

# The Last Emperor

REVISITED

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## THE LAST EMPEROR · JEREMY THOMAS

**When** I look at the film *The Last Emperor* today, I have no idea how it all happened!

Making the film was a four-year process, taken a day at a time. And it all started with a phone call from Bernardo. He had seen *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*, saw the ambition in the production and asked if we could have lunch together. Also, I was friendly with his wife Clare Peploe and her brother Mark Peploe. I suggested Lee Ho Fook, a restaurant in Chinatown near my office in Soho. I was just ordering the food when Bernardo said: "It's so strange you chose a Chinese restaurant, you must have had a premonition because I want to make a film in China, mainly in the Forbidden City." Bernardo then gave me two books on the life of Pu Yi, which were subsequently adapted into the screenplay for *The Last Emperor*.

Getting shooting permissions from the Chinese authorities was a very long and difficult process, while raising the finance and keeping the development going was like entering a dark tunnel. We then had to spend six months to prepare and film in China without a break, but out of the tunnel came this beautiful film.

I have now totally forgotten all the nightmares, and I just think about what an extraordinary experience it was to be in China at the beginning of the 'open door' policy, and be allowed to make that film there with a filmmaker like Bernardo, with whom I continued to enjoy a wonderful working relationship and friendship for more than thirty years and six movies. So that was a key point for me in my life and career, and in fact it was 10 per cent of my life that it took to make the film at that time.

The theme of *The Last Emperor* was one often explored in films. Can a person change? Is it really possible for somebody to change? Ours was the story of a 3-year-old child who was proclaimed emperor of China, the 'Son of Heaven' born to rule over a quarter of the world, who died 60 years later as an ordinary gardener. It was an irresistible and grand epic idea, and a story that wanted to be told, so we came and we told the story.

Producing the film was terrifying because it was much bigger than anything I had done before; it was simply on a whole different scale of filmmaking. The budget for *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* was around five million dollars and it was 25 million dollars for *The Last Emperor*, so the scope of the film was five times bigger. There was also some resistance from within the industry because Bernardo's previous films, *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man* and *La Luna*, had





not done big business at the box office. *Merry Christmas* was a success for me, but it wasn't in the same league of the 'success' a 25 million dollar movie was expected to produce.

But somehow people came, ranging from an English merchant bank, to a French company and then a Japanese company, one by one, investors came to believe in the film. I made wonderful

presentation books and travelled around the world raising money, and finally found enough money to start the movie.

There was an approval process of Mark Peploe's screenplay with the Chinese authorities, but it was less difficult than working with the western studio system. They only made minor script notes and references to change some of the names, then the official stamps went on and the door opened, and we came in and set to work. The authorities in Beijing gave us their full support, from providing studio space to the assistance of the army and, crucially, allowing us access to the Forbidden City in all its splendour.

When you make films in foreign countries, you need to find the mercenary warriors to help you make the film, because no man is an island and you need to work with the experts. The best artists came to work with us on *The Last Emperor*, including cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, production designer Ferdinando Scarfiotti, and James Acheson the costume designer. So our army was a group of celebrated professionals with a tremendous amount of support from the Chinese and Italian film industries in general. Because of the historically close cultural ties between the two countries, the Italian and the local Chinese crews really bonded, not least over the eternal debate over whether noodles or pasta came first. In fact the Italians in Beijing were very helpful, while the British Council and British Embassy, were by contrast rather 'hands off' when we arrived there, although they later sought to claim some credit for the project.

Watching Bernardo work, he liked to spend years investigating a film as he sought to understand everything – from details such as how the knives and forks or chopsticks were used, to what the food was like, even what people had in their cupboards. He wanted to know

everything about the characters, not necessarily to show it on screen, but he wanted to know all there is to know about them. So every little detail and every idea in *The Last Emperor* had been examined and analysed by the time he arrived in China to make the film.

Despite the scope and scale of the film, Bernardo worked in his usual way, without storyboarding or planning shots, instead following the naturalism of the moment. And he did this without ever compromising the production schedule; for example, he filmed the epic sequence of the coronation of the child emperor Pu Yi in the Courtyard and Hall of Supreme Harmony in only three days.

The difficult thing for me about the success of that film was that it was a difficult film to emulate, and I have never climbed to the pinnacle of that type of filmmaking again since.

