

# In Love We Trust

Directed by Xiaoshuai Wang

“Diamond performances...perfectly calibrated.” – Maggie Lee, *The Hollywood Reporter*



**China/ 2007/ In Mandarin with English Subtitles /  
115 min./Unrated**

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## **Synopsis**

A divorced couple learns that the only way to save their little daughter Hehe, who suffers from a blood disease, is to have another child. Now both remarried, Mei Zhu and Xiao Lu are forced to test their love and their commitment to one another by putting their current relationships in danger. A story of parenthood, love, married life, betrayal, trust and giving, *In Love We Trust* touches upon changes in contemporary society and family life, as well as the moral and ethical dilemmas brought on by modernity.

## **Awards and Festivals**

WINNER – Silver Berlin Bear for Best Screenplay – **Berlin Int’l Film Festival**

WINNER – Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, Special Mention – **Berlin Int’l Film Festival**

WINNER – Best Actress Lan Weiwei, Golden Arena Award – **Pula Film Festival**

OFFICIAL SELECTION

**Hong Kong Int’l Film Festival**

**Karlovy Vary Film Festival**

**Athens Int’l Film Festival**

**Gent Int’l Film Festival**

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It's important for me to be related to the reality surrounding me. That's why I'm always looking for subject matters close to my age and my state of mind, and that's why the story of this film concerns 40 year-old contemporary city characters.

I've read and seen in various media, newspapers and TV shows, stories on children affected by leukemia. Some of these tales were quite extraordinary. To save their child, some parents went looking for long lost sisters or brothers. Some were just simply having a new child. For me, the sentimental aspect of these stories is not attractive. I'm more interested by their hidden side. I have the feeling that behind these sick kids, are powerless parents. They have no choice but to face their destiny. That's what I wanted to show. Beneath the quiet front lie crises: love, sickness, death, helplessness, lies, trust...

In this film, I've tried to avoid the social issues of my characters. There is no mention of their social origins, nor of poverty. I've tried to represent them on a neutral basis, with no specificity. These characters could be anyone. They are just men, women, fathers, mothers, husbands and wives. In this way, I wanted all the attention to be focused on their state of mind. How to find an answer to our destiny, when the result is often so uncertain? That's also the ending of the film. No matter if you turn left or right, the answer remains unknown. I hope that people will become more reasonable when facing their destiny. We all have to face reality.

These characters live in a city without any personality. Wherever the place this story occurs, I believe the characters would make the same choices. They have a problem, yet neither the choice nor the solution. They have to cope and endure it. When facing life and death, love and trust show their real faces and you can get a glimpse of the depth of life.

Xiaoshuai Wang

## **Interview with Xiaoshuai Wang**

**In your previous films, you told stories that could only take place in China. However this time, your story could take place anywhere, even if the fact that it happens in China complicates everything. Is this intentional? Did you want to tell a story that would be more universal than Chinese?**

When I started making this film, I didn't want the story to be typically Chinese. My idea was to give the impression of a normal, ordinary life that could have taken place in any country. Recently in China, cases of leukemia seem to be increasingly frequent. People are speaking more and more about it. Yet what I found interesting about this subject wasn't the specific problem of a country faced with this disease, but the contemporary circumstances of the characters: their hopes, health problems, and the way they cope with death. Above all, they are men and women.

This is the reason while filming, I deliberately chose not to situate the action in Beijing's traditional surroundings: Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, or the city's traditional courtyard dwellings with their narrow lanes (Hutong). I think many cities in China are quite similar. They're all alike and don't have anything special about them. For this reason, the setting isn't very important.

Another important element is the character's professional status. In China, there are poor people who have problems paying their medical expenses. It's the reason why I wanted the characters to belong to the middle class. Their main problem isn't money, it's how to cope with death. I didn't want the film to focus on a specific situation or character, I wanted it to remain clear-cut.

**What triggered your desire to tell this type of story. A personal experience?**

I saw a lot of stories like the one in the film on television and read about them in newspapers. At the beginning I wasn't interested. But after several months, and after having seen a number of similar cases, I said to myself that this is a real problem of our society. I started to think of the child's family, their background, and I realized that this could be a very interesting subject. This story, told in this precise manner, allowed us to avoid the dramatic side of the situation- the child's illness and possible death. It is from this perspective that I decided to make this film, concentrating on the four characters' circumstances, decisions, and personalities.

**Your analysis of human feelings brings you closer to the style of European films. Are you aware of this?**

I like European films and their very personal style of expression. But I am little concerned with the specificities of European or other cinema. I don't like stories that are too emotional. I don't like tears. I like profound and hidden emotions.

That has without a doubt to do with my own personality. I am never very expressive when I am happy or mad. I have a very restrained way of handling my feelings. But that perhaps gives the impression that my films are, in a certain way, European.

### **Is the question of divorce in China a new occurrence?**

Nowadays, divorces have become common enough. Which wasn't at all the case about fifteen years ago. At the time it wasn't acceptable. Now people are divorcing more and more. Things started changing in the nineties. As people became richer, their relationships as couples started not to really work. At the same time, single people started to go out to single's clubs looking for partners.

