

Foreword

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Whenever we travel overseas, we always bring along a map if not on an organised tour. With the map at hand, the trip is no longer a mere routine of hopping from one tourist attraction to the next; instead, it unfolds on a surface, where we catch a wider view of all the spots and the distances in between them.

A complete filmography is like a ‘time map’ of films; putting films together in chronological order naturally forms an outline of a film industry, and this is something I felt strongly while researching Amoy- and Chaozhou-dialect films. Information about these regional cinemas is utterly lacking. However, once we gathered data about the individual movies, including the production company, executive producer, producer, director, cast, genre etc, and compiled a list according to the release date, the trajectory of the entire industry came into view – the lifespan of production companies, the career path of actors, as well as the rise and fall of different studios, subject matters and creative styles. And with the addition of relevant resources, the whole picture became easier to grasp.

Volume 8 of the *Hong Kong Filmography* series encompasses all motion pictures produced in Hong Kong between 1975 and 1979. Judging by the completeness of information, every volume of the series goes from strength to strength, particularly in terms of audiovisual materials such as film print, videotape, and laser disc which can be made available with more ease. Volume 8 is especially substantial in this regard. Of all the movies it contains, only 10 percent come without visual materials, the smallest proportion among all the previous volumes, and for the most part, such films are relatively unimportant works. Only a handful of major film titles are not accompanied by visual materials: *Lam Ah Chun* (1978) is one that I managed to spot. More complete and accurate than ever, the current volume has laid solid groundwork for research efforts in the future.

As the eighth instalment of the *Hong Kong Filmography* series, the present volume can also be called the second part of Volume 7, since the two combine to cover Hong Kong cinema of the entire 1970s. In 1984, the Hong Kong International Film Festival published *A Study of Hong Kong Films of the 1970s*, which carries in-depth discourses on some major figures and phenomena in Hong Kong cinema during that time. The book is a precursor to research of its kind and many of the essays still come across as insightful after all these years. Now with a more complete filmography however, it becomes clear that there are still quite some areas these essays have yet to touch upon. In what follows, I am not going to mention any other phenomena in that period but, with one or two examples, to present the linkage

between such separate occurrences.

1) The rise of a great comedian

In the second half of the 1970s, the most significant happening in Hong Kong cinema was surely Michael Hui's meteoric rise to superstardom, his iconic status comparable to Bruce Lee's in the first half of the decade. Ever since *Games Gamblers Play*, the comedy which he directed, wrote and starred in, netted over HK\$6 million in 1974, his other self-created vehicles, namely *The Last Message* (1975), *The Private Eyes* (1976), *The Contract* (1978), and *Security Unlimited* (1981), all became the highest grossers of the respective years, with *Games Gamblers Play*, *The Private Eyes* and *Security Unlimited* breaking box-office records by huge margins. Hui's popularity during this period was indisputably unsurpassed.

Besides box-office figures, here is another example to manifest the potency of Michael Hui's cinema. *Pretty Swindler* (produced by Goldig, 1975), *Big Brother Cheng* (produced by Shaw Brothers, 1975) and *On Probation* (produced by Eternal, 1977), all entered in this volume, each contains a subplot where a character deftly deceives someone else; and every time the sequence is concluded by a line of the lyrics from *Games Gamblers Play*'s theme song: 'A conman makes bigger bucks than the king for sure!' Even Shaw Brothers, the archrival of Golden Harvest (the production company of *Games Gamblers Play*), did not shy away from making this reference. This is indeed a measure of the sweeping influence of the classic.

To and fro between TV and film

Michael Hui owes much of his success to the fact that the TV industry emerged to take the lead in shaping popular culture. His status as a master comedian dates not back to film but his appearance in *The Hui Brothers Show* for Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB). Compared with Mandarin comedy films, *The Hui Brothers Show* is more gag-packed, and the gags are told in ways that are more innovative and effective – usually done in just five or six lines – a lot more entertaining than the skits in the TV variety show, *Enjoy Yourself Tonight* back then. *The Hui Brothers Show* held the Hong Kong people captive as soon as it was aired. Central to its success was Michael Hui's performance as he exchanged witty retorts with his singer younger brother Sam Hui; even when paired with other actors, Michael Hui was just as accomplished with his side-splitting repartees. With such a huge following established early on, he went on to break box-office records instantly with the debut film over which he had full creative control.

