

S2F2 2016 Boosts Love for Film Among Young Students

The Shanghai Student Film Festival (S2F2) 2016 brought students and filmmakers together for a weekend of sharing and learning during the weekend of 18 to 19 March.

Established in 2006 by four international schools in Shanghai, the event has now expanded to nine organizing schools. The 15 participating schools this year were not exclusively from Shanghai, but from cities across China including Nanjing, Wuxi, Beijing and even from outside China, such as South Korea.

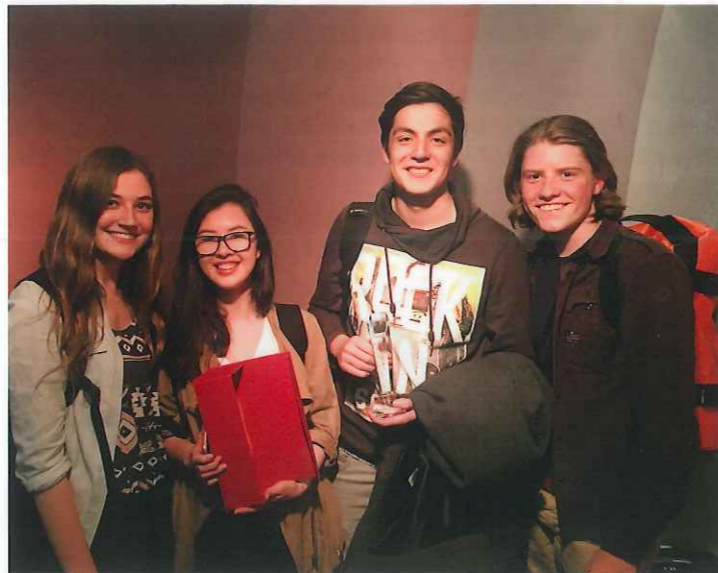
Altogether, over 200 films were submitted this year for competitions in seven categories, including Drama, Comedy, Documentary, Sci-Fi/Action, Music Video/Video Art/Animation, and Thriller/Horror, as well as a separate category for IB films, among which Drama being the category with the biggest submission pool.

The jury team was composed of 11 film course teachers from different international schools.

The jury was excited to see improvements in many aspects in this year's submissions, such as better quality of footage, and use of different locations. Students also made progress in acting by casting actors from different age ranges.

"Overall, they are trying to make bolder decisions. They are trying to think more like filmmakers, and less like students. That's exciting because it means the films just look that much more professional," commented Anthony Reich, a film course teacher from Dulwich College Shanghai who was on the jury.

Joshua Sternlicht, the other jury member from the Shanghai Community International School (SCIS), was



impressed by the students' improvement in cinematography: "Technologies are getting better, camera movements are better, and editing is improving as well as they are using innovating, more cinematic language."

Seung-Ho Yang, a student at Shanghai American School, Pudong Campus, recalled that the biggest challenge was planning on how to orchestrate the entire film. "I've been planning this film for a long time, so, more than anything, time helped me with my challenges. During filming I allowed for natural improvisations to happen, rather than sticking to all of my plans, and that helped make the film even better."

The jury spent a few days screening and judging the films based on four major categories – Story/content/message; Structure; Visual/cinematography; and Audio/sound, and finally decided on the Top 3 for each film category. A new element this year was the announcement of the Official Selections list in each category, which consisted of films that didn't make into the top 3 but were of good quality, similar to an "Oscar nominee" in the US.

Seung-Ho, a first-time attendee, was excited and surprised to learn that his comedy film Best Idea won first place in the category. "The competition fired me up. I want to stick with filmmaking. I have a lot of ideas for films that I want to create and it would be exciting if I could continue to do this in my future," Seung-Ho said.

The full winners list (including the Official Selections) can be viewed on the S2F2 website: <http://www.s2f2.org/past-videos.html>

8-hour Film Challenge – an S2F2 Tradition

As an S2F2 tradition, participating students face an on-site challenge where they are put into small groups with students from different schools to complete producing a short film of the same theme in same location within eight hours.

This is a good way of mixing schools, mixing students, and getting to know other students around the city. It provides tremendous learning opportuni-

ties, as students are constantly sharing skills and learning from one and other. This is important for the students to realize that if you have got a good team with you, you can quickly create something noteworthy. It's important to collaborate with other filmmakers and learn different styles.

SAS Pudong student Ally Zhu admitted that working with the other students was, at times, challenging because they had ideological differences in regards to film. "However, despite the stress involved, we were able to learn from each other through our collaboration. We also were forced to be flexible, which was probably a good thing," she said.

The theme of the eight-hour challenge this year was "Insanity", which in the organizers opinion is a topic very open for interpretation. The students were taken to the Museum of Contemporary Art

in People's Square on 18 March, which served as the base for the 8-hour film challenge, and were divided into 29 groups of five or six students to complete a two-minute film about 'Insanity'.

The students had to write the script, film it and edit it all on the spot within the given timeframe. By 4PM that day, all the 29 groups succeeded in completing the task and their films were then immediately screened to all in attendance. The day ended when the judges awarded three winners.

"More than anything, we just hope generally a passion for filmmaking among students in this city. The 8-hour challenge is not necessarily about the best films, it is just about passion and fun and creating a sense of enjoyment amongst the students. That's the best thing about it," Dulwich teacher Anthony Reich commented.

A Series of Workshops for Sharing and Learning

On the second day of S2F2, workshops were offered at SAS Pudong to all students participating in the film festival. Students had the opportunity to roam between classes on film direction and production, sound design, makeup, and 3D animation run by professional instructors from the Shanghai Vancouver Film School (SHFVS), which is a joint-venture school between the Vancouver Film School and Shanghai University that opened in 2014.

Sebastian Patient and Julia Smieszek from the British International School Shanghai, Puxi were attracted to the special effects makeup workshop, as "Makeup is an area interesting to go into. We don't really get makeup classes at school. It is interesting to see them use face painting, chalk powder and wax to make up cuts, wounds, scarves, etc."

Students attending the 3D animation workshop watched Shawn Patrick



Tilling, SHFVS Lead Instructor of 3D Animation & Visual Effects, demonstrating how to do technical drawings, how to put a skeleton into a 3D puppet and how to bring that fully created element into the 3D application. The audience found the whole process fascinating. "The 3D animation workshop was really great. It connected a lot of the 'hard copy' art to digital art, which helped us better understand the process of 3D animation and how to design a character," SAS Pudong student Sally Jin said.

Peter D. Marshall, a filmmaker and film directing coach from Vancouver, Canada, shared his own experiences with the students of having worked in film and television industry for over 40 years in various roles as a Film Director, Television Producer, First Assistant Director and TV Series Creative Consultant. He encouraged the students to find and follow their passions, and dare to take risks.

"It's really nice talking to people with a lot of experience in the film industry because they definitely have more experiences, more ups and downs than I have, and have probably solved many problems I would never experience. It's really great to ask for their opinions," said Dulwich College Shanghai student Matthew Tan Yi Jian, who has attended the S2F2 for the last three years and won second place in the Documentary category this year.

Peter was impressed by the interest level from these High School students. "Filmmakers are storytellers. It's amazing the young people have tons of stories that need to be told," he said. "Such film festivals are an opportunity for young students to express themselves."

BY CATHERINE DENG