



## REEL ASIAN TAKES A BOW ON ITS 21ST EDITION

The festival announces its 2017 award winners including *Women of the Weeping River*, *A Piece of Paradise*, *A Whale of a Tale* and Menkes Audience Award winner *Bad Genius*

(TORONTO – November 21, 2017) The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival (Reel Asian), presented by National Bank, wrapped its 21st edition on Saturday, November 18 following its successful 10 day run in downtown Toronto and North York. Canada's largest pan-Asian film festival continued to fuel growing appreciation for Asian cinema in Toronto presenting 79 titles from 16 regions this year including China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, USA and Canada. Reel Asian announced the award winners for the juried features and shorts prizes, the *So You Think You Can Pitch?* live competition, and the Menkes Audience Award.

Feature films honoured include *Bad Genius* (Thailand), which won the Menkes Audience Award; *Women of the Weeping River* (Philippines), which won the Fasken Martineau Best Feature Film Award; *A Piece of Paradise* (Canada), which was honoured with the National Bank Best First Feature Film Award and the Centennial Best Canadian Film or Video Award; and *A Whale of a Tale* (Japan), which won the ReelAsian Best Feature Documentary Award.

The annual *So You Think You Can Pitch?* live competition featured 3 teams in the Emerging Category and 2 teams in the Established Category competing for cash and industry prizes in front of a live audience. The awards were given to **Alice Charlie Liu and Bianca Linhares-Huang** for their film *Tell It To My Mother* in the Emerging Category and **Alice Shin** for her film *Haru's New Year* in the Established Category. As Reel Asian becomes the hub for Asian filmmakers to make connections and exchange ideas, the festival will continue to provide essential industry opportunities both at the festival and year-round.

Highlights at this year's festival included a sold out screening of *Bad Genius* with director Nattawut Poonpiriya in attendance; **Representation in Mainstream Media**, a panel discussion about the realities of diversity in mainstream media and how to champion change; the interactive VR experience *Yumi and Boom* from Canadian Spotlight Artist Lillian Chan, as part of Reel Asian X; and Closing Night Gala *Stand Up Man* which garnered a great turnout with the director Aram Collier and cast in attendance.

### 2017 Reel Asian Award Winners:

**Menkes Audience Award:**

*Bad Genius* (Dir. Nattiwut Poonpiriya, Thailand)

All feature films are eligible for this prize. \$5000 cash prize

**Fasken Martineau Best Feature Film Award:**

*Women of the Weeping River* (Dir. Sheron Dayoc, Philippines)

All feature films are eligible for this prize. \$4000 cash prize

*Jury statement: A film that's both small and huge, this film brought us intimately into a unique world, with characters we soon won't forget. Cruel but also tender, the film quietly builds, methodically revealing new layers, until by the end, you're left floored. This is a testament to the filmmaker's assuredness of vision and command of storytelling. The jury was so impressed by this filmmaker's distinct and profound cinematic voice.*

**Honourable Mention:**

*Teiichi: Battle of Supreme High* (Dir. Akira Nagai, Japan)

*Jury statement: The jury was completely taken by this outrageous, wickedly sharp and hilarious satire that never ceased to surprise and delight from the first frame to the last. This is cinema at its most alive and unruly, not afraid to confidently exist in a register all its own. An exhilarating piece of work.*

**National Bank Best First Feature Film Award:**

*A Piece of Paradise* (Dir. Patrick Alcedo, Canada)

All first feature films are eligible for this prize. \$4000 cash prize

*Jury statement: We were impressed and moved by the film's thoughtful and beautifully nuanced portrayal of women who face the seemingly impossible tasks of living in two places at once and of somehow finding purpose and fulfillment in both worlds. The jury believes that the film's intelligence and sensitivity makes it all the more remarkable as a first feature.*

**Centennial Best Canadian Film or Video Award:**

*A Piece of Paradise* (Dir. Patrick Alcedo, Canada)

All Canadian works are eligible for this prize. \$1000 cash prize

*Jury statement: An intimate portrait of the lives of three Filipina women who have come to Canada as foreign domestic workers in Toronto. A Piece of Paradise is a rumination on the challenges of family, home, identity and the pursuit of one's own personal paradise. Shot in three countries over a five year period, the jury was impressed by the filmmaker's honest portrayal of these women's lives and their dedication to their faith, their community and their family.*

**Reel Asian Best Feature Documentary Award:**

*A Whale of a Tale* (Dir. Megumi Sasaki, Japan)

All feature-length documentary films are eligible for this prize. \$1,000 cash prize.