Michael Hui was only one of the many successful examples of TV actors who extended their popularity to film. It is director Chor Yuen's *The House of 72 Tenants*

(1973) that illustrated for the first time the power of TV culture in the 1970s. Originally a stage play starring a host of TV artistes, Shaw Brothers added a few of its actors to the lineup and adapted the play to the big screen. As it happened, the eventual film, released in Cantonese, broke the box-office records of Bruce Lee's *The Way of the Dragon* (1972). The film's success was largely due to the stellar cast of TV personalities, namely Lydia Sum, Ivan Ho, Leung Tin, Adam Cheng, To Ping *et al.*

The following years saw scores of imitators featuring TV stars, such as *Fun, Hong Kong Style* (1974), *The Tenants of Talkative Street* (1974), *My Darling Slave* (1974), and *Star Wonderfun* (1976). Some famous TV persona who made it on the big screen included the Country Bumpkin character played by Tam Bing-man, and Mau the Street Sweeper by Lee Tim-shing. First acting in Cantonese films, Tam went on to make a name for himself with his TV performances after Cantonese cinema slipped into a downturn. His experience was testimony to the sway TV held in entertainment trends. Michael Hui's success in film in the 1970s was certainly a result of this social background.

The appeal of TV artistes was, however, not as long-lasting as it was expected. Films starring TV actors did create a fad but box-office hits were far and few between. Michael Hui's rise to megastardom and his continued box-office firepower was quite an exception in the 1970s. Another example was Josephine Siao, whose charmingly dizzy Lam Ah Chun persona on TV made her a hotshot comedienne in films. In the late 1970s, TV actors no longer had any advantage in film acting; even big names such as Adam Cheng, Liza Wang, Chow Yun-fat and Damian Lau did not reap much success in film. On the other hand, TV eventually became the final home for many Cantonese film actors, such as Wong Man-lei, Cheung Wood-yau, Ning Meng, Pak Yan, Miu Kam-fung, Lo Dun, Cheung Ying, Lee Hang, Lee Ngan, Mui Lan and Chan Wai-yu, who continued with their screen careers on the box. Some actors shifted to the other side of the camera and became dubbing artists, including Ding Yue, Paul Chu, Kam Lui, Cheung Ying-choi, Lam Tin and Chow Luen; yet others broke the mould and gained even bigger fame in their TV days, such as Sek Kin, Lee Hong-kum, Kwan Hoi-shan and Chan Lap-bun.

The immediate result of Michael Hui's success was that Golden Harvest regained its trump card following the loss of Bruce Lee. The studio's success had much to do with the far-sightedness and broad vision of its owners who dared to use new talents, but the presence of Bruce Lee, in actual fact, was more of a stroke of luck. Lee's sudden death in 1973 made it doubtful whether Golden Harvest could stay afloat. Except director Lo Wei's productions which sold relatively better, prospects looked rather dim for the studio, as it was plagued by such box-office flops as Anthony Lau Wing's *The Manchu Boxer* (1974) which made less than HK\$200,000. *Games*

Gamblers Play made Michael Hui a money-spinner and laid a solid foundation for the studio's future. By the late 1970s, Golden Harvest had already beaten Shaw Brothers as the industry leader; and throughout the 1980s and 90s, Golden Harvest managed to safeguard its status as a big studio that went unchallenged by the newcomers to the profession. Michael Hui's rise to fame proved the mettle of Golden Harvest, which would go on to become a pillar of the industry; its presence also broke the monopoly of Shaw Brothers and such competition in the market was instrumental in the boom of Hong Kong cinema.

