

The 16th ifva Animation Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Lam Kee-to (LAM), Lo Che-ying (LO), Patrick Lin (LIN), Gabriel Pang (PANG), Yuen Kin-to (YUEN)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

YUEN: **Back to Base** is quite outstanding and mature. **Corn** is alright, the colors are not pretty but consistent. I like it even if it's not beautiful.

LIN: But I don't understand what it's trying to say. At first I understood a little, but at the end I don't know what the carrot means.

LAM: They all became extra-terrestrials.

LIN: At the beginning the carrot is bigger than him, but when they get on the moon it is the opposite. But I don't understand what he's trying to say with that.

PANG: I don't understand **Unroll** either.

YUEN: Maybe s/he doesn't want you to understand, but is just trying to express some feelings.

LO: You mentioned that **Corn** is similar to some of the works you've seen before.

YUEN: **The Shoes** looks ugly, but it's ok.

LIN: The idea for **The Shoes** is good, but the execution is not. The character design is quite off-putting, and there is no set design. However the story flows smoothly.

YUEN: The emotions are heart-felt.

PANG: It is probably based on real life. The animator's mother provided the voice-dubbing. This work received a prize at the ICT Awards last year. Every time I watched it I'd look around to see if anybody is crying.

YUEN: The music is very calculated.

LIN: I like **Before the End**. The execution is very good, and I completely understand what he is trying to say. Its rhythm and length is just right, and the 3D and stop motion effects are combined with good effect. I quite like it.

LAM: This director has entered a few stop motion animation at this year's competition, and this one is the most complete.

LIN: It cleverly uses 3D backgrounds, which makes it cleaner and easier on the eyes. I also like **Pick Up & Put Down**, which is full of local flavor, but the ending lost me. I like the design and animation technique of **Puff the magic dragon** the most. The technique is rock solid, and the lighting is among the most sophisticated out of the finalists.

LAM: On the big screen you notice that his use of color is very pretty. Some works have simple concepts, but you can see that their creators have been developing

their ideas as they go along. Even if the end result is not complete, these works are still meaningful, particularly within the context of this competition.

- LIN: I really like its character design, which left a big impression on me. The color is also very pretty. The ending of **The Launch** is not very good, and the framing is confusing; you never know if the spaceship is on the left or the right, and he gets the screen direction wrong all the time. The animation of **Back to Base** is quite good, but it's far too long. You could easily cut out 6 or 7 minutes and still include all the story beats. He must have spent a lot of time making this, so he doesn't want to cut things out.
- LAM: The relationships within the story are very complicated, and criss-cross between different dimensions. I think he deliberately left things unclear, but if you watch carefully you will notice the difference between the various dimensions and small details.
- LO: Perhaps the creator is too immersed in his own world. He definitely has something to say, but that slowed the pace down. He spent four years working on this, probably because he worked by himself.
- LIN: Maybe if he had done a storyboard first, he would have saved a lot of time and effort, which would also have made the story simpler.
- LO: He is definitely not an expert, and this is probably his first effort. The concept of **Aeriform Touch** is very good, but he does not express it very well, and the ending is too rushed. The beginning is very pretty, but he is unable to keep it up.
- LAM: It describes two people from different worlds coming together. But the story is too trivial and not complete enough.
- PANG: He drew it on tracing paper.
- LO: **Lei Fung** is too slight.
- LAM: It has a sense of humor, but not enough. The finalists works are chosen from 61 entries, and these works are all very unique. They show the multi-dimensional nature of Hong Kong independent animation. All the works have their own distinctive character, but many are not so complete.
- YUEN: Compared with previous years, there are many women directors. Perhaps this has something to do with the number of educational institutions in existence.
- LAM: Also the works tend to be more concerned with feelings. They are full of personality, and visually distinctive.
- PANG: Unfortunately many do not enter the profession after they graduate. I wonder if it's because they can't find related jobs?
- LAM: Not necessarily. Perhaps they do not want to use this skill to earn money. On the whole entrants rely on their feelings, but their stories are not complete enough.
- KWONG: How does Hong Kong's indie animation compare with other countries?
- LIN: The quality of Hong Kong animation varies a great deal. Many works are not very complete, and are typical student works. They start off with a certain concept, but

execute it without fore-planning and merely improvise as they go along, and so the endings feel rushed and incomplete.

