

# Special screenings

## Magazine Gap Road



**Wasted beauty** *Qu Ying*

★★★★★

**Dir Nicholas Chin, 2008**

Not yet rated, 90 mins

Screens Sat 22 as part of HKAIFF

As Hong Kong independent productions go, *Magazine Gap Road's* lush outlook and polished execution could easily shame more than a few of its mainstream counterparts. By letting his cast of gorgeous looking models-turned-actors – regularly clad onscreen in high fashion – waltz their way from one glamorous set to another, London-born director Nicholas Chin manages to awe the audience with arresting

visuals alone, in this, his feature debut.

Antiques museum curator Samantha (Jessey Meng) has a forgettable past which she spent working as a high-class prostitute in Japan. Out of the blue, Kate (Qu Ying), an old friend and fellow escort, asks for Samantha's help to leave the seedy business, years after the latter's own escape. Inevitably, Samantha finds herself sucked back into the shady world she thought she'd left behind – while simultaneously trying to start a new life with her rich boyfriend, Greg (Carl Ng).

By opening with a night-time highway sequence and, as a notable nod to David Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.*, using the road as a metaphor for the two female protagonists' journey to decadence, Chin has set up his film as a mystery thriller with ostensibly Lynchian references. However, although the director has done an admirable job in creating a serene and slightly oneiric atmosphere – in what is a very decent arthouse effort – there's an unmistakable deficit in both tension and emotional intrigue. For a noir tale that revolves around sex, drugs and murder, you'd be forgiven for expecting a higher suspense quotient than what's on offer here. *Edmund Lee*