Breakthrough in comedy films

Michael Hui has brought multiple breakthroughs to Hong Kong comedy films. Firstly, he proved to all that comedians can also become superstars. By then, comedy actors in Cantonese cinema, most notably Leung Sing-po, Yee Chau-shui, Tang Bik-wan and Tam Lan-hing, had never achieved the status as Hui's. Sun Ma Si-tsang was indeed a big star who also did comedies, but his fame was largely the result of his accomplishments as a Cantonese opera divo. Their contemporaries in Mandarin cinema such as Liu Enjia and Chiang Kuang-chao, on the other hand, only played supporting roles at best, as opposed to Michael Hui who put the comedian on a pedestal. Likewise, Hui's success also shows that comedy is indeed serious business. Before him, Chor Yuen had directed a few outstanding comedies, and so had Li Han-hsiang; comedy, however, was never meant to be their real aspirations. Hui's emergence made it clear that comedy could at once be a lucrative and respectable endeavour. During the commercial boom of Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s and 90s, action and comedy became two keys to success. While action dates back to martial arts movies of the 1960s, it is Michael Hui who made comedy a force to be reckoned with.

The tracks left by Michael Hui in the development of Hong Kong comedy films can be traced. Following the runaway victory of *The Private Eyes*, John Woo cast Ricky Hui, who played a supporting yet important part in it, as well as the up-and-coming comedian Richard Ng in the leads of *The Pilferers' Progress* (1977). The film, as it turned out, scored HK\$6 million as the box-office champion of the year. While taking his cues from Michael Hui, Woo made a conscious attempt to push the envelope. His comedies are not only packed with fast-paced gags, as in Hui's works, but are peopled with even more cartoonish characters, all the while complemented by a liberal dose of special effects. His another money-grosser, *Follow the Star* (1978), emphasises exaggerated antics and special effects at the expense of characterisation and dialogue. *Laughing Time* (1980), Cinema City's debut film, was another comedy he made along those lines. The studio then took another step forward with *Aces Go*

Places (1982) which, on top of quick gags, stunning effects and lavish production values, shines with the sharp-tongued dialogue *à la* Michael Hui. The film's success was also down to its hero Sam Hui, Michael Hui's longtime comedy partner.¹

The second boom of Cantonese cinema

A key element that set Michael Hui's comedies apart is the language – that's Cantonese – in use. When it comes to discussing the revival of Hong Kong Cantonese cinema, the sales performance of *The House of 72 Tenants* is often cited as the main cause. However, as mentioned above, the Cantonese-speaking ensemble films that jumped on the bandwagon had limited success in monetary terms; and the prominence of Mandarin productions remained unchallenged as Cantonese was only used by TV artistes. Not until the arrival of *Games Gamblers Play* did a new school of Cantonese film come into being, with dialogues and lyrics all written in vernacular and playful language. This formed the basis for Hong Kong-style comedies and paved the way for a renewed boom of Cantonese cinema.

Michael Hui's career itself is a lucid account of the value of the Cantonese dialect in comedies. His first foray from TV into film was *The Warlord* (1972), a Mandarin comedy directed by Li Han-hsiang. It reaped \$3 million as Shaw Brothers' bestseller that year, only topped by Golden Harvest's Bruce Lee movies. Next came *The Happiest Moment* (1973), *Scandal* (1974) and *Sinful Confession* (1974), which proved to be not as profitable as before. One problem about these comedies is that Hui's voice was dubbed into Mandarin. Even though Li Han-hsiang had a knack for comedies, the essence of the dialogues lies in the northern Chinese flavor they contain, which is inevitably a barrier to local Hong Kongers. In *Games Gamblers Play*, the tongue-in-cheek Cantonese lines were all spoken by Michael Hui in his own voice, and the film broke box-office records upon release. Ever since, indigenous Cantonese and Hong Kong-made comedies became inseparable from each other. The rise of 'knockabout chopsockies' is one such example.

