

CULTURE

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Golden Horse has eased eligibility requirements and recognized digital cinema and multi-cultural films in a bid to become the most open-minded film competition in the Chinese-speaking world

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

Golden opportunities

▲ Taiwanese director Leon Dai poses with his Best Director, Best Feature Film, Best Original Screenplay and Outstanding Taiwanese film of the Year awards for *No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti* at the 46th Golden Horse Awards on Saturday.

Taiwan's Leon Dai (戴立忍) and his black-and-white social drama *No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti* (不能沒有你) swept the 46th Golden Horse Awards (金馬獎) on Saturday night. Dai took home top honors in five categories including Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Outstanding Taiwanese Film of the Year.

The last time that the Best Picture award went to a Taiwanese production was seven years ago with Chang Tso-chi's (張作驥) *The Best of Times* (美麗時光). According to awards and festival executive director Wen Tien-hsiang (聞天祥), the competition in the Best Director category was especially intense this year, with Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮) losing to Dai by merely one vote.

"*No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti* may not be the most artistically accomplished movie of the year, but it is the type of film the jurors want to encourage ... Since Golden Horse is a competition for Chinese-language productions in Taiwan, the jurors naturally take into consideration the significance of the films in relation to the development of the local film industry when casting their votes," Wen told the *Taipei Times*.

The success of Dai's film at this year's Golden Horse Awards is one example of changes the Golden Horse Film Festival (台北金馬影展) has made in order to remain competitive with other film festivals and awards ceremonies in the region, such as the Hong Kong Film Awards and Shanghai International Film Festival.

One important change involved modifying the jury system to make it more "logically consistent," Wen said. Previously, the judging process was divided into three stages, with three different groups of judges. Each jury member was assigned to a limited number of award categories. This year each juror judged every award category.

One film that reflected the jurors' distinct taste was *KJ: Music and Life* (音樂人生), a Hong Kong documentary that won in all categories it was nominated for, including Best Documentary, Best Film Editing and Best Sound Effects. Shot on DigiBeta, it was the first digital film to win a

Golden Horse award and the first documentary to beat out its fiction counterparts for Best Film Editing and Best Sound Effects. The Golden Horse Awards were previously only open to movies shot in 35mm film.

In another significant development, the 46-year-old event relaxed eligibility rules for international collaborations, from a "both/and" rule to an "either/or" rule: now, half of the dialogue in a film has to be spoken one or more Chinese dialects, or at least six main crew members, one of whom has to be the director, must be of Chinese origin.

This change reflects the fact that Taiwanese society is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. In the case of Taiwanese director Ho Wi-ding's (何蔚庭) forthcoming feature debut *Pinoys Sunday* (台北星期天), which chronicles the life of new immigrants in Taipei, the director would previously have had to have made his Southeast Asian actors speak broken Mandarin if he had wanted to submit the film to the Golden Horse Awards.

Orz Boyz (囍男孩) director Yang Ya-che (楊雅喆) says that because it is increasingly common for local filmmakers to work with their peers from other Asian countries, this new sense of openness is an advantage for Golden Horse. "It is rather narrow-minded to make a big deal about how many awards go to this or that Chinese or Hong Kong movie each year," Yang said.

Wen believes that opening the awards to all Chinese-language productions will work to the advantage of Taiwanese cinema. "To stand out from the crowd, you have to have distinct characteristics like this year's *No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti*, *Face* (臉) and *Yang Yang* (陽陽). Films that look like a Hong Kong genre flick are less likely to catch jurors' eyes," the veteran film critic and festival curator said.

Anyone who watched the awards ceremony on television will know that it attracted a crowd of A-list celebrities. This year's guests included directors Ang Lee (李安), Tsai Ming-liang, Stanley Kwan (關錦鵬) and Johnnie To (杜琪峰) and actress Maggie Cheung (張曼玉).

But what most people don't know is that many of the big-name international directors in attendance were there because they had been invited by



Chinese actress Li Bingbing, center, Hong Kong actor Nick Cheung, left, and Chinese actor Huang Bo display their awards for Best Leading Actor and Actress at the 46th Golden Horse Awards on Saturday.

festival chairman Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝賢) to serve as the faculty members for the newly initiated Golden Horse Film Academy (金馬電影學院), in which 16 young filmmakers from seven countries are admitted to a two-week filmmaking course held during the Golden Horse Film Festival.

The academy is the first and so far the only of its kind in the Chinese-speaking world, and if it continues to develop according to Hou and Wen's vision, it is likely to become an important platform for fostering connections with and influencing young filmmakers.

