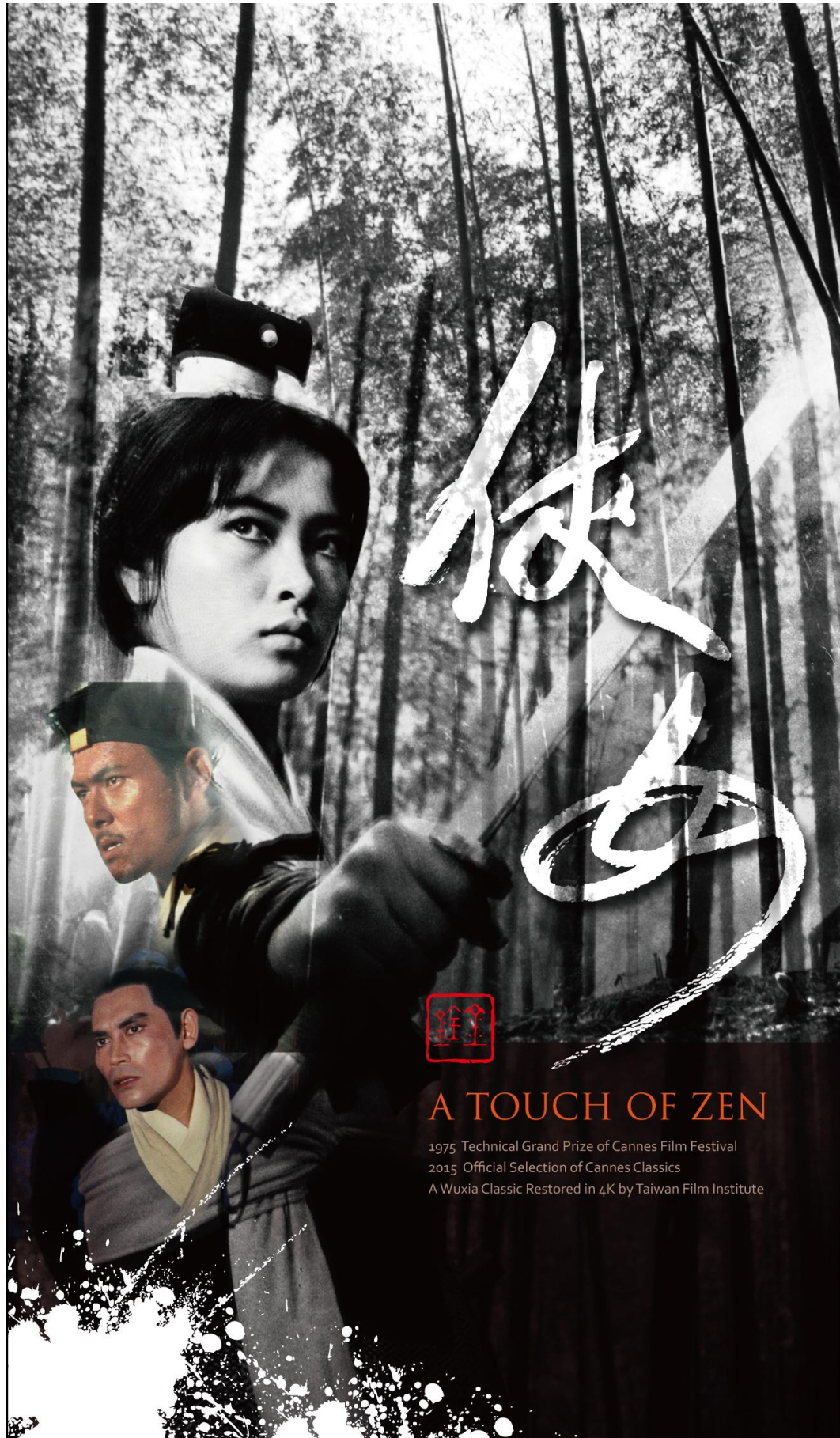


Press kit for the newly restored film directed by King HU
2015 Cannes Classic selection



