

Cinémathèque Quarterly

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About National Museum of Singapore Cinematheque

The National Museum of Singapore Cinematheque focuses on the presentation of film in its historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts, with a strong emphasis on local and regional cinema. Housed in the museum's 247-seat Gallery Theatre, the National Museum of Singapore Cinematheque offers new perspectives on film through a year-round series of screenings, thematic showcases, and retrospectives.

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Editorial Note

Cinematheque Quarterly Vol.2

returns with an issue dedicated to the examination of cinematic space – in terms of Singapore's depiction in films and cinema as a space where the aspirations and shared memories of a society can play out.

Singaporeans have had a long love affair with cinema and to celebrate this history, this issue concludes with a look back to Singapore's only drive-in cinema. With a specially commissioned recipe of *Kacang Putih* by Christopher Tan, transport yourself back to the heyday of the Jurong Drive-in Cinema!

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Cinematheque Quarterly* and find new insights into Singapore's unique cinematic culture and heritage. As space is often defined by its users, the designers have made this issue's cover emulate the surface of a white wall. We invite you to "write on the wall" and respond by decorating a *Cinematheque Quarterly* that is uniquely yours!

We are ever grateful to you our reader, and to our partners, the Singapore Film Commission (SFC) of the Info-communications Media Development Authority (IMDA) and the Asian Film Archive, as well as the community of institutions and individuals who read and contribute to the Quarterly, without whom this issue would not have been possible.

NMS Editorial Team

This issue begins with two essays: *Feedback Mechanism: On Film and the City*, a photo-essay by critic Kenneth Tay inspired by a lecture Tay presented at the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) as part of our programme titled, *PlayTime: A Complete Retrospective of Jacques Tati's Films*; and an essay by Toh Hun Ping that explores the history of Chong Gay, a film company that believed cinema was a cultural tool that could wield a positive influence on society.

Developed in partnership with NUS undergraduate students, *Young Critics' Picks* returns with new reviews of films that address nostalgia and Singapore cinema.

NMS' collaboration with the Asian Film Archive (AFA) continues with a look into its archives of *Medium Rare*, a motion picture film that sought to tell the tale of Adrian Lim, the Toa Payoh ritualistic killer.

Feedback Mechanisms

By Kenneth Tay



II.

Since the early days of cinema, cities have always held a special place, both as subject matter and as screening locations themselves. From the first actuality films to the genre of city symphonies, there is, as Tom Gunning reminds us, a strange mise-en-abîme between the city and cinema: audiences would pour in from busy city streets into the theatres often only to see, there projected onto the screens, images of busy city streets. The experience in the cinémathèque essentially paralleled the experience of entering into a hall of mirrors.

III.

Shot in Paris of the 1960s, *Playtime* (1967) was also famous for having had an entire set built within the city. “Tativille”, as it was called, even had its own dedicated power plant to continuously supply the instant city with permanent lighting. A city built within the great city of Paris, it was almost as if the film had demanded a city to call its own. Not a single brick remains today, but imagine if Tativille had been preserved, museumised even, while the rest of the city continued its acceleration into the future.



V.

_____ J.G. Ballard's novel *Concrete Island* (1974) is often described as an urban "update" of the Robinson Crusoe narrative. It's not difficult to see why such a comparison should arise; although we should add that rather than a castaway island, the protagonist in Ballard's novel is marooned onto a traffic island instead. A concrete island in between the highways. The horror of Ballard's novel isn't so much that no one passes by to help (as perhaps was the case with Crusoe's island), but that everyone is passing by. No one can help._____

_____ No one can stop in the relentless traffic of the highways._____

VI.

_____ In 1964, when Jacques Tati began building his film set for *Playtime*, another significant construction was taking place in Singapore. Built in 1964, transitioning between the great Malaysian project inaugurated the year before and Singapore's eventual independence the year after, the Pan Island Expressway (PIE) can be considered one of the earliest transmission mediums for the nation-state. Stretching over 42 kilometres in length, the longest and oldest highway in Singapore, the PIE allowed information (e.g. goods, people, services) to traverse the entire length of the island in the fastest way possible on land._____



VIII.

Forty years after the construction of the PIE, the film-maker Tan Pin Pin records the journey across the highway in a single take. Beginning at Changi Airport and ending at Tuas Checkpoint, *80km/h* (2004) is a cross-country document of a car/camera traveling at the speed limit of 80km/h on the PIE. As the film-maker herself puts it, the video's duration, a mere 38 minutes, is its message. ⁱⁱⁱ

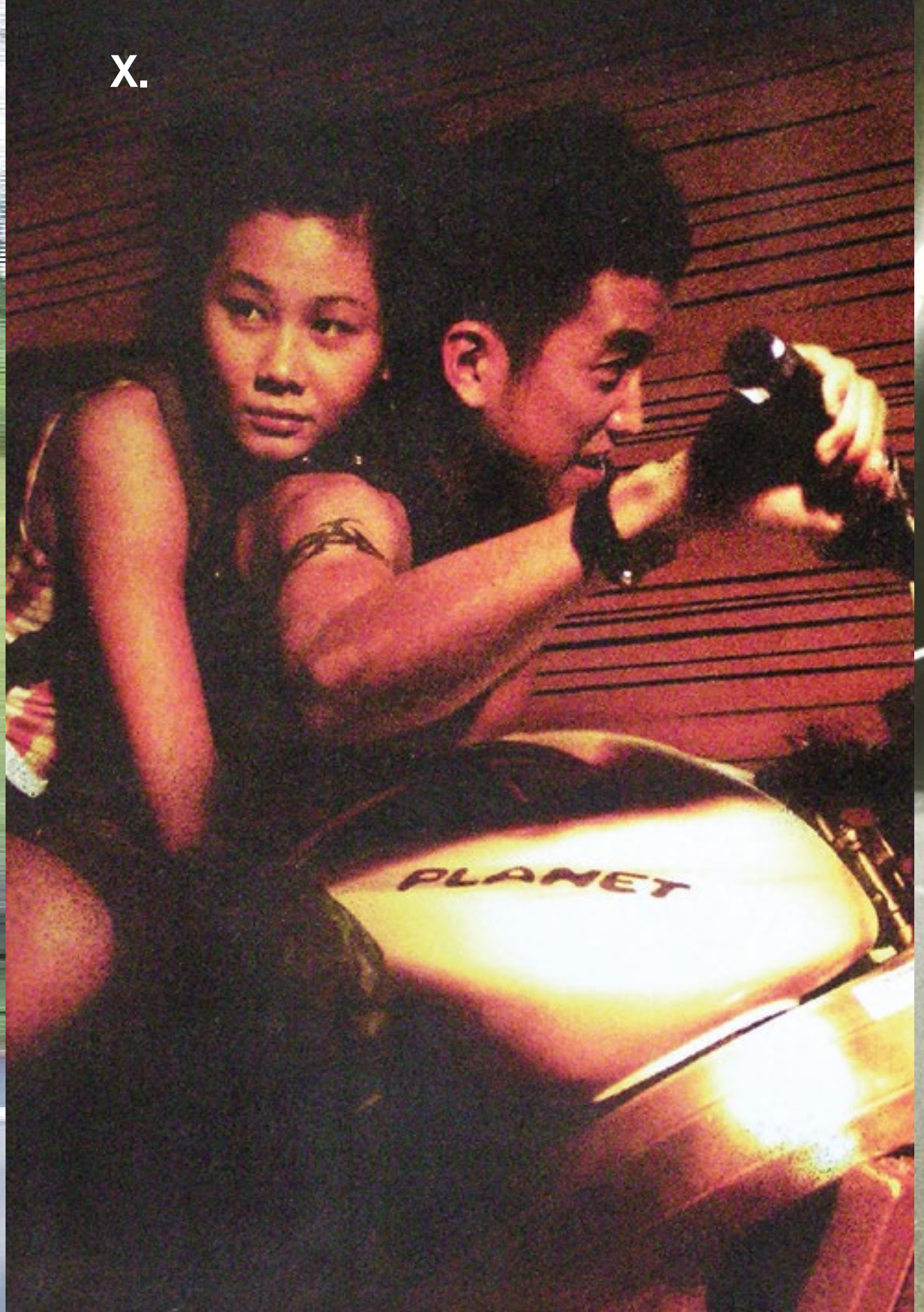
80km/h premiered that same year at the first ever Singapore Short Cuts jointly organised between the National Museum of Singapore, the Substation, and the Singapore Film Commission. ^{iv}

What was it that was racing through the minds of the audience as they sat through all 38 minutes, knowing that the time spent in the cinematheque mirrored essentially the time taken to traverse the entire length of Singapore on the PIE?

IX.



X.



_____ At one level, the title of the film *Eating Air* (1999) refers clearly to the colloquial slang in Singapore for a joyride. Yet, it also points to a desire to devour emptiness, and to do so on speed. The film is more than a good-humored caricature of the *beng* and *lian* subculture of the 90s in Singapore; it is also a portrayal of an entire generation's anxiety, towards a society's expectations of them to make productive lives for themselves. Instead of chasing down their goals and purposes in life, our protagonists, Ah Boy and Ah Girl, experience speed and the drive as pure enjoyment in itself, emptied of any purpose. _____

_____ The last scene in the film shows Ah Girl walking away rather listlessly after discovering what is possibly the deceased body of Ah Boy. As the camera zooms in to take a closer look, something else happens. We take in, once more, the city lights, the city's roads, and a reflection of ourselves in Ah Girl: _____

_____ Have we, in all this time, been conscious that this city merely demands of us to be constantly on the move?



IMAGE CREDITS

- I. Film still from *Playtime*; Image courtesy of Jacques Tati.
- IV. Film still from *Playtime*; Image courtesy of Jacques Tati.
- VII. Screen grab from *80km/h*; Image courtesy of Tan Pin Pin.
- IX. Screen grab from *80km/h*; Image courtesy of Tan Pin Pin.
- X. Film still from *Eating Air*; Image courtesy of Jasmine Ng and Kelvin Tong.
- XII. Film still from *Eating Air*; Image courtesy of Jasmine Ng and Kelvin Tong.

