

## Film Review: An Obsessive Couple's Journey in 'Ash is Purest White'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 9, 2019 - 10:06am

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CHICAGO – Obsessive love is a movie story staple, and “Ash is Purest White” puts a Chinese point-of-view on this strange phenomenon. This is a coupling in the background of organized crime and a changing China, and their success and failure is based on the events surrounding them as much as their devotion to each other.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The film is dreamy, almost surreal, as it takes place between 2001 and 2018. The lead actors portraying the couple in essence represent the emerging capitalist China, setting their sights on territory, both within the relationship and the small fiefdoms that popped up in China's soaring economy. At some point, after a key event, the film switches into a deliberateness that slows down everything, and it becomes a narrative not of action but of searching for something that didn't exist in the first place. In a sense, the new China is precisely that ... a dream that can never exist in their culture. In essence, “upward mobility” corrupts everything and everybody.

Bin (Fan Liao) is a mob boss who has a constant target on his back. His lover is Qiao (Tao Zhao) whose devotion extends beyond just emotional support. Together, they direct their group of loyalists and operations as China begins to grow. When opposing forces corner Bin in a street fight, Qiao fires a weapon, saving his life, but has to do jail time because the gun is illegal.

After serving her time, Qiao comes into a different world. She searches for Bin, but finally comes to the realization that he doesn't want her anymore. Wandering aimlessly, she uses her street smarts to build another nest egg, and eventually resumes her role as den mother to some low level players. Bin comes back into her life at this point, crippled in a wheelchair after a stroke. The final chapter of their story is about to begin.

*“Ash is Purest White” continued its limited release in Chicago on April 5th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Tao Zhao, Fan Liao, Yi'nan Diao, Caspar Liang and Zheng Xu. Written and directed by Zhangke Jia. Not Rated.*



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Qiao (Tao Zhao) and Bin (Fan Liao) in ‘Ash is Purest White’  
Photo credit: Cohen Media Group

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