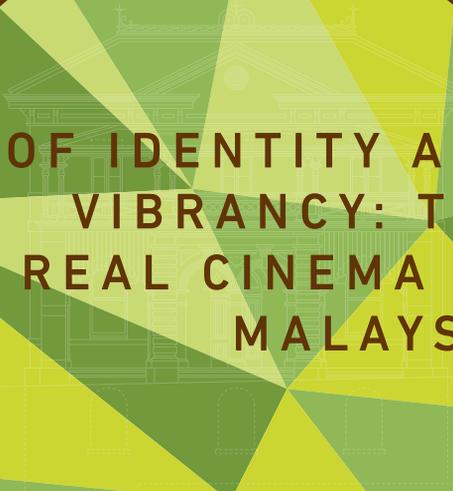
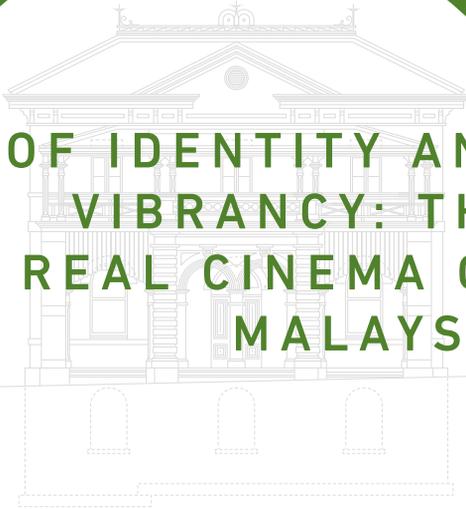


S H O W C A S E
C I N E M A



OF IDENTITY AND
VIBRANCY: THE
REAL CINEMA OF
MALAYSIA

SHOWCASE
CINEMA

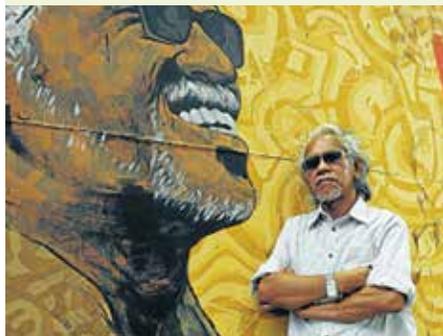


OF IDENTITY AND
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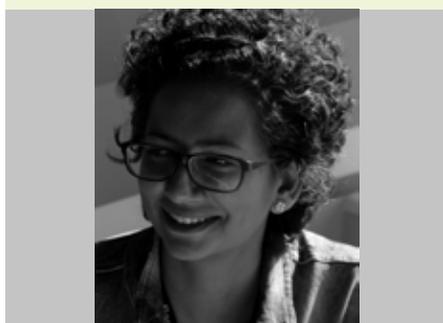
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IN-CONVERSATION WITH PHILIP CHEAH



WED 28 SEPTEMBER, 4-6PM

Philip Cheah & U-Wei Haji Saari on
Local Storytelling in Films



WED 5 OCTOBER, 12-1PM

Nandita Solomon & Philip Cheah on
*Working Across Borders: multi-national
crews and international festival journeys*

THURS 6 OCTOBER, 1-4PM

Philip Cheah & Nandita Solomon on
Making Shorts/Features for Festivals
(Philip) and *Building Careers in the film
business* (Nandita)

SHOWCASE CINEMA MALAYSIA

JOGHO (1999)

U-WEI HAJI SAARI

94 MINUTES

SCREENING:

28 SEPTEMBER, 6-8PM

BUNOHAN (2011)

DAIN SAID

97 MINUTES

SCREENING:

5 OCTOBER, 6-8PM

NOVA (TERBAIK DARI LANGIT, 2014)

NIK AMIR MUSTAPHA

109 MINUTES

SCREENING:

30 SEPTEMBER, 4-6PM

MEN WHO SAVE THE WORLD (LELAKI HARAPAN DUNIA, 2014)

SENG TAT LIEW

97 MINUTES

SCREENING:

6 OCTOBER, 6-8PM

JAGAT (2015)

SHANJHEY KUMAR PERUMAL

90 MINUTES

SCREENING:

4 OCTOBER, 6-8PM

MALAYSIAN NON- FICTION: A SHORT PROGRAM

MULTIPLE DIRECTORS

85 MINUTES

SCREENING:

10 OCTOBER, 9-11AM

THE SHORT FILMS OF EDMUND YEOH

EDMUND YEOH

SCREENING:

5 OCTOBER, 10AM-12PM

SELAMAT DATANG!

