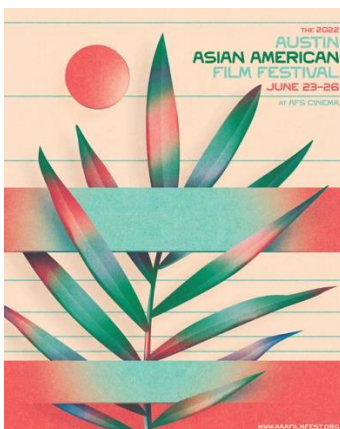




## PRESS RELEASE

### Austin Asian American Film Festival announces film lineup for 14<sup>th</sup> edition (June 23-26)

**Tom Huang's *Dealing With Dad* is the Opening Night Selection, Kurdwin Ayub's *Sonne* is the Closing Night selection, and So Yun Um's *Liquor Store Dreams* is the Spotlight choice**



AAAFF 2022 poster design by Ishaq Fahim

**Austin, TX (May 24, 2022)** – The Austin Asian American Film Festival (June 23-26) announced the film lineup for this year's 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the film festival. Taking place June 23-26, AAAFF's headliner screenings include Tom Huang's comedy ***Dealing With Dad***, which will open the film festival, So Yun Um's ***Liquor Store Dreams***, which is the Spotlight selection, and Kurdwin Ayub's ***Sonne***, which will close the film festival. All screenings will take place at the AFS Cinema (6406 N I-35, Unit 3100).

AAAFF will screen 11 feature films (6 Narrative, 5 Documentary), and 16 short films as part of their ongoing mission to produce programs that champion Asian and Asian American stories through film, educate about AAPI issues, and build community through partnerships with creatives and other organizations. The in-person/in-theater event will feature several filmmaker appearances and post-screening Q&As, as well as a red carpet gala presentation prior to the Centerpiece film screening of ***Liquor Store Dreams*** on Saturday, June 25.

Austin Asian American Film Festival Executive Director Hanna Huang, said, “As our biggest program of the year, the film festival is packed with a lineup of the latest emerging independent films along with events for audiences and filmmakers to have conversations about AAPI representation in front of and behind the camera.”

AAAFF Creative Director Ray Lloyd and Program Director Jenny Nulf, added, “This year’s lineup includes a wide array of genres and themes from a diverse spread of countries and Asian American communities. We’re ecstatic to present our lineup this year and celebrate independent film with our supportive film festival community here in Austin.”



*Dealing With Dad, Liquor Store Dreams, Sonne*

Opening Night will feature Tom Huang’s festival favorite dysfunctional family comedy ***Dealing With Dad*** about an Alpha mom/corporate manager tasked with going home to deal with her overbearing dad, who is now despondent and won’t leave the house. What she and her siblings discover is that their dad is actually, much more pleasant in his depressed state, so they wrestle with the decision to “fix” him or not.

AAAFF’s Spotlight film will be So Yun Um’s documentary ***Liquor Store Dreams*** which draws a line from the ‘92 LA Uprisings to the current-day BLM movement as it looks at two Korean American children of liquor store owners who work to overcome the history and stereotypes that plagued their parents.

Closing Night will present Kurdwin Ayub’s drama ***Sonne*** about three teenage girls from Vienna who deal with the fallout of becoming a viral sensation after a YouTube video of them twerking in hijab and singing a pop song takes off. They each become famous overnight, especially among Kurdish Muslims, which forces them to face their feelings and relationship to the culture as well as making them unexpected targets. The film won Best First Feature at the Berlin International Film Festival.



