

Mongrel Media Presents

CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

A Film by Zhang Yimou

Starring
Chow Yun Fat
Gong Li
Jay Chou

(2006, CHINA, 114 mins)

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Contents

Director's Statement.....	3
Cast.....	5
Credits.....	6
Synopsis.....	7
Detailed Plot Summary.....	8
Historical Notes.....	13
About the Director.....	14
About the Cast.....	16
About the Filmmakers.....	24

CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

Director's Statement

CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER takes place in the Later Tang dynasty, more than 1,000 years ago. The Tang was one of the most flamboyant dynasties in Chinese history. It was an ostentatious time. There's an old Chinese saying, "Gold and jade on the outside, rot and decay on the inside," which means that beneath a beautiful exterior often lies a dark and appalling truth. The story focuses on a dysfunctional imperial family. Like any big family in feudal times, beneath the glamour, within the Palace, deep secrets are hidden.

Visual composition is of paramount importance to me. To heighten the sense of opulence, the color gold is used extensively in the sets, as well as the costumes. Lighting also plays an important role. Colorful Chinese glass art is used to intensify hues and translucence in the pillars, the walls, windows, and many decorative items in the Palace. The palettes and luminosity of the sets are truly unique and palatial.

The costumes are distinctively Chinese. Again, gold is used extensively. Yee Chung Man (Costume Designer) really takes the idea of lavishness to the extreme. Most of the outfits have four to six layers. Each layer has been meticulously handcrafted with intricate details. The "Dragon Robe" and the "Phoenix Gown" worn by Chow Yun Fat (The Emperor) and Gong Li (The Empress) are particularly ornate. It took 40 artisans over the course of two months to construct each. The end result is elaborate and astonishing.

CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER is my third action film. I firmly believe that the story is the most important element in any movie. Action is only a means to tell the story. It is a conduit in which relationships are revealed and conflicts are resolved.

Ching Siu-Tong (Action Director) and I have collaborated on many projects. His action design excels in the battle sequence where thousands of golden armored

warriors charge the Palace. This pivotal scene is also one of my favorites. In this sequence, amid festive activities, the ugly secrets of the imperial family is being unraveled. Outside the Palace, a coup d'état ensues. This scene encapsulates the past and present of the imperial household. The family confronts its biggest crisis while the regime is on the verge of total collapse. To me, this is the key moment of the film.

Cast

The Emperor.....	Chow Yun Fat
The Empress.....	Gong Li
Prince Jai (Middle Son).....	Jay Chou
Crown Prince Wan (Emperor's Eldest Son, Empress' Stepson).	Liu Ye
Imperial Doctor's Wife.....	Chen Jin
Imperial Doctor	Ni Dahong
Chan (Imperial Doctor's Daughter).....	Li Man
Prince Yu (Youngest Son).....	Qin Junjie

Credits

Director.....	Zhang Yimou
Screenplay.....	Zhang Yimou Wu Nan Bian Zhihong
Story Consultant.....	Wang Bin
Producers.....	Bill Kong Zhang Weiping
Director of Photography.....	Zhao Xiaoding
Action Director.....	Tony Ching Siu-Tung
Production Designer.....	Huo Tingxiao
Sound Supervisor.....	Tao Jing
Costume Designer.....	Yee Chung Man
Original Music Composed & Produced	Shigeru Umebayashi
Editor.....	Cheng Long
Associate Producer.....	Zhang Zhenyan

Synopsis

China, Later Tang Dynasty, 10th Century.

On the eve of the Chong Yang Festival, golden flowers fill the Imperial Palace. The EMPEROR (Chow Yun Fat) returns unexpectedly with his second son, PRINCE JAI (Jay Chou). His pretext is to celebrate the holiday with his family, but given the chilled relations between the Emperor and the ailing EMPRESS (Gong Li), this seems disingenuous.

For many years, the Empress and CROWN PRINCE WAN (Liu Ye), her stepson, have had an illicit liaison. Feeling trapped Prince Wan dreams of escaping the palace with his secret love CHAN (Li Man), the Imperial Doctor's daughter.

Meanwhile, Prince Jai, the faithful son, grows worried over the Empress's health and her obsession with golden chrysanthemums. Could she be headed down an ominous path?

The Emperor harbors equally clandestine plans; the IMPERIAL DOCTOR (NI DAHONG) is the only one privy to his machinations. When the Emperor senses a looming threat, he relocates the doctor's family from the Palace to a remote area.

While en route, mysterious assassins attack them. Chan and her mother, JIANG SHI (Chen Jin) are forced back to the palace. Their return sets off a tumultuous sequence of dark surprises.

Amid the glamour and grandeur of the festival, ugly secrets are revealed. As the Imperial Family continues its elaborate charade in a palatial setting, thousands of golden armored warriors charge the palace. Who is behind this brutal rebellion? Where do Prince Jai's loyalties lie? Between love and desire, is there a final winner?

Against a moonlit night, thousands of chrysanthemum blossoms are trampled as blood spills across the Imperial Palace.

Detailed Plot Summary

Please note that CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER contains plot twists that are best not revealed before viewing the film. Please refer to this complete plot summary only after you have seen the film.

Imperial Palace, China, Later Tang Dynasty, 10th Century

The Imperial family is reuniting to observe the Chong Yang Festival, a celebration of family, ancestry, and escape from evil fortune, traditionally associated with chrysanthemum blossoms.

Within the Palace, the EMPRESS (Gong Li), her youngest son PRINCE YU (Qin Junjie), and her stepson, CROWN PRINCE WAN (Liu Ye), await the return of the EMPEROR (Chow Yun Fat) and PRINCE JAI (Jay Chou), the middle of the three princes. Battle-toughened Prince Jai has been leading an army to secure the Empire's northern border, and the Emperor, accompanied by his Imperial Guard, has ridden out to meet him.

The courtiers, maids, and eunuchs inside the Palace move about with as much military precision as the guardsmen and soldiers on the march. The royal family is constantly attended by servants, and their every word and action is constrained by rigid ceremony.

