



The Marriage Celebrant • Zhenghunren

Feature 35mm 105min.

Budget

US\$3,000,000 (HK\$23,400,000)

Producer

Barbara WONG Chun Chun

Tentative Cast

Karena LAM, Tony LEUNG Ka Fai, Daniel WU

Production Company

Endless Entertainment Inc.

HAF Goals

Co-producers, Funds

■ Introduction ■

Being a ‘marriage celebrant’ is a profession available only to Canadians and Australians. You don’t have to be ordained or a civil officer, any law-abiding citizen is eligible. The fun of it is, one may conduct an official ceremony anywhere, anytime, any place as the couple chooses. With a colorful array of weddings and relationships as a backdrop, this romantic comedy dramatizes a unique profession to convey a message about letting go... and finding true love. Set in beautiful Vancouver, it is character-driven, with the moving and universal appeal of *Bend it Like Beckham* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

■ Director/Producer ■

Barbara WONG Chun Chun is a graduate of Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), where she majored in Acting at the School of Drama. She was awarded the Most Outstanding Actress and the Jacky Chan scholarship at the HKAPA. Upon graduation, she joined HK Commercial Radio as a disc jockey, until 1993, when she entered New York University Film School. Her graduate film *Hugo* was awarded NYU Best Student Film.

Wong went on to establish her own company Basko-Wong to produce network news and programs (such as *60 Minutes*, *20/20*) for clients like CNN, Discovery Channel, NBC, ABC etc. In 1997, she wrote and directed her first indie feature, *A Carburetor for Suzy*. In 1999, she returned to Hong Kong, where her documentary project *Women’s Private Parts* was selected for production by Mandarin Films. The film was presented at seven international film festivals, and won Best International Feature Film at the New York International Independent Film Festival. She went on to co-write and co-direct two films – the youth comedy *Truth or Dare: 6th Floor Rear Flat* (2002) and action comedy *La Protégé de la Rose Noire* (2004). Both were box office and critical successes. *Six Strong Guys* (2004), her latest work as writer/director, topped the local box office.

Wong was twice nominated Most Outstanding Youth Director

by the Hong Kong Film Awards, and nominated Best New Performer for her role in Lam Wah Chuen’s *Runaway Pistol* (2001).

■ Production Company ■

Endless Entertainment Inc. (“Endless”) is a Canadian-based film and television production company. For many years, the largest U.S. Studios, including Warner Bros, Universal and Fox have entrusted the key management of Endless to produce and deliver their feature films and television properties. A full-service entertainment company, Endless has fulfilled many roles in the production process from concept creation and development to final production and post-production.

As a producer, the company’s key management has working relationships with Universal Home Entertainment, Universal Studios, USA Network, Sci-Fi Network, Warner Bros Pictures, 20th Century Fox Television, MGM Worldwide Television and NBC Studios. Ron French founded Endless Entertainment in 1998 along with director Martin Wood and talent agent Andrew Ooi. For service production, the company is represented in Los Angeles by Montana Artists.

■ Synopsis ■

A wedding in Vancouver. For the first time, May accompanies her friend Peggy, a marriage celebrant, to conduct a ceremony. In the middle of exchanging vows, a scream of pain is heard. The camera pans down to show the bride in labor. On the way to the hospital, May grabs the document and conducts the wedding ad-lib. A baby boy is born. May becomes fascinated with this new role.

Back home, May’s monotonous life with her husband Hung and teenage daughter Sze Sze is transformed with the arrival of her brother-in-law Nam. Nam has moved in so he has time to construct a boathouse for his impending marriage to Loretta.

He and Peggy encourage May to train as a marriage celebrant so that she can conduct his wedding.

May becomes a highly in-demand marriage celebrant, and her social circle expands as she conducts ceremonies on private jets, yachts, even hospitals, and meets people from all walks of life, expressing love in different forms.

One night, she calls Hung to drive her home. Unable to reach him, she gets drunk in a club. Nam who received her call arrives to see a different side to her on the dance floor – lively, uninhibited, devastatingly charming.

As for Hung, he is busy having an affair with Sally. After meeting her at his ballroom dancing school, he has become stricken by her resemblance to an old lover. An upstanding man in the Chinese community, Hung met Irene, the love of his life, after his engagement to May. However, since he got May pregnant, he had to do the right thing.

Nam also has his share of problems. Loretta breaks up the engagement despite her four-month pregnancy, because she has lost her passion for Nam. The good-natured May helps Nam plan a romantic dinner in a boat restaurant to win her back. Swept by an amorous mood, she also prepares a Christmas dinner to revive her stagnant marriage.

Both events turn out to be disasters and revelations.

Loretta tells Nam that he is not the father of her baby... Hung and Sally are caught red-handed by May, who drives into the rear of Hung's car in a rage. Later that day, Hung confesses he never loved May.

Their daughter leaves for boarding school in Toronto, and Hung moves out, leaving May to ponder on the emptiness of her life. However, before she goes, Sze Sze confronts her Uncle Nam about his feelings for May, and encourages him to take care of her.

Left to their own in the house, May and Nam get closer but nothing happens until another event changes May's perspective forever.

On Nam's boat, re-decorated for a wedding, May conducts a deathbed ceremony for a couple in their sixties. She learns a lesson about life – love survives beyond death.

May stands outside an unfamiliar house. Sally answers the door, but May walks past her to confront Hung in the kitchen: "Let's get a divorce." At this point, another woman turns round. It is Irene! At last, May realizes that Hung has gone back to the real love of his life. Strangely relieved, she is able

to let go of the past. Will she have the courage to start a new life with Nam?

■ Director's Statement ■

Do you believe in marriage? The moment of getting married must be the most beautiful moment in the world. Then after you are married for a while, reality sets in. Slowly and unconsciously, our 'lover' becomes our 'family member', and not knowing from which day onward, communication starts to fade out...

Our heroine May is constantly wavering between two worlds. In her profession as a marriage celebrant, she holds beautiful wedding ceremonies for couples everyday, wishing them happily ever after while her own marriage is like dead fish in the water. However, the different couples' relationships act like a mirror refracting on her own attitudes to love, until she finally accepts that maybe it's time for her to let go.

The different ceremonies she conducts weave through key points in the narrative, like a couple marrying to get a green card, a prison wedding, the parents of two deceased lovers planning a post-mortem ceremony for them, etc. These help to enrich and shed light on the emotional development of the main protagonists.

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