



75th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition

想
飞
的
女孩



GIRLS ON WIRE

a film by Vivian Qu
starring Liu Haocun Wen Qi

also starring Zhang Youhao Liu Yitie Peng Jing Jian Kang special starring Yang Haoyu Zhou You guest starring Geng Le

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2025 - China - Drama - 114 min

Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1 // Picture: Color // Sound: 5.1 // Screening Format: DCP

In Mandarin with English Subtitles

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Crew

Director & Screenplay	Vivian Qu
Produced by	L'Avventura Films J.Q. Spring Pictures
Producer	Sean Chen
Producer	Qin Hong, Xu Jiahan
Executive Producer	Ying Hua
Co-Producer	Mike Downey
Cinematography	Zhang Chaoyi
Lighting	Chi-Ming Wong
Editing	Yang Hongyu
Music	Wen Zi
Sound Design	Yang Jiang, Zhao Nan
Production Design	Li Xiaoliang
Action Choreographer	Liu Mingzhe

Cast

Starring	Liu Haocun (Tian Tian) Wen Qi (Fang Di)
Co-starring	Zhang Youhao (Ming) Zhou You (Tian Tian's Dad) Peng Jing (Fang Di's Mother) Yang Haoyu (Bin) Liu Yitie (Tie) Geng Le (Mr. Hu)



Synopsis

Cousins Tian Tian and Fang Di were raised like sisters until family struggles pushed them apart. Fang Di moves away to work as a stuntwoman in China's largest film studios to clear her family's debts. Tian Tian remains behind, forced to deal with her father's addiction, and falls prey to the local mafia. Forced to escape to the Film City, Tian Tian seeks out her cousin. Thrown together against their will and followed by the mob, they will need to combine their strength and resilience to escape a dramatic fate that threatens to consume them both.

Interview with Vivian Qu

Can you tell us where the idea of GIRLS ON WIRE came from?

In the summer of 2018 I visited Chongqing, the megalopolis in southwest China. I interviewed a handful of families who belonged to the first generation of garment business owners in the 1990s – a time when China was moving fast towards a market driven economy. The typical practice at the time was to buy samples of the hottest Hong Kong fashion through Guangzhou, and to manufacture knock-offs in their family factory. Dreaming of a life in prosperity, the business owners often competed fiercely and took reckless gambles. My interviews with them produced stories of blood and sweat, of miracles and disillusionment, of battling the system and vice, of drugs, bankruptcy, and lives lost. I began to understand better this Gotham City, best known for not only its red chili hotpot but also its hot-blooded people. In their old Kodachrome photos, I saw the vibrant colors of 1990s fashion. I also saw children – crawling on top of fabric piles, doing homework in crowded wholesale markets, sleeping in moving vans - lonely children because their parents were too busy to properly take care of them, lonely children whose cousins were their closest “siblings” (single-child generation) and friends. These children have since grown up. Carrying scars from the past, they struggle to make a better future for themselves. They have their own dreams. I decided to focus on a pair of cousins to tell the story.

One of the most striking aspects of GIRLS ON WIRE is the intertwining of time frames. How did you conceive this? How much of the final result was in the script already, and how much was done in the editing?

I wanted to tell the lifelong story of the cousins, but I was also intrigued by the Film City studio setting where Fang Di works. So, very early on I decided to have two timelines in my story - one is the final three days the cousins spent together (in the Film City and beyond), the other is the various key moments of their lives. I wanted each timeline to complement the other, providing “clues” to our quest to the truth about their lives. I tried to focus on the emotional entanglement between the cousins, which I believe provides the perfect thread weaving through a complex family history and the girls’ personal struggles.



I wanted the emotions to flow from one moment to the next, carrying the right theme, mood, and energy, regardless of present or past, just like in poetry. The final result is very close to the intentions of the script.

Can you talk about the two locations where the story takes place, the city where Tian Tian and Fang Di grew up and the Film City?

I shot the film in two cities, Chongqing for the memory part, and Xiangshan Film City on the east coast, a place for many costume dramas - both TV and film productions. For me, they are both “city of dreams”. If you had traveled to Chongqing in recent years, you’d be stunned by the myriads of neon-lit skyscrapers built on rocky hills with metro trains cutting through them. It’s Fritz Lang’s Metropolis built over a mere 30 years. In contrast to the Film City, where everything is fake and meant to be fake, here everything is real - blood and sweat, the price to pay for realizing one’s dreams. Fake or real, they have something in common - they are forever the stage for human dramas, be it tragedy or comedy, the curtain is always up.