“Cinema is all about Identity”

Lord David Puttnam, Griffith Film School, Brisbane, Autumn 2015

Welcome to our last but not least effort to understand yet another great Cinema Showcase, our vehicle for Screen Culture: *Of Identity and Vibrancy, the Real Cinema of Malaysia*. After India (celebrating 100 years of Indian Cinema in 2012), Philippines Now! (On Guerrilla Filmmaking in 2013), Korea (Incubating Film Studios in Film Schools in 2014 – celebrating the launch of the Asia Pacific Screen Lab, 2014), Indonesia (I want to Kiss You once – a Griffith Indonesian Film Festival, 2015), Singapore (*Unbound*, 2015) as part of the Brisbane Festival, FIFO Retrospective (Retrospective of Pacific Documentary Films, as part of our contribution to the BAPFF – the Brisbane Asia Pacific Film Festival, 2015), we now turn our attention to yet another neighboring country in the Asia Pacific” Malaysia.

We focused on the Singapore censorship issues of films not being allowed to screen in their own country – Singapore – in very same year a film was commissioned to celebrate its 50th Anniversary, partially screened in the same showcase, and often made by the same filmmakers who had made other films that were refused entry! Today, instead, we look at the relevance of self censorship, the need to respect the ‘national language’ to be eligible to be rewarded the Best Film at the Malaysian Film Awards in a multilingual society, or, moreover, the very search for identity – Dr. Nico Meissner situates this somewhere in

between tradition and modernity, the current training needs and other very substantial government incentives to bring Malaysia up to speed with the other ‘rich’ and high income nations of the world in 2020. All these elements make the puzzle to understand the current status of filmmaking in this country complex and somewhat diluted.

From the kampung Kaki Wayang (film buff) who makes films in a spirit of personal prayers (berdoa) such as *U-Wei Bin Haji Saari*, who had his training overseas in the USA, to search and express true full Malaysian identity, to the larger and younger generation with better local access to training and education, even better incentives as part of the Economic Transformation Programme, but who need to navigate their way through workable mechanism of recognition and distribution, the task to curate a showcase of this complex country was not given to one curator but two: *Dr. Nico Meissner*, who joined Griffith Film School at the end of last year, but who lived and worked in Malaysia for four years, and our regular hero, who had been curating for us since the beginning, as the acclaimed film talent scout of South East Asia and even beyond, *Philip Cheah*.

Philip has interviewed and asked 10 questions to one of our returning guests, *U-Wei Bin Haji Saari*, in order to have him reveal never released or published material on his journey

and filmmaking process, while *Nico*, in his essay, lays bare the complexity of the driving forces of what makes nowadays the **Real Cinema of Malaysia: Of Identity and Vibrancy**.

I wish to welcome you to our Griffith Film School Cinema to come and see the selected films and meet, greet and talk with our guest filmmakers that we have flown over from Malaysia and who are eager to share their work and passion with you all.

PROF. HERMAN VAN EYKEN

Head of School, Griffith Film School



OF IDENTITY AND VIBRANCY: THE REAL CINEMA OF MALAYSIA

Hassan Muthalib, one of the most knowledgeable authorities on Malaysian cinema, writes in an essay on its history:

“Malaysian cinema began in 1927 with the production of *Xin Ke* (The Immigrant, Guo Waochen), using a Chinese film cast and crew. But from 1933 onwards with *Leila Majnun* (Love-struck Leila, B.S. Rajhans), there was a multiethnic cast and crew as well as an international involvement in its helming. The films enabled Malaysian cinema to go on to reflect the multifaceted aspects of the country in terms of its peoples, cultures, narratives and grappling with the tensions of modernity that came into conflict with traditional values.”

