



PRESENTS

TAPE

錄影歹

A FILM BY BIZHAN TONG

110 MIN / HK / COLOR / 2024 / CANTONESE

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SYNOPSIS

Updating the story more than 20 years on from the award-winning 2001 film, TAPE (2024) transposes the setting of Richard Linklater's groundbreaking classic from the US to Hong Kong in the story of 3 high school friends whose reunion 15 years on uncovers a terrible secret from their past. Starring Kenny Kwan, Selena Lee, and Adam Pak as the present day characters, and 2022 Hong Kong Film Awards winner Mason Fung, Summer Chan, and Angus Yeung as their younger selves, TAPE explores the cultural implications for sexual assault victims in Hong Kong within an environment that has yet to reckon with #MeToo like no other Hong Kong produced film has done before.

Touching upon themes of power, manipulation, and the subjective nature of truth, and set to a score by acclaimed British musician Keaton Henson, TAPE confronts a societal taboo while showing how people remain trapped in time until they can face and heal the wounds of the past.

ABOUT THE FILM

"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it." -- Maya Angelou

TAPE (2024) – an updated retelling of Richard Linklater's 2001 film transposing the setting from the US to Hong Kong -- shows two different time spans, contrasting the hopes and dreams of one's teenage years with the harsh realities of adulthood, the subjective nature of truth, and the cultural impact for sexual assault victims in Hong Kong, in a story told mostly in real time.

The film follows the reunion of 2 friends – Jon (Kenny Kwan) and Wing (Adam Pak) who catch up and bond over their lives in the present and their memories of the past, from family and careers to failed dreams and societal change while Jon is oblivious that Wing is covertly recording this encounter. But when the topic shifts to Amy (Selena Lee), a former flame of both men, events take a dark turn when a shocking event from the past is revealed escalating to blackmail, violence, intrigue, and exploring themes of power, manipulation, and the perception of truth as all three friends must grapple with their past actions and their present realities.

When the story begins, Young Jon (Mason Fung) and Young Wing (Angus Yeung) are at a graduation party marking the end of high school. Wing's girlfriend Young Amy (Summer Chan) has dumped him while wannabe filmmaker Jon is chronicling his memories on camera to look back on years from now. None of them realize that on this night an earth-shattering event will occur. One which all of them will be forced to reckon with 15 years on. Yet as they navigate these perils, the 3 friends will soon realize they have no choice but to confront the wounds of the past if they are to have any chance of stepping forward into the future.

Phoenix Waters Productions presents TAPE, written by Stephen Belber, Bizhan Tong, Selena Lee, and Bonnie Lo based on a Play written by Stephen Belber and a film written by Stephen Belber and directed by Richard Linklater, and directed by Bizhan Tong (FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST, THE ESCORT), starring Kenny Kwan, Selena Lee, Adam Pak, Mason Fung, Angus Yeung, and Summer Chan. Bizhan Tong and Selena Lee produced the film. Stephen Belber, Richard Linklater, John Sloss and Andy Wang are the Executive Producers. The cinematographer of the film was Colleen Kwok. The production designer was Sarona Lo and the film was edited by Mitchell Tolliday.

RELOCATING FROM US TO HK

The 2001 movie TAPE is a quintessential American film – set in a seedy Michigan motel on the eve of the Lansing Film Festival from a director synonymous with America and 3 American stars at the top of their game. Screening at Sundance and TIFF at the turn of the 21st century and one of the first films to be shot with high definition cameras, TAPE formed part of the new wave of American cinema and helped reshape the landscape of US film for the next decade.

But could the story of the original translate well in a new setting – swapping Michigan with Hong Kong, shifting the story by more than 2 decades to a post-#MeToo landscape, within a region that has yet to reckon with it?

That was the question Bizhan Tong sought to answer in the Summer of 2020. The director's journey arguably began in Summer 2002 when a theatrical screening of TAPE impacted the young teen's path as a filmmaker, but it wasn't till 18 years later when he sought to build bridges between East and West in a quest to help revive the Hong Kong film industry that he revisited the film. And he had an idea.

"Why don't we shift the story to Hong Kong?" he asked himself.

Tong knew it was easier said than done: the region had yet to reckon with #MeToo while the original film explored it heavily years before the movement had launched; the original film's extreme financial limitations would be even more constrained with today's advent of technology; he would have to find and convince Asia's equivalent of Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, and Robert Sean Leonard to board a production unlike any they've experienced before; and no film like this had ever been made in Hong Kong.

Which made TAPE the ideal film to make.

"Shifting the setting to Hong Kong changed the film completely," Tong says. "Most remakes tend to be variations of the original with similar story beats but transposing the location cast new light on its themes making it a wholly different beast. The cultural differences between how female sexual victims in Asia and America are treated in 2023

and 2001 doesn't just update the story but gives it a fresh perspective to an entirely new audience. The intent was to tell the same story as the original film but remould it to fit the lived experiences of female sexual assault victims in Asia today, and the cultural implications for those involved. To me TAPE isn't another remake or adaptation but a new chapter that studies society as it stands today."

Rather than simply licence the remake rights, Tong wanted to invoke the spirit of the original US production as much as he could and, after explaining his vision to the story's original playwright and screenwriter Stephen Belber, and with the blessing of Linklater and producer John Sloss, he worked closely with Belber to adapt TAPE using the same constraints as the original. He then began approaching potential cast, explaining how TAPE would be shot: whereas the US production was shot in only 5 days, the lead actors would be filmed in an also time-sensitive 6, with an additional day filming younger versions of their characters in new scenes which didn't exist in the original film. It would be made with the same financial constraints as the original production (taking inflation into account). Due to the cultural taboo of the story no-one could tell the world what the film is really about, and only once the film is complete could the truth of what was made be told.

