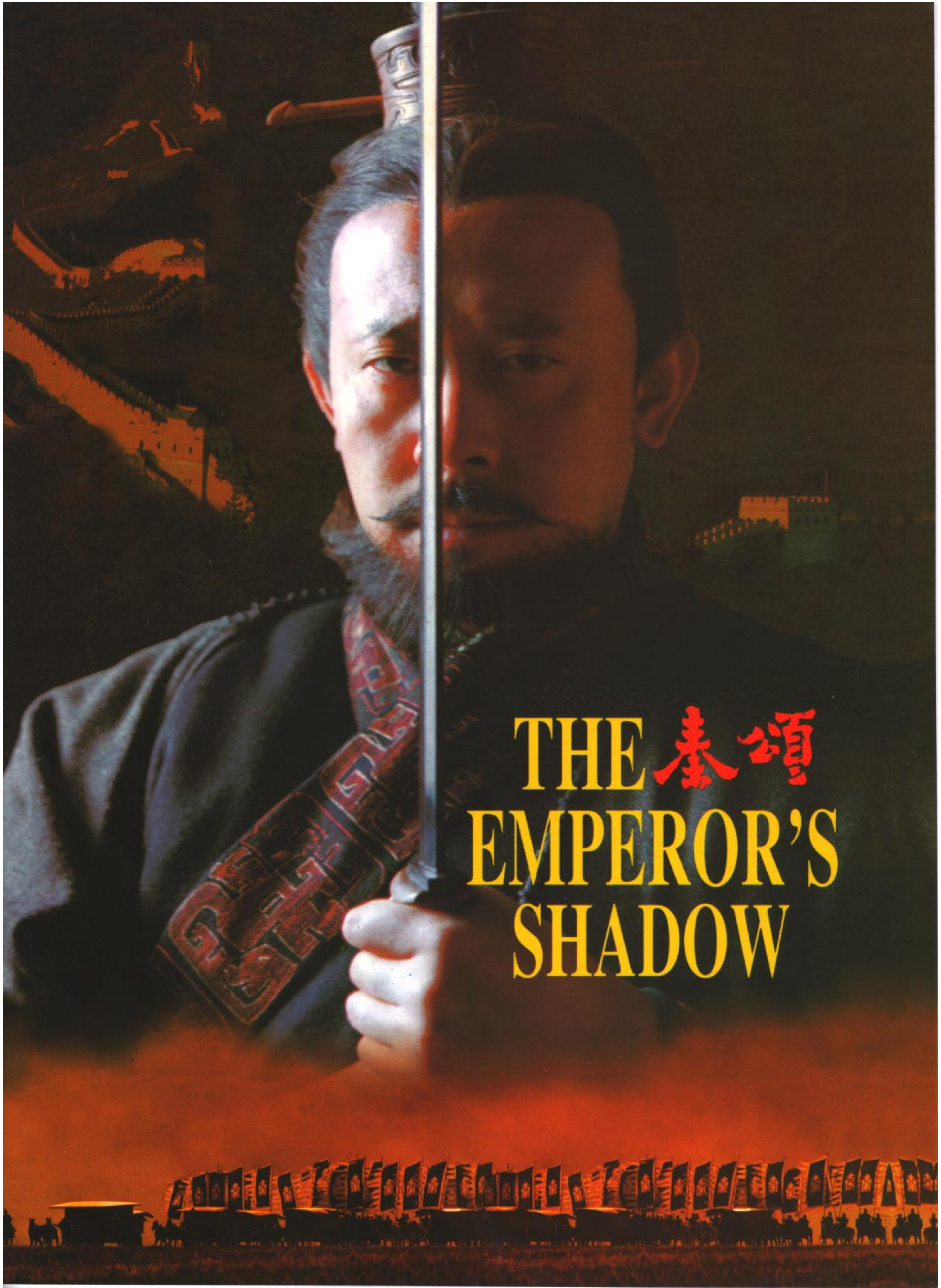


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THE 秦頌  
EMPEROR'S  
SHADOW





### Synopsis

Ying Zheng is China's first emperor. He is known today as Qin Shi Huangdi or the Yellow Emperor.

Gao Jianli is the Yellow Emperor's court composer.

Yueyang is the Yellow Emperor's daughter, and the emotions she provokes in both men link them together.

Gao Jianli's mother wet-nurses both Gao and Ying through their infancy. When they are teenagers, Gao Jianli's qin music helps Ying Zheng overcome his fear of death, and so they become firm and fast friends.

After many years of separation, Ying Zheng has grown up to become the King of Qin. Gao Jianli is a musician in the kingdom of Yan. When Qin conquers Yan, Gao Jianli becomes a prisoner in Ying Zheng's palace with a brand burnt into his forehead. His self-respect wounded, Gao asks Ying to let him die. But Ying does not agree, demanding that Gao live for him and compose an imperial anthem for the empire he is building.

Gao Jianli goes on hunger strike. When Ying Zheng has run out of ideas, his daughter Yueyang undertakes to save Gao's life. Her beauty and sincerity move Gao, temporarily removing his desire to die. He becomes her music teacher and they fall in love. When they make love, the crippled Yueyang miraculously recovers her ability to walk. Gao Jianli thinks Ying Zheng will kill him because of this. But Ying only punishes him and continues to demand that he compose the imperial anthem. In love with the princess, Gao hopes Ying Zheng will agree to let them be together. However, Ying has already betrothed her to his general's son as part of his overall political strategy.

A stone is found in the Yan prisoners' camp bearing the inscription "Ying Zheng will die and his empire collapse." When Ying Zheng cannot determine the culprit, he begins to kill the prisoners en masse. To save the prisoners, Gao Jianli agrees to compose the imperial anthem for Ying Zheng.

The time for Yueyang's marriage approaches. Gao Jianli cannot accept the reality that the woman he loves will be married off to someone else. He and Yueyang make love in Ying Zheng's ancestral temple. Ying Zheng is furious and punishes Gao terribly, damaging his eyesight.

Once the Qin has conquered the other six kingdoms, it is time for Yueyang to marry the general's son. Yueyang cannot forget her feelings for Gao Jianli and commits suicide in her own bridal chamber.

When Gao Jianli learns of Yueyang's death and that Ying Zheng has had all the Yan prisoners killed, he loses all hope for future and all interest in life.

