

## The 17<sup>th</sup> ifva Asian New Force Category Jury Meeting Transcript

Jurors in Attendance: Lee Ping-bin (LEE), Roystan Tan (TAN), Raymond PHATHANAVIRANGOON (P.)

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

KWONG: Today we are going to discuss the award recipients of the Asian New Force Category. The Asian New Force Category, which was founded in 2002, accepts works from residents of all Asian countries/regions outside of Hong Kong. This year we received more than 500 works; since we place no specific restriction on the genre of the work, the works received include animations, experimental films and drama films. The only constraint that we have is that the entry must be a film of no longer than 30 minutes. The review process began last year when 3 members of our pre-selection panel watched all the entry works and selected more than 70 works for the second round. Then in October, Lam Kee-to, Jacqueline Liu and myself went through all those works and picked the 10 finalists that you watched in the past couple days. Today our goal is to select the 3 prize recipients from those 10 finalists. The Gold Prize winner will receive cash prize of \$30,000 and a trophy; the Silver Prize winner will receive a Sony HD recorder while the Special Mention winner will receive a certificate. The objective of this category is to encourage Asian filmmakers to produce films and to encourage their interactions with local filmmakers from Hong Kong. The two main criteria that we value the most for award consideration are independent spirit and creativity. We will now proceed to round table discussion of each finalist and we will begin with *Bleach* from South Korea.

LEE: Actually I find this animation interesting. My interpretation of the film seems to differ from that of the director and that means there could be more than one interpretation to his image. My impression of this film is that one needs to be adventurous, creative and courageous in the face of danger; one needs to seek breakthrough and pursues something meaningful in life. The film is inspiring, interesting and I was moved.

TAN: My impression is that this film would be better off without the subtitles. It is a work of animation and the audience should be able to understand the director's message through the motion of its characters. With the subtitles, the viewers have to digest an extra layer of content. I find the director overused music in his storytelling; it is doubtful whether the film can move its audience without the use of music. It could have been a better film with less music.

P.: I agree with Royston's view. The biggest issue of this film is its subtitle. A film should give its audience some room for imagination and the subtitle completely removes that room. Saying too much has a negative impact on the narrative. I, too, have reservation about the use of music but overall the animation work is well done.

LEE: I find it a pity as well. Without the subtitle, this piece of work could have given us more room for imagination and we could all have different interpretations of the story. Some might think this film comes from a country of totalitarian regime and its citizens are trying to break some barriers. When a film tries to say too much, it actually creates a constraint on the story and that is a bit of a shame.

P.: I feel that we would have had a very different reaction to this film if the post-production is done in a slightly different way.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***The Serenity Prayer*** from Japan.

P.: I have seen this type of story many times before; the shooting style is rather simple and lacks originality. The child actor did a great job but overall the film lacks originality.

LEE: My take is that once the child actor shows up, the entire film just falls apart, for the child actor looks too much of a performer, rather than a story's character. The child actor is too perfect to the point of making his father-son relationship awkward. He does not seem to belong to that family. If the story ends when the child sees his father dead, it would have been more powerful. The joyful scenes in the end seem rather redundant and make this work less convincing.

TAN: This work comes across as "half film, half TV drama" to me and there are some strange TV language signals. The film could have done much better without the second half, for it was rather melodramatic. The child actor was perhaps too perfect to the role.

LEE: In the beginning of the story, I could not believe that the child actor was a homeless boy and found it difficult to integrate him into the story and his role.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***All the Lines Flow Out*** from Singapore.

TAN: When I saw this film, I did not notice that it was shot in Singapore and that gave me something fresh. I was touched by it in a peculiar way, so strange yet so familiar. When the characters catch fish in the river, I felt the director could have ended the

film there. I had trouble following the latter part of the film; perhaps the director himself did not understand either.

P.: I really enjoyed the part with dry ice; at that point I thought the film had something to do with pollution. Like Royston, I had trouble understanding the director's message. Yet, this film gave me a reaction and I was able to immerse myself into it.

TAN: There was a strange chemical reaction; but I did not know how to explain it.

LEE: The director is very strong technically and his camera shot is very powerful even though it can be too long at times. I find this film a bit special but the story sometimes lacks clarity. Overall this is a decent film but as other jury members said, for a film, it can not be just technically superior.

P.: I can say this is a work of a true director; I can sense something strong in his camera shot.

LEE: Yes, I can sense something powerful from this work.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***Broken Night*** from South Korea.

LEE: This type of story is rather popular these days. The shooting style is very much like a short film but the other elements remind me of commercial films. Overall its image is interesting.

P.: I find this film a bit too commercial and a bit too similar to other Korean films. The biggest issue is that the entire story took place in a confined environment; the story seems a bit unconvincing.

TAN: From a technical point of view, this film's shooting style is a bit too commercial. Overall it does not leave a strong impression on me.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***6x8 ft: her space*** from South Korea.

TAN: I had a strong reaction to this film as it comes across as a diary shot for the director herself. It can be a bit self-indulgent at times and that made me a bit uneasy. The main issue comes from the voice-over; it seems a bit too direct and is full of repetition of personal feelings.

P.: I find this film a bit twee.

