

FEATURES

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Golden Horse nominee Sandrine Pinna is a promising young actress who has yet to adapt to her newfound fame

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Sandrine Pinna, whose Chinese name is Chang Jung-jung (張榕容), greeted me at the office of her agency Jet Tone Films (傑東電影), the company founded by Wong Kar-wai (王家衛). Beautiful in just jeans and a T-shirt, Pinna wore make-up that hardly did justice to her 22-year-old face. A recent graduate of the Department of Radio, Television and Film at Shih Hsin University (世新大學), the actress has already garnered acclaim for her talents, as evidenced by a Golden Horse nomination for her role in last year's adolescent romance *Miao Miao* (渺渺) and her winning the best actress category at the 2009 Taipei Film Festival (台北電影節), this time for her role in Cheng Yu-chieh's *Yang Yang* (陽陽).

Pinna, whose father is French and whose mother is Taiwanese, entered the limelight at a young age, beginning work as a model when she was 10 years old. She has since been featured in numerous television commercials, soap operas and films, all of which have contributed to her maturation as a young actress. Last year resulted in an especially bountiful harvest for Pinna, as 2008 saw the actress star in seven short and feature-length films, including *Candy Rain* (花吃了那女孩), *Intoxicant* (匿名遊戲) and *The End of the Tunnel* (天黑).

During our interview, Pinna struck me as a young actress in the midst of a transition, who has yet to adjust to her role as a newly crowned movie star. Sounding slightly uneasy and occasionally tripping over her own words, she was nonetheless often very candid in appraising her career. She also spoke at length about her experience making *Yang Yang*, a film that features a character-driven, coming-of-age story that was tailor-made for Pinna, who plays a university athlete born to a Taiwanese mother and a French father.

Taipei Times: Were you the kind of kid who liked to daydream and imagine yourself playing different characters?

Sandrine Pinna: I was an only child so I could get a bit bored around the house. I would play with my Barbie dolls for five hours a day and dress them in clothes I made from toilet paper. I was also fond of inventing stories and playing all sorts of characters, like a pirate, a grandmother, a man or a woman. Having watched me playing like this when I was growing up, my family was very supportive of my choice to become an actress.

IN THE ZONE

TT: When did you decide to become a serious actress?

SP: I was a senior in college after making *Miao Miao*, and I thought that I might as well turn this acting thing into a career, since I needed to find a job after graduation anyway.

TT: Most of *Yang Yang* was shot in uninterrupted, long takes. What kind of challenges does this style of filmmaking pose for actors?

SP: I often call our cinematographer the magical Jake [his name is Jake Pollock], because I could hardly feel his presence when shooting the film. He and his camera felt almost like one of us [the actors].

Acting in the film requires total concentration. If we have two scenes to shoot today, we have to be in the mood and be feeling the emotions of those scenes for the entire day. If you forget your lines, the whole crew has to start over and redo the scene. You might end up wasting lots of film if you're not in the zone.

TT: Did the director tell you in the beginning that the film would be shot in long takes?

SP: No, actually not. During rehearsal I would be told that this or that scene would be shot in one take. But it wasn't until the last three days of shooting that it suddenly hit me that this whole film would be shot in long takes.

TT: Would you do things differently if you were *Yang Yang*?

SP: Everything would be different. I was born into a big family. My mother's family came from Shandong and we are very close. Every weekend my aunts and uncles would come back to visit, and every aunt could care for and punish each other's kids. But *Yang Yang* is lonely.

TT: Can you tell me about something interesting you do to study your characters?

SP: I don't really have anything interesting to say about that, except maybe that I always want to become the character when reading a script. So if I am given many scripts to read, I will want to become many different persons at once.

If I wear all black today, I'll imagine that I'm invisible. If I wear lots of colors today, I'll think of myself as a butterfly.

TT: You've played some funky characters, whether a singing alien in *Wu Mi-sen's* (吳米森) *Diva Viva* (宇宙歌女) or a chef suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder in *Candy Rain* [by Chen Hung-i (陳宏一)]. How did you prepare for roles like these?

SP: I usually have a 50-word description for each role I play. For example, the character could be defined as a sullen, melancholy type who doesn't talk much. Now, everyone has these qualities in themselves to some degree.

My job as an actor is to dig up and magnify those qualities.

TT: What kinds of roles interest you the most?

SP: I want to play a gangster.

TT: Are you interested in any particular type of genre film?

SP: What's a genre film?

TT: Films such as gangster films, comedies, romances and martial arts movies.

SP: I want to play them all. They all sound fun.

TT: Are you learning how to be a star? Is it difficult?

SP: I find it quite hard to be and act like a star. I'm more the kind of person who does what she likes, regardless of what other people think. I used to care what people think and say, but not anymore. I have to work to learn to become a star, like how to deal with the press, what to wear when I go out and how to present myself in front of others.

TT: Who are your favorite actresses?

SP: Juliette Binoche. The characters she plays feel exactly like her. No, wait, that's not it. What I mean is that you believe in the character she plays and say, "That's right, such people do exist in real life." Meryl Streep and Zhou Xun (周迅) are the same. There are people who seem so fascinating on the big screen who you just want to see them again and again.

I also love watching actresses who pick the right movies and right characters. Meg Ryan in *You've Got Mail* is one example. Bjork in *Dancer in the Dark* was simply awesome. I always fall in love with the character first, then the actor, not the other way around.

TT: Is there anything you want to do besides acting?

SP: I love to sing as well. Why isn't there anyone who wants to make an album with me?

TT: Please describe yourself in one sentence.

SP: I'd say I'm always full of whims and fancies. I love dreaming too, because in a dream you can watch a great show minus all the hard work of real life.

I can also accept many things, whether they are good or bad. I don't like to pass judgment, but it's not nice, say, if you do something to ruin the country.

TT: What's next?

SP: I want to take a break and visit my friend in Japan. I've never traveled with my girlfriends before. It should be fun.