

N S M

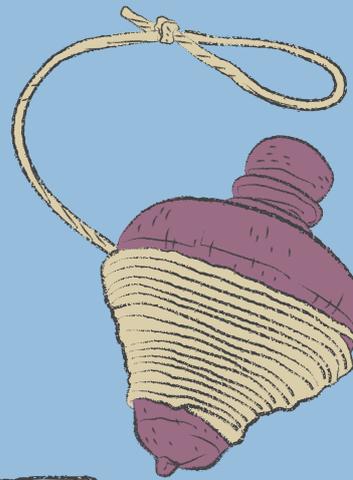
National Museum
of Singapore



Growing Up gallery

EASY GUIDE

For Seniors



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

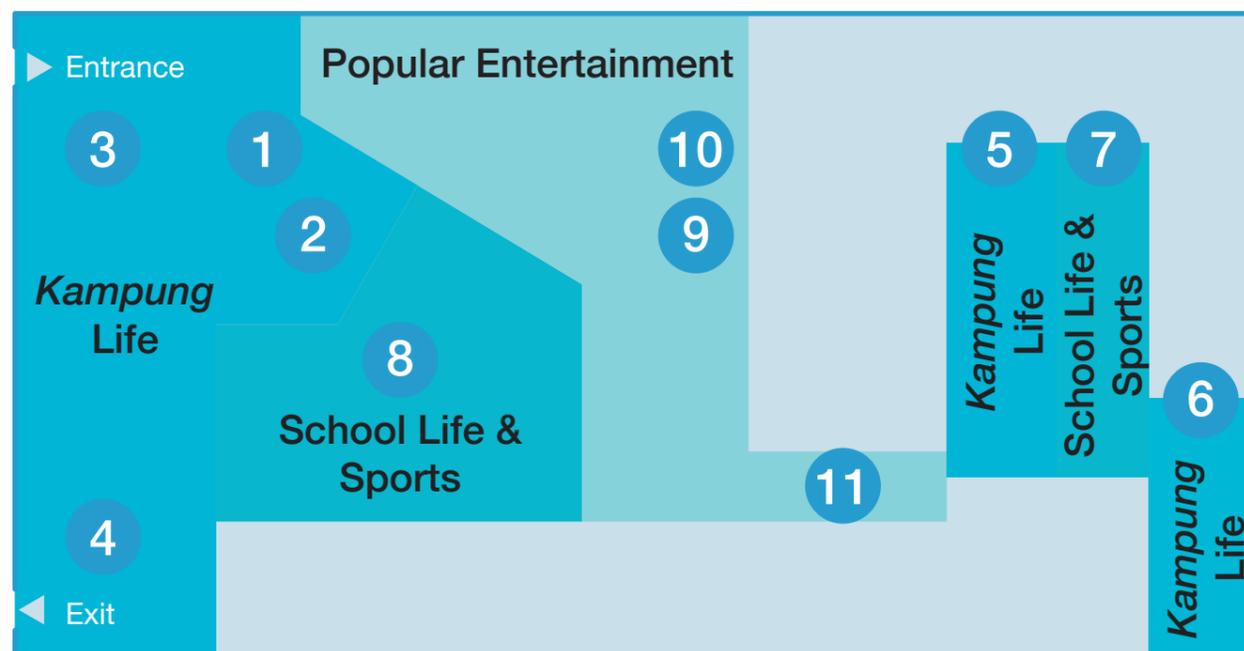
Welcome to the **Growing Up** gallery!

This guide will bring you on a **30-minute** self-led tour to explore some of the key artefacts in this gallery. You may also use this guide to plan your trip before visiting the museum.

This resource guide contains:

-  An overview of the gallery.
-  Artefact highlights from each section.
-  Questions for self-reflection and/or conversations among you, your family and friend(s) during the visit.
-  A postcard to keep as a memento after completing a feedback form.

You may refer to this map to locate the artefacts and displays in the gallery. Take your time, and enjoy the Growing Up gallery!



The entire gallery is about 274 square metres, or the size of a tennis court.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 A Postcard of Singapore
Page 6 | 7 Competitor's Medallion
Page 24 |
| 2 Bicycle
Page 10 | 8 Blue Sleeveless
<i>Cheongsam</i>
Page 26 |
| 3 A Collection of
Store-bought Toys
Page 12 | 9 Images of
Amusement Parks
Page 30 |
| 4 <i>Tikam-tikam</i> Board
Page 14 | 10 Film Posters
Page 34 |
| 5 Traditional Home-made
Toys and Games
Page 16 | 11 The Crescendos
Page 38 |
| 6 Traditional Snacks
Page 18 | |

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **Growing Up** gallery!

