

Warming up to end climate change

You may have noticed the importance of environmental protection through films or TV shows, as well as celebrities lending their voices to public service broadcasts. But when famous personalities make documentaries themselves on the subject, it creates a ‘wow’ factor that draws huge audiences

IN late February, a documentary titled *Under the Dome* (《穹頂之下》) went viral in China’s cyberspace. The film’s producer and presenter is Chai Jing (柴靜), a well-known TV anchor and investigative journalist, who guides viewers to take a closer look at the longstanding smog issue. It soon received hundreds of millions of view and sparked a weeklong debate among Chinese people, before the authorities removed it from all websites in mainland China.

The critics attribute the **aftershocks** to the celebrity’s charm and its elaborate production. Look elsewhere and you will see it is not the first time there has been such a successful combination, in particular on environmental protection. The former vice president of the United States Al Gore and French film director Luc Besson have also made widely praised documentaries. You can watch snippets of all three films on YouTube.

Under the Dome

THIS is a multimedia slide show narrated by Chai, an adept storyteller who is good at holding the viewers’ interest. She starts with her daughter, who was born with a **tumour**, which she claims was caused by air pollution. Her daughter’s suffering prompted the investigative journalist to explore the truth and to find a solution. She talks with victims who contracted illnesses caused by air pollution, scientists, factory owners (the polluters) and high-ranking officials. She questions environmental law in China, comparing it to a toothless tiger. She tries to learn of workable solutions by visiting two cities that used to be the most polluted – London in the United Kingdom and Los Angeles in the United States. She even traces the source all the way to a politically sensitive issue: the **monopoly** of the state-owned petroleum enterprise.

Chai is a former reporter and anchor at the official state station media CCTV. A series of investigative reports won her a high reputation in China. But she had already left the state media when she began to prepare for the documentary a year ago. After the film’s debut, even China’s Minister of Environmental Protection Chen Ji-ning (陳吉寧) praised Chai’s effort in raising public awareness, but the film was soon suppressed in China under the order of the **propaganda** department.



Chai Jing

About the film

Title: Chai Jing’s review: Under the Dome – Investigating China’s Smog
Year: 2015 Producer: Chai Jing
Running Time: 104 minutes



Yann Arthus-Bertrand

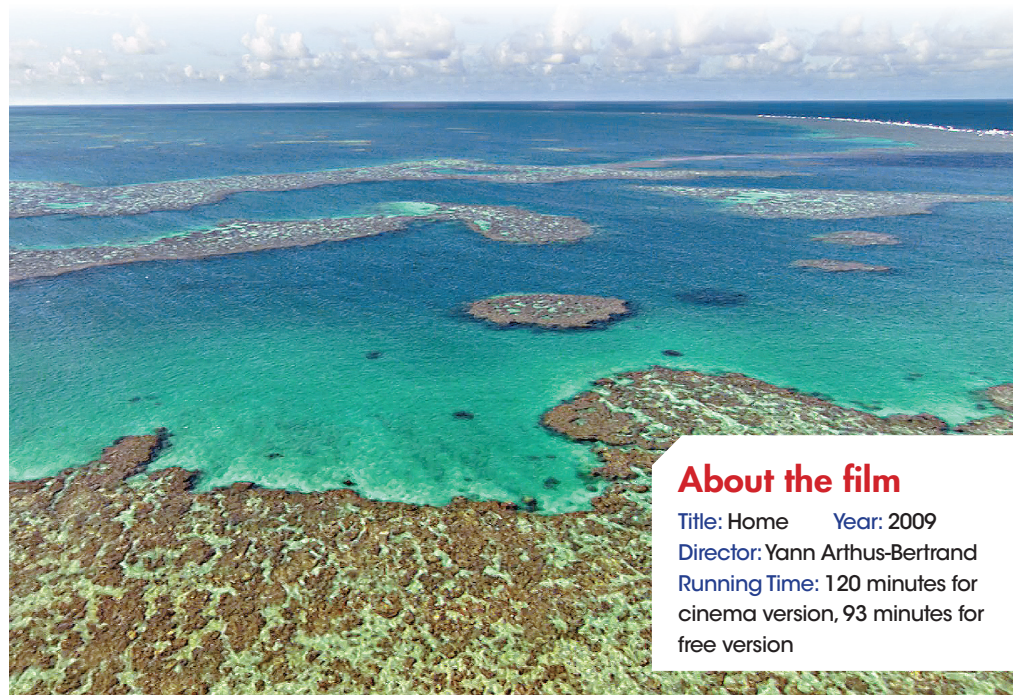
Luc Besson

Home

THE 2009 documentary is produced by famed film director Luc Besson, who is usually associated with thrillers and action films, and directed by photographer and environmentalist Yann Arthus-Bertrand. Most of the shots in the documentary provide an aerial viewpoint, presenting the **brehtaking** beauty of the landscapes in 54 countries.