Bernardo and I made two more epic movies together, *The Sheltering Sky*, and *Little Buddha*, and I don't know how one would have made those films in the independent arena today. It was before the age of CGI, there were no digital shots, and we filmed with real people. Today you would probably just shoot it on an LED stage and 'paint' in the crowds afterwards, as it would not be economically viable or even practical to dress thousands of people as extras as we did back then.

Columbia ended up distributing the film in America, and it was nominated and won nine Academy Awards. Amazingly for today's age of diversity, none of the actors were nominated.

It can be a curse, the Academy Award! You think it's meaningless until you get nominated for one, and I believed in it that year. Bernardo's acceptance speech said it all: "If New York is the big apple, Hollywood is the big nipple." Everybody was very confused about this, and then backstage, the press asked: "Excuse me, Mr Bertolucci, what did you mean by the big nipple?". Bernardo said, "Because tonight I drank the milk of Hollywood." I felt the same.

Bernardo casted Basil Pao as Prince Chun, and he was one of Bernardo's 3rd assistant directors in Beijing. At my invitation, he captured the filming with his stills camera. I sent him to find Confucius' birthplace with Peter O'Toole when RJ's filming ended. Then he re-joined us in Beijing and Italy as a Special Stills Photographer with the aim of publishing a book of his pictures from the film. Though we came close in 1987, the book never materialised until now. This has been a very long journey for my friend 'Principe Chun'.

## CAN A MAN CHANGE? BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI ON THE LIFE OF PU YI

**Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi** was one of the most extraordinary anti-hero characters of modern times, whose life encapsulated the most tumultuous century of change in contemporary Chinese history. His story can either be described as the metamorphosis of an individual who changed from a Dragon to a Man, from an Emperor to a Citizen, or as a journey from Darkness to Light. All my previous films were journeys from light towards darkness; *The Last Emperor* goes the opposite way.

Kidnapped on a gust of wind by history at the age of three, Pu Yi was set on the Dragon Throne in 1908 as the 11th Qing emperor—'The Son of Heaven' and 'The Lord of Ten Thousand Years'—to rule over almost a third of the world's population as the supreme monarch of China.

Three years later he was forced to abdicate when revolution swept away 2,000 years of imperial rule and ushered in China's first Republic under President Sun Yat Sen. And while Sun struggled to control the tournament of warlords in the chaotic years that followed, the former Qing emperor was allowed to retain his title and the Imperial Court remained inside the northern half of the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace.

As a child, Pu Yi grew up surrounded by high consorts, courtiers and over 1,500 eunuchs. Even after the collapse of the dynasty and his abdication Pu Yi was still treated as a divinity, free to do almost anything he wanted... except to live in the present or set foot beyond his palaces. For Pu Yi, to be Emperor was not a game, it was *reality*. Nevertheless, and unwittingly, he had been cast as the lead actor in an elaborate play performed on the largest stage on earth, in which the other actors conspired to keep the reality from him. However, later on when he discovered the true reality that he was no longer the emperor, Pu Yi continued to play the game and lived on in the Forbidden City for many years knowing he was an actor in an empty theatre long ago abandoned by the audience.

In his book *From Emperor to Citizen*, Pu Yi described how from early infancy he was accustomed to having people *kowtow* to him, particularly those more than ten times his age, including old officials of the Qing dynasty and elders of his own clan. In this respect Pu Yi was not responsible but a victim of circumstance, an oriental *Peter Pan* floating like a cork on the stream of history. He also became like a clinical case, addicted to the image of people *kowtowing* to power and omnipotence; and his life became conditioned by this constant need.

This elaborate charade finally collapsed in 1924 when Pu Yi, then 18 and married with two wives, was expelled from the Forbidden City by the latest 'Republican' warlord who captured





Jin Yuan was sure that Pu Yi's first experience of real freedom would change him conclusively.

It's hard to understand this kind of strategy. Why did Pu Yi's jailer take such a decision? In prison Pu Yi was forced to face his own personality—and being forced to meditate upon and confronting his true self was in fact his real punishment. What or who was Pu Yi after all? He had what we call the *Peter Pan syndrome*, an eternal child who refuses to grow up. He didn't want to grow up because the child had been the all-powerful being. When he was forced to grow up, his power had faded away. Only by staying a child could he remain all-powerful.

