



71st Venice Int'l Film Festival  
Official Selection



39th Toronto Int'l Film Festival  
Special Presentations



19th Busan Int'l Film Festival  
A Window on Asian Cinema



58th BFI London Film Festival  
Official Competition



51st Golden Horse Awards  
Nomination for "Best Leading Actress"



11th Hong Kong Asian Film Festival  
Gala Presentation

# DEAREST

A PETER HO-SUN CHAN FILM



HUANG BO

ZHAO WEI

starring ZHANG YUQI TONG DAWEI ZHAO WEI HUANG BO HAO LEI ZHANG YI

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# DEAREST

a Peter Ho-sun Chan film

Best Actress Awards (Zhao Wei),

Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor, nominations

Hong Kong Film Awards

Film of Merit, Best Actress (Zhao Wei) and Best Screenplay (Zhang Ji)

Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards

Best Actress Award (Zhao Wei) Chinese American Film Festival

Best Actress nomination (Zhao Wei) Taipei Golden Horse Film Awards

Best Film, Best Director and Best Actress nominations

London International Chinese Film Festival

Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress and Best Actor nominations

Chinese Australia Film Festival

*“When I first saw the news documentary on which my movie was based, I was in awe of how much more dramatic and unpredictable life was compared to most fiction. I knew immediately that I had to make this movie. Rarely has a subject inspired such urgency. The incredible story of two parents in search of their abducted son and their eventual encounter with his foster mother, takes us on a journey through the various strata of contemporary China’s changing social landscape. This is not just a Chinese story, but a story that is relevant to rapidly growing economies all over the world. Upon reading the script, Zhao Wei called me and said, “Peter, this movie has a strong social conscience.” But I told her that it wasn’t my primary concern. I simply found the story and characters deeply moving. But if the movie can touch audiences in the same way that the documentary touched me, then perhaps, this is a movie with a social conscience.”*

## Synopsis

**Shenzhen, southern China** - When their 3-year old son goes missing, TIAN WEN-JUN and his ex-wife, LU XIAO-JUAN, find their ordinary lives thrown into turmoil. Overwhelmed with guilt, they struggle to cope with the never-ending nightmare. They scour half the country in search of their child but to no avail. The waiting is the hardest thing to endure but they persevere, clinging to the faintest glimmer of hope – even if it comes in the form of a conman’s lie. Hope is the only thing that gives them a reason to live.

Months pass. One day, the couple sit and watch the autumn leaves fall. Although they are divorced, they realize that once a man and a woman have a child together, they are inextricably linked forever. While on the road, they encounter HAN DE-ZHONG and his wife FAN YUN, another couple who have lost their child. Han introduces Tian and Lu to a support group, dedicated to locating missing children. Tian and Lu are both grateful and saddened to meet others in the same situation. The group members assist each other in their search and offer emotional support.

Still searching years later, after receiving a tip, Tian and Lu travel up north to a remote village and finally find their long lost son, TIAN PENG. Tian and Lu return home with their son, now 6, but Peng has changed. He sees his biological parents as strangers. The child is traumatized after being taken away from his ‘family’ for a second time. Meanwhile, LI HONG-QIN, Peng’s foster mother from the village arrives in the city in search of her last surviving relative, exposing long buried secrets...

## **Peter Ho-Sun Chan (director/producer)**

A leading figure in the Asian film industry, Peter Ho-sun Chan has been able to merge art and entertainment with commercial and critical success, winning 168 film awards out of 284 nominations. He co-founded United Filmmakers Organization (UFO) and produced a string of commercial hits that include *Comrades*, *Almost a Love Story* (1997). His directorial debut *Alan and Eric: Between Hello and Goodbye* (1991) was awarded Best Film of the Year by the Directors' Guild of Hong Kong. *Comrades* won 9 Hong Kong Film Awards and was voted one of the 10 Best Movies of 1997 by TIME magazine. Subsequently, Chan directed *The Love Letter* (1999) for Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks SKG. In the same year, he was voted one of the top 10 directors to watch by Variety, in conjunction with Sundance Film Festival. In 2000, he established Applause Pictures and produced some of the most original films, including *One Fine Spring Day* (2001), *The Eye* series (2002, 2004, 2005), *Three* series (2002, 2004) and *Golden Chicken 1 & 2* (2002, 2003).