### **What happens with the "one-child" policy when a couple divorces?**

The one-child policy came into being because the Chinese population was too large. When the one-child policy is not complied with, a fine has to be paid. But when somebody remarries, the new couple has the right to have a child. If, as in the film, the couple formed by the mother and the step-father already have a child, they cannot have a second. In this situation, the fact that the step-father declares the child as his own, comes down to his accepting that he cannot have his own child.

### **The Beijing shown is one that is rarely seen in films. Everyday, modern, poor, sophisticated, raw... Is today's China revealing itself through this scenery?**

From my perspective, Beijing is changing, losing all of its distinctive characteristics. The courtyard houses and alleys (Hutong) and the old buildings have disappeared. Now, there is nothing but modern buildings without any style. For me, Beijing has nothing left that is special. It is nothing more than a place to live. This is why when searching for the film's scenery, we chose the most ordinary looking places. My intention was to show this new Beijing. I also chose building sites, because today Beijing is one big construction site. For the opening scene, by entering the city, I wanted to give the impression of lives that no longer make sense. Life is evermore sad and cold. Relationships between neighbors no longer exist. People don't know one another anymore. This scenery choice also allowed me to concentrate on my characters and their predicaments. In this setting, I didn't want to highlight a life that was typical or specific to Beijing, but a very common, everyday life.

### **SHANGHAI DREAMS spoke about your adolescence. Can we say that IN LOVE WE TRUST speaks about your life as an adult, your life today?**

It is very close to my life. I wanted to make a film about the life of forty year-olds. About the life we lead, and the problems with which we are confronted. We can

say that I feel close to the two men in the film. Both speak very little. They just face up to their situation and the reality of life. I'd like to make other films about forty-somethings today in China.

### **How did you choose your actors?**

I didn't want stars for the actors. I wanted ordinary people, I wanted their personalities, from a certain standpoint, to be ordinary.

The actress LIU Weiwei (the mother) comes from television. I've liked her very much for a long time. She's in her forties and is very close to the mother I imagined for the film.

The step-father, CHENG Taisheng, played in ZU Wen's "SEAFOOD" and JIA Zhangke's "THE WORLD". He has something about him that is very natural and run-of-the-mill. You never have the impression that he is acting. He also smiles a lot in real life. I love his smile and his laugh. I wanted to use that.

ZHANG Jiayi (the father) has been in several television series, and dramas about couples. He attended the Beijing Film Academy at the same time as me. He was in the actors section. We hadn't seen each other in over ten years. I then rediscovered him on television in a role as a calm, reserved forty year old.

I saw YU Nan, the step-mother, in roles where she always played a country girl. It is precisely for this reason that I thought it would be interesting to choose her for the role of a city girl, a modern woman. She represents the young generation that is searching for an independent and modern life. Her character plays with her appearance, always well groomed and made up. I thought that she would be the perfect airline stewardess.

## Director's Biography

After his graduation from the Beijing Film Academy, Wang spent some time working under the PRC studio system before starting out on his own. His first film, ***The Days*** (1993), was an independent feature shot on the weekends in Beijing, and starring Wang's friends as two artists. He followed up *The Days* with ***Frozen*** (filmed in 1994, but not released until 1997). *Frozen*, another foray into the art world of Beijing, was made under the pseudonym of "Wu Ming" (literally, "No Name" or "Anonymous"). In contrast to both *Frozen* and *The Days*, which both took place in Beijing, Wang's next film, ***So Close to Paradise*** (1997), saw him return to Wuhan to film a story of two migrant workers who become involved in a kidnapping.

Wang followed up *Paradise* with the family comedy ***The House*** in 1999.

Despite the numerous films to his credit at this point, it was not until ***Beijing Bicycle*** that Wang rose to truly international success. The winner of the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, *Beijing Bicycle* wowed critics with its story of a youth's search for his stolen bicycle, particularly with its shades of Vittorio De Sica's 1948 *The Bicycle Thieves*.

After the success of *Beijing Bicycle*, Wang made ***Drifters*** (2003), which screened at the Cannes Film Festival in competition for the Prix Un Certain Regard. It didn't win, but his next film, ***Shanghai Dreams*** (2005), two years later, won Cannes's Prix du Jury award.

2008 saw the premiere of Wang's newest film, ***In Love We Trust*** (also known as *Left Right*) in the Berlin Film Festival. A modern drama about a divorced couple, the film had missed a scheduled showing at both the 2007 Cannes Film Festival and the 2007 Venice Film Festival. Wang's next planned project, ***11 Flowers***, recently won the Pusan Promotion Prize for \$20,000.

## Credits

### Crew:

Directed By: Xiaoshuai Wang

Scenario/ Written By: Xiaoshuai Wang

Producer: Huang Bin, Isabelle Glachant

Produced By: Qinghong Debo,  
WX production,  
Stellar Megamedia,  
DUQJI Production

Presented by: Li Bin, Yang Lin,  
Qinghong Debo,  
WXS Production

Director Of Photography: Wu Di

Production Manager: Xie Jian

Edited By: Yang Hongyu

Art Director: Lu Dong

Music By: Du Wei

Music Supervisor: Da Liu

Sound Recordist: Fu Kang

### Cast:

The Mother, Mei Zhu Weiwei Liu

The father, Xiao Lu Jiayi Zhang

The step mother, Dong Fan Yu Nan

The Step-Father, Lao Xie Taishen Cheng

The daughter, Hehe Zhang Chuqian