



29th Tokyo International Film Festival

Jury Members and Award Winners Press Conference

Thank you for your continued support of the 29th Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF). Following the Closing Ceremony, the members of the International Competition Jury and the Award Winners met with the press to comment on the awards. Here are some notes and quotes from the press conference.



■ Date & Time November 3 (Thu), from 16:30 to 18:00

■ Venue EX Theater Roppongi (Tokyo)

■ Jury Press members:

Jean-Jacques Beineix (President of Jury), **Valerio Mastandrea** (Actor), **Nicole Rocklin** (Producer), **Mabel Cheung** (Director), **Hideyuki Hirayama** (Director)

■ Award Winners:

Tokyo Grand Prix:	<i>The Bloom of Yesterday</i> (Directed by Chris Kraus)	(C) 2016TIFF
Special Jury Prize:	<i>Sami Blood</i> (Directed by Amanda Kernell)	
Best Director Award:	Hana Jušić , <i>Quit Staring at My Plate</i>	
Best Actor Award:	Paolo Ballesteros , <i>Die Beautiful</i>	
Best Actress Award:	Lene Cecilia Sparrok , <i>Sami Blood</i>	
Best Artistic Contribution:	Mr. No Problem (Directed by Mei Feng)	
Audience Award:	<i>Die Beautiful</i> (Directed by Jun Robles Lana)	
WOWOW Viewer's Choice Award:	<i>The Bloom of Yesterday</i> (Directed by Chris Kraus)	
Best Asian Future Award:	<i>Birdshot</i> (Directed by Mikhail Red)	
The Spirit of Asia Award by the Japan Foundation Asia Center:	Alankrita Shrivastava (Director of <i>Lipstick Under My Burkha</i>)	
The Japanese Cinema Splash Best Picture Award:	<i>POOLSIDEMAN</i> (Director Hirobumi Watanabe)	

The members of the International Competition Jury appeared first at the press conference, speaking about their experiences at 29th TIFF.

Jean-Jacques Beineix, President of Jury, opened with remarks about working with the other Jury members: "It was a very nice week together, watching so many nice films. We were a little bit surprised, although we did expect it, to see that many films were dealing with some stress of living in this world. We were a bunch of friends, we appreciated being together, and we're sad that we have to go, each of us to our different places."

Mabel Cheung spoke next, saying, "We spent about 3 to 4 hours discussing the winners, overcoming differences of opinion. Actually, there were quite a number of films I really appreciated, which showed differences in culture. I was hoping we could have more prizes to give out for encouragement, because every one of them was a winner."

Valerio Mastandrea said, "Watching movies in a festival is something that makes me a better person, especially for what I do [as an actor]. We saw many different movies, but each time one of them was over, we had the sensation that the language of cinema is one. The differences between cultures, stories, locations make cinema one, but also [it is] for everyone. We talked a lot about the prizes. We come from 4 or 5 continents. Even if today the world seems to be so close and connected, it's amazing and very important to understand that we have different points of view depending on our histories. Differences are the real wealth for human beings." He then joked that Jury President Beineix had written his speech, since the final sentence was something he would say, and that he'd memorized it overnight.

Nicole Rocklin commented, "This last week and a half of films have been eye-opening for all of us. Discovering new talent has been a theme for myself — I've had to do so much homework to find out more about all these talented filmmakers. It's been a wonderful experience. It took a lot for us to make our [award] decisions because there was so much talent. I wish we could've given more awards. It was wonderful to see so many women



filmmakers, and talented actresses, especially at a time when we need diversity in cinema. It was also wonderful to see so many talented first-time filmmakers. I'd walk into the theater without knowing anything, and I would come out wanting to do my homework, to learn more about the directors, actors and cinematographers."

Hideyuki Hirayama admitted, "I don't see so many films in a year to begin with, so this was a great opportunity to see films from all over the world. But I felt that underlying each of them was a shivering effect that I could feel from the filmmakers. I don't know where that comes from, but I could feel the doubt and anxiety of the filmmakers. Still, no better how bad the experience might be, I think I would be on the other side of the camera making the film, than on a jury again."

Beineix was asked about the jury's discussions considering the two Japanese films in Competition, *Snow Woman* and *Japanese Girls Never Die*. He first joked, "Haven't you noticed that the jury's discussion has to be secret?" Then he said, "It's interesting that those two films are quite the opposite. One is in the tradition of ancient Japanese [stories], and the other is in the trend of the crazy, wild way of breaking up the story, putting it together upside down through editing. Both films reflect two tendencies of Japanese film, and probably the truth is in between."