- LEE: I appreciate the message of this film; most of the time young people just talk the talk but never walk the walk. One should seize the moment seems to be the message, but the rest of the film seems a bit sentimental.
- KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***An Original Photocopy of Happiness*** from Bhutan.
- P.: This work seems like a project for film school. Normally I am a bit allergic to voice-over but I find this film's voice-over substantial.
- LEE: My impression of this film is that it is a bit raw and messy. The camera shot follows the girl in search of her father but from the very beginning it lacks purpose and seems scattered. But if possible, I would like offer her some form of encouragement. It is rare to see a film from Bhutan and it is fine to be raw or inexperienced. I would like to encourage her to continue her artistic work.
- TAN: I agree with the part about offering encouragement. This film actually shed light on a social issue in Bhutan that I did not know of before. Yet somehow it gave me the impression that it is a promotional film for Bhutan; there appears to have a double motive behind the interview with those well-known figures.
- LEE: I think this could have been a better film and the main issue is inexperience.
- TAN: The technique is a bit unclear; it seems to fall somewhere between a documentary and a drama film. Some actor's acting seems a bit uneasy, especially the journalist from the last scene. Even though the male actors are not professional actors, I felt that their dialogue was planned.
- KWONG: We will proceed to discuss ***Turtle and Tears*** from Taiwan.
- LEE: I find this film too Taiwanese and a bit old-fashioned. It is a decent work with good technique but it is not really in line with the independent spirit and creativity that we try to advocate with this festival.
- P.: I have reservation about the shooting technique, especially the use of shallow focus.
- TAN: I feel that the development of the girl's friendship could have given the story a nice ending; unfortunately the film never went towards that direction.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss **Gehennah** from Lebanon.

P.: I do not have a strong impression of this film.

TAN: Me neither.

LEE: I was particularly impressed by two common shots from this film: the scene when the female protagonist saw the bus arriving and that shows her desire to leave in search of freedom.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss **Innocence** from Philippines.

TAN: This film does not leave a strong impression on me, for I have seen this type of film quite a few times and this film does fall into that same mold.

P.: I was really impressed with one particular shot: the students' shadow on the wall. I agree with Royston that I have seen many similar films from Philippines before that deal with social issues such as poverty and corruption.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss **Land of the Heroes** from Iraq.

TAN: This has to be the most outstanding work among the 10 finalists. First I think it is very difficult to direct children but in this film the children actors all give natural performance. The subject of this film is very gloomy but the director is able to inject humor into his story. This film is filled with humor; it is simple yet beautiful.

P.: This film is actually rather dark; even his humor is dark humor.

LEE: This film is very open-minded with a simple setting. The director is able to tackle the subject matter with ease using the imposing war as the backdrop.

KWONG: Please nominate two to three films for award consideration.

P.: My picks are as follows: the Gold Award goes to **Land of the Heroes** from Iraq, the Silver Award goes to **All the Lines Flow Out** from Singapore and the Special Mention goes to **An Original Photocopy of Happiness** from Bhutan.

LEE: My picks are the same: the Gold Award goes to **Land of the Heroes** from Iraq because it is simple yet forceful and it is a complete work in terms of drama and creativity. The Silver Award goes to **An Original Photocopy of Happiness** from Singapore and the Special Mention goes to **An Original Photocopy of Happiness** from Bhutan. I feel that if it would be a meaningful act if we could encourage artists from a country like Bhutan to continue their artistic work.

- TAN: My picks are almost identical: the Gold Award goes to ***Land of the Heroes*** from Iraq, the Silver Award goes to ***All the Lines Flow Out*** from Singapore and the Special Mention goes to ***Broken Night*** from South Korea.
- KWONG: We have reached a consensus on the Gold Award and the Silver Award. Let's discuss the recipient of the Special Mention.
- P.: I think the bigger issue is whether we should issue the Special Mention.
- KWONG: Let me first explain why we have the Special Mention. A few years ago, some jury members pointed out to me that while the Gold Award and the Silver Award go to the top 2 works, there could be other works that deserve some form of recognition, for their acting, their script or other areas that stand out, even though overall they are not as complete.
- TAN: I think if we give the Special Mention to the work from Bhutan on the basis of the director's courage, I can see similar courage in other finalists as well. Needless to say, Bhutan is a rather special country but I do have some reservation about awarding the Special Mention to this work from Bhutan.
- LEE: I believe that the quality of all the finalists are above a certain level and the work from Bhutan is a bit weak by comparison. All of the finalists are pretty good; for instance the work from Taiwan is decent but the director has done too much professional calculation in certain areas. In contrast, the work from Bhutan deserves our encouragement more than others do. I think the Special Mention does not only offer encouragement to this particular director, but it also offers encouragement to the entire nation. Many people from Bhutan might decide to pursue a career in filmmaking because of her receiving of this award. In doing so, I believe we are promoting the independent spirit that we try to advocate with this film festival.
- P.: I admire the director from Bhutan because she is not an academic; she is an independent filmmaker that did not attend the film school.
- TAN : If we award the Special Mention to the director from Bhutan on the premise that it can offer encouragement to other artists from their film industry, I can accept this decision.

KWONG: The jury members have reached their consensus: the Gold Award goes to ***Land of the Heroes*** with cash prize of \$30,000 and a trophy, the Silver Award goes to ***All the Lines Flow Out*** with a Sony HD recorder and the Special Mention goes to ***An Original Photocopy of Happiness***.

**Asian New Force Category**

**Gold Award**

*Land of the Heroes*

Sahim OMAR KALIFA (Iraq)

**Silver Award**

*All the Lines Flow Out*

LIM Yi-yong, Charles (Singapore)

**Special Mention**

*An Original Photocopy of Happiness*

Dechen RODER (Bhutan)