

## **Viet Film Fest Closed on a High Note: Viet Cinema Blossoms**

### **Song Lang wins three major awards: Grand Jury Trống Đồng Award for Best Feature Film, Best Actor, and Audience Choice Award for Best Feature Film**

ORANGE – Viet Film Fest closed on October 13<sup>th</sup> after showing 41 films, including 11 features and 30 shorts, at AMC Orange 30 in the city of Orange, California. The countries of production include Canada, France, Germany, Portugal, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, and the U.S. The selections were from various genres, such as comedy, thriller, horror, and drama. There were about 4,000 attendees supporting Viet Film Fest this year.

Community Day started Viet Film Fest with free screenings for students and seniors on the morning of Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. More than 500 high school students from six local high schools were bused to the festival. That night, the charming, blockbuster, romantic comedy *My Mr. Wife* directed by Charlie Nguyen officially kicked off the 3-day event. Fifteen screening sets took place during the following Saturday and Sunday with filmmakers coming from California and other states as well as from other countries such as France, Canada, and Vietnam.

One of the highlights of this year's festival was *Song Lang* directed by Leon Le, a New York based filmmaker. The movie uses Vietnamese traditional folk opera (cai luong) as the backdrop for its main storyline about a friendship between two men that sparks in unexpected ways. The progressive pacing engages the audience deeply into their story. Due to popular demand, Viet Film Fest is holding a special screening of *Song Lang* on Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:00 PM at AMC Orange 30.

Documentaries hold an important role at this year's festival. *Seadrift* directed by Tim Tsai recounts an incident that occurred 40 years ago. What began as a dispute over fishing territory erupted into violence, KKK intimidation, and other hostilities against Vietnamese refugees along the Gulf Coast. The screening of *Seadrift* was followed by a stimulating panel discussion examining the past and present experiences of refugee and immigrant communities as well as about the current state of immigration policies and the work to empower these communities.



VAALA PRESENTS  
**VIET  
FILM  
FEST**

AMC ORANGE 30 CALIFORNIA  
[www.VietFilmFest.com](http://www.VietFilmFest.com)

10  
11-13  
19

A compelling feature film, *The Happiness of Mother*, directed by Huynh Dong was also the focus of a panel discussion. The film depicts a widow with an autistic son and her quest to protect him as he enters the world. The discussion included autism specialists and the parents of autistic children, which helped deepen the audience's understanding of autism and how to build support systems for not only individuals on the autism spectrum, but their families and caregivers as well.

The filmmakers also had a discussion panel about scriptwriting, film producing, and distribution. How to distribute films is still a major concern for filmmakers, given there are so many different options for distributing films other than through the theaters.

Additionally, audiences packed the screenings for features made locally such as *The Bloody Hand* directed by Quoc Vo and *Le Van Khoa: A Lifetime of Arts* directed by Thu Tran.

In addition to the screenings and panels, Viet Film Fest also had other activities such as two book signing events: one of them was the memoirs by Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* and the other was the release of picture book *Song Lang Nhìn Lại* by Leon Le. The Opening Night reception took place at Saddle Ranch Chop House located in the Outlets at Orange. The Award Night Reception was held at the luxurious Water Grill in South Coast Plaza in the city of Costa Mesa.

After a 12-week-long filmmaking workshop, the young participants of VAALA's Youth In Motion Program showcased their shorts on the big screen. The topics varied from familial to social issues, including stories about home life, a teen's daily struggles, and community members asking elected officials for support on a rent control bill.

Viet Film Fest 2019 Jury Board includes Director Tony Bui (*Three Seasons*), Director Hàm Trần (*Journey of the Fall*) and Actress Do Thi Hai Yen (*The Quiet American*).

### **Viet Film Fest 2019 Award Winners**

**Grand Jury Trống Đồng Award for Best Feature Film:** *Song Lang* directed by Leon Le

**Grand Jury Trống Đồng Award for Best Short Film:** *Walk Run Cha-cha* directed by Laura Nix



10  
11-13  
19

**Best Actress:** Kim Xuan for her performance in *Like An Old House*

**Best Actor:** Liên Bình Phát for his performance in *Song Lang*

**Spotlight Award by the Executive Committee:** *Seadrift* directed by Tim Tsai

**Audience Choice for Best Feature Film:** *My Mr. Wife* directed by Charlie Nguyen and *Song Lang* directed by Leon Le

**Audience Choice for Best Short Film:** *Journey of Wanderers* directed by Huynh Anh Duy

It is the first time in Viet Film Fest history that a feature film (*Song Lang*) wins both the Grand Jury Trong Dong Award and Audience Choice Award for Best Feature Film. This is also the first time that two films won the Audience Choice Awards for Best Features, *Song Lang* and *My Mr. Wife*. Director Charlie Nguyễn is the first one to win the Audience Choice Award twice. In 2007, he also won this award for *The Rebels*.

**SAVE THE DATE: Viet Film Fest 2020 on October 9-11, 2020**

Viet Film Fest is a program presented yearly by VAALA in October. Founded in 1991 by a group of Vietnamese American journalists, artists, and friends, the Vietnamese American Arts and Letters Association (VAALA) is a community-based, 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. VAALA's mission is to enrich and connect communities through art and culture. VAALA has organized numerous cultural activities such as art exhibitions, book signings, recitals, plays, filmmaking panels, Viet Film Fest, Children's Moon Festival Art Contest, year-long art and music classes, and free art workshop for the youths.

###

Contact:

Email: [VietFilmFest@vaala.org](mailto:VietFilmFest@vaala.org) & [press@vaala.org](mailto:press@vaala.org)

Website: [www.VietFilmFest.com](http://www.VietFilmFest.com)

**Pictures provided by Viet Film Fest**

Caption "Closing Night with volunteers and filmmakers"

Caption "Q&A & Panel on Refugees ..."

The image is a promotional graphic for the Viet Film Fest. It features a dark background with out-of-focus bokeh lights in shades of orange, red, and teal. The text 'VFF PRESENTS VIET FILM FEST' is prominently displayed in the center. To the right, the dates '10-13-19' are arranged vertically. Below the main title, the location 'AMC ORANGE 30 CALIFORNIA' and the website 'www.VietFilmFest.com' are listed.

VFF PRESENTS  
VIET  
FILM  
FEST

AMC ORANGE 30 CALIFORNIA  
[www.VietFilmFest.com](http://www.VietFilmFest.com)

10  
11-13  
19

Caption “Director Leon Le (middle) on the Red Carpet before Song Lang screening...”

Caption “Audience lining up for Song Lang”

Caption “VFF 2019 Youth in Motion with two Program Directors Tu Nguyen(left) and Uyen Hoang (right)”

Caption “Opening Night Screening with *My Mr. Wife* directed by Charlie Nguyen”

Caption “Opening Night Red Carpet at AMC Orange 30”

Caption “VFF 2019 – Festival organizers thanking sponsors”

Caption “Friday morning – Community Day with High School Screening at Viet Film Fest 2019”