Bitter Herbs

The beautiful Empress is visibly in the grip of a painful malady that seizes her with crippling force—particularly when she has drunk the herbal medicine prescribed for her by the Emperor. Several times a day, herbalists bring the Empress a bowl of strong black liquid which she has no choice but to drink—she knows that refusal will be reported back to the Emperor.

The Empress is disturbed to learn that Prince Wan, the son of the Emperor and his late first wife, wishes to leave the Imperial Palace and move to a provincial capital. As we learn when she confronts him, Wan secretly has been her lover for over three years.

The Emperor, meanwhile, has a cordial but somewhat confrontational reunion with his second son Jai; the Emperor arrives at their meeting clad in full armor, and challenges Jai to a swordfight. Although Jai is young and strong, and the Emperor's prowess as a swordsman still bests his son. The Emperor is proud of Jai's military success but wary of his ambitions, and he warns his son not to try to take power from him.

When the Emperor returns to the Palace, he meets with his chief herbalist, IMPERIAL DOCTOR JIANG (Ni Dahong) and Jiang's daughter and apprentice, CHAN (Li Man). Only they know that the Emperor recently ordered an addition to the Empress's herbal remedy: a black mushroom.

When the Doctor explains to Chan that the mushroom will poison the Empress, she is horrified, but dutifully continues to bring the Empress her soup. Chan has another secret: she is Prince Wan's lover, and she hopes to escape from Palace life and live with him far away.

Prince Jai, too, is horrified when he sees his mother's condition. The Empress and Jai share deep affection. Despite her pain, the Empress works ceaselessly embroidering golden chrysanthemums, ostensibly for the Chong Yang Festival.

Chong Yang Eve

When the five royal family members finally assemble together on the eve of Chong Yang, the tensions among them—spoken and unspoken—are thick. The Emperor has decided to bypass indolent, weak Wan, the eldest son, in favor of making the more capable Jai the Crown Prince. Wan, who wants nothing more than escape, does not object. Jai is torn between concern for his mother and duty to his father. The Emperor forces a confrontation with the Empress in front of the princes, insisting that she drink every last drop of her medicine and pressuring the princes to take his side.

Late that night, a stealthy figure in black appears in the Empress's chamber bearing a chunk of the poison black mushroom. She—the figure is a woman with the branded face of a convict—has her own reasons for revealing the truth about the poisonous herbal brew: she wants the Empress to exact revenge against the Emperor. The invader is spotted and captured by Prince Wan and brought before the Emperor as a suspected assassin.

Unmasked, she is identified as the IMPERIAL DOCTOR'S WIFE (Chen Jin), but the Emperor also recognizes her other secret identity: she is his first wife and the mother of Prince Wan. The Emperor abandoned her when he was a mere provincial governor, and he seized the opportunity to advance himself by marrying a princess—now the Empress. The first wife saved herself by marrying Jiang, but her new family knows nothing of her past.

To compensate for his ill-treatment of Mrs. Jiang, and to remove the family from the Palace, the Emperor appoints Doctor Jiang as Governor of a distant province. En route to their new posting, they stop for the night at an inn, and Chan is joined in secret by Prince Wan. She tells the Prince something she overheard in passing—that the Empress is distributing thousands of embroidered golden chrysanthemums to the army. Jiang realizes that his stepmother/ex-lover the Empress is about to mount a coup against his father.

Before Prince Wan can hasten back to the Palace, the couple is caught together by Mrs. Jiang, who learns—too late—that her daughter is the lover of her own half-brother. Mrs. Jiang drives Wan away, but before she can explain the truth to Chan, the girl runs away too.

As Dr. Jiang and Mrs. Jiang run out into the night to find their daughter, masked swordsmen in black attack them and kill Dr. Jiang. Mrs. Jiang, an accomplished

kung fu fighter and swordswoman, escapes to search for Chan. She realizes that the Emperor never meant to let them escape to live in peace, but intended to have them murdered instead.

Back at the Palace, Prince Wan confronts the Empress about her plot against the Emperor. Realizing that their love affair makes him appear complicit, Wan cuts his own throat, but his wound is not fatal.

When the Emperor comes to Wan's bedside, he blames the Empress for the affair, pressing Wan to tell him everything he knows of the plot.

Chong Yang Festival

Finally, the family is assembled for the Chong Yang celebration. They go through the ritual motions, though they are all silently aware of the imminent uprising.

As the head of Palace security, Prince Jai dismisses the guard to attend a festival banquet, leaving the Palace unguarded. Suddenly, Chan and her mother burst in on the royal family's meeting. In the confrontation, it is revealed to all that she is Prince Wan's mother—the Emperor's ex-wife—and that Chan are Wan's sister as well as his lover. Chan runs from the room and Mrs. Jiang chases after her, but before they can get through the Palace gates, the Emperor's black-clad assassins kill them both.

At the same moment, thousands of soldiers dressed in golden armor attack the Palace led by Prince Jai, each with an embroidered chrysanthemum on his chest. They mow down the eunuchs and guards.

A Surprise Attack

Inside the Palace, Prince Yu suddenly shocks his family by stabbing his half-brother Wan. A dozen men in armor appear behind Yu and surround the Emperor. Yu demands that the Emperor give up his throne, or be killed. Till now, he has seemed young and innocent, outside of the plotting and betrayals. Even the Empress, mastermind of the coup, knew nothing of Yu's ambitions. While the Empress wails over Wan's body, Yu spews out all his resentment, over being ignored and passed by, over his mother's love affair, over his father's lack of affection for him.

But the Emperor was prepared for an attack—even if he didn't expect it to come from Yu. His fighters in black descend from ropes and quickly dispatch Yu's backup men. Yu hurls himself upon the Emperor, who easily subdues his son. In a fury, he whips the boy into bloody unconsciousness with his heavy golden belt.

Crushed Chrysanthemums

Meanwhile, the golden army led by Prince Jai breaks through the Palace gates and into a trap. The Emperor's black-cloaked fighters and armored warriors are prepared, and they descend like bats from the Palace walls to do battle. Jai's

golden army is drawn into the Palace's central square, and the imperial army creates an impenetrable wall of massive, moveable plates that steadily crushes and pins the golden fighters against the Palace gates. Spears and arrows rain down on the captive golden force. Finally, one rebel remains standing—Prince Jai. Captured by the imperial army, he is brought before his father.

