Bridging the Abyss: Transnational Asian Cinema and the Making of *Citizen Jia Li*

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design (Media & Communication)

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Sky Crompton

Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} February 2016
Bridging the Abyss: Transnational Asian Cinema and the Making of Citizen Jia Li
Originality declaration and acknowledgements

The concepts, characters and narrative are the original creative work of the candidate working in their capacity as research candidate, writer, producer and director of the work. The participation in the creation of the film and work has been acknowledged as appropriately in the film credits and published writing.

Acknowledgements

The Film

I am grateful to RMIT University for providing an environment where such an undertaking could be accomplished.

The feature film Citizen Jia Li (Citizen) is a work of fiction created by very real people who invested and gave of their time, insight and professional ability and most of all their trust to a project that gives another voice to the marginalised Asian Australians in our society. The names of the cast and crew can be found in the credits of the film but special mention of my co producers and creatives needs to be made as follows:

Daniel Yun without whom Citizen would not exist either in conception or acquisition, for it was with Daniel and another former student that I had the first conversation regarding Asian Australian film stories and it was Daniel who was later to act as cinematographer for the film. My production manager Ashley Dean Wilde and First AD Christian Kloukinas who kept me out of trouble each day of the shoot and whose creative input was invaluable during development and in shaping the finished product.

The lead cast of Claudia Teh, Susanna Qian and Chris Pang, who trusted me and gave much more than they realised to the creation of the film; Annie Gou who not only translated the Mandarin components of the screenplay from English and took on continuity during production but followed the production through to the end with subtitling the film’s Chinese components back into English.

Thanks also to Carol E. Fleming, Dr Mark Williams, Chris and Robert Semellin and Lorienne Young whose efforts and advice lead to the film’s completion.

This Work

I wish to thank my Supervisors, Professor Jo Tacchi and Associate Professor Craig Batty for their patience, guidance and the clarity of direction and vision that they provided in the creation and completion of this exegesis. Thanks also to my editors Lynn Spray and Rilke Muir for their assistance with the finished draft of the work.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the very real contributions my mother Carol E. Fleming has made to the project. Her commitment, teaching, intelligence and clarity of thought have always been a guiding light to my endeavours and without her I would not be the person I am today, nor would I have created this work.
Note to the Reader

This work is holistic, with the exegesis expressing the work and its methods academically and the screenplay and film world bible being the practice based tools utilised to communicate with cast and creative participants to achieve the completed international release feature film, *Citizen Jia Li*.

The *world bible* and *screenplay* of the feature film *Citizen Jia Li* are original pre-production materials. Minor changes to the screenplay scenes, action and dialogue occurred as a natural part of the creative process of filming, editing and completing the film. For simplicity and the purpose of relating to the original script development and creative intention, when scenes, sections or passages are referred to in this thesis the order, number and page are references to the original documents contained in the Appendices. Where differences between the completed film and original screenplay impact on this work, they are noted prior to the discussion thereof.

Sky Compton
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Enclosed:

FEATURE Film DVD

Separately bound in Book 2:

Appendix 1 – Film World Bible
Appendix 2 – Screenplay
Appendix 3 – Film&Books: Indie Film: Citizen Jia Li, An Inspirational Story of Loyalty and Honor
Abstract

*Bridging the Abyss*; which comprises a completed feature film, an exegesis and two appendices in the form of a production screenplay and a film bible document. These explore notions of original contributions to knowledge around the practice of *transnational cinema*, by embracing what I am calling a ‘systems approach’ (Cinema of Systems) to creative cinema practice through *empathetic design*, the work asks how/whether/in what form I have been able to engage with these ideas to create an original feature film. Further it explores how this work has allowed me to better understand my practice and the theories driving it in the context of globalisation where cultures are blending creating new audiences.

Specifically the project focuses on the application of empathetic design to screen narrative and fictional characters as a way of engaging with transnational audiences by using an empathetic design methodology focusing upon *practice*, using *holistic Asian thinking* and *understanding of cultural systems* to answer the project question:

*How can a filmmakers approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces?*

The exegesis uses the film as a lens through which to explore the knowledge, theories, and practice I used with the outcomes of the project experience and resulted film’s release, feedback and distribution internationally as one way of evaluating the performance of the project. It concludes with an appraisal of my thoughts upon the next steps for my knowledge and further practice based research into the topic of transnational cinema, the cinema of globalised systems.
Introduction

‘Change is part of a dynamic environment’
Ghost in the Shell (Mamoru Oshii, 1995)

The creation of my film Citizen Jia Li (Citizen) was founded upon the proposition that I believe change is constant and is all around us. Observing change is relative to one's position. Some positions make it easier to see what is coming; others make it impossible to apply the knowledge of the observed changes. It is possible to develop a system to predictably project where it will go next, how it will change, and what it will become.

This is an idea that is in itself at the core of the film that underpins this Masters by Research project. The characters of Jia, Kong and Daisy all face and interact with the idea of finding (or avoiding) a space for oneself that is for them and not the surrounding obligations and pressures, this is described by the films short press synopsis thus: when Jia Li loses both her job and home in the one day, nothing as a new Citizen is what she expected. Over three days she will struggle against fears and enemies to find her identity, supported by Daisy, a half Chinese half Japanese ‘Harajuku’ girl, who is coming to terms with her own mixed parentage. Jia's triad ex, Kong, pursues her to get her back, to save face, and searches Melbourne for her - maybe out of genuine love.

To do this the characters (in particular Jia) need to change to be able to see/find their next position. These ideas are integral to themes of family, obligation, honour and finding oneself that proliferate the lives of the characters and drive their narrative from the core. These themes laid a foundation or creative position upon which I was able to stand and shape the world of the film my characters where to inhabit.

“I think I am a good leader. Because I do it with respect and on time, and without a lot of fanfare. I figure you’re a good leader if they like what you’re doing” Clint Eastwood (Goodridge, 2012).
Eastwood defines a place or position from which he can operate in the production of his creative works. This idea of a creative position one where I the writer/director/producer of a creative work stands was important to me and the project as film was informed by my background as a film writer, director and producer, and film and television lecturer. This determined the position of my observations and approach, from both a practice and an academic perspective.

This background and its lifetime of experiences had provided me with an understanding of the importance of themes as ‘core ideas or DNA’ as screenwriter John August (2010) describes them, and how they function within a narrative and their uses in creating the character and narrative form of my world. It was from these positions that I would write and produce my film, from these that the script and the creation process would develop with the script, which while retaining the position of a map to the film, would not be limited by the page of the screenplay but guided by it with full knowledge the film was a work in itself and not simply of the screenplay or simply of me.

In writing ‘apart from me’ I mean that I would attempt to write it from a migrant Asian and first generation Asian Australian perspective to engage that group as my first audience. In doing so I applied an idea of suppressing the personal ego, becoming ‘all things to all people’\(^1\) and allowing the individual egos of each character to take over telling the story, I took this to the point where commentators who did not know me thought the script/film to be from a female Asian person rather than the Anglo-Saxon male that I am.

The writing and primary production spanned 2008 with postproduction continuing through to 2011, when the film was released and started its film festival life, which lead to international distribution in 2013. During this time I produced notes and observations that influenced the writing of the exegesis which forms (with the film and its working documents) a holistic case study into my film practice in the area of transnational Asian cinema. What has resulted is this

\(^1\) Corinthians 9:22: To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. Retrieved from https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:22
exegesis in a structure and style that reflects my practice and approach as an educator with its use of explanatory diagrams and key revision points at the end of the various sections in each chapter. It was from this holistic position both creatively and scholarly that I was able to consider the question: *How can a filmmaker’s approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces?* I was asking of the work and if I had been able to answer it or not through the film and my journey of making it.

**Integrating with Asia**

At the beginning of the exercise of my filmmaking practice case study, I sought to explore ideas that would allow me a harmonious way of inserting my stories into the transnational Asian cinema and screen market. A key reasoning behind this is that today we live in a globalised world, where cultures are constantly meeting and blending a world where technology enables change to be localised *and* transnational.

For example, in *Japanamerica* Roland Kelts (2007) explores the Japanese invasion of America through Manga and Anime pop-culture. He demonstrates that the Asian cultural form of Anime and Manga have *bridged* the physical and cultural distances between Japan and America, to be consumed and incorporated into the lives of young Americans, resulting in a transnational blending of East and West. His book demonstrates the impact Western and Eastern systems have on each other, leading to a blending of ideas and cultures to create a new location of experience in the audience.

One way of seeing this blending is the putting away of the concept of what is foreign, alien or ‘the other’ (Said, 1979) to become a blended ‘us’. With my case study I intend to build upon what I have learnt from Kelts’ observations and explore how my idea of the blending of cultures into the transnational can be used in my creative practice, with the intention that *Citizen* would be accepted by these transnational Asian and like-minded viewership. So it is these types of cultural interaction and blending that are integral to my position as a creative practitioner.
and how I would seek to answer my question with regard to how the transnational consumption of media might be engaged with through my own film and screen work.

It was in 2008 that I set out to create a film from a position from my observations of Asian media, its viewers and my potential audience to enable my project to find a method and space where I could place the film *Citizen* so that it would *bridge* and be consumed in *transnational* and *Asian* spaces. In this way the film’s creation and its associated design (style and structure) and development process I sought to expand my knowledge and understanding of how popular culture audiences engage with and consume Asian and transnational Asian film. Furthermore I sought to extend this to Asian narratives that originate in the west with the aim to serve both an Asian and Western audience there by becoming transnational by the films origin in the west and its consumption. With this in mind I set my primary target audience as young Asian females (18-35 years old) located outside Asian homelands in countries such as Australia and the United States as I believed that it was towards these potential audiences that I had the greatest opportunity of reaching my primary audience.

*In Australia*

My journey of the creation of a transnational Asian film started in Australia after discussions with my Asian film students regarding their own film stories and practices. Reading Henry Chan’s paper ‘From Quong Tarts to Victor Changs: Being Chinese in Australia in the Twentieth Century’ (2000) helped me unpack what my students had unknowingly expressed:

“An important history that has been neglected, rendered silent, is that of the Chinese in Australia.” (Chan 2001, p.1)

The experience of the Chinese is that of other Asian groups in Australia, where they are constantly being the ‘other’ and hitting a ‘bamboo ceiling’ (Hyun, 2005) feeds into the idea of there being a past and ongoing history of Asians in Australia that has been rendered silent. This connected with what I had observed in a lack of
Asian screen stories in the Australian media. When I read Chan’s paper in 2008, several years after I had first talked with my Asian students asking them about telling their (Asian) stories, Chan’s paper reminded me of my students’ thoughts and positions. The papers’ premise exploring the forgotten history of Chinese people in Australia and white Australia’s long prevailing negative attitude to the Chinese helped me to realise that one of the reasons many of them did not tell their stories is that they believed there was no place for them. This was fuelled by a number of factors including ambivalence and outright hostility to Asians.

When I wrote an article on the subject of Asians missing from our screens for The Conversation in 2012 (Crompton, 2012) a comment from Luke Bradson demonstrated this when he wrote: "Shut up! Be thankful you were even let into this country! White Australia!"³

Luke Bradson assumed me to be of Asian background, and his comment demonstrates an alarmingly disturbing white Australian attitude. It mirrored the negative attitudes and experiences I observed Asians coping with, ranging from Asians not being seen on our screens to outright racism in their everyday lives. It was experiences like this that prompted me to make the film and prompted Asian filmmaker Huu Tran⁴. In email conversation with Huu Tran, he stated to me that he did not believe producers want to produce films with Asian-ness⁵ such as his, including martial arts and inter-cultural films. From my observations I believed that what was missing was a local environment which supports ethnic storytellers such as Tran and so the premise for this film was born out of bringing together the dual idea of muted and missing voices becomes pointed when returning to Chan’s paper:

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² Since the late 1990s I have developed, coordinated, taught and lectured in media and communication courses in the areas of Interactive Media, Animation, Film and Television.
⁴ Huu Tran is a writer and director of short films and dedicated to providing opportunities for young Vietnamese-Australians to meet and exchange ideas around film and cultural issues his biography can be found at [https://asianaustralianfilmforum.wordpress.com/2011/event/](https://asianaustralianfilmforum.wordpress.com/2011/event/) He was film festival curator of the Australian Vietnam Film Festival and founder of Global Vietnamese Short Film Festival' (GVSFF) screened in 2010 in Sydney (10th October, Riverside Theatre) Melbourne (20th October, Prince Philip Theatre & 10th November, Kino Cinema) as part of the Global Viet Film Network and the second GVSFF was held in March 2012 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-m9Njbd4mg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-m9Njbd4mg)
⁵ “Asian-ness” is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a noun "relating to Asia or its people, customs, or languages.” Retrieved from [http://mri-aalr.binghamton.edu/docs/asianness/](http://mri-aalr.binghamton.edu/docs/asianness/)
"Those who advocate a ‘balance sheet’ narrative of Australia’s past should recognise that the balance sheet cannot simply be the history of Britannic triumphalism, but will require the interrogation, negotiation, recognition, and incorporation of the multiple histories of the Australian peoples.” (Chan, 2001, p.2)

The analogy of a ‘balance sheet’ is useful to explore Asian communities that are trying to factor their >8% of the population into mainstream media, which is not an easy task. Tony Ayres, director of Home Song Stories (2007)\(^6\), and Khoa Do, director of The Finished People (2003)\(^7\) are two of the most successful Asian-Australian filmmakers who are having success both through recognition at Festival Awards and support through government agencies here in Australia. But, do these films and their limited successes translate into a viable culture for young Asian filmmakers, given that the films supported by these agencies are rarely successful in returning their budgets and generating profit?

This directly relates to the question of where to locate Citizen. Was it to be an Australian film, or was there an alternative? As an Australian filmmaker interested in the issues of Asian film in Australia, as set out above, I decided to attempt to resituate the Australian-ness of the film and the limitations of being categorised as Australian National Cinema and replace it with Asian-ness by setting my target viewer as the global Transnational Asian. It was to be a film about Asians located in a modern multicultural city like many around the globe in the early 21st century. It would be transnational in its location, placed to sit with contemporaries such as Cape No. 7\(^8\) from Taiwanese filmmaker Wei Te-Sheng. Released in 2008, Cape No. 7 is a transnational and trans-century love story about a group of Asians in a provincial Taiwanese town searching and fighting for a voice of their own. It is a small film that made a big impact on the Taiwanese and Asian cinema market through both its narrative and marketing approaches and achieved a ‘record-breaking box-office performance’ (Shiau, 2009).

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\(^8\) Wei, D. (Director). (2008). Cape no. 7 (Hai jiao qi hao) [Motion picture on DVD]. Taiwan: Distributed by Buena Vista International.
It is in a landscape populated with films such as Better Luck Tomorrow (2002)\(^9\) The Princess of Nebraska (2007)\(^{10}\) and Children of Invention (2009)\(^{11}\) from the United States, Cape No. 7 (2008), and Monga (2010)\(^{12}\) from Taiwan, and The Finished People (2003) from Australia, that I place Citizen. These films tell stories of hope, love and homeland with subject matter as wide-reaching as Asian-American children fending for themselves in Boston, to a trans-century love story set in the mixed cultural setting of Taiwan. These films are unique, familiar and challenging in their content and in the tenacity shown by their creators to bring these voices to the screen. It is among films such as these that I hope Citizen Jia Li resides.


\(^{11}\) Chun, Tze (Director). (2009). Children of invention [Motion picture on DVD] USA: Asian Crush, BigStar.TV.

\(^{12}\) Niu, Doze (Director). (2010). Monga (original title Băng-kah, released in Australia as Gangs of Taipei) [Motion picture on DVD]. Taiwan: Distribution Workshop (Australia: Pinnacle Films).
**Beginnings of films are important, delicate times; they set the scope and frame for what follows. *Citizen Jia Li* itself is a product of a beginning time and work of Asian-ness for me as a screenwriter and filmmaker in a time when Asia is expanding and changing from *the other* (Said, 1979) into *us*. These ideas came to me by inhabiting a space where this process was taking place, a space (Australia, Melbourne, the classroom, the media) where I could observe and experience the straining and struggle between the *us* seeking to leave the *other* behind despite opposition from that space by those who would keep the *other* separate from the *us* of Anglo-Saxon Australia identified by Chan and expressed by Luke Bradson.

The Asian Century, a term coined by one former colony (the United States) and adopted by another (Australia); has seen the emergence of Asian cinema as a major global entertainment and media market. Engaging with the Asian Century requires break[ing] through the impasse created by purely imperialist knowledge production (Chen, 2010). This 'break[ing] through' requires 'critical intellectual work on deimperialization ... and ... has to uncover alternative possibilities' (Chen, 2010, p. 211) of how we can engage with the post-colonial globalised transnational Asia of this century. This exegesis and the film demonstrate how I chose to engage with this topic and how the experience impacts on my chosen field of Screen narrative production. I have attempted to bridge transnational Asian-ness to reach these new and emerging international markets. I have done this through the primary question:

*How can a filmmakers approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces?*

This is expanded through the lens of a concept I am drawing from, called 'empathetic design' where the design emphasis is upon the consideration (from the inception stage onwards) of the perceived audience needs. Empathetic design, as coined by Dorothy Leonard (Leonard & Rayport, 1997), has been defined by Köppen et al. (2011) as identifying and addressing the needs of the customer [i.e.

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13 ‘Asian Century’ refers to the ‘rise of Asia’ and its ‘changing of the social, economic and strategic’ global landscape of the 21st century. This rise is explored in depth in the 2012 Australia in the Asian Century White Paper (Dept. of Prime Minister and Cabinet).
audience] in their own environments and applying these to the various aspects of the design process loop from conception through to delivery and consumption. In my case, this means script development through to film production and distribution.

For the purposes of my own story design and development work empathetic design, as I utilise it, is my process whereby through a series of development and knowledge acquisition tools I identify key cultural and trans-cultural identifiers and connections that can be used in character and narrative situations to better serve the perceived audience needs. This is a process that I will expand on further in Chapter One and through this work focusing on the following:

a) the analysis of a holistic approach to Asian thinking;

b) the design of the film *Citizen Jia Li* looking specifically at how one of the characters was developed and visualised;

c) how ‘empathetic design’ can be used with creative screen narrative tools that allow for:

   i) identification of narrative and character by cultural systems;

   ii) acceptance of narrative and character across transnational cultural systems.

The structure of this exegesis follows that of the design and execution of the film, design referring to the formulation of a style and structure upon which planning and execution documents such as the screenplay and film world bible (containing character and story design) form the construction execution documents. Empathetic design thus sits at the core of the application and production of knowledge. This exegesis is separated into three chapters. The first, *Method*, looks at the supporting knowledge base and the assumptions made when approaching the work from a holistic Asian perspective. The second, *Practice*, focuses upon the development and production of the film as seen through the lens of the core, using as a case study the development and writing of the core character of Daisy. The third, *Outcomes*, deals with the dual outcomes of practice and knowledge.

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production. Each of the chapters concludes with an In Summary section of the key aspects and knowledge covered serving to focus my own (and the reader's) thinking upon the information, knowledge and outcomes that have been explored and revealed. It is a reflective device/technique that I find beneficial in both my creative practice and as an educator and teacher. Finally I will conclude with a summary and overview of a) understandings I have gleaned about filmmaking practice in this domain, and b) some ideas about further research that might be undertaken. The diagram on the following page shows the structure and interconnected flow of knowledge in this work.
Introduction

- Objectives
- Question/s
- Method of Practice
- A Contribution to Knowledge

Intent – Theory – Practice / ∞

Chapter 1 – Method
Creative Practice in a Transnational Asian Landscape

Creative Practice as the Method
Asian holistic v Western object based understanding

Asia as a Method of knowledge production for New Transnational Asian Cinema

Empathetic Design and Approach
Systems & Fields, Narrative and Character Development

Chapter 2 – Practice
Citizen Jia Li: Bridging the Abyss

Citizen in a transnational landscape

Story Themes

Empathetic Knowledge for Audience Systems
Empathetic Design of Character & Narrative

Designing a Harajuku Girl
- Daisy’s Layered Design
- Daisy, a Constant Hero

Daisy in Practice: Four Examples
Constantly Asian

Chapter 3 Residing in a Transnational Space

Knowledge

Theory
- Empathetic Design
- New Asian Cinema
- Transnational Cinema

Practice
- Festivals
- Awards
- Distribution
- Critical Review

Conclusion – Bridging The Abyss

- Transnational Cinema Design
- Support Structures

Appendix 1 – 3

- Film World Bible
- Screenplay
- Critical Review

Diagram 1 – Knowledge to Practice Method

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15
Chapter 1 – Method: Practice in a Transnational Asian Landscape

15 The use of the infinity symbol to describe the perpetual loop of theory to practice is derived from Holling (2001), chapter 1, ‘Understanding Complex Systems’.
"Neither the term Orient or the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the other”

(Said, 2003, p.xii)

Introducing Practice as the Method

Said's statement provides a way into the question of possible methods by which transnational Asian cinema can be designed to bridge the physical, cultural between old and new Asian homelands. This chapter seeks to explore my ideas as an academic filmmaker, and the expression of those ideas thought the development and executive decisions behind the film project. I find that the way into each screen narrative is different, but involves finding the core idea/s that will resonate with the intended audience. Drawn as I am towards stories centred on people's journeys for truth, it is these stories that allow me to explore the extremes of human needs and wants.

In the case of Citizen, it is the journey of a group of young Asians making their home in Melbourne. For me, finding the way into the journey of the characters and my understanding of the themes and how to realise them, I utilized empathetic design and Asian thinking as my methods. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the methods and theories that came together in the development and production of the film. I will start by introducing the ideas leading to the film before moving on, in the second chapter, to look at how these connect with my practice by unpacking parts of the film as individual examples or evidence.

The ideas include:

a) empathetic design as my approach;

b) creative practice as my research method;
c) how the differences between Asian and Western thinking lead me to use an Asian position for my creative practice, thus leading to the design, development and production of *Citizen*.

Expanding on the idea of empathetic design from the Introduction, it is a design approach where the emphasis is upon the consideration (from the inception stage onwards) of the audience perceived needs. I set out to explore and identify the needs of my identified audience, *transnational Asians*. In doing this it was necessary for me to understand or empathise with how the audience might think and understand narrative ideas from their particular cultural context. In this case and more generally, how do *Asians* think about issues related to the film's content and to what degree are these thoughts different to the thoughts of those of western origin? It is my approach to these ideas that this chapter explores.

**Finding Another Method**

For a number of years I struggled to align purely Western thinking and knowledge in my approaches to teaching, narrative design and creative practice. I found a disconnect between the conflicting ideas of Western rigid focus on *'the object'* (Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001) and my approach which looked at the *'field'* of action (Nisbett et al., 2001) and its intersection and impact with other systems. An example of this is in narrative structure. I find that for several decades now the proponents of the three-act structure and the hero’s journey as discussed by the likes of Campbell (1949) and Vogler (1992), with its roots in Aristotelian thinking, have predominantly influenced Western filmmaking. My approach is rather to find a holistic view and a flexible approach to the needs of the audience and the narrative, rather than adherence to any one way of telling screen stories. I expand on my approach to structure through this chapter and provide a detailed textual analysis from the film in Chapter 2.

The disconnection I have experienced is not only in the restricted narrative structure, but also in the creation and representation of characters in narratives. On the creation of characters, Smith (1995) discusses ideas such as the *‘character*
is dead’ as being a position taken by screen theorists for some time. This theory is that, at some point, the creation of character-based narrative ceased to be the norm and was supplanted by an emphasis on plot and style. This is a concept which I find difficult to locate in the canon of filmmaking over the last hundred or so years of cinema and screen production, since throughout there have continued to be both character-based and event-based screen narratives. From my position as both the filmmaker and the audience member, the character has always remained important and has never left the page or screen. It would appear that the character is ‘dead’ (Smith, 1995) only within a philosophical argument that is disconnected from common practice.

Smith (1995) is far from the last word on character as “the concept of character is not a concept that stands still” riffs Rita Felski (2011) in the introduction to an anthology of essays on the subject. Felski demonstrates that character is an ‘alive’ field of enquiry with a ‘conviction that literary character can disclose rather than disguise’ and proceeds to talk of a ‘new wave of interdisciplinary scholarship devoted to the puzzle of elucidating our intellectual curiosity about, and emotional attachment to, people who do not exist’ (Felski, 2011, p.v)

In the same anthology, Murphet (2011) challenges us to see ‘a Chiasmus of character’ with potential as both the singular and the multitude, allowing the audience to engage on multiple levels as necessary to take as needed from the narrative. Further, Ahmed (2011) on ‘the problem of character’ cites Novalis’ idea of the character as ‘a completely fashioned will’ to demonstrate that will and the internal influences of a character determine real outcomes.

Because of these disconnections I have searched for a position of response. The idea that character is alive both as a field of research and to the audience above a cinema of style carries over to a field of practice informed by theory where work on character is expanding though the practice of dramatic facilitators, coaches and dramaturges such as Joan Scheckel, the script facilitator for *Whale Rider* (2002) and Miranda Harcourt, acting coach for *The Lovely Bones* (2009) and *Bright Star*

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16 These are underpinning ideas for Smith's work (1995) on character in cinema and set out in his introduction, pp. i-iv

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Their practice includes the use of defined theories and methods such as Hardcourt’s use of John Keats’ Negative Capability (1817) in which she utilises the idea of a ‘willingness to embrace uncertainty’ (Popova, 2012) and asks actors ‘to concentrate less on the information-transfer of the text and more on the thinking/feeling space in the beats/pauses/silences/ellipses/breaks’ (Hardcourt, n.d.).

Here within the precincts of character exploration, interpretation and performance we find a point of convergence where the creator/s and the audience meet. I propose that, the audience is intended to and seeks to be engaged fully, whereby they are removed from the present of the everyday in to the moment of the narrative, the character/s are a method of facilitating that engagement on a range of levels from identification to tour guide in what Rose describes as “a fictional universe ultimately remains, well...fictional. A pretend space. An escape.” Rose (2012 p. 149). The idea of a removal from the everyday by immersive narratives that take the audience from the position of spectator to participant is one that Rose would have us (audience and creator alike) embrace as not only a reality but an active landscape in which narrative creation takes place breathing life in characters that live in if not with us. Characters therefore fill a multitudinous series of roles symbiotic with the narrative and its purpose, and ultimately for the audience. These ideas exist in space occupied by the constraints of subjectivity and objectivity without reference to the holistic nature of existence.

I consider that my holistic approach allows me to respond to arguments such as these through simple, refined, thinking approaches, such as that of leading Los Angeles-based screen industry facilitator, Joan Scheckel. I learnt that in her work on character and story with actors, writers and directors Scheckel seeks to reach beyond singular approaches adopted by Hollywood (such as the Hero’s Journey) that may raise barriers to creativity. Rather she seeks to facilitate the finding of thematic truths and core ideas and motivations within the narratives and characters of each film. In this way she clarified character issues for me during a workshop I attended in 2001, where she demonstrated her direct knowledge-based approaches, such as the simple concept that:

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'Character is revealed through action.'

This is similar to the ‘show, don’t tell’ (Thomas, 2012) approach to character development shared by writers and literary agents (Gardner, 2011), as a means of character design to engage audiences. It is a statement that is powerful in its actualisation of the narrative’s creator and their characters; it acknowledges the existence of the character in the past, present and future. It provides an easily accessible method of constructing characters whose histories are identifiable, and delivers narrative representations that progress the plot and fill the narrative. Scheckel’s approach is holistic, coupling theme with character, and, as she stated in an interview:

‘Theme must be felt. It’s not a metaphor ... It’s what they are doing and feeling structurally in the movie’ (Pitts, 2013, p. 70).

Scheckel’s position on character assisted me at the time of developing the screenplay in designing my own approaches, as a narrative and character creator of transnational stories, these ideas allowed me to breakdown the statement to a process whereby the character is explored:

a) historically within their world; and
b) located within a cause and effect related world.

Real world effectors, events and actions, impact on the characters, both internally and externally, and then motivate the characters’ actions. Such an approach allowed me to create characters that are intended to be identifiable and recognisable and thereby engaging18 to a viewer, allowing them to become a participant in the narrative rather than purely a passive observer. My definition takes a deeper level approach and requires acknowledgement in the creative process, requiring an understanding of the words recognise and identify at their most basic meanings, namely:

18 ‘Engaging’ refers to the audience interaction with the narrative where they not passive viewer/s but an emotional participant responding based upon their own ‘experiences and morals’ (Smith, 1995) to the input from the narrative.
a) an ability to categorise an object, person or action;
b) in the context of an individual or group body of knowledge; and
c) at both subconscious and conscious levels of engagement.

My use of identification serves to illustrate further my disconnect with purely Western approaches. I am interested not only in developing allegiance (Smith) with the character, but also in being able to 'identify', recognise, understand, have knowledge of a type of character and/or the traits, emotions and actions that he or she displays. Without this I believe that the transnational audience could/would be confused by concepts potentially foreign to their frame of reference or require the opportunity to absorb new knowledge and frames of reference prior to engaging with the character and the narrative they inhabit. Another way that identification could be read is contextual understanding of information. With this position of understanding in place, it is then not paradoxical to identify with a villainous character such as Kong in Citizen, as, without understanding and recognition, the audience would be confused and not able to follow the narrative. In Citizen I chose to create characters that had both good and bad traits so that the viewers had a contextual understanding which would allow them to follow the narrative more readily.

Supported by the wider field and systems-based approaches to be looked at later in this chapter, I see my practice as one that utilizes a highly integrative and transdisciplinary approach, as described by Tress, Tress and Fry (2006). This allows me, as an academic and a filmmaker, to engage with ideas and concepts in transdisciplinary projects towards transnational outcomes. Such practice is a method that provides a perpetual loop of information, knowledge and, potentially, wisdom of action that produces outcomes from each point of an 'intent-theory-practice' loop:

\[
\text{Intent - theory - practice - Intent - theory - practice /} \infty
\]

The nature of my enquiry and project cuts across industry, educational and academic issues, relating to transnational screen narrative and practice as the
method (Leavy, 2009). Following the intent-theory-practice loop, my theory and practice are both informed by and contribute to, my practice in the creation of Citizen, its subsequent festival life, awards, distribution, critical reception and academic outcomes. The project has followed an intention to 'actively produce a creative work drawn from a specific research agenda, and that the response to all of this, should speak to other practitioners' (Batty, 2013, p. 16) I have pursued my ideas relating to engaging transnational audiences with empathetic design by choosing key story ideas and characters that act as focal points of connection and engagement for transnational audiences. The end result is a contribution to knowledge that has arisen from 'creative-critical experimentations, insightful reflections and subsequent practice-based applications' (Batty, 2013, p. 17) articulated through this exegesis, conference papers, articles and the various creative outcomes from development to distribution.

This approach fits well with Patricia Leavy's ideas relating to arts-based research practice. In her book, Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice (Leavy, 2009), and her notions of 'Narrative', 'Performance direction', 'Performance text', 'Visual arts', and 'Arts science', I find these methods are useful for understanding my film and research. So, it is through the lens of the film that concepts such as empathetic design are viewed and deliver measurable results. Such results feed into the intent, theory, practice loop of transnational Asian cinema that has formed the focus of the project from the position of Asian-thinking as a method, rather than a purely Western Aristotelian-based approach.

**In Summary:** Creative practice as a method of enquiry engages and creates a continuous loop of practical and knowledge-based outcomes.

**Asian holistic vs Western object-based understanding**

Earlier, I raised the idea of a disconnection between my thinking processes and those of Western Aristotelian thinking, finding that a holistic approach functioned better for my practice as a teacher/lecturer, film/screen practitioner and academic. I found through my observations, reading, attendance at screen practice workshops and general interactions with my western counterparts in the screen
arts, that Western thinking is centred on the singular object rather than the entire field of view, and that this, in turn, can lead to a propensity for Aristotelian thinking. I will call this type of thinking map-based thinking after the theories of Alfred Korzybski (1995). This type of thinking leads to making ‘false to facts assumptions’ (Kendig, 1990, p. 18) about reality, whereby a representation of something such as a map is taken by the Aristotelian observer as being reality. When there is a contradiction between the map and perceived reality, the map is prioritised, whereas the non-Aristotelian thinker considers that the map is in error. I find the latter deficient and so as a filmmaker I am interested in overcoming its deficiency through other methods to achieve my goal. This demonstrates a wider view of the problem in question, and constitutes a holistic approach to perceiving the world. This type of ‘truth to fact’ and field of enquiry approach is one that operates in Asian cultures influenced by China and, specifically, East Asians. Nisbett et al., in their work Culture and systems of thought: holistic versus analytic cognition (2001) describe it thus:

“The authors find East Asians to be holistic, attending to the entire field and assigning causality to it, making relatively little use of categories and formal logic, and relying on "dialectical" reasoning, whereas Westerners are more analytic, paying attention primarily to the object and the categories to which it belongs and using rules, including formal logic, to understand its behaviour” (Nisbett et al., 2001, p. 291).

