



Yongda Motion Pictures

Executive Producer: Huang Pian-pian (黃翩翩)

Producer: Dai Chuan-li (戴傳李)

Director: Xin Qi / Hsin Chi (辛奇)

Screenplay: Chen Xiao-pi (陳小皮)

Cinematography: Chen Zhong-xin (陳忠信)

Sound: Lin Kun (林焜圻)

Music: Huang Xi-shan (黃錫山)

Editor: Chen Hong-min (陳洪民)

Cast:

Jin Mei / Chin Mei (金玫)

Shi Jun (石軍)

Jin Tu (金塗)

Yang Yue-fan (楊月帆)

1967

Black and White

102 minutes



# Foolish Bride, Naive Bridegroom

## 三八新娘憨子婿

### Synopsis

Bun-de (Wen-de in Mandarin, played by Shi Jun/Shih Chun) is a shy young man. Aggressively courted by all the girls in the neighbourhood, he only has eyes for the pretty and mischievous Gui-kia (Jin Mei/Chin Mei). She finds every means possible to meet up with her boyfriend, although he is closely watched over by a very protective father, A-Gao. When the parents finally agree on the wedding, they realise that they used to be in love. Accusing each other of betrayal, they refuse to allow their children to marry. Bun-de and Gui-kia decide to elope. After a few months the young couple is in a dire situation and fighting all the time. They are eventually found by their parents and everyone gets happily married.

### Commentary

While the rest of the world was going through sexual liberation, Taiwan – the Republic of China – had just started its Cultural Renaissance movement in response to the Cultural Revolution in China. The Cultural Renaissance movement emphasized Confucian values, and official Mandarin films also started to be influenced by this morality. But with *Foolish Bride, Naive Bridegroom*, Xin Qi (Hsin Chi) once again takes a real pleasure in deconstructing all the traditional patterns and embracing the young people's perspective.

The opening credits set the tone: in stop-motion, little figurines kiss, accompanied by a pop song duet proclaiming the freedom to love. As in many Taiwanese-language films – but in an exaggerated way - the strongest characters are the women. Here the “foolish bride”, Gui-kia is an intrepid and canny young woman ready to do everything to be with

her boyfriend. On the other hand, Bun-de is a nonchalant and shallow young man, who is treated the way a girl traditionally would be: locked up at home and preached to about the dangers of women by his father, A-Gao. The same inversion occurs for the parental figure, with A-Gao (Jin Tu) taking the role of a whining and struggling widow, whereas Gui-kia's mother (performed by the substantial figure of Yang Yue-fan) is strong and prone to violence, just like her daughter.

Inversion and transgression is the theme of this film that mocks everyone and everything. A-Gao's string of complaints about the difficulties of raising a son alone is a satire of melodrama. A fight between the two parents becomes an opera duet. Gui-kia is the opposite of a passive good girl. Instead, she is an aggressive lover, kicking Bun-de, pouncing on him, and pushing him onto a couch. She is even the one who decides to elope. Coupledness is also presented in a mocking and stereotyped way: When Bun-de comes home late and drunk, Gui-kia pours out her frustrations with irony, *double entendres*, rage, and violence.

Xin Qi thumbs his nose not only at traditional values but also at the conventions of the cinema. Many scenes are shot on the streets of Taipei with passersby looking at the camera, and the camera captures close-ups of kissing, although censorship was still very prudish.

Unlike their parents, the younger generation refuses to sacrifice their love to please their elders. They are insolent, disobedient, even violent, and they reject the patriarchal order. The ending could be seen as a return to tradition: the parents forgive them and give them their blessings. But the wedding scene is a last blow against tradition. A-Gao takes the role of the bride taken away in a sedan and is obediently delivered to his wife's house. Rather than a return to the patriarchal order, the end of the film shows the triumph of youth and love, with new values even contaminating the older generation.

*Foolish Bride* is a perfect example of the way Taiwanese-language comedies undermine the ideals for Chinese youth promoted by the KMT Nationalist government at the time. But the film was made in 1968, very late in the *taiyupian* era, when the ban on the use of Taiwanese would soon put an end to these insolent and liberating films. The violence, even though presented in a comical way, conveys a certain uneasiness about the social repression of the era and seems to presage another form of violence in films: the three-room films that will lock the characters into fancy and claustrophobic houses. *Foolish Bride* is a last big laugh before a decade of overly serious Mandarin cinema.

Yang Yue-fan started her career as a theatre actress during the colonial era and entered the Taiwanese-language film industry in 1955. Because of her big size and unattractive looks, she often performed as a shrew, and was paired with tinier male actors such as Ai Zai-cai or Jin Tu.

Jin Tu is famous for his supporting roles in films such as *Encounter at the Station*, *Tarzan and the treasure*, *The Bride Who Has Returned from Hell*, and *The Rice Dumpling Vendors*. He often performed naïve and good-hearted characters.