

FEATURES

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The winners at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival, from left to right: Australian director Warwick Thornton won the Camera d'Or prize for *Samson and Delilah*; French director Jacques Audiard received the Grand Jury Award for his film *A Prophet*; South Korean director Park Chan-Wook won the Jury Prize for his movie *Thirst*; Filipino director Brillante Mendoza took home the Best Director Award for *Kinatay*.

PHOTOS: AGENCIES

Violence reaps rewards at Cannes

It was a bad year for business, a so-so year for celebrities, but a good year for dark movies at the Cannes Film Festival

BY MANOHLA DARGIS
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, CANNES, FRANCE



The White Ribbon, a meticulous examination of patriarchal domination, won the Palme d'Or at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival on Sunday. Directed by the Austrian-born Michael Haneke and shot in black and white, the much-admired film — a foundation story about National Socialism set in a rural pre-World War I German community — turns on a series of violent events that appear to be the work of some children. In 2001, Haneke won the Grand Prix (effectively second place) for his harrowing drama *The Piano Teacher*, which starred Isabelle Huppert, president of this year's competition jury.

The Grand Prix, also announced Sunday, went to *A Prophet*, a pitch-perfect film from the French director Jacques Audiard about a young inmate who becomes a master criminal during a prison stretch. The film was the critical favorite throughout the festival, and Audiard received a standing ovation from the audience when he mounted the stage. Far more surprising was the Jury Prize (third place), which was split between *Fish Tank*, a slice of Brit-grit realism from Andrea Arnold, and the neo-exploitation vampire flick *Thirst*, from the South Korean director Park Chan-wook. Both were booed by the press watching the show via live broadcast.

The director Terry Gilliam, here with the noncompetition film *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, delivered some funny onstage shtick by pretending to accept the directing prize, which he was meant to bestow. ("Terry, you don't receive, you give," the host explained, promising that Gilliam could have something next year if he didn't create a scandal.) The actual winner of the director award was Brillante Mendoza, from the Philippines, whose grisly, widely loathed shocker, *Kinatay* (Slaughter), hinges on a man who doesn't prevent a murder. The screenwriting award went to Mei Feng (馮致) for *Spring Fever* (春風沉醉的

晚上), a rather baggy if underappreciated drama about young Chinese malaise.

Huppert handed the prize for best actress to Charlotte Gainsbourg, who delivers a wild, fearless performance as a grieving mother in *Antichrist*, an English-language film from the Danish director Lars von Trier. It's easy to imagine that Huppert and her fellow juror, the actress Asia Argento, both ferocious screen performers, were impressed with the intensity of Gainsbourg's performance, which involves a fair amount of nudity and some frantic (and graphic) backwoods masturbation.

The best-actor award for the Austrian Christoph Waltz, who plays a Nazi officer in Quentin Tarantino's World War II movie, *Inglourious Basterds*, made everyone happy. Speaking in French, English and German, Waltz called the film an "unbelievable experience," thanked his co-star Brad Pitt, along with the creator of Waltz's "unique and inimitable" character, Colonel Landa. His voice colored with emotion, he addressed Tarantino directly: "You gave me my vocation back."

Huppert presented the director Alain Resnais — who turns 87 next month — with a "lifetime achievement award for his work and his exceptional contribution to the history of cinema."

He should have won something as well for his dazzling competition entry, *Wild Grass*. Wearing sunglasses (bright lights bother him), a dark suit, a red shirt and a magnificent swirl of white hair, Resnais took the stage and was greeted with a sustained standing ovation. He expressed his gratitude to the jury and the festival and asked his cast to stand and receive applause before he was cut short by the music.

The Camera d'Or for best first feature, awarded by another jury, went to an Australian film by Warwick Thornton that was largely below the critical radar, *Samson and Delilah*, a teenage love story set in the Outback.

Despite the on-screen carnage that was amply rewarded by Huppert and her jury, the festival put on its usual glittering show that for 12 days made cinema seem as if it mattered to the world. News media attendance and spirits might have been down, but the sun came out, as did the jostling crowds, red-carpet stars and distributor wallets.

"This is the center of independent films from around the world," Michael Barker, co-president of Sony Pictures Classics, said Saturday. Unlike many Americans, he stays until the end because one never knows what might turn up: Last year his company bought the Palme winner, *The Class*, which was screened on the last day. This year it bought *The White Ribbon* and *A Prophet*.