Tong was grateful for the support of the industry. "Salon Films Japan and Agog Films were immensely supportive from the start," he says. "The interest of the talent was beyond anything I could have asked for and I was grateful to be able to have sitdowns and auditions with a who's who of talent from emerging to established stars. Their support bolstered my confidence in what we were making, because the film is so character-centric it could only be told well with the right talent involved."

The commitment required of the actors on TAPE was also something entirely different from what they were used to. On paper, the actors would have to shoot an entire film in the course of 6 days, a fraction of the time most movies are filmed. But in order to deliver excellence on such an intense shooting schedule, they would have to rehearse for 2 months – living as and exploring their characters throughout – preparing again and again until the words that came out of their mouths as their characters felt natural, and the relationship between the three friends felt real.

"Telling this story, in this way, had never been done in Hong Kong before," Tong concedes. "I was repeatedly told by almost everyone in Hong Kong that an undertaking like this could not be achieved in this city. So I was really placing a bet on the ability and commitment of the talent and crew who make the bedrock of the Hong Kong film industry, and showcasing Linklater's original US production as evidence that it could be achieved."

Forcing a US-style production on a HK crew would have been detrimental to the shoot, so the approach was to shoot it as a Hong Kong film production, incorporate what worked well with the US production, and prove that this could be an effective model for an East-meets-West hybrid. Placing so much confidence that this approach would work

in the face of sceptical voices forced Tong to put his reputation on the line, doubling down on TAPE as he sought to prove this was possible with other productions he was making at the time.

Between the Summer of 2020 when Tong first reached out to Belber to revisit TAPE and 2023 when production began, Tong's focus was consumed by a desire to support the resurgence of the Hong Kong film industry and its standing in the international market, from making international thriller THE AUDITION across multiple territories including Hong Kong and the UK over the course of the pandemic, creating crime series FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST showcasing the next generation of Hong Kong talent, and supporting other filmmakers by producing their works in Hong Kong in order to support the industry to create more high quality output within the city. He was also developing more commercial productions, from East-meets-West LA-set heist film HOSTAGE CRISIS to Hong Kong's biggest zombie film in history CHUNGKING MANSIONS featuring an international cast. Yet it was his award-winning feature directorial debut, THE ESCORT, that Tong's retelling of TAPE would feel closest to.

THE ESCORT was also set in an apartment, told in real time, and featured two characters – an escort and her client, exploring society's role in the objectification of women, that touched upon similar themes which were expanded upon in TAPE. "BEFORE SUNRISE and the original TAPE were both major influences on THE ESCORT," Tong says, "which made helming this new iteration of TAPE akin to coming full circle, as if my journey to date was building to this moment when I would be more confident to tackle this subject and confront the cultural nuances that exists for sexual assault victims in Hong Kong." Of course, one challenge for adapting TAPE was that neither Belber nor Tong possessed the experience of being a female in Hong Kong. So more writers were brought in. "Despite our best intent the female Asian perspective was missing which we needed in order to do this story justice, so Selena Lee and screenwriter Bonnie Lo were brought in to help further localize and infuse that perspective," Tong says. "I originally met Selena solely to consider her as an actress but her passion was so visible that over time she became my co-writer and producing partner on this film!"

His relationship with the cast and crew grew when an unprecedented event occurred once they started filming: his mother who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer was told she had a month to live. "Their camaraderie and support when we were on set lent a sense of calm which contrasted the pain and chaos that was occurring in my personal life," Tong explains. "Whatever challenges we faced, the entire team faced them head on with a lively spirit and undimmed hope. My month started calling "Action" on TAPE and ended with me holding my mother's hand as she drew her last breath. Without the belief of my team I don't know how we would have been able to accomplish what we did.

JON

One of the biggest challenges of TAPE was casting Jon. "We were looking for someone sweet and unassuming who we couldn't possibly fathom would harbour such a dark secret," Tong explains. "They needed to view themselves as the protagonist of this film so it was interesting during the casting process when I was watching these actors and thinking, "How will audiences respond when we reveal you're a rapist?"

He knew he had found the right actor when Kenny Kwan auditioned for Jon. "Kenny is a good-looking guy with a clean image who looks like a leading man in a romantic comedy," Tong says. "And he was phenomenal at taking direction. It was interesting to see him dig deep into the psyche of his character as he wrestled with the fact that he was responsible for such a heinous crime. Kenny's performance felt organic and nuanced, and it was wonderful rehearsing with him where he contributed a plethora of ideas."

For Kwan, joining the production of TAPE would require a full-time commitment despite the pressurized shoot, which Tong was convinced had certain advantages for the actors. But Kwan initially had reservations. "When I was first notified that we only had 6 days to film, I was, admittedly, taken by surprise, and it definitely took me a while to let the idea sink in, as most films normally would have a longer time span to shoot. In the beginning I was a little worried whether I would have enough time to prepare myself to get in character, but later I realised that when put in such a compact timeline, it propelled everyone to be more focused and devoted, there was no time for me to be myself as "Kenny" again, so for an actor, it's a better experience."

Kwan became more involved in the creative process, exploring not only his character but offering suggestions that resonated with the themes of the story and the culture itself. "I spent a lot of time digesting, studying, and analysing the character from Richard Linklater's original TAPE. Through the process, I took account of the linguistic differences and cultural context and realised that the original script could not be directly translated into Chinese because if we did that, the outcome would sound odd to the audience. So I suggested to tweak and tailor the script in a way that adapts to a more appropriate and relevant cultural context that would resonate with the audience."

While the character of Wing is an extrovert, Jon is more subdued and Kwan needed to tap into the core of the character to find meaning in even the subtlest of actions.

"Jon is someone who is really capable of harbouring his emotions," Kwan recalls, "so I needed to dig deep to explore this character in order to understand his sentimentality so as to allow it to manifest in my actions."

