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Asia

Established in 1995 for the commemoration of the centennial of cinema and the 70th anniversary of NHK, the film project, "NHK Asian Film Festival", is now celebrating its 10th anniversary. NHK is the Japanese public broadcaster.

The NHK Asian Film Festival is a biennale project in which the public broadcaster co-invests in and co-produces up to 5 films from Asian countries. These co-production films are broadcasted specially on a High Definition channel and screened for the public in Tokyo in December every odd year.

This project is headed by Mr Ueda Makoto, a former producer and director.

As he explains, “the aim of the project is to enhance cultural and historical understandings between Japan and its neighbouring Asian countries, by co-producing films with innovative, gifted Asian filmmakers. It also aims to contribute to the development of the visual culture in the region.”

Mr Ueda and his team travel every year to different film events such as Rotterdam’s Cinemart, Pusan’s PPP and Cannes Film Festival to meet producers and directors.

So far, 27 co-productions have been made through this programme, including awards winning films such as Lee Chang Dong’s *Peppermint Candy* (Korea, 1999), Fruit Chan’s *Little Cheung* (Hong Kong, 1999), Nan T. Achnas’s *Whispering Sands* (Indonesia, 2001) and Carol Lai’s *Floating Landscape* (Hong Kong-China, 2003).

They focus on the projects which cannot be made or completed without an external help for economical or political reasons. For example, *Osama* by Siddiq Barmak was the first film to be made in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime.

Mr Ueda and NHK received the Asia Filmmaker Award of the 10th Pusan International Film Festival on October 7th this year. Ueda-san explained to us that since he “respects so much the Pusan International Film Festival, it is a great honour to see that their small contribution to Asian cinema has been recognized.” He recalls also that *Peppermint Candy*, co-produced back in 1999, was the first collaboration between Japan and Korea to be followed by theatrical release in both countries. At that time, there were still some restrictions in cultural exchanges and collaborations between the two sides.

For 2005, four projects have been co-produced by NHK and three of them are from ASEF member countries. Royston Tan’s project, *04:30*, is the first co-production ever made between Singapore and Japan. Tan, the ASEAN director of the year and the Time's Asian Hero in 2001, traces in his new film the relationship between a young Singaporean Chinese boy and his tenant, a thirty-something Korean man who came to Singapore for unknown reasons.

The second project is *Upward* by the Vietnamese first time director, Bui Thac Chuyen. Bui received a prize at Cannes Cinefondation in 2001 for his 35mm short *Night Pedicab Journey*. His debut feature explores subjects like polygamy and minefields in post-war Vietnam.

The third project of the year is *Don't Look Back* by the Korean director, Kim Young Nam. Kim, who had his short films invited to numerous festivals such as Cannes and Tokyo, is a former assistant of director Hong Sang-soo. For his first feature, the director chose to make a three-part film that shows contemporary social and cultural backgrounds of the Korean youth.

These projects will première at the NHK Asian Film Festival in Tokyo in mid-December in the presence of all the directors. After the event, Mr Ueda and his collaborators will take the road again in search of new projects...

by *Jérémy Segay*

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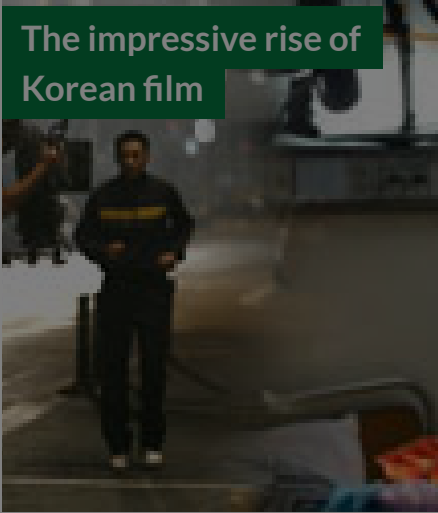


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