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**Hao Wu's Award-Winning *People's Republic of Desire*
Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Monday, February 25, 2019 on PBS**

**Enter China's Stranger-than-Fiction Online World, Where Young People
Gather to Worship Live-Streaming Internet Stars**

Online Streaming Begins February 26



Credit: Jingyang Cheng

(San Francisco, CA) — Disturbing and provocative, ***People's Republic of Desire*** explores the strange world of China's live-streaming "showrooms," where the most popular stars can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars a month from adoring fans who "tip" them with "digital gifts" paid for with actual cash. Produced and directed by Hao Wu, a tech industry executive-turned filmmaker, *People's Republic of Desire* premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, February 25, 2019, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

While live-streaming has been available in the U.S. for years, it has found a rapid – and rabid – following in China where over 422 million viewers watch ordinary people-turned-celebrities as they sing, eat, dance or talk. One of the most popular live-streaming platforms is YY, which attracts an enormous young audience, who spend hours with their online idols and call themselves the *diaosi* ("loser") generation. Like their Hollywood counterparts, the idols' agents negotiate promotional opportunities, manipulate their client's public personas, and take a 20% cut of their earnings.

But have these virtual relationships replaced actual one-on-one connections? *People's Republic of Desire* focuses on two of the most popular online stars: Shen Man, a nurse-turned-singer whose success is sullied by online trolls and family members who expect her to support them, and Big Li, an online comedian willing to risk almost anything to keep his fame alive. Adored and supported by free-spending nouveau riche and poor migrant workers, these live-streaming stars are brought together in a series of high-stakes online idol competitions, where they discover that happiness in their virtual world may be as elusive as in the real one.

"While the characters and the platforms are Chinese, Hao Wu's provocative film shows us that, on the internet, infinite possibilities and crushing disappointments are universal," said Lois Vossen, executive producer of *Independent Lens*. "His film is a fascinating look into a curious online popularity contest determined by real fan dollars, along with the story of a new generation grasping for fortune, fame, and belonging in today's hyper-connected yet alienating social media world. People's desire to log on begs the question, 'what is authentic human connection online?'"



Visit the [People's Republic of Desire](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film, which will be available for online viewing on the site beginning February 26.

About the Filmmakers

Hao Wu (Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Editor). Technology executive-turned-filmmaker Hao Wu takes a raw and human approach to storytelling in an era when culture evolves online. Wu previously held management roles at Alibaba, TripAdvisor and Excite@Home. His documentary films have received support from Ford Foundation JustFilms, ITVS, Sundance, Tribeca and international broadcasters.

Jean Tsien (Executive Producer) has been working in documentary for 35 years as an editor, producer, and consultant. Her notable editing credits include *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up & Sing* and *Miss Sharon Jones!* Tsien consulted on many award-winning films such as *Hooligan Sparrow*, *Dancing in Jaffa*, *Risk* and *Crime + Punishment*. She executive produced *Plastic China* and *The Oslo Diaries*. Tsien has served as an editing advisor at the Sundance Institute Edit and Story Lab since 2010, CNEX Chinese Documentary Forum, and Dare to Dream Asia. She is a member of American Cinema Editors and the documentary branch of the Academy.

CREDITS

Directed, Produced, Filmed and Edited by
Executive Producers

Hao Wu
Jean Tsien
Sally Jo Fifer
Lois Vossen

Graphics, Animation and Visual Effects
Original score

Eric Jordan
Michael Tuller

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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