

AROUND TOWN

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[FILM FESTIVAL]

The next big things

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

Users of a bulletin board system (BBS) restlessly await the moment when the hacker, *Intoxicant*, unleashes a series of promised attacks. A man suffering from manic depression follows the director's advice and starts growing plants in the City of Technology.

Stories ranging from the fantastic to the mundane are played out at the Golden Harvest Awards (金穗獎). Now in its 31st year, the oldest film festival in Taiwan remains an important platform for young directors and film students to show their raw creativity and vision.

Thirty-five films selected from among 177 entries will compete for a total of NT\$3 million in prize money, in the categories of fiction, animation, documentary, experimental and student films.

The thin line between reality and virtuality is neatly crossed in the 35mm short *Intoxicant* (匿名遊戲) by Hsu Han-chiang (徐漢強). In the story about the threat of a viral attack on a BBS, the virtual realm acquires a real-life representation as IDs are portrayed by real persons and the BBS takes the form of a lecture hall. Featuring up-and-coming actors Sandrine Pinna (張榕容) and King Chin (金勤), the film ingeniously blends computer culture with the spy genre and throws in plenty of humorous moments when the characters banter in wacky chat-room language or freeze when making incorrect commands.

Like Hsu, currently a postgraduate at Shi Hsin University (世新大學), Cheng Wei-hao (程偉豪) is another talented young filmmaker who deserves close attention. His film, *You Are Not Alone* (搞什麼鬼), is a hilarious, self-reflecting parody on the ghost story genre. Plots and images from horror classics such as *The Eye* (見鬼), *One Missed Call* and *Ju-on: The Grudge* are more about the making of a ghost movie rather than giving audiences a good scare. The tension and drama between what is real and what is fictional is amusingly revealed throughout the story about a director writing a script for a ghost flick.

Tsai Tsung-han's (蔡宗翰) *My Grandma* (曬棉被的好天氣) serves as a good example of how to tell a simple story well by using the short-film format. An accomplished scriptwriter for *Winds of September* (九降風) and *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?!* (情非得已之生存之道), Tsai uses slices-of-life dialogue to portray a lovable grandmother and her two grown-up grandsons.

Also notable for its well-scripted simplicity is *The Skirt* (裙子) by Wang Tung-yun (王同韻). Nothing really takes place in the film, which tells of a high school girl's budding feeling of love for her best friend. It is through the seemingly insignificant moments in life that nuanced emotions and mood shifts are revealed and remembered.

The man-meets-woman-in-big-city tale is played out by a tow truck driver and an art teacher in Chiang Hsiu-chung's (姜秀瓊) *Hopsotch* (跳格子). The cast of non-professional actors add a realistic feel to the slightly forced plot with a surprising twist at the end. For his role as the driver, Chiang Sheng-min (姜聖民) won the award of Best New Performer at last year's Golden Horse Awards (金馬獎).

In order to bring new perspectives into the competition, the festival added a bloggers' recommendation award three years ago. This year's winner is *The Skirt*, while both *Intoxicant* and *You Are Not Alone* received special mention.

Following the hype and excitement surrounding *Cape No. 7* (海角七號), the festival is also organizing a program on Wei Te-sheng (魏德聖), a three-time Golden Harvest award winner. The lineup includes three shorts made between 1995 and 1997, as well as the director's now well-known five-minute film about his ambitious historical project *Seediq Bale* (賽德克巴萊), which is currently being made into a feature film.

Wei's 1999 feature debut *About July* (七月天) shows the director as an effective storyteller infused with a strong New Wave sensibility. The visuals are simple yet poignant and are able to convey the restless emotion in this coming-of-age story about a country boy.

Up-and-coming directors Lee Yun-chan (李芸嫻) and Cheng Hsiao-tse (程孝澤) will share their experiences in commercial moviemaking tomorrow at Eslite Xinyi Store. Experimental filmmaker and academic Tony Wu (吳俊輝) will examine the relationship between experimental filmmaking and contemporary art on May 12.

The festival runs until May 17, after which it will tour the rest of the country until the end of September.

