

## **NYAFF spotlights Hong Kong cinema**

The New York Asian Film Festival will return when its 17th edition kicks off on June 29. Among this year's highlights will be the world premiere of *Men On The Dragon*, while Hong Kong director Dante Lam and Hong Kong actress Stephy Tang will be honoured with the Action Cinema Award and Screen International Rising Star Asia Award respectively.

*Men On The Dragon* is a quintessential underdog story about a group of blue-collar workers who reluctantly join their company's dragon boat team. Starring Francis Ng and Jennifer Yu, the directorial debut of veteran writer Sunny Chan is one of seven films in the second edition of NYAFF's relaunched main competition. This film is being presented one year after the festival had the Young Blood series as a special focus on first-time directors from Hong Kong.

Another world premiere from Hong Kong is *House Of The Rising Sons* which marks the comeback of Antony Chan after a 26-year hiatus from the director's chair. His latest film chronicles the meteoric rise of The Wynners, the 1970s popular teen-idol band that launched the careers of mega-stars Alan Tam and Kenny Bee. Chan who played the drums is an original band member.

Celebrating the career of Lam as the frontrunner of contemporary Asian action genre, the festival holds a three-film tribute, including a special 10th anniversary screening of psychological thriller *The Beast Stalker* on 35mm print, MMA drama *Unbeatable* and his latest megahit *Operation Red Sea* which grossed US\$580m in China alone to become the second highest film of all time in China and the biggest hit of 2018 in Asia.

Lam will be on hand to receive the Daniel A Craft Award for Excellence in Action Cinema along with his long-term producer Candy Leung.

Tang will also be present to receive the Screen International Rising Star Asia Award before the screening of her film *The Empty Hands*. A former volleyball player and model, she started out in the entertainment business as the lead singer of the popular girls' band The Cookies before launching her successful solo career. In addition to concerts, albums and television appearances, she started her own fashion label and wrote a romance novel. In film, she is best known for her pairing with Alex Fong in a series of popular rom-coms directed by Patrick Kong from 2006-2015.

NYAFF is celebrating Tang for her recent shift in career direction, taking on a series of more challenging roles. These include Cheung Wing-kai's *Somewhere Beyond the Mist*, in which she plays a pregnant policewoman investigating a morbid murder case, and Chapman To's *The Empty Hands*, in which she plays a young woman who reaches self-actualization by stepping back into the ring after the death of her estranged father, a karate master.

The Hong Kong Panorama also includes Jonathan Li's debut *The Brink*, Oxide Pang's *The Big Call*, and Wilson Yip's *Paradox*. The festival will run until July 15.