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Life

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# **Air, dark, light... magic!**

## **Screen Stars**

**Homegrown movie Eating Air and Taiwan's Darkness And Light, both dealing with love and sponsored by SPH, win Silver Screen awards**

**By HELMI YUSOF**

THERE could be a clairvoyant working for the Singapore Press Holdings somewhere.

What was interesting at the Silver Screen Awards Ball last night was that two of the movies which came out with top prizes were the ones which SPH chose to sponsor.

The first, Darkness And Light, from Taiwan, took the Best Film prize.

The other was a Singaporean movie, Eating Air, which picked up the Singapore Film Commission Young Cinema Award. It is directed by Kelvin Tong, Life!'s movie critic, and Jasmine Ng, a movie editor at VHQ, a post-production house.

SPH, in its first time sponsoring the festival, gave \$15,000 for the screening of the two movies.

Darkness And Light had swept all the major awards at the 1999 Tokyo International Film Festival, including the Grand Prix, before it was screened here.

The Singapore International Film Festival jury praised the delicate love story between a young man from China and a Taiwanese girl as being "a stunning example of craft and narrative". The movie is directed by Chang Tso-chi, a protege of famous Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien.

Meanwhile, Eating Air, a vivid, high-octane love story between a biker and a schoolgirl, was described by the jury as "brash and dynamic" and a film that "exemplifies the best in the emerging cinema of the young".

Three other features bagged major prizes at the black-tie event held at the Westin Stamford's ballroom.

Seventeen Years, a movie from China about a young girl who kills her stepsister unintentionally, earned its director Zhang Yuan the Best Director award, while his two lead actresses, Liu Lin and Li Bing Bing, shared the prize for Best Actress for their powerful and restraint performances.

Meanwhile, Split Wide Open, a provocative film from India examining sex and sexuality, was honoured with a Special Jury Prize for being "adventurous in subject and style". Its charismatic actor Rahul Bose was also named Best Actor.

Finally, the Best Screenplay prize went to a brilliant, contemplative film from Israel about the impact of religious extremism on ordinary lives, called Sacred.

In all, 14 Asian films, pre-selected from more than 50 showcased at the festival, vied for the seven major awards.

An international 10-member jury comprising filmmakers, critics, curators and a playwright spent about a week watching all the movies before making the final decision on Wednesday.

In the short film category, Royston Tan Tsze Kiam was the unsurprising winner of Best Film and the Special Achievement Award.

His 10-minute movie about the stagnant relationship between an old man and his son boasts exquisite cinematography and music.

Among last night's celebrity presenters were superstar Chow Yun Fat (who presented an award at the Oscars ceremony only last month), homegrown film-maker Glen Goei and actress-model Lum May Yee.

Host Selena Tan opened the evening with a musical send-up of the Singaporean film industry.

- The writer is part of the SPH Young Film Critic Attachment
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## **ASIA'S BEST: The winners**

### **ASIA FEATURE FILM CATEGORY**

- **Best Film:** Darkness And Light (Taiwan)
- **SFC Young Cinema Award:** Eating Air (Singapore)
- **Special Jury Prize:** Split Wide Open (India)
- **Best Director:** Zhang Yuan for Seventeen Years (China)
- **Best Actor:** Rahul Bose for Split Wide Open (India)
- **Best Actress:** Tie between Liu Lin and Li Bing Bing for Seventeen Years (China)
- **Best Screenplay:** Sacred (Israel/France)

### **SINGAPORE SHORT FILM CATEGORY**

- **Best Short Film:** Sons by Royston Tan
- **Special Jury Prizer:** Wait by Kwong Chee Guan Boi
- **Best Director:** No winner

- **Special Achievement Award: Sons by Royston Tan**
- **Netpac/Fipresci Jury Award (Network For The Promotion Of Asian Cinema/International Federation Of Film Critics): Tie between Darkness And Light (Taiwan) and Close To Paradise (China)**

**The winning pair [/by] of actresses in Seventeen Years.**

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