The claustrophobic premise of having 3 characters for most of the runtime on a production as intimate and intense as TAPE meant Kwan was almost always with his co-stars and director during the rehearsal phase and the shoot itself.

Had there been friction between the cast, this could have spelled disaster. Fortunately the actors immediately struck a positive chord. Adds Kwan of his co-stars, "Both are amazing actors and partners. I can't even imagine how much time and effort Selena had put into meticulously translating the entire original script from English to Chinese!" This also benefited the cast when exploring the links between the characters. "The dynamic created among the three of us turned out to be very interesting. We came from very different backgrounds while the discussions we had, the compromises we made, and the ideas we bounced off each other altogether resulted in a unique piece of work." Kwan also appreciated the flexibility and freedom offered by Tong in performing his role. "Bizhan is a director who gave ample space to us to do things our ways. He listened attentively and then diligently analysed everyone's opinions and tried his best to cater to everyone's needs and suggestions. On set, he allowed us the biggest freedom and gave us support in playing our roles."

Casting the younger version of Jon was a similarly daunting process until Tong auditioned a young actor who captured the ethos of what he was looking for: then-17 year old Mason Fung. "Mason seemed bashful and introverted and innocent like the hero of an '80s teen comedy," Tong remembers. "He was also the only actor whose age fit the part."

Tong had to fly to the UK a couple of days later and did not anticipate that in the subsequent weeks Fung would be nominated for, and ultimately win, Best Supporting Actor at the 40th Hong Kong Film Awards. "Regardless of the win Mason remained grounded, focused on the project and his character, keen to work with his co-stars, and remained steadfastly professional throughout. His character was supposed to smoke in one scene, and as Mason didn't smoke, we had to explain that we would be using fake cigarettes but he still studied it closely to ensure his action came across as authentic," Tong reminisces. "Fung's performance in TAPE couldn't be further apart from his last film, and here he is deliberately understated and low-key. I think the movie allowed him to showcase his range, and in turn he was able to deliver a pitch-perfect performance as a result."

The friendship between Jon and Wing was supposed to have spanned several years, yet Kwan and Pak only had two months to form their relationship before the shoot. Fortunately this was not a concern for the actors. "Adam and I really clicked right away which worked out great for us! Our friendship was established instantaneously and I am very thankful for that," Kwan explains. "Because there were a lot of scenes where there are just the two of us, so behind the scenes and before filming, Adam and I actually spent a lot of time going through the script together, rehearsing and honing on the nitty-gritty details of our roles. It took us no time to really sync with each other. And today, in real life we remain really good friends where we hang out and get coffee from time to time."

With the film now complete, Kwan is eager to see how audiences will respond to TAPE and its message. "There are a lot of layers embedded in the story, and the deeper and closer you get to the core of the story, the more you realize that it becomes more thought-provoking and the message emerges as more enlightening. It is about having the courage to explore the darker side of yourself and I hope that audiences will find that resonance. Perhaps they will find one of the characters to be like them."

AMY

At the centre of TAPE is Amy, a former flame of both men whose history with them on graduation night precipitates the dissolution of their friendship 15 years on. To play the role of Amy, a sweet and innocent teenager who grew to become a successful prosecutor, Tong selected Selena Lee. An award-winning actress famous in Asia for her roles on the television series FORENSIC HEROES and QUEEN OF NEWS, Lee also became well-known in Canada for her role in BLOOD & WATER, a performance so memorable she would lead a spin-off series of her own, BLOOD & WATER: FIRE & ICE.

But TAPE was like nothing she'd ever experienced in film before.

Tong had never met Lee let alone worked with her before, but he says from the moment they connected he knew she was the right actress for the role. "Our one hour introductory lunch meeting ended up lasting more than four, and she had such a strong understanding of the story and what I was trying to accomplish," he says. "We ended up texting every single day, immediately collaborating, breaking down Belber's original script and exploring the cultural differences that can make this story feel unique to Asia. She was so full of ideas and determined that we make this an authentic representation of the female experience in Asia."

Lee says of her initial thoughts, "I enjoyed the original TAPE a lot, and all the actors in that film are brilliant. I don't feel that there needs to be a comparison between me playing the same role as Uma Thurman, as the culture is very different, which plays a huge part in influencing the mindsets and the emotions of the characters. Chinese traditions and family values are some of the struggles that are unique to my interpretation of Amy, as well as the environment that surrounds Amy's upbringing."

"Selena's one of the most passionate and fearless actresses I have ever met and she delved deep into understanding the character," the director continues. "She didn't want to portray Amy as a broken angel but instead explored her flaws and her strengths. She would study the words of the original script again and again picking up on the subtleties of her character and do the same with the men. Amy is a victim, and deserving of justice, yet I don't see her as someone who attracts pity but rather admiration – a person who went through one of the most harrowing ordeals any woman can experience, yet refuses to allow that trauma to define her and is helping other victims through her profession."

Lee responded well to the original script for TAPE, and found the character of Amy tapped into her own desires as an actress. "Coming across a script like TAPE and being able to play Amy is any actor's dream," she notes. "The character is extremely complex. The same script can be read by 10 people and be interpreted in 10 different ways. I

remember meeting Stephen [Belber] on Zoom to discuss the role and when I shared with him my thoughts on a specific thought process of Amy, he told me I am the first to interpret it this way. It is truly fascinating. Perhaps it's the first time Amy is played by an Asian, where cultural differences and societal standards are very different compared to the West. Amy is a very difficult character to dissect and requires a lot of block building. Her emotions and thoughts are explosive yet she needs to suppress them as there are high stakes on the line."

Being involved in the writing process when adapting the script allowed Lee to express her views and experiences in relation to the story's themes. "I believe women in Asia are still relatively suppressed compared to the West. The traditions of what a proper wife should be like, and how sex devalues a woman. Even wearing something revealing can devalue a woman," she comments.

