

## An Encounter with HK Films Never Shown in HK



*Hong Kong Filmography IV* (1953-1959), in separate Chinese and English versions, will be published before the end of this year.

Film archiving has its way of bringing surprises, big or small, especially when different thematic projects give one the perfect excuse to indulge oneself in different terrains. Seeing the close tie formed between the Hong Kong film industry and its overseas market in Southeast Asia, the research work on the *Hong Kong Filmography* series has long crossed over to the Chinese press in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Volume IV contains Amoy and Chaozhou-dialects films made for Southeast Asian market which have never been released in Hong Kong. The missing information, therefore, has to be filled solely with these overseas Chinese papers. To say the whole process is nerve-racking is probably an understatement. Imagine the intricacy to distinguish the same film released under a different title, or an apparent Chaozhou-dialect film turns out to be the Jekyll and Hyde of an old Cantonese film, camouflaged by dubbing... Deducting the re-releases and you have a list of Chaozhou, Amoy and Mandarin films which somehow never made it to the local cinemas...



Amoy-dialect films bloomed in late 1950s, making a Many Chaozhou-dialect films draw their stories star of the newcomer Xiao Juan (right). Yes, she's from Chaozhou operas and folktales. Picture none other than Ivy Ling Bo, who was soon to shows *Fifth Madam Zhao* (1956) with Xia Fan achieve stardom and remained a glamorous star for (right) and Li Qing (left). years to come. Picture shows *Shrews from Afar* (1958), with co-star Zhuang Xuefang.

Amidst the tedious verification and sorting, delightful moments come abundant. Though it's the films, listed chronologically, which make up the body of the Filmography, the people who made these films happen are undeniably the cream of the contents and the soul of the indices attached. What did Louis Cha (then writing under the penname Lin Huan) go through in his film career? How did Patrick Tse Yin and Ho Kar-ling (aka Patsy Kar Ling) kick off their lives on the silver screen? And the days when veteran actress Lo Lan was a young starlet known to all as Lo Yin-ying... Mr Li Cheuk-to, HKIFF programmer, provides us with a snapshot of Hong Kong films in the 1950s (see pp 3-6). Mr Ray Edmondson, renowned film archivist, has been one of the Archive's most ardent supporters. He shares with us the story of an archivist (see pp 12-15). The unspoken sentiments, I'm sure, are felt by all.

[\[clkwok@lcsd.gov.hk\]](mailto:clkwok@lcsd.gov.hk)

## A Snapshot of HK Cinema in the 50s

Li Cheuk-to

Hong Kong cinema, no doubt, enjoyed a very early start: the Cantonese films and films bearing the theme of 'National Defence' produced in the 1930s crafted its niche in filmmaking outside Shanghai, then the centre of Chinese cinema. The real take-off, however, had to wait until after the War in the 1950s when it gathered momentum and firmly established its position in the history of Chinese cinema.

### Mandarin Cinema



Mandarin directors Zhu Shilin, Li Pingqian, Tao Qin and Li Hanxiang (from left).

One of the main driving forces behind the boom was the influx of southbound immigrants prior to and after the Communist takeover in 1949. Among them were cinema talents both in front of and behind the camera from Shanghai, who also brought with them massive capital for filmmaking. They were the sole reason for the sudden appearance of Mandarin films in Hong Kong after the War. It is arguable that both the Cantonese and Mandarin camps of Hong Kong cinema in the 1950s inherited what was interrupted in the Mainland - the social realist tradition of the Shanghai cinema of the 1930s and 40s.

Some of these southbound directors cast bigger and longer shadows, and one of them was Zhu Shilin, who came to Hong Kong immediately after the War. After a stint at Great China Film Company, he joined the financially formidable Yung Hwa Motion Picture Industries Ltd, directing *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* (1948). Yung Hwa's debut work *The Soul of China* (1948) was preceded over by Bu Wancang, already a famous director in the 1930s. Bu later formed his own company, Taishan Film Company, and produced acclaimed works such as *Portrait of a Lady* (1952). Yue Feng, on the other hand, first worked for Great Wall Pictures Corporation, adding *Blood will Tell* (1949) and *The Flower Street* (1950) to his credential. However, they too could not avoid working for big studios and were later recruited by Motion Picture & General Investment Co Ltd (MP & GI) and Shaws Film Company. Their directorial standard did not suffer, but they exerted no influence on the studio's filming policy.