The 'knockabout chopsocky'

The success of Michael Hui's comedies partly accounts for the genesis of the knockabout chopsocky. The likes of Sammo Hung's *The Iron-Fisted Monk* (1977) and Jackie Chan's *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) and *Drunken Master* (1978), soon after theatrical release, came to be known as knockabout chopsockies. Unlike the comedic tone and acrobatics that are readily noticeable, the fact that these chopsockies were dubbed in Cantonese has long been overlooked. In comparison, just a few months before *The Iron-Fisted Monk* came to theatres, the hardcore *wuxia* film, director Huang Feng's *The Shaolin Plot* (1977; Sammo Hung as action choreographer)

was still shot in Mandarin; many counterparts of *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*, such as another Jackie Chan vehicle *Snake and Crane Arts of Shaolin* (1978), were Mandarin-speaking titles. The Cantonese language, as mentioned in the previous section, is part and parcel of Hong Kong comedy. Therefore, even though Lau Kar-leung's *The Spiritual Boxer* (1975) is essentially a kung fu comedy, back in the day it was not referred to as a knockabout chopsocky, precisely because it was shot in Mandarin. The common perception was that Cantonese would strike a more responsive chord with the audience when it comes to comedy.²

On top of Michael Hui's influence, developments of the TV industry also had a part to play in the success of knockabout chopsockies. The point in question is Cantonese dubbing. As opposed to the older Cantonese films which were shot in sync sound, those that became popular in the 1970s were dubbed in post-production, often voiced by someone other than the original actor. This became the order of the day through the 1970s and 80s, and began to change only from mid-1990s. The voice actors were hired part time from the dubbing sections of the two TV stations (TVB and ATV), with those from TVB in greater demand. The TV industry had thus nurtured a huge pool of voice talents, which duly fulfilled the needs of the filmmaking industry. Take Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan, two superstars of the knockabout chopsocky, for example. Although they spoke perfect Cantonese, their parts have long been voiced by someone else ever since they became famous – Tang Wing-hung for Jackie Chan and Lam Pou-chuen for Sammo Hung. These two dubbing professionals contributed considerably to the performance of the two superstars.

From the success story of Michael Hui, we came to notice the mutual influence between TV and film, the rise of Golden Harvest to break Shaw Brothers' monopoly, the growing status of comedy as a major film genre, as well as the dominance of the Cantonese dialect over Mandarin. Individual phenomena are thus linked up to form a broader view of the film scene. What follows is something else that is worth talking about.

2) The trend of realist crime dramas

During the second half of the 1970s, Ng See-yuen's *Anti-Corruption* (1975) was one of the films that had a defining influence. It earned \$2.5 million, just second to the top grosser, *The Last Message*. Rather than box-office results, the film was important in that it ushered in a creative approach that drew inspirations from news stories with shock values, especially those related to criminal activities. Although dramatisation was inevitable, such productions emphasised realism and were shot mostly on location rather than in studio (other than Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest, there were hardly any other production companies with such facilities). This sparked off a

variety of trends in 1970s Hong Kong cinema.

Anti-Corruption also had a social background specific to it. During the 1960s, social realism had always been an integral part of Cantonese cinema. There were no lack of social issue films that addressed housing problem, water shortage, drug abuse, rehabilitation of ex-convicts, juvenile delinquency and more, but none of such movies had yet to claim themselves as adaptations of real-life events. The newfound attention to news stories also had something to do with the establishment of TVB, whose news reportage affected public perception to the extent that film was considered a mere re-enactment of reality as it was first reported on TV.³ One year prior to the release of *Anti-Corruption*, Shaw Brothers brought out *Kidnap* (1974), a box-office draw that was based on the lives of real-life criminals, the ‘Three Wolves’. However, by the time the film was completed, the news story was no longer new; and the film was shot mainly in studio with little sense of realism to speak of. *Anti-Corruption* was the very film that truly pioneered a wave, since it dealt with the latest social controversies and captured the most significant happening in the 1970s – the inauguration of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in 1974.

