

QUEENS OF THE QING DYNASTY

IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN THE QING DYNASTY, YOU'VE SEEN THE PRODIGES OF THE QING DYNASTY. THE NEW CAST
OF THE QING DYNASTY PRODUCTION INCLUDES THE QING DYNASTY, BEHIND THE SCENES, AND THE QING DYNASTY. THE QING DYNASTY
PRODUCTION IS A PRODUCTION OF THE QING DYNASTY. THE QING DYNASTY PRODUCTION IS A PRODUCTION OF THE QING DYNASTY.
TELEFILM CANADA CBC FILMS Canada



SYNOPSIS

In a remote small town, Star (Sarah Walker), a neurodiverse teen, forms an unlikely rapport with An (Ziyin Zheng), an international student from Shanghai volunteering at the hospital. Between the two, a bond forms, cemented by their candid conversations, nightly text messages, and exchange of their deepest secrets. The boundaries of their friendship quickly expand into something special, altering both Star and An's inner alchemy.

Queens of the Qing Dynasty is a queer friendship romance that breaches the absurd and poetic. Both intimate and intense, it explores the intrinsic beauty and innate flaws of what it is to be human, the profundity of connection, the vortex of mental illness, and the creativity of neurodivergence. The electronic music score blurs between cinema foley and sound design to create a feeling of an alternate plane. *Queens of the Qing Dynasty* is an affectionate ode to women, asexuals, and genderqueer individuals who exist beyond the norms of society by writer and director Ashley McKenzie (*Werewolf*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival).

COUNTRY AND YEAR OF PRODUCTION

CANADA, 2022

RUNTIME

122 MINS

FORMAT

DCP, COLOR, 1.37:1, 5.1

LANGUAGES

ENGLISH, MANDARIN, RUSSIAN

PRESS

Samantha Chater
samanthachater@gmail.com

INQUIRES

Ashley McKenzie
ashley@hi-visfilm.ca

PRESS MATERIALS

[Click to Download](#)

CAST

Star	Sarah Walker	she/her
An	Ziyin Zheng	they/them
Gail	Wendy Wishart	she/her
Social Worker	Jana Reddick	she/her
Violet	Yao Xue	she/her
Cher	Cherlena Brake	she/her
Charge Nurse	Reg MacDonald	he/him
Psychiatrist	Carl Getto	he/him
Boyfriend	Nidhin KH	he/him
OR Nurse	Rony Robson	he/him

CREW

writer director	Ashley McKenzie
producers	Ashley McKenzie, Britt Kerr, Nelson MacDonald
cinematography	Scott Moore
production design	Michael Pierson
editors	Ashley McKenzie, Scott Moore
costume design	Sig Burwash, Kathleen Darling
sound design	Andreas Mendritzki
original music	Yu Su, Cecile Believe
music supervisor	Amy Fritz
original animation	Cyril W. Chen
script consultants	Tiffany Pieroway, Ziyin Zheng, Lara Lewis
production manager	Britt Kerr
assistant director	Nelson MacDonald
art director	Steve Wadden
sound recordist	Graham Colwell
sound mix	Stéphane Bergeron

SOUNDTRACK

Yu Su
Cecile Believe
Autechre
Suzanne Ciani

PRESS QUOTES

“destabilizing in the best, mind-expanding way” — Artforum

“a vivid array of image textures and musicalities” — MUBI

“dialogue worthy of Kushner” — Filmmaker Magazine

“By communicating a rare, cathartic, and humane commodity, McKenzie has given us a movie worth talking about” — Cinema Scope

“a work drenched in eerie, morphing explorations” — In Review

“showcases McKenzie’s flair for loose, floating narratives and complex characters” — Variety

“weird, brash, and contemplative” — Film Fest Report

INTERVIEWS / REVIEWS

22/03/2022 [Filmmaker Magazine](#) — Berlinale 2022 Critic’s Notebook, Darren Hughes

21/03/2022 [Cinema Scope](#) — Tales from the Unama’ki Hospital: Ashley McKenzie on Queens of the Qing Dynasty, Adam Nayman

25/02/2022 [MUBI](#) — Glitch in the System: Ashley McKenzie Discusses “Queens of the Qing Dynasty”, Lawrence Garcia

23/02/2022 [Artforum](#) — TO THE WUNDER: Nicolas Rapold on the 72nd Berlin International Film Festival, Nicolas Rapold

22/02/2022 [In Review](#) — Queens of the Qing Dynasty – Ashley McKenzie, Ryan Swen

16/02/2022 [Criterion Daily](#) — Encounters with Stars, David Hudson

14/02/2022 [Variety](#) — Ashley McKenzie on Her Romantic Second Feature ‘Queens of the Qing Dynasty’, Caitlin Quinlan

09/02/2022 [IndieWire](#) — Berlin 2022: The 10 Most Exciting Films at This Year’s Festival, Kate Erbland, David Ehrlich, Eric Kohn

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Queens of the Qing Dynasty is my second feature and, as is often the case, it grew out of and can be seen as a response to my previous film, *Werewolf*. I auditioned two young women, then teens, for the lead role in that film and while I didn't cast them, they became a part of my life, one only for a brief time and the other became a close friend.

