

'The Assassin' tops winners at Asian Film Awards

Hou Hsiao-hsien's painterly martial arts masterpiece "The Assassin" claimed eight wins at the Asian Film Awards, including best film and best director. The cinematic historical drama was also honored for cinematography and its lead and supporting actresses at the ceremony Thursday night in Macau.

Best-actress winner Shu Qi jokingly thanked the "Band-Aids and medicine" that accompanied her during filming, referring to the rigorous training to prepare for the role. Taiwanese director Hou did not attend but the film's cinematographer Mark Lee collected the awards on the director's behalf. He thanked the jury, the cast and crew and Hou's supporters in the region.

"The Assassin," a gorgeously filmed story of a female killer faced with an impossible choice between love and duty, was named best film at Taiwan's Golden Horse Awards and the veteran Hou won best director at the Cannes Film Festival last year. Chinese actress Zhou Yun of "The Assassin" was named best-supporting actress, while the best-supporting actor honor went to Japan's Tadanobu Asano for "Journey to the Shore."

Lee Byung-hun won best actor for his role in the political thriller "Inside Men." Accepting the award, Lee thanked the director and his co-star, but saved the most important people until last: "I would like to thank my wife and son at home for all the

love and support through good times and bad," the South Korean actor said.

In addition to his work in Asia, Lee has enjoyed success in Hollywood, having appeared in "G.I. Joe: Retaliation" and "Terminator Genisys." Lee was invited to last month's Oscars as the only Asian presenter. After criticism over the lack of ethnic diversity among the nominees, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences added three new governors to its 51-member board and appointed six minority members to other leadership positions. The academy also apologized to Asians for a racially insensitive skit during the ceremony.

Lee said he wasn't aware of the controversy surrounding host Chris Rock's joke, but he said Hollywood needs to generally broaden its definition of diversity. "It's for all of us actually. For Asians, for Hispanics, for blacks. I think more roles should come to every kind of race," he said. In its 10th year, the Asian Film Awards celebrate the best talents in Asian cinema. Hong Kong director Johnnie To was the jury president, with actors Sean Lau Chin-wan and Gao Yuanyuan among the film industry figures also on the panel. — AP



Taiwanese actress Shu Qi poses after winning the Best Actress awards of the Asian Film Awards in Macau. — AP



This image released by A24 Films shows director Trey Edward Shults, left, with Krisha Fairchild during the filming of, "Krisha." — AP

Homemade 'Krisha' finds catharsis in tragedy

Aspiring filmmakers take note: Nine days of shooting at his mother's Montgomery, Texas, home, a minuscule budget of \$100,000 and a cast led by his aunt were enough for writer-director Trey Edward Shults to make one of the more devastatingly empathetic portraits of addiction you're likely to see.

Shults' bravura debut film, "Krisha," has been an unlikely sensation on the festival circuit, where it won the grand prize at last year's South By Southwest Film Festival. In February, it won the John Cassavetes prize at the Independent Film Spirit Awards, an honor for best film made with less than \$500,000. Yet what makes "Krisha," which opens Friday, powerful isn't its humble, homespun production, but rather its intensely intimate drama, inspired by the wrenching family history that played out within the same walls as its setting, and was lived through by many of the very people seen on screen.

Krisha Fairchild, Shults' aunt, stars as the title character: a wayward, former alcoholic who comes to the suburban home of her sister (played by Shults' mother, Robyn Fairchild) for Thanksgiving. The scene is festive and teaming, but for Krisha the atmosphere is one of dread.

The film, discordantly scored and dizzyingly shot, captures the small slights and deep wounds of the troubled Krisha as she tries to re-enter family life and keep her demons at bay. We see the judgmental glances that greet her and follow her retreats to the upstairs bathroom. "I'm not the Krisha of the family but I want to try to understand

her and have empathy for her," Shults said in a recent interview.

