

# DIRE STRAIT

IT'S FOR THE BABY.



IT'S FOR THE FAMILY.



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY  
DODGE COLLEGE  
OF FILM AND MEDIA ARTS

WRITER  
DIRECTOR

LIANG-CHUN LIN

PRODUCED  
BY

TAYLOR POLING

DIRECTOR OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY

BRANDON NG

PRODUCTION  
DESIGN

DAZZY SHAH

EDITED  
BY

APOORVA SANKAR

SOUND  
DESIGN

KEVIN KHOR

ORIGINAL  
SOUNDTRACK

SHAO-TING CHANG

STARRING: CHRISTINE LIAO, LEE CHEN, JASON WANG, WILLIS CHUNG

# A DIRE STRAIT.

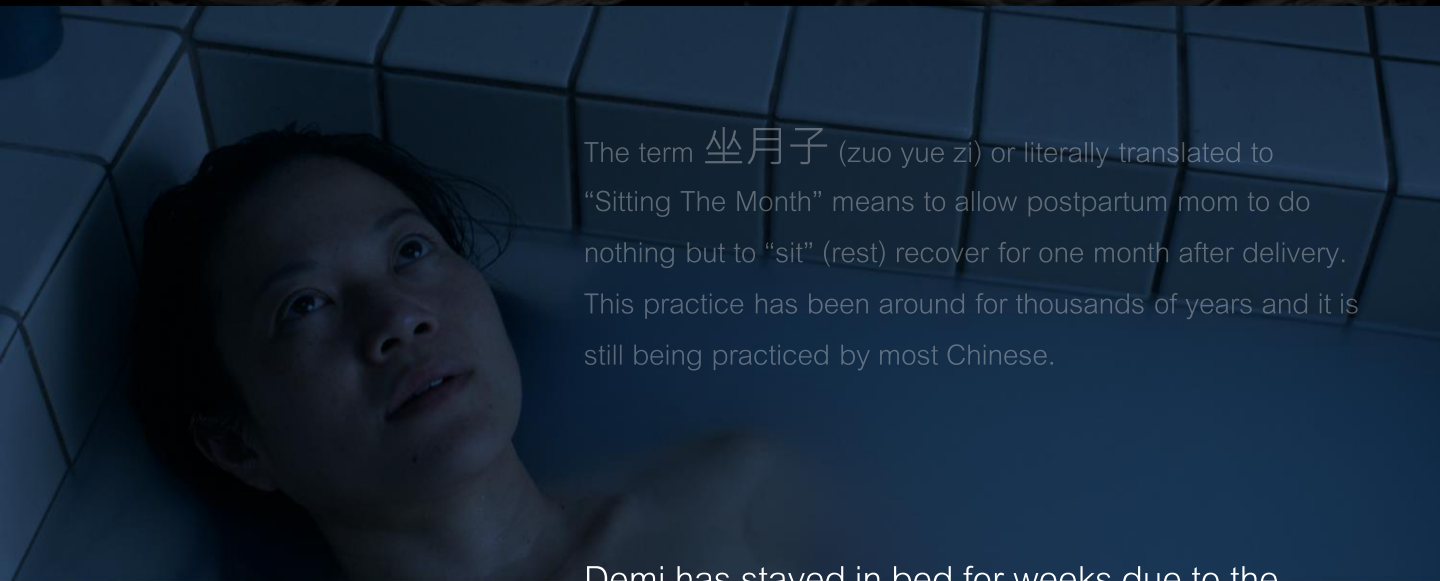
A thriller short based on Chinese postpartum customs explores the conflicting beliefs about motherhood.



Mandarin Title	母侵 Mu-Chin
Genre/ Keywords	Thriller, Dark Comedy, Chinese, Family.
Runtime	21 minutes 45 seconds
Format	Digital / Color / 1.89 / 23.976 FPS
Audio	Dolby Digital 5.1
Completion Date	April 4, 2022
Production Budget	21,000 USD
Country of Origin	Taiwan, United States
Language	English, Mandarin Chinese
Subtitle	Partially English
Camera & Lenses	SONY F65, Red Pro Prime Lens 18, 25, 35, 50mm

# A DROWNING MOTHER.

A new Taiwanese mother tries to survive the strictest postpartum tradition but soon realizes that she needs to escape it.



The term 坐月子 (zuo yue zi) or literally translated to “Sitting The Month” means to allow postpartum mom to do nothing but to “sit” (rest) recover for one month after delivery. This practice has been around for thousands of years and it is still being practiced by most Chinese.

Demi has stayed in bed for weeks due to the tradition “Zuo-Yue-Zi,” in which Chinese people believe in healing women’s bodies after labor and helping them produce the most nutritious milk. Some elderly women also see it as an opportunity to train women into qualified mothers.

