

KINO LORBER

presents

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT A FILM BY BI GAN

****OFFICIAL SELECTION | UN CERTAIN REGARD | 2018 CANNES FILM FESTIVAL****

China/France 2018

Run Time: 2h13, Mandarin

Image Ratio: 3.00, Color

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SYNOPSIS

Luo Hongwu returns to Kaili, the hometown from which he fled several years ago. He begins the search for the woman he loved, and whom he has never been able to forget. She said her name was Wan Quiwen...



CHINA'S EIGHTH GENERATION



I owe a great debt to Henry Miller. For his *Tropics, Sexus, The Colossus of Maroussi*, read when I was 16, but also because his platonic love for Lisa Lu (卢燕) inspired me to see *The Arch* (董夫人) and to discover great Mandarin filmmakers who were still unknown, including Lee Han Hsiang (李翰祥), King Hu (胡金铨), Sung Tsun-Shou (宋存寿), Pai Chingjui and Li Xing (李行). Long before the Fifth Generation, Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝贤), Edward Yang (杨德昌) and Fred Tan (但汉章).

Now, seven months after the heart of Hu Bo, director of *An Elephant Sitting Still*, tragically stopped beating, Bi Gan's latest film, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, emerges. I would go as far as to speak of a generation of fiery poetry.

Don't these two films serve as two flaming torches in the heart of the night?

A poetry of verbs.

Not of adjectives, of detail.

A medieval poetry, gritty and rough, like that of Villon and Chassignet, later scattered through the works of Verlaine, Carco and de La Vaissière.

Close too to Audiberti – a poetry of blood, blood gushing from the land, running frantic in our veins and spreading, immense.

Alas, Pierre Ryckmans, aka Simon Leys, died four years too soon. He would have celebrated Bi Gan as he did Shi Tao (石涛) and Shen Fu (沈复).

And so the Eighth Generation has, indeed, just been born.

Pierre Rissient, April 19th 2018

Director Q&A

The film's Chinese title, Last Evenings On Earth, comes from a short story by Roberto Bolaño, while the international title is inspired by a play by Eugene O'Neill. Are the themes of night and the journey the only similarities?

(Laughter) Picking titles and characters' names is always a bit challenging for me. The thing is, all the characters' names in the film are actual names – names of popular singers. I picked names I liked, names that matched with the film's spirit. Just like the titles of these two works of literature.

After Kaili Blues, how did you approach this new project?

First of all, from a technical standpoint, I'm not satisfied with *Kaili Blues*. I'm sorry I couldn't do certain things because we had such a limited budget. With this new film, I've tried to fulfill my dreams and to be more knowledgeable about the film industry. And then, I've always been fascinated by Chagall's paintings and Modiano's novels. I wanted to make a film close to their works, and by the emotions and sensations they evoke.

So it's Chagall's magic combined with Modiano's questions of memories?

The whole film plays with memories, the magic of memories.

Stylistically, Long Day's Journey Into Night is reminiscent of a genre movie. Is this what drove you to make this film in the first place?

I've never taken any screenwriting courses. So I've developed my own writing habits. To begin with, as regards the script, *Kaili Blues* was a road movie. Once the first draft was written, I began destroying it from the inside, little by little. This gave it a form I liked. Originally *Long Day's Journey Into Night* was a film noir, close to Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*. Through my process of "destroying" scene after scene, the film eventually took on the style it has today.

So you build by destroying? And then add a great many details and personal touches.

Yes but I also work by breaking down and reconstructing. I swap elements and move them from one scene to the next.

How did novelist Chang Ta-Chun participate in the writing of the film?

He was a consultant on the script. We talked at great length about the film's structure, including its division into two parts. The title of the first part is *Memory*; that of the second is *Poppy*, in reference to Paul Celan's poem *Poppy and Memory*. At some point, I even considered using this as the film's title.

For me, the first part addresses issues of time and memory in different timelines. The second part deals with the notion of space, which is emphasized by the single sequence shot and the use of 3D.

It's a film about memory. After the first part (in 2D), I wanted the film to take on a different texture. In fact, for me, 3D is simply a texture. Like a mirror that turns our memories into tactile sensations. It's just a three-dimensional representation of space. But I believe this three-dimensional feeling recalls that of our recollections of the past. Much more than 2D, anyway. 3D images are fake but they resemble our memories much more closely.

“Dangmai” is a town – an actual world you have created in your films.

Originally, Dangmai was an imaginary place. Over the course of my films it has become the crossroads of different timelines. In this film, it's the background of memories – a dream-like place that actually exists.

The film both evokes a dream and feels connected to the birth of cinema. It has a very humid atmosphere, somehow reminiscent of Wong Kar-wai. Is this connected to the weather of your hometown, Kaili, where you particularly like to shoot?