In the difficult times of the early 1950s, Zhu Shulin dexterously pulled off low-budgeters that remain dear to the people's heart. Picture shows Jiang Hua (left) and Han Fei (right) in *Festival Moon* (1953).

Zhu Shilin and Li Pingqian fared very differently. Zhu first co-established Dragon Horse (Loon-Ma) Films with Fei Mu and produced works such as *Flora* (1951) and *Should They Marry?* (1951). He later took up the rein of Feng Huang Motion Picture Co, and under his stewardship, Feng Huang was able to come up with a series of excellent works such as *Festival Moon* (1953) and nurtured quite a number of on and off screen talents. Li Pingqian did equally well at Great Wall. Under the patronage of Yuen Yang-an, he was a prolific director boosting such impressive works as *Awful Truth* (1950) and *Tales of the City* (1954) and taught many a talent. Both Zhu and Li managed a second bloom in their filmmaking career in Hong Kong and their creativity lasted well into the 1960s (both Li's *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* and Zhu's *The Eternal Love* came out in 1960).



Li Hanxiang's first directorial solo *Blood in Snow* (1956), starring Li Lihua.

The late 1940s and early 1950s, without doubt, was the creativity peak of these southbound filmmakers. Quite a few of the leftists among them, such as Ouyang Yuqian, Wong Wai-yat, Gu Eryi, however, chose to return to the Mainland after only a short stay. Some of the best directors among them, though, did not adapt well to the new environment and their creativity waned as a result. Ma Xu Weibang was one of the sad examples. Still, in time, the taste of these immigrant directors became more and more out of tune with the Hong Kong society and thus gave rise to a host

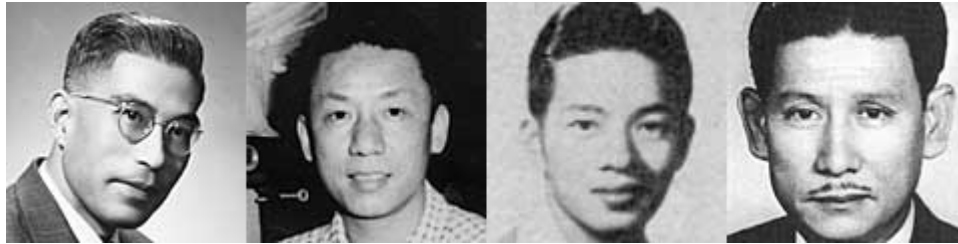
of young directors to make their mark, among them Tao Qin (*Night and Every Night*, 1953), Li Hanxiang (*Blood in Snow*, 1956) and Evan Yang (*The Flame of Love*, 1956).



Screenwriter-director Tao Qin joined MP & GI in the mid-1950s. Celebrating the spirit of youth, *Our Sister Hedy* (1957) is one but Tao's own brand of melodramas.

In 1952, the Mainland market was closed to Hong Kong films. In 1956, the Hong Kong and Kowloon Filmmakers Free General Association Ltd was formed. The split of local cinema into rightist and leftist camps became all the more apparent. Still, the formation of MP & GI in 1956 and the restructuring of Shaws in 1957 proved to be even greater landmarks. With Hong Kong as their base, these two big studios were set to expand into their eventual empire. In the late 1950s, they overtook traditional leftist film companies such as Great Wall and Feng Huang both in clout and production. Boasting a galaxy of stars (such as actresses Li Lihua, Linda Lin Dai, Grace Chang, Lucilla You Min, Jeanette Lin Cui, Julie Yeh Feng, Betty Loh Ti, Chung Ching, Helen Li Mei, Diana Chang Chung-wen and actors Chang Yang, Chao Lei, Kelly Lai Chen, Peter Chen Hou) and a plethora of genres much richer than the early 1950s (which were confined to realist melodramas or comedies with a number of song numbers thrown in) such as historical drama films (*Diao Charn*, 1958 and *The Kingdom and the Beauty*, 1959, both directed by Li Hanxiang of Shaws) and glamorous musicals (*Calendar Girl*, 1959, directed by Tao Qin of MP & GI), the ascendancy of the two studios announced their total compliance to entertainment and the Hollywood influence.

