



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **The 21st Annual Vancouver Asian Film Festival Begins**

*November 2–5, 2017, Vancouver hosts the best of Asian Filmmaking from around the World*

**Vancouver, BC – October 1, 2017** – Vancouver Asian Film Festival (VAFF) is pleased to announce the countdown to its much anticipated 21st Annual celebration of Asian diaspora and diversity in film, set for November 2nd to 5th, 2017 at the Cineplex Odeon International Village Cinemas in Vancouver 88 W. Pender St., in Vancouver’s historic Chinatown district.

“We shape the physical reality and perception of our environment—the diversity landscape in Canadian film and television, and in the international film industry, is changing. How are we rising to meet the challenge of social change? At VAFF 21, we’re proud to present a strong program and panel series that signals this change, and advocates for the diverse, inclusive industry we want to see,” stated **Grace Chin, Festival Director**.

“I am so honoured and thrilled to become part of the VAFF family and look forward to sharing Asian cinema with more Vancouverites out there,” stated **Lynne Lee, Festival Director Elect**.

With this year's theme "Visual Landscape," we are proud to showcase and celebrate the Asian Canadian cinematic landscape. The perception of Canada, its people and culture is influenced by who makes our films; who/what is featured or left out in our films; whose stories we tell or ignore; and the context for these films and stories. How do Asian Canadian creatives feature in this cultural territory? Does the current Canadian cinematic landscape accurately mirror our diverse reality, or distort it?

The VAFF program continues to showcase the breadth and depth of Asian diaspora filmmaking beyond mainstream film festival offerings, with programming that reflects the increasingly borderless creative and industry sensibility of Canada’s west coast. We are proud to continue our VAFF Industry Insight (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series with two panels that collectively challenge us with burning questions for our “interesting times,” both global and local: Do we share a responsibility, as artists, to wield our craft as an instrument of social change—and how can this be most effective in our entertainment industry? We welcome the return of the Best Canadian Feature Award, sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada, as a companion to our longstanding Best Canadian Short Award; and the return of our VAFF Outstanding Contribution to Diversity in Film Award, recognizing an individual who has contributed significantly toward realizing a more diverse arts and culture environment in our shared industry.

The VAFF 21 lineup presents 13 film programs for 2017, including the public premiere of the **“We Heart Canada” video project** with the Vancouver Immigration Partnership, City of Vancouver, featuring Vancouver’s diversity and the experience of new Canadians; and 35 other feature-length and short films of all genres, with English dialogue and/or English subtitles, from the local and international Asian diaspora. Highlights from the features include:

- our critically acclaimed **Opening Night film, the “Columbus” (starring John Cho)** from video essay auteur Kogonada;

- the **World premiere of the controversial Vancouver Chinatown documentary “Paint it Red”** from director-activist Eva Cohen;
- the **Canadian premiere of local filmmaker Rob Leickner’s bittersweet BC love letter, “The Lonely Light of Home”**;
- the **Canadian premiere of Justin Chon’s “Gook,”** a gut-punching look at the L.A. Riots from a very different family perspective;
- Canadian filmmaker Ashley Duong’s intimate environmental **documentary “A Time to Swim”**; and,
- our Closing Night presentation, the Western Canada premiere of Toronto-based Joyce Wong’s Slamdance sleeper hit (and shout-out to Scarborough, Ontario), **the award-winning “Wexford Plaza.”**

We continue to celebrate Canada 150 on Sunday November 5, 2017, showcasing a total of 15 Canadian features and shorts in one day; and are proud to bring Vancouver audiences 20 Canadian or Western Canada premieres; five World premieres, five North American premieres, and an additional two films that are Vancouver premieres. Over thirty filmmakers and panelists, from Canada and internationally, are expected to attend. Organizers anticipate close to 4,000 audience and industry members over the four-day festival.

