

Foreword

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Hong Kong Filmography Volume IX collates all the films produced in Hong Kong within the first three years of the 1980s. 1980 was a significant turning point in the history of Hong Kong cinema, considering the box office winner of the previous year. In 1979, that title was claimed by *Moonraker* (1979), a James Bond film starring Roger Moore which grossed HK\$7.86 million.¹ In 1980, the top spot was claimed by *The Young Master*, a Jackie Chan film which earned HK\$10.26 million at the box office. 1981 saw the Michael Hui film *Security Unlimited* top the ranking, grossing HK\$17.77 million; followed by *Aces Go Places* in 1982, a Cinema City film which grossed HK\$26.04 million. For three consecutive years, the annual top-grossing films in Hong Kong were local productions, with each year's winner breaking the box office record set the year before.

This was only the beginning of a long trend. In the ensuing 13 years, locally made films topped the Hong Kong box office, holding their own against even Hollywood productions until the release of *Jurassic Park* in 1993. This period was marked by the emergence of local filmmaking talents, and a steady stream of excellent productions that dominated not just the local market but were also distributed to other parts of the world: Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Europe and the United States. 1980 was a watershed moment that marked the start of Hong Kong cinema's golden age.

I.

Competition between the Hong Kong Cinema Circuits The ever-increasing box office figures indicated a thriving film industry, made possible by years of dedicated development. A key contributing factor behind such growth was the maturity of three cinema circuits in Hong Kong around 1980 to 1982. There were two well-established cinema circuits prior to 1980—the first was the Shaw Circuit, founded before 1970 and had by then become self-sufficient, screening Shaw Brothers (HK) Limited productions at its own cinemas. The second was the Gala Circuit. Golden Harvest (HK) Limited was only a production company when it was founded in 1970, but the tremendous commercial success brought by Bruce Lee allowed them to establish the Golden Harvest Circuit,² which joined forces with the Shaw & Sons Circuit in 1978 to form the Gala Circuit. Compared to Shaw Brothers, Golden Harvest produced fewer films, numbering about ten every year. Thus, their circuits had to screen independent productions throughout the year in order to sustain themselves. Thanks to their discerning eyes, the Golden Harvest screened many commercially successful productions, including Bang Bang Films Company Limited's *Jumping Ash* (1976), Seasonal Film Corporation's *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) and *Drunken Master* (1978).

A third circuit emerged in 1979—the Golden Princess Circuit. Golden Princess was radically different from Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest in that it did not produce nor invest in any productions at first, only screening local independent

productions and a few Taiwanese films. The inability to reliably source high quality productions put Golden Princess at a strategic disadvantage, rendering them the circuit with the least bargaining power of the three by 1979. Not only was it harder for a commercially weaker circuit to choose and showcase great films, even when they did they had difficulties securing the deal: Golden Princess and Josephine Siao Fong-fong's Hi-pitch Limited had been negotiating the screening of *The Spooky Bunch* (1980), however Golden Harvest came in mid-negotiation and snatched the deal. Learnt from the bitter experience, Golden Princess decided to venture into film production, investing in Karl Maka, Dean Shek, and Raymond Wong of the Warriors Film Co. to form a new production company, Cinema City Company Limited.

The Rise of the Cinema City and Golden Princess Circuits *Hong Kong Filmography* Volume IX paints a picture of Cinema City's beginnings and rise to success. Cinema City's spiritual predecessor was Warriors Film Co., found by the directing and screenwriting duo Karl Maka and Raymond Wong. Their inaugural production was *Crazy Partner* (1979), a spin-off of the martial arts comedy television drama *The Misfits* (1979) produced by Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB). The film was headlined by Tony Wong Yuen-sun and Alan Chan Kwok-kuen, who starred in the original series. In 1980, actor Dean Shek signed on to produce two comedies: *Crazy Crooks* and *By Hook Or By Crook*. These three films continued the trend of action-packed martial arts comedies that were less about demonstrating martial arts prowess than showcasing slapstick humour between dynamic leading actors. Screened by the Golden Princess Circuit, these three films produced by Warriors went on to gross HK\$1.09 million, HK\$3.12 million, and HK\$3.29 million respectively. Even though the figures may not seem hugely impressive, Warriors was Golden Princess's best-selling production house at that point. It just so happened Golden Princess was in dire need of more quality films, so they decided to invest in Maka, Shek, and Wong to form Cinema City.