His musical *Perhaps Love* (2005) was chosen as the closing night film at the Venice Int'l Film Festival. It won 29 awards and was selected as Hong Kong's Best Foreign Language Film entry to Oscar. *The Warlords* (2007) grossed US\$40 million across Asia and won 8 prizes in HKFA, most notably for Best Film and Best Director. He next produced Derek Yee's *Protégé* (2007) and Teddy Chen's *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009). The latter garnered US\$50 million in Asia alone and won 8 HKFA awards, including Best Film and Best Director. *Wu Xia* (2011), was the only Chinese language film selected for the Official Selection at the Cannes Film Festival, and won 8 major trophies. Chan's latest directorial effort *American Dreams in China* (2013) grossed US\$90 million at the China box office and he now has the distinction of being the only director to win Best Director awards at China's Golden Rooster Awards, Hong Kong Film Awards and Taiwan's Golden Horse Awards. He serves as an advisor for BAFTA's Asia advisory board and was named as one of Chinese Cultural Figures (2013).

## Zhao Wei

(as Li Hong-qin)



Zhao Wei is considered one of the top four actresses in China. In a career spanning close to 20 years, she has starred in 26 films and 13 TV dramas. She has collaborated with some of the most renowned filmmakers in China in such notable films as, Stephen Chow's comedy *Shaolin Soccer* in 2001, Ann Hui's *Jade Goddess of Mercy* in 2003, a Chinese epic war film *Red Cliff I and Red Cliff II* by John Woo in 2008 to 2009, the supernatural-fantasy film *Painted Skin* by Gordon Chan in 2008 and *Painted Skin: The Resurrection* by Wu'ershan in 2012, and the Chinese martial arts film *14 Blades* by Daniel Lee in 2010.

She won the Best Actress award at the 10<sup>th</sup> Golden Phoenix Awards For *Jade Goddess of Mercy*, and was nominated at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Film Awards and 27<sup>th</sup> Golden Rooster Awards for Best Actress for *Painted Skin*. She also won the award for Favorite Actress at the 9<sup>th</sup> Guangzhou Student Film Festival and Favorite Chinese Actress at the 6<sup>th</sup> Vietnam DAN Movie Awards for *Painted Skin*.

Zhao is not just a famous actor but also an acclaimed director. In 2013, Zhao's directional debut, *So Young* proved to be a major success at the Chinese box office, grossing over US\$116 million. Zhao also won the Best New Director at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Shanghai Film Critics Awards, the 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese American Film Festival and 29<sup>th</sup> Golden Rooster Awards.

**Li Hong-qin** – is the wife of a farmer. Her late husband has convinced her that she is barren. When he brings home a baby boy and claims that he fathered the child with another woman in Shenzhen, she believes him and raises the child as her own. Her husband later brings home a baby girl that he found abandoned at a construction site in Shenzhen. Although she leads an impoverished rural life, Li Hong-qin finds joy in her son and daughter. However, the harmony of her simple existence is destroyed by circumstances beyond her control. When her husband is accused of child abduction, Li is forced to leave the comfort and familiarity of her hometown and venture into the city of Shenzhen, where she must fight for the custody of her daughter.

# Huang Bo

(as Tian Wen-jun)



Huang Bo is a professional voice actor who graduated from Beijing Film Academy. But it was director Guan Hu who discovered his acting talent in 2000. Huang is now considered one of the top actors in China. Between 2010 and 2011, Huang performed in 5 films.