Shults was drawing from a real past. After years of sobriety, a cousin of his died of an overdose in 2011, shortly after relapsing during a holiday family reunion. Krisha and Robyn Fairchild played significant roles in trying to help their niece and her children. "I was just terrified of being around someone in that situation," says Shults, remembering the holiday meltdown. "It felt like a slow-motion train wreck. I didn't want to do anything except sit there nervously. Two months later, she overdosed and passed away. I think I started processing that with the script."

Shults and other family members, distraught, would often replay in their minds the struggles that preceded the death. "So when he presented us with this script that was so emphatic to the person that we loved, we all came to feel that this might be the way to help other people," says Fairchild, who acted in her youth. "It was an immediate rush of: 'Yes, Trey. Yes. You got it.'"

The character of Krisha is a composite. Shults' father was also an alcoholic who fell off the wagon, leading Shults to keep him out of his life for years before visiting him on his deathbed.

Behind the turmoil and tragedy of "Krisha" is the hard question: How is it best to love a perpetually out-of-control family member? "I think about it all the time," says Shults. "The two big people in our family who inspired this character are passed away now. I think about if I did the right stuff with my dad in cutting him off." — AP

Zo' Kravitz's DIY plan to change Hollywood

Zo' Kravitz has heard enough talk and she's ready for some change. She might have an enviable perch in the entertainment ecosystem with recent film credits as diverse as "Dope," "Mad Max: Fury Road," and "The Divergent Series," not to mention her famous lineage, but she's also seen her share of darkness in Hollywood too, from discrimination to stereotyping.

"People have tried to do that to me over and over again and I've been fighting it and fighting it," Kravitz said on a recent afternoon interview. "I would get auditions and it would be like 'they want you to play the best friend.' And it's like 'why can't I audition for the lead?' Then it'll be like 'ok now you're the quirky black girl,' or 'now you're a hippie.' 'I can play all kinds of people. I don't have to play myself.'"

She's made up her mind to take a stand, not only in the kinds of roles she chooses, but in how she's going to actually create change for herself. Take "Allegiant," the latest entry in "The Divergent Series," out Friday, in which Kravitz reprises her role as the loyal, fierce Christina. Sure, she's the best friend to the Shailene Woodley's Tris, but she's one of many significant female characters in the film, which also boasts admirable racial diversity.

In the Oscar-nominated "Mad Max: Fury Road," too, Kravitz plays one of the wives of Immortan Joe who is escaping her captivity in the high-octane race across the wasteland. "(Director George Miller) absolutely could have thrown four cute girls the back of the car and been like 'be scared.' But he didn't do that," Kravitz said. "He said we were slaves - basically sex slaves. He wanted to feel that in our energy. He took the time to have us go a month early and workshops with (feminist playwright Eve Ensler) to really understand what we were running from."

And in last year's "Dope," a vibrant Sundance breakout from director Rick Famuyiwa, which Kravitz saw as an instant classic in the vein of "Friday" and "Boyz n the Hood," she plays a suffers-no-fools dream girl with an edge. Kravitz has faith in the industry thanks in part to a poignant early experience in one of her first films - the 2007 Jodie Foster and Terrence Howard film "The Brave One."

"(My role) was written for a blonde white Russian girl. I was like 'I'll audition for it any-

way,'" she said. "It changed (director Neil Jordan's) mind about how he saw that role." But in order to move things forward, Kravitz knows she's just going to have to do it herself - write, direct, and produce.

"I love the fact that there's such an open dialogue right now about women in Hollywood and black women and black men in Hollywood and everything in between. Now it's about us bringing the change," Kravitz said. "We started the dialogue but I don't expect any man to write a script that speaks for me. I don't expect any man to write a script for me. I think we need to do that. If we want to be represented properly in Hollywood, let's represent ourselves properly in Hollywood." — AP



Actress Zoe Kravitz attends the premiere of "Allegiant" at AMC Lincoln Square. — AP