



LEFTOVER WOMEN

Press Kit



Directed by Shosh Shlam & Hilla Medalia

Language: Mandarin with English Subtitles

RT: 83 Minutes

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SYNOPSIS

QIU HUA MEI is 34 and a successful lawyer. XU MIN is 28 and works for a public radio station. GAI QI is 36 and an assistant professor at Normal University in Beijing. Despite their thriving careers they still live with the derogatory label *sheng nu*. The phrase, translated as *leftover women*, is an unflattering term used across China for educated, professional women over the age of 27 who have failed to find a husband. With 30 million more men than women, the social stability of China is under threat, and single women are perceived as both the source and the solution of the problem, but how do modern Chinese women balance what's expected of them, and what they want for themselves? As each woman goes in search of "Mr. Right," they have to struggle to stay true to their personal and professional ambitions, all the while burdened by pressures from their families, friends, and even a government that went as far as to launch a campaign to stigmatize unwed women.

Shosh Shlam and Hilla Medalia, the award-winning filmmakers behind the critically acclaimed documentary WEB JUNKIE (Sundance 2014), which brought international attention to internet addicted teens in China, have reunited to examine another 21st-century Chinese phenomenon, shining a bright and unflinching light on the true stories of these *leftover women*. Shosh Shlam is best known for her directing and producing credits for award-winning documentaries such as GOOD GARBAGE (2008), LAST JOURNEY INTO SILENCE (2003), and BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY (2005). Hilla Medalia is a Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and producer who has received three Emmy® nominations. Her projects have garnered critical acclaim and screened internationally in theaters and on television including HBO, MTV, and BBC. Her best-known film, THE OSLO DIARIES (2018) premiered at Sundance and was picked up by HBO later that year.

Made with the support of Abigail Disney's Fork Films and is co-produced with yes Docu and ZDF Arte, the film is produced by Hilla Medalia and Shosh Shlam, and executive produced by Mati Kochavi, Maya Kochavi, Adi Kochavi, Yona Wiesenthal, Vesna Cudic, and Guy Lavie. Worldwide rights are represented by London based MetFilm Sales.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The One Child Policy in China encourages gendercide, and in result 66 million girls are missing. This demographic imbalance is a threat to the stability of the nation, which has prompted the Chinese government to orchestrate the derogatory campaign pushing all unmarried women to get married and have children, especially the educated ones. They want these young, sophisticated women to increase the birth rate and importantly, to 'improve' the gene pool.

We see much of the cultural and historical dimension of the leftover women phenomenon through the wide generational gap between the parents and the daughters. Traditional attitudes of the mother's clash with the attitudes of the daughters. While the parents still see their daughters' chief purpose in life is to getting married and provide them with grandchildren, the younger generations prioritize self-fulfillment. This is entirely new in the society that has always put the 'common good' above the individual.

In the past, arranged marriage was the common practice – and still is today. Most parents still believe in it and regularly engage in matchmaking on behalf of their daughters. Every week they attend the “marriage markets” to find a groom. This can create massive family conflicts and the fallout can be catastrophic. We've captured very dramatic moments that expose this tension. Most commonly though, young women are still obedient. So, even strong-willed Stephanie, to obey her parents, goes in search of a husband. Eventually, the pressure from the family becomes too much, and the only way forward for her is to leave China. Stephanie escapes, while Kelly remains. Kelly, who is most generously financially supported by her parents (a smart Beijing apartment, a new car), remains the victim of the traditional world. Her parents will determine her destiny. They will set the standards, they will suggest husbands, and ultimately, they will have the final word.

SUBJECT BIOGRAPHIES

LEFTOVER WOMEN offers a rare in-depth look at the lives of three fascinating, strong, modern women and their fight to determine the course of their futures. Each woman undergoes a unique personal transformation, together presenting an in-depth and nuanced view of modern Chinese women.

QIU HUA MEI is a 34 and a successful lawyer. She grew up in the countryside but moved to Beijing to work for a big law firm. Although she's successful, her peasant background limits her social standing in Beijing. She is the first in her village to get an education, yet to her family, as an unmarried, childless woman, she is a failure. Stephanie's search for a life partner seems futile. The candidates that would satisfy her own part-modern, part-traditional, expectations are few and far between. The pressure is mounting and eventually drives her away from China: Stephanie moves to France where she can progress professionally and experience the freedom that she longs for.

