

Ceylan stays true to artistic vision, remains open to change

LOS ANGELES, Aug 13, (Agencies): Acclaimed Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan discussed his career and the need for creative independence during a wide-ranging conversation Saturday at the Sarajevo Film Festival, where he is being honored with a retrospective.

In an often humorous talk, Ceylan, who accepted the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo Award for his contribution to cinema on the opening night of the festival, spoke about staying true to artistic vision while remaining open to change. He also addressed the perceived political symbolism of his work and described the use of such accepted cinematic techniques as storyboarding as creatively stifling.

Asked about changes to his style in his more recent films, such as 2014 Palme d'Or winner "Winter Sleep" and his latest work, "The Wild Pear Tree", including the greater use of dialogue and shorter shots, Ceylan said: "That's difficult to explain. These are all instinctive processes. I never plan it; I just do it – it's a feeling. When it comes to defining it, it's difficult for me."

Using more dialogue in his newest film was a challenge. "It makes me afraid because it might not work," Ceylan said. "This fear motivates me. But it doesn't mean that I will always make films like this one."

Ceylan took issue with the view that "The Wild Pear Tree", about a young college graduate considering a career as a teacher in a rural village while also seeking to publish his first book – was more openly political than his past films. He said it was perhaps the subject matter and social situations of the setting that pushed him in that direction.

He set out to make a film about the human condition, about loneliness, not social conditions, which is something that does not motivate him, Ceylan said. He noted that people often examine his films for symbolic meaning, like the shot of a Turkish flag or the titles of books

in a particular scene in his latest work, but that there was none intended. "When you make a film people look at every detail. But it's not your film anymore after you finish it, so what can you do?"

While discussing the fact that "The Wild Pear Tree" was his first major international co-production, Ceylan said he had never faced any forms of censorship in Turkey.

"They don't say anything," he said. "To criticize a film is not an easy thing. People think that when you get money from the government, you are not free anymore. That's not true. They give the money, but they don't say even one word to you about how the film should be. They would have to discuss the film with you, and nobody knows anything about cinema. It doesn't affect your independence in any way."

Storyboards

Ceylan said he never employs storyboards while making his films. "It restricts my vision, storyboards. When I go to the set, I like to be free, free to change. When you go to the set, everything can change. You have to be open to that, and you have to trust yourself...I don't think much about how I shoot something. I have some ideas beforehand, but when I go to the set, I start from zero..."

"A director should never be sure of anything. He should be suspicious all the time; he should be afraid. In the shooting, what you like most is generally what you like least in the editing. In the editing, often the much better shot is the one you didn't like in the shooting."

Stressing that shooting is the most creative process in making a film, Ceylan said: "In the editing, what you shoot is what you have. You cannot change anything anymore, unlike a writer, who can always go back and change everything."

The Sarajevo Film Festival is showcasing eight of Ceylan's films as part of its retrospective, including 1997's "The Small Town"; 2002's "Distant"; 2011's "Once Upon a Time in Anatolia"; and "Winter Sleep". "The Wild Pear Tree" unspools in the separate In Focus sidebar.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Universal Pictures has taken the Chris Pratt-led tentpole, "Cowboy Ninja Viking", off its schedule and undated the movie, which was previously set to release on June 28, 2019.

Sources tell Variety that the film is still in active development with Pratt, Priyanka Chopra, and director Michelle MacLaren remaining on board. Universal said it will be re-dated at a later time to accommodate production scheduling. Insiders say the studio delayed the film rather than rushing it out to make the June 28 deadline. A source close to the situation compared it to "The Mummy's" hurried production schedule, saying the studio wanted to avoid repeating the box office flop.

"Cowboy Ninja Viking" is based on the Image Comics graphic novel by A.J. Lieberman and illustrator Riley Rossmo. It was adapted by Dan Mazeau ("Wrath of the Titans") and Ryan Engle ("The Commuter"). Craig Mazin wrote an earlier draft of the screenplay with an original version by "Deadpool" writers Paul Wernick and Everett Ross.

The novel revolves around an assassin who manifests the toughest skills of three different personas: a cowboy, a ninja, and a viking.

Entertainment 360 – the production arm of Management 360 – Mark Gordon via eOne, Michael De Luca for Michael De Luca Productions, and Pratt will produce. VP of production Sara Scott will oversee production on behalf of the studio.