Golden Princess did not immediately invest substantial capital into Cinema City—its first two films *Laughing Time* (1980) and *Beware of Pickpockets* (1981) were low-budget productions. Still, both films grossed more than HK\$5 million at the box office, HK\$2 million more than films made by Warriors Film Co. Cinema City's production quality and box office both saw marked improvement in 1981. *All the Wrong Clues (...For the Right Solution)* (1981) by Tsui Hark devoted a lot of resources to recreating a stylistically traditional, westernised, and fascinating Hong Kong, and grossed HK\$7.48 million at the box office. *Chasing Girls* (1981), primarily a comedy directed by Karl Maka and starring Dean Shek, featured a lavish car stunt in its final scene—something unprecedented in Hong Kong films at the time—spending generously featuring building and plenty of car destruction in a comedic car chase scenes. The film grossed a whopping HK\$9.46 million. *Life After Life* released in the same year performed slightly less impressively at the box office but still grossed HK\$6.08 million. Cinema City's productions took up the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth position of that year's box office for Chinese-language films. Although Cinema City still lagged behind Golden Harvest, which ranked first, third and seventh at that year, they had surpassed Shaw Brothers in prominence. In 1982, Cinema City's Chinese New Year feature film *Aces Go Places* out-performed *Security Unlimited* and was the first Hong Kong film to gross over HK\$20 million. Their summer release that year *It Takes Two* grossed HK\$16.72 million at the box office, making it the third highest-earning film of 1982. Through its meteoric rise within just one year, Cinema City established itself as major player of film production with significant influence.³

Aces Go Places draws on Michael Hui's madcap comedy style and Jackie Chan's combination of action and humour, but eschews elements of Hui's social satire and the simplistic backdrop of the early Republic period frequently featured in Chan's films. It invested heavily on costume design and set to create a large-scale action comedy intended as pure entertainment. The film's most notable innovation was its stunts: instead of relying on physical confrontation to display high-level martial arts skills, it cleverly made use of machinery to create jaw-dropping car stunts as visual spectacles. The car chase scenes in *Chasing Girls* were only a trial run: *Aces Go Place* begins with a motorcycle crashing into the glass wall of a building and plunging from the first floor to the ground level. The bombastic first act is followed by scenes with cars driving in formation, engaging in high-speed chases, and performing elaborate stunts such as jumping from land onto a ship—usually only seen in foreign productions. The spectacle and destruction featured made martial arts films at the time pale in comparison. Like *Chasing Girls*, *Aces Go Place* spared no expenses in conveying its lavish production to audiences. On top of depicting a modern metropolis with its set designs and filming locations, the film featured extensive destruction of cars and buildings. This new form of entertainment involving grand set pieces, thrilling fight scenes, and densely packed humour, was perfectly aligned with audience tastes in a prospering Hong Kong, leading to the film's astonishing box office success. This cemented Cinema City's later development and posed a tremendous challenge to other production companies.

Encouraged by Cinema City's success, Golden Princess began to invest in other companies including Always Good Film Co. Ltd., which released *Carry On Pickpocket* and *The Perfect Match* in 1982. The two films respectively grossed HK\$11.81 million and HK\$8.83 million, and were ranked seventh and twelfth at the Hong Kong box office. As Golden Princess's films flourished within its cinema circuit, their success attracted partnership from other notable film companies such as Century Motion Picture & Distribution Company Limited managed by Dennis Yu and Jeff Lau, and it produced *Man on the Brink* (1981), *The Imp* (1981), *Marianna* (1982), *Coolie Killer* (1982), *My Darling*, *My Goddess* (1982), and *Nomad* (1982). Some of these were big commercial hits, while others were artistically innovative works, all contributing to Golden Princess's rising fame. Another company was Verdull Ltd. (Film Dept), led by Dennis Chiu. Its inaugural production *The Club* (1981) had screened on the Gala Circuit to admirable results, but their 1982 productions *Funny Boys* and *My Beloved* saw greater success on the Golden Princess Circuit. *Funny Boys* grossed an impressive HK\$6.4 million, further boosting Golden Princess's prominence. This alarming rise caused Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers to collaborate their circuits in releasing the Yuen Woo-ping directed *The Miracle Fighters* that summer, to combat Cinema City's *It Takes Two*.

