

*Luang Prabang Film Festival: 3 Years of Strength with the Power of Movie Fanatics
to Enhance Filmmaking in Southeast Asia*

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Abstract

Luang Prabang Film Festival was founded in 2010 by Gabriel Kuperman, an American expat who had a strong passion for both film and this old capital city. The festival was run by an organized group called The Not-For-Profit Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF). The 3rd year of this festival was held in December 1-5, 2012.

Now in its 3rd year, the festival has grown strongly with the collaboration from movie fanatics in Southeast Asia and Western filmmakers. From the field study trip to the latest event, it was found that there were 3 main activities provided, including the selection of twenty-eight Southeast Asian films from 9 countries to showcase, the film-making workshop, and the film discussion forums. All of these activities were funded by companies, organizations, foreign embassies, and online donation campaign through kickstarter.com. The festival also received help from film distribution companies, hotels and local restaurants in facilitating the screening activities and space, as well as, the government sector, Lao Department of Cinema that supported and helped facilitate in the festival.

The objectives of this festival were to promote cultural expression, mutual exchange, sustainable industry, diversity and education. However, the most important outgrowth received from this festival was the tourism promotion that helped make Luang Prabang a lively and better known city among foreign tourists.

Introduction

The 3rd Luang Prabang Film Festival took place on December 1-5, 2012 with the initiative of Gabriel Kuperman, a 28 year old American expat, who previously worked in the film industry and television in New York. Traveled to Southeast Asia and impressed with the beauty of Luang Prabang, after his master's degree graduation, he then moved to lived in this city in 2008. Moving to this country, he has also brought what he was interested about to initiate a concrete festival in conjunction with of Department of Lao Film.

The not-for profit Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) has been annually held in order to promote film industries in Southeast Asia. It first took place in 2010 as to promote the domestic film industry in Laos and to exchange the knowledge of filming in this region. The objectives of this film festival are:

1. To promote the cultural expression through films; the film interested persons would have the opportunity to visually see various films, to exchange the cultural knowledge and reflect their own stories from different countries to the audience.

2. To initiate the mutual exchange: LPFF provides a space for those Southeast Asian filmmakers to come together and exchange their knowledge and skills in filming in order to help enhancing film industries in this region.

3. To promote a sustainable film industry: LPFF improves Lao film industry in various aspects and initiate the exchange of international film market. This generates incomes and moves the industry forward. LPFF also draws attention from international film industries to look at the country's film industry.

4. To present the diversity: LPFF aims to create the equality through films that tell stories and perspectives in order to reflect the society, race, gender and belief differently. The festival opens an opportunity for independent filmmakers to show their works, as well as women who are related to filming participate in the events.

5. To provide film education: every year Lao people who are interested in filming improve their skills and experiences through an activity in the festival. LPFF collaborates with the state sector and related organizations, such as Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, to help find filming experts to educate their knowledge. This year's festival was honored by United States Embassy that supported a 10-day workshop, and in this workshop fifteen participants were selected to participate in deeply practicing public topics they wanted to communicate to the society.

Luang Prabang Film Festival Administration

One of other important factors in running a film festival is the funding. The fundraising for LPFF came from the collaboration of four significant parties, including private companies, non-governmental organizations, embassies, and donation. The fundraising also came from its campaign run online through kickstarter.com and the support from film distributors and local hotel owners.

Hiring staff to run the festival was not an important issue since the festival received a friendly support from partnerships from Southeast Asian countries who had love in filming. From the study, it revealed that Southeast Asian film experts from each

country were invited to help about the film selection in this festival. For example, below is a list of experts who helped in film selection in 2012.

Mr. Chha Bora, a film director and producer from Cambodia
Ms. Varadila Daoood, the film festival organizer from Indonesia
Mr. Somsanouk Mixay, a writer and journalist from Laos
Mr. Amir Muhammad, a film producer, writer, and media from Malaysia
Mr. Swe Than, a film expert from Myanmar
Mr. Francis Joseph A. Cruz, a film critic from Philippines
Ms. Yuni Hadi, the festival organizer and film selector from Singapore
Mr. Kong Rithdee, a film critic from Thailand
Ms. Nguyen Trinh Thi, a film producer and educator from Vietnam

These experts were asked to select 10 outstanding films from their own country that were shown within the last five years. Then the festival asked for film screeners from the collaborative film distributors. After that, the screeners would be sent to the festival committees who came from the state, private, and international sectors to finalize the film selection to showcase. The reason that LPFF refused for independent submission due to the fact that only major qualified and outstanding films should be shown in this festival in order to present the overall image of countries in Southeast Asia.

The number of total films shown in this year's festival was 28 (before the withdrawal of Rak Am Lam movie, so actually only 27 films were presented) from 9 different countries across the region. There was no film sent from Brunei since the country's film industry was not growing well.

The following 28 selected films were categorized into the country they were from.



