



WORLD OF WONG KAR WAI

As Tears Go By (Wong Gok ka moon)

Wong's impressive debut feature may seem like a conventional Hong Kong triad drama on the surface but it offers glimpses of what would become his distinctive signature style. This atmospheric tale of a disillusioned gangster (Andy Lau) torn between a new love (Maggie Cheung) and old loyalties was a more reflective take on the popular genre, mixing brutal action with stylish flourishes.

bfi.org.uk

Wong Kar Wai's world of heartbreak and melancholy is defined by sumptuous visuals and elliptical storytelling. Yet just as vital is his use of music. His frequent incorporation of songs from around the world – of vintage pop, romantic ballads, traditional music and easy listening – is just as specific as his visual focus on abstraction and sensation.

The multicultural sounds of his films evoke a sense of the past, often conjuring memories as his lonely, heartbroken characters dream of potential connections or ones they once had. He pulls from a history of popular and traditional music as well as a history of cinema soundtracks, including – in one instance – a theme borrowed from another film.

Wong's debut feature is his most generic, an 80s Hong Kong crime film cut from the template established by directors such as Ringo Lam and John Woo. But his signature touches shine through in the doomed love story between Ah Ngor (Maggie Cheung) and Wah (Andy Lau), particularly in a moment involving the film's biggest needle drop. That would be Sandy Lam's Cantopop cover of Giorgio Moroder and Berlin's original song for *Top Gun* (1986), 'Take My Breath Away'. Wong wrings genuine emotion out of the overwrought ballad, the corny lyrics managed by the film's melancholy.

The song fits in snugly among the other 80s synthpop cues, including songs from the film's own Andy Lau (himself and co-star Jacky Cheung, who plays his triad brother, are both known as part of the 'Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop'). Lau's power ballad 'Chi Xin Cuo Fu' is reprised at key moments in Wah's struggle to save his brother.

Kambole Campbell, bfi.org.uk, 20 February 2021

Wong Kar Wai's debut feature conspicuously lacks the gorgeous colours and stylised *mise en scène* of such later offerings as *In the Mood for Love* and *2046*. It's a straightforward gangland thriller, loosely based on *Mean Streets*, though the very bloody action sequences are handled with genuine flair.

Wong throws in some of the slow-motion sequences for which he would later become famous while portraying the relationship between hoodlum Andy Lau and his renegade brother with both humour and pathos.

Geoffrey Macnab, *Sight & Sound*, April 2005

Watching a Wong Kar Wai film means entering a world of heightened emotions. It's not just that they tell unforgettable stories of ill-fated romance,

but it's the masterful way the Hong Kong auteur draws you in ever so tantalisingly. Dreamlike textures, vivid colours and evocative music weave a potent atmosphere that leaves you completely hypnotised.

As a director obsessed with the heart-pounding thrill of seduction, he knows exactly how to beguile his audience just as mesmerisingly. His haunting mood pieces enchant the senses – it's the closest you'll get to experiencing the exhilarating rush of falling in love while at the cinema.

As a young boy, who moved with his family from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1962, Wong spent most of his time with his mother, an avid film buff, in the cinema. 'We spent almost every day watching films – French films, Hollywood films, Italian films, films from Taiwan and local productions,' he said at 2017's Lumière Festival. 'This was sort of my film school, my education.'

His wide-ranging influences became apparent once he started directing. His moody feature debut, *As Tears Go By* (1988), earned comparisons to Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973), while *Chungking Express* (1994) channelled the unconventional spirit of Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960). Wong's mentor Patrick Tam had an impact too on his neon-drenched visual palette.

Wong, a former TV scriptwriter, was also inspired by literature, particularly the works of Haruki Murakami, Liu Yichang and Gabriel García Márquez. But the novelist who had the biggest impact on him was Manuel Puig. The Argentinian author's writing style – stories told in fragments using multiple points of view – shaped Wong's own narrative technique.

The director took these interests and turned them into something completely unique with his deeply profound and soul-stirring stories of love, alienation and heartbreak. Wong found international acclaim, winning the best director prize at 1997's Cannes Film Festival for *Happy Together*, because he was a pioneer who created his own cinematic language for romance, one that was swooningly lyrical and visually stunning. He made the torment of our inner thoughts seem sexy, poetic and glamorous.