For me personally, and as a filmmaker, I find this to be an influential work which sets out the key differences between operating frameworks of Eastern versus Western thinking and knowledge production. These differences have been revealed by the research of Nisbett et al. (2001), and provide answers about how and why my processes function in a similar manner. I will demonstrate that my Empathetic Design process relies on full consideration of all elements in order to make predictive creative assumptions, that is, Asian thinking, as outlined by Nisbett et al., who further explain:

- how Asian thinking works in detail
- Asian intuitive reasoning
- Asians have the ability to accept outcomes in hindsight
These explanations connected strongly with my process, my thinking being 'situation-centred' rather than 'individual-centred' (Nisbett et al., 2001, p. 295). Asian thinking thus allows me to start to consider Asian cinema and make decisions from a holistic position. If the West can be described as a me or individual belief system, and the East can be described as an us or group belief system. These systems can be used as a lens for understanding either position. I apply this process to the reading of films and their contextual facets by first stating the point of view and then analysing each factor individually or as part of a whole. For example, when analysing from an Asian position, these factors will include:

- genre as read in Asia
- a style lens of Asia
- Asian timing and setting
- originating from Asian sources
- Asian creative voice
- intended audience

I believe it is essential that practitioners and academics alike, when engaging with Asia, align their understanding to the context of the Asian position to enable understanding of the intent behind Asian screen work. To illustrate, a useful example of the contrasting positions between Eastern and Western thinking, as applied to cinema, comes from the Taiwanese filmmaker Ang Lee, whose work has successfully bridged East and West.

Two of Lee’s early films, Sense and Sensibility (1995) and Eat Drink Man Woman (1994) are from respective Western and Eastern positions. Each respectively adheres to the idea of individual centred versus group centred approaches of thinking for its narrative approach. In making the film Sense and Sensibility, Lee takes into consideration the needs of a Western audience with the re-creation of a period English drama. Lee uses a number of key aspects of the novel and the social mores of the period to create a rendition familiar to its Western audience focusing on the individual drama for a character/s and the resolution of their personal dilemma in isolation. By contrast, his film Eat Drink Man Woman was intended for an Asian audience, as a contemporary drama once again looking at family life, but

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this time invoking a narrative structure where each character impacts on the others, leading to a narrative outcome where the whole family is brought into balance guided by the influences of the other characters. While both films are about family, I would argue that the latter is more intrinsically holistic so that each event that affects one family member flows through the system and impacts on others. Whereas, in Sense and Sensibility, there are dramatic emotional scenes, the impacts are more focused on the individual and do little to sway the ultimate destination of the plot which has been predetermined by Austin’s thesis of happiness and personal success through marriage. In Eat Drink Man Woman the goal is linked to finding a balanced life for all key participants; success is elusive and can be found in many forms including marriage, career, starting a new family, and letting go of the past.

It is my opinion that Lee demonstrates an understanding or empathy with his audiences, which enables him to produce well-rounded films that serve the needs of his specific target audience/s. I would argue that it is his Eastern originating position that allows him to engage with both types of thinking successfully. His later works such as Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000), embody the ideas of ‘focus-field’ (McRae, 2013, p. 21), using systems of influence and connection to engage audiences. Crouching Tiger required its Asian audience to re-think how it read the martial arts genre as both ‘local’ and simultaneously ‘global’, in the way that it utilised mass culture (Klein, 2004, pp. 18, 20). In The Life of Pi (2012) Lee provides the West with a metaphysical journey greater than the initially implied physical one. Each film successfully connects with global, transnational and transnational Asian audiences, and shows that Lee intimately understands his audiences and how they engage with narrative.

As a filmmaker, when attempting to engage audiences I believe it important to use narrative tools that make the story understandable to audiences. As transnational audiences are distributed and reside within a diverse range of influencing systems, it is important to find and use specific co-modifiers of cultural similarity and difference, so that the distributed audiences are able to recognize and connect with the narrative. Although there are many tools available to filmmakers, such as
the hero’s journey and the three-act structure, I want to focus here on the tool I used in *Citizen*. I created characters that the audience would understand and identify with through their shared knowledge of migrants - through personal experience, family or friends. This was undertaken with the understanding that the intended viewers would be mostly of an Asian background and would understand the context, and be able to relate to the old and new ideas that the characters and their actions presented in the form of overseas study, migration, new homelands and citizenship. The Nisbett et al. (2001) study provides support for this approach to cinema/screen narrative. Their work also explains the disconnect I have previously referred to with purely Western approaches to narrative, and provides validation for processes that are holistic in nature, as I seek to engage with new transnational Asian viewers through my work. This leads to a consideration of how, specifically, Asian thinking methods can be applied to the creation of a narrative such as that in *Citizen*.

**In Summary:** Asian thinking processes are holistic, field-oriented and different from Western object-centred thinking. Approaching filmmaking through such processes has the potential to assist in clearer audience targeting.

**Asia as a Method of Knowledge Production for New Transnational Asian Cinema**

I believe that the distance between old and new homelands for any cultural group can be measured not only by space [distance], but also by time [history] and adaptation. With many East Asian Diasporas, the bridging of space and time has been accomplished by maintaining ongoing interactive relationships through business, family and across generations. Huyssen (2003) sees as impacting on the locations of the homeland and diasporic communities”.

“Clearly, national memory today, in an age of ever more transnational institutions, migrations, and networks, is being colored ever more by nostalgia and imagined memory. But so is diasporic memory at a time when pasts and presents of migrant populations lose the traditional coherence of
The individuals, families and cultural groups who have retained their connections with their old homeland and cultural identity undertake this creation of memory. This has also been accomplished though cultural associations and celebrations of cultural events such as Chinese New Year, dragon-boat races, and so on. With the breakdown of Western colonial empires in the early twentieth century, a number of Asian cultures have reoccupied their physical and psychological homelands. This has not been without difficulties, and Chen, in *Asia as method* (2010, p. 216), points to colonialism and imperialist thinking as having directed many of the centres of knowledge production central to everyday life. The degree of indoctrination, in many instances, permeated all facets of life, affecting cultural activities as well as legal and political institutions. It has taken some time, therefore, to reach the point of post-colonialism and post-imperialism as a way of thinking (Chen, 2010, p. 211).

This proposition is not without its critics. On the one hand there is evidence that Asian holistic thinking has maintained its dominance of the everyday thinking of East Asians, despite the impact of colonialism (Nisbett et al., 2001). On the other hand, Chen (2010) provides a compelling argument that there is much work to be done to ‘break through ...transform...transcend ...and uncover alternative possibilities’ (Chen, 2010, p. 211) to lead away from imperialist knowledge production and return to Asian knowledge production as a valid method. This difference is not insurmountable, and Nisbett et al. (2001) provide a solution. This solution is the path of the *middle road*.

Under the heading *Dialectical resolution of social contradictions* (2001, p. 302), Nisbett et al. pose a question regarding a conflict between mothers and daughters to a sample group of European Americans and Chinese. In the responses from their participants, while European Americans were more likely to side with the parent citing respect for parents, it was noted that the Chinese found a middle road with merit and fault being attributed to both sides. This middle road is a more holistic solution and, I would argue, that despite the undeniable impact of Western
colonialism on Eastern societies, wherever this impact has been felt it has been mitigated or filtered through the underlying holistic thinking processes inherent to East Asian cultures. With Citizen I wanted to create characters who could find solutions that reflected an Asian-ness in solution and outcome. For example, when the character Jia loses her home, she turns to a member of the Chinese community, who applies her own experiences as a Chinese immigrant moving to the West (Citizen, scene 61, p. 53).

The idea of a holistic filter for colonialis impact sits well with the fact that it is not only the West that has engaged in colonising the East. There is a long history of inter-Eastern colonisation, with several Asian nations engaging in colonisation events such as Japan’s occupation of China, Korea and Taiwan, compounding the effects on old homelands and creating the middle homelands.

The concept of colonising denotes the existence of a point of origin homeland from which to expand and create colonies (Chen, 2010). This expansion can take numerous forms, from political to economic to cultural, and may include a combination of these as Chen demonstrates. A way of understanding this could be through the application of Chen’s view of Asia. Locating Asia in succession of cultural and political spaces starting with an imperialist origin; passing through successive colonialisist and post colonialisist spaces; towards a state of de-imperialism, allows for a succession of systems coexisting in time, mind and location.

Here in this work I speak of a space where the movement from imperialism to de-imperialism passing through colonialisism is an ongoing process engaged by groups and members of each system in an ongoing fashion as each of the three states continue to exist in various states of forward movement, reversion or stasis. The three locations of imperialism, colonialisism, and de-imperialism provide a useful framework for my ideas where an understanding that ‘regional integration is a key aspect of globalisation’ (Chen, 2010, p. 5). This draws me further towards the idea of the blending of East and West, putting the other I find at the heart of colonialisism behind to be replaced by the us of globalisation. This is useful to my practice of
filmmaking, allowing me to seek out reflective commonalities to use in character and narrative design and thereby develop strong and complex stories that allow the audience to be engaged.

An example of this move towards globalisation can be seen in Asia, where the old homelands, such as ‘mainland China’ that ‘were never colonised’ (Chen, 2010, p. 5) give birth to the first colonies of the East Asian modern era such as Hong Kong. Here we see the first differentiation between the old and new spaces of Asia (Chen, 2010, p. 5). Then in the aftermath of world war two the American subjectivity of old and middle homelands such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, these being described as colonies allowing America to become ‘inside east Asia’ (Chen, 2010, p. 8) and preparing the way for the new home Asian homeland in the west. From here I have been able to develop the idea of three delineable spaces of locating Asia and apply these to the making of a transnational cinema artefact. This movement from old to new homeland has informed my practice by allowing me to specifically design a transnational narrative that incorporates these ideas in a manner that will be recognisable to its audience and engage them in the narrative. This will be explored further in chapter 2.

Based on my observations of Asian cinema narratives and genres, and the closeness or distance from their Western counterparts, these observations have allowed me as a screen practitioner to explore a deeper understanding of the form, allowing for a position of observation that is external to the practice of cinema itself. This external position has changed my understanding of how audience systems function in relation to narrative and has allowed me to see the underlying structures of the systems involved in the flow of a screen narrative to the audience. This has enabled me to extrapolate my ideas to the point where I suggest that there are three distinct levels of Asian cinema, and that they correlate with the distinct expansion of Asian cultures as they move from the old to the new homelands, these levels are:
a) *Old* homelands, such as China and Japan, are highly protected, maintained cultural ideology strongly and successfully against colonialism;

b) *Middle* homelands, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, embraced colonialism in order to survive, creating a densely multicultural Asian society with many colonial attributes continuing;

c) *New* homelands, pockets of Asian culture, locate themselves in the new homeland and adapt to/assimilate Western approaches into Asian contexts by the second and third generation, creating Westernised Asians who identify as Asians of their new home lands, for example, Asian-Americans, Asian-Australians.

It is important, to explore further the emerging cinema of the middle and new homelands, such as Taiwan and the United States, to understand how the *new* Asian cinema and transnational Asian cinema landscape is developing and how this shapes our understanding of creating such works.

According to Ghosh, 'New Asian Cinema' blurs 'the boundary between art and popular' cinema (2008, p. 24). *Citizen* looks towards a popular cinema audience located in the transnational space. For my purposes I chose to focus upon themes and characters that I believed would be interesting and recognisable to a new homeland audience of young Asians. These characters represented individuals that were identifiable to not only new home land audiences but also to middle and old homeland audiences allowing for the potential to cross back to these systems in a similar manner to other transnational Asian films such as *Monga* (2010), *Cape No. 7* (2008), and *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2002). This would lead me to my first viewership being young Asians in Australia, the United States, and other Pan-Asian regions who had knowledge of the types of experience that my characters encounter in the film and placed these in a framework of popular culture including clothing styles and musical genres. In this way I attempted to blur the boundaries between art and popular cinema for my film.

The protagonist of *Citizen*, Jia, finds a middle path by continuing with her perceived obligatory goal of providing a new homeland for her family, and doing
that by making a life for herself by starting her own business. These were the key codifiers that I believed would connect with my audience. Applying Asian thinking and utilizing empathetic design enabled me to see, hear and apply what I had learnt of my film audiences. The idea of empathy is not new, but I find that there is confusion as to what empathetic design means for creative thinkers. It is this that we will explore in the next section.

**In Summary:** Asian thinking involves the middle road; good and bad are relative to each other, and engaging solutions involves considering the needs of all.

**Empathetic Design and Approach**

Empathy is understood to be the ability to put oneself into another's shoes (Fulton Suri, cited by Kouprie & Sleeswijk Visser 2009, p. 438), see from their perspective and feel what they feel as described in the Köppen & Meinel (2012, p.1) definition of empathy. What I have come to realise is less understood, that is, empathy and its use in the field of design is: a) a *method* [process] of design; and, b) a *type* [emotion] of approach. The *method* is an approach to a narrative question, and the *type* is an individual tool used for specific reasons and purposes. The former is an overarching approach, the latter a specific tool. It is empathetic design as an approach that is, and was, my first position in the creation of Citizen, with a range of characters the viewers might identify with and some that the viewers might empathise with. While not strictly a filmmaking tool, empathetic design seeks to directly engage with audiences and, thus, is a valid approach for designers of film and screen.

To assist our understanding of empathetic design it is necessary to define it more thoroughly.

Kouprie & Visser (2009) hold that *empathy* can be broken into two components, the first being the ‘affective’ where there is an immediate response to the condition of the subject, and the second ‘cognitive’ where the observer has a thinking understanding of the state of the subject. This definition expands upon Köppen &
Meinel’s definition (from Kohut) of ‘the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person’ (Köppen & Meinel, 2012, p. 1). I would hold that the narrative designer first needs a cognitive empathy with their target viewer, which can be obtained through a number of practice-based methods (Kouprie & Visser, 2009, p. 439). This is how I have applied them:

   a) *Observing the subject in their environment* - observing how Asian migrants and Asian-Australians go about their daily lives in contrast with those of European backgrounds, to inform character and narrative design.

   b) *Communication techniques* - my discussions, workshops and feedback with Asian actors, crew and prospective audience members.

   c) *Role playing techniques that allow the designer to develop empathy through questioning the underlying processes, needs and wants of their target* - using Scheckel’s and my own workshop and rehearsal techniques to further develop the project.

In their paper ‘Framework for empathy in design’ Kouprie & Visser outline the ‘four phases of empathy’ (2009, p. 444):

1. **Discovery** – entering the user’s world – achieve willingness
2. **Immersion** – wandering around in the user’s world – taking the user’s point of reference
3. **Connection** – Resonating with the user – achieve emotional resonance and find meaning
4. **Detachment** – Leaving the user’s world – design with user perspective.

With this empathetic design process in mind, it is possible to formulate an approach for designing screen narratives as a general method, and apply it to transnational Asian screen works. In my practice, these steps are innate and applied continually, as a designer using empathy, as a way of finding the core and world of my story. I found it beneficial to take into consideration a range of factors that impact on how the narrative is intended to be consumed. I have expressed
these as:

- story intent – theme, message, genre – creator-oriented
- viewer/genre – type of story – viewer-oriented
- story modality – how it will be viewed – viewer-oriented
- story tools – viewer-oriented.

These dictate my use of different narrative approaches and, in turn, allow me, as the narrative creator, to have increased opportunities to engage intended audiences through a range of shaped story tools. Seeking a way of expressing this idea for repeated application to different narratives, I found it useful to show it in this way allowing the elements of intent, audience, mode of delivery, and tools to be viewed in an abstract manner allowing for generalised application:

\[(\text{story Intent} + \text{Audience}) + (\text{story Modality} + \text{story Tool/s})\]  
\[= \text{delivery for Acceptance}\]

Expression 1
Note: Capitalisation denoted weighting of importance

I have further simplified the formula here:

\[(sI+A) + (sM + sT) = A\]

Expression 1a
Note: Capitalisation denoted weighting of importance.

This understanding allowed me to feed my intent, perceived audience needs, and tools such as Asian thinking, and emotional design into such an apparatus. It also allowed me to be open to both new and old methods of storytelling when designing a narrative for and intended transnational audiences, and, it is this ability to be open which allowed me to create Citizen. Collaborative processes from Scheckel assisted with this approach. I applied these processes to the film's development as an essential component of my practice and research, thus allowing the film to come to life prior to filming through a series of in-depth readings, workshops, individual discussions and performer exercises. My own experience with Scheckel's approach to finding the core of a film, or 'nugget' as she described...
it in the workshop I attended and in her interview with Pitts (2013, p. 70), meant, for Citizen, that the cast worked heavily on action and dialogue, finding a space for each character and how they expressed themselves.

An example of this is the development of the character of Kong, to avoid him being seen simply as a stereotypical gangster. I wanted the audience to be forced to dislike his actions, but to empathise with his conflict, pain and loss. This pain is shown in its rawest sense in Kong’s last shot in the film, where his love for Jia overcomes his pride, anger and ego by letting her go rather than forcing her to come back to him, or beating both her and Daisy to exorcise his pain. With one final look of palpable pain, yearning and loss he exits her life. The audience’s understanding of a single look would not have been possible if the character’s conflicting emotions had not been developed throughout the film - emotions that were pushing and pulling him to that moment. The development of Kong was the product of much discussion and a number of emails between the actor, Chris Pang, and myself about the inner workings of the character. The resulting character arc for the character Kong is intended to enable audiences to accept and understand why Kong did something that was uncharacteristic for Kong the gangster, but acceptable in Kong the lover.

This level of audience acceptance would not have been possible without a collaborative approach to character design which relates back to my original research topic located around empathic design to reach transnational audiences. This is an alternate route to the familiar formulas optimised by the hero’s journey. To quote Scheckel on writing:

‘The hero’s journey is a wonderful structure, if your film is about a hero on a journey. But it is not the only journey, and it is not the only structure that works.’ (Scheckel, n.d.)

Unlike the Smith (1995) model of allegiance, here the audience is encouraged not to seek to align themselves with Kong, but to empathise with his emotion of loss. This is because: a) they are anticipated to be Asian and liable to look at the holistic picture, and b) many are considered to have had a shared experience of loss with
which they can empathise. Thus, Kong’s character has been designed for the viewer to identify, acknowledge and empathise with through empathetic design.

I would further postulate that narrative is associated neither with the specific inner nor outer psychology of the audience, but impacts on the viewer system. A way of illustrating this idea can be seen from the reactions of early audiences to the Lumière brothers’ train footage (1895)\(^\text{19}\), where some of the first cinema audiences were exposed to film of an oncoming train. The film delivered a psychological concept which was reported to have been acted upon by physical reactions of terror and running from the theatre to safety from the perceived danger of the oncoming train. The audience response was based on their (the audience’s) knowledge of the ‘world’ at that time, and lacked knowledge of the illusion of cinema that they were subsequently to learn, thus becoming in the future an educated audience who by viewing learnt how to understand film. In the narrative of *Citizen* the audience ‘creates its own site of knowledge’ (Batty, 2013, p. 17) of the world of the characters. This brings me to a problem where ‘my’ thinking is at odds with that of a number of Western theorists. How do I justify my argument to do this? I went back to the original locus of my theories, which was thinking and empathising with Asia. For support, I turned to the work of Nisbett et al. (2001), Chan (2001) and Ghosh (2008) as these provide a strong foundation for my approach in *Citizen*, and how my approach was arrived at through a systems approach.

**In Summary:** Empathetic design is an overarching approach which leads to the heart of designing narrative and character for viewer engagement.

**Systems & Fields, Narrative and Character Development**

So far I have considered how several theories have influenced my approach to empathetic design in the creation of the film *Citizen*. Several times the idea of understanding the viewers and their thinking processes through the concept of systems and fields has arisen across inter-disciplinary fields, as discussed in the

\(^{19}\) Original Title: L’Arrivée d’un Train À la Ciotat, [Silent documentary]. Directors: Auguste and Louis Lumière. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dGLEDdFdlk

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proceeding section. I have found that viewing my audiences as systems yields useful knowledge to assist empathetic design. Previously, I raised the idea of old, middle and new East Asian homelands, and suggested that they are inter-related and inter-connected by a range of factors. Applying a systems approach to such inter-connected but individual groupings enables the analysis of what makes them individual, and what connects them, and this knowledge is fed into the intent, theory, practice loop that I have used for my empathetic design.

In the last section I referred to the ideal viewer position being that of a participant in the narrative moment. I would further postulate that, for the purpose of narrative input and response, a viewer can be seen as existing in a perceptive ‘now’. How individuals respond to information they receive and the actions related to their responses are dictated by this constraint of being fixed in the now at all times, even in relation to a future story concept. I believe that this is an important concept for a filmmaker to understand in order to engage their audience. It is difficult to predict how any specific individual will respond to a given input of information, thus, Conan Doyle described William Winwood Reade’s position:

‘While the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty” (Doyle, 1890, p. 196)\(^20\).

This difficulty is negated by a systems approach, which gathers together abstract groupings based on common denominators such as cultural, social, economic and geo-political factors. As we have seen in the work of Nisbett et al., it is possible to generalise about East Asians and their responses by such categorisation. Such an approach can assist in answering questions such as;

‘How do you tell a story to an Asian American or Asian Australian born in China, raised in Taiwan, and naturalised in the USA or Australia before becoming an adult?’

This is the type of question I sought to answer through the creation of Citizen for the 4-8% of the population in countries such as the United States and Australia

that are of Asian background. Such groupings present a potentially complex set of system interactions.

The work by Espinosa & Porter (2011) on the viable systems model and complex adaptive systems (CAS) provides a working model and understanding of how systems self-regulate. This is useful to me as a filmmaker as they provide a range of behavioural aspects to define the ‘dynamic operations responsible for their ability to adapt in nonlinear, unpredictable ways’ (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 56). The intent of their research is to seek out sustainable methods for business to interact with systems that are constantly adapting and changing via an ‘open systems CAS approach [that] emphasises the permeability and exchange of information and feedback across all boundaries’ (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 58) and leans towards the holistic by its very approach, as can be seen by their model in Diagram 2.

![Diagram 2: A schematic model for sustainability and sustainable commons in complex adaptive systems (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 58, Figure 1)](image)

This model demonstrates how a range of systems, some without ontological stability (Said, 2003), sits within larger human and biosphere systems. They intersect, overlap and influence each other. If as a filmmaker I accept such a model it is then possible to start to understand the actions and reactions of groupings within a given system. For example, previously I have reasoned that there are several types of homelands for East Asians and that they have been self-sustaining, have adapted and flourished in middle and new homelands such as Taiwan, the
United States and Australia. This is due, in many cases, to self-initiated approaches involved with business, familial and cultural activities. This type of self-regulation and ‘experimentation’, with techniques of consolidation and expansion, is supported by Holling's complex economic and social ecosystems. Holling (2001) explains the approach in the following manner:

“... the complexity of living systems of people and nature emerges not from a random association of a large number of interacting factors rather from a smaller number of controlling processes. These systems are self-organized, and a small set of critical processes create and maintain this self-organization”

(Holling, 2001, p. 391).

Holling's proposition moves towards an ‘integrative theory’ that I can apply to narrative design. It provides an understanding of the overlapping set of influences and self-regulation techniques, which run in a perpetual loop as the system [read audience] continues to grow and experiment or learn, within their changing environment. This fits well with the overall method I utilised for understanding my viewers so that I could design for them.

For example, in Citizen, I assumed that within a realistic genre the use of mixed English and Mandarin [the original script included Cantonese but was simplified and focused on Mandarin as the dominant cinematic language] would make the film more likely to fit with the language receptors of the film’s intended audience of young Asians. The reasoning was that young international students, immigrants, first and second generation Asians would be very familiar with multilingual situations in everyday life, and such a concept would fit easily with these language-based receptors. In search of a model to represent this idea I looked to the natural world. Living cells are good examples of systems within systems. They communicate or interact with other systems through receptors, which are specific in what they will connect with. Extrapolating this idea of cellular receptors into a narrative design context allows very specific identification and design of connectors with audience systems, through the knowledge the narrative creator has gathered about the intended audience. It allows for a design based on empathy
with that audience. To assist in this understanding, I produced a simplified model, as seen in Diagram 3.

![Diagram 3: Information delivery and reception.](image)

This model highlights how an audience system can be receptive to specific narrative information, and delivered through a range of connecting ideas and/or actions that have been identified by the empathetic designer as more likely to effectively engage the target viewer and system. The usefulness of such an approach is that it allows the narrative designer to break down, clarify and articulate in a very concrete manner how and when they will engage the viewer. Without such approaches, *Citizen* would not have achieved its aim of bridging transnational time and space.

**In Summary:** A systems approach to the target audience allows for predictive reasoning on how to engage a constantly-evolving target grouping.

So far I have discussed the ideas behind the film including the holistic approaches involved with empathic design, East/West thinking approaches and the location or position of my own thinking method. In the following chapter, I will explore some of the characters and narrative choices I undertook to demonstrate how this was achieved in practice. These insights provide evidence of my application of these theories and a way forward to understand the outcomes of the film, as discussed in the final chapter.
Chapter 2 –
Practice: Citizen Jia Li: Bridging the Abyss
Chapter 2 – (Practice) Citizen Jia Li: Bridging the Abyss

‘ “If you look at the etymology of the word ‘crisis’ you find it comes from ‘birth’. So, just by doing that, by coming into the truth of what that word means, I’m invited to be more accurate, deeper, and more fluid with what the crisis of my screenplay might be,”’ (Joan Scheckel, 2012, quoted in Pitts, 2013, p.71).

Citizen in a transnational landscape

*Bridge:* noun; 1.1 something intended to reconcile or connect two seemingly incompatible things. (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

As outlined in the Introduction and Chapter 1, my intention with this work is to attempt to: a) demonstrate a method of creating a transnational bridge through filmmaking; and b) explain how this was utilised to create *Citizen*. These intentions led to the creation of the film and this exegesis attempts to explain the process.

Following Joan Scheckel's proposition that the narrative of screen stories and their characters are revealed through action (see p 21, Footnote 17) I understand that characters are thus recognised and identified [or read and accepted] by the viewer through these actions. It is from this position that I approached the creation of the characters and narrative in *Citizen*. To this position I also brought or added the idea of focusing upon the needs of the audience ahead of my own personal preconceptions. In doing this I chose to work as an empathetic designer, deciding to tell the story through Asian eyes. In this case, the audience I identified and targeted for the film was:

a) Asian females, 15-25, as the primary audience  
b) Asian males, 15-25, as the secondary audience  
c) General populous of all ages and open to Asian-ness as the tertiary audience.

I targeted these groups by seeking to create a realistic film world that might be accessible to a variety of transnational Asian systems in old, middle and new homelands. I chose Melbourne because it is culturally global, with a large
population (15.47%) of people of Asian descent (ABS, 2011\textsuperscript{21}). I believed this would contribute to making the film accessible to the target audiences and would also allow me to access existing reference points for transnational Asian-ness. Framing the film as a realistic drama where the need for the suspension of disbelief of the audience is kept to a minimum, determined how I wanted it to be seen and accepted, as I will go on to demonstrate. This forced me to focus on character and narrative design techniques that I had learnt from Scheckel and developed through my own practice. Therefore, rather than focusing on heightened aspects of spectacle or event, I focused on real-world issues facing young Asian migrants in a Western city, including housing and employment (Painter & Yu, 2014) and cultural displacement (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

I did not want Citizen to be an Australian film that fits into the canon of Australian National Cinema as seen by government agencies [who dictate a cultural mandate], distributors [who require economic return] or the wider Australian viewing public [who choose Hollywood product over that of Australian producers who hold 2.4% of the Australian cinema box-office (Screen Australia, n.d.)]. Rather, it would be a transnational film, a film set in a culturally-globalised city in Australia that constitutes a new homeland for a number of migrant groups. This distinction was important as it was designed to allow Asian and transnational viewers to understand the location and environment within which the narrative was placed. I believe this decision was critically important as it would allow the film to be understood by international distributors, critics and viewers as a film not constrained by its location nor by a specific Nationalist cinema label. Rather, I believe that it allows the film to:

1. Sit within the frame of a new Asian cinema that is transnational in its approach and primary viewer reach; and
2. ‘Transcend culture’ and be a dramatic film for any audience (Vanderschelden, 2007).

The second point or frame is not necessary to the film’s existence as a transnational Asian film, but it is importance theoretically as it hints at the

blending of cultures indicative of transnational cinema (Vanderschelden, 2007). In the case of transnational Asian cinema, the merging of Eastern and Western cultures is already happening with emergent transnational cinema and their directors such as those previously mentioned [Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (2000), Better Luck Tomorrow (2002), The Princess of Nebraska (2007), Children of Invention (2009), Cape No. 7 (2008), Monga (2010), Finished People (2003)]. To progress, I will now explore some of the devices I used as a filmmaker and screenwriter to achieve my goals, which include:

- Use of genre and themes: timing, setting and issues according to Asian rather than Western concerns
- Audience conception: considering Asian audiences first
- Style: trying to tell the story as if through Asian eyes.

When designing the narrative of Citizen, I created: a) deep backgrounds for characters and worlds; b) a solid narrative structure whereby no plot holes existed creating a narrative that would attract rather than distract the audience; c) a five-act structure, as I find such a model/method conducive to allowing deeper character narratives for my stories; and d) I told the story through Asian eyes, to attempt to create an authentically Asian narrative through performance, visual style and production design.

This was, in effect, my approach to the creation of the narrative, and it was intended to ensure Citizen would be unhampered by purely Western approaches, while embracing what might be called Asian approaches. This methodology led me directly to the primary project question of how to design transnational Asian cinema to bridge physical and cultural barriers. I attempted to do this through: 1) seeking identification and acceptance by relevant cultural systems; and 2) seeking acceptance across transnational cultural systems.

I outlined this approach in the film world bible (Appendix 1) as a design tool to attempt to ensure that it flowed through each and every detail of the narrative. For example, I used the world bible to show the individual world of each of the three main characters from their clothing to their music style that would set up three individual thematic tones for the sound track. Here I will unpack the creation of
the character of Daisy to illustrate how I used *empathetic design* to create a character that would appeal to my identified audience of transnational Asians. I will discuss her role in the narrative, the methods behind her creation, and how she can help us understand how to create targeted narratives and transnational Asian audiences. Prior to exploring Daisy’s character, however we need an overview of the narrative, the lead characters and Daisy’s position in the narrative.

*Story Themes*

Describing the genre of *Citizen* as drama, comedy and romance with a tone of dramatic realism, and from an Asian perspective rather than a Western one, allowed me to directly engage with the themes of the film. This was a position that I stated in the originating world bible, and one that was strengthened as the film screened and was distributed. Audience members such as China Mike, quoted at the beginning of Chapter 3, believe the film to be realistic in its portrayal of the issues that face Asian migrants in new homelands. The themes of family, honour and obligation combined with finding oneself, were seen as being very real. To this I added elements of romance between Jia and Kong, and a comedy element through the character of Daisy. So, not only were the themes present in the plot that formed the narrative, but also the characters embodied the themes. The characters represent the themes. This was the overarching way in which empathetic design was applied to narrative and character in *Citizen* to engage the target audiences. This directly links back to my thinking as a filmmaker and those of other practitioners such as Scheckel’s idea of the characters thinking and acting on the themes of the film and the ideas of Emmy winning screenwriter Jeffrey Scott (2012) who believes that theme drives all aspects of the screenplay and its characters.

The idea of being a citizen is a larger overriding theme in the film, one that finds itself expressed thought the individual character themes as I will explain. The idea (being a citizen) means different things to different people and in the case of the
film to each character. For example, to Jia it means a new home for her family. This theme is then a method I used to develop the narrative so that each of the three lead characters – Jia, Daisy and Kong – have their own story and individual journeys which encompass the themes, as stated in the film *world bible*:

- Family, obligation, honour and finding oneself and remaining true to that discovery. Looking at where the obligations of honour and being human clash, and the outcome for the protagonists.
- A coming-of-age story for the 21st century.

I wanted to create a film that primarily deals with positive and negative relationships between people of different backgrounds, and some of the challenges people face in finding a new home in a new country. For example, how do people change when faced with the end of their world, as they know it, be it the loss of their home or job? The themes of family, obligation, honour and self-discovery were chosen from my observations of issues amongst my friends, colleagues and students from Asian backgrounds, including migrants and Asian Australians. Drawing on these observations, I wanted to use empathetic design as a way of testing processes to provide a starting point for the type of Asian characters I would create for the film with realistic character experiences within the structures of a hairdresser, a gangster and a Harajuku girl. Their story is described in the film press kit in the following manner:

When Jia loses both her job and home in the one day, nothing as a new citizen is what she expected. Over three days she will struggle against fears and enemies to find her identity, supported by Daisy, a half-Chinese half-Japanese 'Harajuku' girl, who is coming to terms with her own mixed parentage. Jia's Triad ex, Kong, pursues her to get her back, to save face, and searches Melbourne for her - maybe out of genuine love.

This snapshot of the story provides a set of familiar yet unique characters to engage audiences with, through the use of empathetic knowledge.

*Empathetic Knowledge for Audience Systems*
Each cinema has its own cinematic language through which viewers read it, and I acknowledge that there are dangers in simply comparing Western and Asian cinema as highlighted by Ghosh (2008, p. 16). This danger is, to some extent, overcome by the fact that a new language is developing with the transnational blending of Western and Asian cinema.

My first step in developing the narrative and characters was acquiring knowledge of the intended audiences. This involved:

- Observing transnational Asians [and potential viewers] in their day-to-day environments, including schooling, workplace, recreation and inter and cross-cultural interactions.
- Conducting conversations and having an ongoing dialogue with migrant and trans-cultural Asians.

I consider this a holistic approach that helped me understand how Asians in a transnational setting interacted with old and new cultures to negotiate a new home. My approach is similar to the process, as previously discussed, put forward by Kouprie & Visser (2009) for acquiring knowledge for application in empathetic design, and it provided a foundation for how each character was created with specific viewers in mind.

**Empathetic Design of Character and Narrative**

In a film that is about finding a place [home/job/family/friends] in a new homeland, each of the three leading characters had a key role or function to play. These roles can be broken down by a set of criteria, as a group and individually, by what, how and why the character exists in the film. It is worth noting that this approach to character creation that specific viewers would identify was carried throughout the film into the secondary and support characters so as to provide a narrative with substantial depth and richness. Thus, realistically motivated characters can be seen in support characters such as Kong's brother-in-law [Scene
Bridging The Abyss

Jia, Kong and Daisy, collectively and individually, fit these key criteria; that is, that they are recognisable and acceptable to their primary audience of female 15–25 year-old Asians and their male friends and partners. A key tool for the entire Asian cast was the use of mixed language in a realistic manner, to connect with the various transnational Asian audiences of the film. The cast, which I found over the course of three months, was integral to the development of this multilingual world. They assisted in developing the language of the screenplay, with assistance from a Chinese dialogue translator during readings, workshops and conversations. This included using Mandarin, English and Daisy’s mixed Japanese, and text communication, to depict a multilingual and culturally Asian Diasporic world.

Sometimes known as ‘chick flicks’, films ‘tailored to a female audience’ (Ferriss & Young, 2007, p. 17), chick flicks ‘concentrate on issues relevant to women’ (Hollinger p. 221) that ‘give women pleasure’ (Ferriss & Young, 2007, p. 17) due to their strong female-centric narratives and female target audiences. In Citizen, each of the characters has specific functions that were designed with differing audience members and goals in mind. It was intended that this would allow them, as a
whole, to provide each audience member with someone that they could personally either identify with or recognise. Jia’s character speaks directly to new immigrants going through a ‘stranger in a strange land’ experience, where they are displaced and are without roots founded in the new homeland. Kong allows for a connection with male audiences, and engages ideas of masculinity, honour and obligation, as experienced in the 'new homeland' that he must operate within.

Daisy is there for everyone; she is the character everyone likes, even if they do not fully understand her to begin with. She is the glue that holds the characters together, and she is the one that forces them apart. She is the catalyst, and the Constant Hero of the film, as I will explore further in this chapter. On the next page Table 1 shows whom the three lead characters were intended to reach, and how this was achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jia Li – FOB</td>
<td>Female Asians</td>
<td>Physically identifiable, Attractive, Family obligation</td>
<td>Language, Clear journey of growth and empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[New Immigrant –</td>
<td>from China and Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Off the Boat]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kong – ABC</td>
<td>Young Males</td>
<td>Violent, Honour code to Triad family, Conflicted by his obligation to</td>
<td>Language, Clear journey of compromise if not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Australian Born</td>
<td>Young Females</td>
<td>Jia/her family/his code/his attraction to and love for Jia</td>
<td>change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy (Keko)</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Harajuku Girl, Attractive, Honourable and dependable, Changes others,</td>
<td>Recognisable while intriguing, Language,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watanabe - Harajuku Girl</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent yet familial, loyal, Goal-oriented in the extreme</td>
<td>Familial obedience, Constant Hero/unchanging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Character, Audience, Methods and Tools.
When designing and developing these characters I applied a principle I learnt from Scheckel’s workshop, of finding the narrative or character core, or ‘nugget’. This means divining what actually is making the characters act the way they do, thus creating characters so alive that they act of their own volition, rather than being placed and moved like set pieces by the writer and director. This creates a cause and effect narrative world, where the actions of one character are responded to by the others based upon who they are. I believe that this approach assists in engaging its target viewers, since each character appeals to their intended audience group. For an in-depth view of how I approached and achieved the character design, I will now provide a detailed analysis of Daisy. Daisy provides a window into the core question of how to design narrative and character for transnational Asian audiences. I chose Daisy firstly; as I believe that she is a highly accessible character to both male and female audiences, young and old; secondly for her position as a catalytic character. It is her interactions with the other two lead characters (Jia and Kong) that enable us to see how she was designed and to what affect she has on them and the outcome of the narrative.

**Designing a Harajuku Girl**

In the film world bible the character of Daisy is described at length to assist the director, actor and all creative departments to achieve just the right style and tone for this important character. Her key characteristics are described as:

‘Shy about her language skills, very polite, a true friend to those who are kind to her, sees the world and herself with the clarity of someone much younger or much older.

* Daisy is the quintessential Harajuku Girl, a global child of the Generation Y phenomenon, who is struggling against that generation’s innate tendency to selfishness and a drifting, aimless lifestyle*.  

*itizen, World Bible, pp. 11–13).

The term Harajuku Girl was popularised and used by punk pop singer, Gwen Stefani (Groom, 2011), to describe her group of Japanese back-up singers and dancers. Ultimately, the term refers to a female who dresses in a street fashion
style (Groom, 2011, p. 194) primarily derived from the Harajuku suburb in Tokyo, Japan. Daisy needed to be more than an ordinary international student, given the character’s role in the plot, and the creative choice of the Harajuku Girl turned her into something more;

"Because Harajuku fashion is less about what one wears than how one wears it, the dresser commonly supersedes the designer in generating style directions". (Groom, 2011, p. 194)

‘Daisy’s world’ and how she inhabits or ‘wears’ it, was created using:

a) Her actions, which show her open attitude toward exploring the world and new experiences, and her clarity of vision as to what is right and the correct course of action based upon her personal moral code; and

b) Her dialogue, whereby she communicates ideas and actions that provide opportunities for the characters around her to change.

c) Visual design, via her clothes, accessories and apartment decoration.

This character in construction and use is the most complex of the three leads. To explain; on the most basic level, Daisy is designed as an attractive female character about whom young males would say, ‘she’s cute, attractive, fun, cool’, and young females would say, ‘I could be her’ or ‘she could be my friend’. If audiences accept and engage with Daisy in this way, it then enables her to achieve her primary purpose as the catalyst for change in Jia and her life. Without Daisy, Jia would not change or grow, nor would she make the journey to finding another side of herself. Prior to Daisy’s intervention, Jia would have simply continued to be a victim. Daisy was, therefore, created as an unchanging character, which I will term the constant hero, one who is single mindedly faithful to their ideals and those (such as Jia) who they are committed to helping through the course of the narrative. This is a character that does not follow the form of the classic hero’s journey archetype that changes over the course of a narrative. Rather, this type of character is the cause of change in others. This type of character has a holistic influence upon narrative and
character, providing an Eastern approach to narrative and character design questions, as discussed below.

**Daisy, a Constant Hero**

In the mid-2000s I was watching films by Jean-Paul Rappeneau, in particular, *A Horseman on the Roof* (1995) and *Cyrano De Bergerac* (1990). These films moved me and I identified with the named protagonists; I also noted that these characters did not conform to the ‘normal’ hero-on-a-journey character type. I then searched around for other examples, finding Rappeneau’s work littered with them, both as lead and as support characters. I looked elsewhere and identified their repeated use by Hayao Miyazaki in his films *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984). Upon repeated viewing of these films, which did not fit a generalised Western model, I found that the closest archetype I could assign was that of a *messiah*. From there I set out to find a way to define this unique character for future use; I have done so by defining this archetype in my own terms in the following manner:

A Constant Hero is a catalyst for change in others. The embodiment of this archetype can range from that of the everyday-person to a promised Messiah or saviour. Constant Heroes can be recognised by a set of specific criteria, first, they: a) always have an unchanging view of how the world is or should be, based upon the highest moral standards; b) they actively endeavour to follow and promote this viewpoint through word and deed; c) they remain constant to their standards, morals and beliefs and remain unchanged at the end of the narrative from how they were at the beginning; d) through their action or assistance, other characters change - for good or for bad.

Constant Heroes, as thus defined, are seen in a number of films as both lead and co-lead/support characters from Asia, Europe and occasionally Hollywood. I believe that this ‘saviour’ type of character would be recognised by audiences from both the East and West and further the design of a transnational Asian narrative to be consumed as such. I have observed that this type of character tends to be utilised repeatedly by specific auteur directors, and two examples are in the
previously mentioned works of Jean Paul Rappeneau and Hayao Miyazaki. Specific characters include Nausicaä in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), and the support character of Camille in *Bon Voyage* (2003). In the former the title character Nausicaä, is the promised saviour of her post-apocalyptic world who brings peace between the warring forces and nature, to provide the promised new age (Hairston, 2010, pp. 176, 178, 182). In the latter case, of Camille in *Bon Voyage*, it is her dogged determination to achieve her goal to resist the German invasion that compels others to become freedom fighters against the Nazi invaders.

A character’s journey of growth is often held out as the goal of every storyteller and screenwriter, without it script gurus such as Robert McKee\(^\text{22}\) and Michael Hauge\(^\text{23}\) tell us that characters are one-dimensional at best. It is a concept that I myself have taught in my screenwriting and directing classes. And yet, if we look at the character of Daisy, she does not grow or change. This is because she is a *catalytic* character, immovable in her ideas and motivations. She is the ultimate good, true and positive influence. Without her Jia would struggle to survive the loss of her job and home, or find the courage to change. Daisy represents a kind of character that we all need in our lives. Thus, this character type serves as a constant that allows for change in others. At her core, Daisy is a Constant Hero who, whilst having needs and desires of her own and even a goal that she achieves by the end of the narrative [finding out more about her origins], in herself she does not grow or change. She does, however, affect the lives and narrative environment of Jia and Kong, both of whom are different by the end of the film.

**In Summary:** A Constant Hero does not change, they facilitate change, acting as a catalyst in the position of a Messiah/messenger/companion; they are, as the name implies, constant to their ideals and goals.

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\(^{22}\) McKee is well-known for his book, consultancy and ongoing seminars, see http://mckeestory.com/

\(^{23}\) Hauge’s consultancy, books and seminars have led him to work extensively in Hollywood, see http://www.storymastery.com
Daisy’s Layered Design

SHREK
(PEELS AN ONION)

NO! Layers. Onions have layers.
Ogres have layers... You get it?
We both have layers.

Shrek (2001)

We (humans) face everyday life with our personalities determined by experiences that fall within a hierarchy of needs as described by Maslow (1943). His pyramid of layered needs provides an analogy for the idea of characters created with similar layers descending towards an inner identity or core, as previously described by Scheckel, that drives the actions related to how the acquisition or non-acquisition of these needs and associated wants, is achieved.

The character of Shrek describes this idea when he explains that Ogres (read characters) are like onions. He is in effect explaining that they are complicated and have successive layers to their personalities and egos. It is this idea of layers leading to core motivators that I allowed to flow into my empathetic design practice when creating characters such as Daisy.

Daisy’s inner layers, between her core and outer layers, make up her character. A strong, obedient, yet independent and fiercely loyal young woman, she is confident that she will find her place in the world when the time is right. Along the way she will learn and have fun. This was the character I designed to attract contemporary viewers who, I thought, would identify with or recognise this strong yet fun character.

Daisy’s outer layer is that of a Harajuku Girl to make her stand out, serve as the joker/jester/lampoon/fool of the story, and be attractive to both female and male audience members. It is important to understand that the choice of a Harajuku-style character was integral to the success of Daisy. She needed some larger than
life qualities in order for the audience to pay attention to her actions. I chose to create this type of character as I believed the intended audience/s would be open to this Harajuku-style character in her intended purpose which may be linked to the meaning and intent behind the street style of Harajuku itself, which is to express self rather than style. Her character thereby provides an alternative model for Jia to consider and reflect upon her own self-imposed constrained life/world. Daisy the Harajuku joker/jester/lampoon/fool is in effect ‘no fool at all’ (Asimov, 1970) but rather a device that allows a character (in this case Jia) to see the realities of their situation.

Of all the Asian characters in the film, Daisy is the only one who does not speak Mandarin. At the outset it seems that she is an alien in an alien culture in Australia. Cut off from her Chinese roots she could be a victim, but she is not. She could be a dysfunctional rebellious youth, but she is not. She could just be a party girl in Australia to have a good time on daddy’s credit card, but she is not. What she is, is a strong-minded young woman with an innate sense of obligation and what is her right, she represents balance. She is the prefect daughter and friend. As intended, she is a character I created for a very specific purpose which she undertakes with the conviction bordering on obsession, that of a saviour.

**In Summary:** The clothes [design/style] of Daisy are for the viewer. The actions and dialogue of Daisy are for the characters around her.

**Daisy in Practice**

Now that we have looked at how Daisy was developed, I will discuss how I wrote the script. I tried to do so in such a way that the character of Daisy - through empathetic design - helped move the narrative forward. I have chosen a series of scenes from the screenplay in chronological order to map the steps of impact that this character has on the narrative using examples of her thoughts, dialogue and actions.

I will start with Daisy’s first onscreen moment; taken from page 15 of the screenplay at Appendix No. 1. This scene provides a crucial window into the character.

Bridging The Abyss
Fingers type Japanese words in a text across a mobile phone screen. Angry girl pop, a Japanese version of Avril Lavigne, filters through the air. The text is addressed to Mr. Takashi Wantabe:

Text Reads:

Father. Respectfully. Are any of mother’s relatives still alive in Hong Kong? I would like to meet them. Keko (Daisy) Wantabe.

The text finishes, then adds the brackets and nick-name, Daisy.

The viewer meets Daisy as she is texting her father about the possibility of her having relatives on her mother’s side in Hong Kong. This opening scene for her character allows the viewer to get a sense of who she is physically, and what her character is like by way of manners, concerns and level of independence or strength through the design/style of her character. She is a brave young girl who respectfully challenges her father regarding her origins; and it is insights such as these that provide the way into how her character will influence the outcome of the film. What was intended and presented was an attractive, independent and self-possessed young girl who was cool, hip, ‘with it’, in her persona of a Harajuku Girl.

**Design note:** Early presentation of information relating to Daisy’s character and personality traits presented in the first scene sets up her later actions.

*Daisy the Character - Example 1, Daisy at Jia’s Flat Scene*

While we are introduced to Daisy within the first 10 minutes of the film it is not until page 36 of the screenplay [more than 20 minutes into the film] that she is utilised to influence or drive the narrative. Here, Daisy provides Jia with a new albeit temporary home. Jia had found Daisy at her door desiring to continue their
working relationship and friendship. When Daisy finds Jia has nowhere to stay she offers her apartment, which she first rejects but then accepts because she has nowhere else to go. Here, Daisy’s worldview of what is right is an active catalyst, allowing Jia, and thus the narrative, to move forward. This is the first real look at her character as an active participant in the narrative, and it is here that Daisy first presents herself as a saviour, hero of the hour, providing Jia with a home until she decides what to do next. Daisy assists Jia both literally and metaphorically to move on to a new life through the metaphor of the milk crates and boxes Jia has packed her belongings into. Daisy helps her carry them on a journey out of Jia’s world and into Daisy’s apartment, a world of new possibilities. At this point in the film Daisy is revealed as being someone Jia can count on, a friend she did not know she had. This taps into the very real issues relating to housing in major international cities and the loneliness and alienation suffered by those making homes in other lands.

Through the course of the film, Daisy’s role of the Constant Hero is revealed, which relates back to my earlier description of the Constant Hero character type. For Daisy there is no question in her mind as to what is to be done. Jia simply must stay with her; she proposes this without wavering or even a momentary contemplation of another solution. She inhabits her role as the Constant Hero in its totality, asking for nothing and giving whatever is necessary, thereby providing Jia with her first step towards freedom from her old life and finding a place for herself. But a home is not enough for Jia’s transformation. To progress, Jia needs to revise how she sees her world and her place in it. For this to happen in the course of the narrative, Daisy next needs to speak.

**In Summary:** Daisy demonstrates her constancy and loyalty to her relationship with Jia, providing the audience with her worldview.

**Daisy in Dialogue – Example 2, Daisy Speaks**

Up until this point in Jia and Daisy’s relationship, Daisy has only communicated via a translation device, gestures and single Japanese words for ‘yes’ and ‘no’. But upon arriving at Daisy’s apartment in scene 43 [p. 37 of the screenplay], Jia notices from textbooks lying on a coffee table that Daisy is, in fact, learning English. This
prompts Jia to challenge Daisy about speaking English and a conversation occurs in the building’s gymnasium in scene 44 [p. 38]. Jia asks Daisy why she does not speak English. Daisy explains that she is not yet at an acceptable level of proficiency for herself or the perceived expectations of her father. The conversation grows with Daisy explaining her personal dreams such as being a rock singer, through to the compromise of pleasing her father by working in business - the music business.

Daisy’s expression of her ideas and principles through dialogue provide Jia with the opportunity to see a different and alternative world through self-reflection. This scene is the beginning of Daisy’s ideological position as a Constant Hero influencing Jia, which continues through into scene 45 [p.39] where they eat dinner in Daisy’s apartment. This scene prepares Jia to start thinking about a future for herself in addition to her family obligations. I believe that combining these ideas was critical to positioning the film in a transnational Asian space, as they represent a meeting of old and new homelands which is recognisable by the target audience and allowing both to co-exist in a potential future which is articulated in the scene explored next.

In Summary: Daisy’s dialogue starts as self-reflective and non-intrusive, providing Jia time to acclimatise herself to the concept of Daisy as a thinking, speaking person with a clear direction in her life.

Daisy’s Thinking – Example 3, Daisy Facilitating Change

Scene 45 utilises questions and statements by Daisy to start Jia thinking about what she wants for herself. The dialogue is active and uses self-reflective devices to justify Daisy’s helpful position of self versus family issues, as seen in this excerpt:

Scene 45 (cont)

DAISY
I would like a mother...Fathers only work....(Thinking)
...You want no more than this...

JIA LI (Thinking)
I don't have time to want more.

Daisy looks at her meal. Finished, she folds the packet and puts it in the plastic shopping bag at her feet. She stands up and looks at Jia Li.

DAISY
A good thing to want for your family... but...I think this is not much for you.

This excerpt demonstrates how I used Daisy's dialogue and ideas as a mental/thinking catalyst to Jia's process towards change. Daisy's statements of fact and probing of Jia, allow Jia to reflect on what she has and wants. Daisy provides a reflective surface or mirror for Jia to look into, to see what is possible, that it is possible for one to meet their obligations and still have a space for their self to grow. This is not a concept Jia has previously been able to engage with due to her concentration on working towards citizenship and the sponsoring of her family to Australia. Daisy's statements, ideas and questions facilitate Jia's thinking and reach to the core of Jia's character. They pose the question, 'Are you who you want to be?' In this scene a train of thinking sets up Jia to be open to what happens in the following scenes when opportunities present themselves. It allows her to do what she has not done before - accept help from real friends to change and become empowered. These ideas are central to my original premise that, to connect with my target audience, it was necessary to engage with Asian thinking and ideas, and I chose to take them from old and new homelands.

In Summary: Using direct questions and statements to facilitate thinking and action growth in surrounding characters.

Daisy in Action – Example 4, The Active Hero

Throughout the remainder of the film Jia grows during her journey, accompanied by Daisy. Taking opportunities and chances to reinvent herself, she becomes a very different yet familiar character, one who likes herself and is more likeable for that. This journey culminates in the final scene when Kong, once again, confronts Jia in a
further attempt to force her to come back to him. In this final scene Daisy puts her ideals, friendship and heroism into physical action in two major ways.

First, she offers to provide funds to pay Kong’s exorbitant protection demands. Second she comes between Jia and Kong, thereby giving Jia an opportunity for a way out to escape Kong forever. With Daisy’s intervention, Jia reaches a point where she takes a stand against Kong, which she has never before done. This excerpt from the script demonstrates how Daisy’s action leads to this crisis point in the screenplay:

Scene 79 (cont.)

    KONG
    No, you keep out of this, Jap-o.

    Daisy ignores him, handing Jia Li a bundle of hundreds.

        JA LI
        Can you leave us a min?

    Daisy shakes her head, indicating to Jia Li and herself.

        DAISY
        We are partners? ... Hai?!

    Jia Li nods.

        DAISY (CONT'D)
        Hai! (nods)
        ... Then ... I will help for this... (indicates to Kong)
        Bastard.

    Jia Li’s mouth opens, a little surprised at the description, Kong is even more surprised.

        JA LI
        I ... (confused, looks from Daisy to Kong)

        KONG [MANDARIN]
        No, this is between me and you...

    Jia Li looks from Kong to Daisy.

        DAISY
        Are we partners?

    Jia Li considers for a second, takes her eyes from Kong to Daisy and nods. Daisy nods back.

        DAISY (CONT'D)
        Hai.
Daisy turns and holds out the money to Kong.

    KONG
    No...

Daisy steps towards Kong, holding the cash out to him.

    DAISY
    Here is your money. (bows) Please, take it.

He swings an open hand at Daisy. She flinches back. Jia Li steps in between them to protect Daisy. Kong's hand connects with the side of Jia Li's temple. Jia Li lands on her back hitting her head on the ground.

Without the presence of Daisy this scene would have been very different in outcome and dynamic dramatic tone; the introduction of a three-handed scene allowed for a very dynamic scenario where the viewer and the camera moved with the debate, the physical conflict and its final outcome. Daisy's opposition and fending off of Kong offers Jia an alternative to blind submission or running away, as she has previously done when faced with confronting Kong. Here, Daisy is a physically active catalyst, an active force of physical actions that presents Jia with two clear choices. Does she act or does she fall back into old patterns? Because she [Jia] has grown over the course of the film, she chooses the former and demands that Kong never come back into her life. Faced with the new Jia, he is forced to let her go.

This scene encapsulates the main themes and ideas of the film of citizenship, change, family and honour. The characters represent the three homelands of old [Kong], middle [Daisy] and new [Jia]. The scene ranges across ideas and languages allowing the characters to fight for a new place a new home, one where in the case of Jia, she can place herself. As such the scene demonstrates the power of designing a transnational narrative empathetically in application to each character and finally it demonstrates the importance of Daisy as a constant catalytic force with in that narrative.

In Summary: Daisy’s role as the Constant Hero culminates with her providing two alternatives and allowing Jia to make the final choice.
**Constantly Asian**

Through these four scenes I have described how I designed the transnational Asian character of Daisy. Her design and creation engages with the original question of how to design for transnational audiences. She embodies all the theories explored in Chapter 1. She is *theory manifest* as reality through empathetic design. Through style, thinking, action and dialogue she acts as a catalytic character to progress the narrative and engage the audience in the whole [and holistic] narrative.

In the next chapter I will consider the film’s knowledge and practice outcomes. Through it we will engage with the learning, and goals of empathetic design, explored through *Citizen’s* engagement with festivals, awards, critics, distribution and audiences, with a view to understanding the realisation and outcome of my methods and practice exploring the creation of transnational cinema.
Chapter 3 —

Residing in a Transnational Space
Chapter 3 – Residing in a Transnational Space

"Really enjoyed this simple film. I now live in Hawaii, but I did live in mainland China, and had friends from Hong Kong as well. I dealt with many students who were striving very hard to move to Australia for schooling and to live. I know it is not an easy thing to do, and once there, to fail, such as this character does in the beginning, is quite a terrible situation for a hopeful Chinese immigrant to face head-on.

Really good casting and dialogue. Hope to see all of these fine young actors in more films in the future." China Mike (2013)24

Creating Citizen allowed me to test ideas and theories incorporating Asian thinking approaches through empathetic character design. This chapter moves on from the physical completion of the film through its release and distribution to look specifically at what I have learned as a filmmaker. Revisiting the original questions, as set out in the introduction, will allow the chapter to focus on what I have learned in relation to my original question: How can a filmmakers approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces? I will explore this through reflecting on my original premises of: 1) Audience identification of narrative and character; and 2) Acceptance of narrative and character across transnational cultural systems.

This chapter continues the holistic foundation laid in the introduction where I located Citizen as a transnational Asian film and introduced the idea of a knowledge and practice loop (see Diagram 1 Knowledge to Practice Method p. 15), In this chapter I return to this idea by examining some outcomes of these entwined methods by looking at the film from festival release to distribution. By doing this I hope to understand how others understand my filmmaking such as film critics and

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audiences. For clarity, the learning and knowledge generated, and to be reviewed here, is separated into two sections - Theory and Practice. (See following page)

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**Locating Citizen within a transnational landscape**

Throughout this exegesis I explored the reasons behind the making and locating of the film. Rather than being a film designed to fit into the canon of Australian National Cinema, it was to be a Transnational Asian film, using themes and characters that I hoped would be identified and accepted by globally-located young Asians. The idea was that it would, thereby, gain universal appeal within the film’s target audiences. I believe that by working from the point of view of someone who is trying to understand and create ideas through the making of a film and by locating it with contemporaries such as *Cape No. 7* (2008), I can identify a range of generalized commodifying traits that allow for generalized consumption by transnational audiences. These can, potentially, be used repeatedly in the design of transnational productions, and include:

i) blending of cultural ideas – East to West, inter-Eastern

ii) mixed language dialogue - East to West, inter-Eastern

iii) old homeland and new homeland themes.

These concepts fit well with the original decision to remove *Citizen* from the space

25 Commodifying means to treat as or turn into a commodity.
occupied by the Australian-ness of Australian National Cinema. Replacing this with Asian-ness allowed me to clearly focus on engaging globalised Asian audiences. This helped me to create a space where being transnational and using Asian-ness are key components of locating the narrative and characters. I believe that these factors have the potential to be integral facilitators of the creative vision of filmmakers, such as myself. They could lead to the emergence of new voices, stories and knowledge regarding the societies filmmakers choose to narrate; the manner in which stories are told; and how they are engaging with the potential viewer through the practice of screen narrative.

The Knowledge [K] Loop

Throughout this work I have referred to an intent-theory-practice loop as the method of inquiry following an empathetic design process. This process has led to a tangible body of knowledge focused on Empathetic Design, New Asian Cinema and Transnational Cinema for the conception, design, and execution of the film. This body of knowledge [K] and its types are set out in the annotated list below in the order that they were produced:

- Screenplay - product design
- Film Bible - product design and execution
- Conference papers delivered 2008-2011 - reflective
- Festival screening and Award 2011-2013 - market generated
- Convened conference panel 2011 - reflective & responsive
- Marketing materials - 2011 - gathering & re-purposing of old/new
- Published articles – 2011 – reflective
- Distribution – 2013 onward – market
- Scholarly exegesis - 2011-2014 analytical and reflective.

These elements of knowledge collectively and discretely fed the film and this work throughout its journey from creation, to completion and distribution. It shaped the associated creative documents and eventual learning outcomes in a holistic manner. To illustrate this I will look briefly at what knowledge has come to light in
the theoretical components of the work explored in the first chapter and also illuminates my practice as a film maker as I continue to write and create screen narratives through:

1) Empathetic Design
2) New Asian Cinema, and
3) Transnational Cinema.

1) Empathetic by Design

The characters and their narrative were designed in a manner intended to connect with the target audiences. This was the first consideration in the design process. This led to both critics and viewers (such as China Mike) engaging with the characters at certain points, and with the Asian migrant experience of alienation, and being a stranger in a strange land. When I observed engagement responses from the target audience during screening and informal feedback I found these to be corroborative of the ideas and theories I had at the beginning of the process. I believe that they are validated by the fact that Citizen, despite its micro budget and profile, has gained interest of festivals and critics and moved forwards to be distributed through VOD (Video On Demand) to its intended audience viewership of young transnational Asians in a market saturated with up to 50,000 feature films each year (Armstrong, 2010). These audiences from my observations engaged with the characters specifically in the manner intended with positive responses including involuntary responses during screening and identification statements such as China Mike’s.

This gives me confidence to conclude that for my practice in designing cinema characters, an empathetic approach can improve the end product. It is an approach that can be considered by a designer of cinema who wishes to have a meaningful connection and engagement with their target audiences. This approach forms part of my holistic approach at the beginning of each screen narrative I undertake as a method to create unique and familiar screen works.
In Summary: Empathetic Design is an overarching approach to design that starts at the point of conception of the design project and has the potential to assist in engaging target audiences.

2) New Asian Cinema

I have found that Ghosh's (2008) treatise theorising on new Asian cinema brings the now relating to the future of transnational Asian cinema into focus. It allows for an approach to comparative film studies that is of use to academics and practitioners alike. This approach allows for a growing understanding of film/s of Asian-ness, as they are located in a range of different systems. This is important as, previously, such films were located in categories such as Asian Cinema, National Cinema and World Cinema, and applying these labels restricted understanding and viewership. A trans-Asia and transnational approach to criticism and viewership allows non-Western works to be placed on a global landscape, where the West becomes less dominant as the forces of globalisation and transnationalism shift the balance of cultural and political power.

In Summary: The application of Transnational as a critical and reflective position allows an integrative and balanced approach to comparative film analysis and design.

3) Transnational Cinema

I believe, and from my experiences with attempting to secure distribution in the Australian space, I have gone some way to demonstrating that Citizen could not have survived and flourished purely in an Australian National Cinema space. The film being total self-funded for a budget of AUD$50,000 was too small to allow for extensive traditional marketing campaigns and thereby gain the cinema profile and audience of a film such as Home Song Stories. Further, as a fully independent film without any state body funding from agencies such as Screen Australia and Film Victoria, it did not benefit from the profile, resources or market presence that such organizations provide by connection and direct assistance. I found that the
Australian film market is too small to interest a distributor of art house ethnic films such as *The Finished People* without the support of state agencies, film distributors and broadcasters. In addition the opposition to Chinese and by extension Asian stories and characters referred to by Henry Chan in 2000 continues in an environment where their (Asian) physicality defines the public perception of them being ‘foreign’ (Masanauskas, 2012). *The other* despite residing in Australia for decades and generations, this opposition to characters and stories of Chinese-ness (and Asian-ness) has created a narrative *Bamboo Ceiling* (Hyun, 2005). An example of this is demonstrated by an analysis of Screen Australia’s list of the top rating dramas on Australian TV for 201326 which revealed that the number of Asian characters or cast fell well below the 9.6% of Asians in the population with only two cast members being Asian in background or characterization. Looking at the figures for lead recurring cast for the current season/s, indicates first; how many cast of non-Anglo Saxon or European decent are present and their name and individual ethnicity compared to; second how many overall cast. Ordered from top to bottom by viewership number rating on Australian television in 2013, out of 134 characters/actors only two are of Asian descent or depiction.

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Table 2 Australian television in 2013. Proportion of cast non-Anglo Saxon (from Screen Australia, Australian Content: TV Ratings 2013 (see footnote 26). Note that only regular/main cast were counted, not recurring or support roles.

Through my experiences, observations and research it became apparent to me that at the time of my project’s development and distribution (2008-2013) the opposition by the general public is too great to afford a large number of Asian stories and characters into the market. My proposition therefore was that in the international market the film had the greatest chance of being accepted for what it is - a film of Asian-ness in Australia. It needed to appeal to a significant number of people to make production a viable reality, and this has been proven, to some extent, as the film is reaching its transnational Asian and general viewer audience with its selection and distribution through VOD modes, which I will explore further in Distribution. While that journey is not over yet, with new distributors still taking up the film, I see it as affirmation of the beneficial outcomes resulting from my approach and the physical release of the film.

In Summary: Thinking of Transnational Cinema as an approach when conceiving a project is one way to develop projects with a more universal appeal and marketability.

Knowledge & Practice, a Method

I have collected my own reflections and the reactions of others, relating to the

Bridging The Abyss
character and narrative choices made in the film’s creation. The first of these reactions came from a test screening and anecdotal feedback observed and noted, this led to the fine cut of the film. This lead to festivals from 2011 through 2013.

Important is my observation that it is the *characters* and *their experiences* within the narrative that come to the fore in the film and form the focus of the responses of viewers. This is important because it was a core goal that my ideas, theories and practice focused around these types of response. These being achieved provide me with strengthened *confidence* in my theories and approaches to narrative and character design. This being the creative approach of placing myself in the place of the character and the viewer/s, in an empathetic manner during the design, writing and execution process of the film and its dissemination.

**Festivals**

Engaging with audiences through festival screenings is often a significant factor and marker of a film’s success in the market/s. Festival screenings increase the visibility of a film allowing potential buyers, critics and audiences to engage with a film. There are many general and niche festivals around the world, and I have found it is important to design a marketing strategy for festivals where the film is likely to appeal to the programmers and their audiences, who are as diverse as the film genres they choose to view.