At the ceremony to install Ying Zheng as emperor, Gao Jianli smashes his qin over Ying's head, and the relationship between the two former friends reaches crisis point...







SHADOW

素環

THE EMPEROR'S



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### **The Main Characters**

Ying Zheng, China's first emperor, also known as Qin Shi Huangdi or the Yellow Emperor. He first becomes attached to his childhood friend Gao Jianli's music when it helps him through a time of extreme terror. From then on he sees Gao as his shadow. When he grows up, he seeks to bind this shadow to him. When he loses all hope of controlling his shadow, Ying Zheng punishes him and destroys him, pitching himself into despair and loneliness in the process.

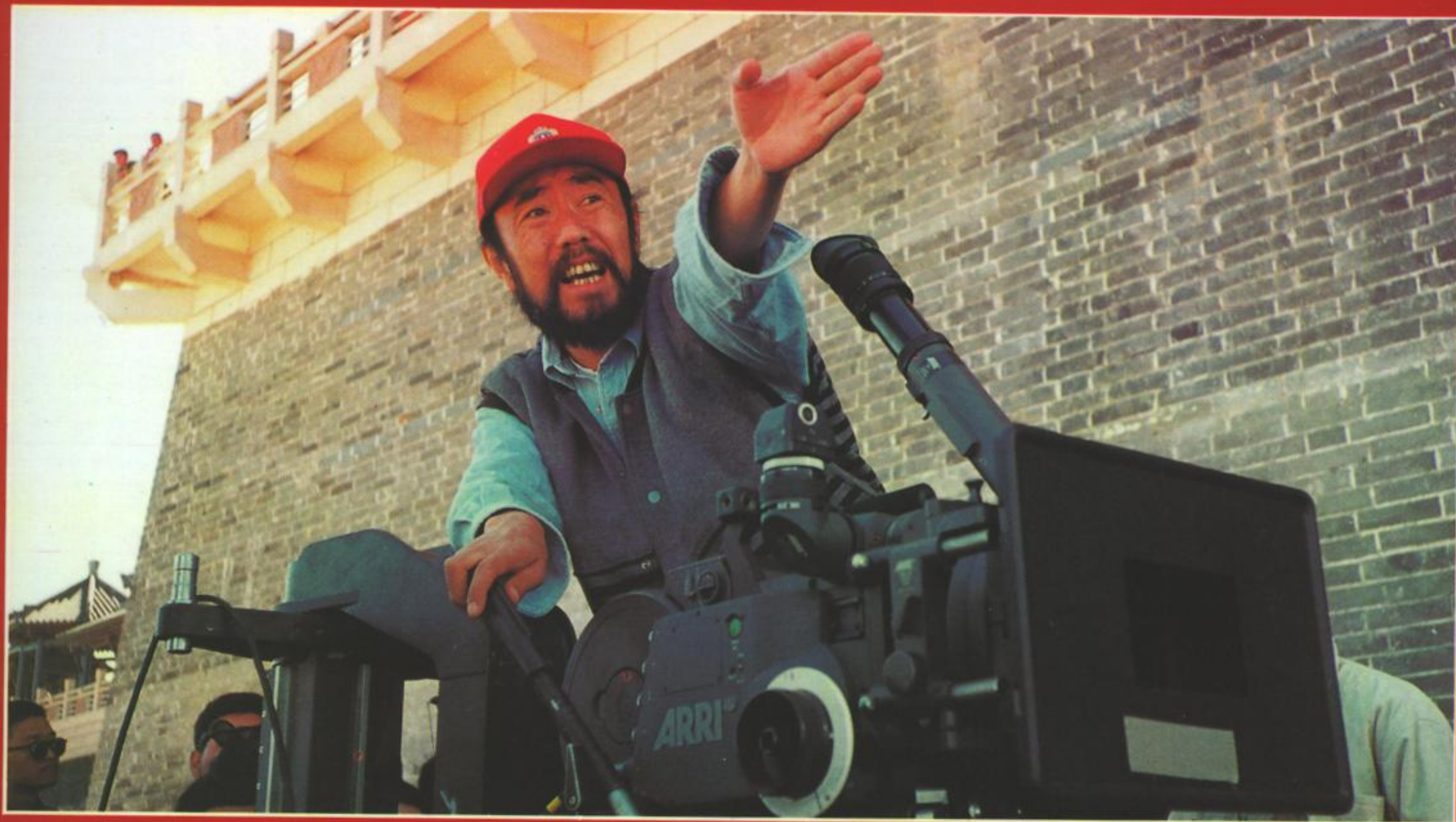
The musician Gao Jianli. Music is Gao Jianli's soul and his lifeblood. Branded on his forehead as a prisoner in Ying Zheng's palace, he wishes to die but his attempts to seek death all come to nothing. Then his desire for life is sparked again by the Princess Yueyang, and caught between bodily desires and his higher instincts, he eventually reaches the end of his life.

The Princess Yueyang. The princess sees love as the most important thing in life. Through love she is reborn, recovering the use of her legs, but love also leads her to her death.

In *The Emperor's Shadow*, the powerful relationships that develop between the emperor, the musician and the princess form the foundation for a universal story that transcends history and culture.







## Human Individuality and the Essence of Chinese Culture

— Zhou Xiaowen talks to Li Erwei about *The Emperor's Shadow*

In the cinema, characters come first. That means filming the texture of life and human individuality. That's why we decided to make history only the backdrop for this story. The main focus is on the characters and their relationships. *The Emperor's Shadow* is about the Qin Dynasty as we imagine it, but I have tried to give this historical period a human quality.

I have always been interested in bringing out the human individuality of historical figures. But I also hope we have managed to express the essence of Chinese culture in the historical atmosphere of the film. So, I've been working with both aims in mind.

I've often heard it said that a particular individual or family can function as a historical cross-section, standing in for something greater. But I'm more interested in the ordinary and everyday than in the great and glorious, so I've gone in the opposite direction. *The Emperor's Shadow* doesn't express history through an individual story, but rather it expresses an individual's character through historical atmosphere.

*The Emperor's Shadow* has a very plain, stripped down look, right down to the sets, costumes, props, cinematography and lighting. The sets are made of real brick, stone and wood. And the art director went to a whole lot of trouble to make the wood look like real wood, not like it was painted. Few films go to so much trouble, but we solved that problem well, and managed to make it have the feel and look of real wood. Then there are all the bronze wares. Bronze doesn't look like copper. It looks a bit like dark chocolate, and we've got that colour right, too. The costumes take black, white and grey as the dominants, although some other colours make occasional appearances. But even where there is some red, it's just a little bit red. The design of the film is completely controlled and harmonious.

