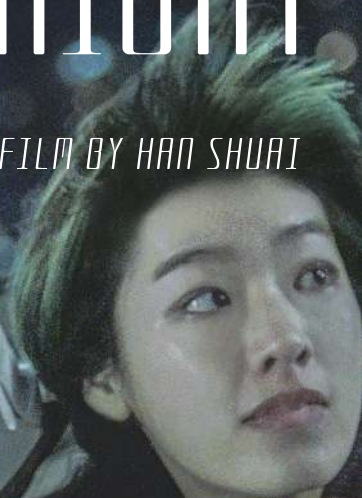


GREEN NIGHT

A FILM BY HAN SHUAI



FAN BINGBING

LEE JOO YOUNG



73rd Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

CAST

Fan Bingbing
as Jin Xia

Lee Joo Young
as Green-haired Girl

Kim Young Ho
as Lee Seung-hun

Kim Min Gui
as Dong



GREEN NIGHT

A FILM BY HAN SHUAI

Hong Kong - 2023 - 92 min

DCP - 1.85 - 5.1 - Colour

Korean and Mandarin with English subtitles

CREW

Directed by
Han Shuai

Director of Photography
Matthias Delvaux
Kim Hyun Seok

Production Designer
Lee Hwa Sung

Edited by
Tom Lin

Written by
Han Shuai
Lei Sheng

Gaffer
Lee Dong Jin

Costume Designer
Yi Choongyun

Original Music by
Hank Lee

Produced by
Liu Ziyi
Wang Jing

Sound Supervisor
Zhu Yunhao

Head of Make-up and Hair
Kye Seonmi

Colorist
Tang Qiang



LOGLINE

Trapped in a life of oppression under her Korean husband, a Chinese woman sets out on a thrilling adventure with a mysterious green-haired girl, finding her chance to finally break free and claim her independence.

SYNOPSIS

In an effort to escape her troubled past, Jin Xia, a Chinese woman, marries a Korean man named Lee Seung-hun in exchange for legal status in South Korea. One night, Xia encounters a green-haired girl enveloped in an enigmatic aura and becomes involved in the dangerous world of drug dealing.

Attracted to the girl for some inexplicable reason, Xia takes her home and the two end up killing Seung-hun in a not-so-accidental accident. The pair go on the run, but Xia returns to the crime scene to retrieve the drugs the green-haired girl left behind...



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I was born in a port city in China across from the South Korean city of Incheon, separated by the sea. As a child, I saw many women embark on a journey across the ocean, driven by their unshakable determination to earn a better wage in Korea and escape the anxiety they faced in their hometown. Many of them never returned. To some, their disappearance seemed gratuitous, but I soon inferred it must have been a conscious choice they made after enduring repression of their dreams and desires. As a young girl, I often wondered about their adventures in an unknown land, even feeling a yearning for their journey.

As I grew up, started working, and got married, I noticed changes in the way women were positioning themselves in the world. Although it seemed like women had more say in various aspects of life, they were still subject to condescending scrutiny. Our attempts at freedom were pre-approved and pre-tolerated by the ghost of an unseen power.

This new plight fueled the rekindling of my imagination of those women's adventures. I hope to revisit their unshakable determination with this story and find the courage to face the faceless ghost.

Interview with the director Han Shuai

by Maja Korbecka

The plot of GREEN NIGHT is full of disturbing coincidences and small hints as if the world somehow speaks to the main character. With such a complex structure, how did the script evolve during the writing process?

From the very beginning, I never viewed *GREEN NIGHT* as a Chinese-language film. When the idea first emerged, I envisioned the story taking place in a foreign city in East Asia, but it could be any city in the region. The film explores challenges that all East Asian women face.

The inspiration for *GREEN NIGHT* wasn't a specific plot, but a desire for films set over one night. On one single evening, the protagonist encounters different problems and experiences turmoil, ultimately choosing to run away with a partner, feeling the drive to just keep going. The hazy, muddled feelings of night drive the protagonist's inner world and my attitude. All encounters and reactions must be condensed

and symbolic, evolving in an unrealistic way.