The remaining chrysanthemum rebels—soldiers and officials—are executed as the Emperor and Empress look on. The Palace Square is littered with corpses and the blood-soaked petals of thousands of trampled chrysanthemums.

Inside the Palace, one son lies dead, and one comatose or perhaps dead too, but the Emperor insists on forcing the Empress and Prince Jai to ascend the great steps to the Chrysanthemum Terrace, to sit at the table with him while the sumptuous Chong Yang banquet is served.

A horde of Palace eunuchs sets to cleaning up the battlefield, till everything is restored to elegance and formality. Even the thousands of pots of chrysanthemums are replaced. A parade of musicians, soldiers, and courtiers begin the ritual celebrations, and fireworks explode in the sky as if nothing has happened.

The unrelenting routine of the Empress's medicine delivery is still enforced. The maids arrive with the black herbal soup. But the Emperor tells Prince Jai that he will not be punished for his rebellion if, from now on, it is he who brings the Empress her poisonous brew. The Empress looks upon Jai with love and despair as he kneels before her and apologizes for failing her. In a flash, he seizes a sword from a Guard and kills himself.

The Empress hurls the bloodied bowl of herbal medicine across the desolate banquet table, still set for the family Chong Yang Festival celebration.

Historical Notes

The brief **Later Tang Dynasty** (923-936 AD) stands in sharp contrast to the Tang Dynasty of earlier centuries (618-907 AD). The Later Tang was a period of corruption, warfare, and political tumult, while the long Tang Dynasty was a golden age of relative stability, prosperity, and peace. But the latter days of the Tang Dynasty were marked by court intrigue and misrule, leading to the downfall of centralized Tang power and setting the stage for a half-century of fragmented and warring kingdoms, vulnerable to attack from Mongols to the north and Turks to the west. (When we first meet Prince Jai, he is returning from war with Mongol invaders on the northern border.) Regional governors and frontier military leaders seized parts of the empire, breaking up China into smaller fiefdoms. The thirteen-year period known as the Later Tang is considered part of the “Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms” period (907-960 AD), which aptly describes the division across China.

While The Emperor and Empress in *Curse of the Golden Flower* are fictional characters, the Emperor can be seen as one of the military men who seize power. He was a mere Captain when married to his first wife. The Empress was the daughter of another regional king, so by marrying her, the Emperor made a powerful alliance. The Emperor’s rigid insistence on following ritual and ceremony can be seen as a mark of his hypocrisy; he aspires to the glory days of the Tang Dynasty, but he is really a latter-day usurper.

The **Chong Yang Festival** has been celebrated in China since ancient times, and continues to be a happy holiday today. It is known as the Festival of Double Nines, because it falls on September 9th, the ninth day of the ninth month. In the tradition of yin and yang, these nines are doubly yang, which connotes positive energy and masculinity.

Chong Yang is celebrated by feasting with the family, honoring ancestors and the elderly, and often by hiking to a mountaintop or ascending to a high place—such as the Chrysanthemum Terrace in *CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER*—to appreciate nature and to escape from evil spirits. The festival is also associated with **chrysanthemums**, chrysanthemum wine, and chrysanthemum cakes. In Chinese herbal medicine, chrysanthemums were used to detoxify and to drive off evil. The Chong Yang symbolism of mountains and chrysanthemums derives from a legend about villagers escaping disaster by climbing a mountain on the 9th day of the 9th month and dispelling evil forces with chrysanthemum wine.

About the Director

Zhang Yimou

Ever since his directorial debut, *Red Sorghum* (1987) won the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival, Zhang Yimou has established his reputation as one of the most talented and influential directors today.

Zhang Yimou was born in China in 1950 and studied cinematography at the Beijing Film Academy. He became a leading member of China's Fifth Generation Filmmakers, the first group to graduate following the turbulent Cultural Revolution. He is an accomplished actor, starring in *Red Sorghum* as well as earning the Best Actor Award at the Tokyo International Film Festival for his performance in *Old Well* (1986). Zhang Yimou is also a skilled cinematographer, with credits including *Yellow Earth* (1984), *Old Well* (1986), and *The Big Parade* (1986).

Zhang Yimou has received multiple honors as a director. He is the first Chinese filmmaker to receive Motion Picture Academy recognition, being nominated for Academy Awards® in the Best Foreign Film category for *Ju Dou* in 1990, *Raise the Red Lantern* in 1991, and *Hero* in 2003. He has earned numerous top honors, including the Silver Lion at the 44th Venice International Film Festival for *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), the Golden Lion Award at the 45th Venice International Film Festival for *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992), the Grand Jury Prize at the 47th Cannes International Film Festival for *To Live* (1994), the Golden Lion Award at the 52nd Venice International Film Festival for *Not One Less* (1999), the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival for *The Road Home* (1999) and the Alfred Bauer Prize for *Hero* (2003).

Hero went on to sweep the board at the 22nd Hong Kong Film Awards, winning awards for Best Action Choreography, Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Music, Best Sound and Best Visual Effects.

Zhang Yimou's box office hit *House of Flying Daggers* is the recipient of multiple international awards as well as BAFTA and Golden Globe nominations for Best Foreign Film. He followed up with 2005's *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*.

Zhang Yimou's work is stretching in new directions. On the stage of New York's Metropolitan Opera in December 2006, he will direct Placido Domingo in the world premiere of composer Tan Dun's original opera *The First Emperor*. Zhang Yimou has also been named chief director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 29th Olympic Games in Beijing, 2008.

Zhang Yimou Filmography

2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2005 Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
2004 House of Flying Daggers

2003 Hero
2000 Happy Times
1999 The Road Home
1999 Not One Less
1997 Keep Cool
1995 Lumiere and Company
1995 Shanghai Triad
1994 To Live
1992 The Story of Qiu Ju
1991 Raise the Red Lantern
1990 Ju Dou
1989 The Puma Action
1987 Red Sorghum

About the Cast

Chow Yun Fat (The Emperor)

Chow Yun Fat grew up on Lamma Island, a small fishing village off of Hong Kong. His family moved to the city on the big island when he was ten. At the age of seventeen he quit school to pursue a career in acting, and at the suggestion of a friend, he applied and was accepted into a local Hong Kong television station's actor trainee program. After the yearlong program, he was quickly signed to the station as a contract player, which lasted fourteen years.

