

On the Powerful but Hard Throne: Film Review of *The Queen*

By Victoria Jing

In Summer of 1997...

"I thought you were getting a new one of this." Said Prince Charles.

"What for? It's perfectly all right." The Queen answered.

This conversation was showing in the movie *The Queen*, directing by Stephen Frears, released on September 15, 2006. The film tells the Royal Family's attitude and behaviour after Princess Diana died in a car accident in August 1997.



(Screenshot of *The Queen*, the Queen invites Blair to become Prime Minister and to form a government in her name)

At that time, there were two options for the Queen: to keep the traditional low-key behaviour, or to comply with public opinion to hold a funeral in public. For nearly one week, the Queen continued to think that it was more important to follow the tradition, and missed the best time to pacifying the national mood. Then under the pressure of the people, the media and Prime Minister Blair, the Queen took public statements and other measures to ease the relationship with the people, so the Royal Family was able to get rid of the trust crisis.

Old Car on Strike

In the 40th minute of the film, the Royal Family chose to take Prince William and Harry out to hunt in order to avoid the relevant reports and media chase about their mother. The Queen took the hound and sat in the driver's seat. Charles said he wanted to go with her and sat in the front-passenger. When the engine started, Charles said that, he thought the Queen should get a new car. In the 55th minute of the film, she rejected the suggestion of Blair that Buckingham Palace should fly half the flag to mourn Diana. Then she drove out alone, but the car broke down when she crossing the river.

After the movie finished, I feel the car has a further profound metaphor in the movie. It just like the traditional system followed by the Royal Family. Charles wants the Queen to make some changes, but the Queen thinks it is okay to keep the status quo. But when she was really getting in trouble – just like that river - what she had relied on suddenly failed to carry her goes on. Even if she is experienced, there is no way to make it keep going. Changing is inevitable.

Another important clue in the film is a deer. This noble and elegant animal seems to symbolize the aristocratic restraint that the Queen holds. When she decided to compromise, she heard that the deer had been hunted. When she saw the deer's body, even though she was sad, she also congratulated the person who shot it. Just as she had to follow the public's expectations under the pressure.

Helen Mirren, the Queen's performer, played the role well and won the 79th Best Actress Oscar in 2007. Another leading role in the film, Prime Minister Blair, is played by Mike Sheen. In the film, he fully showed his understanding and respect for the Queen, took all measures he can do to help the Royal Family tide over difficulties, and won the trust of people.



(Screenshot of *The Queen*, the Queen at Princess Diana's funeral)

Heavy Crown of the Queen

At the end of the film, what the Queen said to Blair making it hard for the audience to criticize her "indifference" to Diana's death. Maybe she is not indifference, just low-key and reserve. But in the face of the public and the media, the change of the times, even if she is the Queen, she has no choice, just like the government is her government in name, but she doesn't have the right to vote. We can say that the Queen did not meet the expectations of the public, but we cannot say that she did not fulfil her responsibilities.

There is a saying that "the masses thinking with perceptual, and the elites thinking with rational". Many years later, onlookers were mourning and weeping must have been as calm as the Queen was. Due to inspired by real historical events, the film's ending has long been doomed. But maybe it's this unchangeable ending that makes the process more thought-provoking.