The first draft of *GREEN NIGHT* was similar to *THELMA & LOUISE* (1991, dir. Ridley Scott). I wanted to propose a different take on two women on the run after committing a crime. My co-writer for *GREEN NIGHT* and my long-time writing partner Lei Sheng added another layer to the story's obstacles, reflecting the idea that an invisible hand restrains women's agency and maybe gender equality is, after all, an illusion.

The patriarchal society tolerates women's struggles and acts of freedom, sometimes only because they render it useless and deemed to fail sooner or later. In *GREEN NIGHT*, when the two women are on the run and there is no one after them, isn't it more terrifying? That your fight for freedom is just a small trick, an escape game they allow you to play. It's a bit like how the patriarchal society acts towards the feminist movement of today, it does not react to it with anger or anxiety, but with silence and contempt. It sees the feminist movement as a pop culture trend that can be commodified. Like green colour is popular one year, pink another year, and "feminism" is apparently popular now. I find it insulting, as it treats topics relevant to half the world's population as a passing fad.

We rewrote the third act to give the story a larger social context and more symbolic ending. After coming to Korea, I came up with the current ending where our protagonist, Jin Xia, concludes the story on her own.

Many details, such as tying shoelaces and chewing gum, position the two adult women as girls. Does GREEN NIGHT connect with your previous film SUMMER BLUR, which focuses on a teenage girl's experiences?

I wrote a scene in which two women step on each other's bare feet in a

bowling club bathroom and shared it with my female producers, Liu Ziyi and Wang Jing. They laughed and said my characters were like teenage girls, but that's exactly a kind of scene they knew I would write ... I guess they always thought I was a bit childlike (but in a good way I hope).

GREEN NIGHT and my first film *SUMMER BLUR* share similar motifs, such as searching for a mother figure, facing patriarchal oppression, promoting sisterhood, and overcoming shame and guilt. The difference is that the characters in *SUMMER BLUR* are children who grow up too fast, while those in *GREEN NIGHT* are adults who are not ready for the big, open world they must navigate.

The film contains elements of a crime story, and the characters' reactions may seem unusual to some. My co-writer, Lei Sheng, and I have long pondered the difference between men and women committing crimes. I believe women's crimes are more irrational and lack strong purpose or logic, driven by emotions and a sense of excitement, the excitement of being summoned by the night and the companions - that was the feeling I wanted to transmit in the film.

I created background stories for both characters. The green-haired girl rejects being a pawn in a male-dominated gang or conforming to the adult world, and Jin Xia is tormented by the memory of betraying her mother in childhood. Ultimately, they are both girls at heart.

You come from the seaside city of Yantai with South Korea's Incheon located just across the Yellow Sea. Fan Bingbing - the star of Berlinale-premiered LOST IN BEIJING (2007, dir. Li Yu) and many other films - was born in neighbouring Qingdao. Has the experience of growing up in nearby seaside cities somehow connected you? How did she join the project?

We started working together because we both wanted to make a film with two very different women appearing in the same frame. Fan Bingbing once told me about her reaction to watching *BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOUR* (2013, dir. Abdellatif Kechiche). The film made her think about the prospect of acting alongside another woman, creating a unique type of on-screen chemistry. She believed this would offer her an opportunity to experiment with different acting techniques. Known for her portrayal of beautiful women in the eyes of men, Fan Bingbing's previous on-screen partners were all male. Working with Li Yu, she realized that she could be more authentic when working with a female director.

Interestingly, Li Yu, Fan Bingbing, and I are all from Shandong province. I come from Yantai, which is also the hometown of Bingbing's mother. Therefore, Bingbing used to live in Yantai too. Growing up in the seaside city Yantai, we often witnessed people migrating to South Korea for work. Through making *GREEN NIGHT*, we reconnected with these memories. To our surprise, shooting a film in a foreign country brought us closer to our hometown.

