

Made in China

Chairman Buddha

cinematography by SIDHARTA PASCUAL
music by FABRIZIO VILLEGAS narrated by PATRICK MCGOWAN
executive producers JIANMING SHEN / ALICE YAN / WEILI LIN / DAVID WILKINSON
written / produced / directed / edited by LOUYI TANG
a Feature Documentary by Tiger Butterfly Films
[www . Chairman Buddha The Film . com](http://www.ChairmanBuddhaTheFilm.com)



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Synopsis (short)

Chairman Buddha is about the mythology of Mao Zedong, whom many Chinese today believe has been reincarnated as a Buddha.



Synopsis (medium)

Chairman Buddha is about the mythology of Mao Zedong, whom many Chinese today believe has been reincarnated as a Buddha. Will Buddha Mao answer their prayers and make their dreams come true?



Synopsis (long)

Chairman Buddha is about the mythology of Mao Zedong, whom many Chinese today believe has been reincarnated as a Buddha. Temples have been built in the countryside, and statues have been re-erected in city squares.

Believing Mao is more powerful than the ancient Indian Buddha, worshippers light incense and fall to their knees before his statues. Will Buddha Mao answer their prayers and make their dreams come true?

Director of Photography



Sidharta Pascual brings to the film an eclectic international background that informs a unique point of view. With a well-honed Documentary, Television and Independent Filmmaking experience, he created poetic scenes from the mysterious culture and ironic country that is contemporary China.

Sidharta's credits include projects for PBS (*America Revealed*), HBO (*America Undercover*), National

Geographic (*Brain Games*, *Alaska Wing Men*) and Discovery Networks (*Louisiana Lockdown*), in his 15-year, international film-making career.

Composer

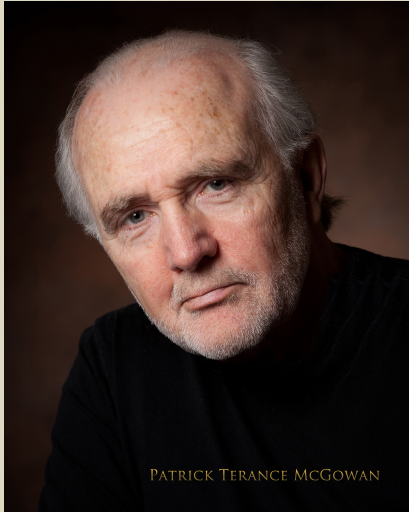


Fabrizio Villegas contributes his music to the film by merging his cultural background, creative composition, music technology, orchestration and performance which translate into a journey of musical landscapes that forge an inspiring and emotional connection to the prosperous and fascinating, but yet mystical country that is China today.

Fabrizio's credits include the score of the feature film *Monseñor: The Last Journey Of Oscar Romero*; music-production for the avant-garde theater piece *Aquatic Information*; TV commercials at The Lodge studios NYC. He is also a music

instructor and engineer at Harvest Works NYC, and music critic for Mexican film magazine *Topcinema*. His music has been performed and premiered in Mexico and New York.

Narrator



Not long after his lung transplant, Patrick Terance McGowan agreed to be the narrator of the documentary. He reads from his heart, with his deep understanding of human nature and from his empathy with misery. His expressive voice added a unique human dimension to the film.

Patrick has performed across a variety of media. His numerous film and TV credits include: *Hell's Caretaker*, *The Prospects*, *Three Houses*, *Chamber of Shadows*, *Pacing the Cage* and *Choose*. He also starred as Uncle Morty in Imagin Asian TV's *Uncle*

Morty's Dub Shack. Theater credits include Doc in Tennessee Williams' *Small Craft Warnings*, *Macbeth* and *Men of Myth*. He also engendered George Carlin in Charles Messina's *Bye George*.

Associate Producer



Jin Guan is a writer, director and producer in China. After graduating with a degree in computer science, he decided to follow his dream to make meaningful films.

During ten struggling years, he wrote, directed and produced three feature films, *My Father*, *The Young Runner*, *The Loner*, and a documentary, *My Retarded Son*. His films often tell stories about troubled lives, from a disabled man to a Japanese deserter. Among them, *The Loner* was selected by the Venice Film Festival in 2015. A brave man, Guan's constant reinforcement and encouragement was

instrumental in propelling this project forward. Otherwise it would never have turned into a documentary.

Writer / Producer / Director / Editor



Considered it to be her destiny, Louyi Tang formed a tight crew and traveled half of China to film *Chairman Buddha*; a documentary that was greatly influenced by the ancient Chinese philosopher, Lao Tze. After a three-year production, she proudly claims that *Chairman Buddha* is not just a documentary, but a collaboration of brave souls, warm hearts and open minds.

Prior to her filmmaking career, she was a professional violinist in the Zhejiang Symphony Orchestra and a teacher at the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Her

passion about film art led her into filmmaking, to which she has devoted her heart since 1991.

Louyi was the screenplay co-writer for five films and many TV plays in China. She won awards for best screenplay in China for *Shadow Magic* and *My 1919*, and won the best screenplay in Taiwan for *Ding Jun Mountain*. She currently resides in the United States, where she studied Directing and Filmmaking at the New York Film Academy.