1-5 ທັນວາ 2012
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Luang Prabang FILM FESTIVAL

1-5 DECEMBER 2012

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

SAT 01	SUN 02	MON 03
10:00am GARUDA IN MY HEART	10:00am BOUNDARY	10:00am HELP! MY GIRLFRIEND IS A VAMPIRE!
12:00pm BUNOHAN	12:00pm ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE	12:00pm ALREADY FAMOUS
2:00pm SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION FROM LILIA CUNTAPAY	2:00pm PANEL: CROSS-BORDER FILMMAKING	2:00pm GOLDEN SLUMBERS
4:00pm MOTHER'S SOUL	4:00pm BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & DINNER	4:00pm IT GETS BETTER
6:00pm OPENING CEREMONY	6:00pm B-BOY DANCE PERFORMANCE	6:00pm LAO CONCERT
7:00pm CHANTHAY	7:00pm BOUNTHANH: LOST IN THE CITY	7:00pm HAK ALIM LUM
9:00pm THE CHEER AMBASSADORS	9:00pm MINDFULNESS AND MURDER	9:00pm LAND BENEATH THE FOG

TUE 04	WED 05	DEC 01-05
10:00am THE DANCE OF AN ALCHEMIST	10:00am POSTCARDS FROM THE ZOO	11:00am LAO SHORTS PROGRAM I
12:00pm FATHER'S WAY	12:00pm WITH OR WITHOUT ME	1:00pm PETER LIVERMORE COLLECTION
2:00pm PANEL: DOCUMENTING SOUTHEAST ASIA	2:00pm DANCE OF TWO LEFT FEET	2:00pm LAO SHORTS PROGRAM II
4:00pm WHO KILLED CHEA VICHEA?	4:00pm 24 HOURS OF ANGER	
6:00pm TRADITIONAL DANCE PERFORMANCE	6:00pm LAO MUSIC VIDEO PROGRAM	
7:00pm ALWAYS ON MY MIND	7:00pm CHANG	
9:00pm IN APRIL THE FOLLOWING YEAR, THERE WAS A FIRE	9:00pm I CARRIED YOU HOME	

LEGEND

THESE SCREENINGS ALL TAKE PLACE AT LPFF'S SECONDARY, INDOOR VENUE AT AMANTAKA.

THESE SCREENINGS/ACTIVITIES ALL TAKE PLACE AT LPFF'S PRIMARY, OUTDOOR VENUE AT THE HANDICRAFT MARKET.

THESE SCREENINGS/ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE IN THE LPFF VISITOR CENTER AT PROJECT SPACE.

ສະເຫຼີມສະຫຼອງຮູບເງົາຂອງຂົງເຂດພາກພື້ນອາຊີຕາເວັນອອກສຽງໃຕ້
CELEBRATING SOUTHEAST ASIAN CINEMA


















www.lpfilmfest.org www.facebook.com/lpfilmfest

Image 1 : Program Schedule

Other significant activities beside the film showcase included two panel discussions;

The 1st forum was the discussion of “Cross-Border Filmmaking” on December 2nd 2012, 2 pm. The participants in this discussion were

- Luke Cassady-Dorion, a film director
- Ananda Everingham, an actor and film producer
- Sherman Ong, a film producer
- Kong Rithdee, a journalist, film producer and selector from Thailand
- Nicholas Simon, a film director



Image 2: The discussion of “Cross-Border Filmmaking”

The 2nd forum was the discussion of “Documenting Southeast Asia” on December 4th 2012 at 2pm. The participants in this discussion were;

- Ian Bromage, a film producer
- Bradley Cox, a film director
- Peter Livermore, a film producer
- Thanapanont Phithakrattanayothin, a film producer
- Shalahuddin Siregar, a film director



Image 3 : The discussion of “Documenting Southeast Asia”

The showcase cinemas in this festival were located in different areas depended on the time of the day. The film showcase during day time was in:

Luang Prabang City

1. LPFF Visitor Center – Project Space Luang Prabang
2. Amantaka Hotel

Suburb Areas of Luang Prabang

1. Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre
2. Coconut Garden
3. Saffron Coffee Company
4. T’shop Lai Gallery
5. Ock Pop Tok
6. @ My Library
7. House of Dreams

The night time film showcase happened in Handicraft Market that was renovated by UNESCO in 2003 and located in center of the city. With such location, this market became a perfect location for cultural and public activities with the ability to receive up to 1,500 audiences.

From above, in summary, there were two main activities occurred in this film festival; the showcase of selected films from different countries in the region and the academic film discussions/seminars. All of such activities happened through various locations belonged to both the state and private sectors. The activities were run during the day and night time based on the schedule made by the festival organizers.

The First Step from A Film Lover To The Success Of Luang Prabang Film Festival

From the study, the festival began from a group of people who were interested in filming and passionate of Luang Prabang city. Such feelings were turned into the force of initiating Luang Prabang Film Festival. Currently, the festival has been held for three years already.

Although there has not been many films produced in Laos, having this film festival was considered something more than a success that ever happened among other countries in the region. If only showing Lao films, there would not be enough films to showcase and would not be able to make the festival succeeded. The collaboration from partnerships and support of people who had passionate on films were the significant keys for preceding the festival conveniently. These have helped solving the issues of funding since people who loved films all aimed to see the growth of film industries, especially the ones in Southeast Asian countries where they lacked of support from the governments. However, with the power and love that people have towards film and filming, the festival has moved forward throughout three years, and it seems to be growing with a great leap forward. Thus, this then has resulted in the increased support and roles of government. It is also expected that the support will be further grown.

Conclusion

In the past three years, it is found that LPFF has grown continuously. With the beginning from a group of people who had love in films and filming and being supported by various parties and organization, the festival then has been able to grow further and sustainably.

Running LPFF is significantly important for the growth of Lao film industry since it has encouraged and awaked the industry to be more lively and creative in producing qualified works. Moreover, the state and private sectors also started to look at and pay attention in filming Medias. This could be seen from the increased support they gave to the festival each year.

However, the festival could be grown with sustainability if the Department of Lao films take more roles. If possible, LPFF will be able to improve and grow farther than being a film festival for Southeast Asia.

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