



32nd Tokyo International Film Festival Closing Event

Closing Ceremony and Press Conference with Award Winners and Jury

The 32nd Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) concluded tonight, after 9 days of screenings and special events. Winners of the awards at the 32nd TIFF were announced during the Closing Ceremony at the Tokyo International Forum in Yurakucho. We would appreciate members of the media helping us share this exciting news with film fans across the globe.



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Tokyo Gemstone Awards are given to promising young actors who have appeared in a film in the festival. Takeo Hisamatsu, the festival director, presented the awards, which went to **Riru Yoshina** for *Take Over Zone*, **Sairi Ito** for *Life: Untitled*, **Yui Sakuma** for *I Was a Secret Bitch* and the Norwegian actress, **Josefine Frida**, who appeared in the Competition feature *Disco*.

The **Japanese Cinema Splash Awards** were up next, honoring the newest independent Japanese films at the festival. Jury member Akiko Ooku mentioned that it had been a very difficult task to select the winners, but that the three jury members were united in their selections.

She presented the best director award in the category to **Hirobumi Watanabe** for his film **Cry**. Watanabe, who has participated in TIFF five times before and won the Japanese Cinema Splash Best Film Award for his earlier film *Pool Side Man*, was quite overcome with emotion. He mentioned that his film company is essentially a family business in Tochigi Prefecture, and especially thanked his grandmother, who appeared in the film and passed away in August at the age of 102. "I won this award because of her," he said, his voice breaking.

The **Best Picture Award** went to the film *i -Documentary of the Journalist-*, which is about controversial Tokyo Shimbun reporter Isoko Mochizuki. Veteran director **Tatsuya Mori** apologized for "being dressed if I were going to my local rental video parlor," and thanks the jury and TIFF for selecting the film. Mori talked about how the "air we breathe today in Japan is filled with repression." Producer **Mitsunobu Kawamura**, explained how the movie was a companion piece to a fictional drama, *The Journalist*, based on the same reporter and released to great box office acclaim, earlier this year.

The Asian Future Award, selected by a three-member jury, was given for films that demonstrated "passion and universality," according to jury member Elena Pollacchi, as well as those that would connect with audiences.

Iranian film **Old Men Never Die**, by **Reza Jamali**, was given **The Spirit of Asia Award** by



the **Japan Foundation Asia Center**, and the Chinese film, *Summer Knight*, received the **Asian Future Best Film Award**. Jamali expressed his feeling that it was a great honor to receive this prize at TIFF for his debut film, and especially thanked his producer and his wife who spent very hard time together. *Summer Knight* director **You Xing** mentioned that filmmakers are by nature "insecure creatures," and that the award he received at TIFF gave him greater encouragement to strive even more.

The coveted **Audience Award**, selected by TIFF audiences, went to the French film *Only the Animals*. Director Dominik Moll had already left Japan, so it was up to the lead actor, **Denis Ménochet**, to accept the award. "I've never seen an audience so devoted to film that they would wait two hours to talk with filmmakers about a movie," he said. "I think that the value of film was actually born here in Japan."

The **Best Screenplay Award** went to **Shin Adachi** for his autobiographical film *A Beloved Wife*. "This is a rare instance of a comedy being selected for a Competition," he noted in his thanks.

The **Award for Best Artistic Contribution** went to **Wang Rui's** Chinese feature, *Chaogtu with Sarula*.

Jury member Michael Noer presented the **Best Actor Award** to **Navid Mohammadzadeh** in what Noer described as a performance that showed the actor in "full control of losing control," as a drug lord in the Iranian thriller *Just 6.5*. **Nadia Tereszkiwicz**, who appeared in Dominik Moll's *Only the Animals*, sent a video message thanking the festival for her **Best Actress Award**.

The **Best Director Award** went to **Saeed Roustaei** for *Just 6.5*. The Iranian helmer acknowledged what an honor it was to receive an award from the country that produced Akira Kurosawa.

The **Special Jury Prize** went to the Ukrainian film, *Atlantis*. Director Valentyn Vasyanovych sent a message saying how honored he was to receive an award from a country "that has experienced war and understands the pain." The film's star, **Andriy Rymaruk**, accepted the award on behalf of the director.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike presented the **Tokyo Grand Prix/Governor of Tokyo Award**, commenting that films transcend borders and, looking forward to next year's Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, pointed out the importance of culture in the quest for international understanding.