- i Tom Gunning, cited in Helmut Wehsmann, "The City in Twilight: Charting the genre of the 'city film' 1900–1930", in *Cinema & Architecture*, eds. Francois Penz and Maureen Thomas (London: British Film Institute, 1997), 8.
- ii An earlier version of this section appears in Kenneth Tay, "Escape Velocity: An Afterword", in *CONCRETE ISLAND*, eds. Kenneth Tay and Luca Lum (Singapore: NUS Museum, 2016), 126.
- iii Tan Pin Pin, "80km/h", tanpinpin.com.
- iv For more on *Singapore Short Cuts*, see Kathleen Ditzig, "The NMS Cinémathèque in Context: A History of Film Programming at Singapore's Social History Museum", *Cinémathèque Quarterly* Vol. 1 (January–March 2017): 6–13.
- v For a more developed account of speeding with reference to traffic accidents in Singapore, see Ho Rui An, "An Accident: Two Views from the Dashboard", in *CONCRETE ISLAND*, eds. Kenneth Tay and Luca Lum (Singapore: NUS Museum, 2016), 60–69.

“To Each His or Her Own Ambition”



A concise history of the Chong Gay Organisation in Singapore

By Toh Hun Ping & Yang Yanxuan

Top row to bottom left The changing logos of Chong Gay Organisation.
Bottom right Logo of Overseas Movie Organisation.

During the lull of local film production fervour in the 1970s to 1980s, we could count only a handful of individuals or film companies who risked financial loss and ridicule in their attempts to revive the then moribund film industry here. The Chong Gay Organisation, which was established in the early 1960s, was one such company. In the mid-1970s, it made three local films in rapid succession. The third and final production, *Two Sides of the Bridge*, though an unsuccessful financial venture, is well remembered even till today.

“HEALTHY” BEGINNINGS

Chong Gay was founded in October 1964 by a Hokkien entrepreneur, businessman and philanthropist Koh Tian Kit as Chong Gay Film Co. Ltd. Chong Gay, which literally translates to “an integration” (of arts) in Chinese, was born out of Koh’s belief in cinema as a cultural tool and of its potential to wield a positive influence on society.

To that end, Chong Gay started distributing “popular films of artistic value”¹ from Hong Kong and Japan to the Singapore-Malaysia market. Supporting this agenda were Koh’s sons and Chong Gay’s managing directors, Koh Seng Leong and Koh Seng Guan, as well as film director Tang Pek Chee (*Lion City*, 1960) lending support as general manager.

The film distribution and exhibition market in the 1960s was dominated by Shaw, Cathay, Kong Ngee and Eng Wah, but Chong Gay planted itself firmly among these heavyweights with its foray into film exhibition. Chong Gay first acquired the old Victory Theatre at



Chong Gay’s envelope design from 1966, with the company name, logo and address. On the back of the envelope was an advertisement for the film they distributed – *My Darling Grandchild* that starred child actress Fung Bo Bo. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

the Gay World Amusement Park in July 1968. First opened in 1945, New Victory Theatre was rebranded as a Chong Gay movie theatre in July 1968, the company’s first in Singapore.

A year later, in August 1969, Chong Gay took the next step of broadening its film supply sources. It wanted to avoid screening what it defined as exploitative and profit-driven movie-making works coming mainly from Hong Kong and Hollywood. Instead, Chong Gay picked up local distribution rights to first-run films produced by four major movie companies from Hong Kong known as “Great Wall”, “Phoenix”, “Sun Luen” and “Fei Lung”. While the films made by these firms were well-celebrated, they made a

1 “An Announcement by Chong Gay Film Co.” *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 4 June 1965, p. 8.



The opening film of Chong Gay's New Victory Theatre was *Eternal Love*, a Hong Kong Cantonese romantic melodrama starring Nam Hung and Lu Kei.



The New Victory Theatre at Gay World Amusement Park. (Images courtesy of Wong Han Min)

splash less for its titillating content but for the heavy moralising and “healthy content and function” inherent in their narratives. For their espousal of socialist agendas in their works and receiving support from the Chinese communist state in the making of their films, these films were considered examples of “left-wing” filmmaking.

To counter competition for audiences from Shaw and Cathay conglomerate chains, Chong Gay sought the collaboration of now-defunct independent theatres like Palace Theatre, Diamond Theatre and Galaxy Cinema in a bid to form a cinema chain that showcased these “left-wing” films. In 1969, Chong Gay Film Co. also renamed and inaugurated itself as Chong Gay Theatres Ltd,² reflecting its goal to bolster its presence in the local film exhibition and cinema operator market.

BIG SCREEN MODELS

Part of Chong Gay's expansion plans included the construction of the 24-storey Golden Mile Tower, anchored

by the new flagship Golden Theatre, and the building of Kallang Theatre, their second theatre complex. These cinemas were considered modern for their time – envisioned as part of mixed-use buildings like the many office-cum-entertainment complexes in Singapore today.

Contemporary audiences may be familiar with Golden Theatre's old cinema halls that have since been operated by Rex Cinemas and The Projector. When Golden Theatre officially opened in October 1973, the 2,000-seat theatre was the largest in Singapore, putting Chong Gay on par with Cathay and Shaw as a cinema titan. This new status was also in no small part due to Chong Gay's success in becoming the first exhibitor in Singapore (other than the Cathay and Shaw Circuits) to obtain the rights to first-run major English language films, such as *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Sting* (1973).

The fact that Chong Gay's cinema screens presented both noble-minded, moralistic heroes and treacherous mobsters engaging in violent shootouts



Top Handbill advertisement of colour films distributed by Chong Gay and produced by four major film companies from Hong Kong. They were screened at the Palace and Galaxy Theatres. (Images courtesy of Wong Han Min)

Right Handbill advertisements of social-realist dramas *My Home, But Not Sweet* (1969) and *Spring Summer Autumn & Winter* (1969). They were Mandarin colour films produced by Hong Kong's Great Wall Movie Enterprise Ltd and Sun Luen Film Co. respectively, distributed by Chong Gay and screened at the Palace and Diamond Theatres. (Images courtesy of Wong Han Min)



2 “Chong Gay Theatres Ltd organises inauguration ceremony.” *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 6 September 1969, p. 20.



A 1971 calendar promoting Golden Mile Tower. Chong Gay Theatres Ltd was named as the developer. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

was not hypocritical for Chong Gay even as the operator continued to champion “healthy content” in Cinema. Their preference for conscientious messages of “healthy” films was perhaps made distinct with the decision to open Golden Theatre with *Rebirth of a Deaf Mute*, a Great-Wall produced film, instead of the Hollywood blockbusters the theatre had been contracted to distribute and screen.

Rebirth of a Deaf Mute was a social realist drama portraying the injustice of child labour and the poor working conditions in a shipyard run by an oppressive owner. Chong Gay’s choice of this film to open Golden Theatre could be seen as a move against the grain of the local film market.³

RAISING CAST, CREW AND MORALS

While Chong Gay was scoring these external deals with Hollywood-linked distributors and “left-wing” film companies, things were beginning to shift internally in the company. Before Golden Theatre opened with *Rebirth of a Deaf Mute*, Koh Tian Kit, the founding director of Chong Gay, passed away in April 1973.

Within two years, the control of the organisation shifted into the hands of its vice-chairman and managing director Lim Djit Sun, a businessman and entrepreneur from Indonesia.⁴ Lim’s

leadership sparked a series of ventures that Chong Gay is now remembered for. In April 1975, Lim declared Chong Gay’s plans to form a movie production arm in Singapore to make films that reflected local interests and themes.⁵ Much like his predecessor Koh, this movie-making impulse stemmed from Lim’s view that the films showing in local cinemas were overtly commercial and presented a corrupt, degenerate and subversive culture. To right the wrongs of screen culture and address the dearth of “healthy” films in the market, Lim thought it pertinent that Chong Gay embark on producing their own crop of socially conscious films.

Armed with a moral mission, Chong Gay started earnestly importing filming equipment from overseas and engaging foreign film production experts to guide and mentor local crew. Recruitment

and actors’ training classes were held under the supervision of Hong Kong film producer-director Chan Man. Chan was an apt mentor, having directed *China Wife* (1957), a Nanyang-themed film produced by Kong Ngee that was shot on location in Singapore.⁶

With Chong Gay, Chan directed their first two films under pseudonyms⁷, *Crime Does Not Pay*⁸ (1975) and *Hypocrites*⁹ (1976), both social realist dramas made in Mandarin. While members of the cast were all Singaporeans, including experienced stage, television and radio play actors and actresses, local crew learnt on the job from crew members brought over from Hong Kong during the three-month shooting period of these two films.

