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Confronted with government denunciations and human rights violations against their spiritual practice, a group of Chinese activists executes a bold and perilous plan to hack into state television.

In March 2002, a state TV station in China was hijacked by members of outlawed spiritual group Falun Gong. Their goal was to counter the government narrative about their practice. In the aftermath, police raids sweep Changchun City, and comic book illustrator Daxiong (Justice League, Star Wars), a Falun Gong practitioner, is forced to flee.

He arrives in North America, blaming the hijacking for worsening a violent repression. But his views are challenged when he meets the lone surviving participant to have escaped China, now living in Seoul, South Korea. Combining present-day footage with 3D animation inspired by Daxiong’s art, Eternal Spring retraces the event on its 20th anniversary, and brings to life an unprecedented story of defiance, harrowing eyewitness accounts of persecution, and an exhilarating tale of determination to speak up for political and religious freedoms, no matter the cost.
I first worked with artist Daxiong on a video game I produced called Shuyan Saga (2018 Canadian Screen Award nominee, Best Original Interactive Production). I had known Daxiong’s work on Justice League and Star Wars comic franchises, and was struck by his talent in bringing characters to life in his illustrations. Through our collaboration, I learned why Daxiong left his hometown of Changchun and the connection this had to an unprecedented hijacking of the Chinese state television in 2002 by members of the outlawed Falun Gong spiritual group.

I came to know Falun Gong myself in 1998 through an interest in meditation and Eastern philosophy. At that time, Falun Gong’s slow-moving exercises were still freely practiced in Chinese parks, and its adherents numbered in the tens of millions. When authorities banned Falun Gong a year later in 1999, they began an extensive state media campaign to vilify it. Those who persisted in practicing were subjected to detention, torture or abuse.

The state media characterizations were a sharp contrast to my own experience with Falun Gong and the community of Chinese expatriates I’d encountered who practiced it. I was sympathetic to the samizdat efforts by adherents to counter the Chinese state narrative on Falun Gong, underpinning what would become a 20-year-long campaign of well-documented human rights abuses. But I wondered how this conflict escalated to a state TV hijacking, especially given Falun Gong’s pacifist roots. I wanted to understand what led those involved to carry out this bold act, which ultimately cost several participants their lives.

Pursuing this story would have consequences, however. While simultaneously in production on this film and its predecessor, the investigative documentary and 2020 Slamdance Grand Jury Finalist Ask No Questions, Chinese authorities approached my business partners at Tencent, a large Chinese media company that was publishing our Shuyan Saga video game. Tencent was forced to cut ties with my company in the midst of our launch. A mobile publishing deal was also axed with another Chinese distributor. Furthermore, Chinese public security officers contacted the family in China of my wife and filmmaking partner, Masha Yujiao Loftus, and warned them that the regime knew what we were up to overseas.
Despite the threats and interference, which I detailed in an op-ed I wrote for the Wall Street Journal in late 2020, I felt it was crucial to continue with my filmmaking on these subjects. Firstly, the crimes against Falun Gong adherents in China are abhorrent and they are continuing today. Outside China, the plight of Falun Gong, if known at all, is often regarded as an issue of the past as it has proceeded for years and is not often regarded as news. Inside China, the story is highly censored. My wife, Masha, shares a hometown with the protagonists in the film (Changchun City), but having had no contact with the Falun Gong community there, she was completely unaware of the atrocities taking place out of sight in her own city.

Secondly, regardless of one's interest in Falun Gong’s repression, we see the same tactics and issues rising to the surface with other groups in China, and this story serves to shed light on broader issues.

Eternal Spring explores religious persecution at a time when similar abuses continue against millions of Uighur Muslims in northwest China. It is also a story about media censorship, misinformation, the need for transparency, and freedom of speech. These themes are crucial in the wake of controversies around transparency in the reporting of important public health information at the onset of what’s now a global pandemic.

After the rise of anti-Asian hate related to the spread of Covid-19, this film also presents a needed narrative featuring courageous Chinese protagonists. It demonstrates that the Chinese regime does not by default represent Chinese people, and reminds us there are remarkable Chinese individuals struggling for human rights, transparency, freedom, and justice.

Creatively, Eternal Spring presented an opportunity to use animation in documentary filmmaking not only as a device for recreation, but as a means to explore the inner journey of an artist who endured torture and for whom the process of creating these images offered catharsis.