Diversified Development of the Gala Circuit Before the rise of Cinema City, Golden Harvest dominated the industry in both production and distribution. Golden Harvest had in its arsenal a box office favourite: master comedian Michael Hui. Although Hui did not star in many films, his stellar 1981 Chinese New Year film *Security Unlimited* cemented his position as a superstar. Golden Harvest also had Jackie Chan. Despite having three commercially successful films to his name since his claim to fame in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978), Chan's future in Golden Harvest was still an unknown. Chan's debut film with the company was *The Young Master* (1980), directed by and starring himself. It was a safe bet for Chan, returning to his martial arts comedy roots. He also featured Yuen Biao, an established fellow martial arts star, in the film. With

Golden Harvest's financial backing, plus Chan's own dedication, it was released during the Chinese New Year of 1980 to a resounding success, breaking the local box office record which had by then been held for a few years by *The Private Eyes* (1976). This propelled Chan to become another Golden Harvest superstar.

Besides these two household names, Golden Harvest also had Sammo Hung. Even though Hung did not have as big a draw as Michael Hui or Jackie Chan, he had long been an established director and star. He steadily progressed his career at Golden Harvest: his *Encounter of the Spooky Kind* (1980), *The Prodigal Son* (1981), and *The Dead and the Deadly* (1982, with Hung as the producer) achieved progressively greater box office success year on year. All three films made it to the top ten of Hong Kong's year-end box office—*The Prodigal Son* even ranked third. *Encounters of the Spooky Kind* and *The Dead and the Deadly* pioneered a new supernatural comedy genre which combined action and stunts. It became an important film genre in 1980s Hong Kong. Golden Harvest was bursting with talent, but the rise of Cinema City and the box office success of *Aces Go Places* presented a formidable challenge.

Golden Harvest responded by quickly learning what their competitor did best and combining it with their own strength. Sammo Hung was one of the first to adapt and rise to the challenge, though his first work after his change of style was neither a Golden Harvest production nor screened at their circuit. His self-directed, self-starring inaugural production for Always Good Film Co. Ltd., *Carry On Pickpocket*, features a contemporary setting. Instead of the usual train-and-fight story common in martial arts films, he introduced dangerous stunts such as car hopping, vehicle fighting, and high-altitude leaps. These innovations brought him great commercial success. In 1983, which is not covered in this book, he went on to present a new hit for Golden Harvest, *Winners & Sinners*.

As a major cinema circuit for Hong Kong films, Gala Circuit not only profited from Golden Harvest's productions, but also fostered long-term partnerships with capable independent production companies. One of them was Ng See-yuen's Seasonal Film Corporation. Two of their most commercially successful films in 1978, *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Drunken Master*, were screened on the Gala Circuit, whereas *The Butterfly Murders* (1979) and *We're Going to Eat You* (1980), both directed by Tsui Hark, were screened at Golden Princess Circuit with limited success. Seasonal Film returned to Gala in 1981, and released *The Sweet and Sour Cops* (1981), *Legend of a Fighter* (1982), *The Sweet and Sour Cops (Part II)* (1982), and *Ninja in the Dragon's Den* (1982). Liu Wai-hung and Kent Cheng were the leads in the two *The Sweet and Sour Cops* films—while the casting choice was not particularly remarkable, the films nonetheless grossed a surprising sum of HK\$4.72 million and HK\$5.59 million. *Ninja in the Dragon's Den*, directed by Corey Yuen Kwai, earned HK\$7.59 million, which was a very impressive figure for an independent production.

Aside from Seasonal Film, Gala Circuit also brought in Vicky Leung's Pearl City Films Ltd as a collaborative partner. Their inaugural production was the highly successful *Cops and Robbers* (1979). From 1980 they boldly invested in emergent directors and were commercially rewarded with quality productions such as *The Saviour* (1980), *The Beasts* (1980), and *The Story of Woo Viet* (1981). Pearl City later worked with Johnny Mak to produce *Lonely Fifteen* (1982) and *Happy Sixteen* (1982). *Lonely Fifteen* became a blockbuster with a record-breaking box office record of

HK\$10.33 million—something that even major companies such as Shaw Brothers could not achieve. Shifting sights from television to film production, Mak became a long-term collaborator with Gala, with his films screening exclusively on the circuit. Mak would go on to receive more investment from Golden Harvest.