## Cantonese Cinema



Cantonese directors Wu Pang, Lee Sun-fung, Chun Kim and Lee Tit (from left).

Cantonese films, on the other hand, marked out the mass market (targeting the grass-root audience) from early on. Most of the films were budget productions and their attempts at imitating Hollywood were inevitably embarrassing. It is not surprising that they were wiped out by Mandarin productions in the late 1960s. Still, one unique Cantonese genre enjoyed a golden age in the 50s - the Cantonese opera adaptations. Cantonese operas and operatic songs were then very popular and there was a ready market for adaptations. Cantonese opera stars (such as Sun Ma Si-tsang and Fong Yim-fun) were equally luminous on the screen and just as popular even if they were not in costumes - so long as they still belted out from time to time.

Another unique feature is the now legendary Wong Fei-hung series. The audience just couldn't have enough. Director Wu Pang and the cast led by Kwan Tak-hing made more than 60 Wong Fei-hung films, most of them coming out in the 1950s. 25 of them were made in 1956 alone. Their huge popularity could be partly explained by their Cantonese roots and indigenous flavour, and most importantly, the authentic martial arts being displayed in the films. They laid down the foundation for later kung fu films, which became not only a genre, but also a phenomenon.

The other two popular genres in Cantonese cinema were of course melodrama and comedy. Progressive Shanghai filmmakers led by Choi Cho-sang headed south to Hong Kong for the second time and hastened the launch of the second 'Cleansing Up of the Cantonese Cinema Campaign' in 1949. In 1950, *Tears of the Pearl River*, directed by Wong Wai-yat, was made as a demonstrative work. Together with *Kaleidoscope* (1950) produced by the South China Film Industry Workers Union, they represented the deliberate adoption of the anti-feudalism and anti-superstition motifs by the Cantonese cinema. In 1952, The Union Film Enterprise was formed as a response to the call for the de-crossing over of the opera and cinema artists and soon became the synonym for progressive cinema. The Union classics include *Family* (1953), which was adapted from the Ba Jin novel of the same title, and *In the Face of Demolition* (1953), the archetype of later similar films about hard-up cohabitants helping one and other out in adversities. 1955 saw the production of Lee Sun-fung's *It Was a Cold, Winter Night*, Chun Kim's *Parents' Hearts* and Lee Tit's

*Eternal Love*, all pinnacles of Cantonese drama's artistic achievement. The 1950s was also the time when some of the greatest stars in Cantonese cinema such as Ng Cho-fan, Pak Yin, Cheung Ying, Mui Yee, Tsi Lo-lin, Ma Si-tsang, Hung Sin-nui were in their prime, exhibited by their unsurpassed on-screen appeal and fine artistic performance.



Exquisite character delineation attributes to the success of the Cantonese melodrama *Tragedy of Love* (dir Lee Tit, 1955); on the left is Ng Cho-fan with co-star Hung Sin-nui.

The appeal of comedy is universal and timeless. In its heyday of the early 1950s, with the exception of the 1950 *Broker Lai* trilogy, which were adapted from Ko Hung's colourful originals, the success of almost all the comedies at that time rode on the stellar performance of the comedians, such as Tang Kei-chen and Yee Chau-shui in *A Comet of Laughter Lands on Earth* (1952), Leung Sing-po in *Daddy and Sonny* (1951) and Sun Ma Si-tsang in *More than Just a Couple* (1951). Comedies gathered another bumper harvest in the late 1950s. *My Kingdom for a Husband* aka *The Romance of Jade Hall* (1957) was distinguished by its spectacular sets while *Two Fools in Paradise* (1958), *The Romantic Scatterbrain* (1959) and the four *Mr Wong* films (1959) were boosted by fine performance from Sun Ma. The Union's social satire *Money* (1959) and South China's *Feast of a Rich Family* (1959) were both ensembles featuring a galaxy of stars. Not to be left out was *The Chair* (1959), which beat out its western counterpart *The Twelve Chairs* (1970) by eleven years.



Sun Ma Si-tsang (left) and Tang Kei-chen (right) are the souls of comedies. Picture shows *Two Fools in Paradise* (dir Yeung Kung-leong, 1958).

The massive adaptation of period Cantonese operas can be said to begin in 1957, and like drama genre under the baptism of the Union, it bloomed in just two years. Most of the Tong Tik-sang's classics starring Yam Kim-fai and Pak Suet-sin (such as *The Purple Hairpin*, *Butterfly and Red Pear*, *Princess Cheung Ping*) were made in 1959. With outstanding comedies and opera adaptations coming out in droves, Cantonese cinema ushered in the new decade in great shape. Still, undercurrents began to gather pace, in the form of new talents and genres, in order to meet the demand of a younger audience. (Translated by Teri Chan) ●



High quality opera adaptations came out in droves in the 50s. Opera divas Yam Kim-fai and Pak Suet-sin (2nd & 3rd right) were naturally the directors' favourites. Picture shows *The Purple Hairpin* (dir Lee Tit, 1959).

**Li Cheuk-to**, General Manager of the Hong Kong International Film Festival and former President of the Hong Kong Film Critics Society. He is the author of eight volumes of film criticism including *Notes on Hong Kong Cinema of the 1980s*, *Viewing Against the Grain* and *Gallery of Vivid Images*.





*Editor's Note: Our programme Hong Kong Films and Popular Culture of the 50s and 60s - jointly organized with the Centre for Humanities Research of Lingnan University - embraces two themes: 'Popular Music, Comics and Cinema' and 'Literature and Films'. Keena Tsui, project assistant and Lingnan student Ng Sum-yi reflect on the preparation of the event.*

## **An Interesting Research Assignment**

Keena Tsui

It was my first assignment for the Film Archive and I was to lead four undergraduates born in the 1980s researching the pop literature and films of the 1950s and 1960s. It gave me a jolt that the 1960s, the decade when I was born, is already history. To my young researchers, I must be, like Nancy Sit (known affectionately as Auntie Good to soap opera fans of the new millennium), already vintage.

### **Sharp-Witted Businessman**

Our key interviewee is Law Bun, the founder of the Universal Publishing Group, Xianhe Ganglian Film Company and the *Hong Kong Daily News*. He gave writers Ni Kuang, Yee Tat, Isabel Ni and Cen Kai-lun their first break and discovered stars such as Suet Nei and Kenneth Tsang Kong. That he was a publication and cinema tycoon who called the shots in the two worlds was what we were first made aware of. What surprised us, in our first meeting, was his easiness and sense of humour. After all, he is a respected elderly approaching 80. The stories of Universal and Xianhe Ganglian came to life and became even more fascinating when told by the very man who made them happen. In his reminiscences, we also saw how a man with incredible business savvy broke his path to success.

Thanks to him, one mystery that had intrigued us for some time was finally solved. No biographies existed for Cheng Wai, the writer of *Our Sister Hedy* (1957) and *Autumn Comes to Crape Myrtle Garden* (1958), the novels from which the two films of the same title were adapted. There were even rumours that Cheng was actually Cen Kai-lun. On the day when we were ready to take it as a fact, Law revealed to us that Cheng was actually a clinic nurse who wrote on the side.



Law bun with Lingnan students Kenneth Cheung, Yuki Shum and Tess Wong (from left, standing).



*The Happy Encounter* written by Si Tak (alias Sam So), another of Universal's 'thirty-cent novel'.

### **Who's Who of Wuxia Heroes**

Another fun part of our research was compiling the 'Who's Who of Wuxia Heroes' of famous martial arts characters. Some casting, I have to say, really stretched our imagination. We had a great time preparing for the exhibition preparing for the exhibition and in the process, reliving the world of the 50s and 60s. To my young researchers, it was an enriching and amusing experience; to me, it was nostalgia.



## **An Unforgettable Experience**

Ng Sum-yi

Thanks to Professor Leung Ping-kwan's referral, a bunch of Lingnan undergraduates were tied up with the Hong Kong Film Archive and I, as one of the lucky few, had the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the exhibition.