A TOUCH OF ZEN

1975 Technical Grand Prize of Cannes Film Festival
2015 Official Selection of Cannes Classics
A Wuxia Classic Restored in 4K by Taiwan Film Institute

A TOUCH OF ZEN (Taiwan, 1971)

SYNOPSIS

The film is adapted from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, a collection of legendary and supernatural tales written by Pu Songling and published in 1740. In the story, a young scholar named Gu lives near a rundown fort rumored to be haunted. One day, he befriends Yang, a mysterious beauty hiding inside the fort. After a night of passion with Gu, Yang reveals that her father, an honorable official, was executed by the nefarious but powerful Eunuch Wei. Now, she is also hounded by Wei's agents, who attempt to eradicate all trace of her family. Gu then finds himself caught up in her struggle to survive. When the agents attack the fort, he devises brilliant tricks to crush the siege. Though in love with Gu, Yang leaves him after the battle to become a Buddhist nun, trying to leave her past behind. However, after realizing that Gu is in danger, Yang and her mentor set out to protect him. The army commander sent by Eunuch Wei confronts the two, and a battle of carnage between good and evil ensues...

PRINCIPAL CREDIT

Director / Script writer: King HU

Producer:

SHA Yung-fong, HSIA-WU Liang Fang

Cinematographer: HUA Hui-ying

Editor: King HU, WANG Chin-chen

Music: WU Ta-chiang, Lo Ming-Tao

Starring: HSU Feng, SHIH Chun, BAI

Ying, TIEN Peng, Roy CHIAO Hung



PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original Title: 俠女 XIA NU

Genres: Wuxia, Action, Classic

Year of Production: 1971

Country of production: Taiwan

Year of Restoration: 2014

Aspect ratio: 1:2.35

Running time: 180 minutes

Original language: Mandarin

Subtitles: Mandarin, English, French

Original shooting format: 35mm color

Screening format:

DCP, HDcamSR, HDcam

Production company:

Union Film Company

Awards:

1972 Golden Horse Awards

- Best Art Direction (Color Film)

1975 Cannes Film Festival

- Technical Grand Prize



DIRECTOR

King HU



Born in Beijing in 1932, King HU moved to Hong Kong at the age of 18 and started work as an illustrator for film advertisements. In 1954 he made his acting debut in the film *Humiliation for Sale*, and in 1958, through director LI Han-hsiang, he joined Shaw Brothers as an actor, scriptwriter, and assistant director. In 1963 HU was first assistant director to LI on the film *The Love Eterne*, and the following year his first directorial effort, *The Story of Sue San*. This was followed in 1965 by WW2 film *Sons of the Good Earth*. 1966 saw HU release his first wuxia film, *Come Drink with Me*, marking the early days of HU's characteristic style in which characters, settings, and even martial arts choreography all take strong influence from Peking opera. *Come Drink with Me* was a major factor in the contemporary rise of wuxia films, and the embryonic forms of elements of HU's later movies were already visible.

The 1967 *Dragon Inn* proved to be a blockbuster, setting box-office records in Taiwan, Korea, and the Philippines, and the film would prove to have a broad and lasting influence. The follow-up to *Dragon Inn* would finally hit screens in 1971, after three years of filming. *A Touch of Zen* would go on to take the Technical Grand Prize award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975, propelling HU onto the world stage, and the bamboo forest duel scene became a classic scene and an indelible contribution to cinema. The 1979 films *Raining in the Mountain* and *Legend of the Mountain* demonstrated Hu's unwillingness to be pigeonholed as simply a wuxia director. The former served as the opening movie of the 3rd Hong Kong Film Festival and the latter won the Best Director and Best Art Direction awards at the 16th Golden Horse Awards.

In 1981, HU's film *The Juvenizer*—entirely self funded and self shot—was his first comedy and his only contemporary film, making it something different. After *The Wheel of Life* (1983), HU would step out of the limelight until 1990's *The Swordsman*, for which HU made a comeback at the request of TSUI Hark. HU was involved in costuming, styling, and set design on the film, including setting up a massive set in Xitou, Taiwan. The 1992 film *Painted Skin* would be HU's last. That same year, he received a lifelong achievement award from the Hong Kong Directors Association.

Filmography

1964 《玉堂春》 The Story of Sue San
1965 《大地兒女》 Sons of Good Earth
1966 《大醉俠》 Come Drink with Me
1967 《龍門客棧》 Dragon Inn
1970 《俠女》 A Touch of Zen
1970 《喜怒哀樂》第二段『怒』
“Anger” in Four Moods

1973 《迎春閣之風波》 The Fate of Lee Khan
1975 《忠烈圖》 The Valiant Ones
1979 《空山靈雨》 Raining in the Mountain
1979 《山中傳奇》 Legend of the Mountain
1981 《終身大事》 The Juvenizer
1983 《天下第一》 All the King's Men
1983 《大輪迴》 The Wheel of Life
1990 《笑傲江湖》 The Swordsman
1992 《畫皮之陰陽法王》 Painted Skin

CAST

HSU Feng



HSU Feng's first film was King HU's 1967 *Dragon Inn*. The following year she began filming for *A Touch of Zen*, playing the lead female role with a combination of icy beauty, fierce will, and powerful heroism. *A Touch of Zen* would go on to win the Technical Grand Prize at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, and Hsu's performance in the film received critical acclaim not only at Cannes, but around the world. During her five years (1966-1971) with Union Film Company, Hsu appeared in five films; from 1971 to 1975, she starred in over 20 films, including *The Fate of Lee Khan* (1973) and *The Valiant Ones* (1975). In the former she played a steely Mongolian princess, dignified, imposing, and ruthless. This was possibly her greatest performance in a wuxia film, although her lead role in 1976's *Assassin* earned her the Best Leading Actress award at the 13th Golden Horse Awards. That same year, her role as Weicheng, the wife of famed Nationalist Chinese military officer Xie Jinyuan, in the film *Eight Hundred Heroes* earned her a Special Award for Acting Technique at that year's Asian Film Festival. 1980's *The Pioneers* saw her earn another award, this time Best Leading Actress in a Feature Film at the 17th Golden Horse Awards. Hsu's other films include *Raining in the Mountain*, *Legend of the Mountain*, and *The Everlasting Glory*.

Selected Filmography

1967 《龍門客棧》 Dragon Inn	1977 《劍、花、煙雨江南》 The Kill with Intrigue
1970 《龍城十日》 A City Called Dragon	1979 《山中傳奇》 Legend of the Mountain
1971 《俠女》 A Touch of Zen	1979 《空山靈雨》 Raining in the Mountain
1973 《迎春閣之風波》 The Fate of Lee Khan	1980 《源》 The Pioneers
1974 《英烈千秋》 The Everlasting Glory	1980 《碧血黃花》 Magnificent 72
1974 《忠烈圖》 The Valiant Ones	1980 《古寧頭大戰》 The Battle of Ku-Ning-Tou
1975 《女兵日記》 The Chinese Amazons	1980 《大地勇士》 The Frogman
1975 《近水樓臺》 First Come; First Love	1981 《英雄對英雄》 The Last Duel
1976 《八百壯士》 800 Heroes	1981 《廣東先生對響馬》 Mr. Kwong Tung and the Robber
1977 《俠士、鏢客、殺手》 Swordsman, Protector, Assassin	

SHIH Chun



SHIH Chun joined Union Film Company in 1965, and was a leading man from his first film appearance. His role in King HU's *Dragon Inn* (1967) made him into a bona fide celebrity and the new rising star of wuxia films. With his role in *A Touch of Zen*, SHIH cemented his place as part of HU's regular cast. A frequent player in a number of wuxia films of the time, SHIH specialized in cool, calm, rational characters. In 1978 he traveled to South Korea with HU to appear in *Raining in the Mountain* and *Legend of the Mountains*, and in 1982 his role in *The Wheel of Life* earned him the Best Actor gong at the 28th Asia Pacific Film Festival.