*Actual People, A New Old Play, Tehranto*

Additional narrative features include Kit Zauhar's drama **Actual People**, about a biracial girl in her final week of college, whose desperation to get a boy to like her leads to escalating anxieties about everything in her life. Victor Villanueva's **Lucid** follows a woman who lives a full satisfying life...in her dreams. That is, until a mysterious man she meets in her dreams challenges her to make them more adventurous until she questions if it is worth staying in her dream state or not. Qiu Jiongjiong's fantasy **A New Old Play** focuses on a man who was a leading clown-role actor in 20th-century Sichuan opera, as he reluctantly is escorted to the Ghost City. Throughout his trip, earthly scenes from the past creep into the mists of the Netherworld. The film won a Special Jury Prize at Locarno. Faran Moradi's love story **Tehranto** pairs two young students with very different upbringings from a divided Iranian community in Toronto as they fall in love against the backdrop of the city.



*Borderlands, Free Choi Soo Lee, Hidden Letters*

A trio of feature-length documentaries include Samarth Mahajan's **Borderlands** looks at how everyday lives intertwine with borders in the Indian subcontinent via six characters whose lives are defined by personal and political borders. Julie Ha and Eugene Yi's **Free Chol Soo Lee** explores the efforts by Asian Americans to free Chol Soo Lee, a Korean immigrant who was wrongly convicted of a gang murder. However, once released, he was ill-equipped to handle the attention and status that his celebrated case brought upon him. Violet Du Feng and Qing Zhao's **Hidden Letters** tells the story of two Chinese women trying to balance their lives as independent women in modern China while confronting the traditional identity that defines but also oppresses them. Shanti Thakur's **Terrible Children** looks at an Indian family's struggle and growth generationally after the filmmaker's Indian father gives her a letter, which he left unopened for 20 years. The letter inspires her to discover her father's history of trauma and renewal—of family violence, boyhood in a right-wing paramilitary group, Muslim-Hindu violence during Partition, and family banishment for marrying a Danish woman.

To purchase badges, tickets and for more information More information please go to: [www.aaafilmfest.org](http://www.aaafilmfest.org).

## **2022 Austin Asian American Film Festival Official Selections**

### **HEADLINERS**

#### **Opening Night Selection**

##### ***Dealing with Dad***

Director: Tom Huang

Country: US; Running Time: 106 min

Alpha mom/corporate manager Margaret Chang must return to her hometown to deal with her overbearing dad, who is now despondent and won't leave the house. She drags along her older sad-sack brother Roy to help her. They discover their dad is much more pleasant in his depressed state, and their equally overbearing mom Sophie and youngest brother Larry (still living at home) see no need to change this. The siblings ponder the situation and reminisce about the bad times with Dad, discovering that their familial bond is stronger than they ever realized.

## **Spotlight Selection**

### ***Liquor Store Dreams***

Director: So Yun Um

Country: US; Running Time: 97 min

Tracing back from the '92 LA Uprisings to the current-day BLM movement, *Liquor Store Dreams* is an intimate portrait of two Korean American children of liquor store owners who set out to bridge generational divides and claim their own legacy. As they forge new paths, they must face the history and stereotypes that plagued their parents

## **Closing Night Selection**

### ***Sonne***

Director: Kurdwin Ayub

Country: Austria; Running Time: 87 min

Three teenage girls from Vienna twerk in hijab and sing a pop song. A YouTube video of it makes them famous overnight, especially among Kurdish Muslims. Yesmin, the only one of the friends who is Kurdish herself, begins to distance herself more and more from her culture. Nati and Bella, on the other hand, seem fascinated by a world that is strange to them. When the girls meet two young Kurdish patriots, the situation threatens to escalate.

## **ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE FEATURES**

### ***Actual People***

Director: Kit Zauhar

Country: US; Running Time: 84 min

Riley, a biracial girl in her final week of college, goes to great lengths to win the affections of a boy from her hometown of Philly, and ends up having to confront her escalating anxieties about her love life, family, and future.

### ***Lucid***

Director: Victor Villanueva

Country: Philippines; Running Time: 88 min

Ann Cruz is a lucid dreamer. Her dreams are the exact opposite of her mundane, routinary life. In one of her fabricated dreams, she meets a mysterious man who challenges her to make her dreams more adventurous. As she crosses paths with another lucid dreamer, she realizes her dreams are far more alive than her reality – making her question if it is worth staying in there or not.