Crime Does Not Pay was more well-received by audiences than *Hypocrites*,

- 3 Major film companies like Shaw and Cathay were contractually bound to choose between importing or exporting films from and to the “free world” markets of Taiwan and handling films from communist China or “leftist” Hong Kong film studios. The exclusivity of such deals might have paved an opportunity for Chong Gay to become the sole promoters of leftist cinema in Singapore. In fact, Chong Gay was the only exhibitor of films produced by the state-run propaganda department in communist North Korea.
- 4 Prior to taking up leadership at Chong Gay, Lim’s name had already been made with the establishment of several businesses in Singapore. Some of these are still household names, such as Overseas Emporium, a departmental store that retailed China-made goods and stands at People’s Park Complex today.
- 5 “Chong Gay Organisation will set up film production department for making movies with local themes, in time for the Asean Film Festival.” *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 30 April 1975, p. 29.
- 6 As a genre, Nanyang films portrayed exoticised traits of an amorphous Malaya region that foreign audiences lapped up. Popular elements of Nanyang films included shots of tropical backgrounds and swaying coconut trees, singing actors, men in sarongs and references to what was seen as the prime beverage of the Straits – Nanyang coffee.
- 7 Inspired by the trend in overseas Chinese stage and left-wing screen productions, cast and crew in Chong Gay’s film productions often took on pseudonyms. The screenplay for *Two Sides of the Bridge*, Chong Gay’s third feature, was written by “Lim Ann” or Lim Meng Chew, already an accomplished journalist and writer and director for the stage. He co-directed the film with “Chen Ge”, known off-screen as Tan Chang Meng, also an equivalent polymath in the fields of journalism, film criticism and stage directing. The composer for the film’s theme songs was credited as “Zhu Ye” or Reuben Yap. Lead roles in *Two Sides of a Bridge*, were taken up by Chan Pong Koon (“Fang Liang”) and Tay Lee Meng (“Tay Seen Yei”).
- 8 *Crime Does Not Pay* was a family drama revolving around a tyrannical and unscrupulous father figure involved in drug trafficking. But the subject matter was also a fitting one as the country was grappling with growing substance abuse during the time of its premiere at the 5th Asian Film Festival in Singapore in November 1975. Subsequently screened in Chong Gay theatres, the film and its strong social messages received positive feedback from audiences.
- 9 A satirical social comedy, *Hypocrites* follows two families which cross paths – one ensconced in the trappings of wealth and indulgence in decadence and debauchery, and the other working their way up in society under the watchful and fatherly eye of a frugal and diligent food hawker.



Top Publicity brochure of North Korean propaganda film *A Flower Girl* (1972), which was based on a revolutionary opera written by Kim Il-sung, then-leader of the communist republic. The film was dubbed in Mandarin by China's Changchun Film Studio and screened in Chong Gay's Kong Chian (Toa Payoh) and Zenith (Tampines Road) theatres in November 1973. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

Left Film poster of *Two Sides of the Bridge*. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

1st from bottom left Newspaper advertisement of *Crime Does Not Pay*.

2nd and 3rd from bottom left Advertisements of *Hypocrites* in the local Chinese and English press. (Images courtesy of Su Zhangkai)



Production photos of *Two Sides of the Bridge*, on location in Kelantan and Terengganu, on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia. From *Silat Weekly* Issue #9, published 15 July 1976. (Image courtesy of Su Zhangkai)

but what struck observers in the promotion of the two films was Chong Gay's emphasis on the casts' collective effort as compared to other film companies which stressed individual stardom and relied on sensationalist marketing. Sadly, these observational footnotes in archived film criticism are all that is left of both films. The films were reportedly lost in a fire in a Hong Kong warehouse.¹⁰

THE LAST ACCOLADE: TWO SIDES OF THE BRIDGE

Two Sides of the Bridge was a stand-out film for Chong Gay, fondly remembered as the first and only Chong Gay film made by an all-local cast and crew (in this case, referring to both Singaporeans and Malaysians) and considered a truly local accomplishment in feature film-making.¹¹

The film chronicles the relationship of a young couple, Rufei and Lingfeng, who face the pressures of living in a rapidly transforming and materialistic Singapore. While Lingfeng perseveres at her day job in a textile factory and night classes to improve her skill sets, Rufei is lured by a high-paying but dubious job at a money-lending firm which eventually entraps him in risky investment schemes. To evade his heavy debts, Rufei returns to his rural home in Kelantan and finds some brief respite and quietude before becoming embroiled in a ploy with drug traffickers.

In contrast to the typical *kungfu* flicks and Qiong Yao romance melodramas showing in local cinemas at the time, *Two Sides of the Bridge* appealed to audiences with its "healthy", realist portrayal of lives in urban Singapore and rural parts of Malaysia. It could almost be perceived as exemplar of a kind of local film-making that audiences preferred to be devoid of crass commercialism, shock tactics, lurid sex and violence.

For all its acclaim, *Two Sides of the Bridge* did not do well at the box office. For a while, the Chong Gay film production team was undaunted. They continued their filming efforts by producing short documentaries and participating in film shoots here by Hong Kong film companies, biding their time for opportunities to carry out production on three scripts that had been written – namely, *Three Female Students*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Ghost Worshipper*.

In the meantime, the organisation expanded its theatre network, opening the 2,400-seat Kallang Theatre in April 1978¹² and building cinemas in the new housing towns sprouting across the island. In the midst of this, Lim established Overseas Movie (Pte) Ltd and managed it concurrently with Chong Gay.¹³

By then, China was in its post-Mao era and the Overseas Movie-Chong Gay

10 According to Tan Chang Meng, co-director of Chong Gay's third local feature production, *Two Sides of the Bridge*.

11 The film premiered in December 1976 at the Golden Theatre and subsequently enjoyed retrospective screenings in 1990s and during the 11th Singapore International Film Festival in 1998. In April 2017, several cast and crew members came together for a retrospective screening programmed by the National Museum of Singapore Cinematheque.



Left Film-still from *Two Sides of the Bridge*. Standing in the middle is Choo Siew Fong, who is now still acting for local television. She was also Chong Gay and Overseas Movie's publicity manager in the 1980s. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

Right Film catalogue of China Film Festival '85, organised by Overseas Movie. In the catalogue is a map showing the distribution and photos of cinemas owned by Overseas Movie (Pte) Ltd in Singapore. (Images courtesy of Wong Han Min)



34 theatres began screening Mandarin films produced by studios there. Convinced of their high production standards and cultural value, Lim was tireless in marketing these films even when they risked putting the company at financial risk. Lim's persistent efforts extended to organising China Film Festivals from the mid-1980s onwards, which included inviting delegates from China to Singapore for film exchange programmes.¹⁴

These signalled opportunities for Chong Gay's production arm to start making films again as the idea of China-Singapore co-productions was raised during these exchanges. However, Lim passed away abruptly in 1987 and plans for such co-productions were dropped. The fourth Chong Gay feature never materialised and the lull in local film production extended for a few more years until 1990's *Medium Rare*.

CHONG GAY AND OF THE PRINCESS THEATRE PAST: "TO EACH HIS OR HER OWN AMBITION"

The cinemas belonging to Chong Gay and Overseas Movie have long passed into the hands of other and newer players; some taking on merely their names as in the case of Princess Theatre, others their architecture such as The Golden Theatre. But we can recall Chong Gay today as a notable if not persistent player that sought to revive a moribund film industry with films bearing moral messages. Chong Gay charted its own course in film history against risks of financial loss and even ridicule in their attempts. As the late Lim Djit Sun put it in response to talk that he was unwise to promote unprofitable Chinese films in the 1980s, "To each his or her own ambition".



Overseas Movie's "New Crown" and "New Town" cinemas in Ang Mo Kio, before they were redeveloped into Djitsun Mall. Circa 1990s. (Image courtesy of Wong Han Min)

Many thanks to Wong Han Min, Su Zhangkai and Koh Eng Soon for their guidance and for sharing with us their collection of movie memorabilia, old newspapers and film magazines. We also extend our gratitude to Mr Tan Chang Meng and Mr Reuben Yap (director and composer of *Two Sides of the Bridge* respectively) for agreeing to be interviewed.

12 Kallang Theatre was eventually sold to the government in 1981.

13 Ngiam Tong Hai, "Work on five cinemas costing \$10m." *The Straits Times*, 23 September 1981, p. 9.

14 Chong Wing Hong, "More China-made films on the way." *The Straits Times*, 10 October 1984, p. 9.

TELLING OUR STORIES:

Nurturing Emerging Voices of Southeast Asian Cinema

The 28th edition of the **Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF)** marks the fourth year of its reboot. Focused on nurturing the voices and stories of Southeast Asia, SGIFF's film and development programmes have primed the Festival as an international discovery ground and connection platform for independent filmmakers.

FILM PROGRAMME

The Festival's Singapore Panorama section showcases some of the most exciting local feature and short filmmakers of the year, while the Silver Screen Awards competition highlights emerging film talents in its Asian Feature Film and Southeast Asian Short Film categories. In 2014, Singaporean filmmaker Kirsten Tan was awarded Best Southeast Asian Short Film for *Dahdi*. Tan then went on to make her award-winning debut feature, *Pop Aye* (2017).

The **SOUTHEAST ASIAN FILM LAB** is a story development workshop for filmmakers from Southeast Asia embarking on their first feature-length film. Over the years, the programme saw established industry mentors like Singapore veteran filmmaker Eric Khoo, USA-China producer Terence Chang and Indian filmmaker-producer Anurag Kashyap. The workshop ends with an industry pitch for the Most Promising Project prize.

