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## CINEMA IS “THE WINDOW TO THE WORLD” AT THE ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

In A&E by Victoria Davis / April 30, 2017

There’s an excitement about it. Pulling up to the movie theater parking lot, seeing the round yellow lights flashing around film titles. Employees in red button-up suits hand out tickets at the booths to eager families, couples and friends who giggle with anxious enthusiasm. Through glass doors, sidewalk meets red and blue diamond carpet in a building filled with the smell of butter,

salt and sweets. Walls are lined with movie posters old, new and those still yet to come. For some, it's their own Narnia, an escape from the real world. For others, the theater is a place to learn more about the world both real and imaginary. But for many, this is home.

The Asian Film Festival is one of the leading cinema showcases in North America. This year, being rooted in San Diego, the festival has its seventh annual spring show case at the UltraStar Theater in Mission Valley. Underneath a double-decker outdoor strip mall, the movie theater was decked out with a red carpets and festival canopy underneath the flashing film-title framing yellow lights outside by the ticket booth. Inside, information and press tables sat awaiting check-ins with attendees who flooded the floor. Posters of the festival screenings such as *The Right To Protest*, *Sunday Beauty Queen* and others panned the left side wall near the popcorn, soda and snack counter. In the back, purple café tables and chairs housed lunching filmophiles and interviews between press and film directors. All of this resting on the same red and blue diamond carpets all theaters must consider a necessity.



SDAFF Spring Sign (John  
Pascasio).jpg

PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA STAFFORD

“I grew up in a place where there weren't many movie houses,” said director Baby Ruth Villarama. “I had a small little television in the house and that was my window to the world.”

Villarama is a film director from the Philippines. Her documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen* tells the stories of Filipino domestic workers living in Hong Kong. While they work 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, every Sunday, these women host a beauty pageant on their one day of freedom to celebrate Independence Day for the Philippines. Last week at the film festival, the documentary had its first ever premiere in North America.

“My mom was once a domestic helper and I also grew up with nannies by my side,” said Villarama. “But they are voiceless in the grand scheme of things. To me, the film is a discovery of real-life Cinderellas.”

Cinema is the window to the world, according to Villarama. She said that it's like “looking into a family album” where 50 years from now, people will be able to look back and see what life was like way back when. To Villarama, cinema guides us to what we can do for the future.

“Life imitates art and art imitates life,” said Villarama.

“Cinema is the perfect way to show someone that there’s

more out there than what you’re living. Film is a powerful medium that gives someone a special way to experience life.”



Councilman Chris Cate, Baby Ruth Villarama, Maria L. Cate (Jose Bucud).jpg

PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA STAFFORD

**Theatrical Market Statistics** showed that from 2012 to 2016, the United States and Canada box office count was between \$10 billion and \$12 billion. In the international countries, however, box office count was more than double that, \$24-27 billion. At the UltraStar, individuals from all different backgrounds and ages wait in a line leading from theater number seven, located in the back of the cinema, all the way out to the front entrance doors. As ticket-holders wait to be let in to see the next festival screening, other attendees come pouring out the doors.

“Did you like it? Was it good?” asked a young blonde woman.

“Oh yeah,” replied a dark-haired boy. “It’s just so important. It’s all important.”

Over the years, box office expense numbers have continued to increase. While this could be due to a growing population, it’s also likely that more people are recognizing the need to draw back the curtains and look out their cinematic window. Whether it’s at the Ultra Star in Mission Valley, the Cine Thisio in Athens, the Cinémathèque Française in Paris or the Colosseum Kino in Norway, movie theaters welcome people into a world of education, in their own way. Rather than textbooks and lectures, narratives and vibrant colors fill the eyes, minds and hearts of all who let the blue-hued light shine upon their faces.

“News is fleeting, but with movies and documentaries you get to give more time to research and put more emotion into it,” said Villarama. “You can help people empathize more. If they can take away some lessons and the film gives them inspiration, then it’s all worth it.”

This year, the film festival hosted 20 films from ten different countries. Genres consisted of anything from comedy to cartoon and drama to documentary. Konrad Aderer is one of the documentary filmmakers, similar to Villarama, but Aderer’s latest films center on the past. While

he is known for one of his first documentaries, *Enemy Alien*, a post 9/11 documentary, Aderer's newest film, *Resistance at Tule Lake* recounts the resistance group at Tule Lake, one of the United States war incarceration camps for Japanese Americans following World War II. Aderer's own grandparents had been living in the camps when Aderer's mother was born.

"As I was making the film I began to ask myself questions like, 'Would I have resisted? Or would I have just gone along with everything?'" said Aderer. "I really don't know—I used to think I would have but I have kids now. Things change."



Konrad Aderer, Steve Nagano (Jose Bucud).jpg

PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA STAFFORD

Cinema, according to Aderer, draws from a source that no textbook

can: human emotion. Films draw out something inside us; questions, beliefs and an inner strength we never knew was there. It might be the overwhelming power of the 50-foot-wide screen in front of you, glowing brighter as the lights dim, but Aderer has another theory why people are so drawn to the theaters.

"Almost all films, documentary or not, are based around a dramatic structure," said Aderer.

"That's how we are drawn into a topic. There has to be something you like about these characters and they have to have a challenge and see how they overcome that challenge."

It's the story that captures us. It's not the flashing lights or the smell of pop-corn. It's not the soft and possibly reclining theater chairs. The movie theater is a home for storytellers and story listeners. The sights and smells of a theater mean a story is coming. It means that for two hours, you get to be a part of another life, another culture, another world.

