The Asia Pacific Screen Awards has announced nominees in nine award categories with 37 films representing 16 countries and areas. They are: Australia, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Palestinian Territories, People's Republic of China (Mainland China/Hong Kong), Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkey.

APSA Chairman Des Power said, “I congratulate the 2009 nominees who represent the extraordinary breadth of talent that exists in our region in a year when the quality of Asia-Pacific films is exceptional. Nominees were determined from a record number of 212 entries from 43 countries. The response indicates that the filmmakers of Asia-Pacific value our mission to acclaim their work and take it to a global audience.”

APSA is a unique collaboration between CNN International, UNESCO and FIAPF-International Federation of Film Producers Associations. Films are judged on cinematic excellence and the way in which they attest to their cultural origins.

Japan is strongly represented in 2009 with a total of seven nominations followed by the People’s Republic of China with six. India, Iran, Russian Federation and Republic of Korea all received five nominations. Three Australian films are nominated (Maryand Max, Gandhi’s Children, Samson & Delilah) and this marks the first time an Australian film has been recognised in the Best Feature category. Countries and areas nominated in the APSAs for the first time this year are Thailand, Cambodia and Palestinian Territories.

Asghar Farhadi’s ensemble drama, Darbareye Elly (About Elly, Islamic Republic of Iran), has received the most nominations of any film (Best Feature Film, Achievement in Directing, Best Screenplay and Best Performance by an Actress), followed closely by Lu Chuan’s arresting war epic, Nanjing! Nanjing! (City of Life and Death, People’s Republic of China), which earned three nominations for Directing, Cinematography and Best Feature Film.

Asia-Pacific’s finest have been recognised in the performance categories. The nominated actresses are: Zhou Xun as a chain-smoking cabbie in Li Mi de Caixiang (The Equation of Love and Death), Kim Hye-ja as a fiercely devoted mother in Bong Joon-ho’s Madeo (Mother), Golshifteh Farahani’s standout performance as Sepideh in Darbareye Elly (About Elly), Yana Troyanova’s complex portrayal of a sociopathic mother in Volchok (Wolfy) and the ‘Queen of Sri Lankan cinema’, Malini Fonseka, as the overbearing matriarch in Akasa Kusum (Flowers of the Sky).

The nominated actors are: Masahiro Motoki for his tender performance as a cellist/mortician in Okuribito (Departures), Yang Ik-june for his portrayal of a low-life gangster in his directorial debut, Ddongpari (Breathless), Mohamed Bakri as a judge earning a living as a taxi driver in Eid Milad Laila (Laila’s Birthday), Ge You as a lonely bachelor looking for love in Fei Cheng Wu Rao (If You Are the One) and legendary Indian actor Naseeruddin Shah (Monsoon Wedding) as ‘the common man’ in A Wednesday.

Several nominees in 2009 have previously been nominated in the APSAs and are therefore Members of the Academy of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards. They are: Tulpan producer Karl Baumgartner nominated this year for Strength of Water, Mongol producer Sergey Selyanov
nominated this year for Pro Fedota-Streltsa, Udalogo Molodtsa (The Tale of Soldier Fedot, the Daring Fellow) and 2007 Best Feature Film Winner, Lee Chang-dong, nominated this year for Ye Haeng Ja (A Brand New Life).

Winners are decided by the International Jury headed by Huang Jianxin who will assemble on Australia’s Gold Coast ahead of the APSA ceremony on November 26. The 2009 Nominees join past Jury members and nominees as members of the Academy of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards.