

Nanjing! Nanjing! (City of Life and Death)

China 2009

Directed by
Chuan Lu

Written by
Chuan Lu

Director of Photography
Cao Yu

Original Music
Liu Tong

Cast
Lu Jianxiong
Liu Ye

Mr Tang
Fan Wei

Kadokawa
Nakaizumi Hideo

Jiang Shuyun
Gao Yuanyuan

Mrs Tang
Qin Lan

132 minutes Subtitles

We are delighted to announce that director Matt Harlock will be attending our screening of *American: The Bill Hicks Story* in two weeks' time on Tues 29 Nov. Matt will introduce the film & hold a Q&A afterwards. We hope you can join us for this very special event.

This is as raw as cinema gets. A truly visceral experience – something that bypasses the synapses to lodge in some inner place. Chuan's most controversial move is to offer us a third perspective – that of a young Japanese soldier, Kadokawa. He emerges as the film's unlikely conscience, the one whose numb disbelief most closely echoes the audience's own. This didn't go down well in China, where the Nanjing Massacre is central to the national psyche and the cultural animosity reserved for the Japanese.

Matt Bochenski, Little White Lies

Possibly the war film of the year, Lu Chuan's picture has a lacerating immediacy and a true artist's gravity and tact. Surveying the mass slaughter of Chinese PoWs in monochrome, the director achieves humane switches of perspective on both sides which put *Saving Private Ryan* to shame.

Tim Robey, Daily Telegraph

As a portrait of the unspeakable things that can happen when soldiers are let loose on a civilian population, *City of Life and Death* is in a class by itself as it cuts back and forth between the experiences of several individuals on both sides of the massacre. Clearly a man possessed by his subject, Lu (who also wrote the screenplay after two years of research that focused on recorded witness testimony) has infused an intensity of emotion into every frame of this film, capturing the sense of mind-warping chaos and pure bedlam that emerge when panic and terror rule the day. Lu has done this by managing to be both epic and intimate. Helped by powerful, convincing acting, he combines a delicate, empathetic touch with the ability to stage action on a large scale. He does it all without any sense of special pleading, by bringing the kind of cool matter-of-factness he showed in his compelling last feature, 2004's *Kekexili, Mountain Patrol*, to the charnel house streets of Nanking. That camerawork is one of the keys to the film's impact. Most of the film is shot using a peering, probing handheld camera that creates intimacy and intensifies emotion. Some scenes are so effectively re-created it's as if the film has somehow captured documentary reality with a long-forgotten hidden camera.

Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times

Our next screening...

American: The Bill Hicks Story (UK)

Tue 29 November 2011

Dir: Matt Harlock

Moving documentary about the inspiring comic genius.



Voting for *Chico & Rita*: A-35 B-30 C-12 D-1 E-0 Attendance: 85 Rating: 81.7%