



**SIGHT AND SOUND GREATEST FILMS OF ALL TIME 2022: 90=**

# A One and a Two...

## (Yi Yi)

Yang's warm, witty and wise look at how the members of an extended Taiwanese family deal (or not!) with various everyday problems has the scale, depth and attention to detail of a great novel. It starts with the patriarch fortuitously bumping into an old flame on the day his mother goes into a coma; thereafter the complications and ironies proliferate to engrossing effect.

**Geoff Andrew, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk)**

You have to be alert and very observant during the opening minutes of an Edward Yang film. Few, if any, concessions are made to the expectations raised by western cinema. There are no close-ups, you're not nag-narrated by voiceover, no one will explain plot points in the dialogue, and none of the cast will be well known to you. Yang's films are as rich in domestic trauma as *EastEnders*, but his melodrama is nothing like soap opera. It's a process of tender, sensitive, gradual adult revelation; a cinema that seeps steady doses into your system until you're overwhelmed by its poignancy.

*A One and a Two...* won Yang the Best Director prize in Cannes 2000 and has gone on to attract high praise around the world, becoming the first of Yang's many films to be distributed in the US. The only rough western equivalent to the panoramic, allusive films made by Yang and Hou Hsiao-Hsien – directors who came out of the '80s Taiwanese 'New Cinema' – would be the Robert Altman of, say, *Short Cuts* (although French director Robert Guédiguian's *La Ville est tranquille* is also in the same ball-park). But Yang's best films, *A One and a Two...* and *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991), make Altman look lightweight.

Yang's script structures insist on quiet revelation. Each scene peels off like the skin of an onion, giving away only so much at a time. When you get to the core you feel as if you know precisely what it's like to live in the Jiens' seemingly average Taipei apartment block. As a former engineer and one time prize-winning cartoonist, Yang prefers to produce scripts of careful shot descriptions backed by comprehensive psychological character profiles, using collaborators to turn these into the conventional screenplays producers need to raise money. The script's architecture is so strong you feel you understand how each compartmentalised life fits with the others and the way each character achieves a means of escape back into the personal when necessary. Yang keeps sympathy with everyone, without judgement. For instance, though A-Di is shown to be the antithesis of NJ, he is at least a man of action. He makes things happen, even if they are mostly ill thought-out, and the chaos in his wake is churned up with the best intentions.

Music is used adroitly to access the inner life of this model middle-management family and its neighbours (and to give a further clue to the pervasive all-American influence in Taiwan evinced in such fast-food outlets as NY Bagel). Lili plays her mournful cello facing the wall, Ting-Ting plays 'Summer Time' on the piano to her comatose grandma as puberty awakens, NJ sings along to 'Baby It's You' while listening on headphones and bonds with the Japanese games designer Mr Ota at a karaoke bar. The compromise between solipsistic concerns – NJ's hankering to start his life over with Sherry, Ting-Ting's burgeoning puberty, Min-Min's flight to a temple, Yang-Yang's attempt to begin to understand the world – and communal responsibility (taking out the rubbish, talking to a woman in a coma) could

hardly be more perceptively drawn than by Yang's insistence on master shots that by maintaining a certain distance give as much weight to the environment as to the characters' state of mind.

To some extent, NJ and his family are suffering the typical aftermath of the Asian economic meltdown. It seems no accident that Yang should make such a mature, reflective and controlled film at such a time. If the frantic social satire of his *A Confucian Confusion* (1994), which mocked Taiwan's obsession with consumerism as the Tiger economies cranked into top gear, proved an apposite barometer of an economy out of control, the sobriety and tender grief at the passing of harmony in the much more successful *A One and a Two...* are surely pointers to the means of slow recovery.

That's not to say that the film lacks anger. Only that compared with Yang's other major achievement, *A Brighter Summer Day* – a doom-haunted '60s period epic about a teen *crime passionel* half remembered from a real incident in Yang's youth (echoed here in the relationship between Lili and Fatty) – *A One and a Two...*'s sense of a Taiwanese identity crisis between native and mainland Chinese populations and US and Japanese mercantile influences is put more profoundly in a global, perhaps even universal context through the film's use of an 'ordinary' technocrat's middle-class family. Yang still sees Taiwan's insistence on drilling its youth to study science and engineering rather than the humanities as an imposition and a weakness. His quarrel with government agencies and Taiwan's film-funding mechanisms has been almost perpetual, stretching back to the days of military censorship. Now that Taiwan has no film industry to speak of, the struggle is even fiercer.

**Nick James, *Sight & Sound*, April 2001**

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#### **A ONE AND A TWO... (YI YI)**

Director: Edward Yang

©/Presented by: 1+2 Seisaku linkai

Presented by: Pony Canyon, Omega Project, Hakuodo

Production Company: Atom Films

Producers: Shinya Kawai, Naoko Tsukeda

Japan Location Unit Line Producer: Miyoshi Kikuchi

Associate Producers: Yu Weiyen, Osamu Kubota

Production Manager: Chen Xisheng

Japan Location Unit Location Manager: Tomoo Tuchii

Japan Location Unit Location Co-ordinator: Morihiko Tanaka

Assistant Directors: Wang Yuhui, Yang Shiping

Japan Location Unit Assistant Director: Masao Takeshita

Japan Location Unit 2nd Assistant Director: Koji Kawano

Continuity: Jiang Xiuqong

Casting Director: Alex Yang

Screenplay: Edward Yang

Director of Photography: Yang Wei-han

Director of Lighting: Li Longyu

Computer Graphics: Hong Weiming, He Chaozhen

Editor: Chen Bowen

Production Designer: Peng Kaili

Japan Location Unit Art Director: Chihiro Masumoto

Art Director: Wang Zhengkai

Wardrobe: Fan Jingyun

Make-up: Yuan Jingwei

Special Make-up: Gao Hua

Hairdresser: Zhang Shufen

Titles: Zhang Xianfang

Music: Peng Kaili

Sound Design/Location Sound Recording: Du Duzhi

ADR/Foley: Du Duzhi

#### **Cast**

Wu Nianzhen (*NJ Jian*)

Issey Ogata (*Mr Ota*)

Elaine Jin (*Min-Min*)

Kelly Lee (*Ting-Ting*)

Jonathan Chang (*Yang-Yang*)

Chen Xisheng (*A-Di*)

Ke Suyun (*Sherry Chang-Breitner*)

Michael Tao (*Da-Da*)

Xiao Shushen (*Xiao Yan*)

Adrian Lin (*Lili*)

Chang Yupang (*'Fatty'*)

T'ang Jü-Yün (*Mrs Jiang, Lili's mother*)

Zeng Xinyi (*Yun-Yun*)

Li Yongfeng (*Migo*)

Jin Shihui (*Nancy*)

Wu Jie (*Wu Jie*)

Shu Guozhi (*Shu Ge*)

Dai Liren (*Liren*)

You Meiyun (*NJ's neighbour*)

You Qidong (*Xiao Yan's uncle*)

Ke Yulun (*young soldier*)

Liu Liangzuo (*dean*)

Chen Lihua (*Lili's English tutor*)

Chen Yiwen (*policeman*)

Song Shaoqing (*young banker*)

Luo Bei-An (*Boss Huang*)

Antonio Lee (*piano bar pianist*)

Danny Deng, Fan Reijun, Cheng Jianxiong,

Zhen Yuancheng, Cai Ruying, Sun Fajun,

Jay Miao (*A-Di's friends*)

Tang Congsheng, Wang Qizan, Li Jianchang

(*punks at NY Bagel Café*)

Kenjiro Tsuda (*Robata restaurant waiter*)

Wu Weining (*the 'concubine'*)

Zhang Huiling (*Huiling*)

Xu Guiying (*NJ's secretary*)

Allen Lu (*Mrs Jiang's boyfriend*)

Yang Shiping, Ye Ziyun (*grandma's doctors*)

Yang Jinhua (*doctor's wife*)

Li Wanyun, Lin Xiaowei (*Xiao Yan's assistants*)

Wu Yiting (*the baby*)

Xu Wenjuan (*Da-Da's friend*)

Wang Zhengkai (*security guard*)

Xie Nianzu (*policeman*)

Chen Shiqi, Xiang Guangting, Lin Yanchun

(*Yang-Yang's classmates*)

Fan Reijun (*voice of Yun-Yun*)

Tang Congsheng (*voice of young banker*)

Taiwan/Japan 1999©

173 mins

Print courtesy of UCLA

The screening on Sunday 22 January will be introduced by Hyun Jin Cho, Film Programmer, BFI Festivals.

