

F I L M R E V I E W

# ALL PICTURE, NO STORY

'Our Island, Our Dreams' uses a postcard-worthy location to tell a run-of-the-mill romantic tale

BY HO YI  
STAFF REPORTER



When moviemakers successfully use a location's history and environment to tell a story that attracts interest in that area, everyone's a winner. Think *Cape No. 7* (海角七號) and the waves of tourists it brought to Hengchun (恆春). Shot in Kinmen, *Our Island, Our Dreams* (星月無盡) is a light-hearted romance that dwells on the island's photogenic features to the detriment of an absorbing tale.

The story centers on three best friends who grow up together in Kinmen. As Xin Jun (Chen Yi-han, 陳意涵) becomes a pretty young woman, A-wu (Matt Wu, 吳中天) and A-jin (Chen Cheng-wei, 陳正偉) find their feelings for their childhood buddy changing. They hide this new affection in order to protect their friendship.

Along comes Han Wei (Huang Shih-yuen, 黃世元), a young soldier from the main island who rocks the boat by wooing Xin Jun despite her repeated rejections. She succumbs to his advances, a happenstance that triggers memories of her elder sister De Yue's (Yang Kuei-mei, 楊貴媚) fate after falling in love with an officer who was transferred and never returned.

Director Peter Tamg's (唐振瑜) myopic filmmaking casts Kinmen in the central role. A-wu, a local cultural worker, is a convenient vehicle to introduce audiences to the island's landscapes, its traditions and history. The temple, ancient houses and underground fort are all pleasant enough to look at, but instead of being an integral part of the narrative, they are little more than travel guide illustrations.

College students-turned-TV personalities, brought to the public's attention after appearing in the variety show *University* (大學生了沒), were cast as soldiers in flashback sequences that recreate life in the 1970s. Anecdotes about how tens of thousands of enlisted men during that era competed to chase some local skirt are intended to bring comic relief, but the humor feels tired and the novice actors lack on-screen charisma.

While *Cape No. 7* shows how a successful movie can boost local tourism, films like *Our Island, Our Dreams*, which is undermined by a dull script, unimaginative filmmaking and flat acting, risk being relegated to the "glorified tourism advertisement" genre.

## OTHER RELEASES

► COMPILED BY MARTIN WILLIAMS

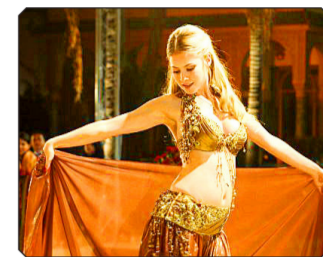
### Killshot

Shot a few years ago, this was barely released in the US last year, despite stars Diane Lane and Mickey Rourke, director John Madden (*Shakespeare in Love*, *Mrs. Brown*) and source material by Elmore Leonard. Rourke is a hitman who takes an obnoxious apprentice (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), but the pair are spotted as they go about their business by Lane and her husband (Thomas Jane). Thus the hunt begins to erase the inadvertent witnesses. Like Rourke, Lane is enjoying a late career surge, but this film won't help much — unless the DVD takes off.



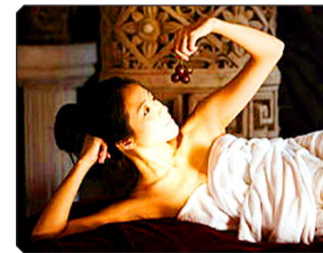
### Whatever Lola Wants

Rule of thumb: If a movie is about dancing, it will be screened in Taiwan. *Whatever Lola Wants* is a more interesting example of the dance flick because it transports a lovesick American woman to Egypt to "find herself"; to be precise, she finds herself belly dancing and competing with the locals. Moroccan director Nabil Ayouch is enthusiastic about the possibilities of the story and has made a film that is friendly to all comers. North African tourism ministers should jump on this one.



### Fit Lover (愛情左右)

Not a sex film despite the title, this Chinese romantic comedy about a reality TV show host sifting through a dozen young men with different zodiac signs has a regional cast: lead actress Karena Lam (林嘉欣, *Claustrophobia*) has Taiwanese connections, and her possible suitors are a mix of Chinese, Taiwanese and a Japanese. It's all very naive and jolly; stronger material with this theme can be found in the older Taiwanese feature *The Personals* (徵婚啟事) starring Rene Liu (劉若英). The full Chinese title — not used for the Taiwan release — says that this is a sequel to 2007's *Call for Love* (愛情呼叫轉移), but viewers won't need to have seen it.



### Partners

The movie version of the popular, sophisticated Japanese TV series pits underutilized and underpromoted ace detective Yutaka Mizutani and his youthful partner against a deadly foe who targets the Tokyo marathon after leaving a string of bodies around the capital. Like a lot of serial killers, this one leaves a code behind that challenges the cops to identify him. Fun for fans of detective stories, and helped immeasurably by the rapport between the lead sleuths.