### **Absolute Beginners**

Looking back, the most testing part was not the marathon viewing of 50s and 60s films, nor the arduous search for film-related materials, it was our very inexperience and ignorance in organising an exhibition. We were just as clueless in laying out the exhibition material as in penning the text. Thanks to the help of Archive staff and our own trial and error, we managed not to fail in our assignment.

It was also our first attempt at venue design. It has to be said that the original design was much more fantastical, but we had to bow to practicality. Well, at least it did, for some moments, exist in our imagination.

### **Precious Experience**

Limited by our knowledge and life experience, the society and cinema of the 1950s and 1960s were to us, initially, a giant unfinished jigsaw. Thus, we had conducted interviews with director Wong Yiu, comic artist Theresa Lee Wai-chun and Professor Yu Siu-wah from the Department of Music, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Director Wong Yiu was responsible for some of the most popular musicals of the 60s, and stars like Chan Po-chu, Lui Kei, Josephine Siao and Nancy Sit regularly appeared in his films. Though more than ninety years old, the legendary figure was still very robust and turned out to be funny and kind. In the ninety-minute interview, we were more than impressed by Wong's love for cinema and his acute social awareness.



Chan Po-chu (left) and Lui Kei (right) in *Girls Are Flowers*(1966).

To girls of my mother's generation, the cartoon character Miss 13 Chow was their fashion icon and the comics their fashion bible. To my surprise, Theresa Lee Wai-chun, the comic artist of *13-Dot* cartoon, received no formal fashion design training and she drew Miss 13 Chow's incredible wardrobe just as her aesthetic and imagination took her.



Cover of *13-Dot* cartoon



A visit to comic artist Theresa Lee Wai-chun (2nd right) by Lingnan students Wing Chan, Mandy Lam (2nd & 3rd left) and Archive staff Stephanie Ng (1st right) and Amy Chung (1st left).

Professor Yu Siu-wah possesses encyclopedic knowledge of Chinese music, and he is equally learned in the studies of Cantonese opera and operatic songs. Most of the related information in the exhibition was provided by Professor Yu. Professor Yu patiently explained to us the plethora of musical instruments and compositions used in Cantonese opera and operatic songs, and the definition of an array of Cantonese operatic genres such as *myu* (wooden percussion instrument), *longzhou* (dragon boat songs) and *nanyin* (the southern tune). It was like we were given a crash course on our cultural heritage.

Starting from knowing next to nothing, we graduated from the internship boasting more than a superficial awareness of the popular culture and cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. To veteran curators, our exhibition may look too amateurish. However, we hope that visitors to our exhibition would say that, despite all the shortcomings, the work is one of sincerity and hard work. (Translated by Teri Chan) ●

## An Archivist's Story

**Ray Edmondson**

How do people get into film archiving? There's never been a well-defined path to follow. Everyone has a personal way into it. I've been asked to record mine.



Ray Edmondson giving a seminar on 'AV Archiving' at the National Library of Venezuela in July this year.

Accompanying him is Lourdes Blanco, translator from the UNESCO's Memory of the World programme.

(Courtesy of Mr Ray Edmondson)

### **Childhood Reminiscenes**

At the tender age of six I acquired my first film projector, a gift from a very wise and prescient Santa Claus. It was a toy "Dux Kino" driven by a clockwork motor, and its comic strip style films - with two alternating movements on a horizontal strip of 35mm film - each took five minutes to grind through. I have been hooked on film projection and the fun of presenting a show ever since.

As I grew to adolescence, other projectors - silent 16mm and 8mm - followed. They ran the short 50 and 100 feet "package" movies that one could buy at serious toy shops or photographic stores in those pre-video days. I teamed up with a school friend who had an equally eccentric interest in film projection, pooling our equipment to put on film shows for kids in our inner-Sydney neighbourhood. We would switch from one projector to another, play around with fancy light effects on the screen and curtains, and add music from a wind-up gramophone. What our audiences thought of these extravaganzas I don't know: they were always very polite about it, and I suppose the shows had the virtue of being free.