Having done over one hundred and twenty eight episodes of the popular television series *Hotel*, Chow was considered a sex symbol and popular leading man in Hong Kong. The immense popularity of his next television series, *The Bund*, made him a household name in all of South-East Asia.

His first big break in films came when new age director Ann Hui approached him to star in *The Story of Woo Viet*, which gained him critical acclaim for a role in a serious and commercially successful film when Hong Kong was still mass producing Kung Fu action films. From there, his career skyrocketed. He received a number of Best Actor awards for his roles, and even made twelve films in 1986—a record for a Hong Kong actor.

John Woo then cast him in the role of Mark for the internationally acclaimed film *A Better Tomorrow*. Chow reached megastar status in Asia with his now trademarked trench coat, sunglasses and blazing Berettas. After a series of romantic comedies and dramas, the determined Chow would later collaborate with John on *The Killer* and *Hard-boiled*—two movies that perked the interests of a growing international fan base.

A new genre of films was produced in Hong Kong with Chow at the forefront. These stories were reminiscent of the gangster films starring Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney, now with Chow playing the tragic hero. Hong Kong director Ringo Lam's *City on Fire* was the inspiration for Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, which won Chow another Best Actor award for his role.

Having conquered Asia with over 68 movies, Chow set out to Hollywood in 1996 for his first English-speaking role in *The Replacement Killers* directed by Antoine Fuqua. He then starred in the police drama *The Corrupter* helmed by director James Foley. Fox's studio epic *Anna and the King* with Jodie Foster was said to have rivaled *Gone With The Wind* in production size, with Chow starring as the King. It wasn't until *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that Chow became a recognizable face in the United States, after its box office and Oscar successes. After making *Bulletproof Monk*, Chow worked on Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* and united again with Ann Hui on *The Postmodern Life of my Aunt*. After *Curse of the Golden Flower*, he returned to work with John Woo twice in a row, in the upcoming video game *Stranglehold* and Chinese epic film *The Battle of Red Cliff*.

The man the *Los Angeles Times* declared "The Coolest Actor in the World," and whom *People* magazine voted one of "50 Most Beautiful People," continues to live in Hong Kong where he is known to his fans as "Big Brother." Chow spends his spare time photographing landscapes and plans to sell them to raise money for the number of local and international charities he is involved with.

Chow Yun Fat Filmography

2008 Battle of Red Cliff
2007 Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
2007 Stranglehold (video game)
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2006 The Postmodern Life of My Aunt
2005 Waiting Alone (China) (Special Guest Appearance)
2003 Bulletproof Monk
2000 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
1999 Anna & the King (Hollywood)
1999 The Corruptor (Hollywood)
1998 The Replacement Killers (Hollywood)
1995 Peace Hotel
1994 God of Gamblers' Return
1994 Treasure Hunt
1992 Full Contact
1992 Hard Boiled
1992 Now You See Love, Now You Don't
1991 Prison on Fire II
1991 Once a Thief
1990 The Fun, The Luck and The Tycoon
1989 God of Gamblers
1989 A Better Tomorrow III
1989 Triad; The Inside Story
1989 The Killer
1989 Wild Search
1989 All About Ah Long
1988 City War
1988 Goodbye, My Friend
1988 Cherry Blossoms
1988 The Greatest Lover
1988 Diary of a Big Man
1988 Fractured Follies
1988 Tiger On Beat
1988 The Eighth Happiness
1988 A Better Tomorrow II
1988 Prison On Fire
1987 Spiritual Love
1987 Flaming Brothers
1987 An Autumn's Tale
1987 The Romancing Star
1987 Rich and Famous

1987 Brotherhood
1987 Scared Stiff
1987 Tragic Hero
1987 City On Fire
1986 My Will, I will
1986 A Hearty Response
1986 The Seventh Curse
1986 Love Unto Waste
1986 A Better Tomorrow
1986 The Lunatics
1986 100 Ways to Murder Your Wife
1986 Missed Date
1986 Dream Lovers
1986 The Affair from Nepal
1986 Rose
1985 Why Me?
1985 Women
1984 Hong Kong 1941
1984 The Occupant
1984 Love in a Fallen City
1983 Bloody Money
1983 The Bund II
1983 The Bund
1983 The Last Affair
1982 The Head Hunter
1982 The Postman Strikes Back
1981 The Story of Woo Viet
1981 The Executioner
1980 Police Sir
1980 Joy to the World
1980 See-Bar
1978 Miss O
1978 Their Private Lives
1977 Hot Blood
1976 The Hunter, The Butterfly and The Crocodile
1976 Massage Girls
1976 Learned Bride Thrice Fools Bridegroom
1976 The Reincarnation

Gong Li (The Empress)

Gong Li has been called China's Greta Garbo, and the similarities are obvious. Like the legendary Swedish actress, she has an almost otherworldly beauty and a remarkable acting range; her two score movie credits to date continue to explore new ground. Also like Garbo, Gong is an intensely private woman who struggles to balance her desire for privacy with the publicity that her profession and art entail.

Born in Shenyang in December 1965, she grew up in Jinan, the daughter of an economics professor. A music lover from early childhood, Gong dreamed of a singing career, but when she failed to gain entrance to China's top music school in 1985, she opted for the Central Drama Academy in Beijing, from which she graduated in 1989.

Gong's presence was quickly noticed. While still a student, she was cast as the female lead in *Red Sorghum* (1987), the debut feature by Zhang Yimou. The film launched two careers. Along with the film, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, Gong's performance, as the meek bride who becomes a powerful woman after her husband's death, won international acclaim. Gong quickly went on to become one of China's (and international cinema's) leading young actresses of the '80s and '90s.

Physically slender and demure looking but possessing a naturalistic verve and strength on screen, Gong embodies a new generation of Chinese women, brought up amid old traditions but reaching towards feminist values.