Eternal Spring offered a unique combination of dramatic heist story, an ongoing and important human rights concern, and an artist’s personal journey in bringing these stories to life and facing his own recollections of loss and suffering in the process.
**JASON LOFTUS  DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**

A Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and four-time Canadian Screen Award nominee, Jason’s work spans documentary, docuseries, virtual reality, narrative games, and animation.

Jason produced the docuseries on Chinese cuisine, *Confucius Was a Foodie*, which was named Best Food Series on TV at the 2021 Taste Awards. It has aired in over 100 territories worldwide, including on PBS stations across the US and NatGeo People Asia.

Jason’s directorial debut in a documentary feature, together with Eric Pedicelli, was called *Ask No Questions* and premiered in competition at Slamdance in 2020. It won the Copper Wing (Best World Cinema) at the Phoenix Film Festival, was endorsed by artist Ai Weiwei, and was nominated by Film Threat as 2021’s Best Socially Relevant Documentary, among other honours.

*Eternal Spring* is Jason’s follow-up to *Ask No Questions* and his second documentary feature as director.

**DAVID SCHMIDT  EDITOR**

David Schmidt has edited documentary films for a decade. His work has appeared at the AGO, Toronto International Film Festival, TVO, CBC, and CTV. He worked on *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, winner of the Canadian Screen Award for Best Documentary.

Previously he worked on *Long Time Running*, First Runner Up for TIFF’s People’s Choice Awards for Documentaries. David holds a BFA in Film Production and Screenwriting from York University.
**Daxiong** is an internationally recognized illustrator and comic artist, having worked in China, Europe, and North America. In 1999, he created Qicartoon Studios in Jilin province where he served as the chief illustrator. In 2000, he was the winner of the Shanghai Animation & Comic Competition with his work *Chinese Ghost Stories* which received publication soon after the competition. In 2002, Qicartoon Studios earned third place in the Shanghai Animation Competition for its work *Zhuzi Baijia*. In Europe, he received top honors at the 33rd annual Angoulême International Comics Festival for his work in *Demi Gods and Semi Devils* written by Chinese novelist Jin Yong.

Since 1999, through his studio, Daxiong has published more than 100 titles which are being distributed in China, Japan, and Taiwan. In 2008, Daxiong was arrested in China because his art offended the Chinese Communist Party.

After relocating to New York City, Daxiong founded Flag Art Studios. He was the artist on the *Top 10 Special #1* with Wildstorm Productions and subsequently was announced as the artist for the graphic novella, *Star Wars: Adventures: Luke Skywalker and the Treasure of the Dragonsnakes* with writer Tom Taylor through Dark Horse Comics. Daxiong was also the artist for a 10-page story titled “Superman and Doctor Light in Samurai” in DC’s 80 Page Giant, *Justice League of America*, written by Amanda Mcmurry.
AWARDS & FESTIVALS

News of each festival selection is embargoed until the festival has announced its lineup. Please confirm with judithc@loftysky.com if you’re unsure and would like to report on an upcoming festival appearance.

**Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, March 2022**
- Official Selection
- World Premiere
- Newcomers Competition

**London Human Rights Watch Film Festival, March 2022**
- Official Selection
- UK Premiere

**Movies That Matter, April 2022**
- Official Selection
- Competition Programme: Activist
- Netherlands Premiere

**Krakow Film Festival, May/June 2022**
- Official Selection
- International Documentary Competition
- Polish Premiere

More to come.
POSTER & PRODUCTION STILLS

High-resolution stills and film poster can be downloaded [here](#).

Still 1: Daxiong illustrates memories of Changchun. Photo Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures.