About the Film

How is this documentary different than others about Mao Zedong?

Divergent from other documentaries in Chinese and Western media, this documentary views Mao Zedong from the eyes of ordinary Chinese and tells the story with their words. The film focuses on today, a time of Mao Zedong without Mao Zedong. No archive footage is used in this film. To be precise, this documentary is about Mao Zedong's worshipers creating a new religion a few decades after his death.

Why has this film chosen this particular angle?

Most of the Chinese personal accounts in this film may be partly or completely fabricated or historically incorrect. But these stories are meaningful and valuable, as they are part of Chinese culture. Whether or not they are true is not the point. The important question is, why are Chinese people telling these tales? And why do they believe them?

For thousands of years, the Chinese have believed that emperors were sons of the Heavens. Then naturally, in their eyes, Mao Zedong was not an ordinary person. It is the Chinese who created Mao Zedong. They deified him as a Buddha after his death. Viewed from this angle, we may be able to look at Mao Zedong and his impact on China from a new perspective.

How did Lao Tze's philosophy influence the making of this documentary?

Lao Tze's is a beautiful philosophy. It is a very good way to view and conduct our lives. He believed that human behavior that is not in harmony with nature and the universe, would not be fulfilled.

Before the trip to China, I decided to cast away my shooting plans and, with open hearts and minds, film whatever might be meaningful or valuable for the story. This yielded many beautiful, spontaneous moments that might not

otherwise have been captured. For example, there was a funeral that took place during the time of filming. We filmed the entire funeral as my instincts told me it would be part of the film, though at the time we did not know how. It is similar to the filming of the singing nun. These seemingly unrelated events brought deeper meaning to the story. They also helped form the visual aesthetic of the story.

What is the difference between the worship of Mao and Buddha?

There are similarities and differences. Circling around the Mao statue is a custom inherited from Tibetan Buddhists. “Grandpa Mao” is an intimate and auspicious way to address him. In homes, Mao’s statues sometimes are enshrined in a very high place. To please him, cigarettes are offered in front of his niche, as Mao was a smoker. There is a noticeable phenomenon that people are more delightful and cheerful than when worshipping in the Buddhist temple. As a tourist, one of the must-see sights of Beijing is the mausoleum of Mao Zedong. Mao’s birthday is considered to be Chinese Christmas today.

How many Mao believers are in China?

Nobody knows. Worship of Mao Zedong is more popular day by day. If a friend or a colleague worshipper of Mao experienced a miraculous event, more believers are created. In recent years, more Chinese have given a Mao statue as an auspicious gift for the new year or spring festival. If a person does better after receiving Mao’s statue, he may very well go to Shaoshan, Mao’s hometown, to thank him. In Shaoshan, CEOs of companies bring hundreds of their employees to thank Mao for their booming businesses. For many Chinese, to deny a possible protecting spirit is inauspicious. They would rather believe in him than suspect him.

What is your experience with Mao worshippers?

Today, a Mao believer may be more trustful. If you want to take a taxi at night, you might prefer one with Mao’s icon prominently displayed. Mao’s statue or picture inside a restaurant can certainly provide some sense of ease or

security. One night, we took a taxi to Mao's hometown. In the middle of the trip, the taxi driver changed his mind and refused to send us to our destination. He called another taxi to pick us up at a gas station. In fear of being robbed, we refused to get out of his taxi. The new taxi driver knocked on our window and told us that we would be safe. I did not believe him until I saw a cheerful Mao dangling from his rear view mirror.

Why is the making of this film a life journey of yourself?

The purpose of making this film about Mao Zedong's worshippers was never about politics. It is a long sigh about the longing for my motherland that I left behind years ago and where I may never again live. The whole process of making this film gave me a chance to reevaluate China's culture and history that I had lived with for many years. One day when I looked at the tears streaming down the serene face of the crying nun, I suddenly began to be aware that what I really wanted to express in this film is that life is misery. The layer of this meaning is deeply hidden in the film.

What kind of reaction do you expect after an audience watches the film?

I am prepared for criticism. I would never expect that people would applaud the film. What I really hope for is, at the end of the film, the audience remains silent in thought. If they have the chance, I hope some could go to China and do their own research. Silence would be the best audience reaction for this film. If there is an award for silence I would like to receive one.



At a countryside funeral, the live music band repeatedly played the same dirge as had been played at Mao's funeral, decades earlier.



Chinese opera performers dressed up to hustle old men and earn tips in Chinese yuan; currency adorned with Mao's image.



Providing free noodle soup to thousands of tourists who journeyed to Mao's hometown village to celebrate his birthday.



Credits

Director of Photography -

Sidharta Pascual

Music -

Fabrizio Villegas

Narrator -

Patrick Terance McGowan

Rap Lyrics & Artist -

K. Sparks

Colorist & Post-Production adviser -

Daniel Orentlicher

Writer, Producer, Director, Editor -

Louyi Tang

Executive Producers -

Jianming Shen, Alice Yan,
Weilin Lin, David Wilkinson

Associate Producer -

Jin Guan



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