

THE DATING GAME

a film by Violet Du Feng



World Premiere | 2025 Sundance Film Festival

World Cinema Documentary Competition

Total Runtime | 90 minutes

Countries of Production | United States, United Kingdom, Norway

The Dating Game is a production of Fish and Bear Pictures and Violet Films, in association with Bird Street Productions, Ten Thousand Images, and Chicken & Egg Pictures.

Media Contact

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Logline

In a country where eligible men outnumber women by 30 million, three perpetual bachelors join an intensive seven-day dating camp led by one of China's most sought-after dating coaches in a last-ditch effort to find a girl, and love.

Shorter Synopsis

Set in China, where eligible men outnumber women by over [30 million](#), ***The Dating Game*** is the story of Zhou, Li, and Wu, three bachelors embarking on a seven-day dating camp, led by Hao, one of China's most sought-after dating coaches. In their last-ditch effort to find love, the bachelors chuckle and bond as Hao makes them over, altering how they look and act online—and in real life. It's all part of Hao's signature "strategic deception," a series of techniques designed to, purportedly, make humans connect. Hao's credentials? Hao successfully wooed Wen, a stylish, educated city-girl—a real catch who is now his wife.

As our three bachelors stumble through the camp's awkward challenges, they try to make sense of their authentic and constructed selves, and find the self-confidence they need to land that date.

The Dating Game is, on the surface, a whimsical romp through courtship in the digital age, but it also reveals the social challenges that leave us questioning how we seek human connection.

FILMMAKERS

Director & Producer | Violet Du Feng

Violet is an Emmy-winning filmmaker and an adjunct professor at Columbia University. She has directed, produced and executive produced 14 documentaries, including the Oscar-shortlisted, Peabody and Emmy-nominated *Hidden Letters* with broadcast in 15 countries; *Harbor From the Holocaust*, a CPB/PBS special film with music performed by Yo-yo Ma. Her producing credits include *Night of Nights*, *Dear Mother*, *I Meant to Write About Death*, *Singing in the Wilderness*, *Confucian Dream*, *Mainland* and *Please Remember Me*. She is a recipient of the 2024 Chicken and Egg Award, 2023 Sundance Momentum Fellowship, 2021 Rockwood JustFilms Fellowship and 2018 Sundance Creative Producing Fellowship. Violet has served as an advisor for Sundance's Creative Producing Lab, AIDC, CAAM, Hot Docs, Doc Edge, CNEX and the Shanghai Film Festival. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the Documentary branch.

Producer | Joanna Natasegara

Joanna Natasegara is the Academy Award®-winning filmmaker behind Violet Films, a London-based production company. Violet Films' work finds the political in the personal, tackling global stories with an intimate lens. Joanna's work includes the Oscar®-winning Netflix Original *The White Helmets*; BAFTA and Oscar®-nominated *Virunga*, Executive Produced by Leonardo DiCaprio; the Oscar®-nominated *The Edge of Democracy*; *The Heart of Invictus* docu-series for Netflix in association with Archewell Productions; *We Dare to Dream*, the second film from Academy Award®-nominated director Waad al-Kateab and Executive Produced by Angelina Jolie and John Legend; and Disney's Oscar® Nominated Documentary Short, *Nãi Nai And Wài Pó*. Upcoming projects include the scripted adaption of *Virunga* for Netflix, written by Academy Award®-winner Barry Jenkins and *Shoot The People* for Paramount Plus.

Violet Films has frequently partnered with MFF & CO, following the global entertainment studio's acquisition of a minority stake in the UK company in 2024.

Producer | James Costa

James Costa is a documentary film producer. He is a member of The Producers Guild of America as well as BAFTA. He is on The National Council for The Roundabout Theatre in New York and Executive Producer Council for CAP/UCLA. James is the Executive Producer of Petra Costa's latest film *Apocalypse In The Tropics*, Michael Pemo's latest film *Homegrown*, both of which premiered at the 2024 Venice Film Festival. His other notable EP credits include *The White House Effect*, *Queendom*, *Hidden Letters*, *Freedom On Fire: Ukraine's Fight For Freedom*, *Delikado*, *Desperate Souls*, *Dark City* and *The Legend Of Midnight Cowboy* and *Welcome To Chechnya*.

Producer | Mette Cheng Munthe-Kaas

Mette Cheng Munthe-Kaas is an Emmy-nominated and award-winning producer, interactive producer and editor of feature documentaries. Through Ten Thousand Images, she produced the award-winning *No Word For Worry* in 2014 and *Nowhere to Hide* in 2016, which won over 20 awards, including the first prize at IDFA, and was nominated for 2 Emmys. Her recent co-productions have won numerous international awards including Best Documentary at Berlinale for *Myanmar Diaries* in 2022.

