

Bev's Girl Films



ENTERTAINMENT, FILM, FILM FESTIVALS

Q and A with Jason Tobin, star of Dax Phelan's JASMINE

NOVEMBER 7, 2015 | LIA CHANG | LEAVE A COMMENT

Dax Phelan's award-winning film *Jasmine* starring Jason Tobin, Glen Chin, Grace Huang, Sarah Lian, Byron Mann and Eugenia Yuan, screens tonight at 5:15 p.m. at the Landmark Tivoli Theater. Phelan will be on hand to discuss the film. For tickets or additional information, visit the Cinema St. Louis website (<http://www.cinemastlouis.org/sliff/2015/jasmine>).



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/12096085_10154485476229988_261567620710116889_n.jpg)

Leonard To (Jason Tobin) is a man who is struggling to come to terms with the unsolved murder of his beloved wife, Jasmine. After more than a year, he decides to come back to Hong Kong and move on with his life. He searches for a new job, attends group grief support meetings, and reconnects with Grace, a woman from his past. While he still calls the police, hoping Jasmine's murder case will be resolved, Leonard does seem to start life anew.



(https://liachang.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/jasmine_-_leonard_meets_anna_3.jpg)

A scene from Dax Phelan's JASMINE

On the first anniversary of Jasmine's death, Leonard visits her burial site and crosses paths with a mysterious man, who Leonard becomes convinced is a prime suspect for his beloved wife's death. Leonard decides to investigate and follow this man, in hopes of finding connections to his wife's murder, and reports the man to the police. However, when the police fail to arrest the man,

Leonard realizes that the only way for him to stop his own fiery downward spiral and move on with his life once and for all is to take matters into his own hands. The result: a shocking and unforgettable final revelation.



© Lia Chang Photography

In his directorial debut, Dax Phelan keeps us on an edge of our seats and takes us on a roller-coaster ride with his star-studded cast and crew. With a strong character-driven narrative and constant suspense all set in the bustling city of Hong Kong, Dax Phelan creates a story that is bold, riveting, and shocking with a theme that is universally relatable to anyone who has ever loved and anyone who has ever suffered. *Jasmine* is dedicated to Dax Phelan's mother.

Jasmine is playing at numerous film festivals this fall including the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival (Nov. 13) (<http://www.ticketfly.com/event/988937-jasmine-philadelphia/>), Bahamas International Film Festival (Dec. 11)

(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_dax-phelan_photo-by-lia-chang-image119.jpg)

Dax Phelan. Photo by Lia Chang

(http://www.bintlfilmfest.com/the_festival/film_description/742), at the Anchorage International Film Festival (Dec. 7 & 10)

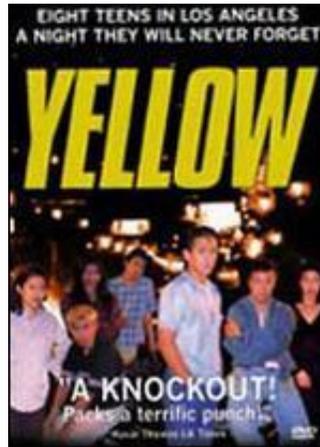
(<https://anchorageinternationalfilmfest2015.sched.org/event/826f2dc28ddc29ab8a2528767679dccb#.Vj5fW0upTVI>).

Jason Tobin is a Hong Kong actor and producer who co-wrote, co-produced and stars in *Jasmine*. He is best known for his role as Virgil Hu in Justin Lin's critically acclaimed 2002 film *Better Luck Tomorrow (BLT)*, *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, *#1 Serial Killer* and Chris Chan Lee's *Yellow*. In our interview over Skype, Tobin talks about the making of *Jasmine*, the challenges of low budget filmmaking in Hong Kong, and being a part of the Independent Asian American cinema scene including *Better Luck Tomorrow*.

Chang: How did you get into acting?