The originally defined audience was Asian females, 15-25 in age, and their male friends and partners, plus a more generalized audience. This needed to be tested. It was from this starting point that I proceeded to list and enter the potential range of festivals that the film could fit into:

- Asian film festivals
- Independent film festivals
- Underground film festivals
- Pop culture film festivals
- General interest film festivals
Based upon this list, and utilising festival, application and information services (such as Withoutabox.com and britfilms.co.uk), I created a spreadsheet database of festivals in which to enter the film. The database was used and updated from 2010 until the end of the festival cycle in early 2013. Starting in June of 2011, *Citizen* was accepted into a number of festivals internationally:

1. Phoenix Comic Con Film Festival 2011 [United States]  
   *Pop Culture/General Interest*
2. Melbourne Underground Film Festival 2011 [Australia]  
   *Underground/Independent*
3. Yellow Fever Film Independent Festival 2011 [Northern Ireland]  
   *Asian/Independent*
4. Asian Australian Film Forum 2011 [Australia], *Asian*
5. Big Island Film Festival 2012 [United States], *General Interest*

It can be seen here by a comparison of the identified potential festival types and the resulting screenings (annotated by type), that I correctly identified and engaged with my target festivals. However, for every successful festival screening there were more than twenty rejections. While this is not unusual, considering that, in 2009, around 50,000 feature films were produced and released into the potential festival distribution market, it does start to illustrate the effort required to market an independent feature film to festivals alone before considerations of target audiences such as the transnational Asian one identified for *Citizen*. These experiences did lead me to a range of specific conclusions relating to how the film’s position within the film festival circuit could be have been improved, namely, by:

i) Higher profile marketing campaigns

ii) Dedicated marketing budget commensurate with film potential

iii) Engagement of professional film promoter/s.

Empathetic design targeting the film’s potential *Asian* interested viewership
remained at the core of my efforts to market the film to festivals and its subsequent screenings. Through my ongoing reading of industry websites looking into these issues, and my observations relating to film marketing in a more general sense, I have concluded that implementing these strategies around improving the marketing of the film would have led to more screenings and a higher overall profile for the film. This would have led to more opportunities for awards and distribution, which I discuss next.

**Awards**

The nomination and winning of awards is another way to measure a film’s success, and gain market profile. It was part of the considerations and decisions of casting and direction for *Citizen*. The cast was chosen for their potential to catch the attention of festival programmers and judges, while direction focused on bringing out memorable performances from each cast member. Recognition of these choices and decisions came in the form of two nominations and one award for the cast members of the film from festivals in Australia and the United States. These were:

- Nomination Best Actress: Claudia Teh (Jia) in the Melbourne Underground Film Festival, 2011
- Winner Best Actor: Chris Pang (Kong) in the Asians on Film Festival, 2013.

The nomination for and winning of these awards raised the film’s profile thus leading to further screenings, increased market profile and recognition with distributors/aggregators and exhibitors. These achievements flowed on to critical reviews and marketing when it came time to consider distribution. The nomination and award also provided measurable results for the empathetic design and direction of the characters played by Claudia Teh, who took the title role of Jia Li, and Chris Pang who played Kong. This has allowed the empathetic design ideas and approaches resulting in these characters to be *unpacked* through exposure to real-world testing and validation methods. This produces new knowledge demonstrating that the method and execution of those characters connected with
the audience; this is knowledge that I can feed back into future projects and the creative process.

Had the film had a greater festival market presence, I believe it would have had the potential to gain further nomination and award opportunities. The nominations and award experiences achieved provided valuable knowledge of how the film was being received, which also fed into the approaches to distribution and critical review of the film, as discussed in the next two sections.

**In Summary:** Award nomination and/or winning equals recognition [positive attention]. Focus should be placed at a project’s inception onwards in gaining the traction [market awareness] that such nominations/awards can provide within identified markets for the film.

**Distribution**

I have found, through the journey of *Citizen*, that the way cinema is distributed is changing. This includes transnational cinema. The modes of distribution have changed over the first decade of the 21st century. Previously, filmmakers and producers would see the landscape as being theatrical, terrestrial broadcast, and physical media distribution. With advances in the speed and services available through the internet, digital distribution has become not only a viable alternative, but it is taking over a significant market share of media and cinematic distribution. This has led to a number of new formats and delivery modes via the internet and Video On Demand [VOD] in its numerous forms.

Following on Citizens’ festival screenings was the task of identifying and securing distribution for the film. I identified that VOD held the most chance of achieving this and reaching the film’s target audience. VOD is an overarching term covering a number of distribution platforms that an Australian documentary filmmaker, Andrew Einspruch, provided in 2013 an explanation of the various types of VOD. He compiled the following list:
"VOD is a catch-all phrase that barely tells you anything. When discussing the options, you have to add other letters to end up with an acronym that describes the model. Here are the common variants:

Transactional (TVOD) – you pay per transaction to rent or buy. (Examples: iTunes, Amazon Instant.)

Subscription (SVOD) – a regular fee charged, giving access to a library of titles. (Examples: Quickfix, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus.)

Advertising-Supported (AVOD) – ads are shown to users instead of charging (for) them. (Examples: YouTube, Crackle, Hulu.)

Sale (EST/DTO) – “electronic sell-through” or “download to own” include a transfer of rights to the buyer, and the option to watch as often and for as long as wanted.

Ultra VOD – a premier service that charges a premium for on-demand access, for example, a first-run release that is still in theatres.” (Einspruch, 2013).

It was into this environment of new modes of distribution and viewing that Citizen was released in mid-2013. There were several factors that I believed would impact on where and how the film would be seen. The first was the film’s small or micro production budget of AUD$50,000. The second was its limited marketing budget, and, finally, the Asian-ness of the film. While I hoped for the attachment of a film sales agent for the film, by the middle of 2012 I no longer anticipated that theatrical release would be the first release position for the film. Few films are picked up from even major festivals for distribution, and those that are benefit from being products that have universal viewer appeal or are highly-specific genre products. As my film was a drama that was Asian in its positioning, this led me to consider a bottom-up approach to distribution rather than top-down. Peter Broderick (2007) went to some lengths to describe the changing landscape of independent distribution. He describes top-down distribution thus:
"The studios and other distributors were in full control. As gatekeepers and middlemen, they controlled access to audiences in a top-down distribution system”
(Broderick, 2007, p. 1).

When considering how to distribute Citizen, I determined that a bottom-up approach would be beneficial, which Broderick describes as being through factors now available to independent filmmakers such as ‘Direct Access to Viewers, Global Distribution, Access to Target Audiences, Direct Revenue Flow’. These new factors presented me with opportunities to exploit the transnational position I had created for the film, by seeking distribution internationally first, rather than following the more traditional method of securing distribution in the home territory before international distribution. I had also long believed that if the film could gain success in the West then it had the potential to gain traditional distribution in Asia – specifically, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and other South East Asian territories, as had Ang Lee’s film Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon in its second release in Asia after its success in the West. To this end, I deliberately held back release of the film to any Asian territory until having gained a track record and profile through international distribution in Western territories such as the United States and Europe. This approach allowed me to raise the profile of the film internationally while holding back release from markets that had the potential for a larger market share based on the profile generated in the West.

To date, Citizen has been distributed in the United States and Europe on TVOD on Amazon Instant, SVOD on Hulu Plus, AVOD on Hulu and Viewster. It is through the bottom-up approach that I hope Citizen continues to gather traction in an international market to reach its global audience of transnational Asia that was the original focus of my practice and continue to provide support in answering the research question that it explores.

In Summary: Distribution and target audiences are integrally linked to how a film will be consumed. Transnational distribution needs to be considered by
It is though the lens of a transnational Asian approach that my core ideas of empathetic design and audience systems come into focus. One way of assessing the project is through critical reviews for *Citizen*, these would assist in evaluating the underlying ideas and the project itself. Since critical reviews of the film would also raise its profile among potential viewers, I considered which publications could potentially review the film. These included independent, pop culture, Asian, underground and mainstream film publications. What resulted was a series of reviews in a range of publications providing responses that fed into further marketing, and provided insights into how the film and its Asian-ness, characters and narrative were perceived by the reviewers and their readership. What became clearer to me as the reviews started to come in during the latter half of 2013, was that when a critic had an understanding of the cultural themes, character types and issues that the film was centred around [Asian-ness], then the reviewer was able to identify and engage with the narrative and creative aspects of the film. When they were not, as in the case of a review by Justin Oberholtzer (2013), who did not understand the existence of Kong’s character or his cultural context, and
where the reviewer would have liked Kong’s character to ‘disappear entirely’, Films&Books reviewer, Tae-hee Jang (see Appendix 3), describes his performance as one that ‘simmers with emotion and palpable rage’ being a ‘contrast between ordinary citizen and flashy Triad member [which] works, perfectly played by the two leads.’ These demonstrate how the film’s characters and narrative speak to its target audience in ways that the western viewer (Athique, 2008) of mainstream cinema who is not culturally familiar with Asian issues may fail to recognise.

To expand on this idea is important as it represents a barrier to creative works as well as being a cultural signpost of the changing nature of the Asian Century referred to in the introduction. Using Indian films as an example Athique points out that ‘Prior to the 1990s the only Indian films to reach any significant Western audiences were art films operating in this niche market’ (Athique, 2008, p. 300). These (art house) viewers have an investment in the exotic form they consume. It is only later in the late 1990s / early 2000s with crossover films and audiences that there is a start to viewing and gaining a transnational film vocabulary with films such as those of Ang Lee (The Life of Pi (2012)) mentioned in the introduction allowing for a start of recognition of Asian cultural issues and stereotypes contained within Asian cinema. It is this lack of vocabulary that I have observed in the responses of some western viewers to Citizen.

This does not mean that I reject valid criticism (critical or otherwise) of the film or any of its shortcomings from reviews or other sources, it simply assists to contextualise the validity of critique by taking into account a range of factors in the design and execution of the film including its cultural and physical limitations:

- It was a deliberate attempt to create a transnational Asian film
- It had a micro budget
- It had a narrow shooting window of 12 days for principal photography
- It used an unknown and untried cast
- It was my first feature as director.

In reflection these factors both limited and liberated the work and myself. I was able to create a collaborative work without the constraint of financial and creative
oversight but was restricted as to the scope of my pallet by these same factors. These twin pressures of freedom and restriction focused me upon the narrative and the characters leading me towards searching for ways to deepen these without expensive and time-consuming methods of execution.

This approach again focused research and practice upon the information and knowledge that the audience was receiving and how to deliver it in a manner that kept them engaged with the film’s populist narrative. The outcome was that I found I am able to create engaging and compelling characters and narratives that sit within a work that is the whole package, containing the creative elements to be expected of a feature director by a mainstream viewing audience.

The journey of Citizen through its inception to distribution allows me to answer my initial question - How can a filmmakers approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces?

The answer that I found for my practice is one located in the simple complexity of the systems that I sought to engage with. These are human systems with specific origins that are currently in the process of blending through interaction with other like and unlike systems, Asian and western alike. I have found that I am capable of creating stories and content for these through:

- Empathetic design – to design for diverse audiences (Expression 1 p. 35)
- Transnational Narrative - to connect with audience receptor’s
  (Diagram 1 p. 15)

These answers have provided me with learning and knowledge that I can use in an ongoing manner with confidence gained through the film’s working insights and validation of my screen theories, design and practice. It is these that I take with me as I move forward to my next goals in the pursuit of bridging the spaces between knowledge of the screen arts, between new audiences, stories and spaces arising out of the ongoing blending of a globalised cultural landscape.
Conclusion – Bridging the Abyss

In the time between the beginning of the film’s journey in 2008 to today in 2015, much has changed in the landscape of screen media. These changes include the emergence of China and Asia as part of the Asian Century as significant global media market forces. Further, distribution and consumption paradigms have changed allowing filmmakers direct access to their markets and audiences. These changes have facilitated my film rather than inhibited its engagement with its markets and audience. Through empathetic design, I have been able to locate Citizen in a place where it continues to have merit and increasing potential for engaging its audiences with its narrative and characters. In this respect, it is in some way bridging the distance between homelands, societies and cultures as it was intended to do. The research knowledge engaged with by this work, the film and its outcomes of transnational empathetic design and audience engagement offer a way of locating, understanding and producing transnational cinema by way of combining academic research and reflective methods of practice. It is providing a deeper understanding of how to apply empathetic design to transnational Asian Cinema to answer the central research question:

*How can a filmmakers approach to practice that incorporates transnational Asian cinema be used to bridge physical and cultural spaces?*

Throughout this work I have discussed the design approach, the product, and its reception and consumption in order to propose the validity of the design method and approach. The idea was that the viewer should be considered first, that the designer should reach out for an understanding of and empathy with the viewer to guide and facilitate the design. While the journey of the film has provided much clarity for me about the method of knowledge acquisition and application involved with empathetic design, holistic Asian thinking and locating work in the transnational space, it has also allowed me to refine theories of Empathetic Design (to design for diverse audiences) and Transnational Narrative (to connect with audience receptors) through application of ideas into practice where outcomes
such as gaining a viewership, critical feedback, and distribution can be observed and evaluated. While these goals have been achieved I believe that there is more to be done to refine the model of my theories and practice to prove these principles on a larger scale.

This has led me to two clearly definable avenues for further research. The first is a need for further enquiry into transnational cinema design as a method of engaging audiences. The second is the need for support structures for transnational screen practitioners in Australia and internationally, for emerging Asian and non-European screen narrative designers. These avenues of further research are linked, and I believe will serve to support the emergence of culturally-blended narratives that reflect the world we live in today, and in the new homelands that have been created by the movement of diasporas in the East and the West.

Transnational Cinema Design

While I am proud of Citizen and what it has and is yet to achieve, it is limited by its position, my skills at the moment of creation, and the pressures of its budget and resources. It was a film written with those limitations in mind so that the project could be completed. These constraints, therefore, limited the degree to which I was able to write a screenplay for wider audiences who would be attracted to larger stories, thus justifying larger production and marketing budgets.

I believe that the next test of my methods requires application to a larger narrative, either in the form of an ongoing television drama or a longer form high-profile feature film. Working in either of these spaces will enable me to explore further the notion of empathetic design for transnational audiences, and will draw back into question some of the knowledge that I have gained through this practice-based inquiry. To this end, I intend to develop one of these paths as the basis for my future research investigations. This will extend the understanding of empathetic design and holistic thinking research further into the real-world arena where a larger audience can more rigorously test it. I believe this will assist in providing further proof of this method.
Support Structures

In the United States there are well-placed and focused Asian organizations', such as the 'Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment’ (CAPE), which provide a support structure for established and emerging Asian-American screen practitioners, from actors to producers. This support includes workshops, industry liaison and internship programs with the private sector. This level and type of Non-Government Organisational support is yet to be facilitated in Australia to promote a sustainable screen culture. Further, because of Australia’s geographic and cultural positioning between the East and West, I believe that such a support structure could be well placed to engage with both locations. In line with this thinking, I intend to further explore the feasibility and functioning of such a support structure and what shape it could take. I will approach this task through research and engagement with the stakeholders and existing local (Film Victoria), national (Screen Australia) and international (CAPE and other NGOs) screen support structures.

In conclusion, it is my hope that Bridging The Abyss and Citizen, have the potential to contribute knowledge in the area of empathetic design and transnational cinema, New Asian Cinema and holistic Asian thinking, will also speak to practitioners who are interested in producing creative works in this area, and to filmmakers and screenwriters. For me as a practitioner, this journey has resulted in a crystallisation and forming of a solid foundation of principles Empathetic Design and Transnational Narrative development practice as methods of knowledge development as outlined in the Chapter 1 of this exegesis. It is upon these that I can build bridges, furthering my knowledge and creative-based work using the ‘intent-theory-practice’ loop described in Chapter 1. Such a process is reflective of an ongoing accumulation and application of knowledge which, I hope, will lead to a deeper understanding of how such screen works can better engage their audiences and expand the range of transnational narratives seen on our everyday screens. It is my hope that other filmmakers can learn from the efforts
described here and appreciate the benefits of at least some of my thinking as they consider how they can connect with the audiences for their films.

Storytellers have always held a space between the past and the future, their conveying of history, ideas and messages in a manner that fulfills the dual roles of educator and entertainer as a way of connecting the past with the future. In the globalised world of today the audience and the stories are of the future now, where life and art switch places in a race towards the next moment, event, story. It is into this river or timeline that I have sought to place my practice or voice as I observe from the scholarly riverbank.
Reference List


Glossary of Terms

Asia, Asian – countries, peoples; of, originating from and situated in the East

Asian-ness – thinking, aestheticism and approaches that are Asian in their origin.

Asian Century – the 21st century categorized as a time that will see substantial growth in influence by Asian countries and peoples upon global affairs.

Australian-ness – thinking, aestheticism and approaches that are Australian in their origin.

Character – person, entity animal place or thing portrayed by actions and or dialogue with in a narrative.

Constant Hero – character archetype categorised by the unchangeableness of their morals and ideologies, which act in a catalytic manner on other characters they interact with enabling those characters to change.

Globalization – globalised interaction between peoples, companies and nations.

East, Eastern – lands situated to the East in relation to Europe generally starting with Turkey (see Orient), people, or peoples who reside in the East and Eastern regions.

Empathy, empathic – understanding and/or share in the feelings of another; to walk in their shoes figuratively, to show empathy.

Empathic Design – conceiving, planning and testing of a construct through consideration factors derived through empathy-originated process.

Harajuku – District in Tokyo, Japan.

Harajuku Style – Diverse extreme fashion style originating in the Harajuku District in Tokyo, Japan.


Holistic – the thinking and practice approach/s whereby all available factors and information are included in considerations, assumptions and calculations.

Homeland – place of origin during birth, childhood, adolescence; place of cultural and ideological origin; where a person or group originated from.

Identification – the process whereby a viewer recognises and can categorise an idea, person, place or thing via their knowledge with in their personal systems or frame of reference.

Integrative theory – an approach that allows several ideas or approaches to work together to achieve outcomes.
Narrative – sequence of ideas, concepts, events that progress to a realisation, commonly attributed to be comprised by a beginning, middle and ending.

National Cinema – where buy a nations’ cinema may be categorized as to its style, narrative scope and approach to the cinematic form.

System/s – set of connected parts or things that form a whole that may be categorized as such by their commonality of attributes.

System/s (complex) – describing the collective behaviour of the parts of; or groups of; or interaction between systems.

Orient, Oriental – lands and peoples situated in Eastern regions stretching from turkey to Japan.

Practice – actualising theories and ideas by utilisation within a space that is not purely theoretical.

West, Western – lands including and to the West of Europe ending on the Western coast of North America; can include former Western colonies, such as Australia. Of the West.

Transnational – across national boundaries.

Transnational Cinema / Screen – screen narratives that are of or include multinational themes, characters, locations and/or ideas.

World Bible - creative document in addition to the screenplay produced by the director and/or producer of a cinema work to define the approach, style and structure for the various creative stakeholders involved in the production of the cinema work.
Bridging the Abyss: Transnational Asian Cinema and the Making of *Citizen Jia Li*

Appendixes – Book 2

Appendix 1 – Film World Bible.............................. Section 1

Appendix 2 – Screenplay................................. Section 2

Appendix 2 – Critical Review............................. Section 3

Note to the Reader

The appendices containing the *World Bible* and *Screenplay* of the feature film *Citizen Jia Li* are original pre-production materials. Minor changes to the screenplay scenes, action and dialogue occurred as a natural part of the creative process of editing and completing the film. For simplicity, when scenes, sections or passages are referred to in this thesis the order, number and page are references to the original documents contained in the Appendices. Where differences between the completed film and original screenplay impact on this work, they are noted prior to the discussion thereof.

This exegesis and the accompanying creative works are submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the research degree of Master of Design (Media & Communication).

Sky Crompton ADS Screen, Dip TAA, Dip Film

School of Media & Communication
Design and Social Context
RMIT University
October 2015
Appendix 1 – Film World Bible
Citizen Jia Li

Film Bible/World Document
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Version 2.1  
Date 14 Feb 2008  
Written by Sky Crompton  
Edited by Corinne Urrutia
This document is designed to provide a broad overview of the story, characters, creative intent and approach for this film. It covers the major departments involved in the production, providing references and concept explanations which endeavour to describe how and what will be achieved for the final production.

**CITIZAN JIA LI Context / rules for the story and its production**

**Script:** ‘The map is not the territory’ [quotation] the script is a map like tool which gives the filmmakers a general guide to the territory that will be traversed in the journey to tell the cinematic story in question.

It is not in it’s self the final product which the intended audience will see in fact in many ways it is much less than 50% of the production if thought of in the following context.

Script idea 20% + Creative team interpretation 80% = 100% of achievement

This being true each creative member needs to consider what they are bringing to the project and that that can be of immense value to the finished product.

**The audience:** Audience don’t know or care about anything but the sensorium of the finished film that they are watching. This means that our job as a creative team is to give them what they need, to have the experience without any baggage and enjoy doing it.

**Product Quality:** Make a good film, audiences remember two films good ones and bad ones the ones in the middle are forgotten and the bad ones live with infamy, so make it well and make it memorable.

**Genre:** Don’t make other peoples films, time and again we are ask to describe a film in the context of those that have come before, make no mistake *Citizen Jia Li* is not to be described in those terms. It sits simply and comfortably in its own context:

“a 21st century coming of age film set in the global village of Melbourne.”

**The Film’s World**

**The Audience:**

The primary audience for the film is people between the ages of 18 – 30 of Asian decent in Australia and rejoins where Chinese is the native language. Beyond that the themes are universal allowing the film’s story to cross cultural barriers worldwide.
The films themes:

Family, obligation, honour and finding ones self then remaining true to that discovery. Looking at where the obligations of honour and being human clash and the outcome for the protagonists.

A coming of age story for the late bloomers in the 21st century.

It deals with relationships and between people of different backgrounds, positive and negative ones and how people find a new home in a new world, and how that changes them for good or evil.

Plot

Jia Li new citizen of Australia in a new century learns to fight for herself against circumstance and individuals who oppose her to triumph for her self and her loved ones.

Back-story

Jia Li came to Australia 5 years ago when she was 17 to go to university, gain citizenship to bring her aging parents whom her brother Hero is caring for in China.

It was decided she would go as her general marks were better at school and more likely to do well in studying abroad. While her brother continued to study music and work to support their parents. In doing this she gave up playing music with her brother, which was the one thing, she truly loved.

Having worked as a hair dresser and having a diploma from China she planed to get a job doing that to pay for her study, and to send money home.

In coming to Australia She was helped by a Chinese family and their son Kong a low level triad member with potential for advancement. The family were helped to move to Hong Kong by Jia Li’s grand farther and so there is a strong obligation on Kong to do the right thing in return.

Jia Li obtained her degree in business and a diploma of hairdressing and has just become a citizen. In the mean time she has broken off her relationship with Kong and her brother Kong is about to arrive on a student visa.

Once he has a job they plan to bring out their parents. Jia li has been working for Serena Kent who runs a hair salon.
SYNOPSIS

JIA LI has become a citizen. After 4-5 years of study and working for a nasty hairdresser for whom she can do no right, while being payed under the counter with no security she has finally payed her dues she thinks and wants to start her new life and finally bring her family to Australia as planed.

But instead of getting better conditions as promised she is given the sack by Serena the owner of the salon where she works and is then evicted from her flat along with the rest of the building to make way for a re development all on the same day.

Lost and bewildered she turns to her ex boyfriend Kong, a lower mid level triad member for help only to be reminded why she dumped him in the first place.

Daisy rock and roll loving Harajuku girl and washer at Jia Li ‘s former salon turns up on Jia Li’s doorstep. Daisy communicates only through monosyllabic responses in Japanese and, a sophisticated texting computer and a simple set of gestures and understanding s between her and Jia Li.

Daisy invites Jia li to stay with her while she gets back on her feet. Jia Li declines until she finds a new place and job.

Meanwhile Kong wants Jia Li back. This takes him through Melbourne’s streets to places where they once went, her flat, etc, in an effort to find her and also to understand what went wrong in their relationship.

The reasons for him wanting her back range from his loosing face in fount of his fellow triad members and the obligation he feels toward her for her family’s helping his to come to Australia, but there is another in his own controlling way he wants and loves her.

Back at Daisy’s up market flat Jia Li learns that Daisy is in fact learning English and speaks it farley well though not well enough for daisy to use English to communicate.

They spend the evening talking about their families and dreams; Jia Li explains why she was with Kong due to his family’s obligation to hers.

The next day Daisy transforms Jia Li in to a hip street wise young thing with a make over and they go to see her former client Ms CHAN a Chinese real-estate agent who challenges Jia li to take control of her life and gives her the opportunity to open her own salon, by finding her a shop owned by an acquaintance ho is romantically interested in Ms Chan. Whilst in the meeting with Ms Chan the secretary May recognises Jia Li as Kong’s former Girlfriend.
Ms Chan convinces Jia Li to trust in her self and start her own hair salon, Ms Chan calls in a favour from a friend John Simkins who has an office/shop for rent, she arranges for Jia Li to see it that morning warning her that she must become a tough business woman to survive.

Jia Li and Daisy inspect the shop with Mr Simkin, Ms Chan’s would be lover. They listen to him tell how he started his working life and met his wife in this very office. A businessman always Jia li has to haggle with him on the price and terms to win out in the end getting the office for what she can afford.

Meanwhile Kong continues to search the city for Jia Li, more and more angrily finally ending up at Serena’s salon where he finds that she has sacked Jia Li contrary to his agreement with Serena. Infuriated he increases Serena’s protection money after leaving her abused and terrified in a back storeroom.

The rest of the morning and early afternoon disappear in a world wind shopping spree provides the equipment for the salon and also wipes out most of Jia Lis funds.

On their return Daisy nervously asks to become a business partner in the salon Jia Li says that she already is which makes Daisy very happy. Jia Li leaves Daisy to clean up while she goes of to get a business name and her diary and the client list it contains.

Kong meets up with some of his triad peers and their girlfriends in a city Noodle shop where Ms Chan’s security May tells him that she saw Jia Li and can get her address.

Returning to the scene of her former humiliation Jia Li reluctantly faces Serena, brushing aside her threats finally standing up to her taking her dairy and leaving a furious Serena powerless to hurt her any more.

Back at the new salon Daisy is cleaning when Kong arrives entering the salon he and Daisy exchange words in an escalating which is interrupted by Jia Li’s arrival.

Kong demands that Jia Li return to him or she will have to pay protection money which she can no longer afford. Daisy steps in the gap and offers her money to give their partnership the financial backing it needs.

Kong becomes violent attempting to hit daisy when Jia Li steps in and gets knocked down in Daisy’s defence.

Jia Li’s world spins out of control, now conflicted by his actions Kong goes to her aid knocking daisy down as well but is stoped by Jia Li yelling from the floor for him too keep away as her recent life flashes before her. Getting to her feet she
scrapes up Daisy’s fallen money from the floor and demands Kong take it and never come back saying that his family’s obligation is over, caught between obligation and honour a beaten Kong leaves Jia Li and Daisy the masters of their domain. Daisy asks what they do now and Jia Li says the go home, tomorrow she has to pick up her brother they both look at the business name which has both Daisy’s and Jia Li’s name on it which Daisy pins up on the wall and they leave for the night.

The name on the business name certificate is Melbourne Cut. They turn out the lights.

**Performance Style and characterisation**

There are many styles of performance. From the comedy of the Producers (2005), to the gritty realism such as we seeing in Million Dollar Baby (2004). It is important to be clear about what type of performance is to be achieved on each project.

In the case of Citizen Jia Li the characters are driven by real situations, desires, and needs. Thus the performances must strive for a naturalness and spontaneity that we see in the film’s of the French new wave, and contemporary film makers such as Ken Loach ‘Kes’ (1969), Steven Soderbergh ‘Traffic’ (2000), Krzysztof Kieslowski ‘Trois couleurs: Bleu (1993)’ and Kar Wai Wong ‘In the Mood for Love’ (2000). While these films may very widely in their stories and individual tone, they all have a common thread in that the audience can not only identify the characters but also emphasise with them and engage collectively in the characters screen experience.

Such performances require a depth that moves beyond or transcends just performing a part, and required a clarity of who the character is and an understanding as to why they do what they do and how each decision changes them for ever and thus they are growing and/or dieing every moment on the screen.

We could call this Cause and Effect Characterisation and Performance, in its self this idea is nothing new but many times is forgotten when it comes down to delivering on the day of the performance.

It requires a letting go of the fears and baggage that each performer carries when striving to achieve something new (hopefully for each new role), it further requires believing in the knowledge and understanding that the performer has about their character and letting their skill and belief in their character take over, then they will become the character reacting moment by moment in the environment of each scene of the story.
“….the camera sees everything you need to behave, react to the other person…. [quote Sir Michael Cane on acting on Parkinson on the ABC 19 Jan 2007]

Caged animal theory acting, when we cage an animal they act in a semblance of how they would in the wild. When we put an animal in an environment that is not their natural one they perform in a way that is similar to but not true to their nature as they are uncomfortable possibly even afraid. The same can be said of actors who put on a performance instead of acting in response to the actions of the other characters in a given piece.

If we were to take a lesson from children we see that a normal well balanced child’s perspective is free from concerns of the exterior, this allows them to instantly believe in the imaginary worlds that they find in play and create themselves, for them acting is part of the everyday and they have nothing to fear, everything is new and wonderful and safe. Because of this they believe it and thus they are believable in their responses when they are acting both at play in every day life and on the stage and screen.

These concepts are very true of the realistic approach to be taken for characters of our film.

THE CHARACTERS “life is what happens while your planning it”

People all see the world through individual eyes some people can not let go of the past, others live totally in the now with no thought of the future and there those who plan constantly for future goals. This film includes all these.

Jia Li – lives in the future

Age: 22

Ethnic Background: Mainland China - languages, Mandarin, English

Family: Twin brother, aged mother and father.

Favourite things:

- Before coming to Melbourne: Listening to her brother play Jiazz, being with her family.
- When she was with Kong: going out to Jiazz clubs and walking through Melbourne at night.
- Now: The morning walk to work, spending weekends planning what she will do when her brother is here.
**Key characteristics:** Reserved, works hard towards long term goals, more likely to withdraw than stand up for herself when faced with a confrontation, she will bottle all the pain, fears or heart up and not express it. Withdrawn not letting anyone else in but her family.

**Clothing Journey:** starts out wearing neat and clean but somewhat faded clothes that allow her to fade into the background in tones of faded reds, greens, blacks, by the end she is wearing strong solid and bright reds, blues, greens she has come to life and is stronger.

**Characterisation:** she is a plodder not a fighter, setting long term goals and working toward them for years some times. She finds dramatic change difficult to deal with. She is extremely self reliant this also makes her short on friends

**Back story:** Jia Li came to Australia 4 years ago at the age of 18, she is intelligent and did well at school but her family was no well off, she was helped to come to Australia by Kong’s which in some ways fulfils an obligation his family has to hers due the fact that Jia Li’s grandfather a merchant, helped Kong’s family immigrate, first to Hong Kong, and then to Australia.

At home in China she had done a hairdressing course but on coming to Australia it was decided that she would do business as it provides many options for employment.

Her and her brothers plan is that he would stay to look after their parents while she got a job and home base and then he would come out get a job and when they could afford to bring out their parents to live.

She worked her way through university to get a business degree by working for under the counter money at a hair salon she has built up a wonderful repour with the customers and has become a real asset to the business, this has caused Serena to become jealous.

Due to the fact that Kong’s family she did not develop a group of her own friends but inherited his when they started going out. So that when she broke up with him she found that her social circle contracted almost completely, which has left her isolated and feeling alone.

She left Kong because of his increasing involvement in the triads and his tendency to violence. She does not want that sort of life as her family have never been involved in crime.

Last week she became a citizen it is her intention to now bring her parents to Australia with the help of her brother Hero who is coming out on a student visa once he has a job they will have enough income to bring their parents to Australia.
Journey: she will learn to rely on other people, let them in and to fight for what she needs and most of all realise what it is she wants out of life for her self.

Kong – lives in the past

Age: 25

Ethnic Background: Chinese born in Hong Kong immigrated with his family to Australia at age 5 - languages, Cantonese, Mandarin, English.

Family: Farther and mother who run a mini supermarket/bottle shop, and one sister who is married to Andrew, an upper mid level member in the triad.

Favourite things: Enjoys the thrill of his job, the power and implied control that he has over people, spending time with the group/extended family of the triad and up until six weeks ago going out with Jia Li.

Clothing Journey: starts out in clean whites and ends in greys and blacks which are crumpled and slept in he is dishevelled.

Key characteristics: strongly developed self-centred sense of obligation and honour. Tendency to explode and act swiftly when provoked. Physically strong, handsome but not beef cake.

Kong puts across an impression of being strong and in control emotionally but deep down he is afraid of not seceding to drag himself up to a position of respect in the triad.

Back Story: Kong was born in Hong Kong and lived there with his family until they came to Australia when he was 5. His family lived in the western suburbs when they moved to Australia and opened their shop.

