

SEASSI Film Series 2005

Films will be shown every Tuesday night at 7:00 PM in 206 Ingraham, unless otherwise noted. Short discussion will follow each film presentations.

June 14th

MA NAKHORN (Citizen Dog) - 2004

Director: Wisit Sasanatieng

Language: Thai with English subtitles. **Run Time:** 100 minutes.

The Thai "new wave" director of the candy-colored, humorous yet touching homage to Thai "noodle westerns" of the 1950s/60s, "Tears of the Black Tiger" (shown at the SEASSI film festival, 2003), returns with his latest feature, the magical realist fable "Citizen Dog."

In this sophisticated love letter to the complex megalopolis that is Bangkok, we're treated to visions of a surreal city in which people grow tails, dolls talk and smoke, mountains rise out of recycled plastic bottles, fingers are detached and reattached bloodlessly, and Thai illustrated soap opera novel characters come to life.

In the end, director Wisit's ambitious, sprawling film is a quiet meditation on the human condition, examining the elusive peace and sense of purpose we're all searching for, which sometimes, despite ourselves, we actually find. Heartwarming and sentimental, without ever descending into "cloying" or heavy-handed, Wisit here shows an interesting influence from fellow Thai new wave filmmaker Pen-Ek Ratanaruang, who himself supplies the virtually nonstop voiceover narration that also, surprisingly, "works."

June 21st

CA-BAU-KAN - 2002

Director: Nia diNata

Language: Indonesian with English subtitles. **Run Time:** 120 minutes.

Giok Lan, an Indonesian woman living in the Netherlands, returns home to Indonesia to search for her roots. She discovers that her mother, Tinung, a woman from a small village, was a Cabaukan, a word that used to mean

courtesan. The courtesans entertained the Chinese men in colonial Indonesia. Giok Lan's father, Tan Peng Liang, was a Chinese, very successful merchant who ran a tobacco business in Batavia. Set mostly in Batavia, between 1930 and 1950, the film reveals the love story between Tinung and Tan Peng Liang, who because of their social and cultural differences, found it almost impossible to get married.

June 28th

CLOSER TO HOME - 1995

Director: Joseph Nobile

Language: English and Filipino with English subtitle. **Run Time:** 120 minutes.

Joseph Nobile's *Closer to Home* weaves a universal, haunting tale of two people inexorably drawn together for vastly different reasons. Seventeen year old Dalisay struggles to journey from the Luzon province south of Manila in the Philippines countryside to New York City to marry Dean, an ex-merchant marine

She's hoping to buy a cure for her dying Filipina sister and, ultimately, a future for her debt-ridden Filipino family, while the American hopes to escape his disintegrating American family through love and a family of his own with a mailorderbride. A powerful, controversial film that quietly builds to a shattering collision of aspirations and cultures.

July 5th

TUM TEAV - 2003

Director: Fay Sam Ang

Language: Khmer with English subtitles. **Run Time:** approx 2 hours.

Tum Teav is considered a classic of Khmer literature, and probably existed as a folk tale for some time before being written down in the mid nineteenth century by the famous poet Santhor Mok, who served in the court of Khmer king Ang Duong, legendary for reviving literature in Cambodia after a long fallow period (lasting several hundred years) following the fall of Angkor. It is unknown whether the original story came from either Cambodia or Thailand, where a very similar tale exists and is quite well known.

The story follows the young lovers Tum and Teav; Tum is a young monk from a poor family renowned for his beautiful chanting. It is exactly this skill that first causes Teav, the daughter of a relatively wealthy family, to fall in love with him.

The feeling is mutual and so he leaves the monkhood for her, despite being warned by the dire prediction of an older monk. The tale then unfolds in a mix of royal intrigue, conniving nobles, stubborn, class-conscious parents and lovestruck young people, until the rather inevitable tragic and very sorrowful ending. This story is quite notable in Khmer literature, in that its realist tone was in stark contrast to all previous epic poems (and, like all Khmer literature prior to the twentieth century, Tum Teav was originally composed and performed only in verse). Tum Teav was also extremely influential in shaping the romantic story lines of most Khmer fiction, popular song and film scripts throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and into our own.