Although Demi tries to be as cooperative as possible to please her in-laws, the weeks-long confinement and endless chicken soup push her to her limit. She desperately needs a break; however, just one misstep spirals into her worst nightmare...

[CLICK HERE FOR TRAILER](#)



# A QUIRKY FAMILY.



## DEMI

A smiley daughter-in-law that says yes to everything. A new mother that tries to prove herself good enough to be a mother.



## MOTHER-IN-LAW

A dictator of the family that is overwhelmingly loving and caring at the same time. You better do whatever she asks you to as it's always "for your own good."



## FATHER-IN-LAW

An absolutely quiet observer. He's always looking, listening, following while thinking, but never talking. He barely even makes any sound.



## HUSBAND

A 35-year-old mommy's boy. Too insecure to give up anything. Desperately needs rewards and praises to feel valuable at all.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In Taiwan, around 40% of mothers experience postpartum depression. Studies have shown that cultural factors play a crucial role: the tradition of postpartum confinement, the power structure in the family and our arbitrary interpretation of maternity.

A Dire Strait is based on the postpartum custom "Zuo-Yue-Zi." Although might be practiced differently in every family, it concretizes the arbitrary standard of a good mother in our culture. This film is a projection of my fear of this judgmental system as an Asian woman.

I have witnessed my mother, her mother, and all other mothers in my family spend their lives struggling. My mother can't stop talking about how much she was pressured during pregnancy and after giving birth. She had to sneak food into her room, forbade from a fan or even an open window during the steamy summer. "I was having heatstroke and growing heat rash all over my body, although they think I would catch a cold as soon as I take off my sweater." My mom now laughed about it.

Chinese mothers feel obligated to prioritize family over self-care while also doing it in a "right" way that pleases elders. In order to benefit the family, the fundamental unit in our collectivist belief, women are forced to lose their uniqueness and what they want in life. They not only step into the system but also trim themselves to fit into it. Eventually, mothers see it as an achievement and continue training the next generation to suffer the same way. Many younger mothers nowadays still bear such family pressure.

It took my mom, the most talented woman I know, 30 years to find out what she wanted to do with her life other than being a mother. She privileged me with a lot more freedom and choices than she had. A Dire Strait is my shout-out for her, as well as my first statement to break this chain.

## CHRISTINE LIAO AS DEMI



Christine Liao started her artistic journey as a dancer. She began taking dance classes at 3 years old and fell in love with storytelling through movement. Her interests started expanding toward theater and acting in high school and continued to grow in college, where she performed with a theater troupe at UC Berkeley. She has since worked in various short films, independent features and web videos. Christine played Waverly Jong in Sierra Madre Playhouse's Joy Luck Club in Fall 2019. Her best known role thus far is as the restaurant cashier in the comedy sketch, The ABC Who Can't Read Chinese. You can also find her in Fine China on HBO platforms and the video game Life is Strange: True Colors.

## LEE CHEN AS MOTHER-IN-LAW

Lee Chen was born as Li Hui on February 17, 1963 in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia of China. She got her BA in English Language and later came to the U.S. to earn a MA in Education and a MFA in Theatre. She had been in many theatre and dance productions in Chicago, Honolulu and Los Angeles but then left acting for nine years to raise her two sons. She came back to act in film/TV in 2011, since then, she has guest starred and co-starred in TV shows Good Trouble, VEEP, The Morning Show, Gentefied, Arrested Development, Girl Meets World, NCIS: Los Angeles and TNT's "Southland". You can also find her in independent features including We Broke Up, DOE, Midlife and Love Arcadia.





## JASON WANG AS FATHER-IN-LAW



Graduated from the Law school of Beijing Open University, Jason later immigrated to the US in 1994 and now is a well-known producer/director of events and concerts among Chinese community in LA. He has directed more than 100 shows, including US Chinese-American New Year Festival Gala, China's Tenor Trio World Circuit, and Los Angeles Chinese Culture Festival.

His acting works including theater plays After Divorce, Love therapist, Crazy Theater, as well as feature and short films Beneath the Banyan Tree, The Monkey King, Still Rolling, Stephanie, One Face Mask, and more.

## WILLIS CHUNG AS HUSBAND

Willis Chung was born in Monterey Park, California. He is an executive producer of Mad Minds Entertainment with experience producing for brands such as Apple, Samsung and Lenovo. Parallel to his production background, Chung established himself as an entrepreneur in the digital imaging technology space, with his company Sclera Digital - clients including Marvel and HBO. Other than these roles, his passion in acting had also led him to take parts in plenty short films and TV. You can see him playing in one episode of Little America, Fresh Off the Boat, Silicon Valley, Lethal Weapon (2019 TV series), House M.D. among others.