The entire plot hinges on the lead characters. I think the plot is as important in films as it is in novels. And it's not about technique, or method, or strategy. In the end, it comes down to the director's instincts.

I think it's always better to get the audience involved with characters than events. In *The Emperor's Shadow*, Gao Jianli isn't an assassin at heart. He and Ying Zheng, the first emperor, were both nursed by the same woman. And the two of them went

through various trials and tribulations together when they were small. They are friends. So I don't think the interest of the film lies in whether or not Gao Jianli will assassinate Ying Zheng. Rather, it lies in how Ying Zheng came to have this friend, and in understanding their feelings and their personalities. Of course, these things are expressed through events, because the audience has to see how feelings manifest themselves and not just hear them spoken about. So, I believe that when the audience sees *The Emperor's Shadow*, they won't be hanging on the edges of their seat to see if Ying Zheng kills Gao Jianli or Gao Jianli kills Ying Zheng. That's just the plot, and I don't think the audience will be that concerned with it.

Instead, there are two main themes in *The Emperor's Shadow*. The major one is about the relationship between the two main male characters, Gao Jianli and Ying Zheng. The minor one concerns Gao Jianli and the Princess Yueyang's efforts to conquer each other in love. In both cases, both parties suffer.

In the case of Gao and Ying's friendship, it is the result of their own personalities. Ying Zheng wants to conquer Gao Jianli's spirit and make him write music that will conquer the people's hearts and minds. Gao Jianli resists at first, but then his love for Yueyang causes him to compromise. In the end, he loses all faith in Ying Zheng, but as the anthem he has forced Gao to compose is performed, Ying ascends the sacrificial altar to become China's first emperor, the Yellow Emperor. Gao Jianli dies on the Yellow Emperor's sacrificial altar, but Ying Zheng weeps tears of loneliness. From this we can see that in fact not just Gao but both men have come to a bad end.

The music in *The Emperor's Shadow* is quite different from the music in other Chinese films. That is because the Bronze Age was a very uninhibited and dynamic era. There wasn't a lot of gentility, modesty and courtesy around then! It was a time when people were liberated, strong and direct, like the bronze wares themselves, or like an untamed yell!

There are three main themes in the music. The first is a children's song which later becomes the basis for the imperial anthem itself. The second is the gentle, feminine Ode to Yueyang. And the third element is derived from the scene on the execution



ground when Gao Jianli and Ying Zheng are adolescents. This last element is more rhythmic than melodious.

