



Zheng Hun Qi Shi

The Personals

Chen Kuo-fu

TAIWAN, 1999

104 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Zoom Hunt International Productions Co. Ltd./ Central Motion Picture Corporation**

Producer: **Hsu Li-kong**

Screenplay: **Chen Kuo-fu, Chen Shih-che**

Cinematographer: **Ho Nan-hong**

Editor: **Chang Dar-lung**

Production Designer: **Wang Yi-bai**

Sound: **Tang Hsiang-chu**

Music: **Steve Liu**

Principal Cast: **René Liu, Chin Shih-chieh, Chen Chao-jung, Wu Bai, Gu Bai-ming**

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Du Jia-zhen is an ophthalmologist, deeply in love with a married man. Like many women in this situation, she is aware of how untenable her position is, but unable to change it. One day the man disappears; their meetings end and he does not return her daily phone calls to his answering machine. Unable to numb the pain of her personal life through a heavy work schedule, Du Jia-zhen places an ad in the paper and begins the dating game.

The men she meets constitute a frightening, often pathetic cross-section of Taiwanese male anxieties and thwarted dreams. The individual vignettes are beautifully directed and satisfying in their own way, but it is their cumulative power, with two unexpected accents towards the film's end, that astonish us. Ultimately it is our strong-willed, proactive heroine who has the most to lose from the pursuit of love.

With the camera squarely facing her in every scene, the modulated subtlety of René Liu's performance as the lonesome woman with a bag full of secrets is a wonder to behold. A new major talent has arrived. Cameos by several known and non-professional performers as her dates are uniformly excellent.

Chen Kuo-fu is the most important voice in young Taiwanese cinema, expressing the social discontent wrought by a makeshift, hyper-capitalist society. While rarely explicitly political, his career, from the alienated teens of *Highschool Girls* to the thwarted yuppie romantics of *Treasure Island*, is a

wondrous prism into a deeply dissatisfied society. He is also a masterful visual stylist, creating rich tableaux of overlapping colours that reflect the incessant throb of a major urban centre with a serious attitude problem.

■ **Noah Cowan**

Chen Kuo-fu was born in Taiwan in 1958. He is a noted film critic, author, programmer and magazine editor, and directed his first feature film, *Highschool Girls*, in 1989. Selected filmography: *Highschool Girls* (89), *Treasure Island* (93), *The Peony Pavilion* (96) and *The Personals* (99).

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