The festival's Film and TV Film Project Promotion (金馬創投會議) is another important event for filmmakers that tends to go unnoticed by the general public. Initiated in 2005, the forum connects filmmakers with potential investors from around the world who are interested in Chinese-language television and film projects.

Twenty-five projects were selected from among 92 entries this year, and attracted more than 40 investors from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand. More than 250 meetings between filmmakers and investors were held over the course of three days from Nov. 24 to Nov. 26.

Taiwanese director Cho Li (卓立)

said the promotion program can significantly speed up the process of finding investors for a project. Less than one year after she pitched her idea to nine groups of industry professionals, her feature debut *Zoom Hunting* (獵豔) has already been completed and will premiere this spring.

"People in Taiwan don't seem to realize that others think very highly of the Golden Horse's project promotion because it is open to all Chinese-language works," she said.

Having been to similar events in China and Hong Kong, Chinese director Pan Baochang (潘寶昌) thinks that Taiwan's promotion program is conducted with a higher degree of professionalism and is more diverse in terms of the style and content of the selected projects.

"Because of Golden Horse's status in Chinese-speaking parts of the world, participants are noticed a lot more easily," said Pan, whose project about free runners won top prize at the promotion program last year.

Taiwanese filmmaker Shen Koshang (沈可尚) admitted that he first saw the promotion program as a big party and didn't expect much from it, especially for his art-house project *The Song of Siren* (賽蓮之歌). But he landed 13 meetings with industry professionals and has gained valuable insight into his position in the market.

"For me, it was important to realize that we can't just use local talent, resources and capital. You have to try to think of your audience in a broader sense and be able to tell a story to people around the world," Shen said.

When asked what he thought about the rapidly growing film industry in China and its coveted market, the director said he believed that in the coming years many Taiwanese productions will be made to suit Chinese tastes.

"But to me, it is just a cycle. Years later, people will be drawn back to what makes Taiwan unique and valuable: freedom," Shen said.

Yang agrees. "If you want to enter China, you have to comply with its censorship, and the first thing you have to give up is freedom. You will say 'the [Chinese] audience won't understand Taiwanese language and culture, so we have to take them out.' Then your film is no longer Taiwanese."

Shen's *The Song of Siren* was the most successful film at this year's project promotion, winning the top cash prize of NT\$1 million. In a statement issued to the media, jurors said one of the reasons why they gave the honor to a less commercially oriented project was that they "hope to encourage works that explore the unknown with a bold, independent spirit."

46th Golden Horse Awards (2009)

- **Best Feature Film**
No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti (不能沒有你)
- **Best Director**
Leon Dai (戴立忍), *No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti* (不能沒有你)
- **Best Leading Actor**
Nick Cheung (張家輝), *The Beast Stalker* (証人)
Huang Bo (黃渤), *Cow* (鬥牛)
- **Best Leading Actress**
Li Bingbing (李冰冰), *The Message* (風聲)
- **Best Supporting Actor**
Wang Xueqi (王學圻), *Forever Enthralled* (梅蘭芳)
- **Best New Performer**
Yu Shaoqun (余少群), *Forever Enthralled* (梅蘭芳)
- **Best Original Screenplay**
Leon Dai (戴立忍) and Chen Wen-pin (陳文彬), *No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti* (不能沒有你)
- **Best Screenplay Adaptation**
Guan Hu (管虎), *Cow* (鬥牛)
- **Best Cinematography**
Cao Yu (曹郁), *City of Life and Death* (南京！南京！)
- **Best Visual Effects**
Wang Jianxiong (王建雄), Jimmy Chen (陳京民) and Li Liping (李麗萍), *Crazy Racer* (瘋狂的賽車)
- **Best Art Direction**
Lee Tian-jue (李天爵), Patrick Dechesne and Alain-Pascal Housiaux, *Face* (臉)
- **Best Makeup and Costume Design**
Christian Lacroix, Wang Chia-hui (王佳惠) and Anne Dunsford, *Face* (臉)
- **Best Action Choreography**
Sammo Hung (洪金寶) and Leung Siu-hung (梁小熊), *Ip Man* (葉問)
- **Best Film Editing**
Cheung King-wai (張經緯), *KJ: Music and Life* (音樂人生)
- **Best Original Film Score**
Dou Wei (戴維) and Bi Xiao-di (畢曉笛), *The Equation of Love and Death* (李米的猜想)
- **Best Original Film Song**
For My Heart (遇見) from *Death Dowry* (米香), written by Zeng Yan (曾軫), performed by Tao Hong (陶紅) and Tan Weiwei (譚維維)
- **Best Documentary**
KJ: Music and Life (音樂人生)
- **Best Short Film**
Sleeping With Her (片刻暖利)
- **Outstanding Taiwanese Film of the Year**
No Pudeo Vivir Sin Ti (不能沒有你)
- **Outstanding Taiwanese Filmmaker of the Year**
Lee Lung-yue (李龍禹)
- **Lifetime Achievement Award**
Ming Ji (明驥)
- **Special Contribution Award**
George Wang (王珽)

