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# the arch



a film one must absolutely see  
le figaro litteraire

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presented at: cannes · san francisco · locarno · mannheim

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l'humanite dimanche highly intelligent work of art l'express  
profound paris match superb s.f. chronicle brilliant s. f. examiner

"One leaves the theater feeling grateful, feelings assuaged, feeling that there truly is such a thing as human brotherhood and sisterhood, that passion stems from the soul and not the guts — in short, that there is hope for a better, brighter, cleaner world."

— HENRY MILLER —



●● A FILM DYNASTY'S PRODUCTION RUNNING TIME 95 MINUTES 35MM B/W WIDE SCREEN RATIO 1:1.66

## STORY SYNOPSIS:

Seventeenth century (Ming Dynasty), Southwest China.

MADAM TUNG (34), the young widow of a patrician scholar, was greatly honored throughout the village. She gives lessons to the village's children to support her MOTHER-IN-LAW and her young daughter WEI-LING (16). Her diligence makes it possible for them to cling to the life, in the simplest ways, proper for the patrician family in the village. Her only help is Chang, a faithful clansman who works at her back yard which he has turned into a profitable farm.

For the village community, Madam Tung is their physician, their adviser, the living incarnation of all the virtues. For fifteen years since her widowhood, they have not known her deviate from the path of dignity or chastity. They have submitted a petition to the emperor for permission to build an arch in her honor.

A troop of soldiers arrives to protect the farmers from the threat of bandits during harvest time. They are led by the young captain, YANG (28), who is as handsome as he is courteous. Strongly fascinated by the young widow, Captain Yang looks for every chance to deliver his servile attentions. Madam Tung now begins to learn that her youth and her desires are not over. Wei-Ling, at the same time, is innocently attracted to Yang since the first day she sets eyes on him.

When news of the arch being granted arrives, Captain Yang's growing hope to overcome the widow's coldness suddenly appears more unattainable. He turns to find solace in the love her daughter offers and in turn marries her with the mother's approval. When his mission is finished he leaves with his wife.

Time passes, Madam Tung's mother-in-law dies. The servant, Chang, begins to suffer from the growing intensity of his feelings for Madam Tung. The night before the inauguration of the arch, she is tempted to throw away her widow's veil. But honor prevails, and Chang leaves her. In the morning, straight, proud, and alone, Madam Tung is united to the arch.





# CAST:

Madam Tung ..... LISA LU

Captain Yang ..... CHIAO-HUNG



## PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Presented by ..... Paul D. Lee  
Produced by ..... Shu Shuen  
Written and Directed by ..... Shu Shuen  
Director of Photography ..... Subrata Mitra  
Cameraman, Exterior Unit..... Chi H'u-Che  
Music written and performed by ..... Lui Tsun-Yuan  
Edited by..... Les Blank and  
C. C. See  
Technical Advisor ..... Chiu Ding  
Assistant Producer ..... Richard Tang  
Lighting by..... Liu Pei  
Sound Effects by..... Del Harris  
Sets by ..... Pao Tien Ming  
Make up by ..... Sung Shiao-Chiang  
Costumes by ..... Liu Hsian-Hui  
Opticals Effects ..... Consolidated Film Industries  
Sound ..... Ryders Sound Service, Inc.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

THE ARCH departs from the traditional ways of film making in China and attempts to go back to the method by which Chinese characters (word-symbols) were originally constructed. It is not surprising that this method corresponds closely with the theories of the western concepts of cinema art. For each Chinese character is a picture in itself which conveys an idea, a feeling and a romance of its own.

The story of THE ARCH is subject to many interpretations. Some see in it a conflict between the force of tradition and the force of natural human feelings; some see in it a story of the irony of fate; some see in it the psychological development of a character, and some see in it another love triangle. Whatever the interpretation may be, the story is about a woman tormented and the effect of her inner conflicts upon the other characters. That to me, as the author-director, is the interesting thing.

I see in Madam Tung the helplessness of all of us. She exemplifies the ludicrousness of mankind, the futility of morality, the futility of intelligence, the futility of knowledge and of ethics — the fact that we cannot escape anguish and torment.

For it is pointless to conclude what is right or best for her to do. Her suffering comes not as the consequence of the choice she makes, for one way or the other one lives on. The ludicrousness is that we are forever forced to choose between insidious choices, significant to us because of the inherent weakness of human nature: the vulnerability of our feelings, the limitedness of our wisdom, and our inability to transcend our experiences — our lack of the cosmic sense.

