

Nanjing residents, the son of a missionary, and a former "comfort woman," there is also the testimony of Yoshimi Yoshiaki, one of the first researchers to reveal the Nanjing atrocities, and Ienaga Saburo, who continues to wage a legal battle against the Japanese government over the issue of textbook censorship.

Some of the most riveting (and unpleasant) moments in this film come from the camera of John Magee, a missionary in Nanjing at the time of the massacre. He secretly filmed scenes of the invasion and many of the victims. Magee himself testified at the Tokyo trial, giving accounts of murders by bayonet, guns, and drowning. His films were known at the time, and he made them available to prosecutors, but for some reason they were never used as evidence. This leads to speculation as to why issues of atrocities in Nanjing and elsewhere were never pursued vigorously in the postwar trials. Of the seven who received death sentences for their part in the war, only one was executed specifically for involvement in the Nanjing Massacre. All of the seven are now enshrined as martyrs at Yasukuni Shrine. It has long been clear that the Tokyo War Crimes Trials were not thorough investigations of wartime atrocities. This film again raises the question of whether the United States manipulated the trials in a way that would enhance its ability to create an ally in Japan (and make the emperor appear benevolent at the same time). In other words, the United States itself may have contributed materially to a tendency that angers so many Americans: the focus inside Japan on "Japan as victim," but not on Japan as an aggressor. For its part, not only has the Japanese government been reluctant to acknowledge the Nanjing Massacre or the formal

institution of sexual slavery, some government officials have, even in recent years, flatly denied that such things took place.

Government officials may deny the massacre, but just as regrettable is the level of ignorance among the general populace. At the end of the film, as at the beginning, we are introduced to the views of Japanese citizens, who seem ambivalent about their country's involvement in the war. Part of this ambivalence comes from ignorance of what happened, but part comes from a fabricated postwar nationalism colored with glorious stories of the war, and symbols (such as Yasukuni) that add tangible potency to those stories.

Even beyond questions of conspiracies, legacies, and trials, however, this film contains powerful material. Subtitles are not always grammatical, and transitions are not always smooth, but these are minor matters in a film that can certainly be recommended for both high school and college/university classes. The central point is perhaps best stated midway through the film by a former Japanese soldier: "The Japanese army was not an army for the people. First of all, it's not a national army—it's the Emperor's army. Second, the army was made up of obedient soldiers who served the Emperor only, soldiers who had no opinion and obeyed like robots. . . . Just obey absolutely." ■

J. Michael Allen

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China

Unleashing the Dragon

A FOUR-PART DOCUMENTARY SERIES BY MIRACLE PICTURES
HOSTED AND NARRATED BY JOAN CHEN

DISTRIBUTED BY
FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS
153 WAVERLY PLACE
NEW YORK, NY 10014

1995. 200 MINUTES (4 X 50 MIN.)
COLOR

Viewers familiar with the successful four-part, made-for-TV video series *Japan* (WTTW/Chicago, 1987), hosted and narrated by actress Jane Seymour, will recognize the same general style and format embraced in *China: Unleashing the Dragon*. Like *Japan*, *China* also uses a familiar actress appearing on location (sometimes even wearing an identical trenchcoat) to introduce each segment of the video as well as to provide narration and continuity between the various topics and comments from interviewees. But while sophisticated video coverage and analysis of Japanese society has been available for many years via engaging series like *Japan* and *The Faces of Japan* (WNET/New York, 1987), few equivalents have existed on the China side, especially in the fallow years since the Tiananmen Square events of 1989, when general interest in China seemed to wane. This painstakingly produced, carefully edited video series, *China: Unleashing the Dragon*, therefore, should be widely welcomed by educators and students concerned with the amazing changes going on in contemporary China, especially since this series is among the first to really probe the impact of the economic reforms going on since the late leader Deng

Xiaoping made the call to accelerate China's push to become a socialist market economy in 1992.

While no single video, even a nearly four-hour one, can do justice to all the many dramatic changes that have occurred in the short space of the two years from 1992–94 during which most of this video was filmed, nonetheless, *China: Unleashing the Dragon* goes far to enhance our understanding of the depth and far-reaching implications of the vast reforms now sweeping China. Employing a remarkable ability to match the narrative text with stunning visual images, unusual in all but the best documentary films, this video's strength lies even more in its phenomenal ability to capture the paradoxes and ironies of a society in the midst of a high-speed transition, with all the excitement and chaotic behavior accompanying the current experiments with economic reform. As the video itself remarks, the end result of all this change can only be guessed, but the basic forces shaping the transition are well documented and presented in this series.