Malaysian filmmaker Bradley Liew's debut feature *Singing in Graveyards* was the first story to win the Most Promising Project title in 2014. The film made its world premiere at the 2016 Venice International Film Festival (Critics' Week) and subsequently returned to SGIFF as part of its Asian Vision section. More recently, Southeast Asian Film Lab 2016 alumni projects *Cu Li Never Cries* (by Filmmaker Pham Ngoc Lan, Vietnam) and *Taste* (by filmmaker Le Bao, Vietnam) were selected for the prestigious Cinefondation's Atelier at the Cannes Film Festival 2017.

"Providing that Asian viewpoint and regional industry support system that every filmmaker needs in their career is something that we emphasise. We are very happy to see these projects go on to other film labs, get made eventually, and hope they continue to make their way back to SGIFF on the big screen," says Executive Director of SGIFF, Yuni Hadi.

The **YOUTH JURY & CRITICS PROGRAMME** aims to nurture a new generation of critical writers on Asian cinema. Open to post-secondary students in Singapore, participants are given the opportunity to form close ties with their filmmaking counterparts in the Southeast Asian Short Film Competition, and gain exposure to the regional developments in film through their writing. Some of its alumni include Alfonse Chiu (Editor-in-chief, SINDie), Rifyal Giffari (Nominee, ASEAN-ROK Film Leaders Incubator, Busan Film Commission), and Sara Merican (Cinema Studies Major, University of Pennsylvania).

As the largest and longest-running film event in the region, SGIFF sees its role as one that creates space for the understanding of Southeast Asian cinema in Singapore and the rest of the world - for as long as there are stories to be told and audiences that wish to ride the wave.

The 28th edition of SGIFF runs from 23 November to 3 December 2017. For more information, check out www.sgiff.com



28th
SINGAPORE
INTERNATIONAL
FILM
FESTIVAL

Be part of our journey. Join SGIFFriends.

Since our establishment in 1987, the Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) has grown to become Southeast Asia's largest and longest-running film event with over 100 films each year, as well as masterclasses, awards for outstanding talent and educational programmes for young filmmakers. Without your support as patrons and friends, the Festival would not be here today.

Our new membership drive, SGIFFriends, is a chance for you to support independent films. Every dollar you give counts towards the work that we do. As SGIFFriends, you will enjoy special benefits including priority access, exclusive updates and much more.

Help us prepare for the 28th edition in 2017 and give independent filmmakers in Singapore and Southeast Asia a platform to share their stories to the world.

**Sign up to become an SGIFFriend
today at sgiff.com/sgiffriends.**

5x5



Alex Oh x Rennie Gomes



Hear from the experts what goes on behind the scenes in a film

In film production, people often know of the directors and producers, but tend to be unaware of those who work behind the scenes. Get to know two established names in the local film industry who give sound to film – Alex Oh, a film composer who has composed for over 17 feature films and television dramas, and Rennie Gomes, the sound engineer and builder of Singapore's first Dolby Certified Film Mixing facility at Yellow Box Studios. Here, they trade questions on their creative process and glean insights from each other.

Both Rennie and Alex are also jury members of the National Youth Film Awards 2017, an annual local short film competition presented by *SCAPE and the National Youth Council. The National Youth Film Awards look to discover and celebrate the best emerging talent for technical film craft in Singapore.

WITH ALEX OH

1. How would you describe the importance of a film score to a film? What, to you, makes a good composition?

Good compositions add an extra dimension to film, expressing what words cannot say. They heighten a film's intensity and drama, connecting with and touching audiences on another level. Thematic film scores can define a film with a catchy tune that audiences can remember long after they leave the cinema.

A good composition will therefore be a score that tells the story. This means a number of things. The theme, orchestration and performance of the music must blend well with the picture and work together as one.

2. You have worked on many different types of films from horror to comedy, and on a range of productions from television to independent films. How does your method in developing scores differ from genre to genre?

The method stays the same while the approach differs across genres.

It starts with talking to the director about the heart of the story and the concept of the score. From there, my approach differs depending on a number of factors. For example, is the score for film or TV? What is the story, concept, and genre? Is it going to be small and intimate, medium or a big score? Of course, factors like time and budget also affect the film score.

3. What value have you found in cross-cultural collaborations, for example with the Sydney Scoring Orchestra and now in Dublin?

In cross-cultural collaborations, I have learnt a number of things:

Performance: During the recording of the score for *Bait*, The Sydney Scoring Orchestra was amazing. There were 30 cues of music and all were recorded within 6 hours. They saw the score for the first time and other than two cues, the rest of the cues were all one-take recordings. Because of the great performance from the orchestra, it brought the film a couple of notches higher in terms of production value and quality.

Teamwork: On the score of *Bait*, there was great teamwork from Trackdown, an audio post-production company in Sydney. From the music editor and orchestrator, to the copyist, score supervisors and sound engineers, everyone was in their specific field in creating the score. Everything was efficient, which produced fast, high-quality results.

Ensemble Sizes – While pursuing my M.A. in Scoring for film in Dublin, I had the opportunity to write music for different ensemble sizes. From string quartets, to medium-sized 29-piece orchestra to huge 110-piece orchestra recording in Bulgaria, the different ensemble sizes add value and quality to a film.

4. Are there any other composers whose work inspires you?

Beethoven, Stravinsky, Ravel, Holst, Penderecki, John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Howard Shore, Christopher Young, Ryuichi Sakamoto.

5. You have conducted master classes, and like Rennie, are involved in the National Youth Film Awards (NYFA). Why is investing in the next generation important to you? What are some of your aspirations for the future of film scoring in Singapore?

It is a life's journey for one to master his or her craft. If someone who is in front of you on that journey guides you, you will avoid some mistakes that were already made and end up making new mistakes to learn more and achieve even greater heights than the person before you. It is always good to share knowledge. When I first started in 2001, there wasn't anyone

whom I could learn from locally or who was willing to share that knowledge with me. The Internet was limited at that time, so I learnt on the job. I read lots of books and made lots of mistakes, which I learnt from. Now I would like to share the experience that I have gathered. Two years ago, I started giving talks to schools that have music or film courses. Many were responsive and I am very glad to share that knowledge.

The next step for the film industry as a whole will be to have a greater variety of local films in Singapore. In the two years that I have been on the NYFA jury panel, I have seen a variety of good quality films from students. The next 5 to 10 years will be interesting as these student film-makers become professional film-makers. A greater variety of stories will result in more interesting scores. If this continues, it will be great for the next generation of film composers. The only question is whether they are equipped and versatile enough to handle different genres of films. How can they work with the director effectively to communicate the story through the score to the audience?

The symphonic sound is made to accompany films, giving it that cinematic, larger-than-life sound. I would like to see more orchestra recordings for scores in our local films and believe that this would greatly increase our film production value and quality as a whole.

WITH RENNIE GOMES

1. What is a common misconception that people have about the importance of sound in films or how it works?

A common misconception about sound for film is to use most, if not all, of the sound recorded on set as is. Many forget that it needs the same attention to detail as when editing the pictures. Bad cuts or noisy audio is often disruptive to the audience and breaks the flow in good storytelling. Levels of voice and background noise may vary from shot to shot and need to be adjusted.

Some of the best dramas, even if there are no stunts or action sequences, have nice clean dialogue, non-jumpy levels from cut to cut, well-designed background sounds, and music that flows smoothly in and out enhancing emotion and drama. It is often said that the best sound in drama is when it is not noticed and that, in itself, is an art. Keeping it natural even when adding sound effects or even foley is always crucial. It's about never distracting the audience from what is happening on the screen.

2. Having worked on local films such as Eric Khoo's *Mee Pok Man* and local anthology *7 Letters*, is there any particular local film or scene where you think sound was employed particularly well to bring out different layers of the film?

I find working on horror films the most challenging sound-wise. Horror is nothing without good use of sound or even the lack of it. Sometimes silence gives the best scare. I worked on two locally-produced HBO thrillers. *Grace* was worked within confined spaces.

Creating sounds as the characters moved from one room to another was always exciting as I had to keep the audience guessing what was around the corner. The best part was giving the ghost character a voice.

In *Dead Mine*, there were some pretty neat fight sequences but I had the most fun characterising the zombie-like voices. Scenes in caves had to sound like these monsters were all around even when you couldn't see them and moving them in surround is always exciting.

3. Is there a difference in the way you design sound for commercial work and for independent films, since 90 per cent of Yellow Box's work comes from advertising?

Commercials are much shorter forms of communication compared to films. So we have a much shorter time to establish the story and we have to deliver the plot as tightly as possible.

We have achieved greater expertise for commercials after having worked on a number of films, because in films we go for details that would seldom be noticed in a short commercial.

After having worked on so many films, we can't help but apply that same level of detail even in our commercials.

Funnily enough, most commercials have now become longer and have a greater emphasis on storytelling and characters as opposed to just selling a product. It's all still about engaging an audience with good storytelling. We're seeing a fusion of branded content with good storytelling, with less emphasis on the product and

more on the philosophy of the brand in the story.

That being said, I still enjoy doing film the most as it is the purest art form of moving visuals on a wide screen, where we can deliberate and add pauses when we need to emphasise a moment. There is also a sense of liberty in creating a soundscape where decisions are made by ourselves and the director and not “different committees of people”. The sense of experimentation in films is definitely more thrilling once we come across the right film and with a good collaborative team of individuals who are on the same page throughout the creative process.