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## SIGHT AND SOUND GREATEST FILMS OF ALL TIME 2022

### The General

Sun 1 Jan 12:10; Sun 29 Jan 15:10

### The Leopard (Il gattopardo)

Sun 1 Jan 14:10; Thu 5 Jan 18:40; Fri 20 Jan 14:00

### Sunset Boulevard

Sun 1 Jan 15:50; Fri 27 Jan 14:30; Mon 30 Jan 17:50

### Metropolis

Sun 1 Jan 17:55 (+ intro by Bryony Dixon, BFI Curator); Sun 15 Jan 14:40; Mon 30 Jan 16:30 BFI IMAX

### L'avventura (The Adventure)

Sun 1 Jan 18:05; Sun 22 Jan 15:20; Mon 30 Jan 20:15

### Touki-Bouki

Mon 2 Jan 13:40; Tue 31 Jan 17:40

### The Red Shoes

Mon 2 Jan 13:50; Tue 24 Jan 18:05

### Once Upon a Time in the West (C'era una volta il West)

Mon 2 Jan 15:20; Sat 7 Jan 17:15; Sun 15 Jan 16:15 BFI IMAX

### Get Out

Mon 2 Jan 18:40; Fri 6 Jan 17:50

### Pierrot le Fou

Tue 3 Jan 18:10; Wed 4 Jan 20:30; Thu 19 Jan 20:30

### My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)

Tue 3 Jan 18:20; Sun 22 Jan 10:00 BFI IMAX; Sat 28 Jan 13:40

### A Man Escaped (Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé)

Tue 3 Jan 18:30; Sat 28 Jan 20:30

### Black Girl (La Noire de...)

Tue 3 Jan 20:30; Thu 12 Jan 18:15 (+ intro)

### Ugetsu Monogatari

Tue 3 Jan 20:50; Tue 17 Jan 20:30

### Madame de...

Wed 4 Jan 14:30; Fri 20 Jan 18:10 (+ intro by Ruby McGuigan, Cultural Programme Manager)

### Yi Yi (A One and a Two...)

Wed 4 Jan 18:40; Sun 22 Jan 14:00 (+ intro by Hyun Jin Cho, Film Programmer, BFI Festivals)

### The Shining

Fri 6 Jan 20:10; Tue 10 Jan 20:10; Sat 21 Jan 20:30 BFI IMAX

### Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)

Sat 7 Jan 12:10; Sun 22 Jan 12:30 BFI IMAX

### Tropical Malady (Sud pralad)

Sat 7 Jan 13:50; Mon 9 Jan 20:40

### Histoire(s) du cinema

Sat 7 Jan 16:30

### Blue Velvet

Sat 7 Jan 20:30; Fri 20 Jan 20:35; Tue 24 Jan 21:00 BFI IMAX

### Sátántangó

Sun 8 Jan 11:15; Sat 21 Jan 13:30

### Celine and Julie Go Boating (Céline et Julie vont en bateau)

Sun 8 Jan 14:45; Sat 21 Jan 17:00

### Journey to Italy (Viaggio in Italia)

Sun 8 Jan 18:20; Mon 23 Jan 14:30; Fri 27 Jan 20:50

### Parasite (Gisaengchung)

Mon 9 Jan 17:50; Wed 18 Jan 17:30 BFI IMAX

### The Gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse) + La Jetée

Wed 11 Jan 20:30; Mon 23 Jan 18:10

### A Matter of Life and Death

Thu 12 Jan 20:40; Sun 22 Jan 11:30

### Chungking Express (Chung Him sam lam)

Thu 12 Jan 20:45; Tue 17 Jan 20:50; Sat 21 Jan 14:15

### Modern Times

Fri 13 Jan 17:45; Sun 22 Jan 13:10

### A Brighter Summer Day (Guling jie shaonian sha ren shijian)

Mon 16 Jan 18:30; Sat 28 Jan 16:00

### Imitation of Life

Wed 18 Jan 20:30; Wed 25 Jan 14:30; Sun 29 Jan 12:30

### The Spirit of the Beehive (El espíritu de la colmena)

Thu 19 Jan 18:00; Sat 28 Jan 13:50

### Sansho the Bailiff (Sansho Dayu)

Fri 20 Jan 17:45; Thu 26 Jan 17:50

### Andrei Rublev

Thu 26 Jan 18:40; Sun 29 Jan 17:20

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