His breakout role was in the Chinese black comedy film directed by Ning Hao and produced by Andy Lau *Crazy Stone* in 2006. In 2007, Huang won his first major award for Best Supporting Actor at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Chinese Film Media Awards.

Huang's performance in Guan Hu's black comedy film *Cow* in 2009 later won him the Best Actor Award at the 46<sup>th</sup> Golden Horse Awards. His latest film *Lost in Thailand*, directed by Xu Zheng, was the top-grossing domestic film of 2012, earning over US\$200 million at the box office.

**Tian Wen-jun** - Born in Xi'an City in the Shaanxi Province of China, Tian Wen-jun operates a small cyber cafe in Shenzhen. He fathered a son named Tian Peng with his former wife, Lu Xiao-juan. Tian's lack of education has left him with few career options, His various attempts to start his own business all ended in failure. After the abduction of his son, Tian reunites with Lu and embarks on a journey to find their son in nation of 1.3 billion people.

# Tong Dawei

(as Gao Xia)

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Tong Dawei has established himself as one most prolific actors of his generation. Thanks to his boy-next-door image, he has gained a huge fan following. After graduating from the Shanghai Theatre Academy in 2001, he landed his first major film role in Zhang Yuan's *I Love You* (2002). The film was a film festival circuit favorite after premiering at the 20<sup>th</sup> Sundance Film Festival and the 32<sup>nd</sup> Int'l Film Festival Rotterdam.

In 2007, Tong gained international recognition when he starred opposite actress Fan Bingbing in Li Yu's controversial film, *Lost in Beijing*. The critically acclaimed drama was selected for competition at the 57<sup>th</sup> Berlin Int'l Film Festival and invited to the 6<sup>th</sup> Tribeca Film Festival. Since then, his popularity has skyrocketed thanks to starring roles in John Woo's blockbuster war epic *Red Cliff* (2008) and the star-studded historical drama *The Founding of a Republic* (2009). This was followed by a major role in Zhang Yimou's World War 2 drama *The Flowers of War* (2011) opposite Oscar winning actor Christian Bale. The film grossed over US\$94 million in China, and was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 69<sup>th</sup> Golden Globe Awards. His latest works include John Woo's *The Crossing* (2014) and *American Dreams in China* (2013), that garnered him Best Supporting Actor nominations at the 50<sup>th</sup> Taipei Golden Horse Awards, the 33<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Film Awards and the 56<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Film Festival.

**Gao Xia**- is a lawyer whose ideals have been corrupted. Like many others, Gao Xia has opted for financial gain over upholding justice. Through a twist of fate, he encounters Li Hong-qin, a helpless, uneducated woman in desperate need of legal aid. At first, he is eager to dismiss the poor and desperate peasant woman but slowly begins to empathize with her plight. Eventually, he rediscovers the true meaning of justice and what it means to be a voice of the disenfranchised.

## Hao Lei

(as Lu Xiao-juan)



Hao Lei shot to fame in 1998 at the tender age of 19 in the television drama series *Don't Cry Seventeen*. Hao first rose to international prominence after starring in Lou Ye's film, *Summer Palace*, a film about Tianamen Square protests. In 2010, she won the Best Supporting Actress Award at the 47<sup>th</sup> Golden Horse Award for her role in Chung Mong Hong's *The Fourth Portrait*.

For her work in recent film, *Mystery*, directed by Lou Ye, Hao was nominated for the Best Actress at the 49<sup>th</sup> Golden Horse Awards and 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Film Awards.

**Lu Xiao-juan** - Originally from the same hometown as her former husband, Tian Wen-jun, Lu Xiao-juan is a self-made career woman. Through hard work and perseverance, she has successfully climbed the social ladder in Shenzhen. Her achievements serve as a stark contrast to Tian's failure. The growing social and economic disparity between them, ultimately lead to divorce. Despite losing the custody battle for her child with Tian, she remains a devoted mother even after her second marriage. Her perseverance is tested during the perilous search for her missing son.