Tobin: I was 18. I had finished high school and was supposed to go to University in the UK. At that point, I didn't know you could become an actor. I literally thought being an actor was a lark. I didn't realize you could study to be an actor and try to get the job. I just didn't understand. In high school, you are studying to go to law school or become a doctor, that's your job. When I was 18, my father recognized that I loved movies and liked acting. He showed me an advertisement

for an acting class in Hong Kong and I went to it. I was done for. Six months later, instead of going to university in the UK, I packed my bags up and moved to LA.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_jason-tobin_photo-by-lia-chang-image96.jpg)

Jason Tobin. Photo by Lia Chang

(<https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/t16763gy719.jpg>) **Chang:** What have been your favorite projects?

Tobin: The Asian American features that I've done- *Yellow* with Chris Chan Lee, followed by *Better Luck Tomorrow*, *#1 Serial Killer*, *Finishing the Game* and now *Jasmine*. When I look at my body of work, I am really proud to have done these Asian American features. In my whole life I always wanted to be part of something important. I feel that having worked in these Asian American films that not only did it satisfy my creative urges as a performer and as an actor, they also satisfied me because I felt like I was part of something important. If I have somehow contributed to Asian American cinema and helped move it forward, you can't pay for that. That's a deep sense of satisfaction that you can't get anywhere else.

Chang: You said, 'Asian American cinema is where I belong; it is where I want to be.'

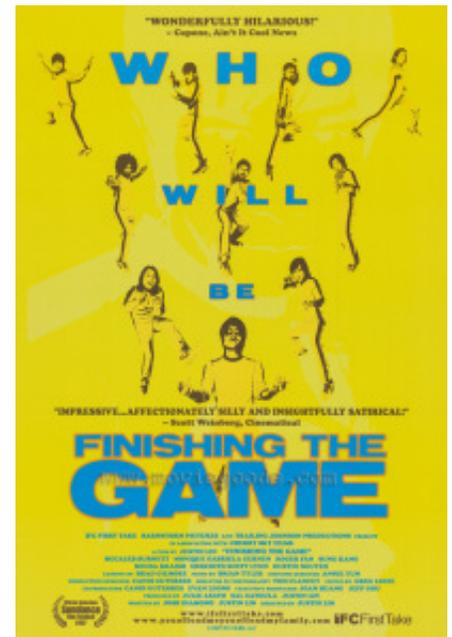
Tobin: Obviously I lived in America, so I have a lot of friends who are Asian American actors or filmmakers. We frequently talk about how we want to be part of the mainstream. Why can't they cast more Asians where they don't have to be the Kung Fu fighter, or have to explain their Asianness? There's all the talk about wanting to get into the mainstream. I've caught myself speaking in those terms too. Several years ago, it occurred to me that I don't even feel comfortable working in that arena. Younger actors can speak with a lot of bravura. I am happy to stay within my community, my culture, making films that are important to us. To me at least. I'm never going to be a Caucasian man; I'm never going to be a black man. I'm never going to be French or Jewish. I am a Chinese, English speaking guy. I am really happy with that. The stories that I am interested in telling, I have always felt like a bird between two trees. Trying to fit in.

Chang: Are you working on something now?

Tobin: It's a story about these two down and out Asian American actors who are completely unemployed and can't get hired at all. They decide to go on a road trip to visit Bruce Lee's grave in Seattle. That's the premise. We'll be shooting that in 2016.

I am working on a Martial arts film. It is not going to be an action packed martial arts film. It is going to be sparse, when you see it, it will be important. I talk about it like a martial arts film – meets American indie film. It's another thing that we always talk about in Asian American cinema, why do we always have to be the martial arts guy? I completely understand that sentiment, and even though I have practiced martial arts my whole life, and watch so many martial arts film and am a massive Bruce Lee fan, as an actor I always steered clear of it. I wanted to be taken seriously as an actor. I'm getting older, I love the genre, I better do one now before I get older.

