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Nominee for six awards including Best Feature Film at the 2016 Golden Horse Awards, *The Road to Mandalay*, to Premiere in Singapore as part of the 27th Singapore International Film Festival



© *The Road to Mandalay* 2016

Singapore, 3 October 2016 – After recently winning the Federa Award for Best Film at the 73rd Venice International Film Festival, and now announced as a nominee for six awards, including the Best Feature Film at the 53rd Golden Horse Awards, *The Road to Mandalay* (2016) (再见瓦城) by Myanmar-born, Taiwanese director Midi Z (趙德胤) will premiere in Singapore as part of the 27th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF). The film will make its Singapore premiere as one of the Festival's Special Presentation Films on 1 December 2016 at the Marina Bay Sands.

The Road to Mandalay is a powerful and tragic love story that follows two illegal immigrants from Myanmar on a journey to Thailand seeking a better future. Starring Taiwanese actor-singer and Best New Actor at the 48th Golden Horse Awards Kai Ko (柯震東) and Best Actress at the Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia in Tokyo Wu Ke-



Xi (吴可熙), the film examines the exploitative conditions and experience of millions of Burmese migrants who crossed their country's border into Thailand looking for work and fleeing the civil war in recent years.

Following its world premiere at the 73rd Venice International Film Festival, *The Road to Mandalay* continued its festival circuit run at the 41st Toronto International Film Festival. The recipient of ARTE International Prize at the 2015 L'Atelier of Cinefondation of Festival de Cannes will also be screened at the 21st Busan International Film Festival this month, and as the closing film of the upcoming Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival on 24 November 2016, before its premiere in Singapore.

"This year we are proud to host Midi Z, one of the rising stars of Asian cinema. *The Road to Mandalay*, his latest award-winning film, is a poignant drama that provides an insight into the immigrant experience facing many Myanmar people today. With strong performances by leads Kai Ko and Wu Ke-xi, this co-production between Taiwan, Myanmar, France and Germany, and filmed entirely in Thailand, attests to the international and regional co-operation that is driving the new generation of Asian cinema," said Yuni Hadi, Executive Director of SGIFF.

Born in Myanmar and based in Taiwan, writer-director Midi Z has developed a unique style for his intimate and authentic portraits of people struggling with displacement and poverty on the margins of the Myanmar society. A rising talent in international cinema, he was selected to participate in the Taipei Golden Horse Film Academy under the tutelage of auteur Hou Hsiao-Hsien in 2009. His third feature *Ice Poison* (2014) – Taiwan's entry in the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 87th Academy Awards – also won the Best Film award at the Edinburgh Film Festival, and earned him the Best Director Award at the Taipei Film Festival. He will also receive the Outstanding Taiwanese Filmmaker of the Year at the 53rd Golden Horse Awards.



On the premiere of his film in Singapore, Midi Z shared, “I am very happy to premiere *The Road to Mandalay* at the Singapore International Film Festival. This movie was filmed in Thailand and tells the love story between two immigrants from Myanmar – a universal theme yet culturally specific experience that many Southeast Asians can relate to. Singapore is also a country settled by immigrants who have made a home working and living here, and I hope that this story will have a special resonance with local audiences. I look forward to meeting them when the film premieres at SGIFF.”

The 27th edition of SGIFF, which runs from 23 November to 4 December 2016, will take place across various venues, including Marina Bay Sands, which returns this year as Presenting Sponsor. A fervent supporter of the arts, Marina Bay Sands is lending support to the Festival for the third consecutive year. As part of *Sands for Singapore*, the integrated resort’s Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Marina Bay Sands aims to provide a distinguished platform for Asian filmmakers through its world-class venues. The other screening venues are National Museum of Singapore Gallery Theatre, Shaw Theatres Lido, National Gallery Singapore Auditorium, The Arts House Screening Room, Filmgarde Bugis+ and Objectifs Chapel Gallery. Ticket sales for SGIFF will begin on 28 October 2016.

The SGIFF is an event of the Singapore Media Festival, hosted by the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA). SGIFF’s Official Sponsors include Presenting Sponsor, Marina Bay Sands and Official Festival Time Partner, IWC Schaffhausen.