Cheung was asked about the Grand Prix winner deliberation: "We discussed several films, but [the winner] stood out because it has a very special angle. It's an impossible love story between the victim and the persecutor, and it sees the Holocaust from a very different angle which most of us have never seen. The message, finally, is to forgive and gradually, we can go back to our life. This is the subject matter which we really respected, and technically, it is a very well-made film. The cinematography and acting are very good, the director is amazing, and the control of the film. It is an exceptional film."

Following the Jury press conference, the TIFF award winners also met with journalists, commenting as follows.

The Japanese Cinema Splash Best Picture Award winner was **Director Hirobumi Watanabe**, with his dark comedy, *POOLSIDEMAN*. This was the third time the director had been selected for the Japanese Cinema Splash section, and he was asked whether having a budget would affect his filmmaking. Watanabe works with a famously tiny budget, as the journalist pointed out, the "lowest in this film festival," and a tiny crew of "only three people." The director responded: "All of my films are low-budget indies. After three films, I feel that I've found a way to make my films, and I don't want to throw away the style I came up with. That's my theme, as well. But in the future, I know that I have to make a film in the proper way."



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Asked about collaborating with his brother, Yuji, Watanabe answered, "There are many filmmaking directors who are brothers, such as the Cohen brothers and Dardenne brothers, and I really admire them. I don't really have any big conflicts with my brother, since I'm directing and my brother is doing the music. It's like, thanks to my brother, I can make films."

Birdshot, directed by **Mikhail Red**, won the **Best Asian Future Film Award**. He was asked about the influence of his father, famed filmmaker Rae Red. "My father never pushed me into filmmaking, but having artists as parents, I was exposed to cinema at a very early age and I got to see a lot of important films, growing up. I started to experiment early on myself. During my teens one of my mentors was the late Marilou Diaz Abaya. I showed my first feature film three years ago here at TIFF, and I'm very happy to have shown this one here as well."

The Spirit of Asia Award by the Japan Foundation Asia Center winner was **Lipstick Under My Burkha**, directed by **Alankrita Shrivastava**. She spoke about the changes in her country: "India is a very diverse country, and I think different women, depending on whether they live in the big cities, and the education they've had, are different. But I feel that women in India, especially in the small towns, are on the brink of some change and transition. I think they're trying to break out and live a little more freely. I want to try to encapsulate it. I'm not sure how much films can inspire, but they can definitely encourage a great deal of conversation. Showing women in search of freedom can definitely challenge the stereotypes and how women are portrayed in popular Indian film."



Best Actor Award winner **Paolo Ballesteros** of *Die Beautiful*, which was also the **Audience Award winner**, arrived in the stunningly gorgeous gown he'd worn to the Closing Ceremony. He was asked, "What's it like to be Julia Roberts?" Bellesteros answered: "It's hard. My feet hurt. Every time I do a transformation, it takes about 3 to 4 hours, all by myself. I just flew in last night at midnight, and I had to wake up around 7 am to do my makeup. So it's challenging." He continued, "The Best Actor Award means so much to me, because it's for my first lead role, and the world premiere, the first showing was here in Japan, not in the Philippines. I'm so happy and honored."



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Did you really want the Best Actress Award, some asked. "Of course I'm happy with Best Actor, but it would have been unusual if I'd gotten Best Actress."

Die Beautiful director **Jun Robles Lana**, whose 2015 film *Barber's Tales* took the Best Actress Award at TIFF last year, was asked how he directs his stars: "I give them a hard time," he joked. "It's really a collaboration between me and the actor. I give them enough space to play the character. I go in when I sense there's something to be fixed or that needs more work. But I'm really happy that my actors were able to shine here at TIFF, and that the jury recognized them."

Die Beautiful Executive Producer **Perci Intalan**, who also worked on Lana's last film, concurred: "Jun's style is collaborative; he tries to bring out the uniqueness of each actor. Paolo comes with his own character and brings his own energy to the film. Jun tries to harness that. He also gives his actors backstories that aren't part of the film, so the actor knows the history of the character. I think that helps."

Asked about this Gold Age of Philippines cinema, Lana said: "I think it started with the advent of digital technology. It allowed new talents, new filmmakers to follow their inspiration and make films outside the box, outside the studio system. All these great masters, like Brillante Ma Mendoza and Lav Diaz, paved the way for filmmakers like me to tell our own stories."

Ballesteros added, "I believe that Philippine audiences and actors are now more open to a different kind of film and stories, and that's why we're getting all these films now."

Said Intalan: "Another factor is that the filmmakers are starting to mentor other filmmakers. The masters are starting to teach the new generation and the new generation is helping others, and it's spreading. That's why you see more films."