(<https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/finishing-the-game-movie-poster-2008-1020406341.jpg>) I dipped my toes into martial arts films with Justin Lin's *Finishing the Game*, the premise is that it's a mockumentary and I am not in the film. I was cut out. My character Toby Jackson is not in America. The documentarian is in LA and as originally scripted, they would cut to me in Mexico as an underground street fighter, trying to get back into America. He can't get back in so he's becomes part of this underground fight club. I was in the best shape of my life, 4% body fat. After the shoot, Justin Lin came up to me at the end of the day and told me that this was the best acting he had ever seen me do. Several months later he calls me in Hong Kong, and says, "I love the footage It's some of my favorite stuff we shot but I just can't make the footage work in the film. It just doesn't make sense." It was heartbreaking. He says I'll give you all the footage.



This is the impetus for this Bruce Lee road trip story. They are huge Bruce Lee fans, and one has just been cut out of the film where he's playing a Bruce Lee type character. *Finishing the Game* was an important film for me even though I am not in it. Art director Candy Guitterez designed the poster and used a ghost image of me in the poster. It's my face on the poster with all of the other Bruce Lees layered on top.



(<https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/betterlucktomorrow.jpg>)

Han (Sung Kang), Virgil (Jason J. Tobin) and Ben (Parry Shen) are overachieving high school honor students in Orange County who live second lives at night as a gang responsible for criminal mischief in Better Luck Tomorrow. Photo: MTV Films

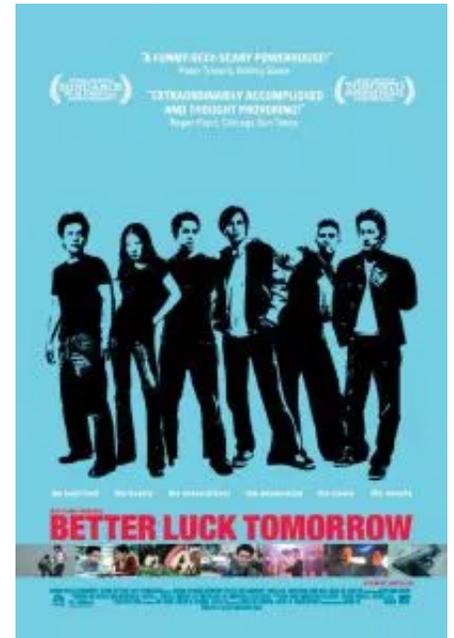
Chang: What was your experience with *Better Luck Tomorrow*?

Tobin: *Better Luck Tomorrow* was a blessing and an Asian American powerhouse. The gift that keeps on giving. I've gotten so much out of that film. When I was in LA at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, I met actors from *Revenge of the Green Dragon* and *Soul Searching*. They told me that because of BLT, they were really inspired by me. You can't pay for that. Every time I go back to America and I hear about the importance of that films in their lives, it validates me for all of the hardships of being an actor. An actor's life is full of ups and downs.

BLT shook things up. My audition was on a Sunday, I was feeling jaded but luckily I went to it. After one or two scenes, we improved and it was cool and fun. When I read the script I was blown away. This is the kind of role, specifically with my character, an unbelievable role. This is the kind of role that makes careers, that wins Oscars. He's such a live wire, shows such vulnerability. If this film were cast as a non Asian American film, Virgil would not have been the white guy. I felt incredibly lucky. The third day of shooting, I turned to Roger and said that this movie is a gift. This is a blessing. I am so lucky to be on this film. I have felt that throughout the whole journey.

I am a British citizen and in 2002 we'd gone to Sundance with *Better Luck Tomorrow*. The film hadn't been released yet, so I went on vacation to Argentina. On my way back to America I was denied entry. Even though I had been in and out of America many, many times, for some reason, post 9/11 things were computerized and the infraction that I had overstayed my visa by 5 days several years earlier, showed up. They said I had to go back to the UK and reapply for a visa. A lot of people took that to be that I was deported but I wasn't. It just meant that my Visa application

was rejected. It meant that I spent a few years away right when BLT came out. Many people thought that I should have been there to capitalize on the success. I watched BLT's success from afar.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/better_luck_tomorrow.jpg) I wasn't there for the poster. That actually is not my body. The day of the photo shoot, the cast had a body double for me. They took my head from another picture and stuck it on. It was sad but I have no regrets. I spent a year in Argentina, learning guitar, learning Spanish. After a year of that I thought I better go back to work. Being a British citizen, I went to London, did a couple of movies, and TV shows. As much as I enjoyed working in the UK I was still an Asian man, an Asian person working in a predominantly white country. I've done this before; I've fought this battle before. I decided it was time for me to go back to Hong Kong and find a different challenge.