Over 80 years later, nothing much has changed.

Malaysia remains a country that is searching for its own identity - somewhere between tradition and modernity, the local and the global; a multiethnic and multicultural nation with 137 living languages and a vibrant mix of Indigenous, Malay, Chinese, Indian, British, Portuguese and Arabic influences.

Malaysian Cinema is as colourful as its country - and that is a great thing. I cannot claim to understand either of the two (despite having lived in Malaysia for almost four years). But both fascinate me. Both have an innocent vibrancy, a youthful energy, a positive attitude - but at the same time a fascinating identity crisis. Where do I begin?

Maybe in 1995 - when U-Wei Haji Saari (who will show his film *Jogho* as part of this Show Case) became the first Malaysian filmmaker to show a film, *The Arsonist*, at the Cannes Film Festival. U-Wei's films often tackle difficult questions around sexuality and the Malay identity, pushing boundaries of how much social realism is allowed in Malaysian cinema.

The release of Amir Muhammad's *Lips to Lips* in 2000 brought the beginning of what became known as The Little Cinema of Malaysia. For everyone who wants a case study of the power of digital technology, look no further. In a country of obvious and deeply rooted racial differences, young filmmakers of all ethnic backgrounds came together and used digital technology to make films outside of the government controlled funding and distribution system, causing international film festivals to take notice of Malaysia and its stories and raising important questions about the identity of the country and its people.

Tan Chui Mui's *Love Conquers All* and Liew Seng Tat's (who will show his latest film as part of this Show Case) *Flower in the Pocket* won the New Currents award at the Pusan International Film Festival in 2006 and 2007. Amir Mohammad's *The Big Durian* became the first Malaysian film at Sundance. The short film collection *15Malaysia* brought 15 Malaysian filmmakers together. Circumventing government censorship through online distribution, it quite openly demonstrated against ethnically motivated

policies and for unity and togetherness among the people. Yet, none of the above found much success at the local box office. James Lee's *The Beautiful Washing Machine* makes this point even clearer. Not shown commercially in Malaysian cinemas, it was the first Malaysian film that secured distribution in Korea. Yasmin Ahmad's *Sepet*, about interracial love and the many obstacles such relationships face in modern Malaysia, is one of the most talked about films in Malaysian film history. It brought young, multiethnic audiences together and was highly recognised at international film festivals. Domestically, however, it was seen as 'unislamic' and treated unfavourably by distributors and exhibitors, resulting in an underwhelming box office performance.

Earlier this year, Shanjhey Kumar Perumal's *Jagat* (another film that will be part of this Show Case) was considered as a nominee for Best Film at the 2016 Malaysian Film Awards, only to be removed by the jury because the film is not in the national language. It is a Tamil film - a language that 10 per cent of the country's population calls its mother tongue. The removal caused a public outcry, but is just the latest example of a cinema and a country continuing to search for their identities.

Despite these complexities around content and identity, or maybe because of them, contemporary Malaysian cinema is potentially at its most vibrant stage. Maybe ironically, government support plays an important role.

In 2010, the Malaysian government launched its Economic Transformation Programme as a catalyst to accelerate the country into high-income nation status by 2020. The

programme focuses on 12 strategic sectors that have been identified as key drivers of economic growth. With Communication Content and Infrastructure as one of the sectors, Malaysia has introduced a 30% tax incentive for high quality international and local film productions - globally, one of the highest financial content creation incentive - with the aim to not only attract international productions and investments but also to train the local industry and therefore increase the quality and competitiveness of its output.