But the film seeks not only to show exquisite images, but also to raise our awareness in protecting Mother Nature. From the sky, we see the **diminishing** glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctic, as well as large crowds of climate refugees in Africa. From the sky, we clearly see the felled areas in forests and the evaporating water system. “I was particularly struck by the contrasts,” the producer Luc Besson says. “I see Las Vegas, which was built out of a desert and consumes thousands of litres of water for pools and golf courses, and then Indian women in saris digging for water in the **arid** soil.”

It set a record as it was released simultaneously in 181 countries on 5 June, 2009, World Environment Day, through cinemas, DVD, television channels and YouTube. Hong Kong’s TVB Pearl also took part in its global debut on that day.



About the film

Title: Home Year: 2009
Director: Yann Arthus-Bertrand
Running Time: 120 minutes for cinema version, 93 minutes for free version

An Inconvenient Truth

“I AM Al Gore. I used to be the next president of the United States.” The former vice president of the US starts the documentary with **self-mockery**. In the 2000 presidential election, Gore lost to George W Bush due to a controversial electoral voting system. President Bush opposed the Kyoto Protocol, which is aimed at controlling greenhouse gas emissions. The treaty was signed by Gore in 1998 when he was the vice president during the Clinton administration.

Gore has long pushed for a solution to global warming, so he made *An Inconvenient Truth*, which won two Academy Awards. It is not just because he was involved in this issue when he was US vice president. In fact, his interest in global warming was sparked when he was a student at Harvard University. The documentary was based on a slide-show presentation, and Chai Jing may have taken inspiration from Gore’s slide-show approach. In the film, Gore shows figures, graphs, photos – evidence to refute the deniers’ view that global warming has not been proved and may not be by caused by greenhouse gas emissions, and he gives some possible solutions at the end of the film. In addition to the film’s success, his book of the same name was also a bestseller. 📖



About the film

Title: An Inconvenient Truth
Year: 2006 Writer: Al Gore
Running Time: 108 minutes

Movie Matters

with James Marsh



Keeping the legends alive

Many of you probably watched *Fast & Furious 7* over Easter. Originally planned for Summer 2014, the film was delayed after the tragic death of actor Paul Walker in November 2013. As Walker had already filmed many of his scenes for the film, the producers decided to continue – after a respectful hiatus. But how would they complete the scenes Walker had yet to shoot? Paul’s two brothers – who look very similar – were hired to take his place, and his face was then put on their bodies using CGI. Did you spot which scenes were not really Paul?

Sadly, this is not the first time an actor has died leaving unfinished work behind. But while Hollywood goddess Marilyn Monroe’s *Something’s Got To Give* was scrapped after her death, or RnB star Aaliyah’s role in *The Matrix Reloaded* was recast, other methods of movie magic have also been employed.

When Heath Ledger passed away in January 2008, he had started *The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus*, but still had most of his scenes left to shoot. Rather than use expensive CGI, director Terry Gilliam rewrote the script, so Ledger’s character changed his appearance whenever he appeared. Then he hired Johnny Depp, Jude Law and Colin Farrell to all play the same part. Philip Seymour Hoffman’s role in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* was also rewritten after his fatal drug overdose.

Closer to home, Hong Kong legend Bruce Lee died in 1973, leaving behind 100 minutes of footage for *Game of Death*. That film was completed using a combination of stand-ins and archive material. Bruce’s fate was chillingly echoed in 1993, when his son Brandon Lee died on the set of *The Crow*. Again, stunt doubles and duplicated shots of Brandon were used to finish the film.

While *Fast & Furious 7* does an impressive job of keeping Paul Walker alive, it also raises the rather eerie question: how long before we see the stars of yesteryear resurrected as the heroes of tomorrow? Bruce Lee for *Fast & Furious 8*, anyone?

