



NANTONG NIGHTS | PATAFILM

# NANTONG NIGHTS

Léopold Dewolf & Emma Qian Xu | France, China | 12 mn | 2021

Original language : Mandarin, Nantong dialect | English & French subtitles | Color / 1.85 / Stereo | DCP & HD FILES



[Trailer](#)

## Synopsis

Nantong, China. Jian works as an e-driver, driving the cars of customers too drunk to drive home. One night, one of his passengers asks him to be taken to the police station...



## Directors' note

### // Emma Qian Xu

I had been wanting to make a film in my hometown, Nantong, for quite some time. Like many cities in China, the place has changed dramatically over the past few years. The old house that I grew up in, shared with my extended family, got torn down. My family now lives in brand-new apartments with all the convenience of modern life. Since I only return home once a year, these transformations have become more and more jarring to me.

The film feels personal because, just like the protagonist in “Nantong Nights,” I recognize less and less the city I once knew. Sometimes, I don’t even recognize my country. I believe this is a feeling shared by many from my generation. Although the film was shot in my city and partially in its local dialect (my mother tongue), I wanted to stay away from making an autobiographical film; instead, we utilized fiction, along with film noir codes, to tell a larger story about the cost of change in today’s Chinese society.



### // Léopold Dewolf

Travelling to Nantong for the film was my first time in China. Like our lead character, I was struck by the massive amount of construction happening all around me, stretching on for kilometers, with entire neighborhoods set to be built from scratch. This was all the more striking to my European eyes, as my hometown, Paris, appears to be frozen in time.

The idea for the film originated when Emma pointed at a man on a tiny scooter passing by and explained to me what an “e-driver” was (i.e., someone who drives other people’s cars when they’re drunk). I had never seen anything like this in Europe. I immediately started to imagine what would happen if a respectable e-driver were to be matched with a shadier customer.

From the first day of writing to the last day of shooting, “Nantong Nights” took us a week to make. This allowed us to maintain a degree of spontaneity throughout – something we had hoped would help us capture the time and place we were in.

## Directors' biography



### Léopold Dewolf

After growing up in Paris, Léopold Dewolf studied stop-motion animation in London (BA, University of Westminster) and directing in Los Angeles (MFA, USC School of Cinematic Arts), where he was the recipient of the Thomas B. Bush Scholarship for Cinematography. He showcased his work in international film festivals, including in France (Festival Tous Courts, 7ème Lune, Poitiers, Séquence Court-Métrage, Nancy, Contis), Serbia (Küstendorf curated by Emir Kusturica), Spain (Mecal in Barcelona), Belgium (Court Mais Trash in Brussels), Ukraine (Wiz-Art in Lviv), Macedonia (Skopje Film Festival), Azerbaijan (Baku Film Festival), and the US (USC's LGBT Film Festival in Los Angeles). His curiosity for other cultures brought him to Peru, where he made a film under the tutelage of Werner Herzog in the Amazonian jungle, and most recently to China, where he co-directed a short film in Mandarin and the local dialect. Léopold also works as a movie trailer editor for CANAL+ and Aparté.

### Emma Qian Xu

Emma Qian Xu was born in Nantong, China. Following her undergraduate studies, she came to France for graduate school and earned a Master's Degree in International Business Negotiation in Paris. Later on, Emma pursued her passion for filmmaking parallel to her career in tourism and attended night class at the Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français. After a year of intensive courses and hands-on shooting every weekend, she then started collaborating with Léopold Dewolf. They co-wrote "The Curtain," a short film which she also produced. The film subsequently earned an audience award at the international competition of Court Mais Trash in Brussels. Most recently, Emma co-wrote and co-directed, "Nantong Nights," shot in her hometown in Mandarin and her native dialect. Emma has been based in France for seven years. Trilingual in French, English, and Chinese, she seeks to develop more international co-productions between Europe and Asia.



## Cast & Crew



### CAST

Jian Zhang, Xingxiang Mao, Sijia Dong

### CREW

**PRODUCERS** Léopold Dewolf, Emma Qian Xu

**PRODUCER** Antonin Ehrenberg

**PRODUCTION COMPANY** Patafilm

**DIRECTORS & SCREENWRITERS** Léopold Dewolf & Emma Qian Xu

**DOP** Léopold Dewolf & Emma Qian Xu

**EDITOR** Alexis Marro

**SOUND** Xiaolong Jiang, Alain Castillo

# Festivals

## ***World premiere***

**Festival du court métrage de Clermont Ferrand** 2021 (France)

## ***International and Asian premiere***

**Short Shorts & Asia** 2021 (Japan)

**Fajr International Film Festival** 2021 (Iran)

**Festival du film court en plein air de Grenoble** 2021 (France)

**Cinema Jove de Valencia** 2021 (Spain)

**Festival Comète** 2021 (France)

**Thessaloniki Short Film Festival** 2021 (Greece)



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**Private screeners can be provided upon request**