Chang: What is your experience of being Eurasian?

Tobin: I am from Hong Kong and have always loved Hong Kong, but I also have a love hate relationship with it. I am a real product of Hong Kong. I constantly get asked why my English is so good? They don't understand the history of Hong Kong, that there is a British colony, with two school systems, Chinese speaking and English speaking, and that I'm Eurasian. My Father is white, a British guy; my mother is Chinese, a Cantonese woman from Hong Kong. I wanted to use as much of myself and even to the extent when we meet Leonard at the beginning of the film, he's come back from somewhere, he's been away. If you notice my accent changes quite a bit. In America, me as Jason, I grew up speaking Cantonese, speaking English, I went to a British School so I learned to speak English with an English accent. Subsequently I went to America, and learned to speak with an American accent. I



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_jason-tobin_photo-by-lia-chang-image43.jpg)

Jason Tobin and his wife Michelle. Photo by Lia Chang

spend time in Australia because my wife is a naturalized Australian, so frequently my accent changes depending on who I am talking too. If I am in America and speaking to American people, I am going to sound more American. When I am home and with family, I sound more British. It's not phony either way. It's just comfort. I don't feel comfortable sounding like an American when I am talking to my dad. It doesn't feel right. I brought little things like that to the character. Aussie, American, added something to Leonard, where is he from? It adds to the fact that he's trying to be something that is not.

Chang: Dax said, "I wanted to go on record that I would be the first one to make a movie with Jason as the lead." What is your response to that?

Tobin: I'm unbelievable grateful for Dax's belief in me because no one else has done that. It really flatters me that he felt that strongly about me as an actor and as a performer.

It is tough to make a film, especially when you have very little money. It's easy to test your relationship. Our relationship, thank goodness is all the better for it. We're still friends. It's something special when someone believes in you.



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(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_dax-phelan-jason-tobin-byron-mann_photo-by-lia-chang-image16.jpg)

Dax Phelan, Jason Tobin and Byron Mann. Photo by Lia Chang

Chang: How did you and Dax first meet?

Tobin: I had just got back to Hong Kong. I had just worked with Byron on a film and we really hit it off. We hung out a bit and he told me that he had a friend in town, a screenwriter named Dax Phelan. They were working on a project. We had dinner one night. Dax and I talked a lot about films, the kind of films that we liked, and the kind of actors we liked. A few months later in LA we met for coffee and talked about doing a movie together. Just getting to know him in Hong Kong, spending time with him in Hong Kong, it was very much the kind of relationship that I've always wanted to have with a director. As an actor, I've always wanted to have the kind of actor/director relationships like Scorsese and DeNiro back in the day, or Marlon Brando in *Last Tango in Paris*. In many ways Dax and I did have that relationship. We really got to know each other. We talked about things that I've never really spoken to another director before. We spent a long time talking about things, we spoke about things that we were deeply ashamed of, things that we felt truly embarrassed us, moments in our life that we were not proud or happy to speak of. We had that level of trust. That played into the story of *Jasmine*.

Chang: How did you and Dax develop the story together?

Tobin: *Jasmine* is not autobiographical. It did not happen to me and Dax. We did, however, try to channel as much of the loneliness and deep seeded shame.

In terms of the process of writing; I really wanted to use as many aspects of myself as possible. I wanted make the kind of a film that was really organic as possible, and to try and act the way it was organic. I wanted to use as much of myself as possible, whether it be pain, death, or loneliness that I felt in my own life. With regards to my character Leonard, my father's name is Anthony Leonard Tobin, So I used my father's middle name. To is actually my Cantonese name, even though my surname is Tobin.