## Zhang Yi

(as Han De-zhong)



Zhang Yi is a renowned TV actor, with credits in over 30 TV drama series in the past 12 years. His breakout role in the 2012 TV drama series *Beijing Love Story* brought him national attention.

**Han De-zhong** – a member of the nouveau riche who has benefited from China's economic reforms in spite of his humble beginning. After his son is abducted in a supermarket, Han has re-evaluated his priorities. No longer obsessed with material wealth and power, he now invests all his time and money into searching for his son.

## Zhang Yuqi

(as Fan Yun)



Zhang Yuqi was the female lead in *CJ7* (2008), a role that introduced her to Asian audiences. She subsequently appeared in such films as, *Shaolin Girl* (2008), *All About Women* (2008) and *Jump* (2009), but it was her performance in *White Deer Plain* (2012), selected for competition at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival that brought her international attention.

**Fan Yun** - Han De-zhong's wife. Soon after marriage, she gives birth to their only son, only to see him kidnapped.

**“Dearest” has received overwhelming response since its international premiere at the Venice International Film Festival, and subsequent screenings at other festivals including the Toronto IFF and London IFF. Upon its release in China, it earned USD56 million at the box office. Critics have praised the film's complexity and the director's sensitive treatment of characters. But beyond its critical acclaim and box office success, the film has generated waves of discussion for its unblinking, realistic portrayal of China's social landscape. We hope some of the background information provided here will help you gain a deeper appreciation of the film.**

## **Child Abduction and One Child Policy**

Kidnapping and human trafficking have become a problem in China since the eighties. The victims are most often children. Tens of thousands of children are abducted and sold each year. Based on a true story, “Dearest” chronicles a horrifying tale of child abduction. In a country where many families are allowed only to have one child, the idea that one's son or daughter could be abducted and sold is no doubt a nightmare scenario for parents. Yet it continues to happen in China with alarming frequency.

In 2013, state broadcaster China National Radio estimated that 70,000 to 200,000 children are abducted in China each year for illegal adoption. Some are sold into forced labor or even marriage. Others end up on the streets. Some say this number is a modest estimate. Because most parents cannot prove that their child was kidnapped, many cases are filed as missing-person reports and thus go unaccounted for in the official statistics. The market for stolen children is growing at an alarming rate. According to media reports, the price for an abducted child is between \$5,000 to \$13,000. Most kidnappings are perpetrated by large, organized gangs that operate nationwide. Based on cases solved by the Chinese police, it's not uncommon for some kidnapping rings to have dozens or even hundreds of members.

Articles 240 and 241 of Chinese criminal law exact harsh punishments for child-traffickers; serious offenders can receive life sentences or the death penalty. But it has failed to stop traffickers from stealing children and breaking the hearts of parents. Police often refuse to file a missing child report until after twenty-four hours have passed. In the film, Tian and Lu blame the police for missing the precious window of time to save their children. Even when police do investigate, happy endings are rare. Children are moved over great distances and shuffled between handlers after they're kidnapped, making it impossible for them to be traced. In the film, Tian Peng was transported miles away from Shenzhen to a northern rural village in Anhui province.

To address the problem of child abduction, Chinese police forces have adopted a broad range of measures. Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) policies include: a national anti-kidnapping taskforce; a DNA database that matches stolen children with their parents; and partnerships with civil society groups like Baobeihuijia (Baby Back Home), which uses social media and the Internet to keep a current database of missing children. The police have managed to track down some of the missing children and reunite them with their parents. In 2011, Chinese police rescued 8,660 abducted children. Most parents who lose children stand little chance of seeing them again. In the film, Tian Peng was the only child to be reunited with his parents in the parents support group.

The horror faced by parents whose children are stolen is unimaginable. Many blame the one-child policy and poverty in China. Parents of stolen children are often poor and uneducated. They do not know what their rights are.