Children's matinees - "Saturday arvo at the flicks" as we called them - were popular in my childhood. At about the age of twelve I happened to see, at my local cinema, a 1936 Cinesound feature film called *Orphan of the Wilderness*. It's an appealing story about an orphan kangaroo called Chut, whose adventures see him sold to the

circus as a boxing kangaroo. Mistreated and crazed by thirst, Chut attacks his trainer in the ring, and escapes. At that point in the story, two children near me ran out of the theatre in tears. The film made an impression on me too - but for more than one reason.



Chut the kangaroo, Mike the dog with Brian Abbott (right) and a crew member on the set of *Orphan of the Wilderness*. (Copyright Greater Union Organisation; courtesy of ScreenSound Australia)

By the 1950s, the once active Australian feature film industry was dead. The only local movies one ever saw were occasional documentaries and the weekly newsreels, *Australian Movietone News and Cinesound Review*. To my generation, it was other countries - primarily Britain and USA - that made the "big" films, presumably because we didn't know how to. The realisation that an Australian company, Cinesound, had once made features as well as newsreels somehow amazed and intrigued me.

### **An Archivist's Road of No Return**

Fast forward to 1967. Now in the final year of my Arts degree at university, I happened to catch on television a documentary called *Forgotten Cinema*, made by a young, independent film-maker named Anthony Buckley (today he's a major producer). During its 60 minutes the unfolding history of Australia's forgotten feature industry - most of its output destroyed by time - captured me. And right in the middle, there it was: a section from *Orphan of the Wilderness*. The end credits identified the National Library of Australia as the source of the footage. I had never heard of the place, but thought how much I would enjoy working among all that film! Right on cue, a representative of the Library turned up at the university on a recruiting drive... and before long I was offered a cadetship to train as a librarian and move to Canberra where, in December 1968, I found myself with the grand title of reference librarian in the Library's Film Division.

My main job was to help borrowers find films in the Division's extensive 16mm documentary film lending collection. But when time could be spared, I also

comprised the entire staff of the embryonic film archive. And what was the first thing I did? You guessed it. I searched the shelves looking for a print of *Orphan*. And there it was!

Growing the Archive first as a collection and then a staff unit within the National Library, and later as a separate institution (the National Film and Sound Archive [NFSA] was separated from the Library in 1984) was to become a long and eventful journey over the next three decades and more, although I couldn't have guessed at the time where it would lead (and would have been terrified if I had). It was also to be a constant voyage of discovery as Australia's film history unfolded to me, and I was to repeatedly experience that greatest privilege of a film archivist - finding an important "lost" film.

Then, as the 1990s dawned, the voyage unwittingly went further. Opportunities came to travel in Southeast Asia, so I searched for my opposite numbers to find what was happening in their countries: and discovered that they had been seized with the same curiosity! A seminal gathering in 1995 of 20 archivists from across the region, for a month-long training seminar at the NFSA in Canberra, crystallized the relationships and convictions on which SEAPAVAA was founded the following year, and on which it has worked and grown ever since. It is archiving at the raw edge, for many of its members work with the most minimal of resources. But it has given a face to the region, and its richness lies in its nature as a professional family, for relationships are strong, personal and supportive. At our most recent annual conference in Vientiane, Laos, when my term as the inaugural President ended, there were a hundred of us: a possibility no one could have imagined a decade earlier.



At the launch of Edmondson's book *Australia's Lost Films* back in 1981 with (from 2nd left) former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, Andrew Pike (co-author) and director Ken G Hall. (Courtesy of Mr Ray Edmondson)

I have gained many treasured friendships, with the filmmakers of yesterday and today, with researchers and activists who were concerned, like I was, that our film heritage should be rescued and protected within an appropriate organization. One of



those friendships, for the last 20 years of his life, was with Ken G Hall, a giant of Australia's film industry and the man who produced and directed *Orphan of the Wilderness*. He told me that, of his 18 feature films, it was the one he most enjoyed making. It remains my favourite.

I've always seen that title as a metaphor for the realities which so many of us face as film archivists. To some extent, we are still pioneering an idea. We are orphans abroad in environments that aren't always sympathetic, and sometimes we feel very lonely and ill-equipped in our vocation - it is the price of trailblazing. Globally there are surprisingly few of us compared to the size of our task, and faced with rapid technical changes, ethical dilemmas and limited resources we seem to stand in a wilderness without reference points. Except, that is, for a long horizon. We are still an evolving profession and, like Chut the kangaroo, we don't give up easily.