As women from Shandong, we have learned to maintain a rough exterior while suppressing our inner emotions. Sharing a common hometown, Bingbing and I have similar experiences, which made it natural for us to connect. Although she is stronger than I am, as a famous film star she has to deal with a great deal of media attention and criticism. Our shared background was an important factor in making our collaboration possible.

This is your first time making a film in South Korea. How did you handle the language barrier? How much time did the two lead actresses, Fan Bingbing and Lee Joo Young, dedicate to learning each other's mother tongue?

This is the first time I am making a film in South Korea, so I approached

the language issue with care. My co-writer and producer had suggested incorporating the language barrier to create dramatic irony, similar to the scenes between the Vietnamese pianist and the French protagonist in *THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED* (2005, dir. Jacques Audiard), but I felt that it didn't fit with the overall story of *GREEN NIGHT*. Instead, I made the green-haired girl a smuggler who travels between China and South Korea, with a Chinese boyfriend working in a drug cartel, explaining her basic understanding of the Chinese language. This added an element of ambiguity to the relationship between the two women, as they can communicate with words but only at a basic level, reflecting their cautious attitude towards each other.

Fan Bingbing had previously appeared in the Korean film *MY WAY* (2011, dir. Kang Je-kyu), but only spoke Chinese in that role. For *GREEN NIGHT*, she spent two months learning her lines in Korean and making them her own. My primary focus was for her to speak Korean in a natural voice, rather than for her pronunciation to be perfect.

The language barrier ended up being an advantage for shaping the introverted personality of her character, Jin Xia, on screen. Bingbing's previous roles were often extroverted, aligning with her own confident and straightforward personality, but the language restriction forced her to rely more on physical interaction. She even improvised on set and added new lines, consulting with our assistant director and language coach to ensure they were properly translated. This showed her desire to express herself through the character and I was thrilled to see this.

Lee Joo Young had previously learned Chinese pronunciation, and exceeded our expectations with her performance. She was meticulous about her pronunciation, listening to her recorded lines over and over in the dressing room. She did an excellent job, despite her initial worries.





What was the biggest challenge in developing a co-production project between Hong Kong and South Korea?

The biggest challenge was communication. Our team faced difficulties due to our different language backgrounds, cultural experiences, and film-making approaches. Translation was a major obstacle, especially when time was critical on set. Industry standards, work hours, production processes, departmental structures, and scheduling were vastly different, making it difficult to align expectations. The situation was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which added to the uncertainties and changes. To overcome these challenges, we had to explain our practices and preferences to each other, respect and adapt to each other's ways of working, and communicate effectively. When we cannot understand each other, we are powerless.

The use of a handheld camera added another layer of complexity. This style of filming was not familiar to my Korean crew, who were used to more structured methods. My assistant directors worked hard to provide a daily storyboard for the crew, but as they saw me improvising on set, they eventually put the storyboard aside. Instead, they focused on observing my vision and needs. This allowed for a more flexible and dynamic process.

In SUMMER BLUR and GREEN NIGHT you explore the relationships between women. What would you say is the biggest difference in the design of the two female characters?

I have always been intrigued by the idea of sisterhood. I believe that the concept of a mirror-image relationship between two women is a classic

and timeless motif in cinema. Typically, there is a heroine who embodies my point of view, characterized by repressed emotions stemming from vulnerability and timidity. The other woman represents desire, with her energetic extroversion and raw vitality embodying the protagonist's inner self and true desires. Essentially, they are two sides of the same coin, a theme that is even more pronounced in *GREEN NIGHT* than in *SUMMER BLUR*.

The tattoo on the green-haired girl's chest made me think of THE MATRIX and "follow the white rabbit" tattoo. Why did you decide to choose fireworks as an audiovisual motif in the film?

Both the green firework tattoo and the green sea anemones are an extension of the green hair. The bowl-cut green hair bouncing in the air while a person is running was the image that first came to my mind upon starting to work on *GREEN NIGHT*. Fireworks are also personally connected to Jin Xia's past as we get to know about the accident she witnessed in her childhood. The guilt was engraved in her heart with the first sound of BANG. But she always longs for change. Green itself represents a yearning for freedom.

The second sound of BANG when the green-haired girl passes the security check indicates the start of their relationship. To me, the entire film is like an extended explosion in Jin Xia's heart. No matter it's the green tattoo or the green hair, no matter it's committing crimes or facing her desires, these elements all plant a seed of the final explosion. Although I chose not to show it on screen, I hope the protagonist herself becomes a firework, finally unleashed and free.

In GREEN NIGHT you inquire into the feeling of safety and different meanings of touch. Why did you decide to put such an emphasis on the images of touch and bodily reactions?

To me, bodily sensations are always important. And that might be influenced by the films directed by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. There are beautiful moments created by a touch, like when they step on each other's bare feet, a gentle stroke by the feather the girl is holding, and a hug they share. There are painful moments too, like Jin Xia cutting her hand by accident or hitting her chest while choking with a chewing gum. The feeling of these moments cannot be described through words, but the images capturing these moments are very cinematic. In fact, cinema is an ideal medium to convey these bodily sensations, and I hope that the audience can experience these beautiful and painful moments alongside our characters.



In GREEN NIGHT, the visual style sometimes shifts abruptly, as seen in the rape scene. Can you describe your collaboration with cinematographers Matthias Delvaux and Kim Hyun Seok in creating these dynamic visual elements?

In GREEN NIGHT, the visual language varies between the day and night scenes. The day scenes are depicted in a more realistic style, while the night scenes are more subjective and dream-like. This differentiation was intentional and achieved through the collaboration between the Director of Photography, Matthias Delvaux, and the rest of the crew. Despite the limitations posed by the budget, Matthias, being the only European in the crew, put in a great deal of effort to create the desired visual look and feel of the film. Our discussions and shot-by-shot review process were crucial in realizing our vision and bringing the film to life.

During the principal photography, Matthias fell ill with COVID-19. To avoid delaying the shooting schedule, Matthias hoped we could find someone experienced to help us for a few days. We were fortunate enough to have Kim Hyun Seok, who has a remarkable portfolio having worked with renowned directors such as Lee Chang-dong on *POETRY* and Wang Xiaoshuai on *SO LONG, MY SON*. Despite being on a tight schedule, Kim agreed to help us at 3 am. He arrived on set without even having time to read the script but appeared relaxed and confident in his approach.



Kim and Matthias both have a strong background in handheld camera work and prioritize performance over technical perfection. We work together to find the rhythm for the camera movement, which benefits the actors by providing them the flexibility to improvise. Our goal is to allow the audience to follow the story and the characters, rather than being distracted by the camera. The importance of performance is paramount to us, and we hope the audience will be engrossed in the story and not the presence of the camera.

In 2021 and 2022 China's art cinema on the film festival circuit is more and more often represented by co-productions. What is your outlook on the future of Chinese cinema?

The pandemic has undoubtedly caused turmoil and uncertainty in the film industry. The past three years have felt like a long, harsh winter for many. Despite the numerous uncertainties, we can be sure of one thing: China is a place with too many great stories waiting to be brought to life. It's crucial not to lose faith and continue to make films. As the final line of the movie says, "do not be afraid". Do not be afraid of the uncertainly.



HAN SHUAI

director and screenwriter

HAN Shuai is a Chinese film director and screenwriter. Her debut feature *SUMMER BLUR* won the Grand Prix in the Generation Kplus competition section at the 2021 Berlin International Film Festival, the FIPRESCI Award in the New Currents section at the 2020 Busan International Film Festival, Jury Award at the 2020 Pingyao International Film Festival's Feimu Awards section, Best Director and Best Actress for newcomer HUANG Tian in the Firebird Young Cinema competition at the 2021 Hong Kong International Film Festival.