Although big Hollywood still turns up at Cannes (the Pixar movie *Up* opened the festival), the studios don't show much work here unless Clint Eastwood has a new one. All too often quality is now the province of their specialty divisions, some of which were recently shut down. That makes older, established companies like Sony Classics and newcomers like Oscilloscope Laboratories even more important. IFC Films, for one, has made a nice habit of buying some of the best movies here, and this year grabbed *Antichrist* and Ken Loach's *Looking for Eric*, a crowd-pleaser about a postman who, in the midst of a meltdown, conjures the

From left to right: Christoph Waltz won Best Actor Award for his role in the film *Inglourious Basterds*; Zhou Tan, left, and Wei Wu pose after Chinese director Lou Ye received the Best Screenplay Award on behalf of screenwriter Mei Feng for *Spring Fever*; French actress Charlotte Gainsbourg won the Best Actress Award for her part in *Antichrist* by Danish director Lars von Trier.

philosophizing form of his favorite soccer star. It's no wonder that IFC Entertainment's president, Jonathan Sehring, characterized the festival as "very, very good."

But while Hollywood movies are not much in abundance, the stars still come out, if somewhat fewer this year. Most of the American headliners ("Brad!" "Angelina!") turned up at the premiere of *Inglourious Basterds*. They soon disappeared, but Tarantino was everywhere. He danced on the red carpet, chatted in English on French television and praised Mendoza's *Kinatay*. Mendoza, a rising talent who was at Cannes last year with the rowdy *Serbis*, could use all the help he can get with this movie. A morality tale that he wields like a blunt instrument, *Kinatay* hinges on the inaction of a police-academy student while a prostitute is murdered and dismembered. The movie had its respectful fans, but many others fled the theater.

By closing night a lot was still in play, which may portend good news for American movie lovers. Oscilloscope, the company founded by the Beastie Boy Adam Yauch, bought *Wendy and Lucy* last year, and this year picked up another film, but has not announced its title. This was Yauch's first time at Cannes.

"I was glad to see everyone in tuxes and ball gowns going up the red carpet," he said in an e-mail message from New York on Sunday. "I was afraid that the photos I've seen of Grace Kelly and Cary Grant would have faded into history like everything else, and that people would be walking into premieres in shorts, T-shirts and Crocs. So I was impressed when I saw a man in a suit turned away because he was wearing sneakers. Perhaps Cannes is the last bastion of dignified decadence."



Arnie Roth conducts a work from *Distant Worlds*. PHOTO COURTESY OF SQUARE ENIX

Video gamers' musical fantasies fulfilled

BY JOSUE COFRESI
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

As part of celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of the *Final Fantasy* video game franchise's first release, the Taipei Symphony Orchestra and Chorus will present a concert of music by composer Nobuo Uematsu tonight and tomorrow at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall.

The program for the Taipei leg of *Distant Worlds: Music From Final Fantasy* (太空戰士交響音樂會) world tour comprises works that Uematsu penned for the series of video games between 1986 and 2004, when he resigned as *Final Fantasy*'s chief composer.

The *Final Fantasy* series is known for its revolutionary gameplay, groundbreaking graphics and epic storytelling, and also for its musical score. The concert, which premiered in 2007, two decades after the first *Final Fantasy* role-playing game came out in Japan, features Uematsu's compositions performed by a full orchestra under Grammy Award-winning conductor Arnie Roth and accompanied by high-resolution video from the series.

During the collaborative process of arranging the music for live performance, Uematsu and Roth asked themselves what "fans heard in the past and what can we bring that's new," the latter said at a press conference held at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall yesterday.

Roth said the concert sticks very closely to what came out of the studio, maintaining the link between Uematsu's scores and *Final Fantasy*'s cinematic sequences.

"There are no prerecorded tracks, no safety nets," said Roth, also speaking at the press conference. Because of the works' different styles, "it is a demanding concert. It takes a lot of work on the part of the orchestra."

The music is wide-ranging enough to appeal to a broad range of tastes.

Liberi Fatali, the show's opening number, exudes a sense of impending darkness through subtle violin and cello interludes, while the piano intro for *To Zanarkand* and the sorrowful *Aerith's Theme* are intended to convey feelings of unfulfilled love and helplessness, respectively.

Local audiences may recognize *Eyes on Me*, a track sung by Mando-pop icon Faye Wang (王菲) that was used as part of the sound track for *Final Fantasy VIII*.

Other highlights from the set list include the Spanish guitar razzle-dazzler *Vamo' alla Flamenco*, the jazzy, drum-heavy *Swing de Chocho* and *Memoro de la Stono*, which is partly sung in Esperanto, the language created in the late 19th century for the purpose of facilitating global communication.

The concert's "blend of art forms is a distinguishing feature that has captivated audiences in other cities," said Shih Chieh-yung (史繼詠), a music professor at National Taiwan Normal University (國立台灣師範大學) who works for Smartcard (聲碼數位藝術), the organization that brought *Distant Worlds* to Taiwan.

"Except for comic book and game conventions, gaming fans rarely get the chance to come together like this," Shih said.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: *Distant Worlds: Music From Final Fantasy* (太空戰士交響音樂會)

WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm

WHERE: Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館), 505, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段505號)

ADMISSION: NT\$800 to NT\$3,200, available online at artsticket.com.tw or by calling (02) 3393-9882

Nobuo Uematsu, the man behind the music.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SQUARE ENIX