Two animated films produced by Wu Sau-yee's Hong Kong Film Services, *Older Master Cute* (1981) and *Older Master Cute Part 2* (1982), were screened across the Gala Circuit and respectively grossed HK\$4.55 million and HK\$5.86 million. *Older Master Cute* was Hong Kong's first ever animated full-length film. The two films did well at the box office and are of special significance in the history of Hong Kong cinema. Faced with a strong challenge from the Golden Princess Circuit, Gala Circuit continued to grow alongside their competitor. This fierce competition between these two circuits, as well as the production competition between Golden Harvest and Cinema City, were the main driving forces behind the Hong Kong film industry's development in the 1980s.

The Shaw Circuit's Conservative Response Contrary to Golden Harvest's effort to innovate in the face of competition, the resourceful Shaw Brothers adopted a more conservative approach. From 1980 to 1982, Shaw Brothers released no fewer than 27 films every year, more than double the output of Golden Harvest or Cinema City. However, they often had modest success at the box office, with the better-performing films ranked quite low in the annual top ten Chinese-language films box office rankings: in 1980 their *Disco Bumpkins* (1980) grossed HK\$4.08 million and was ranked seventh; in 1981 three of their films made the list—*Mahjong Heroes* (HK\$6.49 million, ranked fifth), *Challenge of the Gamesters* (HK\$5.08 million, ranked ninth), and *Martial Club* (HK\$5.07 million, ranked tenth); in 1982 *Legendary Weapons of China* ranked tenth, grossing HK\$9.91 million. There were more than ten local films grossing over HK\$10 million at the box office in 1982, but none were produced by Shaw Brothers.

Some of the once popular genres—such as erotic films produced by Li Han-hsiang, martial arts films by Chang Cheh, or screen adaptation of Gu Long's works by Chor Yuen—were still being produced, but they lacked fresh ideas and began to look dated. The trend of adapting Jin Yong and Gu Long's novels to TV dramas was still very much alive then, but Shaw Brothers, despite owning the rights to most of Jin Yong and Gu Long's works, failed to produce exciting adaptations in the 1980s. Even a subject as popular as *Brave Archer and His Mate* (1982), produced by Chang Cheh for Shaw Brothers, grossed only a modest sum of HK\$ 1.63 million. Among the more established directors at Shaw Brothers, only Lau Kar-leung could produce new films with guaranteed box office success—indeed the best earning film released by Shaw Brothers in those three years was Lau's *Legendary Weapons of China*.

Shaw Brothers however did recruit a number of new directors in the late 1970s. Their unique selection strategy favoured talents from Taiwan, such as Kuei Chih-hung, and later Sun Chung, Hua Shan, and Mou Tun-fei. Kuei's early horror films such as *Hex* (1980), *Hex Vs Witchcraft* (1980), and *Bewitched* (1981) did reasonably well at the box office. Shaw Brothers also began to recruit local directors with backgrounds in television, such as Chan Kar-suen, Lee Pui-kuen, Clifford Choi Kai-kwong, and Taylor Wong. Chan's *Disco Bumpkins* (1980) and Lee's *Mahjong Heroes* (1981) were Shaw Brothers' biggest earning films in their respective years of release. Shaw Brothers'

biggest success, however, was discovering Wong Jing. Wong started as a screenwriter and proved that he could also direct films. His directorial debut at Shaw Brothers, *Challenge of the Gamblers* (1981), was the company's second highest earning film that year. That same year he wrote the commercially successful *Mahjong Heroes* and *The Treasure Hunters*. Until Shaw Brothers ended their cinema business in 1985, Wong's films, whether with him as the screenwriter or the director, had consistently been box office hits. Shaw Brothers went on to introduce more talented new directors after 1983, although that is beyond the scope of this book.

Despite being less responsive and adaptive to challenges, Shaw Brothers remained competitive. For a while, the three cinema circuits formed a triumvirate and competed in an open environment, creating beneficial conditions for the continued growth of Hong Kong cinema.