The **Best Canadian Short Award** will be presented to one of eight nominated eligible short films, and the **Best Canadian Feature Award** sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada will be presented to one of four nominated eligible feature films. We will also be presenting various **People’s Choice Awards** during the closing night screening and awards ceremony the evening of Sunday, November 5th. The winner of the **Canada 150-China Scriptwriting Competition**, and our **VAFF Diversity Award winner**, will be announced at the opening gala the evening of Thursday, November 2nd. The Saturday, November 3rd afternoon **VAFF Industry Insight (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series** provides a forum for discussion of actionable items for filmmaking of social change, discussion of diversity in Canadian film and television.

The 21st annual Vancouver Asian Film Festival will take place November 2 to 5, 2017, at the Cineplex Odeon International Village Cinemas, 88 West Pender Street, Vancouver. The entire program schedule will be available online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) starting October 5th. **Tickets will be available online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) starting October 5th**, or at the VAFF table located in the lobby of the Cineplex Odeon International Village Cinemas, 88 West Pender Street, Vancouver, starting November 3.

**The entire program schedule will be available online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) starting October 5. Tickets will be available online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) starting October 5, or at the VAFF table located in the lobby of the Cineplex Odeon International Village Cinemas, 88 W. Pender St., Vancouver, starting November 3.**

**Interviews and photo opportunities are available. Additional releases, images and screeners/links will also be available. Please email [media@vaff.org](mailto:media@vaff.org) or visit <http://vaff.org/about-vaff/press-media.php> for media accreditation forms and other information.**

### **About the Vancouver Asian Film Festival (VAFF)**

The Vancouver Asian Film Festival Society (VAFF) is a not-for-profit organization that celebrates diversity in film. The longest-running Canadian film festival of its kind, VAFF was founded by independent filmmaker and writer Barbara K. Lee in 1995 and debuted in September 1997. VAFF is entirely organized and produced by a group of dedicated volunteers, and is made

**VANCOUVER ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL | 1350 BURRARD STREET—# 367 VANCOUVER B.C. V6Z 0C2**

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possible by generous financial support from corporate sponsors, public funders and private donors.

**Follow the festival as it unfolds at:**

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## VAFF 21: MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENTS

### One-liner:

Vancouver, BC—The Vancouver Asian Film Festival celebrates its 21st year of showcasing the best of independent Asian international diaspora cinema in English, and with English subtitles, November 2–5 at the Cineplex Odeon International Village in Vancouver’s historic Chinatown; get tickets and passes online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) from October 5, and at the theatre box office starting November 3.

### Two-liner:

Vancouver, BC—The Vancouver Asian Film Festival showcases the best of independent Asian international diaspora cinema in English, and with English subtitles, including feature-length and short films in all genres. This 21st annual festival takes place November 2–5 at the Cineplex Odeon International Village in Vancouver’s historic Chinatown, with 13 programs covering 35 films, the public premiere of the “**We Heart Canada**” video project with the City of Vancouver, as well as the VAFF Industry Insight Panel Series. Tickets and passes are available online at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org) from October 5, and at the theatre box office starting November 3.

### Paragraph:

Vancouver, BC—The Vancouver Asian Film Festival showcases the best of independent Asian international diaspora cinema in English, and with English subtitles, including feature-length and short films in all genres (narrative, documentary, animation, experimental). This 21st annual festival takes place November 2–5 at the Cineplex Odeon International Village in Vancouver’s historic Chinatown.

With the theme “Visual Landscape,” the VAFF 21 lineup invites us to showcase and celebrate the Asian Canadian cinematic landscape, explore how its people and culture are influenced by filmmakers, as well as how the Canadian cinematic landscape reflects upon our diversity. The festival’s 13 film programs include 13 film programs for 2017, including the public premiere of the “**We Heart Canada**” video project with the Vancouver Immigration Partnership, City of Vancouver, featuring Vancouver’s diversity and the experience of new Canadians; and 35 other feature-length and short films of all genres, with English dialogue and/or English subtitles, from the local and international Asian diaspora. We continue to **celebrate Canada 150 on Sunday November 5, 2017**, showcasing a total of **15 Canadian features and shorts in one day**; and are proud to continue the **VAFF Industry Insight (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series**, which provides a forum for discussion of actionable items for filmmaking of social change, discussion of diversity in Canadian film and television. Highlights include 20 Canadian or Western Canada premieres; five World premieres, five North American premieres, and an additional two films that are Vancouver premieres.