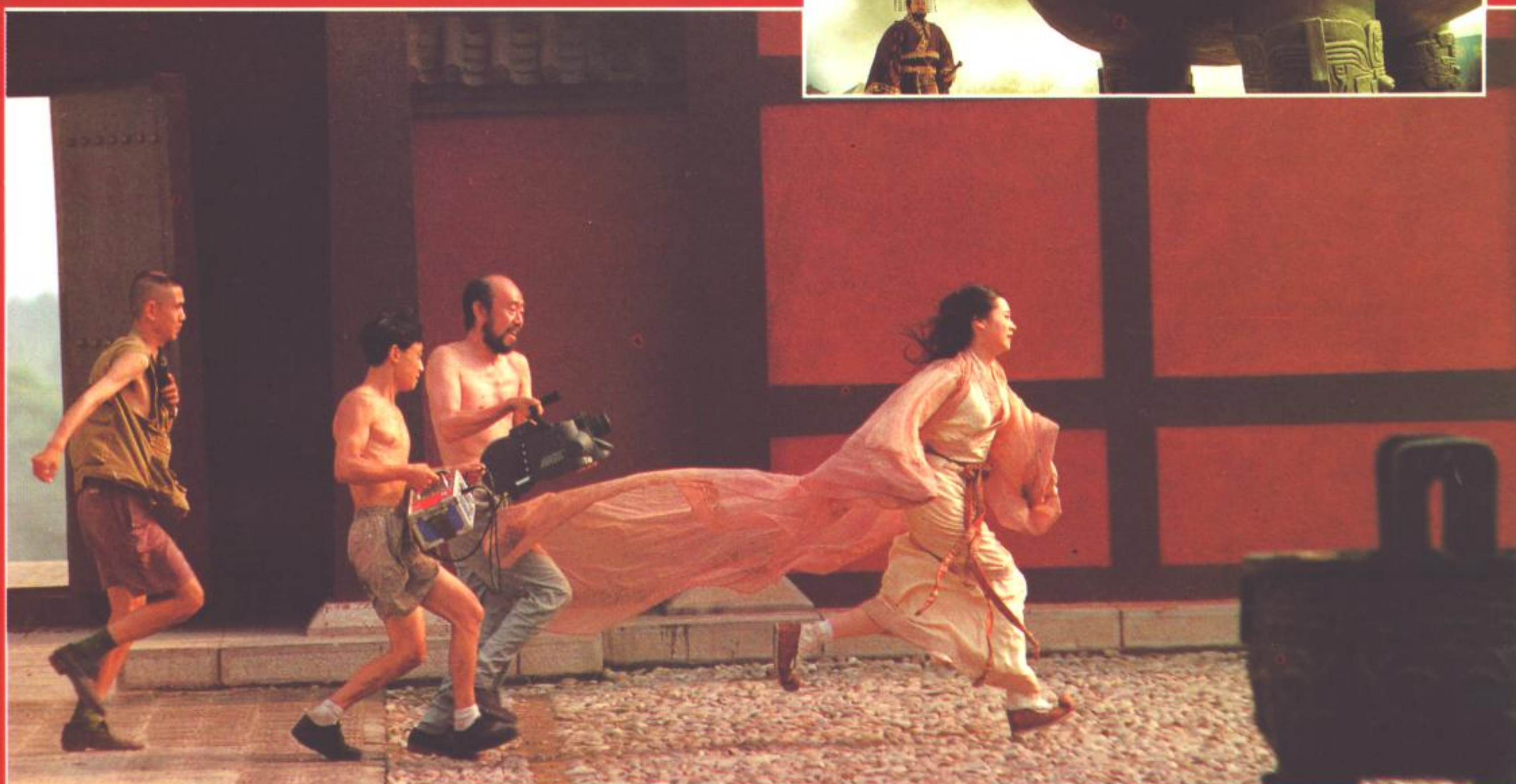
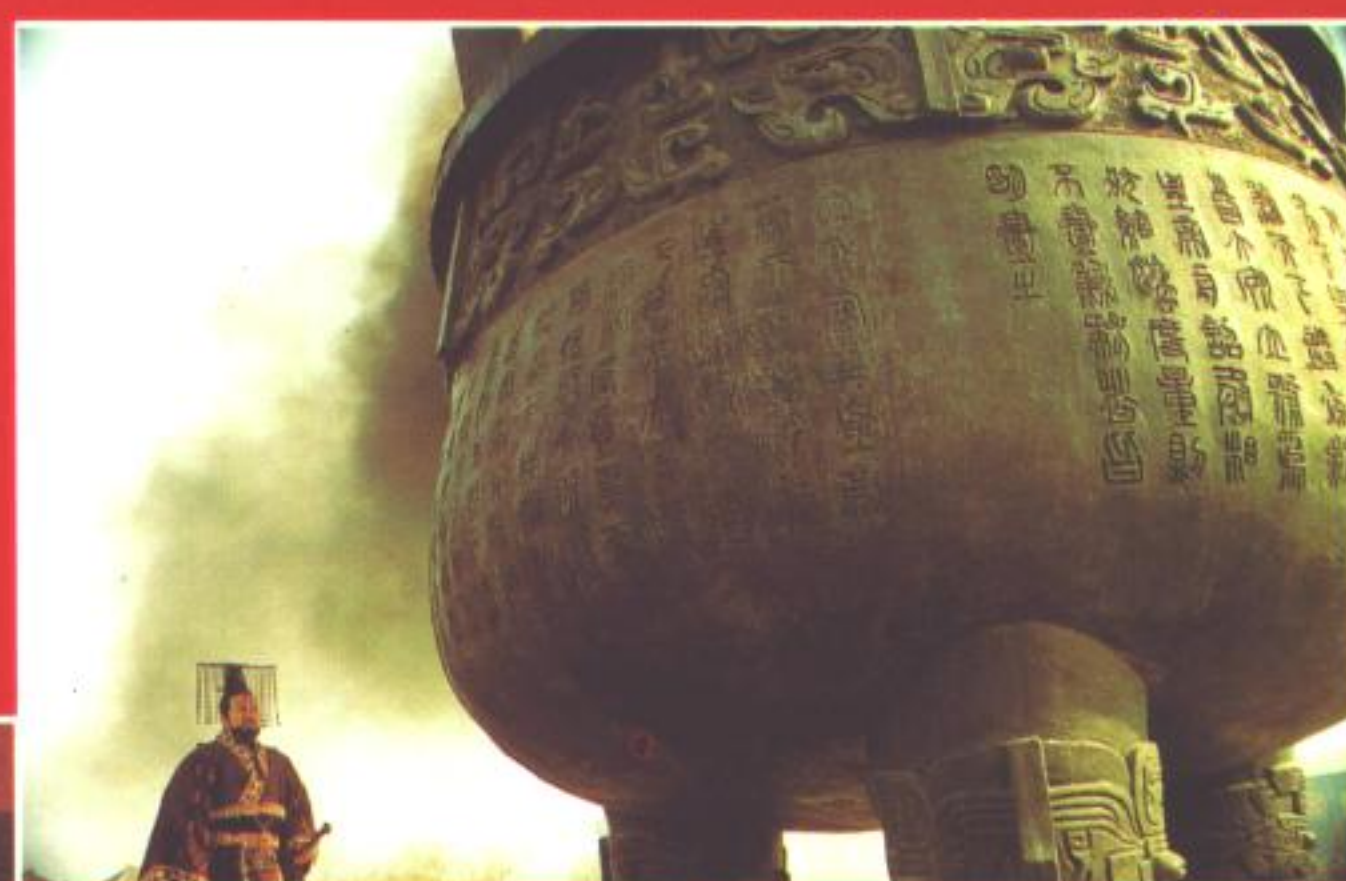
The music has a number of different roles to play in *The Emperor's Shadow*. In most films it's just there as background, but in this case it structures the whole plot. Although they say Gao Jianli is a musical genius in the film, I'd prefer to pay that compliment to our composer, Zhao Jiping. He says he has sought to place emphasis less on atmosphere and more on underlining individual feelings. So, for example, when the chorus chants the imperial anthem at the end of the film it expresses the excitement the character cannot express directly.

I feel the Qin Dynasty, during which *The Emperor's Shadow* takes place, must have been a very macho, tough era, and that had to be expressed first in the design of the film, in the objects, costumes and settings that were going to appear in the film. Once we had that sorted out, then there was the question of the cinematography. To make the lighting bold and tough, we've avoided soft light or fine lines of light. The contrast levels are always high when we see the emperor's face. I felt that his character is clearly defined, and so his lighting should be, too. That's basically how we lit the characters.

As for the palace interiors, we placed an emphasis on the fire and the smoke. This is because the palaces back then only had one window or doorway through which the light would come in. This also meant that the natural light would stream in, giving a very strong feel where it was visible. But in places the sunlight wouldn't have reached, we left them dark. In fact, I demanded that every shot have some totally black spots in it. This was partly to make the cinematography look like a monochrome pen and ink sketch, and partly as a means of controlling the colour. Apart from the art design itself, cinematography also plays an important part in controlling the colour and bringing out the contrast between firelight and sunlight.

*The Emperor's Shadow* was a difficult film to shoot. Nothing exists from that time now. We had to create every single prop and costume ourselves down to the hair ornaments. We checked out the costumes and props that had been used in some other productions. But we couldn't use them because they were all too fancy. Red, green and gold, all shiny; if we'd used them the film would have looked awful! In the end, we discovered that the more simple and straightforward we kept things, the more expensive they looked, but that the more fancy and fussy we made them, the cheaper they looked.

