Beat: Entertainment

Squid Game 2 roundtable at Lucca Comics and Games 2024

Discovering the new season

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USPA NEWS - On Thursday, October 31, at Lucca Comics and Games 2024, director Emanuele Vietina moderated the press conference with Squid Game director Hwang Dong-hyuk and protagonists Lee Jung-jae and Wi Ha-joon.

Emanuele Vietina:
Director Wang, since we announced your arrival in June, there has been an incredible hype.
I would like to start with a question for the creator, writer, and director, Mr. Hwang.
About three years ago, the world of Squid Game that you imagined and you created arrived on Netflix, becoming immediately a true global phenomenon. So, did you ever expect such a reception for audiences all around the world? And even looking ahead, what are the main news for the fans that we will be able to discover in the second season coming on next December?

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
I think it goes for any creator that when you are making something, you wish for it to be a successful project. However, never to this extent where the entire world responded with such passion and love for the series Squid Game. I had not expected that to happen.
And as a creator, sometimes I would pinch myself thinking, is this a dream or is this reality? It was truly a surreal experience. Soon in December, season 2 will launch and I would say the biggest difference between the two seasons is if season 1 was about the story of Sung Ki Hoon or player number 456 entering Squid Game for the first time and about how he survives and leaves the game as a winner, season 2 is going to be that Ki Hoon based with his memories of the first game and the experiences going through a new realization and awakening and returning once again to the game in order to stop this unjust game.

Emanuele Vietina:
This is a very interesting point that brings me immediately to ask a question to Lee Jung-jae because of course player 456 is very central in the plot but the new plot is wider. So Lee Jung-jae your player, player 456 has become a symbol for many people and it's a very iconic and recognizable role. In the very first images of the new season we saw him with red hair while in the last teaser player 456 is in the most unexpected place.
So how was it? How was it to return to play Ki Hoon? Can you tell us something more about where and how we will find your character in this second season?

Lee Jung-jae:
It was very natural for me because I don't know if what I think is right but it was like after going through a terrible situation in order to live a new life I had the courage to dye my hair red for a while because I thought it was the beginning of Ki Hoon's new life. I think the director said something similar so is that right?

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
The red hair of Ki Hoon at the end of season 1 I got it from my favorite comic book Slam Dunk. The main character of Slam Dunk - I only know his Korean name Kang Baek Ho I don't know the Japanese name - he had red hair so I got the idea from that character that's the symbol of he's not normal anymore he's not ordinary man anymore after he's been through those cruel games he lost a lot of friends and people so he's trying to be back to normal life but he cannot so that red hair is a symbol of his abnormal so that's why I put red hair on him it's incredible.

Lee Jung-jae:
In season 1 I got many questions about what your red hair mean and in fact when I was shooting season 1 I don't think I've ever asked the director what is the meaning behind the red hair because I think to me it came very naturally I don't know if this is correct but I believe that after going through such a tremendous experience in order for Ki Hoon to be able to live a new life I thought that dyeing his red hair red was sort of the beginning of his new courage and so that's how I interpreted the character and the red hair and I think later on I realized that the director had a similar idea.

Emanuele Vietina:

Mr. Wi your character Jun-ho had to face so many twists and turns literally until the end during the first season so of course we are wondering what we should expect in this second season about your character.

Wi Ha-joon:
in the second season first of all I hope that all of you will be looking forward to seeing the story of Jun-ho unfold where he quite literally turned away from the gates of death and in order to find his brother and to chase those cruel ones behind the game and to put an end to this unjust brutal game what kind of things he will go through how determined you will find him and his charisma along the way I hope all of you look forward to watching that.

Emanuele Vietina:
Director Hwang is there something in this second season or in general any reference or inspiration from Italy? It's something that when a big creator as you are is here we love to ask in some way.

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
Surprisingly I used two Italian songs for the second season, more surprisingly one of the two songs is by Puccini; that's the most famous opera aria in Korea maybe in the world I used that song in the first episode of the second season. Also another Italian song called time to say goodbye by Andrea Bocelli I think it's from Pisa I was surprised to visit Lucca because this is our first city to promote our show so it's an amazing coincidence.