The festival presents both adjudicated and people choice awards, including the **Best Canadian Short Award**, **Best Canadian Feature Award** sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada, and our various **People’s Choice Awards** sponsored by London Drugs. The winner of the **Canada 150-China Scriptwriting Competition** and our **VAFF Diversity Award winner**, will be announced at the opening gala the evening of Thursday, November 2nd. The 12 winners of the Asian In Movies Competition and our London Drugs People’s Choice Awards will be announced at the closing night awards presentation the evening of Sunday, November 5th. Over thirty filmmakers and panelists, from Canada and internationally, are expected to attend. Organizers anticipate close to 4,000 audience and industry members over the four-day festival.

Tickets and passes are available online from October 5 at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org), or at the theatre box office from November 3 at 5:00 pm. For more information, please email [info@vaff.org](mailto:info@vaff.org).

## VAFF 21: HIGHLIGHTS

For the full program schedule, program and film synopses, and more detailed film and festival information, please refer to the online program at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org).

- **Opening Night + Gala:** “Columbus,” a romantic dramedy starring John Cho (“Star Trek: Beyond” ) a visual love letter to the way physical space affects emotions and identity, Independent Film Festival of Boston 2017, Special Jury Prize, Narrative Feature winner. Screening preceded by Opening Gala at River Rock Casino Resort, announcing our VAFF Diversity Award winner, and Canada 150-China Script Writing Competition winner.
- **Centrepiece Presentation + Celebration:** “Gook,” a drama written, directed and starring Justin Chon (“Twilight,” “21 And Over,” “Seoul Searching”), multiple award winner including Sundance Film Festival 2017, Audience Award, Best of Next!; Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival 2017, Grand Jury Prize , Best Narrative Feature and more. Screening followed by Centrepiece “90s Hip Hop Dance Party” at Sai Woo.
- **Closing Night + Awards + Afterparty:** “Wexford Plaza,” (slice of life dark comedy) CAAMfest 2017 Jury Award, Best Narrative winner and VAFF Best Canadian Feature Award nominee —Screening followed by presentation of VAFF Best Canadian Short, Best Canadian Feature, and People’s Choice Awards.
- **Canadian Doc Spot:** World premiere of “Paint It Red” by director-activist Eva Cohen about the topical controversy over redevelopment of old Chinatown residences — a VAFF Best Canadian Feature Award nominee.
- **“We Heart Canada” Video Project:** In celebration of Canada 150, a video project in collaboration with local non-profit organizations and the Vancouver Immigration Partnership, City of Vancouver, features ten 3-minute videos about Vancouver’s diverse immigrant experience.
- **International Spotlight Switzerland:** Award-winning Swiss born Chinese director François Yang’s beautifully-shot French feature *The Soul of the Tiger (L’âme du Tigre)* , complex intergenerational, intercultural dynamic—and conflict—of diaspora families.
- **Home-grown Talent:** The Canadian premiere of Vancouver-based Rob Leickner’s (“The Tree Inside” won the VAFF “Audience Choice” Award in 2015) latest feature film, “The Lonely Light of Home” follows a family that runs a B&B fishing lodge in coastal British Columbia is forced to explore individual choices of unrequited love and betrayal, when an alluring stranger arrives at the door. A VAFF Best Canadian Feature Award nominee.
- **Award-winning Shorts Programs:** One program of international shorts, and another of all-Canadian shorts, including the VAFF Best Canadian Short Award nominees.
- **VAFF Industry Insight (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series:** In two separate panel discussions, this series collectively challenges us to consider whether we share the responsibility to motivate more diverse representation as artists, to wield our craft as an instrument of social change, and asks how can this be most effective in our entertainment industry.
- **Canada Day:** Full day of Canadian programming on Closing Day, including Uneasy Lies The Head: Two Documentaries, Canadian Shorts: Life In Multiculture, Canadian Doc Spot: “Paint It Red” and the Closing Feature Film: “Wexford Plaza”, and more.