Four years earlier, in 2006, Iskandar Malaysia was established - an economic development region three times the size of Singapore. Iskandar Malaysia promotes six key sectors of strategic growth. With the Creative Industries being one of these sectors, Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios was opened in 2014. On a 20-hectare site, with 5 sound stages, 2 television studios, numerous service companies and a 30 acres backlot of natural forest, Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios is a fully integrated and one of the most modern media production facilities within the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, investments have been made into education, to help grow the talent needed to support the developing infrastructure. EduCity, part of the Iskandar Malaysia project, comprises of a growing number of local and international educational institutions that are all linked to one of the six growth sectors of Iskandar Malaysia. Multimedia University, Malaysia's first private university, is supporting the creative industries through its Faculty of Cinematic Arts. The faculty works closely with Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios and Rhizophora Ventures - the latter, an equity investor into local content for the global market, supporting the faculty through funding into scholarships, training and infrastructure (works from the Faculty of Cinematic Arts are shown in the non-fiction short programme of this Show Case).

Current Director General of Malaysia's National Film Development Corporation, Kamil Othman, once decried heavy government funding and an entitlement to be screened at local cinemas as the main reasons for a lack of competitiveness and therefore a lack of quality that hinders Malaysian films from travelling to international film festivals or access overseas markets. Local box offices are dominated by what Hassan Muthalib terms the 'mainstream': made for the local market, with usually low quality storytelling, technical execution, directorial vision, and performances. The 'independents' (who Hassan Muthalib quite rigorously distinguished from the 'mainstream'), on the other hand, were never supported by government funding, and hence made for and sustained by international festivals.

In recent years, excitingly, these two worlds started coming together. New filmmakers have been trained better and grown up influenced by the independents. Investments into film education, the success of the independents - most notably The Little Cinema of Malaysia - and investments into the infrastructure are slowly enhancing the quality of films in Malaysia and push them into the local mainstream. These are the films this Show Case wants to celebrate.

Starting from U-Wei Haji Saari, one of the fathers of independent, socially-aware, realist cinema in Malaysia, covering international festival successes such as *Bunohan*, *Lelaki Harapan Dunia* or the short films of Edmund Yeoh as well as respectable local box office performers like *Jagat* (the highest grossing Tamil film in Malaysian film history) and *Nova*; ending with the new voices of young Malaysian documentary filmmakers.

This is a new generation of Malaysian filmmakers. A generation that continues to struggle with its identity - as individuals within the cultural, ethnic and religious complexities of Malaysia, as young women and men in the digital age, as Malaysians in a globalised world. This is a generation that celebrates these struggles through a socially more realistic cinema, that focuses on showing the real Malaysia, with all its quirks and contradictions. This is the generation that revolutionises the country's film culture. The Malaysia Film Show Case wants to show this generation of Malaysian filmmakers - and through them, the real Malaysia; a place of complexity, searching for identities, beauty and youthful vibrancy.

DR. NICO MEISSNER

Griffith Film School



Nico joined Griffith Film School as Curriculum and Planning Coordinator in January 2016. Prior to that, he worked in Malaysia for almost four years, establishing Multimedia University's Faculty of Cinematic Arts.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING!!

TEN QUESTIONS WITH U-WEI BIN HAJI SAARI...AND THEN SOME...

It's always with a sense of trepidation when I find out that the filmmaker, U-Wei Bin Haji Saari, would be in the same city as I. Invariably that would mean that we would go on the hunt together. U-Wei is a big game hunter but his game is jazz. He's such a formidable hunter that if I'm midway through one vinyl rack, he would have knocked off three racks by then.

U-Wei's consumption of culture is so voracious that he would blow most film critics away by his viewing depth. Most of the time, they end up coming back to him to solicit historical memory. By contrast, his filmmaking output seems modest. Six features at last count. U-Wei (born 1954) studied filmmaking at the New York School for Social Research. His controversial film debut, *Perempuan, Isteri dan...* (Woman, Wife and Whore, 1993) received five awards at the 11th Malaysian Film Festival including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay. The censors chopped off the last word from the film's title for the domestic release. Then followed *Wajah Ayu* (Black Widow, 1995). In 1996, his film, *Kaki Bakar* (The Arsonist) premiered at the Singapore International Film Festival and was then shown at the Un Certain Regard of the Cannes Film Festival.