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About the Singapore International Film Festival

Founded in 1987, the Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) is the largest and longest-running film event in Singapore. It has become an iconic event in the local arts calendar that is widely attended by international film critics, and known for its dynamic programming and focus on ground-breaking Asian cinema for Singapore and the region. Committed to nurturing and championing local and regional talent, its competition component, the Silver Screen Awards, brings together emerging filmmakers from Asia and Southeast Asia while paying tribute to acclaimed cinema legends. With its mentorship programmes, masterclasses and dialogues with attending filmmakers, the Festival also serves as a catalyst for igniting public interest, artistic dialogue, and cultural exchanges in the art of filmmaking. The SGIFF is organised by the Singapore International Film Festival Ltd, a non-profit organisation with Institution of Public Character (IPC) status.

For more information, please visit www.sgiff.com.

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ANNEX

THE ROAD TO MANDALAY (2016)

MIDI Z

Taiwan, France, Germany, Myanmar / 108 minutes / English, Chinese, Thai, Burmese

The will to survive overrides the most basic human desires in this uncompromising portrait of two illegal Burmese migrants.

Beginning with the procedural of illegal border crossing into Thailand and jumping straight into the precarious living conditions of a garment factory, director Midi Z's new feature film takes on a frantic tone of constant anxiety that plagues the working community of illegal Burmese migrants striving to carve a space for themselves in a foreign land.

Headstrong and hardworking Lianqing (played by Wu Ke-Xi, a regular in Midi Z's films) strongly believes that life abroad promises a bright future. She relentlessly works to save up her earnings for a working permit, a process that takes her and others through a Kafkaesque labyrinth of provincial bureaucracy existing within the shadows. Guo (in a breakthrough role by Kai Ko, known for his roles in *You Are the Apple of My Eye* and *Tiny Times*) on the other hand plans to work in Thailand temporarily to bring his earnings back for a better life back in Myanmar.

An unrequited love blossoms between Lianqing and Guo when they meet sharing the same transport into Thailand. While both share similar circumstances abroad, the difference between their aspirations thwarts the development of their relationship. Guo's attempts to get closer to Lianqing is met with her total conviction to channel all her energy and entire being to get the papers she needs so desperately. In a world where there is no time for love, repressed desires find its monstrous outlet.



In *The Road to Mandalay*, Midi Z continues to explore the psyche and living conditions of the working class diaspora which he has touched on in his fiction and documentary features. He reveals the exploitative conditions of migrant workers and the commodification of their lives, harrowing in its depictions but threaded with a strong sense of humanism for his characters.

Tightly woven and unfolding in a pace that expertly escalates the narrative, effectively interspersed with brief tender moments and unforeseen encounters that seeps into surrealistic terror, the film is a confidently mounted masterpiece that positions Midi Z as one of the most important filmmakers in Asia.

Biography of Midi Z

Midi Z was born in Myanmar in 1982, before he moved to Taiwan at the age of sixteen. His debut feature, *Return to Burma* (2011), was nominated for the Busan New Currents Competition and Rotterdam Tiger Competition. His third film, *Ice Poison* (2014) won Best International Film at the Edinburgh Film Festival and represented Taiwan at Foreign Language Oscars.

Profiles of Lead Cast

Kai Ko

Ko Chen-tung, also known as Kai Ko, is a Taiwanese actor and singer. Ko won Best New Actor at the 48th Golden Horse Awards and the 12th Chinese Film Media Awards for his debut performance in the film *You Are the Apple of My Eye* 《那些年，我們一起追的女孩》. In November 2011, Ko released his debut studio album “*Be Yourself*”.



Wu Ke-Xi

Taiwanese actress Wu Ke-Xi met Burmese-Taiwanese director Midi Z in 2010, and starred in several films set in Myanmar. Wu was nominated for Best Actress at the Chinese Film Media Awards for *Ice Poison* 《冰毒》 and won Best Actress at the Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia in Tokyo for her performance in the short film *The Palace on the Sea* 《海上皇宮》.

Nominations of *The Road to Mandalay* at the 53rd Golden Horse Awards

- Best Feature Film
- Best Director – Midi Z
- Best Leading Actor – Kai Ko
- Best Leading Actress – Wu Ke-Xi
- Best Original Screenplay – Midi Z
- Best Art Direction – Akekarat Homlaor