China's one child policy is the most controversial population planning policy in the world. It was introduced in 1979 to alleviate social, economic and environmental problems in China. Demographers estimate that the policy prevented at least 400 million births between 1979 and 2009. In 2007, 35.9% of China's population was subject to the restrictions. The Chinese government announced in November 2013 that it would be relaxing the policy to allow couples to have more than one child if one of the partners is an only child

Since the release of the film that brought the issue to national attention, the criminal code amendment bill (9) was modified to stipulate that any act of buying abducted children or women would be deemed a felony.

## **Urban vs Rural**

In 2012, China's urban population accounted for 52.6% of the total population. As urbanization in China rapidly advances, the economic disparity between urban and rural areas continues to widen. Despite the challenges, working in the city generates a much higher income than working the land. As a result, more and more farmers have migrated to urban centers in search of opportunities. At present, over 200 million migrant workers have left their hometowns in the countryside to work in cities, and have become a major part of the labor force.

Tian Wen-jun and Lu Xiao-juan, the divorced couple who lose their child in "Dearest", are both migrant workers. They left their hometown Shannxi years ago for Shenzhen and now lead completely different lives. Unable to rise from his station, Tian barely subsists at the fringes of society, operating a cyber café. Meanwhile, Lu has remarried,

landed an upwardly mobile job and has completely assimilated into the Shenzhen middle-class society.

The film was set in Shenzhen for specific reasons. Shenzhen is the youngest among the major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. The Special Economic Zone was established by the late Chairman Deng Xiaoping in the eighties, which saw the transformation of the southern fishing village into one of China's most powerful economic engines within three decades. There is no distinction between locals and outsiders in the city because everyone arrived from somewhere else. Shenzhen was a city built by the hard work of migrant workers over the course of thirty years. *"The real-life couple on which the characters Tian Wen-jun (Huang Bo) and Lu Xiao-juan (Hao Lei) are based, are not divorced. Their estrangement in the film reflects the shift in social values as a result of China's economic reforms. After moving from a small town to a big city, the wife becomes a successful executive, while the husband ends up operating a cyber cafe in the inner city. The two eventually drifts apart, unable to bridge the social-economic divide. The real life impact of changing social values is what gives the film added dimension."* The setting is an honest reflection of what life is like for migrant workers in big cities. The Lu character represents migrant workers who are desperate to improve their economic status, climb the social ladder, and quickly assimilate into urban society. In contrast, Tian and even Li Hong-qin represent the migrant workers who are still struggling, if not trapped at the lowest level of society. *"It's astonishing how a Hong Kong director is able to depict such a cross section of Chinese society within the time frame of a 130-minute film, that includes rural women, laborers, middle-class families, local bullies, civil servants, policemen, lawyers, an orphanage director, a judge, etc. Most importantly, they are not defined by their profession. Each is imbued an individual personality and perspective, breathing life into the characters."*

The disparity between the urban and rural, between rich and poor, the struggle between state and individual, compassion and the rule of law, are all vividly explicated in the film. The rapid urbanization of China's social landscape has seen a corresponding rise in the cost of living in cities. It has become more stressful to live in big cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. For an average city family to raise a child, both parents must work. A family where both parents work full time is the norm. Lacking both time and resources, parents often neglect their children, unwittingly making their children easy targets for child traffickers. The reason that Peng falls victim to abduction can be traced to Tian's and Lu's negligence, an all too common plight for migrant workers. The film addresses a host of problems faced by China's migrant workers, including language and cultural barriers. Early on in the film, Lu and Tian argue over whether their son should be allowed to speak in their hometown dialect or Mandarin, underlining the conflicting views of migrant workers. More and more children of migrant workers are raised in cities. They know little of their

hometown dialects, or even the concept of a “hometown.” But if they don’t erase their past and cultural identities, it’s harder for them to assimilate into the urban society in which they live.

