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Smithsonian to Offer a Sneak Preview of “Journey from the Fall”

The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program, the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Lam Nguyen Productions, Old Photo Films and ImaginAsian Pictures will present a sneak preview of “Journey from the Fall” March 31. The film was inspired by the true stories of Vietnamese refugees who fled the country after the fall of Saigon and those who were forced to stay behind. The film’s star Kieu Chinh (“The Joy Luck Club”) is expected to be at the screening.

April 30, 1975, marked the end of Vietnam’s 20-year civil war and the start of the exodus of millions of refugees. Despite his allegiance to the toppled South Vietnamese government, Long Nguyen (as Long Nguyen) decides to remain in Vietnam. Imprisoned in a Communist re-education camp, he urges his family to make the escape by boat without him. His wife Mai (Diem Lien), son Lai (Nguyen Thai Nguyen) and mother Ba Noi (Kieu Chinh) then embark on the arduous ocean voyage in the hope of reaching the United States and freedom.

The film was an official selection of both the Sundance and the Pusan Film Festivals, winning 12 awards at 20 festivals around the world. Financed entirely by Vietnamese American businessmen and featuring a cast and crew whose families fled Vietnam, the film is a mind-altering experience in which ex-prisoners-turned-actors play their own jailors onscreen.

The preview will take place at 6:30 p.m. in the Meyer Auditorium of the Freer Gallery of Art. Free tickets are required for the screening. A maximum of two tickets per person will be distributed at the auditorium one hour before show time. For more information, please call (202) 633-2690 or visit www.apa.si.edu/VietAm or www.JourneyFromTheFall.com.

This is the first of the public programs by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program under the Vietnamese American Heritage Project. The project includes the exhibit “Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon,” showing at the Smithsonian’s S. Dillon Ripley Center until April 1, then traveling nationwide for three years; a middle school curriculum guide in fall of 2007; and a dedicated Web site, www.apa.si.edu/VietAm.

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