The Development of Left-Wing Film Companies Besides the three circuits and the development of their associated production companies, another integral part of Hong Kong's film industry was the re-emergence of the three left-wing production companies: The Great Wall Movie Enterprises Ltd, Feng Huang Motion Picture Co, and Sun Luen Film Company. These three companies paused development during the Cultural Revolution. Only after did they readjust their production strategy and shine again around 1980 to 1982. After years of stagnation, the three companies proactively recruited and supported new actors and directors to complement their aging talents. New actors included Henry Fong Ping, Nina Paw Hee-ching, Leanne Liu Hsueh-hua, Newton Lai Hon-chi, and Ha Bing-sam. As for directors, the first to migrate from television was Stephen Shin, who directed *Affairs* in 1979 and later *Innocence* (1980) and *Eclipse* (1982). Shooting for *Innocence* took place in Japan, and featured Japanese actors Tetsuro Tamba and Yasuaki Kurata, something that was unimaginable in the past. Other directors with television background included Johnnie To and Allen Fong, who respectively directed *The Enigmatic Case* (1980) and *Father and Son* (1981) for Feng Huang.

The left-wing film companies held an advantage in the market, as they were the only ones allowed to film in Mainland China at the time. Documentaries about sights and customs in China were their speciality—some successful films include *Xinjiang 'Yar-Chk-See'* (1981) and *Wonderful Sichuan* (1982). Besides documentaries, shooting for most left-wing productions tended to take place in the Mainland, especially for *wuxia* films. This included the screen adaptation of Liang Yusheng's novel *Guangling Sword, To Kill the Big Villain in Mt. Tai* (1980) which was famously shot at the actual Mount Tai, Johnnie To's *The Enigmatic Case* which was shot in Northern Guangdong, as well as *White Haired Devil Lady* (1980) which showcased sceneries from Mount Huangshan. The biggest success, however, was Chung Yuen Film Production Company's *The Shaolin Temple* (1982). Besides shooting at the actual Shaolin Temple, the cast was specially selected from the Mainland martial arts team rather than actors from left-wing companies in Hong Kong. The national martial arts champion Jet Li was cast as the male lead, alongside other martial talents such as Yu Hai, Yu Chenghui, Hu Jianqiang, and Ji Chunhua. The highly-difficult martial arts techniques featured in the film's fighting scenes were a fresh experience to Hong Kong audiences. The film was released during the Chinese New Year and grossed an impressive amount of HK\$16.16 million. It was the fourth best-selling Chinese film that year, the best result ever achieved by a left-wing production company. The film also introduced the future

marital arts superstar Jet Li to the world.

The left-wing film companies screened their films on their own South China-Nanyang Cinema Circuit. As there were not enough left-wing productions to sustain the circuit, South China-Nanyang Circuit screened mainly productions filmed in the Mainland. However, they began to shift their screening strategy over those few years, taking on commercial films made in Hong Kong, such as Bang Bang Film Production's *Do-Re-Me* (1980) and *Charlie's Bubble* (1981). At the same time, Hsia Moon, an actress who made her fame at The Great Wall Movie Enterprises Ltd, founded Bluebird Movie Enterprises Ltd. and invested in Ann Hui's *Boat People* (1982). The critically acclaimed film was shot in Hainan Island and grossed HK\$15.43 million, second only to *The Shaolin Temple*. The combined earnings of the two films from South China-Nanyang Cinema Circuit exceeded HK\$30 million. That same year, the three left-wing companies—Great Wall, Feng Huang, and Sun Luen—merged to form the Sil-Metropole Organisation Ltd., which Southern Film Corporation subsequently joined.

Looking back, the Chinese New Year of 1982 was a historic moment. Golden Princess Circuit released Cinema City's *Aces Go Places*, Gala Circuit released Jackie Chan's *Dragon Lord*, Shaw Circuit released Lau Kar-leung's *Legendary Weapons of China*, South China-Nanyang Circuit released Jet Li-starred *The Shaolin Temple*. Each of these films were illustrious in their own right, and every circuit had record-breaking earnings—the whole industry was prosperous. The overall box office earnings in Hong Kong from 1980 to 1982 were increasing year on year, and 1982 was the year the made the most significant advance. There was only one film grossing more than HK\$10 million in 1980—that number jumped to nine in 1982. In 1980, a film grossing less than HK\$3 million could make it to the top 20 highest earning film that year, whereas in 1982 the bar rose to at least HK\$5 million. All these are testaments to Hong Kong film industry's rapid development.

II.