Every character in THE ARCH has good intentions, and is without a pronounced tragic flaw. But the story does not turn out to be a happy one. And that is our lot. So what is there to offer as a comfort but tolerance of each other's weaknesses and compassion for each other's pain.

For a first directing project, THE ARCH is extremely complicated material. But because of its psychological nature, it offers a great deal of freedom for cinematic expressions and challenges creative use of the medium. I attempted to present this dramatic story in a simple detached manner, hoping only to show how similar are people, their needs, their feelings, and the predicaments they face, everywhere in the world. And how time will never change this.



## PRODUCTION NOTES:

"THE ARCH" is a first experiment in many ways: it is the first feature film for the backer, the producer, writer-director, the editors and the first major dramatic role for most of the principal actors taking part in the film.

The production proceeded on insisting on changes whenever local practices and traditional habits of film making proved unsuitable for our purpose. From the method of script-breakdown to set constructions, lighting, wardrobe, make up and to the use of dialogues, actors' movements; everything adhered uncompromisingly to our concept.

No time and effort have been spared to make up for the lack of experience. The feature took 18 months to complete and a total of no less than 8,000 working hours for each of the responsible workers behind it.

Although a humble first attempt, we have gathered some well known talents in the field to join force with us in its making:

Subrata Mitra, the internationally renowned Indian Camera-man, who has shot most of Satyajit Ray's films came specially to Hong Kong to work as Director of Photography for "THE ARCH" — his first out-of-India picture.

The breathtakingly beautiful exterior footage is the work of Tai Wan's many times Golden Horse Award winning cameraman, Professor Chi H'u Che.

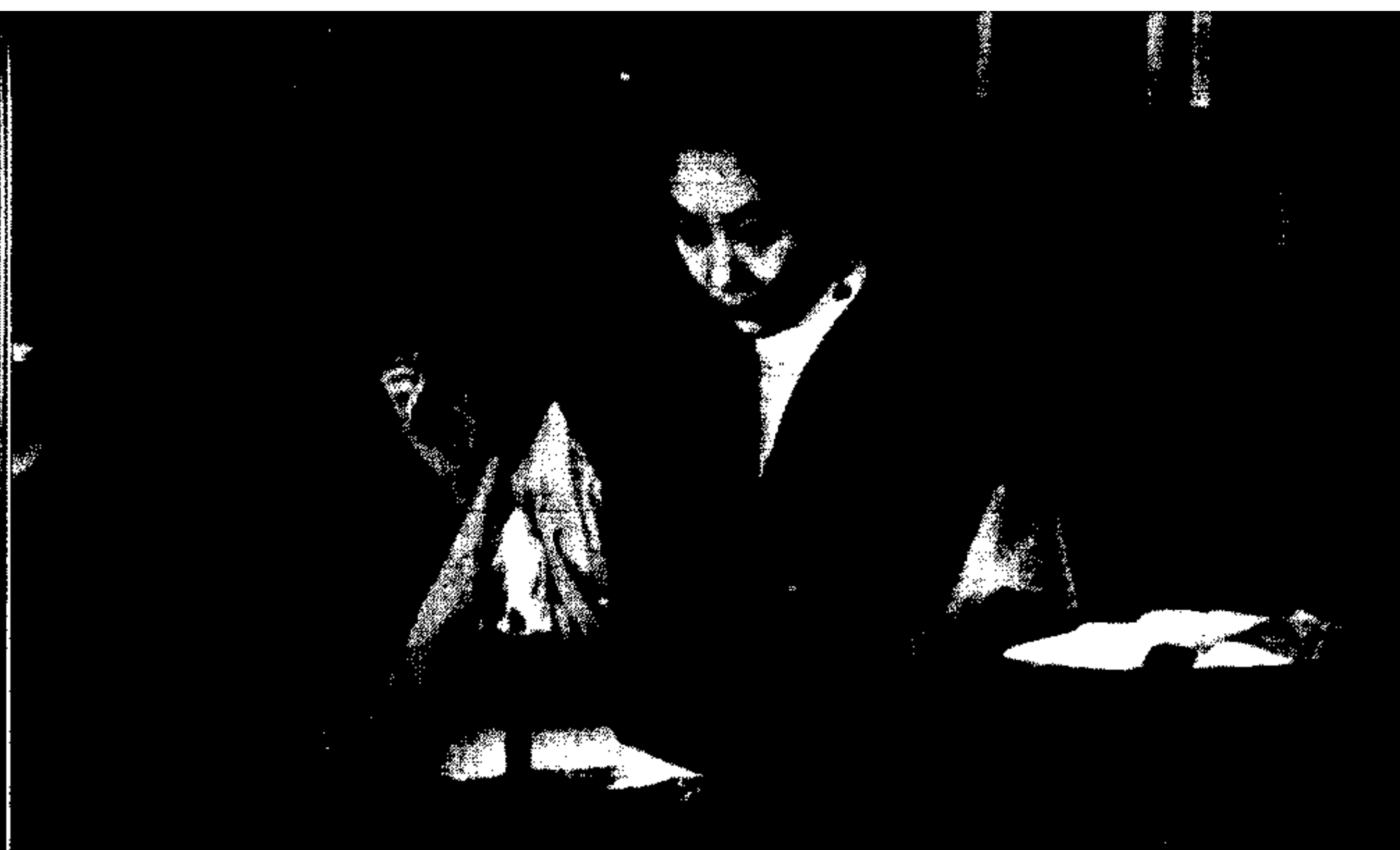
From Hollywood, we have a sound effect vetran, Del Harris. Among the numerous pictures he had contributed his talent are: "LAURA", "THE ROBE", "LILIES OF THE FIELD" and "THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE" for which he was nominated for an Academy Award.