Gong was linked with Zhang both professionally and romantically for several years. He directed her in some of the most memorable Chinese films of the last decade—*Ju Dou* (1990); *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991); *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992) for which she won Best Actress at the Venice Film Festival; *To Live* (1994); and *Shanghai Triad* (1995). She has also worked with other Chinese directors, particularly Chen Kaige, with whom she has collaborated in three highly regarded features—*Farewell My Concubine*, which won the 1993 Palme d'Or at Cannes, *Temptress Moon* (1996), and *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1999).

Along the way, her work has garnered critical acclaim and awards around the world. She served as a member of the jury at the 50th Cannes Festival in 1997 and president over the jury at 2000's Berlin Festival. She has lent her name to campaigns for children's and environmental protection, and in this capacity, on 10 May 2000; Gong Li was named UNESCO Artist for Peace in Paris by the Director-General of UNESCO, in recognition of her dedication to the organization's ideals and aims. In August of the same year, she was nominated as Ambassador of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO). She has also served as a consultant on various matters to the Chinese government.

In early 2001, she was the only Chinese actress picked by the Chinese Government to be the image of China Olympic. She traveled to Moscow with the Chinese Olympic Committee, led by the Vice Premier, for the successful bidding of the 2008 Olympics to be held in Beijing. The glamorous actress is the face of L'Oreal cosmetics in Asia, and one of People magazine's "Most Beautiful People."

Breaking the Silence (2000), her first collaboration with director Sun Zhou, won her the Best Actress award at the Montreal Film Festival, the ninth China Golden Rooster Film Festival and China Hundred Flowers Film Award. It was chosen as the special screening film for the 2000 Berlin International Film Festival. *Zhou Yu's Train*, a contemporary Chinese love story, was her second film with Sun Zhou.

In 2004, she joined the filming of *Eros*, an anthology of three films directed by Steven Soderbergh, Michelangelo Antonioni and Wong Kar-Wai. The same year, the Cannes Film Festival named the Wong Kar-Wai romantic science-fiction drama *2046*, in which Gong Li appeared more majestic than ever, as an official selection.

In 2005, Gong Li debuted in her first American movie, captivated by Rob Marshall's offer to play in the adaptation of the novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden. She recently appeared in the American movie adaptation of Michael Mann's famous television series *Miami Vice*. In 2006 and 2007, she will be seen in several films, including *Curse of the Golden Flower* and *Hannibal Rising* by Peter Weber.

Gong Li Filmography

2007 Hannibal Rising (Peter Webber)
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower (Zhang Yimou)
2006 Miami Vice (Michael Mann)
2005 Memoirs of A Geisha (Rob Marshall)
2004 Eros (Wong Kar-Wai)
2004 2046 (Wong Kar-Wai)
2002 Zhou Yu's Train (Sun Zhou)
2000 Breaking the Silence (Sun Zhou)
1999 The Emperor and the Assassin (Chen Kaige)
1997 Chinese Box (Wayne Wang)
1996 Temptress Moon (Chen Kaige)
1995 Shanghai Triad (Zhang Yimou)
1994 To Live (Zhang Yimou)
1994 The Great Conqueror's Concubine I & II (Xi Xianran)
1994 8 Guardians of Buddhism (1994)
1993 Pan Yu Liang, a Woman Painter (Huang Shuching)
1993 Flirting Scholar (Steven Chow)
1993 Farewell My Concubine (Chen Kaige)
1992 Mary From Shanghai (Sylvia Chang)
1992 The Story of Qiu Ju (Zhang Yimou)
1991 God of Gamblers III
1991 Party of a Wealthy Family
1991 Raise the Red Lantern (Zhang Yimou)
1990 Ju Dou (Zhang Yimou)
1989 The Puma Action (Zhang Yimou)
1989 A Terracotta Warrior (Chen Xiao Dong)
1989 The Empress Dowager (Lee Hang Sien)
1987 Red Sorghum (Zhang Yimou)

Jay Chou (Prince Jai)

A pop-star phenomenon throughout Asia, Jay Chou brings unexpected gravity and depth to his portrayal of Prince Jai in *Curse of the Golden Flower*. Born Chou Chieh-Lun in Taiwan, 1979, Jay began playing the piano at age four. His mother supported his musical gifts and he went on to master piano and cello. Music,

songwriting, and basketball dominated his high school days, and he was first noticed in 1998 when a friend sang one of his pop compositions on a TV talent contest, accompanied by Jay on piano. Alfa Music launched Jay's career, first as a tunesmith and then as a singer. In 2000, his debut album "Jay" quickly propelled him to stardom with numerous hits. His unique musical style is a fresh-sounding fusion of eastern and western traditions featuring strong lyrics and a personal style of storytelling.

With his soulful voice and infectious tunes, his second album, "Fantasy," and five subsequent albums, have continued to win legions of fans young and old throughout Asia. He has been the best-selling Mandarin artist in the world for the past five years, with a busy performance schedule touring Asia and North America and numerous music industry awards.

Apart from many music videos, Jay began film acting in a starring role in *Initial D* (2005), a comedy-action hit in China. His portrayal of Prince Jai, directed by China's preeminent filmmaker, Zhang Yimou, could launch a film acting career to rival his pop-star status.

Liu Ye (Prince Wan)

Born in Jilin, China, in 1978, Liu Ye graduated from the Central Academy of Drama in 2000. Since then, he has appeared in numerous films, teleplays, and stage appearances, winning the 2004 Best Actor award at the China Golden Rooster Awards for *Beauty Grass* and the 2002 Best Actor award at the Taiwan Golden Horse Awards for *Lan Yu*. He will be seen in the forthcoming *Dark Matter* directed by Chen Si-Zeng.

Ni Dahong (Imperial Doctor Jiang)

An eminent actor on the Chinese stage, in films and television, Ni Dahong graduated from The Central Academy of Drama in 1986. He is a leading player with The National Theatre Company of China, and has received two of the highest honors in Chinese theater, the Plum Blossom Award in 2000 and the Wenhua Award in 1999. His theater work includes both the Chinese and Western classical repertory. His film work includes roles in Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994) which won Grand Prize at the 47th Cannes Film Festival, and *Journey to the Western Xia Empire* (1997) directed by Lu Wei, which was a prizewinner at the 50th Locarno Int'l Film Festival, Switzerland. He has also been seen in numerous leading roles in Chinese television.

