

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HAWAII INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PARTNERS WITH THE VILCEK FOUNDATION  
TO PRESENT AMERICAN IMMIGRANT FILMMAKERS ON PROFILE**

HONOLULU, HI (September 24, 2009) – The Hawaii International Film Festival (HIFF) is teaming up with The Vilcek Foundation to present five films in a program titled “American Immigrant Filmmakers On Profile” (AIFP). The screenings will be held during the Festival from October 15-25 at the Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters.

Three of the AIFP films will highlight the talents of foreign-born directors: *BOMBAY SUMMER* by Joseph Mathew Varghese, *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES* by S. Leo Chiang, and *THE PEOPLE I’VE SLEPT WITH* by Quentin Lee. The other two films, *WHITE ON RICE* and *PRINCE OF BROADWAY*, will showcase the prowess of immigrant actors Hiroshi Watanabe and Karren Karagulian, respectively. These directors and actors will be available after the first screenings of their films to answer questions from the audience.

Executive director of The Vilcek Foundation, Rick Kinsel, believes immigrants often face difficult transitions when moving to the United States, and adds “They have a unique perspective on life. These films allow talented filmmakers and actors to share their creativity, experiences and stories with the world, while heightening awareness about the enormous contributions immigrants make to arts and culture in this country.”

All of the AIFP delegates will be volunteering as guest speakers in HIFF’s youth education programs while attending the Festival. Quentin Lee will meet with sixth-through-eighth graders at Hongwanji Mission School, S. Leo Chiang will visit with high school students at Assets School, Hiroshi Watanabe will talk to students at McKinley High School, Joseph Mathew Varghese will visit students at Waipahu High School, and Karren Karagulian will conduct a video conference that will be accessible to schools across the state.

The Vilcek Foundation honors and supports foreign-born scientists and artists who have made outstanding contributions to society in the United States. For more information on The Vilcek Foundation please visit [www.vilcek.org](http://www.vilcek.org). For more information on HIFF please visit [www.hiff.org](http://www.hiff.org).

## **Film Synopses and Delegate Bios:**

### **BOMBAY SUMMER**

AIFP guest: Joseph Mathew Varghese

*BOMBAY SUMMER* explores the fleeting friendship between three young people and its eventual disintegration in the face of betrayal and personal loss. At the center of the story is Geeta, a young middle-class woman, adept at balancing the needs of family and life in modern India. She is in the middle of a secret affair with Jaidev, a struggling writer who comes from a rich, traditional family. Their lives take a dramatic turn when they befriend a young migrant, Madan. Madan ekes out a living as a

commercial artist, but has begun to undertake various illegal ventures to make ends meet. Even though they come from different backgrounds, the three bond as friends. Interweaving stories of their personal lives, the film follows their journey of self-discovery and loss. The original and gripping soundtrack of the film was composed by French musician, Mathias Duplessy.

Hawaii Premiere  
United States 2009 | Hindi w/ English subtitles | 102m

Director: Joseph Mathew Varghese  
Producer: Joseph Mathew Varghese, Sanjay Bhattacharjee  
Cinematographer: Amol Rathod  
Script: Joseph Mathew Varghese  
Cast: Tannishtha Chatterjee, Jatin Goswami, Samrat Chakrabarti, Gaurv Dwivedi

18-Oct 4:00 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters  
19-Oct 2:30 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

**Joseph Mathew Varghese** came to the U.S. in 1994 and enrolled in an arts school to fulfill a personal dream of becoming a photographer. After freelancing as a photojournalist, Varghese took on the more challenging format of feature-length documentary filmmaking. His two documentaries, *THE LAST SEASON: THE LIFE AND DEMOLITION OF BALTIMORE'S MEMORIAL STADIUM* and *CROSSING ARIZONA*, premiered at the Maryland and Sundance Film Festivals, respectively. Varghese now lives in New York. *BOMBAY SUMMER* is his first narrative feature film.

