



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tribeca Festival hosts rare screening of “Kundun” featuring remarks by Director Martin Scorsese

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Last Friday, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and the Office of Tibet, joined Tribeca Festival and Martin Scorsese to host a screening of Scorsese’s epic “Kundun” on the second day of the Festival. The first time that the film has been screened on 35mm in many years.

The day began with a red-carpet welcome of the team responsible for bringing the story of “Kundun” to life. Scorsese, film editor Thelma Schoonmaker and casting director Ellen Lewis were reunited with the Tibetan cast members, many of which, Scorsese and Schoonmaker noted, were not professionally trained actors but who were intensely dedicated to bringing this story to life for those not familiar with the story of the Dalai Lama.

In addition to the cast and crew, Tribeca Festival co-founder Jane Rosenthal and actor Michael Imperioli, a long-time friend of Tibet, as well as writer/director Oren Moverman – co-producer of “Wisdom of Happiness”, and filmmaker Alexandra Pelosi, joined in the pre-screening festivities.

Along with the cast and crew, the red-carpet opening included a traditional Tibetan welcome by the members of the Tibetan community of NYNJ, as well as music and dance outside, entertaining those attending the film and New York city pedestrians who found their way past the theater.

Screening and Remarks

Family members of the late Melissa Mathison, the screenwriter behind “Kundun”, attended the screening, including Mathison’s children, Georgia and Malcolm Ford, brother Dirk Mathison and his wife, Susan.

Also attending the film screening were Former Kalon Tripa Tenzin Namgyal Tethong; Founder of Danang Foundation, Lama Tsewang Rinpoche; Director of Shi-De Kunkyabing (Centre for Universal Peace), Geshe Tashi Dorjee; former Justice Commissioner Ngawang Rabgyal; and former Representative Rinchen Dharlo

“This screening is a part of Compassion Rising, a global campaign from the International Campaign for Tibet and the Central Tibetan Administration’s Year of Compassion. We are proud to serve as a centerpiece of that effort,” Rosenthal stated. “Kundun” is more than a film, it’s a meditation on faith, exile, and the quiet strength to hold onto identity in the face of erasure.”

Martin Scorsese spoke to a range of topics through his remarks, speaking to the drive of the actors who participated in the creation of the movie, his frustrations with the number of people who have been able to see it, the work that went into finding a realistic place to film, and the dedicated work of the late Melissa Mathison, screenwriter and former ICT board member, Schoonmaker, Lewis and more. He also spoke at

length on the need for a US based Tibetan film festival to bring greater attention to the work of Tibetan filmmakers.

“Best wishes to Supreme Holiness the Dalai Lama on the upcoming occasion of his 90th birthday on July 6th. He’s the reason we are all here today,” Scorsese said. “The making of ‘Kundun’ changed my life for the better in many different ways and it all started with Melissa (Mathison) who is represented here by her brother Dirk and her children Malcolm and Georgia Ford. I would like to welcome members of the extraordinary cast who grounded me during the shoot. These men and women are the heart of the film and they are the heart of Tibet and its culture.

Once the movie began it was an emotional ride for the audience of 500. From those who hadn’t seen the film in nearly 30 years to those who had never seen it before, the story had a deep emotional impact on everyone.

Reception

At the conclusion of the screening, many made their way to the offices of Wisdom Publications, where Wisdom Publications and ICT hosted a reception where participants and friends could reflect on the film, working with Martin Scorsese, and reconnect while listening to remarks from ICT President Tencho Gyatso, Thelma Schoonmaker, Ellen Lewis and master of ceremonies, Homer Gere. Remarks included recognition that it was 30 days until the Dalai Lama’s 90th birthday and encouraging everyone to participate in the Compassion Rising World Tour event and the Office of Tibet’s “Year of Compassion”.

“It has been a very special day today, it was a dream to have “Kundun” screened again on the big screen again and we tried for His Holiness 80th but we weren’t able to and I don’t know how we made it happen this time but we couldn’t have without Thelma, Lisa, and Marty and Tribeca,” ICT President Tencho Gyatso said at the reception. “The fact it is celebrating His Holiness 90th Birthday so that is also a huge day for us.”

“This movie was so important to me and to Marty as he spoke today... This was the most remarkable experience for me,” said Thelma Schoonmaker. “I have remained in the Tibetan community through (Kunga) and Tencho as well and it is one of the best things I have ever done in my life. So, I am very happy to be here tonight.”

“The acting was so powerful because they weren’t acting, they were reliving a tragedy that happened just 15 or 20 years ago and what has happened to Tibet, what has happened to all of us individually was very powerful,” said former Kalon Tripa Tenzin Namgyal Tethong. “We watched the film today after nearly 40 years and it is as powerful as seeing it for the first time. Many of us were in tears at different scenes 40 years ago than we were today because the film keeps speaking out to us.”



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