

Prospectus For Curated Series

“Retrospective look at Emerging Asian Male Stars”

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Since the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), Asian fever swept Hollywood. Asian directors who were prominent in art house theaters began to step into limelight. Some even began making martial arts movies targeted at an international audience, such as the works of Yimou Zhang (*Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), and *Hero* (2002)) and Kaige Chen (*The Promise* (2005)). Globalization in the film industry brought Asian stars to Hollywood, Jackie Chan in *Rush Hour* (1998), Yun-Fat Chow in *Anna and the King* (1999), Li Gong in *Miami Vice* (2006) and a predominately Asian cast film *Memories of a Geisha* (2005). Even Asian scripts and films are remade in Hollywood, such as *The Lake House* (2006) is a remake of Korean film *Siworea (Il Mare)*(2000), and this year's Academy Award Best Picture winner *The Departed* (2006) is a remake of Hong Kong film *Infernal Affairs (Mou Gaan Dou)* (2002). American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino openly admits his love for Chinese martial art films, and is manifested in his works for example *Kill Bill* (2003). Asian film industry is certainly attracting much attention.

The popularity of martial art films allowed a few Asian actors receive popularity in United States. Old martial art films from Shaw Brothers Film Studio in Hong Kong are easily available online and at Kim's Videos. BAM Rose Cinema hosted a Shaw Brothers martial art retrospective two years in a row. It makes people wonder if only

Asian actors who specialize in martial arts are noticed here. Of course that isn't the case. One of the most prolific Asian actor imports in Hollywood must be Ken Watanabe. Since his role against Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai* (2003), he has starred in *Batman Begins* (2005), *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005), and *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006). He is one of the most recognizable Asian actors in Hollywood. Another recognizable Asian actor, Tony Leung, is known for his roles in Kar Wai Wong's films. Even though he has yet to star in a Hollywood film, he is recognizable to a particular group of American audience who love and follow Kar Wai Wong. BAM also dedicated a special program on Tony Leung last year.

This proposed retrospective hopes to introduce more Asian films to new audiences as well as audience familiar with some of the artists in this program. New audience whom have seen Chinese blockbusters such as *Hero* or *Crouching Tiger* that would like to see more. As well as audiences from Asian communities in New York that are fans of the actors in this program. The main focus in this special program is Asian male actors who does not specialize in martial arts and is emerging on the Hollywood scene after established fame in their home country. The works selected are from the actors' pre-Hollywood or pre-international fame days.

Drawing on this year's Academy Award winner, the main theme running through the films is crime and gangsters. The program showcases this popular gangster, crime

genre in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. Films are selected from the works of Andy Lau (Hong Kong), Chen Chang (Taiwan), Ken Watanabe (Japan), Sung-ki Ahn (Korea), and Takeshi Kaneshiro (Japan/Taiwan). There are many top Asian actors emerging in Hollywood today, unfortunately due to the limited programming space some are omitted. Top actor Tony Leung already had his own special feature program last year. That was a very complete and in depth program. To screen some of his earlier works again would edge out works of other Asian actors' work not so widely seen. Yun-Fat Chow is also a very diverse actor making his mark in Hollywood. Entering Hollywood as early as 1998 with *The Replacement Killers* (1998), his early filmography is very impressive too, with collaboration with famous directors such as John Woo. Even though he made many martial art films such as *Crouching Tiger*, and *Bulletproof Monk* (2003), he also showed his talents in non-martial art films such as *Anna and the King* (1999). With his newest film, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007) coming out this summer, including his early works could generate a buzz. However, the program likes to balance actors from different Asian countries.

The opening film, *Century of the Dragon* (1999) features Andy Lau. Following the theme of this year's Academy Award winner, Lau plays the mole inside the police department in the original *Infernal Affairs* (2002). Some American audience might

remember Lau from Yimou Zhang's martial art film, *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). In *House of Flying Daggers*, Lau also portrays a mole infiltrating law officer in ancient China. *Century of the Dragon* tells a similar story. An outstanding trainee, Sing, at the Hong Kong police academy goes under cover in local mafia. There he befriends tough gang leader, Fai-long, portrayed by Lau. As territorial war breaks out with rivalry gang, Sing's loyalty is tested between the gang and the police. This story line is incredibly close to *Infernal Affairs*. Made three years earlier, this film give a taste of Hong Kong gangster film genre as it progresses and influence Hollywood.

The second film features actor Chen Chang. He is probably most familiar to American audience through Ang Lee's martial art film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) as Xiao Hu. Looking at his past performance one realize he has been visible on the international scene since his debut. Chang has worked with A-list Chinese directors and looks like he has a very promising career ahead of him. Thus, even though this four hour epic, *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) might seem a little heavy in this program; this is a good chance to look at his work in adolescent days as a non-actor. Based on a true story the film set in 1960s Taiwan, portrays a teenager caught between love and small time gangsters in a turbulent era. The film reflects the instability and anxiety of Taiwanese people at the time and is hailed as a masterpiece of Taiwanese cinema today.

