



## Marriage Proposal • Hefa Jiehun

**Feature** 35mm 98min.

**Budget**

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

**Producer**

Roger GARCIA

**Production Company**

Making Film Productions Limited

**HAF Goals**

Funds

### ■ Introduction ■

A country bumpkin from Mainland China tries to fulfil his American dream through a paper wedding. But his bride turns out to be a groom! More than a decade after Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* broke into mainstream Hollywood, HK's new indie powerhouse Pang Ho Cheung rewrites the gender roles in a topical contemporary comedy of culture clash between gay and straight, East and West. Building upon the successful formulas of films like Peter Weir's *Green Card* or Joel Zwick's *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *Marriage Proposal* aims at being entertaining and character-driven, while providing a fresh look on the subject.

### ■ Director ■

**PANG Ho-Cheung** was born in Hong Kong in 1973. He directed his first short film at 15, using an obsolete video camera. He was educated in Taiwan and Hong Kong. He began his career with stints as scriptwriter for a gag show at HK ATV and HK Commercial Radio (where he scripted Jan Lamb's *Out of the Blue*). In 1997, he published his first novel *Fulltime Killer*, which was adapted into a big production in 2001, starring Andy Lau and Sorimachi Takashi, by Johnny To and Wai Ka-fai.

In 1999, *Summer Exercise*, a short film he wrote, directed and produced from his own budget of USD 15,000, won the Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards (IFVA), and became the first Hong Kong short film to be nominated for a Golden Horse Award in Taiwan. It was screened at nine international film festivals. In 2001, Pang completed his debut feature *You Shoot, I Shoot* on a budget of USD 500,000. It won him the Best Screenplay at the HK Golden Bauhinia Awards, and was screened at Pusan IFF, Hong Kong IFF and other festivals, in Melbourne, Bangkok, Milan and Udine.

Pang's second feature, *Men Suddenly in Black* (2003) reaped a box office profit of USD 1,400,000 despite the shrinking HK market for local films. The film also won Best New Director and Best Supporting Actor (Tony Leung Kar-Fai) at the HK Film Awards. In 2004, Pang was invited by the HK Arts

Festival to direct *Recycled*, a drama starring Karen Mok and produced by Stanley Kwan. In the same year, Pang made his third feature, *Beyond Our Ken* starring Gillian Chung from one of Asia's hottest idol groups, Twins. The film had its world premiere in Japan with Pang's other works as part of the retrospective program "Hong Kong New Power – Pang Ho Cheung" in the Winds of Asia section of Tokyo IFF 2004.

### ■ Producer ■

**Roger GARCIA** was born in Hong Kong. His work as a film producer includes many short films in Hong Kong in the 1980s, and independent features *Macao, oder die Rückseite des Meeres* (Ombra), *Sand* (Modern Films), documentary *Happy Berry* (2004, Modern Films) and studio films in the US *The Big Hit* (Columbia TriStar, co-producer), *The Disciples* (Viacom, executive producer, story writer). He recently completed *Chinese Box Home Movies* (co-creator) and commentary with Wayne Wang for the DVD release of *Chinese Box*.

Garcia was director of the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and has been Guest Programmer for festivals in San Francisco, New York, Switzerland and Italy. He served on the juries of the Hawaii International Film Festival 2003 and Hong Kong International Film Festival 2004. As film critic, he has written and broadcast for *Variety*, *Film Comment*, *Far East Economic Review*, National Public Radio (US), Radio Television Hong Kong and many others. He has edited and written books for the British Film Institute, *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Edizioni Olivares* and the Hong Kong International Film Festival. He was most recently featured in *Screen International* (UK, June 2004) and *Film Comment* (US, September 2004).

### ■ Production Company ■

**Making Film Productions Ltd** was established as a production services company in Hong Kong in 2001. Headed by director/scriptwriter Pang Ho Cheung and executive producer Subi Liang, the company specializes in high quality feature film, theater and post-production as well as advertising and marketing services. Its first feature film production *Beyond Our Ken* (2004), directed by Pang, was named one of the 10

most popular Chinese movies of the year by the Hong Kong Film Critics Association and by a popular poll. In 2005, the company began to invest in the production of *Undo*, produced and written by Pang Ho Cheung and directed by Peter Kam. Shooting will begin in April.