This gallery explores what life was like growing up in Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s. The country during this post-war period was beset with uncertainties and challenges. Regardless, children of that time were still able to enjoy happy childhood years.

This gallery takes you through the *kampung* (Malay for village), school and entertainment venues of that period, all of which were places where children spent their childhood, forged friendships and were inspired to pursue their dreams.

Think back to the 1950s and 1960s. Were you born yet? If so, how old were you?



From top left: *Kampung* Life, School Life and Sports, and Popular Entertainment sections in the Growing Up gallery.

I. *KAMPUNG* LIFE



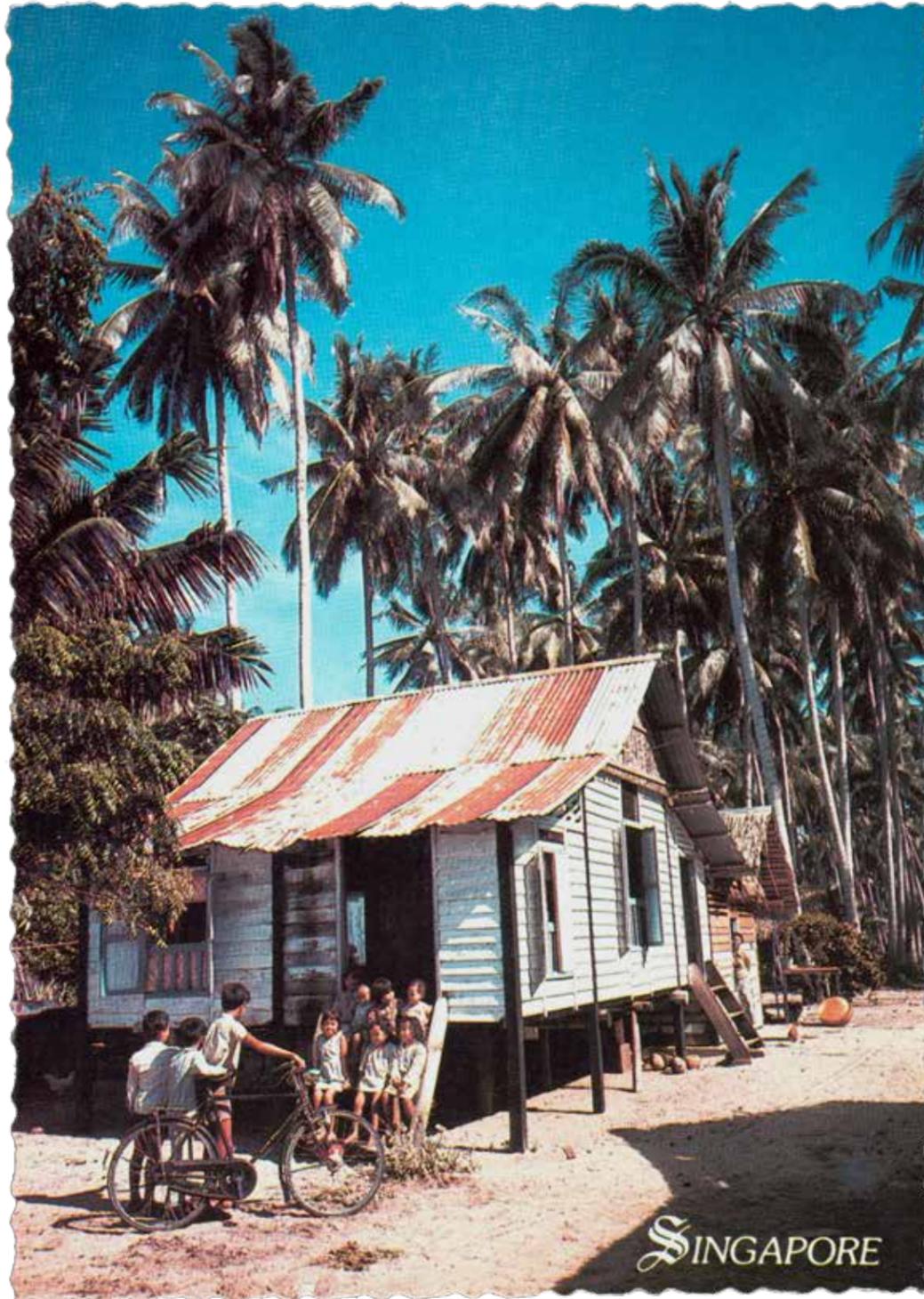
Spot the coconut trees in the gallery!