All children think they can kill, cancel and resuscitate with their mind, but for Pu Yi such fantasies had become reality. He had played at emperor from the age of three to ten years of age, but when he opened his eyes he was simply the sovereign of an empty theatre beyond which he was doomed to be a nobody, and his whole life had taken place inside that cage. At that moment he knew that the price of 'all powerfulness' was freedom.

The Pu Yi released in 1959 was certainly a different man from the one who entered the Fushun prison ten years earlier. He was absolutely free for the first time in his life, just another man in the street where he could ride a bicycle, eat in a restaurant or take a bus. Perhaps he had learned something as a student of Marxism, but it was when he had to confront and resolve the simplest day-to-day things that he realised that he had changed. He became a gardener in the Beijing Botanical Gardens, married again and travelled around China, which to him was virtually a foreign country, and in 1963 his book became a best-seller.

All in all, the story of Pu Yi, from dragon to man, from emperor to citizen, could be summed up as follows. In Chinese tradition the emperor is the total expression of the collective—the first to sow and the first to reap—and ideally the model for all citizens.

In his contradictory existence Pu Yi never succeeded in being that. Only when he became an ordinary man after re-education did he perhaps become a model citizen. So was it then, in Mao's new China, that every model citizen could somehow achieve the status and the essence of the emperor, resulting in the creation of billions of *emperors*?

Jean Cocteau once said: "I've always preferred mythology to history. History is truth that becomes an illusion; mythology is an illusion that become reality." And in the story of Pu Yi, the last emperor, one cannot ignore mythology.

Compiled and edited from interviews with Bernardo Bertolucci on *The Last Emperor*.



## PAINTING WITH LIGHT · VITTORIO STORARO

**Before** I begin a film, I always sit down with the script and create my own scenario in colour and light. This process is an important discipline, as I try to give a kind of wave to the entire script scene by scene that's linked together in a very emotional way. I can take the script and say 'here I need this kind of light or this feeling of light', or 'here it might be better to play the scene at night rather than day', and suggest to the director that this might produce a much stronger emotion for a certain scene.

Then after looking at the location, following that particular feeling of light, I can have the basic structure without knowing where the camera will be. I can imagine what Bernardo will do because I know him so well, but I am going strictly from a feeling for the sequence, for the set and what I want to achieve with the lighting. Then I think 'maybe I need an arc outside the window, maybe I need some bounced light or whatever. Only when I've gone through the entire script and done my scenario of colour and light—and after talking with the production designer and the costume designer and trying to link this movement of colour together—will I be ready to start work.

For *The Last Emperor*, I tried to visualise Pu Yi's life through the colour spectrum, with his evolution as a journey towards the light of knowledge. The cinematography of the film incorporates the relationship between life and light by dividing the various stages of Pu Yi's life and their differing sensations and the emotions evoked by differing colours in the course of a psychological journey that he was forced to undertake through revolution, war, prison and re-education in the new People's Republic of China.

The colour Red is associated with Pu Yi's birth as emperor when, on a dark night lit by flickering torches he was removed from his mother's arms. The Orange rays of the morning sun represent the colour of Pu Yi's childhood within Beijing's Forbidden City. Yellow, the colour that symbolises China's Imperial dominion, represents his conscious power over all the country's citizens when he was crowned emperor.

Green represents his introduction to a new age of knowledge when as a teenager he was educated by his English tutor Reginald Johnston. Blue represents freedom when Pu Yi - The Lord of Ten Thousand Years, was driven out of the Forbidden City having been *liberated* by



China's new warlords. Indigo was used to represent Pu Yi's second coronation when the Qing dynasty was restored as Manchukuo by the Japanese empire. The colour Violet represents Pu Yi's consciousness, the introspection of his behaviour as emperor and as a man.

The inner journey Pu Yi undertakes with the help of the governor of the detention centre where he was held, from his birth to his imprisonment, contains the metaphor of moving from Black to White, where the Son of Heaven becomes a new Son of the Earth.

My colour vision is inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Theory of Colours, on the psychological effects that different colours have and the way they influence our perceptions. For example, it is scientifically proven that blood pressure goes up in the presence of red while with blue it goes down. Colour itself only exists as a vibration in energy on one specific wavelength. It should be a kind of feeling, and should not be understandable. Using this colour theory I seek to give the audience the ability to feel the story.

While the director uses camera movements, angles and lenses to express himself, light and shadow are my instruments. And for this film I tried to visualise light as knowledge. At the beginning of the film, when the young emperor is being kept away from knowledge I try to keep him out of the direct beam of light, there's always the umbrella of the eunuch or some other material at the window that obstructs his view each time he seeks to discover something new—knowledge—illuminated by light.

When R.J. brings knowledge I bring light, and for the first time Pu Yi is lit by the sun's rays. But when you have direct light you also create shadows. From Johnston to Tientsin and Changchun shadows become more and more important, eventually overpowering the light. Through this conflict between light and shadow I sought to articulate the evolution of the story.

In prison, when Pu Yi thinks back on his past, I try to have the light and shadow separated to help us understand that he is changing. In the end when Pu Yi is pardoned, we have white snow, with no shadows. Light and shadow are no longer in conflict, they are in harmony. At the end of the picture Pu Yi has gone through the entire range of emotions as a human being to reach the balance of light—the white light.

Compiled and edited from Storaro's introduction for Basil Pao's book *Blazing Shadows* and from excerpts of an interview with Storaro by Ann Tasker from *The Last Emperor* production notes.



CHAPTER ONE · THE FILMING

PU YI · AGE 3 · SON OF HEAVEN · EMPEROR OF CHINA





Richard Vuu and Bernardo Bertolucci faced the international media during the busiest day of filming in the vast Coronation scene. While an extra waited for the filming to resume.

SCENE 102. A BRAND NEW TENNIS COURT · LOCATION: THE FORBIDDEN CITY



Joan Chen as Empress *Wan Jung* was exceptionally beautiful on the day the new warlord Feng Yu Xiang's army interrupted their game of tennis and expelled Pu Yi's family and the Qing Imperial Court from the Forbidden City for good.



1

1. The Maestro instructing his star on the sidelines. 2. Pu Yi watched the soldiers come pouring down from the terraces onto the 'Brand New Tennis Court'.



2



*Soldier-extras* guarding the Prisoner-extras in the Fushun Prison relaxing on the back-lot of Beijing Film Studios.



The recreation of the Cultural Revolution in their neighbourhood brought back powerful and frightening memories for some of the older residents of the *hu'tungs* where we filmed. And after three days, our Cultural Revolution ended, along with the last day of filming in Beijing, on 19th November 1986.

SCENE 187. THE BOTANICAL GARDENS OF BEIJING



Seven years after his release from prison, *Pu Yi* became an ordinary citizen and one of the head gardeners of the Botanical Gardens in Beijing. He died at the age of 61 in 1967.



1



2



3

1.2. **EXTRAS** FROM SCENE 38 IN THE COURTYARD OF VILLA CHUN ON THE BACK-LOT OF BEIJING FILM STUDIOS.  
3. **EXTRAS** FROM SCENE 47 THE 'LONG RED AVENUE', IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY.



**AN EXTRA** FROM SCENE 47 DURING LUNCH BREAK ON THE 'LONG RED AVENUE' IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY.



A QUIET MOMENT ON THE 'VERANDAH OUTSIDE THE EMPEROR QUARTERS' FOR ACTOR **CARY-HIROYUKI TAGAWA**.





**VITTORIO STORARO** TOOK A WELL-EARNED REST NEAR THE 'BRAND NEW TENNIS COURT' SET IN SCENE 102.



**LADIES-IN-WAITING** ON A BREAK BETWEEN TAKES IN THE SAME SCENE BY THE TENNIS COURT IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY.



1



2

1. **A LADY-IN-WAITING** FROM THE ENTOURAGE OF PU YI'S MOTHER LADY AISIN-GIORO, IN SCENE 45 IN THE 'COURTYARD OF THE EMPEROR'S QUARTERS'. 2. **AN EXTRA** RESTED NEAR A MEDIEVAL 'FIRE STATION' - THE UBIQUITOUS GIANT BRONZE WATER POTS DISTRIBUTED ALL OVER THE FORBIDDEN CITY FOR USE AGAINST THE FREQUENT FIRES.



1

1. **JOAN CHEN** AS WAN JUNG IN THE 'BALLROOM OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRY CLUB' SCENE. 2. **A LOCAL EXTRA** FROM SALSOMAGGIORE RESTED IN THE SHADOWS INSIDE THE BALLROOM OF THE PALAZZO DEI CONGRESSI DURING A BREAK.



2



## THE EMPEROR AND I FROM *THE CONFORMIST* TO *THE LAST EMPEROR*

**My first encounter** with the collective vision of the ‘sacred triumvirate’—director Bernardo Bertolucci, cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and production designer Ferdinando Scarfiotti—came when I was an 18-year-old art student in Los Angeles who had to write an essay on *The Conformist* for my Film Aesthetics class.