SHIH generally played calm, controlled, and unique figures, and was known to be very selective about scripts without HU's name attached. As a result, his filmography is comparatively smaller than those of many of his contemporaries. He has previously served as director of the Taipei Show Business Union, and continues to make occasional appearances on television, and is currently chairman of the King HU Foundation. In 2003, SHIH was part of a short film by renowned director TSAI Ming-liang, entitled *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. He also has a guest appearance in HOU Hsiao-Hsien's new wuxia epic *The Assassin* (2015)

BAI Ying



BAI Ying joined Union Film Company in 1966, and during his five-year tenure there, he was part of five movies, including *A Touch of Zen*, *The Grand Passion*, and *Black Invitation*. His debut film performance, in *Dragon Inn*, immediately made a star of him, and from there out BAI was a frequent star of wuxia films, always proving a standout whether he was on the side of good or evil. His role in *Dragon Inn* as formidable martial artist, court eunuch, and antagonist Cao Shaoqin, with his unique combination of a youthful face and white hair, spawned many imitators. In *A Touch of Zen* he played the flip side of Cao, the upright Ming-dynasty general Shi Wenqiao, helping the Donglin movement in their resistance against the court eunuchs.

From 1966 through 1977, BAI performed in over 20 films, most of them wuxia films, with the more well-known including King HU's films *The Fate of Lee Khan* (1973) and *The Valiant Ones* (1975). In 1970 he joined Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers, traveling there to star in *The Eunuch* for the studio. This marked the start of frequent trips between Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1977, BAI's turn as a villain in 3D wuxia film *Dynasty* earned him the Best Supporting Actor award at the Golden Horse Awards. BAI Ying became one of the preeminent actors of the Hong Kong/Taiwan film world, known for his ability to play hero or villain, his agility, and his stern appearance.

KEY CREW

Executive Producer: SHA Yung-fong

In 1953, SHA Yung-fong formed distributor/promoter Union Film Company together with HSIA Wei-tang, CHANG Chiu-yin, and CHANG Tao-jan. In 1956 SHA and HSIA set up International Films, of which SHA was general manager. The links between the two companies quickly led to people in the entertainment industry referring to them by the joint name International-Union.

International-Union would go on to enjoy a 30-year history in the Taiwanese film industry. 1965 saw SHA set up his own studio in Danan, Taoyuan, and setting to signing up actors. The company gave Union a huge boost, and the studio soon set about establishing a production department that attracted top-flight talent from Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1967, Union's reputation was sealed with King HU's *Dragon Inn*, and then pushed to international prominence with *A Touch of Zen*. Four years later, SHA established International Film Processing, and together the studio and processing company formed the Taiwan Filmmaking Trade Association, with SHA the chairman. SHA and partners' International-Union efforts started with efforts to promote and develop Taiwanese cinema in a market that was at the time flooded with Japanese movies, producing well-received films that would become classics, including international hits like *Dragon Inn* and *A Touch of Zen*. SHA and his partners undoubtedly were major contributors to the blossoming of Taiwanese cinema.



Cinematographer: HUA Hui-ying

Born in Shanghai in 1925, HUA Hui-ying joined the Ministry of National Defense run China Movie Studio as an apprentice in 1946, working as a darkroom assistant and laying a foundation in cinema. In 1951, HUA became a cinematographer, with his first film being 1953's *Robbery in the Dust*. During the 1950s and 1960s, HUA was responsible for cinematography on most of the studio's black and white films, playing an important role in the early development of Taiwanese cinema. In 1964 he oversaw shooting on his first color film, *Oyster Girl*. Four years later, he joined Union Film Company as a cinematographer, director, and deputy studio head. Starting from 1967, he worked with King HU on *A Touch of Zen*, a three-year shoot that resulted in a film that won the Technical Grand Prize at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, and with it international acclaim. After leaving the cinematic world in 1971, HUA joined CTS to head up their film section, and then in 1985 he formed the Chinese Society of Cinematographers to help promote the technical aspect of film industry in Taiwan. In 1989 HUA served as director of photography on three 360-degree movies, *The Dream Comes True*, *Land of Splendors*, and *The Three Gorges*.

