

## The 14<sup>th</sup> ifva Animation Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Wong Yung (YUNG), Percy Fung (FUNG), Neco Lo (LO), Felix Ip(IP)

Absent Jurors: Alan Wan (ALAN)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Rachel Wan (WAN)

### **Shell**

LO : There is plenty of room for improvement. The snail is quite unique and funny. The film uses glow colours to display a very consistent style, which is relevant to what it talks about. It is a bit quirky; the character design is so-so; the camera movement is overused. The 3D treatment is not developed enough and there are too many black-outs--some of which might be intentional, say, to tune down the degree of violence in the ending massacre. That might not be the best solution, however. Overall speaking, it is fairly average.

WONG : The shot that I like most is the top shot at the beginning. The storyboard and its film-look are relatively weak; the gags are banal. It is not really that bad but it is also not the best. Just like the rest of the 3D animations in the competition, it is not a fully developed work. The film is packed with either half slow motion or actions without impact; the movement or the walking is done rather crudely, too.

IP : The set and lighting at the start is quite good, and so is the colour treatment which is quite attractive. But the story-telling and the camera movement that follow cannot keep up. There are some punch lines at times, but they are not delivered clearly. The ending is kind of shocking to look at whereas in the middle it drags on too much. Also, some editing points are too rough.

FUNG : Personally I do not have much to comment about **Shell**, which is quite entertaining.

IFVA: The absent adjudicator, Alan WAN, comments **Shell** as follow: He appreciates the character design which displays the grandeur of a stage work. As a work of collaboration, it demonstrates good teamwork with panache. However, the script is just average.

### **Butterfly Effect**

LO : It is full of visual movement, which is interesting. It employs the technique of paper

cutting/ photo cutting which requires quite a lot of labour and obviously they are done painstakingly. Looking at the background we would imagine the large amount of photos he has cut to achieve such effect. It is like a work of handicraft. The film may not go as smoothly as we expect but it has achieved something. The song is a long one, with various movements and content. It needs more refinement in making good combination of the segments, music and visuals. At some point, the tempo goes wrong. Being a music video, it needs to improve the alignment of the animation and the music.

WONG : It has a dynamic set design but I would say its cinematography is a bit dull. There could be more movement like zooming in and out. Overall speaking, it is an interesting work.

IP : There are too many medium shots. It is too loud in terms of the colour treatment. This problem has been dealt with in the middle of the film. If he can come up with a better colour scheme, he can definitely bring out more happiness in the film. As for the rhythm, the music and the animation are way too separated. This needs to be improved.

FUNG : He attempts to employ a lot of editing skills to establish good linkage between scenes. I appreciate such effort, especially when it requires a lot of photo-shooting to plan ahead. As for the rhythm, it takes time to perfect the necessary technique.

We have discussed two phenomena about this year's works: on the one hand, people are equipped with better skills and software support. On the other hand, it seems they are weaker in story telling and thematic expression. This film is a good demonstration of these facts. It is created with a liberated use of the media, but it lacks the efforts required in developing the content.

### **Listeners**

WONG : ***Listeners*** might be too short in length and unable to show the relationship between music, butterfly and magic. The street performance in the beginning comes too hastily. Then we see a group of aliens arriving with the mission to destroy. Before the audience can get hold of what happens, the protagonist is shot and killed, which is really difficult for viewers to follow and understand. Visually, it is relatively raw and simple, which in a way is a kind of style. I do not particularly find it impressive.

FUNG : It's like being churned out before the deadline. Overall speaking, the skills and the story are incomplete.

IP : It is just too short. It looks familiar in terms of some of its visual execution. The worlds of the aliens and of the street performer are not compatible.

### **The Busker**

WONG : **The Busker** is weak in its character movement and performance. There are some lovely designs but it does not touch me at all.

FUNG : Some scenes are done in a meticulous way, for example, the clown wiggles his waist as he enters the room. The rhythm is not good; perhaps it is because of the inexperience of the student-director. However, he does pay a lot of effort in developing the story, but its delivery flops.

IP : This story requires strong performance. It does not have any dialogues. With a better timing it can be cut down around one minute further. The character design is quite adorable; some of the ideas are quite refined, and with good use of colour.