## KEY CREATIVES

### WRITER/DIRECTOR: LIANG-CHUN LIN



Liang-Chun was born and raised in Taiwan. She earned her BA of Radio and Television from Chengchi University in Taipei and MFA in Film Production from Chapman University, with directing discipline. Her previous short films, YUTAS (2013) and HIS PERFECT DEAD EX (2018), were nominated as Best Student Short and Best Narrative Short in The Golden Harvest Film Festival (biggest short fest in Taiwan). STILL ROLLING, which was selected by 2021 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, San Diego International Film Festival, has earned tremendous feedbacks from female audience.

Liang-Chun has directed 10 narrative short films and now continues creating content that reflects on Asian women experience. She is currently in development on GRANDMAS' BIKINI, a new feature film focuses on the identity crisis and self-recognition of elderly women, as well as ANNOYING PALACE, a comedy that discusses modern issues with tropes and cliché of ancient Chinese costume drama.

### PRODUCER: TAYLOR POLING



Taylor Poling is a producer from Northern Virginia and is currently pursuing his MFA in Film & Television Producing from Chapman University in Orange, CA. He has produced seven short films during his time at Chapman and has served as Production Manager on several others. Prior to film school, Taylor worked in software sales and corporate finance for several years after receiving his undergraduate degree in International Business and Finance from the University of South Carolina.



## KEY CREATIVES

### DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: BRANDON NG



Brandon Ng was born in San Francisco and raised in the city and around the Bay. He discovered his passion for film and the arts during undergraduate education at UC Santa Cruz. With one year of freelancing experience after earning his BA in Film and Digital Media, he was then accepted into the prestigious Dodge College at Chapman where he spent 3 years earning his MFA in Film Production, focusing on cinematography. At Dodge, he studied under many great teachers and industry veterans, and received mentorship from Johnny Jensen, ASC and Bill Dill, ASC.

Aside from focusing on the cinematography, his greatest strength lies in his collaborative mindset. He believes in the collaboration of the team and is empathetic in considering how all departments compliment one another best in achieving an emotional experience for the audience. While technological advances are becoming more abundant and dominating the filmmaking arena, his focus in regard to storytelling, filmmaking, and the arts remains singular; to connect with his fellow human.

### PRODUCTION DESIGNER: DAZZY SHAH



Dazzy Shah is an Indian-Canadian Production Designer, currently based in Los Angeles. She holds a M.F.A. in Production Design from the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University in California, and a B.A. in Architecture and Visual Studies from the University of Toronto. Dazzy has also been selected as one of the few participants in the Art Directors Guild's prestigious Production Design Initiative Program. The combination of her studies has helped her explore various forms of artistic practices, which ultimately led her to finding her passion for Production Design.

When not buried in a stack of Pinterest boards and books, she enjoys writing, reading, floor naps, binging her ever-expanding list of media recommendations, and Taco Bell.

## KEY CREATIVES

### SOUND DESIGNER: KEVIN KHOR



Kevin was working in Economic Consulting until he embraces his passion for music and sound in 2015. He was so intrigued by the interview of sound professionals behind movies that he began recording sounds around the house, which led him to filming a short film using the sounds he captured. That experience motivated him to his Masters in Film Production with an emphasis in Sound Design at Chapman University, and has worked as a sound designer/ sound mixer since then.

Now Kevin is mentored by dialogue editor Justin Walker and works in a great team under some great mixers like three-time Emmy award winner Stephen Tibbo. After dozens of short films, he later worked for Podcast Talk Easy with Sam Fragoso, YouTube channel of UFC promoter Chael Sonnen (1M subscribers) and currently works for TV show A GRUNT'S LIFE, and more independent projects.

### EDITOR: APOORVA SANKAR



Apoorva Sankar was born and raised in India. She earned her BA in Literary honors from India and MFA from Chapman University in Film Production, emphasizing on Editing.

Apoorva has worked on several short narrative content and documentary style films. Her documentary project, BIRDS WITHOUT WINGS, was the finalist of the Student Academy in 2021 and won her Best Editing Awards at the New York International Film Festival and Global Film Festival.

She currently works at MOCEAN LA a well-reputed trailer house in Los Angeles where she assists the finest editors. She has worked on some huge projects like GIRL FROM PLAINVILLE, DR STRANGE and PIECES OF HER. She also freelances and has worked on a Samsung Commercial, short film I WAS ALWAYS COMING BACK from Columbia University, digital content with Jubilee Media and edits tik-tok videos for Millions.