The **Grand Prix** went to the Danish film *Uncle*. Director **Frelle Petersen** spoke about his struggles making the film: "We felt we had already won when we found out we were selected to compete in the Tokyo International Film Festival," he said. "We were hung over the next day, because it was such a great reason for celebrating."

Jury President Zhang Ziyi closed the ceremony with words of appreciation for the superlative hospitality the jury had received, while Festival Chairman Hiroyasu Ando expressed the festival's thanks to audiences and the 300+ volunteers who had made the festival such a success.



Following the 32nd Tokyo International Film Festival Closing Ceremony, the International Competition Jury and the festival's award winners sat down with the press to share their impressions.

The first half of the conference was devoted to the five members of the jury, with acclaimed actress and **Jury President Zhang Ziyi** making the opening remarks: "We would like to once again thank the Tokyo International Film Festival for bringing us here and giving us this opportunity to watch such superlatives films, as well as the chance to meet each other and spend time together."

Hollywood producer **Bill Gerber** said, "We've had an amazing experience, both with the festival and with each other. We had a great creative discourse about all the movies and came to what we consider are fair decisions, although we struggled over some of them. And I took some time to get to know Tokyo. Exploring the city with my biking partner, Michael (Noer) has also been a fantastic experience."

French actor-producer **Julie Gayet** said, "We get on very well, and share the same feelings. We were very privileged to have a special cinema room just for us, where we could watch the films together on a big screen. The organization is fantastic, very high level, and I want to thank everyone for such a high-class festival."

Said Danish director **Michael Noer**, "For me to be part of this jury was a reminder of something I'd actually missed. When I was in film school, I'd go to the cinema 2 or 3 times a day, and have deep discussions with my friends, because we didn't have a private life. This was one of the only times in my life when I've gotten to know people so quickly, and it was a great experience."

Japanese helmer **Ryuichi Hiroki** commented, "TIIF is now very close to my heart. Discussing the film we saw with my fellow jurors has helped me realize how deep their passion is for film, and how fruitful it is, meeting all the other people involved in the films."

Asked what the specific elements were that led to the decision for the Grand Prix selection of *Uncle*. Zhang answered in English, "It's very easy to answer your question: It is the best movie. We all agree on that." As for the other award selections, "The 14 films in competition really represented a wide diversity — not just artistic films, but films like the Japanese comedy *A Beloved Wife*, as well as artistic films like the French film *Only the Animals*. The quality of all the films was wonderful, with wonderful performances. We felt it was a very rich selection."

Zhang was also asked about the jury's perception of TIFF. "There are 9 members of the jury at Cannes, which I've had the privilege of serving on," she responded, "while TIFF only has 5, so we didn't have to bicker as much as we did at Cannes."

The panel was asked whether they'd made any discoveries during their time in Tokyo. Gerber, who joked about discovering that there's great pizza, said, "We felt the level of filmmaking was extraordinary. Every film had some incredible element, whether it was acting, producing or directing. I've made some notes about some of them for the future."



Said Noer, "I think *Uncle* itself is a discovery. It was a world premiere and we got to unwrap this gift. Even though it's Danish (as is he), I didn't even know about it myself. Also, the young actress in *Only the Animals* (Best Actress Award winner Nadia Tereszkiewicz), although she was on screen for a short time, really felt like a discovery."

Added Gayet, "I was very surprised to see that all these films that are quite difficult to see, from Ukraine, for example — tonight there was no Ukrainian interpreter for the winner, because it's so rare — and a film shot in Inner Mongolia. Now that I'm a producer and distributor, I feel that there are some that I really want to buy and bring to France." She also mentioned the experience of seeing Shibuya on Halloween, and the World Cup Rugby final on TV.

Hiroki agreed. "It was such a great opportunity to see films from Iran, from Denmark, from Ukraine, and I thought each and every film were really inspirational to me as a filmmaker."

Concluding the session with the jury, Zhang commented, "Being at TIFF, I think what is most important for the festival is what kind of character, what kind of DNA, what perspective it has. I hope that TIFF will succeed to realize its distinct color in the film festival world."