At the age of 16 Kong started to run with an Asian gang stealing cars for kicks, which later got them involved in the car striping industry. Showing his aptitude for thinking on his feet and not getting caught he moved up the ranks of the triad to become involved in a protection money (Insurance) racket in the Melbourne CBD.

By the age of 20 when his family helped Jia Li come to Australia he had gotten to the point where he was collecting money an enforcing payment, being overseen by a mid level boss (an accountant) who was skimming before the proceeds went to the big boss.

He started going out with Jia Li eight months after she arrived when she got her own place moving out from living with his parents. Most of the time they hung out
with his friends and his married sister, occasionally going to Jiazz clubs, which she liked.

He started dating Jia Li because he genuinely liked her but also because she was easy to be with and would do what he wanted as opposed to being demanding she would let him take the lead in what they were doing.

Kong found this out gaining proof one day broke both the legs of the account and on presenting the proof to the big boss was promoted to accountant getting all his former bosses territory.

Over the last 18 months he has been involved in a number of other rackets besides the protection one, including money laundering and game fixing and doing the leg and enforcing work that has allowed his more violent tendencies free reign. Six months ago the police for assault held him but the charges were later dropped.

At this time Jia Li finished her studies graduating from university and decided she did not want to go down the path Kong had chosen for them. Their relationship became more estranged over the following four months until she broke off all contact.

Due to the obligation his family had to hers Kong did not peruse Jia Li even though he has coped much flack from his fellow triad members about letting a woman leave him.

Due to these situations he has himself become isolated over the last two months taking more and more jobs for the triad, the most recent being the destruction of the papers of a recently deceased triad boss for his brother in-law which involved him torching the old mans house after removing sensitive papers before a police crimes investigation team got to them.

He is very angry at the whole situation but obligation and his own selfish pride will not allow him to do anything else.

**Journey:** Kong will discover that control is an illusion, and that he has truly lost Jia Li.

**Daisy (Keko) Wnatabe – lives in the now**

**Age:** 19

**Ethnic Background:** Jiaapanese, City Tokyo, languages, Jiaapanese, English

**Family:** Father. Mother died in childbirth when Daisy was born. No siblings.
Back story: Daisy’s farther met his mother in Hong Kong when he was poste their by his company. It was an office romance that transcended racial barriers. Due to their common interest in cooking which they discovered at a business function.

On the death of Daisy’s mother (Helen) her farther returned to Jiapan (Tokyo) with the child, bring her up in a series of near by boarding schools.

He keeps Daisy to him self not letting her have contact with Helen’s family. Hence Daisy did not learn Cantonese or Mandarin.

Favourite things: Her father, Rock Music, being with friends, wild far out fashion and playing with media.

Clothing Journey: a strong personality her clothes do not change she is just cool all the time and serves as a guide to assist Jia Li in her growth being displayed in an outward fashion. By providing her with a new set of clothes and make over she helps her develop a protective armour of self confidence, which Daisy her self exudes through her own clothes.

Key characteristics: Shy about her language skills, very polite, a true friend to those who are kind to her, sees the world and her self with the clarity of some one much younger or much older.

Daisy is the quintessential Harajuku Girl, a global child of the generation Y phenomenon who is struggling against that generation's innate tendency to selfishness and drifting aimless lifestyle.

Her mother Helen passed away during childbirth, Daisy has since been brought up by her businessman father and a series of boarding schools. He wants her to do an MBA and secure her future and bring him honour.

Ever since her older cousins took her to a rock concert at the age of 15 all she has wanted to do is be a rock singer. Starting her first short-lived band the next day it produced one cover version of a Bon Jovi track before it was disbanded because the drum and base players had to be home by 6 for dinner.

Has a habit of not sticking at things for a long time except for rock music which seems to be more than skin deep now.

From then on she decided to be a solo artist, none of this means that she is musically good, though she is not bad but she is defiantly enthusiastic about every thing she does and has to be perfect at it.
She misses having a mother a lot and has taken a year off to learn English, show her father she is responsible, and experience another culture deciding what she wants to do with her life.

While she has a reasonable grasp of English she refused to let people know this until she is perfect which is no more than her father would expect of her.

This attitude flows over into how she keeps house, which is perfect modern/traditional Japanese only allowing her bedroom to totally be her with posters and clothes everywhere.

She has been working in the salon with Jia Li for five months in which time she has developed a working friendship with Jia Li who is the only one who is kind to her.

Daisy has a range of Japanese girl friends (also here as students) she goes out with to movies, coffees and rock concerts, but she finds their preoccupation with boy a little scary. Though she does like them, she has little experience with them having come from girls schools until coming to Australia to study English.

Journey: Daisy comes out of her Harajuku shell and with the friendship with Jia Li makes a step toward the type of responsibility her father wishes of her.

**Hero/Chaing**

**Age:** 22

**Ethnic Background:** Mainland China - languages, Mandarin, English

**Family:** Twin sister, aged mother and father.

**Favourite things:** Jiazz

**Key Characteristics:**

**Back story:**

**Ms Chan**

**Age:** 40

**Ethnic Background:** China, languages – mandarin, English

**Family:** Distant relatives back in mainland China both parents passed away since she left China.
Favourite things:

**Key characteristics:** Hardworking, Opinionated, single-mindedly determined to make her way in the world overcoming

**Back story:** After the events of Tiananmen Square, Jenny Chan immigrated to find more security, she was helped by several members of the Chinese community in Melbourne whom she contacted through fellow class mates in China.

She studied to become a real-estate agent and after five years working for other agents she started her own business, first catering to the Chinese community looking after rental property’s later branching out into sales of residential and commercial properties she has a small but successful business with a secretary and two other agents.

Her personal life has not been as successful as at first with the loss of her family she did not feel safe to involve anyone else in her life then with the business she was too busy. Now she finds herself successful but alone and does not know what to do about it.

In John Simkins she has found a friend but the fears, concerns and strangeness of him being form a different ethnic background have made her hold him at arms length.

**Mr John Simkins**

**Age:** 60+

**Ethnic Background:** Anglo Saxon

**Family:** Wife dead 7 years from throat cancer from smoking and his two sons who now run his businesses with him directing them, also two daughter in law’s who he adores and who have given him 5 grandchildren, 3 girls 2 boys.

**Favourite things:** Jenny Chan, his grandchildren, Golf, making unique handmade toys for his grand children & watching Michael Parkinson on Saturday evenings (Not happy about Parkinson’s retirement).

**Key characteristics:** Patient with his grandchildren, he does not suffer fools gladly (His sons have constant proof of this). Expects strong work ethic from his employees and that includes his family. He is a fair man with a soft spot for his girls.
He sees the world for what it is and makes his judgments as needed, not basing his actions on pre conceived assumptions.

**Back-story:** Since his wife’s passing has spent more time with his family and less on his businesses having realised that life is precious and work is just work.

Three years ago he met Jenny Chan during the buying of a factory, which she was handling as agent, since then he has taken her out every Chinese New Year and they have coffee once a month. Ms Chan’s reluctance to have a relationship is the reason that they do not spend more time together but he is patient man.

His Son’s are not keen on Jenny Chan but John figures it’s none of their business.

**Serena Kent**

**Age:** 35

**Ethnic Background:** Anglo Saxon

**Family:** Mother and father who run a hardware shop in north Melbourne.

**Favourite things:** Her BMW, Shopping for clothes, Partying, and getting her own way.

**Key characteristics:** vapid and vicious bitch, Jealous of anyone who has any success, takes pleasure in getting her own way. And makes everyone’s life hell if she does not get what she wants and now.

**Back-story:** currently between boyfriends whom she dumps on a regularly, she has always thought Kong was a bit of nice ass, and could not understand why he was with Jia Li, whom he brought for a job in her salon for which he gave her a discounted rate of protection about 3 years ago.

When Jia Li left Kong Serena stepped up her campaign of persecution which in the main is because of how good Jia Li was at her job and culminating with her giving Jia Li the sack thinking it might give her some leverage with Kong.

**Kevin**

**Age:** 23

**Ethnic Background:** Hong Kong Chinese – Language, Cantonese, Little basic English.
**Family:** All family except an uncle and auntie’s who are back in Hong Kong and another distant uncle here in Australia. His parents both died in a car accident when he was eleven. and was brought up by a maternal aunt.

**Favourite things:** Rap Music, Partying, Drinking, Girls.

**Key characteristics:** Cocky, sly and driven by self interest primarily, no respect for anyone, ready to seize any opportunity to gain an advantage for him self.

**Back-story:** His parents both died in a car accident when he was eleven. And was then brought up by a maternal aunt until he started getting in trouble with the police and was sent to Australia for an extended holiday to see if his uncle an upper middle level triad member involved in gambling rackets.

Kevin came to Australia two months ago and has been constantly getting on everyone’s nerves being nothing but trouble to his family and has ended up with Kong because of Kong’s reputation for fixing problems and fixing younger triad members out when they go astray he has had some succusses in straitening them out.

Kong has given him a small group of shops to collect protection money from which he has been skimming from thinking no one will notice.

**Bill**

**Age:** 35

**Ethnic Background:** Anglo Saxon Australian

**Family:** has a mother, farther and sister who live near by, sister is just finishing uni as a nurse, she hangs out at his place a lot as they are close and enjoy each others company, also one of her girl friends from uni fancies him.

**Favourite things:** going out with friends and family, cricket, fly-fishing.

**Key characteristics:** honest, hardworking, sort of guy you can rely on, laconic sense of humour.

**Back story:** after finishing a degree in Journalism, and a diploma in photography Bill has been working as a freelance writer for the Independent news papers. He would like to travel and write for national geographic.

He knows Ben from living in the same set of flats fro about 18 months, Ben is always coming round to borrow a cup of coffee in winter and a beer in summer, either because he has run out of money or because Bills sister is there, invariably they end up having pizza which bill ends up paying for.
Ben
Age: 28

Ethnic Background: Anglo Saxon Australian.

Favourite things: Bills sister Diane, gardening and plants.

Key characteristics: Moderately lazy,

Back-story: Ben works nights as a kitchen hand, days as a part-time builder’s labourer, while he does a uni course in horticulture part time. He has been sweet on Bill’s sister since the first time he saw her when she came round to visit.

Since meeting Diane he has started to get his act together and is looking to settle down with a steady job and think about buying a flat and asking Diane out seriously.

May

Age: 20

Ethnic Background: First generation Chinese Australian

Family: Mother and farther, two brothers and a baby sister. She is the oldest.

Favourite things: Dance clubs, being the centre of attention, having things bought for her, being waited on

Key characteristics: Selfish, a gossip, wants attention for her self, goes behind peoples backs and causes trouble for them and is generally lazy.

Back-story: May has been with Allan for three years they were going out in high school, their relationship is not a happy one because while Allan really likes May she is bored with him, he is not handsome and successful in the triad, but works a desk job in a government department and moonlights at a call centre for extra cash to save for a deposit on a house. Kong is much more attractive with the passion and power that he has in the triad.

She has been working for Ms Chan for a year when her mother an acquaintance of Ms Chan’s got her the job, she is not particularly interested in the job and would much rather work in retail because she likes clothes but has no training.

Andrew
Age: 30

Ethnic Background: forth generation Chinese Australian, speaks Chinese and English.

Family: mother father and three sisters, married to Kong’s sister May for 4 years, he and May are planing their first child.

Favourite things: Being with May (Kong’s Sister) their friends and family.

Key characteristics: Kind loving, serious and thoughtful tries to pour oil on troubled waters and seek peaceful solutions to problems.

Back-story: Having worked his way through school he has a strong work ethic and believes in faithfulness to the triad. He has been helped by older members who see his potential, and in the same way he has been helping Kong to progress.

Over the last two months he has had to defend Kong on several occasions due to his rash behaviour and decline in productivity, not form his area but in him self, more a bad attitude which Jia Li having him was seen as a sign of weakness.

He genuinely likes Kong for his own sake beyond being married to his sister, and continues to try to keep Kong on the strait and narrow.

---

Allan

Age: 20

Ethnic Background: Second generation Chinese Australian, speaks Chinese a bit but mostly English.

Family: Nucleare family of mother father a brother and sister who are both older, he is child 2.5 of this nucleare family who had everything done for him and so has no direction for himself

Favourite things: playing video games, eating spending time at home.

Key characteristics: goes from job to job try a new scheme every few months driven by the need to keep May happy in her quest for popularity and fun, he is just simply your classic under achiever who had the ability but never could be bothered to try at school or work.
**Back story:** He and May have been having problems for the last six months as she wants him to make something of himself and he doesn’t, is really happy hanging around at home.

**Sally**

**Age:** 19

**Ethnic Background:** First generation Chinese Australian

**Family:** Mother Father and Brother

**Favourite things:** Danny, seeing new things, going out to dinner with friends, weekends with the girls, her Job as a gallery attendant.

**Key characteristics:** loving of family and friends, trustworthy, giving, likes helping people.

**Back-story:** she has been in love with Danny since she was fifteen, he did not even realise it until she kissed him one day a year ago when he was dropping her home from a party which he had taken her and her brother to.

**Danny**

**Age:** 22

**Ethnic Background:** second generation Chinese

**Favourite things:** Sally, long walks along the Yarra River, going to the movies

**Key characteristics:** Honourable, kind, cares for his family and friends, a really nice guy.

**Back-story:** Danny’s mother and Sally’s are best friends since child hood. He finished top of his class in maths and went on to do a diploma of business at TAFE at which point he was recruited by Andrew to work in the gambling operation.

Danny is a numbers man for the gambling operation of the triad, she is only interested in providing for his family, and looking after them. While he is part of the triad, he keeps mostly to his family as much as possible.

When he realised that he liked Sally he decided that the best thing that he could do was marry her and make a home for them which has been his main project since this decision.
Client 1

Age: 30

Ethnic Background: Anglo Saxon - Blond

Favourite things: Husband and daughter, her home.

Key characteristics: fun loving, generous, sees the good not the evil in the world.

Camera and Lighting for The World

Contemporary 2008 Melbourne filled with the Asian new Australians of the 21st century coming to escape old oppressions and fears only to meet with a mixture of the old and the new.

The Image

The imagery of Citizen Jia Li is driven by the low contrast saturated colours running to the white end of the spectrum rather than muddy tones. This will be aided by production and lighting design using strong colours and crushed blacks.

Style and colour treatment

http://www.scene-stealers.com/top-10/top-10-overlooked-movies/

Saturated 70’s visual style with a colour pallet treatment with colour priority rested in the following order for characters

- Greens and yellows 1st
- Blues and reds 2nd
The Camera & Lighting

The series of following fashion images provide a number of clues to the visual style to be achieved. What follows are

Style, Colour Pallet and Composing of the frame

Not overly composed frames, which have an observational, feel looking through widows, watching across the street with saturated colours and strong crushed blacks and whites

Daytime

Night Time
Lighting

The image below shows clear separation of fore, mid and background in an inclosed space through the use of creative lighting and drapes/props to achieve the images narrative.

A soft diffused look with narrow depth of field, think Polaroid, think saturated colours seen through white stockings, think a late seventies colour pallet transported to contemporary Melbourne and you have Jia Li’s world this is her story and the story of the people who inhabit that world.

How to achieve the look

- Stockings behind the lens
- Filters to accentuate colour - Polariser
- Preset camera settings for internal and external, day and night scenes.

Journeys in colour

- Jia Li goes from washed out old clothes in washed out blacks greens and reds to vibrant blues whites and reds
- Kong from White to Grey to Black
- Daisy is just all over the place and fun.

Each other character stays as they are.

Journey through the lens

- Jia Li – starts tight ends wide: this signifies her growth and increasing strength over the course of the film.
- Kong – Shot on long lenses: this signifies his narrow and unchangeable character.
- **Daisy** – Shot on wides: this signifies her openness to everything new.

**Camera Movement**

Pan and tilt, Hand held with a gentle rhythm reminiscent of European French new wave films and Asian films of the last 20 years.

Driven by the narrative the camera moves with a gentle rhythm following the characters as it seamlessly moves between purely observational documentation and character driven P.O.V’s. It could be said that the city of Melbourne is watching Jia Li and the other characters at times.

**References:**

- French new wave
  - In the Mood for Love 2000
  - The Long Goodbye 1973

perifrasi.splinder.com/archive/2006-11

www.gloucester.gov.uk/Content.aspx?Urn=2891
PRODUCTION DESIGN & ART DEPARTMENT

Locations

See location document.

Costuming

The costuming for the film both describes who the characters are and how they express themselves. The Key characters of Jia Li and Kong each have their emotional journeys visually described by their clothes.

- Jia Li goes from washed out old clothes in washed out blacks, greens and reds to vibrant blues, whites and reds, the brightening of the colours in her clothes shows how her inner strength has grown so that she can protect herself.

- Kong from White to Grey to Black. Kong’s transformation is from cool and collected to that of being lost, confused and dishevelled. His once clean clothes become slept in and crumpled.

The Gangster Look

[Image]

www.lifeofguangzhou.com/.../11604673589329.shtml

the Harajuku look
Striped back everyday makeup, minimalist in general except for Daisy and the new Jia Li look which is more confident and shows an awareness of looking nice and self worth.
The Sound

Sound Design

Stylistically the design of sound will be used to emphasize the emotional tone of the scene utilising sounds that would be found in that location.

For example during a hand over of documents by Kong to another triad member in an alleyway in china town the noises of the street would fill the scene but as the tension rises the scene would become more and more silent with a single sound being isolated and emphasised which will raise the tension of the scene finally returning to the original street noise when the tension is released.

Music

Music is used to further sculpt the lead characters and define their personalities and how they feel at particular moments in the story.

Jia Li: Jiazz & Blues

Kong: Gangster Rap Australian

Daisy: Angry girl rock

The only music that is heard in the film is diagetic from the environment they are in or that they play or encounter.
Appendix 2 – Screenplay
CITIZEN JA LI

Screenplay by Sky Crompton
From an Original Concept by Sky Crompton

Shoot Script V1 9-4-08
Copyright Sky Crompton 2007-2008
Production Co: GUNG HO Productions P/L
Po Box 204 Dromana, Victoria, Australia, 3936
Mobile: +61 (0) 407 335 612
Email: gunghofilm@mac.com
SCRIPT NOTES FOR READING THE SCREENPLAY SCRIPT LAYOUT

DIALOGUE:

The story of this film is told in several languages, where languages other than English are to be used, it will be noted either prior to the dialogue or at the character name as in the following examples.

JA LI [MANDARIN]
Let me go.

It should also be noted that whilst the script is written with English grammar, the dialogue will be delivered in its native language with the grammar and syntax of the language, according to the characters, backgrounds and social status as outlined in the character breakdowns.

INSET FRAMES:

Inset Frames refer to image overlays or where there are more than one image taking up the frame weather overlaying a smaller image over a portion of the frame or rolling 1/2 and image up and un rolling another beside it. These are shown in the script by.

INSET FRAME:

Thank you and our film starts now...

1

EXT. ON BLACK -- MORNING

FADE SOUND IN:

Road noise, passing cars echo from a concrete walled freeway.

Sounds of a car's engine as it moves through early gears. Peeking at 7000 RPM

FADE UP TEXT: GUNG HO Productions [logo for film]

Sounds of the car's engine finally moving into fifth gear and it settles into an angry rumble.

FADE UP TEXT: Heroes Workshop or Film Production Co

TEXT: A range of production partner titles play slowly over black as the sound plays of the car traveling along a freeway at high speed.

Sounds of radio starting, an early 50's Jazz track plays.

FADE UP TEXT: CLAUDIA THE
CONT:

A can of energy drink being opened [how do we know its an energy drink? Bigger hiss on opening.]

Sounds as it foams on Kong,

KONG [CANTONESE]

Shit...

Sounds of the can being put down, deceleration, him mopping up the spilt drink

KONG [CANTONESE] (CONT'D)

Shit ...shit...

Sounds of the radio buttons beeping and of the radio station being changed, cute angry girl rock music starts playing mid song.

FADE UP TEXT: SUSANNA QIAN

KONG [CANTONESE] (CONT'D)

Eugh, rubbish....

SNAP FADE IN:

EXT. INSIDE CAR ON FREEWAY -- MORNING

Looking out the side window from inside a Silver Japanese sports car, we fly past a red and yellow freeway sculpture as they thrust up into the sky.

Panning round to the front window which is broken by a bright red chinese good luck charm hanging from the mirror, we fly over a series of bridges then back to the side window looking towards the city skyline.

Then passing under a skeleton like roof we come into an open bridge before flying......

Between twin square towers holding the bridge as we pass between them

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR -- MORNING

Cars speed by the passenger window, as a hand opens the glove compartment.

It pulls out a small ledger book.

Drops it on the seat.

It is followed by the hand dropping an old snub nose Chinese automatic on top of the book.

The hand reaches for a black Ipod nano.

Plugs it into a car adapter.
CONT:

Button sounds are heard and hard thumping gangster rap music rips through the car.

FADE UP TEXT: CHRIS PANG

KONG [MANDARIN]
Yeah, that's it.

The car roars harder as he puts his foot to the floor.

Panning up we see KONG (25) is nicely dressed in black pants and jacket and a tight white shirt open at the collar with no tie.

He changes through the gears quickly and the engine revs, shiny clad feet on the clutch and accelerator.

In profile he is confident in dark wraparound glasses. He finishes an energy drink. A few sticky drips from the foam on the outside of the can stick to his fingers as he crushes the can.

Slips the empty can behind his seat without a thought.

He starts drumming out the rap beat on the steering wheel.

Sound moves away from the screen.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. TITLE SEQUENCE -- CONTINUOUS

Ambient silence of a sleeping room on black.

A Chinese block signature fades up. It is colored red through to blue from top to bottom. In Chinese, it reads:

TEXT: Citizen JA IL [CHINESE CHARACTERS & English subtitles]

FADE TITLE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- MORNING 7 AM

A thin shaft of light cuts through a gap in a pair of old cheep curtains spreading light across a darkened living room.

Sounds of waking fill the room as dust swims through the light. Footsteps approach.

A female figure crosses through the light causing eddies in the dust. Opening the curtains the light flares, blinding everything in white with soft yellow edges.

In silhouette, JA LI (22) Chinese, stands looking out of the sunlit window dressed in her plain pajama bottoms and
CONT:
a singlet. Her hair makes her look like a character out of a manga comic.

Ja Li's serious face, which is slowly waking, fills the frame. An uncharacteristic smile fills her serious face, not because of anything she sees but with the thoughts of a new day.

From the centre of the rundown main room of the furnished flat, we watch Ja Li move back from the window. She stops at a portable stereo on top of a shelf, which is made up of two milk crates with a rug dressed over them.

There is an indoor fern on one side and a stack of CD's on the other. She leafs through the pile of CD's and finding the one she wants, she puts it on and carefully returns the empty case back to the top of the stack.

She tidies and straightens the CD's, presses play and walks over to the tiny kitchenette; a bench with a stool and behind it a small sink and stove.

Up beat jazz music (like Jazz Samba by Stan Getz) starts playing. Smiling, her head bobs as she sways to the jazz rhythm, she takes the kettle to fill it up, then plugs it in to boil.

She walks to the open bathroom door and enters closing it.

Behind the door, sounds of clothes hitting the floor and a shower starting are heard.

Slowly panning back to the open window we see the whole flat, everything seems to have a place in its neat and ordered world.

The room is small, the paint faded and marked with a number of picture frames on the walls. The only furniture is a single old easy chair with a rug thrown over it covering its clean yet worn exterior.

Next to the chair is another milk crate which serves as a table. There is a lamp on it with a red lampshade. Next to the lamp is an A4 envelope from the Emigration Department department on top of which is an Australian Citizenship certificate which reads:

Australian Citizenship

JA LI

Panning around the room in close up we scan the picture frames.

Picture 1: An older man and woman in their late 50s, Ja Li (18) and her twin brother HERO [CHANG](18) all standing for their photo.
5. CONT: (2)

Picture: Ja Li receiving a Diploma with her brother in China. Written below in Chinese reads CHANG & JA IL GRADUATION 2002. In felt pen someone has put a line through CHANG and written HERO in Chinese.

Picture 2: The brother, Hero, standing in front of a brand-new Moped.

Diploma 1: A diploma in hairdressing 2004 from Fu Kang Beauty and Hairdressing School [Chinese & English].

Diploma 2: A Bachelor of Business - Business Information Systems 2007 from RMIT University (Aust.)

Poster: A poster of a Melbourne jazz band.

Picture 3: The Melbourne skyline at night.

The kettle starts boiling and then clicks off.

The sounds of the shower stop. We continue to pan on wide, several more plants on up turned green milk crates, coming to the bathroom as Ja Li comes out wrapped in a towel.

Drying her hair with another towel, she goes into the bedroom.

6. INT. JA LI'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Approaching the built-in robe, Ja Li opens the door. All the plain faded clothes are neatly hung and folded.

Turning round to the room, while sounds of dressing are heard, we see an old double bed and dressing table from the 1970s. Along the wall, with bricks as book ends, is a line of text books on business, haircutting and Jazz.

Turn back to Ja Li, dressed in plain faded black pants and a faded floral print blouse that has seen much wear but is clean and neat.

She puts her wet hair up in a towel making it look like a turban.

7. INT. JA LI'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Coming out of the bedroom, she goes to the fridge, takes out a tapin lunch carrier and butter on a plate and puts them on the bench.

She gets out a plate from the cupboard, butter knife from a draw and a jar of vegemite and puts them next to the butter. Takes two pieces of bread from a bag on the bench, puts them in the toaster and pushes them down to toast.
She returns to the bedroom moving gently to the rhythm of the jazz.

CUT TO:

INT. JA IL'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A red hair dryer blows Ja Li's dark hair in waves.

The sound of the toaster popping up causes her to stop drying. The hair settles and is brushed twice by an expensive looking brush.

She puts up her hair with a red hair clip and looks in the mirror forgetting how she looks instantly, she exits. The morning sun falls across the room, reflecting in the dressing table mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

She lifts the toast out of the toaster, spreads butter and vegemite on it and pours a cup of green tea into a glass mug.

She sits on the stool and takes a mole skin diary with a pen clipped to it from beside a vase of flowers. She removes a slightly crumpled Jazz festival flyer acting as a bookmark, lays it aside and makes some notes in Chinese while she eats her toast.

TEXT & SUBTITLES READ:

Futon & linen for Hero

Noodles, Chicken, Onion, Bok Choy, Rice, Tea

$500 to Father and Mother western union

Think about where to get new apartment:

Springvale ?? [crossed out vigorously]

Glen Waverley [circled in pen in a positive manner]

She finishes the toast, rinses and drains the mug, puts it in the sink and walks to the bathroom.

In the distance we see Ja Li cleaning her teeth while the flyer, partly covered by the mole skin, comes into focus.

Text reads:

St Kilda Jazz Festival [the date is obscured by the diary]

In Chinese characters written on it [subtitles]:
CONT:

Text Reads: Hero fly in date??, buy tickets.

Ja returns to the kitchen, picks up a shoulder basket and puts in it her tapin, moleskin diary and a warm cardigan and scarf that are on the bench.

She turns off the CD player and chooses a disk from the stack. She picks up a Diskman and headphones from beside the boom box. She takes out the disk and places it in the Diskman.

Turning and walking back to the kitchen bench she picks up her keys, mobile phone and the basket which already has a faded red folding umbrella in it, walks to the door and slips on her practical black slip on shoes before opening it.

EXT. APARTMENT TO STREET -- MORNING

Ja Li exits and locks the door behind her. She puts her keys and mobile phone into her pockets and the basket under her arm.

Walking down the corridor she stops to read a computer printed sign on the lift doors.

Text reads:

'Out Of Order'

In red felt tip pen someone has added to the text.

Text reads:

AGAIN!!

She nods unsurprisingly and smiling, she takes the stairs. She skips down the three flights and swings out with a bounce from the bottom step and onto.

CUT TO:

EXT. CBD ALLEYWAY -- CONTINUOUS-

The alleyway leading to a main street putting on her headphones, presses play and walks around the corner. Jazz music starts to play.

CUT TO:

EXT. JA LI CBD STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Scene note 1: [This sequence of scenes forms a montage of shots that describe Melbourne through Ja Li's eyes and will start with MONTAGE START and end with MONTAGE END, we see her mind's eye of more locations than her walk to work]
Scene note 2: [The scene starts at the top of the city and ends at Flinders Street Bridge]

Jazz music plays over the faint sounds of the street, the day is bright and sunny, the sort of day that makes one think it is going to be a good one.

A long sidewalk is visible as Ja Li walks along a street. A tram passes. She passes shop owners and early morning business activity.

Her mobile phone rings.

She stops, feeling it vibrate in her pocket. She slips off her headphones and pulls out a 5 year old mobile phone that has seen a lot of life.

Its screen reads 'Hero', flashing gray on the monochrome screen; she presses a button and answers as the Jazz plays faintly in the background mixed in with the sounds of the city.

[Mandarin Starts]

    JA LI
    Hi.

    HERO (O.S.)
    Hi, sis. What's it like there today?

Ja Li looks around the warm summer street, the low sun flares across her vision between two buildings. [N.B. If the weather is otherwise during shoot, dialog will adapt to accommodate]

    JA LI
    Fine this so far, but it's Melbourne; four seasons in one day...so I've learnt to carry an umbrella...
    (she looks around at the weather)
    ...but at the moment it's very nice...How is Mum and...Dad? What is it like there?

    HERO (O.S.)
    Very smoggy, which is not helping dad, he's always tired. Mum's fine, she just worries about him...They send lots of love. I've got good news...I got my visa yesterday.

    JA LI
    Finally. When do you fly here?
Ja Li stops and holds the phone with her chin and shoulder as she gets out her moleskin diary and a pen from the basket.

Ja Li (CONT'D)
What day?... The number of the flight? ... Time?

She finishes writing and puts away the pen and dairy.

Ja Li (CONT'D)
I'll be so glad when you're here.

Hero (O.S.)
I know, I didn't think that would ever happen. So, I'll be there in a few days.

Ja Li
Good. I have a surprise for you when you get here.

Hero (O.S.)
What?

Ja Li
Not till you're here.

Hero (O.S.)
Just a clue?

Ja Li
Ok, it has to do with something we both like?

Hero (O.S.)
That's easy, Jazz.

Ja Li (smiling)
Then you will be able to guess easy, won't you? If not, I'm not going to ruin it for you. You will just have to wait...

She starts walking as she talks. Passing more shop owners opening their shops for the day.

Hero (O.S.)
....Ok I'll wait .....Tell me about Melbourne again then.

Ja Li
You'll be able to see it soon yourself.

Hero (O.S.)
I want to taste it now, to get the smog from here out of my mind.
She crosses the road at a pedestrian crossing.

JA LI

Ok.

MONTAGE START

Walking along with the phone to her ear, Ja Li, in a documentary tour agent voice, describes HER Melbourne.

The city sounds fade away but the Jazz continues to play.

JA LI

Imagine it's a beautiful bright day in greater Melbourne, a typical summer day where families go about their activities...

Hero's laugh emanates from the mobile phone. Ja Li continues walking.

CUT TO:

We see people playing tennis,

INSET FRAME: Close up overlay of tennis players

JA LI (CONT'D)

or rowing down the tree lined banks of the Yarra river......

INSET FRAME: Close up of rowers on the river.

CUT TO:

Sounds of Hero laughing in the background. Wide of Ja Li walking along the tree lined footpath.

JA LI (CONT'D)

(pouting)

Are you laughing at me?

HERO (laughing) (O.S.)

No... Yes... Have you a job as a tour guide you didn't tell me about?

JA LI(laughing)

Not yet... But the way Sarena is treating me at work ugh ...
14 CONT:

HERO (O.S.)
Forget her... Tell me your favorite things again...

CUT TO:

15 EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS -- CONTINUOUS

Starting on the Batman Av Bridge, shots of runners along the Yarra river during a fun run.

JA LI
I love gardens like the Botanicals where there are joggers at all times of the day, running amongst the trees.

Wide open lawn with people picnicking.

JA LI (CONT'D)
And on weekends they are full of people relaxing and enjoying the plants and birds on the lakes...

HERO (O.S.)
Lakes?

JA LI
Ponds, really.

Families walking around the ponds, feeding the birds.

INSET FRAME: Ponds and Birds.

Wide shots of parkland and gardens

INSET FRAME/S: Individuals and small groups relaxing

People alone and individuals walking through the different sections of the gardens.

JA LI (CONT'D)
Dad would love it, he would spend days classifying every type of plant in the collection,

INSET FRAME/S: Close ups of plants and flowers.

JA LI (CONT'D)
While mum feeds the ducks in the ponds; against the rules of course.
15 CONT:
Shots of birds again.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. CBD STREET MONTAGE -- CONTINUOUS
Ja Li still on the phone turns into Swanston Street. The streets start to get busier.

17 EXT. NATIONAL GALLERY -- DAY
From outside, people are entering the national gallery; exhibition banners flutter in the light breeze. People enter, passing the water wall.

JA LI
I will take you all on visits to the art gallery. It has got a wall of water and ceiling of stained glass where we'll lie on the carpet and make pictures, if we look long enough.

