

FESTIVALS

HFPA at the Shanghai International Film Festival - East Meets West

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Director Batbayar Chogsom's *Out of Paradise* took the Golden Goblet, the top award of the Shanghai International Film Festival. Besides the Mongolia-Switzerland co-production, the 21st edition of the festival awarded the Best Actress prize to Isabelle Blais, for the Canadian film *Tadoussac*, the Best Actor, to the US' Tye Sheridan for *Friday's Child*, and Best Director to Rodrigo and Sebastian Barriuso for the Cuba-Canada co-production *A Translator*.



Golden Goblet winners: *Out of Paradise* director Batbayar Chogsom (left) and Rodrigo and Sebastian Barriuso, Best Directors for *A Translator*.
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The festival also hosted the SIFF Forum, a series of panels on different aspects of the international film industry. This year's speakers included **Jesse Eisenberg**, Cannes Film Festival director Thierry Frémaux; Michael C. Ellis, president of the Motion Picture Association Asia Pacific; Smitri Kiran, creative director of the Mumbai Film Festival; Carla Mooney, founder and director of the Silk Road Entertainment Film festival, and Annabelle Sheehan, CEO of the New Zealand Film Commission.

The HFPA was present at SIFF Forum as part of the New Filmmakers Panel, organized and produced by the Shanghai-Vancouver Film School in partnership with the **HFPA grantee New Filmmakers L.A.** The panel talked about support options for emerging filmmakers worldwide, from grants to internships. It included the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences' Bettina Fisher, Director of Educational Activities; Creative Executive Christine Dávila; filmmaker Shih-Ting; and New Filmmakers LA founder and director Larry Laboe. The HFPA was represented by Ana Maria Bahiana, who spoke about the Association's long track of philanthropy in the arts, with grants in support of education, restoration and diversity.



Scenes from a festival (clockwise from top left): the New Filmmakers Panel at SIFFORUM - Shanghai_Vancouver Film School Vice President of Industry Dr. Bonny Zhang, Creative Executive Christine Dávila, the Academy's Bettina Fisher, the HFPA's Ana Maria Bahiana, Director of Film for the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film & TV Division Peng Qizhi, New Filmmakers L.A. director Larry Laboe, producer Margaret Wu, filmmaker Shih-Ting; Jesse Eisenberg meets the Shanghai audience at SIFFORUM; Christoph Waltz and Nicolas Cage present at the festival's opening night.
COURTESY SIFF

Besides the SIFFORUM speakers, International guests of this year's edition included **Nicolas Cage**, **Christoph Waltz**, Jason Statham and producer David Permut. In 2015 HFPA member and renowned film and TV actress Lisa Lu was a guest of honor of the festival.

SIFF enters its third decade as one of the most important film festivals in Asia, programming films from all over the world and hosting a thriving film market. "The festival is a platform of filmmakers in China and abroad to communicate with each other", says Peng Qizhi, Director of Film for the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film & TV Division. "It also offers the Chinese audience the opportunity to see films in different languages, from different countries and backgrounds. In total, over the 10 days of the festival, we screen around 500 films from all over the world. They are seen by an audience of about 450,000 people. We have become the biggest audience of all festivals around the world – it exceeds even the audience of the Berlin Film festival."

The festival and its forum and market play a key role in the ongoing plan of returning Shanghai to its glory days as "the Hollywood of the East" it once was in the 1920s and 30s when the city was an international hub and the preferred location for stars and filmmakers. In 2014 a group of developers, with the backing of the local authorities, launched the International Film and Television Park in an area earmarked for audio-visual production. "As a great cosmopolitan metropolis, Shanghai was China's cultural and financial center when the 20th century arrived", says L.A./Shanghai-based producer Margaret Wu. "To regain that title, Shanghai has implemented effective regulations to open the door wider for private and overseas investors and film professionals. An influx of foreign and private investment and know-how should help Shanghai to once again play a significant role in China's cinema." ■