This was followed by *Jogho* (1999), an intriguing tale about bull fighters set in the Patani Malay community of Southern Thailand, a little explored border region where Thai and Malay cultures overlap, bonded by the common Islamic faith. Then *Swing My Swing High, My Darling* (2004), the idiosyncratic adaptation of James M Cain's *The Postman Always Rings*

Twice and his magnum opus, *Hanyut* (2013) a total cultural reset of Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*.

U-Wei has always been the link and gateway for the Malaysian digital New Wave to emerge in 2000 with Amir Muhammad's *Lips to Lips* and Osman Ali's *Bukak Api* (Open Fire!). The thoughtfulness found in his filmmaking as well as its outlaw sensibility, gave the next generation a benchmark to aspire to.

While U-Wei is still the most well-known personality in Malaysia, he remains a man with a secret identity. Not many have had the privilege to see his 10,000 strong vinyl collection or his houseful of art works and installations. Neither has U-Wei been engaged on one of his chief loves – music – and how it impacts on his cinema. In this interview, Philip Cheah listens to the song of the little road with U-Wei.

PHILIP: Let's start with jazz. It's one of your fundamental influences and I often wondered whether you started digging it during your New York film school days or whether you picked it up in Malaysia. If it's the latter, how did that happen?

U-WEI: Jazz, that's fundamentally what I listen to on vinyl and CDs, plus lots of 'world music'. I remember that in the early 70s, they called jazz as something of a personal black experience and that's why maybe in my collection, 90 per cent of the records I bought were black musicians playing that music. That changed a bit along the way.

My father bought the first gramophone in the village plus a couple of 'hip' (guitar-based) records recommended by the salesman. Musically, the local radio station was useless to me except for the radio dramas they put out. I started checking out the contemporary 'now' music from long-haired musicians. I felt they would be the ones making the interesting music. (Editor's Note: In the 60s, long hair was disallowed in schools and considered a sign of rebellion.)

Then with my own money I bought a Bob Dylan EP and albums of British blues groups. Very soon I backtracked towards the real blues - Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf and T Bone Walker - with whom I naturally went crazy over. I then abandoned those white musicians (except for a few artists) and went on to other black music especially soul, funk and gospel.

I love the blues. I listened to a lot of funk although I didn't dance. Ornette Coleman answered it for me years later in 1976, that I was 'Dancing in My Head'. (Ed.: Ornette Coleman's album title.) I enjoyed gospel very much even though I am a Muslim. It was the only music I listened to till I came across Charlie Parker with strings on Verve and Miles Davis's 'Seven Steps to Heaven' on CBS that I bought around 1972.

And the rock music I'm familiar with came from hanging around my hip friends. I grew out of it early but there was a time in the 90s when I was back in Malaysia and there was hardly anything to buy or listen to, so I started listening again to rock. But the stuff that I really dug, I never really stopped.

When I went to the States in 1976 for my film studies, just being in the record stores was

like being a kid in a candy store all over again. But the very first album I got was Bob Marley's 'Catch a Fire' (since in Kuala Lumpur, I could only get Jimmy Cliff). After that, I bought the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) and musicians such as Julius Hemphill, Leo Smith, Cecil Taylor, Arthur Blythe and the rest in the avant-garde and those who came before that I missed. I quickly realised the greatness of Duke Ellington and Sun Ra and I was so glad to be finally able to get and listen to their records easily.

I have to say that I had two entry points into jazz. I started first in Kuala Lumpur even though I was only listening to Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, as the availability of the music was scarce. The second was New York where the music was really happening: the loft scene (Sam Rivers), Chicago (AACM musicians), California (David Murray and Butch Morris), Saint Louis (Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake), Mississippi (Leo Smith and Olu Dara) all moved to and played in New York City. It was a great time to be there if you're into the new jazz. Of the two, the stronger entry-point into the music for me was when I was in the States and that stayed with me till today.

Strangely enough, it was funk and gospel that got me deeper and deeper into jazz. No matter how strange or how 'out-there' early 70's jazz was, I kept on telling people, "jazz musicians can do that funky stuff too man...and that's gospel."

PHILIP: It's ironic that while Garin Nugroho has used many pop music references in his films, you on the other hand, with your

cataloger's mind for jazz, blues and rock, have not bothered to reveal this influence. How come?