The heroine, Lisa Lu, who plays the part of Madam Tung, also came specially from Hollywood to make her first Chinese film. Miss Lu was born in Peking. She received her dramatic training at the Pasadena Playhouse. Her first motion picture is "MOUNTAIN ROAD" in which she stars opposite James Steward.

China's foremost musician, Lui Tsun Yuan, the "pipa virtuoso", composed the film score. Music was particularly chosen using only the classical pipa and chin. Mr. Lui explored fastidiously the nature of these two delicate ancient instruments, accentuated their mood and exquisite quality. His sensitive performance complemented the visual images so brilliantly that the film's delicate subtleties become at once communicable.

The making of "THE ARCH" has not been easy, and how much we have accomplished in what we set out to do can be answered only by its audience. Our hope is that it would appear on the international scene of cinema as an intrinsic Chinese film authentically told with the universal language of sight and sound and humanity.





## COMMENTS

### Edward Albee

"THE ARCH is one of those rare films which rekindle my hope that cinema is capable of being an art form."

### Bosley Crowther

"In these days when commercial films are abounding with shock assaults on the sensibilities, it is soothing and sensuously rewarding to come upon a serene yet moving work."

### Francois Houang

Professor of Comparative Philosophy, University of (Paris. author of "Ame Chioise et Christianisme", "Le Boudhisme de l'Inde a la Chine"; also known for his French translation of Lao Tse's Works.)

"In this truly Chinese film, where all is discrete and measured, Shu Shuen has succeeded by means of gestures and silence in revealing an extremely intense personal drama. Her arch represents the the death of the soul, a kind of moral suicide."

### Hsu Yu

(Novelist, poet, dramatist; leading figure in contemporary Chinese literature)

"Poetic sense is one of the characteristics of most of the successful works of art. "The Arch" is a film that enriches such sense of Chinese classics. It has a unique tempo and is laden with suggestions of passion. After seeing the film I feel as if I had read an old Chinese classical poem of intimate murmurs from the inner chambers."

### Albert Johnson

"THE ARCH is reminiscent of a classical story in the Ibsen or Jamesian mode .... The visual aspects are delicately beautiful and the acting is profoundly moving and romantic. There is an indescribable haunting quality about this film — the sort that lingers in the mind when one has seen something rare, exotic and new."

### Fritz Lang

"THE ARCH by Shu Shuen is one of the most charming films I have ever seen. It is a kind of morality play executed in the spirit of Old China. Its serene mood of majestic tranquility gives us a remarkable insight into a strange ancient world. It's pictures of breathtaking beauty and the action of its leading lady is simply superb. I am eagerly looking forward to Miss Shu Shuen's next film."

### Henry Miller

".....I am also very curious, I must confess, to observe the reaction of Westerners to this film. They need this kind of medicine, if I may put it that way, more than anything. They need the poetry, the fantasy, the quietude, the blissful stillness and the simple human touch with which this film is imbued ....."



### Anais Nin

"I was so deeply moved by THE ARCH, aesthetically and humanely. Shu Shuen has achieved a film of poetic beauty, and in this particular era of explicit and vulgarized sensuality this treatment of contained passion is more powerful, reaches an intensity quite rare in films .... I admire a woman so young to have completed such a refined and enduring classique."