### ***A New Old Play***

Director: Qiu Jiongjiong

Country: Hong Kong/France; Running Time: 179 min

One evening in the 1980s, Qiu Fu, a leading clown-role actor in 20th-century Sichuan opera, reluctantly departs this world for the Ghost City under the escort of two underworld officials. Along the way, he meets old friends. As they recall the past, earthly scenes creep into the mists of the Netherworld. Qiu Fu's life in opera unfolds against the backdrop of China's tumultuous 20th-century history.

### ***Tehranto***

Director: Faran Moradi

Country: Canada; Running Time: 92 min

In Toronto lively music, intricate textiles, and vibrant colors paint an unlikely story of love and family when Badi and Sharon, two young students with very different upbringings from a divided Iranian community, accidentally fall in love.

## DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

### ***Borderlands***

Director: Samarth Mahajan

Country: India; Running Time: 67 min

An intimate exploration of how everyday lives intertwine with borders in the Indian subcontinent. *Borderlands* brings together six characters whose lives are defined by personal and political borders. Through conversations and observations, the characters reveal their efforts to find meaning in a world beyond their control. Divided families meet, love blossoms across borders, traffickers get caught – in this slice of life documentary.

### ***Free Chol Soo Lee***

Directors: Julie Ha, Eugene Yi

Country: US; Running Time: 83 min

Asian Americans unite to free Chol Soo Lee, a Korean immigrant who was wrongly convicted of a gang murder, but once out, he self-destructs, threatening the movement's legacy and the man himself.

### ***Hidden Letters***

Directors: Violet Du Feng, Qing Zhao

Countries: China/Germany/Norway/US; Running Time: 89 min

*Hidden Letters* tells the story of two Chinese women trying to balance their lives as independent women in modern China while confronting the traditional identity that defines but also oppresses them. Connected through their love for Nushu--a centuries- old secret text shared among women -- each of them transforms through a pivotal period of their lives and takes a step closer to becoming the individuals they know they can be.

### ***Terrible Children***

Director: Shanti Thakur

Countries: US/India/Canada; Running Time: 57 min

*Terrible Children* poses the universal question: must we betray our family to grow up? The filmmaker's Indian father gives her a letter, which he left unopened for 20 years. She pieces together her father's history of trauma and renewal—of family violence, boyhood in a right-wing paramilitary group, Muslim-Hindu violence during Partition, and family banishment for marrying a Danish woman. Told through personal narrative, reimagined history, and chronicles of racial nationalism, the film reveals the rich and complex interior lives of boys fighting to become men.

## SHORT FILMS

### ***38 at the Garden***

Director: Frank Chi

Country: US; Running Time: 38 min

In a hostile time for Asian Americans, the revisiting of a basketball star, Jeremy Lin's unlikely story 10 years later gives hope and shatters stereotypes on sport's biggest stage.

### ***Big Trouble in Little America***

Director: Qiyue Sun

Country: US; Running Time: 9:05 min

Haunted by wet dreams on her newly bought mattress every night, "Chinese Girl" goes on a journey to cleanse herself of the spirits with help from her Chinese heritage.

### ***Conversations at the Register***

Directors: Brandon Soun, Lan Nguyen

Country: US; Running Time: 8:55 min

Community organizing saved KH Supermarket from demolition two years ago, but after a long fight against gentrification, the Cambodian American market is closing its doors and starting a new chapter.

### ***Elvis of Laos***

Director: Van Ditthavong

Country: US; Running Time: 11:20 min

Through dance and conversations - a famous Lao singer, his son, and his granddaughter examine the artist's life, inspirations, and legacy after leaving the war-torn country in late 1974.