People milling about outside the gallery.

JA LI (CONT'D)
And the best thing is, it's free...well, mostly.

CUT TO:

Ja Li still walking to work.

CUT TO:

JA LI (CONT'D)
I'll take mum and dad to the Vic market,

PHOTO MONTAGE: IMAGES OF VICTORIA MARKET STALLS AND SELLERS.[PEOPLE NOT FEATURED] CLOSE UPS OF PRODUCE, CLOTHING, TOYS AND ANIMALS.

JA LI (CONT'D)
Where you can spend all morning from stall to stall and find most anything you need or don't. Any time of the year and then in summer...

CUT TO:

18 EXT. CBD STREET MONTAGE -- CONTINUOUS
Ja Li walks past the Town Hall.
CONT:

JA LI

.....I'll take you all to Moomba and....

CUT TO:

EXT. ST KILDA ROAD AND ARTS PRECINCT -- AFTERNOON

Moomba is in full throw with people filling the streets.

INSET FRAME/S: Of skate borders/carnival rides/Moomba

HERO (O.S.)

...Hang on, what's a Moomba?

INSET FRAME/S: More of Moomba.

JA LI

Sort of a
(thinking)
.....Circus ... a festival, but not just that, um???. ....They have a bird man rally which is very funny

HERO (O.S.)

Bird man......

JA LI

People make planes and jump into the river

HERO O.S.

They what?

JA LI

...it's too hard to explain, you have to see it and you will understand and love it...

CUT TO:

EXT. CASINO SIDE WALK -- NIGHT

JA LI (enthusiastically)

...And then you have to see the Casino at night and fireworks during Moomba.

Flames shoot up illuminating the casino sidewalk.

INSET FRAME/S: Multiple explosions from the Casino flames.

Fireworks explode covering the sky again and again. People are watching.

JA LI (CONT'D)

There is just so much to do and see and it's really nice.
CONT:

Boats move along the Yarra River at night.

INSET FRAME/S: Multiple shots of the ferris wheel and people watching the carnival.

A large ferris wheel turns round, all lit up with green and red lights that make streaks as it turns.

CUT TO:

EXT. FEDERATION SQUARE -- AFTERNOON

Below the large video screen is a bandstand where people are gathered to listen to the free music. People enjoying the day in smiling groups.

JA LI
And on the weekend, I'll take you all to Federation square and Lygon street and Chinatown, there is always something to do.....

Families and groups of people talking, passing by, milling in the public space, eating meals, drinking with friends.

MONTAGE END

EXT. ST KILDA STREET BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

Ja Li walks into view of South Bank and the Yarra from the bridge, she stops in the middle.

HERO (laughing) (O.S.)
I can't wait ...um??

JA LI
What?

HERO (laughing) (O.S.)
What's Moomba about again?

JA LI (laughing with Hero)
You'll have to see it, OK...

Ja Li's expression becomes serious, strained. She misses Hero.

HERO (O.S.)

...Ok.....

(serious)
Is it going to be hard to get a job? I want one soon...

JA LI
Don't worry. I have some money for you when you get here and there are lots of jobs. ...It will be ok...
22 CONT:

HERO (O.S.)
I know ...I just don't want mum and dad to be on their own too long.

JA LI
I know. ... I want us all to be together here so much,
(sniffs back a tear)
...It's a good place ... to make home...

Ja Li gets choked up, she smiles, tears forming in her eyes.

Beat

HERO (O.S.)
I miss you too...

JA LI (choked up)
...I have to go.

[Mandarin Ends]

She pushes end on her phone. She sniffs and dries her eyes.

Looking out over the Yarra, we follow her view as she smiles a hopeful smile upon her city. Putting her head phones back on, the music lifts in volume as she walks off to work.

SNAP FADE TO BLACK:

23 EXT. OUTSIDE HAIR SALON -- MORNING 8:30 AM

Fingers type Japanese words in a text across a mobile phone screen. Angry girl pop a Japanese version of Avril Lavigne filters through the air.

The text is addressed to Mr. Takashi Wantabe:


The text finishes, then adds the brackets and nick name, Daisy.

The fingers hesitating over the send button.

The sound of feet approaching causes DAISY (19) to looks up as Ja Li comes into view. Dasiy leans against the salon door, one foot swinging and head bopping to a pair of large headphones that make her look like Princess Leia from Star Wars.
Daisy looks like a displaced Harajuku Girl, which is just what she is. She wears a school uniform complete with short pleated tartan skirt and blazer, her hair in pigtails and socks to the knees that come out of big black shoes all finished off with a miniature version of a school bag.

Smiling to see Ja Li, she presses the send button on her phone and looks down at it, surprised. She pauses, thinking. She shrugs, puts the phone in her pocket and gets out an electronic translator from her school bag.

She types into the translator as Ja Li gets out her keys.

**JA LI**

Hello, Daisy ... How are you this morning?

Daisy looks up, then back down at her translator, types a message on it and hands it to Ja Li who is finding the right key.

Ja Li takes the communicator and reads the message.

**Text Reads:**

I am very well, have you had a good work journey this morning :) May I leave at 3 pm today?

Ja Li smiles handing back the communicator. She puts the key in the lock and turns it.

**JA LI (CONT'D)**

Yes, it was very nice. And yes, you can leave at three but you...you know you don't have to ask anymore. We all know you leave at 3.

**DAISY [JAPANESE]**(bowing her head)

Hai, Ja Li San.

She opens up the salon, shaking her head at Daisy's formality and enters the shop followed by an eager bouncing Daisy.

Panning around there are a few piles of hair left under chairs from the end of the previous day.

**JA LI (O.S.)**

That Sally is a pig, look at this mess. Can you do a quick sweep up, Daisy?

**DAISY [JAPANESE]**

Hai.
INT. HAIR SALON -- CONTINUOUS

JA LI

Thanks.

The salon is narrow, neat and white. Mirrors with posters of amazing and bizarre Asian hair cuts on both Asians and blonde hair models.

Ja Li enters, walks to the counter and puts her basket down behind it. She takes out her moleskin dairy, spins round the day diary, which opens to Monday, and makes several notes in her diary of times and clients.

She takes out a tool roll of hair dressing tools and walks over towards a cutting bench, putting the diary behind a hair dryer and unrolling her tool roll.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. HAIR SALON -- LATER

There are two clients this early. One is being washed by an apprentice, Sally (19) Anglo Saxon, who is in simple black pants and top. The other, MS JENNY CHAN (40) dressed in late nineties power business suit, is sitting before Ja Li who is going over her hair with a comb.

Daisy comes up and puts a cup of jasmine tea in front of Ms Chan.

MS CHAN (SMILES AT DASIY)

Thank You.

DAISY [JAPANESE]

Hai.

(bobs in acknowledgement, walks off)

There is a VOGUE magazine in front of Ms Chan, but her attention is on Ja Li in the mirror.

JA LI [MANDARIN]

What would you like today, Jenny?

MS CHAN [MANDARIN]

Can you take ten years off?

JA LI [MANDARIN]

I'll try, but you'll need a new suit.

MS CHAN

Ouch!

(looks at Ja Li in mirror)

Since when were you up on fashion?
Ja Li cocks her head to one side, shrugs and starts brushing Ms Chan's hair. Ms Chan sips her tea.

Beat.

**MS CHAN [MANDARIN]**
So, 'Citizen Ja Li' what does it feel like?

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**
Good, like now I belong here...like everything starts now.

Ms Chan smiles nodding. Ja Li straightens Ms Chan's head back and starts cutting.

**MS CHAN [MANDARIN]**
That's just how I felt when I arrived in eighty-nine. It's a good place to be, to live and start again.

Ja Li nods in agreement.

**MS CHAN [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)**
Your family will come too?

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**
Yes. My brother any day and when he gets a job and we have a house, our parents.

Ms Chan looks at Ja Li with a sad smile.

**MS CHAN [MANDARIN]**
Good.
(approvingly)

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**
Your family are still in China?

**MS CHAN [MANDARIN]**
Only distant cousins, aunts, uncles, the rest...gone (painful memories move across her face)
...I have my work ... Australia has been very good to me in that way.
(reaches for her purse)
When you are looking for a new house (pulls out and passes a business card to Ja Li)
Call me...
Ja Li takes the business card it, one side in Chinese and the other...

TEXT READS: Jenny Chan real-estate sales and rentals. Suite 14 Level 4 68 Lonsdale st Melbourne 3000 Ph +61 (0)3 9??? ??? Fax +61 (0)3 9??? ??? Cell + (0)407 665 132 Email jchan@jcreal.com.au

MS CHAN [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
...When I first came to Australia, our people helped me. Now, I can do the same for you.

Ja Li puts it in her back pocket.

JA LI [MANDARIN]
Thank you. It is hard to get anything at the moment, this will help.

From Ms Chan and Ja Li's POV we see SERENA KENT (35) enter with a crash of the door. She is wearing tight black pants and top and black hand bag to match. She has a down turned mouth, which is her default setting as she surveys the salon.

SERENA
Daisy, get me a coffee... then, maybe I'll feel normal.

Screwing her mouth up like she has tasted something bad, Ms Chan looks at Ja Li in the mirror.

MS CHAN [MANDARIN]
Is that possible?

Ja Li smiles at the joke, choking back a laugh.

Daisy runs over to the coffee machine starts to make the requested coffee.

MS CHAN [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
She has a way of making the room taste bitter.

JA LI [MANDARIN]
She pays the bills? ...I need that.

Ms Chan nods in the mirror in understanding of Ja Li's point, [From the mirrors POV] but looking back at Ja Li, she shakes her head.

MS CHAN [MANDARIN]
I pay your bills and I wouldn't be here if you were not cutting my hair.
25 CONT: (3)

JA LI [MANDARIN]
Thank you.

CUT TO:

In a two shot in the background, Daisy hands the coffee to Serena who sips it and screws up her face.

SERENA
Ugh!....What's this?
(accusing disgusted face at Daisy)
...Is that the best you can do?

Daisy reluctantly takes the cup that Serena holds out to her and turns back to the machine to make another. With her hands on her hips, Serena surveys her domain as Ms Chan and Ja Li watch on in the mirror.

CUT TO:

26 INT. HAIR SALON -- LATER

Daisy is stacking hair product on a display. Ja Li takes an apron off a smiling Client 1(30) tall, blond and sexy. She turns this way and that looking at herself in the mirror.

CLIENT 1
I love it.
(puts a one hundred dollar note on the bench)
The change is for you.

Client 1 air kisses Ja Li. At the till, Serena is watching and listening with a jealous look on her face in the background.

CLIENT 1 (CONT'D)
I have to run. Thanks lots.

She picks up her bag and exits, waves to Ja Li and just acknowledges Serena at the till. Daisy starts sweeping up the blond hairs.

Ja Li takes the hundred to Serena who puts it into the till. Ja Li says nothing when there is no change, her face tells us this is normal with a frown.

SERENA
We need to talk about you wanting to be on the books.

The till remains open in front of Serena.

JA LI (smiling)
Good. What do you need from me?
My tax number?
SERENA
Actually, ..I'm not going to. It doesn't work for me. It's a hassle...

JA LI
But I need to be able to show I have a job and you said...

SERENA
...and Sally's sister is happy to be off the books so, ..I'm letting you go.

The color drains from Ja Li's face, she is shocked. She looks around and notices Sally cleaning the benches, smirking.

In the background Daisy is sweeping slowly without her headphones on, frowning.

JA LI
But, my brother is coming...here... I need my job...

SERENA
Should have thought of that earlier, darl.
(shrugs)
I don't need the hassle...

Serena holds out her hand.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Keys.

Ja Li takes the keys out of her pocket and hands them over, she bites her lip.

JA LI
Can I have my money for last week?

SERENA (shakes her head)
What money?.....

Sarena drops the keys in the till and closes it.

SERENA (shakes her head) (CONT'D)
.....You never worked here...Bye.

JA LI (upset and stunned)
(Quietly)
...Oh?

She returns to her cutting bench and packs her scissors, combs and accessories, rolling them up in tool roll.
Daisy watches in the background.
She puts them in her basket, takes a long look around and starts to leave.

She makes eye contact with Daisy; seeing her confused expression, Ja Li gives a vague wave and walks out the door, still stunned.

Sarena smiles smugly to herself as she goes through the day book.

Daisy gets out her translator, types furiously and hands it to Serena. Serena reads the text:

**Text Reads: Where has Ja Li San gone?**

Serena looks at Daisy and closes the translator with one finger as if it were dirty and holds it out with disdain in two fingers.

**SERENA**
Somewhere you will be going if you don't mind your own business.

Daisy frowns and puts her hand on her hip. Serena looks at her watch.

**SERENA (CONT'D)**
Don't you have to be somewhere?

Daisy nods angrily.

**SERENA (CONT'D)**
Then, go. (Waves her off, and walks over to Sally)
Tell your sister she starts tomorrow... eight thirty sharp, ok?
(To Daisy)
You be here then too.

Daisy picks up her mini school bag, takes off her headphones and packs them in her bag. Looking at Serena seriously, she nods in a short angry manner.

**DAISY**
Hai.

She picks up her bag looking from Sally to Serena who she nods to as she exits. Serena turns back to Sally.

**SARENA**
There are others who will take the job if she doesn't work out, tell her that.
Turning to Ja Li's cutting bench, she notices the moleskin diary and picks it up.

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- AFTERNOON

BILL (35) and BEN (28) both in street wear, are struggling with an enormous ugly reclining chair, trying to get it through the door of the Lift/Stairwell. Behind, in the corridor are packing boxes outside an open door.

Ben pulls the wrong way and the chair opens up causing Bill to drop his end, filling the corridor.

BILL
   Ugh, damn it ...(hands in the air) I don't even like this piece of crap.

BEN
   I'll have it...

Bill looks incredulously at Ben as Ja Li enters the corridor. He turns to Ja Li.

BILL (smiling)
   Sorry, Miss Li. Here...

Bill lifts the chair aside, Ja Li slides past.

JA LI
   Thanks...

She notices the boxes, turns back to Bill indicating the boxes, she frowns.

JA LI (CONT'D)
   ...you are moving?

BILL
   Evicted ...making way for a redevelopment of my flat into a contemporary up scale life style abode. (shakes his head) That's what the bloody brochure says anyway.

BEN (realisation)
   That's why the creep wouldn't renew our lease...Damn...

BILL (laughs)
   I'm making way for a bunch of metros and their bimbos... (Realisation)...that rhymes...

Ja Li walks off confused. Ben looks at Bill, then at the chair.
CONT:

BEN
Can I have it?

BILL
My sister doesn't come with the chair.

BEN
(thinks to himself)
We'll see...

Ja Li stops at her door, inserts her key and pushes the door open. She finds a yellow envelope on the floor in front of her. She picks it up and turns it over, pushing the door closed with her free hand.

BILL (O.S.)
Don't even start thinking...

The front of the envelope reads in hand writing:

**Text Reads: 'Miss Li apartment 35'**

She opens the letter as she steps in. At the top of the letter it reads in large red type:

'*Eviction Notice'*

The door clicks shut...

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Montage scene: Ja Li sits on the floor with several newspapers, she circles and crosses out a series of apartments. This is interspersed with her walking around her apartment while ringing up for apartments.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Ja Li's mobile lies on the newspaper on the kitchenette bench, with rooms for rent circled in blue biro and then crossed out in red biro. We pan over to the lounge. Sunlight casts long shadows through milk crates packed with stuff.

The sound of a broken air conditioner underlies bumps and scraping accompanied by footsteps. Ja Li enters carrying a crate full of books and pictures.

She is in the same pants but different shirt. The apartment is stripped bare. Everything except the photos on the wall of the lounge is packed into milk crates, two old suitcases and a Hong Kong shopper.

She puts down the last crate, turns to the frame wall and starts taking them down. She squats down to pack her framed photos and degrees in the crate along with a shoe-box.
Lifting the lid off the shoe box, revealing loose photos, she sits down crossing her legs. She places the box on her lap and looks through the photos.

Image A: her and Hero at age 5 with Hero in a pull cart behind her.

Image B: her and Hero at age 12 in their father's shop.

Image C: her and Hero on their bikes at age 16

Image D: Her and Kong on St Kilda Street Bridge in a smiling embrace.

She puts it face down back into the box with the other photos and finishes packing the rest. Looking around at the empty space, marks where the pictures were are all that she has left, making it dingier than ever.

She looks at the newspaper on the bench and bites her lip.

Takes up her mobile phone, scrolls through the names stopping at KONG. Pushes the call button, it starts to connect, she pushes the cancel button before it rings.

Dropping it into the chair, which is the only thing left of the room unpacked, she walks to the window and looks out.

Confusion, dull fear, pained anger and resignation pass over her face as she stares out into the world beyond. She looks down back into the room...thinking ...looks out again ...then without thinking turns back in.

We hear the sound of Ja Li dialing and then her phone ringing can be heard.

KONG [MANDARIN] (O.S.)
What?

JA LI [MANDARIN]
Can I see you?

KONG [MANDARIN] (O.S.)
After two months... Why?

JA LI [MANDARIN]
I want to talk...about...

KONG [MANDARIN] (O.S.)
Us...

JA LI [MANDARIN]
..Us? ..um ..no.. I need to see you...
Ja Li's phone beeps with the disconnection. She comes back to the window, a pained expression on her face.

The phone still beeping, she finally ends her side of the call, zombie like. She remains staring at the phone for a long moment. Snapping out of it, she puts her phone away and goes to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

In the mirror she checks her teeth, brushes her hair and puts lipstick on. Picks up her cardigan and keys and leaves the apartment, locking the door.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

A couple walk past Ja Li, their heads together, looking over their eviction notice, neither are happy.

Ja Li locks the door, turns and walks to the elevator where she watches Bill and Ben trying to get a couch into the elevator.

She frowns while they maneuver it this way and that.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Kong's car pulls up. Kong is accompanied by KEVIN (23) Chinese extraction dressed in gangster rapper clothes, contrasting Kong's slicker black pants and jacket with an open white shirt.

Kong parks in the alleyway; with a rumble, the engine shuts off. The rear exit door to Ja Li's apartment building is held open by a brick.

Kong opens his door, pulls out a small cashbook from the door pocket, turns to Kevin, holding out his hand.

KONG [MANDARIN]
I'll do the count now.

KEVIN [MANDARIN]
(A little surprised)
...Yeah, sure...
Pulls out a thick bundle of yellow pay envelopes held together by a rubber band; they each have a symbol and a number on them. He hands it to Kong with thought and looks at their surroundings.

KEVIN
Why are we here?

Kong yanks off the rubber band. Opening the first envelope, he counts through $20 dollar bills silently till he gets to 25.

KONG
Waiting for Ja Li.
(Looks at Kevin, then at the money)
...Shut up and let me count.

Finishing the first packet, he makes a note in Chinese in the book. He starts on the next one.

KEVIN
I thought she dumped you?

Kong looks up narrowly at Kevin who holds up his hands.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Only joking ...really, I mean it...you can do a lot better...
you're a handler, an accountant.

Kong ignores Kevin, but stiffens his actions more precise, more dangerous.

Kong finishes another packet, notes it, keeps on with his task, seriously methodical.

Kevin gets out of the car and stretches his legs. Comes round to Kong's side. Kong has his feet on the road while sitting in the car. Kevin watches Kong nervously, starts tapping his leg unthinkingly and looks away from Kong.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
How did you do it?

KONG (distracted)
What?

KEVIN
How did you move up so fast? I mean, you've got your own turf. ...how did you do it so quick? ...Could you teach me?

Kong stops a finger between bills, makes a note keeping his place, looks up to Kevin.

KONG
I don't think you're up for it.
Kong finishes the count on that packet, puts the rubber band around the uncounted ones, putting them on the dash.

He takes an energy drink from the door pocket, holds its cold surface to his cheek and then opens it. Takes a sip and finishes it, looking off in a considering way, thinking of the past.

**KONG (CONT'D)**

I used to collect security payments....the boss called me in one day...he said 'Kong you're short'.

Kevin nods uncomfortably.

**KONG (CONT'D)**

Short $500.......gave it to him.

Kong looks sideways to where Kevin is shuffling his feet.

**KONG (CONT'D)**

He said to me it would never happen again. I agreed.

**KEVIN**

So, you didn't skim again?

Kong glances narrowly at Kevin.

**KONG**

From that day, I recorded everything I collected, and after my accountant tallied when I delivered to the boss...

Kevin is scratching his neck but can't get the itch out of his system. He starts to sweat.

**KONG (CONT'D)**

...every time it was short, I took it out of my own pocket, my books always tallied...until one day, the books were $1000 short

**KEVIN [MANDARIN]**

What happened?

**KONG [MANDARIN]**

My account found he couldn't walk anymore ... I got a promotion...

Kong stands up in a fluid move, turning towards Kevin who flinches but has nowhere to go, being against the car.

**KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)**

No...you're not up for it.
Kong turns away, stretches and reaches into the car for his book, pen and the uncounted packets. Uncomfortable, Kevin pushes himself off the car...

KEVIN [MANDARIN] (Changes the subject)
Where is this FOB girl [Fresh Off the Boat] of yours? I don't get why you bother with one like her...

Kong looks at Kevin, his patience is running out.

CUT TO:

Bill and Ben have the lift door open with a couch outside. Bill is measuring the lift with a tape, while the other has a hand over the sensor.

BILL
By the way, Jane said she wants the chair.

BEN
How about joint custody?

BILL
...not my problem anymore, is it? (looking at the couch again)
This ain't going to fit....

BEN
But, I remember bringing it up in the lift?

Ja Li, arms folded and foot tapping, waits.

BILL
In your dreams. (Looking at the bottom of the couch)
Ok ...I believe you, only... it came up...in a box, you idiot.

Ben looks confused until Bill shows him the IKEA sticker on the bottom.

BILL (CONT'D)
...IKEA...
Ja Li watches frustrated by them blocking the lift, not willing to wait longer she spins on her heel and starts down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

Watching her from above she gets smaller and smaller as she makes her way down, her feet drumming out a rhythmical tap, tap, skip, tap, tap, skip, tap, tap, skip.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. BOTTOM STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

As she comes off the final flight to where the exit door is propped open by an old brick. She hears Kong and Kevin's voice drift up to meet her with a hot breeze from outside.

KONG [MANDARIN] (statement like tone)
Ja Li...

She cocks her head at hearing her name, stepping out of the stairwell she pauses, hidden by the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Out of focus in the background of the frame, Kong pushes away from leaning on the car facing Kevin.

KONG [MANDARIN] (Statement)
...is mine...

In focus, Ja Li pokes her head around the corner of the door with her back to it, sees them, then turns away back against the open door. She listens.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
...mine till I say otherwise...

KEVIN [MANDARIN]
...Must be a good screw...

KONG [MANDARIN]
...not everything is about sex & money...other things such as...obligation...honor...

KEVIN [MANDARIN]
(Laughs)
Yeah, right.

Kong looks at Kevin as if to say 'you idiot'.
31.

CONT:

KONG
How long have you been here?

Kevin looks at his watch. Kong disbelief.

KONG (CONT'D)
In Australia.

KEVIN
..um?... One
  (thinking)
Two months or so...why?

KONG [MANDARIN]
You want to progress in the business?

Kevin nods.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
(Pointedly)
Obligation...honor are everything
to the boss, to family...to me.

Kevin holds his hands up.

KEVIN [MANDARIN]
Whatever ... she's still a two
dollar FOB screw...

Tears run down Ja Li's face.

KONG
You miss the point, she's mine,
...I say when it's over...

Ja Li turns round and steps out. Kevin straitens up as if
to run at the movement, Kong turns at his action. Seeing
Ja Li, he pauses then walks over to her.

KONG (to Kevin) (CONT'D)
Wait here.

Kevin relaxes.

Ja Li's nose has run along with her eyes, she sniffs self-
consciously and runs an arm across her tears, she is upset
and angry, standing defensively, feet a little apart,
head turned away to deal with her tears.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Well, I'm here. What do you want?

Ja Li turns to him with a deep frown, he frowns back
angrily.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
You've made me look like a fool.
(MORE)
KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
...The amount of shit I've had to deal with from everyone!...For what..

Kong waves his hand indicating to the world in general

KONG
...because you want more...

Ja Li can't believe what she is hearing. With a hurt expression she looks down at her feet. Kong takes half a step closer almost reaches out to touch her but does not.

Beat

KONG [MANDARIN]
You want to talk about us...

Her pained gaze flicks up to his face for a moment. Her balance moves towards him, he starts to reach out for her.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)

(softener)
...I'm here

She steps away looking along the graffiti covered walls of the alleyway.

KONG (Raising his voice)
Well....what.?

Ja Li's gaze flicks to the trash overflowing and littering the alleyway.

KONG [MANDARIN]
...Nothing...

She looks directly at Kong, furious tears streaming down her face, his hands wave about in the air in frustration.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
What do you WANT?

Ja Li's face narrows in pained fury.

She spins on her heel.

Runs for the door.

Kicks out the brick.

She passes inside.

The door closing behind her.

Kong starts after her.
36 CONT: (3)

The door slams in his face.
Kong hits the closed fire exit with his fist repeatedly.

KONG [MANDARIN] ...
COME BACK HERE....

CUT TO:

37 INT. BOTTOM STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

The fire exit door vibrates with the sound of Kong's blows.

KONG [MANDARIN]
...YOU BITCH!
(muffled)

Ja Li sits on the stairs crying, rubbing her foot. She flinches at the brick striking and shaking the door.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
GET OUT HERE, NOW!

Holding herself by the shoulders, she stands back watching the door shivering with each blow to the door.

The sounds die down, less punches and kicks on the door.

She turns and limps startling up the stairs, this time her footsteps sound sad.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. ALLEYWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Kong, furious, turns and walks back to the car.

Kevin stands in front of Kong's door, smirking to himself.

Kong walks up to him, furious.

KEVIN [MANDARIN]
You sure told her...

Kong's right elbow smashes into the left side of Kevin's face, the sound of crunching bone and flesh is heard going through Kevin's head.

He screams as he hits the bitumen hard.

Kong steps back.

Swings his left foot hard.

Kevin screams again.

Holding his groin.

He rolls around in agony.
Kong steps over him into his car, closes his door, we hear Kevin gasping for air and moaning.

Kong starts his car.

Kevin half rolls, half drags himself out of the way.

The car speeds out of the alleyway leaving Kevin's writhing form in the empty alleyway.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. OUTSIDE JA LI'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Daisy is knocking on Ja Li's door dressed as the 'Sid Vicious' version of a punk Garbage collector in t-shirt and overalls, all bright colors.

Ja Li, eyes red and a bit puffy, pauses at the sight of her, sighs and continues on to the door.

JA LI
Daisy...why are you here?

Daisy takes out her translator and types a reply, handing it to Ja Li with a short bow.

TEXT: I wish work with you. Please.

She hands the translator back and starts to open the door to her apartment.

JA LI (CONT'D)
You can't work with me, I've lost my job...
(gestures at Daisy)
you were there.

Ja Li opens the door to reveal all the milk crates. She turns to Daisy.

JA LI (CONT'D)
I don't even a have a home after today.
(Pleading)
You have to go...

Daisy looks in the door, then walks right into the room, leaving Ja Li at the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Daisy looks around the sad apartment, it's sadder now that most things are packed into milk crates. Ja Li goes to the bench looking for something.
Daisy takes her translator, types away and holds it out to Ja Li who turns around only when she feels Daisy's touch on her shoulder. She reads:

**TEXT: Where your new home?**

JA LI (sniffs)  
I haven't got one...  
(Indicates the newspaper housing section)  
...that's the problem.

Ja Li turns away stifling tears, wiping her nose and composing herself.

Sounds of typing, finishing Daisy coughs politely as Ja Li searches a box. Daisy touches Ja Li's shoulder to get her attention, Ja Li reads:

**TEXT: Stay with me :)**

Ja Li looks at Daisy, frowns and shakes her head hands back the translator and taking the card she has found in the box idles her mobile.

JA LI (CONT'D)  
No...I'll find something, I have to make a call...  
(she presses call)  
Make yourself a drink.

It rings. Daisy goes to the Kitchen, searches and makes a glass of water because that's all there is left.

JA LI (CONT'D)  
Hello, Ms Chan....Jenney? It's Ja Li...from the salon.  

(Changes to Mandarin)  
Yes, I'm looking for new place flat. Would I be able to see you today?  
(Listens)  
Oh...ok...  
(Looks at Daisy, frowns, then turns away to the window)  
Tomorrow... 9... thank you.  
(ends Mandarin)

She ends the call, Daisy walks up to her and hands her a glass of water. She takes it without thinking and drains it.

She looks at Daisy, thinks, hands the glass back to Daisy.
CONT: (2)

JA LI
Ok...yes...I'll stay with you if it's ok...

Daisy smiles, nods and walks over to a milk crate and picks it up and starts towards the door, stops at the front door and looks for Ja Li to follow.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE JA LI'S APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

Scene Note: [The following two scenes are filmed from the handy cam POV by Daisy & Ja Li, the look is lower quality and more frenetic]

From the POV of Daisy's video camera, Ja Li packs the last bag into the taxi watched on by an unimpressed Indian/Sheik taxi driver(30).

Ja Li gets in the back left hand seat, the other side full of her milk crates and bags, and closes the door.

The camera makes its way to the taxi as Daisy gets in the front seat.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI -- AFTERNOON

The background is filled with Hindi music as the unimpressed taxi moves off. From the passenger seat we see the Sikh taxi driver in his turban and all his paraphernalia from wooden massaging ball seat cover to dashboard idol.

The camera then turns around to see Ja Li in the back, squashed in among her belongings.

Cutting to out the window, watching people as we pass by the cityscape. A montage of different window views from the taxi proceeds.

Daisy passes the Handycam to Ja Li.

Inter-cutting between Daisy and Ja Li using the camera we see Daisy and the Taxi driver's heads bobbing to the music. The Taxi driver is laughing along with Daisy.

Ja Li points the camera out the window as we pull up to the enormous and modern building in which Daisy lives.

Scene Note: Acquire the following for the next scene[The taxi driving off revealing Ja Li standing in front of the
CONT:

tall building in the center of the frame, we pan up to the top of the building revealing the sky.]

CUT TO:

INT. DAISY'S LOUNGE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Video projection image of the Taxi driving off, revealing Ja Li standing in front of the tall building in the center of the frame, we pan up to the top of the building revealing the sky.

The image freeze frames.

Daisy turns on the lights and turns off the video projector, ending its spraying the images of their journey all over the wall of her apartment.

Ja Li smiles briefly and gets up from the couch, looking around the apartment which has an expensive zen like cleanliness about it.

Her milk crates and bags look like an expensive piece of sculpture in a modern gallery piled to one side.

JA LI (pointing at her bags) Where should I put all this?

Daisy is packing up the Handycam, video cables and projector.

She looks up, shakes her head and waves off Ja Li's concerns indicating that she will be a moment and skips off with the projector and camera to the bedroom.

Ja Li looks around the apartment, runs her hand along the large, brown, suede sofa and looks out the window to the view of the city.

Turning back in, she sees books on a coffee table at the end of a suede couch, mostly big glossy coffee table books to do with fashion, and rock and roll and one titled 'Advanced Spoken English.' Ja Li picks this up, it opens to a page book marked with a class timetable, it is a time table for english classes which start at 3.30 pm each day.

Sounds come from the bedroom. She closes it quickly and puts it back as Daisy exits the bedroom typing on her translator, Ja Li walks back to her boxes meeting Daisy, who has changed and hands her the translator which reads:

TEXT: Come I will show you favorite place mine :)
Daisy is ready at the door. Ja Li follows putting the translator on the kitchen bench on the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAISY'S ROOFTOP -- EVENING

Scene Note: [Daisy's English is clear but embarrassed and lacks perfect grammar and confidence of her usual enthusiastic countenance.]

The sun is a few minutes from setting as Daisy leads Ja Li out on the roof. Melbourne stretches on for many miles in the hot summer evening.

From a low angle we see Daisy lets out a long sigh and points to the skyline in a sweeping arch which becomes a stationary spin into which she spreads her arms out, head back as the world spins around her.

For a moment we see the world form her perspective, glimpses of the nearby buildings cloud the setting sun.

Daisy slowly comes to a rest, laughing, dizzy and joylessly she stumbles falling onto her but.

Ja Li has the start of a small smile on her face as she helps a laughing Daisy up. Standing, they watch the sunset.

JA LI
Daisy...can you speak English?

DAISY [JAPANESE]
Hai.

JA LI (Confused)
Then, why don't you?

DAISY [ENGLISH]
My english must be very good before I use...

Ja Li raises her eyebrows in surprise as if to say 'is it going to get any better?'

DAISY [ENGLISH] (CONT'D)
...Father says that in business you must perfect a skill before using it.
(Pauses)
I cannot do less then he expects.

JA LI
You want to be in business?

DAISY
No, he wants... me to be...
(MORE)
...I want be rock singer.

Ja Li shakes her head in confusion and sits down on a cooling vent.