The film was the first collaboration between the three maestros at the beginning of their film careers. All were still in their twenties and in search of a breakthrough, their latent talent and pent-up energy palpable on the screen. And their barely restrained creativity pulsed through the flickering electric shadows like a thoroughbred bursting out of the starting gate in full stride.

In a 2006 interview Bertolucci recounted the genesis of *The Conformist*. From hearing the story of Alberto Moravia’s 1951 novel *Il conformista* from a lady friend while busy editing *The Spider’s Stratagem* (based on the Jorge Luis Borges short story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*) to how, without reading the book, he had pitched the story to the producers who’d immediately linked it. Bertolucci also described how he wrote the screenplay in a month, with Moravia’s book opened next to the typewriter, and how the project went into production within months after that.

Bertolucci recalled Storaro as being ‘precocious’ when they first met on his second film, *Before the Revolution*, in 1964 where Vittorio worked as the focus puller. They became friends, partly because of their similar age\*, and in 1970 Bernardo asked Vittorio to photograph *The Spider’s Stratagem*, his first film in colour, which turned out to be the beginning of a brilliant partnership that spanned 23 years and eight movies. A few months later, Storaro was on board as cinematographer for *The Conformist*.

On the scale of ‘precociousness’, Bernardo’s own trajectory as a young artist was certainly off the charts. He published his first book of poetry at 15, and went on to win prestigious literary prizes while still a teenager. He started out in film as first assistant to Pier Paolo Pasolini on *Accattone* in 1961, then almost immediately afterwards wrote and directed his own first movie *La Commare Secca* in 1962, age 21. There was no looking back from there.

Scarfiotti, an architect who became the assistant to the great Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti, and began designing for his theatrical and opera productions with *La Traviata* in

\*Vittorio Storaro (born 24 June 1940), Ferdinando Scarfiotti (born 6 March 1941) and Bernardo Bertolucci (born March 1941)



1963. Scarfiotti created sets on some of the most famous stages in Europe for Visconti and other renowned directors by the time he signed on to become production designer for *The Conformist*. Apart from the 'Radio Station' scene, the film was shot entirely on location in Rome and Paris, with Bertolucci calling his designer's suggestions and choices of key locations 'inspired'—in particular the EUR district of Rome that had been commissioned by Benito Mussolini as a model Fascist city. Directly after *The Conformist*, Scarfiotti designed Visconti's last film *Death in Venice*.

As a great admirer of *French New Wave* cinema, Bertolucci was thrilled and considered it 'a great privilege' to have secured the services of the legendary costume designer Gitt Magrini for *The Conformist*. Gitt had worked with all the 'greats', from Michelangelo Antonioni and Louis Malle to Jean-Luc Godard and Françoise Truffaut; she went on to design the costumes for *The Last Tango in Paris* and *1900* with the team.

It was editor Franco Arcalli who suggested throwing out the chronological structure of *The Conformist* screenplay by telling the story in flashbacks. 'The producer, my cousin Giovanni, had insisted that I use a new editor,' Bertolucci recalled. 'Before *The Conformist*, I had always considered editing to be an operation of 'law and order', a kind of police operation. That the editing is a conformist that reshaped the raw footage; whittled away and tamed what was beautifully wild... 'until Arcalli changed that perception. 'I think my films before *The Conformist* had come directly from life, and the ones that came after was life plus *cinema*. With *The Conformist*, the cinema was grown-up, and I became a grown-up in cinema shooting *The Conformist*.'

The film exploded onto the international scene with its premiere at the Berlin Film Festival on 1 July 1970 as a nominee for the Golden Bear award. In September 1970 Bertolucci caused a sensation when he presented both *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist* together at the New York Film Festival to critical acclaim. The rest, as the saying goes, is history. The film is universally hailed as a visual masterpiece and a classic of modern cinema. According to film historian David Thompson 'the film stands as the seminal source of nearly every great modern effort on behalf of an integrated look—call it *total cinema*.'

My own experience with the film was both a little squalid and unimaginably exhilarating. As perennially broke art students my roommate (a fine painter and serious film buff) and I,

residents of Mrs Crump's crumbling boarding house, had to sneak into the theatre through the fire exit to watch the film. But the fear of getting caught, and the shame of being a poor foreign hippie being looked down on by the rich kids of UCLA in the audience, soon melted away with the first flicker of red Art Deco neon on the screen. So much information about the protagonist and his situation was communicated in the two minutes and 48 seconds opening credits sequence, simply through the gradually shifting of the light from darkness to dawn, one line of dialogue and the minimal movements of the actor, it was clear a new visual language was at play.

Structured along the spine of a car chase that led to the final climax, the story of a deeply conflicted man who volunteered to assassinate his former professor in Paris for the Fascist government thugs in Rome, was revealed through flashbacks of episodes in the protagonist's past. These were artfully implanted by the free association of imagery and connections of ideas, which gave the movie the sensation of a surreal dream that ultimately ended up in a nightmare, with the sustained feeling that there was more to be discovered beneath the surface than was happening on the screen.

That dreamlike quality permeated throughout the film: from the cage-like lighting on the walls of the living room, where the protagonist's fiancée performed an animal dance, to the harsh separation of shadows and light in the scenes set against the brutally graphic Fascist architecture and the scenes in Paris, where the warm glow of decadence started to embrace the shadows, only to harden again with the confrontation in the professor's study in the classic 'Plato's chained prisoners in the cave' scene, hardening further in the kitchen of the Chinese restaurant where the oscillating shadows from the swinging overhead lamp echoed the would-be assassin's wavering commitment.

From the sensuous tracking shots that followed the ladies leading a line of dancers in and out of the ballroom, to the overhead crane shot that swooped in to witness the professor's murder, Bertolucci's camera glided like mist through the psychologically infused imagery, peeling back the layers of mystery buried within Storaro's shadow-plays projected against the backdrop of Scarfiotti's expressionist sets and Magrini's impeccable costumes. The perfectly directed cast moved from profound stillness to raw explosions of emotion, without ever crossing the line to disturb the suspension of disbelief. This was personified by the classic



It was Jeremy who asked me to bring my camera on set to cover some of the behind-the-scenes action that photographer Angelo Novi did not have time for. My snapshots, mostly of lavishly costumed 'off duty' extras in repose, were well received and widely published around the world with the release and subsequent success of the film, which established my career as a photographer.

And it was Jeremy who commissioned the portfolio (based on the design of the catalogue of my first exhibition) that I produced for promoting the film at Cannes that led to an invitation from my friend Michael Palin to join the crew from Hong Kong to Shanghai for his *Around the World in 80 Days* travel series. This in turn led to a 25-year collaboration with Michael that took me to the furthest corners of the globe. In 1992, I was invited by Bernardo and Jeremy to photograph the filming of *Little Buddha* for a book, but besides saying our friendships grew in the Himalayan nations of Nepal and Bhutan, and that we had many delicious meals together in Seattle, that story belongs elsewhere.

The last time we were all together was at the Venice Film Festival in 2013, when Bernardo was President of the Jury and Jeremy and Sakamoto were there for a special screening of *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*. We visited the maestro at his hotel after the screening. His wife Clare brought him down to the café, and I tried to hide my shock at how much he had physically changed. It was a bittersweet reunion, for though Bernardo had been wheelchair-bound for a decade and Ryûichi was struggling with a stubborn cancer, their eyes still sparkled with intelligence and their minds were as sharp as ever. Even if the mood may have been a bit somber, and laughter harder to come by, it was still wonderful to be together around the table with the family again.

This book is my tribute to them, and to all my non-conformist friends in my Last Emperor family around the world.

BASIL PAO · CHEUNG CHAU · JULY 2023



**While** doing some research for the tribute exhibition *The Last Emperor Revisited* I was putting together for The Foreign Correspondents Club, Hong Kong after Bernardo's passing, I came across this scene in Paolo Brunatto's documentary *The Chinese Adventure of Bernardo Bertolucci*; I showed the clip at the opening of the exhibition on 19 November 2019, and it got quite a few laughs. I have transcribed it here verbatim for your amusement:

SCENE: BERTOLUCCI AND EDITOR GABRIELLA CRISTIANA IN THE EDITING ROOM IN LONDON...

*On the screen of the Moviola: The scene of 3-year-old Pu'yi being named the new emperor by the dying Dowager is fast-forwarding ... until it came to the shot when the father kowtows to his son...*

BERTOLUCCI: I wasn't sure how to end this, I thought perhaps with the father bowing to him... You know why I decided to have him bow? It wasn't in the script.