HAN Shuai is also the author of *New Impressions Cinema: The Aesthetics of Lou Ye's Films*, published by the Phoenix Education Publishing, Ltd. She holds a Ph.D. in Theater and Cinema Studies from the Central Academy of Drama, China.

FILMOGRAPHY

SUMMER BLUR - 2020 - 88 min

*Grand Prix, Generation Kplus,
Berlin International Film Festival*

*FIPRESCI Award, New Currents,
Busan International Film Festival*

*Best Director, Firebird Young Cinema Competition,
Hong Kong International Film Festival*

*Jury Award, Feimu Awards,
Pingyao International Film Festival*

*Nominated for Best New Director,
Asian Film Awards*

FAN BINGBING

Fan Bingbing is a Chinese actress and producer. Born in 1981, Fan rose to fame in 1998 with the mega-hit television series *MY FAIR PRINCESS*. In 2003, she starred in *CELL PHONE*, which became the highest-grossing Chinese film of the year and she won Best Actress at the Hundred Flowers Awards. In 2007, she won her first Golden Horse Award for her performance in *THE MATRIMONY*. In 2010, her portrayal of Nan Feng in *BUDDHA MOUNTAIN* earned her Best Actress at the Tokyo International Film Festival. In 2016, Fan starred as Li Xuelian in *I AM NOT MADAME BOVARY*, for which she won a Silver Shell for Best Actress at the San Sebastián International Film Festival. Her portrayal of Li Xuelian also earned her the Best Actress award at Golden Rooster Awards and Asian Film Awards, and received a Golden Horse Awards nomination for Best Leading Actress. Among her other film credits are Wang Xiaoshuai's *CHONGQING BLUES*, Li Yu's *LOST IN BEIJING* and Chen Kaige's *SACRIFICE*. She has also appeared in many foreign-language films, such as *STRETCH*, *MY WAY*, *X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST* and *THE 355*.

In 2017, Fan served on the 70th Cannes Film Festival jury along with Pedro Almodóvar, Park Chan-wook, Jessica Chastain and Will Smith. She was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

I AM NOT MADAME BOVARY - 2016 - 128 min - dir. Feng Xiaogang

*Silver Shell for Best Actress, San Sebastián International Film Festival
Best Actress, Golden Rooster Awards
Best Actress, Asian Film Awards
Nominated for Best Leading Actress, Golden Horse Awards*

BUDDHA MOUNTAIN - 2010 - 105 min - dir. Li Yu

Best Actress, Tokyo International Film Festival

CHONGQING BLUES - 2010 - 110 min - dir. Wang Xiaoshuai

In Competition, Cannes Film Festival

LOST IN BEIJING - 2007 - 112 min - dir. Li Yu

In Competition, Berlin International Film Festival

CELL PHONE - 2003 - 107 min - dir. Feng Xiaogang

Best Actress, Hundred Flowers Awards



LEE JOO YOUNG

Lee Joo Young has been praised for her distinctive screen presence and unique characterization in works like the drama series *ITAEWON CLASS* and feature films *BASEBALL GIRL*, *MAGGIE* and *A QUIET DREAM*. In 2021, she was nominated for Best New Actress at Blue Dragon Film Awards for her performance in *BASEBALL GIRL*. In 2022, she starred in *BROKER*, directed by Hirokazu Koreeda, which was selected for the main competition of Cannes Film Festival.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

BROKER - 2022 - 130 min - dir. Hirokazu Koreeda

In Competition, Cannes Film Festival

Nominated for Best Supporting Actress, Buil Film Awards

BASEBALL GIRL - 2020 - 105 min - dir. Choi Yun-tae

Nominated for Best New Actress, Blue Dragon Film Awards

Nominated for Best Actress, Buil Film Awards

Independent Star Award, Seoul Independent Film Festival

MAGGIE - 2018 - 89 min - dir. Yi Okseop

Actor & Actress of the Year Award, Busan International Film Festival

A QUIET DREAM - 2016 - 101 min - dir. Zhang Lu

Opening Film, Busan International Film Festival





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