"It captures our imaginations," said Aderer. "As a filmmaker, I see pictures of places like Tule lake, and it just makes me want to bring it to life. To me, the payoff of understanding the world of someone else is human emotion."

In his book, *Ireland*, Frank Delaney expresses the essential need for storytelling and every human's innate desire to believe in the things that make us feel. In the forward he writes,

“Storytelling, from wherever it comes from, forms a layer in the foundation of the world. And glinting in it, we see the trace elements from every tribe on earth.”

Just in the past few months, the US has hosted Sundance Film Festival, the Latino Film Festival and now the Asian Film Festival. People from every nation on earth have a love for storytelling rooted in their very being. While film is just one of the many mediums, it has become one of the most popular forms of narration for both fact and fiction. When it comes down to it, stories that may not be true still house truthful lessons. In that sense, all stories ring with emotional facts of life. The theater is, in essence, a school for emotion.

“We’re always discovering things about the past—with film, we can pick history apart in slow motion and really make new connections,” said Aderer.

Villarama added, “When you get to spend time with people who are different from you, you get to understand what they are going through, their culture and their identity. Through film, you can begin to appreciate who they are.”

As the people who had been waiting in line file into the theater, find

A rectangular box containing a small image icon of a document with a green leaf, followed by the text "AARP Beauty Queen Photo Booth (Jose Bucud).jpg".

PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVIA STAFFORD

their seats and watch the screen light up as the lights dim down, conversations silence. All eyes face one direction, towards the window to the world. Each person, man, woman and child, watch as life plays out before their eyes. As viewers root for the hero to triumph over tribulation, something begins to stir inside them.

“Film gives people hope,” said Villarama. “People can walk out of a theater having learned something that gives them hope. Especially in the world today, we don’t want to lose that hope.”

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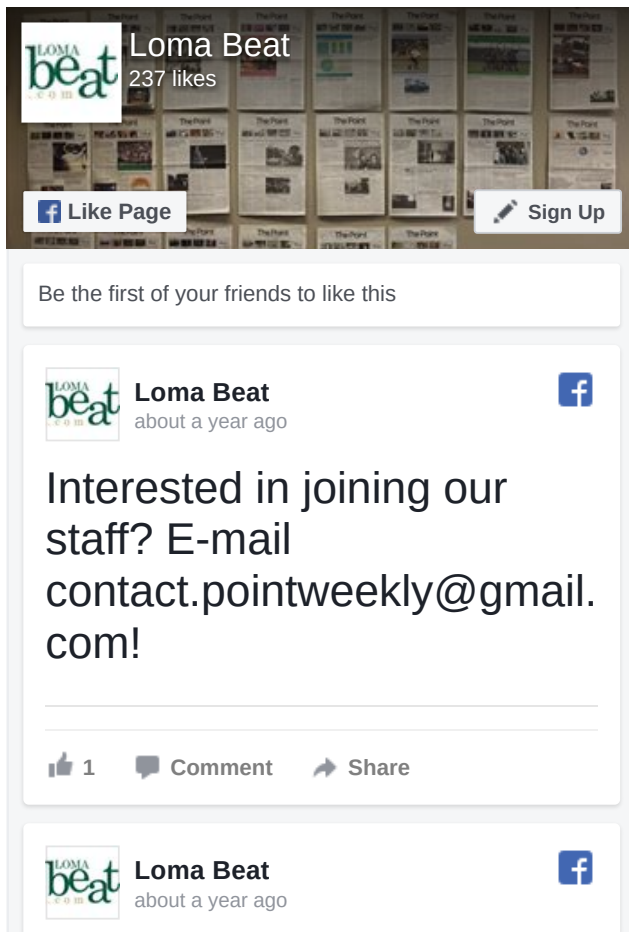
**PLNU Professor and Nazarene Pastor Urged to Drop La...**

On Feb. 3 a petition was created as a reaction to two lawsuits.

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## THE POINT

As another school year comes to an end, students across PLNU are scrambling to finalize their summer jobs, internships, classes and journeys home. A few students, however, have different plans in store for the long-awaited break as part of PLNU's Worship Arts program.

Every year, PLNU's Summer Ministry Teams (SMT) go out as traveling bands to Nazarene camps and local churches throughout California, Arizona, New Mexico and Hawaii to serve and worship together for a number of weeks.

This summer is no exception, with two SMT teams, long-term and short-term, composed of PLNU students of all levels, who have committed to taking worship to a whole new level.

"This will be my third, and last, summer doing SMT," said junior Sarah Matter, who is the team leader and drummer of the long-term SMT team Selah. "It's honestly an indescribable experience; to have the chance to be immersed in what I love to do while being surrounded by people who have become like family to me is something that I will cherish for years to come."

While the majority of their time will be spent traveling and performing worship, each team will also be able to interact and spend time with the kids, young adults and staff at each camp and local church.

“As much as I love the music and the worship aspect of what we do on SMT, I would say that getting to meet and hang out with so many different and amazing people is one of my favorite parts of the entire experience,” said junior Aaron Yoshida, who is a part of this year’s short-term SMT team. “I can’t wait to grow and be inspired by the people we will encounter just as much as our team will hopefully inspire them through our music and worship.”

In just a few short weeks, both Summer Ministry Teams will have the opportunity to take PLNU into the places and to the people that not all students are able to reach. Through worship, fellowship and the making of lifelong memories, PLNU’s SMT teams are ready to make a difference and make great music, too.

POLLS

What is your favorite holiday?

- Christmas
- Halloween
- Thanksgiving
- My Own Birthday
- Valentine's Day
- New Year's Day
- Other

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