Emanuele Vietina:
In Squid Game we see many different social dilemmas that you could define existential, represented in the show so what human being is willing to do to earn money or the conflict between greed and humanity or again adults risking their life while playing children games and much more so director Hwang what can you tell us about it?

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
Squid Game is a series that through which I hope to show how the current contemporary capitalist society and its limitless competition and the competitive system has led to an exacerbated wealth gap as well as created numerous numbers of so called losers of the game and I wanted to show that side and hold a mirror to the current society that we live in through Squid Game now that is not to say that I am trying to give you an answer through our series however having said that I do hope that this series can provide an opportunity for the viewers out there to maybe reflect on the current society and ask ourselves what kind of society are we living in what kind of world is the future world going to be like and is there any way we can put a stop to it and these themes are continuing to be explored in season 2 as well it is not to say that I dare try to answer these questions.

However I do hope that there will be room for meaningful discussion to take place after season 2 also to add that if we neglect the weak that have been created through this current system those that have benefited from the labor or having the classes of the weak will no longer be able to live status quo so I hope that these will be meaningful questions we can ask ourselves.

Lee Jung-jae:
As we live together in today's society, I do believe that we need to put in a lot of efforts for us to live a better world. And in order to do that, I think the most important things we have to keep in mind is mutual respect, also taking care of and looking after the weak, and putting our hands, going hand-in-hand and collaborating with one another.
And these themes are very important things that penetrate the themes of Squid Game. With each episode, you'll be able to meet characters with different backstories where it'll get you to think, how can we be of help to them in order to live together as citizens? And also, you will find yourself rooting for these characters and wanting to really understand them and relate to them.
And so I hope that all of the audiences out there, after watching our series, will get to resonate with and relate to these themes that are being explored.

Wi Ha-joon:
Squid Game, by portraying and expressing the current social dilemmas that we face today, I believe that that was how it won the hearts of so many people around the world. And by asking very important questions that needed to be asked, I think that the audiences, after watching the show, were allowed an opportunity to really reflect on today's society and think once again about these important issues. As an actor, being a part of Squid Game and playing a role in this series was not just about bringing a character to life, but it was also about the process of researching and studying and exploring what it means to be human and human nature.
And by portraying the emotions and mindsets of these people who are driven to the rock bottom of their lives, I was able to truly feel the concepts of human greed, selfishness, and also human dignity in the way as well.

Journalist 1:
Let's talk a bit more about the new season, since you are here, and thank you very much for that. So, my question is, will we have new locations, new rooms, new games in the new season, or will we see again the same places we had before? Can you tell us more about the new setting of the challenge?

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
I first want to start off by saying that recently when I get questions asked about Squid Game, I get a lot of very heavy, complex questions. And I just want to say, first of all, that our series is not that heavy or that serious of a show. It is a show that can be a fun watch for anybody who wants to watch it.
So, I just want to say, because I think when we dive too much into those darker themes, it may feel like it's going to be a difficult show to watch, but that's not the case. So, I first want to start off by saying that.

In Season 2, you will see a lot of new and different things. Also, the games that appear in Season 2, there are games that you've already seen, but there are also a lot of new games. So, you will see a lot of different, bigger, grander, more beautiful games in Season 2.
So, I think you can look forward to that a lot.
In Season 2, you will see the character Ki hoon return to the island where the games are played. And so, because he's returning, you will get to see some of the more familiar places that you've already seen in Season 1. For example, the dormitory set, or the stairway with those very vivid colors, and also the space where these games are played.
However, unlike before, there are definitely a lot of new elements that we've added. So, when you watch Season 2, it's going to feel familiar, yet very refreshing. And the games that you'll see in Season 2 as well, some might be some that you've already met, but most of them are going to be very new games, where the scale has gotten greater, it's going to be more intriguing, and also played against a more beautiful backdrop.
So, I hope all of you will look forward to watching that. Thank you.