The Rise and Accomplishments of New Directors Concurrent to the industry's prosperity was the emergence of many young directorial talents from 1980 to 1982. The majority of them had a background in television. The 1970s was a time when the emerging television industry saw rapid development and attracted many young people who studied filmmaking in Hong Kong or elsewhere. Television stations had a much higher output per hour than even the largest film production company (such as Shaw Brothers), and trained many more experienced screenwriters and directors. Despite working with less time and resources than film productions would offer, this group of talented and energetic screenwriters and directors were able to produce television works that were innovative, topical and profound. Among them, Patrick Tam, Ann Hui, Tsui Hark, Yim Ho, and Allen Fong caught the film industry's attention. In 1979, some independent companies, less risk-averse than the big production companies, boldly recruited these new directors, giving rise to films including Seasonal Film Corporation's *The Butterfly Murders* directed by Tsui Hark; Pearl City Films Ltd's inaugural film *Cops and Robbers* by Alex Cheung Kwok-ming; Unique Films Limited's *The Secret* (1979) by Ann Hui; and Bang Bang Film Production's *The Servant* (1979) by Ronny Yu Yan-tai and Philip Chan. The two crime thrillers *Cops and Robbers* and *The Servant* did quite well at the box office, whereas the critically

acclaimed *The Butterfly Murders* and *The Secret* were less commercially successful than anticipated. These directors continued to draw industry attention and produce new works between 1980 and 1982.

The success of these films paved the way for larger film companies to recruit more directors from television. 1980 to 1982 saw the release of films in which many such talents made their directorial debut, including Dennis Yu's *See-Bar* (1980), Lau Shing-hon's *House of the Lute* (1980), Johnnie To's *The Enigmatic Case*, Patrick Tam's *The Sword* (1980), Clifford Choi's *Encore* (1980), Allan Fung's *A Grand Statement* (1981), Taylor Wong's *Return of the Deadly Blade* (1981), Allen Fong's *Father and Son*, Wong Jing's *Challenge of the Gamesters*, Rachel Zen's *Cream Soda & Milk* (1981), Shu Kei's *Sealed with a Kiss* (1981), Clarence Fok's *Job Hunter* (1981), Wong Chi's *Krazy Kops* (1981), Cheuk Pak-tong's *The Security* (1981), Kirk Wong's *The Club*, Ng Siu-wan's *Once Upon a Rainbow* (1982), David Lai's *Lonely Fifteen*, Terry Tong's *Coolie Killer*, Tommy Fan Sau-ming's *The Gang of Five* (1982), Albert Lai's *Young Dreams* (1982), King Hoi-lam's *The Pure and the Evil* (1982), Lee Yuen-for's *The Story of Women* (1982), and Michael Mak's *Happy Sixteen*. Stephen Shin and Yim Ho also released new works.

Despite sharing similar backgrounds, these young directors had varied mindsets and skills. Some immersed themselves fully into the film industry, while others merely viewed it as part-time employment outside of their work in television. Some pursued serious artistic interests while some attempted to create innovative commercial films; some were good at catering to audience preferences, and some were simply efficient and experienced technicians. Talents such as Johnny Mak, Stephen Shiu and Leung Lap-yan migrated from television to become film producers rather than directors. Johnny Mak's style from his television work permeates in *Lonely Fifteen* which he was the producer of. Over those few years, directorial experience in television almost became the prerequisite of become a film director. This recruiting trend helped elevate young talents within the industry, such as Alfred Cheung who directed *Monkey Business* (1982), Corey Yuen Kwai who directed *Ninja in the Dragon's Den*, Nam Nai-choi who directed *Brothers from Walled City* (1982), Danny Lee who directed *Funny Boys*, and Frankie Chan who directed *The Perfect Match* (1982). In just three years, the film industry in Hong Kong became led by young directors, inspiring even more new talents to follow their footsteps. This has been one of the key factors behind the dynamic and innovative nature of Hong Kong's film industry.

We have thus far discussed the key phenomena in the film industry from 1980 to 1982, but it is worth noting that there are multiple facets to filmmaking. When discussing these young directors, it is important to not just focus on their commercial success, but also their achievements and impact on arts and culture. Some of them performed exceptionally in that regard.

Ann Hui saw both commercial and artistic success. Following her directorial debut, *The Secret*, she directed *The Spooky Bunch*, *The Story of Woo Viet*, and *Boat People*. All three achieved great commercial success, especially *Boat People*, without compromising a shred of Hui's humanistic values. *Boat People* was a masterpiece of its time—in portraying the reality of Vietnamese refugees faced by Hong Kong, the film subtly reflected the historic changes that the city was about to undergo. With its a grand vision that displays both breadth and depth, the film showcases Hui's ability to

handle complicated scenes as well as in-depth portrayal of human nature.

