



Lan Yu

Stanley Kwan

HONG KONG, CHINA, 2001

86 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Kwan's Creative Workshop**

Executive Producer: **Qin Jian**

Producer: **Yongning Zhang**

Screenplay: **Jimmy Ngai**, based on the Internet novel "Beijing Story" by **Beijing Comrade**

Cinematographer: **Tao Yang**

Editor: **William Chang**

Production Designer: **William Chang**

Sound: **Xueyi Wang**

Music: **Yadong Zhang**

Principal Cast: **Jun Hu, Ye Liu, Jin Su, Huatong Li, Fang Lu**

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In his finest film since the days of *Rouge* and *Actress*, Stanley Kwan has returned to some basic principles of cinema: A simple, perfectly-conceived love story; great performances from actors working without artifice; and a situation and place allowing for political and social commentary of a subtle and fascinating nature.

The film is set in Beijing in 1988, in the months leading up to the disaster of Tiananmen Square. On the cusp of middle age, Chen Handong is a successful businessman with deep Communist party connections. His loyal lieutenant, Liu Zheng, is one of the few people who know that Handong's taste in sexual partners runs more to men than women.

In a raucous pool hall one night, with everyone getting sloppy drunk, Liu Zheng confesses that he has procured a boy, Lan Yu, for the bar's gay owner. The kid is a student from the countryside and is desperate to try out anything for money. However, after he meets the boy for the first time, Handong informs Liu Zheng that he will be taking Lan Yu home himself.

Their sex is wild and passionate. They gradually become lovers and Handong begins construction on a house for them to share. However, the relationship is shattered by Handong's infidelity with a pretty younger man. When political turmoil suddenly erupts, both men, facing the momentous changes afoot, try to remember the love that transformed them both.

To call *Lan Yu* a "gay film" – its two protagonists are decidedly homosexual and are on screen throughout the film – would be sadly limiting. Its ultimate themes are at once universal and local and have little to do with what men do in bed. This is a film about the fragility and ultimate necessity of love, even under the shadow of great events. It is also a remarkably specific look at China at one of its most crucial recent junctures – a time of hope and fear, mirrored by the emotional turmoil of *Lan Yu*'s star-crossed lovers.

■ **Noah Cowan**

Stanley Kwan was born in Hong Kong in 1957. After studying communications, he worked as an assistant director and director on numerous features, documentaries and short films. Selected filmography: *Women* (85), *Love Unto Waste* (86), *Rouge* (88), *Full Moon in New York* (90), *Actress* (92), *Too Happy for Words* (92), *Red Rose, White Rose* (95), *Yue Ye Yue Meili* (96), *Yang + Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (96), *Personal Memoir of Hong Kong: Still Love You After All These* (97), *Hold You Tight* (97), *The Island Tales* (99) and *Lan Yu* (01).

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