

# The Arrival

Singapore

## TAN Pin-pin



Genre: Drama  
Format: HD  
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:  
US\$ 360,000 (HK\$ 2,808,000)  
Funds Secured:  
US\$ 36,000 (HK\$ 280,800)

Producer:  
TAN Pin-pin

Writing Credits:  
TAN Pin-pin  
Alfian SA'AT

Production Company:  
BFG Media

HAF Goals:  
Funds, Sales agents

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Arrival* focuses on the journey of a woman, Aishah, who, together with her husband, has always wanted children. When they eventually find a baby to adopt after a long wait, Aishah discovers that she is unable to love the baby like everyone else seems to do so effortlessly. She is wracked with guilt. This film is about the journey she takes to learn the meaning of love, grace and compassion.

## SYNOPSIS

Aishah and her husband receive a call in the middle of the night letting them know that the baby they have been waiting for has been born. Aishah and her mother visit the single mother at the hospital to collect their baby. Checking for deformities and finding none, they take the baby home after paying off the birth mother.

The little stranger has arrived unexpectedly, and it throws the neat life of this yuppie couple into disarray. The jubilant adoptive father is sent out to buy baby supplies and furniture is moved to make space for a borrowed cot. At night, in bed, while the new father makes grand plans for his new son, Aishah remains reserved, unable to fathom why she feels so distant. This is the kid they have yearned for so long, a baby now in bed, sleeping soundly beside them. And yet...

Does she have reservations because she is worried about the baby's parents, because they are too poor, too uneducated, too lower class? Is the baby sensing her resistance too and crying harder because of that?

She consoles herself that mothering takes some getting used to. And even if she cannot muster up the ability to be "motherly", she can at least be "responsible." She has to ensure that their baby is fed, burped and cleaned. And so that is what she tries to do, going through the motions of mothering.

This is how Aishah begins this journey, one she never imagined that she would take, into parenthood. Call it a tango between a baby and his adoptive mother as they get to know and love one another.

It takes a certain grace to accept and love. Along the way, Aishah tries to abandon the baby. She tries to have her own. She tries returning the baby to his birth mother only to find that she is too poor to feed another mouth.

In the end, after a zigzag journey, she decides to keep the baby. It may appear that she now needs him more than he needs her.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

There is much curiosity surrounding adoption. The headlines are full of celebrity adoptions (Angelina JOLIE, Madonna, Katherine HEIGL) and one cannot help but wonder: how do Cambodian Maddox and Malawian David fit into their new families? What if one just does not take to their adopted baby?

Using this question as a starting point, *The Arrival* taps into the vein of curiosity people have about adoptions, a vein rich with narrative possibilities and dramas. Everyone knows someone who has been adopted but what is it really like? Is it possible to love a child that is not one's own? What does it mean to "love" anyway? Is the interdependency and commitment to the members that make up one's family "love?" How important are blood relations?

This film closely examines the ties that bind, not just between Aishah and the baby, but between the birth mother and her baby, between Aishah and her mother, between grandmothers and their grandchildren. It teases out the material in the ties that bind.

## DIRECTOR

TAN Pin-pin was born and raised in Singapore and is best known for her groundbreaking documentaries *Moving House*, *Singapore GaGa* and *Invisible City*. Her films have screened in Rotterdam, Berlin and Pusan, winning over 20 awards, most recently for *Invisible City*. She got her start as an assistant director of television dramas. *The Arrival* is her first feature film.

## PRODUCER

See above.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

BFG Media was founded by TAN Pin-pin to produce *Moving House*, which was the first Discovery Channel project to be entirely conceived and produced by Singaporeans. It went on to win the Student Academy

Award for Best Documentary, as well as several other awards. In 2001, it was the most viewed Singaporean documentary in the world. BFG Media was also involved in the successful production and distribution of *Singapore GaGa* and *Invisible City*. Working with the Art House in Singapore, it orchestrated the first theatrical release of a Singaporean documentary, which went on to enjoy an unprecedented sold-out, seven-week run.