### ***Fictions***

Director: Alice Liu

Country: Canada; Running Time: 12:30 min

A young Chinese Canadian photographer is forced to reflect on her shifting identity when she discovers the work of Cindy Sherman.

### ***Firsts***

Director: Jesse Ung

Country: New Zealand; Running Time: 16:50 min

On the eve of Chinese New Year, Steven, a closeted Chinese international student living in New Zealand, oppressed by the expectations of his parents plans to lose his virginity to a stranger that he meets online.

### ***Mulaqat - Sandstorm***

Director: Seemab Gul

Country: Pakistan; Running Time: 19:52 min

Zara, a schoolgirl in Karachi (Pakistan), shares a sensual dance video with her virtual boyfriend, who then blackmails her. Caught between his manipulative behavior and the desire to experience love on her own terms, Zara searches for the strength to reject the confines of a patriarchal society.

### ***Seasons***

Directors: Gabriella Canal, Michael Fearon

Country: US; Running Time: 21:50 min

Nevia No is a classically trained performer who runs Bodhitree Farm in Pemberton, New Jersey. Nevia struggles to maintain equilibrium on the farm and provide for her farmhands, mother and adult daughter, Euni. Nevia dreams that a season of farming will persuade her daughter to take over the family business, but Euni may have dreams of her own.

### ***Sincerely Miné Okubo***

Director: Yuka Murakami



Country: US; Running Time: 15:43 min

Short biographical film on the artistic span and career of Miné Okubo, a Japanese American artist who is best known for her graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946), which chronicled the WWII incarceration while she was an internee.

### ***Stigma, Style***

Director: Cheryl Wong

Country: Singapore; Running Time: 13:15 min

Set in Singapore, eleven-year-old Kerri is invited to spend an afternoon by the pool at her friend Jessica's house where she grows increasingly curious about Jessica's elder sister, Clara.

### ***Thank You, Come Again***

Director: Nirav Bhakta

Country: US; Running Time: 11:11 min

After the trigger of a hate crime, an undocumented Indian American convenience store clerk comes crashing into his subconscious as he grieves the passing of his father during an attempted border crossing.

### ***The Everyday Show***

Director: Viren Shinde

Country: US; Running Time: 10:30 min

Diya is an acclaimed film director who appears on Sam's talk show to promote her latest film. But Sam insists on unearthing a decision from Diya's past that she would rather not discuss on live television.

### ***Warsha***

Director: Dania Bdeir

Country: Lebanon; Running Time: 15 min

A Syrian migrant working as a crane operator in Beirut volunteers to cover a shift on one of the most dangerous cranes, where he is able to find his freedom.

### ***What Remains***

Director: Ginger Yifan Chen

Country: US; Running Time: 4:20 min

Over a series of photographs, Georgette Quan tells the story of her family's shrimping business, from the age of the Chinese Exclusion Act to its present-day status as a state park.

### ***Where the Winds Die***

Director: Pejman Alipour

Country: Iran; Running Time: 12:54 min

Sardasht is a Kurdish city in West of Iran. Sardasht is the first city in the world to be a victim of chemical weapons with mustard gas bombs at 4:15 p.m. on Sunday, June 28th, 1987. This film is about before and after the bombing, a romantic relationship, and the effects of the war.

### ***Year of the Rabbit***

Director: Akira Morita

Country: Cambodia; Running Time: 11:44 min

*Year of the Rabbit* follows trailblazing deaf tuk-tuk driver Kong Sovannaro as he navigates the chaotic streets of Phnom Penh to support his growing family. It's an exploration of love; the different and similar ways it is expressed in the "hearing" and "deaf" communities, and across the network of support Sovannaro has created around himself.

**ABOUT AAAFF**

Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF) produces programs that tell Asian and Asian American stories through film, educates about AA + NHPI issues, and builds community through partnerships with creatives and other organizations.

AAAFF is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department, Texas Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. More information can be found at [www.aaafilmfest.org](http://www.aaafilmfest.org).

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