LO: Their time management skills are not good.

LIN: If they had spent more time in the planning stage, they would have saved some time in the production stage, and their works will be more complete.

LO: I think their teachers in college probably taught them about production planning, but when they are in production they lose control. Many students do not graduate on time. Some works would definitely benefit from having a few more weeks of production time, but sometimes they just have to finish by a certain deadline.

LIN: Some works are overly ambitious.

YUEN: And the music is too heavy-handed.

LIN: Most works do not have dialogue, so they rely on music.

LO: Perhaps they do not have sufficient personnel to work on the film.

LAM: Many entrants see animation as a medium for expressing their feelings. However many of these feelings are not well developed. This is a problem common in many local works.

LIN: It does not matter so much that they have no dialogue. After all, this can make the work more international. The problem is that the stories are not complete.

LO: Many entrants rely on their feelings alone. I wonder if this is a Hong Kong specialty? Many works lack focus, like *Pick Up & Put Down*, which starts off talking about the old woman, but then switch to disasters.

LIN: If the authors had concentrated on the two main characters, they would have been able to convey their message better, instead of wasting time on the other characters.

LAM: It's because these entrants do not have a boss telling them what to do. This reflects the liberty that these artists enjoy, so I don't think of this as a weakness. Rather, it is the author's own creative decision.

LIN: *Pick Up & Put Down* is already quite good, but if the authors could change things a little bit, it would be even better.

LAM: This work is an RTHK commission project.

LO: But RTHK does not interfere in the director's artistic freedom, although they have references for certain subjects. Some RTHK projects are not that good in terms of the quality of animation and story lines, but they broadcast them anyway.

LAM: RTHK takes into account various elements when deciding on whether to grant the commission, and the concept takes precedence.

LO: No, usually they only care about the budget and the work's length.

LAM: Usually they have a theme. In recent years we recognize a certain RTHK flavor in many of the works.

LO: If the work is around 12 minutes long it is probably an RTHK project.

KWONG: All of you have briefly discussed all the finalist works. Now please select three favorites that you think deserve awards.

LAM: I choose **Back to Base**, **Puff the magic dragon** and **Pick Up & Put Down** .

LIN: I choose **Puff the magic dragon**, **Pick Up & Put Down** and **Before the End**.

YUEN: I choose **Back to Base** and **Pick Up & Put Down** .

PANG: I also choose **Back to Base** and **Pick Up & Put Down** .

LO: I choose **Back to Base**, **Before the End** and **Puff the magic dragon**.

KWONG: We can eliminate those without any votes. We are left with four works, **Back to Base**, **Puff the magic dragon**, **Pick Up & Put Down** and **Before the End**. You can give nominations for the Gold Award now.

LO: I appreciate the attitude of **Back to Base**. It matches well with the mission of ifva. It is very independent and the production is not commercial. Even though it has flaws, you can clearly see the animator's efforts. It is very long and he cannot control many elements, nonetheless his efforts are not wasted. Next time, if he had an advisor by his side, he would probably do better.

LIN: Looking at the work, you can sense his improvement as he went along.

LO: Those of us who are animators appreciate that even tiny movements may take a lot of time to draw. His technique is quite good, and he pays a lot of attention to details.

PANG: The work reminds me of hand-drawn animation from the past.

LO: Perhaps he enjoys the process too much. He kept working and was unable to stop.

YUEN: In the scene where the character is giving CPR, you can see his reflection in the water.

LO: He is very concerned with small details. The overall design is simple yet effective.

LIN: Technically it's very accomplished, but I wasn't very much affected by it emotionally. I was more touched by **Before the End** and **Pick Up & Put Down** .