Lee continues: "I personally have had the experience of an ex-boyfriend putting me down because I am an actress and that I should never wear any revealing clothing. I believe things are improving, because women in the West are setting examples, stories are being told, which I am thankful for. But there aren't enough stories in Asia being told. Women born and raised in Asia are naturally not as outspoken compared to the West. Topics revolving around sex and the value of women needs to be talked about more to reshape mindsets and values in Asia. Amy in TAPE reflects this very topic."

Attempting to closely fit the financial and scheduling constraints of the original despite the notable differences between the two – more characters, more locations, a larger runtime, a different shooting style – proved daunting to the team but it was a challenge they embraced nonetheless.

"Filming tape was like Mission: Impossible, as we wanted to match the budget of the original film," concludes Lee, who also produced. "Not to mention we needed to complete the film in 7 days! I was shocked to know that the original TAPE was shot on such a tiny budget considering the cast and director. To make TAPE possible, we got a lot of help. I am really grateful that throughout my career as an actor, I met a lot of wonderful and talented people who were angels during this process. Deborah [Lau-Yu] from Fete Chinois, Ah Sai (my producer and director for BARRACK O'KARMA) who has connected me with so much help within the industry, Michael [Lam] who provided our team with delicious meals, Sarona [Lo, production designer], Kenny, Adam and everyone who took huge pay cuts to make Mission: Impossible possible. And of course thanks to Bizhan who was granted the rights to film Tape and made this mission possible for us to take on! There were so many hiccups and challenges throughout the process, and it was difficult to overcome. But I am thankful for this experience. And truly thankful for every single one of this amazing passionate bunch of crazy people."

WING

Wing instigates the events of TAPE – it is he who invites Jon and Amy to his apartment – and him who covertly records Jon to confess on camera that propels the narrative. Playing Wing is Adam Pak, star of the BREAKOUT BROTHERS trilogy and the TV series INEVITABLE. Pak is known for a wide range of films including MASTER Z: THE IP MAN LEGACY and P STORM while his latest film, A GUILTY CONSCIENCE, broke box office records in Hong Kong becoming the first local film ever to reach HK\$100m (US\$12.75m).

Pak had been among the first actors to speak with Tong about the film which he would eventually be cast in.

“When I first knew of the project I didn’t know it would be filmed in 6 days,” recalls Pak. “I thought it would be filmed in a very short amount of time but in 6 days I would’ve thought that it’s achieving the impossible or wanting to achieve the impossible. I’d seen the original TAPE and I knew there was a lot of dialogue and there’s a lot going on even though it’s happening in a short period of time in a hotel room, but I immediately thought it’s a big challenge and to be able to walk in Ethan Hawke’s shoes or any one of those characters is like a dream come true. I knew the difficulties were going to be there but still I braved it and I’m glad I made that decision because I think through this role I was able to break through a lot of my own Cantonese barriers so I think it was an opportunity to learn, an opportunity to perform, and an opportunity to be a better self.”

Pak was aware of the challenge but willing to take it on regardless. “When Bizhan approached me to play Wing especially in a very local Cantonese dialect I was extremely daunted by this idea that I would need to speak full Cantonese for at least 90 minutes. Having seen Ethan Hawke perform in the original TAPE I knew that Wing would have to go through different stages of breaking down, of being confident, of trickery, of illusiveness, being jealous, being a good friend... There are so many characters that Hawke played and I just loved the idea. I didn’t think of it as a lot of dialogue in Cantonese. I thought of it more as different shades of Wing that I could possibly portray and play, and as an actor I just thought it was too good of an opportunity to pass up. This is the heaviest character that I’ve ever had to play so it was a big task to overcome, and at that moment I just said ‘Yeah, I’m willing to give it a go.’ I love Ethan Hawke, I love the original TAPE, and I couldn’t pass up that opportunity so I went for it, and I’m so glad that I did.”

But Tong was soon concerned that Pak wouldn’t have the time in his schedule to be able to fully commit and explore Wing in preparation for such an intense shoot, and it was up to Pak to persuade him. “How I convinced Tong that I was able to make the time and be able to deal with all the dialogue was by showing some of my homework

that I'd done on previous characters, and he was convinced that I'm capable of putting in the hard yards dealing with such a large project. I'm honestly very thankful that they trusted me with the amount of work, and I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to carry out everything that I've ever learned in this one character of Wing."

Pak would play the film's wildest character, a lifeguard and part-time drug dealer capable of blackmailing his best friend, yet whose charm invites the audience to sympathise with him.

"When we meet Wing in the present day, there is a strangeness to what he does. He's pouring beer down the sink, making a mess of his place, but he's also setting up cameras so there is a sense of purpose to it all," explains Tong. "He seems perpetually stuck in arrested development and has changed little in the last 15 years, yet it's Wing who's orchestrated a scheme to confront their traumatic past."

Pak adds: "I think Wing's intentions from the beginning were innocent. He just needed an answer as to why his girlfriend didn't choose him and chose his best friend. I don't think Wing has evil intentions. Of course he has learned throughout life to be tricky, to be manipulative, to be jealous, to be very loose in his manners, but I think deep down Wing is just looking for answers and to be honest he's looking for love. He's had a very troubled childhood like a lot of people do and he was hurt when he was young. When he had the chance with his peers he just wanted to confront certain problems and he wanted to find answers, even though that makes him slightly manipulative. As the audience we get to see Wing talk to every single character, and see Wing change from victim to pursuer to a detective to a defensive character, and every time he changes the audience can sympathise or understand as to why he's become so wild at times to help find answers to the questions that the very innocent him wants to find."