Third film features Korean actor Sung-ki Ahn. He is known as the “National Best Actor of Korea”. Although he might be little known to the American audience, the amount of production and talent in Korean film industry cannot be ignored. Moreover, he is well known in the Asian community which is a target audience for this program. *The Last Witness* (2001) based on a novel, follows the story of Detective Oh in his investigations into a mysterious murder. He finds a diary which details the escape of North Korean prisoner of war held captive during Korean War. The film gives a vivid portrayal of North Korea POWs camps. Anti-communist sentiments in this film reflect South Korea’s social feelings towards their North Korean kin. This reflection of society connects well with *A Brighter Summer Day*. Though Ahn is playing the supporting role of the escaped prisoner, he gives a powerful performance. While the lead actor Jung-jae Lee who plays Detective Oh is also a rising star in his own right. His other works include *Siworea* (2000), the Korean original to *The Lake House* (2006).

The forth film featured in this special program is from Ken Watanabe. As described earlier he is the most recognizable Asian actor in Hollywood today. The selected work *Dandelion* (1985) was screened in American art house theaters in the 80s and received rave reviews. Unimaginable to audiences than that the young truck driver would be acting in Hollywood fifteen years later. This screening gives

audiences who missed the first screening a chance to look at this comedy. This is a story of two truck drivers who arrive at a failing roadside fast food ramen noodle restaurant. The two helps widowed restaurant owner Tampopo to create the perfect bowl of noodles. This film received the slogan of “Noodle Westerns” with its subplots of gangsters and comic sequences parody of American westerns.

The last and final film selected in this program features Asian heartthrob Takeshi Kaneshiro. Half Japanese and half Taiwanese, he’s ability to speak multiple languages earned him a wide variety of roles and huge popularity in Japan, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. Dubbed by *Time* magazine as the “Asian film industry’s Johnny Depp” in his choice of quirky roles, Takeshi has a promising future ahead of him. He also starred in Yimou Zhang’s *House of Flying Daggers* as the young officer set up to earn the trust of blind dancer Mei, portrayed by Ziyi Zhang, in order to lead him to rebel leader. The film selected, *The Odd One Dies* (1997) is from his early days, before he became a highly acclaimed actor. Takeshi depicts a miserable young guy with no goal in his life. He strikes a death deal with gangster before his luck turned and got rich. Regretting his deal, he falls in love with female assassin. Now the dilemma is on, will he give his life for his love.

Because of the unavailability of film prints, most films are shown on DVD formats, which isn’t very ideal. Hence, a small venue like BAM is suitable for this

program. BAM situated in Brooklyn is close to Asian communities in Brooklyn. Its past programs include many Asian screenings besides the above mentioned Shaw Brothers collection and Tony Leung special. People interested in Asian cinema can make this connection bringing possible audience.

Featured Actor Mini-Biography

Andy Lau



Born on September 27th, 1961 in Hong Kong. He is a singer and actor in the Hong Kong entertainment business for over twenty years. Andy has made over one hundred films in his career so far, generating a large following of fans across Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan. He has recently established his own film production company to bring more young Asian talents in film industry.

Notable filmography includes:

Battle of Wits (2006) By Chi Leung ‘Jacob’ Cheung

House of Flying Daggers (2004) By Yimou Zhang

Infernal Affairs (2002) By Wai Keung Lau and Siu Fai Mak

Days of Being Wild (1990) By Kar Wai Wong

As Tears Go By (1988) By Kar Wai Wong

Chen Chang



Born on October 14th, 1976 in Taiwan. He started his impressive film career at age thirteen making critically acclaimed film *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) with director Edward Yang. His filmography is full of A-list Chinese directors from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Notable filmography includes:

The Go Master (2006) By Zhuangzhuang Tian

Three Times (2005) By Hsiao-Hsien Huo

Eros- “The Hand” (2004) By Kar Wai Wong

2046 (2004) By Kar Wai Wong

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000) By Ang Lee

Happy Together (1997) By Kar Wai Wong

A Brighter Summer Day (1991) By Edward Yang

Sung-ki Ahn



Born January 1st, 1952 in South Korea. He is known as the “National Best Actor of Korea” He made his film debut at the age of 5, and has since participated in nearly a hundred films. He studied Vietnamese in undergrad and is proficient in number of languages. His on screen image has earned him as ideal husband and dad.

Notable filmography includes:

Battle of Wits (2006) By Chi Leung ‘Jacob’ Cheung

Duelist (2005) By Myung-se Lee

The Romantic President (2002) Man-bae Jeon

Ken Watanabe



Born on October 21st, 1959 in Japan. He started his acting career on stage and worked on television as well as film. Ken is best known for his samurai roles in Japan. He was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia in 1989. He has since recovered his health and brought his career to new heights.