4. What is the most difficult thing about being a sound engineer, and what is the most rewarding?

Sometimes the most difficult thing about being a sound designer is letting go of an idea that you think works well, but ends up not making the final cut. Music and sound can be a very subjective medium.

Film is one of the most collaborative forms of art. There is no doubt that the director steers the boat, but he is always guided by an experienced crew. This collaborative process, though great, also has its ups and downs. Clear communication is the key. Being precise and asking the right questions is always essential to meeting a successful brief. Getting into the story and the mind of the director are key attributes in building a good soundtrack. After all, the soundtrack is always about emotion.

The most rewarding aspect of any sound design job is getting to see the sound gel with the pictures and even bring a different dimension to them. We sometimes get productions where the director or producer asks us to help “save” the pictures because they encountered many problems during production. We do our best and sometimes it is pure magic when we see the delight on their faces after it all comes together.

5. Where do you see the post-production industry in Singapore in 10 years’ time? Any words of advice for struggling post-production students out there?

The democratisation of the media is upon us. Anyone can make a film these days. Software is cheap, even free. It all boils down to the art. It’s like writing. Anyone can fill a page with words. But very few can fashion them into a good story that will move the human spirit.

Specialty films and “Big Fx” films will always be made and the need for specialists will always be there. Post-production professionals have to be specialists in their fields and have to constantly yield innovative ideas, especially in the use of their craft. Film-making will always evolve with technology. But good storytelling will always stay.

FILMS

REVIEWS

OF

SELECTED

FILMS

FROM

LETTERS



Young Critics' Pick — A Review of Kelvin Tong's *Grandma Positioning System* (GPS) By Mary Ann Lim



Grandma Positioning System, Kelvin Tong, 2015

Grandma Positioning System (GPS) tells the story of a young boy who goes to Johor every year with his family to pay respects to his grandfather, as part of a Chinese tradition associated with the Qing Ming festival. In spite of travelling to the same graveyard every year, the family would always lose their way if not for the directions provided by the boy's grandmother (Ah Ma). Ah Ma acts not just as the navigator for the family, but for her deceased husband as well. During each visit to her husband's tombstone, she recounts the journeys undertaken and important events of both the family and Singapore in that past year.

The turning point in the film is the implied passing of Ah Ma. Whereafter, the young boy takes up Ah Ma's role in

narrating events and directions to his grandparents, and by doing so, changes his family's attitudes toward the rituals.

GRANDMA POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS): DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT

Grandma Positioning System (GPS) captures the generational differences within a typical Singaporean family. The film represents the gradual devaluation of traditions, through the differences between Ah Ma, who insists on her duty, and the rest of her family, particularly her son and daughter-in-law. Loss of traditions is paralleled with a loss associated with the changing landscapes in Singapore which, as narrated by Ah Ma, includes the loss of

landmarks, such as the old Tekka Market and the Old National Library Building. The family's indifferent and impatient attitudes towards the traditional rituals and Ah Ma's impassioned monologues to her husband parallel public sentiments on urban development: a relentless call for modernization and redevelopment, and yet also a call for greater heritage conservation.

Ah Ma's concern that the ghosts of the dead cannot find their way back home is not as absurd as one might initially think it is. Instead, it references the anxieties of all Singaporeans trying to find their way in a constantly changing city. Ah Ma articulates a collective nostalgia, where individuals seek to navigate their way back to a common landmark and a common identity.

FINDING YOUR WAY

Where the sense of loss (of family) is never explicitly articulated by the family members nor by the film itself, it is characterized instead by a literal loss of direction. However, in the scene where the young boy manages to find his way back to his grandparents' tombstone, he repositions not just himself, but his family towards the right direction. In dutifully taking up Ah Ma's mantle, the young boy connects the traditions and memories of the past, to a developing present. More significantly, he represents the ways in which historical memory can find fresh meaning in a new generation that is simultaneously able to reposition itself through history (as demarcated by family, places, events or rituals), and eventually into moulding the future.

Grandma Positioning System (GPS) is fundamentally a film about how our individual and collective memories are both rooted in and transcend physical space by creating enduring stories about the past. By articulating historical narratives that do not simply chart out the Singapore Story, Tong allows the audience to narrate their own experiences in the present and illustrates how memory-making can be a democratic process. In giving due dignity to the new forms which traditions take in the film, we are all similarly invited to continuously reposition ourselves within the transient landmarks and events that mark our lives.

"GEOGRAPHY IS NEVER JUST
GEOGRAPHY, AND BUILDINGS ARE
NEVER JUST BUILDINGS. THEY
ARE REPOSITORIES OF SHARED
MEMORIES FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE."¹
– KELVIN TONG, DIRECTOR OF *GPS*

¹ Han Wei Chou. Quoted in "Kelvin Tong gets personal with 7 Letters short, *Grandma Positioning System* (GPS)". *Channel News Asia*, 22 Aug 2015, Accessed: 14 April 2017.

Young Critics' Pick — A Review of Jack Neo's *The Girl* and Boo Junfeng's *Parting*: Nostalgia and Space in Singapore

By Ho Xiu Lun



The Girl, Jack Neo, 2015

46 Following SG50, Singapore's jubilee year celebrations in 2015, films have increasingly featured nostalgia in presenting personal and social memories of Singapore's history. Among the many works created as tributes to Singapore's Golden Jubilee, *7 Letters* was an anthology of seven short films by seven local film-makers that presented unique interpretations of home. In particular, two of the seven short films, *The Girl* by Jack Neo and *Parting* by Boo Junfeng, addressed the relationship between Singapore's rapid development and our identity as Singaporeans. The making of a place is linked to individual and collective histories. Hence, nostalgia tied to specific places is often a result of a period of transformation and the symbolic values that people attributed to the place before its change. *The Girl* and *Parting* are two films which feature and are themselves nostalgic for spaces in Singapore's past.

The Girl by Jack Neo begins in a *kampung* and follows an innocent love story of a girl's crush on a boy. In the film, the boy is rescued by the girl from a loan shark. However, before he repays her kindness, she moves out of the *kampung*. As with some of his previous films such as *Homerun*, Neo continues to portray the *kampung* as being of a time of a stress-free and intimate communal living. The last scene, in which the girl leaves the *kampung* in a lorry while the boy chases the vehicle, points to the inevitability of urbanisation. Nostalgia is often symptomatic of people seeking respite in the past (idealised through mediated and selective memory) while facing deficiencies in the present.¹ Neo's glorification of the *kampung*, and in turn the *kampung* spirit where organic communities foster intimate kinship ties, perhaps points to the noticeable lack of such a spirit in present-day communities.



Parting, Boo Junfeng, 2015

In *Parting*, film-maker Boo Junfeng presents a bittersweet love story of an elderly Malay man suffering from dementia, who boards a train to Singapore to track down his old love. His search leads him to a Singapore that is beyond recognition and the realisation that his old love had long since migrated to Australia with her spouse and children. A key setting for the film is the Tanjong Pagar railway station, a heritage site which is now gazetted for conservation. The film's love story parallels the ties between Singapore and Malaysia. For many who grew up during the time of Singapore and Malaysia's merger and separation, the railway was their only link to Malaysia and means to re-connect with their loved ones in a newly neighbouring country. Memories are anchored in the materiality of a place.² Through a specific place, these memories form the identities of an individual or even a nation. However, as these places change and evolve, people

experience a sense of displacement and nostalgia for what once was, much like the protagonist who feels foreign in a place he once called home.

A film's setting can carry deep sociological meanings. In *The Girl* and *Parting*, changes in places give way to a sense of nostalgia. The films highlight specific periods of change in Singapore's history that are often forgotten today (Urban Renewal Programmes and the separation of Singapore and Malaysia), except by the people who lived through them. Yet, these events are worth remembering as they still inspire many Singaporeans, both those who lived through these changes and those regaled with stories of them. If *The Girl* and *Parting* are examples of how nostalgia can be tied to a place then perhaps a film's setting, much like a building or specific space in Singapore, is only as significant as the feelings and meanings we attribute to it.

1 Christopher Shaw & Malcolm Chase, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," Christopher Shaw & Malcolm Chase (eds.), *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.2–4.

2 Yeoh, Brenda, and Lily Kong. "The Notion Of Place In The Construction Of History, Nostalgia And Heritage In Singapore." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 17, no. 1 (1996).

Delving into the Archive: Retracing *Medium Rare*

By Chew Tee Pao, Archivist, Asian Film Archive

48 In 1991, Singapore produced its first English language feature film, *Medium Rare*. Loosely based on the true story of Toa Payoh ritual killer Adrian Lim, the film title is a play on the term for a steak cooked medium rare – with some blood still in it.

I didn't get to see the film when it was released on 28 November 1991. *Medium Rare* ran for 16 days in local cinemas and was later screened by cine.SG at the National Museum of Singapore in 2006. The first time I encountered the film was when I interned at the Asian Film Archive (AFA). The film had been donated to AFA and I excitedly helped to process and label the film reels. This was the first Singaporean film I held in my hands – a true relic of Singapore cinema!

In the ensuing years at AFA, I came to appreciate the significance of film-related material. Related materials can vary from a page of the script, to a news clipping or a movie ticket stub. These materials can reveal additional details about the film. Film memorabilia is often more profound than watching the film

itself. It is like finding the missing handle to a door, if the film can no longer be seen. Memorabilia can sometimes be all that is left of the film.