There was little in common between Wing and Pak to approach the character so smoothly. "I'm more disciplined, I'm more understanding, I believe there are some questions you can't get answers to and you have to form your own conclusions," says Pak. "Whereas Wing can be childish at times, maybe because of his upbringing, and he really believes that sometimes by being a little rude or pushing someone you can really get to the truth. He's very stubborn when it comes to this sort of thing hence why I say Wing is slightly childish or he hasn't developed to a certain level of maturity. I guess this makes him very entertaining as a character to watch. With me and Wing we're two totally separate people. Of course through Wing I learned that sometimes it's good to push someone else's buttons, to tease them a bit and get something out of them – it's a tactic – but I personally feel that everyone deserves a certain amount of respect and some things you can't ask even though Wing can very easily drop his manners and ask very difficult questions. That's something I admire about Wing. I can never become him but there are things I admire about this character."

Tong gave the cast flexibility when exploring their characters, believing there was no one who could understand the characters better than the actors playing them. Nonetheless Pak felt the director's influence was present throughout.

"It was an absolute pleasure. He knows the script back to front. He watched the original TAPE and he has his own particular ideas as to how the story can be told, was told, and what creative ideas he could input into each scene to make it more vibrant, to give it a different texture, to make it more interesting to the viewer. I believe a lot of the sympathy that Wing gets is because Bizhan pushed Wing into a particular direction that would lead the audience to follow Wing into the story. Honestly I believe it's a difficult job for three actors to talk in one very small room. You can lose the audience quickly and I think he really knew the ins and outs of the script and the characters, and knew exactly how to puppeteer the scenes so that you would never have a boring moment. I think Bizhan had a very clear idea of the story before he came into it because to direct a Cantonese language production isn't the easiest thing to do, and I believe Bizhan pulled it off with flying colours. I consider working with Bizhan to be one of the highlights of my career. Maybe in the future I can do an English role and hopefully work with him too, after all English is my first language! But I'm very happy with this experience and I believed there were a lot of sparks because Bizhan was a part of the production."

The friendship between Jon and Wing needed to look authentic, and their relationship with Amy feel natural. In order to achieve this the cast worked extensively together despite the impact of COVID making it difficult at first. Pak recalls, "Thankfully the production had organized us to do a cold reading. I remember at the time it was COVID so we couldn't actually be locked in a room together, so what we did is when we could get everyone together Kenny, Selena, and I would do a lot of Zoom meetings. When you do Zoom meetings it's not like being on set or being able to try out the lines to an actual person but it worked out better in that it helped me personally to get the flow of each scene, or how my character approaches Jon and Amy. You really need to understand the script firstly with this project before you can start playing with it because there's so much going on and so much being said, and I think we kept the improvisation to a bare minimum. All 3 of us felt we need to keep to the script as much as possible because all of us respected the original TAPE. We respected the original writer, we respected Bizhan, and we wanted to carry it out as it was written on the page hence why we did a lot of rehearsing. I think it's through the rehearsing that Kenny and I discovered we had a lot in common, or Selena and I despite coming from different backgrounds found that there was a lot we agreed on, and I really got to know these two other actors very well. I admired them and their work, so I was very happy to get the chance to work with them, and I think it's the amount of work that went into practicing the script, whether it was online or on set, or a couple of hours before the set that really helped the relationship between Amy, Wing, and Jon."

Despite sticking closely to the script, Pak improvised his dance at the start of the film. He felt the flexibility Tong provided helped the production immensely. "I think flexibility is very important," Pak explains. "Every actor has ideas and of course not every idea works but it's good to have an environment where the actor can talk to the director or producer or other actors about what he or she can bring to the table. The dance at the beginning was unscripted. Wing dances, there was an expression to it, but a lot of it is my own. And I think in that moment there was a lot of Quentin Tarantino stuff I was watching, there was a sense of freedom, an 'I want to be myself' drag queen vibe, and other elements I had seen that I wanted to put into a film. Of course I had to select which ones were right for the moment and which ones weren't but I really enjoyed the opening scene. There were little bits and pieces I added like the smoke rings Wing creates when he smokes or the way I hold the cigarette as if I was smoking drugs, giving subtle hints to the audience of what Wing is and what he does seemingly unconsciously from Wing's perspective. But for the audience if you look carefully you can pick up little details and little clues as to who Wing actually is. I do remember there was one scene where Jon is arguing with Amy and the whole scene is about them but Wing is actually in the room at the time. What I suggested which Bizhan agreed to is Wing would be off camera and smoking so while Jon and Amy are arguing we could see Wing's smoke just softly drift across the camera, and part of the ashtray would be in frame. I think it was really empowering and I felt relief that certain ideas actually helped the production. Of course as any actor you present these things and a lot of times it's refused but Bizhan was really respectful and he would honestly consider it, and I'm glad some of these little ideas would make it into the film. I hope people will enjoy the character of Wing. Everyone in the production put a lot of ideas into Wing and I really hope viewers will enjoy the performance. "

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Time plays a crucial role in the Hong Kong adaptation of TAPE, as the 2001 film was brought forward to 2023 to reflect a technology-dependent society and post-#MeToo world, while the film explores two different timespans set 15 years apart told mostly in real time.

For Tong, the passage of time allows the audience to feel the weight of one's actions, trapping the characters in the past, so that they are unable to move forward into the present until their wounds are healed. But the city of Hong Kong was a character itself. "We set the events of the past in 2008, at the height of the Beijing Olympics, when the city's expectations for the future were vastly different to what it is now," he explains. "Hong Kong symbolizes a city trapped in the past and that is reflected in the characters too."

Even the shooting style was different, shifting from Linklater's handheld use of High Definition cameras while retaining a similar time-sensitive scheduling format. "The

original film was shot in 5 days and we gave ourselves a week to film, which was a challenge with the number of technical shots and filming in exterior locations too,” Tong explains. “But with the extensive prep work done with the cast and crew we were able to manage it on time.” The update in technology also helped further differentiate the remake from the original film. “By shifting from an audiocassette to video technology and apps, we were able to play around more with every component of the film from the edit and sound to the set design,” Tong notes.