You are standing before life-sized coconut trees that were often found near *kampung* houses in Singapore.

Before the introduction of Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats in the 1960s, most Singaporeans lived in *kampungs*. They often lived under poor conditions, without proper sanitation and a ready supply of water and electricity. *Jambans* (Malay for “toilet”) were shared among a few households and water for everyday use had to be collected from wells and standpipes located a distance away from the village. Floods, outbreaks of fires and diseases were common.

Regardless, people learnt to cope and make do with what they had. Growing up in a *kampung* meant everyone knew each other, and often shared food and entertainment. The *kampung* was a community space where children lived and played together. This *gotong royong* (Malay for “community”) spirit fostered a strong sense of belonging, community and identity among those who lived in *kampungs*.

1 A Postcard of Singapore



A postcard of Singapore (1960s – 1980s)

2008-05066

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

The image you see on the left is from a postcard that shows the scene of a *kampung* house in Singapore between the 1960s and 1980s.

Kampung houses have two distinctive features: A high sloping roof and a raised floor. Their roofs are often made of *attap* (“palm” in Malay) leaves and wood. Over the years, some traditional houses were modified using modern construction techniques and materials. For instance, zinc sheets and brick tiles or wooden shingles were used instead of *attap* leaves to construct the roof.



Let's pause and think...

-  1 Have you lived in a *kampung*? What was life like in a *kampung*?
-  2 How different or similar is living in the *kampung* compared to your current home?
-  3 There have been discussions about bringing back the *gotong royong* (“community” in Malay) spirit from the *kampung* days. Do you think this community spirit can be fostered without living in a *kampung*? Why or why not?

2 Bicycle



Take a closer look at the bicycle parked under the coconut trees



Raleigh "Sports" three-speed bicycle (1963)
Gift of Lee Hsien Loong
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

Bicycles were a common way of getting around and between *kampungs*. This Raleigh bicycle belonged to Lee Hsien Loong, the current Prime Minister of Singapore. His paternal grandmother, Chua Jim Neo, had bought the bicycle for him as a present for his 11th birthday. It would have cost around \$174 in the 1960s.

Once the largest bicycle manufacturer in the world, British manufacturer Raleigh's bicycles were popular in Singapore till the 1970s.

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Do you know how to ride a bicycle? What are some memories you have with a bicycle?
- 2 How did you get from place to place when you were a child? What about now?
- 3 Do you think bicycles are still a useful form of transport in Singapore today? Why or why not?

3 Collection of Store-bought Toys



Look behind you to find a display of toys from the past



Collection of store-bought toys (1950s – 1970s)
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

The display features a collection of toys sold in the 1950s and 1960s. In those days, toys sold at the stores were expensive, and were purchased only on rare occasions. The toy cars, train sets and pictorial cubes that you see on display were the source of much entertainment for children.

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Have you seen or played with any of these toys before?
- 2 Did you or your friends own any of these toys? Where and how were these toys played?
- 3 Compared to the toys and games that are manufactured today, would you prefer to have your children or grandchildren play with these traditional toys? Why or why not?

4 Tikam-tikam Board



Can you find the tikam-tikam board among the toys on display?



Tikam-tikam board (1950s – 1970s)

2002-00972

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Have you played *tikam-tikam* before? How much did you have to pay to pick a tab?
- 2 How much of your pocket money did you spend on *tikam-tikam* or similar games?
- 3 *Tikam-tikam* boards are hard to come by today. Can you think of other similar games or activities?

This was a popular game among children in the 1950s to 1970s. A *tikam-tikam* (Malay for “random pick”) board could often be found in provision shops or “sarabat” vendors (drink stalls run by Indians and Malays).

For a few cents, children could pick a numbered ticket and pull off the corresponding tab. The prizes for “winning” tabs included soft drinks, plastic toys or packets of condiments or biscuits.

5 Traditional Homemade Toys and Games



You can find more traditional toys on display at the back of the gallery.



Collection of traditional toys (1950s – 1960s)
On display at the National Museum
of Singapore

The *kampung* was both a home and a playground for many children growing up in Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s.

