

**STRAND  
RELEASING**

*presents*

# SATURDAY FICTION

**A FILM BY  
LOU YE**

*Starring Gong Li*

## **PRESS NOTES**

*OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Venice International Film Festival  
Toronto International Film Festival  
New York Film Festival*

Country of Origin: China  
Format: DCP/1.33/Color  
Sound: 5.1 Surround  
Running Time: 127 minutes  
Genre: Drama  
Not Rated  
In Mandarin and French with English Subtitles

### **National Press Contact:**

Carly Hildebrant  
Strand Releasing  
Phone: 310.836.7500  
[carly@strandreleasing.com](mailto:carly@strandreleasing.com)

### **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Internationally-acclaimed director Lou Ye returns with SATURDAY FICTION, an elegant, cryptic black and white thriller graced by a stunning performance from Gong Li.

## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

1941. Since the Japanese occupation, China has become a wartime intelligence battlefield for the Allies and the Axis Powers. Iconic actress Jean Yu returns to Shanghai, ostensibly to appear in the play “Saturday Fiction” directed by her former lover. But what is her true aim? To free her ex-husband? To gather intelligence for the Allied Forces? To work for her adoptive father? Or to escape from war with her lover? As she embarks on her mission, with friends ever more difficult to distinguish from undercover agents, as everything spirals out of control, Jean Yu starts to question whether to reveal what she has learned about the imminent Pearl Harbor attack.

## **DIRECTOR’S NOTE**

When I was a kid, I used to follow my parents who worked in the theater backstage at the Lyceum Theater in Shanghai. I spent a lot of interesting times there. It was also where I rubbed shoulders with actors in costume and watched them play different roles, their loves and hatreds, and their separations through life or death on stage. Then I’d see them walking off-stage and chatting in their dressing rooms. And I’d follow them again, leaving the theater, going back to their dull and ordinary real lives... It was a fantastic experience, shuttling back and forth between stories and reality. Many years later, reading “Death of Shanghai” by Hong Ying, (a novel about Shanghai’s Isolated Island period) gave me the same feeling.

The first week of December 1941 will change the history of the world – although the people of those times do not know it. Unaware of the future, they are simply living their lives as usual, following their daily routines and pursuing their goals. During Shanghai’s Isolated Island period, in and outside of the theater, on and off-stage, they are slowly approaching that unknown ‘Saturday’ which belongs to their destinies.

Saturday Fiction is a film about the destinies of different people during a time of complex world crisis. It is also a dialogue with the Saturday School, an important school in the history of Chinese contemporary literature.

*-Lou Ye, 2019*

## **LOU YE | BIOGRAPHY**

Lou ye was born to a theatrical family in Shanghai in 1965. He spent his childhood in theaters and studied at Shanghai School of Fine Arts before working as an animator at Shanghai Animation Studio. He graduated from Beijing Film Academy in 1989, majoring in directing. His films have been selected by all the major international festivals (Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Taipei Golden Horse Awards, Chinese Independent Film Festival, Asian Film Awards) and awarded numerous prizes, including the Silver Bear at the 64<sup>th</sup> Berlin Film Festival for *Blind Massage* and the Best Screenplay Prize at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Cannes Film Festival for *Spring Fever*.

## **LOU YE | FILMOGRAPHY**

**2019** *Saturday Fiction*  
**2017** *The Shadow Play*  
**2014** *Blind Massage*  
**2012** *Mystery*  
**2011** *Love and Bruises*  
**2009** *Spring Fever*  
**2006** *Summer Palace*  
**2003** *Purple Butterfly*  
**2000** *Suzhou River*  
**1993** *Weekend Lover*

## **MA YINGLI | BIOGRAPHY**

Screenwriter, director and producer Ma Yingli studied Directing at Beijing Broadcast Academy (now Communication University of China) and graduated from the Berlin German Film Academy (DFFB). Her credits as a writer and director include the feature film *Days of Miandi* and a number of documentaries including *Byebye – Hello, Nightgirl* and *Behind the Dream: a Documentary on the Shadow Play*. Since 2000, she has enjoyed a productive collaboration with director Lou Ye, working as assistant producer (*Suzhou River*), co-writer (*Summer Palace, The Shadow Play*), writer (*Blind Massage*) and writer and producer (*Saturday Fiction*).

## **SCREENWRITER / PRODUCER’S NOTE**

It was the early 90s when I first met the writer Hong Ying. I was living in Berlin and she was in the UK. I had invited some friends, poets and writers, to my place and we talked about female literature and female films. They recommended Hong Ying to me, and we called her right away. She said she would send me her books; that perhaps we should work together. At the time, I was still studying at the DFFB (Berlin German Film Academy) and I hadn't met Lou Ye, who had just graduated from Beijing Film Academy, thousands of miles away. A few years later, we met in Berlin during the post-production of *Suzhou River* and thus began a collaboration that has lasted 20 years to date.

