

Presseheft



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Credits

Originaltitel: He Lui

Länge 115 Min., Format 35 mm, 1:1.85 Farbe

Buch	Tsai Ming-liang , Yang Pi-ying, Tsai Yi-chun
Kamera	Liao Peng-jung
Schnitt	Chen Sheng-chang
Ton	Yang Ching-an
Ausstattung	Lee Pao-lin, Ku Chia-chao
Regieassistenz	Wang Ming-tai
Herstellungsleitung	Lin Shih-yuan
Produktionsleitung	Huang Che-ming, Lin Huei-ching
Produzenten	Hsu Li-kong, Chiu Shun-ching
Ausführender Produzent	Chung Hu-ping
Associate	Wang Shih-fang
Produktion	Central Motion Picture Corporation

Verleih:

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Darsteller:

Xiao-kang	Lee Kang-sheng
Vater	Miao Tien
Mutter	Lu Hsiao-ling
Junger Mann	Chen Chao-jung
Xiao-kangs Liebschaft	Chen Shiang-chyi
Geliebter der Mutter	Lu Shiao-lin
Regisseurin	Anne Hui (als sie selbst)



Inhalt

DER FLUSS

In einer Wohnung in Taipeh lebt Xiao-kang mit seinen Eltern. Viel haben sie nicht gemeinsam, alle drei gehen ihre eigenen Wege.

Sein Vater arbeitet nicht mehr und verbringt seine Zeit damit, in den unzähligen Saunas der Stadt jungen Männern nachzuspüren. In den schmalen, kaum beleuchteten Räumen sucht er Trost und jagt einer Illusion von Freundschaft hinterher. Was er findet, sind flüchtige Kontakte.

Xiao-kangs Mutter ist die Fahrstuhlführerin eines Restaurants. Für sie dreht sich alles darum, das Essen für Mann und Sohn, aber auch für ihren Liebhaber auf den Tisch zu bringen. Ihr Geliebter handelt mit Porno-Videos und ist oft unterwegs. Die Liebe zwischen den Eltern ist seit langem erloschen. Sie teilen längst nicht mehr dasselbe Bett und besprechen nur noch das Nötigste.

Zufällig trifft Xiao-kang eine alte Freundin wieder. Xian-chi, die inzwischen Produktionsleiterin einer Filmcrew geworden ist, lädt ihn zu einem Besuch am Drehort ein.

Xiao-kang folgt ihrer Aufforderung, und es stellt sich heraus, daß dringend ein Komparse benötigt wird; jemand, der bereit ist, sich im Fluß treiben zu lassen. Obwohl Xiao-kang schon der Gedanke abstößt, sich in das völlig verschmutzte Gewässer zu begeben, läßt er sich schließlich von der Regisseurin überreden. Unmittelbar nach dem Dreh überkommen ihn heftige Schmerzen, die vom Nacken auszugehen scheinen. Doch schon bald breiten sie sich über seinen ganzen Körper aus und greifen auch seinen Kopf an.

Es beginnt eine Odyssee zu zahlreichen Ärzten und Heilern. Niemand kann ihm helfen.

Dann stellt sich heraus, daß die Decke im Zimmer des Vaters undicht ist. Es tropft und tropft, nicht einmal der gerufene Klempner kann die Ursache ausfindig machen. Xiao-kangs Zustand verschlechtert sich.

Auf der Suche nach einem Wunderheiler reisen Vater und Sohn gemeinsam in den Süden. Nachdem sie ein Hotel gefunden haben, begibt sich der Vater auf die Suche nach einer Sauna. Auch Xiao-kang sucht eine Sauna auf, und zufällig begegnet er dort seinem Vater.

Zu Hause nimmt sich die Mutter vor, die Quelle des Lecks ausfindig zu machen. Während es draußen gewittert und stürmt, bricht sie die leerstehende Wohnung über ihrer eigenen auf.



Tsai Ming-liang

Biografie

Geboren am 27.10.1957 in Ku Ching, Malaysia. Studium an der Theater- und Filmfakultät der Universität Taiwans.

Arbeitete als Produzent und Regisseur am Theater, als Autor und Regisseur für das Fernsehen. Nach mehreren Drehbüchern seit 1992 mit den Spielfilmen REBEL OF THE NEON GODS und VIVE L'AMOUR auch international erfolgreich.

Filmografie

- 1988 JIA JIAFU - TV Film
- 1989 KUAILE CHEFANG - TV Film
- BU LIAO QING - TV Film
- HAIJIAO TIANYA - TV Film
- 1990 WODE YINWENMINGZI JIAO - TV Film
- MARY - TV Film
- LI XIANGDE GANQINGXIAN - TV Film
- AH XIONGDE CHULIAN QINGREN - TV Film
- 1991 XIAOHAI - TV Film
- 1992 QINGSHAONIAN NAYU (REBEL OF THE NEON GODS)
- 1994 AIQING WANSUI (VIVE L'AMOUR)
- 1995 MY NEW FRIENDS Dokumentarfilm
- 1996 HE LIU (DER FLUSS)
- 1998 DONG (THE HOLE)
- 2001 WHAT TIME IS IT THERE?