Film

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros Entertainment shows Michelle Yeoh (from left), Henry Golding and Constance Wu in a scene from the film 'Crazy Rich Asians'. (AP)

Film

'Opulent romantic comedy'

'Rich' a wish-fulfillment fantasy

NEW YORK: Adding to Hollywood's sizzling summer, the shark thriller "The Meg" opened well above expectations with an estimated \$44.5 million in ticket sales, while Spike Lee had his best debut in a decade.

"The Meg" had been forecast by some analysts for closer to half that total.

With an international cast led by Jason Statham and featuring Li Bingbing, Rainn Wilson and Winston Chao, "The Meg" cost at least \$130 million to make.

Following hits like "The Shallows" and "47 Meters Down", the shark movie – 43 years after Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" – has been showing surprising bite at the box office. Jeff Goldstein, distribution chief for Warner Bros, said late summer was ideal timing for "The Meg". (AP)

LOS ANGELES: A lucrative and confusing weekend saw "The Meg" score \$50 million and take third place at the China box office. The first two places were taken by "iPartners" and "The Island", with over \$70 million each.

Given 125,000 screenings on its opening day, "iPartners", an apparent sitcom adaptation, ran off with \$44.2 million on Friday, ahead of comedy "The Island" with \$22.1 million from 86,000 screenings, according to data from Ent Group. "Meg" had 74,000 screenings and took third place with \$15.5 million. But controversy dogged the Friday outcome, as distributors of "iPartners" were said to have supported their film with unusually heavy buying of their own film's tickets, in a move to create the appearance of success. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Guy Pearce is in talks to replace Michael Sheen in Sony and Cross Creek Pictures co-production "Bloodshot" based on the Valiant comic and starring Vin Diesel, sources tell Variety.

The pic also stars Eiza Gonzalez. Sheen was forced to leave the film due to scheduling, and the studio was quick to act to find a replacement, as the movie is currently in production.

The studio had already announced it would be moving forward with its five-film shared

At New York's Serendipity 3 cafe, money-is-no-object customers can order a \$1,000 sundae that's garnished with gold leaf. Like plunking a cherry atop such an extravagant dessert, the delirious sugar high that is "Crazy Rich Asians" ends with fireworks exploding along the roof of Singapore's Marina Bay Sands hotel – one of the world's most expensive buildings. Surprisingly enough, it's the first touch that genuinely feels over-the-top in, Rachel Chu (Constance Wu), a middle-class economics professor who discovers that her Singapore-born boyfriend is not just handsome but worth more than the GDP of most countries.

If those pyrotechnic bursts seem to be gilding the lily, it's only because Warner Bros' spared-no-expense adaptation of Kevin Kwan's status-obsessed best-seller already feels like a grand, two-hour fireworks show, one in which gorgeous Asian stars parade around in dazzling, brightly colored couture, driving luxury cars to and from locations that suggest a cross between Versailles and Donald Trump's bathroom (no, really, those are the design influences). Normally, such grandiosity is reserved for the queen of England, or the rarefied circles in which James Bond operates, although director Jon M. Chu ("Step Up 2: The Streets") has crafted a broadly appealing charmer in which practically anyone can identify with Wu's character as she's whisked into this elite milieu.

This is wish-fulfillment fantasy on a whole other level. Kwan's characters aren't just rich, they're crazy rich (and in some cases, just plain crazy), which makes Chu's version the most blinged-out big-screen romance since Baz Luhrmann's "The Great Gatsby" – minus the looming sense of tragedy that separates F. Scott Fitzgerald from a guilty-pleasure beach-read writer like Kwan. As books go, "Crazy Rich Asians" is unapologetically tacky, a finger-snapping satire of the conflict between old-money attitudes and nouveau-riche ambition at a moment when Asia is producing billionaires by the dozen. To their credit, screenwriters Peter Chiarelli and Adele Lim keep the sass while filing down itsfangs to make the characters more agreeable all around.

Rachel remains a smart, self-reliant character who finds herself at the center of a sparkling princess fan-

tasy – except that unlike the cliched heroines of such movies, she isn't waiting for a makeover or for some kinky Christian Grey type to come along and transform her life. If anything, the conflict here is that her boyfriend, Nick Young (Henry Golding), has to convince his family that she's the one for him and, as favorite son and heir to a dynasty of real estate moguls, might have to sacrifice his fortune if he doesn't want to lose her.

