

No Iron Lady, But the Lady is a True Orchid of Steel

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Michelle Yeoh during her visit with Suu Kyi outside her house gates in Rangoon.

Coming out in the heels of Aung San Suu Kyi recent electoral breakthrough of her National League for Democracy, *The Lady*, is an epic feature film directed by **Luc Besson**, about the Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. **Michelle Yeoh**'s true to life depiction of Suu Kyi's political life as the Uniter of the Burmese peoples' democratic aspirations gives us a very accurate understanding of the events that led to her pro-longed house arrest. She was no Iron Lady but Suu Kyi was called the Steel Orchid. This film really helps us understand why and how she used her time in solitude to read and write her ideas about democracy and justice.

Yeoh describes the film as "an incredible love story" against the background of "political turmoil". **Paris Match** names the film an extraordinary story of love between her deceased husband Michael Aris played by **David Thewlis**, and a woman who sacrifices her personal happiness for her people. Michelle Yeoh called the film "a labour of love" but also confessed it had felt intimidating for her to play the Nobel Prize winner.

During the shooting of the film, news broke that Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest had been lifted. Luc Besson hesitated to believe what he saw on TV because it looked so much like his recent footage. Yeoh used her spare time to visit Suu Kyi immediately. She says that she got the feeling she was still on the film set during the visit because Luc Besson had recreated the house so accurately. On 22 June 2011 Yeoh wanted to visit Suu Kyi a second time but was deported, reportedly over her portrayal of Suu Kyi. Yeoh watched about 200 hours of audiovisual material on Suu Kyi and took lessons in Burmese to get it all right. This really pays off and becomes evident when she delivers Suu Kyi's historic first speeches in public in Burmese.