U-WEI: Perhaps the films I've been making are set in the 'kampong' (village or rural). As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I decided to remake "The Postman Always Rings Twice" with *Swing My Swing High, My Darling* in 2004, was the reggae attitude towards songs. Not by using reggae music on the soundtrack though. Reggae musicians especially in the 70's did many many versions of a song - either straight cover versions or dub versions. So I thought "why not another version of James M Cain's story?"

Songs and music are very much a big part in my filmmaking process especially while writing the script. I always write scripts with songs in mind or with music playing in the background even though those songs are not featured in the films. In that sense, they might not be an influence considering that these songs would not be heard on the film, but that's the whole point of being influenced isn't it? They are present but invisible. 'Family Affair' by Sly Stone and a friend's group, Koprata, are the songs I kept playing again and again while writing 'Kaki Bakar' (The Arsonist). I then quoted Koprata's Sani Sudin's lyrics in the opening of the film but the song is not heard in the film. It was just the essence of self-esteem of a man, being recalled from the song.

Lyrics such as "One child grows up to be somebody/ they just love to learn/ another child grows up to be somebody/ you just love to burn..." and "...blood is thicker than mud" from Sly Stone's 'Family Affair' are lines that I hung on to when I thought about Kakang, the

protagonist (of The Arsonist) that went off the rail in his late 40's while having a family to take care of.

I have not used songs as references in my films. Maybe I was too busy just listening and enjoying the film soundtracks done by Curtis Mayfield, Isaac Hayes, Marvin Gaye, James Brown, Willie Hutch, Miles Davis, Art Blakey and even Art Ensemble of Chicago that I loved.

Then again, I'm a filmmaker from this part of the world where I can't just look across to my producer and say, "Make a call and get me the rights to 'Singing in the Rain.'" But that's doesn't mean I don't want to have some songs in my films...maybe the next one. Like James Brown said: "...Give the drummer (filmmaker) some..."

PHILIP: There is one other unknown influence for you that most critics are not so aware of - and that is your deep interest in painting, sculpture and art installations. There must be some reflection of that in your films. Tell us more...

U-WEI: As a 'mualaf-seni' (art-convert), I love looking at fine art works of paintings, sculptures, installations and photography. At times, I tried to see films as another extension of fine art. But in films, the audience is locked down (seated) and cannot roam freely as a fine art audience can. Sometimes, I see filmmaking as another form of installation with a different set of rules. After all, the French word for film composition is 'mise en scene'.

For that reason, I enjoy curating art shows for private galleries, the Malaysian Embassy and also for The National Visual Arts Gallery

in Kuala Lumpur. Eventually, that led me to publish some books for them.

Before I started *Hanyut* (2013), my director of photography (DP) and I sat down and discussed some art works and photography as reference points for the film's colour tones and moods. It was not so much to emulate the paintings or the photographs but to set a common ground and understanding for us to start the project.

I see myself more as an art fan though I do have some artists working on my film sets. I had Fadzil Idris, a sculptor, as my Art Director in *Jogho* (1999) and in my theatre project, Euripides' "Bakai" (1998). Zaki Ahmad Anwar, one of the most prominent Malaysian contemporary artists, did a few of my movie posters (*Hanyut* 2013) and theatre (*Wangi Jadi Saksi* 2006).

In 2011, I invited eight contemporary Malaysian fine artists and four writers (including yourself) to participate on a project, *Wayang U-Wei Angkat Saksi*, where these artists were allowed to interpret or react freely to what they felt when watching my films; and through their disciplines, they produced their art works. Subsequently, the writers will then comment on the works (art pieces).

PHILIP: If there is a thread running through your films, they seem to be about misunderstood women (*Woman, Wife and Whore*, 1993) and angry men (*The Arsonist*, 1995, *Jogho*, 1999, *Hanyut*, 2013). Coincidence or they are pet topics??

