



This production still handout released to AFP from Ten Years Production Limited from the Hong Kong movie "Ten Years" shows actor Liu Kai-chi (left) playing a character who sells local Hong Kong eggs. — AFP photos

Hong Kong movie riles China and taps city's deepest fears

In Hong Kong, a woman sets herself on fire in protest, a taxi driver despairs at the eradication of the local language and young children in military uniform prowl the streets, echoing the horrors of China's Cultural Revolution. But this is not the past, it is Hong Kong in 2025 as portrayed in the movie "Ten Years", which has been a box office hit locally-despite some cinemas refusing to show it-and has raised hackles in China. The five-part movie made by young Hong Kong directors taps residents' worst fears for the future of the semi-autonomous territory as Beijing's grip tightens.

Its sell-out screenings have come against an increasingly turbulent backdrop of running battles between young protesters and police, and the detention in China of five booksellers critical of Beijing, as concern grows that Hong Kong's long-cherished freedoms are dying. Since its release at the end of December, the movie, made for just HK\$500,000 (\$64,000), has earned an unexpected HK\$6 million and is now a "best film" contender at the Hong Kong Film Awards on April 3. "The movie is giving a voice to the unexpressed sentiment of Hong Kongers," director Ng Ka-leung, 34, told AFP.

"I wanted to use the film to respond to some questions I wanted answered, including whether or not Hong Kong has a way out, and how would Hong Kong change." Ng's segment "Egg Man" portrays an egg vendor under attack from young "red guards" seeking to denounce citizens. China has flexed its muscles in response. Broadcasts of the Hong Kong Film Awards on the mainland have been pulled, with the movie's nomination widely believed to be the reason. China's state-run Global Times newspaper hit out at the film as "totally absurd" and a "virus of the mind".

Ng suspects political motivations were behind the difficulty in getting the film a decent run in Hong Kong cinemas. "Why wouldn't cinemas consider our movie, which was profitable and when lots of people still wanted to see it?" he questioned.



This picture taken on March 1, 2016 shows filmmakers (from left) Javons Au, Ng Ka-leung and Kiwi Chow posing in Hong Kong. — AFP

Audience in tears
The film's five segments take a no-holds-barred approach to their vision of Hong Kong, with the image of an elderly woman dousing herself in petrol and setting herself on fire particularly hard-hitting. "If we recognize the harshness of reality, that Hong Kong truly has a problem, then we can think of a way out of this situation," Kiwi Chow, director of the "Self-Immolator" segment told AFP. Self-immolation, which activists in Tibet have used to protest against Beijing's ironclad control there, is unheard of in Hong Kong. "I really don't want my story to come true," Chow, 37, said.

Cinema audiences have watched "Ten Years" in stunned silence, some of them moved to tears. "The movie has left a big impression on me because it shows many scenes which are similar to events in Hong Kong now," university student Thomson Chan, 21, told AFP after one screening. "I feel what's predicted (in the film) will happen." One 53-year-old who wanted to remain anonymous said he felt the future "would be even worse than the movie". The city's freedoms are protected by a deal made with Britain when Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997, but there is now growing anxiety that China is stamping its mark on the territory, from politics to education and the media.

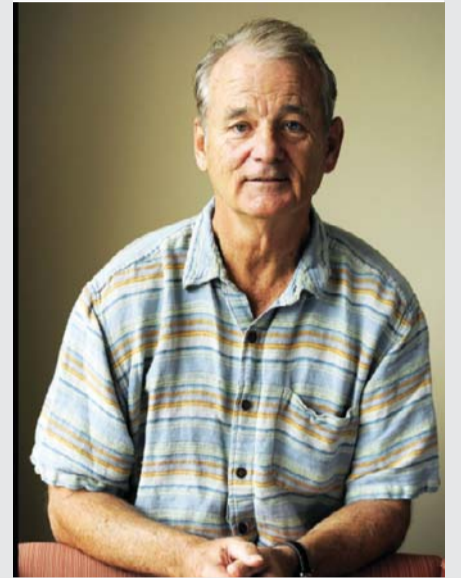
Film critics say the public wants to see those issues directly addressed. "There are some political movies in Hong Kong, but they use metaphors and indirect ways to tell the story," Hong Kong film critic Dominic Li told AFP. "(In) 'Ten Years', they are very direct and strike at the present situation of Hong Kong," he added. "These five young directors showed bravery in making a film about very sensitive issues."—AFP