JA LI
A rock singer?

DAISY (Nodding)
Yes, but we agreed that I should learn English first...
(Shrugs, cocks her head)
And think about it...I maybe will work in the music...business.
(Smiles like it's the first time she had this thought)
You like to eat?

Ja Li, suddenly hungry at the mention of food, nods.

JA LI
Please.

Taking out a mobile phone, Daisy dials.

DAISY
Chinese ok, Ja Li San?

Ja Li nods looking out into the city, lights are starting to turn on, a warm breeze moves through the bushes on the roof bringing with it sounds of the city night.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAISY'S ROOFTOP -- LATER NIGHT

DAISY (Curious & shy)
What do you want?

Ja Li looks up from her Chinese food in its folding box, chopsticks poised for another mouthful, confused.

DAISY (CONT'D)
...your dream?
(Points to herself)
I want to play rock music...
(Shy)
...and father to be proud...
that's why I came here, to show
that I can be responsible...
(Smiles for acceptance)
...what you want?
Ja Li eats, chews a mouthful, thinking.

JA LI
My family to be happy...in China we don't have much, ...everyone has to work hard to survive...
(Thinking)
here it is a better life for my parents... when they come
(thinks)
I want them to be happy here.

DAISY
You have mother?

Ja Li nods.

DAISY (CONT'D)
What is she like?

Ja Li finishes her food, leaving the chopsticks in the box on the ground.

JA LI
She is strong and loving and keeps us together. She teaches piano to rich people's children.

DAISY
I would like a mother...Fathers only work...
(Thinking)
...You want no more than this...

JA LI
(Thinking)
I don't have time to want more.

Daisy looks at her meal. Finished, she folds the packet and puts it in the plastic shopping bag at her feet. She stands up and looks at Ja Li.

DAISY
A good thing to want for your family... but...I think this is not much for you.

She reaches out for Ja Li's container, Ja Li looks at her considering what she said. Picks up her container passing it to Daisy. Getting up she looks out into the city, in the background Daisy finishes cleaning up from their meal.

JA LI
What happened to your mother?

Beat

DAISY
...She die when I come..
45 CONT: (2)

JA LI
Sorry...

DAISY
Hai..(Small bow, sniffs)...We go in now?

JA LI
I'll be down soon.

Daisy smiles, nods, then exits with the Chinese food rubbish.

The sounds of the city fill the night, as Ja Li looks out thinking into a light filled cityscape. We pan down to the city streets below.

CUT TO:

46 EXT. CHINATOWN ALLEYWAY -- CONTINUOUS

City buildings reach high above the dirty Chinatown alleyway with dumpsters lining one wall. Tilting down, we come to rest on Kong's car as it stops in the alleyway where a man is waiting.

Zooming in, we focus on the driver's door opening, he pulls something out of the car while another man watches the alley entrance.

Kong straightens his body and hands a black sports bag to ANDREW (30) who is dressed in a black suit, no tie after a long day.

ANDREW [MANDARIN]
Everything is here?
(Unzips the bag on the bonnet of the car)

The bag is filled with manila folders full of paper and three used foolscap ledger books.

KONG [MANDARIN] (Nods)
I torched the rest.
(Kong watches the alleyway entrance)

ANDREW [MANDARIN]
Good, we can all sleep easy...
(Goes through the papers, glances at Kong)
You look like you need some.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Later ...I have a pick up tonight.
CONT:

Andrew zips up the bag, lifts it off the bonnet, looks at Kong.

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    I need the piece.

    KONG [MANDARIN]
    It's at home...I'll get it to you.

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    Ok...
    (Thinks)
    I need to tell you...

    KONG [MANDARIN]
    What?

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    You shouldn't have sorted Kevin that way.

    KONG [MANDARIN]
    He was skimming.
    (Angry)

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    You can't hospitalise every newbie who skims fifty bucks, especially family...
    (Sighs)
    ...Even distant family...nobody likes it.

    KONG [MANDARIN]
    He won't do it again.
    (Shaking his head)

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    Just make sure you are with the program...
    (Pointing)

    KONG [MANDARIN]
    (Directly) - Meaning?
    What you're saying is, there's a problem with how I do my job...

    (his right hand moves to his back)
    ...Is that it?

Andrew runs his hand through his hair, frustrated and tired.

    ANDREW [MANDARIN]
    (Calming down)
    Just remember to be careful...
    (MORE)
ANDREW [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)

(beat)
Look, have dinner with us... Ellen is always saying she hasn't seen her little brother to annoy in ages...

(Genuine)
...she's waiting for me now...come.

Kong looks away, he relaxes a little, his hand moves away from his back, looking back to Andrew.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Not tonight...say hi and I'll do dinner soon.

ANDREW [MANDARIN]
Ok...
(Gives Kong's shoulder a familial squeeze)
...you stay cool, man.

Kong nods, Andrew shifts the bag in his hand and walks off, Kong watches till he is out of sight.

Kong steps over to his car, opens the door and pulls the chinese automatic out of the back of his pants and looks at it, his hand shakes like it weighs a lot.

He gets in the car and puts it in the map pocket in his door and closes the door. Starting the car, he lets it run for a moment then, putting it into gear, rumbles off into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. DAISY'S LOUNGE ROOM -- NIGHT

Daisy's phone screen types in Japanese characters, the text is addressed to Mr. Takashi Wantabe:

Text Reads: Father. Why don't you reply :-( I want to know about my family...Who my mother was. Please. Daisy :

Fits sheets to the couch and looks up hearing the sound of the front door closing. Ja Li walks up to her.

JA LI
Can I help?

Daisy shakes her head, putting a pillow in its place.

Ja Li goes over to the milk crates. Her basket is on top and she goes through it, searching.
JA LI (CONT'D)
Daisy...have you seen my diary?

Daisy from the couch looks up, shakes her head.

DAISY
You had at salon, yes?

She knocks a shoe box of photos and it is unbalanced and falls, spreading its photos out on the floor.

Ja Li bends down and starts to gather them up.

JA LI
Yes, it must be there.

Daisy, finished with the bed, comes over and helps pick up the photos. She picks up a picture of Hero/CHANG and Ja Li hugging and smiling at the camera.

DAISY
I thought you with the gangster.

Ja Li looks at the photo Daisy is holding and shakes her head.

JA LI
No...
(smiling)
...That is my brother, Hero...
(explaining)
...We're twins...
(finality)
...I'm not with Kong anymore.

DAISY
He cute.

JA LI (confusion)
Kong?

DAISY
Your brother.

Ja Li looks at the picture, smiling, thinking of Hero.

JA LI (agrees)
Yes
(smiles)
...he is. He'll be here in a few days...and waiting in the airport because I have lost his arrival time in my diary...

Daisy picks up the last of the photos, puts them in the box and hands the box to Ja Li. She takes it from Daisy, places the photo of her and Hero back into the box and puts the lid on. She packs it in a milk crate with her other stuff.
DAISY
Why Kong? ...He not good for you.

Ja Li, surprised, shakes her head and shrugs.

JA LI
You're right...he was not...

Nods in agreement.

JA LI (CONT'D)
...But when I first came here...
To Australia... it...
(indicates around)
...was so strange ...I was lonely
...my family helped his to come
here in the eighties...his family
did the same for me now...
(thinking)
...I didn't plan it...it just
happened...something you fall
into without knowing it's...

Daisy considers this, ...suddenly tired, yawns.

Ja Li yawns as well, they look at each other and smile.

JA LI (CONT'D)
You should sleep.... I should sleep.

Daisy nods and turns to go to her room.

JA LI (CONT'D)
Daisy...

Daisy turns back.

JA LI (CONT'D)
Thanks.

DAISY (smiles)
Is ok ...good-night.

Daisy exits.

Ja Li wanders over to the couch, pulls back the covers, then walks over to her boxes and pulls out her pyjamas. She sees the shoe box of photos. Taking the lid off, she leafs through them again, pulling one out:

JA LI [MANDARIN]
What did I ever see in you?

She tosses the photo into the box and walks back to the couch. We focus on the photo in the shoe box.
CONT: (3)

Image: Kong standing by his car, smiling, self-confident.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREETS MONTAGE-- NIGHT

We follow Kong's car as it turns the corner and stops on the opposite side of the street where two young men are talking.

They stop as he pulls up, Kong winds his window down one walks up to it taking a small paper package out of his pullover pocket hands it to kong they exchange friendly words and do a street hand shake.

Stepping away from the car the young man watches Kong drive off and returns to his companion.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHINA TOWN -- NIGHT

From inside Kong's car the colors and sounds of china town filter in as he drives through the crowded streets.

He stops parks and getting out walking into the crowds he is lost.

The sounds of the street mingle with loud club music which over comes the street as we ....

CUT TO:

INT. GAMBLING TABLE -- NIGHT

Soft imagery that blends one shot to the next

ECU Dice roll on green felt.

Inset frame: bright signage. [Dutch tilt]

Dissolve to poker Chips being put down on green felt.

Inset frame: close up of crowds.

Dissolve to cards being dealt.

Inset frame: alcohol being spilt into a shot glass on a bar.
CONT:

Dissolve to the city streets.

CUT TO:

EXT. FEDERATION SQUARE & YARRA BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Kong's car drives past Federation Square over the St Kilda Bridge, stopping fifty meters after it. He gets out and walks back to the bridge and down a spiraling ramp to the waterside below, next to South Bank.

EXT. UNDER ST KILDA ST BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

Scene Note: [this scene starts and ends as one shot from the point indicated by 'X']

Kong wanders and stops at the water side railing just under the bridge. A couple walks past from the Botanical Gardens side of the tunnel.

X

He looks out towards the Crown Casino then turns back to the opposite direction.

EXT. UNDER ST KILDA ST BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Flashback starts:

Past 1 - Happy together

It is a summer night. Kong and Ja Li, dressed in a simple floral dress and cardigan, walk towards his right. They seem happy, holding hands, laughing about something.

They pause; Kong looks down at her, lifts her head and kisses her, they finish and hug. We see Ja Li looking out into the night, her smile becomes sad. Moving round we find Kong very happy.

CUT TO:

Past 2 - The Break up

Kong is holding Ja Li's hands, she pulls away. She is in darker cloths, the weather is cooler, he is wearing a black polo-neck.

JA LI [MANDARIN]

Let me go.

Their hands brake apart, she stumbles back a step, he moves after her.

JA LI [MANDARIN]

Why won't you get a real job?
Kong stops and looks resentfully at her.

JA LI [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
...Then we could be normal people...and I wouldn't be scared...

KONG [MANDARIN] (angry)
It is a real job, and we get looked after better than anyone who does 9 to 5 ...

JA LI [MANDARIN]
Well, I don't want it anymore...
I don't want to be with a gangster.

He steps up to her taking her by the upper arms

KONG [MANDARIN]
We are not over.

JA LI [MANDARIN]
I won't be afraid anymore.

Ja Li hugs her cardigan to her chest, turns and starts walking away, Kong grabs her by the upper arms, shaking her.

KONG [MANDARIN]
...I've done everything for you...

Shaking her more.

KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
...This is going to make me look like a joke.

She tries to shake him off.

JA LI [MANDARIN] (crying)
...I'm sorry...let me go...please...

She shakes him off.

Repeat Shot [dream like glitch]:
She shakes him off.

JA LI (echoes)
Let go.

She runs off down the tunnel, disappearing into the night.

Flashback Ends:
We pan back to Kong in the present, his hand stretched out to stop Ja Li in memory. His eyes water, anger and confusion ripple across his face.

Kong turns and walks off in the same direction as Ja Li in the past.

Muted sounds of a guitar twanging without an amplifier can be heard in the background. The waking sounds of Ja Li groaning are more audible.

Ja Li wakes, sitting up, she turns to look around and rubs her eyes with both of her palms.

She hears again the muffled sounds of a guitar being played coming from Daisy's room. She gets up and walks over to the closed door.

She knocks lightly.

She knocks hard, the sound continues, Ja Li opens the door.

Daisy is rocking out on her bed in a thigh long white T-shirt with a bright and grungy design on it and boy short underwear. She has enormous headphones that are plugged in to the sound system and is playing a Fender Stratocaster.

She sees Ja Li, picks up a remote and stops the sound system. She flicks her head and motions for Ja Li to join in. Ja Li is still half asleep and shakes her head.

Daisy jumps down and gets another set of headphones and some hand written song lyrics, handing them both to Ja Li and pushes her on to the bed getting on herself.
DAISY
You sing. (Daisy nods encouragingly)

She picks up a remote. Ja Li looks at the lyric sheet it is all in Japanese.

Ja Li
I can't read this?

Daisy confused looks at the sheet, flips it over in Ja Li's hand reveling English lyrics.

And hits play, pointing to the lyric sheet. Puts her headphones on, plugs the guitar into a small amplifier, turns the volume up. Picks up her guitar, swings her head from side to side to the beat and starts playing. Ja Li puts her headphones on in dumb compliance and reads:

JA LI (Reading)
Flew in from Miami Beach BOAC.
Didn't get to bed last night.
(Beat)
On the way the paper bag was on my knee.

(singing)
Man, I had I dreadful flight.

She picks up more rhythm.

JA LI
I'm back in the USSR. You don't know how lucky you are, boy. Back in the USSR.

Daisy nods to Ja Li beaming, Ja Li beams back. They both are rocking out on the bed. Daisy joins in on the next bar.

JA LI & DAISY
Been away so long I hardly knew the place. (beat) Gee, it's good to be back home. Leave it till tomorrow to unpack my case.

Daisy does a rock star jump and splits, while Ja Li jumps up and down head spinning side to side.

JA LI & DAISY (CONT'D)
Honey, disconnect the phone.

(beat)
I'm back in the USSR.
CONT: (2)

We pan towards the kitchen as the sound fades out...

CUT TO:

INT. DAISY'S LOUNGE ROOM -- MORNING

Bowl of cereal in hand, Daisy, dressed as in the bedroom before, is eating while Ja Li, now dressed in yesterday's clothes, tidies her couch bed.

Daisy looks at Ja Li and shakes her head. She puts down her cereal bowl and takes Ja Li by the hand.

DAISY
You not go with this clothes?

Daisy leads the surprised Ja Li to the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. DAISY'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

[Scene Note: Polaroid Images 1-6 will be taken on set and then filmed being dropped on to the bed.]

Daisy lets go of Ja Li's hand and makes her sit on the bed. Looks at her for a moment then goes to her wardrobe taking out a Lolita outfit, hands it to Ja Li and points to the dressing screen in the corner.

DAISY
Change.
(waves her off)
Go.

Ja Li looks at the outfit with raised eyebrows but follows the outstretched finger. Behind the screen, she starts to change. Daisy exits.

CUT TO:

Changed Ja Li comes out. Daisy is sitting on the bed finishing her cereal, a POLAROID camera next to her. Daisy chokes at the site of Ja Li. Putting her bowl on the floor, she has a coughing and laughing fit, falling off the bed in hysterics.

Ja Li is not amused by this. Daisy picks herself off the floor, picks up the camera, takes a photo and then waves her back to the screen.

DAISY (CONT'D)
You try another.
(laughs)
I get for you.

Daisy walks to the closet, choosing another outfit, hands it to Ja Li over the screen and walks back to the bed.
CONT:

Picks up the Polaroid Image (1)out, giving it a shake to help the development. She looks at it for a moment.

JA LI (O.S.)
How does that one look?

We hear the sound of Ja Li stepping out, Daisy looks up, drops the photo to the bed, picking up the camera she puts it up to her eye.

CUT TO:

We see the first image of Ja Li, the sound of another Polaroid being taken. Daisy's hand drops another Polaroid onto the bed.

In close up we see the Polaroid captures it dropped next to the first photo we see

Polaroid Image 2: Punk Ja Li

Daisy drops the photo on the bed as Ja Li changes behind the screen.

In fast motion we see clothes being tossed over the back of the screen or taken for trying on.

Polaroid sound effect. Polaroid Image 3: Punk business Suit Ja Li

Polaroid sound effect. Polaroid Image 4: Tennis Ja Li

Polaroid sound effect. Polaroid Image 5: Combat GI Ja Li

Polaroid sound effect. Polaroid Image 6: 50's Rock-a-billy Ja Li

CUT TO:

Daisy stands beside Ja Li as they look through the Polaroid's. Looking up from the last Polaroid to Ja Li now dressed in skin tight dark blue stretch jeans and red high heals, white singlet and a red and gold short sleeved cowboy shirt with pearl press buttons.

Daisy walks around Ja Li to the left, checking her out as we rotate around her to the right. Daisy pulling on her bottom lip thinks, suddenly turns to the dresser, takes a hair clip from her dresser and twists Ja Li's hair up and gives her a pair of aviator sunglasses and steps back as Ja Li puts them on.

Turning Ja Li to the dresser mirror, they see a very cool young woman looking back at them both. Daisy nods, smiling.
DAISY
Very Cool. Now you go girl.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. MS CHAN'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Daisy, dressed like Lara Croft is playing on her PSP headphones in the waiting room as MAY (19) is answering the phone at a desk. Separating them from the office behind is a glass wall.

While talking on the phone, May turns round to look through the glass, we see Ja Li is seated before Ms Chan in a 60's timber lined office, a hand bag matching her outfit beside her chair. Behind Ms Chan are two old sepia photos of a Chinese man and woman between which is a large red good luck charm.

May frowns on looking at Ja Li, then concentrates on her phone call and computer.

Further along Ms Chan's office wall is a B&W picture of a man with a shopping bag standing in front of a tank. A caption reads:

'TIANANMEN SQUARE JUNE 4 1989.'

Ms Chan sits at a plain desk with piles of folders and documents. She clicks through a list on the computer, making a negative clicking sound in her mouth.

[Start Mandarin]

MS CHAN
...no...rented ...no...too expensive...no...too big...

Ms Chan looks over at Ja Li who is anxiously seated before her, Ms Chan shakes her head.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
No...I have nothing like what you're looking for...

Ja Li starts to get up, Ms Chan gestures her to sit down. Ms Chan refers back to her computer.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
...Today.
(shrugs)
...in a week...no two, a nice 2 bedroom apartment is coming up I think.

JA LI (a little afraid)
Ok ... maybe someone else has something ....and a job..

Ms Chan looks at Ja Li, shakes her head to herself.
MS CHAN
When I first came to Australia,
after the 'Square' in 89...I was
alone... my parents too set in
their ways to even give me their
blessing...

Pushing away from the desk, she continues.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
...So, I came to Australia with
one bag and no friends and naive
hope...
  (smiling in memory)
...And surprisingly, it worked
out...the Chinese community helped
me... And here I am...sometimes
it's lonely but you
survive...and...

JA LI
Yes?

MS CHAN
.A little bravery goes a long
way in this country...

JA LI
What do you mean?

MS CHAN
I have a house... my own business,
...people working for me and I
think and say what I like ...a
woman on her own (gestures to her
world, her office) ...that's what
coming here has gotten me ...you
can do the same ... be a banker...
be a hairdresser ... start your
own business...you choose...

Ja Li is confused, she gets up.

JA LI
I need somewhere to live.

Ms Chan looks straight up at Ja Li, contemplative; she
taps her pen with a slow deliberating rhythm, making a
decision, the tapping stops.

MS CHAN (pointedly)
Something will turn up ...it's
not where...

She catches Ja Li's eye, it follows as she looks at the
picture of the man and the tank.
...but how you will live...when I left, it was a fight to get here...I had to fight to get what I have now.

Ja Li stares at the picture,

CU SHOT: At the tank and man,

ECU SHOT: At the man.

MS CHAN (serious) (CONT'D)
Where are you now? ... Do you have somewhere you can stay for a while?

Ja Li snaps out of her contemplation of the image.

Ja Li looks around the waiting room where May is taking phone messages, while Daisy plays her PSP.

Back to Ms Chan, Ja Li nods.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
Ok, so you have somewhere to stay but no job because you let your boss walk all over you.

Ja Li frowns.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
Do you have any money?

Ja Li nods.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
Do you like cutting hair?

Ja Li nods.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
Then, why don't you give it a shot?

(takes out her mobile and scrolls for a number)

... I have a ... a friend who has an office, a small office you could turn into a salon ... I'll mention that you need it month by month to start ...but remember

(Looks at Ja Li)

...this is business, so, you will have to treat it like business...... If you bargain with him, he will respect you and you will get it for a good price...

(MORE)
so, know what you can afford, and
I will be your first customer.

JA LI (CONSIDERS)
My own salon?

Ja Li sits down, she is still taking in this new concept, while Ms Chan watches her to see if it sinks in.

It has started to. She looks at Ms Chan.

MS CHAN
Why not? Wouldn't you like
something of your own?

Ja Li looks back at the picture.

JA LI (thinking)
Yes...

She looks back to Ms Chan opposite her.

JA LI (CONT'D)
(Deciding)
...I...would.

MS CHAN
Good...

Ms Chan picks up the mobile phone and hits speed dial, the phone rings, rings, rings.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
...I'd rather come to you than
that cow Serena any day...
(as an after thought)
And find a good name for the business.

[End Mandarin]

The phone picks up and someone answers. Dazed and confused, Ja Li watches as Ms Chan starts talking on the phone.

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
John hi...it's Jenny Chan ...how
are you?
(smiles)
...Good.
(MORE)
CONT: (4)

MS CHAN (CONT'D)
Look, I have an acquaintance who is looking for a shop...and I thought of you...

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. JA LI'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

A couple woman and a man are making inaudible small talk as they carry used liqueur boxes past Ben in the corridor.

They exit via the Lift/staircase. Ben is stacking boxes in the corridor on top of an old television.

Kong pays no attention to him and hammers on Ja Li's door. There is no answer.

Kong bangs with his fist harder.

KONG
Ja, open up.

Hits the door again.

BEN
Hi...you looking for Miss Li?

Kong turns to see Ben standing with a box of books in his arms.

KONG (off hand)
What's it to you?

BEN (defensive)
Nothing...she moved out yesterday...so... I don't think she'll answer?

Kong looks at Ja Li's door, considering the ramifications, turns, starts to leave. Ben has put the box of books on top of the old TV.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hey, do you want to buy a TV?

Kong turns, looks at him as if to say 'do I look like I want your TV, idiot?' Ben shrugs.

BEN (CONT'D)

Guess not.

Kong moves to leave, Ben looks at his TV patting it as Kong walks off.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's a good TV.
(to himself.)
Looking after Kong who has disappeared, his phone rings, he takes it from his back pocket and answers.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hi, Jane. What do you want...sure you can come over...the chair?... I guess we could talk about it... How about dinner?? Tonight?? 7.30?? Great.

The call finishes. Ben has a beaming smile on his face as he walks back to his door.

CUT TO:

1920's timber lined walls and doors with business signs on them create a warm, if aged, atmosphere.

Daisy leans against a door, number[??], her foot swings back and forth, tapping the door. Ja Li stands uncomfortably across the hall from Daisy.

She checks her watch, it reads: 10.14 am.

JA LI
Remember, we have to be tough.

Daisy smirks, giving a serious jump to attention 'Yes Boss' salute.

DAISY
Hai!

Ja looks at her with a 'Very funny' look.

Footsteps echo from down the corridor. Turning the corner, appears a tall man, JOHN SIMKINS (62) wearing a day suit, tie-less shirt, open at the top button. His graying hair is thinning but neatly swept back like everything about him.

Energy carries him to the two young women. Ja Li turns and Daisy pushes away from the wall, hands tucked into pockets, elbows out, cool.

JOHN
Good morning.
(checks his watch)
Ten fifteen ...John Simkins ...Miss Li.

Ja Li takes his hand with a gentle hold, which he matches, making her feel confident. She straightens her back.

JOHN (CONT'D)
...And?
Releasing his grasp, she turns to Daisy.

JA LI
This is Daisy.

JOHN
Nice to meet you, Daisy.

John shakes Daisy's hand which she returns with gusto.

DAISY (head bow)
Hai.

JOHN
Shall we go in?

The girls nod as one. John turns, fits a key into the door. Daisy turns to Ja Li, smirks and nods as if to say 'he's cute'. Ja Li nods her head smiling back in agreement.

CUT TO:

INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT -- MORNING 10:15AM

Walking into the small space with scattered rubbish and newspapers strewn across the floor, the girls follow him in. Daisy kicks a ball of paper across the floor. John follows its trajectory where it stops at the other end of the room at the filth caked windows.

JOHN (shaking his head)
It is a bit of a mess...the last tenants were less than ideal, I'm sorry to say...
(rubs his chin)
Hence, the state we find it in...very different from when I first worked here as a clerk.
(he gestures to a corner)
My desk was there... I would do the dispatches...all computers these days but when I started it was all done by hand.

He turns to the opposite corner pondering. The girls let him continue.

JOHN (CONT'D)
...I met my wife here in this job. We were Haberdasher's Supplies and I later came to own....
(Beat: shakes himself out of his reverie)
...Anyway, Jenny tells me...
The familiar use of the name makes Ja Li take a second look at John. She smiles with the idea of them together.

JOHN (CONT'D)
...it would suit your needs, Miss Li. So, what do you think?

Ja Li walks around, looking at the walls, thinking of how to set out the salon.

JOHN (CONT'D)
There is a washroom back there next door. Though considering this I can't comment on its condition,...
   (gestures to the general mess)
With a little plumbing we can get the plumbing in here if need be...it was a hair salon you wanted it for?

Ja Li nods.

JA LI
Yes, about the rent.....I can only afford a hundred and fifty a week?

JOHN (shakes his head)
I couldn't let it go for less than two seventy-five.

JA LI (serious)
Um...
   (considers figures in her head, looks around)
It is a mess, I will have to do a lot to it...one seventy-five.

JOHN
Let's call it two twenty-five.

Ja Li looks at Daisy who seriously shakes her head. John watches them conferring. The finish talking.

JA LI
Two hundred and no bond because of the mess?

John with a poker face.

JOHN
And a haircut once a month....
   (considers how much hair he has)
or so ... do we have a deal?
John holds out his hand, Ja Li takes it and they shake on it.

JA LI
Thank you…
(smiling)

Smiling back, John shakes his head.

JOHN
You're welcome... first, Jenny
	twists my arm with dinner... and
	now, you...
(smiling, shakes
his head)
...A bloke can't win...

John turns back to the window, takes out a handkerchief,
rubs a hole in the dirt and grime of the window, looking
out to the city.

JOHN (CONT'D)
...you never know what life will
serve you up. Do you?

Ja Li is standing up straight, confident in her success.
She and Daisy watch on as he continues to look out the
window.

JA LI
No, you don't.
(nodding in
agreement)

SNAP FADE OUT:

EXT. PARKING LOT ROOF -- MORNING

From the edge of a parking lot we follow Kong's car as it
roars up the last ascent to the roof. It swings wide
across the empty lot and brakes at the edge of the wall.
He exits the car and pulls out his phone.

Close up on him as he angrily dials his phone. He comes
to stop, standing, looking out into the city. We see
concrete, glass and sky behind him.

JA LI PHONE [ENGLISH]
Hello. You have called Ja Li. I'm
sorry, I can't take your call.
Leave a message and I will call
you soon.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Damn it...you bitch!
(to the sprawling
city)
He throws the phone back into the car. We hear it breaking on impact. He slams the door and kicks the wall. He looks out onto the city.

**KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)**

…I can't believe I still want you...

He stares off into the city.

Things happen in the city, oblivious to his actions or feelings. Smoke from chimneys curl past graffiti of a humming bird. A crane lifts concrete. Cars drive below. People doing their jobs.

Kong turns around, goes to the car and grabs an energy drink from the passenger seat. Walks back to the wall, pops it and drinks half in a long gulp. Puts it down on the wall in front of the cityscape.

He goes back to the car. We hear angry sounds of him rummaging in the car.

Back at the wall he tries to call out but the phone is dead with cracks across the screen. The energy has gone out of his anger, finally replaced by exhaustion. He stands next to the wall leaning on it as we pan out to see his view.

**KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)**

Where are you, Ja?

(yearning)

---

**INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT -- MORNING**

Daisy is playing soccer with a ball of paper in the background as Ja Li finishes counting eight hundred dollars in twenty dollar notes. John writes a receipt in a small receipt book handing it to her. He takes the money and places it in an old fashioned pocket book. Ja Li shakes John's hand, forming their pact.

**JA LI**

Thank you, Mr Simkins.

He takes his business card from his pocket, handing it to her.

*Text reads: Simkins & Sons industries John Simkins, address, phone number, fax etc.*

**JOHN**

If you need anything, call and ask for me by name. My sons are a little too officious for their own good ...or mine for that matter.
Ja Li accepts the card with two hands, reading it. She looks back up at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
And better not mention Jenny's name...
(thinking)
Officious and meddlesome ... pity that...

JA LI
What about the rent?

JOHN
Give that to Jenny.
(smiling)
I'll get it from her.

He puts his hand in his pocket, feeling for the keys, taking them out, he hands them to Ja Li.

JOHN (CONT'D)
My best wishes for your venture.

He looks around one last time, smiling to himself and his memories.

He exits.

Daisy kicks her paper ball around the small, narrow, prospective hair salon. Ja Li joins Daisy as the ball comes to rest at her feet...

JA LI
Let's have a look at the washroom.

...as Daisy kicks her ball and gets an imaginary goal at the windows. Waving her arms over her head in victory as Ja Li looks at her, then walks off shaking her head at the silliness.

Daisy stops and trots after Ja Li off screen.

CUT TO:

Looking in the door of the small washroom, Daisy and Ja Li look in beside each other.

DAISY [ENGLISH]
That is bad. Eugh what smell?

Horrified, Daisy holds her nose as they both look at the sink and bench, which is strewn with rubbish and filth.

JA LI
Any volunteers for cleaning detail?
CONT:

Daisy turns and runs out quickly.

CUT TO:

INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT -- CONTINUOUS

Daisy is waiting for Ja Li, looking around at the empty space. Ja Li takes out a pad and pen and starts making notes.

JA LI
Well, if this is going to be a salon, then, we need to go shopping.
(looking at the dirty walls)
This colour has to go.

Turns to Daisy.

JA LI (CONT'D)
You want to go shopping?

Daisy is enthusiastic as they walk to the door.

SNAP FADEOUT:

INT. HAIR SALON -- MORNING

Kong walks in as if he owns the salon. In past the Sally and her sister and clients; the eyes of one, a brunette (45) looks him up and down, pausing on his arse, and follows him with interested lust.

From the back of the salon, Serena sees him, her eyes following him as he approaches. She straightens herself, pushing out her chest as he walks up. She gives him a final once over, then, looking down at what she is doing, she opens the till, gets an envelope out and leans over the counter, showing her cleavage.

SERENA
You're early this month, what can I do for you?

Kong stops at the counter, not coming to a rest.

KONG
Where is Ja Li?

SERENA (shrugs)
I let her go...
(peeved)
...and that idiot Jap went with her.

Kong walks towards the storeroom in the back of the salon, Serena follows, forgetting the envelope in her hand.
Stopping at the store door, Kong motions her to go first. Entering, she flicks on the one florescent lamp, which flickers continuously, lighting the shabby closet of a storeroom. He follows her in past lines of hair product.

Kong reaches out and pushes her towards the back, she turns, stumbling, surprised and scared.

**KONG (demanding)**

We had an agreement ...she works for you...

**SERENA (fear)**

But she's not with you now?

Kong picks up a bottle of conditioner.

**KONG (angry)**

Changes nothing! We had an agreement! How do I look if you don't honor it...HEY?...

He pushes its base against her breasts, then shoves her back, hard against the wall, product falls around her.

**SERENA (terror)**

I didn't...Nooo...think...

(she shrieks)

Covering her head, she struggles, he shoves her back off balance, she is frantically cringing, trying to escape him.

He smashes the end of the bottle on a shelf and empties the contents of the bottle over her.

**KONG (furious)**

...None of you do, and this is what happens!

Dropping the empty bottle, he takes the sodden envelope from her, grabs her hair, lifting her to face him and shows her the envelope.

**KONG (angry but calm) (CONT'D)**

From now on, it's double.

He flicks conditioner from his hand and exits the room. The florescent light continues to flicker as Serena hyperventilates with a whimper against the wall.

**SNAP FADE OUT:**

---

**EXT. SHOPPING MONTAGE -- MORNING**

Ja Li and Daisy go up and down industrial aisles with a shopping cart, filling the basket with shampoo, aprons etc.
They look at chairs choosing six chairs and stools, a bench and mirrors.

From one salon supplier to the next, renting, buying until Ja Li has no money left by early afternoon. We see them with baskets, gathering supplies and equipment. Sales reps give them posters etc.

INT. HAIR SALON SUPPLIES STORE -- EARLY AFTERNOON

Ja Li is counting out fifty-dollar bills, as a man at the counter watches. Daisy has her head inside a blow dryer, which looks like it is part of a space program.

DAISY [JAPANESE] (from inside)
Ja Li San?

JA LI
Three hundred...
(turns to Daisy)
Yes?

Daisy points at herself inside the dryer, grinning from ear to ear, it's obvious she loves it. Ja Li cocks her head.

JA LI (CONT'D)
You want that one?