### Ghost Mother

In Asia, if you see a female specter with black hair hanging over her face and wearing a white sheet, then you would run like hell — if you don't suffer cardiac arrest first. In the case of the 2007 Thai horror flick *Ghost Mother*, however, the ghost is a matronly young woman who channels her undead energies into bloody vengeance against the drug-dealing tormentors targeting her family. One central conceit borrows from *The Sixth Sense*. Sounds like a good ghost to have on your side.



### The Best Romance

A young reporter accidentally stabs a young policeman at a South Korean night market with a wooden skewer; naturally the cop has a terrible fear of sharp implements and faints, while she milks the incident for all a journalist's worth. What else but romance could follow (eventually)? The subplot includes drug-dealing baddies, but the main draw is the two stars, who came from almost nowhere and made a good impression with Korean audiences. This 2007 feature is also known as *The Perfect Couple*. Starts tomorrow at Ximending's Baixue grindhouse.



## Film Notes

### OUR ISLAND, OUR DREAMS (星月無盡)

DIRECTED BY: PETER TAMG (唐振瑜)

STARRING: YANG KUEI-MEI (楊貴媚) AS DE YUE, CHEN YI-HAN (陳意涵) AS XIN JUN, MATT WU (吳中天) AS A-WU, CHEN CHENG-WEI (陳正偉) AS A-JIN, HUANG SHIH-YUEN (黃世元) AS HAN WEI

LANGUAGE: IN MANDARIN WITH CHINESE AND ENGLISH SUBTITLES

RUNNING TIME: 96 MINUTES

TAIWAN RELEASE: TODAY

The cast members of *Our Island, Our Dreams* welcome you to Kinmen and hope you have a pleasant trip.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CREATIVE CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT

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TT: I read in the liner notes that *60 Minutes* had covered the same topic as *American Outrage* and didn't show it because it was supposedly "too political." Why do you think it is so hard for documentaries like that to get out there and be shown?

BH: That's the million-dollar question. The entire film industry is a very uncertain place and no one wants to take any risks. Anything that seems like a risk at all is going to hurt the chances of a movie getting released. Anything but the safest film or something that has a celebrity in it is the only way to avoid that. It's really

unfortunate that that is the way it is. That's why I'm really glad that *Wholphin* exists. It's definitely not enough, but hopefully there will be much more opportunities for documentary filmmakers.

TT: What opportunities are there right now for makers of short films to find audiences for their work?

BH: There are a ton of opportunities to find an audience and maybe make a very nice profit off of these films, and that's only going to increase. It doesn't happen all the time and it doesn't happen with every film, but the opportunities for that are only increasing as everyone

moves more and more into that type of content because of online distribution becoming so important to the [film] business.

TT: I'm sure you have been asked this before, but why have a DVD magazine instead of streaming the films online?

BH: It's portable, you can take it on a plane. A good portion of the DVD is also the booklet, so it's more of a package. But I honestly don't know. People like it, people want to own it, they want to have it on their iPod, too, so they can show this funny compilation of cool films to their friends. But they also want to own our DVD. I don't know

why, but I guess it seems more permanent.

TT: What are the drawbacks of streaming films on a site like YouTube instead of having a DVD on hand?

BH: It's the quality and also some films are not meant to be seen in a box that size, they need to be seen full screen in a good resolution. We try not to put films that require that online anywhere. We put films from previous issues, things that are out of print, on YouTube. We have a good partner deal with them, so we actually get paid to put it on there. We are not doing it for free, which is good.

TT: What are the advantages of the short film format?

BH: Being concise is something that is always good. I love haiku, it's my favorite form of poetry. I like being able to say a lot with a little. But I don't know that it's a question of an advantage or not. Every story has the right length with which to tell it. Some stories take 110 minutes to tell, some stories take 10 minutes. That doesn't affect the quality of the story, it's just what it is supposed to be. Maybe it's supposed to be 43 minutes, and that is something that, with things like our DVD and with Internet-based distribution, has

taken off, the idea that something can be expressed in whatever time the artist feels like it needs to be. It doesn't have to conform to any television or movie theater parameters of what the proper length is to be programmed.

### FILM NOTES:

WHAT: *Wholphin* at Urban Nomad Film Fest

WHEN AND WHERE: Screening of *Wholphin* short films tomorrow at 8:30pm at Paris Night Club (夜巴黎舞廳), 5F, 89, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段89號5樓), above the IN89 (Hoover) movie theater in Ximending; screening of *American Outrage* with talk by Brent Hoff afterwards on Sunday

at 3pm at Taipei Artist Village (台北藝術村), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號), near Shandao Temple MRT Station (善導寺捷運站)

### ON THE NET:

urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com  
ADMISSION: Tomorrow's screening is NT\$700 or NT\$500 for advance tickets and includes short films that start at 7:30pm before the *Wholphin* screening begins and entry to the party afterwards. The April 26 screening and talk is free. Check urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com for ticket sales locations

To subscribe to *Wholphin*, check store.mcsweeney.net