

Lifestyle

Iran and Philippines clinch top honours at Singapore International Film Festival's Silver Screen Awards



Iranian film *Disappearance* was announced as the best film in the Asian Feature Film Competition on Saturday (Dec 2). (Photo: SGIFF)



SINGAPORE: Iranian film *Disappearance on Saturday* (Dec 2) won best film in the Asian Feature Film Competition at the 28th Singapore International Film Festival's (SGIFF) Silver Screen Awards.

Best Southeast Asian Short Film, meanwhile, went to *Jodilerks Dela Cruz, Employee of the Month* by Filipino filmmaker Carlo Francisco Manatad.

Iranian filmmaker Ali Asgari's *Disappearance* beat seven other shortlisted films to win the top honour. This is his debut film, which tells a tale of two young lovers who run from hospital to hospital to seek medical aid while facing setbacks along the way.

According to the four-member jury, the plot took place over the course of one night, but managed to exude "amazing simplicity, truth and compassion" while also "conveying the complexity of a whole culture and human relationships".

Actress Sadaf Agsari, who played Sara in *Disappearance*, clinched the award for Best Performance as well.

The jury commended her "ability to convey complex emotions in an amazingly understated performance" and said that she drew the audience "into her world" and "grips" the viewer to "explore every small nuance of the character's intense emotions".

Thai filmmaker Anucha Boonyawatana was awarded the title of Best Director for *Malila: The Farewell Flower*, a story that explored the mysteries of love and spiritual redemption.

The film was said to have a "quiet, extremely sensitive, beautifully shot exploration of fundamental themes of our existence", according to the judges.

"The film gently nudges us into a meditative state to enable us to explore for ourselves, the meaning of being in the present. Of being in the now. Of Life and of Death," the judges added.

This year, the jury for the Asian Feature Film Competition was made up of the director of the Oscar-winning film *Elizabeth*, Shekhar Kapur, Hong Kong-Australian filmmaker Clara Law, Iranian-American screenwriter and director Ana Lily Amirpour and the head of programming at the Locarno Film Festival Mark Peranson.

LOCAL ANIMATED FILM CLINCHES AN AWARD

Dark humour worked well for Filipino filmmaker Carlo Francisco Manatad. His film *Jodilerks Dela Cruz, Employee of the Month* was awarded the the Best Southeast Asian Short Film.

The film showed a gas station attendant's last day of duty with a "farcical approach in the storytelling" that depicted worldly "issues of lawlessness, crime and violence", said the judges in their verdict.

Singapore was also among the award winners with Tan Wei Keong's *Between Us Two* winning the Best Singapore Short Film.



Local filmmaker Tan Wei Keong's *Between Us Two* won the Best Singapore Short Film. (Photo: SGIFF)

The film showcased a gay son's conversation with his mother through animation. The jury felt that the topics addressed by the film were important and that the personal approach by Tan made it "even more poignant".

The judges praised the film and said: "The personal approach and the use of animation was effective and it added another layer to the story telling."

Asian film icons were also recognised as the Cinema Legend Award was awarded to Japan's leading actor Koji Yakusho, whose career spanned 39 years.

As the SGIFF closes its 28th edition on Sunday with more than 14 awards presented, Disappearance will be screened at the National Museum of Singapore.

Source: CNA/aa

