



A FILM BY ANDREJ ILIEV  
ÉMILIE OHANA DRAGO LAZETICH

# Shanghai Story

TWO LOST SOULS,  
ONE NIGHT IN THE MAGIC CITY

# Shanghai Story

Genre: Comedy/ Drama  
Running Time: 71 mins  
Format: 4K Color  
Language: English  
Countries: Czech Republic/ HongKong/ Slovakia  
Writer/ Director: Andrej Iliev

## Synopsis

A failed product copywriter with an alcohol dependency crosses paths with a mysterious stranger on a personal mission and together they embark on an unforgettable adventure across the neon-lit Shanghai. During their journey they learn about each other, themselves and discover how to see the city and life with new eyes.

A deeply personal story about love, life, loss and the importance of human connection in today's fast-paced world, **Shanghai Story** follows two characters who are seemingly different to each other but connect over a personal trauma and find a way to move forward in the far-away land.





# Director's Statement

The main characters David and Alice have lost their ways and just like many expatriates they don't possess the intimate knowledge of the ground they stand on. They don't live in a bubble, they are not CEOs, diplomats or Ambassadors with a handsome salary and a private mansion. They are regular people facing their demons far away from home and trying to make sense of the ever changing times.

The backstory of Alice was left intentionally vague, as the viewer discovers the bits and pieces together with David. She is arguably the more interesting character and her appeal at least partially lies in her mystery. The viewer never catches a glimpse of Alice's map, because David never does. Revealing too much of her would lessen the mystery. After all, how much can you get to know someone in just a few hours?

***Shanghai Story*** is a film about human connection. And as such it deserves to be shared with other people. As a filmmaker, I matured in Shanghai and with this film I wish to conclude my time in the city. It's a small film in scale, but a big part of my life.



# Background

***Shanghai Story*** is a true indie film, a throwback to 90s independent wave and inspired by films of Richard Linklater (*Before Sunrise*), Kevin Smith (*Chasing Amy*) and Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*. It was filmed entirely on location in Shanghai, China.

Most of the locations seen in the film were filmed guerrilla style, with 19 days of principal photography and 5 extra days for pick-up shots. The film tells the tale of two lost souls trying to make sense of the ever-changing world.





# Guerilla-Style Production

Due to the high cost of filming locations in Shanghai and the large number of them required for *Shanghai Story*, the production was only able to secure a few of the high-profile places seen in the film to use with a full-sized crew. All the remaining locations seen in the film were filmed guerrilla-style, with the cast and crew roaming the street of Shanghai at night and discovering the most intriguing and offbeat places in the city (Shikumen ruins, dancing aunties at Shaanxi Road, back streets in the heart of the city and views of iconic buildings from Pudong alleyways).



# Motivation

How many films centered around New York, London or Tokyo can you think of? Probably quite a few. What about Shanghai?

In 2004 I watched Sophia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* in a movie theatre in Slovakia (formerly Czechoslovakia) together with my cousin Ondrej. We were both nineteen. After the movie was over, I told him I wish I had made it. For several weeks afterwards it was all I could think about. I had already been a huge fan of Bill Murray since 'Ghostbusters' and he was the reason I wanted to watch Coppola's film in the first place. And even though he and Scarlett Johansson were both great, it was another character I fell in love with - Tokyo. The vibrant cinematography and relatable story about two lost souls trying to make sense of their lives all set in the neon-lit metropolis were like a breath of fresh air. Then I waited for 8-9 months for the DVD release (different times) and watched the film over and over again. 4-5 years had passed and meanwhile I moved to the UK where I eventually graduated film school. The recession hit hard in 2008 and my future in the UK didn't look too bright. The same year I visited China first time, including a few days trip to Shanghai. Like a moth to a flame, I was immediately mesmerized by the colours and the contrast between the ancient and the futuristic. I fell in love with the city, and immediately wanted to move there. A few years and two- three trips later I did exactly that. It was the year 2012 and I started thinking about a short film set in Shanghai. Riding the subway at night and listening to the 'Lost in Translation' soundtrack made me feel like one of the characters in my favourite movie.







Three years later I managed to self-finance a short film called 'Shanghai Story', which I wrote, directed, shot and co-produced. The whole cast & crew consisted of 4 people I had just met - Emilie Ohana, Drago Lazetich and Miroslav 'Notch' Karel. That's just how Shanghai works - it's straight to business, with getting to know people on the go. The short did relatively well at a few small film festivals around the World. After the positive experience, I have decided to actively pursue a feature film version.

We knew that shooting around the city with a full sized crew will be a challenge, so we had to utilize all the visual flare that Shanghai has to offer, with its neon light backdrop serving as the canvas for the story. I insisted on casting the same people, since the script was tailored to the actors specifically. With a bare-bones crew and filming mostly at night, it was a challenging endeavor, but despite all the setbacks that come with making an indie film (especially in a country like China), we managed to wrap-up the production and deliver the film. Shanghai Story has made a modest festival run just after the pandemic, winning a few awards in the process.

Shanghai by nature is not a place for small independent cinema. It's a place for big business. It was a difficult project to realize, but just like anywhere else in the World, there are people who live there with stories to be told. And they too deserve a little love just like the city itself.

*- Andrej Iliev*

## Writer/ Director: Andrej Iliev

Andrej Iliev was born in 1984 in the former Czechoslovakia. He started making short films when he was nine after his best friend found a 16mm camera under his bed. Andrej has relocated to Shanghai in 2012 where he now works as a commercial director and cinematographer.

He continues making short film and mixing genres, like his thriller with a twist *The Voiceman*, crime parody *The Killing Game*, a zero dialogue feel-good mystery *Two Men One Pool* and a single character sci-fi *2022*.

*Shanghai Story* is his first venture into feature film.



## Director of Photography: Gert Kombate

Gert is a Shanghai based Togolese filmmaker and cinematographer. He has previously worked with Andrej on his comedy short *The killing Game*.

*Shanghai Story* is his feature film debut.



# Cast

## Alice: Emilie Ohana



Emilie Ohana is a French- American actress. Born in Havana, Cuba, Emilie has started her career in French Film and Television at an early age.

She has since starred in Roland Joffe's ***Vatel*** and had a recurring role as Zoe the video artist in ***Paris, I Love You*** and ***New York I Love You***, where she shared screen time with Ethan Hawke and Bradley Cooper.

## David: Drago Lazetich



Drago Lazetich is a Serbian-American actor. After leaving California and coming to Shanghai in the early naughties he has found himself working steadily in Chinese film and television.

His latest acting credits include Guan Hu's WWII epic ***800*** and the action extravaganza ***Wolf Warrior 2***. Drago has previously appeared alongside Jackie Chan in ***Dragon Blade***.

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