Education is another obstacle that prevents migrant workers from assimilating into the city. Often migrant workers have limited education but their children also do not have the same access to public education in the city as other children with permanent residency status. Due to limited resources, “local” children have priority in terms of enrollment over children from families with work visas. Children of migrant workers are even further down the list. Even then, children of migrant workers face tougher admission requirements. Confronted with an array of social and economic disadvantages, children of migrant workers are only too aware of the class differences early on. Naturally, children with less envy those with more. In the film: *“before wandering off, Peng watches preschoolers playing from the other side of the gates to the kindergarten. It’s obvious that Peng doesn’t have permanent residency status. Without it, he cannot attend kindergarten like the other children. This is the reality of China today.”*

The influx of migrant workers has also created inner cities slums. Without urban infrastructure, the inner cities are unregulated, and overcrowded, characterized by unhygienic living conditions and high crime rates. In short, the inner cities are a part of the urban landscape but have fallen through the cracks of the system. Many analysts consider the rise of inner city ghettos as an inevitable result of China’s urbanization process. Addressing this unique Chinese phenomenon, the film takes us inside one of Shenzhen’s inner cities where Tian resides: *“The cluster of cables suspended over the narrow street is as convoluted and entangled as the lives below. If the red string that marks the cable slips off, it’s lost forever, much like the bond between Tian and his son Peng-peng. After the child is abducted, adopted and eventually returned, is he still Tian’s son? If not, whose child is he?”*

In the film, little screen time is devoted to Peng’s abductor. Instead the film shifts focus to the abductor’s wife, Li Hong-qin, a Jiangsu rural woman played by Vicky Chao. Unaware that her husband has committed a crime in Shenzhen, Li Hong-qin suddenly finds herself a victim of tragic circumstances when she is branded the wife of a “child trafficker.”

“Dearest” is not simply a film that explores the issue of child abduction and trafficking in China. Carefully navigating through the strict Film censorship system in China, the director uses the child abduction case to reveal the darker aftermath of China’s rapid economic development, including the growing disparity between urban and rural population. It may just be a tiny piece of a larger puzzle, but as renowned media veteran Yang Lan said, “There is much to be gained from this film.

Not only does it touch you emotionally, it's deeply affecting.”

## **Legal**

Child trafficking has grown to epidemic proportions. Not just a crime that affects individual victims and families, it reflects the ethical and moral dilemmas within contemporary China's changing social landscape. Due to the complex nature of the crime that involves every level of society, the effectiveness of judicial system and social safety net is challenged and brought into question.

In addition to loopholes in the Chinese legal system, child trafficking offences continue to escalate due to the failure of relevant government agencies to address the problem due to lack of support and personnel. After a child is abducted, family members often find themselves entangled in red tape and bureaucracy, leaving them feeling angry, desperate and helpless.

In the film, Tian and Lu are relentless in their efforts to locate their lost child. Li, the trafficker's wife, also struggles to reclaim her child at all costs. Depending on the perspective, both sides have legitimate claims. By presenting a conflict without a clear-cut resolution, Peter Chan is able to expose the underlying social dysfunction. From the start, the police refuse to file a missing child report until after 24 hours, in effect, giving the abductor time to smuggle the child out of the city. Li is charged with obstruction of justice. After serving a six-month prison sentence, she tries to visit her daughter at the orphanage but her request is denied. When she petitions to adopt her own daughter, she is discriminated against because of her rural background: *'The People's Court serves the people, but not your kind of people!'* At the court hearing, the judge is unsympathetic and even criticizes Li's lawyer for *'his willingness to accept any case for money.'* Unable to find his son missing after six years, when Han applies for a birth permit for his pregnant wife, the officer demands to see a death certificate for his missing child. The situations depicted in the film are examples of the many social injustices, illustrating how red tape and bureaucracy result in the violation of basic constitutional rights, how the legal system fails to protect children from traffickers and how the child welfare system has grown stagnant and obsolete.

