



The Aurora Asian Film Festival Summary and Highlights

The Aurora Asian Film Festival offers a cinematic journey to Asia and the Pacific Islands, allowing for the filmmakers' perspectives on the rich and diverse cultures of Asian/Pacific Islander and Asian Pacific American peoples. This unique weekend of entertainment is sure to engage, educate and enlighten all those who venture into the historic Aurora Fox Arts Center and nearby Fletcher Plaza, home of the Festival.

The Aurora Asian/Pacific Community Partnership (the Partnership) and the professional staff of the Denver Film Society, organizers of the widely respected Starz Denver Film Festival, present the Aurora Asian Film Festival in cooperation with the City of Aurora. A Steering Committee made up of Asian Pacific American (APA) leaders from the metropolitan area oversees the Partnership, a nonprofit organization. The presenting sponsor, Starz, helps make it possible to showcase Asian art and culture through this award-winning specialty film festival.

Most documentaries and feature films are recent entries from Sundance, Berlin and other international festivals, and many are North American premiers. Films either originate from such Asian/Pacific countries as Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Laos, Mongolia, The Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Tibet and Vietnam, or are made by Asian Pacific American filmmakers in the U.S. or abroad. The annual festival programs reflect the overall goal to experience a true cultural exchange through a wide variety of outstanding films.

In 2004 and 2006, the *Rocky Mountain News*' 'Top of the Rocky' named the Seventh and Ninth Aurora Asian Film Festivals as "Top Specialty Film Festival", stating that "(the films)...create an intriguing blend of ethnicity and art." And, "The festival typically has featured some of the strongest programs of any of Denver's many niche festivals." Walter Chaw, film critic of *Film Freak Central*, wrote in 2004, "There is possibly no other film festival, Denver's own included (Denver International Film Festival), that has more local flavor than the Aurora Asian Film Festival". He went on to refer to Original Aurora as a "...revitalized portion of East Colfax that is beginning to take on the look and feel of Boulder or LoDo..." and concluded by saying that the Seventh Aurora Asian Film Festival is something to be proud of—"it's the big time."

The Governor's Awards for Downtown Excellence honored the Festival with the Colorful Colorado Merit Award, which recognizes a downtown project that provides an opportunity to showcase creative and inspiring efforts. The award stated, "Celebrating its sixth year in 2003, the Aurora Asian Film Festival brings to life the beauty and cultural expression of Asian cinema, art, culture and cuisine over a four-day period in June..." *Westword*'s 'Best of Denver' named the Festival "Best Specialty Film Festival" in 2000.

Highlights of the first year, 1998, included the Academy Award-winning documentary short "A Story of Healing" (Dewey/USA/1997) and the world premiere of a locally produced film, "Tiger Street," featuring actor Julian Jung Lee. Opening night included an appearance by Jennifer Kato, Associate Producer of "My America...or Honk If You Love Buddha," followed by an outdoor reception and live entertainment by "One World Taiko," a Japanese percussion ensemble. That set the stage for subsequent Festivals, featuring high quality films and receptions with Asian-themed music, dance, fashion and cuisine. During each Festival, Asian art is exhibited at the Aurora Fox Arts Center. The festival now features Asian art at local art galleries, also.

Guest producer, Peggy Chiao from Taiwan, commented that the quality of films in the Second Aurora Asian Film Festival rivaled those of any U.S.-based Asian Film Festival, including Los Angeles. Other highlights through the years have included high-energy and thought-provoking Q&As about the films and documentaries with directors Gil Portes and Ramona Diaz (the Philippines), Barbara Sonneborn ("Regret to Inform"), Timothy Bui ("Green Dragon"), Sridhar Reddy ("19 Revolutions"), among others, actress Lhakpa Tsamchoe ("Himalaya"), and a live dance performance by Chinese dancer Zhongmei Li ("Portrait of an Enchantress").

The Tenth Aurora Asian Film Festival is in its planning stages and is slated for June 1-3, 2007, at the Aurora Fox Arts Center, including a grand Opening Night Gala and reception at nearby Fletcher Plaza. The goal of the Festival Planning Committee is to create an atmosphere of exploration as we all learn together about the vibrant and varied APA cultures.