An Interview with TSAI MING-LIANG

CHEN: THE RIVER is your third film. The way it is constructed makes it look a lot like a sequel of REBELS OF THE NEON GOD?

TSAI: My films map the journey through life of one character, Xiao-kang. Personally, I would rather see it as a sequel of Vive L'amour. The River projects the growth and chronicles the experience of this one character. In each of my three films, Xiao-kang confronts new problems and experiences new mood shifts. I consider all three Xiao-kang's films.

CHEN: But you've also resurrected two characters, father and mother (played by Miao Tien and Lu Hsiao-ling, respectively), from REBELS. Construction-wise, I think it precedes The River.

TSAI: This time I set out to play up the family element. When I outlined a background study for VIVE characters, I meant to give Xiao-kang a home, which could very well be the one illustrated in REBELS, a home he hardly ever visits, a home he definitely detests. In The River, family element resurfaces. He harbors no love for his family. He has no intention to go home. He only does it because he is terribly sick, and once he is there, he is trapped. You can say that he is caught by a dilemma similar to his father's. The old man likes to hang out in places like gay sauna. The leak is just one more incentive that drives him away from home. Now, come think about it, Xiao-kang's mother doesn't seem to like her home very much, either.

The apartment that houses the family serves merely as a symbol. The River focuses on the family and probes into its problems to see what have happened. What drives Xiao-kang away from his home, where he is forced to return and confronts many ghosts of his past and present.

CHEN: Looming big and imposing in The River, as well as REBELS and VIVE, is a metropolis, Taipei in this case. I remembered when you first told me the story, Tamsui River (a river bordering northern part of Taipei) plays a key role. This element is all but disappears by the time you finished the film. Tell me a little more about how you developed the screenplay?

TSAI: Early on, I was going to tell the story, in part, with a documentary style. It was meant to magnify the symbolic meanings of the polluted river. Life is like a river. The further we travel down the river of life, we face more and more dilemmas coming from a more deteriorating environment. But, I don't want to make it into a film about environment protection . . .

The inspiration of The River came from All Corners of the Sea, a TV drama I did years ago. There was this one scene, an extra was shoved into a river by one child actor. He accidentally swallowed some water, and got sick for a couple of days. A



real-life story. I left the scene on the editing floor. The extra, a school buddy of mine, was really pissed. And since, strange as it is, I have had this compelling urge to base a film on this simple story. All my films invariably focus on social issues, scrutinizing many changes sprouted out at us because of economical prosperity and environmental degradation. The River is it, and so are REBELS and VIVE .

I have always wanted to probe deeper into the roots of humanity. While shooting The River, I kept reminding myself to probe into the deeper, the darker half of ourselves. We don't always live happily ever after. Look around, our city is growing fast. Materialism boosts human greed to an unglorious height. We have everything we ever wanted, yet there is something lurking in the dark to keep us from being really happy.

There is one scene in this film that, no matter how hard I have tried, I can't write it off or edit it out. A very early shot of father whiling away in a dark sauna suite. It is an echo of the river. If life is like a river, a part of it will always be darkly swirling and unfathomably deep. There will always be some dark and damp corners for the father to coop up. These are the images I want.

CHEN: Water in your films carries loads or message. Is it a symbol or sensuality?

TSAI: Water doesn't necessarily stand for sensuality. Different people interpret it differently. It could also mean disasters, or life itself. Water in REBELS stands for multilevel of feeling. It may flow freely.

It may be stagnant. You need it so badly, yet are sometimes in awe of it.

Water in The River stands for desires. It overflows, causing troubles. The leak happens at the same time Xiao-kang taken ill. It corners both father and son and forces them to confront and solve their problems. The father and son, though acting like total strangers, are chips from the same block. The young man played by Chen Chao-jung was posted as an intruder. All three take to looking into mirror. The mirror image brings out the similarity in these three characters .

The strange neck problem of Xiao-kang is not triggered by his dip in the dirty river water. It is a projection of his rebellion. Psychologically, Xiao-kang rejects the water. Next room, his father doesn't reject the water. The old man merely sets up a barrier to block off the water. Xiao-kang doesn't let his neck problem stop his day-dream like drifting. He keeps moving around until he arrives at the last scene and opens up the window. This character is created to serve different purposes in each of my films. He kissed Chen Chao-jung in VIVE, opens a window in The River. There are hopes behind a kiss, an open window.

CHEN: This character Xiao-kang, is it a projection or you?