Swedish-Denmark-Norwegian coproduction *Sami Blood*, directed by **Amanda Kernell**, won both the **Special Jury Prize** and also the **Best Actress Award** for young Sami star **Lene Cecilia Sparrok**. Kernell admitted that she "almost cried on stage [when Sparrok's name was called]. It's her first film, and she's only 19. Lene and her little sister, who plays her little sister in the film, were both so hard-working. [Acting] is hard work. It's having biology tests, it's fighting with big reindeer, it's traditional Sami singing in front of a crowd of Swedish people, and kissing a boy that you don't know. She's been so brave and so hard-working. I'm so happy and I really think she deserves the award."



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Sparrok was asked whether she would continue her day job, herding reindeer, after this recognition. She replied: "I don't know, maybe. I want to continue with reindeer herding, and if I can do both [acting and herding], maybe. Time will tell."

Kernell spoke about the coproduction partners: "This was the first feature film supported by the Sami Film Institute, as well as the Swedish Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute and Norwegian funds, and they're very happy with [the TIFF awards]. Most of the characters in the film and on the crew are Sami. Of course it's a big thing when a Sami film is made *within* the community. It's only happened a few times. It means a lot to get it out to another audience. I'm very happy to have it distributed here, and I hope we can come back for the Japan opening. It's universal, and I think a lot of people here can relate to it."



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The **Best Director Award** went to **Hana Jušić**, for *Quit Staring at My Plate*. She was asked whether she felt it was most important for a film to inspire the next generation, make audiences happy or teach them a life lesson. Said Jušić: “None of the three. As you can see from my film, my goal is not to make the viewers happy. I never intend to make a thesis to teach people something. I don’t like films that try to teach something. What I like, as a viewer — I like watching films more than I like making them — what I like is when you feel a connection, you feel that the people behind the film have the same understanding of life that you have. There’s some small detail or situation that somehow inspire you. The same vision of the world we live in, or not the same, but it’s a vision of the world that moves you. I think films should *move* us, not teach us.”

Director Mei Feng, who won the **Best Artistic Contribution Award** for *Mr. No Problem*, was asked about the original author of his film’s story, Lao She. Said Mei: “He’s a wonderful writer. I admire him and love his work. A lot of his works are set in Beijing, but he also lived in Chongqing. The base story is not really representative of his works. But when I was reading through his work, looking for one to adapt, I was surprised that it’s so different. It really shows a sharp analysis of China’s social structure.”

Finally, Director **Chris Kraus** and producer **Kathrin Lemme** arrived, brandishing their Gold Kirin award. Their film, *The Bloom of Yesterday*, won both the **Tokyo Grand Prix** as well as the **WOWOW Viewer’s Choice Award**. Asked about the difficulties of getting the film made, Kraus said: “They have to do with the theme, of course, and the mixture of the painful theme with a sense of humor. It makes it not so easy for funders and TV stations to join it, so we needed a couple of years to find people who wanted to make the film. In 2013, fortunately, we got an important German script prize, and that [allowed us to make it.]”



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He admitted that it was a long journey to the film’s completion. “The process began with my own research of my family story. So I wrote a book for my children and my family. I went to the archives to Riga and Russia and Berlin, and I found a very interesting thing: the grandchildren of the perpetrators and the victims sat there, and it was a delightful atmosphere, and they made fun of the situation. So at the very beginning we said yes, we need to treat this with a certain lightness.”

Lemme noted: “When I read the script for the first time, I was very impressed. I loved the way the two subjects fit together. It also brought me to think about my own family. The film invites people to discuss this subject, and that worked on me as well.”

Kraus, who had mentioned how happy he was to be receiving the award from Jury President Jean-Jacques Beineix, during the Closing Ceremony, was asked which Beineix films he’d been watching when he was 19 or 20: “I saw *Diva* and then, 3 or 4 years later, I saw *Betty Blue*. They were famous in Germany. I loved the mixture, the love story and pain, especially with *Bette Blue*. He was a hero of mine, so it was exciting to be on stage with him.”

Ends on an ambiguous note, and the director was asked whether he intended any message for future generations: “It was just my romantic heart beating. To be honest, [the baby] is a big symbol, maybe there’s hope for reconciliation. It was a perfect image for that. Everyone hopes that we can overcome it. They have such a journey of pain in the film, we don’t know if they’re meeting again. There’s a child, but we don’t know if it’s really his, despite the name.”

The producer was asked whether she thought Toto and Zazie should form a new family. Lemme laughed, “It’s a tricky question for me, since I asked the director the same question. I think I like the ending the way it is. It’s the perfect ending. You can’t end it like a clear romantic comedy, after what these two characters went through. Of course there’s a bit of hope, but [a different ending] would’ve been too direct.”

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