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## Bright lights on for PIFF opening



### Filmmaker seeks mix of artistic, commercial

Fruit Chan at German Night at the film festival in Busan.

Fruit Chan, a native of Guangzhou who moved to Hong Kong at age 7, is one of leading filmmakers in Asia. His debut film, "Finale in Blood" in 1991, and "Made in Hong Kong" in 1997 earned him critical acclaim. His latest work, "Three ... Extremes" (2004), a co-production of Korea, Hong Kong and Japan, made headlines at the Venice International Film Festival.

Mr. Chan was invited to Pusan International Film Festival as a juror for the New Currents segment.

**Q.** As a jury member, what do you look for?

**A.** I can tell you I'm looking for talent. It's easy to make a good film with good production, but it's not easy to find real talent.

**You're called one of the most innovative filmmakers in Asia. Do you think you have that talent?**

I don't know how good I am because I cannot judge my own works, but I should say the most recent film I did is different from my other works. "Dumplings" [included in "Three ... Extremes"] is considered mainstream; the story is half true and half fictional.

Now I'm just brainstorming my ideas [for a new film] in my head. I'm looking for — and also trying to make — artistic films that can do well commercially. I like Park Chan-wook's "Old Boy." It is artistic, at the same time, commercially successful.

**Do you think the Pusan Film Festival has changed?**

It's my first time as a jury member in Busan, but as a jury member, it's my second time since the Moscow Film Festival two years ago. I've come to Busan six times, to relax and enjoy movies and check out films from other countries.

I have noticed the festival's central location has changed from Nampo-dong to Haeundae. I liked Nampo-dong because you can feel the texture of people, texture of the city, etc., there. But you have to change. It's okay for me. I really enjoy the Pusan Film Festival because it has maintained its quality since the beginning. It's a film festival with both artistic and mainstream films.

By Inès Cho  
Staff Writer

### BUSAN

With each year, the Pusan International Film Festival grows in stature and enhances its reputation as the premier film festival in Asia, drawing bigger names to Busan. If an event's success can be judged by the amount of media attention it draws, then PIFF has arrived.

At the opening on Thursday, overly excited crews from KBS-TV and other local television outlets busted out of their cordoned-off areas to swarm the startled stars who walked on the red carpet.

Bodyguards jostled with TV journalists who were eager to ask the actors and directors deep questions like, "Are you well?" and "How do you feel?" and "Is this your first time here?" The

stars' bodyguards managed to peel their angry clients away from the media pack and into the main event.

Festival director Kim Dong-ho said the festival's real success, at least for the first half of the nine-day event, was marked by the presence of major stars and the number of world premieres. Because the festival in Busan now stands as the most important Asian film market in the world, Mr. Kim plans to strengthen its marketing power by increasing the number of screening rooms for the Pusan Promotion Plan, or PPP, from the three that were offered this year.

The 7th PPP, which ended Saturday evening, was where international financiers and Asian film industry professionals met to make deals. This year's PPP was "quite successful," said PPP Director Jay Jeon, with more than 1,000 participants from 30 countries and 300 companies looking to make deals this year.

"Several Korean films closed great deals, but they don't disclose the exact figures," he said. "But a Korean film, 'Moment to Remember' (Nae Meorisogeui Jiwugae) by CJ Entertainment, was sold to Japan at the highest price, at \$2.5 million."

Mr. Jeon also said Korean director Bong Jun-ho's project called "The Host" was popular. "France's Pathe Distribution was interested in co-production, although they are still in the middle of financing," he said.

The opening movie often sets the tone for a film festival, and in this, PIFF didn't disappoint. More than 5,000 spectators packed the Busan Yachting Center's Outdoor Theater for the Hong Kong film "2046," by Wong Kar-wai, a sequel to "In the Mood for Love."

"2046" starts out with the narrator, a drifting newspaper columnist played by Tony Leung, who recalls his romantic memories with a former lover, Su Li-zhen, played by Maggie Cheung. Like other characteristically Wong Kar-wai films, the film is visual poetry on the theme of love, rather than an ordinary film that follows a linear sequence of events.

Dutch film critic Peter van Bueren criticized the decision to show the film again in Busan after it had premiered in Cannes in May, saying that "2046" didn't need to be re-edited and re-shot again, because now the film "didn't make sense."

But it was undisputed that Mr. Wong's cinematography was beautiful. Watching the film, from beginning to end, is to indulge in what's expected as the famous "Wong Kar-wai style": strikingly artistic still photographs, the lighting peering into human emotions, opulent primary colors, sometimes contrasted, like flashes of distant memories, against black-and-white.