I'm a great fan of *Days of Being Wild* and perhaps I'm unconsciously influenced by Wong Kar-wai's work. It meant a lot to the younger generation of Chinese filmmakers. *Kaili* is located in a subtropical area so it's often raining, especially during summer.

I have the feeling that, for you, cinema is first and foremost about creating an atmosphere and feelings. It's not simply about telling a story – at least, that's not what's most important.

Definitely. I'm always trying to capture the atmosphere of the locations I'm shooting in – to portray their authenticity. To do this, I almost always change the scenes when I get on set before I begin shooting: the actors end up getting used to it, and being inspired by it. When everybody on set is seeking that authenticity, I'm truly fascinated. The plot in itself is always a bit ordinary. This film is simply about a man setting out to look for a woman. But what I wanted to capture were the emotions. I refrained from shooting overly explanatory scenes. I was aware they would only lead to a purely narrative film.

And yet “a film must be easy to understand”, don't you think? (laughter)

I'm always told my films are difficult to understand. But it's wrong – you need to feel them! If I don't shoot the usual explanatory scenes, it's because they make me lazy. You tend to say to yourself: “As I have a plot thread, all I have to do is follow it – it's easy.” But without these narrative scenes, you still grasp the storyline. Besides, it makes for nice surprises.

How did the shoot go?

I stopped the shoot on the first day (laughter). I wasn't happy with the production design. It lasted for a while, there was a lot of pressure and I was really tense. Afterwards, I stopped the shoot two or three

times again, always on account of the production design... or because I was in no condition to shoot. Finally the shoot wrapped a few days before Chinese New Year 2018 (middle of February).

Is this why three cinematographers appear in the credits?

Actually, Yao Hung-I began shooting the first part. We worked together for several months and then he went back to Taiwan. Dong Jinsong then took over for half of the part in 2D and the preparation of the final sequence shot that David Chizallet eventually shot. Chizallet also shot one scene of the part in 2D. The shooting finally wrapped a few days before Chinese New Year, mid February 2018.

You seem to need to reinvent yourself all the time, to reassess the filmmaking process, from the shoot to the editing. Is it a challenging process for you?

The shoot is always very hard on me. I need to feel at risk, almost as if I had to escape death to carry on creating. I often tell myself that the film is lousy but then the next day I come up with a new idea – it rekindles the film, which takes on a new life. I find that questioning yourself to step out of your comfort zone – even if it means “destroying” yourself – is necessary for creators. I’m convinced that many great filmmakers are like that – although obviously I don’t claim to be in their league. This is something I’d already experienced on *Kaili Blues*. Whether I have a big or a small budget, I can’t satisfy myself with just making a film because I have a written screenplay. It’s not enough for me, it’s not inspiring enough.

Did you shoot the sequence shot we mentioned before at the end of the shoot?

I did. The crew and I prepped for it for a long time and shot it once. But I wasn’t at all happy with the result. You mentioned Wong Kar-wai, and it so happens that his gaffer, Wong Chi Ming, helped us out. As soon as he got the lighting ready, I felt inspired again. I was very anxious to shoot the sequence shot whereas before I didn’t really feel like it.

Why?

Because when you do a sequence shot, everything is planned in advance. You can hardly change anything about it. It’s definitely Wong Chi Ming’s work that inspired me to do it.

The production design of the sequence shot is really interesting. Did you shoot it on the outskirts of Kaili? And how did you come up with the idea of the sequence shot?

I did a lot of research and looked at different ideas during the writing process. Eventually, as I went through Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, I came up with the idea of wandering. It’s an invitation to a journey. Whether the audience believes that the characters are dead or alive doesn’t matter. The film was shot on the outskirts of Kaili. The big building was built by the Soviets when the neighboring mine was in operation, and was later turned into a prison. It’s been shut down ever since. I’m so fascinated by this place that I wrote this story in order to live in it.

How did you go about casting? The choice of your lead actress, Tang Wei, for example?

Actors' faces are very important to me. Chagall's *The Promenade* was an inspiration – who could portray the flying woman? I couldn't picture anyone. And then Tang Wei's face appeared to me and I realized she could be fascinating, and I contacted her right away. As far as Luo Hongwu's and Whitey Cat's mothers are concerned, I thought of an actress who would be move From one character to the other. For me, Sylvia Chang was the best choice. She's remarkable in both roles. The rest of the casting process was realized fairly quickly.

You like popular songs from the past, which bring a nostalgic touch to the film.

I picked songs I grew up with and enjoyed as a teenager. It was the same process as in *Kaili Blues*. They immediately remind us of our memories, whether sweet or bitter. I'm a big fan of the singer Wu Bai. His voice is the sound of ruins. When I was thinking about the film, his voice naturally accompanied the images in my mind. For the film, I had to cut down on the number of songs; I could have included a lot more! Composer Lim Giong also wrote a few pieces.