SOURCE: GOLDEN HORSE AWARDS

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

NOV. 20 TO NOV. 26



1. Landy Wen (溫嵐) and *Dancing Queen* with **21.39%** of sales
2. Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰) and *Love Moments* (愛的時刻自選輯) with **17.91%**
3. Shin (信) and *Take Advantage of Me* (趁我) with **11.44%**
4. Rachel Liang (梁文音) and *There is Always Love* (愛，一直存在) with **7.89%**
5. Elva Hsiao (蕭亞軒) and *Diamond Candy* (鑽石糖) with **3.34%**

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PLANET POP

nearly as much of an outrage at all," Lambert added. "I think it's because I'm a gay male."

The *Early Show* also ran video footage that blurred Lambert's male kiss, and doing so caused the network its own problem. Gay rights groups accused CBS of hypocrisy by also playing unedited video of a kiss between **Madonna** and **Britney Spears** at 2003's MTV Video Music Awards.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation said the CBS decision "reinforces an unfortunate double standard that is applied to openly gay performers."

Some members of the gay community also scorned Lambert. Jennifer Vanasco, editor in chief of Web site 365gay.com, said his performance hurt the cause of gay marriage in the eyes of mainstream Americans "who think gay life is exactly what [he] portrayed on the American Music Awards."

Lambert, 27, took a flair for showmanship, powerful vocals and sexual ambivalence all the way to the finals of top-rated US TV show *American Idol* in May.

But his weekend performance at the AMAs has drawn mixed results. ABC



Adam Lambert isn't apologizing for his frisky behavior at the American Music Awards. PHOTO: AP

received more than 1,500 complaints, but sales of Lambert's debut album *For Your Entertainment* are strong.

British singer **Robbie Williams** said on Saturday he was not engaged to his girlfriend, **Ayda Field** — despite "proposing" to her a day earlier.

The pop star popped the question to Field, 30, live on Australian radio on Friday, only for his London-based spokesman to say it was a joke and

deny they were engaged.

In London, the star's spokesman said Williams' on air proposal to the American actress had been nothing but a "joke," but the singer's mother insisted her son had popped the question and was engaged.

"I'm very excited. I'm really pleased. I've always wanted a daughter-in-law," Jan Williams told BBC Radio 5 live. He had told her about his plans a week ago.

Williams confessed on a BBC talk show recently that he was deeply in love with the 30-year-old actress.

He is currently in Australia on a concert tour to promote his new album, *Reality Killed the Video Star*.

The proposal came when Williams was told Sydney had a reputation for hosting celebrity weddings, as both **Elton John** and **Michael Jackson** had held impromptu weddings in the harbor city. Neither marriage lasted.

"Is there anyone you want to get married to?" Williams asked Field. She replied: "This is so awkward." To which Williams said: "Will you marry me?"

After a pause, Field, 30, answered: "Yes, I'll marry you."

Williams borrowed a ring from the radio show host to slip on Field's finger

and asked: "Would you be my betrothed until the end of time?" To which she responded: "I would love to be your betrothed until the end of time."

Basketball star **Shaquille O'Neal** paid for the funeral of a five-year-old North Carolina girl after being moved by national news coverage of the case of Shaniya Davis, who police say was kidnapped and killed.

The Cleveland Cavaliers player was touched by the stories he saw and got in touch with the family to see what he could do to help, a spokeswoman for O'Neal said Thursday.

More than 2,000 people attended the girl's funeral yesterday. Her body was found Nov. 16 beside a rural road.

Her mother, Antonette Davis, who had reported the child missing six days earlier, is charged with human trafficking and child abuse involving prostitution.

"I was sitting at home watching it on the news and the story brought a tear to my eye," O'Neal told *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper.

Corey Breece, of Rogers and Breece Funeral Home, which handled the service, declined to tell the *Fayetteville Observer* newspaper how much it cost but added that a child's funeral "averages around US\$4,500." — AGENCIES