Still 2: Night of the TV hijacking. Photo Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures

Still 3: Director Jason Loftus (L) with artist Daxiong (R). Photo Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures
Still 4: Memories of Changchun. The birch trees have eyes. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures

Still 5: Haunted by memories of persecution. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures

Still 6: Lei Ming on the run. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures
Still 7: Violent arrest. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures

Still 8: “Mr. White” recalls his labour camp experience. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures

Still 9: Liang in captivity. Credit: Lofty Sky Pictures
Directed by Jason Loftus
Written by Jason Loftus

Additional Writing
Masha Loftus
The Pearman Brothers

Produced by Jason Loftus

Producers
Yvan Pinard
Kevin Koo

Executive Producer Masha Loftus
Director of Photography John Tran, csc
Animation Director David St-Amant
Edited By David Schmidt

Lead Concept, Storyboard, and 2D Artist Daxiong
Music By Tom Hill

Casting & Voice Director for Animation Masha Loftus

FEATURING
Daxiong
Jin Xuezhe (“Mr. White”)
Lan Lihua (“Xiao Lan”)
Wang Jianmin
Zhang Zhongyu
Wang Liansu
Wang Huilian

ANIMATION CAST
Daxiong Himself
Jin Xuezhe “Mr. White” Henry Guo
Liang Shi Jian
Big Truck Ben Li
Little Wei Yu Feng
Zhang Wen  Tan Junfeng
Lei Ming  Yu Zhicheng
Liu Weiming  Tony Bai
Aunt Zhou  Zhang Yuhuan
Sister Chen  Xiao Yanrong

Camera Operators
Chris Goll
Scott Burton
Eric Pedicelli
Kevin Koo

Still Photographer
David Schmidt
Kevin Koo

Sound Recordist
Brian Cushin
Dafydd Cooksey
Eric Lork

CG Supervisor  Kevin Zimny

Post Production Supervisor
Yvan Pinard
Kevin Koo

Storyboard & Layout Supervisor  David St-Amant
Leica Reel Editor  Rhodanim Belo Jr

2D & 3D Concepts
Daxiong
Ben Li
Leinweber Cansino

2D Matte Painting
Daxiong
Chun-yi Lin
Fuyu Yang
Rhodanim Belo Jr
David Prentice

SUPPORTING ANIMATION CAST
Liang’s mother-in-Law  Zhang Yuhuan
Liang’s wife  Masha Loftus
Liang’s daughter  Evelyn Guo
Young Daxiong  Tan Dabao
Boy at the winter festival  Tan Erbao
Girl at the winter festival  Masha Loftus
Train attendant  Shi Jian
Daughter of train attendant  Masha Loftus

Police in orange jacket  Zheng Zhi
Chief of police  Tony Bai
Sister of Big Truck  Xiao Yanrong
Relative of Little Wei  Henry Guo
Roommate of Mr. White  Shi Jian
Waiter  Tony Bai
Jianmin Wang  Henry Guo
Taxi Driver  Ben Li

Unit Production Managers
Kevin Koo
Yvan Pinard

Production Coordinator  Masha Loftus

SECOND UNIT
Flying Cloud Productions
Leon Lee, Second Unit Director
Jacey Shi, Second Unit Coordinator

Set Decorator  Vivien Csere
3D Matte Painting
Vipin A Jacob
Jong Ho Kim
Simon Phan
Yoo Hoon Kim
Victor Tarapacki

Character Technical Director Kevin Zimny
Lead Character Modeler Victor Tarapacki

Character & Prop Modeling/Texturing
Victor Tarapacki
Jong Ho Kim
Yoo Hoon Kim
Vipin A Jacob

Animators
David St-Amant
Alexander G Smith
Matthew Sousa
Carl Beauchemin

Lead Lighting & Rendering Yoo Hoon Kim

Compositing
Yoo Hoon Kim
Yvan Pinard

Pipeline Technical Direction
Mike Boers
Elaine Sik Ling Wong
Kevin Zimny

IT Support
Sina Rastegar
Jean-François Patenaude

Additional Editing Eric Pedicelli

Assistant Editors
Andrew Beach
Kevin Koo

Supervising Re-recording Mixer Bret Killoran

Sound Effects Editors
Chris Russell
Joe Scandella
Scott Hitchon

Dialog Editor Francois Maurice
Foley Artist Ryan MacNeill
Foley Recordist Steve Ejbick
ADR Recordist Bret Killoran

Sound Studio Manager Steven Gurman
Mixing Studio Redlab
Supervising Graphics Designer Evan Lin

Motion Graphics
Yan Aftimus Rosa

Yellow Lab - Creative Studio
Andrew Embury
Sara Bennett
James Hazael
Yvan Pinard
Andrew Beach
David Schmidt

Additional Graphics Design Haley Anderson

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Masha Loftus
Festival Strategy Sean Farnell

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  Adam Leipzig
  Manfred Becker
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  Brian Morrison
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