

Philippines

MOWELFUND Film Institute Breeds a New Group of Filmmakers

What do the following filmmakers have in common: Venice Film Festival winner Lav Diaz, Cannes Film Festival winner Raymond Red, award-winning directors Mark Meilly, and Paolo Villaluna? Clue: It's something they share with noted cinematographers Lee Meilly and Neil Daza and film editor Manet Dayrit. The answer is that all of them at one time or another attended filmmaking workshops at the MOWELFUND Film Institute (MFI). On December 18, 2008, 36 participants of the MFI's Specialization courses in directing, cinematography, editing and acting had their graduating ceremonies at the MOWELFUND Plaza at 66 Rosario Drive, Quezon City.

Dubbed "DecemBEER Fest 2008", the affair combined the graduation and general homecoming for the MFI alumni. It was the culminating event of MFI's specialization workshop which began on August 16, 2008 and continued to October 19, 2008. The ceremony was marked by the premiere of a trilogy of short films made by the new filmmakers shot on Fujicolor negative 35mm film. The short films ran the gamut of genres, from horror-suspense to comedy and drama.

In *Nakaw*, a series of unexplained deaths occurs in a provincial mental asylum following the arrival of Dr. Salvacion, a psychiatrist from the city. The key to the mystery is unearthed by Guada, who wastes no time trying to



The new breed of MOWELFUND filmmakers

convince the doctors and the nurses of her discovery, but who will listen to an inmate? It becomes a race against time to save lives, particularly that of a comatose little girl who is a patient of Dr. Salvacion. The film stars multi-awarded actors Ricky Davao and Gina Alajar.

Wayt Elefants, the second episode, trails a fabulous but mismatched trio on their quest for the Holy Grail of Filipino Beauty junkies: the ultimate skin-whitening formula. Featuring comic stalwarts Mel Martinez, Patrick Ysmael and John Feir, *Wayt Elefants* is a send-up of the native obsession for flawless, white skin and the absurd extremes the not-so-fair will endure to achieve their goals.

The last of the trilogy, *Sundalo*, is the story of a soldier's struggle against his profession, society and himself to protect his loved ones and his principles. It stars Rommel Luna, Anna Luna, Antonio Luna, Liza Ramos and Mike Vergel.

The specialization workshops were taught by veterans of local cinema, who imparted to the participants lessons learned through their years of experience. For



Keyser Mercantile staff with the family of Director Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao

directing, directors William Mayo and Bb. Joyce Bernal gave lectures augmented by on-the-spot directing exercises. For cinematography, master directors of photography Surf Reyes and Jun "JP" Pereira unraveled for the class the intricacies of lighting and the 35mm film camera. Acclaimed actress Gina Alajar supervised the acting workshop, while respected editor-director Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao and Mike Canlas trained the next generation of editors.

Among the luminaries invited to attend were MOWELFUND Chairman Emeritus and former President of the Philippines Joseph Ejercito Estrada, Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, Quezon City Vice-Mayor Herbert Bautista, Councilor Ariel Inton, National Commission for Culture and the Arts Executive Director Cecille Guidote Alvarez, pillar of the movie

industry German "Kuya Germs" Moreno, noted actress Lorna Tolentino (whose son Ralph, fathered by action star Rudy Fernandez, attended the directing workshop), and Film Development Council of the Philippines Chairman Jackie Atienza. The Board of Trustees, headed by Atty. Espiridion Laxa, National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts director Eddie Romero, Marichu "Manay Ichu" Vera-Perez Maceda, director Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao, composer Prof. Josefino Cenizal, and MOWELFUND Executive Director Boots Anson-Roa also graced the event.

San Miguel Corporation was the major sponsor of the event. Other sponsors include Keyser Mercantile Co. Inc., which provided the rolls of 35mm for the short films, the Presidential Social Fund, CMB Film Services, Inc., Roadrunner Network Inc., Globe Telecom, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, M&H Food Corporation, and the Film Development Council of the Philippines. ■



VJ Sianghio (2nd from left) with DOPs Larry Manda, Jun Pereira and Raymond Red (left to right)