

The 21st ifva Youth Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jury members: Adam Wong (Wong), Roy Tsui (Tsui), Adrian Chow (Chow),
Ruby Yang (Yang), Roy Tsui (Tsui), Tony Chun (Chun)

ifva representative: Kattie Fan (Fan), Wylie Fung (Fung)

Fan: Thank you for attending this meeting, the purpose of which is to select the Youth Category Gold, Silver and 3 Special Mentions from the 9 finalist works. We can discuss the works one by one and then nominate, what do you think?

Yang: Can we go straight for nomination?

Fan: That's fine. You can each nominate 3-5 works and we can discuss them before deciding on the awards.

Chow: I can go first. I have seen the works in the first round, and saw them again today. I nominate *Oxygen* for Gold Award, *When the Sun Goes Down* for Silver, and Special Mentions for *Whiteboard*, *Happy Dark Hour* and *If*.

Tsui: I also go with *Oxygen* for Gold Award, *When the Sun Goes Down* for Silver, and Special Mentions for *Whiteboard*, *Happy Dark Hour* and *All I Want*.

Wong: I agree with you. First place for me is *Oxygen*, second place is *When the Sun Goes Down*. I also like *All I Want*, *If* and *Whiteboard*. After watching on the big screen, I like *When the Sun Goes Down* more.

Chow: I feel the opposite. I liked *When the Sun Goes Down* originally, but when I watched it on the big screen, the lead actress's flaws were magnified. She feels weird, more like a typical Hong Kong girl.

Wong: The lead actor is good.

Chow: I agree.

Wong: The biggest problem is the voice dubbing, which affects the whole work and make it seem calculated. It's the same with *All I Want*. I want to know why, despite their youth, they have such mature views about love which shows up in the work. It's as if they are very experienced in the matter.

Tsui: Because it's realistic. Don't you remember when you were young, you were like that as well? It's as if they had seen it all.

Wong: I find *All I Want* a bit pretentious, while *When the Sun Goes Down* is more sincere, and its dialogue is meaningful. The Oolong tea analogy is spot on.

- Yang: The male voice dubbing sounds like a man in his 30s, which makes it seem pretentious. Even though *All I Want* is more unpolished, its structure is interesting. As a work of a young filmmaker, I find it more convincing. *All I Want* is also more fresh.
- Chun: Both works are about love, and both reflect the mindset of young people nowadays. They start dating at an early age. The film language and of *When the Sun Goes Down* imitates contemporary films, which makes it more palatable, while *All I Want* is more raw, and the director uses their own way to make the film.
- Yang: That's why I feel a raw approach is better for young people. Even though there are a lot of mistakes in *All I Want*, the director is willing to explore and try out different ways to make a film. This is what young people should do, rather than imitate. They should develop their own methods. Compared with *When the Sun Goes Down*, I prefer *All I Want*. I also agree that the Gold award should go to *Oxygen*.
- Wong: However, I feel that the actors in *All I Want* are not likable. The only way to explain it is that some people are just as pretentious in real life.
- Chun: If I'm not mistaken, the male actor is also the scriptwriter. Is that correct?
- Fan: Yes, the director and the lead actor are the same person.
- Chun: Then the pretentiousness may just be him being himself.
- Yang: He does seem to be pretentious.
- Wong: His acting is stiff.
- Yang: Young people are like that. If his performance was perfect, I would be less convinced. I think the performance in *When the Sun Goes Down* tries too hard.
- Tsui: Both films are calculated. The dialogue in *When the Sun Goes Down*, which is interspersed throughout the film, is meaningful.
- Wong: The dialogue in *All I Want* is pretentious.
- Chow: I find it bothersome.
- Wong: The dialogue is too deliberate. The actress tries hard to be natural, but as they talk back and forth to each other, the flow is not logical. I suspect the actress spent a lot of time and effort memorizing her lines.
- Chow: Do you (Yang) choose *The Dormer* as Silver Award winner?
- Yang: Yes.

- Chun: I am still considering. *Oxygen* is head and shoulders above the rest. The cinematography, performance, directing and sound are superior to others. It undoubtedly deserves the Gold Award.
- Fan: You have not mentioned *GONE 2015* and *Life Through a Lens*. Do you have any suggestions to give them?
- Yang: *Life Through a Lens* uses too much music, and the story is too predictable.
- Wong: The story is clichéd and easy to guess. But the production craftsmanship is quite good.
- Chun: If the theme of *Life Through a Lens* is about escaping from the expectations of the older generation, then the way it's written falls into those expectations. If the protagonist feels trapped and can only work in an office, he should be angry at receiving the camera, not touched.
- Chow: I like the music. I think it's an original composition. In the scene where he remembers his father, the music follows a theme, which is well-considered.
- Fan: How about *GONE 2015*?
- Chow: They are probably international school students.
- Wong: The treatment of *GONE 2015* should be better. The ending echoing the beginning is just form, and seem meaningless.
- Fan: You all chose *Oxygen* as the Gold Award winner. What do you want to say about it?
- Yang: I think the part with the father at the end is a bit clichéd and unnecessary. The part with the reporter is also not needed. Overall the casting and visuals are good. For a work by a youth, it is quite good.
- Wong: The production is quite grand. However part of the story does not make sense. Is the part with the Chief Executive about using another point of view to talk about those in power? Yet it is undeveloped. If that is not his intention, then the story is just a clichéd one about the opposition between protestors and those in power. I don't know why the ending is so dragged out.
- Yang: The opening is also too long.
- Wong: It's too immersed in that kind of atmosphere. Why does the chief executive have to make a speech in front of an empty auditorium? What does that mean?
- Tsui: I thought they would use some crowd cheering sound effect in that scene, but they didn't. This production team is quite something for someone under the age of 18. The visuals,

music and way of expression are very broad-ranging and mature. The casting of Deon Cheung takes it to another level.