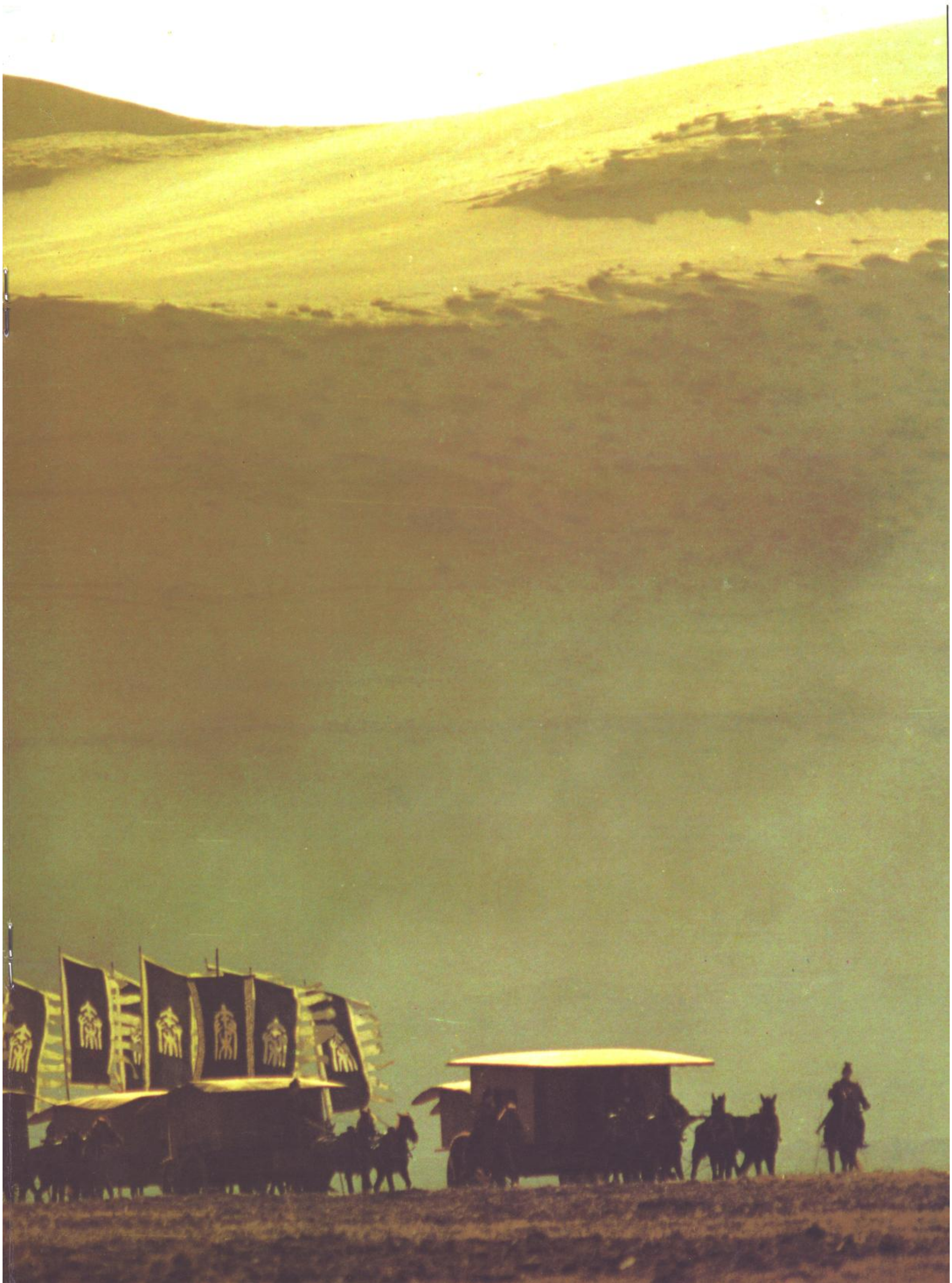
The script for *The Emperor's Shadow* was reworked and refined for a total of five years. Lu Wei is a wonderfully talented screenwriter. Before I began the shoot, I gathered all the most important members of the production team and we worked over the script one last time, so that it had reached a very high level before shooting began.



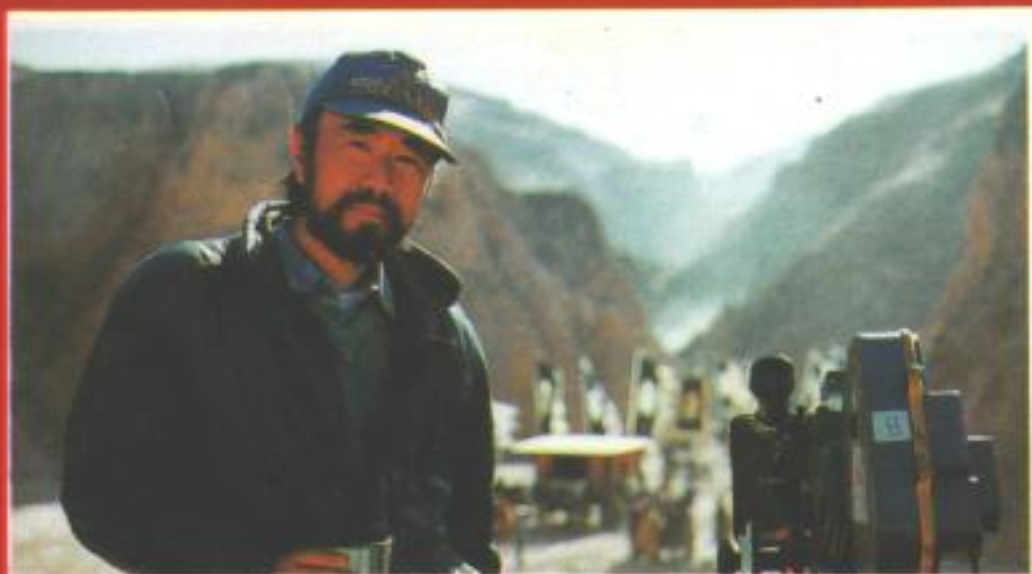












### Director — Zhou Xiaowen

One of China's leading film directors, Zhou Xiaowen was born in Beijing in 1954. He graduated from the Cinematography Department of Beijing Film Academy in 1975 and now works as a director for Xi'an Film Studio.

Filmography:

In Their Prime (1986)

The Last Frenzy (1987, Special Prize, Golden Rooster Awards).

Obsession (1988, Best Editing Award and 4 nominations for other prizes at the Golden Rooster Awards, and an Honorary Award at the Hawaii International Film Festival.

