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**A SNEAK PEEK AT THE 17TH ANNUAL TORONTO REEL ASIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
NEW THIS YEAR - THE BEST OF SOUTH ASIAN CINEMA**

Toronto, September 18, 2013 – The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival (Reel Asian), presented by National Bank, celebrates its 17th annual edition from November 5 to 16, 2013 with an exciting expansion to include films from across South Asia. In response to the overwhelming demand from the local community for more South Asian films, Reel Asian is proud to officially expand to include feature films from India, Pakistan, and the South Asian continent. This expansion to include South Asian work in the festival marks the beginning of a new and exciting era for Reel Asian – one that will recognize the breadth of talent within the South Asian film industry and enhance cultural understanding and appreciation of this community.

“Reel Asian has a history of creating a sense of community for Asian film fans and giving voice to an underrepresented segment of the media arts landscape. As the Asian population in Canada continues to grow and as Asian arts are injected into mainstream culture, there is no better time to expand our festival mandate to represent new voices from the Asian community” – Sonia Sakamoto-Jog, Executive Director of Reel Asian

Reel Asian is Canada’s largest pan-Asian film festival dedicated to showcasing contemporary Asian films and work from the Asian diaspora, and is the only film festival in Toronto providing a dedicated forum for pan-Asian cinema. This year’s lineup includes the best of South Asian film from around the world; our Opening Gala will include a notable film from India with special international guests in attendance followed by a South Asian themed Gala party. (Opening Night Gala film to be announced October 8, 2013). The Opening Night Red Carpet event is expected to attract over 1,000 film and party lovers. Other festival highlights include Pakistani documentary *Without Shepherds* starring international-cricket-star-turned-politician Imran Khan, and up-and-coming Indian American filmmaker Meera Menon, with her award-winning debut film *Farah Goes Bang*.

Reel Asian has received an overwhelming show of support from the local South Asian community with partnerships underway with the South Asian Visual Arts Centre, MOSAIC South Asian Heritage Festival of Mississauga, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, MyBindi, The Weekly Voice, Asian Television Network, Panorama India, and the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention. The festival has been guided by an Advisory Committee of 21 influential community leaders, artists and filmmakers, chaired by award-winning filmmaker Richie Mehta (*Amal*, *Siddarth*, *I’ll Follow You Down*) to provide their professional expertise on Reel Asian’s new programming direction.

Founded in 1997, Reel Asian is Canada’s largest pan-Asian film festival dedicated to showcasing contemporary Asian films and work from the Asian diaspora. Reel Asian was established in response to the strong interest in Asian films in Toronto, and has grown to a two-week festival attracting over 12,000 attendees each year. From November 5 to 14 (Toronto) and November 15 to 16 (Richmond Hill), the festival will present more than 50 films and videos from over 12 countries, including China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Canada and the USA.

Confirmed guests include Meera Menon (Director, *Farah Goes Bang*), Cary McClelland (Director, *Without Shepherds*), and Ramona S. Diaz (Director, *Don’t Stop Believin’: Everyman’s Journey*).

Offering a balanced combination of highly anticipated premieres, award-winning international films, and contemporary independent work, Reel Asian has risen to become the leading exhibitor of coveted Asian films in Toronto. Asian filmmakers who have premiered their work at Reel Asian include Justin Lin, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Lixin Fan. With something guaranteed to please everyone, Reel Asian’s 17th annual festival will be the ultimate destination where cultures meet and film fans unite.

Reel Asian's full festival lineup, including the Opening Night Gala film, will be announced at the Official Press Launch on Tuesday, October 8, 2013 at the Japan Foundation, Toronto.

SNEAK PEEK AT THE 2013 LINEUP

Farah Goes Bang

Meera Menon | USA 2013 | 93:00 | International Premiere

Farah is a 20-year-old, fun-loving, Bush-hating, Iranian-American virgin. With her two besties, she sets off to campaign for US presidential candidate John Kerry and get laid in this fresh take on young American feminism. Winner of the inaugural Nora Ephron Prize for Best Female Film at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival

Without Shepherds

Cary McClelland and Imran Babur | USA/Pakistan 2013 | 90:00 | Canadian Premiere

"What is the meaning of Pakistan?" cricket star-turned-opposition leader Imran Khan asks the crowd at a political rally. This sprawling documentary follows six very different Pakistanis trying to define their dynamic but misunderstood country. Winner of the Best Documentary and Grand Chameleon (Best Overall Film) awards at the 2013 Brooklyn Film Festival.

Don't Stop Believin': Everyman's Journey

Ramona S. Diaz | USA 2012 | 113:00 | Canadian Premiere

When American band Journey went in search of a new lead singer, they happened upon YouTube clips of a Filipino singer with a voice of gold, belting out cover tunes in an obscure Manila bar. A modern day rags-to-riches tale.

Evangelion: 3.0 You Can (Not) Redo

Hideaki Anno | Japan 2013 | 106:00 | Canadian Premiere

The long-anticipated third instalment of Hideaki Anno's epic anime saga begins with Shinji returning to Earth after 14 years of hibernation, only to discover a new world order and a home he barely knows. Earth lies in ruins and those he once fought valiantly to protect have cruelly turned against him. Based on the anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* that has generated over \$2 billion dollars in revenue, the series has risen to god-like cult status in the anime community.

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