From movies of the 1970s, it can be seen that two news events had left an indelible mark on Hong Kongers – the stock market crash in 1973, and the founding of ICAC. *Hong Kong 73* (1974), a box-office blockbuster directed by Chor Yuen, is a send-up on the widespread stock speculations among Hong Kongers; Michael Hui’s *The Last Message* portrays how the frenzy was driving people crazy. The financial disaster didn’t just appear in films that treated it as the main theme, but in the subplot of many other films. ICAC was also a frequent existence in 1970s Hong Kong films, including many cop films and gangster flicks. Mou Tun-fei’s *Bank-Busters* (1978), a Shaw Brothers production, is the first ever motion picture about the ‘big circle boys’ who came from Guangzhou to rob in Hong Kong. The ending sees the robbers being shot dead by the police, and the only surviving member, before he dies, makes an arduous effort to hand in proof of police corruption to the ICAC office – an illustration of ICAC’s exalted position as the final guardian of justice. Of all the 1970s films that touched upon ICAC, there is not even one single occasion of an ICAC officer playing the antagonist. Its high moral status among Hong Kongers back then is there for all to see.

Here is an episode that sheds light on the achievements of *Anti-Corruption*. As the film opens, a novice police officer is seen patrolling the streets together with a veteran, who teaches him some slang terms in the criminal underworld – *tiu fui* (literally ‘jumping ash’) means pushing drugs, *sei nui* (literally ‘society girl’) means prostitute. Within just a year after its release, two films – *Bald-Headed Betty* (1975, Chinese name: *sei nui*) and *Jumping Ash* (1976) – came on the scene. *Betty*, though

not exactly based on real-life incidents, is a story about a decent girl being forced into prostitution. *Erotica* is offered with grim depictions of social realities, arguably an extension of the creative style first established by *Anti-Corruption*. A tale of drug peddling, *Jumping Ash* was scripted by Philip Chan who used to be a police officer himself. Despite the influence of *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *The French Connection* (1971), the film is a follow-up on *Anti-Corruption* style-wise, with a strong sense of realism thanks to the extensive use of location shots and authentic dialogue. It is a precursor to the celebrated cop film of Hong Kong.

After *Anti-Corruption*, Ng See-yuen directed another box-office triumph titled *Million Dollars Snatch* (1976).⁴ Around the same time, Shaw Brothers also came up with *The Criminals* (1976) based on true crime stories. The film would blossom into a franchise and a total of five instalments were made within two years. This was followed by a couple of titles that revolved around the indictment of drug lords in the 1970s, such as *The Drug Queen* (1976), *The Discharged* (1977), *The Rascal Billionaire* (1978), *Poison Rose and the Bodyguard* (1979). While these pictures are again attempts to document crime stories, they feature gangsters as protagonists and therefore contain characteristics of the gangster film genre, such as the rise of a gangland boss from a small-time thug and his eventual fall. These crime realists thus became a catalyst for the gangster film.

The success of the criminal realist approach adopted by *Anti-Corruption* also affected TV programming. Rediffusion Television (RTV), predecessor of Asia Television (ATV), made the *Ten Mysterious Cases* series (1975) shortly afterward.⁵ Johnny Mak, director of the series, got his big break and quickly rose through the ranks in the TV station. Later in the 1980s, Mak ventured into film and drew ingredients from shocking news stories for *Lonely Fifteen* (1982), *Long Arm of the Law* (1984), *Sentenced to Hang* (1989), *To Be Number One* (1991), and *Island of Greed* (1997). *Anti-Corruption* stemmed from news reportage on TV, and its success in turn exerted influence on the programming strategy of TV stations, ultimately forming a cycle that continued to evolve.

3) A time of transition

The 1970s were a period when Hong Kong cinema was in the middle of a transition, with changes becoming more evident toward the later half of the decade. Let's start with a relatively minor occurrence in the late 1970s. The Cantonese opera film had almost died out by the late 1960s, and yet in the late 1970s, there emerged three Cantonese opera pictures which sold quite well, namely *Laugh in the Sleeve* (1975), *Princess Chang Ping* (1976), and *The Legend of Purple Hairpin* (1977), all headlined by the Chor Fung Ming Opera Troupe, successor of the legendary Yam Kim-fai and

Pak Suet-sin. These staple plays of the Yam–Pak duo were box-office guarantees in Cantonese opera, and the film adaptations all grossed over \$1 million. This marked however the final glory of the Cantonese opera film which soon made its quiet exit off the scene.

