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Come Drink With Me [Da zui Xia]



Hong Kong, 1965, 93 min

Director King Hu [Hu Jinquan]

Producer Run Run Shaw

Screenwriters King Hu, Er Yang

Cinematographer Nishimoto Tadashi

Editor Jiang Xinglong

Music Zhou Lanping

Cast Yueh Hua, Cheng Pei-Pei, Chen Honglie, Li

Yunzhong, Yang Zhiqing, Feng Yi, Shen Lao,

Wang Chong, Han Yingjie, Yuan Xiaotian

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We see the bad guys first: the effete Jade-Faced Tiger (Chen Honglie in white) and other members of the Five Tiger Gang ambushing a convoy of prisoners in the countryside. They succeed in freeing two of his fellow "Tigers," and takes hostage the official in charge of the convoy. Next we see the hostaged man's sister Xiyan, known as Golden Swallow (Cheng Pei-Pei, disguised as a man), deliberately provoking the gang in a rural inn. And then we see the film's hero Fan Dabei, who calls himself Drunken Cat (Yueh Hua, superb), apparently a beggar leading a troupe of orphaned kids with great haircuts who sing for small change. Drunken Cat makes a point of "accidentally" helping Golden Swallow, to her bemusement, especially once she's wounded with a poison dart. All the elements appear to be in place for a hostage-rescue thriller. And then the film reveals that it's about something else entirely: about good disciples and bad disciples, about loyalty and treachery, about an unseen murder and an unplanned revenge.

Come Drink With Me has a very special place in the history of the *wuxia pian* (the "martial chivalry" genre). It's credited with launching a "new wave" in the genre, assimilating ideas from western thrillers and Japanese samurai movies while respecting Chinese traditions. Its flair and innovative style paved the way for everything from Bruce Lee's kung-fu to Tsui Hark's digital action--which is why Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* pays homage to it, not least by casting Cheng Pei-Pei. But it was also the great King Hu's first film in the genre, and many of his specialties get a first airing here: the plot which suddenly expands to a larger frame of reference; the use of a traditional inn as an arena for personal clashes which flare into anti-gravity conflict; skillfully coded messages (here, in a song); and a heroine in male drag. Thirty-seven years on, it stands up very well as one of Hu's most entertaining movies.

The film was produced by Shaw Brothers, the Hong Kong major which effectively ceased production in the mid-1980s. The company's back-catalogue has been out of reach and therefore out of sight ever since. But the Shaw archive now has a new owner, and it's about to become possible to explore its riches. We're delighted to present this brand new print of King Hu's classic--as the first of many rediscoveries, we hope. King Hu himself died in 1997, but we're thrilled that our screening will be introduced by the film's star Yueh Hua. Here he plays the original drunken hero, and still very likely the best.
- Tony Rayns

Programme Code: COMED

Fri Oct 4, 7:00pm

Visa Screening Room @the Vogue
\$8.50

Sun Oct 6, 2:30pm

Visa Screening Room @the Vogue
\$6.50

Selected Filmography

Sons of the Good Earth (64), Dragon Gate Inn (66), A Touch of Zen (69), Four Moods (episode Anger only, 70), The Fate of Lee Khan (74), The Valiant Ones (75), Raining in the Mountain (79), All the King's Men (83), Painted Skin (93)

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