

Showcasing screen gems for the cinephile

Iggy Pop, Chow Yun Fat and Pam Grier are some of the familiar faces in the latest line-up of movies for the Singapore Cult and Underground Film Festival. BY DYLAN TAN

SINGAPORE Cult and Underground Film Festival (SCUFF) returns for its second edition next week. Like the inaugural event last year, the line-up is an eclectic one, to say the least.

Organised by the Society for Cult and Underground Movies (SCUM), which comprises two local cinephiles Anthony Chiam and Herman Ho, it will feature a mix of new indie releases and cult classics.

Making its Singapore premiere are *Gimme Danger*, Jim Jarmusch's rockumentary about legendary punk band The Stooges, and surreal black-and-white horror flick *The Eyes of My Mother*.

The former was first shown at Cannes last year and puts the influential music group fronted by Iggy Pop under the spotlight as Jarmusch traces how its blend of rock, blues, R&B, and free jazz – which some critics back in the 1960s and 1970s wrote off – went on to define alternative music.

The Eyes of My Mother, meanwhile, has shocked horror fans with its graphic visuals but also earned its writer-director Nicolas Pesce praises for its originality.

Making a comeback on the big screen is the Ringo Lam-directed *Prison on Fire* (1987), which stars Chow Yun Fat in one of his most memorable roles. It will be screened in its original Cantonese soundtrack for the first time in Singapore.

The last title in the line-up is *Coffy*, a 1973 blaxploitation classic that turned its lead Pam Grier into an icon of the genre.

Chiam explains that the wide spectrum of movies that range from cult classics to independent releases in the line-up is meant to showcase screen gems to cinephiles: "If a particular film feels 'right' to us, we'll just give it a shot."

Ho adds: "One of the key object-



Above: Making a comeback on the big screen in Cantonese for the first time is *Prison on Fire* (1987). **Below:** The last title in the line-up is *Coffy*, a 1973 blaxploitation classic that turned its lead Pam Grier into an icon of the genre.



ives for SCUFF this year is to reach out to a wider audience, and let them know that there is something for everyone – we want SCUFF to be an adventure for discovering new, interesting and unusual films."

SCUM has been running its website for four years now, focusing on all things cult, B-grade and non-mainstream. It previously organised bi-monthly screenings before introducing the festival format, SCUFF, last year.

Ho shares that they will only choose titles that they would pay to watch themselves, even if it means sometimes taking a risk with slower ticket sales.

Hence, they are not disheartened even though last year two off-beat documentaries – *Remake, Remix, Ripoff* (about the sometimes absurd nature of Turkish cinema) and *Raiders* (about a group of childhood



SCUFF 2017 will feature Singapore premieres of *Gimme Danger*, Jim Jarmusch's rockumentary about legendary punk band The Stooges (above), and surreal black-and-white horror flick *The Eyes of My Mother* (below). PHOTO (THE STOOGES): TOM COPI

friends who reunite decades later to finish up a fan version of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) – did not perform strongly at the box office for them.

"Those targeted a very niche group but the other films like (Kiwi horror-comedy) *Housebound* fared better and (Austrian horror flick) *Goodnight Mommy* was our best-selling film ... all in all, two out of four isn't that bad," adds Chiam. "And more importantly, we had a great time putting it all together."

Ho also says they are collaborating with a radio station and music website to spread the word further for the first time and believes they are taking "baby steps in the right direction".

"I think it will still take some time for the local audience to fully appreciate the 'underground' nature of independent films ... If you look at all the buzz Singaporean filmmakers have been making recently in international film festivals, it's quite heartening for the smaller film productions out there," he states. "So we are hoping this openness to smaller film titles will rub off on our local audience and encourage them to give the SCUFF films a try."

dylantan@sph.com.sg
@DylanTanSYBT

■ SCUFF 2017 takes place from Feb 24 to 26. For screening times and ticketing details, check the Events section of scumcinema.com