LO : It is action-packed, but not rhythmical. The clown and the piano-playing lack energy. There is consistency among the colour, character design and the editing of the streets. It gives a flavour of a fairy tale.

### **All Around Me**

WONG : **All Around Me** has the best visual treatment among our several 3D animations. You might find it a bit dragged on in some scenes or in its rhythm, which reduces the degree of its impact. The characters' performance is rough, using the technique of editing in Japanese cartoon. They lack finely crafted expressions. The intervals in the beginning are not a good choice. But it has achieved quite a lot in its lighting and the creation of an atmosphere. Overall speaking, the characters and the background go well together.

IP : I am impressed by its lighting. The beginning scene at the school is delivered fairly well but soon I get lost when seeing the locker opened--I am confused towards whether it is the inner struggle of the character, who can finally overcome it because of the girl.

The pair of flapping wings at the beginning is well crafted, although more refinement is needed in most of the details. The character design is as mainstream as the Japanese cartoon characters. Its flop is mainly about the hair, which looks okay in the front but spiky like a porcupine or a durian at the back. It diverts the audience's attention.

FUNG : It is the most developed work among the several 3D animations on the list. It has good graphic design. Yet, it seems to me that like most of the works here, it looks unfinished and as if it was prepared in a rush. I do hope one day he will get to finish it.

### **Such Is Life**

IP : It demonstrates good techniques and is very intact. You can get a clear picture of what it is about, and of the every punch in the course. In particular, I find one montage very touching. Outdoor shooting is interesting. The camera tracking at the beginning is quite a surprise. Despite the clay models are not exceptionally attractive, they are pleasing to the eye. The film is also well structured, although the ending can be made more condensed.

FUNG : It is my intention to persuade you to consider this film as the exemplary of the year. In terms of its creative line-up, the resources it employs and the degree of independence, I believe it serves as a landmark for ifva. I believe there is always room for improvement for a work, but in my mind, it is near-perfect.

IP : It is very entertaining.

LO : It indeed needs refinement, but given the level of difficulty of this work, it has really come a long way. The relationship between the two protagonists is clearly conveyed. Yet, I still find the ending too banal. The dark force represented by "Human" can be identified as the auteur or something else. It is not clearly explained, and neither does it tell why the auteur has to separate the two of them. In short, whenever "Human" shows up, it is the time when the two have to be separated, which is too dramatic. The only thing I find unsettling is the use of the Chinese music when the female lead fist appears. It does not match well with the piano theme tune and makes a weird twist. Even worse is how the Chinese music comes in at the beginning two segments, and then being cut out completely, leading into the sound of the piano.

WONG : I was serious when I said it was anti-religion. In the beginning of the film, a man first comes into sight and then a woman follows; it is similar to the Creation. However, the film has not set up any rule of game for the audience to follow and decipher it—what can be done here? What can be done by the man and the woman and what are they capable of? At one point they can make flowers out of magic, at another, they are helpless when they hurt their heads.

The camera movement and the scenes are finely crafted and attractive. There are magical moments when the characters go out of the house. It is a stop motion pleasing to the eye. At the start, it seems to be probing into religion and making fun of it, but the attempt is not sustained throughout the story. I agree that it fails to give a good ending.

IFVA : Alan WAN thinks ***Such Is Life*** is the most impressive of all. The single-mindedness and concentration of the director speaks to him. He comes to think that perhaps the director is very indulgent to his own work.

### **Yim**

LO : ***Yim*** is similar to this year's Oscar Award-winning animation short film (La Maison en Petits Cubes) in terms of the theme and the 2D treatment. Perhaps it is a coincidence. It has a very precise maneuver of art direction and so is its overall execution. However, at some point it has gone too far and got a bit showy. Still that is acceptable. In the film, we reminisce about the things past in Hong Kong through the devil's eyes. It has a very appropriate length and delivers coherently.

WONG : The intervals are well designed. I am particular impressed by the scene where the camera walks up along the stela of the King of Kowloon until the screen fades to black at where the Devil is waiting. The timing is good and it makes an impact. It has the best control of timing among all the works. As for the visual design, it gives a magical feeling of a fairy tale, which is great.