Meanwhile, Shaw Brothers put into production the Chaozhou opera film *Farewell to a Warrior* (1976), starring Xiao Nanying, an opera diva who had migrated to Hong Kong. This well-made opera piece was nonetheless a complete flop at the box office. Chinese opera has always had its fans, but as time passes, it has gradually lost its mass appeal. Be it Cantonese opera, Chaozhou opera, or *Huangmei Diao* (Yellow Plum) opera which was all the rage for a while, opera pictures were no longer a draw in the 1970s. Chor Fung Ming's revival proved to be transient, and that no other opera troupes ever made any film thereafter was clear evidence that Cantonese opera films had little market appeal.

Apart from Chinese opera films, the late 1970s also witnessed the exit of veteran Cantonese film directors. With the revival of Cantonese cinema in 1973, some directors who had taken a backseat rejoined the fold. *Laugh in the Sleeve* and *The Legend of Purple Hairpin* were both directed by Lee Tit; Ng Wui made a comeback with *Fun, Hong Kong Style* and *Star Wonderfun* etc; Lee Sun-fung directed for Sun Luen studio *The Best Friends* (1976); Wu Pang directed *Disco Bumpkins* (1980) – all these were directorial credits of their final stage. The last film Ng Wui directed was *Crazy Hustlers* (1979) and thereafter, he started his second career as a TV actor. The final offering by Lee Tit was a Yu opera film *Bao Zheng, the Judge* (1980). Wong Fung, who entered Shaw Brothers and directed quite a few money-makers in the 1970s, came up with *Police Sir* (1980; Chinese title means 'That's It'). By 1980, most Cantonese film directors of the previous generation had retired from the scene after showing their colours for one last time. As far as I know, those who remained active in the 1980s were no more than Chor Yuen and Yeung Kuen; others worked for TV stations as producers, the most successful being Siu Sang and Wong Tin-lam who had thrived in both Cantonese and Mandarin cinemas.

Meanwhile, the departure of film directors from the 1950s and 60s also took place in Mandarin cinema. Griffin Yueh Feng and Ho Moon-hwa bade farewell; King Hu and Chang Cheh also completed their last great works in the 1970s. In the 1980s, only Li Han-hsiang returned to his childhood hometown Beijing and found new inspirations for film work, turning in *Reign Behind a Curtain* (1983) that had an edge of its own.

Along with the exit of the veterans was the rise of a new breed. Some up-and-coming talents behind the scene went on to become the pillar of Hong Kong cinema's golden age in the 1980s and 90s. Jackie Chan is the most telling example.

Hong Kong cinema in the 1970s can be broadly summed up by the fist and the pillow – which stand for action and erotica respectively. With the rise of kung fu flicks, martial arts skills of the actors became the latest focal point; leading men in the 1970s were almost invariably sought from among those who could fight. Prior to Michael Hui, almost all new stars who got spotted were such ‘fighters’; and even after Michael Hui, these martial arts adepts continued to be a major source of acting talents.

A look at the Jackie Chan films in this book reveals how he had become a superstar. In *All in the Family* (1975), he played a small part as a rickshaw puller who strikes up an affair with his female boss. Then he was cast by Lo Wei for the lead in the Taiwan-made *New Fist of Fury* (1976), but the role didn’t exactly fit him and the box-office result was mediocre. He showed his kung fu chops in *Shaolin Wooden Men* (1976) but didn’t leave much impression on the audience, and the few films he made in Taiwan even failed to gain theatrical release in Hong Kong. Then later within a year, two money-spinners – *Snake in the Eagle’s Shadow* and *Drunken Master* – catapulted him to superstardom, followed by his self-directed and self-starring *The Fearless Hyena* (1979) which topped the box-office chart that year with over \$5 million. After entering Golden Harvest, *The Young Master* (1980), which he directed and acted in, raked in \$11 million and made him the first ever film star and director who earned even more money than Michael Hui. Within just five years, Jackie Chan quickly graduated from a bit player to a megastar. And he is just one among the many newcomers who made the rank in the 1970s; others included Ng See-yuen, John Woo, Sammo Hung, Karl Maka, Eric Tsang and Lau Koon-wai, among others.

