

## BFI announces new publication 'Electric Shadows: A Century of Chinese Cinema'



**A lavishly illustrated new BFI Compendium on the history of Chinese cinema, written by many of the world's foremost authorities on Chinese film.**

### July 2014

The BFI announces its new publication **Electric Shadows: A Century of Chinese Cinema** - the latest in a series of BFI Compendiums following *39 Steps to the Genius of Hitchcock* (2012) and *Gothic: The Dark of Heart of Film* (2013). The book is an accessible introduction to the long and illustrious history of Chinese cinema from the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan over the past century. It's a perfect companion to **BFI Southbank's** *A Century of Chinese Cinema* season, an unprecedented celebration of 100 years of filmmaking in China programmed in partnership with TIFF, running from June to October 2014.

Through a range of lavishly illustrated new essays, written by many of the foremost authorities in the field, the fascinating, dramatic history of Chinese cinema is revealed. From the early silent films to Shanghai's Golden Age, from the restrictions of the Cultural Revolution to the ground-breaking 'Fifth Generation' films of the 1980s, from the independent spirit of the 1990s to the hugely successful blockbusters of the new millennium. Along the way it tells the parallel stories of Hong Kong and Taiwan's cinema, and China's great genre cinema, from the wildly-popular 'wuxia' swordplay epics and kung fu spectacles to crime thrillers and eerie ghost tales.

The book is available to buy from **2 July** through the [BFI Shop](#), [amazon.co.uk](#) and other outlets.

For stockist enquiries please contact the book's distributor: [bill@centralbooks.com](mailto:bill@centralbooks.com)

The book's contributors are Chris Berry, Michael Berry, Peggy Chiao, Tony Rayns, Bérénice Reynaud, Yingjin Zhang, John Berra, Kevin B. Lee, Yuqian Yan, Victor Fan, Peter Rist, Grady Hendrix, Cui Zi'en, Li Zhen, Edward Anderson and Robin Baker. There are additional contributions from filmmakers **Tsui Hark** (*Once Upon a Time in China*), **Jia Zhangke** (*A Touch of Sin*, *Still Life*) **Ann Hui** (*Boat People*), **Feng Xiaogang** (*Back to 1942*, *Aftershock*) and **Stanley Kwan** (*Center Stage*).

'**Electric Shadows: A Century of Chinese Cinema**' begins with *From the Shadow Play to Electric Shadows* (Victor Fan) an exploration of early Chinese silent cinema charting its progress from China's first film, *The Battle of Dingjunshan* made in 1905, to the increasing popularity of 电影 "diànyǐng, or 'electric shadows', the Chinese term for movies, from the late 1920s. *Boxers and barbers: film in the late Qing dynasty* (Edward Anderson and Robin Baker), reveals the story of the pioneering foreign filmmakers who captured priceless footage of China in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (much of which is held by the BFI National Archive, and is now available to view on BFI Player).

Tony Rayns' essay *The Second Generation* explores the great 'Second Generation' of leftist Chinese directors in Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s. This 'Golden Age' saw the emergence of screen icons like Ruan Lingyu, whose glamour and fame rivalled that of anyone in Hollywood, and a number of classic films, culminating in Fei Mu's 1948 post-war masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town*, released on the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

*The Seventeen Years Period* (Kevin B. Lee) charts the period 1949-66 that followed the Communist Party's victory, when the film industry was nationalised and films from the Mainland – among them the stirring dramas of director Xie Jin (*Two Stage Sisters*) – became increasingly subject to Communist Party censure. *The Cultural Revolution in Chinese Cinema* (Chris Berry) looks at Mainland cinema during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution decade of 1966-76 when film production was drastically limited.

*The Fifth Generation and the New Cinema of the 1980s* (Michael Berry) focuses on the emergence of a new generation of radical filmmakers from the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1980s when Chinese cinema dominated the international art-house scene. *Independent Filmmaking in China* (Tony Rayns) and *Chinese Documentary Filmmaking* (Kevin B. Lee and Yuqian Yan) explore the vibrant independent cinema scene that grew through the 1990s via directors such as Jia Zhangke. John Berra analyses the popular Chinese 'multiplex' cinema of the present in his essay *Chinese Popcorn: Multiplex Cinema of the 2000s*, when the Chinese film industry rivals Hollywood for box office and influence, and is soon to become the world's biggest box office nation.