Journalist 2:
I hope you will forgive me, this is not a question specifically about Season 2, but I'm very curious, because since it's been reported that there is probably going to be a US adaptation of Squid Game, possibly to be directed by David Fincher, and I just wanted to ask you what your thoughts are about that, and whether you think the show could work in a different cultural context.

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
Yeah, I saw the article from Deadline, but I don't think it's official yet, so I cannot tell much about that issue, but, I mean, as a filmmaker and creator, I respect David Fincher, I love his work, so if he does make a remake or a spin-off of Squid Game of his own, as a fan, I'll look forward to it. I mean, I think he'll make a great spin-off or something. So, I'm just curious, you know, how, what he's going to make based on Squid Game, so I'm looking forward to it.

Emanuele Vietina:
It's not that common, you are the creator of Squid Game, but you are not jealous about your creature, you want to share, it's a very nice attitude.

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
No, no, it's like expanding my universe, so it's still mine. It's there.

Journalist 3:
I think it's not a coincidence that two of the most important stories about capitalism and social dilemmas from the last years are from South Korea, and I'm talking about Parasite, the movie, and, of course, Squid Game. So, I was wondering if there is something going on in South Korea that sparkles this trend from the South.

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
In my history, since the Korean War, which took place from 1950 to 1953, to rise from the ashes of war, we took only about four to five

decades for us to grow from the ashes of war, pick ourselves up, and grow into one of the strongest economies in the world. And in order to achieve that, we had to go through many sacrifices, put in numerous efforts, and also experienced a great deal of chaos, confusion, and conflict. And I believe that while we have become, while Korea has become a very rich country, in the process, when you look at the capitalist society in Korea compared to that of Europe, where you took about a century or two centuries to mature your capitalist system, I believe that the Korean capitalist system is a little bit more vulnerable.
And in that vulnerable system, those that we have neglected, those that we have failed to take care of, are now creating into certain, becoming certain issues that have now been exposed to the world.

And including, you know, there are many creators in Korea, including the recent Nobel Prize winner, writer Han Kang, where they have took all of those pains, those hurtfulness, and the contradiction of the rapidly growing Korean society, and created that into their own creative works. And on top of that, I think we now live in an era where there are more creative platforms that allow for these creative works to reach many audiences around the world.
And so I think those things married together have led to the current popularity and a lot of global focus on Korean content.

Lee Jung-jae:
I think it's a very good thing for us to be so popular and so well-known. And in a way, it's a very grateful thing, but I personally think that we should think a little more and make a more complete movie or drama.
But I feel a very interesting phenomenon. When K-pop was very popular, I didn't hear much that I wanted to go to Korea. When I went abroad.
But as K-dramas and K-movies became popular overseas, the story I hear the most is that I want to go to Korea.

Wi Ha-joon:
As an actor, it makes me immensely proud to be a part of that. And going forward, I hope that through all of my work, plus all of the Korean content including K-pop, K-food, Korean culture and stories, I hope that by being a part of it as a performer and actor, I can contribute to sharing more of Korea to the people around the world by allowing for people to relate to these stories and bringing them a lot of great entertainment.

Journalist 4:
I want to ask a question to the director. I want to know what he thinks about the reality show of Squid Game. Do you think it's a paradox doing a reality about a show?

Hwang Dong-hyuk:
I've been asked that question a lot. Netflix made a reality show based on the Squid Game.
I've seen one or two episodes of it. The participants actually played the game that was in the Squid Game and played the dalgona game. I felt a bit surreal when I saw them playing the game to win the prize. There are people who ask if making a reality show based on the Squid Game is like erasing the message that the Squid Game has. I don't know.

The Squid Game series itself is not made for opening someone up or propaganda. Likewise, it contains content that criticizes capitalism, but it is a product in the capitalist society. I made this work to sell the product. Likewise, I invested in this work to sell this product. I don't think it dilutes the message of this work. The capitalist world that the Squid Game talks about is that kind of place. It's a place where everything is commercialized and materialized. I think it's like reproducing the capitalist world that the Squid Game shows.
I don't think it weakens the message.
I think it's like revealing the message.

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