

# Interview: Fung Chih Chiang for ‘A Witness Out of the Blue’ at Chicago’s Asian Pop-Up Cinema

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 10, 2020 - 4:43pm

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CHICAGO – Hong Kong writer/director Fung Chih Chiang makes his second appearance at Chicago’s Asian Pop-Up Cinema (APUC) as Season Ten continues on March 11th, 2020. Two years ago it was “Concerto for a Bully,” and now he’s back with the crime story “A Witness Out of the Blue.” The genre-bending thriller twists the usual cops versus criminals by creating an atmosphere that is more about life in general, and features a parrot as the title character. For tickets and more info [APUC](#)

HollywoodChicago.com talked to writer/director Fung Chih Chiang (through an interpreter) about his particular style of filmmaking and how he approaches it.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is a philosophical film disguised as a crime story. What were the roots of the idea behind the written script, and when did the parrot come in?

**Fung Chih Chiang:** Basically there are so many gangster-versus-cop movies made in Hong Kong, that I wanted to put a different spin on the genre. That was the focus in creating the story. Also in many of these films, there is the police, the criminal and the witness to the crime. In stretching these types or roles, the easiest one to make different was the witness. I had a parrot as a kid, and at one point it busted me for not doing my homework – I was watching television – because it sang a TV jingle back to my mother. The parrot betrayed me. [laughs] So I thought why not have a parrot as a witness, because it can mimic the atmosphere.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** There is a lot of comedy among the violence and gunplay. What makes you view life as funny, and how did you want your characters to reflect that humor?

**Chiang:** This is my fourth film, and each of them are totally different from the other. But I do have a common thread ... I like to inject dark humor. Because of this, I keep people guessing about the genre. For example is ‘Witness’ a police drama, a love story or a gangster story? I don’t like my approach to a genre to be labeled, because the range of emotions in any human being can change at any time. I want those character emotions to define and tell the story.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Louis Cheung portrayed the lead character, a sort of bumbling and ineffective cop. What did you find in his audition that made him right for the for this key role?

**Chiang:** The usual crime story pits a strong criminal against a strong cop or detective. I wanted more of a David-and-Goliath story – a superstar gangster versus a weaker policeman. In real life, there are no ‘Jackie Chan’ cops, so I just wanted a reflection of that reality in the character.

Louis Cheung fit the bill. His personality, which is generally like the Hong Kong people, is not to be the first one who runs into danger. They sit back and assess the situation a bit more, very passively. And that’s what makes the character interesting ... if there is really nobody else around, he has to go in. People relate to Cheung in that sense.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** One of the key lines in the film is “the world is not suppose to be like this.” When you wrote that line, what does it mean to you in general about the world we live in?

**Chiang:** This line comes from a point of frustration, ‘why does the bad guy have to win?’ In other words, justice still should prevail, but doesn’t. But even the bad guy thinks about it, because at some point even he wonders why that happens.





Fung Chih Chiang in Chicago  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The previous film you brought to the Asian Pop-Up Cinema was 'Concerto of the Bully' in 2018. Both that film and 'Witness' have similar stories of criminals showing their good sides, out of love for someone else. What is fascinating to you about this side of human nature, so much so that it's in both films?

**Chiang:** My personal belief is that no human being is totally evil or totally good. On the evil side, for example, there is plenty of opportunity to soften that personality, especially with family or love. Every person has a soft spot, and we never know who we'll encounter that has the power to release that softness.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Your genre-bending style is similar to director Boon Jong Ho, the South Korean director of 'Parasite.' What do you think that film winning the Oscar Best Picture opens up to Asian films in general going forward?

**Chiang:** First, it's a high compliment to be compared to Boon Jong Ho, I'm a great admirer of 'Parasite.' I would love to have a film break through to any other part of the world, with no barriers, and Parasite's success has raised the bar. I'm sure when Boon Jong Ho was making the film, he couldn't have imagined it breaking the barriers that it did. Like any filmmaker, he believed in what he was doing, and did it. That's what I do, I make something I believe in, and go from there.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally, since this is your fourth film, what do you handle better as a director now than what you did on your first film?

**Chiang:** Each film is a new challenge, and different situations come out of each of those challenges. For every new film it's like I start over again.

Season Ten of the Asian Pop-Up Cinema series continues on March 11th, 2020 (7pm), with 'A Witness Out of the Blue' at the AMC River East, 322 East Illinois Street in Chicago. Fung Chih Chiang will make an appearance on behalf of the film. For a complete overview on APUC, [click here](#). [20]



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