I had never played an adult. I'd always played young people, college age. For the most part, I'd always played very young. *Jasmine* was an opportunity for me to channel certain aspects of my father. I'm not saying my father is Leonard To. There are all these aspects that I wanted to bring truth to the character. Dax already had an idea, about this unreliable investigator, narrator, and protagonist. To me, I had a lot of feelings that I had about Hong Kong, growing up here, certain isolation, even though it is a massive city and population. There is something about him- the clothes don't fit him; the suit does not fit him. He's always the outsider. There is a wealth gap, an elitist gap, the very elite Hong Kong, and people that are trying to be that. That is something I can relate to.

Chang: Why was the scene in the hotel room the scariest day of Dax's life?

Tobin: We were shooting at Chungking Mansion. (*Chungking Express*). I think Wong Kar Wai may have grown up there. It's a very seedy, rundown building and not the cleanest or safest building in Hong Kong. It's pretty disgusting and full of life. It's really, really fascinating. We ended up shooting in a very cheap low budget hostel on the 10th floor.

The scene that day was that Leonard was having a very very tough night. Leonard can get through the days because he is interacting with people, but the nights were problematic because that is when the loneliness would overtake him. This is the scene where he is alone in his room at Chungking Mansion. We did a lot of long takes. Improvisational- a lot of it was about behavior, how he spent his time. We start rolling as the scene progressed and he begins to spiral out of

control. I started to do things that weren't in the script. At one point, I opened the window. I was completely naked. I opened the window and stepped out the window and was on the ledge. And Dax said cut! Dax was terrified that I was going to jump. In that instant I knew I had perhaps gone too far as an actor. That was a very risky thing, not a safe thing to do. It really hit a chord in me. I just started crying and bawling my eyes out uncontrollably for half an hour. I stood in the room. It was just me, Guy and Dax and it was deathly silently. They just filmed me for a good 20-30 minutes, crying. That became a 3 second shot in the movie.

Dax and I had talked about Martin Sheen having a mental breakdown in *Apocalypse Now*. I'm not trying to compare myself to those kind of actors. We had talked about DeNiro, Marlon Brando, and Martin Sheen, so I wanted to step up. I wanted to push myself as much as I could. In that instant it really hit a chord in me. It made me think that my life did flash before me. It made me extremely, extremely sad. In a sense, that is the essence of Leonard To.

Chang: What character does Hong Kong play in the film?

Tobin: I grew up in Hong Kong. I spent my life living in American, studying to be an actor. I spent a long time as this Asian guy working in a white country and trying to break through that barrier. I felt proud to be part of this Asian American wave of film. I always felt like I fought the good fight. I was glad to be part of *Yellow* and that whole movement. There was a part of me that wanted to come back to my hometown and make a film here.

In Hong Kong, I'm not local enough, I'm too westernized. Hong Kong movies are always about Hong Kong people. Very rarely are they about people like me who are English speakers. I wanted to make a film in my subculture. I wanted to use that aspect of myself. I wanted to tell this story. I'd always felt this sort of isolation living in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a big city, but it feels small, like a little village because it is such tiny bit of land. There's something about the extreme wealth and elitist that is here and also this huge working class population. It's like a microcosm of America. There's this great wealth divide. Byron's character represents the rich, powerful, that have everything, beautiful women, there's Leonard who can't fit in. he want it so bad and he can't have it. He's trying to fit into his suit. He's trying to be something that he is not. Even though I am not Leonard To, I can relate to that. As an actor, I sometimes feel as if I am just an imposter. It is something that I wanted to explore.

Chang: What are the challenges of low budget filmmaking in Hong Kong?

Tobin: Low budget filmmaking is challenging regardless of where you are. If you are trying to shoot a film without permits, and you are trying to use real locations, Hong Kong is such a populated city that wherever you stick your camera, someone will be looking right into it. In LA, you can always find a street that is relatively quiet. You wait until people walk by, and you have it for a few minutes. In Hong Kong, you literally have three seconds before someone else starts looking in the camera. We did many, many takes. The other thing that was particularly difficult about our shoot, at the time, we were using the Red One camera. I believe at the time the native ISO wasn't particularly fast. It is handheld with a wide lens, an unbelievably short lens with a very shallow depth of field. With the aperture wide open, just keeping me in focus was extremely difficult. The film looks great for it. We could have gone the other way and used longer lens.

