

The 16th ifva Asian New Force Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Maggie Lee(LEE), Aruna Vasudev (ARUNA), Cheng Hsiao-Tse
(CHENG)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG)

Translator: Tammy Cheung

LEE: I did the pre-selection and when I thought about the works again, I like the Mongolian one more than I thought. It's really beautiful and for a documentary, it has so much drama.

ARUNA: You're deeply wounded by the tragedy of the situation, yet it is done without any tragedy. It's just telling the story about the people, and it moves you to tears. It's a very strong film.

LEE: The editing is very concise, and the use of musical symphony is very good.

ARUNA: It's not done in a tragic way, but it's done in a straight-forward way, which touches you even more deeply. I was also very touched by the Georgian film ***The April Chill***.

CHENG: I feel documentaries and fiction films should not be put in the same category. I like the Mongolian film too, but I can't use the same standard to judge it as fiction films. I myself also make fiction films, I know that the story-telling technique and the director's point of view is very different between a fiction film and a documentary. But I do understand the message of the film, and I was able to feel its power and sincerity.

ARUNA: How do you feel about the other films in general?

CHENG: I personally like the Georgian film. I find the mise-en-scene very mature. Even though I don't understand the historical background of the country, I can feel the impact of the story through its strong imagery. In general the standard of the films is quite high. I know some of the Taiwanese directors, and I was impressed by their creativity. Overall there is a great variety among the finalist works, they include many different kinds of stories, which is wonderful.

LEE: Even though the award tries to look for more edgy works with interesting new

techniques, there is not many experimental works. Most are conventional narrative works.

KWONG: Do you see the same case in other festivals?

LEE: ifva entries from early years were more experimental. Maybe even five years ago.

KWONG: Even though I didn't see all the 500 entries, maybe there are some experimental works among them, but maybe they're not very good. That's why they didn't make it into the 70 in the second round.

LEE: Even among the 70 I didn't see many experimental films, maybe only two.

KWONG: The Asian New Force category is very competitive.

ARUNA: ***My mom's great Kimchi stew*** has a great sense of humor, which is such a pleasure. ***Lies*** also to some extent. Most of the work is very serious.

LEE: It's also quite an original idea.

ARUNA: The young boy in ***My mom's great Kimchi stew*** is very good.

CHENG: It' is not easy to make a comedy in terms of acting and editing. This film generated a lot of laughter at the screening.

KWONG: What do you think of ***Repair*** ?

CHENG: I like it, but if the editing were improved it would be a better film. Even though I knew the ending would come, it still moved me.

LEE: When I did the first round selection, my first favorite was The April Chill, I also liked ***Sleeping with Her***, but maybe it's too pretty, and the storytelling may be too simple.

ARUNA: I thought ***Once Upon a Time in Kinmen*** also has a sense of humor. It's very nicely done.

CHENG: ***Sleeping with Her*** is by a female director, so it's very unexpected of her to make a film like that, to express a psychological state. The cinematographer is very good,

and I know much of the film was shot in a studio. The cinematography is very beautiful.

LEE: I met the director in Rotterdam a year ago, who told me that they tried to contact a famous Indonesian actress for the role. I liked the fact that even though the director was only making a short film, she's trying to cooperate with a different culture.

CHENG: I saw a previous version of *Birthday*, the whole story takes place inside a living room. This is the second version of the film, and the characterization is much richer. In the screening, I noticed the audience was very touched by this film.

LEE: What do you think of *Kinmen*?

CHENG: I think the directors are very bold in tackling this subject matter about China-Taiwan relationship. Most Taiwan directors wouldn't touch this issue. The directors used a satirical approach, which makes it quite special.

LEE: Some of the cultural reference like the songs is very specific, and I don't know if a foreign audience would understand it.

ARUNA: It's necessary to know social/historical background to understand a film, but films can make you understand also. Directors should state such information in the synopsis so that the audience can understand it. *Happy Birthday* is not a great film, but it is such a clever social commentary on what is happening in Iran and is filled with humor. It's very strong and very well done.

KWONG: During the first round, we saw a lot of good short films from Taiwan, but many of them are about family. Maggie suggested we include *Once Upon a Time in Kinmen* because it is more ambitious. It's not just about family but more about politics. That's why we included it in the top ten. Do you want to say anything about *Happy Birthday*?

ARUNA: I don't have much to say about it. It's nicely done. I really liked the way the director made a clever commentary on the Iranian situation. But as a film I prefer the others.

LEE: I thought *Happy Birthday* is good and well made, but I don't have a strong emotional reaction to it. I don't know why.

ARUNA: Because it's a very simple film about relationships.

CHENG: In terms of acting, both the girl and the boy are very good.

LEE: All the other films have good acting too. Except *Repair*. I don't like the actor in it.

ARUNA: The actors in *Lies* and *My mom's great Kimchi stew* are very good.

KWONG: *The Disappearing Guangzhou* is another documentary from China. What do you think about it?

CHENG: I find the film to be very long when I watched it, which shows that there a problem with it.

ARUNA: It's an exciting subject, but I don't think it came through.

CHENG: If this is for a TV broadcast, it's okay, especially the first half, but as a documentary, it doesn't go deep enough.

LEE: The reason we included this among the finalists is to encourage the filmmaker, because we've seen so many Chinese documentaries talk about really big problems and people suffering so much, but this film has a different style.

CHENG: The style of this film is quite unique.

ARUNA: It's very interesting to explore the transformation of a city and, with it, the transformation of people's lifestyles.