While the film is heavily influenced by what’s popular in Hong Kong in each of the time periods – from hair and make-up to technology and clothes, Tong went to Britain to find the music for TAPE.

Of hiring musician Keaton Henson to score the film, Tong says: “For me, TAPE needed to be an authentic Hong Kong production – but the themes of the story are universal and I wanted that to be reflected in its score. I listened to music from Hong Kong composers at first, but as beautiful as they are it didn’t feel as universal as what I was seeking.”

Keaton Henson came onboard after reading the script and set to work building the world of TAPE through his music. Later he brought in Phillip Osborne to collaborate as they explored various tonal shifts the characters would undergo on their journey. From the ethereal opening of the past to the nerve-shredding tension of Jon and Wing’s fight in the present to the unforgettable score that ends the film, the music defines the characters’ feelings and underscores the mood.

“It was important to me that the music not detract from the authentic performances we were watching onscreen,” Tong adds, “so music was used sparingly. Only during certain heightened periods, and a very intimate scene, does the music’s presence lend weight to the visual narrative in that moment.” In order to shoot the film in only a week, much of it came down to allocating a significant amount of time on pre-production – preparing for contingencies and rehearsing extensively with the cast while filming chronologically to help keep the actors in the right headspace. While challenges occurred during filming, Tong says the team’s positive mindset means the obstacles were minimal.

“The entire team were close knit, knowing we would face extreme challenges when making this film,” Tong says. “We were all rooting for each other and knew it would send a positive message to the industry if we were able to defy the odds. And it was incredible how much support we had, as more people came onboard to take part on this journey. My DP [Colleen Kwok] won the top prize at the Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum that year, my B Cam Operator [Yau Cheong Leung] received a Best Cinematography nomination for THE SPARRING PARTNER at the Hong Kong Film Awards a few months later, and every person brought their own ideas while being united by a singular vision.”

Shortly after shooting wrapped, Tong flew abroad to tend to his mother in her final days, supporting her during the day while at night he would work remotely with his editor and colourist to create a cut of the film. A first cut was created 2 days before she passed. "It was the most harrowing experience of my life," the director recalls. "I was barely getting an hour's sleep; but making the film was the only control I had in my life, and I wanted to make my mother proud. I knew after all the support and belief people had in me that I couldn't drop the ball. So shaping TAPE became a culmination of all my life's work, both personally and professionally. Ultimately I believe my mother would be proud of what we made."

Tong says his favourite moment of the whole production came from shooting the final scene, when we return to the night of the graduation party and build up to the event that bridges the present with the past. We don't see the event take place, but the final shot is heartbreaking nonetheless.

"After we filmed I sat down with Cindy [Wong, Assistant Director] and Colleen, and just absorbed the moment," Tong remembers. "It took me back to the Summer of 2002 when Linklater inspired me as a teen and the eventual path I'd take with TAPE. I realized a part of me is still stuck in the past. And I hope just as he inspired me that I can inspire others as well."

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CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Kenny Kwan

Originally part of the boy band Boyz formed in 2003 where their hit song "Stubborn" became wildly popular in Hong Kong and Mainland China, Kenny Kwan shifted to movies in 2005 and by 2009 had successfully penetrated the Mainland China market on both the small and big screen. His lead performance in the series THE LEGEND OF LU ZHEN in 2013 catapulted Kwan's popularity in Mainland China, while his films THE WHITE STORM and THE FOUR became major successes, with THE WHITE STORM exceeding 10 million views in its first 3 days of release. Kwan's upcoming films include Herman Yau's action thriller CUSTOMS FRONTLINE.

Selena Lee

Hong Kong-Canadian actress Selena Lee is one of the most well known stars in Asia across the film, television, and theatre landscape. Her series FORENSIC HEROES was the top rated series in Hong Kong in the past ten years, while psychological series BARRACK O'KARMA won her several Acting awards including TVB's Most Favorite Female Lead Character and a Best Actress nomination at the Asian Television Awards for the show's sophomore season. She starred in the Canadian drama series BLOOD & WATER where her character proved so popular she received her own spin-off series, BLOOD & WATER: FIRE AND ICE in 2021, earning a Best Supporting Actress nomination at the Canadian Screen Awards. In addition to starring in TAPE, Lee also co-wrote and produced the film.

Adam Pak

Australian born actor Adam Pak starred in the BREAKOUT BROTHERS trilogy and various other commercial hits including P STORM, MASTER Z: THE IP MAN LEGACY, and LOVE SUDDENLY. Pak led the ViuTV series INEVITABLE while his latest film A GUILTY CONSCIENCE broke box office records in Hong Kong and became the first local film ever to reach HK\$100m (US\$12.75m) as well as the highest grossing Hong Kong film of all time.

Mason Fung

Awarded "Best Supporting Actor" at the 40th Hong Kong Film Awards in 2022 for his role as the young So Wah Wai (Hong Kong's first athlete who won the gold medal at the Paralympic Games) in the movie ZERO TO HERO, Mason Fung immediately proved himself to be one of Hong Kong's most promising young talent, and has since followed on from his award-winning role with his performance in TAPE.

Summer Chan

Summer Chan began on stage where she won the Best Actress award at the Hong Kong Radio Drama Awards for her performance in MY MOM IS SICK before shifting to the small screen where she received rave reviews for her role as a cancer patient for RTHK. Subsequently Chan shifted to the big screen where she starred in UNDERCOVER SPY with boyband Mirror's Anson Lo, Heidi Lee, and Chloe So where the film became one of the top 10 domestic films of 2021.

Chan has since appeared in various films including BEYOND THE EDGE starring Louis Koo, and FERMENTATION again starring Anson Lo. Her film ORIGINAL SIN starring Simon Yam and Philip Ng was nominated for several awards at the 29th Minsk International Film Festival and was also screened at the 15th Chicago Asian Pop-Up Cinema where Chan won the "Bright Star" award.