Chow: I agree.

Tsui: It is not without flaws. The use of voice-over drags the film out, and does not fill the narrative gaps at the beginning and the end.

Chun: I agree. If they edited those parts out it would flow better. Perhaps the director is afraid the audience will not understand. In fact, we understand just from watching the part at the beginning. Perhaps the director doesn't have enough confidence in her own images.

Yang: Even though the storytelling of *Oxygen* is not mature, we should give encouragement to young people who pay attention to subject matter.

Fan: You all agree that *Oxygen* gets Gold Award?

Tsui: We should encourage people under the age of 18 to explore this kind of subject matter.

Fan: So *Oxygen* will receive the Gold Award. For Silver Award, you have mentioned *The Dormer* and *When the Sun Goes Down*. Are there other nominations?

Chun: I want to hear the reason for choosing *The Dormer* other than its subject matter. I can think of some good points for *When the Sun Goes Down*, but I can't think of any for *The Dormer*.

Chow: One of the reasons I like *The Dormer* is due to its subject matter. I like works that deal with the Umbrella Movement, and want to encourage and recognize such works. Among the entries, not that many deal with this topic. The storytelling is also interesting, and goes from the home environment to Hong Kong as a whole. Even though the transition is sudden, it's acceptable. I like the film's progression, for Hong Kong has changed beyond recognition. To a certain extent, this is a direct expression of that. The ending is clichéd, and the dinner scene feels like a TVB drama. Perhaps I am over-interpreting it, but this scene hints that Hong Kong is their home, and they have to try and fix things. It's not about leaving home and not returning.

Yang: I agree. The story develops from the home. The ending is clichéd, but they have their own point of view and have thought things through. The voice-over is a bit stiff, but it's ok. It does not over-emphasize the Umbrella Movement, and does not go overboard. As a work by young people, it has good concept and reflects upon Hong Kong society.

Chun: For young people, love and hate are deeply felt. Now the story doesn't fully make sense, and feels a bit like ETV.

Chow: Even if Hong Kong has worsened, they still don't want to leave because it's home. It is not about traditional values. Perhaps I'm over-extrapolating.

- Tsui: After hearing your (Chow and Yang's) views, I almost want to switch my vote to this work. I agree with what you say, but its technique prevents me from getting into it. When picking Gold and Silver Award winners, I look for the work's completeness, whether its technique is smooth and if the images are beautiful. For Special Mention I would go for crazy and unusual works. For example, I think of *All I Want* as the Mong Kok version of *Before Sunrise*; *Happy Dark Hour* uses atmosphere and mood to drive the film; *Whiteboard* is fun and raw, and I like the eraser gag at the end.
- Wong: I agree with what Chow said about *The Dormer*, however, it leans too much in that direction. Its technique is very raw. Also I don't understand why the main character goes back home for dinner after taking part in the Umbrella Movement. I don't see Chow's interpretation, I don't understand why the lead character goes home all of a sudden.
- Chun: I don't get that reading either, so I didn't form an impression.
- Yang: What is your reading?
- Chun: He is forced to go home. In my line of work, I often see youths being forcibly taken home by the police, teachers or social workers. It is only when they meet a new girlfriend or get married and form a new home do they obtain a sense of coming home. The mother suddenly becomes not angry—we'd only see this kind of thing in dramas.
- Yang: I don't think the character has thought too much about it. He goes out, experiences some things and comes home for dinner. Perhaps you are over-interpreting. The dialogue is problematic, but for a Youth Category work, we shouldn't expect the dialogue to be too tidy.
- Chow: After hearing Chun's views, I understand more about the problem with this film. I am reading the film symbolically. The film's problem is that it does not offer a way of interpretation, whether to have a surface reading or to interpret its symbols.
- Chun: Even "blue ribbons" could read the scene as a prodigal son returning, and people from different positions can read the film in a different way. This is the most problematic part of the film; is this what the filmmaker intended? *When the Sun Goes Down* is a more complete work, and I am more impressed by it than by *The Dormer*. We can discuss what you like about *When the Sun Goes Down*.
- Tsui: I think romantic films in the mother tongue, that is, Cantonese, are awful. Because it is in the mother tongue, the romantic dialogue is cringey. Even though the dialogue in *When the Sun Goes Down* is well considered and smooth, it is difficult to do good romantic dialogue in Cantonese.
- Wong: The first scene is good. They use a real couple, and have them break up at the end, which is brilliant!
- Tsui: This film has the most quotable dialogue.