China: Unleashing the Dragon is divided into four fifty-minute episodes based on broad themes, with most episodes further subdivided to explore interesting tangents. In addition, fascinating

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In the 1960s, Deng Xiaoping, a rising star in the communist leadership, began to question where China was heading.

Photo courtesy of First Run/Icarus Films

interviews with expert observers, top officials, and ordinary Chinese from many walks of life punctuate the videos and provide a wide range of perspectives, giving the videos a valuable multidimensionality all too rare in shorter videos or more hastily constructed series.

The first episode, "Deng's Legacy," brings the audience quickly up-to-date on Deng's role in transforming China since the late Chairman Mao's death in 1976. To illustrate their points and to highlight the stark contrasts now apparent in China's sometimes chaotic, uneven development, the apparently Hong Kong-based Anglo-Chinese creators of this video series have judiciously and brilliantly selected a cross-section of projects now underway in different parts of the country. Among the more fascinating new experiments investigated are: an enormous urban development project ("Suzhou East") undertaken by

the city of Suzhou with financial and administrative aid from the government of Singapore "on the Singapore model"; the more "wild," "lawless," "highly speculative," "greedy" atmosphere prevailing in the unconstrained, rapid (i.e., 20 percent per year) growth on Hainan Island (shown are businesses and tourism in Haikou and in Sanya, which is building a "Riviera" resort with a Nice-style airport); and updates on older, better-known projects and joint ventures in the southern Special Economic Zones like Zhuhai, Shenzhen, and Shekou. Along the way, one meets the mayors of Suzhou and Zhuhai, Singaporean officials, a variety of Chinese entrepreneurs and new millionaires, as well as ordinary workers still unable to benefit from the economic bonanza going on around them.

The second episode, "The Fragile Rice Bowl," investigates the individual quest for success, often viewed, especially by

younger people, in purely monetary or "modern" lifestyle terms as the freedom to earn and spend as one wishes, although this trend toward rampant consumerism is sometimes criticized within and without as an excessive and apolitical tendency devoid of spiritual value. To illustrate these themes, this episode centers on the twin slogans "breaking the iron rice bowl," i.e., abandoning a secure but low-paying government job, and "jumping into the sea," i.e., entering the risky but potentially rewarding private sector. These trends are artfully and sensitively explored through the recent life changes of a young Shanghai schoolteacher-turned-sales manager for a prestigious, rapidly growing cosmetics firm, and how the current economic opportunities are deeply affecting not only herself, but her friends and the members of her immediate and extended family, both in the countryside and in the city. There is much sociological food for thought in this episode, as we see the human dimensions of the resurgence of social hierarchies, generation gaps, and other disparities between those working in the public and private sectors, rich and poor, old and young.

The third episode, "The Soul of the Master," further develops the latter themes in the context of the question of what is happening to Chinese culture in the aftermath of both thirty years of Maoism, and the subsequent resurgence of market forces. This dilemma is dramatically accentuated in the declining popularity of traditional opera, which the state balks to support because it doesn't pay, to the rising popularity of youthful rock concerts, which the authorities look upon with alarm. We not only meet singers and performers, but hear also the laments of a cultural academician who foresees a China in which not only book-reading is

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212-727-1711

replaced by video games, but where most of the traditional culture has completely disappeared. What kind of people will the Chinese be then? he asks. This episode also explores the sad, uprooted lives of the underclass of floating workers from the countryside seeking jobs in the city. This less-noticed trend is exacting a heavy toll on older patterns of traditional village life. One of the more poignant moments is the comment of a

coming apart among the masses of rural residents. This episode leaves us wondering what price China is paying for its economic boom.

