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CHAN IS MISSING

A FILM BY WAYNE WANG
WITH
MARC HAYASHI/WOOD MOY



Photos by Nancy Wong

CHAN IS MISSING A FILM BY WAYNE WANG

is a mystery story set against the backdrop of San Francisco's Chinatown. It is about two Chinese taxi drivers who are looking for their business partner, Chan Hung. Chan Hung is a middle aged Taiwan immigrant who vanished with their money. In their effort to find clues to Chan Hung's whereabouts, they question his family, friends, and acquaintances.

Wang breaks away from the stereotypical images of Hollywood by presenting a contemporary picture of life in the Chinese community with its great diversity of people reflecting dif-

fering cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. **Chan is Missing** is about how Chinese perceive themselves as "Chinese living in America", "Chinese Americans", and "Americans". These complex perceptions are distinct sensibilities that are often at odds with Western values. It is this dynamic humanism in Asians which Hollywood moviemakers have depicted as being inscrutable and docile.

The film represents the work of a great many Asian Americans in the Bay Area. Marc Hayashi, Woody Moy, and Judi Nihei, —members of the

San Francisco Asian American Theatre Company are featured in the film. In addition, people who live and work in Chinatown were cast as supporting characters. The production crew consisted of: cameraman Michael Chin, production manager Sara Chin, soundman Curtis Choy, and script-person Piera Kwan.

Wayne Wang has worked in Chinatown with various educational agencies in the community. As a filmmaker, Wang's films have received critical acclaim and won awards at film festivals both in the United States, and abroad.

Wayne Wang Productions

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"Chan is Missing" is the first feature length film to be produced by an entirely Chinese American cast and crew. It was made for under \$20,000 in grant money obtained from the American Film Institute and the National Endowment for the Arts, and its remarkably low budget was feasible only because the actors and crew accepted minimal salaries and community organizations donated extensive materials and services.

Set against the backdrop of San Francisco's Chinatown and Manilatown, "Chan is Missing" follows the search conducted by Jo and Steve, two Chinese American cab drivers, for their missing business partner, Chan Hung, a middle-aged Taiwan immigrant who had vanished with \$2,000 of their money. As the two men ask after their partner's whereabouts amongst his friends, family and acquaintances, they encounter a diversity of Asian American types and accordingly come to a sort of reckoning with their own identity and place on the American scene.

Depicted in the film is a most telling and oftentimes humorous cross section of San Francisco's Chinese American community. There is a philosophizing, chain-smoking Chinese cook that swills milk while stir-frying orders of sweet and sour pork; a well-assimilated female Asian attorney who is preoccupied with the legal implication of cross-cultural linguistic misunderstandings; Chan Hung's daughter who speaks Black English with a Chinese accent; a social worker who finds an analogy for "Asian Americanism" in an apple pie baked with Chinese techniques. Asian Americans of many backgrounds are presented in all their complexities and contradictions in the film, and impressionistically, they suggest that Chinese Americans in general lead vital and dynamic lives.

Independent filmmaker, Wayne Wang, sees his film as a stimulus for the rethinking of many Chinese stereotypes. Wang says, 'I want to portray many different Chinese of all ages and walks of life. I want to show them as complex characters with many internal contradictions; that they have distinctly individual sensibilities about the struggle between being a "Chinese living in America", a "Chinese-American" and an "American, per se"'. Wang contends that Hollywood has failed to depict Chinese with any subtlety, and in his film, he aims to go some way towards rectifying that fact.

In an effort to acquaint audiences with the ways and workings of the Chinese mind, Wang structured "Chan is Missing" in accordance to the ancient Asian concept of reciprocity, Yin and Yang. The mystery in the film is only laid to rest after the heroes of the film begin to consider their problems along the lines of a Chinese riddle in which unsaid factors reveal the solution, and the film's story turns as much on "what is not shown" (Yin) as "what is" (Yang). Moreover, to prompt audiences towards a more deliberate thinking of the Chinese

character, Wang cleverly keeps the central character of his film completely off stage. Chan Hung never actually appears in the film, and his personality and background must be circumspectively pieced together by the audience from frequently contradictory bits of information.

Hence, though "Chan is Missing" is a colorful and entertaining mystery, it also aims to involve audiences in a more responsible and understanding way of regarding Chinese Americans. It tacitly situates audiences within the Chinese American psyche and milieu, and therein, it displaces audiences in a fashion that allows them to consider Chinese Americans from a fresh, primary and cliché-free perspective.

The film strives neither to glorify Chinese American nor to roughly refute negative Chinese American stereotypes. Rather, it encourages audiences to participate in a self conscious inquiry upon the manner in which they have traditionally construed Chinese Americans. Wang has noted, "I don't want to create characters in my film who all resemble Chinese John Waynes. We don't need more myths. We don't need more Chinese heroes telling us what's right or wrong. Instead, we need to have access to different kinds of (Chinese) people and to understand better how we perceive them; to examine how we see them and how we listen to them."

The actors in the film include Asian American Theater Company members, Wood Moy, Marc Hayashi and Judi Nihei. The production crew was comprised of the few Asian media professionals in the Bay Area, cameraman Michael Chin, soundman Curtis Choy and production manager Sara Chin. The community people in the film played themselves.

C R E D I T S

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

Jo	Wood Moy
Steve	Marc Hayashi
Amy	Laureen Chew
Lawyer	Judi Nihei
Henry, the cook	Peter Wang
Presco	Presco Tabios
Frankie ..	Frankie Alarcon
Mrs. Chan	Ellen Yeung
Jenny	Emily Yamasaki
George	George Woo
Jenny's friend	Virginia Cerenio
Mr. Lee	Roy Chan
Mr. Fong	Leung Pui Chee

CREW

Cameraperson	Michael Chin
Soundperson	Curtis Choy
Production Manager	Sara Chin
Continuity Person	Piera Kwan
Production Assistants	Julian Low/Don Wong/ Bob Yano
Producer/Director	Wayne Wang
Scriptwriter	Isaac Cronin Terrel Seltzer Wayne Wang
Editor	Wayne Wang
Music Composer	Robert Kikuchi
Chinese Pop Music Composer	Sam Hui