

CRIME: HONG KONG STYLE

Infernal Affairs (15) 無間道

MON 7 MAR, 18:15

**Dir Andrew Lau/2002 HK/101mins/ Cantonese, English with Chinese and English subtitles
Andy Lau, Tony Leung, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang**

Directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, *Infernal Affairs* is a veritable who's who of Hong Kong cinema in 2002. Through his early career as a cinematographer, Andrew Lau worked with an intimidating list of Hong Kong's filmmaking talent and his *Young and Dangerous* franchise – a long running series about young triads in Hong Kong's busiest shopping district – was a local sensation. He was joined on *Infernal Affairs* by Alan Mak who also co-wrote the screenplay with Felix Chong. Together Mak and Chong have written and directed a number of award-winning films focusing on themes of surveillance, the criminal underworld, and the Hong Kong identity, as told through deviously clever storylines. Most recently, the duo received widespread acclaim for their *Overheard* trilogy.

The star studded cast will contain familiar faces to many fans of Hong Kong cinema. Inspector Lau is played by Andy Lau, pop superstar and prolific actor. Chang Wing-yan is played by Tony Leung, who audiences may recognise from his frequent collaborations with director Wong Kar-wai including *Chungking Express* (1994), *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *The Grandmaster* (2013). Between them, Lau and Leung have starred in nearly 250 films and are enormously popular across East and Southeast Asia. They are joined in *Infernal Affairs* by Eric Tsang (playing Hon Sam), actor in a staggering 272 films and star of local TV; Anthony Wong (SP Wong), one of many actors who crossed over from exploitation films into the mainstream; and Sammi Cheng (Mary), successful pop star and Hong Kong's most popular actress at the turn of the century. The list goes on.

Infernal Affairs came out at a time when global audiences were losing interest in Hong Kong cinema. During the "Golden Age" of the '80s and '90s Hong Kong was one of the biggest exporters of films, music and television across Asia but as time went on they faced stiffer competition from industries in Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Mainland China. At the same time, the early 2000s were wrought with anxiety for Hong Kong's residents who were (and still are) unsure about their future following the handover to China in 1997. Though on the surface, *Infernal Affairs* is a heart-stopping crime thriller, in its contemplation on identity the film addresses many of the anxieties facing Hong Kong's 7 million residents by asking: who are we, if we have spent our lives pretending to be someone else? The characters in *Infernal Affairs* are victims struggling against a tide that cannot be stopped, but the film's plot is too fiendishly clever to get bogged down in any potential pessimism.



HOME

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Infernal Affairs took Hong Kong's most iconic genre – the crime film – filled it full of the region's best and brightest, and against the backdrop of one of the world's most iconic skylines, reminded the world that Hong Kong had, and still has, a lot to offer the world.

Fraser Elliot (University of Manchester)

EVENT This screening is introduced by Felicia Chan, Lecturer in Screen Studies at the University of Manchester.

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