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## **VAFF 21: BEST CANADIAN FEATURE AWARD 2017**

Sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada, the VAFF Best Canadian Feature Award (BCFA) is presented annually to a qualifying Canadian independent feature film/filmmaker in the current year's festival. Now in its second year, three Canadian feature films are eligible for the BCFA nomination. The annual winner is determined by a three-member film industry adjudication panel. The award will be presented in an awards ceremony after the Closing Night screening.

### **BCFA 2017 Adjudication Panel (alphabetical by last name):**

- Roy Hayter, Directors Caucus Representative—Executive Board, Directors Guild of Canada (BC District Council)
- Karen Lam, Independent Film and Television Producer/Director/Writer
- Dorothy Woodend, Acting Festival Director, DOXA Documentary Film Festival

### **BCSA 2017 Nominees (in program screening order):**

- "The Lonely Light of Home," Drama, Thriller; Canada; Canadian Premiere: Rob Leickner, Director
- "A Time To Swim," Environmental Documentary; Canada: Ashley Duong, Director
- "Paint It Red," Documentary; Canada; World Premiere: Eva Cohen, Director
- "Wexford Plaza," Comedy Drama; Canada; Western Canadian Premiere: Joyce Wong, Director

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## VAFF 21: BEST CANADIAN SHORT AWARD 2017

Sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada, the VAFF Best Canadian Short Award (BCSA) is presented annually to a qualifying Canadian independent short film/filmmaker in the current year's festival. Now in its tenth year, an average of 3–6 films per year are eligible for the BCSA nomination. The annual winner is determined by a three-member film industry adjudication panel. The award will be presented in an awards ceremony after the Closing Night screening.

### **BCSA 2017 Adjudication Panel (alphabetical by last name):**

- Gray Chen, Programmer, Planning Committee, Vancouver Taiwanese Film Festival
- Ana De Lara, Independent Film Director/Producer/Writer
- Steve Rosenberg, Program Director, InFocus Film School

### **BCSA 2017 Nominees (in program screening order):**

- Music And Other Drugs "The Lion," Documentary; Canada: Jonathan Chiang, Director
- Uneasy Lies The Head "Anastasia Lin: The Crown," Documentary; Canada: Kacey Cox, Director
- Canadian Shorts "Sleepwalk," Drama, First Nations; Vancouver premiere; Canada: Andrew Chung, Director
- Canadian Shorts "Violet and June," Comedy, Romance, LGBTQI; Canada: Linnea Ritland, Director
- Canadian Shorts "The Ether Inside," Sci-Fi, Drama, Horror; World premiere; Canada, Netherlands: Axel Frühmann, Director
- Canadian Shorts "Flagged," Documentary; World premiere; Canada: Mimi Nguyen, Director
- Canadian Shorts "Floating Light," Drama; World premiere; Canada: Natalie Murao, Director
- Canadian Doc Spot "Purple Days," Drama; North American premiere; Canada, USA: Kevin C.Y. Tseng, Director

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## **VAFF 21: WE HEART CANADA PUBLIC PREMIERE PRESENTATION**

The “We Heart Canada” video project is a series of 3-minute videos created to celebrate Canada 150 and Vancouver’s diverse immigrant experience. Presented through a collaboration between non-profit organizations and independent filmmakers, and in partnership with the City of Vancouver/Vancouver Immigration Partnership, the public premiere presentation of this video project will happen at VAFF 21. Also featuring several short films from Vancouver Foundation “Fresh Voices,” and City Studio.

What does it mean to truly belong to the communities in which we live? How has the process of migration shaped social and cultural identity? “We Heart Canada” captures stories of resilience, courage, joy and transformation, offering immigrants and refugees - particularly youth - the opportunity to shape their narrative and contribute to the discourse about belonging and cultural identity in our city. Through the project, community groups collaborated with diverse teams of filmmakers to share the experience and perspectives of Canadians from a variety of backgrounds.