Chen Jin (Imperial Doctor's Wife)

A graduate of the Shandong College of Arts, Chen Jin has been a leading actress since the late '80s in numerous Chinese films, stage productions, and television series, for which she has been honored with many awards from Chinese cultural institutions. She will next be seen in *Luck of Love*.

Li Man (Chen)

Li Man, born in 1988, studied Folk Dance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music for 6 years. At the age of 17, Li Man was discovered by *CURSE* director Zhang Yimou while she was a student at Beijing's prestigious Central Academy of Drama and hand-picked for her role in *CURSE* as Chan, a palace herbalist who is slowly poisoning the Queen (Gong Li). The Chinese press quickly dubbed Li Man the latest "Mou Girl," short for Yimou, for her physical similarities to the director's previous actress discoveries, Gong Li and Zhang Ziyi, who both went on to become huge successes after starring in Yimou's films (Gong Li in *Red Sorghum* and *Raise the Red Lantern* and Zhang Ziyi in *The Road Home* and *House of Flying Daggers*).

Qin Junjie (Prince Yu)

Born in 1991, Qin Junjie is a student at Fu Jian Secondary School. *Curse of the Golden Flower* is his first film.

About the Filmmakers

Wu Nan (Co-Writer)

Screenwriter Wu Nan, born in 1974, graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1998 with a degree in directing and went on to a Master's in Film Studies in 2001. She now teaches at the Central Academy of drama in the Faculty of Television Broadcast. She has written many scripts for TV, including *The Scent of Women* in 2006 and *The Legend of La Jia* in 2003, and directed a short film, *Go Wherever You Wanna Go*.

Bian Zhihong (Co-Writer)

Screenwriter Bian Zhihong, born in 1974, graduated from Peking University with a Chinese Language degree in 1995, and received a Master's from the Beijing Film Academy in 2002. Prior to working on *Curse of the Golden Flower*, he has written for Chinese TV series and worked as a journalist, film critic, and in internet business development.

Bill Kong (Producer)

Bill Kong is head of Edko Films, one of Hong Kong's longest-standing independent film companies. Kong's production debut, *The Blue Kite* (1993) received multiple awards including Best Feature Film at the Hawaii and Tokyo International Film Festivals. Bill Kong's production credits include Yim Ho's *The Day the Sun Turned Cold* (1994), which won Best Picture and Best Director at the Tokyo International Film Festival, and the Academy Award® winning epic, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000 Best Picture).

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon became not only one of the biggest hits of 2000, but also the most popular foreign film in US cinematic history. It went on to earn a roaring US\$210 million at the box office and win multiple awards including four Academy Awards® in Best Foreign Language Film, Best Art Direction, Best Original Score and Best Cinematography, as well as two Golden Globe Awards in Best Foreign Language Film and Best Director.

In 2002 alone, Bill Kong produced Sun Zhou's acclaimed love story *Zhou Yu's Train*, starring Gong Li, Tian Zhuangzhuang's remake of the Chinese classic film *Springtime in a Small Town*, which won the San Marco prize at the 2002 Venice Film Festival, and Zhang Yimou's nominated martial arts drama, *Hero*.

Hero smashed box-office records when it opened in China, grossing more than US\$1.45M in a single day from 200 screens, then opened to a staggering US\$18M in the U.S. in 2004. Winner of the Alfred E. Bauer Prize for innovation at the 2003 Berlin Film Festival, *Hero* has been nominated for a host of awards, including Best Foreign Language Film at the 75th Annual Academy Awards®, Best Foreign Film at

the Golden Globe Awards®, and 14 nominations at the Hong Kong Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Actress for Maggie Cheung.

Bill Kong's 2004 projects include *Windstruck*, the first Korean film to open day and date in Korea, Hong Kong and China, and Zhang Yimou's Academy Award® nominated *House of Flying Daggers*, which premiered at the 58th Cannes Film Festival to great acclaim. 2006 has seen three Bill Kong productions released in the United States: *Fearless*, directed by Ronny Yu and starring Jet Li, Zhang Yimou's *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*, and now *Curse of the Golden Flower*.

Bill Kong Filmography

2007 Blood: The Last Vampire
2007 Lust, Caution
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2006 Fearless
2005 Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
2004 House of Flying Daggers
2004 Windstruck
2003 Zhou Yu's Train
2002 Hero
2002 Springtime in a Small Town
2000 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
1994 The Day the Sun Turned Cold
1993 The Blue Kite

Zhao Xiaoding (Director of Photography)

Zhao Xiaoding graduated from the prestigious Beijing Film Academy in 1987 with a degree in Cinematography. Zhao shot his first feature film, *Soul of the Thundering Mountain* (1987) straight out of college and has since been extremely prolific, averaging at least one film a year. His other works include the critically acclaimed *A Season of Flowers and Rain* (1999) and *Spring Subway* (2001).

In 2001, Zhao Xiaoding began his collaboration with Director Zhang Yimou, working as the Cameraman on Zhang's martial arts epic, *Hero* (2003). The two struck up a great working relationship, and when Zhang Yimou began preparations for the *House of Flying Daggers*, he quickly asked Zhao to be Director of Photography on his new film. Zhao's work on the film earned him his first Academy Award nomination for Best Cinematography.

Aside from his cinematic commitments, Zhao Xiaoding is a refined and experienced cinematographer of commercials. Zhao has shot advertising campaigns for some of the leading brands in the world including Coca Cola, Armani Perfume, Toyota and the Bank of China. More recently, Zhao Xiaoding was Director of Photography on the successful publicity film for Beijing's Olympic bid, the Shanghai Expo bid and the Beijing 2008 Logo Unveiling publicity film.