I wondered as I sieved through the collection of *Medium Rare*: can one construct an understanding of the film through its memorabilia? While there is no way to appreciate the performances of the actors and the aesthetic quality of the film, I can decipher its story and the intended motivations of the creators. Information on what went on behind the scenes, the efforts of the cast and crew, the wardrobe changes of Margaret Chan's character, etc., are all available. Without referencing the actual film, we are able to get a rare glimpse into the making of *Medium Rare* through its (non-exhaustive) non-film collection.

ON *MEDIUM RARE*

The film was slated to be produced and directed by Tony Yeow and to star veteran actor Lim Kay Siu as Daniel Wong Ah Mok. Australian writer Mary Lancaster was to pen the script. For international

appeal, two American actresses were cast for an interracial romance with the lead character.

Most of these plans were not realised.

American actor Dore Kraus was cast as the character of "Daniel" after Kay Siu turned down the role. American actress Darcy LaPier, who was to play one of Daniel's wives, pulled out and was replaced by Singapore-based actress-model Jamie Marshall. The writer James Best (after Lancaster dropped out) left the project and the film's co-stars Margaret Chan and Rani Moorthy re-wrote the script just a week before filming. Arthur Smith, the film's director of photography, doubled as director when the intended American director Stan Barrett pulled out and his replacement Tony Yeow resigned after the first day's shoot. Apart from casting woes, sponsorship deals also fell through.

These obstacles and setbacks before and during the production were documented in *The Straits Times*, which also reported that the Economic Development Board (EDB) of Singapore seemed to distance itself from the

film, along with other sponsors. The report prompted the EDB to make a written response to clarify this misrepresentation.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FILM: MAKING *MEDIUM RARE*

Medium Rare is at present the largest and most comprehensive memorabilia collection of a Singapore film preserved by the AFA. Few films have such a large memorabilia collection. Given the convenience of current digital formats, filmmakers may see little urgency in preserving physical records. Yet the importance and relevance of preserving such materials will only become apparent over time. After all, if a film can be regarded as a historical artefact and document, so too should its memorabilia.

When I found an old photograph of the Bedok Cinema (now the Bedok Point Mall) and a hand-painted poster advertising *Medium Rare* in 1991, right in the neighbourhood where I grew up, I could imagine what watching the film might have been like, even without having seen the film myself. Such is the power of related materials.



Singapore's first English feature film hits snags

Headline from The Straits Times, 13 April 1991



Cover of an original pitchbook that was distributed to potential sponsors and distributors.



An illustration of Lim Kay Siu as the character of Daniel.

I hope this film will succeed, firstly for pure commercial reasons and personal artistic pride, and secondly that it may pave the way to launch Singapore as a center of world-standard production crew and cast for the region. We are congregating the best crew from the commercial advertising sector and the best talent from the Singaporean and Los Angelian drama circuits.

It is my vision that Singapore will someday become the nucleus for the region's film industry, providing all above-the-line and below-the-line requirements to produce motion pictures and television programmes.

Errol Pang
Executive Producer

An opening statement by Errol Pang in the pitchbook.



Daniel is the total showman. He performs trance rituals to large audiences, to convince them of his powers. It is from these crowds that he shortlists fresh, young women with chronic emotional problems, to prey upon. Hock and Mia, after many complications, finally finds him performing one of these shows at his temple, with Yoke Lin and Kathy being his assistants.



Daniel plants another curse, and Kathy falls into a trance. She walks into the pool with her baby at midnight.



Love seeks no reason, and so Hock and Amelia, after tremendous obstacles and painful frustrations, find Kathy's baby at Daniel's rural hideaway, and rescues him.



Having failed in his hex and curse, Daniel is desperately distraught. He has lost all symbols of his power - his wife, mistress and sacrifice. He begs Mother Kali for help.



The Mother punishes the belligerent and demented devotee.



Justice does not wait for the next life.

These were the original storyboards that differed greatly from the eventual storyline.



DERROL STEPENNY PRODUCTIONS (PTE) LTD.

PAN PACIFIC HOTEL, ROOM 510/511
7, RAFFLES BOULEVARD, MARINA SQUARE, SINGAPORE 0103
TEL: 3366111 FAX: 3369861 TLX: RS 38621

MEDIUM RARE -- BACKGROUNDER

"Medium Rare" is the first full-length motion picture in English filmed and produced in Singapore. The project is endorsed by the Creative Services Strategic Business Unit of The Economic Development Board (see attached).

Originally "inspired" by a Singapore ritual murder trial of the early 80s, "Medium Rare" is a fast-paced thriller designed for international movie audiences. Its universal themes are uncontrollable egotism bordering on dementia and willing victimisation caused by the abdication of responsibility for oneself.

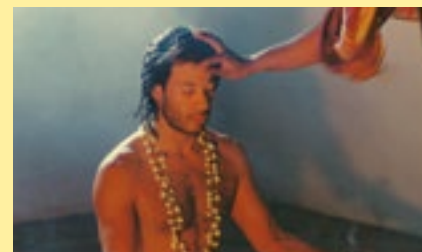
In the lead role is American actor Dore Kraus, who comes from a remake of "Ultraman", currently screening in cinemas throughout Japan. Also starring is American actress Jamie Marshall, a professional model and producer of the current STARS' presentation of "The King and I". Leading the local cast is Margaret Chan, best remembered as Emily of Emerald Hill among her other stage performances.

Sponsors for the movie include the Pan Pacific Hotel, Cosmoprof, Kodak, Polaroid, Esprit, Man and His Woman, AVIS, Ben-Benjamin, Cardos Communication and Yong De Tailor.

"Medium Rare" is being shot entirely in Singapore in April and May and is expected to premiere at the end of the year. The S\$1.7m film is 100% locally funded by Derrol Stepenny Productions.

Left A page of a media invite on story angles for the film. The Pan Pacific Hotel was a major sponsor of the production, providing accommodation for cast and crew, and housing the office of Derrol Stepenny Productions that produced and financed the film.

Bottom left A media invite to Man Magazine to feature the lead actor Dore Kraus.



SCENE 1 PRE-TITLE SEQUENCE INITIATION OF DANIEL

AMMA'S HOUSE

DAWN, INT OF ROOM IS STILL DARK LIT BY OIL LAMPS
NATURAL SOUNDS ; A HAND HELD BELL BEING RUNG AS FOR A POOJA, COCK CROW

1. Scene opens on CLOSE-UP of face of Amma, a powerful and benevolent Hindu Shaman. Her age is indeterminate, late 60s perhaps, but Amma walks straight and tall, a large Indian woman, with a gentle yet powerful face framed by greying hair, parted down the centre. The parting is coloured red with pottu.

Amma's eyes are closed in prayer, her lips mouth an inaudible mantra.

2. Amma bends. We see her hands at a brass/silver tray filled with vibuthi or grey cow dung ash. Amma's left hand, homely and veined, picks up a handful of vibuthi.



SCENE 8 THE SEANCE

AN OPEN FIELD LIT BY FLICKERING CONGA TORCHES.
DUSK

NATURAL SOUNDS OF WORSHIPPERS, CROWD SOUNDS, INSISTENT DRUM BEAT AND CYMBALS

Beverly senses something exciting is about to happen and moves in close for photos her flash gun popping. Yoke Lin turns, and shields Daniel with her own body, as if protecting Daniel from the flashes, She gestures to Beverly by holding up a hand, to tell her that the flash is not permitted.

Beverly understands the request. She drops her camera and switches to her video camera.



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9 May 1991

Mr Lionnel Lim
MAN Magazine
Shussee Publishing
128 Tanjong Pagar Road
Singapore 0208

Dear Lionnel

We are the producers of "Medium Rare", Singapore's first full-length motion picture in English.

An invitation is extended to MAN Magazine to do a feature on our lead character, American actor Dore Kraus, who is currently filming in Singapore.

Enclosed are file photos of Mr Kraus, his bio, a backgrounder on "Medium Rare" and a list of Who's Who in our cast and crew (for further editorial possibilities).

Please note that Mr Kraus is due to complete his acting commitments in Singapore by 20 May and will then return to Melbourne where he is currently based.

Media Liaison : Lim Beng See
Public Relations Consultant
336-8111 x 510/511



SCENE 10 THE PARASITE OF A MOTHER

INT OF MAY LIN'S HOUSE

AFTERNOON SHORTLY AFTER SCENE 9

NATURAL SOUNDS; MAHJONG GAME, PEOPLE TALKING ABOVE THE CLATTERING TILES

1. Camera takes in the airwell of a turn-of-the-century Peranakan house. It looks like a gambling den with three mahjong tables set up, around which are groups of middle-aged men and women furiously playing mahjong. Atmospheric sounds :

"Pong" "Play 7 flowers-lah" "Chi-mo" "Hey stop dooping me-lah" "Alamak, I tan for nine bamboo and only now come, suay!" "Joker, come on, pay up" "kong"



SCENE 13 THE "CLINIC"

INT OF ASHRAM, A HALL WHICH LOOKS LIKE A WAITING ROOM
AFTERNOON OF SAME DAY AS SCENE 11
NATURAL SOUNDS, PATIENTS TALKING AMONG THEMSELVES

1. Scene opens on a close-up of a vapid young receptionist. She has a "cockatoo" hairstyle and wears clattering ear-rings. She has a high, sing-song voice and speaks like a know-it-all. She is explaining a "prescription" to a middle-aged housewife.