Is it a romance? A film noir? Or maybe a sci-fi movie?

I think it defies categorization. My main hope is that it's a film unlike any other. But then again, it could be all three together, couldn't it?

Poetry is very important to you. Its use has taken various forms in your films and evolved since Kaili Blues.

Kaili Blues is a very personal film – I could even say, exaggerating a bit, that it has nothing to do with filmmaking, as it was so close to my personal life. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is much more cinematic – I've given filmmaking a great deal of thought since.

You've included far fewer poetry quotes in this film.

I even took out the only direct quote I had planned to include towards the end of the film. I turned it into an incantation the characters speak to make the bedroom rotate. This way, the film's poetry is only conveyed through images and sound.

Do you see your style as related to magic realism?

I think my films are more realistic than magical (*laughter*). Because cinema is such a magical artform! No film is without magic. In cinema, anything's possible. In this film, all the characters are willing to fly. I could feel it when I was shooting them.

There's no airport in Kaili but you can still fly! (laughter) Did you want all the characters to speak the same Kaili dialect?

Yes. It took them quite some time to learn it. It's not easy. They were very generous and outdid themselves for my film.

Why did you shoot in dialect?

I find Mandarin quite dull and devoid of true beauty. Dialects inspire me to write dialogue or poetry.

Interview by Wang Muyan, April 28, 2018

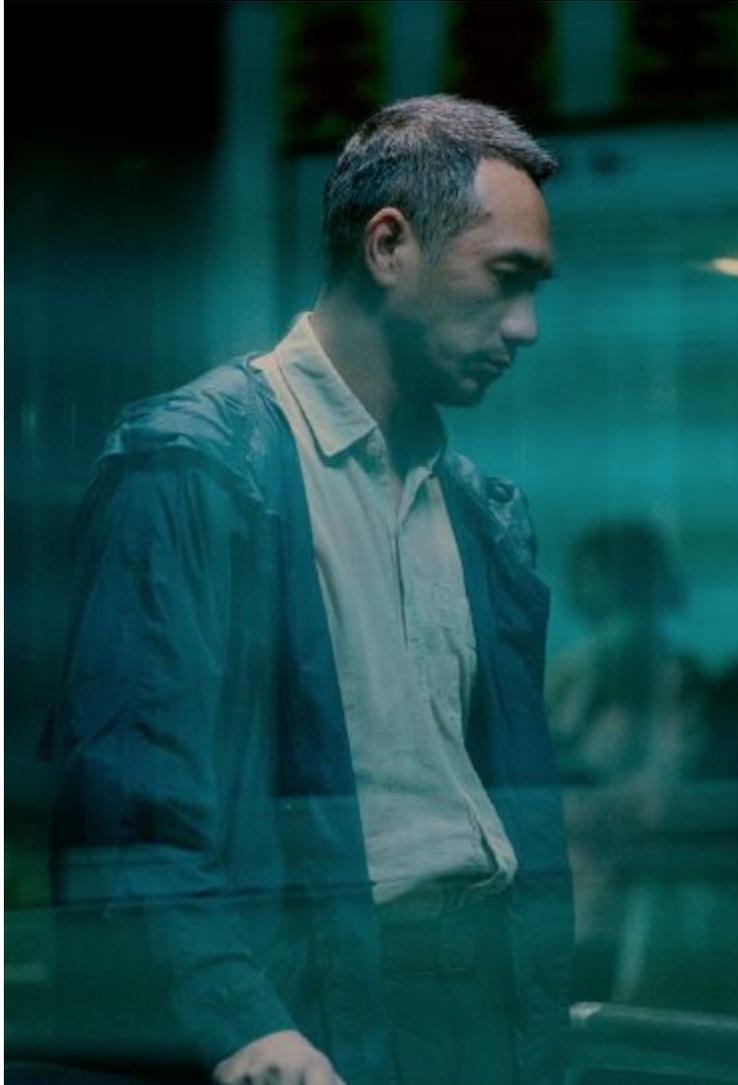
BIOGRAPHIES

Bi Gan



Writer-director Bi Gan was born in Kaili City, Guizhou Province, People's Republic of China, in 1989. In 2013, his short film *Diamond Sutra* received the Special Mention Award in the Asian New Force Category of the 19th IFVA Festival. His critically acclaimed debut feature *Kaili Blues* won the Best Emerging Director Award at the 68th Locarno International Film Festival, the Montgolfière d'Or at the 37th Nantes 3 Continents Festival, and the Best New Director Award at the 52nd Golden Horse Awards, amongst others. It was selected in numerous international film festivals and widely sold internationally. His second feature, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, an international co-production between China and France, makes its premiere in *Un Certain Regard*, at the 71st Cannes Film Festival.