Black Mountain Road (1990)

Youth Has No Regrets (1991, Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, Shanghai University Students Film Festival)

Reckless Youth (1992)

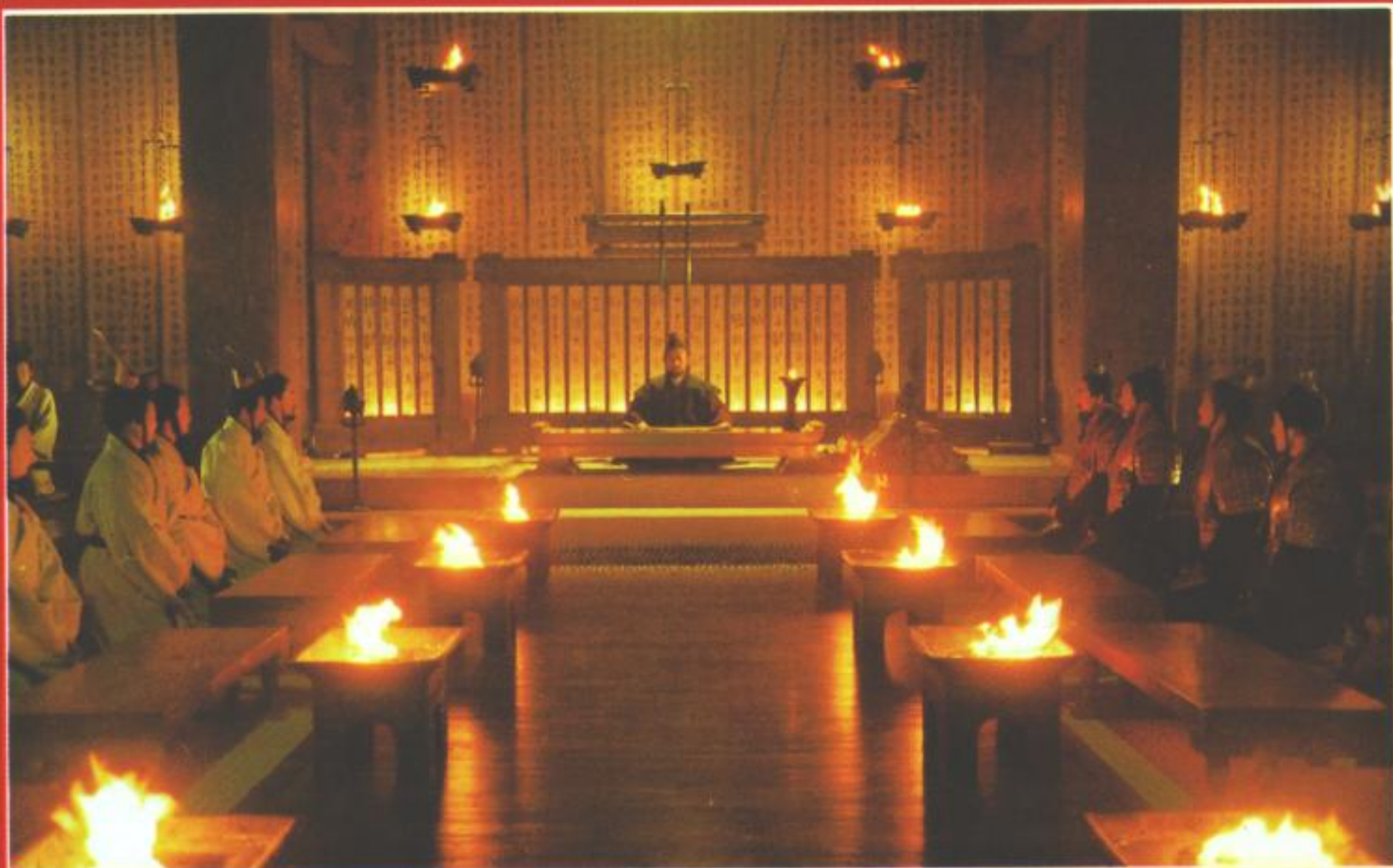
Lie Detector (1993)

Ermo (1994, Jury Prize, Youth Jury Gold Award, FIPRESCI Prize, Christian Critics Award, and four other nominations, Locarno International Film Festival; First Place, Best Director, Best Actress Awards, Shanghai Film Critics "Ten Best Films of 1994" Awards; Best Co-Production, Best Technique, Best Actress, China Ornamental Column Film Awards; First Recommendation for a Mainland Chinese Film, Taipei Film Awards; Best Actress, Golden Rooster Awards; Special Recommendation, Mexico International Film Festival; and screened at more than ten other international film festivals.

As for the actors Jiang Wen and Ge You, their performances had nothing to do with acting. They actually became Ying Zheng and Gao Jianli! Personally, I feel that acting is something beginners do. When it comes to performers like Jiang Wen and Ge You, I couldn't possibly hope to make them fascinating for audiences through acting techniques. Of course, it may be necessary to work out certain movements or the speed at which certain lines should be delivered. But we never spoke about acting per se. I even feel that saying someone acted well is almost an insult! As for Xu Qing, she really reached new heights in *The Emperor's Shadow*. This is certainly her most successful role so far.

Jimmy Tan, the main investor and chief producer, deeply loves the cinema. He's a very broad-minded man who understands and respects artists. It's very hard to find someone like him to work with in China these days. He is the main reason we have been able to complete *The Emperor's Shadow* so smoothly, and without him things could not have gone so well.

I aim to move forward with every film I make, and so *The Emperor's Song* should be my best film so far. I believe the audience will enjoy this film.





# 秦頌

Background to the Production

THE EMPEROR'S SHADOW



Director Zhou Xiaowen has dreamt of making *The Emperor's Shadow* for six years. Back then, his good friend the famous author Lu Wei wrote a film script for him. While he was working on other films, Zhou worked with Lu to revise the script several times to produce a story set in the Qin Dynasty and about the Yellow Emperor. However, no one was willing to put up the money for a film requiring such a big budget. And so, for a long time, it remained just a dream.

In 1994, Zhou Xiaowen began to work together with Ocean Films of Hong Kong. *Ermo*, which he had just finished, became the first film Ocean handled. He also gave them the script that he had long dreamt of filming, and which is now known as *The Emperor's Shadow*, to consider. With high hopes for the Chinese cinema, Ocean Films not only distributed the high quality films *Ermo* and *Blush*, but also took an interest in *The Emperor's Shadow*.