Editor | John Farbrother

John Farbrother is an award-winning editor whose work has aired on Discovery, History Channel, National Geographic, and CNBC. Most recently, he was the editor of the Oscar Shortlisted *Hidden Letters*. John was co-editor of Steve James' Emmy winning and Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*. Recipient of the 2017 Critics' Choice Award for Best Political Documentary, the film was nominated for a Peabody and was selected by the National Board of Review as one of the Top Five Documentaries of 2017. As a producer, John has received three regional Emmys for work he also edited.

Composer | Chad Cannon

Chad Cannon is a composer interested in the intersection of cultures, history, and human stories. He recently scored the acclaimed Netflix documentary, *American Factory*, which won the Best Director Award for a documentary at Sundance and is the first release by Barack and Michelle Obama's production company, Higher Ground. His 2016 debut soundtracks received global recognition: the Hiroshima documentary *Paper Lanterns*, lauded as "haunting, mystical" by The Japan Times, and which received an International Film Music Critics Awards nomination for Best Original Score for a Documentary. He is a graduate of Harvard and Juilliard, and is an alumnus of the Sundance Composer Labs.

Editing Consultant | Maya Daisy Hawke

Maya Daisy Hawke was the editor on Oscar and double Sundance Audience Award winning, *Navalny*, and on *Sugarcane*, which won the Sundance Directing Award at Sundance 2024. She co-edited *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (dir. Werner Herzog) with partner Joe Bini. Supervising and Consulting Editor credits include *Joonam*, *Black Box Diaries*, *After a Revolution*, *A Photographic Memory* and *Band*. Her own experimental films have been exhibited and performed at the Museum of Moving Image, the Sundance Film Festival, ICA Frames of Representation in London, LACMA, the Camden International Film Festival, and IDFA. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As a filmmaker standing between China and the U.S, I aim to deliver poignancy through intimate stories that are layered and subtle but ultimately accessible and resonate with global audiences.

My understanding of cross-cultural sensitivities helps to ground my filmmaking in complex nuances, turning deeply personal stories into films with big themes and messages. This approach was absolutely crucial when approaching the characters we filmed in ***The Dating Game***.

My last film, *Hidden Letters*, challenges gender stereotypes from a woman's perspective. In ***The Dating Game***, I have crossed the aisle to understand men, and challenge some of my own preconceived misconceptions.

We spent over half a year gaining trust from dating coach Hao. We were transparent that the intention is not to promote him, but to ask tough questions through the controversy of his work. We also cast the clients in the camp very carefully. We held long conversations about our intentions with each client before they joined the camp. Our shared understanding of the urgency of this story made us one close team to make this film together. Through this close dialogue between the male protagonists and me, the female director, this film will seek to determine where men and women can find common ground and what they agree are the essential components of human connection.

I believe gender equality is the heart and soul of any civil rights movement or democracy. On the surface, I think ***The Dating Game*** attracts viewers with an entertaining, whimsical, and unique 21st-century intervention into the universal dating dilemma but my intent is to hold an ambitious macro lens to interrogate how politics, technology, culture, and economics all contribute to a global polarized gender divide, and how such a divide greatly weakens any society's prospects for peace and equity.

The theme of truth is at the heart of our story. Our characters obfuscate facts to prospective dates with uber-constructed profiles. They do this because they yearn for human connection, and urgently. Yet, in turn fear being deceived by scammers on apps, or by dates who, too, are presenting unreal versions of themselves. There is also internal self-deception, as our characters struggle with what to reveal and hide about themselves.

Another important story element is the humor. While we unsettle the audience with what is real and what is not, the authentic humor will serve as a foundation of trust between filmmakers, our subjects, and the audience. It is a collective humor—laughing with our characters, not at them. Through this trust, we empathize with the struggle of our characters, prompting us to honestly ask ourselves what lengths we will go to find love.

The film offers an accessible way into a world rarely known to outsiders, who are invited to think about the larger existential questions that our characters' often absurd circumstances raise. I hope it makes viewers smile, and think about love and loneliness and the role of either in a functioning society.

— Violet Du Feng

CREDITS

directed & produced by

VIOLET DU FENG

produced by

JOANNA NATASEGARA

JAMES COSTA

METTE CHENG MUNTHE-KAAS

executive producers

CHANDRA JESSEE & REBECCA

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JULIE PARKER BENELLO

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KEN PELLETIER

TREVOR BURGESS

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JENN LEE SMITH

JAMIE WOLF

NATALIE SEAVER

edited by

JOHN FARBROTHER

director of photography

WEI GAO

music by

CHAD CANNON

editing consultant

MAYA DAISY HAWKE

co-producers

ABIGAIL ANKETELL-JONES

BETSY TSAI

MAGGIE LI

a production of

FISH AND BEAR PICTURES

& VIOLET FILMS

in association with

BIRD STREET PRODUCTIONS

TEN THOUSAND IMAGES

CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES