

Press kit for the newly restored film directed by King HU
2014 Cannes Classics selection



DRAGON INN (Taiwan, 1967)

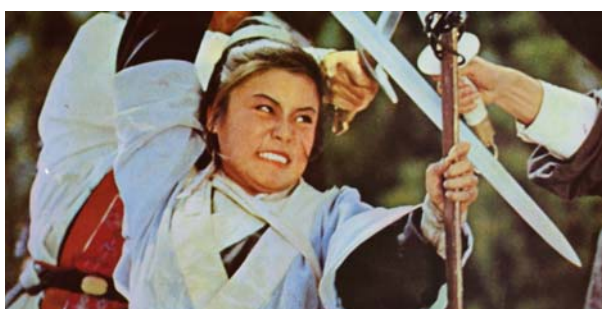
Synopsis

It is the middle of the Ming dynasty, and the loyal and upright Minister of Defense, Yu Qian, has been executed by the emperor's chief eunuch, Cao Shaoqin, a formidable swordsman. Yu's children have been sentenced to exile from China, but as they travel toward the empire's western border, Cao dispatches two of his top agents from the secret police—known as the East Espionage Chamber—to kill them. Having reached Dragon Inn, located in the desolate lands near the border, the agents and their henchmen prepare an ambush.

Meanwhile, wandering swordsman Xiao Shaozi has also found his way to the Inn, followed by two other young swordsmen, the Zhu brothers. Suspecting the three were plotting to rescue the Yu children, the agents trick the newcomers into a fight in the dark of the night. With the help of innkeeper Wu Ning, formerly one of Minister Yu's men, the trio launch a heroic rescue mission to stop the agents, save the children, and kill Cao.

Principal Credit

Director / Script writer: King HU
Producer: SHA Yung-fong
Cinematographer: HUA Hui-ying
Editor: CHEN Hung-min
Music: CHOW Lan-ping
Starring: SHANG KUAN Ling-Feng, SHI Jun,
BAI Ying, HSU Feng



Production Information

Original Title: 龍門客棧
Genres: Wuxia, classic
Date of Production: 1967
Country of production: Taiwan
Date of Restoration: 2013
Aspect ratio: 1:2.35
Running time: 111 minutes
Original language: Mandarin
Subtitles: Mandarin, English, French
Original shooting format: 35mm color
Screening format: DCP, HDcamSR,
HDcam.
Production company: Union Film
Company
Awards: Best Screenplay (won) and Best
Feature Film (runner-up), 1968 Golden
Horse Awards



Contacts

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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 Mountains* 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	1975 《忠烈圖》 The Valiant Ones
1965 《大地兒女》 Sons of the Good Earth	1979 《山中傳奇》 Legend of the Mountain
1966 《大醉俠》 Come Drink with Me	1979 《空山靈雨》 Raining in the Mountain
1967 《龍門客棧》 Dragon Inn	1981 《終身大事》 The Juvenizer
1970 《俠女》 A Touch of Zen	1983 《天下第一》 All the King's Men
1970 《喜怒哀樂》第二段『怒』 Four Moods (Anger sequence)	1983 《大輪迴》 The Wheel of Life
1973 《迎春閣之風波》 The Fate of Lee Khan	1990 《笑傲江湖》 The Swordsman
	1992 《畫皮之陰陽法王》 Painted Skin

Lead Cast



SHANG KUAN Ling-Feng

SHANG KUAN joined Union Film Company in 1966, and the following year landed a lead role in King Hu's *Dragon Inn*. The success of the film propelled SHANG KUAN to stardom, with her and *Dragon Inn* co-star HSU Feng becoming Union's preeminent ladies of wuxia. In addition to appearing in movies, SHANG KUAN pursued her study of the martial arts, earning second-*dan* belts in both karate and taekwondo, making her a perfect fit for the wuxia films that accounted for so much of her work. In 1973, she appeared in Lo Wei's *Back Alley Princess*, earning the Best Leading Actress award at the 11th Golden Horse Awards. SHANG KUAN was at her most prolific between 1975 and 1978, including the popular *18 Bronzemen* series on which she worked with director Joseph Kuo. Later, she traveled to the United States to study mass communication. On her return to Taiwan, she made a brief comeback in film and television before retiring from the entertainment world in 1981. Today, SHANG KUAN is a taekwondo teacher in the United States.



SHI Jun

SHI Jun 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 1970 role in *A Touch of Zen*, SHI cemented his place as part of HU's regular cast. A frequent player in a number of wuxia films of the time, SHI 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 Mountain*, and in 1982 his role in *The Wheel of Life* earned him the Best Actor gong at the 28th Asia Pacific Film Festival.