Zhao Ziaoding Filmography

2006 *Curse of the Golden Flower*
2005 *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*
2004 *House of Flying Daggers*
2003 *Hero*
2001 *Spring Subway*
1999 *A Season of Flowers and Rain*
1998 *The Prosperous Queen Mother*
1997 *Love Fool*
1996 *One Family, Two Systems*
1995 *The Substitute Husband*
1994 *The Temporary Dad*
1993 *The Divorce War*
1992 *Police Hero*
1991 *A Raging Grudge*
1990 *The Wolf and the Angel*
1987 *Soul of the Thundering Mountain*

Tony Ching Siu Tung (Action Director)

Acclaimed Hong Kong action director Tony Ching has worked with top names of the Hong Kong movie industry, including Jackie Chan in *City Hunter* (1993) and *Duel of Dragons* (1992), Chow Yun Fat in *The Affair from Nepal* (1985), and *A Better Tomorrow* (1987) and Michelle Yeoh in *Wonder Seven* (1994).

A two-time winner of Taiwan's Golden Horse Awards for his action direction in *New Dragon Inn* (1992) and *My Schoolmate, the Barbarian* (2001), Tony Ching has also been the recipient of the Best Action Choreography award for *The Affair from Nepal* (1985) and *Swordsman* (1990) at the Hong Kong Film Awards. Mr. Ching's *A Chinese Ghost Story* pioneered the craze for Chinese horror films in the late 1980s and was awarded the Best International Fantasy Film Award and Best Director for Mr. Ching, at Fantafestival. In 2001, he choreographed the Jet Li - Mel Gibson TV collaboration, *Invincible*, and the multi-award winning smash hit *Shaolin Soccer* (2001) starring HK superstar Stephen Chiao.

For his choreography of the beautiful yet thrilling fight scenes for Zhang Yimou's *Hero*, Tony Ching was awarded the Best Action Choreography award at the 22nd Hong Kong Film Awards for the third time in his career.

2006 has been a busy year for Tony Ching. Besides *Curse of the Golden Flower*, he worked as Action Director on the hit Indian action film *Krrish*. Forthcoming in 2007 are two more films for which Tony Ching served as Action Choreographer: the fantasy-adventures *In the Name of the King*, and *Dororo*.

Tony Ching Siu Tung Filmography

2007 *Dororo*
2007 *In the Name of the King*

2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2006 Krrish
2004 House of Flying Daggers
2003 Belly of the Beast
2003 Hero
2002 Naked Weapon
2001 Invincible
2001 Shaolin Soccer
2000 The Duel
1998 The Black sheep Affair
1996 Adventure King
1994 Wonder Seven
1993 Street Fighter
1993 Flying Dagger
1993 Moon Warriors
1993 City Hunter
1992 The Heroic Trio
1992 New Dragon Inn
1991 Son on the Run
1991 Swordsman II
1991 A Chinese Ghost Story III
1987 A Chinese Ghost Story
1987 A Better Tomorrow II
1986 Peking Opera Blues
1985 The Affair from Nepal
1982 Duel to the Death
1980 The Master Strikes
1980 The Spooky Bunch

Huo Tingxiao (Production Designer)

Production Designer Huo Tingxiao graduated from the Beijing Academy of Film in 1991. In the same year, he was invited to work as Production Designer on Yang Fengliang's *A Woman from North Shaanxi* (1991) as well as *Life on a String* (1991) by esteemed Fifth Generation director, Chen Kaige.

Since this auspicious beginning, Mr. Huo has worked with a string of renowned filmmakers, including He Ping in *Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker* (1993), for which Mr. Huo was awarded the prestigious Golden Rooster Award for Best Production Design. Huo Tingxiao has collaborated closely with Chen Kaige, acting as Production Designer for Chen's Academy Award® nominated *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), and Chen's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1999) for which Huo was awarded the Cannes Film Festival Technical Grand Prize for Best Art Direction.

Huo Tingxiao Filmography

2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2004 House of Flying Daggers

2003 Hero
2000 Song of Tibet
1998 Steal Happiness
1999 The Emperor and the Assassin
1997 Jie Fang Da Shi Bi
1994 Wing Chun
1993 Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker
1993 Farewell My Concubine
1991 A Woman from North Shaanxi
1991 Life on a String

Frankie Chung Chi Hang (Visual Effects Supervisor)

Frankie Chung is one of the most recognized visual effects directors in the Hong Kong film industry, with over 20 years of experience in animation design and production. He began his career as a 2D animator for one of the earliest cell animation studios in Hong Kong, and later joined Centro Digital Pictures in 1995 to establish a subsidiary specifically to foster a new group of talents for the local animation industry. In 1998, his versatile talent was proven in film as he supervised the effects for the blockbuster "A Man Called Hero", and garnered a Golden Horse Award for Best Visual Effects.

As the head of Centro's Computer Graphics department, Frankie manages a state-of-the-art studio with 150 employees and supervises various award-winning projects, including Stephen Chow's record breaking film "Kung Fu Hustle", which he was acknowledged with the Best Visual Effects kudos from both the Hong Kong Film Awards and Golden Horse Awards.

Frankie recently achieved another career milestone as he was appointed as the co-director of Centro's latest film project, "The Secret of the Magic Gourd." The whimsical family drama, filled with top notch computer animation, marks the Walt Disney Studios' first entrance into a co-production project in China.

Tao Jing (Sound Supervisor)

A veteran of the prestigious Beijing Film Academy, Tao Jing was nominated for the Best Sound award at the 8th Golden Rooster Awards for work on his debut project, Chen Kaige's *The King of Children* (1988). This proved to be an auspicious start to a career that includes work on Chen Kaige's Palme d'Or winning *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993) and Zhang Yimou's BAFTA and Cannes Grand Jury Prize winning *To Live* (1994). In 1989, Tao Jing supervised the sound for Mu Deyuan and Liang Ming's *Lonely Soul in a Black Chamber*, the first film in China to be mixed in Dolby Stereo.

A long-time collaborator of Director Zhang Yimou's, Tao Jing was awarded the Golden Reel Award for Zhang's *Shanghai Triad* in 1995, the Best Sound Award at the 22nd Hong Kong Film Awards for *Hero* (2003), and a BAFTA nomination for *House of Flying Daggers* (2004).