Angus Yeung

Gracing magazine covers and both the small and big screen, Angus Yeung starred in SOCIAL DISTANCING and has appeared in various modern hits including BODIES AT REST, LINE WALKER, and INEXTERNAL.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Bizhan Tong (director)

Born to a Chinese father and Persian mother, Bizhan Tong has spent his life seeking to understand his cultural heritage by living in two worlds while striving to bring the East and West into one.

He founded Phoenix Waters Productions, a production company exploring social issues through the power of film, beginning with *THE ESCORT* (2018), a film he wrote, directed, and produced which explores society's role in the mistreatment of women told from the perspective of an often overlooked and marginalized segment which he won various awards across the festival circuit for.

Tong lives in Hong Kong and has partnered with film companies across the globe including the US, UK, Japan, and Malaysia in an effort to bring local Asian stories to global audiences. As part of Tong's vision to support the resurgence of the Hong Kong film industry by making it more internationally focused he partnered with ATV, Hong Kong's oldest broadcaster, as its Executive Producer and launched international arm AMM Global where he wrote and directed *THE AUDITION* (2022), a film about the impact of social media disinformation inspired by the passing of his mentor the UK film distributor Trevor Green which was shot in the UK and Hong Kong over the course of the pandemic.

Tong created and directed Hong Kong crime series *FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST* (2023) featuring an all-star cast including Jeannie Chan, 2019 Hong Kong Film Awards winner Crisel Consunji, and Justin Cheung about a psychologist who interviews criminals to assess whether they are mentally fit to stand trial, exploring the cross section between mental health and criminal behaviour. He recently co-wrote, produced, and directed the Hong Kong remake of Richard Linklater's 2001 Sundance and TIFF film *TAPE* (2024), produced horror music comedy *MURDER BALLADS* starring Simon Callow, and in March 2023 launched Phoenix Waters Asia to support filmmakers across the South East Asia region.

His projects in development include tech drama series *CRYPTO KEEPERS* while his next film is East-meets-West action thriller *SHASHOU* followed by bank robbery thriller *HOSTAGE CRISIS* and *CHUNGKING MANSIONS*.

Stephen Belber – co-writer & executive producer

Stephen Belber is an acclaimed playwright, screenwriter, and director. He was previously nominated for an Emmy for THE LARAMIE PROJECT (2002) and wrote the original TAPE (2001) starring Ethan Hawke and Uma Thurman directed by Richard Linklater.

Since then he has written and directed MATCH (2014) starring Patrick Stewart, MANAGEMENT (2008) starring Jennifer Aniston and Woody Harrelson, and WHAT WE DO NEXT (2022) starring Corey Stoll. He wrote the HBO Limited Series O.G. (2018) starring Jeffrey Wright and is the creator and co-showrunner of the new Netflix drama series THE MADNESS starring Colman Domingo, released in November 2024.

Richard Linklater – executive producer

Before SLACKER, an experimental narrative revolving around 24 hours in the lives of 100 characters, garnered acclaim in 1991, Richard Linklater had made many shorts and completed a Super 8 feature, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LEARN TO PLOW BY READING BOOKS (1988).

Linklater's additional credits include the 70's cult hit DAZED AND CONFUSED (1993); BEFORE SUNRISE (1995), for which Linklater won the Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear Award for Best Director; SUBURBIA (1997); THE NEWTON BOYS (1998), a western/gangster film set in the 1920s; the animated feature WAKING LIFE (2001); the original TAPE (2001); the hit comedy SCHOOL OF ROCK (2003); \$5:15 AN HOUR (TV), BEFORE SUNSET (2004) which earned him an Academy Award nomination; BAD NEWS BEARS (2005); A SCANNER DARKLY (2006); FAST FOOD NATION (2006); INNING BY INNING: A PORTRAIT OF A COACH (2008); ME AND ORSON WELLES (2009); BERNIE (2012); UP TO SPEED (2012, HULU); BEFORE MIDNIGHT (2013); BOYHOOD (2014) which also earned him an Academy Award nomination; EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!! (2016); LAST FLAG FLYING (2017); WHERE'D YOU GO, BERNADETTE (2019); APOLLO 10 ½ (2022); and HIT MAN (2024).

Linklater also serves as the Artistic Director for the Austin Film Society, which he founded in 1985 to showcase films from around the world that were not typically shown in Austin.

John Sloss – executive producer

John Sloss is the founder of Cinetic Media, a co-founder of FilmBuff, and was a cofounder, with director Gary Winick, of the groundbreaking digital production company, InDigEnt. He is the founder of and a partner in the entertainment law firm Sloss Eckhouse LawCo LLP. And he co-founded Producers Distribution Agency, the

theatrical distributor of *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, *Senna*, *The Way*, *Brooklyn Castle* and *Escape From Tomorrow*.

Through Cinetic Media, Sloss has facilitated the sale and/or financing of well over 400 films including *Before Midnight*, *Life Itself*, *The Square*, *Short Term 12*, *Safety Not Guaranteed*, *Friends With Kids*, *The Kids Are All Right*, *Precious*, *We Own the Night*, *I'm Not There*, *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, and *Super Size Me*.

Sloss has executive produced over 60 films including *Before Midnight*, *Bernie*, *Far From Heaven*, and the Academy Award®-winning *The Fog of War* and *Boys Don't Cry*. His clients include Killer Films, Kevin Smith, Bob Dylan, Charles Ferguson, Alex Gibney, Todd Haynes, Edward Burns, John Hamburg, Justin Lin, Jake Kasdan, and Big Beach Films.

Prior to founding Sloss Law Office in 1993, Sloss was a partner at the international law firm Morrison & Foerster. Sloss received his J.D. and B.A. from the University of Michigan. He has served as an adjunct professor in the NYU Stern-Tisch MBA/MFA joint degree program and speaks regularly on entertainment related topics.