### **Organizational Partners:**

- Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, MOSAIC, Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Community College, Vancouver School Board, VPD, YMCA

### **Local Filmmakers:**

- Alfred Liu, Angelina Cantada, Bruno Cruz and Neil Colango, Derek Kwan, Desiree Lim, Elizabeth Cheong and Lisa Lee, Emily Chan, Lucho Berzek, Phil Planta, Yvette Lu and Beverly Hannah and Nik Green

DATE: Friday, November 3, 2017

TIME: 6:15 pm – 7:30 pm

LOCATION: Cineplex Odeon International Village Theatres, 88 W. Pender Street, Vancouver

For the program schedule, synopses, and film titles, please refer to the online program guide at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org).

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## VAFF INDUSTRY INSIGHT (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) PANEL SERIES

Launched two years ago as a locus for industry advocacy and action with a distinct diversity focus, the VAFF Industry (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series continues to challenge the entertainment and media industry to examine their work and practices in creating a more diverse and inclusive Canada.

For each of the two panel sessions, speakers will share personal stories, journeys, and experiences in their fields, then gather at the end of the session to participate in a roundtable discussion allowing for the audience the opportunity to join in on the conversations.

The VAFF Industry Insight (VAFF I<sup>2</sup>) Panel Series is open to VAFF Industry, Filmmaker and VIP Passholders, as well as festival ticket holders with membership.

### VAFF I<sup>2</sup> SCHEDULE:

PANEL 1: 12:00 PM–1:30 PM: Canada 150: Diversity and Representation in Canadian Film and Television

**After 150 years of Confederation, what does a profitable, diverse, inclusive Canadian entertainment and media industry actually look like—and how do we realize this vision?** A retrospective, current, and future-forward discussion by key industry representatives and professionals.

**Panelists:** [TBA](#)

PANEL 2: 2:00 PM–4:30 PM: Sparking Celluloid: Filmmaking for Social Change

Do we share a responsibility, as artists, to wield our craft as an instrument of social change—and how can this be most effective? **Includes a screening of the Deepa Mehta film *Anatomy of Violence*, which examines one of the country's most internationally notorious crimes:** The 2012 gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman on a Delhi bus. In collaboration with theatre director Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry, Mehta worked improvisationally with her actors to envisage possible sociological and psychological backgrounds and pasts for both the perpetrators and the victim—highlighting a patriarchal culture, cycle of abuse, and an economic system skewed against the disadvantaged.

**Panelists:** [TBA](#)

DATE: Saturday, November 4, 2017

LOCATION: Auditorium 9, Cineplex Odeon International Village Theatres, 88 W. Pender Street, Vancouver

For the session schedule, description and panelist/moderator announcement updates, please refer to the online program guide at [www.vaff.org](http://www.vaff.org).

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## VAFF 21: MEDIA LOUNGE

### Media Lounge

VAFF 21 will have a designated area for interviews and photo opportunities during the festival, November 2–5, 2017 inclusive:

Venue: River Rock Casino Resort, 8811 River Rd, Richmond, BC

- Nov 2, 2017 | 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Venue: International Village, 88 W. Pender St., Vancouver (3rd floor lobby)

Schedule:

- Nov 3, 2017 | 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- Nov 4, 2017 | 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- Nov 5, 2017 | 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Please email [media@vaff.org](mailto:media@vaff.org) or visit <http://vaff.org/about-vaff/press-media.php> for media accreditation forms and other information.

Please send interview requests to [media@vaff.org](mailto:media@vaff.org).

