

## Document Citation

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## Away with Words

**Christopher Doyle**

**JAPAN/HONG KONG, CHINA, 1999**

90 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Time Warp Inc.**

Executive Producer: **Hiro Tokimori**

Producer: **Noburu Uoya**

Screenplay: **Christopher Doyle, Tony Rayns**

Cinematographer: **Christopher Doyle**

Editor: **Anne Goursaud, Sozo Morisaki**

Production Designer: **Bruce Yau**

Sound: **Duu-Chih Tu**

Music: **Fumio Itabashi**

Principal Cast: **Tadanobu Asano, Kevin Sherlock, Mavis Xu, Christa Hughes, Georgina Hobson**

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*Toronto IFF 1999*

*David Overbey wrote this note last year after seeing a rough cut of Away with Words, but Chris Doyle was unable to complete the film at that time. We felt that David's enthusiasm for the work and warm support for Chris's career warranted the inclusion of his note in this year's programme book.*

Christopher Doyle is one of the world's most celebrated and accomplished cinematographers. He has photographed many of the important films of the major Asian directors, from Edward Yang's *That Day on the Beach* to Chen Kaige's *Temptress Moon*. He is best known, however, for his essential contributions to the films of Wong Kar-wai – *Days of Being Wild*, *Chungking Express*, *Fallen Angels* and *Happy Together*. It is not a shock, then, that his first as director (he is also the film's cinematographer, of course) should be called *Away with Words*, for the images are all-important and carry not only the narrative but its emotional thrust. Therefore, a summary of the plot is not easy.

Since his childhood in Okinawa, Asano has had a mnemonic memory. For him, words have tactile forms and tastes that make them constantly present in his mind; as a result, he can't forget a word once he's heard it. Now he is in "gridlock," his memories blocking the flow of life. Asano finds himself in Hong Kong's Dive Bar, drawn by the colour of the gay club's couches, a shade of blue which reminds him of the sea. Kevin, the bar's flamboyant owner, is a lush, unable to recall

most of his booze-soaked, wild life. He is arrested every night because he cannot remember how to pronounce the name of his street in Cantonese. Asking instead to be taken to the police station, he is promptly arrested for public mischief. The film chronicles Kevin and Asano's meeting, in which words are a burden.

This bare outline, however, conveys very little of the experience of seeing *Away with Words*. One must, simply, see the film. Doyle creates extraordinary images to remind one that cinema is, after all, a visual art.

■ **David Overbey**

**Chris Doyle** was born in Sydney, Australia in 1952. He has collaborated as the director of photography with such top Asian filmmakers as Chen Kaige, Stanley Kwan and Wong Kar-wai. *Away with Words* (99) is his first feature film.

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