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HKIFF47 ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF FIREBIRD AWARDS AND FIPRESCI PRIZE

9 April 2023 (Hong Kong) – The 47th Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF47) announced winners of the 14 Firebird Awards and FIPRESCI Prize at the Awards Gala held this evening at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, with ***Stonewalling*** stealing the limelight by taking home three awards.

Co-directed by Huang Ji and Otsuka Ryuji, ***Stonewalling*** was named Best Film for the Young Cinema Competition (Chinese Language). The jury commended it for ‘reminding us of the confusion, difficulty and suffering women face nowadays, and the inescapable responsibilities they have to shoulder’. The film’s two female leads, Huang Xiaoxiong and Yao Honggui, respectively playing the mother and the daughter, jointly received the Best Actress award for their distinguished and interactive performances.

In the same category, Macau’s Hong Heng-fai won the Best Director award with ***Kissing the Ground You Walked On*** for ‘brilliantly using the image and sound design to craft a complex narrative in a well-organised structure.’ The Best Actor award went to veteran actor Li Xuejian who impressed the jury with his acting depth and charisma in every scene in ***To Love Again***. The jury also concurred to award a Special Mention to ***Bad Education***, the debut feature of actor-turned-director Kai Ko.

Of the eight films vying in the Young Cinema Competition (World) category, Mexican director Lila Avilés’s ***Totem*** was chosen as the Firebird Award winner for its ‘totality, a unique experience of time and space.’ For his ‘sure-handed subtle directional debut,’ Argentine director Martín Benchimol garnered the Best Director award with ***The Castle***. The Best Actor award went to young Mirko Giannini, who played a tormented adopted child in ***Astrakan***, for ‘bringing this peculiar quality of unexpected strangeness to his first performance.’ To celebrate their brilliantly nuanced and varied performances, the female ensemble cast of ***20,000 Species of Bees*** collectively won the Best Actress award.

In the Documentary Competition, the jury unanimously awarded the Firebird Award to ***Apolonia, Apolonia*** by Danish director Lea Glob, commending it for ‘chanting out the body and soul, revealing its pleasure, melancholy, suspicion, pain, perseverance, resistance and growth, at once lyrically, tenderly and steadfastly.’ Polish filmmakers Elwira Niewiera and Piotr Rosołowski took the Jury Prize with ***The Hamlet Syndrome*** for creating an extraordinary perspective and its deep humanity and emotionality.

Exploring male gaze and voyeuristic violence, Swiss filmmaker Morgane Frund received the Firebird Award in the Short Film Competition with her graduation project, ***Bear***, for its ‘exceptional editing and a conceptual sleight-of-hand.’ The Jury Prize went to ***Smoke Gets in Your Eyes***, a black comedy by Singaporean director Alvin Lee, which presents the absurdity of funeral practice with exquisite camerawork and precise pacing.

Besides winning the Firebird Award, Huang Ji and Otsuka Ryuji’s ***Stonewalling*** was also the pick of the FIPRESCI Prize jury for its profound cinematic portrayal of a young woman who finds inner power that intensely connects audiences.

The 12-day HKIFF47 will conclude tomorrow after showcasing in-theatre and online screenings of nearly 200 films from 64 countries and regions.

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Appendix

A Complete List of Jurors and Award Winners

Young Cinema Competition (Chinese Language)

Jurors: **Hsu Hsiao-Ming** (director and producer), **Zhang Lu** (director), and **Mary Stephen** (film editor)

Award	Film	Recipient	Jury's Comments
Firebird Award	<i>Stonewalling</i>	Huang Ji, Otsuka Ryuji	This film deals head-on with contemporary society, reminding us of the confusion, difficulty and suffering women face nowadays and the inescapable responsibilities they have to shoulder. It inspires the audience to reflect on this important issue in modern society. It is an invaluable film replete with empathy.
Best Director	<i>Kissing the Ground You Walked On</i>	Hong Heng-fai	Filming a writer's story is no easy task. The director brilliantly uses image and sound design to craft a complex narrative in a well-organised structure. Moving between the real and the unreal, he expresses his understanding of the world and immerses his torrent of emotions into the film. This directorial debut feature brims with the distinctive style of an auteur.
Best Actor	<i>To Love Again</i>	Li Xuejian	This film chooses to express an elderly man's sadness in a tranquil way. He plays an ordinary man so lively and vividly,

			impressing us with his acting depth and charisma in every scene. Blessed by his remarkable performance, the film becomes so affecting.
Best Actress	<i>Stonewalling</i>	Huang Xiaoxiong, Yao Honggui	Both the characters of the daughter and the mother are equally important, complementing each other in this film. Their interactive performances give credibility to this unique story. Through their different perspectives, the audience is deeply moved by the experiences of these women. The mother's role is particularly demanding, while the daughter's performance requires enormous dedication and courage.
Special Mention	<i>Bad Education</i>	Kai Ko	This film is very different from the others in the competition. It lets us profoundly feel the emotions and strengths the director strives to express. We much anticipate his next film.

Young Cinema Competition (World)

Jurors: **Ann Hui** (director), **Emmanuel Burdeau** (film critic), **Clarence Tsui** (film programmer)

Award	Film	Recipient	Jury's Comments
Firebird Award	<i>Totem</i>	Lila Avilés	When something builds itself little by little and slowly, but undoubtedly becomes a whole, living its own life and trapping you into it, you can be sure that it deserves to be called a film. That is a totality, a unique experience of time and space.