**“Dearest” is obviously not a story that happens every day. Yet through the film, each viewer is somehow able to experience the shifting social landscape and recognize the conflicting emotions around family. The pain and tragedy of loss is something that everyone can relate to and understand. After all, the film isn't just about the search for a lost child. It also reflects the loss of certain social values. People come and go. We get lost. We suffer loss. We ask ourselves, where is “home”?**

## **Quotes from Media:**

“Peter Chan’s ability for continual reinvention is truly impressive. Dealing with a deeply pertinent mainland issue, Chan has chosen again to break away from his Hong Kong cinematic roots. The scene where Tian Wen-jun is being entrapped, the camera sweeps across the crowded surroundings of a railway station, vividly capturing a snapshot of China’s diverse underclass. A break in the film’s overall rhythm, sees the introduction of an unorthodox support group for finding missing children, which essentially brings the upper and middle classes into the same picture. Through these apparently innocent but intentional devices, Peter Chan is able to cross over great social divides, and unite people from all walks of life in a single story about the real struggle against child abductions, as well as creating a contemporary portrait of China’s common folk.” **Mu Wei Er/ NANDU.COM**

“Baby abduction and trafficking are epidemic in China. The one-child policy put a premium on young male lives; the highly prized little boys couldn’t legally be bred in bulk, so many were stolen from parents who would do anything to get them back. In February, the government broke one ring, arresting nearly 1,100 traffickers, and saved 382 abducted children. Those big numbers can catch the world’s attention, but one story can touch the heart: That is director Peter Chan Ho-sun’s achievement in *Dearest*, the true tale of a man who lost his son, fought to get him back, then lived with the ambiguous consequences.” **Mary Corliss and Richard Corliss, TIME.COM**

“Peter Chan is one man taking on the entire family planning system! It’s hard to imagine the birth permit scheme as an engaging subject for a film, but such a drama definitely surpasses expectations, while hinting at a new game afoot in the incessant skirmish between Chinese filmmakers and the state administration.” **TENCENT ENTERTAINMENT**

“The film impresses with its ugly vision of child abduction in contemporary China. It’s alarming to see how Chinese urbanites, broadcasting their pleas for any information about their children on TV and the Internet, get inundated by hundreds of calls from people who all claim they can help as long as they are paid first — with some even passing off other kids as the lost child...” **Boyd Van Hoeji, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER**

“The sophisticated storytelling is inflected with subtle observations about class, contemporary values and the difference between city and rural life.” **BFI**

“Due to its realism, ‘Dearest’ does not shy away from deriding the absurdities of the public system, while turning an eye on persistent diseases of the modern age that is deeply intertwined within China’s social, political and economic landscape. The question is if the film will have real impact that translates into substantial social action. Even if, it just succeeds in rousing passing public concern for child beggars by the roadside, it will have done more

than most superficial movie offerings. This is not to say every film must be about making thoughtful social commentaries or be world-changing. ‘Dearest’ is a much welcome change to the unhealthy trends of Chinese popular cinema, whether it’s made for those deeply alienated and tormented by the system or to give a little hope for those still searching for their loved ones.” **Mu Wei Er/ NANDU.COM**

“What makes Peter Chan an incredible director, is his refusal to attach a reductive label of ‘Trafficker’s wife’ to Li Hong-qin, to ordain her as the natural villain in the story. The intense conflict from diametrically opposed good and evil would have been the easier path to provoke an audience and cater to their needs of emotional catharsis. Chan chose not to do this, instead he even goes further to justify the moral character and actions of Li. When she saw hope in rightfully adopting her ‘daughter’ (another child abducted by her late husband), she gives up everything even herself, to fight for it with such humility and quiet strength, unfortunately, whether it is ethical, moral or legal, nothing is on her side. Destiny can be cruel or just the absurdity of life.” **Zheng Yu Li/ CAIXIN.COM**