Tsui Hark's two films since *The Butterfly Murders*, *We're Going to Eat You* and *Dangerous Encounter – 1st Kind* (1980), both portray a society rife with violence and insanity. The pessimism and film noir elements displayed in *Dangerous Encounter – 1st Kind* were rarely seen in Hong Kong films at the time. It was banned by Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), despite the film company's protests. Tsui later added new scenes and further edited the film. The original Chinese title of the film was also slightly amended. TELA allowed its public screening after drastic changes were made to the plot. The dark tone of the original corresponded to Hong Kong's underlying repression at the time. While toned down, the edited version still retained its impact and set itself apart from other Hong Kong films despite not performing too well at the box office. When Tsui joined Cinema City the following year, he devoted himself to producing mainstream commercial films—finding his first box office success with the retro style comedy *All the Wrong Clues (...For the Right Solution)*. Tsui subsequently created several trend-setting films, becoming one of the most successful Hong Kong directors in producing mainstream commercial films.

Father and Son directed by Allen Fong carries on the left-wing's societal concerns and portrays the realistic spirit of ordinary individuals, but also breaks free of the old-school narrative favoured by the left, resulting in a natural and meticulous style. The film paints a non-idealised picture of personal growth—even personality flaws such as stubborn sexism are brought to life in the film. Patrick Tam's *Nomad* innovatively used bold colours, meticulously crafted composition, themes of sexual exploration, clever set design, as well as the decadent beauty the four young actors brought to the screen. Despite its disjointed plot and style, the film looks and feels fresh to this day. Alex Cheung's *Man on the Brink* depicts a young police officer who experiences an identity crisis and questions his allegiance after going undercover as a triad member. Its realistic performance style, rich scenes, and an ironic climax at the end resonated with all types of audiences, becoming the golden standard for later undercover police films.

Overall, the outstanding works by new directors of the post-war generation not only introduced innovative film aesthetics, but also reflected their experience in Hong Kong, showcasing clashes of different worldviews—from cultural differences and wealth disparity, to considerations on form and content—they displayed a sense of anxiety about the future and contributed to the development of a new paradigm in Hong Kong cinema.

Continued Emergence of Film Talent Besides directorial talent, the influx of professionals from television work also brought in several notable new screenwriters. Joyce Chan was a renowned television screenwriter who had produced numerous excellent series and dramas. She collaborated with Patrick Tam on a number of famous television works. Ann Hui's first two films *The Secret* and *The Spooky Bunch* were written by Joyce Chan. She was also the screenwriter of Patrick Tam's *Love Massacre* (1981) and *Nomad* (as co-writer). Lee Ten was another screenwriter and film critic who was active at the time. He mostly co-wrote genre films with other screenwriters, such as *Cops and Robbers*, *The Beasts*, *The Imp*, and *Marianna*. Other screenwriters from similar backgrounds included Chen Fang, Wong Jing, Cheng Yu, Leung Lap-yan, Hoi Dik, Shu Kei, and Lillian Lee. Film directors would also recruit people they had worked with in television, such as photographer David Chung (*The Secret*, *Dangerous*

Encounter – 1st Kind, Father and Son), Bill Wong (*The Story of Woo Viet, All the Wrong Clues [...For the Right Solution]*, *Nomad*), and film editor Sammy Chow Cheung-kan (*Dangerous Encounter – 1st Kind, Father and Son, The Security*).

The period also saw the emergence of television actors who showed great promise before their later rise to fame. Chow Yun-fat was one of TVB's most popular actors at the time. After starring in a slew of low-profile films, Chow got a serious and challenging role in *The Story of Woo Viet*—a Vietnamese refugee-turned Filipino hitman, demonstrating his nuanced performance. Singer-turned-actor George Lam also thrived in the film industry, starting with his memorable role in the commercially successful *Disco Bumpkins*, he developed his idiosyncratic humour and comedic rhythm in *All the Wrong Clues (...For the Right Solution)*. By constructing distinctive comedic personas of the middle class, Lam became the go-to comedian in productions by Cinema City and D & B Films Co., Ltd. His remarkable performance as the Japanese journalist Shiomi Akutagawa in *Boat People* also won him much acclaim. Also starring in *Boat People* was Andy Lau, an emerging acting talent trained by TVB. Lau, despite his young age, had a firm grip on the character with a tired soul, and infused the role with his own charm. Equally young and handsome but with a rebellious twist, Leslie Cheung was another emergent actor trained by Rediffusion Television (RTV). Cheung starred in several teen films, a genre which was very popular at the time, such as *Encore*, *Job Hunter* and *Teenage Dreamer* (1982). He also demonstrated exceptional sensitivity and decadent charm as the character Louis in the film *Nomad*. However, these young television stars still had to wait for a few more years, before their ascent to superstar status.