Towards the end of 2016, Hong Ying was a regular visitor to our studio in Beijing. One day, she left us a copy of “Death of Shanghai” and asked us to read it, to see if we'd be interested in an adaptation. To be frank, at first, we didn't scrutinize the book in great detail, but the spaces of theatre and hotel, and the novel's shifts between on-stage and off-stage convinced Lou Ye of the challenge. So we said yes to Hong Ying and to our investor Ms. Chang, formerly China's preeminent talent agent. She is passionate about Lou Ye's films and has supported him unwaveringly, especially during the years of his ban, for which he remains truly grateful.

During the writing of the script, the story and structure underwent many changes, evolving from “Death of Shanghai” to *Saturday Fiction*. (The film's Chinese title is *Lyceum Theater*).

Yokomitsu Riichi was the originator of New Sensational School of both Japanese and Chinese literature in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The story of the stage play comes from his novel, “Shanghai”.

Working as the producer of *Saturday Fiction* from development and financing to completion was, for me, an unforgettable experience. As independent filmmakers, both Lou Ye and I are accustomed to taking care of everything – from script to financing, from casting to putting together the key creative team, from post-production to advising on and co-ordination of promotion and distribution – ourselves. But as the production moved on, especially when Gong Li, Mark Chao and Odagiri Joe, Pascal Greggory, Thomas Wlashiha and other excellent actors came on board, when Lou Ye requested that all filming should be on real locations, which meant we had to recreate and film the year 1941 in the heart of metropolitan Shanghai, as well as to shoot the gunplay scenes in and outside of the historical Peace Hotel, the result was the challenges of this production went way beyond our initial expectations.

-Ma Yingli, 2019

## **GONG LI | BIOGRAPHY**

As an actress, Gong Li has won numerous awards at the leading international festivals. Her debut film, *Red Sorghum* (1987), won the Golden Bear at the 38<sup>th</sup> Berlin Film Festival. In 1993, she was awarded the Best Actress Golden Phoenix for her outstanding performance in *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992), which also won the Golden Lion. The same year, *Farewell My Concubine*, in which she took the lead role, won the Palme d'Or at the 47<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival.

Gong Li is also the first Asian filmmaker to have been awarded the Kering 'Women in Motion' Award, presented by the director of the Cannes Film Festival in 2019.

In China, Gong Li has won two Golden Phoenix Awards and three Hundred Flowers Awards – the country's most prestigious cinema prizes.

Since 1997, Gong Li has served as Jury President for many international film festivals, including Berlin, Venice, Tokyo and the Taipei Golden Horse Awards, and was a member of the 50<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival jury.

## **GONG LI | SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY**

- 2019** *Saturday Fiction* | directed by Lou Ye
- 2014** *Coming Home* | directed by Zhang Yimou
- 2005** *Memoirs of a Geisha* | directed by Rob Marshall
- 2004** *2046* | directed by Wong Kar-wai
- 1993** *Farewell My Concubine* | directed by Chen Kaige
- 1992** *The Story of Qiu Ju* | directed by Zhang Yimou

## CAST

**Jean Yu**  
**Tan Na**  
**Furuya Saburo**  
**Frederic Hubert**  
**Saul Speyer**  
**Bai Yunshang**  
**Kajiwara**  
**Mo Zhiyin**  
**Ni Zeren**

Gong Li  
Mark Chao  
Joe Odagiri  
Pascal Gregory  
Tom Wlaschiha  
Huang Xiangli  
Ayumu Nakajima  
Wang Chuanjun  
Zhang Songwen

## CREW

**Directed by**  
**Screenplay**  
**Original Writers**

**Director of Photography**  
**Production Designer**  
**Sound Designer**  
**Costume Designer**  
**Editors**

**Visual Effects Designer**  
**Line Producer**  
**Producer**  
**Produced by**

**Production Companies**

**International Sales**

Lou Ye  
Ma Yingli  
Hong Ying  
Yokomitsu Riichi  
Zeng Jian  
Zhong Cheng  
Fu Kang  
Linlin May  
Lou Ye  
Feng Shan Yu Lin  
Wang Lei  
Xu Le  
Ma Yingli  
Chang Jihong, Lou Ye, Dong Peiwen,  
Wu Yi and Zhang Jin, Huang Xin,  
Chang Jihong, Li Xinyue  
Qianyi Times, Yingfilms, Bai An Films, Tianyi Movie & TV  
And Zhuoran Films, UEP, Qianyiyuan, Fanyu Media

Wild Bunch International

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For more information, please contact Carly Hildebrant at [carly@strandreleasing.com](mailto:carly@strandreleasing.com)

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