### Karel Reisz

"Miss Shu Shuen reaches straight out for an enormous theme in her first work. In THE ARCH she gives us a film of great beauty and maturity, an astonishing debut."

### Josef von Sternberg

"A film with many magnificent scenes. Interesting direction .... A promising talent."



## **CRITICS:**

### **LE MONDE (Jean de Baroncelli)**

Suddenly we are confronted by a masterpiece : THE ARCH, directed by Shu Shuen, is the most delicate and refined film ever made .... Shu Shuen's film is bound to remind us of "La Princesse de Cleves". The stylistic elegance is common to both works .... This is one of the noblest, freshest and most serene of recent films, thanks to its technical maturity, the intense poetry of the shots, and Lisa Lu's interpretation of the widow.

### **L' EXPRESS (Claude Veillot)**

THE ARCH is the first Chinese film to reach an international audience ... Shu Shuen shows us in her first feature film that the ancient Chinese civilization is rich in cinematographic potential .... THE ARCH is a film of exceptional beauty for its ethical aspect as much as for its aesthetic impact.. It is a beautiful, accomplished, and highly intelligent work of art.

### **SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Thomas Albright)**

"Mature artistry," "stunning achievement," "exquisitely beautiful."

### **LE FIGARO (Louis Chauvet)**

With exceptional charm and delicacy Shu Shuen describes the conflict between honour and passion of a heroine who, for once, really deserves that title .... The film is a model of subtle art .... directed with uncompromising constraint and charged with poetry: stately gestures, calm transitions, meaningful lack of action, value of the silences. Confronted by such a degree of simplicity, we are not the spectators of a tragedy, we are its confidants.

### **COMBAT (Henry Chapier)**

.... excellent cinema, without a note of pretention or affectation.

### **LE FIGARO LITTERAIRE (Claude Mauriac)**

The Story is in fact timeless .... Admirable in its simplicity and written with utmost clarity .... It is in creating the subtle, cyclical progression of action and atmosphere that Shu Shuen reveals her original talent.

### **FRANCE-SOIR (Robert Chazal)**

From Hong Kong comes a poem of images and sound, an exceptionally pure work of art which is a landmark of cinematographic beauty.

### **PARIS MATCH (Michel Simon)**

THE ARCH is a film of profound beauty. There is secret singing in the poetry of the images. Shu Shuen gives us an hour and a half of happiness and shows us the splendour of authentic emotions.

## **LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR**

(Jean-Louis Bory)

THE ARCH reminds us of the aesthetic truism that you say more when you say less. The time of understatement has returned. Watching THE ARCH we are liable to faint, not because of its excess, but like our grand fathers when they saw a naked ankle.... The charm of this film holds us spell-bound, Shu Shuen's images are gripping and the traditional music is often heart-rending.

A "Princesse de Cleves" of the Ming epoch. The art of litotes taken to the extreme of refinement.

(Michel Mardore)

The first astonishing feature by Shu Shuen .... THE ARCH can be compared to the best of Japanese films .... Shu Shuen intuitively rediscovers the aristocratic dignity of her ancestors. A charming and refined work without a note of vulgarity. Remarkable purity of design. In all, a very rare pleasure. This film is a sequel of wonderful engravings, tense with desire and suppressed violence. If classicism still means something, Shu Shuen, despite her youth, is a classical director. The graceful gestures with which the widow sweeps the courtyard are enough to evoke the whole civilization of 17th century China. Very beautiful.

## **L' HUMANITE (Francois Maurin)**

The work of a brilliant young director with a definite gift for the medium and a delicate touch.

One of the most touching films we shall see for a long time. It is also an extraordinarily mature work. The stylistic beauty and maturity of the film is equally astonishing. The young director, Shu Shuen, may sometimes remind us of Mizoguchi, but a distinctively personal note pervades the film and the scenario itself is a first rate piece of work. This is a film you must absolutely see.

## **SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER (Stanley Eichelbaum)**

I was flabbergasted by the individuality and haunting poetic delicacy of "THE ARCH" .... It's like no other Chinese movies that I've ever seen .... A brilliant debut .... Shu Shuen freely adapted the 17th century tale into sophisticated modern psychological terms .... It is the same conflict that dominated the plays of Racine. But Shu Shuen treats it with a Chekhovian feeling for calm, unhurried and penetrating character analysis .... Pictorially, her film is dazzling .... The acting is superbly compelling.