(From left) Ray Edmondson, Angela Tong (Head, HKFA), International Coordinator Teresa Huang and Director Winston Li of Chinese Taipei Film Archive at the 58th FIAF Congress in Seoul, 2002.

In case you're wondering, yes, I still have the "Dux Kino" and its several successors. And the wind-up gramophone. And the films. And they still work. Of course, I also have DVD and CD and the other digital gear of today. But I've never been tired of the fun of projecting film - for family and friends. They are still, I'm glad to say, polite about it. And it's still free. ●

**Ray Edmondson** is Director of Archive Associates, a consultancy company. He served as the Deputy Director of ScreenSound Australia (former National Film and Sound Archive) from 1984 to 2001. He currently holds office in SEAPAVAA and AMIA and served as the former's inaugural president from 1996 to 2002. He is the author of 'A Philosophy of Audio-visual Archiving' (UNESCO, 1998) and has recently completed the revised general guidelines for UNESCO's Memory of the World programme.

## New Acquisitions

### Film Relics from Hawaii

Our team received an email from Hawaii last November. The sender is an enthusiast and generous donor, Mr Kevin Kodama, who has in his possession film posters and film-related materials retrieved from the closed-down Golden Harvest Theatre in Honolulu. Asked if the Archive would take over the collection, Mr Kodama had also attached a film list which runs such familiar names as *The Last Message* (1975), *The Iron-Fisted Monk* (1977) and *Police Story* (1985). We decided no time should be wasted and immediately explored the possibility of shipping these film relics lost overseas back to their birthplace. As a more thorough understanding between the two sides was established after months of email correspondences, Mr Kodama agreed to donate the entire collection to the Archive. Not only was the gesture unconditional, the task of packaging and arranging for delivery was borne by our generous donor.



Golden Harvest Theatre in Honolulu Chinatown, Hawaii

Photographed by Craig T Kojima. Courtesy of Star-Bulletin.

In June this year, the thirty carton boxes finally arrived at the Archive across the Pacific. While we were struck with awe by the volume of the donation - which one might quickly dismiss in convenient email correspondences - our heart swelled with gratitude to our donor for the efforts he made in arranging the temporary storage and transportation of these treasures. We couldn't be more blessed with this heaven-sent gift. Once again, our sincere gratitude to Mr Kodama. ◆



One of Golden Harvest's all-time favourites: Jackie Chan's Police Story.

**Donors** (5-7.2002)

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals

RTHK

South China Film Industry Workers Union

Entertainment Production Ltd

Bliss Distribution Ltd

Gold Dollars Company (Pte Ltd)

Mr Ho Sai-wah

Mr Ng Bo-ki

Ms Li Yizhuang

Mr Zhou Chengren

Mr Li Kit-ling

Ms Lam Lai-ying

Ms Heung Mei-yung

Ms Ling Siu-fong

Ms Dorothy Au

Mr Stephen Teo

Mr Elton Kwok

Mr Jim Chan

Mr Chan

Mr Pang Lok

Mr Tang Xiaodan

Mrs Fung Yip Pui-ching

Mr Fung Po-kwan

Mr Po Fung Winson

Ms Peggy Cheng

Ms Tang Siu-yin

Ms Tam Mi-Kuen

Reva A H Bray

Mr Kevin Kodama

## Mail Box

### Letter to the Acquisition Team

*Editor's Note: Film researchers Ms Li Yizhuang (affectionately known as Teacher Li) and Mr Zhou Chengren have generously donated some 400 volumes of literature to the Archive recently. We are currently working on the arrangement of the collection which, when completed, will be available in our Resource Centre. Teacher Li's support is an immense boost to our acquisition endeavour. Below is an excerpt from her letter:*

... When asked how we felt about the donation, we believe we were inspired by the spirit of your colleagues. In November last year, we paid our first visit to the Archive. We were impressed by how our donated literature were meticulously bound and displayed for the readers's reference. The Archive has been pursuing unrelentingly its goals of popularising and promoting film culture by catering for the audience, film buffs and scholars, and what a fine job it has done!