*Swordplay, Kung Fu, Gangsters and Ghosts* (Grady Hendrix) highlights the genre films that first brought Chinese cinema to global attention in the 1960s and 70s, from Bruce Lee's kung fu flicks to King Hu's spectacular *wuxia* epics. *Hong Kong: From the Silents to the Second Wave* (Peter Rist) uncovers Hong Kong's cinema history from its origins to the hip New Wave visions of Wong Kar-wai. Peggy Chiao's essay *A Brief History of Taiwanese Cinema* celebrates the work of Taiwanese New Wave masters, Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien, and explores the island's cinematic heritage which developed outside of Hong Kong's mainstream cinema and the censorship of Mainland China. Li Zhen explores *A brief history of Chinese animation*, also known as Manhua anime which began with the arrival of the pioneering Wan brothers in 1926.

*The 'New Woman' Question in Chinese Cinema* (Bérénice Reynaud) considers the unique role played by women in Chinese cinema, Yingjin Zhang's celebrates *Film stars and stardom in China* and Cui Zi'en & Michael Berry's essay *The evolution of Chinese Queer cinema* completes the compendium.

– Ends –

**ELECTRIC SHADOWS: A CENTURY OF CHINESE CINEMA** ed. James Bell, £16.99, BFI. 140pp large format paperback. For sale via the BFI Shop, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk) and other outlets.

## Contents:

1. **FROM THE SHADOW PLAY TO ELECTRIC SHADOWS** by Victor Fan  
Boxers and barbers: film in the late Qing dynasty by Edward Anderson and Robin Baker
2. **THE SECOND GENERATION** by Tony Rayns
3. **THE SEVENTEEN YEARS PERIOD** by Kevin B. Lee
4. **THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN CHINESE CINEMA** by Chris Berry  
A brief history of Chinese animation by Li Zhen
5. **THE FIFTH GENERATION AND THE NEW CINEMA OF THE 1980s** by Michael Berry
6. **INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING IN CHINA** by Tony Rayns
7. **SWORDBLAY, KUNG FU, GANGSTERS AND GHOSTS** by Grady Hendrix
8. **CHINESE DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING** by Kevin B. Lee and Yuqian Yan
9. **THE 'NEW WOMAN' QUESTION IN CHINESE CINEMA** by Bérénice Reynaud  
The evolution of Chinese Queer cinema by Cui Zi'en with Michael Berry
10. **CHINESE POPCORN: MULTIPLEX CINEMA OF THE 2000s** by John Berra
11. **HONG KONG: FROM THE SILENTS TO THE SECOND WAVE** by Peter Rist
12. **A BRIEF HISTORY OF TAIWANESE CINEMA** by Peggy Chiao  
Film stars and stardom in China by Yingjin Zhang

Review copies available on request

[www.bfi.org.uk/china](http://www.bfi.org.uk/china)

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### **A Century of Chinese Cinema from June to October 2014 at BFI Southbank**

Curated by Noah Cowan for TIFF Bell Lightbox, in collaboration with China Film Archive (Beijing), Hong Kong Film Archive and Chinese Taipei Film Archive, with the generous support of our season sponsors **Lycamobile** and **Shangri-La** and with special thanks to **Cathay Pacific Airways**.

### **About Lycamobile**

Lycamobile is a prepaid mobile SIM card provider that provides low-cost, high-quality international and national calls and has acquired over 30 million customers across 17 countries (UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Spain, Australia, France, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and the USA). Lycamobile is available through an extensive network of more than one million retail outlets. The brand was initially introduced in 2006 and is already

Europe's largest pre-pay MVNO. Lycamobile continues to grow rapidly with further market launches planned throughout 2014.



### **About Shangri-La**

Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, one of the world's premier hotel companies, currently owns and/or manages more than 80 hotels under the Shangri-La brand with a room inventory of over 34,000. Over four decades the group has established its brand hallmark of 'hospitality from the heart.' The group has a substantial development pipeline with upcoming projects in mainland China, India, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. For more information and reservations, please contact a travel professional or access the website at [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com).



### **About Cathay Pacific Airways**

Carmen Tse, Marketing Communications & E-commerce Manager at Cathay Pacific Airways, commented: *"Flying five times a day from London to Hong Kong, and onwards to 21 destinations within mainland China, we are committed to bringing China and the Far East closer to the UK to share cultural experiences. We are delighted to be supporting Electric Shadows, the BFI's film season in 2014 which will showcase some of China's most iconic films ever created. Serving business and leisure travellers, Cathay Pacific has connecting flights from Hong Kong International Airport to more than 170 destinations worldwide."*

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / Southbank 2014 / BFI A Century of Chinese Cinema**