RECEPTIONIST:

Ah, this fu, you must burn. Then you mix the ash in plain water. Cannot coffee or tea just water, ah? Then you drink. This will wash the bad luck from your body.

This fu you paste outside your house, over the door, so evil spirits cannot enter, then no more bad luck in mahjong.



SCENE 15 THE ELECTRIC SHOCK TREATMENT

INT OF ASHRAM, THE "TREATMENT ROOM"
AFTERNOON
NATURAL SOUNDS, PERHAPS SOMETHING THAT SUGGESTS A POWERFUL SURGE OF ELECTRICITY GOING THROUGH A HUMAN BODY.

1. Close-up of strong straps being used to tie down the arms of a girl to the arms of a chair.

2. Tight shots that shows Daniel and Yoke Lin strapping the mad girl into a strong chair. The girl looks delirious, her head lolls, her eyes are closed. Perhaps there are strong straps across the chest, under the breast to secure her in the chair.

3. Daniel and Yoke Lin step back and we can see the girl in the chair, her bare feet have been placed in a basin of water. The treatment room is bare and sterile like a surgical room. Thick electrical leads emerge from a wall socket and worm their way to a remote control device in Daniel's hand. Electrical wires lead out from this gadget to the chair.



SCENE 21 "GOD" POSSESSES A MERE MORTAL

INT OF ASHRAM, AN ANTE-ROOM LEADING TO THE "TREATMENT" ROOM
AFTERNOON
NATURAL SOUNDS; LOW, SENSUOUSLY HYPNOTIC MUSIC PLAYED ON A CASSETTE PLAYER

1. The ante-room is clinically white. There is a white cloth screen, like the type you see in hospitals. From behind this screen come the muffled sound of sobbing. It is a small sound, not hysterical.

2. Back two shot of Yoke Lin as she helps Daniel remove his shirt. This is clinically performed, like a nurse helping a doctor prepare for surgery.



SCENE 26 GUILT

INT OF DINGY CLINIC, THE RECEPTION AREA
AFTERNOON
NATURAL SOUNDS

1. Two shot of Yoke Lin and the receptionist. She is heavily made-up and wears elaborate ear-rings, the fingernails are long and painted red. The uniform is several sizes too small so we see the woman's large bosom strain against the fabric. The skirt is so short it rides high up her thigh, on her feet the girl wears house sandals.

2. Yoke Lin carefully hands the receptionist the phials of blood over the counter. Contrast this attitude with the careless way the trollop of a receptionist pops the precious phials into a plastic bag. Yoke Lin's hands tense, almost as if wincing.

RECEPTIONIST:

Wahhhhh, second time this week. Soon, you'll have no more blood.



SCENE 67 BEVERLY GROWS SPIRITUALLY

BY THE BEACH
DUSK
NATURAL SOUNDS

1. Slow dissolve of Amma's deep, dark eyes, onto Beverly's closed eyelids.

2. Camera pulls back and we see Beverly meditating. Camera pulls further back and we see Daniel who is also meditating. They sit in lotus position facing each other. Both are simply, but almost identically dressed in off-white Punjabi suits.

3. Beverly's face is serene. There is a deeper look of concentration upon Daniel's face, as if he has to hold on to his meditative state. Daniel opens his eye first.



SCENE 85 THE END

KAMPONG HOUSE
NIGHT OF SCENES 81-84
NATURAL SOUNDS

1. Close-up of the ritual sword in Daniel's hand. Camera pulls back. We see Daniel praying, his eyes closed.

2. Flash of a car's headlight. Slamming of breaks. Car door opens and closes violently. The kampong house door opens.

3. Daniel turns around at the sound. His crazed face breaks into a look of total adoration and bliss.



DANIEL:

(In a hoarse reverent whisper)

Mother, you have come! You have come to your son!

Ashram

Pak Qua Bedroom

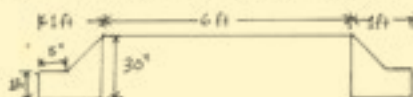
Set and Props Requirements

Set

- 4 sides wooden walls to the ceiling. (Ceiling use black cloth "stretched")
- White thick rope to form graphic design on wall. (10 ft height)
- Black carpet for entire floor.
- 1 Pak Qua Bed, 8 feet diameter / 30 inch height.
 - Round mattress area, 6 ft diameter.
 - Mattress, use rope, Indian bed style.
 - 1 ft height for candle border, all round bed and 5 inches width.
 - All seven sections detachable.
 - Mattress section, independent (create 2 openings for cameraman to shoot from within).
 - Colour: Red wooden area and pink ropes.
 - Inside of round mattress area in white.
- Construct 1 doorway with 2 panels.

Props

- 70 pieces of shallow candles dishes 4 inches diameter.



Day: One - 10/4/91
Wednesday

Producer: Graham Moore
Director: Arthur Smith
Title: Medium Rare

Prod. No. _____

SET # SET	SCENES	CAST	D/N	PAGES	LOCA
1. Street in front of Peranakan House	Wilson asks May Lin to the movies	4,4 Extras x 10	D	12,13	
2. Hall of Peranakan House	May Lin arrives to find her mother playing <u>majong</u> . Yoke Lin visits	4,5 Extras x 7	D	14,15	
3. Well at Peranakan House	May Lin sees that Yoke Lin is sad	5,1	D	73	
4. A hospital mortuary	Family at the mortuary after stepfather's death	2,4,5 Extras x 17	D	61,62	

CALL TIME

7.30 - All crew and talents leave PFH for location.
8.00 - Arrive at location and start set up.
8.45 - All talents ready for 1st set.
9.45 - Wrap 1st set and move to 2nd set.
10.30 - all talents ready for 2nd set.
12.30 - Lunch break.
1.30 - Back on set.
2.00 - All talents ready for 3rd set.
4.00 - Wrap 3rd set and prepare to move location - 4th set.
5.00 - Arrive at next location and start getting ready for 4th set.

NOTES

Be prepared for possibility of moving to "mortuary" location earlier if it rains.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Location person to direct all vehicles on arrival.

Tong Watt street to be cleared of all traffic. After end of 1st set, redirect generator to grip truck location.

Walkies - grip truck, generator camera crew.

ADVANCE SHOOTING NOTES

SHOOTING DATE	SET NO	SET NAME	LOCATION	SCENE NO
11/4/91	one	Peranakan House	Tong Whatt	27
	two	"	"	33
	three	"	"	37
	four	"	"	38
	5	"	"	78

CALL SHEET

Producers: Graham Moore
Director: Arthur Smith
Title: Medium Rare

Day: Thirty
Date: 14.5.91
Tuesday

SET	PG	SCENES	CAST	D/N	INT/EXT	LOCATION
1. Pond: Reflections of sunlight on water	5	5		D	Ext	Pan Pac, 4th flr (pond near swimming pool)
2. Anna's House: 88 Daniel takes Beverly for a drive near Anna's house. Anna is outside picking flowers <u>[M/u & hair/wardrobe, pls check continuity with Julia]</u>	66		1, 4, 6	D	*	Lor Gambas (near the Kampong House)
3. Night of May Lin's death: May Lin calls home and Ashram <u>[continuity: sc 79, 81]</u>	105	78	5	N	*	Pan Pac, Rm 512

CALL TIME

1000 : Crew to arrive at Pan Pac office
Prepare & set up at pond, 4th floor
Ready to shoot Set 1
(Note: We have to be out of there by 11am)
1130 : LUNCH
1200 : Hair & m/u for Jamie at Pan Pac
1215 : " " Done at Pan Pac
1230 : Pack up and ready to leave for location 2
1300 : Leave for location 2
Box to pick up Rani at Bkt Panjang Govt High Sch (Rani to be dressed for part)
1400 : Arrive at location and prepare for Set 2
Ready to shoot Set 2
1630 : Pack up and head back for Pan Pac
1730 : Prepare for Set 3
1830 : M/u & hair for Cars
Ready to shoot Set 3

W . R . A . P....W . R . A . P....W . R . A . P....W . R . A . P....

Top A page from an original typewritten set and prop list.

Top centre 1st day of shoot: The "Peranakan House" used for filming was situated on Tong Watt Road.

Top right 30th (last) day of shoot: The film officially wrapped up its production on 14 May 1991.

Right A press conference was held on 16 May 1991 at the Pan Pacific Hotel Ballroom II to mark the completion of filming.

Bottom right A wrap party was held (presumably) at Hard Rock Cafe Singapore, which opened on 6 Feb 1990.





DERROL STEPENNY PRODUCTIONS (PTE) LTD.

PAN PACIFIC HOTEL, ROOM 510/511
7, RAFFLES BOULEVARD, MARINA SQUARE, SINGAPORE 0103
TEL: 3368111 FAX: 3391861 TLX: RS 38821

9 May 1991

Mr Yeo
Arms & Explosives Division
OIC
Criminal Investigation Department (CID)
Blk J Kinloss Complex
3 Ladyhill Road
Singapore 1025

Dear Mr Yeo

RE: USE OF KNIVES IN "MEDIUM RARE"

We wish to thank you for entertaining our phone enquiries about the above between 23 - 24 April 1991 (you spoke to our former Production Secretary, Ms Anita Louis).