Following brief prologues in London and New York, the pageant that is "Crazy Rich Asians" takes place on a trip back to Singapore, after Nick invites Rachel to be his date at his best friend's wedding. She's understandably nervous about meeting his mother, Eleanor (Michelle Yeoh, kinder and far more dignified than the conniving matriarch described in the book), and never imagined that Nick, who hasn't mentioned what kind of family he comes from, could be so loaded.

Brilliant

Hanging out with his friends, who take her to the city's hawk stalls for an unpretentious street-food meal, she's slow to pick up on just how wealthy the Youngs are. The movie milks this brilliant young woman's naivete for as long as it can (until the big reveal of the Youngs' palatial estate, shown in a breathtaking flyover helicopter shot), although it cleverly tips audiences off to the family's buying power in that earlier London-set scene, in which a racist British concierge turns Eleanor away from a posh private hotel, only to be instantly humbled after she makes a quick phone call to her husband, who purchases the business out from under him.

That's a hugely empowering moment for not only Asians but anyone who has ever been discriminated against for not being part of the white establishment, and it sets the tone for a film that celebrates a world in which money can buy everything but common sense, rolling its eyes at how outrageously those who have it choose to spend their millions. Once in Singapore, Rachel reaches out to her filthy-rich college roommate, Peik Lin (Awkwafina, winning laughs with her mix of wide-eyed incredulity and faux-disaffected 'tude), who essentially serves as a substitute fairy godmother,

coaching Rachel on fashion and how to handle herself among the Singapore super-elite. (The movie's other comic standout is "The Hangover" star Ken Jeong, playing Peik Lin's hilariously inappropriate father.)

Nick and the guys head for a bachelor party on international waters (where there are no laws against firing bazookas, apparently), leaving Rachel to join the bride's friends on a nearby island, where they're treated to an all-expense shopping spree and other chichi perks. While audiences try to process the excess, Wu plays it cool and unimpressed, earning our admiration as precisely the opposite of the gold-digger everyone mistakes her for. And though the movie becomes predictable in its final stretch, the depth of her character's integrity is poignantly conveyed over a strategic game of mahjong with her would-be mother-in-law.

As entertaining as the more opulent displays must have been to stage, director Chu actually had to tone things down from the source material, in which the wedding involves private performances by the Vienna Boys' Choir and Cirque du Soleil (even so, the multi-million-dollar event is jaw-dropping, leaving "Mamma Mia!" and "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn" in the dust). In the book, Kwan quotes Far East explorer Marco Polo's deathbed claim, "I did not tell half of what I saw, for no one would have believed me," and the same filter was clearly required here – yet the film lacks for nothing when it comes to visual excess. Though most of the dresses are designer (Asians' obsession with European brands is a running joke), costume chief Mary Vogt is to be commended for the way her selections convey the personalities of the characters who wear these fabulous frocks, as her job isn't merely to wow but to define the people she's outfitting.

And this is one massive ensemble she's working with, so much so that it can be tough to keep the characters straight. Money may be the surface distraction here, but the true theme is family – and what it means to Asian culture in particular. Rachel may be an embodiment of the American dream, having been raised by a single working-class immigrant mom (Kheng Hua Tan), but her lack of family ties is an issue with the Young clan, whose many generations are assembled for the occasion. (RTRS)

universe plan, based on the Valiant comic books "Harbinger" and "Bloodshot".

"Bloodshot" is about a mortally wounded soldier resurrected through cutting-edge nanotechnology and tasked with rounding up super-powered outcasts known as "harbingers". "Bloodshot" was created by Kevin Van Hook, Don Perlin, and Bob Layton in 1992. The



Kesha



Pearce

project has big franchise potential for Sony. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Kesha dropped a new teaser trailer for her upcoming documentary "Rainbow: The Film". The behind-the-scenes doc, which is set to premiere on Apple Music Friday, arrives a year after the release of her Grammy-nomi-

nated album "Rainbow" and charts the singer's cathartic process in making it: The singer has been embroiled in a legal battle with former collaborator Dr Luke, whom she has accused of sexually assaulting her, for several years.

In the clip, Kesha appears clad in pink, finding her way through a "Stranger Things"-meets-"A Midsummer Night's Dream"-style forest.

Her narration carries on throughout the video, as she reveals: "When I wrote 'Rainbow', I was in a very dark place. I was alone. And I was scared. And I was in rehab for an eating disorder that had gotten wildly out of control."

She shares how she was not allowed access to a keyboard, and her pleading that playing the keys "isn't work" for her. (RTRS)