Budding directors show off their creativity and vision at the Golden Harvest Awards, which start today

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: The 31st Golden Harvest Awards (第31屆金穗獎)**WHEN:** Today to May 17**WHERE:** Screening room at Eslite Xinyi Store (誠品信義店), 6F, 11 Songgao Rd, Taipei City (台北市松高路11號6樓); Chinese Taipei Film Archive (國家電影資料館), 4F, 7 Qingdao E Rd, Taipei City (台北市青島東路7號4樓)**ADMISSION:** All activities and screenings are free**ON THE NET:** www.ctfa.org.tw/31GH

Clockwise from top:

You Are Not Alone, by Cheng Wei-hao.
Mobius Band, by Fan Chiang Hsiao-fang, Cheng Hsiu-hung and Hu Shu-ting.
The Skirt, by Wang Tung-yun.
Country to Country, by Tsai I-feng.
My Grandma, by Tsai Tsung-han.
Wannabe, by Hung Ming-hsuan.
Lucky Me, by Chen Wan-ju.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHINESE TAIPEI FILM ARCHIVE

Young exhibitionists show what they've got

Whether it's thinking outside of the box, or inside it, Asia's

largest student design fair signposts what the future may look like

BY ALITA RICKARDS
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

While students in creative fields are encouraged to think outside the box, one designer at the 28th Young Designers' Exhibition 2009 (YODEX) has done the opposite. Chow Chen-ming's (周振明) "Perfume" is a box that can collect a scent, say in a forest or in a bakery. The box retains the odor and can reproduce it using digital technology.

YODEX, held at the World Trade Center from Thursday to May 17, showcases design projects from students who are selected through competitions within their schools. It is recognized by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) as the largest student design fair in Asia.

The entries are "students' graduation final projects" said Jessica Chang (張智捷), a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Design Center (台灣創意設計中心), which organized the event. "They are not always very professional but the students' ideas are very creative."

Students from more than 90 local and 25

international institutions will participate in this event, with entries from Australia, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. Up-and-coming young designers' submissions cover the spectrum from fashion, industrial and graphic design, to communication, interior and multimedia presentations.

The criteria rest on five categories: creativity, marketability, presentation of Taiwan's culture, environmental considerations and safety.

With the future of the world such a hot topic, it will be interesting to see what the next generation has in store.

"Most of the students in Taiwan have a laptop and they love to ride bicycles," said Chang. "So a group made a bike that can fold into a desk so you can use your notebook



[computer] at it." The Shu Tong bike, designed by Shih Cheng-yin (施正茵), Lai Wen-yi (賴穩伊) and Hung Pei-shuan (洪佩軒), has an attractive streamlined design as well as an interesting function.

Other designs, such as a cart that allows a dog to carry its accessories (leash, bowl, jacket), or a bench that turns into a rather unwieldy magazine rack on wheels, are perhaps less obviously sellable. Entries in the fashion category range from exquisite to outlandish.

One of the things the judges will be looking for, said Chang, are "products that are marketable, and able to be reproduced." Ultimately the goal is to have students use the exhibit not only to gain international exposure, but as a platform to launch a post-graduation career.

In this sense, the ability to think

The Shu Tong bike, designed by Shih Cheng-yin, Lai Wen-yi and Hung Pei-shuan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN DESIGN CENTER

outside of the box, in terms of creativity and originality in design, is not to be outdone by the ability to be able to also think inside the box, in terms of practicality and salability.

The exhibit offers a glimpse into what is currently happening in design around the world, and what direction we are heading in. If Chow's Perfume box could be used as a gauge, the future, embodied in the youthful explorations of these designers, might just smell like teen spirit.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION:

WHAT: 2009 International Young Designers' Exhibition (YODEX)**WHEN:** Thursday to May 17 2009, from 9am to 5pm. Opening ceremony on Thursday**WHERE:** Taipei World Trade Center, exhibition halls 1 and 3**ADMISSION:** NT\$200 (NT\$150 for students and groups). The exhibition is open to those aged 12 and up**ON THE NET:** yodex.boco.com.tw