

# Realism Through Measured Storytelling: How Emerging Filmmakers Explore Social Depth

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- The 20th FIRST International Film Festival (IFF) Project Market has officially kicked off in this month, once again placing independent cinema under a global spotlight. Known for its steadfast commitment to realist storytelling, the festival has received a surge of submissions this year that directly confront pressing social issues, ranging from urban alienation to the complexities of modern family structures.

This dedication to "raw reality" is a hallmark of the festival's legacy. Looking back to the 16th FIRST IFF, the low-budget independent feature *Go Fishing* captured the industry's imagination, ultimately winning the prestigious "Spirit of Freedom" (originally "Best First Feature" context) for its authentic portrayal of life's quiet struggles. This trajectory reinforces FIRST's role as a vital incubator for filmmakers who dare to look life in the eye without a commercial filter.



Producer Qidi Zhu

Unlike typical realist films, *Go Fishing* avoids overt conflict or emotional dramatization, instead transforming awkwardness, silence, and helplessness into the film's core emotional language. This highly controlled yet effective approach creates a distinctive realist sensibility.

The film's rare balance between authenticity and professional execution owes much to executive producer [Qidi Zhu](#). Departing from traditional production roles, Zhu deeply engaged in multiple creative and technical aspects, anchoring the film's realist texture. In character design, she positioned the protagonist Li Wei as a representation of the "silent majority," rejecting heroic tropes and adopting an almost anthropological lens to portray the emotional repression and economic stagnation of county-town youth. In narrative design, Zhu employed everyday fishing as both the story engine and metaphorical core: repeated fishing scenes following an ex-lover's

return subtly reveal marital fatigue, class immobility, and male dignity's erosion, each empty catch critiquing the notion that effort guarantees reward.

Spatially, Zhu treated Lingbao County as a "silent third protagonist," using static long takes to observe abandoned factories, narrow alleys, dim KTVs, and dry riverbeds, giving local experience a broader societal resonance. Through systematic control of character, narrative, and space, Zhu shaped *Go Fishing*'s realist aesthetic, earning the film the "Amazing Debut" award at FIRST, selection for the 37th Entrevues Belfort Film Festival, and screening at the inaugural Berlin Chinese Youth Film Festival. It has emerged as a rare contemporary youth realist work reflecting structural imbalance from a county-town male perspective, gaining recognition in both academia and industry.

From a production standpoint, *Go Fishing* demonstrates a new path for realist filmmaking: when storytelling relies on measured observation rather than emotional amplification, the producer evolves from executor to shaper of a film's social depth. Qidi Zhu's approach exemplifies how young producers can meaningfully contribute to authorial realist cinema, confirming the enduring emotional resonance and long-term vitality of contemporary realist films.

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