The birth of New Wave Cinema

Alongside the film workers who learned the ropes by themselves, the TV stations also became a boot camp for film talents. In the late 1970s, the most noteworthy story of Hong Kong cinema was certainly the birth of New Wave. When *The House of 72 Tenants* first made filmmakers realise the clout TV held on popular culture, they first enlisted the help of TV artistes, but it was the directors and writers who brought about the rise of TV with their new ideas. In the late 1970s when the box-office draw of TV artistes was wearing out, the TV workers began to forge new grounds in film. The process was escalated by an unexpected development – the sudden closure of Commercial Television in 1978, which drove many TV professionals to the film scene. Talents such as Tsui Hark, Patrick Tam, Ringo Lam, Lau Tin-chi, Barry Wong and Kitty Ip were such examples. In 1979, Tsui Hark directed his debut film, *The Butterfly Murders*, whereas Patrick Tam directed *The Sword* in 1980. And so the closedown of the TV station turned out to be a driving force behind the New Wave. As long as the TV station serves as a breeding ground for talents, its closure would bring positive

effects to the creative industry as a whole.

Summary

The above are just a few incidents in the developmental history of 1970s Hong Kong cinema. There are still a great many topics that lie beyond the scope of this piece, such as the effects of the ever-loosening censorship control, the hit trend of Shaolin martial arts films, the boom of kung fu flicks that capitalised on different stylistic schools, the rise of Gu Long *wuxia* films, and the emergence of several three-dimensional *wuxia* pictures. Needless to say, there is limit to each and every filmography. The film distribution and exhibition business, for instance, had undergone major changes and restructurings over the 1970s, and such developments were all closely related to the unprecedented boom of Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s. All these are however not quite traceable in this volume.

Also worth mentioning is that despite the availability of visual resources for most of the films detailed in this volume, the co-existence of different versions of the same material constitutes a problem unique to this project. Often, the version available today is found to be shorter than the original cut. The reason is that such resources were chiefly acquired from either TV stations or outer regions (e.g. Taiwan), where censorship control was usually more stringent. Materials sourced from these places have usually been excised, the scenes of a sexual nature in most cases. What's more, quite some Hong Kong films of the 1970s appealed to audiences with the straight skinny on the criminal underworld, and most of these scenes were butchered and thus allow us only a partial view of the original work. The same applies to many of the laser discs, which were usually based on the trimmed-down version intended for overseas exhibition, or were edited in the first place so that the eventual disc would not be classified as Category III. While reviewing 1970s films in laser discs, I often found scenes in the original movies missing. All I can do is to hope that other versions closer to the original cuts would be discovered in the days to come. Researchers are advised to pay special attention when studying Hong Kong films from this period.

(Translated by Elbe Lau)

Notes

- 1 With regards to the trendsetting role Michael Hui played in Hong Kong's comedy films, see Ernest Chan, 'Mischievous Urban Fantasia: Michael Hui's Comic Mode', in Po Fung & Lau Yam (eds), *Golden Harvest: Leading Change in Changing Times*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2013, pp 54–62.

- 2 Po Fung (interviewer) & Cindy Shin (collator), 'Sammo Hung: Making My Action Choreography Relevant to Audiences', *Newsletter*, Issue 64, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, May 2013, pp 4–9.
- 3 James Kung & Zhang Yue'ai, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Television in the 1970s: A Perspective', in Li Cheuk-to (ed), *A Study of Hong Kong Cinema in the Seventies*, the 8th Hong Kong International Film Festival catalogue, Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2002 Revised Edition, pp 14–17.
- 4 The film scored \$1.5 million and was ranked the tenth highest-grossing film of the year.
- 5 *Ten Mysterious Cases* was an anthology series that was aired every Thursday. The first episode opened on 25 September 1975.