CREDITS

PHOENIX WATERS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

SALON FILMS JAPAN

AND

PHOENIX WATERS ASIA

A Film By

BIZHAN TONG

TAPE

Directed by

BIZHAN TONG

Screenplay by

STEPHEN BELBER & BIZHAN TONG

and

SELENA LEE & BONNIE LO

Based on the Play written by STEPHEN BELBER and the Film written by
STEPHEN BELBER and directed by RICHARD LINKLATER

Produced by

BIZHAN TONG

SELENA LEE

Executive Producers

STEPHEN BELBER

RICHARD LINKLATER

JOHN SLOSS

ANDY WANG

Director of Photography

COLLEEN KWOK

Production Designer

SARONA LO

Film Editor

MITCHELL TOLLIDAY

Music by

KEATON HENSON

and

PHILLIP EDWIN OSBORNE

KENNY KWAN 關智斌

SELENA LEE 李施嬅

ADAM PAK 栢天男

MASON FUNG 馮皓揚

ANGUS YEUNG 楊天宇

SUMMER CHAN 陳紫萱

Costume Designer

SARONA LO

Associate Producer

GUY ORLEBAR

Assistant Director		CINDY WONG
Line Producers		CINDY WONG
		LAURA GREGORY
Production Coordinator		CECILIA THEN 鄧慈慧
Art Director		SARONA LO
Art Department Assistant		BENJAMIN CHIANG 江衍鋒
Set Decorator		SARONA LO
Carpenter		MANSON POON 潘廣彥
Property Master		MANSON POON 潘廣彥
Assistant Property Master		LISA CHAN 陳莉莎
Focus Puller		SOKIN 蘇煒鍵
Second Camera Assistant		DESHAWN LEUNG 梁年康
Camera Assistant		TOM CHUNG 鍾德權
B Camera Operators		YAU CHEONG LEUNG 梁佑暢
		LI HOK FUN 李學寬
B Camera Assistant		LEUNG KOK TO 梁珏滔
Gaffer		LEE KWAN WAI 李鈞煒
Key Grip		STONE LAM 林祐碩

Dolly Grip		SO CHUNG HAY RINGO 蘇仲熙
Key Make-Up Artist		RITA LEUNG 梁沛霞
Make-Up Artist		ANITA YUEN 袁穎雯
Key Hair Stylist		EDEN YIP
Hair Stylist		WESKER WONG
Stylist for Ms. Lee		MICHAEL LAM AT BEIJING HAIR CULTURE
Sponsor		HEA HAIR SPA
Costumer		LUI KING CHUN 呂琮珍
Wardrobe Sponsor		IRIS & INK by the OUTNET
Script Supervisor		KRISTIE KO
Soundman		LAU KAN MING 劉健明
Colourist		SZE YU WU 胡思瑜
Main Title Design		TSZ PANG LEUNG
End Credits		SIRSENDU BIKASH
VFX Supervisor		ANURAG SINGH
VFX by		RAHUL KAMBLE

		ABHISHEK KUMAR
Simi Logo created by		ELISA PINI
Still Photographers		CHENG NGO FUNG ORWELL 鄭傲峯
		ALI GHORBANI
		BENJAMIN CHIANG 江衍鋒
BTS Filmmaker		BENJAMIN CHIANG 江衍鋒
Poster Photographer		TSANG TSZ CHING 曾子晴
Photography Assistant		CHOI TSZ LUNG 蔡子龍
Official Design Partner		PALETERRA INC.
Electric		SIU KI YEUNG 楊肇麒
		TO KAI CHING 杜啟正
		LO CHEUK NAM 盧卓楠

On Set Dresser		LUI KING CHUN 呂琮珍
Production Assistant		MAK CHI HO 麥智皓
Extras Casting		STAR SCENE PRODUCTIONS
Caterer		MICHAEL LAM
		泰潮
		聚興家
ADR Editor		JUSTIN RANDELL
ADR Sound Recordists		FUNG CHING NAM SHERMAN
		馮正楠
		LEE CHAU WAI OCTAVIA
		李秋慧
		LEUNG KA WOOM AGNES
		梁嘉媛
Foley Artist		STUART ANKERS
	CAST	
Jon		KENNY KWAN 關智斌
Amy		SELENA LEE 李施嬅

Wing		ADAM PAK 栢天男
Young Jon		MASON FUNG 馮皓揚
Young Wing		ANGUS YEUNG 楊天宇
Young Amy		SUMMER CHAN 陳紫萱
	BEACH PARTY CROWD	
何澤權		
盧峻萓		
胡志傑		
周子峰		
倪政聖		
王書煦		
李詠詩		
鄧佩儀		
劉曦妍		
張嘉儀		
蔡梓昭		
BOWEN XU 許博文		
SABRINA MA 馬千生		
TAN YIQI 譚伊淇		
LAU CHUN PANG 劉駿鵬		
KONG ANDREW MANG YAT 江孟溢		
WONG MAN LING 王曼齡		
WONG CHING MAN 黃靖雯		
CHAN CHEUK YING 陳綽盈		
TANG YUET YAN JOCELYN 鄧悅昕		
SPECIAL THANKS		
MARVION		

CHEUNG KWAN WAH 張鈞驊		
JACKIE ECKHOUSE		
VENUS CHEUK		
NAHO ISHIGAMI		
HAMISH DUFF		
RAIMUND BERENS		
FILMED ON LOCATION IN		
HONG KONG SAR		

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MUSIC CREDITS

“Night Beach”

Performed by WinnieTheMoog

Courtesy of Creative Commons

“Let’s Tape”

Written by: Milky Milk

Performed by: Anita Chui

Courtesy of Golden Shadow Entertainment