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THE THIRD ANNUAL ASIAN WORLD FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
THE NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF
NORTH KOREAN FILM SALT (SOGUM)

Directed by South Korea's Controversial Sheen Sang-ok

L-R Sheen, Kim Jung-il, Actress Choi Eun-hee
Choi Eun-hee (hat) Sheen with script

LOS ANGELES, 28 September 2017— The Third Annual Asian World Film Festival asianworldfilmfest.org (AWFF) announced the North American premiere of the North Korean film Salt (Sogum). Salt will be screened November 1, 2017 at 6 PM. The Festival runs between Oct 25 – Nov 2, 2017. All films will be screened at the Arclight Cinemas in Downtown Culver City (9500 Culver Blvd.) To purchase tickets

The film, directed by controversial South Korean filmmaker Sheen Sang-ok tells the story of a young man who has become a Communist party activist, and his mother’s journey towards understanding her son’s political choices.

All films selected by their countries as Oscar or Golden Globe contenders are automatically invited to participate at the Film Festival.

ABOUT DIRECTOR SHEEN SANG –OK
In 1978, Director Sheen suddenly disappeared to North Korea. Between 1983 and 1986 he made seven films and oversaw the production of thirteen more. There has been a lot of speculation (including defection) as to how Sheen arrived in North Korea. The director later claimed he had been kidnapped. His time in the north remains a mystery as does his defection to the US. In 1986, while Sheen and his
wife were on a business trip in Vienna, Austria they claimed political asylum at the U.S. embassy. They eventually settled in Los Angeles before returning to South Korea in 1994.

**AWFF Festival and Program Director Georges Chamchoum** said, “We only hear the nightmarish stories coming out of North Korea lately. Apart from the politics, let us not forget the ancient and rich culture that North Korea has to offer. That is why we wanted to be the first in North America to showcase a movie from North Korea.”

**A SON’S MEMORIES:**
Sheen Sang-ok passed away in 2006. His son, Jeongkyun Sheen reflected on the memories he had of his father.

“Honestly, I don’t have a lot of childhood memories of my father. The only thing I pretty much remember is my dad dragging his exhausted body home and flipping through film-related books. After escaping from North Korea, my father lived with me in America. He lived as though he was in hiding and wasn’t able to make movies.”

“There is a scene in Salt, where the lead actress (Choi Eun-hee) and countless other extras carry salt over the mountains. This scene required a severe wind to blow but while shooting, the wind machines couldn’t create that effect. So, Director Sheen Sang-ok shared his frustrations with Kim Jung-il. The next day, Kim Jung-il sent a helicopter to fly by, causing the wind to blow and successfully creating the real-life effect. My father said he was very surprised to see how things that cannot be done in a capitalist world (regarding production costs) can be easily accomplished by one command of Kim Jung-il.

He is the first South Korean director who endlessly made movies in the North, the South, and also in Hollywood. He is the one who upgraded the status of the Korean film industry. He is now gone, but his films remain. I hope his accomplishments become widely known to future generations. I am very thankful that many people still remember Director Sheen.”

Although the film has rarely been screened, Salt actress Choi Eun-hee received the Best Actress award at the 14th Moscow International Film Festival in 1985.

**SALT SYNOPSIS:**
The story is set in Kando (the northeast region of Manchuria, China) in the 1930s, when open warfare took place between the Japanese occupation forces, communist fighters, and Chinese bandits. The story is about an unnamed mother of a family. Her husband is killed in the crossfire and her son runs away with the communists. The mother struggles to find her son and later joins a smuggler group who carry heavy loads of salt across the snowy forests. Throughout her journey, the mother starts to understand why her son is a Communist party activist.

**ABOUT THE ASIAN WORLD FILM FESTIVAL**
All films selected by their countries as Oscar or Golden Globe contenders are automatically invited to participate at the Film Festival. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association recognizes selected screenings as the required official screenings for their members who vote on the Golden Globes. At last year’s event, some 30 films from 27 countries participated.

Sponsors include Presenting Partner Ha Phuong Foundation, as well as the city of Culver City, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, Variety, East West Bank, RK Media (Radio & TV Korea), the Arclight Theatres and Emporium Thai Restaurant (Los Angeles) and AWFF host venue the historic Culver Hotel.

AWFF recently partnered with The Snow Leopard Trust to raise awareness for the endangered snow leopard and its ecosystem in the high mountains of Asia. The Film Festival’s main cinematic award is named after the snow leopard. Snow Leopard Trust

The Asian World Film Festival (AWFF) brings the best of a broad selection of Asian World cinema to Los Angeles to draw greater recognition to the region’s wealth of filmmakers, strengthening ties between the Asian and Hollywood film industries. Uniting through cross-cultural collaboration, our festival champions films from over 50 countries across Asia spanning from Turkey to Japan and Russia to India and the Middle East. All films that participate in the Festival will have a unique chance to be guided through the challenging awards season, and showcased for the Motion Picture Academy, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and all Guilds for enhanced exposure, media attention and awards consideration. AWFF is a non-profit organization under Aitysh USA. www.AsianWorldFilmFest.org

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