July 12th

JOURNEY FROM PHA DONG: A Decision in the Hills - 1998

Producer: Hmong ABC Productions

Language: English. **Run Time:** 65 minutes

Produced originally by the CIA in 1967, Journey from Pha Dong tells the story of the alliance between the Hmong and the Americans as they joined effort to fight against the Communists. This war was later known as the Secret War. In this video, you will see Hmong people in the villages and in war fighting against the enemies in northern Laos. General Vang Pao was the main characters in the video. This is the best documentary that talks about the relationship between the Hmong and the Americans.

July 19th

CHANCES ARE. . . (Vat Doi Sao Doi) - 2001

Director: Charlie Nguyen

Language: Vietnamese with English subtitles. **Run Time:** 120 minutes

A romantic comedy about a Vietnamese-American returning to his homeland to get married. After a bachelor party and a misdirected train ride, he finds himself on a tumultuous journey to get back to his fiance in Saigon. Will he get back in time for his wedding? Or will he find true love elsewhere on the journey? Chances Are . . . (Vat Doi Sao Doi) is a rare Vietnamese comedic feature length film. The movie was screened in various cities in the U.S. in 2002 and became a hit in the Vietnamese community with many sold-out screenings.

July 26th

LUUK ISAN (A Child of the Northeast) - Thailand 1983

Director: Choroen Lampungporn

Language: Lao with English subtitles. **Run time:** 115 min.

Luuk Isan or "Child of the Northeast" is about a year in the life of a family in a Lao village in Northeast Thailand during the 1930's. Isan, which means "northeast" in both Thai and Lao, is also the "politically correct" term used by the Thai government today to refer to the Lao ethnic majority in this region; it has also been adopted by the people themselves as their own label of ethnic and linguistic pride. This movie is based on Khampoun Bountavee's award-winning novel which the author based on the memories of his own childhood in Isan during the depths of the Depression. The movie version, however, shows as much about central Thai attitudes toward the people of Isan as it tells us about the author's experiences. While several of the actors in the film are professional central Thai actors obviously trying to pass off an "Isan accent", others are obviously native speakers of Lao, and in spite of the film's flaws due to its quasi-anthropological "exhibit the exotic natives" flavor, it does manage to portray many accurate details of the lives of the people in this region, some of which are still observable to this day. Also interesting for students of the way the "modern nation state" works to link together the various ethnic and linguistic groups within its borders is the dialogue among the characters themselves concerning their identity, and one scene in particular where efforts by the central Thai government to establish a firm cultural and administrative hold on the region--something they paid little attention to prior to becoming a constitutional monarchy in the 1930s--are portrayed.

THE LEAF, NOT YET FALLING - USA, 2002 *)Tentative addition

Director: Vannasone Keodara

Language: Lao with English subtitles. **Run time:** 13 min.

Memories are very precarious: good memories can fade with time, while haunted ones remain. *The Leaf, Not Yet Falling* is a documentary film of a little girl's sweet childhood memories of her homeland, Laos, her bitter experiences during the Communist Regime and the involvement of the American CIA during the secret air war era. It recaptures over two decades of experiences living in exile.

August 2nd

BURMA, BUDDHISM, NEUTRALISM - 1957

An episode of "See It Now" a popular news documentary show hosted by Edward R. Murrow for CBS television.

Run Time: approximately 1 hour.

The program sympathetically explores Burma's staunch policy of neutralism during the hot years of the Cold War, particularly emphasized is the role of Buddhism within Burma and its possible role in the development of the state's internal and external policies. The program is interesting as a snapshot of a brief period in which Burma's unorthodox political system seemed progressive and capable of generating a viable alternative to polarizing cold war ideologies. In addition, portions of the documentary serve as an ethnographic introduction to Buddhist initiation in urban Burma. The film also explores the roots of Burma's ever complex relationship with its northern neighbor China.

Guiding the documentary are lengthy interviews with a lively and intellectual U Nu (1907-1995), the devout Buddhist and Burmese political leader, who served as prime minister of Burma on multiple occasions (1948-56, 1957-58, 1960-62) until he was overthrown by General Ne Win in 1962 and effectively removed from power for several decades.

By: Bryce (Win Oo)