Jimmy Tan, the President of Ocean Films, decided to make *The Emperor's Shadow* as a quality film up to international standards and with a budget rarely seen before in China. With this film Ocean Films hopes to stimulate the audience's interest in Chinese culture and history of 2,000 years ago. There are powerful battle scenes, atmospheric palaces, a towering sacrificial altar, stirring chants and moving qin music, as well as the friendship between two men and the passion between a man and a woman. The film also has stunning cinematography and talented acting. Once it is completed according to Ocean Films and Zhou Xiaowen's vision, it will not only be a Chinese cinematic achievement, but a film for audiences everywhere.

THE 秦頌  
EMPEROR'S  
SHADOW



# 秦頌

## THE EMPEROR'S SHADOW

### The Cast and Crew Have Their Say

#### Chief Producer—Jimmy Tan

I like epic, moving stories full of historical atmosphere, and that's exactly what *The Emperor's Shadow* is. It's really stirring and exciting! I think all good films depend upon talent, so I must thank the director, Zhou Xiaowen, and everyone else involved for all their hard work.

I love the cinema very much, and my greatest hope has long been to produce a truly excellent Chinese film that is also up to the highest international standards. *The Emperor's Shadow* is that film, and I am very proud to have made this film for China.

#### The Crew

##### Chief Producer — Jimmy Tan

Jimmy Tan is well-known as an independent film producer in China and the President of Ocean Films. He was also the chief producer of Zhou Xiaowen's *Ermo* and Li Shaohong's *Blush*.

##### Screenwriter — Lu Wei

Lu Wei is one of China's outstanding film screenwriters. His previous credits have included Teng Wenji's *Ballad of the Yellow River*, Chen Kaige's *Farewell to My Concubine*, and Zhang Yimou's *To Live*.

#### Cinematographer—Lu Gengxin

The main focus of this film is China's first emperor, but the director's plan has been not to focus on history but on the individual. With history as an atmospheric setting, the film examines the personalities, psychologies, fates and relationships of the three main characters Gao Jianli, Ying Zheng and Princess Yueyang. From amidst all this, it brings out the tragedy of the human condition, namely loneliness.

In representing the first emperor, of course we could not stray too far from history. The Warring States period in which the film is set is an heroic period and the people then were fierce, rough and tenacious. Their relationships were governed by the sword. Therefore, I liken the cinematography in *The Emperor's Shadow* to rough earthenware rather than highly refined porcelain.

The basic colour requirements for the film were for rich but restrained tones, with black and white as the dominants. The large musical instruments and ancient wares are major features of the compositions. With the light, we tried to be direct and strong.

#### Cinematographer—Lu Gengxin

Attached to Xi'an Film Studio, Lu has worked before with Zhou Xiaowen on *Lie Detector* and *Ermo*.

#### Art Director—Cao Jiuping

*The Emperor's Shadow* seeks to express the emotions of human relationships. Every item of clothing, every hairstyle, every piece of furniture, every interior, every line of dialogue and every movement must seem at once unfamiliar yet believable. Together, they must move the audience to laughter, tears and sighs.







#### **Art Director — Cao Jiuping**

Cao Jiuping has been the art director on every one of Zhang Yimou's films, including *Red Sorghum*, *Judou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *To Live*, and *Shanghai Triad*. He is one of China's most famous art directors today. He has also worked before with Zhou Xiaowen on *Black Mountain Road*.

#### **Costume Designer — Tong Huamiao**

Images of people from 2,000 years ago exist on painted trunks, on funerary artefacts that have been unearthed, in the films and television series that other people have made before us, and of course, in the audience's minds. The costumes in *The Emperor's Shadow* are neither based on historical research nor on archaeological artefacts, and especially not on what we found in other people's films. Instead, they were born here, here in our imaginations.

#### **Costumes Tong Huamiao**

An art director, and also a costumes designer at the Xi'an Film Studio. Tong's previous credits include Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *To Live* and *Shanghai Triad*.

#### **Sound Recordist — Hong Yi**

Strong sounds; rough and direct dialogue; forceful and powerful music; the simple yet savage sound of the ancient qin instrument; and primitive, unadorned and powerful chanting—all these sounds combine in *The Emperor's Shadow* to bring the essence and atmosphere of the people of the Qin Dynasty to life.

#### **Sound Recordist — Hong Yi**

Attached to Xi'an Film Studio, Hong Yi's previous credits include He Ping's *Swordsman of Double Flag Town*. He has worked before with Zhou Xiaowen on *Youth Has No Regrets* and *Ermo*.

#### **Composer — Zhao Jiping**

The music in *The Emperor's Shadow* is different from other films. It isn't just there for an atmospheric effect, but is part of the story, and takes on an important role in expressing personality and pushing the plot along. The dense, ancient, simple, moving and fierce music of the qin gives the film a special flavour all its own.

#### **Composer — Zhao Jiping**

Outstanding film composer Zhao Jiping's previous credits include Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth*, Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum*, *Judou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *To Live*, and *Shanghai Triad*, and Zhou Xiaowen's *Black Mountain Road*.

#### **Cast**

#### **Jiang Wen, as the first emperor, Ying Zheng**

My first screen role ever was as China's last emperor. Now, in *The Emperor's Shadow*, I'm appearing as China's first emperor.

It occurred to me that everyone in China has an image of the Yellow Emperor already. I wondered if I could take on the role. In what ways was I different from him? Could I match up to other people's expectations or even go beyond them?

I did a lot of research on the first emperor, and came to understand him a lot better. During the shoot, I tried my best to enrich the role relying on my own experiences.

Acting opposite Ge You in this film, I found we

worked together very well. Xu Qing also brought the role of Princess Yueyang to life. Actually, I should add that Princess Yueyang is the soul of this film.

#### **Jiang Wen, as the first emperor, Ying Zheng**

One of China's major stars, Jiang Wen was born in Tangshan in Hebei Province in 1963. He graduated from the Acting Department of the Central Drama Academy in 1984 and is currently attached to the China Youth Art Theatre.

He has taken the lead role in *The Last Empress*, *Hibiscus Town* (Best Actor Award, 100 Flowers Awards), *Red Sorghum*, *Chuntao* (Best Actor Award, 100 Flowers Awards), and *Imperial Eunuch Li Lianying*.

In 1994, he wrote and directed his first film, *In the Heat of the Sun* (Best Actor, Venice International Film Festival, Singapore International Film Festival).