## VAFF 21: ATTENDING FILMMAKERS

### Attending Filmmakers (As of October 1, 2017)

#### Feature Films:

- **Thursday, November 2, 2017**
  - Opening Night **“Columbus”**, Romantic Dramey, USA: **TBA**
  
- **Friday, November 3, 2017**
  - **“Finding KUKAN”**, Documentary, **Canadian Premiere**, USA: Robin Lung, Director/Co-Producer/Writer
  - **“The Lonely Light of Home”**, Drama Thriller, **Canadian Premiere**, **Canada: Rob Leickner**, Director/Writer; Michelle Kim, Producer; Casey Manderson, Paul Bae, Jessica Harvey, Valerie Tian, Cast (Best Canadian Feature Award nominee)
  
- **Saturday, November 4, 2017**
  - **Centrepiece Presentation: “Gook”**, Drama, Canadian Premiere, USA: **Justin Chon, Director/Writer/Actor:TBA**
  - **International Spotlight Presentation: “Home is Where the Sunsets”**, Drama, Canadian Premiere, USA: **Kayla Tong, Director/Writer (unconfirmed)**
  
- **Sunday, November 5, 2017**
  - Canadian Doc Spot: **“Paint It Red”**, **Documentary, World Premiere, Canada: Eva Cohen**, Director; Beverly Ho, Documentary Lead Subject; Mark Lee, Ma Tai, Kong Tai, Kevin Huang, Doris Chow, Kingmong Chan, Documentary Subjects (Best Canadian Feature Award nominee)
  - **Closing Night Presentation: “Wexford Plaza”**, Dramey, Western Candian Premiere, Canada: Joyce Wong, Director/Writer; Darrel Gamotin, Lead Cast; **Harry Cherniak, Producer (unconfirmed)** (Best Canadian Feature Award nominee)

#### Short Films:

- **Friday, November 3, 2017**
  - Fighting Chance: Three Documentaries “Im/Perfection,” Art Documentary, Canadian Premiere, USA: Andrew Hida, Director/Producer; Jennifer Moncayo-Hida, Associate Producer
  - Music and Other Drugs “The Lion”, Music Documentary, World Premiere, Canada: Jonathan Chiang, Director/Writer; Francis Arevalo, Co-Producer/Documentary Subject (Best Canadian Short Award nominee)

- **Saturday, November 4, 2017**

- International Shorts “Ballad of the Knife Sharpener”, Documentary, World Premiere, China/ USA: Khalid Ali, Director/Editor (unconfirmed); Kumi Smith, Assistant Translator (unconfirmed)
- International Shorts “in blossom”, Drama, HKSAR: Chi Him Yuen (unconfirmed)
- International Shorts “A Taxi of Coldness”, Drama, World Premiere, South Korea: Joonha Kim, Director/Writer; Woochul Kim, Producer

- **Sunday, November 5, 2017**

- Uneasy Lies The Head “Anastasia Lin: The Crown,” Documentary, Canada: Kacey Cox, Director/Writer/Producer; Anastasia Lin, Subject (unconfirmed) [if Anastasia Lin does not attend, Judith Cheung, Producer, will attend instead]
- Canadian Shorts “Lucy”, Animation/ Youth, Canada: Elisa Chee, Director/Writer; Catrina Longmuir, Producer
- Canadian Shorts “Violet and June,” Comedy, Romance, LGBTQI; Canada: Linnea Ritland, Director/Writer/Producer; Mia Miller, Producer (unconfirmed); Sean Lai, Producer (unconfirmed)
- Canadian Shorts “The Ether Inside,” Sci-Fi, Drama, Horror; World premiere; Canada, Netherlands: Jaymee Mak, Cast; Joseph Gallaccio, Cast; Jenny Yoon, Cinematographer; Candice Straza, Producer; John Gunter, First Assistant Director
- Canadian Shorts “Flagged,” Documentary; World premiere; Canada: Mimi Nguyen, Director; Kathy Thai, Cinematographer; Cherie Au, Production Manager; Kaitlyn Fung, Sound Operator
- Canadian Shorts “Floating Light,” Drama; World premiere; Canada: Natalie Murao, Director/ Producer
- Canadian Doc Spot “Purple Days,” Drama; North American premiere; Canada, USA: Kevin C.Y. Tseng, Director/ Writer