I like to cast people from my community, whether they're traditional actors or not, and so my scouting process is a time of being out in the world and connecting with locals. I invite people into my life, and they invite me into theirs. It often leads me to places I didn't expect, because most people, as it turns out, are aching for a connection, friend, or even a lifeline.

This was true of the two teens, each entering my life amid a whirlwind of doctors, social workers, guardians, hospital stays, and housing crises that felt, to me, like a grim comedy of errors. For a time, these experiences were all-consuming and formed my initial sketch for a film about a patient and sitter connecting in-hospital.

But it was the unique way that one of these teens computed her own "dilemmas" that really fascinated me. Her mode of observation and expressing herself in words was constantly surprising and would twist everything, as I saw it, in a new direction. I loved the way her brain worked. Her subjectivity was a place I liked to exist within. This intrigue and affection gave birth to the character of Star.

The task of creating a rarefied character that is specific to a remote place like Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island felt exciting. I spent time writing a script about as long as my first feature. Then another door opened, literally across the street. Ziyin Zheng, who plays An in the film, moved into my neighbourhood. They broke the ice by asking if they could play a "sassy bitch" in one of my films, and we were quickly bonded.

Ziyin made the move from Shanghai to complete an MBA, but their real purpose in coming to a new place was to find a queer community, resolve fear around their sexuality, and hopefully fall in love. Living here my entire life, in search of similar things, I admired their candour but also worried that this may not be fertile terrain.

After a year of friendship, they asked me again to put them in a film, saying, "I need a platform to express myself." Maybe cinema was a space where their aspirations could take shape, where they could learn to articulate themselves in a new place, where they could try out varied ways of self expression. I started reworking the script and wrote the character of An, in consultation with Ziyin, in order to integrate experiences and interests of theirs into the film.

I introduced Star to An. "Do you like hearing honest thoughts?" asks Star in a dark hospital room. "Yes, I do," replies An. And so a union is made. From there, I moved into a realm of freely imagining what could be possible between them. As characters, Star and An refused to be dulled by a social realist mode of cinema. So I made aesthetic

choices with the goal of bringing their inner colour, musicality, and generative rhythms to the surface— letting the film vibrate on their frequencies.

The film universe had to be more expandable for them to unfold within, a space of play, release, and free association. I tried to balance that with subtle edges of slipperiness and consequence, not entirely detached from the real world and all that it requires us to grapple with and unpack. This tiny bubble of a world, examined in context, encourages dialogue around the complex nuances of human variation and interaction.

BIOGRAPHY

Ashley McKenzie (she/they) is a filmmaker based in Unama'ki—Cape Breton Island, Canada. She writes and directs films in collaboration with people in her community, compelled by the stories near to her that may otherwise be overlooked. Casting locals and shooting on-location brings vitality to her work and high-visibility to the people and textures concealed in a remote place. Her debut feature *Werewolf* won the Rogers Best Canadian Film Award from the Toronto Film Critics Association in 2017, the most generously endowed film prize in Canada. It was theatrically released by Factory 25 in the US and Les Alchimistes in Europe. Film Comment called *Werewolf* "an austere, marvelously focused debut feature," while *The New Yorker* named it to their "Best Movies of 2018" list. Ashley's films have screened at the Berlinale, Toronto International Film Festival, Maryland Film Festival, and Sydney Film Festival, as well as been curated by the Criterion Channel, MUBI, and Anthology Film Archives. *Queens of the Qing Dynasty* is her latest feature and is seen on the cover of *Cinema Scope* (Spring 2022).

FILMOGRAPHY

2010 Rhonda's Party; 8 min.
2012 When You Sleep; 12 min.
2013 Stray; 14 min.
2015 4 Quarters; 13 min.
2016 Werewolf; 78 min.
2017 Martha Brook Falls, 6 min.
2022 Queens of the Qing Dynasty, 122 min.

PRODUCTION

Hi-Vis Film
23 Northside Br.
Cape North, NS
Canada BOC 1G0
www.hi-visfilm.ca