

# 穿越高原

张泽鸣 刘保华 作品

## ACROSS THE PLATEAU

A FILM BY  
ZHANG ZEMING  
AND PAUL LIU

The extraordinary story of seven Chinese men and women, all of them retired, who embark on a 3,100 kilometre journey from Lanzhou, a smoggy industrial city in north west China, across the Tibetan plateau to Everest Base Camp.



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
2007 Rhode Island  
International Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
2007 Sao Paulo  
International Film Festival

# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

Chinese title: **CHUAN YUE GAO YUAN**

## CREDITS

Directors: **Zhang Zeming** and **Paul Liu**

Producers: **Andrew Pike** and **Harriet Pike**

Associate Producer: **Zhang Zeming**

Co-producer: **Zhang Zeming**

Cinematography: **Paul Liu** and **Zheng Yaohao**

Editors: **Nancy Wu**, **Zhang Zeming** and **Scott Wombey**

Sound: **Paul Liu** and **Zhang Zeming**

Production manager: **Zhang Zerong**

Assistant Production Manager: **Yu Xiaohong**

Produced by **Ronin Productions Pty Ltd**, Australia

Cantonese dialogue, English subtitles

95 minutes

HDV/DigiBeta



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# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

The extraordinary story of seven Chinese men and women, all of them retired, who embark on a 3,100 kilometre journey from Lanzhou, a smoggy industrial city in north west China, across the Tibetan plateau to Everest Base Camp.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Seven retired Chinese from different backgrounds and life experiences come together to form a cycling team. They take an extraordinary journey from the industrial city of Lanzhou in north-west China, across the Tanggula Mountain and Tibetan plateau to Lhasa and finally to the Everest Base Camp. The whole journey is 3,100 kilometres and takes the cyclists across five mountains with altitudes of over 5,200 metres. After conquering countless difficulties, they eventually realise their long-cherished dream, to cross the Roof of the World on bicycles.

Among these seven, the oldest is 66, a man who had a brush with death when he suffered a stroke. Another was left paralysed for a year after being poisoned in an industrial accident. There are two women among the team. All come from Guangzhou, the metropolis in southern China also known as Canton, and the first city to open to the outside world under Deng Xiao Ping's reforms. In the highly commercialised city, people have changed significantly over the last twenty years. Lives are dominated by materialism and the quest for wealth, a sharp contrast to the Maoist days. But these seven men and women are looking to find fulfillment by setting themselves a gruelling personal challenge.

Co-director Zhang Zeming emerged in the mid-1980s as one of the leading new talents in southern China with his ground-breaking debut feature, *SWAN SONG* (Juexiang, 1985). **ACROSS THE PLATEAU** is one of his most rewarding films – visually spectacular and rich in emotion and strong characters. The seven cyclists all survived traumatic experiences during the Cultural Revolution, and their life experiences contribute to their determination and stamina in tackling their adventures late in life. From their story, we glimpse China's past and present, and in particular the changing culture of the people.





# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

## ZHANG ZEMING - Director

### BACKGROUND

Zhang Zeming was born in Guangzhou and grew up in the Pearl River Film Studio. His formal education was halted in 1966 by the Cultural Revolution and in 1968 he was sent to work on a rubber plantation in Hainan Island. He returned to the studio in 1978, working as a production assistant and on continuity, his ambition to direct. In his spare time he wrote his own screenplays and studied Chinese literature with the Guangdong TV University. The studio was impressed by his script **SWAN SONG** and invited him to direct the film as part of an initiative to encourage young film-makers. After the film's international success he went on to direct **DAN YI** and **SUN AND RAIN**. He went to the UK in 1989, working on projects with the BBC and British Film Institute, culminating in the making of **A DATE IN PORTLAND STREET** in Hong Kong and London for Golden Harvest and **FOREIGN MOON** in London, for Media Asia, in association with BBC Films and the BFI. He now lives in Hong Kong, developing new projects, including **THE ENGLISH TEACHER** (script development funded by Shenzhen Vanke) and **RED LIGHT, RED STAR** (script funded by the BBC). His new film, **I'LL MARRY YOU TOMORROW**, funded by Great Star, is in development. **THE LAND OF THE WHITE CLOUD** was his first documentary series. He has also directed a number of television commercials.

### FILMOGRAPHY

#### 1985 **SWAN SONG** (Jue Xiang) 100 minutes

Written and directed by Zhang Zeming.

Based on a novel by Kong Jiesheng and featuring Kong Xianzhu as Ou Laoshu and Chen Rui as his son, Guangzai.

#### **Awards and Festivals**

Special Jury Prize, Festival of International Cinema, Turin, 1986.

Golden Rooster Award for Best Art Direction and

Golden Rooster Award for Cinematography, China, 1986. Nominated for four other Golden Rooster Awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Script and Best Actor.

#### **What the critics said:**

"A major breakthrough for the new Chinese cinema." - Variety.

"This forthright pic is top-notch in all departments, with good performances, fine camerawork and tight editing." - Variety.

"Balanced exquisitely between elegy and anger."

"No film says more about what it's been like to live in China in recent years and few other films of the '80s have come near this range of depth and feeling." - Time Out.

"For the first feature of a young director working in difficult conditions, Swan Song is astonishingly assured." - The Times.

"Plumbs the depths of what has happened to Chinese culture and Chinese people in the last 35 years." - City Limits.



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## 1986 DAN YI (made for television) 90 minutes

Co-directed by Zhang Zeming and Deng Yuan. With Zhang Liwei.  
Best television film, China, 1986.

## 1987 SUN AND RAIN (Tai Yang Yu) 90 minutes

Directed and co-written by Zhang Zeming.  
Based on the short story *You Can't Change Me*, by Liu Xihong.  
With Yan Xiaopin, Sun Chun, Yi Xinxin.

### **What the critics said:**

*"A graceful film of feelings, looks and temporary alliances that marks Zhang Zeming as a considerable talent – no Angry Young Man, but a film-maker with an almost Truffaut-like approach to the emotions and feelings of ordinary people."* – International Film Guide.

## 1994 A DATE IN PORTLAND STREET (90 minutes)

Written and directed by Zhang Zeming.  
With Kelvin Wong Siu and Li Fung Shu.  
Filmed in Hong Kong and London.

Zhang Wei has been studying art in England for the last few years. His wife, an advertising executive in Beijing, is waiting for a visa to join him. Desperate to see each other, they arrange to meet for a one-week holiday in a place foreign to them both–Hong Kong.

### **What the critics said:**

*"One of the best Chinese films of the year...Zhang Zeming's cinematic language is very smooth and beautiful...he deals delicately with two characters who love each other but can't get on."* – Shea Kei, Ming Pao Daily News.

## 1995 FOREIGN MOON (90 minutes)

Written and directed by Zhang Zeming.  
With Vicky Chen Hsiao Hsuen, Harrison Liu and Chen Da Ming.  
Produced by Media Asia Films in association with the BBC. Developed by the British Film Institute. Filmed in London. To be distributed in the US by Miramax; in Australia by Dendy Films and in Japan by Tokuma Communications, among other territories.

Three Mainland Chinese – a flautist, an engineer and a boxing champion – chase dreams of a new life abroad. They run the New Moon Take-away from their cramped bedsit until their relationships of innocence are tested and broken.

### **Awards and festivals**

In Taiwan won GOLDEN HORSE AWARD for Best Original Screenplay and nominated awards for Best Film and Best Actor.  
Won Best Director Award at Zhuhai International Film Festival.  
Screened at London Film Festival and other international festivals.

### **What the critics said:**

*"A gentle, often very perceptive light drama about a young mainland Chinese woman's emotional dislocation in London...a spot-on portrait of London life ... its Chinese characters are very real and the pic accurately captures their various responses and solutions to cultural dislocation."* – Variety



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*"Those impressed by his debut will not be disappointed by **Foreign Moon**, which adopts a similarly detailed approach to characterisation and gentle narrative" - South China Morning Post*

*"Thankfully, important independent films keep finding their way into our cinemas, films such as **Foreign Moon**" - The Australian.*

## DOCUMENTARIES

### 2001 THE LAND OF THE WHITE CLOUD

Directed by Zhang Zeming

The history of the Chinese in Australia, ten-part series for Guangdong Television, China.

### 2006-7 ACROSS THE PLATEAU

Directed by Zhang Zeming



# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

**PAUL LIU -**  
**Co-Director, Cinematographer**

## FILMOGRAPHY

**Education** Certificate of Art on Film, TV Drama Sound,  
Australian Film Television & Radio School  
Sound for Film, Beijing Film Academy.

**2006—2007** Co-Director, DOP and sound -  
**OLD HORSES**, 90min documentary  
(in production by Southeast Corner Film Studio).

**2006—2007** Co-Director & DOP - **ACROSS THE PLATEAU**.

**2006** Camera - **ASIAN HEART**, TV movie (Australian independent film).

**2005** Camera - **GERMANY FOR BEGINNERS**, TV magazine, Deutsche Welle TV, Germany.

**2004** Editor - **ROMANCE IN SUMMER**, 20 episode TV serial,  
Produced by Chongqing Zhong Ke Pu Media & Film Production Company.

**2000** 20 episodes TV serial - **TRUTH HEART**.

**1994 – 1996** Student - Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

**1992** **SOUND -THE STRANGER**, 16 minute short film, Australian Film, Television  
and Radio School.

**1986—1987** Sound Department, Pearl River Film Studio, Guangzhou, China.

**1984-1986** Student, Sound Department of Beijing Film Academy, Beijing, China.

**1972 - 1984** Sound Assistant, Pearl River Film Studio, Guangzhou, China.





# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



**ACROSS THE PLATEAU** is a physical journey in which seven intrepid Chinese take advantage of a new sense of personal freedom to explore their country, pedalling from Lanzhou, an industrial city in north-west China, across the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa and on to their ultimate goal, Everest Base Camp. The route takes them over five mountains of more than 5,000 metres.