On returning to Guangzhou, we decided to donate our beloved book collection to the Film Archive. Of them, the most precious are copies of three series of essay collections published nation-wide. They are *Studies on Film, TV* (published between 1981 and 1989), *Theories of Art and Culture* (published between 1981 and 1987) and *Plastic Art* (published between 1984 and 1989).

Our biggest motivation is that with the emergence of a Greater China film circle, it is inevitable that Hong Kong film scholars will touch on Mainland productions and it is exactly how and where the information will be of use (in particular, monthly literature which contain crucial essays and indices of national academic journals).

We hope that Hong Kong film scholars will benefit, in one way or another, from our collection.

Yizhuang

6 July 2002



The couple Li Yizhuang and Zhou Chengren

## Letter to the Programming Team

*Editor's Note: Mr Chow Wai, better known to the broadcasting world as Lang Wun, wrote the airwave novel A Mother Remembers which was later turned into a movie adaptation released in 1953 to critical acclaim. Here he shares with us his experience of attending the Cathay screening and exhibitions:*

... I had seen the *Back to Dreamland and Cathay Story* exhibitions as well as over ten films from the 1960s at the screening. I smiled, wept, sighed - it was indeed a remarkable achievement the Hong Kong cinema had attained. The world had changed drastically in these five decades. While past events were drifting away, they never failed to bring many an enchanting moment to an old man like me.

And what a lucky fellow I am to have viewed these fine works after all these years  
- Thank you, Hong Kong Film Archive!

Hong Kong cinema is endowed with priceless treasures yet to be explored. Let's keep trying our best and give our earnest support.

Chow Wai

24 June 2002

## EVENTS

### A Get-Together with John Woo

With the endorsement of the director himself, *Young John Woo's French Favourites* organised in November/December last year was a great success. When John Woo returned to the territory to promote his latest work *Windtalkers*, we of course seized the opportunity and arranged a gathering for our young film lovers. The responses from the campuses were overwhelming and our 127-seater cinema was filled to the brim.



On 25th of June, the day of John Woo's visit, the director was given a guided tour of our film vaults before dropping by our Resource Centre. His good friends Ada Loke and Lam Yut-hang also came for a reunion. Their grief was still acute when the recent passing away of legendary director Chang Cheh came up in their reminiscence.



In the seminar, John Woo first confessed his obsession with the French director Jean-Pierre Melville and his excitement when he met Alain Delon face to face. He mentioned that this is one of the attractions of cinema - it brings people together. Then he shared with the audience his experience in the Hollywood game of power politics. He first had to play by other people's rules, but gradually earned his admission to decision-making and a greater display of personal style.

He directed the Q&A session with perfect ease. As a master of the hero genre in Hong Kong cinema as well as in Hollywood, he was inevitably asked to compare the difference in their portrayal in the two cinemas. His insightful explication was that Chinese heroes are tragic yet larger-than-life. Their heroism lies in their willingness to sacrifice for their ideals and their commitments. American heroes, on the other hand, are less lofty and much more stereotypical. Their ultimate goal concerns not with making sacrifices but their survival. In directing actors, Woo said, he always encourages them to put themselves into the character's shoes, even though it means letting the tears flow.



As for the predicament of the local cinema, he put the blame on the poor scripts, which are market oriented and, all too often, get the short shrift. Lastly, he urged film students and newcomers to put good effort into scriptwriting and concentrate on developing their own style. If you are good, he said, you will not remain unnoticed. (Translated by Teri Chan) ◆



## Exchanges With Fellow Professionals



Archive conservator Edward Tse talks familiarly on the projection of archival film prints.

The painstaking task of delivering a motion picture to the earnest audience in the auditorium owes a great deal to members of the cast and crew whose names are acknowledged on the credits. Yet a smaller group of workers who actually do the delivery often go unnoticed - projectionists working inside the projection room throughout the entire screening. The projectionist's role is made even more demanding when it encompasses the notion of 'Film preservation'. At a seminal gathering held at the Archive on 19 July, our conservation team shared with colleagues from the Engineering and Mechanical Department who, from time to time, handle the projection of old film prints, the essentials of the preparation and storage of equipment, as well as the standard projection procedures. ◆