LO: That's because it's fragmented and not like a complete story. It does not explain the ins and outs of each character, but more like describing an event. Compared with a more complete story, this film leaves a different impression on the audience. People like **The Shoes** because its story is touching, but just looking at a still picture of the film may be quite frightening.

KWONG: Aside from this film, do you have any other nominees for the Gold Award?

LAM: I suggest giving the Gold Award to **Back to Base**. Originally, I wanted to give the Silver Award to **Puff the magic dragon**, but there are not enough votes.

- LO: You can lobby for votes.
- LAM: I like **Back to Base** a lot. It successfully creates a strange, alien world that is different from everyday reality. The part where they rescue the alien is interesting and heart-warming. When I was watching it I sense that he made the film this way on purpose; it's not that he could not express the story clearly, but that he didn't want to make things so obvious. The story concerns two characters coming together, like brothers, and is filled with love and sunshine. The animator created his own unique style, and even though the middle part is a bit boring, it is not important. The alien world he created is very complete, especially in comparison with **Corn**, in which you don't know what kind of planet it was. Even though this is not so clearly stated in **Back to Base** either, you can see that he has established his own well-thought-out system, which is laudable. I like the action in **Puff the magic dragon**. Most new directors care more about feelings than action. **Puff the magic dragon** uses a lot of live action rotoscope, which works together well. It describes a hallucinogenic world, which contrasts with the bright world of **Back to Base**, and is shocking to me. **Puff the magic dragon** has a certain Japanese-comics inspired form, but he manages to incorporate many Japanese elements into his own style. His depiction of action is very detailed, which shows that he is an experienced animator.
- LO: He participated in ifva several times before.
- LAM: Watching this on a big screen, I was impressed by the use of strong, bright colors, and that he successfully built a good atmosphere with his editing. I don't mind the ending part, which describes a very Hong Kong world which contains old people, neighbors, the unemployed, young people. It feels like the work is influenced by certain guidelines because it was commissioned, which weakens its independent spirit.
- YUEN: RTHK usually sets the topic when soliciting commission works, which are generally quite broad, like "Hong Kong flavor".
- LAM: This year there are many works that talk about the family, and is close to the creators lives. Even though **Before the end** and **The Shoes** are not very complete, I appreciate their independent spirit.
- LIN: Of the four remaining works, I like **Back to Base** the least. In many ways it is very subtle, but as an artist, I think he has a responsibility to let the audience understand what he's trying to say. Right now there is something lacking about this work.
- PANG: **Back to Base** has its own sense of integrity and animation design. The time machine reminds me of Doraemon.
- YUEN: On the whole it reminds me of an animation program I saw on MTV, which also features gadgets.
- LO: You can view that as a strategy. **Back to Base** has no dialogue and few sound effects. Its soundtrack is mostly music. It is quite minimal.
- LIN: That's because he wants to concentrate on animation.
- LO: You could see that as a flaw. **Pick Up & Put Down** is a bit predictable.
- PANG: **Before the end** has room for improvement. Its stop-motion and other technique

is quite good, but on the whole it is not that touching. **Puff the magic dragon** has strong visuals and rhythm, but it would be better if the rhythm was not so monotonous. Now the work does not leave much of an impression. If the ending part was longer it would be better.

