

## Chicken Poets

A film by Meng JingHui

China 2002 production

35mm, 1.85:1 Color

94 minutes

The final generation of idealists in China are already in their thirties. How are they going to face their lives, and how are they going to face a world that is greatly different than the world of their childhood?

### **Synopsis:**

Yun Fei is an unsuccessful poet who comes to a small village on the outskirts of Beijing to visit an old poet friend, Chen Xiaoyang.

Yun Fei discovers that his friend has become a successful businessman, operating a black chicken hennery in town, and that he dreams of replacing all the white eggs on the dining tables in Beijing with the more nutritious black eggs.

Yun Fei encounters a series of absurd and unfortunate incidences in this quirky little village, and meets an odd and lonely girl named Fang Fang. Fang Fang, who is color-blind, dreams of leaving her small black and white village and eventually falls in love with the poet. But Fang Fang's love cannot motivate Yun Fei to succeed in life, however much his poetry has made great changes to the small town. By chance, Yun Fei purchases a pirated CD which he discovers possesses a magical power that can help him succeed.

Yun Fei becomes famous overnight. But he finds that his situation in life does not improve as a result. His cheerful friend, Chen Xiaoyang, disappears unexpectedly, the black chickens come down with an unknown illness, and Yun Fei becomes depressed and tired of being a poet.

He abandons the CD in a pile of chicken feces, drives away Fang Fang whom he truly loves, and retreats alone to the abandoned hennery.

In his sleep he dreams of an ostrich, the magical CD, and the chicken feces being planted in a rice field, giving rise to a large tree. The tree is full of beautiful poetry, and he and Fang Fang happily pick the poetry off the magical tree..

**Director:**

35-year-old Meng Jinghui is an influential and popular director of the drama genre who carries the cultural flag for the young generation. He has directed more than ten plays, including: "Si Fan", "The Balcony", "I Love XXX", "The Accidental Death of an Anarchist", "Rhinoceros in Love", and "Bootleg Faust" during the last decade of the twentieth century. Each of his plays resounded through the film community and drew great praise and acclaim. He was named "the director "In fact, Mr. Meng deserves much credit for the remarkable resurgence of spoken drama" ("The New York Times").

"Chicken Poets" is the first cinematographic work directed by Meng Jinghui, which has a similar style as his dramatic works, and is full of black humor, bitter poeticism, sharp criticism of reality, and deep metaphors.

**Actors:**

Qin Hailu:

An up-and-coming young star in the Chinese film industry, Qin Hailu played the leading role in the play "Bedbug", directed by Meng Jinghui. She won the best actress award in the Hong Kong Gold Redbud Awards, the Best New Comer Award in 2000 Hong Kong Academy Awards, and the Best Actress Award in 2000 Hong Kong Critics Awards. She was also was nominated for the Best Actress Award in Hong Kong Academy Awards with her performance in "Durian,Durian" , the Best Actress Award in 57th Venice Film Festival, as well as the Best Actress Award in 2000 Asia-Pacific Film Festival.

Chen Jianbin:

A well-known drama actor, Chen Jianbin has played the leading role in many of Meng Jinghui's plays, including "The Accidental Death of an Anarchist", "Amatory Ants", and "Bootleg Faust", as well as other cinematographic and television works. He won the most popular actor award in the Film Festival of College Students with his leading role in the movie "Chrysanthemum Tea".

## **Narration by Director**

The final generation of idealists in China has already reached their thirties.

First, this is a movie about that generation of people. The birth time of that generation of people has decided the idealistic attitude from these people regarding the world. However, after they grown up, the arrival of commercial society is like a rushing torrent sweeping out the value, moral, and standard of society known to them, which has completely changed every thing. How are they going to face this changed and new world that is different than their childhood time? Their worries and hesitations are the stories of the poet in the movie.

The protagonist of the movie is a poet. Our poet seems to be weak and indecisive. He seems to be powerless, and, yet, he has an internal force stirring his heart.

The unsuccessful poet comes to a small town near the airport at the outskirts of Beijing. The small town in the movie is a fictitious scene. We are not pursuing after its reality but are after its trueness. It represents the nature of the developing China—locating at the border of city and countryside, which possesses all the features of urban and rural integration. The urban scenes often use night scene, expressing the beautiful and apathetic outer shell of city. These two senses of reality—the nature and outer shell jointly form the environment and the background of the poet.

Whether it is a description of the small town, hennery, or the poet, the movie is neither a record of actual event nor reality. The most prominent features of this movie are its poetic quality and style. The movie emphasizes the self-internal conflict of the characters, the conflict of want to leave and stay, the conflict between weak and strong, and the conflict between reality and dream. In this movie, people and environment maintain a high contract, with them staying in opposition throughout the entire movie. Characters often stay in a lightless and relatively gloomy state, showing a strong contrast with the environment. Many fluorescent lights are used for lighting, creating a cool whitish, grayish, and cold effect. The camera has many motional shots, using the express of emotions and inner world of the

protagonist as its principle. Additionally, the film will use drama techniques to complete some special scenes, making the style of the film even stronger.

Uncanny, intensive, pungent, and black!