CRISTIANA: *(Turns around to look at Bertolucci...)* Why?

BERTOLUCCI: Basil, this great photographer from Hong Kong, was playing the father. He wanted to play Pu'yi, because he resembled the real Pu'yi. But I had him play the father to keep something of Pu'yi's real face in the film. *(Looking proud of himself...)* It's the father who actually looks like the real Pu'yi... Anyway, he had a camera on the set, and I could never figure out when he was shooting... He got some great pictures. He's doing a book. They came out in LIFE. But I could never catch him. He hid it in the huge sleeves of that... 'Dragon robe'\*... I couldn't catch him, and I was getting annoyed... *(With a mischievous smile...)* So I thought: Here's my chance for revenge... The boy walks towards the father after the old woman dies. The old woman had just named him the new emperor. *(Gabriella starts to laugh...)*

BERTOLUCCI: And I wanted Basil to bow down before this three-year-old as punishment...

CRISTIANA: *(Laughing...)* Because he wanted to play Pu'yi?

BERTOLUCCI: No, because I could never catch him... *(They both laugh...)* Anyway, "I am lord of 10,000 years..." and then the throne and all that gold.

*\*Not true. Pure fantasy! It's not possible to hide a camera up the sleeve of the 'Dragon robe'.*



JEREMY THOMAS



BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI



MARK PEPLOE



FERDINANDO SCARFIOTTI



JAMES ACHESON



VITTORIO STORARO



RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO

## AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

### ACADEMY AWARDS

BEST PICTURE JEREMY THOMAS  
BEST DIRECTOR BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST SCREENPLAY MARK PEPLOE & BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST ART DIRECTION FERDINANDO SCARFIOTTI,  
BRUNO CESARI & OSVALDO DESIDERI  
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY VITTORIO STORARO  
BEST COSTUME DESIGN JAMES ACHESON  
BEST FILM EDITING GABRIELLA CRISTIANA  
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO, CONG SU, DAVID BYRNE  
BEST SOUND IVAN SHARROCK, BILL ROWE

### GRAMMY AWARDS

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO, CONG SU, DAVID BYRNE

### BRITISH ACADEMY FILM AWARDS

BEST FILM JEREMY THOMAS & BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST COSTUME DESIGN JAMES ACHESON  
BEST MAKE-UP ARTIST FABRIZIO SFORZA

### CESAR AWARDS

BEST FOREIGN FILM BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

### GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

BEST MOTION PICTURE - DRAMA  
BEST DIRECTOR BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST SCREENPLAY-MOTION PICTURE BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI,  
MARK PEPLOE & ENZO UNGARI  
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO, CONG SU, DAVID BYRNE

### DAVID DI DONATELLO AWARDS

BEST FILM AND BEST DIRECTOR BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST PRODUCER JEREMY THOMAS, FRANCO GIOVALE & JOYCE HERLIHY  
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR PETER O'TOOLE  
BEST SCREENPLAY MARK PEPLOE & BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI  
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY VITTORIO STORARO  
BEST COSTUME DESIGN JAMES ACHESON & UGO PERICOLI  
BEST EDITING GABRIELLA CRISTIANI  
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN FERDINANDO SCARFIOTTI,  
BRUNO CESARI & OSVALDO DESIDERI

### LOS ANGELES FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION AWARD

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY VITTORIO STORARO  
BEST MUSIC RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO, CONG SU, DAVID BYRNE

### NEW YORK FILM CRITICS CIRCLE AWARDS

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY VITTORIO STORARO

### DIRECTOR GUILD OF AMERICA AWARDS

OUTSTANDING DIRECTORIAL ACHIEVEMENT IN MOTION PICTURE  
BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

### WRITER'S GUILD OF AMERICA AWARDS

BEST SCREENPLAY MARK PEPLOE, BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

### BRITISH SOCIETY OF CINEMATOGRAPHERS

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY-FEATURE FILM VITTORIO STORARO