Within the film industry, there were talents who seized on the opportunities over these three years. Chiu Kang-chien, who had moved from Taiwan to Hong Kong for years, wrote several acclaimed productions for the young directors, such as *The Story of Woo Viet* (as 'script consultant'), *Coolie Killer* (co-screenwriter), *Boat People*, and *Nomad* (co-screenwriter). He also later worked with Stanley Kwan and Tony Au to create several film classics, and became an esteemed screenwriter in Hong Kong cinema. As for actors, Dean Shek and Karl Maka attained superstar status in these three years; others —such as Kara Wai, Cecilia Yip, Pat Ha, Season Ma, Irene Wan, and Kenny Bee, Alan Tam, both once developed solo career in Taiwan—also began to shine and would soon become integral members of the film industry.

III.

Venturing into Western Cinema Another interesting development in Hong Kong cinema over these three years was its successful investment in Western cinema. Following the success of the martial arts film *Enter the Dragon* (1973), Golden Harvest had been investing in Western cinema, and tried to promote Jackie Chan to the American market as the new Bruce Lee in *Battle Creek Brawl* (aka: *The Big Brawl*) (1980), with limited box office earnings. However, just a year later, they finally struck the right chord in the United State with *The Cannonball Run* (1981), which featured Burt Reynolds as the lead with Jackie Chan and Michael Hui as sidekicks. The film grossed US\$ 72.18 million and was the sixth best-selling film in the U.S. that year, which was a remarkable achievement. Raymond Chow (founder of Golden Harvest) was not alone in venturing into the U.S. market—Run Run Shaw (founder of Shaw

Brothers) personally invested in the American sci-fi film *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott and starring Harrison Ford. Despite its unimpressive box office earnings, the film stood the test of time and became a sci-fi classic with a massive following today.

Birth of the Hong Kong Film Awards 1982 saw the birth of the Hong Kong Film Awards. It was founded by the *City Entertainment Magazine* which began circulation in 11 January 1979. Voting was initially open only to film critics. The inaugural Hong Kong Film Awards took place at the Hong Kong Arts Centre on 9 March 1982 with five award categories: Best Film (*Father and Son*), Best Director (Allen Fong, *Father and Son*), Best Screenplay (Alfred Cheung, *The Story of Woo Viet*), Best Actor (Michael Hui, *Security Unlimited*), and Best Actress (Kara Wai, *My Young Auntie* [1981]). In the ensuing decades, the Awards witnessed big changes in terms of organiser, voting method, structure, and award categories. Today, it is one of the most preeminent film awards ceremonies for promoting Hong Kong cinema, and its awards are well respected far and wide.

Summary All the above are but the most obvious observations from the film records collated in *Hong Kong Filmography* Volume IX—there are still many more interesting developments in the history of Hong Kong cinema, waiting to be discovered and explored.

Notes

1. The box office figures referenced in this article are extracted from ‘Box Office Records of First-run Films, 1969–1989’ (Hong Kong: *City Entertainment Magazine*, 1990) and *Golden Harvest: Leading Change in Changing Times* (Hong Kong Film Archive, 2013).
2. The first film screened on the Golden Harvest Cinema Circuit was *Enter the Dragon*, on 30 December 1972. In line with industry practice, the screening of the film and the establishment of Gala Cinema Circuit are considered events of 1973.
3. For more about the emergence of the Golden Princess Cinema Circuit and its relationship with Cinema City, see the essay ‘The Changing Business of Cinema Circuits in the 1970s and the Rise of Golden Princess and Cinema City’ in *The Essence of Entertainment: Cinema City's Glory Days*, eds. May Ng, Wong Ha-pak (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2016), 28 – 45.

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