Ann Lee, bfi.org.uk, 2 February 2021

AS TEARS GO BY (WONG GOK KA MOON)

Director: Wong Kar Wai
Presented by: In-Gear Film Production Co. Ltd.
Executive Producer: Alan Tang
Producer: Rover Tang
Production Manager: Angela Wilson
Production Assistants: Ivi Michelle Sims, Margaret Wong, Jackson Chan
Assistant Director: Johnny Kong
Screenplay: Wong Kar Wai
Director of Photography: Andrew Lau Wai-keung
Assistant Cameraman: Mui Kin-fai
Special Visual Effects: Ting Yuen-tai
Editors: Peter Chiang, Hai Kit-wai
Art Director: William Chang Suk-ping
Assistant Art Director: Silver Cheung
Set Decorator: Wong Chi-on
Music: Danny Chung
Theme Songs Composed by: Chan Sau-nan, Wong Man-ching
Theme Songs Performed by: Kit Wong
Sound Editor: Rooney Ching
Stunt Co-ordinators: Willie Doone, Kong Tao-hoi, Poon Kin-kwun

Cast

Andy Lau Tak-wah (*Ah Wah*)
Maggie Cheung Man-yuk (*Ah Ngor*)
Jacky Cheung Hok-yau (*Fly*)
Alex Man Chi-leung (*Tony*)
Wong Un (*Mabel*)
Lam Gao (*Kung, godfather*)
Wong Bun (*Ah Sai*)
Ronald Wong
William Chang Suk-ping

Hong Kong 1988
102 mins

This 4K digital restoration was undertaken from the 35mm original camera negative by the Criterion Collection in collaboration with L'Immagine Ritrovata and One Cool.

WORLD OF WONG KAR WAI

As Tears Go By (Wong Gok ka moon)

Wed 7 Jul 14:30; Sat 17 Jul 20:30; Mon 19 Jul 20:45

Days of Being Wild (Ah Fei jing juen)

Thu 8 Jul 20:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by season programmer Ann Lee);
Mon 12 Jul 14:30; Mon 19 Jul 18:00

Fallen Angels (Do lok tin si)

Fri 9 Jul 20:50; Wed 14 Jul 14:30; Sun 25 Jul 18:30

Ashes of Time Redux (Dung che sai duk)

Sat 10 Jul 11:20 (+ pre-recorded intro by season programmer Ann Lee);
Wed 21 Jul 20:45; Fri 30 Jul 20:45

Chungking Express (Chung hing sam lam)

Sat 10 Jul 18:15; Mon 12 Jul 20:50;
Tue 20 Jul 20:45; Thu 29 Jul 14:30

Happy Together (Chun gwong cha sit)

Sun 11 Jul 15:40; Fri 16 Jul 14:30; Fri 23 Jul 18:10

In the Mood for Love (Fa yeung nin wah)

Wed 14 Jul 20:45; Sat 17 Jul 13:30;
Wed 21 Jul 14:30; Thu 29 Jul 20:45

2046

Thu 15 Jul 20:20; Sat 17 Jul 16:10; Sat 31 Jul 14:30

The Grandmaster (Yi dai zong shi)

Tue 20 Jul 18:00; Thu 22 Jul 20:50; Mon 26 Jul 20:50

The Hand (Extended Cut)

Thu 22 Jul 18:30; Fri 30 Jul 18:20

My Blueberry Nights

Fri 23 Jul 20:50; Wed 28 Jul 20:40

Presented in partnership with Janus Films and the ICA

Visit [Youtube.com/bfi](https://www.youtube.com/bfi) for a dizzying tour in the World of Wong Kar Wai, guided by season programmer Ann Lee

CHINESE VISUAL FESTIVAL

Opening Night: UK Premiere: Drifting + intro

Thu 15 Jul 17:50

UK Premiere: Love Poem + intro

Sat 17 Jul 12:00

Swimming Out Till the Sea Turns Blue + intro

Sat 24 Jul 14:00

Closing Night: UK Premiere: Shadows + intro

Sun 25 Jul 15:10

NEW RELEASES & RE-RELEASES

After Love

Continues from Jun

Nashville

Continues from Jun

The Father

Continues from Jun

Ultraviolence

Continues from Jun

Supernova

From Fri 2 Jul

Another Round

From Fri 9 Jul

Jumbo

From Fri 9 Jul

Deerskin

From Fri 16 Jul

Girlfriends

From Fri 23 Jul

Mandabi

From Fri 23 Jul

Media partner

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