When you use shorter lenses, you are right in the action. I am glad that the visual style of the film is the way it is. It really helps tell the story. Especially with the 1:235 ratio as well. With other films shot in Hong Kong; you can always see someone looking in the camera.

In Hong Kong they usually use long lenses because there are so many people that it is better to be far away because no one knows you are shooting. Guy liked the look of using short lens. Dax believed using 235 was great for landscapes. He wanted to use that more for our faces, it's unusual. It is not a style that is used that often in Hong Kong.

Chang: How were Byron and Eugenia cast?

Tobin: Byron is a really cool guy. He's this suave, charming, charismatic kind of guy. He's like this gentleman/playboy, which is not as an insult. It's easy to want to be him. I love the guy. It was easy for me as Leonard to want to be Byron. There an ease there, and also he's a great actor. From the very beginning when we started writing the script, he was always in our mind to play the man. He's originally from Hong Kong. I think he has a home in LA, in Vancouver; he's definitely an international jetsetter. He's actually the kind of guy that I want to be.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_byron-mann_photo-by-lia-chang-image136.jpg)

Byron Mann. Photo by Lia Chang



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_jason-tobin-eugenia-yuan_photo-by-lia-chang-image31.jpg)

Jason Tobin and Eugenia Yuan. Photo by Lia Chang

I had known Eugenia for a long time and always thought that she was a great actress. I had never worked with her but we've known each other for a while.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/no1serialkiller_webstill_07.jpg)

Eugenia Yuan and Jason Tobin in #1 Serial Killer.

She was someone we had always thought of. For me the shoot was incredibly difficult. As you know, the film is mostly on me. It was a tough shoot. I had to do take after take, long takes, and I had to do such emotional, every scene is emotionally draining. Long takes, and multiple takes. I was exhausted. After two or three weeks of filming, Eugenia showed up for a few days to do her

scenes. I was so happy that I had someone to act opposite. As an actor she is really easy to work with. She's very in the moment, responsive. She was always very organic and in the moment. It elevates your acting.

As scripted, the original cut was two hours and 40 minutes. We had gotten to a shorter edit, 90 minutes at one point, and I said to Dax and Chris, "You've been editing to the script for a long time, now you need to throw the script away, and edit the film that you have. You need to rewrite it. I told them to go Malick on it." To their credit, they tore the film to pieces and rebuilt it with that in mind. They came away with a much better film. What that means is that in the process, a lot of performances, actors and scenes got cut out. You use a lot of clay, pottery, and sculpture, pack a lot on and take things out. Even though I am in a lot of the film, to get those scenes we had to do so much more to get that. In film they always talk about shooting ratio, it's the acting ratio and writing ratio that makes up that backstory, that got cut out.

Chang: Who is Grace and what was the evolution of her character?

Tobin: As an artist you want to work on a subconscious level. Is she is real or not real. The story evolved and changed through the making of it. There are a lot more intimate scenes where Grace and my character Leonard are getting to know each other and getting reacquainted. If you notice, in Grace's scenes, there's a baby crying in the background. Whose baby is that? Could Leonard be the father? With Grace, to me she always symbolized the life that he could have, and that the audience should want him to have. She's the path that could lead him to some sort of salvation. Psychologically he is unable to.

Those scenes didn't make it in the final cut, but we had to go through those scenes in order to have one did make it into the film. Eugenia says more than one look, then a script full of dialogue. I sometimes describe it as acting beyond the frame.

Chang: How did your producer Stratton Leopold get involved in the project?

Tobin: Dax and Stratton have known each other for many years. I think he met him when he was working at Mace Neufeld. Stratton mentored him and always believed in him. When Dax approached him about Jasmine, Stratton was on board right away.

