

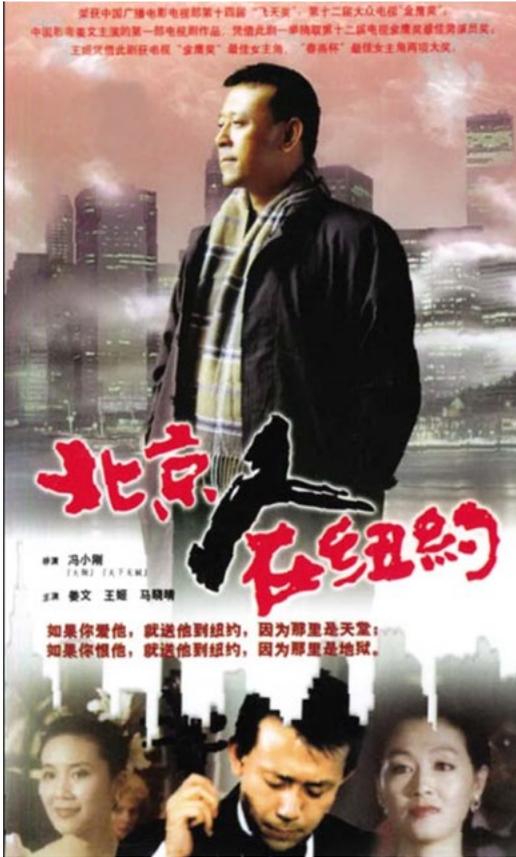
CHINESE FAMILIES GOING GLOBAL IN POPULAR CULTURE

FOLLOWING THE END of the Cultural Revolution (1964–1978), when the first large groups of immigrants from China began to settle in the US, Canada, Australia and elsewhere, TV shows and films have documented and reflected on the motivations and challenges of emigration, a politically loaded subject.

The first to make a real splash was the highly popular 1993 twenty-one part television series *A Beijing Man in New York* 北京人在纽约, which told the story of a Beijing musician, Wang Qiming 王起明 (played by Jiang Wen 姜文), who moves to New York to pursue his dreams of fame. In one scene, Wang, who has earned his fortune but lost his values and his family, showers a blonde Caucasian prostitute with dollar bills as he has sex with her. He

tells her to say 'I love you'. The scene, and the series as a whole, sparked much discussion about the superiority/inferiority complex with which many Chinese people viewed the West and America in particular, Chinese male behaviour and notions of cultural purity and contamination.

Other TV shows and movies about this period also describe the struggle of Chinese in the US to cope with — or rebel against — their low socioeconomic status there as well as cultural clashes. The 2001 film *The Gua Sha Treatment* 刮痧 tells the story of a grandfather who gives his American-born grandson a traditional Chinese medical cure, *gua sha*, that involves scraping the skin with a hard object. But the marks on the child's skin lead people to accuse his daughter of child abuse.



Reflections on the motivations and challenges of emigration: The highly popular 1993 twenty-one part television series *A Beijing Man in New York* 北京人在纽约, tells the story of a Beijing musician, Wang Qi-Ming 王起明 who moves to New York to pursue his dreams of fame
Photo: icba.com

The twenty-five episode *New World* 新大陆, a Sino-American co-production first screened in 1995, depicted the challenges faced by the earliest migrants in the 1980s, including students working in Chinese restaurants to survive.

The 2001 *Dangerous Journey* 危险旅程 (originally titled *Tou Du Ke* 偷渡客) a twenty-six part TV series shot in China, the US and New Zealand tells the grim tale of a woman (played by Wang Ji 王姬) who becomes a 'snake-head' (people smuggler).

The most recent wave of migrants, from 2000 to the present, has largely comprised China's middle class, skilled workers and their families. Films such as *Farewell, Vancouver* 别了, 温哥华 shot in 2003 and the

2008 TV series *Couple's Time Lag* 夫妻时差 echo familiar themes of cultural maladjustment, but the characters are finally on an equal footing with their new neighbours, no longer broke or linguistically and culturally inept. In films like the hugely popular 2012 comedy *Lost in Thailand* 人再囧途之泰囧, the foreign country is an exotic locale for adventure while the 2013 romantic comedy *Finding Mr Right* 北京遇上西雅图 is set in Beijing and Seattle, to which the female protagonist Jiajia 佳佳 (played by Tang Wei 汤唯) flies to give birth to the child of her married tycoon boyfriend back in China, but falls in love with a Chinese doctor now driving a taxi in Seattle: it's complicated.

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