There's also a deeper symbolism I explore in the film. The group are all retired, crossing the plateau of their lives between youth and approaching old age. The dramas of growing up and living in revolutionary China, including many harrowing experiences, lie behind them and they now enjoy their happiest, freest days when, unlike in the recent past, they can seek personal adventures outside their home city.

They are crossing the plateau towards old age with extraordinary spirit and determination, as reflected in their passion for setting themselves the challenge of some of the toughest, most spectacular, cycling journeys possible in the world.

It is a spirit that our audiences will admire, helping them get to know the new face of ordinary Chinese people, 50 years on from the revolution that, until recently, so coloured every aspect of their lives. Cycling breaks down cultural barriers, with the foreigners on similar journeys they meet along the way, and members of the audience.

The seven cyclists have intriguing stories. The film focuses on two in particular – a retired university professor and a factory worker. For Lao Qiu, 66, the journey is the culmination of his struggle to rebuild his life after a stroke and the sudden death of his wife. Ah Ling was an ordinary worker and single mother who had no goals except to travel through China. She, too, had to rebuild her life, after being left paralysed for a year after an industrial accident.

Through these characters, who we see both on their journey across the wilderness and in their daily lives in urban Guangzhou, I present a new picture of the rapidly changing China of today, and its tumultuous past, and something universal in the human spirit in its fortitude in facing both outside and personal challenges. Ultimately, we all share the desire to live life on a high plateau – to the fullest.

The film shows the relationship between the Chinese and Tibetans, at bicycle level, where a Han Chinese can befriend Tibetan farmers, sponsor their children's education, and plan to return to become a voluntary village teacher. The different people get on well, the politics of any difference a distant spectre.

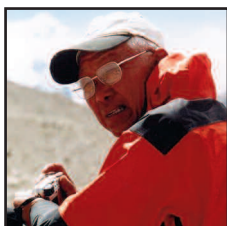
- Zhang Zeming





# ACROSS THE PLATEAU

## BIOGRAPHY OF THE CYCLE TEAM



### QIU DE ZHONG

Lao Qiu is 66 years old and leader of the Ever Young Cycle Team of Guangzhou, and the Tibet Cycle Team.

He was an oceanographer by training and profession, after graduating from the Shandong Qingdao Ocean College back in 1963. Before retiring he'd been a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Science's South Ocean Research Institute. But his career ended prematurely, when he was 52, after suffering a stroke while on an international research voyage in the South Pacific. No longer able to work, he depended on his wife, a professor at the nearby university. But she died tragically of a mysterious, SARS-like pneumonia in 1996. He found new hope when, in the sanatorium he visited to recover from his misery, he met a woman who was recovering from a heart operation. She suggested he go cycling in order to find a new interest in life. Lao Qiu eventually fell in love with this woman, and developed his passion for cycling, with an ambition to cycle around all 31 provinces of China. He has already clocked up 54,000 kilometres.



### ZHU SHIWEN

Lao Zhu, now 63, was a soldier when he was young and was involved in propaganda theatre for the army. Later, he became a worker at the Guangzhou Heavy Machinery Factory. He enjoys playing Chinese traditional musical instruments, such as the flute, as well as western brass instruments. As Guangzhou opened its doors to new entertainment, he was there playing in bands in various nightclubs across the city. He still teaches music and feels that the young people he works with keep him young too.



### WANG RUICHANG

Lao Wang, 61, was a purchaser for the Guangzhou Floret and Hemp Factory. He's an innovative, creative person, who even owns the patent to a novel multi-storey car parking system!



### WU CHENGMIN

Lao Wu, 56, was an official of the Guangzhou Food Research Institute. His ambition to get to Lhasa failed because of altitude sickness.



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## HU HUILING

Ah-ling, 52, worked in the Guangzhou First Rubber Factory. Like many in her generation, she was forced to leave the city and work in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. She has found it hard to forgive herself for not being able to help her younger brother, who visited her in the countryside but died suddenly. Four years after going to the country she returned to become a worker. An industrial accident in her factory, in which she was poisoned, left her paralysed for a year. With her strength of character, she fought her way back to health and a normal life. However, her husband abandoned her, leaving her a single mother.



## WU GUOLIANG

Ah Liang, 51, is a bus driver with the China Travel Agency but is now on unpaid leave. Ah Liang has cycled further than any other in the Tibet team. He never resorts to a car, whatever the weather. He has a good standard of living, but relishes the challenge and hardship he meets on his cycling expeditions.



## GUA YANYUN

Ah Yun, 49, was the deputy head of planning with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China's Guangzhou Branch. Ah Yun is a spirited woman. Because she grew up during the Cultural Revolution, she could not realise her dreams of becoming a university student, studying literature and travelling the world. Instead, she became a farmer and a worker in the countryside. In order to get back to the city she entered a banking school and became a humble clerk. With her talent, she rose to be deputy head of the Planning Section and completed further education through self-study.

She took voluntary redundancy when she was 42, in order to regain her freedom. She has studied calligraphy and photography and has won acclaim in newspapers and magazines. She writes professionally and takes the photographs during the cycle trips. At last, she feels she's using her talents and realising some of her dreams.

