

MOVIES TO MUNCH ON

INDIE FILMS AT THE BEIJING INTERNATIONAL MOVIE FESTIVAL

by Marilyn Mai



Beijing's film festivals can be as varied as its food choices.

At one extreme is the official festival: Quanjude's duck in a bag, packaged to a soulless sheen, sterilized and offering just enough payoff to have you longing for the real thing.

At the other extreme are the seriously underground festivals: lamb kidneys from a makeshift grill. No one else understands your craving, but you gotta have 'em from this one guy, even if it takes a month to track him down and you're still not sure if his organ meat is legit.

The Beijing International Movie Festival (BIMF) falls somewhere in between: the clean-enough *xiaochi* in your friend's neighborhood that serves up delightful flavors alongside more pungent dishes for the edgy palates. Just for you, we've put together a BIMF sampler platter, complete with directors' notes.

Piano Fingers, directed by Nicholas Carmen

An affecting 30-minute short pairing American nostalgia with the pain of decay to tell a story of love in the time of Alzheimer's.

"My great-aunt suffered from a severe case of the disease at the end of her life, and I have tried to capture the poignant struggle that my great-uncle had to endure, loving a woman who no longer remembered his name ... The image that solidified my desire to tell their story on film was watching my great-aunt, just months from her death and unable to recognize the faces of loved

ones around her, still able to play note for note the Debussy preludes and Chopin nocturnes she learned on the piano as a child."

Nemesis, directed by Jesper Troelstrup

You gotta love a short film centered on masturbation, motor skills and misunderstandings.

"Since there are only five million people in Denmark, I think it's fun to get [my film] into the big world. And so I sought also to come to Beijing ... The inspiration for the movie I got from a true story a youngster told me. I like to work with irony, since we often use it in Denmark. But it is probably a special Danish tradition."

[*Sorry Mr. Troelstrup, I don't think the Danish have a corner on irony. Breakfast pastries, on the other hand ...* —Ed.]

Candy, directed by Davy Giorgi and Samantha Pineda

Candy maintains a strict regiment of Sarah Wrap workouts, mops floors at the gym and plays some gorgeous violin.

"For us it is very exciting to share such a strong and quirky story with a public that belongs to a completely different culture [Our film] is inspired by the idea of having a "wasted talent" in a family that is completely oblivious to a child's needs. What she becomes as an adult is the direct result of her broken family structure and her lack of social contact with the world."

Cultures of Resistance, directed by Iara Lee

Lee takes a world tour, finding graffiti artists and rappers in Iran, monks in Burma, musicians in Brazil — all using their art and beliefs to create change.

"I felt a need to show the human cost of and human response to [militaristic aggression]. And I felt like the best way of doing so was to document and support creative forms of resistance. It is easy to forget that the arts have always existed as a form of dissenting political expression ... I hope people here can connect the film to their own struggles and be motivated to make their own creative response to human rights violations and militarism, or whatever their cause may be."

This is but a small sample of a large and succulent selection; check our listings for more information. Other highlights include:

- *The Furious Force of Rhymes*, an explosive film that probes the depths of global hip-hop as protest music (Oct 17)
- *Gilles Corporation*, the hilarious and nauseating clip about a chicken farmer meeting globalization head-on (Oct 9, 14, 17)
- "Budgetless Bombs," a celebration of bad movies (Oct 17)

The Beijing International Movie Festival runs Oct 9-18. See Events for times and venues.