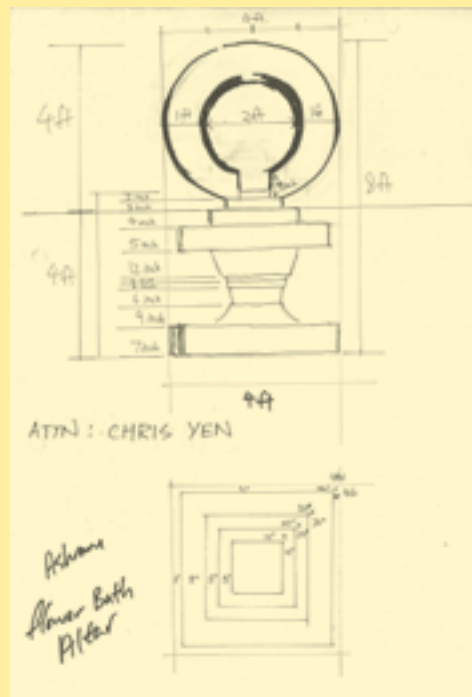
We apologize for getting back to you so late. In fact we did go down to the CID with the knives but were, unfortunately, unable to see you because you were not in. Since then, we have been in the midst of production and have been unable to go down to the CID again.

When we were last there, we were advised to include the dates of filming and the scenes the knives will be used in. Due to the fact that we were deciding schedules from day to day, we found difficulty in contacting you beforehand about the actual dates. We wish to apologize for this and appeal for your kind understanding.

The knives were used in the following scenes and dates:

Scene:	Brief Description:	Date:
1. Sc 84	The lead actor, Daniel, cuts an orange into two with a knife	22.4.91
2. Sc 85	The lead actress, Yoke Lin kills Daniel, & then kills herself	23.4.91
3. Sc 61	Daniel dismembers an actor with his ritual sword (simulated scene with special effects)	4.5.91
4. Sc 79	Daniel kills another character by slashing her across the neck	6.5.91
5. Sc 74	Daniel uses his ritual sword to cut off the heads of two wooden figures	9.5.91

Tan Li Li (the production manager) wrote to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to obtain the permit to use blunted knives for several scenes.



ATTN: LAWRENCE MAH
FAX: 005-61-387-96657
FROM: ERRAL PANG
MY WARDROBE DEPT. REQUIRES
DORE KRAUS' MEASUREMENTS:
(1) HEIGHT 5'10" (2) SHIRT SIZE 39R
(3) WEIGHT 72 Kg. (4) SALT 39R
(5) WAIST 31" (6) SHOES 9
(7) OUTSIDE LEG 42" (8) LENGTH OF ARM ?
(9) INSIDE LEG 32" (10) COLOR OF HAIR 2K
(11) COLOR OF EYES 2K
(12) CHEST - 40"
TKS FOR THE HELP. TODAY if POSSIBLE
ERRAL.

DERROL STEPENNY PRODUCTIONS (PTE) LTD.
PAN PACIFIC HOTEL, ROOM 510/511
7, RAFFLES BOULEVARD, MARINA SQUARE, SINGAPORE 0103
TEL: 3368111 FAX: 3391861 TLX: RS 38821
Fax: 284 9858
To: ProArt; Gan, Thomas, Chris
Requirements for Kampong House on 23 April 91
Pooja (ceremony) PLS CALL AS
1) Indian joss-sticks SOON YOU RE-
2) banana & banana leaves LIEVE THIS
3) Mango FAX, Thanks
4) Sweet rice (pongol)
5) flower & (Jasmine & Rose)
6) Rock incense & incense holder
7) ~~Incense~~ ^{Campur} & ^{Campur} holder Kuthu-
8) apple & oranges vilakku
pls buy these Indian items at ^{tailor shop} ~~little Indian~~ and ask the salesmen
exactly what needed for a pooja
ceremony.
Thanks
Camill

Top left A drawing for constructing a "flower bath altar".

Top right The clothes worn by the main cast were sponsored by "Man & His Woman", a boutique at the Promenade on Orchard Road.

Left A shopping list for props to be used in the scene at the Kampong House by Camill (possibly the prop master or art director).



PLAYBACK: KACANG PUTIH DAYS AT THE JURONG DRIVE-IN

Text by Hannah Yeo

60 Lighthearted moments captured of cast and crew in-between takes.

61



Vehicles at the Jurong Drive-in Cinema (1971) National Archives Singapore, Ministry of Information and the Arts



Minister for Culture, Jek Yuen Thong learns how to set a speaker up at the Jurong Drive-in Cinema's opening. (1971) NAS/MITA



Patrons buying snacks from a vendor at the opening of the Jurong Drive-in Cinema (1971) NAS/MITA

“We didn’t go to the Jurong cinema often. You needed a car to go, or there were taxis, small little lorries, vans... but it was so noisy and there were mosquitoes. Half the time the movie would break down and people would come out (of their cars) shouting. Even in the cinema, people would get so angry and toss their *kacang putih* cones to the front... they would toss their slippers, *kacang putih*, *kacang putih* cones, whatever they had in their hands. Good luck if you were sitting in the front!” — Eve Tan, on watching shows at Jurong drive-in cinema and Kong Wah cinema

Still can't imagine it? Visit the much beloved recreation of the Jurong Drive-in cinema at the National Museum's Voices of Singapore Gallery!



Visitors at the National Museum's very own Drive-in Cinema installation in the Voices of Singapore gallery. (Image courtesy of NMS)

Did you know that there was an open-air drive-in cinema in Jurong from 1971 to 1985? Opened by Cathay, it was the largest in Asia and the only one in Singapore’s history. Cinema-going was a popular form of entertainment in mid-20th-century Singapore and an important part of that experience was the snacks that you could buy at the cinema! From sweet and sour plums, *ding ding tang* (hard maltose candy) and *mai ya tang* (malt candy) to *keropok* (crackers), a night at the cinema was not complete without something to munch on. If you’ve never asked your parents about their movie-watching (read: dating) days, try out food scholar and cookbook author Christopher's home style recipe for *kacang putih* (assorted nuts and beans). One bite and it will just be like eating it at the cinema, we promise!



K · a · c · a · n · g P · u · t · i · h



S · u · g · a · r · e · d P · e · a · n · u · t · s

Preheat oven to 140 degrees C.

In a wide, heavy-based pan, combine 150 grams fine sugar with 80 grams water and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Bring to a full boil over medium heat so that the sugar dissolves, then add 250 grams skinned raw peanuts.

Cook, stirring gently but frequently with a wooden spoon, for 12 to 15 minutes. The syrup will first reduce to a thick glaze coating the nuts, and then will suddenly crystallise: when it does so, immediately turn off the heat and stir well so that each peanut gets thoroughly coated with powdery sugar crystals.

Scrape peanuts onto a baking sheet lined with baking paper. (Some dry sugar will inevitably be left stuck on the pan's base and walls.)

Bake peanuts for 17 to 20 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes, until they are pale golden but still coated in thin crusts of white sugar.

Transfer baking sheet to a rack in a well-ventilated area and let peanuts cool. As soon as they have cooled, transfer them to an airtight container. Store in a cool, dry place.

Recipe by Christopher Tan



Writers' Biographies

Kenneth Tay's work engages with contemporary media practices and media histories. He previously worked as an Assistant Curator at NUS Museum where he initiated the project CONCRETE ISLAND. He is a recipient of the 2017 NAC Arts Scholarship, and is currently based in New York where he is pursuing his MA in Media Studies at The New School.

Yang Yanxuan began her writing career as the co-editor of the defunct POSKOD.SG. Since then, she has continued to produce print, digital, audio, editorial and custom B2C and B2B content on topics relating to film, culture, and medical science. Her writings and stickman comics can be found at yangyanxuan.com.

Toh Hun Ping is a film-maker and freelance film researcher. He runs the Singapore Film Locations Archive, a private video collection of films made in Singapore and maintains sgfilmlocations.com. In preparation for a new experimental film and a monograph on probably the first narrative feature made by Singapore-based film-makers (Xin Ke, 1927), he is researching the history of film production in early-mid 20th century Singapore.

Alex Oh is a film composer, producer and pianist, with more than a decade of experience, and is one of Singapore's most prolific and versatile film composers. His philosophy is simple – to tell stories through music.

Rennie Gomes is an award-winning sound designer and the backbone of Singapore's first Dolby Certified Film Mixing facility, Yellow Box Studios. Having worked on dramas and films with HBO, Netflix and a host of international co-productions, he is a much sought-after sound craftsman in his field.

Mary Ann Lim is currently a student of Philosophy in NUS who aspires to, in some near future, spend her days writing about her main preoccupations of film and art, and sometimes both.

Ho Xiu Lun is a full-time undergraduate at the National University of Singapore, currently pursuing degrees in Economics and Business Administration. Other than being an active softball player, she is a film lover and always had a soft spot for local and Southeast Asian films.

Chew Tee Pao is an archivist at the Asian Film Archive. He strategizes the Archive's preservation and outreach programmes, and advocacy efforts. Tee Pao has written articles on film preservation and contributed a chapter on "Independent Digital Filmmaking and its Impact on Film Archiving in Singapore" to the book Singapore Cinema: New Perspectives.

Hannah Yeo is a History major with one year left at Yale-NUS College. She seeks kind, passionate communities through creative teaching. In her free time, she plays tennis well, plays the guitar badly and loves organizing themed parties.

Christopher Tan is an award-winning writer, photographer, author and instructor whose original words, images and recipes centre on food, culture and heritage, and have been published in 12 books and many international magazines.