The film’s Chinese title literally means “the girls who want to fly” whereas the English title is GIRLS ON WIRE. Can you elaborate on them?

Wires, visible on Fang Di and invisible on Tian Tian, are metaphors for the challenges women are still facing today. We wish to break free from the wires that bind us, but at the same time we depend on the wires for security. Such is our relationship with family, society, memory, and history.

In a world that operates on power, even within a family, women are often the first ones to make sacrifices. Generational trauma, the way in which women have to carry not just their own dreams but those of their families, have not diminished over time. Tian Tian and Fang Di, each chooses their own way to fight for freedom.

How did you visually conceive the way to show the different time periods?

I asked my set and costume designers to do meticulous research about the 1990s and early 2000s décor and fashion. Drawing inspirations from many old photos and videos, they built and decorated the

set of the factory/home where the cousins grew up with many authentic items from the time. When the film cuts to different periods of their life, we can feel an organic evolution of the family situation over time. The only item that remains throughout and is taken away only at the end of the film, is the old chiming clock.

In my studio I still keep a 13-inch color TV from the 1980s. It was the first TV set my family ever owned. 4:3 is the aspect ratio of nostalgia. I want not only my characters but also the audience to look at the past through this small window. It creates distance and intimacy at the same time.

There is a deliberate mix of movie genres with a dramatization of a social situation in China – and probably not only in China. Can you elaborate on this mix of genres?

The world is like a big stage, but the shows it puts on are not organized by genre. This has been increasingly the case in recent years. We live in a time that witnesses horrific war and political farce at the same time, 21 st century technology used to impose barbaric control over people. We need to employ a great deal of effort to make sense of the absurdity that defines our living experience. I want my film to reflect this feeling and not be confined by the boundaries of storytelling.

The crow plays a significant role in the film. Does it have any significant meaning in Chinese culture?

In ancient Chinese mythology, the crow was considered a sacred bird who drives the carriage for the Sun. When bathed in sunlight, its feathers look golden. But over the course of two thousand years they have been gradually stigmatized as bearers of bad luck. We can see a similar narrative in the history of women.

Will the film be released in China?

It will be released in China on March 8, International Women's Day.



Vivian Qu

Writer, director and producer, Vivian Qu made her directorial debut with *TRAP STREET* which premiered at the 2013 Venice Critics Weeks. Her second feature *ANGELS WEAR WHITE* was in Competition at the 2017 Venice Film Festival and won numerous awards around the globe. She is the only female director to ever win Best Director Award at both the Golden Horse Awards and the China Film Director's Guild Awards. Vivian Qu is also a renowned producer. In 2014, she produced *BLACK COAL, THIN ICE*, which won the Golden Bear and a Silver Bear at the 64th Berlin Film Festival. Vivian Qu has served on the international jury at Venice Film Festival, Berlin Film Festival, and Shanghai International Film Festival, as well as President of the Jury at the 55th Antalya International Film Festival.

Liu Haocun

Liu Haocun entered the public eye in 2019 as the leading actress in Zhang Yimou's Berlinale Competition entry *One Second*. Her performance earned her the Best Newcomer Award at the 15th Asian Film Awards. After appearing in another Zhang Yimou film *Cliff Walkers*, in 2020 she was nominated for Best Actress at the 34th Golden Rooster Awards for her role in *A Little Red Flower*, and won the Best New Performer Award at the 30th Huading Awards. She has appeared in other notable films including *Ride On*, playing opposite Jackie Chan.

Wen Qi

Wen Qi (aka Vicky Chen) was 12 years old when she was discovered by Vivian Qu to play the 16-year-old leading role in Venice Competition title *Angels Wear White* (2017). Her performance not only garnered her a Golden Horse nomination but also a Best Actress win at the 54th Antalya International Film Festival. The same year she won the Best Supporting Actress Award at the 54th Golden Horse Awards for *The Bold, the Corrupt, and the Beautiful*. In 2023 she directed the short film *Questions to Heaven* which premiered at the 25th Shanghai International Film Festival and received Best Short Film Award at the Pingyao Film Festival.

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