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Interview with Yves Cresson of Bayoo Asia



*The number of Chinese projects filmed in France has multiplied in the recent years. What motivate Chinese crews to come and shoot in France? film.culture360.asef.org meets with **Yves Cresson**, the associate manager of [Bayoo Asia](#), a production company and media consultancy specifically directed to Chinese productions willing to work in France.*

Could you tell me more about how and why did you create Bayoo?

I created the company in 2000. Bayoo has two main activities. Bayoo TV works as a media consultancy for radio and television projects; Bayoo Asia, co- managed by Chinese writer director WANG Fang-Hui, is specifically directed to the development and the production of Asian film and television projects.

At the time, we observed that the audiovisual market in China was developing at a quick pace with the opening of thousands of new TV channels. This development brought a strong demand for content. In the last few years, Chinese productions slowly opened themselves up to the outside. Since we had a

managing team coming from both China and France, we knew we could take advantage of those new opportunities and help Chinese production companies to shoot in France.

We produced our first big project, Dreams Link, in 2006. Dreams Link, a television drama series broadcast on the network Hunan TV was a big success in China. Around twelve hours out of the forty hours of the show were shot in France. Bayoo Asia was signed as executive producer on those episodes and was in charge of setting up the budget, casting, scouting the locations. We even made some changes to the screenplay.

In your opinion, what are the reasons that bring Chinese crews to shoot in France despite the cost of shooting abroad? Can the recent implementation of the TRIP (Tax rebate for international production) incentive by the French government explain this rise of popularity?

Although I am very pleased with this decision, the Tax rebate for international production does not have any impact on the number of Chinese companies coming to France. Most expenses on those films are under one million euro, so they are excluded from this incentive. We are speaking about completely different scales: in China the average budget for a feature film will be between \$300 000 and \$3 million. A television drama of thirty episodes costs between €2.5 million and € 3.5 million. In France, one television film would cost between €800 000 and €1.2 million.

I told the French Film Commission, that this incentive targets mostly American film productions but will miss out foreign productions which have lower budgets. I hope that the TRIP initiative will be adapted to the emerging countries economies, because those countries might be leading the world economy in the future

Shooting abroad and more specifically in France can be a real competitive advantage for a Chinese television channel which has to compete with thousands of other networks. France is synonymous with an idea of luxury and exoticism. This combined with the exceptional locations and landmarks makes it particularly seductive for Chinese productions.

... But they could go to other European countries, what does make France so special?

This is true. During one of our last projects, the production team was supposed to film in Italy and then, at the last minute, they decided to switch the location back to France. We have many competitors in this market, but I believe we also have unique assets. We have the Eiffel Tower, The Champs Elysées , Montmartre...We also have the support of a very large Asian Diaspora, among them 600 000 are Chinese .Nevertheless, Chinese productions have to support a very high cost when deciding to go and shoot in France ,that is why the film-shooting conditions are often very precarious.

While we are on the subject, what differences do you find between the French and Chinese way of making films?

France has a long history in cinema, with rules and corporatism which China is not familiar with. Chinese crews are more homogeneous than French, when needed every person of the crew would give a hand on the film set to speed up the filming. For instance, on one film set, I remember watching the makeup girl walking with her case in one hand and a Dolly track in the other. You would not usually see that in France. Chinese crews would work every day of the week whereas naturally in France we had to limit them to at least six days a week. Part of Bayoo's job is to adapt the Chinese requirements to the reality of the French legal and social context. In that sense, we have to impose some restraints on the Chinese production companies but we also request the French work force involved to be more flexible and accept much less comfortable work conditions than on the French productions.

(At that very moment, a young brown hair woman gets in the office and interrupts our conversation. Yves Cresson introduces me to Cécilia Halatre, a French actress who has a small role in Jacky Chan's next feature Chinese Zodiac and is about to fly for Beijing to film some more scenes for the film.)

Cécilia, I would like to get a feedback from your experience on the *Chinese Zodiac* set.

In the film I play the French friend of one of the leading characters, but apart from this I do not know anything about the story! Since my part was very small they did not give me a screenplay and I had to communicate in English because no one would speak French. But overall it was a very fun experience I would say. As Yves said; they were all supporting each other, all the time and there was also a lot of

improvisation on the set compared to typical French film sets.

Back to you, Yves, how do you see the future of Bayoo and the collaboration between French and Chinese productions?

In 2011, Bayoo produced two TV dramas of thirty episodes each, Wenzhou in France about the Wenzhou community in France and Nos années françaises , (Our French years), a big budget television series about the time spent in France in the 1920s by key founders of the Chinese communist party to be broadcast on CCTV1. We also served as line producers on Jackie Chan’s feature *Chinese Zodiac*. We are currently working on the preproduction of a documentary *Le Siècle des Lumières*, about the Age of Enlightenment in France to be broadcast on Beijing TV.

Nevertheless I cannot predict the future. In my opinion the Chinese cultural industry is developing at the same pace as the rest of the economy. They do rely on a very large domestic market but are also interested in expanding into foreign countries such as France. China has a very large potential audience and many resources but often lacks knowledge of some media and business habits. This is where companies such as Bayoo can play an important role

What about working with other Asian countries?

For now, because of our experience and background we only want to concentrate on China, which is already keeping us very busy.


About the Contributor

*Aurite Kouts is a filmmaker and journalist based in Paris. She is currently producing a feature documentary about social enterprise in the UK and collaborating on different projects to be co-directed with the French documentary filmmaker **Bernard Louargan**.*

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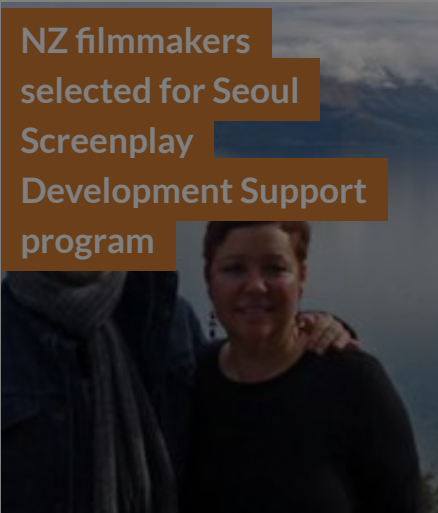
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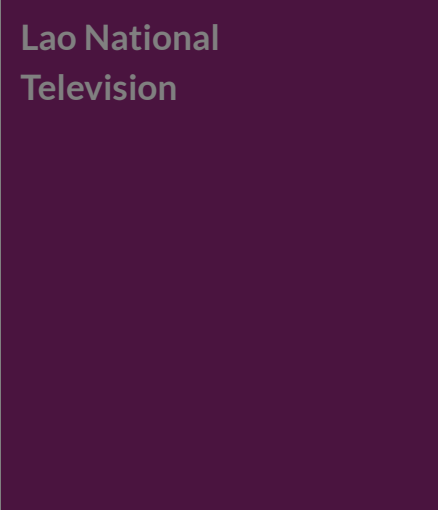
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