LIFE



A forum at the 15th Beijing International Film Festival discusses the growth potential of the domestic film market after the blockbuster success of *Ne Zha 2*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Film veterans put success in focus at Beijing festival

Directors, industry leaders and actors share experiences, memories and predictions in masterclasses, **Xu Fan** reports.





Left: Jiang Wen (center), jury president of the festival's prestigious Tiantan Award, poses for selfies with fellow celebrities during the closing ceremony. **Right:** Actress Ni Ni, also a Tiantan Award juror, on the opening ceremony's red carpet alongside actors Zhu Yilong (center) and Wu Lei. PHOTOS BY CHEN ZEBING / CHINA DAILY

Shining stars, prestigious filmmakers, and rarely screened films are the elements that define a film festival. At the Beijing event, three masterclasses stand out — hosted by actor-director Jiang Wen, auteur Jia Zhangke, and French actress Isabelle Huppert — offering cinephiles a window into the lesser-known stories behind their iconic works.

Known for his bold visuals and dark humor, Jiang has directed six films, five of which — including *Hidden Man* — are adaptations of novels. What has caught the attention of some critics is how drastically these adaptations differ from the original stories.

"What I brought to the screen is what I envisioned in the novels. When I read a novel, many images come to mind that are often different from the original tale. But the novels are still important because they stimulate my imagination," Jiang explains.

Speaking about *Hidden Man*, an adaptation of Zhang Beihai's *Xia Yin* (The Reclusive Hero), Jiang recalls how the novel reminded him of old Beijing landscapes. These memories trace back to his childhood when, at age 10, he moved with his parents into a residential compound that once belonged to a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) princess.

Jiang emphasizes that the most important reason for a young filmmaker to begin a filmmaking career is the capability to express an independent perspective; everything else, including technical skills, comes later.

Interestingly, Jiang reveals that by the time he finishes writing a script, he already has the entire film visualized. "I don't need to refer to the script while shooting. I remember every line, whether mine or another character's," he shares, offering a glimpse into his unique filmmaking process.

Director Jia Zhangke, winner of multiple prestigious international awards including the Golden Lion at the 63rd International Venice Film Festival, also shares insights into his filmmaking journey during his masterclass.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of *Mountains May Depart*, which won Best Screenwriter at the 10th Asian Film Awards. For the first time, Jia unveils one of his motivations behind the film.

"There's a scene in the movie where Zhao Tao's character tries to transport her father's body back to their hometown after his sudden passing. That storyline came from my own life: My father died in another city and my older sister and I had to take him home in an ambulance. The trip took nine hours," he recalls.

"It was the hardest moment of my life. But when I was filming it, that pain was buried deep in my heart. This huge emotional force kept me going and drove me to finish the film," he adds.

French actress Huppert, 72, recalls collaborating with South Korean director Hong Sang-soo on films like *In Another Country*, *Claire's Camera*, and *A Traveler's Needs*. "Hong is a special director. His signature style involves shooting films in extremely short periods but investing heavily in preparation," Huppert recalls, using *Claire's Camera* as an example, which took only six days to shoot. *In Another Country* was filmed over nine days.

Evolution in technology

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, its potential to impact and transform the film industry became a major discussion topic at the festival.

Director Jia believes that AI will soon bring sweeping changes to human thought, lifestyles, and possibly, entire civilizations.

"The film industry was born out of technological evolution," he says. "Few insiders are immune to the changes AI is bringing. However, the content generated by AI relies on existing data, such as photos or videos found online. Even so-called 'new' images are merely rearranged elements of what's already available, which means AI-generated content often lacks true creativity and innovation."

Nevertheless, Jia maintains an open attitude: "AI technology is still evolving; it's unformed and immature. Instead of rejecting or overhyping it, we should explore its potential and learn how to make the best use of it in everyday life and filmmaking."

For most seasoned professionals in the industry, AI has introduced conveniences that could potentially redefine the rules of filmmaking.

Describing AI's research capability as a "super library", Yu Baimei, an established scriptwriter-director known for the sports film *Ping Pong: The Triumph*, explains how it greatly reduces the time needed during the initial scriptwriting phase, especially when gathering archival materials.

"You can think of AI as a superhuman entity that holds nearly all of humanity's accumulated knowledge, spanning literature, mathematics, law, and more. Right now, it serves as an excellent assistant but within five to 10 years, it could evolve into something far beyond just a tool," says Yu.

Zhang Ke, a veteran scriptwriter known for blockbusters like *The Volunteers* franchise, believes young writers should approach AI with caution. He advises them to verify historical and military information using multiple sources rather than relying solely on AI.

"If a young person's goal is to become one of the best scriptwriters in China, it's better not to rely on AI. Instead, read, travel to different places, spend time dreaming, or even go through inner struggles," he suggests.

Sharing that he recently focused on reviewing some great works, Zhang says that the most compelling lines are born from raw, irrational emotions that flow directly from the creator's heart. "That's something AI can never create," he adds.

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

TCM gets a needle into New Zealand's healthcare system

WELLINGTON — On April 27, residents of New Zealand's South Island were immersed in the world of traditional Chinese medicine at an exhibition held in Christchurch.

Visitors to the event explored several TCM practices, including pulse diagnosis, acupuncture, *tui na* massage (one of the oldest massage techniques in the world), herbal sachet making, tai chi, and Baduanjin (a form of *qigong*) exercises.

The Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine showcased innovative technologies, such as the Health Smart Ring and Smart Health Evaluator. These devices, incorporating cloud computing and artificial intelligence, offer personalized TCM health testing and evaluation services to the New Zealand public, the organizer says.

With a history that spans thousands of years, TCM emphasizes holistic approaches to disease prevention, treatment, and well-being, the Chinese Consul General in Christchurch He Ying noted at the opening ceremony.

Today, TCM has spread to nearly 200 countries. Acupuncture and *tui na* massage are now formally recognized within New Zealand's healthcare system, benefiting people from diverse backgrounds, she says.

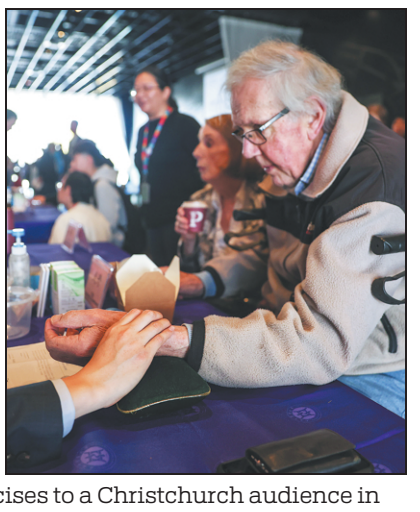
Meng Yu, vice-president of the Shanghai University of TCM, adds that several doctors in New Zealand have pursued further education, deepening ties between the two countries and advancing Chinese medicine's academic development.

Meng hopes for stronger China-New Zealand cooperation using traditional medicine to bridge the two cultures.

Public demand for TCM services continues to grow, says Robin Kerr, president of Acupuncture New Zealand.

Resident Mary Timings participated in the event and shared that TCM offered her a refreshing, new perspective on health and well-being.





Left: An expert from Shanghai showcases traditional Chinese exercises to a Christchurch audience in New Zealand on April 27. YAN XINYUN / XINHUA **Right:** A New Zealander gets a pulse check during the event. LONG LEI / XINHUA

The event, attended by over 100 representatives from local communities and TCM organizations, was co-organized by the Chinese Consulate General in Christchurch, the Shanghai University of TCM, the Confucius Institute at the University of Canterbury, and Christchurch City Libraries.

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