Best Director	<i>The Castle</i>	Martín Benchimol	Delivering a major film in a minor key, we're happy to witness a sure-handed subtle directorial debut which at once illustrates a dynamic and difficult mother-daughter relationship and an allegory about the struggle of disadvantaged indigenous people against the affluent social elite.
Best Actor	<i>Astrakan</i>	Mirko Giannini	Children in movies are almost always good to watch. They can get even better when there is something off, something a little bit wrong with them. He is commended for bringing this peculiar quality of unexpected strangeness to his first performance as Samuel.
Best Actress	<i>20,000 Species of Bees</i>	Ensemble Female Cast	We'd like to celebrate the brilliantly nuanced and varied performances of actresses who vividly embodied the different ways women fight for their right to become independent in a world where men from the present and past hold sway.

Documentary Competition

Jurors: **Malcolm Clarke** (director), **Qiu Jiongjiong** (director), **Uli Gaulke** (director and film scholar)

Award	Film	Recipient	Jury's Comment
Firebird Award	<i>Apolonia,</i> <i>Apolonia</i>	Lea Glob	Is this a camera lens? It's the obstinate gaze of the eyes. Behind the camera are two besties looking into the mirror, who collaborated for over a decade to create an annotation for an epic.

			Adopting a variety of materials, the director delivers a portrait crafted with the body, the paintbrush, and the camera lens, as well as specific action and sound through light, nuanced and lingering strokes. It chants out the body and soul, revealing its pleasure, melancholy, suspicion, pain, perseverance, resistance and growth at once lyrically, tenderly and steadfastly.
Jury Prize	<i>The Hamlet Syndrome</i>	Elwira Niewiera, Piotr Rosołowski	While after a year of war in Ukraine, we have almost become accustomed to the daily images of horror, this film reminds us in a painful and powerful way of the scars that war leaves in people's minds. The theatre space becomes a memory capsule for the actors involved, in which they let themselves and us participate in the relentless disclosure of their memories. The emerging images dig deep into our consciousness and leave behind a disturbing feeling. The extraordinary perspective that the film creates and its deep humanity and emotionality make this film so stunning.

Short Film Competition

Jurors: **Jun Li** (director), **Esther Yeung** (producer and distributor), **Ariel Esteban Cayer** (film programmer and critic)

Award	Film	Recipient	Jury's Comment
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Firebird Award	<i>Bear</i>	Morgane Frund	Exceptional editing and a conceptual sleight-of-hand elevate this promising graduation project, forcing us to reckon with how we gaze at and think through moving images – and, therefore, how we look at others and the world.
Jury Prize	<i>Smoke Gets in Your Eyes</i>	Alvin Lee	A simple narrative structure, coupled with exquisite camerawork and precise pacing, constitutes an escalating sense of absurdity and yields an ending with lingering reverberations. It is an outstanding black comedy.

FIPRESCI Prize

Jurors: Maja Korbecka, Manoj Barpujari, Bruce Lai Yung-Hang

Award	Film	Recipient	Jury's Comment
FIPRESCI Prize	<i>Stonewalling</i>	Huang Ji, Otsuka Ryuji	For a profound cinematic portrayal of a young woman embedded in her immediate environment and class divide but managing to find inner power that intensely connects audiences.

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Media Enquiry

Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF)

Gaby Choi

Tel: +852-2102-7382 | 9689-2060

Email: gaby_choi@hkiff.org.hk

Kevin Chiu

Tel: +852-2102-7383 | 9787-0905

Email: kevin_chiu@hkiff.org.hk

Strategic Public Relations Group (SPRG)

Andico Tsui

Tel: +852-2114-4346 | 6902-3831

Email: andico.tsui@sprg.com.hk

Veronica Li

Tel: +852-2114-4945 | 9414-2862

Email: veronica.li@sprg.com.hk

About The Hong Kong International Film Festival

The Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) is one of Hong Kong's most significant cultural events annually. It is Asia's longest-running platform for filmmakers, film professionals, and filmgoers worldwide to launch new work and experience outstanding films. HKIFF introduces world cinema to local audiences to enrich and deepen the understanding of Hong Kong moviegoers. Committed to discovering new talent, HKIFF premieres the breadth of Chinese cinema and showcases Asian talent. Festival-goers can enjoy world-class films, attend seminars hosted by leading filmmakers worldwide, visit film exhibitions, participate in receptions and parties, and more. HKIFF draws extensive coverage from the local and international media and has grown in importance as one of the premier platforms for launching films in Asia.

About The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Limited

The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Limited (HKIFFS) is a charitable, non-profit and non-governmental organisation dedicated to discovering and promoting creativity in film art and culture. It organises the annual Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) and the Hong Kong - Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF). Another highlight is the Cine Fan Summer International Film Festival (SummerIFF), held every August. In 2013, HKIFF introduced the repertory HKIFF Cine Fan Programme to enrich and deepen Hong Kong moviegoers' experience through a monthly programme of contemporary, retrospective, and thematic showcases. In 2021, HKIFFS restructured its film industry services and set up HKIFF Industry to promote and support non-mainstream film industry development through co-production, festival strategies, and overseas distribution (HKIFF Collection).

Official website: www.hkiff.org.hk

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