The Award winners were then invited onto the stage during the second half of the press conference.

The **Japanese Cinema Splash Best Film Award** had gone to the hard-hitting *i - Documentary of the Journalist-*, directed by veteran documentarian **Tatsuya Mori**, who told the Closing Ceremony audience that he was grateful for the jury's decision to award the film, despite its controversial political content. Mori was unable to attend the conference, but the film's star, crusading journalist Isoko Mochizuki, and producer Mitsunobu Kawamura appeared in his stead.

Kawamura, who also produced a fiction film earlier this year that was inspired by Mochizuki, *The Journalist*, explained, "It's a fact that not many politically themed films have been made in Japan over the past 20 years, and that was the impetus for us in making this documentary. I produced the fiction film and Mr. Mori was making the documentary at the same time. We were compelled to make this film because the political scene isn't being well covered in Japan."

Japanese Cinema Splash Best Director Award had gone to TIFF favorite **Hirobumi Watanabe**, whose autobiographical "man and pig" story *Cry* marked his 5th outing in the section. Watanabe commented, "We are such a small production company, and we self-fund our tiny films. We don't make commercial films, and it's wonderful to have film festivals select films like this. If we hadn't been found by TIFF, we wouldn't have found our audience and I'm so grateful. I know there are a lot of young filmmakers putting their hearts and souls into their films, and I hope there will be opportunities for them to be found, as well."

The Spirit of Asia Award by the Japan Foundation Asia Center had gone to **Reza Jamali's** directorial debut, the dark dramedy *Old Men Never Die*, about a village in Azerbaijan where no one has died for 45 years. The Iranian director said, "I'm so happy to have received this award. I've just finished shooting my second film, and to be given the



wonderful opportunity to be acknowledged in this way has given me faith in my own (style) to go forward in the future.”

Summer Knight, You Xing’s youth drama about a boy’s summer staying with his grandparents, a directorial debut, had received the **Asian Future Best Film Award**. He commented, “This award is helping me in terms of my future endeavors. Because this is work in progress, since we haven’t finished the sound mix and color grading yet, this has given me a sense of confidence (about my filmmaking).”

He elaborated, “It’s an autobiographical piece based on my upbringing as a kid in China, but my job as a filmmaker is to convey a story, to convey emotion, to invoke a sense of connection with the audience. But I chose this period (of time) because I’m more familiar with the material, rather than how much it meant to me personally.”

The **Best Screenplay Award** had gone to Japanese director **Shin Adachi**’s sophomore film **A Beloved Wife**, an autobiographical comedy about an unsuccessful screenwriter and his long-suffering spouse. Adachi was asked about his selection of end credits tune, which is the same one sung in the TIFF Opening Film, *Tora-san, Wish You Were Here*. He said, “It’s one of my favorite songs, and I did know that it was used in the very first Tora-san film. I don’t necessarily want my film to become a series, but I wanted a song that could be sung by a parent and child, so I used it.” He also said that he wished he had thanked his wife onstage during the ceremony, since “For the past 20 years, all her yelling and complaints made their way into my script, for which I’m very thankful.”

Veteran Chinese helmer **Wang Rui**, whose **Chaogtu with Sarula**, a gorgeously-lensed tale of a loving couple living in the Mongolian grasslands as they cope with the lures of the city, took home TIFF’s **Award for Best Artistic Contribution**. Rui said, “What I wanted most to convey with my film was this sense of the husband wanting to leave the grassland to go to the city. The audience might wonder why he would want to leave such a beautiful place, but I wanted to convey that it’s spiritual, rather than physical richness, that he’s looking for.”

Rui was asked to comment on the experience of being at TIFF, and whether it might inspire a storyline in a future film. He replied, “I don’t have any plans for my next film yet, but people are influenced in ways that they can’t see right away. So maybe there will be an influence that isn’t obvious. It’s like the process of sake fermentation: little by little, [inspiration] may happen.”