SHI 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, continues to make occasional appearances on television, and is currently chairman of the King HU Foundation. In 2003, SHI was part of a short film by renowned director TSAI Ming-liang, entitled *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.



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 to the territory 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.



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; between 1971 to 1975, she appeared 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 *Everlasting Glory*.

Key Crew



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. Union Film Company would go on to enjoy a 30-year history in the Taiwan 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 1970's *A Touch of Zen*. Four years later, SHA established International Film Laboratory Ltd., and together the studio and processing company formed the Taiwan Filmmaking Trade Association, with SHA the chairman.

SHA and partners' Union Film Company efforts started with efforts to promote and develop Taiwancinema 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*. Their efforts helped train many of Taiwan's preeminent cinematic figures, while the trade association protected their livelihoods. 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. In 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 side of film in

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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*.

Editor: CHEN Hung-min

Editor and director CHEN Hung-min became one of Taiwan's earliest fully homegrown cinematic talents when he joined the industry in 1950 at Nongjiao Co. In 1956, CHEN and several other editors—including SHEN Yekang, WANG Jinchen, and WANG Qiyang—joined forces to create a workgroup called Nan Fang Ren.

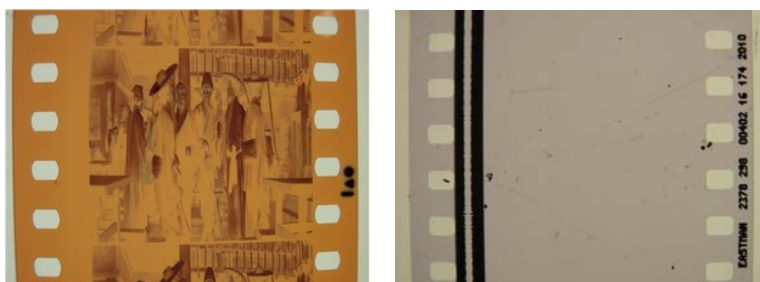
In 1963 CHEN traveled to Japan to train with Japanese companies Toho and Toei, learning special effects and film art. After working as editor on the blockbuster wuxia film *Dragon Inn*, CHEN went on to become a director himself, making his first Mandarin-language film *A Valiant Villain* in 1969.

Music: CHOW Lan-ping

CHOW Lan-ping joined Shaw Brothers in 1963, working with director LI Han-hsiang on the Huangmei opera film *The Love Eterne*, creating the score and soundtrack. After *The Love Eterne*, CHOW continued to focus on creating Huangmei-style themes and tracks, some of which remain classics to this day. *The Love Eterne* received several awards at the 1963 Golden Horse Awards, including Best Music. In 1969 and 1970 CHOW's work for *From the Highway* and *Boat Girl* earned him further Golden Horse awards for Best Music. CHOW's work on *Dragon Inn* is spectacular, combining classical Chinese music, religious music, and modern percussion to create a score as spectacular as the visuals.

Restoration Details

L'Immagine Ritrovata film laboratory received *Dragon Inn* material from the Chinese Taipei Film Archive.



The subject of this project is the preservation of the original material of *Dragon Inn* by digitization in 4K resolution, and the restoration of the film in 4k by producing a set of digital elements. The original film negative is generally in good preservation condition. The restoration of *Dragon Inn* was aimed at solving the main issues : flickering, tramlines, major dirt and scratches and all splice-marks, jittering, tilting and in general instable image. The only very tricky part was a tear going along 7 frames in reel 2, that was solved with manual clone reconstruction and luminance adjustment. Due to the high number of scratches, a final speckle filter was applied, for a wet-gate scratch removal effect without creating many single artifacts. There was no vintage copy available

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to be used as a reference for color restoration. The notes provided by the Taipei Film Archive and the research carried out on the film were key information for this task. The condition of the sound positive was excellent. Only a slight cross modulation distortion was present, due to image spread (an effect caused by wrong exposure of the print). This required an extra high-frequencies work.

Chinese Taipei Film Archive

Up till 1979, there was no organization responsible for collecting, restoring, preserving and researching on films made in Taiwan. Most films made in 1930s and 1940s were damaged or lost, this makes the research of Taiwan film history even more difficult. In 1979, Government Information Office recognized the importance to salvage film heritage and founded the Film Library under the Motion Picture Development Foundation of R. O. C. Later, to emphasize its function of preserving film culture heritage, the Film Library was upgraded as the Chinese Taipei Film Archive (CTFA) in 1989. CTFA is supported by the government in budget and the archive's operation is supervised by the government. The plan for the future is to upgrade the Chinese Taipei Film Archive to the national film institute.

L'Immagine Ritrovata

Film restoration & Conservation

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.

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