

Review: First-time director Anderson .Paak brings humor and magic to RSIFF title 'K-Pops'



JEDDAH: Cinema can go overboard with emotional relationships, and this is where American singer and rapper Anderson .Paak's Red Sea International Film Festival title "K-Pops" hits the right notes without sinking into a morose medley. Entertaining, with music that keeps the audience engaged, the film follows BJ, a washed-up drummer whose life turns around when he meets his teenage son for the first time.



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.Paak himself plays the father, who is still holding out in middle age for rock'n'roll stardom while his real-life son Soul Rasheed plays the fictional Tae Young, whose mother Yeji is Korean.



BJ gets an unexpected gig on a Korean talent show and discovers that Tae Young is a hotly-tipped contestant.

The movie travels beyond the Korean cultural scene by exploring the love life of its protagonist, who on a trip to Korea meets his old lover, Yeji (Jee Young Han), and learns that he has had a son by her. The two make up for lost time, and the scenes between them are handled subtly by .Paak – laudable for a debutant director who is

also a multi-Grammy winner. Eager to make up for lost parenting time, BJ becomes the boy's mentor but as the film goes on, we realize the father needs to grow up alongside his son.

Partly shot in Saudi Arabia's AlUla as part of a multi-film deal between Film AlUla and global media company Stampede Ventures, the work turns out to be endearingly personal and the ties between father and son are magical. Touchingly tender, it is an easy watch, in part because of the strong chemistry between all three lead stars. What is more, interracial complexities are woven into the plot, although I did feel that these could have been explored a little more — a somewhat understated screenplay could have been reason and more layered storytelling would have been welcome. However, the film's comedic touches make up for this and .Paak is mesmerizing, especially when he gets the audience to laugh the loudest. Leisurely executed, the movie flows along like a lazy river that is a joy to ride.
