

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

JOURNAL

Filipino filmfest showcases regional work

WITH feature films representing the different regions of the Philippines, the upcoming IndioBravo Filipino Film Festival might as well be called "Around the Philippines in 15 Movies." The festival, which premiered Thursday, June 11, at Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art and runs until June 14 at the Visual Arts Theater (333 West 23rd, showcases award-winning new films produced not only in Metro Manila but in key cities in Visayas and Mindanao, including Cebu City, Davao City and Bacolod—and in the local dialect at that (with English subtitles).

For many years, regional Filipino films have taken the backseat to Manila-based productions, released by mainstream studios like Star Cinema, with only occasional film projects from the South, such as Cesar Montano's *Panaghoy sa Suba*. The prologue in the witty satire *Confessional*, which is set amidst Cebu's Sinulog *mardi gras*, astutely pointed out that most

people think that everything outside of Manila is "just a vacation spot." In the past few years, however, the emergence of independent film festivals in the Philippines like Cinemalaya, where the indie hit *Ang Pagdadalagang ni Maximo Oliveros* debuted, has encouraged young talent from all over the country.

So far, regional Filipino films have earned accolades in festivals abroad including Singapore, India and France—proof of the diversity



and richness of Filipino culture as visualized by cinematic storytellers. Below, a quick tour of our regional cinemas:

Tirador (Metro Manila)

From Cannes 2009 Best Director winner Brillante Mendoza comes this virtuoso, fly-on-the-wall, at times shocking ex-

position of life in a volatile Manila slum. Mendoza's camera work is so fluid and the acting so untheatrical, watching *Tirador* feels like spying. But Mendoza's apparently self-effacing vision is at its most searing when trained on corrosive politicians, religious denialists and power-crazed cops—he appears to have merely turned on the camera and recorded them digging their own graves. *Tirador* makes it clear why Mendoza is considered a singular visionary among the mavericks of world film. (Friday, June 12, 8pm, Visual Arts Theater 2; Sunday, June 14, 6:20pm, Visual Arts Theater 1)

Confessional (Cebu)

Do-it-yourself documentarian Ryan Pastor is a cynic. "Lies + Lies = Truth," he snarks during *Confessional's* opening frames, before embarking with his girlfriend on a trip to shoot the Sinulog *mardi gras* festival in Cebu. True to the essence of this ancient costumed spectacle-cum-commercialized tourist trap, nothing is quite what it seems. The duo encounter a nun with a surprising past, an entertainer of indeterminate gender

and an ex-politician who is either a charlatan, a menace, a genuine penitent or all three. *Confessional* gleefully explodes the boundaries between "reality" and fantasy, documentary and fiction, while offering a fascinating glimpse into the paradoxes of Filipino culture and identity. (Saturday, June 13, 4pm, Visual Arts Theater 1)

Donsol (Sorsogon)

Weary, urban sophisticate Teresa (the luminous Angel Aquino) flees Manila's urban sprawl for the idyllic, sun-drenched coast of Sorsogon. Heading to Donsol, "whale shark capital of the world," with her perky journalist sister (Cherie Gil) in tow, Teresa hopes to find solace and an underwater encounter with one of the endangered gentle giants who return perennially to the area to mate. What she encounters is young, easy-on-the-eyes Daniel (Sid Lucero), a local dive guide nursing some hurt of his own. *Donsol* is an elegaic meditation on nature, mortality, temptation and devotion. Starring Angel Aquino, Sid Lucero, Jaclyn Jose, Bembol Roco, Cherie Gil (Saturday, June 13, 5pm, Visual Arts Theater 2)

Yanggaw (Bacolod)

This powerful horror film is set in a rural village where superstition and dark beliefs run deep. When gentle, beautiful Amor (Aleera Montalla) comes down with an illness no conventional doctor can diagnose, she begins to disappear on the same nights that residents of her village are violently murdered. Fearing their daughter is possessed, her parents (Ronnie Lazaro and Tetchie Agbayani) seek the counsel of a faith healer. But ultimately they are forced to take matters into their own hands. Starring Ronnie Lazaro, Tetchie Agbayani, Joel Torre (Friday, June 12, 10:15 p.m., Visual Arts Theater 1; Saturday, June 13, 5:15pm, Visual Arts Theater 1).

[Showbitz!]

Geneva is Philippines' sexiest vegan

GENEVA Cruz was hailed as the Philippines' Sexiest Vegetarian Celebrity for 2009 in the month-long contest conducted by the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

The singer-actress who was a vegan—since she was 15—bested out other Filipino celebrities, which include Lougee Basabas, Yasmien Kurdi, Chin-Chin Gutierrez, Raymond Bagatsing, Cory Quirino, and Alicia Mayer.

Cruz topped the list after Filipinos worldwide voted on PETA's month-long contest, which officially ended last May 29. After the voting, one winner was declared for each country, and two overall winners are declared for each region.

"For me, being vegan is not about the diet. It's really about my love for all creatures," Geneva said.

The online poll also revealed that Taiwanese singer-actress Barbie Hsu is considered Asia's Sexiest Vegetarian woman for 2009, and Bollywood superstar and heartthrob Shahid Kapoor as Asia's Sexiest Vegetarian Man.



Tintin Babao is expecting—a child

CELEBRITY mom and TV host Christine "Tintin" Bersola-Babao is pregnant again.

Tintin revealed the child on the way to reporters during an event where the Babao family was launched as the first celebrity family endorser for World Vision Child Sponsorship program.

"It's not yet official because I'm still waiting for the result from our doctor on June 11. But it's positive when I did my personal test last June 4," Tintin told reporters.

Both Tintin and her husband, Julius Babao—ABS CBN news anchor—wishes that they want a boy as their next baby.

"Pero ok lang kahit among ibigay ni God, but if we can wish, sana a boy," Tintin said.

The Babaos' firstborn is Antonia and is now four years old.



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