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The 9th edition of Cinemanila International Film Festival will be running from the 8th to 19th of August this year in Manila, the capital of the Philippines.

The event topped by festival director Tikoy Aguiliz and organised jointly by the Independent Cinema Association of the Philippines (ICAP) and the Film Development Council of the Philippines has announced an impressive series of events.

In conjunction of the 40th anniversary of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), several special programs and events will be held. These include awards for the Best ASEAN Film and the Best ASEAN Short film of the year, an ASEAN Film Focus, a Scriptwriting and Film Essay contests, all coming with several cash prizes. In addition, an original initiative will be taken with the launching of the SEAWAVE project. This project presents an ensemble of the contributions of the most prominent directors of the region. Each filmmaker will prepare a 3 to 5-minute short film revolving around the theme of “A Journey”. The result will be a 90-minute feature film, which will be presented during the Festival. The directors who participate in this first SEAWAVE project are Riri Riza, Garin Nugruho, Nan T. Achnas from Indonesia, U-Wei Bin Hajissari, James Lee, Ho Yuhang, Tan Chui Mui and Amir Muhammad from Malaysia, Eric Khoo, Kelvin Tong and Royston Tan from Singapore, Nonzee Nimibutr, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Wisit Sasanatieng and Penek Ratanaruang from Thailand, and Lav Diaz, Raya Martin, Jeffrey Jeturian, Brillante Mendoza, Lav Diaz, Auraeus Solito, Rox Lee and Chito Roño from the Philippines.

As was the case last year, Cinemanila will celebrate the best of the world cinema and showcase award-winning films of major European festivals, which include the Palme d’Or winner, the Romanian film 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days. In terms of guests, the Festival is announcing the presence of the internationally acclaimed and Asian cinema aficionado Quentin Tarantino, who will grace the event and receive Life Time Achievement Award.

Local films will also be in the spotlight. A section called the Digital Lokal Competition will showcase for the third year the best and most recent Filipino films and honoured them with awards from an international jury. Former awarded filmmakers, Auraeus Solito, Brillante Mendoza and Med de Guzman have been invited during the last 12 months to several international film festivals, including Berlin, Cannes, San Sebastian and Rome.

It should be noted that young and independent directors in the Philippines have access to some supports and funding that exist nowhere else in South-East Asia. Particularly, two events, Cinemalaya and CinemaOne based on a similar concept organise every year a script contest and give fund to around 10 feature film projects. Once made into films, they are screened later on during the dedicated festivals.

Cinemanila International Film Festival is also giving attention to South-East Asian cinema talents by organising a co-production meeting with international producers for a number of SEA projects in Boracay, a famous resort island, situated south of the capital.

In France, Solito’s Maximos Oliveros was released earlier this year, and Mendoza’s latest film to date, Foster Child, is due to hit the French screens early next year. This recent re-blossoming of Filipino cinema in the film festival circuit and international distributions marks the end of a period of more than twenty years without any commercial releases of Filipino films in France. Cinemanila International Film Festival could now position itself as the key platform to showcase, promote and boost the international diffusion of the country’s filmmakers and will benefit from the growing interest in Filipino cinema.

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