## **THE PEOPLE I'VE SLEPT WITH**

AIFP Guest: Quentin Lee

A promiscuous woman finds herself with an unplanned pregnancy and needs to figure out who the baby's daddy is...NOW. Angela Yang loves sex. She loves it so much she needs to make baseball cards of her lovers to help her remember where she's been. It isn't until Angela becomes pregnant that she thinks twice about her lifestyle. Her gay best friend, Gabriel Lugo, tells her to "take care of it," but her conservative sister, Juliet, persuades Angela to marry the baby's father and lead a "normal" life like her. Angela listens to her sister, chooses to keep the baby, and goes on a quest to find the identity of the father by any means necessary. Is it the "Nice but Boring guy," the "Mysterious guy" or the "Five Second guy"? Watch Angela's hilarious quest to make herself an honest woman!

World Premiere  
Canada, United States 2009 | 89m

Director: Quentin Lee  
Producer: Stanley Yung, Koji Steven Sakai, Quentin Lee  
Cinematographer: Quyen Tran  
Script: Koji Steven Sakai  
Cast: Karin Anna Cheung, Wilson Cruz, Archie Kao, Lynn Chen, James Shigeta

18-Oct 3:00 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters  
19-Oct 1:00 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

**Quentin Lee's** feature documentary, *0506HK* (2007), documents Lee's return to Hong Kong, where he was born and raised. As he explores his desire to move back there from Los Angeles, he interviews local artists, filmmakers, friends, and family about why they are in Hong Kong and why they choose to be there. With humor and wit, Lee explores culture, belonging, politics, and ultimately the question of where the best place is for him to exist as a filmmaker.

Lee's first feature film, *SHOPPING FOR FANGS*, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 1997. He wrote and co-directed the film with Justin Lin, as well as produced and self-distributed it through Margin Films, a company he founded in 1997. Lee also produced and directed two other narrative feature films, *DRIFT* (2000) and *ETHAN MAO* (2004). This fall, he is publishing *Campus Ghost*

*Story*, a horror graphic novel, with co-creator John Hahn. Lee's latest film, *THE PEOPLE I'VE SLEPT WITH* (2009), is a comedy that will make its world premiere at HIFF.

### **PRINCE OF BROADWAY**

AIFP Guest: Karren Karagulian

*PRINCE OF BROADWAY* is the story of Lucky and Levon, two men whose lives converge in the underbelly of New York's wholesale fashion district. Lucky, an illegal immigrant from Ghana, makes ends meet by soliciting shoppers on the street with knock-off brand merchandise. Levon, an Armenian-Lebanese immigrant, operates an illegal storefront with a concealed back room where counterfeit goods are showcased to interested shoppers. Lucky's world is suddenly turned upside-down when a child is thrust into his life by a woman who insists the toddler is his son. While Lucky copes with his new domestic dilemma, Levon struggles to save a marriage that is falling apart. The seedy side of the wholesale district is revealed through a journey that continually confronts the interplay between what is fake and what is real. *PRINCE OF BROADWAY* has been nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and has already won many awards at various festivals including the Boulder International Film Festival, the Los Angeles Film Festival and the Marrakech International Film Festival.

Hawaii Premiere  
United States 2008 | 102m

Director: Sean Baker  
Producer: Darren Dean  
Cinematographer: Sean Baker  
Script: Sean Baker, Darren Dean  
Cast: Prince Adu, Karren Karagulian, Aiden Noesi, Keyali Mayaga

20-Oct 7:00 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters  
21-Oct 3:45 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

**Karren Karagulian** was born in 1969 in Yerevan, Armenia. After school, he served for two years in St. Petersburg for the Russian Army. At the age of 22, he immigrated to New York. After playing a lead role in Koorosh Yaraghi's short film, *MEN IN PATIENCE*, he played minor roles in two Sean Baker films, *FOUR LETTER WORDS* and *TAKE OUT*. *PRINCE OF BROADWAY* is Karren's first leading role in a feature film.

### **A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES**

AIFP Guest: S. Leo Chiang

*A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES* is a documentary about the struggles and triumphs of the Vietnamese-American community rebuilding in post-Katrina New Orleans. Versailles is a community in eastern New Orleans first settled by Vietnamese refugees. After Hurricane Katrina, Versailles residents impressively rise to the challenge by returning and rebuilding before most neighborhoods in New Orleans, only to have their homes threatened by a new government-imposed toxic landfill just two miles away. *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES* recounts the empowering story of this group of people who, having already suffered so much in their lifetimes, turn a devastating disaster into a catalyst for change and a chance for a better future. S. Leo Chiang's *TO YOU SWEETHEART*, *ALOHA* screened at HIFF 2004.

Hawaii Premiere  
United States 2009 | English, Vietnamese w/ English subtitles | 68m

Director: S. Leo Chiang  
Producer: S. Leo Chiang  
Cinematographer: S. Leo Chiang, Francis James  
Cast: Father Vien Nguyen, Mimi Nguyen, Minh Nguyen, Ngo Minh Khang, Joel Waltzer

17-Oct 8:15 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

20-Oct 12:00 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

**S. Leo Chiang** was born and raised in Taiwan. He immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager and earned an MFA in film production from the University of Southern California before beginning his filmmaking career. His films include *To You Sweetheart*, *Aloha*, about the 94-year-old 'ukulele master Bill Tapia, and *One + One*, a documentary about mixed HIV-status couples. His most recent film, *A Village Called Versailles*, is about the transformation of the Vietnamese-American community in post-Katrina New Orleans.

## **WHITE ON RICE**

AIFP Guest: Hiroshi Watanabe

Jimmy is 40, divorced, and shares a bunk bed with his 10-year-old nephew. For most men, this state of affairs would be ego-crushing, but Jimmy is strangely unperturbed. Despite an utter lack of social finesse, he embarks on an enthusiastic mission to replace his ex-wife with someone better. Assisted by his suave friend Tim, Jimmy wrangles dates with all the women in his office (without success) and completely flubs a set-up arranged by his sister Aiko. To make matter worse, his carefree attitude provokes the ire of Aiko's straight-laced husband, Tak, who is quickly losing patience with Jimmy's freeloading. Jimmy hardly seems to notice, and when Tak's beautiful niece Ramona comes to visit, he begins to court her shamelessly. When Jimmy shirks his responsibility to the family in order to follow Ramona to a party, the resulting mayhem causes everyone to take another look at how they relate to one another. *WHITE ON RICE* won Best Screenplay and the New Acting Award at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

Hawaii Premiere

United States 2009 | English, Japanese w/ English subtitles | 86m

Director: Dave Boyle

Producer: Duane Andersen, Dominic Fratto, Michael Lerman

Cinematographer: Bill Otto

Script: Dave Boyle, Joel Clark

Cast: Hiroshi Watanabe, Nae, Mio Takada, Lynn Chen, James Kyson Lee

19-Oct 7:30 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

20-Oct 9:30 PM Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters

**Hiroshi Watanabe** was born in Tokyo, Japan. After working for many theatre productions and some films there, he moved to the U.S. He has had roles in theatre productions such as "Odd Couple" and "Pillow Talk," and he has acted in films such as *BIG DREAMS LITTLE TOKYO*, *THE LAST SAMURAI* and *LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA*. *WHITE ON RICE* is Watanabe's first experience playing a lead role - one he finds very exciting!

## **Festival information**

Established in 1981, the Hawaii International Film Festival is dedicated to the advancement of understanding and cultural exchange among the peoples of Asia, the Pacific and North America through the medium of film. HIFF is the premier international film event in the Pacific and has won the praise of governments, filmmakers, scholars, educators, programmers and film industry leaders throughout the world. For the discovery and exhibition of Asian and Pacific features, documentaries and short films in the nation, it is a primary source. The Festival has premiered such movies as *ONCE WERE WARRIORS*, *THE PIANO*, *SHINE*, *SHALL WE DANCE*, *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* and *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*. Further, *DEPARTURES*, a Japanese film, had its U.S. premiere at HIFF 2008, won the HIFF Audience Award, and then went on to win the 2009 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

HIFF's major sponsors include: Regal Entertainment Group, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Hawaii, Halekulani, Hawaii Tourism Authority and The Vilcek Foundation.

The 2009 Hawaii International Film Festival will be held October 15-25 at the Regal Dole Cannery Stadium 18 Theaters. For more information please visit our website at [www.hiff.org](http://www.hiff.org).

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