## ■ Synopsis ■

The day Guo Qi has been waiting for has finally arrived. With an H-1 working visa in hand, he boards a San Francisco-bound plane at Chengdu Airport. Like so many of his compatriots who have never left their native provinces, Guo Qi's ultimate goal is a green card from the proverbial 'Gold Mountain'.

As the flight begins, we learn through flashback how the trip was arranged by Guo's buddy Ming, who himself has secured US residency four years ago through marriage to a wealthy Chinese-American woman. Now, he runs a food manufacturing business in the Bay Area. For 200,000 yuan, Ming has agreed to get him a marriage of convenience.

Over in San Francisco, Jim is just coming out of another AA meeting when he gets a phone call from Ming asking him to go to the airport. Guo is picked up by Ming and Jim, and taken to Jim's place for temporary stay. Guo is surprised by Jim's fluent Mandarin, but a bigger shock awaits him when Ming tells him that he has to get married at the City Hall first thing in the morning. Guo doesn't understand what's the rush, when he hasn't even met his "fiancée" yet. Ming explains that although Guo Qi has given him most of his savings, it was still less than the going rate for a paper wedding with a woman, so his second best choice is Jim!

Guo Qi freaks out, saying he's not gay but Ming convinces him that what matters is the marriage license which will enable him to get a green card. The Mayor of San Francisco has just given his approval to the County Clerk to issue marriage licenses to gay couples, investing them with all the same rights as straight couples. The fact that Guo is straight is in fact an advantage, as he won't grow attached to Jim, and after fulfilling the legal requirements, they can get a divorce in two years.

At the 'wedding', Guo is introduced to Randy and Thom, Jim's gay activist friends, and to Ngan – Jim's lover. A 40-year-old bartender, he would love to be the groom, but he and Jim have an overdue mortgage to pay off.

What follows for Guo is an initiation into the famous San Francisco gay subculture, as Jim and his circle try to give him an image make-over to fool the immigration officer. Through many humorous episodes, not only does Guo experience the

culture shock of living in the West, he also slowly comes to grips with an alternative lifestyle and outlook that is new to his experience as a straight man. Moving in Jim's circle, Guo realizes that they are just like everyone else in their problems and aspirations.

On 11 March, 2004, the California Supreme Court orders the County Clerk to stop the issue of marriage licenses to gay couples. Gay marriages conducted before that date also face the danger of being annulled. Unwilling to see all his money and efforts to live in America go to waste, Guo joins the gay movement to protest against this act. He goes to every Pride march and makes the news as a fervent activist.

On the day the Supreme Court rules that gay marriages are annulled, Guo gets into a fight outside the law courts with a group of Christian demonstrators who support the court's decisions. Guo is taken to the police and threatened with facing trial for violation of civil rights. Guo calls Ming for help. However, Ming's factory is in financial difficulty and he does not pick up the phone. It is Guo's gay friends who bail him out. Touched, Guo casts aside his selfish interests and throws himself into the campaign for gay rights.

At the same time, he decides to hang out with lesbians in the hopes of entering another paper wedding before his working visa expires.

## ■ Director's Statement ■

The development of the story does not result in the protagonist, a country bumpkin from China, falling in love with his American gay husband after their paper wedding. Instead, the message I want to deliver through this story is that immigrants are not the only ones who seek a better life.

There should be no exceptions among people, regardless of their gender, nationality, sexual orientation, and skin color. Everybody shares and strives for the common goals of improving their wellbeing and lifestyles. For instance, some choose to emigrate and start a new life in a foreign country, while others choose to achieve their dreams through a fake marriage. Once people get to know each other better, language and racial barriers can be broken down. There are sometimes uncommon examples, where a traditional Chinese farmer becomes a champion for legal marriage rights for homosexuals in San Francisco.

No human being in the world is perfect. But that imperfection has nothing to do with cultural or sexual orientation.

## Contact: *Making Film Productions Limited*

Rm. 1202 Tung Sun Commercial Center, 194-200 Lockhart Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong

Tel: +852-2838-1067 Fax: +852-2838-7132

E-mail: [subi@making-film.com](mailto:subi@making-film.com)

Website: <http://www.panghocheung.com>