



Keep Cool

Zhang Yimou

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA,
1997

91 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Guangxi Film Studio**

Executive Producer: **Zhang Weiping, Wang Wei**

Producer: **Wang Qipeng**
Screenplay: **Shu Ping**, based on his novel "The Evening Paper News"

Cinematographer: **Lu Yue**

Editor: **Du Yuan**

Production Designer: **Cao Jiuping**

Sound: **Tao Jing**

Music: **Zang Tianshuo**

Principal Cast: **Jiang Wen, Li Baotian, Qu Ying, Ge You, Zhang Yimou**

Print Source: **Guangxi Film Studio, 30001, 26 North of Youai Road, Nanning City, Guangxi Province, China. T (86) 0771-3133-739 F (86) 0771-3133-739**

Foreign Sales Agent: **Far East Films Ltd., Suite 1-3, 16th Floor, Kinwick Center, 32 Hollywood Road, Central Hong Kong. T (852) 2512-8712 F (852) 2887-9027**

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Keep Cool is an urban comedy from the versatile Zhang Yimou and is in many ways a departure in terms of both style and substance for Zhang. His only other film with a contemporary setting was *The Story of Qui Ju*, which took place in a rural environment. *Keep Cool* transports us into a busy, hectic Beijing. As usual with Zhang, his stylistic approach is in keeping with the film's subject and genre, and *Keep Cool* may remind some viewers of Wong Kar-wai's films. Using a highly mobile hand-held camera, dense and high-contrast lighting, and a rapid, wholly unconventional editing style, Zhang shoots his actors in jittery close-ups, and perfectly captures not only the business of Beijing, but the sense that this city is in the midst of enormous changes.

The plot of *Keep Cool* concerns a bookseller named Xiao Shuai (Jiang Wen), who is pining away with desire for An Hong (Qu Ying), a beautiful, liberated and very sexy young woman. She is not interested in Xiao because she is currently dating an influential member of Beijing's rapidly growing nouveau riche. Lao Zhang (Li Bao Tian), a researcher, accidentally finds himself in the middle of this fray.

This is a comic but nonetheless highly accurate portrait of Beijing today. This is the new China, where money matters more than tradition, and the city is pulsating with greed. And yet there are reminders of the old ways, such as the seemingly endless negotiations that Zhang's characters engage

in. About his film, and about the new China, Zhang has said, "People all want to change their lives. Their heads are full of ideas. They are reaching out for all kinds of new opportunities. Life is a ferment of desires and worries, excitements and illusions."

The film features wonderful performances, particularly from Zhang regular Li Bao Tian, newcomer Qu Ying (a popular model in China), and Jiang Wen as the frustrated bookseller consumed by desire.

■ Noah Cowan



Zhang Yimou was born in Xi'an, China, in 1950. He earned a diploma from the Beijing Academy of Cinema, and began his career as a cinematographer at the Xi'an and Guangxi film studios, where he shot Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade*, among others. His first

film as director, *Red Sorghum* (88), received the Golden Bear award at the Berlin film festival. Feature films include: *Red Sorghum* (88), *Code Name Cougar* (89), *Ju Dou* (90), *Raise The Red Lantern* (91), *The Story of Qui Ju* (92), *To Live* (94), *Shanghai Triad* (95), *Keep Cool* (97).

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