“Star actress Zhao, who recently also made a splash as a director with So Young, here suggests she’s the Chinese Juliette Binoche, able to imbue each new crying scene with slightly different emotions... Huang Bo, from the comedy hit Lost in Thailand, here shows he’s a more than capable dramatic actor as well, and Hao Lei, as his former wife, offers such a beautifully understated yet heartfelt performance that the crack of a smile that creeps onto her face when someone takes her hand feels like the equivalent of an entire stadium yelling for joy...” **Boyd Van Hoeji, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER**

“Dearest” hits audiences twice, aiming first for the heart and later for the head, as it raises intriguing questions... In a daring move, the film also withholds its strongest performer, actress Zhao Wei, until the midway point. Zhao brings contradictions and intrigue to her character. Though we have every reason to hate her, instead we feel for her situation, which takes her segment of the film into territory where by-the-book morality doesn’t necessarily seem to apply. A coda featuring footage of the cast alongside the real people that inspired their roles adds a nice closing touch...” **Peter Debruge, VARIETY**

“Although thought to be barren, Li Hong-qin like many other women in her situation is essentially an uneducated but loving mother figure, subjugated by outdated ideas about a woman’s rights to reproductive freedom.” **Mu Wei Er, NANDU.COM**

“This heartbreaking true story of child abduction in China grows more complicated with each passing frame. Writer Ji Zhang and director Peter Chan offer up no villains and no tidy morals as they explore what it means to be a parent and the effects of China’s one-child policy. The movie features some of China’s biggest stars, but Huang Bo stands out as a father who’ll do anything to find his only son.” **Josh Jackson, Editor-in-Chief, PASTEMAGAZINE.COM**

“An epic melodrama that hits all of the right emotional buttons... Huang Bo (who starred in

local comedy hit *Lost In Thailand*) makes a great transition into more dramatic fare, while Hao Lei, as his former wife, is equally impressive and gives a gently moving performance that will strike a chord with audiences.” **Mark Adams, SCREEN INTERNATIONAL**

As for Hao Lei, possibly the best Chinese actress at the moment, she delivers a pitch perfect performance. Her gestures, emotions, and the tension in her voice are natural and precise. Early on in the film, the scene where she has a heated argument with Huang Bo, serves up a master class on “how to perform the part of a bickering couple.” **Snoopy Nirvana, BUNPIC.COM**

***Reference:***

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*Zheng Yu Li, CAIXIN.COM*

*Chen Fei*

*Han Hao Yue, BLOGWEEKLY.COM*

*Snoopy Nirvana, BUNPIC.COM*

*Sai Ren, WEIBO*

*Fu Chao, TENCENT ENTERTAINMENT*

*Liu Yang, ENTGROUP.CN*

**Director:** Peter Ho-sun Chan  
**Producers:** Jojo Hui Yuet-chun  
**Scriptwriters:** Zhang Ji  
**Cinematographer:** Shu Chou  
**Production Designer:** Sun Li  
**Costume Designer:** Dora Ng  
**Editor:** Derek Hui  
**Music:** Leon Ko

**Cast:** Zhao Wei (*"Painted Skin", director of "So Young"*)  
Huang Bo (*"Lost in Thailand", "Crazy Stone"*)  
Tong Dawei (*"The Crossing", "American Dreams in China"*)  
Hao Lei (*"Summer Palace"*)  
Zhang Yi (*"Beijing Love Story"*)  
Zhang Yuqi (*"White Deer Plain", "CJ7"*)

**Production Budget:** US\$12 million  
**Production Status:** Completed  
**Release Date:** 22 Jan, 2015 (Hong Kong)

**Production Company:** We Pictures Limited  
Alibaba Pictures Group Limited  
Stellar Mega Films Ltd.  
Beijing Enlight Pictures Co., Limited  
J.Q. Pictures Limited  
Shanghai Real Thing Media Co., Ltd  
Huang Bo Studio  
Pulin Production Limited  
Beijing Happypictures Cultural Communications Co., Ltd.

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