## **PARISCOPE**

Excellent psychological study of the characters. The director's sensibility make this film a masterpiece which reminds us of Chekov's short stories.

## **LE CANARD ENCHANE (Michel Duran)**

It is a subtle, delicate and extraordinarily unassuming work of art. THE ARCH is a film for those who still have enough tenderness in them to want to step out of our own mad world, at least for 1½ hours.



## **INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE**

(Thomas-Quinn Curtiss)

Narrative, acting, photography and composition are ever in perfect harmony in this very beautiful and singularly moving love story woven into a cinematic tapestry of lovely delicacy by Miss Shu Shuen's unusual art. You will find here a subtle sensitivity and a haunting lyric tone that are uncommon on the screen.

## **LES LETTRES FRANCAISES (Marcel Martin)**

A film that leads us directly to the heart of Oriental mythology. A glance or gesture reveal a symbolic universe, and the camera touches everything with controlled sensuality. The main drama and the classical aspect of the treatment often remind us of Corneille and Racine.



## **LA CROX (Jean Rochereau)**

I am already prepared to reach a verdict on the films of 1969, convinced that one film alone will be considered exceptional. It can easily be compared to "La Princesse de Cleves", but there is also much in it that reminds us of "The Book of Proverbs" and "Ecclesiastes" .... THE ARCH is indeed a classical tragedy. It is in the delicate and tactful evocation of sensuality: the very acme of passion is revealed by an allusive hint. When two hands chance to touch Shu Shuen reveals a whole world of desire and passion. Only a civilization more refined than ours can express so much with such constraint.

## **FRANCE-NOUVELLE (Albert Cervoni)**

Without a note of vulgarity, Shu Shuen totally and successfully recreates the sensibility and pulse of a distant epoch. THE ARCH is a revelation thanks to its sensibility, its neo-realism and its director's discretion.

## **TELERAMA (Jean Collet)**

You should see THE ARCH as quickly as possible : it is an exceptional work of reserved beauty and great serenity, qualities which remind us of Mizoguchi and Satyajit Ray. It is a delicate, compassionate film, full of feminine intuition. Go and see THE ARCH: you will leave the cinema feeling spiritually refreshed.

## **L' HUMANITE DIMANCHE (Samuel Lachize)**

A film of astonishing limpidity which deals with genuine emotions. It is the work of a director who has understood that cinema is certainly the best way to express personal feelings. With all my heart I recommend it to you.

Film subtle, intelligent, exciting. A treat for the eye and a wealth of human truth.



## **CRITIC:**

### **LOS ANGELES TIMES (Kevin Thomas)**

An impressive Debut. Shu Shuen is adroit at revealing the painful conflict between emotions and appearances, at driving home the multi-level psychological, social and philosophical implications of her story in paradoxical fashion.

### **BOSTON AFTER DARK (Deac Rossell)**

"Each facial expression, each gesture important. There is a fine marriage of style and content .... Go and see this unique and evenly powerful film."

### **LOS ANGELES HERALD-EXAMINER (Michael Ross)**

"THE ARCH" seems the work of a painter and sculptor, as well as a dramatist.

It is a thoughtful, mature and honest film characterised by superb acting and sensitive direction. A serene, immaculate, honest and mature film that works in the difficult area where the emotional nuance resounds passionately. A magnificent performance by Lisa Lu.

### **HOLLYWOOD CITIZEN-NEWS (Charles Faber)**

Shu Shuen has produced, written and directed a flawless work of art, as exquisite as anything ever recorded on film. The chief reason is that the greatly gifted young woman has totally fulfilled her artistic intentions by keeping all the elements of the film (her first) in perfect scale.

Everything bears a completely honest relationship to everything else. This rare sense of proportion and fitness is astonishing.

Beautiful Lisa Lu possesses the elegant restraint which is the essence of Madam Tung, and conveys her emotions, including passion, with precise economical means that obtain overpowering results ....

"THE ARCH" would be a keystone in anyone's career, but for one as young as Shu Shuen it is an arch of triumph.

### **LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS**

(Richard Whitehall)

A work of pure limpid passion and beauty.

### **THE IMAGE (Doug Jones)**

Shu Shuen's film THE ARCH, is more than good- it ranks as one of the best foreign films I have ever seen. This first film shows every mark of an accomplished director, with the black-and-white composition adhering closely to the Eisensteinian aesthetic.