



9th Pusan International Film Festival



"The festival has become Asia's representative festival, but we've got to maintain that reputation."



Pusan Film Festival is a hot ticket

By Ines Cho
Staff Writer

With its opening film's 3,000 tickets for the public sold out in just under 5 minutes, the 9th Pusan International Film Festival is off to an auspicious start.

More than 28,000 people, nearly double the number last year, logged onto the festival's official Web site, www.piff.org, to buy opening-night tickets.

The publicity team said ticketing went smoothly despite a flood of phone calls and astonishing number of simultaneous online requests.

The special event "Fifty Plus," which reserves tickets for festival-goers who are at least 50 years old to book in person, also proved to be successful. The 300 tickets set aside for "Fifty Plus" at Busan Bank branches were sold out in 30 minutes.

On Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Korean actors Ahn Sung-ki and Lee Young-ae will kick off

the much-awaited festival as the masters of ceremonies at the Busan Yachting Center Outdoor Theater, followed by the opening film, Wong Kar-wai's newly edited "2046."

The closing ceremony on Oct. 15 will be led by Korean actors Kim Tae-woo and Bae Jong-ok and will feature "Scarlet Letter" by David Byun.

This year, the Busan event boasts 40 world premieres, the highest number in PIFF's history. There will also be 16 international premieres and 48 Asian premieres.

"21 Grams" by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu was withdrawn from the World Cinema section because it was scheduled for a number of screenings in Korea before the festival. In order for a film to be included in the World Cinema section, it has to be at least a Korean premiere.

PIFF publicists announced that because of the cancellation and a system error in counting, there will be a total of 264 films from 63

countries. "Paradise Girls," in the World Cinema section, is a world premiere, so the number of world premieres changed from 39 to 40.

The Pusan International Film Festival has announced that Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao Hsien will be the second recipient of the Asian Filmmaker of the Year award.

Mr. Hsien is one of the most acclaimed directors of the past two decades. His latest work, "Cafe Lumiere," is a tribute to Japanese film legend Yasujiro Ozu.

With its Korean Cinema Award, the film festival recognizes non-Koreans who have made outstanding contributions in promoting Korean films worldwide. This year's recipients are festival directors Yano Kazuyuki of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival and Philip Cheah of the Singapore International Film Festival.

One of the highlights of the festival will be the Hand-Printing Ceremony in which Greek

filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos will be honored. Mr. Angelopoulos made his director's debut with "Reconstruction" in 1970, and then went on to make "Alexander the Great" (1980), "Landscape in the Mist" (1988) and "The Gaze of Ulysses" (1995). He's won the Golden Tiger Award at the Venice Festival and the Grand Prix at Cannes.

At the Busan festival, the Angelopoulos retrospective will include his first completed part of "Trilogy," which is also the film's Asian premiere.

With less than a week to go, tickets for general screenings, which cost 5,000 won (\$4.30), can be purchased at PIFF box offices. The temporary PIFF box office in Seoul will be open until Wednesday, from 9:30 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. daily at Megabox COEX. Other PIFF box offices outside of Busan are at Megabox Suwon and Megabox Daegu. During the festival, in Busan, there will be

five PIFF box offices, at the Haeundae Busan Yachting Center Outdoor Theater, Megabox, Daeyoung Cinema in Nampo-dong and the Busan Theater.

Before buying tickets, check the film's Web site to see the list of sold-out shows. To buy tickets online, customers need to be members of PIFF Cash, a pre-paid account system. Go to the festival's Web site to register (Korean only). After the registration is confirmed, a 12-digit number will be provided. A member needs this number to buy tickets.

PIFF Cash must be used to purchase tickets, and the pre-paid accounts can be replenished via credit cards. Tickets can be picked up at a designated PIFF box office.

For detailed information on films, venues, concerts and nightly parties, transportation and accommodation, visit the Web site (English available), which has been upgraded for this year.

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Director makes movies his mission



Pusan International Film Festival Kim Dong-ho is always trying to maintain the festival's edge.

Pusan International Film Festival director Kim Dong-ho attends an average of 17 film festivals around the world each year. Over the past decade, his mission has been to promote Korean films overseas and make the Busan festival the best in Asia.

In 2001, the director was invited to attend a conference in Berlin along with 10 other cinematic luminaries of prestigious international film festivals, including Berlin, Venice, Locarno and Sundance.

The following year, Mr. Kim served as a panelist in a directors' discussion at the Cannes Film Festival. Back then, when asked whether his festival had made it to the big time, Mr. Kim humbly replied, "I guess so."

The former vice minister of culture and director of Korean Film Council shares his vision for PIFF and Korean film.

How did such a young festival become so big?

PIFF functions as the ultimate showcase of Asian cinemas in one place. In terms of programming, the festival in Busan offers Asia's best selection of promising works. The festival has become so important that European and American programmers now must check out new movies there.

One of the key factors contributing to such great success within a short period of time is that we have dedicated programmers who have worked at the festival from the very first

year and have been with us since then. If you look at other local festivals, such as Bucheon and Jeonju, staffers change often. By maintaining the same staffers, we have been able to stick to the festival's core concept and character.

Kim Ji-seok, who specializes in Asian films, Jay Jeon, who specializes in international films, and Lee Yong-kwan, who specializes in Korean films, are founding members of the Busan event. In fact, they were the ones who had wanted me to become their festival director.

Now Lee Yong-kwan serves as the deputy director, who was replaced by Heo Moon-young, the former chief editor of the influential film magazine "Cine 21."

What is the core concept of the Pusan International Film Festival?

The unchanging concept is to discover new directors and their innovative productions and introduce them to the world. Both the package and quality have to be appealing to the international market.

In Asia, there had been, and still are, many old festivals before Busan came along. Fukuoka, for example, has a festival with a long history, but the number of films and guests is small, and programmers failed to show a wide range of new movies.

Our programmers are very dedicated and intensively search for films in their designat-

ed regions throughout the year.

Which direction will the festival take in the future?

We will be holding our 10th festival next year. I'd like to take that opportunity to make the festival better.

The festival has become Asia's representative festival, but we've got to maintain that reputation. Our reputation has prompted other Asian film festivals to compete harder.

The Tokyo Film Festival, which is 20 years old, has revamped its festival with \$6 million in support from the government. It threw a lavish promotion party at Cannes and changed the date to follow right after PIFF. The Shanghai Film Festival is spending \$5 million, with support from the government, with prizes worth \$100,000, a new marketing team, etc.

All this is happening when we have a meager budget of 4 billion won (about \$3.6 million), and I doubt the budget department [of the Korean government] will respond. That kind of situation certainly bothers me, but a festival can fall very quickly if the quality of selected films is not good. [Being in this industry] means infinite competition and challenge.

What has been PIFF's main contributions?

It played a critical role in exporting Korean films abroad. At PIFF, programmers and

directors of the world's major festivals come and select their finds, so the number of viewings of Korean films has sharply increased.

Before 1996, Cannes Film Festival had shown a total of four Korean films — including "Mulleya Mulleya" by Lee Du-yong in 1984, "Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?" (1989) by Bae Yong-gyun, "Yuri" (1996) by Yang Yun-ho — over its 50-year history. They were not part of the competition either.

Since 1997, every year, four or five Korean films have been showcased at Cannes, totaling 32 films in the past eight years, and Korean films have won awards at Cannes.

That kind of exposure has brought profit to Korea. It not only raises the national awareness in the world, it promotes the Korean film industry as a whole.

More important, it directly influences the export rate of Korean films. Before 1998, Korea exported an average of 14 films per year, earning \$150,000. Last year alone, though, more than 200 films were sold overseas, earning \$37 million.

In 2002, a team of researchers at Chugye University for the Arts came down during PIFF and conducted a survey to determine the competitive effects of the festival. Their analysis revealed that the monetary effect that the film festival would bring to Korean economy was 34 billion won.

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