Huang Jue



HUANG Jue was born in Guangxi, China in 1975. He made an impressive big-screen debut with his performance in *Baobei in Love* (2004). He has since starred in several critically-acclaimed films, such as Xu Haofeng's *The Master* (2013) and Huo Jianqi's *Falling Flowers* (2013).

Filmography:

2018, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Director : BI Gan

2015, *The Master*, Director : XU Haofeng

2013, *Fallen City*, Director : HUANG Hong

2013, *Falling Flowers*, Director : HUO Jianqi

Tang Wei



Tang Wei was born on October 7th, 1970 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang. She graduated from the Central Academy of Drama, where she majored in directing. In 2004, she made her debut in *Policewoman Swallow*, which won her the sixth CCTV6 Digital Film Lily Award for Outstanding Actress. In 2007, she received more attention for her performance in *Lust, Caution*, and won the 44th Golden Horse Award for Best New Performer. In 2010, her performance in *Crossing Hennessy* won her the Best Actress Award at the 11th Chinese Film Media Awards. In 2011, her performance in *Late Autumn* won Tang Wei more than ten Best Actress awards (Baeksang Arts Awards, Busan Film Critics' Awards, Korean Association of Film Critics Awards, etc.). In 2013, she starred in the romantic comedy *Finding Mr. Right*, which grossed \$85 million at the Chinese box office and which won her the Best Actress prizes at the Shanghai Film Critics Awards, China Film Director's Guild Awards and Beijing College Student Film Festival, amongst others. In 2014, Tang was cast as Xiao Hong in *The Golden Era*. In 2015, she made her English language debut in *Blackhat*. One year later, Tang was cast again in *Book of Love*, the sequel to *Finding Mr. Right*, which was a huge commercial success and became the highest grossing Chinese romantic film of all time.

Filmography:

- 2018, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Director : BI Gan
- 2017, *Book of Love*, Director : XUE Xiaolu
- 2016, *A Tale of Three Cities*, Director : Mabel CHEUNG
- 2014, *The Golden Era*, Director : Ann HUI
- 2013, *Finding Mr. Right*, Director : XUE Xiaolu
- 2010, *Crossing Hennessy*, Director : Ivy Ho
- 2010, *Late Autumn*, Director : KIM Tae-Yong
- 2007, *Lust, Caution*, Director : Ang LEE



Credits

Cast

TANG Wei | WAN Qiwen
HUANG Jue | LUO Hongwu
SYLVIA Chang | Wildcat's Mom – Red-Headed Woman
LEE Hong | Chi Wildcat
CHEN Yongzhong | ZUO Hongyuan
LUO Feiyang | Young Wildcat
ZENG Meihuizi | Pager
TUAN Chun | Ex-husband of WAN Qiwen
BI Yanmin | Woman prisoner
XIE Lixun | ZUO's hatchet men – Lover of Red-hair woman
QI Xi | Woman in Jade Hotel
MING Dow | Policeman
LONG Zezhi | Yellow-Haired Man in Pool Hall

CREW

Written and Directed by BI Gan
Production Designer | LIU Qiang
Directors of Photography | YAO Hung-I, DONG Jinsong, David CHIZALLET
Gaffer WONG | Chi-Ming
Sound Director | LI Danfeng
Editor | QIN Yanan
Music | LIM Giong and POINT Hsu
Costume Designer | YEH Chu-Chen, LI Hua
Production Manager | HUANG Congyu
Line Producer | SUN Tao

Literary Consultant | ZHANG Da-chun
Consultant | LI Xun
Executive Producers | WAN Juan, SHEN Yang
Producer | SHAN Zuolong
Production | Zhejiang Huace Film & TV Co., Ltd., Dangmai Films (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.,
Huace Pictures (Tianjin) Co., Ltd.
Co-Production | CG CINEMA, Horgos Taihe Entertainment Co., Ltd., Shanghai PMF Pictures Co.,
Ltd., Shanghai Tencent Pictures Cultural Diffusion Co., Ltd., China Film (Shanghai)
Investment Fund, Mandarin Vision Co., Ltd., Tian Jin Mao Yan We Ying Media Co.,
Ltd., Free Whale Pictures Co. Ltd., Jiangsu Zhongnan Films Co., Ltd.,
Shanghai Ju Hong Film and TV Culture Studio, Realm Media Group,
Dream Sky Films Co., Ltd., Youku Information Technology (Beijing) Co., Ltd.
Co-producers | Charles GILLIBERT, YEH Jufeng, LI Xiaonan, ZHANG Guanren
In association with Wild Bunch
Supported by Doha Film Institute

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