

(China/France, 2002. Rated R. 127 min; Cast: Zhang Ziyi, Toru Nakamura, Liu Ye; Music: Jörg Lemberg; Cinematography: Yu Wang; Producers: Lou Ye, Wang Wei, Yongde Zhu; Director: Lou Ye)

Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi explained a scene from the political thriller "Purple Butterfly," where she returns to her ex-lover. Ziyi told the Nanfing Daily that she played an underground worker returning to her ex-lover, played by Nakamura Toru. One of the set-up scenes in the film, she said that it was also one of the most memorable ones for her as an actress. Ziyi said that the film's director Lou Ye let the actors improvise with their scenes.

She explained in the 2002 interview that as the character, she rediscovered the "feeling from the past and the feeling of real love came back. ... We left a room and walked to the end of an alley. He kept walking and I started to walk back. We left each other without a word. I kept walking but still wanted to see him. (I) walked slower and slower and suddenly turned around. I run to the end of the alley, once reached the boy, I lighted a cigarette and stopped. (Director) Lou Ye said 'cut.'

"Then the only thing left for me was just running back to the boy and giving him a look. But after several takes, I became very excited and felt there was more to unleash. (I) asked Lou Ye, 'can you give me a little bit more time? Don't just let it end now.' Lou Ye agreed."

"Purple Butterfly," which screens Jan. 21 - 27 at the Brattle Theatre, is set in Japanese-occupied Shanghai in the 1930s. Ziyi's character, Ding Hui, is a member of a resistance group called Purple Butterfly; Toru's character, Itami, is a member of the secret police unit charged with dismantling the resistance group. The movie was written, directed and produced by Lou Ye.

A member of the sixth generation of filmmakers in China, Ye was born in Shanghai in 1965. The son of performers, his



childhood was spent backstage and in his parents' dressing room. He graduated from the Beijing Film Academy. His graduation project "Weekend Lover" earned the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Prize for Best Director at the Mannheim-Heidelberg Film Festival in 1996. He produced the highly acclaimed TV series "Super City" in 1995. Three years later, he established Dream Factory, one of China's first independent film production companies. The company's first film production was Ye's critically lauded "Suzhou River," which won the Tiger Award at the 29th Rotterdam Film Festival in 2000.

Ye explained to the German film magazine Schnitt that the name "sixth generation" doesn't mean anything except "those that independently finance their own films." He said that film styles vary dramatically among the producers and film directors.

"We are all born in the center or at the end of the 1960s," Ye told Schnitt. "Everyone has its style and its topics."

Financing films in China, he continued, is the one thing that remains the same for all filmmakers. He said that there are no more national subsidies, and even national studios must raise their own financial resources. Despite the new emphasis on commercial success, he added that the censorship remains stringent.

"The criteria of the film censor did not change however and are still the same as 20 years before," he said. "That is a large contradiction. On the one hand, films must be viable themselves also to commercial criteria; on the other one, the political censorship still exists."

Lou's 2000 film "Suzhou River" still has not been screened in China.

- Jason Nielsen