A day's activities for children could include tree climbing, fishing in a *longkang* (Malay for "drain") especially after a heavy downpour, hunting birds or insects, or a game of catch with friends. As toys sold in stores were expensive, children often used their creativity to transform simple materials such as planks, sturdy sticks, scrunched-up newspaper, tin cans, or other discarded materials into hours of fun!

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Can you name all the toys and games that you see in this display? How are they played?
- 2 What was your favourite game as a child and why?
- 3 Do you see children playing with these games today? Why do you think they are no longer as drawn to these games?

6 Traditional Snacks



Spot the platter of traditional snacks in the gallery.



Platter of traditional snacks (1950s – 1960s)
On display at the National Museum of Singapore

The display features a platter of traditional snacks, sweets and cakes. Many families would make these snacks and share them with their neighbours during festive occasions.

Can you identify the following treats?

Nian gao is a cake made from glutinous rice flour, and is commonly eaten during Chinese New Year.

Pineapple tart is a bite-sized pastry topped or filled with pineapple jam and often eaten during Chinese New Year.

Onde-onde is a sweet glutinous rice ball filled with liquid palm sugar and coated in grated coconut.

Kueh salat is a two-layer dessert comprising steamed glutinous rice topped with green custard made with pandan juice and coconut milk.

Kueh bahulu is a cake commonly served during Eid al-Fitr (or Hari Raya Puasa) as well as Chinese New Year.

Laddu is a sweet Indian treat made of flour, ghee and sugar with other ingredients that vary by recipe, such as chopped nuts or dried raisins.

 **Let's pause and think...**

-  Have you eaten any of these snacks before?
Which is your favourite snack?
-  Do you know how these snacks are made? Who used to make them for you, and can you make them yourself today?
-  Do you think these traditional snacks are no longer as popular today? How would you feel if they are forgotten?

II. SCHOOL LIFE AND SPORTS



Press the button to activate the zoetrope and observe the “animation”.

During the 1950s and 1960s, schools in Singapore were a hotbed for various activities and events that reflected the political climate of the day. Yet, schools at that time also became a shared space for children of all races to learn about their commonalities and national identity. At school, children forged friendships, shared their experiences and learnt to look out for one another.

Once enough primary schools had been built to provide a place in class for every child of school-going age, more attention was placed on sports to encourage a balanced school life, as well as a fit and healthy population. The sporting arena helped to foster a spirit of camaraderie among the young and shaped their aspirations.

7 Competitor's Medallion from Summer Olympics at Helsinki

 Find Tang Pui Wah's medal among the display of medals.



Competitor's medallion from the Summer Olympics at Helsinki (1952)
Gift of Tang Pui Wah
2015-00031
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

This medallion belonged to sporting legend Tang Pui Wah, Singapore's first female Olympian who competed in the women's 100m sprint at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki.

Tang Pui Wah's strong bond with her schoolmates inspired her to keep training. She fondly recalled the times where they helped her with her studies, and warmly welcomed her at the airport after the 1952 Helsinki games.

 Let's pause and think...

- 1 Do you play or watch any sports?
What are your favourite sports activities?
- 2 Can you name other Singapore Olympians and athletes and the sports they play?
- 3 In the 1950s, the school environment and her classmates motivated Tang Pui Wah to keep training. How else do you think we can support our local athletes today?

Possible answers for  2

Tan Howe Liang and weightlifting. Feng Tianwei, Li Jiawei, Wang Yuegu and table-tennis. Joseph Schooling and swimming.

8 Blue Sleeveless *Cheongsam*



Find the school uniforms worn by students in the past!



Blue sleeveless *cheongsam* (1968)
Gift of Chan Siok Fong
2005-00040
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

Chan Siok Fong was a full-time teacher and the Chief Commissioner of the Singapore Girl Guides from 1967 to 1977. It was common for teachers to wear traditional costumes such as the *cheongsam* to school during the 1950s.

While it was compulsory for students to wear their uniforms to school, not all could afford to buy a set of uniform. In such instances, students would wear their “best set” of clothes to school instead.

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Did you have the opportunity to go to school? If you did, which school did you attend and is it still around today?
- 2 What did you enjoy and dread the most about school?
- 3 How do you think the school experience has changed from the time you attended school to present times?

III. POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT

Despite the political and social upheaval in post-war Singapore, the entertainment scene in the 1950s and 1960s allowed people to come together to create shared experiences. Radio and television were common platforms for different communities to come together.

