



WORLD OF WONG KAR WAI

Days of Being Wild (Ah Fei jing juen)

+ pre-recorded intro by season programmer Ann Lee

Leslie Cheung gives a magnificent performance as a rakish playboy in the 1960s searching for identity while callously breaking hearts. Wong hit his stride with his sophomore effort, tying together his favourite themes of time, memory and rejection in a hypnotic drama. Featuring a cast of Hong Kong's biggest stars, it's a poignant snapshot of youthful restlessness that's an artistic triumph.

bfi.org.uk

Days of Being Wild is already widely accepted as a modern classic, but it has had a worse than bumpy ride since an earlier version premiered in Hong Kong in December 1990. (The present version is Wong Kar Wai's definitive cut, prepared for international release.) The first-release business in Pacific Asia was so poor that a planned Part Two – centred on Tony Leung's gambler character, glimpsed here only in the closing scene, and set in 1966 – was never completed, although Wong Kar Wai's recent *Ashes of Time* seemingly does much of what he intended to do in that film. This film's 'mistake', in the eyes of Asian audiences, was to defy all expectations aroused by the casting of six of the region's top stars; it took two re-releases, a lot of critical support and a slew of Hong Kong Film Awards to rehabilitate the film and Wong's career.

Wong himself was only two years old in his native Shanghai in 1960, and so *Days of Being Wild* represents a considerable feat of imaginative reconstruction. It's also a tour de force of non-linear narrative, atmospheric, poetic rhythms and (thanks to sensational camerawork and design) visual writing – all of which sets it far apart from the slipshod norms of the Hong Kong film industry. The film is at once highly specific in its details and hallucinatory in its effect, a seeming contradiction that prevents it from lapsing into retro-chic for its own sake. Its essentially discrete scenes coalesce around elastic perceptions of time and space: clocks/watches and mirrors are key motifs, and Wong pays both formal and thematic attention to the ways his characters experience the passing of time. Fittingly, the intermittent source-music to which the minimal drama is choreographed oscillates between languorous Hawaiian steel guitars and bouncy Latino cha-cha arrangements.

As an existential account of solitary souls in random orbits, the film blows away the entire body of recent French 'designer' cinema. As a touchstone for Hong Kong's specific identity and psyche, it's close to sublime. Aside from the hapless, defeated Zeb, the characters are rootless and uncommitted to the territory: Rebecca is in extended transit between Shanghai/Manila and the USA, Su is constantly on the verge of returning home to Macau, Tide wants to drift, Yuddy wallows in inertia until he chooses to seek out his own death – an event the camera celebrates with a stunning Steadicam shot that is its only decisive movement in the whole film. Their relations with each other are consequently hesitant and unstable, quivering with a yearning for the warmth

and commitment that might have been, balanced between dependency and hatred. Concomitant factors are the characters' shaky sense of ambition and self-esteem, the endemic inability to value anything, and the moments of hysteria and anguish that bespeak unvoiced spiritual needs. This adds up to a view of Hong Kong and its people that looks forward to 1997 at least as much as it crystallises the city's population-growth pangs of the 1960s. But the tone is tender and elegiac, never recriminatory or alarmist.

Nothing in Wong's previous work as a screenwriter or director anticipated the structure or poetic density of *Days of Being Wild*. If he had been able to realise the film as the intended diptych, the play with levels of time and memory would apparently have been even more sophisticated; he would also have been able to broaden his vision of the quintessential Hong Kong protagonist by matching Leslie Cheung's playboy (the absurd name 'Yuddy' is an invention of the film's original subtitler) with Tony Leung's gambler. The enigmatic finale aside, though, the film feels complete enough as it stands: the poetic play with the established personae of its stars offers a level of satisfaction all its own, and the interwoven visual and aural motifs provide a credible level of consistency.

With hindsight, we know that Wong Kar Wai is capable of taking these formal ideas and themes in other directions: *Ashes of Time* and *Chungking Express* use different forms and tonalities to get at similar places in the mind and heart from other angles of approach. They also confirm Wong as a key filmmaker for the 1990s. But *Days of Being Wild* will remain a peak in his filmography, and a landmark in Hong Kong cinema: the first film to rhyme nostalgia for a half-imaginary past with future shock.

Tony Rayns, *Sight and Sound*, December 1994

The first part of an informal trilogy including *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *2046* (2004), *Days of Being Wild* saw Wong begin to incorporate a more international sound into his films. Opening with 'Always in My Heart' by the Brazilian guitar duo Los Indios Tabajaras, the film's romantic songs create irony and a sense of distance, as main character Yuddy (Leslie Cheung) seeks refuge in casual relationships, only to soon abandon them and break hearts as a result.

'Maria Elena' is another cue – although Los Indios have an instrumental version themselves, this one is performed by Spanish bandleader Xavier Cugat, with multiple tracks played repeatedly throughout the film. Wong's cues of other Cugat arrangements – 'My Shawl' and 'Siboney' – convey a longing that we can't read on Leslie Cheung's often impassive face, a longing that only becomes apparent towards the film's closing.

Days of Being Wild is a formative film for Wong both in visual and sonic terms. His attraction towards Latin music and his use of it to convey unspoken and unseen emotional angst is becoming ever more clear.

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

DAYS OF BEING WILD (AH FEI JING JUEN)

Director/Screenplay: Wong Kar Wai
Production Company: In-Gear Film Production Co. Ltd.
Executive Producer: Alan Tang
Producer: Rover Tang
Associate Producer: Joseph Chan Wing-Kwong
Production Manager: Jacky Pang Yee-Wah
Assistant Production Manager: Candy Leung Fung-Ying
Post-production Manager: Siu Wing
Production Assistant: Rocky Tang
Assistant Directors: Rosanna Ng Wai-San, Johnny Kong Yeuk-Shing
Continuity: Wong Wai-Hung, Chan Bo-Shun
Director of Photography: Christopher Doyle
2nd Unit Photographers: Ngai Chi-Kwan, Lau Wai-Keung
Assistant Cameramen: Chan Siu-Kwan, Dick Cheung, Wong Kam-Shing
Stills Photography: Lawrence Ng Kai-Wah
Special Effects: Chang Sui-Lang
Editing Consultant: Patrick Tam Kar-Ming
Editor: Kai Kit-Wai
Assistant Editors: Chin Sun-Kit, Ha Lam-Sang
Art Director: William Chang Suk-Ping
Assistant Art Directors: Alfred Yau, Wai-Ming, Lau Sai-Wan, Wilson Hui Wei-Chi
Properties: Wong Tze-On, Tam Wing-Cheong
Assistant Properties: Wong Tze-Ping, Lee Kwok-Loy, Lee Tze-Kong
Wardrobe: Luk Ha-Fong
Optical Director: Lui Lai-Wah
Music Supervisor: Terry Chan
Choreography: Eddie De Guzman
Recording Consultant: Benny Chu Chi-Ha

Sound: Chan Wai-Hung
Boom Operators: Leung Chung-Wai, Tam Tak-Wing
Action Directors: Tung Wan-Wai, Tsui Pui-Wing, Poon Kin-Kwan
Stunt Director: Joeseeph Chi Chiong-Chavez

Cast

Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing (*Yuddy*)
Maggie Cheung Man-Yuk (*Su Lizhen*)
Andy Lau Tak-Wah (*Tide*)
Carina Lau Ka-Ling (*Leung Fung-Ying*)
Rebecca Pan Di-Hua (*Rebecca*)
Jacky Cheung Hok-Yau (*Zeb*)
Tony Leung Chiu-Wai (*Smirk*)
Danilo Antunes (*Rebecca's lover*)
Hung Mei-Mei (*amah*)
Ling Ling-Hung (*nurse*)
Tita Muñoz (*Yuddy's foster mother, 'Auntie'*)
Alicia Alonee (*housekeeper*)
So Elena Lim (*hotel manageress*)
Mariton Fernandez (*hotel maid*)
Angela Ponos (*prostitute*)
Nonong Talbo (*train conductor*)

Hong Kong 1990©
94 mins

This 4K digital restoration was undertaken from the 35mm original camera negative by the Criterion Collection in collaboration with L'Imagine 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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