

# Nanjing East Road

Taiwan / USA

Arvin CHEN



Genre: Romantic Comedy  
Format: 35mm  
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:  
US\$ 1,000,000 (HK\$ 7,800,000)

Producers:  
LEE In-Ah  
LUI Oi-Leng

Writing Credit:  
Arvin CHEN

Production Company:  
greenskyfilms

HAF Goals:  
Funds, Co-producers,  
Sales agents, Pre-sales

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## INTRODUCTION

This film is about the central conflict between ambition and love, set against the backdrop of the economic boom of the “Four Asian Tigers” (Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan) - a transitional period that saw Asia open up to the Western world, while developing at an alarming rate, similar to modern day China. *Nanjing East Road* satirizes contemporary capitalism with a mixture of romance, humor and tragedy set during the Taiwanese economic miracle.

## SYNOPSIS

Taipei, 1981. The middle of the Taiwan Miracle. A whole new world has suddenly emerged and with it a generation of young men and women obsessed with financial success. Among them are Weiming and Yuluen, two ambitious young sales representatives who work for one of the thousands of trading companies that have popped up all over the island. Armed with rudimentary English and an assortment of creative scams, these kids spend their days connecting foreign buyers with local manufacturers, earning a substantial commission in the process. But while Yuluen wants women and money, Weiming has more complicated motivations. Years ago, he was in love with Xiao-Rong whose family disapproved of his background and forced their break-up.

One day while waiting for their call list (illegally obtained information about foreign buyers), their boss, Mr. GOK, brings in a new batch of sales girls. Yuluen is smitten with Pei, while Weiming finds her privileged upbringing and education (she speaks perfect English) off putting. However, he reluctantly agrees to let her accompany them on their sales runs across the city. It's on one of these runs that they meet Jim and Aaron, purchase reps from an American department store chain and Yuluen hatches a scheme for him and Weiming to set up their own trading outfit behind Mr. GOK's back and milk this foreign cash cow.

Weiming is hesitant, but then he runs into Xiao-Rong who has moved to Taipei for school. Determined to win her back, he agrees to Yuluen's plan and they embark on a mission to wine and dine Aaron and Jim, who demand all kinds of kickbacks, while poaching Mr. GOK's manufacturers who also have their own Byzantine terms and conditions. In the middle of all this, Weiming embarks on his own wine and dine campaign to win back Xiao-Rong. But on a business trip to Singapore, Weiming forges a romantic connection with Pei, instead.

The clock is ticking, the Americans haven't committed to a deal and any minute Mr. GOK will find out what's been going on. Pei, who has been sleeping with Aaron, discovers that the Americans have no intention of doing a deal but when she tells Weiming he loses his temper and crushes her dreams in return, telling her that her American Romeo has a wife back home. Pei is crushed and leaves. Mr. GOK discovers their plan and fires them. Weiming realizes that it was Pei he wanted all along, but Aaron tells him that she has become a flight attendant and could be anywhere in the world by now.

Months later, Weiming is selling scooters and taking English classes while Yuluen is working for another trading company. Weiming goes to the airport every night trying to spot Pei at the international terminal and, at long last, he finally sees her in a group of China Airline stewardesses. He confesses his feelings for her, but she just keeps on walking through the departure gate. Dejected, he watches her plane take off and then, after a few minutes, she reappears next to him.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*Nanjing East Road* began with my fascination for 1980's Asia during the economic boom of the “Four Asian Tigers.” Coming from a multicultural background, I'm especially interested in stories of intersecting cultures and this era seemed rife with possibilities for great drama. The world of our film is Taipei during the early 1980's, an absurd city of high rise office buildings, business hotels, western-style restaurants, piano bars and lounges.

I've always wanted to make a film dealing with the central conflict between ambition and love, set against a backdrop of economic flux - the greatest example being Billy WILDER's *The Apartment*. Though it's important that the film addresses the effects of the era's rapid economic development and its implications for modern Asia, the core of the film is the emotional development of the young Taiwanese men and women trying to find a place for themselves in this fast-changing society.

## DIRECTOR

Arvin CHEN is a Chinese-American filmmaker based in Taiwan. He grew up in the Bay Area, but moved to Taipei to apprentice with renowned Taiwanese filmmaker Edward YANG (*Yi Yi, A Brighter Summer Day*). In 2006, his short film, *Mei*, won the Silver Bear at the 57<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival, as well as honors from the Director's Guild of America and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. He recently completed production on his first feature film, *Au Revoir Taipei*, which was produced by Wim WENDERS and was selected for both the 2007 Pusan Promotion Plan as well as L'Atelier de Cannes in 2008, the film premiered at the 60<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival.

## PRODUCERS

LEE In-Ah is a producer based in Los Angeles and Cologne. Prior to establishing LeeLee Films with writer/director Grace LEE, she was head of production at Reverse Angle Productions, owned by Wim WENDERS and his partner, Peter SCHWARTZKOPFF. She was production executive on WENDERS' *Soul of a Man*, and the executive producer at Wim WENDERS Productions for commercials and music videos for clients such as Audi, Barilla and Afri-Cola. Her producing credits include *Don't Come Knocking*, starring and written by Sam SHEPARD and directed by Wim WENDERS and *Land of Plenty* also directed by WENDERS, as well as Grace LEE's *Best of the Worst* and *The Grace Lee Project*. Her upcoming projects include *In the Miso Soup* with Wim WENDERS, *Whirrrrrr* by award winning cinematographer Phedon PAPAMICHAEL, and *Letter to Matschek* with Niels MUELLER.

LUI Oi-Leng is currently based in London with AV Pictures Limited, where she handles international film sales to key European and Asian territories. She was previously Head of Distribution at Cathay-Keris Films, the film distribution arm of Cathay Organization - one of the largest cinema circuits in Singapore and Malaysia. At Cathay, Oi-Leng was also responsible for the re-launch, marketing and programming of The Picturehouse - Singapore's first and only arthouse cinema - and she also managed the Cathay Classics film library of 400 titles, seeking sales, distribution and remake opportunities. Prior to joining the film industry, Oi-Leng was a consultant with McKinsey and Co. and she graduated with an Anthropology degree from Princeton University. Oi-Leng is a producer of Arvin CHEN's first feature film, *AU REVOIR TAIPEI*, which premiered at the 60<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival in 2010.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

greenskyfilms was founded in 2006 by producers LEE In-Ah, Philipp STEFFENS, Lynn SCHMITZ, and Thomas BRETTSCHEIDER. The associates of greenskyfilms are developing several television series and films for German television as well as international feature and documentary films. With projects set in Germany, France, Canada, Taiwan, Greece and Africa, they specialize in international co-productions and work with writers and directors including Wim WENDERS, IM Sang-soo, Phedon PAPAMICHAEL and Dominique DERUDDERE. They also engage in television design, high-end motion graphics and corporate film production.