FUNG : The control of timing and the visual composition are remarkable. It gives a strong film-look and suits well for big-screen showing. It requires a lot of time and effort to finish it even if it is to be done by two persons.

### **My Mother Is an Alien**

FUNG : I am kind of against *My Mother Is an Alien* for it is too “televisualised”. It is not as autonomous as the rest of the films.

LO : The work employs a safe style to tell a story. Visually it is not particularly smart. The dialogues work and they are essential in the film. If compared to other works such as *Yim* which uses no dialogues but successfully puts the story across, there is no reason for me to choose *My Mother Is an Alien*.

IP : I find it too noisy. I think it would be better to have the talking start later so as to allow more space for the audience to feel the colours. The editing works smoothly; its pictures, colour and lighting are gorgeous, with the latter being done in a very professional way. In this way, however, it looks too commercial and lacks the independent spirit. I do not quite get what the song is about until I read the lyrics in the subtitles. It would be better if it uses either more music or makes it quieter. I think it delivers too much to the audience at one time. But speaking of its pictures, colour and lighting, the elements are just gorgeous; the character design is not bad, too.

WONG : The content does not match well with its title. To me, it is not crazy enough. Normal people do not think of the possibility that one’s mother is an alien. If so, there must be something crazy and hysterical to happen. After I read the title, the film however does not sustain itself to meet the expectation the title brings about. There are even elements of melodrama such as shouting for mom at the graveyard. I think the script loses track of what it wants to talk about. In terms of the production, it is very professional. Despite a few problems in the dubbing and music, it is coherent and a pleasure to watch—but definitely not a wonder.

### **Panda Toy**

LO : I do not have any comment about *Panda Toy*.

FUNG : Its story is special; that’s why I chose it in the beginning.

WONG : Visually it is not bad at all, with some interesting graphic design.

FUNG : It has a special story, about who on earth is the consumer. It is the work with the strongest storyline which is also clear and comprehensible. The skills displayed are of the standard kind. When compared to *All Around Me*, the latter is more

outstanding.

WONG : Its style is clean and minimal and it is expressed in a coherent way. I still prefer the outcome of **Panda Toy** to **Shell**. Indeed, **Panda Toy** has an interesting story where a question is raised right at the beginning for everyone to contemplate. The ending, however, is too simplified.

IP : The theme is within the director's grip. It is a smart way to choose a theme like this. The character design sparkles in combination of the stage lighting without using too many backgrounds, for example, the capsule toy vending machines at the beginning of the film.

IFVA: Now we come to the next round of discussion. You may each pick three works.

FUNG : I would suggest four of them, with the best one having three points, then two points for the next. We may allow two works to have one point. Two points for **Butterfly Effect**; one point for **All Around Me**; three points for **Such Is Life** and two points for **Yim**.

IP : Three points for **Such Is Life**; two points for **Yim**; one point for **My Mother Is an Alien** and another one point for **All Around Me**.

WONG : Three points for **Such Is Life**; two points for **Yim** and **My Mother Is an Alien**; one point for **All Around Me**.

LO : I am also giving three points to **Such Is Life**; two to **Yim** and one to **All Around Me**; another one point to **Butterfly Effect**.

IFVA : Alan WAN has picked and ranked three works; he nominates **Shell** for a Special Mention, Silver Prize **Such Is Life** and Gold Prize **My Mother Is an Alien**.

IFVA : Most of us give **Such Is Life** the highest marks except 溫紹倫; **Yim** follows.

FUNG : Back then I was about to give three points to **All Around Me** because it took a painstaking volume of work to finish. I understand we could not endorse a work simply because of the effort it pays. That's why I chose **Such Is Life** in the end.

WONG : I have no objection to awarding **Such Is Life** the Gold Prize.

LO : I am not suggesting **Yim** copies from other works. Perhaps the director did see the animation I mentioned before. There are different ways of copying. This film has a different direction; it is not melancholic. The similarities between the two works are the art direction in which both use 2D retouching of water-colour, and the looking for memory under water. I believe even for that oscar-winning animation, its idea might not be totally original. Thus, I am okay with it.

