



Farewell China (Oi joi bit heung dik gwai jit)

Director: Clara Law

Production Company: Friend Cheers

Executive Producer: Teddy Robin

Producer: Anthony Chow

Associate Producers: Eddie Fong, Joseph Chan

Screenplay: Eddie Fong

Director of Photography: Jingle Ma

Editor: Ma Kam

Production Designer: Rebecca Lee

Music Director: Jim Shum

Cast:

Maggie Cheung (*Li Hung*)

Tony Leung (*Zhou Nansan*)

Hayley Man

Liu Chin

Chit-man Chan

Jady Choy

Hung Chun

Vinny Colon

Hong Kong 1990

116 mins

Digital

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MAGGIE CHEUNG: FILMS OF ROMANCE, MELANCHOLY AND MAGIC

Farewell China

Clara Law's film is a dark and harrowing depiction of the immigrant experience. Cheung portrays Li Hung, a woman who emigrates to New York, leaving her husband Zhou behind in rural China. Although it's a supporting role for Cheung (the story is largely seen from the perspective of Zhou, excellently played by Tony Leung) it is potentially one of her most haunting performances, encapsulating the horrors of an American dream becoming a nightmare.

Director's statement

'Girl from Mainland China Committed Suicide in Japan' – this is the headline of a news article I came across in April 1988. The piece disturbed me deeply; many questions came to my mind. What drove the girl to suicide? Was she ill, running short of money, torn by love, or being persecuted for political reasons? What about her family back in China? Did she have a lover, or perhaps a husband, maybe even a child? The article evoked memories of many Chinese friends I have met while studying abroad. For various reasons, they have decided to stay in a foreign country, in voluntary exile, long after they are supposed to return to China. Some have become successful, many are barely surviving. I wonder how many have simply perished?

Traditionally, Chinese were bound by a peasant mentality. They were docile, passive, fatalistic; they attributed everything to the will of heaven. To lead a peaceful life in their homeland was all they ever wanted. Yet lately, the search for a better life outside China has been the concern of many Mainland Chinese. The crackdown in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 is, in many ways, a point of inflection; are there any options left?

To have to search for a home outside one's motherland could well be sad, yet not to be at home in one's own homeland could be sadder. What can one do if he/she succeeds in finding a home elsewhere, yet they are unable to stop longing for the homeland? This paradox fascinates and perplexes me; it is the theme I have attempted to explore in *Farewell China*.

The search for a lost sound

As filming of *Farewell China* ended in late 1989, the search for an appropriate music score soon began. The original idea of featuring the emerging Mainland Chinese rock music as the voice of this post-Cultural Revolution generation soon gave way to a search for a more broad-based music, with a greater sense of history and, ideally, a more epic dimension.

In December 1989, the director Clara Law came across an old album featuring some apparently freely improvised singing in a Taiwanese dialect. It was a raw, unpolished sound, almost primitive in nature. The music, which originated in Hang Chun, a small town in Southern Taiwan, has both the feel of provincial folk music, and the sentiment of country blues. Yet the recording artist, Chen Da, had died some time ago.

MAGGIE CHEUNG: FILMS OF ROMANCE, MELANCHOLY AND MAGIC

As Tears Go By Wong Gok ka moon

Sun 1 Sep 12:00; Sat 28 Sep 20:30;
Sat 5 Oct 12:30

Days of Being Wild Ah Fei ching chuen

Mon 2 Sep 20:50; Fri 27 Sep 18:20;
Mon 7 Oct 20:50

In the Mood for Maggie

Tue 3 Sep 18:15

A Fishy Story Bat tuet maat dik yan

Tue 3 Sep 20:35; Sun 22 Sep 18:10

Song of the Exile Haak tou chau han

Sat 7 Sep 20:50; Sun 29 Sep 12:40

Irma Vep

Mon 9 Sep 20:30; Wed 18 Sep 20:50;
Sat 5 Oct 20:50

Farewell China Oi joi bit heung dik gwai jit

Wed 11 Sep 20:45; Mon 23 Sep 18:00

Green Snake Ching se

Thu 12 Sep 20:45; Sat 28 Sep 18:20

The Heroic Trio Dung fong saam hap

Sat 14 Sep 18:35; Fri 4 Oct 20:50

The Actress (aka Center Stage) Ruan Ling-Yu

Sun 15 Sep 18:00; Sat 21 Sep 20:10

In the Mood for Love Fa yeung nin wah

Thu 19 Sep 18:10 + intro and discussion;

Tue 8 Oct 18:30; Fri 27 Sep 20:45; Sat 5 Oct 18:15

Comrades: Almost a Love Story Tian Mi Mi

Sat 21 Sep 17:30; Mon 30 Sep 20:35

Hero Ying xiong

Mon 23 Sep 20:30; Sun 6 Oct 18:00

Clean

Thu 3 Oct 18:00; Tue 8 Oct 20:45

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To locate alternative performers who could rendition this music for the film's score, Clara Law decided to travel to Taiwan in early 1990. She had, by then, the assistance of Jim Shum as the music director. Shum, recognisably one of Hong Kong's most sophisticated experimental filmmakers, spent nearly two years working in Taiwan and has extensive connections with the music industry. The journey began.

The two went to the small town of Hang Chun, and met with Cheung Sun-chuen, a student of the deceased recording artist, now in his early 70s. It became clear that the songs were based on only a handful of musical scores written more than a century ago, and always accompanied by a Taiwanese version of a two-string banjo. Numerous versions of lyrics have since been written, largely dwelling on themes of mainlanders having emigrated to Taiwan, and their sentiments of longing for the mainland. For *Farewell China*, two versions of the same song were recorded, one by Cheung and the other by a female performer, also a student of Chen. The singing became the source music for all the film's sequences in Mainland China.

For the film's other musical score, Law and Shum travelled up to Taipei, where they worked with David Huang and Richie Walker, the latter a disc jockey for the radio station IRT (formerly an American Armed Forces radio station). The objective was to create a more western, more processed sound based on the 'Hang Chun' songs, produced through jamming sessions with electronic guitar. While Huang developed the rhythm track, Walker provided the musical accompaniment. What resulted was a Chinese-inspired electronic blues, and was used for majority of the film's New York sequences. Final sound mixing was conducted in Hong Kong in late March 1990.

Production notes