

A Chinese movie review. The Last Dance; you can't watch it without crying.

By William Corden

I went to see this movie last night , it was absolutely brilliant.

The Chinese entertainment culture is not reknowned for its emotional output but occasionally out pops a movie that transcends the mainstream by a mile.

This one is such a movie and I've not seen one as good since I saw another Chinese movie, "The Shower" back in 2005.

"The Shower" has family ties and traditions as its centerpiece and has you biting your lip with heartrending scenes and I recommend that you watch it... it's a marvellous movie.

This movie, though, goes even further and had most of the spartan audience blubbering unashamedly as the story brilliantly unfolds.(the audience spartan because the screening was at 9.50 pm on New Year's Eve.)

It starts with a middle aged, handsome and personable man falling into debt as a result of his failing "Wedding Planner" business in Hong Kong. The failure mainly because of political upheaval and the financial crisis.



Arresting morbidity ... Dayo Wong and Michael Hui in *The Last Dance*. Photograph: Trinity Cine Asia

He is offered a lifeline by one of his relatives and the lifeline is in the form of a partnership with an elderly,

strict and irascible Daoist priest who runs a funeral business. The business follows very strictly and sincerely the ceremonies of the religion..

A clash of ideas immediately surfaces and we are treated to a tour-de-force of acting by every member of the cast, as we see how tradition faces the new world. The clash sweetly resolves into a mutual respect as they start to understand each other. Underneath the main storyline is the family interplay of the Daoist priest, and a look into the characters of his son and his troubled daughter.

Daoist tradition will not permit a woman to conduct the ceremonies of sending the deceased to the afterlife as they are thought to be worthless. The son is only a reluctant follower to appease the wishes of his father.

The relationship between the Wedding Planner and the priest is a lovely story of adaptation and compromise while the relationship between father, son and daughter has everybody weeping in the theater at its intensity.

Some of the scenes where they embalm the deceased, especially one where they tenderly embalm a young child are almost too hard to take. But the skill of the cinematography and the gentleness of the acting lets you just about hold on.

If you can watch this movie without crying you must have a heart of stone, just a brilliant production.