### AMERICAN CINEMA EDITORS AWARDS

BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM GABRIELLA CRISTIANA

### ARTIOS AWARDS

BEST CASTING FOR FEATURE DRAMA FILM JOANNA MERLIN





BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI



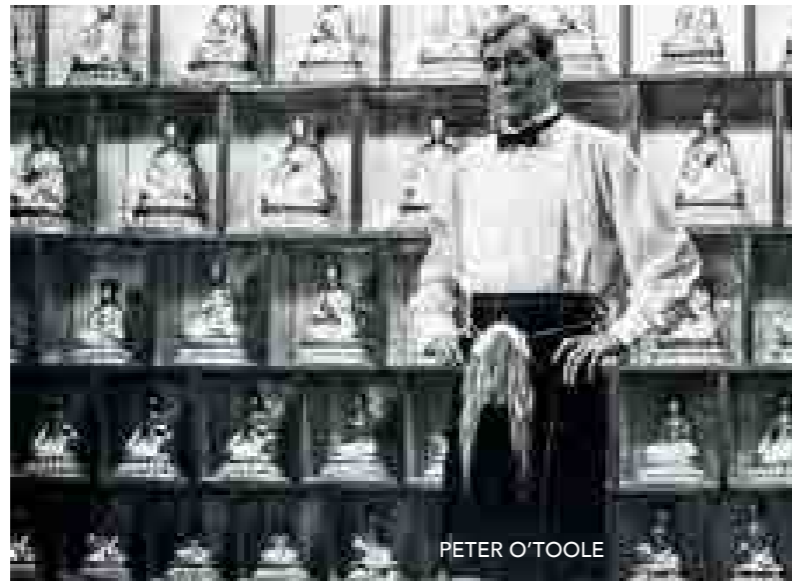
CLARE PEPLOE



YING RUO'CHENG



ANGELO NOVI



PETER O'TOOLE



FERDINANDO SCARFIOTTI



ENRICO UMETELLI



CICELY BERRY



SUZANNE DURRENBERGER



HERCULES BELLVILLE



AKI IKUTA AND RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO

IN MEMORIAM

AKI IKUTA (Music Producer-Japan)  
Died 1987

FRANCO GIOVALE (Associate Producer)  
Died 1992

FERDINANDO SCARFIOTTI (Production Designer)  
1941-1994

ANGELO NOVI (Stills Photographer)  
1930-1997

VICTOR WONG (Actor-Chen Pao Shen)  
1927-2001

YING RUO'CHENG (Actor-Prison Governor)  
1929-2003

HERCULES BELLVILLE (Producer- Recorded Picture Co.)  
1939-2009

COLLETTE KOO (Assistant Costume Designer)  
1960-2010

SUZANNE DURRENBERGER (Script & Continuity)  
1922-2011

PETER O'TOOLE (Actor-Reginald Johnston)  
1932-2013

ENRICO UMETELLI (Camera 'A' Operator)  
Died 2016

CICELY BERRY (Dialogue Coach)  
1926-2018

BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI (Writer Director)  
1941-2018

CLARE PEPLOE (Writer Director & spouse of Bertolucci)  
1942-2021

RYÛICHI SAKAMOTO (Composer Musician)  
1952-2023



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Basil Pao, Cheung Chau, 2023

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**Basil Pao** began his photographic career in 1980 upon his return to Hong Kong after ten years in the United States, where he was art director for Atlantic Records and Album Graphics Inc. in New York, and Warner Brothers Records in Los Angeles. He first worked with Michael Palin when he designed the book, album and poster for the Monty Python film *Life of Brian*. They have since collaborated on 11 illustrated books based on the BBC travel series *Pole to Pole*, *Full Circle*, *Hemingway Adventure*, *Sahara*, *Himalaya*, *New Europe* and *Brazil*. He is the author of *Hands*, *China Revealed*, *Yi'Jing-Book of Changes*, *Shan Shui-Mountain-Water*, *The Universal Scream*, *OM<sup>2</sup>-Ordinary Moments+* and *Carnival of Dreams*. His exhibition catalogues include *Travels with Michael Palin* for his exhibitions at the Fox Talbot Museum and the Royal Geographical Society in London and *Around the World in 8000 Days* at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum. His corporate limited editions include *A Tale of Two Ventures* for Wah Kwong Maritime Transport; *AMAN*, *Bhutan* and *AMAN<sup>2</sup>* for Amanresorts; *OM-Ordinary Moments*, *CMYK-China* and *Blazing Shadows-A World of Black & Light* for Printer Trento. Basil's travel essays and other assignments, including his special stills photography for Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* and *Little Buddha*, Terry Jones' *Erik the Viking*, Terry Gilliam's *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* and other feature films, have appeared in publications and exhibitions all around the world.