



## INOUE Umetsugu 井上梅次 (1923–2010.2.11)

### Director

Born in Kyoto, Inoue graduated from Faculty of Economics of Keio University and joined Shintoho (New Toho) as a part-time assistant director in 1947. His mentors were the famous directors Saeki Kiyoshi, Chiba Yasuki and Abe Yutaka. Because of his talent in screenwriting, he was promoted to director in 1952 and made his directorial debut *Head Cheerleader of Love*. Inoue joined Nikkatsu Corporation in 1955. Two years later, he made *Man Who Causes a Storm* (1957), which took the new actor Ishihara Yojiro to stardom. Inoue had since then become one of the major directors for the company, specialising in teen action films as well as light comedies and musicals. Inoue left Nikkatsu in 1959 and, accompanied by his wife, famous actress Tsukioka Yumeiji, he went to the US to study new cinematic technology, at the invitation of Nagata Masaichi, the director of Daiei Motion Picture Company. After returning to Japan, Inoue directed a number of commercial films for Takarazuka, Daiei, Shochiku and Toei, including *The Stormy Band* (1960), *Nocturne of a Woman* (1961), *Black Lizard* (1962), *Duel of the Underworld* (1963) and *Melody of Crime* (1964).

In 1965, with cinematographer Nishimoto Tadashi acting as a go-between, Inoue signed an indefinite contract with Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Ltd to make 100 films. He came to Hong Kong in December 1966, bringing with him an entourage of assistant directors, art directors, lighting specialists, martial arts directors, dance instructors and dancers. The first film he directed for Shaws was the spy action title *Operation Lipstick* (1967), followed by a big-budget musical, *Hong Kong Nocturne* (1967). Inoue strongly recommended composer Hattori Ryōichi to Shaws, who composed the music for *Operation Lipstick*, *Hong Kong Nocturne*, *King Drummer* (1967) and *Hong Kong Rhapsody* (1968). Apart from *Operation Lipstick*, the first three films that he made for Shaws were adapted from his previous works in Japan: *The Night I Want to Dance* (1963), *Man Who Causes a Storm* and *Tokyo Cinderella* (1954). Inoue was efficient in terms of budget and production, and always gave the audience what they wanted. His working principle coincided with Shaws' motto of 'making more films with less time, lower budget and better quality'. Shaws later even assigned him actors and wardrobe managers to assist him in filming a total of seven teen romances in Japan. The last film he directed for Shaws was the musical *The Yellow Muffler* (1972).

Inoue insisted in using his real name for his Hong Kong productions and directed 17 films for Shaws. His favourite actors were Peter Chen Ho and Lily Ho. He made around 160 films throughout his career, writing the scripts for 99 of them. He switched to work in the television industry and theatre productions since the mid-1970s. Inoue passed away from illness on 11 February 2010.