XU MIN is 28 and works for a public radio station. Her parents are well-off and well-connected government officials, and she is the direct product of the traditional Chinese doctrine that women should marry and take care of their families. Career is something that you do to increase your stock value before you meet "Mr. Right". She is on the hunt for the most eligible bachelor, but in her opinion, time is running out. Her parents seem to think so too and spend their weekends attending marriage markets looking for a suitable candidate. We observe them as the pressure between mother and daughter mounts. The scene is set for a big family showdown. Prompted by the visit to a 'relationship expert', Kelly confronts her mother and the truth about the years of emotional abuse comes out.

GAI QI is 36 and the oldest of the three women. She is an assistant professor at the Normal University in Beijing. She brings the perspective of an independent, educated woman who challenges the traditional view. However, over the course of the narrative, it is actually Iris who undergoes the most transformative journey. After a chance encounter on the subway, she starts a brief liaison with a university-educated, younger man from a lower social class. Their brief encounter is followed by a snappy marriage, a pregnancy, and the birth of a baby girl. Can Iris be the new role model that Chinese women are looking for? Has she got it all now? Is her story a 'happily-ever-after' or a 'smoke and mirrors' happiness? Iris' family don't approve of her husband's social standing. Meanwhile her mother-in-law must hide Iris' true age from the rest of the family.

Though these three women are going through different dramatic journeys there are overlapping themes which transition from one story to the next. As they search for “Mr. Right”, we will see the protagonists participating in social events, going to matchmakers, bars, government-sponsored events for singles and more. Underpinning their search is the oppressive force of the class system which affects the future of each of the characters. Stephanie, for example, comes from a small village and is therefore highly unlikely to marry a Chinese man from a higher class. On the other hand, no man seems to be worthy of Kelly, the youngest and richest of the three – at least as far as her mother is concerned. And then in Iris’ story, we see what happens when the rules are broken, and the truth hidden - with Iris marrying a ‘peasant’ to the shame of her family, but then giving birth to a long-desired grandchild. Each woman’s story adds another aspect to the portrait of the Shengnu phenomena, and together they paint the complex picture of career women in the 21st Century China.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Shosh Shlam - (Director/Producer) of "Last Journey into Silence" (2003) that won best Documentary at the Lublin Film Festival. Her next film, "Be Fruitful and Multiply" (2005) broadcasted on channel 2 in Israel, ZDF and other European TV channels. "Good Garbage" (2008) won an award for Best Documentary at the Shanghai Film Festival in China, FICA Film Festival in Brazil and "Web Junkie" that won best Documentary Honorable Mention at the Jerusalem Film Festival. Won the best documentary in TRT Turkey. Premiered in Sundance Film Festival (2014) and was theatrically released in NY, LA and Toronto. Broadcasted on the BBC, ARTE, PBS and on many other TV stations. Shosh holds an MA in Comparative Literature from Bar Ilan University. She also graduated from the Theatre Department at Tel Aviv University, and studied at New York's School of Visual Arts

Hilla Medalia - (Producer/Director) Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and producer has received three Emmy® nominations. Her projects have garnered critical acclaim and screened internationally in theaters and on television including HBO, MTV, BBC and ARTE. Her range of titles include 'To Die in Jerusalem' 2007 (HBO), 'After the Storm' 2009 (MTV), 'Numbered' 2012 (ARTE), 'Dancing in Jaffa' 2013 (Tribeca, IFC Sundance selects), 'Web Junkie' 2014 (Sundance Film Festival, POV, BBC) and 'The Go Go Boys' 2014 (Cannes Film Festival), 'Censored Voices' 2015, (Sundance Film Festival and Berlinale), 'Muhi - Generally Temporary' 2017 (San Francisco Film Festival, Hot Docs) and 'The Oslo Diaries' 2018 (Sundance, HBO). Hilla is a board member of The Israeli Director's Guild and a member of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science. Hilla holds an M.A. from Southern Illinois University.

CREDITS

Written, Directed and Produced by

Shosh Shlam

Hilla Medalia

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Fan Jian

Composer

Ran Bagno

Editor

Joelle Alexis

Executive Producer

Vesna Cudic

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Maya Kochavi

Adi Kochavi

Yona Wiesenthal

Guy Lavie

Associate Producers

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Ma Shanshan

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Sabine Bubeck-Paaz

Co-Producer

ZDF/ARTE, yes Docu

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Sound

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Rotem Dror

Color Grading

Aharon Peer

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Cindy Zeng Xin

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Xu Min

Gai Qi

Aishan

Ai Lu-Ming

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Founder of Hailan Family Wellbeing

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Qiu Xiufang

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