

“Girls Always Happy” Won 2 Awards at 42nd HKIFF

The 42nd Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) has come to a glamorous close. At the award ceremony, winners of the five award categories were announced. The five categories include three Firebird Award competitions (“Young Cinema Competition”, “Documentary Competition” and “International Short Film Competition” sponsored by JIA SCREEN), “FIPRESCI Prize” and the “Audience Choice Award”. The first 4 categories each had their independent jury, including renowned Japanese director SUWA Nobuhiro; Iranian filmmaker Mani HAGHGHAI; Kent JONES, filmmaker, writer and Artistic Director of The New York International Film Festival; Cecilia YIP, two-time winner of the Hong Kong Film Award for Best Actress; Indian political documentarian Anand PATWARDHAN; celebrated Hong Kong photographer, director, producer and cinematographer Peter YUNG; Asian performing arts critic Ken SMITH; Nuno RODRIGUES, a co-founder and the Artistic Director of the Portuguese film festival *Curtas Vila do Conde*; TSENG Wei-Chen, well-known Taiwanese film critic and scriptwriter; Adam WONG, Hong Kong director and winner of the Hong Kong Film Award for Best New Director. As in previous editions, the winner of the “Audience Choice Award” at the 42nd HKIFF was determined by audiences casting their votes online. Chinese film “Girls Always Happy” won 2 awards and became the biggest winner at this year’s HKIFF.

List of winners at the Hong Kong International Film Festival Competition:

Young Cinema Competition

FIREBIRD AWARD

Girls Always Happy (Director: Yang Mingming)

Jury’s comment:

It is a film that explores similar territory as the winning title of the Jury Prize however from a very different angle. It builds with richness and complexity and humor and insight as it goes; it is tough and tender at the same time, and endlessly rich and surprising. This award goes to “Girls Always Happy” directed by Yang Mingming.

JURY PRIZE

Daughter of Mine (Director: Laura Bispuri)

Jury’s comment: The Jury Prize in the Young Cinema Competition goes to a film about motherhood, friendship and growing up; a film that sings with the wonders and the rhythms of the natural world.

Documentary Competition

FIREBIRD AWARD

Of Love & Law (Director: Hikaru Toda)

Jury’s comment: Hikaru Toda’s debut feature follows the partnership at the core of Japan’s first openly gay law firm transcends sexual politics to document a broad range of human rights cases. Through solid activist

filmmaking, Toda captures the singular quirks of the Japanese legal system while emphasizing the need for diverse expression in any conformist society.

JURY PRIZE

The Distant Barking of Dogs (Director: Simon Lereng Wilmont)

Jury's comment: Shot on the war-torn border of eastern Ukraine, the film follows how a 10-year-old orphan struggles to maintain a normal childhood amidst encroaching violence. Director Simon Lereng Wilmont delivers a palpable pacifist message in the figure of the boy's grandmother, who avoids taking sides but remains an unmovable object in the path of war.

SPECIAL MENTION

Mama (Director: Jin Zingzheng)

Jury's comment: Beautifully shot in rural Hubei, Jin Xingzheng's account of an octogenarian mother's selfless care for her violent, mentally ill son unfolds as a rare and extreme case of traditional family values that are fading in the age of modernity.

International Short Film Competition

FIREBIRD AWARD

Wicked Girl (Director: Ayce Kartal)

Jury's comment: A beautiful yet painful animated short. The moving sketches and vivid voice acting are combined together with a rhythmic flow in *Wicked Girl*, a moving poem of a little girl's memory while she was in a hospital bed after suffering from a sexual assault. The seemingly disorganized talking actually came from the girl's consciousness when she was still in coma. The story is filled with twists and turns and supported by astonishingly beautiful animation artwork that will amaze the audience. It is a great and controversial piece of work.

JURY PRIZE

The Burden (Director: Niki Lindroth von Bahr)

Jury's comment: Can a musical comedy be a flyer against the consumption society? Can a musical comedy be played by anorexic animals? Is our world a galactic zoo on its way to perdition? Niki Lindroth von Bahr answered the above three questions with her animation "The Burden" and won the Jury Prize.

FIPRESCI PRIZE

Girls Always Happy (Director: Yang Mingming)

Jury's comment: Through biting dialogues, the director presents a vivid picture of urban values and cultures in modern China, without overstating or sugar-coating her main characters' flaws, and shows a self-assurance of tone that is remarkable for a first self-directed and self-acted feature.

AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD

An Elephant Sitting Still (Director: Hu Bo)