Tao Jing is a two-time winner of the Golden Rooster Award for Best Sound for Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1999) and *Hero* (2003). He has published widely on the subject of sound in film and is a Visiting Professor at the Beijing Film Academy.

Tao Jing Filmography

2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2005 Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
2004 House of Flying Daggers
2003 Hero
2003 Beautiful Shanghai
1999 The Emperor and the Assassin
1997 Keep Cool
1995 Shanghai Triad
1994 To Live
1993 Farewell My Concubine
1992 Morning Beijing
1991 Life on a String
1990 Oh Snow of Fragrances
1989 Lonely Soul in a Black Chamber
1988 The King of Children

Shigeru Umebayashi (Composer)

Shigeru Umebayashi's career as a professional musician began when he led the legendary new-wave rock band EX to stardom in Japan. In the early 1980s, EX was selected to be the supporting band for Eric Clapton's Japan Tour.

When EX split up in 1985, Umebayashi began writing film scores. He won immediate recognition in the same year for *Sorekara* and *Tomoyo Shizukani Nemure*, which were awarded with several music prizes including the Music Award at the Mainichi Film Contest, the Japanese Academic Music Award as well as Music Awards at the Yokohama Film Festival and the Osaka Film Festival.

Since then, Mr. Umebayashi has scored more than 30 films, among which include Morita Yoshimitu's *And Then*, Wong Kar Wai's multiple award winning *In the Mood for Love* and Carol Lai Miu Suet's critically acclaimed *Floating Landscape* (2003). Mr. Umebayashi was awarded Best Original Theme Song for Jacob Cheung Chi Leung's *Midnight Fly* at the 2001 Golden Horse Awards. More recently, his compositions have been heard in *Fearless* directed by Ronny Yu, and in Zhang Yimou's *House of Flying Daggers*.

Shigeru Umebayashi Filmography

2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2006 Fearless
2004 House of Flying Daggers

2003 Onmyoji II
2003 Floating Landscape
2002 Zhou Yu's Train
2001 Onmyoji
2001 Hikari no Ame
2001 Midnight Fly
2000 In the Mood for Love
2000 Shojo
2000 2000 AD
1998 Belle Époque
1998 Sleepless Town
1997 G4 Option Zero
1997 Watashitachi ga suki datta koto
1997 Isana no Umi
1997 Ichigo Domei
1996 Izakaya Yurei 2
1996 Shin Gokudo Kisha
1995 The Christ of Nanjing
1994 Hashirana Akan Yoake Made
1994 Kitanai Yatsu
1995 Boxer Joe
1995 Zero Woman
1994 Natural Woman
1994 Izakaya Yurei
1993 Tokapeb
1993 Nemuranai Machi Shinjuku Zame
1992 Byoin he Iko 2 Yamai ha Kikara
1992 Arihureta Ai ni Kansuru Chosa
1991 Goaisatsu
1991 Ote
1991 Yumeji
1990 Tekken
1990 Hong Kong Paradise
1988 Getting Blue in Color
1987 Kyohu no Yacchan
1986 Shinshi Domei
1986 Sorobanzuku
1985 Sorekara
1985 Tomoyo Shizukani Nemure
1983 Itsuka Darekaga Korosareru

Yee Chung Man (Costume Designer)

Yee Chung Man has worked prolifically in the Hong Kong and Chinese film industries since graduating from the Design Department of Hong Kong Polytechnic in 1974 and from New York's Parsons School of Design in 1977. He has won numerous awards for Art Direction, Costume Design, and Makeup at the Hong Kong Film Awards and Golden Horse Awards. In addition to over twenty films as Art Director, Costume and Makeup Designer, he directed *Anna Magdalena* (1998)

and *And I Hate You So* (2000). He has also directed many music and dance productions. He most recently worked as Art Director on *The Secret of the Magic Gourd*, directed by John Chu and Frankie Chung.

Yee Chung Man Filmography

As Art Director/Costume Designer:

2006 *The Secret of the Magic Gourd*
2006 *Curse of the Golden Flower*
2005 *Perhaps Love*
2004 *Three II*
2003 *Golden Chicken*
2003 *Three*
2000 *Tokyo Raiders*
1999 *Hot War*
1996 *Comrades, Almost a Love Story*
1995 *Peace Hotel*
1995 *Full Throttle*
1994 *He's a Woman, She's a Man*
1993 *C'est La Vie, Mon Cheri*
1991 *Savior of the Soul*
1991 *Once Upon a Time in China I*
1990 *Song of the Exile (1990)*
1990 *A Terra-Cotta Warrior*
1987 *A Chinese Ghost Story*
1986 *The Legend of Wisely*
1984 *Hong Kong 1941*
1982 *All the Wrong Spies*
1981 *Once Upon a Rainbow*

As Director:

2000 *And I Hate You So*
1997 *Anna Magdalena*

Cheng Long (Editor)

An Electronic Engineering graduate of the Shanghai University of Science and Technology, Cheng Long began graduate studies in Computer Science in the USA before working as a sound engineer in a news van for WPVI-TV6 in Philadelphia.

This ignited Mr. Cheng's love for motion pictures and led him to pursue a Master's degree in Film and Media Arts from Temple University, Philadelphia, followed by a course in Feature Filmmaking at the prestigious American Film Institute in 1995. Upon graduation, Cheng Long edited a series of US-based projects including *Bontoc Eulogy* (1995) which screened at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival, and *US Customs Classified* (1995) which premiered on CKAL-9.

Returning to China in 1997, Cheng Long edited the feature film, *A Time to Remember* (1998) before editing the television shows *A Hero Without a Name*

(1997-1998) and *Love Affairs in Two Generations* (2000) for China's Zhejiang TV Drama Centre and Nanjing Cable TV Station respectively. Since *Curse of the Golden Flower*, he has worked on the drama *Milk and Fashion* directed by Sherwood Hu. Cheng Long is currently a visiting scholar in the Directing Department of the Beijing Film Academy.

Cheng Long Filmography

2006 Milk and Fashion
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower
2005 Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles
2004 House of Flying Daggers
1998 A Time to Remember
1995 Bontoc Eulogy