Daisy, still inside, nods vigorously with a bigger grin.

DAISY [JAPANESE]
Yes.

Ja Li turns back to the salon man.

JA LI
How much more for that one?

SALON MAN (thinking)
a hundred.

Ja Li frowns, looks at Daisy's happy face and then to the cash in her hand, the salon man following her gaze, she looks at him, and smiles sweetly.

SALON MAN (CONT'D)
Ok, ok. Cut it out. Make it fifty.

JA LI (smiling sweetly)
With delivery?

The Salon Man laughs.

SALON MAN
Yes, with delivery.
They both turn to watch Daisy examining the dryer for extra buttons and features, she sees them, they nod back and she is thrilled.

The salon man and Ja Li both have a good laugh at her joy as Ja Li starts counting out the rest of the money.

Daisy bounces over to the counter as Ja Li counts the last of her money out.

**JA LI**
I am short... can I pay for the dryer in installments?

The salon man looks at her, thinks, nods.

**SALON MAN**
I guess so ...I know where you'll be...

The Salon Man starts writing up the invoice. Daisy sees Ja Li count out the last of her money, this registers.

Catching Ja Li's eye, she indicates that she will be back in five minutes.

Daisy exits.

The salon man brings out three matching hair dryers from under the counter. Putting them in the box with Ja Li's other purchases.

**SALON MAN (CONT'D)**
Salon warming present.

**JA LI**
I can't...

**SALON MAN (genuine)**
I heard what Serena did... anyway, it's in my interest that you make a go of it.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. ATM -- AFTERNOON**

Daisy gets money from an ATM. People walk past and men can't help but look at how she is dressed.

A man walks past in street clothes, he turns and looks at her as he passes.

She turns, looks at him, he slows down and lets a long whistle as she makes a gun out of her hand, slowly drawing and pointing it at him at arms length. She pulls the imaginary trigger.
CONT:  

It recoils, he grabs his chest pretending to be mortally wounded, she re holsters it and turns back to the ATM as he reaches out to her, staggering off screen stage right. 

She takes her money out puts it in her pocket and walks off screen stage left. 

CUT TO:  

INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT -- AFTERNOON  

Carrying bags of cleaning equipment; a broom, a mop and bucket Ja Li and Daisy come through the door of the Salon. 

They put everything against a wall and Ja Li takes out her note book list from her back pocket and it reads:  

- Cleaning Equipment  
- Paint  
- Business name  
- Client List  

She taking a pen puts a line through the first item and turns to Daisy.  

JA LI  
Ok,  
(looks around)  
....do you mind cleaning while I do the rest?  

Daisy shakes her head,  

JA LI (CONT'D)  
Perfect. Then we'll have a salon with no clients unless I can get my diary from Serena.  
(laughs)  
How did I get myself into this?  

Daisy looks down at her feet, shuffling them. Ja Li notices this.  

JA LI (CONT'D)  
What is it?  

Daisy looks up from her feet biting her lip.  

DAISY  
WE have business?...You want business partner?  
(uncertain)  
...Me?
CONT:

JA LI
Yes Daisy....I need you, I want you to be my partner.

Daisy smiles a beaming smile.

DAISY
I get Diary.

JA LI
No, that's my job.

Daisy looks at Ja Li, 'you sure?' Ja Li nods.

JA LI (CONT'D)
I'm sure I'll be fine. What's the worst she can do?

Daisy thinks, head cocked to one side, then makes a stabbing action.

DAISY
Kill you... Lots.

Ja Li laughs, then looking at Daisy, realises she is serious and thinks more seriously about it as she gets her bag.

JA LI
You had better start with the washroom. I'll be back.

With a little wave, she exits. Daisy looks around towards the washroom, she shivers at the thought of it.

CUT TO:

INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT WASHROOM -- LATER

The wash rom door opens to show Daisy dressed in yellow toxic waste gear, holding a mop and bucket in one hand and spray disinfectant in the other.

Daisy steps into view. Taking a step forward, she aims her spray gun and fires straight into the lens.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAIR SALON STREET -- AFTERNOON

A wide view of the street opposite the hair salon shows Ja Li with her aviator shades on is carrying her hand bag with Foolscap envelope in it and a 4L tin of paint, walking back and forth on the sidewalk apprehensively.
CONT:

She stops, shoulders her bag, swaps the tin of paint from the right into her left hand and walks across the street towards the camera.

CUT TO:

INT. HAIR SALON -- LATER

Sally is blow drying Serena's hair while she reads a fashion mag, she has clean clothes on nylon poncho, the cloths not quite overtly sexual as before, while Sally's sister is washing the only other client's female (30) hair, fumbling it.

The door opens and Ja Li enters aviator shades on and heads for the counter, Sally and Serena both turn around. Serena motions for Sally to see to her not recognising Ja Li her in new clothes and attitude.

Sally walks over to Ja Li standing between her and Serena.

SALLY
Hi ..how Can I help you?

JA LI
Hi, Sally. No, I just came for my diary.
(points to it on the counter)
Thanks.

Serena looks up hearing the familiar voice. Stands up pulling off the nylon poncho that covers her, and stalks over, magazine still in hand. The other customer notices what is going on and watches quietly.

SALLY
Oh.
(uncertain)
I?... Sure?.. Um?.. Serena?
(confusion)
Ok?

Ja Li moves to get the moleskin diary, Serena reaches it first dropping her magazine on the counter, snatching it up.

SERENA
No you don't, you little bitch.

Ja Li steps back defensively.

JA LI
But it's mine?
(points to it)
My name is on it.

SERENA
You want it? You can pay for it.
CONT:

Ja Li cocks her head to one side screws up her mouth in an angry pout and bites her bottom lip as she considers what to do.

Serena waits.

Ja Li puts down her can of paint and bag and starts up to Serena, forcing her back a step. She reaches out, grabs hold of the diary and pulls with two hands.

Serena holds on as her arm is yanked outwards, she snarls.

SERENA (CONT'D)
No WAY...

Ja Li takes a better hold, kicks Serena in the shin.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Yelp.

Serena lets go of the diary. Ja Li steps away with it to her bag and paint tin. Sally's sister and the woman she is washing watch rooted in the background. Serena grabs her shin.

SERENA (furious) (CONT'D)
Sally, call the police, we have an ex employee stealing.

Ja Li turns to face them, nods in agreement.

JA LI
Yes, do that you can explain how you don't declare all that cash work and the staff without work visas....
(smiles)
...Oh but I never worked here.

Serena stands up furious. Sally is poised over the phone looking from one to the other.

SERENA
Get out, you bitch.

JA LI
With pleasure.

Ja Li looks at Serena quietly, unagitated while Serena looks at Ja Li clenching her fists and getting more and more angry.

Ja Li turns picks up her bag and paint and walks out the door, which closes behind her.

Serena screams, picks up the magazine on the counter and hurls the magazine in her hand at the closing door which it hits and drops to the floor.
Sally's sister and the client watch open mouthed.

CUT TO:

INT. WASHROOM NOODLE SHOP -- AFTERNOON

A two day old shirt hangs over a paper towel dispenser. The sound of water running bounces off the walls of the dirty washroom. Its florescent lamps cast a metallic blue light, which gives Kong's reflection a corpse like look as he sags over the sink.

Kong wearing just a crumpled white singlet with his black pants tries to scrub the fatigue out of his eyes, rubbing both hands over his face.

A toilet flushes in the cubical behind him. He straightens his back, looks taller and continues his washing, splashing water under his arms, washing the stink off.

DANNY (22) dressed in everyday street wear exits the cubicle and walks to the adjacent washbasin. Kong takes a hand full of paper towel and dries his armpits, tossing the used paper into the open bin below the two sinks. Danny looks over at Kong, who has taken a comb out of his pocket an is slicking back his wet hair.

DANNY [MANDARIN]
You ok, man?

KONG [MANDARIN] (grunts)
Long shift.

Danny nods.

DANNY [MANDARIN]
Pity about Kevin...

Kong continues grooming himself.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Shit happens.

Danny turns back to his mirror, thinks for a moment, then glances at Kong...

DANNY [MANDARIN]
Yeah, I guess so...to Kevin...

Shrugs, dries his hands and exits.

Kong's hands are resting on either side of his sink, he sags again letting out a sigh.
Eyes closed, his head hangs low over the sink.

CONT:

INT. NOODLE SHOP -- AFTERNOON

An everyday noodle bar with tables for 2, 4 & 6 people, crowded into a small, cool, white space lit by fluorescent lighting.

Two couples are eating around a table with two empty seats. They are May, Ms Chan's secretary in her office clothes, and Alan (20) medium height in office clothes. They are conducting a private, unhappy conversation. Their meals are untouched.

MAY [MANDARIN] (low voice)
You never tell me what we're doing, you just expect me to jump.

ALAN [MANDARIN] (low voice)
Don't do this here. I just want to eat.

Kong enters from the washroom. May and Alan both turn as he sits down at the end of the table nearest to them waving for his order. May looks him over as the waitress comes over.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Spicy noodle soup.

The waitress nods and walks off. May and Alan are back to their heated whispering.

Sally (19) dressed in everyday street clothes is sharing her wonton soup with Danny. She picks up one with her chopsticks and feeds him, smiling. He munches the whole wonton in his mouth, juice dribbling down his chin.

SALLY [MANDARIN]
You pig...there's no way I'm marrying you now.
(to May)
It's over. He is all yours, May.

May turns to her name being called.

MAY [MANDARIN]
Fine with me, I'm ready to trade-in mine.

Looks sideways at Kong.

MAY [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
How many kilometers has it done?

Sally looks Danny over.
SALLY [MANDARIN]
Not many and It's in very good
condition, just run in, in fact,
about five thousand on the clock.
(smiling at Danny)
What will you give me?

MAY [MANDARIN]
Fifty dollars for a spin around
the block.

DANNY [MANDARIN](to Sally)
I'm worth more than that, babe.

Kong is served and starts eating. Sally wipes Danny's
chin with a napkin. Alan has started to eat his meal.
May plays with hers, watching Kong out of the corner of
her eye.

SALLY [MANDARIN](lustfully)
I know you are. I'll make it a
hundred dollars, if you're good.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Get a room, will you?

SALLY [MANDARIN]
Not till after the wedding, two
weeks.
(plants a big kiss
on Danny)
Big boy.

MAY [MANDARIN]
Gross.

Sally and Danny smile at each other. Kong resumes eating.
May turns, leaning towards Kong.

MAY [MANDARIN](to Kong) (CONT'D)
I saw your ex today...

Kong's eyes look up from his meal, but he doesn't stop
eating. She has his attention and is going to make the
most of it, leans away a bit, forcing him to put down his
chop sticks.

MAY [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)
... My boss got her a shop...in
your territory...

Kong stops eating and wipes his mouth.

KONG [MANDARIN]
Where?

May evaluates what she is going to get for the information,
calculating, she drags out the moment.
I'd have to get the address....what's it worth to you if I did?

KONG [MANDARIN]
I'll look after you...

Beat

That's all I want to know...

May takes out her phone, looking like the cat who has gotten the cream. She fingers a number on her mobile.

SNAP FADE OUT:

INT. MELBOURNE BOWL CUT -- EVENING

Hard rocking Japanese Pop music plays as Daisy's silhouette dances before the sun filled main window casting long shadows, plays a mop as an air guitar, rocking out to the music.

She puts down the mop, leaning it against the window as the music track finishes.

Taking her head phones off as she goes over to a pile of CLEANING PRODUCTS, next to which the space age hair dryer has been left, she picks up a naked paper roll tube.

Turning, she holds the tube up to her eye, using it to scan the afternoon city. Through the tube she sees buildings, people doing jobs, interesting architectural angles.

She scans three floors of shiny building windows, watching the people in them.

She hears a door opening behind her, tube still to her eye, she turns, framing Kong who strides in like James Bond, in its center.

CUT TO:

Daisy lowering the tube steps forward with attitude to the middle of the room tossing her toilet roll telescope away into a pile of rubbish.

DAISY
What you want.

He ignores her, brushing past, putting her off balance and forcing her to take a step back as she watches him.

Continuing into the salon, he walks around the whole room. Watching from the middle of the room, Daisy turns to
silently follow his movement like a compass needle drawn by a magnet.

Stops and looks out the window, picks up a rag from below the window, and cleans a hole in the grime that covers it. He stares out to see the view.

KONG
Bit of a shit hole?

Daisy bristles, stands legs apart and to attention ready to defend the shop.

DAISY
You leave...now!

Kong looks her up and down unimpressed.

KONG
It speaks does it? ...Well, I'm not leaving Jap-o. So, unless you're going to do something about it
(points and leers at her)
Shut up....I'm going to wait as long as it takes.

Daisy steps forward two steps, karate pose, grinds her back foot into the ground.

DAISY
I make you....

Kong gets a mean look on his face and he steps forward but not stopping until he is almost in reach of Daisy.

JA LI [MANDARIN] (O.S.)
What are you doing here?

Kong turns at the sound of Ja Li's voice, so does Daisy.

Ja Li enters carrying her hand bag, foolscap envelope and a can of paint, walking almost up to them, angry.

KONG (O.S.)
Ja?

On seeing her changed appearance, he stops, she puts down what she is carrying.

KONG [MANDARIN]
You look different.

He looks her up an down, notices her confident bearing and new clothes. He hesitates, pauses uncertainly, tired behind his confusion 'who is this woman? Not girl, woman'.

Ja Li takes a step forward defensively.
Her movement breaks his train of thought. He steps towards her. As he moves, Kong regains some of his normal confidence.

**KONG [MANDARIN]**

You, Ja... you.

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**

No.

(puts her hand up and turns away)

..Go away.

Daisy watches rooted to the spot in the background.

**KONG [MANDARIN]**

No...

(forcefully)

I have an...

(searching)

obligation...my family does...I would lose face...

(shakes his head)

So, I want you to back to me.

Kong moves a step forward and gestures to her to come to him.

Ja Li steps back, uncertain, old fears surfacing. She is becoming smaller, she looks around searching for a solution as Kong gains confidence and grows, straightening his form.

She shakes her head, frowns.

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**

No...we are over.

Behind her, Daisy puts her hands on her hips, bristling.

**KONG [MANDARIN]**

Can't you see I want you?

Ja Li turns she looks around the room and sees her friend sees the salon for what it could be, all her new hopes and dreams disappearing, sags where she stands looks at Kong and shakes her head.

**KONG [MANDARIN] (CONT'D)**

Then, you're going to have to pay.

**JA LI [MANDARIN]**

What do you mean?
KONG [MANDARIN]
Insurance...Protection...If you're with me, protection is free...
without me, you have to pay.

JA LI [MANDARIN] (Frustrated, angry)
How much?

KONG [MANDARIN]
...Two hundred and fifty...a week...

JA LI [MANDARIN]
I can't afford that...
(hurt and angry)

Kong steps closer to Ja Li, leaning towards her.

KONG [MANDARIN] (offering)
Then come back to me...

Kong reaches out to touch Ja Li's face, she moves back and looking frightened and lost.

Daisy steps forward, both Ja Li and Kong turn to see her having forgotten that she is there.

Daisy puts her hand into her back pocket and takes out a wallet on a chain and counts off ten one hundred dollar bills.

DAISY
One month.

KONG
No, you keep out of this, Jap-o.

Daisy ignores him, handing Ja Li a bundle of hundreds.

JA LI
Can you leave us a min?

Daisy shakes her head, indicating to Ja Li and herself.

DAISY
We are partners?... Hai?!

Ja Li nods.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Hai!
(nods)
... Then... I will help for this...
(indicates to Kong)
...Bastard.

Ja Li's mouth opens in a little surprised at the description, Kong is even more surprised.
JA LI
I...
(confused, looks from Daisy to Kong)

KONG [MANDARIN]
No, this is between me and you...

Ja Li looks from Kong to Daisy.

DAISY
Are we partners?

Ja Li considers for a second, takes her eyes from Kong to Daisy and nods. Daisy nods back.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Hai.

Daisy turns and holds out the money to Kong.

KONG
No...

Daisy steps towards Kong, holding the cash out to him.

DAISY
Here is your money.
(bows)
Please, take it.

He swings an open hand at Daisy. She flinches back.

Ja Li steps in between them to protect Daisy. Kong's hand connects with the side of Ja Li's temple.

Ja Li lands on her back hitting her head on the ground.

BLACK FLASH

UPSIDE DOWN: Her POV spins seeing and hearing as if at the end of a long tunnel. Daisy and Kong in flashes of spinning, both reaching for her.

BLACK Flashback: Kong screaming and kicking the fire door. Everything echoes and shimmers, Kong's voice spills over her.

Daisy's image is split double and her voice echoes as she moves forward.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Ja Li San!
(distorted sound)

WHITE Flashback: Ja Li terrified behind the fire door.
Daisy's cash falling to the floor in slow motion, the notes trample under Daisy's feet.

In spinning motion, we see Daisy's boots and Kong's legs.

KONG

Move!

(distorted sound/to Daisy)

... Ja!...

Kong pushes Daisy out of the way, she falls to the floor.

BLACK Flash Back: Still image - Tiananmen Square of man with a bag in front of a tank.

Ja Li on her knees.

Kong reaches out to her.

Ja Li's vision rocking, voices drumming, distorted sounds of blood rushing in her ears.

Ja Li's face is angry. She is on her knees and palms.

Pushing herself up to her knees. Kong reaching out, spinning.

Ja Li clenches her fists.

JA LI

GET AWAY!

Holds up her hand out pushing it palm towards Kong. Kong backs off, hit by the violence of her shout.

She pushes herself off the floor, one hand on her head, the other hand balancing her, pushing the floor away.

Seeing the cash, she bends down, scraping it up.

JA LI (CONT'D)

There is your honor.... your obligation, and an end of it...

(beat)

I don't need you anymore...

(beat)

I never want to see you again...

She looks at Daisy who is brushing herself off, looking daggers at Kong.

JA LI (CONT'D)

You ok?

DAISY (nods)

Hai.
CONT:  (6)

Kong is still standing there stunned, Ja Li holds the money out to him.

DAISY  (CONT'D)

Take money! Go.

Kong looks daggers at Daisy, looks back at Ja Li and the cash.

His face goes from remorse, to pain, to anger, to pleading loss.

JA LI

You..  HeaRD..  GO!

Kong takes the money, turns and walks away, footsteps without any energy receding out the door.

Ja Li, hand on head, and Daisy watch him, then turn to face one another. From between them we see him leave through the small opening of the doorway.

DAISY

Ok?

Ja Li nods feeling the back of her head.

DAISY [ENGLISH]

You get name?

JA LI

Name?

DAISY [ENGLISH]

Hai. Salon name.

JA LI

Yes...

(questioning tilt of the head)

English?

Daisy shrugs.

DAISY [ENGLISH]

Show me salon name.

Ja Li goes to the bag and pulls out her diary and the foolscape envelope, passing it to Daisy who flicks through the moleskin diary.

Daisy has pulled out the business name certificate and is reading it.

Ja Li goes is going through her moleskin dairy.

DAISY [ENGLISH] (CONT'D)

You get diary from Sarena?
Ja Li nods.

JA LI
Yes we have clients.

DAISY
And now you now when is your brother flying.

Daisy looks at the business name certificate. Ja li turns to the entry with the flight info.

JA LI
Tomorrow....
(thinking)
...Can he stay with us?

Daisy's eyes widen, smiles and nods her head vigorously.

DAISY
Hai.

Ja Li's eyes narrow, she rubs the back of her head, looking a bit suspicious of Daisy's motives.

JA LI
Thanks...I think...
(picks up her bag,
tosses her the keys)
You want to lock up?

Catching the keys, Daisy gives her the thumbs up.

DAISY
One minute.

Turning to the wall, Daisy takes a thumb tack and sticks the certificate at eye height and runs her forefinger over where it reads:

Text Reads: MELBOURNE BOWL CUT

Proprietors

Ja Li & Keko Wantabe

Daisy skips over to join Ja Li who is waiting at the door.

JA LI
Do you have the keys?

Daisy holds them up for Ja Li.

DAISY
Hai.. Home time?

JA LI
Yes ..Lets go home.
Daisy nods and puts her headphones on, bopping to music heads out the door.

Alone Ja Li looks at her new salon, her world the sunn is setting warm light casting her shadow long in the room, she smiles, turns and closes the door as empowering girl rock music climbs in volume.

SNAP FADE TO BLACK.

Major Credits Roll.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE SUN -- EVENING

We see Daisy in silhouette dancing in fort of a large setting sun with the music she is stopped by the sound of a test being received by Daisy's phone.

She stops dancing but the music play on as she reads the message.

On the screen it reads.

Text Reads: Mr. Takashi Wantabe: Have contacted Hong Kong Family. They want to see you in holidays.

DAISY

Woup...

She leaps into the air reaching for the sky at the end of the track's final drum solo and we freeze on that frame.

FADE TO BLACK:

Remainder Credits Roll
Appendix 3 – Critical Review
Indie Film: Citizen Jia Li, An Inspirational Story of Loyalty and Honor

Broad themes of loyalty, honor, duty and friendship run through Sky Crompton’s too-real slice-of-life story of a newly immigrated Chinese-Australian hairdresser, Citizen Jia Li. Intimate camera-work, gritty art-direction, convincing actors, and a very true-to-life script make Citizen Jia Li a must see for fans of stream-of-life films. This is not a niche, cultural film, laden with stereotypes, but a fascinating glimpse into the heart of what it means to become a new citizen of any country. In the context of a low production budget, this film is a just-right combination of story, character, and smart camera work—a recommended watch for fans of indie film.

You Can Smell the Coffee

The audience is drawn in, from the first scene, as an anonymous, ordinary woman gets ready for her day. You can almost smell the coffee, as the camera intimately explores her apartment, lingering on photos of family decorating her walls. This is our first clue that family is central to the story—though we never actually see the parents or brother, who remain behind in China. We soon learn that family is the focus of Jia Li’s life as she struggles to get her foothold in Australia, anxious to help them immigrate.

Have you watched Citizen Jia Li? What’s your rating? Rate this film at the bottom of this story.

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Actor News

Korea’s Busiest Entertainer Joo Won to Headline Stage Musical Ghost
By the numbers, Joo Won is Korea’s busiest star. It seems his acting and singing skill keeps him in...

F&B Actor Review: Salman Khan, Bollywood’s Bad Boy
Superstar
Born on December 27, 1965, Salman Khan is the eldest son of legendary screenwriter Salim Khan
The film opens with a burst of cheerful optimism, as Jia Lia receives a call from her brother, soon to arrive in Australia. She tells him of all the wonderful opportunities that await him. This conversation is poignant, and sharply punctuated with subtleties such as her brother’s sad comment, “I don’t want to leave our parents.”

This scene is, perhaps, our only major criticism of this ambitious film, as the audience follows along for several minutes on a fascinating Australian travelogue while Jia Li and her brother speak. It would have worked better if it weren’t quite so long. It was so well done as promotional scene, one can imagine the Australian government as a sponsor.

Mercurial Script Writing
After so optimistic an opening, the capricious script-writer, Sky Crompton, yanks the proverbial rug under Jia Li’s feet, tossing her out of her job and apartment in the same day. Citizen Jia Li abruptly plunges into a dark, desperate place, with art direction matching the mood—close shots, gloomy lighting, graffiti and noise on the streets, shaky cameras—yanking us from the lovely travelogue of Australia into the mean streets of survival.

Here, the story streams in two very distinct and poignant paths: jobless and homeless immigrant Jia Li, determined to make it on her own; and cool and sometimes brutal triad member Kong, Jia Lia’s ex, who refuses to give up the relationship “because I’ll be humiliated.” Both are very convincing, and their acting is understated and real.

F&B Actor Review: Hyun Bin Come-Back
Hyun Bin, Korea’s favorite son, back from the marines at the end of 2012, has grown back his hair an...
The English subtitles, mixed with spoken English, render the script in memorable lines. When Jia Li is being fired because she wants to "go on the books," she asks her ex-boss for the money owing.

"What money? You never worked here. Bye Bye," says Serena, the nasty hair salon owner played perfectly by Liza Dennis. When she delivers the "bye bye," it brought to mind the character played by Meryl Streep in The Devil Wear’s Prada.

One of the most memorable scenes in the film, reinforcing the theme of family, loyalty and duty, is this exchange between lead Jia Li and her best friend Daisy:

"I want to be a rock star. What do you want?"

"My family to be happy." When Daisy challenges her selfless goals, Jia Li sighs and says, "I don't have time to want more."

The Two Leads—Powerful Opposites

The story follows the lives of two characters, Jia Li and her ex-boyfriend Kong. Although clearly this is Jia Li’s story, the parallel gangster storyline is a necessary contrast to the "ordinary" life of an immigrant citizen.

Since the story ran parallel plot lines, we’ll review both actors in the same way. Claudia Teh’s quiet despair and unyielding determination contrast beautifully with Chris Pang’s violence. The contrast is emphasized in dialogue, with Pang delivering fierce, evocative lines, opposing Claudia Teh’s quiet energy. In looks, we see Pang’s gangster character driving a Z, twirling his thumb ring, close ups of his mouth and facial features, fiercely handsome. Teh is portrayed as plain, humbly dressed, light on the makeup, lovely, but ordinary, and charmingly modest. Pang simmers with emotion and palpable rage; Teh takes whatever comes her way and calmly deals with it. The contrast between ordinary citizen and flashy triad member works, perfectly played by the two leads.
Chris Pang delivers lines with such chilling coolness, the audience totally believes his bad-boy vibe. At one point Kong (Pang) is asked by his young gangster sidekick ‘how did you move up so fast’ in the triad, and Pang answers, with a story of an accountant who shorted him on his collections by $1000.

Pang’s icy, “My accountant found he couldn’t walk anymore,” was delivered with just the right disinterest to be convincingly frightening. Later, when his sidekick asks why he wants Jia Li so much, even though she dumped him, he answers, “Jia Li is mine. Until I say otherwise.” Both lines, delivered by a lesser actor, would have seemed a little too dramatic, but with Pang’s delivery it works. Pang won Best Actor for Asians on Film 2013.

Review: Citizen Jia Li

Script

Lead Actors

Camera Direction

Music and Soundtrack

Overall Production Values

Direction

Summary

Excellent lead actors, a taut true-to-life script that sounds right to the ear, and an intimate camera combine to make Citizen Jia Li a must-see for indie film fans, and audiences who appreciate gritty, real life drama. Ratings reflect the context of low-budget production independent film.

Thumbs up for:

- Sky Crompton — for a gritty true-to-life script that transcends culture
- Chris Pang as the cool, troubled triad member — understated cool with bursts of believable rage.
- Claudia Teh — who carries the weight of the film on her capable shoulders with subtle professionalism.
- Daniel Yun — for his intimate camera that becomes integral to the story-telling.
- Tim Trappet — for a diverse, character-driven soundtrack.

Thumbs down for:

Overall Score

89
The Likeable Daisy

An important character in Jia Li’s life is the very cute, perky and likeable Daisy—a half Chinese half Japanese ‘Harajuku’ girl—who is both a bit of a caricature and a needed contrast to Jia Li. Although the script doesn’t take her character to the level of deep characterization, perhaps due to the already meaty dual plot-threads, Susanna Qian plays Daisy with deliberate tongue-in-cheek. We instantly like her, this always cheerful Daisy, and she’s just the right dose of character contrast to the lead.

Vignette performances by the taxi driver and Jia Li’s neighbors moving out after eviction, are well played, but not important to the story, and perhaps go on slightly longer than needed, but aside from this minor gripe, the actors and characters are colorful and believable.

Reader Ratings

1 votes

5
Cinematographer Daniel Yun Anchors the Film

Great script and acting go only so far. Shot in 12 days for less than the cost of the Nissan 350Z driven in the film, Dan Yun deserves credit for making this all work—guided, of course by director Sky Crompton. His eye is intimate and roving, and his cameras are cast members in their own right, moving with the action, becoming part of the scene, subtle but critical.

When Pang’s gangster character is on screen, Yun’s camera dives in almost too close—Pang’s hand on the gearshift, his nose, then his eye, then his mouth—and moves with the character, the perspective almost of an observer. In Jia Li’s scenes, the camera lovingly lingers, no longer abrupt and aggressive, but suddenly appreciative and steady. The two personalities of the camera, match the two character story-streams.

More subtle, but important, is a well-crafted soundtrack by Tim Trappett, with a mix of jazz, vocals and thematic music. Again, Trappett’s music supports the characters, in the same way as Yun’s cameras. With the Jai character we feel the vibe of jazz, with a sad bluesy tone. When we jump to Kong’s gangster, we energize with hip hop. Daisy, our wannabe rocker, is highlighted with pop vocals. It all works well and becomes integral to the overall production success.

Summary

Excellent lead actors, a taut true-to-life script that sounds right to the ear, and an intimate camera combine to make Citizen Jia Li a must-see for indie film fans, and audiences who appreciate gritty, real life drama. There’s no hint of over-production, over-acting or extraneous dialogue in this taut, believable, well-crafted film. F&B gives 4.5 thumbs up and recommends for adult audiences of any culture.

Download or view here>>

Snapshot

4.5 Thumbs Up (out of 5)

Thumbs up for:

• Sky Crompton — for a gritty true-to-life script that transcends culture

• Chris Pang as the cool, troubled triad member — understated cool with bursts of believable rage.

• Claudia Teh — who carries the weight of the film on her capable shoulders with subtle professionalism.

• Daniel Yun — for his intimate camera that becomes integral to the story-telling.

• Tim Trappet — for a diverse, character-driven soundtrack.

Thumbs down for:

• Minor gripes: too-long Australia travelogue in opening and a soft ending.
**Recommendation**: Citizen Jia Li is worth a watch for uniqueness and artistry, strong lead performers and engaging characters that feel real.

**Notable**: Official selection of Phoenix Comicon Film Festival 2011, Melbourne Underground Film Festival 2011, Yellow Fever Independent Film Festival 2011 and Asian Australian Film Forum 2011.

**Cast**

Jia Li...Claudia Teh (Chun Kee Claudia Teh)
Daisy...Susanna Qian Serena...Liza Dennis
Bill...Tasker Streete
Man Moving...Stuart Kortum Kong...Chris Pang
Taxi Driver...Avinder
Couple under bridge...
Jacinta Palmer &
Christian Kloukinas
Man at ATM...Daniel Yu
Sally's Friend...Karen
Zhang Danny...Ocean Yu
Hero (Voice)...Zheng Fei Oliver He
Jenny Chan...Christine Cao
Client 1...Danniella Armstrong
Ben...Anthony Couroupis
Woman Moving...Lauren Saylor
Kevin...Matthew Hong
Andrew...Joshua Ongso
May...Annabelle Kong
John Simkins...Jim Daly
Salon Man...Ryan Heath
Sally...Hanna Jones
Salon Client 2...Rebecca Harris
Alan...Kevin Tran
Crew

Director, Executive Producer: Sky Crompton
Cinematographer...Daniel Yun
Production Manager...Ashley Dean Wilde
1st Assistant Director...Christian Kloukinas
Post Production Sup...A. D. Fleming
Original Music...Tim Trappett
Script Editor...Christian Kloukinas
Dance Choreographer...Alta Truden
First A D...Christian Kloukinas
Runner...Joao Oliveiva
Production Assistant...Ellen Zhou
Location Assistant...Vivien Yi
Continuity & Interpreter...Annie Gou
Sound Designer...Evan Kitchener
Dramaturge...Andrew Gilbert
Stage Choreographer
Second A D...Daniel Higgins
Production Secretary...Jenni Koski
Location Scout...Daniel Higgins
Continuity Consultant...Helena Deluise
Ass Continuity & Interpreter...Zhihong Li (Richard)
Japanese Dialogue Coach...Kazuko Tasaki
Gaffer...Adam Grikepelis
Camera Ass...Doug Gordon Joao Oliveiva
Location Sound Recordist...Ron Hornbuckle
Boom Operators…Helen McGrath Sharon
Consulting Production Designer…Julie Bell Wright Ross Hubbard
Production Designer…Rebecca Harris
Art Department Assistant…Tommie McSweeney
Art Department Assistant…Dave Fairclough
Art Department Assistant…Ross Hubbard
Art Department Runner…Nick
Costume Supervisor…Emma Carpion Unit Wardrobe Ass…Elise BeggsDuncan Make-Up Artist/s…Courtney
Yasmin Aksu Tara Anderson Storyboards…Dan Yun
Security…Dominic Paglia
Michael McGlade
Assistant Editors…Michael Mulgrue Alta Truden Ash Wild Daniel Youn Colorist…Belinda Filthie
Designer…Evan Kitchener
Back Up Wardrobe…Fulvio Cabrera
Hairdressers…Maria Teolilo Marie Mihail Unit Manager…Daniel Higgins
Unit Assistant…Charlotte
Stills Photographer…Tika Platis
Data Wrangler…Michael Mulgrue
Editing Consultant…Matthew Rooke Subtitles…Annie Gou
Compositing…Darren Bell
ADR Recording…Chris and Robert Smellin & Lorienne Young
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