Popular entertainment hangouts, more simply known as the “Worlds” – the New World, Great World and Happy World – appealed to both the young and old with their diverse mix of performances and attractions. Films of different genres and languages, as well as popular music, were enjoyed by many people in Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s.

This period was also the golden age of Malay film production in Singapore, where the films were shot and produced locally. People watched them in both indoor and outdoor cinemas. Together with other Chinese, Hindi and Western films, they were a popular choice for entertainment in Singapore at the time.

The diversity and opportunities afforded by Singapore’s vibrant entertainment scene helped shaped the dreams and aspirations of children, and enabled them to pursue their passion.

9 Images of the Amusement Parks



Take a picture with the backdrop of Happy World park.



Happy World amusement park (c1959)
1995-00462
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

Have you heard of the other popular amusement parks or “Worlds” in Singapore?

The next page shows pictures of the other “Worlds”.



Great World amusement park
(1940s – 1960s)
1998-00328
Collection of the National Museum
of Singapore



New World amusement park at
Kitchener Road (1938 – 1939)
2007-50928-076
Collection of the National Museum
of Singapore

The popular trio, the Great World, the New World and the Happy World, were amusement parks located near Zion Road, Jalan Besar and Geylang Road, respectively.

They hosted diverse performances, including traditional operas such as Chinese *wayang* (Malay for theatrical performance involving puppets or human dancers) and Malay *bangsawan* (a form of Malay theatre), as well as movie screenings, concerts, cabaret performances, joy rides and boxing matches. Children in those days often followed their parents or older siblings to the “Worlds” for games and movies.

Let's pause and think...

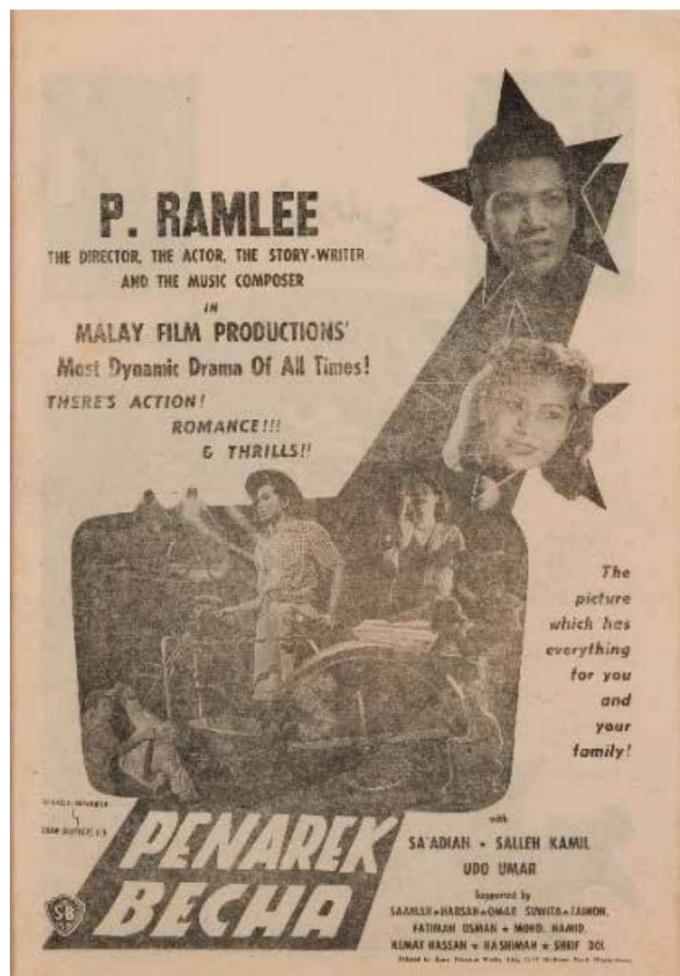
-  1 Have you been to any of these “Worlds” or amusement parks?

 - If you have, which was your favourite “World” and can you recall how you spent your time there?
 - If not, where did you usually go on outings with friends or family?
-  2 Do you remember when these “Worlds” started to close down? How did you feel about it?
-  3 When was the last time you visited a similar amusement park in Singapore? Do you think the concept of an all-in-one entertainment facility like the “Worlds” will draw Singaporeans today?

10 Film Posters



Try finding these posters in the gallery!