The final episode, "Hong Kong and the Boom Towns," is in no way the least informative or insightful of the series, despite being perhaps the better-known topic to the outside world. Rather, this intriguing insider's perspective on Hong Kong is a particularly revealing look at

lawyers and filmmakers, gives one an excellent feel for the economic, cultural, and political issues that are on everyone's mind during this anxious period of transition. Whether the city will be able to maintain the advantages of the pluralistic society, basic freedoms, rule of law, and relative absence of corruption it has become accustomed to under British rule while keeping up its world-renowned, dynamic entrepreneurial spirit

production: the death of Deng, and the reversion of Hong Kong to mainland control. Since both of these events were in fact anticipated when the film was made, the narrative is able to raise pertinent questions about the future of China and Hong Kong in light of these then-foreseen changes. It is therefore safe to say that for the time being, this high-quality, fast-paced, and thought-provoking video series, which maintains high production values through-

... THIS HIGH-QUALITY, FAST-PACED, AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING VIDEO SERIES, WHICH MAINTAINS HIGH PRODUCTION VALUES THROUGHOUT, IS A MUST-SEE EXPERIENCE FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE IMPRESSIVE AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL ECONOMIC CHANGES GOING ON NOW IN CHINA.

tearful village mother seeing her sons go off again in vain to the city in search of employment. "No one stays on the farms anymore," she sobs, and "it's the same everywhere." This is another aspect of traditional China's bedrock which is being sundered as traditional bonds of family and village seem to be

what makes this city tick, even for those who might already know the city well or might have visited it many times. Although Hong Kong has now changed political hands, the film's penetrating interviews with a variety of Hong Kongers from all levels of society, young and old, rich and poor, from club members to

under the city's new "one country, two systems" status, are the issues explored in depth in this episode.

Although filmed mostly in 1994, this thoughtfully constructed video series loses little of its visual or narrative impact from the two biggest changes that have taken place since its

out, is a must-see experience for anyone interested in the impressive and multidimensional economic changes going on now in China.

The series is recommended for advanced secondary, college, and adult audiences, but it is to be noted that before seeing these videos, viewers of this series will

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benefit considerably from some previous exposure to modern China's history, and especially some familiarity at least with major events since 1949. The videos would therefore best fit as a series into an advanced secondary or, preferably, into a college course or adult discussion series concentrating on China or East Asia, although the series or individual episodes might fruitfully serve in a variety of courses in a number of specific social science disciplines as well.

The recent books, *China Wakes*, by Nicolas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Times Books, 1994), and *Mandate of Heaven*, by Orville Schell (Simon & Schuster, 1994), would make ideal complementary reading to accompany this series, since many of the changes and themes examined in these two insightful volumes are beautifully exemplified in the videos. Nicolas Kristof in fact appears in three of the four episodes as one of the foreign experts interviewed (although, unfortunately, his name is misspelled—with two f's—in the subtitles).

The only general drawback worth pointing out in a work otherwise so admirably put together is a tendency toward oversimplification and even exaggeration on some historical points, though this can perhaps be forgiven in a work striving to cover so much ground. Among the few factual errors detected is that Tianjin (mentioned in the third episode) is not a province, but a municipality. ■

Roland L. Higgins

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Electric Shadows

DIRECTED BY HERVE COHEN AND RENAUD COHEN

DISTRIBUTED BY
FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS
153 WAVERLY PLACE
NEW YORK, NY 10014

1993. 26 minutes. Color

Scholars of contemporary China are only now beginning to explore the role of the media in social, cultural, and political change in post-Mao China. This is the theme of the film *Electric Shadows*, set in the rural heartland of Sichuan province. Taking its title from the Chinese term for cinema, *dianying*, this well-crafted documentary follows a team of three itinerant film projectionists as

they travel by bicycle and foot from village to village. They carry with them a makeshift screen, a film and a slide projector, and the films selected by the cinema bureau of Xiuwen Commune, the educational *The Growing of Oranges*, and the popular martial arts classic *The Revenge of Mount Tai Shan*. We learn little of the history of this commune, for the focus is on the itinerant projectionists them-

selves. Earlier in the film—in one of the film's rare didactic moments—they pass a household where a group of people have gathered to watch television. We are asked to look at the television through the eyes of the projectionists, as though the television itself was a force against which they worked. The television set is quickly left behind, and the viewer is drawn into the drama of a profession now seemingly threatened by the arrival of this and other forms of popular cultural entertainment.

Images of village life and of the slow meandering of the film team through the countryside predominate. We watch county government bureaucrats sip tea and discuss the ideological content of Hong Kong films. In another scene, we watch the team push their bikes through a busy market town; in another, after they've



Photo courtesy of First Run/Icarus Films

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