*Jury statement: On paper this film seems like an impossible task. However, with grace and nuance, this film deftly brings compassion and understanding to a hotly controversial debate. The jury recognizes the filmmaker's skill and courage to strip away the sensationalism, bitterness and hysteria and truly find the humanity. In doing so, this film continued to resonant and challenge long after the final credits rolled.*

**Animasian Award:**

*Fox and the Whale* (Dir. Robin Joseph, Canada)

All animated films and videos are eligible for this prize. \$800 cash prize.

*Jury statement: We were immediately drawn into the stunning visuals of the lush natural environment, combined with a touch of whimsy, playfulness, and wonder. Enjoyable for any age, this film needs to be shared to many audiences.*

**Air Canada Short Film or Video Award:**

All Canadian short films and videos are eligible for this prize which provides an opportunity to broadcast on Air Canada's in-flight entertainment screens on international flights.

*Jury statement: These short films displayed powerful storytelling in a compact amount of time, displaying masterful handling of content ranging from complex family dynamics to personal freedoms at work.*

*The Boss* (Dir. Evan Wu, Taiwan)

*Jury statement: A well-told, convincing portrayal of a delicately changing relationship between two brothers, moving and empowering the lives of people with developmental disabilities.*

*Guo Mie* (Dir. Joseph Chen-Chieh Hsu, Taiwan)

*Jury statement: A beautiful, complex portrait of a matriarch saying goodbye to a lost love, hello to his new girlfriend and the family dynamics in the wake of his death. It will make you hungry for her shrimp rolls and want to ride in a karaoke cab with her. Such skillful storytelling with a strong lead character, featuring wonderful moments of humour blended throughout the film.*

*My Turn* (Dir. Nakyung Kim, South Korea)

*Jury statement: Intimate and chilling, this gut-wrenching film provides a fresh perspective on a very timely topic. Very believable portrayal of how people's need to protect their self-interest can turn so quickly to coldness and harshness.*

*Summer Hours* (Dir. Liong Siew-Hong, Taiwan)

*Jury statement: Quietly heartbreaking, this film was beautifully acted by its young cast, expressing more with a gesture than any words could convey.*

**DGC Ontario & WIFT-T Film Award:**

*Over Time* (Dir. Mariam Zaidi, Canada)

All films made by female Ontario based artists are eligible for this prize. \$1000 cash prize and a \$1200 programming pass and one-year membership from WIFT-T.

*Jury statement: Commendable doc that provides an intimate portrait bringing us to the heart of a changing Regent Park.*

Independent juries comprised of distinguished members of the media arts community selected this year's award winners.

- The Features Jury: Mehernaz Lentin, Albert Shin and Jason Anderson
- The Shorts Jury: Joyce Wong, Milda Yoo and Lisa Valencia-Svensson

**So You Think You Can Pitch? Awards:**

The annual *So You Think You Can Pitch?* live competition featured 5 teams competing for cash and industry prizes in front of a live audience. This year's 12th annual Pitch Competition took place on Monday, November 13. A launching pad for emerging Asian Canadian talent, finalists competed for amazing prize packages that will help them kick-start and/or finish their short film. The two prize packages of cash and in-kind services for the Emerging Category and Established Category will help the winners cover Digital Cinema production and post services, artist's fees and more.

The Pitch Jury included Shasha Nakhai, Michael Fukushima and Heidi Tao Yang.

**Emerging Category Award:**

Alice Charlie Liu and Bianca Linhares-Huang, *Tell It To My Mother*

This award has a \$6,700 value (cash and in-kind).

**Established Category Award:**

Alice Shin, *Haru's New Year*

This award has a \$8,200 value (cash and in-kind).

**About Reel Asian**

The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival (Reel Asian), presented by National Bank, is a unique showcase of contemporary Asian cinema and work from the Asian diaspora. As Canada's largest Asian film festival, Reel Asian® provides a public forum for Asian media artists and their work, and fuels the growing appreciation for Asian cinema in Canada. This year's festival runs in November 2017 in Toronto and North

York. Reel Asian will be showcasing special projects featuring prominent artists, content creators, up-and-coming filmmakers and will also include the "Reel Ideas" program for creative minds in the industry to connect. Works presented at Reel Asian include films, videos, and presentations by East, South and Southeast Asian artists in Canada, the U.S., Asia and all over the world.

The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, presented by National Bank, gratefully acknowledges the support of government funders the Government of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada, Government of Ontario, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario150, Ontario Media Development Corporation, Toronto Arts Council and the Business for the Arts.

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