The night before the first day of the shoot, one of our investors pulled out. Can you imagine the amount of stress when a major investor pulls out the cash? You've hired the people; you've booked things out. Then you lose the money at the last minute. It wasn't all the money, but it was a huge chunk and it would have shut us down. Stratton was literally a guardian angel, not just because he lent his expertise and his name to the project, but also because he literally saved us. Our boat was about to sink. He saved the day.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_eugenia-yuan_photo-by-lia-chang-image60.jpg)

Eugenia Yuan. Photo by Lia Chang

Chang: How long was the shooting schedule?

Tobin: A good month. A four-week shoot, six days a week. We had a terrible schedule. You could never do this in America. In Hong Kong, and I certainly wouldn't do it again, we had really short turnarounds. Some days we had 8 hour turn around. That's ridiculous. I honestly don't put up with that anymore. The 8-hour turn around was good for my performance. If I was supposed to be tired, I definitely was.

In Hong Kong, there are no unions. As an actor you have to protect yourself. When you are in the states, in the west, there are rules. That being said, I was the producer on this film, so I could have put my foot down. With such a low budget film, with the tight turnarounds, I didn't enjoy them, but we couldn't afford not to do it. Fortunately, everyone on board the film, every cast member, every crewmember, really believed in the script and they persevered through it. I would never want to put a crew through that kind of pain and agony again. Dax said that everyone came on board because they wanted to help me, so I am very thankful.

Chang: What challenges did you face in postproduction?

Tobin: The biggest challenge we faced in postproduction was that we had zero budget. We had no money whatsoever. We had tried to raise money prior to the shoot, but we could only raise enough to shoot the film.

We did not have enough to complete the whole postproduction part of it. What that meant was that we had to make the film sporadically and then we had to go back to work. We would return to making the film as we made more money.

After the shoot, we didn't have an editor, but in the back of mind I'd wanted to introduced Chris Chan Lee to Dax. I'd worked with Chris Chan Lee on his first feature Yellow. I have great respect for Chris. He's the kind of filmmaker that can do everything. He can write, he can DP, he can direct, he can edit. He's an all around filmmaker. He was working as an editor and knowing that this was Dax's first time as a filmmaker, and knowing their personalities as well, I had a feeling that they would really hit it off and that both of their experiences would compliment each other. I feel like a genius for introducing them.

Chang: Why did the film take so long to complete?

Tobin: Right after the shoot, he suffered a few family losses, his mother and grandmother. That set him back. He needed to drop the film for a while so he could regroup and recover. What that meant was that we had an extremely long postproduction. Several years. It was never because the film wasn't any good. Life got in the way.

We were not going to make this film in any sort of traditional way. We weren't trying to make a commercial film. We stayed true to the spirit of it, this organic.

We were always very patient. We never rushed ourselves. We were going to make the best film that we could make. Traditionally when people think your film takes a long time to finish, they think it has problems. That was never the case.

After a while a couple of crewmembers and people that worked on the film got upset. It's understandable. People work on a film; they want to see where their time and energy went. People were paid a pittance on this film. I totally understood it. We went into this film with a certain philosophy. We're going to take our time.



(https://bevsgirlfilms.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/2015-7-30-jasmine_dax-phelan-jason-tobin-eugenia-yuan_photo-by-lia-chang-image32.jpg)

Nicole Watson, David Tsuboi, Michelle Tobin, Dax Phelan, Jason Tobin, Eugenia Yuan, Jon Anderson and guest attend the #AAIFF2015 screening of Jasmine at Village East Cinema in New York on July 30, 2015. Photo by Lia Chang

Chang: How did you raise the completion financing?

Tobin: We needed to get sound design and music. Byron knew Nicole Watson, her and her partner Jon Anderson saw the film and loved it. They came in and paid for the postproduction. We could see the finish line. DPS in Hollywood. It would have been cheaper in Hong Kong.



