



75th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Generation

燃比娃

A STORY ABOUT FIRE

2025 – CHINA – ANIMATION, ADVENTURE,
FANTASY – MANDARIN – 85'

COLOR – DCP – 1.85:1 – DOLBY DIGITAL
CHINESE & ENGLISH SUBTITLES

LOGLINE

RANBIWA, a monkey that raised by human tribe, was heading towards the Holy Mountain to steal the fire for mankind. At the end of the journey, he went through Nirvana in fire and turned into a man.



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SYNOPSIS

Based on an ancient Qiang myth, the minority group residing in the mountainous area in southwest China, *A Story About Fire* tells the story of a monkey who grew up in an ancient human tribe, following the footsteps of his mother, AWUBAJI to the Holy Mountain to find the secret of "warmth". After going through hardships and perils, he got the fire stone from the mouth of the "Beast of Fear". His hair was burned off and he became a human being after Nirvana.

Rendered in the 2D hand-drawn Traditional Chinese Ink Painting style, the film adopts captivating visual style and poetically envisions an enigmatic primitive society. Through the tale of the fire stealer, the film poignantly revisits the timeless themes of growth and companionship, which feel increasingly precious in the atomistic modern society. Famous Chinese actors ZHOU Xun and YANG Haoyu dubbed the main characters, adding another layer of charm to the film.

This film marks the strong return of the legendary Shanghai Animation Film Studio, the birthplace of many iconic Chinese animations.



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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This film is a humorous and witty 2D hand-drawn animation based on the ancient Qiang myth RANBIWA Steals Fire. While the original story follows a traditional narrative style, I wanted to reimagine it with a modern twist, using a multi-threaded narrative structure. The art style takes cues from traditional Chinese ink painting, blending poetic visuals with a sense of mystery.

The storytelling leans on animation's authentic language, aiming to create a film that embraces the true essence of animation - a pure and authentic animated experience.

Story & Characters

To me, every legendary tale may have its roots in something simple and ordinary. With this animated feature, I aim not only to bring the legend to life but also to explore the deeper truths that might lie behind it.

The main characters in this film are a monkey and a wolf. The monkey, RANBIWA, is tasked with retrieving "the Mystic." He is not a typical hero - he is full of fear when facing the unknown. But something mysterious keeps pulling him forward. RANBIWA represents the fearless spirit of exploration in humanity's ancestors while also reflecting the ordinary individuals like you and me.



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Unlike the original legend, this film introduces a new and important character: a wolf named DOGGIE, RANBIWA's loyal companion. The monkey symbolizes the ancestor of humans, while the wolf represents the ancestor of dogs, showcasing the ancient partnership between humans and canines and the deep emotional bond they've shared for centuries. Dogs aren't just companions, they're family. This theme is especially personal, inspired by my dog, who was a loyal companion for over a decade before passing away recently.

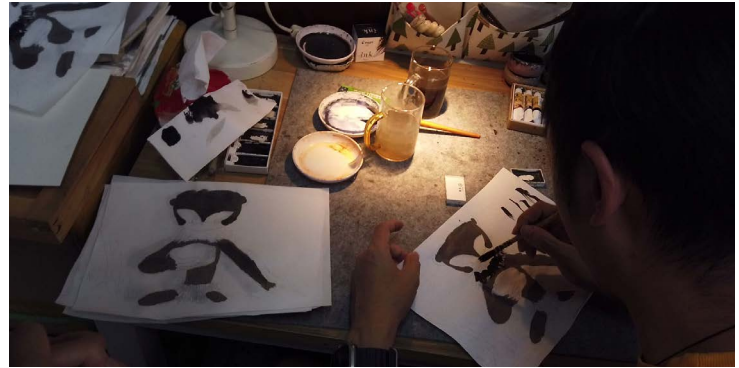
Core Concept of the White Stone

The Qiang people have a tradition of worshiping white stones. In this film, the white stone symbolizes the treasure that Ran Bi Wa discovers after facing countless challenges. However, as revealed early in the story, this treasure had been with the human tribe all along. It serves as a reminder that the things we tirelessly pursue in life might already be right in front of us, waiting to be seen and appreciated.

Artistic Styles

1. 2D Hand-Drawn Animation and Traditional Chinese Ink Painting Style

Since the story is rooted in folklore, with its setting, characters, and narrative being entirely imaginative, 2D animation is the perfect medium. It provides unparalleled creative freedom, unbound by perspective, structure, or spatial limits, allowing viewers to immerse themselves fully in the story.



Hand-drawn animation was chosen over digital drawing for two reasons: to achieve a distinctive, stylized look and to leverage the expressive power of brushstrokes, textures, and materials in conveying emotions and atmosphere. The story has a raw, untamed, and earthy quality. To reflect this, the film adopts a traditional Chinese ink painting style, incorporating the brushstrokes and colors of ink painting to create visuals that align with the story's tone and aesthetic.

2. Evolving Color with Mood and Exaggerated Action Design

The film's color palette shifts dynamically with the progression of the story, reflecting the emotional journey of the characters:

In moments of struggle, the snowfields are portrayed in cold, desolate tones to evoke a sense of isolation. Upon reaching the sea of flowers after overcoming challenges, vibrant and lively colors reflect the protagonists' joy and excitement. During the climactic battle with the "Beast of Fear," bold, exaggerated colors heighten the tension and drama, creating a visual crescendo.

The film weaves in segments of experimental animation, including morphing sequences, loops, and abstract visuals. These techniques aim to showcase the unique possibilities of 2D and hand-drawn animation, offering audiences a fresh perspective on its artistic potential.



The character movements are intentionally exaggerated, breaking away from the predictable patterns of conventional animation. These dynamic, rhythmic actions – alternating between tension and release – give the story a unique energy. The pacing of the narrative is equally important, ensuring it remains engaging throughout.

3. Unconventional Storytelling

The film takes a fresh approach to traditional storytelling. For example, instead of showing characters getting lost and finding their way through conventional methods like markers or landmarks, it uses a Möbius strip to visually represent a sense of being trapped in a loop. As the strip unravels, the characters discover the right path. This creative approach not only makes the story more intuitive but also adds a layer of visual intrigue.

4. Music with Deep Cultural Roots

With minimal dialogue, music and sound design play a crucial role in the storytelling. The score combines the haunting melodies of the Qiang flute with the rhythmic intensity of Sichuan drums. This blend creates a unique auditory experience that enhances the film's atmosphere.



ABOUT LI WENYU – Director



Li Wenyu graduated from Peking University (China), where he was mentored by Kexuan Ma. He is currently a professor specializing in Animation and Digital Art at Sichuan University. His animated short films have won numerous international awards, including those from the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Warsaw Film Festival, and other international events. His works have also qualified for the Academy Awards.

Filmography

Ran Bi Wa [A Story About Fire], 2025, 85 mins, Animation
Gong Jiao Che [A Bus], 2019, 7 mins, Animation
Yin [Oh & Yeah], 2017, 2 mins, Animation
Xiang Du [Go to City ELE], 2015, 10 mins, Animation
Wu Ya [Raven], 2013, 1 min, Animation



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DUBBINGCAST

RANBIWA by **YANG Haoyu**
AWUBAJI by **ZHOU Xun**
RANBIWA (YOUNG) by **BEI Yile**
DOGGIE by **KANG Chunlei**

ZHOU Xun is a renowned Chinese actress and singer, acclaimed for her versatile performances in films such as *Suzhou River* (2000) and *The Equation of Love and Death* (2008). She has received multiple Best Actress awards, including from the Golden Rooster Awards, the Hong Kong Film Awards, and the Golden Horse Awards, establishing her as one of China's most esteemed actresses.



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CREW

PRESENTED by **Shanghai Flim Group
Shanghai Animation Film
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CO-PRESENTED by **Midnight Blur Films**

PRESENTER **WANG Jun**
CO-PRESENTER **ZHAO Jin**
CHIEF PLANNER **XU Chunping**
CHIEF SUPERVISOR **SU Da**
CHIEF PRODUCER **CHEN Bo**
PRODUCER &
PLANNER **WANG Anyi**
PRODUCER **SU Donghai**
CO-PRODUCER **ZHAO Jin**
DISTRIBUTOR **LI Jin**
SOUND DIRECTOR **HUANG Lei**
MUSIC DIRECTOR **WILD CHILDREN
ZHANG Quan**
LINE PRODUCER &
SCREENWRITER **ZOU Yuchen**
BUSINESS PRODUCER **ZHOU Yue**



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& INTERNATIONAL SALES

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