Notable filmography includes:

Letters from Iwo Jima (2006) By Clint Eastwood

Memories of a Geisha (2005) By Rob Marshall

Batman Begins (2005) By Christopher Nolan

The Last Samurai (2003) By Edward Zwick

Takeshi Kaneshiro



Born October 11th, 1973 in Taiwan. Takeshi is half Japanese and half Taiwanese, capable of speaking multiple languages earned him wide variety of roles in Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He made his debut as a singer in Taiwan, but as his career in acting propelled, he no longer performs as a singer. Despite being effortlessly good-looking, he chooses to strike a balance between commercially pleasing and quirky roles. In 2003, *Time* magazine writer Kate Drake, dubbed him as the “Asian film industry’s Johnny Depp.”

Notable filmography includes:

Perhaps Love (2005) By Peter Chan

House of Flying Daggers (2004) By Yimou Zhang

Turn Left, Turn Right (2003) By Johnnie To

Fallen Angels (1995) By Kar Wai Wong

Chung King Express (1994) By Kar Wai Wong

Filmography



Long Zai Bian Yuan (English title: Century of the Dragon) (1999, color, sound, 90 mins. Hong Kong)

Director: Clarence Fok Yiu-leung

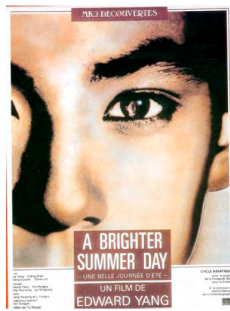
Writer: Jing Wong

Actors: *Andy Lau*, Louis Koo

Available on DVD from Tai Seng Video Marketing \$11.96

Possible film prints preserved at Hong Kong Film Archives.

Five years ago, an outstanding trainee at the police academy was hand-picked to go under cover in Hong Kong triad. He became close friends with the toughest gangster. When territorial war breaks out with rivalry gang, he is caught between his loyalty towards police and the triad.



Guling jie shaonian sha ren shijian (English title: A Brighter Summer Day) (1991, color, sound, 237 mins. Taiwan)

Pro.Co.: Yang and His Gang Filmmakers

Director: Edward Yang

Actors: *Chen Chang*, Lisa Yang

Available on DVD from Duke University, otherwise out of stock.

Possible film prints persevered at Image Museum of Hsinchu

Culture Bureau, condition unknown.

A tragic epic film based on a true story. A teenager in 1960s Taipei. In a school full of young gangsters. The protagonist Xiao-shi (Chen Chang) falls for gang leader's girlfriend, Ming. Caught in between number of pursuers, Ming refuses Xiao-shi. Out of rage Xiao-shi kills Ming.



Heugsuseon (English title: The Last Witness) (2001, color, sound, 104 mins Korea)

Pro. Co.: Cinema Service

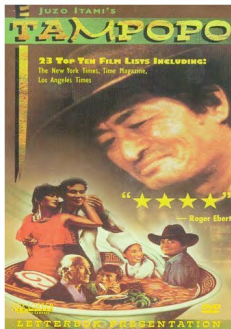
Director: Chang-ho Bae

Actors: Jung-Jae Lee, *Sung-ki Ahn*

Available on DVD from TigerCinema for \$9.99

Film print s held at original production company Cinema Service.

Based on Korean novel, the film follows Detective Oh's (Jung-Jae Lee) investigation into a mysterious murder. His investigation leads him to a diary, which details the escape of North Korean prisoner of war held captive during the Korean War. Detective Oh becomes so emotionally involved that he pursues the writer of the diary hoping to crack the case and learn more about the POWs.



Tampopo (English Title: Dandelion) (1985, color, sound, 114 mins. Japan)

Prod. Co.: Itami Productions

Director: Juzo Itami

Actors: *Ken Watanabe*, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Nobuko Miyamoto

Available on DVD from Amazon for \$19.95

American western meets Japanese Samurai. Two truck drivers arrive at a failing roadside fast food ramen noodle restaurant to help store owner Tampopo make a perfect bowl of noodles. Interruptions of gangster and other sub-plots fill the film with comedy. The film introduces the importance of culinary in Japanese culture.



Liang ge zhi neng huo yi ge (English title: The Odd Ones Dies) (1997, color, sound, 90 mins. Hong Kong)

Pro. Co.: Milky Way Image Co.

Director: Ka-Fi Wai

Producer: Johnnie To

Actors: *Takeshi Kaneshiro*, Carman Lee

VHS from Tai Seng Video Marketing \$15.96

Possible film prints persevered at Hong Kong Film Archive

Two assassins with one mission, only one gets to live. Unfortunately, or fortunately, they fall in love. Who will live? Who will die? A comic Hong Kong gangster film.

Budget

Film rental fees: \$60

Film rental shipping fees: \$20