- Chun: It tries to do every scene in one take, which they must have spent a lot of effort on. They try not to go with traditional filmmaking methods, which is difficult to do. The result is not too pretentious.
- Fan: Do you agree on the Silver Award?
- Wong: Perhaps we can vote?
- Fan: The most important thing is that you are satisfied with the results, and discussion may help you obtain consensus.
- Yang: I agree with the production value of *When the Sun Goes Down*, but the voice dubbing is a serious problem, and I can't get into the film because of it. I find two secondary school students who have been through a lot not very convincing and awkward. The technique and execution is good, but I deduct a lot of marks because of the dubbing, which doesn't suit the main character.
- Chow: I also like *When the Sun Goes Down*, and wrote the juror's comments for it. The only reason for not choosing it as Silver Award winner is because it looks awkward on the big screen, and everything is magnified. The difference in energy between the male and female leads is big. This is just my opinion. If everyone picks this film as Silver Award winner, I'm willing to go along.
- Yang: I can accept *When the Sun Goes Down* as Silver, and *The Dormer* is third place.
- Fan: We don't have third place. It can be Special Mention.
- Yang: I understand. That's acceptable.
- Fan: So Silver Award goes to *When the Sun Goes Down*, while Gold Award winner is *Oxygen*. You can pick three Special Mentions from the five works: *All I Want*, *Happy Dark Hour*, *If*, *Whiteboard* and *The Dormer*.
- Chun: I like *All I Want* and *Whiteboard*, while *Happy Dark Hour* plays with form in a fun way.
- Fan: Maybe we can use the method of elimination. At this point, few jurors picked *If*.
- Wong: It is tidy and the script is complete. If we put aside the clumsy plot progression, its acting and storyline is complete, and I was touched by it. I like the tragic ending. But the stereotypical mouthy classmates are unacceptable. The lines are delivered too rapidly and I don't know whether it's deliberate or a mistake. The transitions are too forced and rely too much on dialogue. This is its greatest flaw.
- Yang: *If* feels like a film made by secondary school students the most. The subject matter touches on lesbianism and bullying, which is good.

- Chun: But the stiff acting made it hard to get into the film. Its treatment of suicide and homosexuality is not deep enough. The psychological state of the character prior to her suicide by wrist cutting is not very natural.
- Yang: The young filmmaker has not thought it through properly.
- Chun: If they had done more research, the script would have been better and more convincing.
- Wong: Its flaw is that it is too proper and not mature enough. The director must be a good student, who put into the film all that they've learnt, but in a stiff way. I am not very fond of *Happy Dark Hour*, which I think is too ordinary and easy, there is no development. It stays on the same level from beginning to end.
- Yang: I agree. It's saying the same thing for five minutes.
- Wong: They just added a filter to the images, but it doesn't mesh with the content.
- Chun: It keeps repeating itself four or five times, and there is very little development. I don't know what the main point is.
- Fan: What do the other two jurors think?
- Tsui: I hope to have a non-conventional work win. Even though it is repetitive, this is the effect they need. Compared to the more cautious *If*, I'd rather pick *Happy Dark Hour*.
- Chow: I like *Happy Dark Hour*. It deals with mood and visual texture. The repetition of the sound is what is needed in this drama. It tries to stimulate the audience with repetition so that they feel the sexual repression. I don't like *All I Want* especially after seeing it on the big screen. The dialogue is bothersome and repetitive. It tries too hard to be raw, and imitates Wong Kar Wai. We picked *If* last in the first round after watching over 90 entries. When we were tired from watching all those films, *If* seemed good. But among the finalists, it is not outstanding. It begins with the lead character taking a bath and talking on the phone, and then flashes back to tell the story, which is well-designed. I agree that it deals with the issue of lesbianism.
- Fan: How about *Whiteboard*?
- Chun: *Whiteboard* re-imagines a boring classroom--that in itself is commendable. *All I Want* is similar to young people's cases that I have, they all have love troubles that go back and forth, which is bothersome. The dialogue is close to the way young people talk.
- Tsui: *Whiteboard* starts out with an ordinary topic, but deals with it in a creative way.
- Yang: *Whiteboard* is fresh and creative. It should definitely be among the Special Mentions.
- Fan: Do you have anything else to add? If not, we can vote.

Tsui: I want to add that the Chinese name of *All I Want* is worth mentioning. It is self-conscious that its theme is clichéd.

Wong: Do we pick three works out of the five?

Fan: That's right. The candidates are *All I Want*, *Happy Dark Hour*, *If*, *Whiteboard* and *The Dormer*. You should pick three works out of the five, so each person has three votes.

Result of vote

Whiteboard 5 votes

Happy Dark Hour 2 votes

The Dormer 4 votes

All I Want 4 votes

If 0 votes

Youth Category

Gold Award

Oxygen

Yip Yuen-ching

Silver Award

When the Sun Goes Down

Cheng Kui-sum, Wong Chun-lung

Special Mention

Whiteboard

Keung Shing-lok

The Dormer

Ho Yui-chi Savio

All I Want

Wu Tin-long