The festival indeed has grown over the years in terms of physical capacity, yet one of the best things about it is that it still allows participants — at least

some who try hard — to mix and mingle with movie moguls at nightly parties. For example, if you pretend to speak Cantonese, you can slip in with the Wong Kar-wai and Tony Leung entourage at the opening reception at Paradise Hotel.

And if you happen to know big-time director Lee Chang-dong or his younger brother Joon-dong, you can be casually invited to an unofficial but very private gathering after all official festivities have ended.

Among the guests in Busan, young British filmmaker Daniel Gordon was one of the most sought-after interview candidates among international journalists because of his documentary film shot in North Korea titled "A State of Mind."

It's not too surprising that a film festival would draw other festival directors. Paolo Neri, the executive manager of Far East Film Festival in Italy, said he watches only Asian films in Busan.

His appreciation of Asian film summarizes the benefits of the festival: "The world film industry is divided by two: Hollywood and the rest of the world, in which Asian films are leading at the moment."

"Asian films have their own style and values. Unlike Hollywood-style films that have predictable, happy endings, heroes [in Asian films] often die or sacrifice for a cause, or couples break up in the end. And audiences accept that kind of reality in films."

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Korean TV crews stepped over the cordons to interview the stars on the red carpet at the Pusan Film Festival on Thursday. By Inès Cho

### Some highlights and lowlights (so far...)



#### My Family, My Films and My Nation (Indonesia)

A boy who looks barely 10 years old lights up a cigarette and says he'll kill his mother when he grows up. Another boy explains how to get drunk fast. In his narration, director Garin Nugroho says these Indonesian boys all died not long after he filmed these interviews, which are interspersed with clips from Nugroho's other, socially aware films in this short, intense 1998 documentary-style picture. "My Family" awakens viewers to a crude but real slice of Indonesia, a society the director calls "a world without a hero."

By Chun Su-jin



#### Pink Ribbons (Japan)

A startling documentary on Japanese independent porn movies by director Kenjiro Fujii. Often dubbed "roman porno" for their mix of romance and pornography, these low-budget "pink movies" were a career entry point for many now-established Japanese filmmakers. Yet the genre also attracted a giant underground following, and is seen by many critics as embodying the experimental spirit. Veteran producers talk about what sells and what doesn't when it comes to sex and social desire; one director says rape scenes are a turn-on for many people who've experienced war.

By Park Soo-mee



#### Two Great Sheep (China)

Someplace cold and mountainous in China, a sweet old farmer who looks distractingly like Morgan Freeman is entrusted with the care of two exotic "foreign sheep" — beasts in whose welfare, for nebulous political reasons, some local officials have a keen interest. At first, it's a great honor, but before long catastrophe seems to threaten. Directed by Liu Hao, this quiet, funny little movie keeps threatening to become cute, but doesn't (unless you count the one earflap on the farmer's hat that's always sticking up). The village life is evocatively detailed, and the landscapes are stark and moving.

By David Moll



#### Paradise Girls (Netherlands)

Directed by Fow Pyng Hu, a Chinese-Dutch filmmaker, this is a film about three young Asian women who are going through emotional phases in their lives in different places — Hong Kong, the Netherlands and Japan. All three are in despair because of situations caused by men: a boyfriend, a father and a son. The movie deals with the stories separately, but arranges them so that all three women meet in Bali at the end. It's stylishly shot, capturing some familiar cultural settings and dealing with issues affecting young women in, or from, Asia.

By Park Soo-mee



#### The Beautiful Washing Machine (Malaysia)

Shot cheaply on video, this feature by James Lee seems at first to be a smug satire of consumerism, in which anonymous drones push shopping carts down endless supermarket aisles and have empty, listless conversations. You know — the kind of thing that was old hat 25 years ago. But one strange development later, things start to get interesting, and then, in a dark way, they get very funny. And eventually they become something else altogether. I can't say I had a good time watching this, but I've been thinking about it for days.

By David Moll



#### The Scarlet Letter (Korea)

Screened in advance for a film industry and press audience, PIFF's glossy closing film, directed by Daniel Byun, will end things with the sound of deflation, unless there's an emergency re-edit going on as you read this. A preening cop (Han Suk-gyu) juggles a wife (Uhm Ji-won), a mistress (Lee Eun-jo), product placement (Gangnam's Blue Note jazz club) and a murder mystery that never becomes interesting. A bizarre plot twist toward the end seems to have been put there to leave the audience with a memory of something — anything — besides the pretty faces.

By David Moll