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## Joan Chen returns to Chinese film

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By Min Lee, AP



HONG KONG -- Before Ang Lee, before Chow Yun-fat, there was Joan Chen.

The 46-year-old Shanghai native was a pioneer for ethnic Chinese actors in Hollywood, appearing in the Oscar-winning movie "The Last Emperor" and the "Twin Peaks" TV series.

These days she enjoys cross-cultural filmmaking, living in the U.S. with her husband and children but alternating between English and Chinese-language movies.

"Every culture has a different way of expression. You can absorb from each culture elements that help your performance," she told The Associated Press by phone recently from China, where she was filming "Seventeen," about the relationship between a mother and her son.

She has made a homecoming of sorts in recent years, appearing in a series of a Chinese films.

This year has been especially productive and highlights her diverse output. She had roles in Oscar-winning director Ang Lee's new spy thriller "Lust, Caution" and Chinese director Jiang Wen's art-house film "The Sun Also Rises," both of which competed for the top Golden Lion prize at the recent Venice Film Festival. "Lust, Caution" won.

She also appeared in the Australian movie "The Home Song Stories," about a Hong Kong night club singer's struggles in Australia.

The veteran actress said she enjoys going back and forth between Chinese and Western productions, which she says makes her a fast learner.

Chen said Hollywood is more systematic and offers better working conditions and more rest, while in China, filmmaking is more casual, "family style" -- and she doesn't have a trailer.

She said, however, "it's not especially harsh for me. It was like this when I was very young. I've worked in China for many years."

Chen enjoyed huge stardom in China before leaving in 1981 to study filmmaking at California State University, Northridge. Jiang Qing, wife of Mao Zedong, cast her as a guerrilla in a propaganda movie. She later became known as the "young Elizabeth Taylor of China" and won China's top acting prize at age 19.

She continued working in the U.S., even directing the 2000 Hollywood movie "Autumn in New York," starring Richard Gere and Winona Ryder.

Chen said it's easier for Chinese actors to get work in Hollywood now because there's greater awareness of China and Chinese movies, but the American industry is still conservative and good roles are still difficult to come by.

"Be it Western audiences or international audiences, they definitely have an urgent desire to learn about China," she said.

Meanwhile, Chen's recent performances have won rave reviews from filmmakers. She stole the show in "The Sun Also Rises" with her portrayal of a giddy, sexy female doctor who has a crush on a teacher at a Chinese school campus during the brutal Chinese Cultural Revolution.



## AP Interview: Joan Chen returns to Chinese film, enjoys cross-cultural filmmaking

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Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan, who directed Chen in the 1994 movie «Red Rose White Rose,» said he enjoys Chen's feminine appeal.

«She's constantly polishing herself, reminding herself to see how she can become a better woman, a more attractive woman,» he said.

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