

The First Gay-themed Film to Hit Theatres in Mainland China

“Seek McCartney” is a China-France co-production adapted from Chinese novel “Once in Tibet” by WANG Chao and directed by WANG himself. The film is a simple story about the relationship between Chinese man Zhao Jie (HAN Geng) and his French soulmate Rohmer (Jérémie Elkaim). A crack developed between them after they got involved in a car accident which led to the death of a child. Rohmer then started off to Tibet however did not expect he would die in an avalanche there. Zhao Jie then went to Tibet for on a journey to nirvana and redemption, during which he began to understand more about his late partner, finally felt relieved, and had a whole new perception of life.

“Seek McCartney” is undoubtedly a minority movie. Shooting commenced in 2013 and shot in various locations including Beijing, Paris and Tibet, the film had a really long battle with censorship for its plot centers on a homosexual couple. One saying was that the film had actually passed China’s censors once in 2015 not long before it was subject to another round of censorship, and only until mid-2017 the film was finally approved for public screening. It is set to hit theatres in China on 13 April.

There were other films in Mainland China on gay subject matter in the past. “Spring Fever” (2009) was one of them, however banned from screening in China even though it won “Best Screenplay” at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival.

What kind of reviews will “Seek McCartney” get? How will the market respond? How far can the film go on Chinese theatre screens in terms of its sensitive content? Industry people are very concerned as this is the first time a gay-themed film co-production is approved for public screening in Mainland China. Some are also concerned that the “not suitable for young persons” warning was not seen anywhere on the film’s promotional materials.