TSAI: This film is very complicated. Every character in this film is a projection of me. I wrote a little bit of me into each of them. I like all of them. I let them cry a little, wander off a little. In the final scene, Xiao-kang is made to walk away from the camera and then come back. I want you to sense that there is still some hope in this



character. I like this character very much .

CHEN: Talking about cruelty. In the end of the film, the sauna scene, the father and son are involved in a very erotically incestuous scene. Visually and psychologically, it is a very core-shaking powerful, yet very cruel, scene. Why?

TSAI: I believe that only by pushing it to the limit (the pains, the cruelty) that I can shatter pretentiousness and insensitivity of this society. People read about major crimes daily. It 's in the 24-hour news, newspapers and weeklies. They have taken these cruel crimes for granted. They won't feel it unless you punch them hard .

In this film, it seems very important for the father and son to uncover something about one another. So, they find out something about each other, but then what? I wanted to stretch it a little bit farther and set them up in a really awkward situation. The funny thing was even after I have pushed them into a tight corner. What happened then didn't seem so bad. They embraced as if they have found redemption in each other's arms. This could be their only chance to embrace or caress each other, or hold each other's hand. Then and there, they did it, exuberating warmth and serenity.

CHEN: You seem to be very pessimistic about family values?

TSAI: From the family angle, my three films seem to be tied in to one another. The River screened by itself might be confusing. Relations between RIVER's characters is not well declared at the beginning of the film. Had the father not declared his relationship with Xiao-kang over a phone conversation with a miracle worker at the end of the film, theirs could be anything, for example, grandfather and grandson. The three living in that tiny apartment could be roommates, taking temporary boarding in a house with worsening leak and entertaining no co-relationship at all. They are the microcosm of a dysfunctional family, a dysfunctional society where gap between its members are getting wider.

In this film, I also attempt to patch up the dysfunctional relationship seen in my previous films. I considered this possibility when I first set out to shoot this film. My previous two concentrated on breaking up bondage between people. Should I try some patching up with this film, I asked myself? What could be the thing that will help them make contact? I may look into it with my next project The Hole. Why is there a hole between two rooms ? Something meaningful might this way come.

After all that have happened to our society, isn't it about time for us to sit down and go retrospective, especially when nothing works to correct the wrongs (not with religions, political or financial power)?

Shouldn't we start over by building something new and beautiful out of the ashes of old and decaying. In THE RIVER, the father takes his son to doctors, making contacts with people. By touching and feeling Xiao-kang, people are giving



Xiao-kang a hand to stand up on his own.

CHEN: It seems to me that characters in *The River* are not very actively interacting with outside world.

TSAI: I did it on purpose. I meant to empty the stage for the main characters. The world is a stage for them. It all happened in Taipei. By blocking off the busy crowd of Taipei, I created an illusionary world. My characters seemed to be day-dreaming in this illusionary world, a cutoff space that created total isolation and enclosure.

CHEN: If realism is your priority, why not taking up non-professionally trained actors like your fellow directors, such as Hou Hsiao-hsien?

TSAI: I would rather catch unaware passersby cruising down the street than hiring non-professional doing takes. To me, that would be faking it. What is film, I've pondered hard and often on this. It may look real, but it's not. You can do your best to make it look real. Very often, I have to work very hard to bring out something I especially want to emphasize. In *The River*, it is the surrealistic vacant streets and overpasses. I design camera movement to better suit my actors. When I want my audience to concentrate on a crying Yang Kwei-mei or a puffing Lee Kang-sheng, I ask for a close-up shot. When I assign director Ann Hui the part of a commercial film director, she does it like she is really directing a film. I like it that way.

CHEN: But most of the time, you are doing it from an objective point of view.

TSAI: Yes. I meant to initiate audience step by step to the subjective inner world of my characters. I am the guide.

CHEN: Does the father role post a great handicap to Mr. Miao Tien?

TSAI: Prior to taking up my offer, he pondered for a long time. There were different opinions from his family and friends, and there are the consideration of his previous image as macho man in many kung fu and swordplay romances; this proved to be an especially great hurdle to overcome. The nude scene was especially tough on him. While preparing for the take, our focus was on whether he should do a frontal nude or the alternative. But once the camera started to roll, the mood shifted, he started to take off his cloth. On the love scene between gay lovers, at first he asked me a lot of questions, such as would I use close-up shots, which I myself didn't have the answer. A lot of things and decisions are undecided until you reach the location. I experience great inner struggles all the time: What if the audience couldn't get through the acting and locate the things hidden under it? What if these inner struggles pose as too big an obstacle for my actors to overcome? I learn that sometimes it is good to let their feelings flow and not to fight against these feelings. Thus, together, we generate something great together.

(by Rachel Chen, translated by Jean Yeh)