- YUEN: **Puff the magic dragon** is not novel. Visually **Back to Base** is interesting, and manages to conjure up a unique and personal world.
- PANG: When I watched it the first time I felt it was too slow, but on second viewing I thought it was okay.
- YUEN: I like **The Shoes** better. The author must have had that kind of experience to be able to write a story like that. On the other hand one could make up a story like **Before the End**.
- LAM: **The Shoes** is very feminine, while **Before the end** is very masculine. I like the latter's character design. On the big screen you can really sense the protagonist's loneliness, and the story is quite complete. This year many entries are about remembering one's elders, which has been a popular theme in the past few years.
- LO: This sort of theme is easy to handle for young people.
- YUEN: Perhaps they are influenced by their teachers, who may be fond of this kind of topic.
- LAM: In recent years many works have to do with family relationships. Both **The Shoes** and **Before the end** share similar themes. The former is more personal in its treatment, and the set design is a bit too simplistic, which I view as a personal choice. However, the film expresses many things not through animation but through texts, and I don't know if that's because the entrant wanted to finish up the film in order to enter it into this competition. The story of **The Shoes** is quite touching, but the connection between shots seems broken and the film does not flow properly. **Before the end** has a stronger sense of completeness, but it is relatively more restrained. I selected to be one of the finalist works, but I don't think it deserves an award.
- LIN: If most people like **Back to Base**, then I can compromise and allow it to win. It fulfills the themes of the competition, which is creativity and independent spirit. The work was created by one person over the course of 4 years, and as such more than qualifies.
- LAM: For Silver Award I nominate **Puff the magic dragon**. Its shots are very powerful and full of personal character.
- PANG: **Pick Up & Put Down** is complete, yet overall the work does not have a strong effect. Compared to **Puff the magic dragon** it is quite weak. However the latter merely revolves around a single topic, and there is not enough variation, even though it is visually quite rich. **Puff the magic dragon** did not leave a strong impression on me.
- LO: **Puff the magic dragon** is abstract and does not have a strong story-line. It simply flows freely, and expresses the creator's feelings.
- YUEN: **Pick Up & Put Down** wants to please everyone, while **Puff the magic dragon** is very personal.

- LO: Which one you prefer depends on your personal taste.
- LAM: ***Puff the magic dragon*** has a very Japanese style, while ***Pick Up & Put Down*** expresses local concern. The two works are very different in style, so it's hard to compare them.
- YUEN: Can we give them both Silver Awards?
- LAM: What's the difficulty?
- KWONG: There is no difficulty. It's up to the five jurors, as long as there is consensus among you. But I would advise against giving out too many awards.
- LIN: I like ***Puff the magic dragon***. The animator has good technique, and the lighting and composition are both well-done. Visually it is a striking work, and I nominate it for the Silver Award. I recommend that we give special mention to ***Pick Up & Put Down*** to commend it for its local flavor and substance. This work carries a good message.
- LAM: Although ***Puff the magic dragon*** has a strong influenced-style, I agree that it is nonetheless a distinguished work.
- LO: Even if he referenced other works, he still needs the ability to execute it. This is no easy task.
- PANG: My views are just the opposite. I recommend giving ***Pick Up & Put Down*** the Silver Award, and ***Puff the magic dragon*** special mention. For me the latter made achievements in certain areas, and so ought to be commended, but does not deserve to win the Silver Award. That's just my view.
- LAM: This is a cruel decision, and comes down to a battle between styles. Very often when judging a work, one is split between foregrounding technical skills or subject matter. ***Pick Up & Put Down*** and ***Before the end*** share a similar theme in that they are both about human nature. I would be happy if both works get special mention, while ***Puff the magic dragon*** deserves the Silver Award.
- PANG: I have no problem with that.
- KWONG: So our Gold Award this year goes to ***Back to Base***, Silver Award goes to ***Puff the magic dragon***, and two special mentions go to ***Pick Up & Put Down*** and ***Before the end***.
- LAM: It's a pity that ***The Shoes*** didn't get a special mention.
- LO: Three special mentions would be too many.
- LAM: Also I think it's a pity that some works did not become a finalist, like the one about electric plugs. But sometimes you have to make a choice. The four works that received awards are all distinctive and worthy of note.

Animation Category

Gold Award

Back to base

MAK Siu-fung, HO Ka-chiu

Silver Award

Puff the Magic Dragon

HO Ka-ho, TSUI Ka-hei

Special Mention

Pick Up & Put Down

Lilian FU

Special Mention

Before the End

CHIO Ka-ian, Fion, LEUNG Chi-hang, PANG Kuen-yee, Pierre, LAU Sze-long, YEUNG Wai-ping