(<https://liachang.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/jasmine-2.jpeg>)

2015 LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL GRAND JURY PRIZE FOR BEST FEATURE GOES TO JASMINE, DIRECTED BY DAX PHELAN. HERE, THE TEAM FROM JASMINE CELEBRATES ITS FIVE AWARDS. FIFTH FROM LEFT: CHRIS CHAN LEE (WINNER, BEST EDITING); SEVENTH FROM LEFT: JASON TOBIN (WINNER, BEST ACTOR IN A DRAMA); THIRD FROM RIGHT: DAX PHELAN (DIRECTOR); SECOND FROM RIGHT: GUY LIVNEH (WINNER, BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY). (PHOTO: STEVEN LAM)

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Chang: Being on the Film Festival Circuit...

Tobin: We had our US premiere in Dallas, our LA premiere at the LA Asian Pacific Film Festival. In this day and age, everyone in Hollywood is talking about the West and China co-productions. Everyone is trying to figure it out. Everyone wants to make these films. We did it. *Jasmine* is a US – Hong Kong co-production. *Jasmine* is a little indie film that we made. That is the thing that I am most proud of. It's as much an American film, as it is an Asian American film, as it is a Hong Kong film. For me, I spent my whole career training as an actor in Los Angeles. I spent so many years going to the LA Asian Pacific Film Festival for other films, *Better Luck Tomorrow* and *Yellow*. To finally bring my film, a film that I produced, that I co-wrote, that I gave everything to, bled for, to premiere in Hong Kong and in LA, to me that was fabulous.

I grew up in Hong Kong; I went to America to study to become an actor. My whole adult life, my acting life was LA. To me Hong Kong and LA are my hometowns. To make a film in Hong Kong, to premiere in LA, to be so well received. When I won the best actor award at the LA Asian Pacific

Film Festival, I was in tears. I was so moved. Hong Kong is my home, but coming to LA with the film felt like coming home as well.



(https://liachang.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/2015-7-30-jasmine_lia-chang-bea-soong-phil-nee-elizabeth-sung-eugenia-yuan-jason-tobin-tzi-ma-vic-huey_photo-by-lia-chang-image66.jpg)

Lia Chang, Bea Soong, Phil Nee, Elizabeth Sung, Eugenia Yuan, Jason Tobin, Tzi Ma and Vic Huey at the #AAIFF2015 screening of Jasmine at Village East Cinema in New York on July 30, 2015. Photo by Ursula Liang

Related articles:

#AAIFF2015: Dax Phelan's Award winning JASMINE to have New York Premiere at Village East Cinema on July 30 (<http://wp.me/pla1d-dJT>)

JASMINE and TWINSTERS Take Top Honors at the 31st Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival; ADVANTAGEOUS, MISS INDIA AMERICA, THE KILLING FIELDS OF DR. HAING S. NGOR among the winners (<http://wp.me/pla1d-cHJ>)

Lia Chang (<http://www.liachang.photoshelter.com>) is an award-winning filmmaker (<http://www.asamnews.com/2015/07/29/behind-the-scenes-with-actress-lia-chang/>), a Best Actress nominee (<https://vimeo.com/130055641>), a photographer (<http://dc.broadwayworld.com/article/Photo-Flash-Library-of-Congress-IN-REHEARSAL-Exhibit-20110726>), and an award-winning multi-platform journalist (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lia_Chang). Lia has appeared in the films *Wolf*, *New Jack City*, *A Kiss Before Dying*, *King of New York*, *Big Trouble in Little China*, *The Last Dragon*, *Taxman* and *Hide and Seek*, which will screen at the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival on November 21st (<http://wp.me/p6wusm-31>). She is profiled in *Examiner.com* (<http://www.examiner.com/article/lia-chang-and-garth-kravits-star-hide-and-seek>), *FebOne1960.com Blog* (<http://febone1960.com/blog/?p=89>), *Jade Magazine* (http://www.jademagazine.com/106me_chang.html) and *Playbill.com* (<http://www.playbill.com/news/article/retweet-broadwaygirlnycs-picks-for-most-useful-theatre-women-on-social-media-355230>).

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Lia Chang

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