Poster for Malay film *Penarek Becha* (1955)
1999-00890
Copyright of Shaw Organisation
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

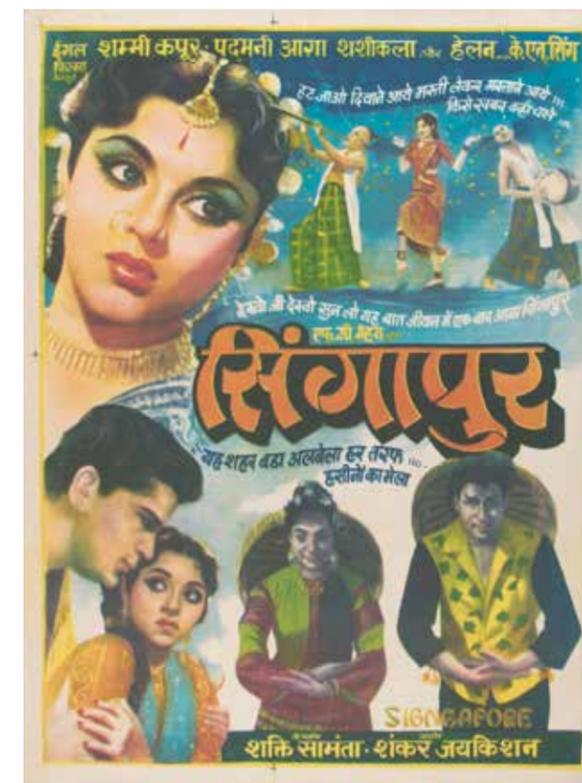
Penarek Becha was the first film directed by P. Ramlee, one of the most celebrated Malay entertainers in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to being a director, Ramlee was also an actor, composer and singer. Ramlee was known for his contemporary comedies that reflected the social concerns of the local Malay community.



Film pictorial (issue 34) published by Kong Ngee Film Company, featuring Zhou Xuan on its cover (1951)
Gift of Ho Vui Chan
2014-01032
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

Kong Ngee Film Company was a local company set up by brothers Ho Khee-yong and Ho Khee-siang, and renowned for producing Cantonese films in the 1950s and 1960s. Zhou Xuan was a popular Chinese singer and actress in the 1940s and 1950s. She was known as the “Golden Voice” after emerging as the runner-up in a talent contest in Shanghai and later went on to star in several popular films.

Directed by Shakti Samanta, Bollywood film *Singapore* was shot on location in Singapore and portrayed the country as an exotic place. The plot revolves around murders and hidden treasures in a rubber plantation in Singapore.



Poster for Hindi film *Singapore* (1960)
2009-02920
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore

 **Let's pause and think...**

-  1 Have you watched any of these films and movies? How much did you have to pay for a movie back in the 1950s and 1960s?
-  2 What was the first movie that you watched as a child?
-  3 How different are the movies and cinemas today from those in the 1960s? Which do you prefer?

11 The Crescendos



Can you spot this picture of
The Crescendos in the gallery?



The Crescendos at Television Singapura (1963)
Photo from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
Courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore

For some young Singaporeans growing up in the 1960s, the world of entertainment provided a platform for them to come together to pursue their dreams of being a pop star. The Crescendos was one such example.

The Crescendos started out as a singing trio made up of John Chee, Leslie Chia and Raymond Ho while they were at St Patrick's School. Their female lead vocalist Susan Lim joined the group when they participated in the popular local competition Radio Singapore Talentime in 1962. The subsequent addition of Israel Lim on bass guitar and Peter Soh on drums allowed the group to perform as an electric band. The group eventually became the first Singapore pop group to be signed on by an international record label.

Let's pause and think...

- 1 Did you listen to music from local bands or musicians while growing up in the 1960s? What are your favourite songs?
- 2 Have you heard your favourite bands or musicians perform live? What was the experience like?
- 3 Have you ever dreamt of being a singer or musician? Why or why not?

We have reached the end of the self-led tour of the Growing Up gallery. We hope you were able to take a walk down memory lane and relive some of your growing up days.

We would love to hear from you! Please share your feedback by visiting <https://go.gov.sg/easyguidefeedback> or by scanning this QR code.



On completion, present the submission page to a staff at the Visitor Services counter to redeem a postcard.

Alternatively, you may request for a hard copy of the feedback form from the staff at the Visitor Services counter and present the completed form to redeem a postcard.

All information is correct at time of publication. The National Museum of Singapore reserves the right to make changes and modifications to the galleries without prior notice.

Visit www.nationalmuseum.sg for more information about senior programmes at the National Museum of Singapore.