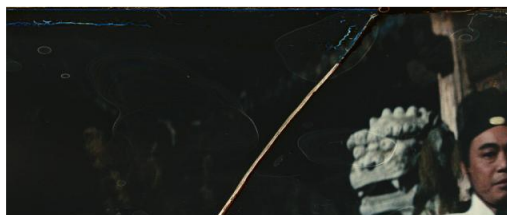


RESTORATION DETAILS

The restoration project is to preserve the original material of *A Touch of Zen* by digitization in 4K resolution, and the restoration of the film in 4k by producing a set of digital elements. L'Imagine Ritrovata film laboratory received *A Touch of Zen* material from Taiwan Film Institute on June 30th 2014; this material consisted of 35mm color negatives and soundtrack negatives, 18 reels, 17,716 feet. The original film negative is generally in good preservation condition, shrinkage is very light. The most serious problem were a few tears that the lab repaired using clear tape.



The Digital Restoration of *A Touch of Zen* was carried out using professional soft wares dedicated to film restoration. The film was not particularly warped or unstable, but it was covered in stains and colored spots of various size, and full of splices, so the lab used strong dust removal filter and spent a lot of time checking frame by frame to eliminate unwanted artefacts. A heavy task was then the removal of splices: being a movie with fast editing, the element is full of close splices on very fast movement. The work was done with manual reconstruction of the damaged part of the frame with clone and interpolation tools, adjusting for every frame luminance and grain. VFX is also involved in the process to remove the dark spots and scratches, or to reconstruct certain damaged frames.



Before the work with VFX



After the work with VFX

During the color correction process, the original negative scan allowed the lab a wider definition and greater detail richness. There was no vintage copy available to be used as a reference for color restoration. A positive print of 1992 preserved at the Taiwan Film Institute was consulted. Research results on *Dragon Inn* provided by TFI, and the lab's previous restoration experience on this film has helped the lab execute the color-correction of *A Touch of Zen*, which is shot by the same director and film crew. These pieces of information provide deeper insight on the film's visual expressivity, which attains the effect of a grand photographic realism through each and every visual element: set design and lights, costumes and the "dusty" look, makeup and, last but not least, cinemascope format.



Before Color Correction



After Color Correction



L'Immagine Ritrovata is a highly specialised film restoration laboratory. It was born and developed thanks to the good work of the Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna, with which the laboratory is in continual close collaboration. L'Immagine Ritrovata is an international point of reference in the field, due to its development of methodologies, its constant research work and the vast range of its activities in the restoration of world cinematographic heritage. The equipment with which the laboratory is furnished - facilities that include all workflows, from 4K to photochemical - is at the forefront of technological innovation and is designed for the restoration of film from every cinematic age.



Taiwan Film Institute (TFI) is a foundation set up by the Ministry of Culture on July 28, 2014. It was upgraded from the Chinese Taipei Film Archive (CTFA), which had thirty-four years of history before it was replaced by TFI. One important mission of TFI is to preserve Taiwan and Chinese films. TFI now has close to 15,000 Taiwan and Chinese film titles in its collection and is vigorously undertaking the important task of digital restoration.

Though film preservation and restoration are still TFI's core missions, TFI will also play a significant role in the international promotion of Taiwan cinema. Three new departments, the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) Office, the Education & Promotion Department, and the Overseas Market Department have been set up. The expansion manifests that TFI is shouldering the important task of broadening the international visibility of Taiwan cinema and documentary.

For rights licensing and international sales of our restored films, please contact:

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