LEE: We also want to encourage this filmmaker because the film is in Cantonese. The government is trying so hard to suppress the dialect. There was a demonstration where people wanted the freedom to speak Cantonese, and people got arrested. I don't think it deserves to win. We just wanted it in the selection.

KWONG: Each of you can select two or three works that deserve awards.

LEE: My favorites are *April Chill*, *ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY* and *My mom's great Kimchi stew*.

ARUNA: These are my three favorites too, but I also like *Lies*.

LEE: *Lies* is good too, but I think *My mom's great Kimchi stew* is very strong.

ARUNA: *Lies* has a lovely idea, especially how the relationship between the kids comes out. It's very nicely done.

CHENG: *April Chill*, *Repair* and *Happy Birthday*.

KWONG: We'll eliminate those which have got no votes: *Lies*, *The Disappearing Guangzhou*, *Birthday*, *Once Upon a Time in Kinmen*, *Sleeping with Her*. Are you ready to vote for the grand prize, or would you like to discuss a little bit?

ARUNA: There are two with only one vote, *Repair* and *Happy Birthday*. Maybe you can try to convince us.

CHENG: It's not necessary. Aruna, yesterday you told me that you like *Happy Birthday*.

ARUNA: I do, but after seeing the other works today, I like them better.

LEE: I think there is a problem with describing the psychological state of the girl in *Happy Birthday*. She's very anxious, but it's a bit confusing. In the pre-selection Hitomi was really against this film, because she feels it doesn't make sense for the girl to behave this way. It's impossible that they do not find out this news. The basic premise is unrealistic.

ARUNA: It doesn't bother me. They don't have television and the internet, and they wanted the girl to have a happy birthday. I understand their desire to protect the little sister.

LEE: The technique and emotion of *Happy Birthday* are good.

KWONG: Are you all ready to nominate the grand prize?

ARUNA: *April Chill* got all three votes. I suggest dividing the prize between the Mongolian and the Georgian films. I think they are both very good.

LEE: I would like to give special mention to *My mom's great Kimchi stew* because it's so enjoyable.

CHENG: Does that mean we split the grand prize into two?

KWONG: Yes and they would divide the prize money.

LEE: If you don't like **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** so much, we can respect that.

CHENG: That's not what I mean. What I'm thinking of is the name of the award. If I were an award recipient, I would like to know why I received the award. Documentaries are at a disadvantage when competing with fiction films. If we split the grand prize, should we name the award differently for the documentary?

LEE: I personally think it would be okay to just give the award to **April Chill**.

ARUNA: I think the Mongolian film is so good, you should divide the award. It talks about a terrible tragedy without sentimentality, which is extremely difficult to do. It's the kind of film that will stay with me. Some images I will never forget, like the scene when he says he will buy 5 kilos of flour for my family. But he says it very calmly as he offers the animal skin. **April Chill** also has moments like that, and for me it's very difficult to choose between them.

LEE: I like them both as well. Objectively speaking, **April Chill** is obviously better as a film technically, whereas emotionally I'm touched by **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY**.

ARUNA: The Mongolian film is also very well done and well shot.

LEE: If we give them both the grand prize, it would look like they are equally good, but I think **April Chill** is better.

ARUNA: They are equally good. It's a majority decision, and I'll go by that. But I really urge you because it'll be very helpful for both filmmakers to get that money.

LEE: What about special mention?

ARUNA: We can give it to **My mom's great Kimchi stew** if you like.

LEE: We can give the camera to **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** and the money to **April Chill?**

ARUNA: The money and the recognition of an award would mean a lot to both of them, because neither is a big filmmaking country, and it would mean a lot for local audiences to see films from Mongolia and Georgia. So I urge you to divide the award.

CHENG: **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** is very moving. As a documentary it is hard to compare it with fiction films.

ARUNA: **April Chill** is also documentary. It is based on actual facts.

CHENG: I think it would be unfair if the documentary didn't get a prize. I think these two films should get prizes. I think **April Chill** should get the grand prize and **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** the second prize, if you have such a prize.

LEE: I like them both, but I feel it would be slightly unfair for **April Chill** to share the prize because in my opinion it is better. I don't know if there is a way around that.

KWONG: The organizers are quite flexible. In the past we have had two entries for grand prize, and two entries for special mention.

LEE: I think **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** deserves more than a special mention.

KWONG: If we decide to give two grand prizes, they would split the \$30,000. You asked whether it's possible to have a first and a second prize, with both receiving some money. We haven't done that before, we could try and accommodate it.

ARUNA: We can give the special jury prize to **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY** with a little less money.

LEE: That's a great idea.

ARUNA: We can give \$10,000 and the camera to **ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY**, and **April Chill** gets \$20,000, and special mention to **My mom's great Kimchi stew**.

KWONG: Then the value of the prizes will be similar.

ARUNA: Yes, but the grand prize is more prestigious.

LEE: That's fine with me.

CHENG: What would the entrants and participants think?

ARUNA: That doesn't matter. It's for ifva to decide.

CHENG: I have participated in competitions like this before, and was upset when they changed the prizes.

KWONG: We have never encountered this problem before. In the past we have had two grand prize winners, and nobody complained. Our principle is that only two works split the prize, not three or four. So we decide that ***April Chill*** is the Grand Prize winner and gets \$20,000, ***ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY*** gets the special jury prize with \$10,000 and the camera. Then special mention for ***My mom's great Kimchi stew***.

Asian New Force Category

Grand Prize

The April Chill

Tornike BZIAVA (Georgia)

Special Jury Prize

ZUD. COLD SYMPHONY

MARKHAA Buyan (Mongolia)

Special Mention

My mom's great Kimchi stew

HAN Seung-hun (South Korea)