A poet who knows it: Bill Murray shares some favorite verse

Bill Murray has turned up everywhere from bachelor parties to baseball games, but his latest surprise has a more literary side: He shares some favorite poems in the April issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*, which comes out Friday. The "Ghostbusters" star is featured on a page dedicated to National Poetry Month, offering brief asides on works by Galway Kinnell, Lucille Clifton, Thomas Lux and Naomi Shihab Nye. For Clifton's inspirational "what the mirror said," Murray comments. "Everybody needs an 'Attagirl!' now and then." Murray also includes Kinnell's "Oatmeal," with its reference to sharing a meal with the late John Keats.

"Alas, Kinnell, too, is now available for breakfast," Murray adds, noting that the poet died in 2014. The magazine's books editor, Leigh Haber, had reason to believe Murray might agree to the project. He's a longtime supporter of Poets House, a literary center based in Manhattan, and one year read works there by Emily Dickinson and others to a gathering of construction workers. Haber told The Associated Press during a recent interview that she contacted Murray through a mutual friend. Two months went by without a response. On deadline day, he called the magazine's office and told Haber that he was in town and had some poems in mind. Because he didn't use emails or fax machines, he suggested a meeting at his room in the Carlyle Hotel. Haber and an assistant headed right over.

"It was so funny," Haber said. "He had scraps of paper on which he'd scribbled notes and Xeroxes of poems. His love of poetry was obvious from how much pleasure he took in reading the poems aloud to us." With business out of the way, Murray rolled



In this, file photo, Bill Murray poses for a portrait at the 2012 Toronto Film Festival, in Toronto. — AP

out a glass cart and served martinis. "An act of poetry all its own," Haber calls it. Murray's other picks include Lux's romantic ode "I Love You Sweatheart," of which he said, "This poem vibrates the insides of my ribs, where the meat is most tender." He also felt a personal connection to Nye's "Famous" and its lines "I want to be famous in the way/ a pulley is famous/ or a buttonhole, not because it did/ anything spectacular/ but because it never forgot/what it could do." Murray's take: "It's not the dream of being big. It's the dream of being real. That's what stands out to me." — AP

Iranian star Farahani to make European stage debut

Iranian film star Golshifteh Farahani is to make her European stage debut in May playing the tragic heroine Anna Karenina in Paris. The 32-year-old, who made her name internationally in Asghar Farhadi's modern classic "All About Ely", was the first top Iranian actor to star in a Hollywood film, raising eyebrows in her homeland when she appeared in Ridley Scott's "Body of Lies" in 2008.

Authorities later forced her into exile in France and in 2012 she caused further controversy by posing nude for the cover of art magazine *Egoiste* in an act of feminist defiance of Iran's religious leaders. "Paris is the only place on the planet where women are not made feel guilty all the time," she told the magazine. "(Back home) you are guilty as soon as you feel your first sexual feelings, even before you reach adolescence."

Farahani-daughter of the acclaimed Iranian director Behzad Farahani-will play Karenina at the Theatre de la Tempete in an adaptation of Leon Tolstoy's novel written and directed by Gaetan Vassart. She is starring in the fifth of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films alongside Johnny Depp next year after appearing in "Rosewater", the directorial debut of former "Daily Show" host Jon Stewart. That film told

the story of Canadian-Iranian journalist Maziar Bahari, who was locked up in Tehran after reporting on violence against protesters during the country's presidential election in 2009. — AFP



This file shows Iranian actress Golshifteh Farahani posing during a photocall for the film 'About Ely' by Iranian director Asghar Farhadi. — AFP