#### **Ge You, as the musician Gao Jianli**

I'm still not completely sure to this day what sort of a person Gao Jianli is. But there are certainly many things about him that attract me. However, there were several things that made this character difficult to act. Learning the qin alone took quite a lot of effort!

#### **Ge You, as the musician Gao Jianli**

Also one of China's major stars, Ge You was born in Beijing in 1957. When he was 18 years old, he was sent down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. Four years later, he returned to Beijing and won a place in the Central Drama Troupe as an actor. Since then he has acted in almost 100 films and television series, winning the Best Actor award in both China's Golden Rooster and 100 Flowers Awards.

Ge You became the first Asian actor to win Best Actor at Cannes in 1993 for his work in Zhang Yimou's *To Live*.

His other films have included Teng Wenji's *Ballad of the Yellow River*, and Chen Kaige's *Farewell to My Concubine*.

#### **Xu Qing, as the Princess Yueyang**

Princess Yueyang in *The Emperor's Shadow* is the richest role I have taken on so far, and she is also the role that has excited me the most. I have never come across a character who could move me as much as Princess Yueyang does before.

The things that attract me most about her include her ardent pursuit of love as a girl and her strong personality, as well as her passionate love for Gao Jianli and the cruel end she comes to.

Many people have asked me whether I did not feel under a lot of pressure acting with Jiang Wen and Ge You, who are two of China's biggest stars. I did not. They are excellent actors, but they are also very friendly and very relaxed. The three of us worked together very well indeed.

#### **Xu Qing, as the Princess Yueyang**

Xu Qing is one of China's most popular film and television actors. She graduated from the Acting Department of Beijing Film Academy in 1992 and currently attached to Beijing Film Studio as an actor. She made her name with the lead role in Chen Kaige's *Life on a String* (1990).

The Cast and Crew Have Their Say





THE 泰頌  
EMPEROR'S  
SHADOW





A wide-screen color feature film

# 秦頌

## THE EMPEROR'S SHADOW

Presented by

Chief Producer  
Producers

Directed by  
Script  
Cinematography  
Art Direction

Music  
Sound  
Editor  
Costumes  
1st Assistant Director  
Executive Producers

Line Producers

Starring

Also starring

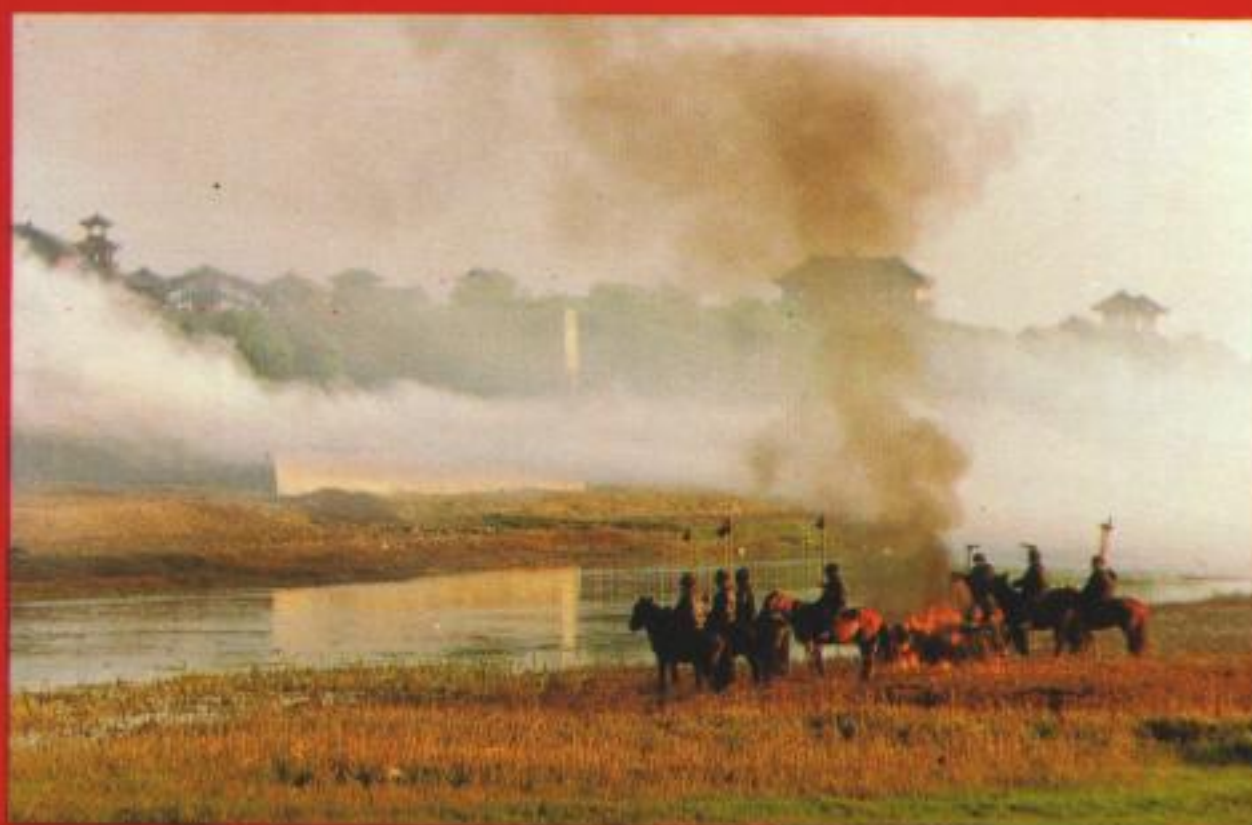
Jimmy Tan  
Chen Kunming  
Zhang Pimin  
Jimmy Tan  
Tong Gang  
Hu Yuesheng  
Cai Huansong  
Zhou Xiaowen  
Lu Wei  
Lu Gengxin  
Cao Jiuping  
Zhang Daqian  
Dou Guoxiang  
Zhao Jiping  
Hong Yi  
Zhong Furong  
Tong Huamiao  
Liu Jing  
Ah Gui  
Chen Mila  
Gao Erchun  
Wang Dawei  
Li Erwei  
Jiang Wen, as Ying Zheng  
Ge You, as Gao Jianli  
Xu Qing, as Ying Yueyang  
Ge Zhijun  
Wang Qingxiang  
Di Guoqiang  
Wang Ning  
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Li Mengnan  
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