National Consortium for Teaching about Asia

Summer 2010
Movie Synopsis

Asian Studies
Florida international university
Director: Steven Heine
Coordinator: Andrea Martinez
The Bad News Bears Go To Japan (1978)

**Actors:** Tony Curtis, Jackie Earle Haley, Tomisaburo Wakayama, Antonio Inoki, Hatsune Ishihara  
**Directors:** John Berry  
**Writers:** Bill Lancaster  
**Producers:** Bill Lancaster, Hisashi Yabe, Michael Ritchie, Terry Carr

In the final film in the BAD NEWS BEARS trilogy, the lovably delinquent Little League team is hot off of a victory at the Houston Astrodome. Their next mission is to travel to Japan for the Little League World Series in Tokyo. Enter Hollywood huckster Marvin Lazar (Tony Curtis), who sees a goldmine in the "little team that could." Off the field, the team learns about Sumo wrestling, and star player Kelly Leak finds teen romance with a Japanese girl. Bill Lancaster, writer of the original film, returned for this installment of the saga.

Through this encounter, the film becomes a very interesting and appealing introduction to Asian culture and differences with the West, and thus a good starting point for discussion of cross-cultural issues.
Each year at Lantern Festival in eastern Taiwan, a ritual takes place in which men stand on a sacred palanquin dressed in nothing but red shorts, while people pound their bodies with firecrackers that singe their skin. For the duration of the ritual, these men are believed to be invested with the spirit of the god Handan.

The ritual known as the Scorching of Handan has become a major event in recent years. The people who take part have always been shrouded in mystery and rumored to be members of the gangsters’ underworld. Filmed over the course of 22 months, The Gangsters’ God takes the viewer right into the local underworld of Taitung, and follows a chapter in the dramatic lives of four “Brothers.” One of them is an organizer of the Handan ritual, while the other three, born in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, respectively, intend to participate in the ritual the following year.

The Brothers lead unstable lives: during filming, one goes to jail and another is admitted to a psychiatric clinic. As Lantern Festival approaches, will they manage to ascend the palanquin and serve as human incarnations of the god Handan?

The unique soundtrack was arranged by Chen Guan-yu of the Hohak Band. It is largely based on elements of traditional Minnan (“Southern Fujianese”) music, with recording of authentic instruments like the suona, the erhu and traditional drums. The music is emotionally expressive and contributes to the film’s tight pace. During the festival of the Scorching of Handan, Chen Guan-yu and the recording crew moved among the crowd, collecting a variety of sounds such as the exploding of firecrackers.
"The Man Who Would Be King" is about two ambitious ex-soldiers stationed in India who set out to become the rulers of an entire country. After finishing their tour of duty in India, Daniel Dravot and Peachy Carnehan have decided that India is "too small for the likes of them," so they decide to bribe a local ruler and extort money from him, in order to buy twenty Martini rifles, which they will use to take over villages in Kafiristan. They eventually come to a small village, Urheb, where they meet Ootah and Billy Fish, an Indian who speaks English; he then becomes their translator. They then train the natives of this village to use the rifles, and soon conquer village after village. During a battle, Daniel is struck by an arrow that seemingly sticks out of his chest. The ignorant natives believe that he must be a God for not having died. Daniel and Peachy decide that it would be easier for a "God " to take over the country, so they pretend that Daniel is a god, the son of Alexander the Great.

All goes well until Daniel's ego and greed gets the best of him. He asks Peachy to bow when he walks in front of him. He later tells Peachy that he has decided to stay, and now believes that he is the “son of Alexander”, and that to fulfill his destiny, he will marry Roxanne. At the ceremony, Roxanne bites Daniel, drawing blood. The entire crowd realizes that since Danny is bleeding, that he is a man, not a God, and that he has been deceiving them the entire time. Peachy grabs Daniel and they run off with their twenty soldiers, shooting at the crowd of monks who set out to kill them. They are eventually captured, and Daniel is killed. Peachy is later crucified; when they come to see him the next day, he is still alive, and they say that it is a miracle that he lived and they cut him down. He eventually climbs down into the valley and retrieves Danny's head, still wearing the crown. He brings it back to Rudyard Kipling, a writer for the Northern Star, as proof that Daniel accomplished his goal, and became the King of Kafiristan.
Wednesday, June 16

**Ten Nights of Dreams (2006)**

**Directors:** Yoshitaka Amano, Takashi Shimizu, Akio Jissoji, Yudai Yamaguchi, Miwa Nishikawa

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`I had a dream like this...` Based on renowned Japanese writer Natsume Soseki's same-titled short story collection, *Ten Nights of Dreams* brings ten fantastical dream sequences to film with great visual and psychological panache. Representing the combined efforts of eleven directors, this outstanding anthology delves into the surreal subconscious with ten madly imaginative, reality-subverting visions that range from wonderfully wacky to nightmarishly unsettling.

The ten shorts are directed by legendary filmmaker Kon Ichikawa, who previously adapted Soseki's *Kokoro* for film in 1955; Akio Jissoji (Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis, Rampo Noir); horror maestro Takashi Shimizu (The Grudge); Blue Ribbon Best Director Miwa Nishikawa (Yureru); Nobuhiro Yamashita (Linda Linda Linda); actor/director Matsuo Suzuki (Otakus in Love, Welcome to the Quiet Room); J-horror standbys Atsushi Shimizu (The Wish), Keisuke Toyoshima (Tales of Terror), and Yudai Yamaguchi (Battlefield Baseball); and the new directing team of Final Fantasy character designer Yoshitaka Amano and gaming guru Masaaki Kawahara.

Thursday, June 17

**Departures (2008)**
Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, *Departures* is a delightful journey into the heartland of Japan as well an astonishingly beautiful look at a sacred part of Japan’s cultural heritage.

*Departures* follows Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki), a devoted cellist in an orchestra that has just been dissolved and who is suddenly left without a job. Daigo decides to move back to his old hometown with his wife to look for work and start over. He answers a classified ad entitled *Departures* thinking it is an advertisement for a travel agency only to discover that the job is actually for a “Nokanshi” or “encoffineer,” a funeral professional who prepares deceased bodies for burial and entry into the next life. While his wife and others despise the job, Daigo takes a certain pride in his work and begins to perfect the art of “Nokanshi,” acting as a gentle gatekeeper between life and death, between the departed and the family of the departed. The film follows his profound and sometimes comical journey with death as he uncovers the wonder, joy and meaning of life and living.