The **Special Jury Prize** had gone to Ukrainian director **Valentyn Vasyanovych** for **Atlantis**, a near-future tale of war behind the Ukraine and Russia that seems torn from the headlines. On his behalf, the film’s star, Andriy Rymaruk, commented, “The director and I are so thankful for this film to win such an important award. It was extremely challenging during the production of the film because there’s an ongoing war where we live, and I also work as a soldier. I would like to continue acting in films, but there’s this other side, where I also have to be a soldier. I would love to come back to TIFF and win the Best Actor Award.”

Iranian helmer **Saeed Roustaei**, who had won the **Award for Best Director** for his *Just 6.5*, an up-to-the-minute police officer about the drug trade in his country, took the stage with



Best Actor Award winner **Navid Mohammadzadeh**, the star of the film.

Mohammadzadeh commented, "I'm so happy that we both won, since the director told me he would kill me if I won and he didn't."

Responded Roustae, "I was quite confident that my star would win and I wouldn't, so I got a good night's sleep and relaxed in the audience tonight until my name was called unexpectedly."

Asked about the high entertainment value of his film, when most films shown in Japan seem to be quite somber, the director demurred, "This film broke box-office records in Iran and was said to be the most-seen film in the past 20 years. But I'm not really familiar with the industry as a whole."

Roustae elaborated on his comments during the award ceremony regarding the influence of Akira Kurosawa: "I started making films at 15, and studied at film school and watched 5 to 6 films a week. I'm not sure which ones may have influenced me most. I think I've seen Mr. Kurosawa's works the most, so I'm sure his influence has made its way into my work. One important thing I learned from his films is to take time and be very detailed in the stories you tell."

Did Mohammadzadeh meet any drug traffickers to prepare for his role? "In my first film with Mr. Roustae, I played a drug addict. I didn't do any firsthand research. The character came from the many conversations I had with him. During the process of writing the script, which took 2 or 3 years, I talked a great deal with him about this character, as well. It's a distinct character that is the result of our many discussions."

He added, "Our working relationship is like friendly buddies. I truly enjoy working with him and hope that we can work on another project together."

Said Roustae, "We went to the same college and met there 10 years ago. We laugh a lot and fight a lot, more than a married couple. But he has wonderful acting capabilities, so I always enjoy working with him."

Danish Competition entry **Uncle**, about a young woman who cares for her elderly, disabled uncle on a livestock farm, had been the festival's top honoree, winning the **Tokyo Grand Prix/The Governor of Tokyo Award**. *Uncle* is writer-director **Frelle Petersen**'s second feature, and he took the stage with a big yell, holding his trophy high.

"I feel very good. I'm very happy and I'm going to be for a long time," he told the press. "We spoke with our crew in Denmark, where it's early in the day, and they're all celebrating. It's an amazing recognition from the Tokyo International Film Festival."

About the impetus for the tale, Petersen said, "For me, I wanted to make a character-driven story, in this case I wanted to explore something from the place where I grew up in the south of Denmark. I wanted to look at a character who's not able to leave the countryside. It's very well known that if you want to move away to go to university, it can be difficult to (leave your family and friends).



“I also wanted to tell a story in an agricultural setting. Most farms have been modernized to meet EU guidelines. But most small farmers couldn’t do this, so they all have to close down their farms by 2026. So at that time, it will be a historical portrait of a very traditional culture in Denmark.”

Asked about the film’s depiction of familial love, the director said, “It’s important to find out who’s important to you. I decided to depict an unusual family combination, a niece and an uncle, and to explore the relationship they had. I realized that it’s nice to have family members that are close to you, but friends and colleagues can be part of your family as well. It’s nice to spend time with those people.”

Uncle star Jette Sondergaard was asked what it was like acting with her own real-life uncle. She responded, “We had a lot of fun. We had our morning routine, where we rehearsed together, having a cup of tea at the kitchen table you see in the film. It was not embarrassing or a bad thing at all to work together. The director made the set nice and safe.”

Petersen spoke about living on the location during production: “I’ve always wanted to start with the environment I’m going to shoot in, and I wanted to be on the farm. I lived in a caravan at the farm even while working on the screenplay. Jette came down and started helping her uncle. It was a nice approach because I got close to the reality of being a farmer. It became even more authentic, and I will definitely do it again.”

For the full list of Award Winners, please see the URL below.

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For the images of today’s events please find from the URL below.

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