FUNG : The part I like most is the closing of the folding gate. It gives a very special angle to view.

WONG : I like the way it leads us out from the tea house, goes into the water and then leads us out again, creating a very good contrast and pace. It is lively and fun to watch.

FUNG : Anyone thinks **My Mother Is an Alien** is better than **All Around Me**?

IFVA: shall we also listen to the comments of Alan WAN "Its animation is well crafted with sharp pace, turning the seemingly heavy emotions into amusement. It expresses the respect for mother in an alternative way. I am drawn into it also because it speaks with local sentiments." Neither Neco LO nor Percy FUNG chooses this film. Would you two like to say something about it?

LO : I reckon the limited number of awards and I try to consider it from my own preference. I will give both **Butterfly Effect** and **All Around Me** one point. The latter, which is obviously under the influence of Japanese animation, is praiseworthy. We can see the director's endeavour and he in fact has come a long way. I also witness the efforts of the group of creators of **Butterfly Effect**, and I like its cinematography. **My Mother Is an Alien** comes close to the two but is not as strong as them because of a certain flaws.

FUNG : Any one wants to say something in support of **My Mother Is an Alien**?

WONG : My hope is to have both **Yim** and **My Mother Is an Alien** awarded the Silver Prize. I gave them the same score. If to rank the two, **Yim** would come first. But it seems that **My Mother Is an Alien** deserves something more than a Special Mention. I would suggest giving two Silver Prizes, and **All Around Me** and **Butterfly Effect** to receive the Special Mentions. Let's discuss about it.



FUNG : It is acceptable to me. Still, I would like to defend **All Around Me** and **Butterfly Effect**. **My Mother Is an Alien** is done with much organizational and financial support. I do not know if this team have had enough money to work on it in the end, and I dare not to speculate if **All Around Me** and **Butterfly Effect** have any commercial support. It seems to me that the efforts in making these two films are all-out, and relatively they displayed a stronger sense of the independent spirit. I would also like to see more people being recognized; so, I would support the proposal mentioned just now.

LO : I think it is too much like a melodrama and television cartoons. I am not against it but when it comes to choosing between these works, I think **Yim** performs better and with a richer imagination and visual design.

FUNG : I have decided to pick **Yim** for the Silver Prize and the rest would be several Special Mentions.

WONG : I hope it is okay to have some extra Special Mentions.

IFVA: What we would like to do is to endorse good work instead of awarding prizes to each and every one of them. The difference between the Gold, Silver and the Special Mention is that, the former two are works with better overall performances while Special Mention draws the attention of the judges for excelling in some particular parts despite a weaker overall performance.

IP : It is hard to choose. Considering the independent spirit, creativity and the topic, I prefer **Yim**.

FUNG : I have decided to pick **Yim** for the Silver Award. It is almost as good as the winning work.

LO : I agree to award **All Around Me** the Silver Prize.

IP : I also choose one for the Gold and one for the Silver, the latter being **All Around Me**.

IFVA: Only one vote for two Silver Prize.

WONG : No problem.

IFVA: Now that the Silver Prize is chosen. Any recommendation about Special Mention?

WONG : ***My Mother Is an Alien*** must be in, and I hope ***All Around Me*** can be in as well.

FUNG : My choice is ***Butterfly Effect*** but it seems we are giving too many Special Mentions.

LO : If there are only two places, I would go for ***My Mother Is an Alien*** and ***All Around Me***.

IP : Me too.

IFVA : This year's Gold Prize of the Animation Category is ***Such Is Life***; Silver Prize goes to ***Yim*** and Special Mentions go to ***My Mother Is an Alien*** and ***All Around Me***.

### **Animation Category**

#### **Gold Award**

*Such is Life*

Emily Lai-ming WONG

#### **Silver Award**

*Yim*

Chun-yu CHUI, Wai-yee CHAN

#### **Special Mention**

*All Around Me*

Hey-chiu YEUNG

#### **Special Mention**

*My Mother is an Alien*

Sin-ling YEUNG, Sze-kit LAU