## KEY CREATIVES

### COMPOSER: SHAO-TING CHANG



Winner of 2019 Taiwan's National TV Golden Bell Awards for Best Original Score (Bite, 2018), Shao-Ting Chang has written music for over 80 projects, including features, tv series, shorts, documentaries, animations, commercials, and games. Horror, romance, comedy, action, sci-fi, and fantasy are just a few genre Chang is experienced in. In addition to composing epic, orchestral, electronic, emotional, and ambient music, he also loves trying out new things and adding folk, ethnic, avant-garde elements into his composition.

As a previous audio engineer who has abundant training in sound mixing and design, Chang is especially skilled at creating music that blends well with ambience and sound effects.

Graduated from the Screen Scoring Master Program at New York University, Chang now collaborate regularly with young artists across Asia and the States.

### HAIR MAKE-UP/SPECIAL EFFECT: POTHMOLITA "APPLE" DOU



Pothmolita Dou, better known as Apple, is an international makeup artist and the first Cambodian special effects makeup artist to work in the Hollywood film industry. Apple was a recipient of the prestigious Vi Neill Makeup Artist Scholarship in 2016. With this scholarship, she attended Cinema Makeup School in Los Angeles, California, where she earned a diploma of Beauty & Special Effects Makeup.

She took training from established Hollywood artists such as Ken Diaz, Vi Neill, Leonard Engelman, Don Lanning, and Michael Spatola, and she has worked on movies, commercials, music videos and photoshoots throughout Asia and the United States. Her feature projects include First They Killed My Father, Hex, Before the Fall, The Forest Whispers, Lisa and Liza.

Apple hopes to inspire and empower future generations of Cambodian makeup artists to pursue the same career path and take it to higher levels.



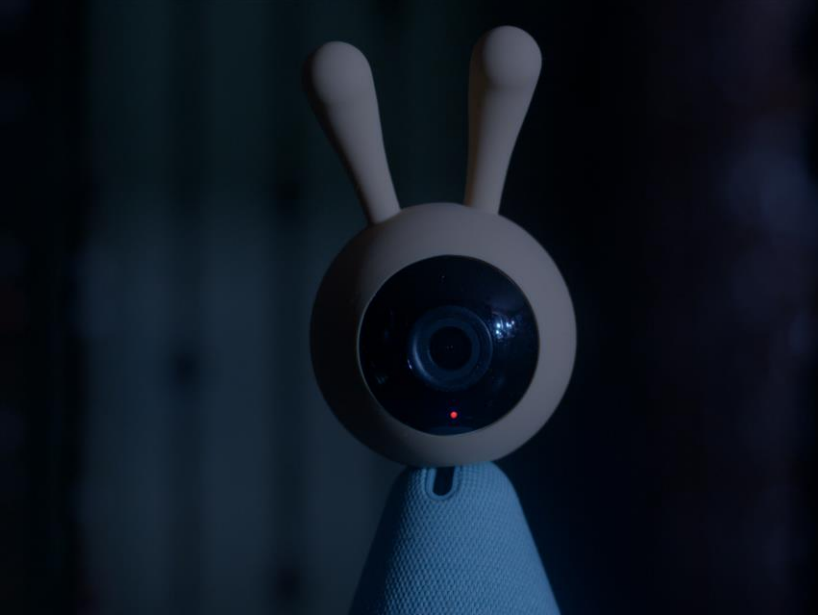
STILLS



STILLS



STILLS





## BEHIND THE SCENE



Setting up the canopy bed to create a visual prison.

Makeup artist painting the silicone postpartum belly.



Plenty prop chickens...



# BEHIND THE SCENE

Director working  
with actors.



A minimal crew and a lot of PPE.





# AWARD

Grand Jury Award (as known as the Best Short Film)

In prestigious Dances With Films, our very first participating festival.



## DEADLINE

≡ MENU

READ NEXT: New York Emmy Nominations: News 12 D...

### A DIRE STRAIT

written & directed by Liang-Chun Lin  
produced by Taylor Poling

**HONORABLE MENTIONS: KICKSTART MY HEART/TIM TRAVERS THE TIME TRAVELERS  
PARADOX**





## REVIEWS

“ The film itself is very funny. It walks that fine line between being funny and being kind of sad and manages never to trip. ” – Steve Kopian ([Unseen Films](#))

“A great movie to highlight the practice of zuo-yue-zi, to make people aware of it, get people talking and discussing it, both the good and bad sides.” – Mark OC ([OC movie](#) with a 5 stars review.)

“A Dire Strait is early in its fest run but seems destined to capture some more prizes along its festival journey. Liao is definitely a face to watch for in the future. Stark and disturbing, emotionally intense and strangely humorous, A Dire Strait is a unique, inspired film that you could check out if it shows up at a festival near you.” – Richard Propes ([Independent Film Critic](#))

## MORE

- More photos, posters, and trailer can be downloaded at our:



- Finds us on:



- Follow more with: **#ADireStrait**