U-WEI: That's true. It seems there's a thread or even a common theme I've been working

on in all of my films. There are some specific themes like alienation and loneliness with misunderstood and angry people in them. Maybe I know one or two things about alienation and loneliness from living abroad for a certain period of time. Or like a comedian having only one joke to tell, since the rest are variations; a filmmaker too has only one film to make because the rest are just variations as well.

From the two films you mentioned, the woman, Zaleha in 'Woman Wife and Whore' and the man, Kakang in 'The Arsonist' get into a lot of trouble in the society they live in. As a filmmaker, I need characters that can produce drama or trigger a crisis (externally or internally) for the narrative. But it has to be plausible. One effective way is to involve the society they are in, for example, one man against everybody. I always thought that's a potent premise searching for a reason. The reason being that not understanding can be an attractive, beautiful thing but misunderstanding is a damned thing. By constructing a misunderstood character, chaos and drama will result and escalate into anger or even anarchy. Both Zaleha and Kakang are misunderstood figures, but they're strong and smart and that makes them retaliate by any way they know how. Both of them feel like strangers in a strange land and their answer is to survive at all costs. A misunderstood person will eventually be an angry person if he or she cares. A woman like Zaleha will seduce and Kakang will burn to cleanse their problems. I thought that looking into these kinds of characters was exciting.

PHILIP: Another thread seems to be the invasion of space - from personal space (*The Arsonist*) to geographical space (*Hanyut*) to

imaginary space (One Note, One Fragment). Is space really the place where all conflict grows out from?

ILike Sun Ra said, "Space is the place."

What can one (filmmaker) say or do now without a space. Space is what it's all about. Ask Mr Ra.

PHILIP: You came from a generation of Malaysian filmmakers who all studied overseas and came home to build your careers and make your statements. Was it then impossible to enter the film industry without a degree or as a rank independent outsider?

(Note: FINAS only set up the Film Academy of Malaysia in 1989)

U-WEI: In Malaysia, filmmaking is a free for all. A lot of people here seem to think that filmmaking comprises talent, bravery, luck and 'cari rezeki' (a way to earn a living), without looking much on other aspects of it, for example, a technical, more better craftsmanship. Filmmaking requires different kinds of knowledge and discipline. Although talent is fundamental it cannot be that only. Everybody has talent or feels they are talented. Sometimes, they are only raw talents.

It's easy to get into the film industry here but the loose infrastructure and the high priority on business and profit, makes it a challenge for a film school graduate to make a meaningful, personal film. Lino Brocka from the Philippines said something like, "I'm not optimistic with what is happening but I'm not pessimistic either since I'm still making films."

That could be a position a film school graduate might take regarding the industry.

As you can see, I'm not as prolific as some of my peers. I would like to make more films but the conditions and chances just seem hard to come by.

PHILIP: The screen quota regulation of 1991, where a local film had to be screened for one week was improved in 2011 to a minimum of two weeks, seems to have actually boosted local production. The 1970s saw annual production limping along at three to four titles. In 2013, there were 71 films. But are there still too many other regulations that repress creativity?

U-WEI: The 'Skim Wajib Tayang' (Screen Quota Regulation) was implemented in 1991 with the good intention of safeguarding local films by having a compulsory two-week screening time in the theatres. But the catch is the tickets sales must reach a certain amount daily. The theatres have the right to pull out a film if they feel it's not doing good enough on the first couple of days. No sleepers are allowed. Of course, there are still other loopholes in the Skim Wajib Tayang that I can think of.

Now that Malaysia produces more than 80 films a year makes producers fight over dates. Meanwhile, theatre owners still have preconceived doubts on the life expectancy of a local film judging from their track record against Hollywood or Bollywood. The idea of giving a chance is thrown out the window.

The panel that decided or agreed on the dates and amount of approved theatres (the date and theatres are requested by the producers

actually) are not actuaries, nor fortune-tellers, if you know what I mean.

The 'conditions' needed for the given 'privilege' of 'Wajib Tayang' has never been dealt and addressed properly too. Wajib Tayang is like a nice seat given during a ride but many are unable to sit for long because the train master will ask them to leave because they smell. Again here, James Brown might say, "Give me some air...it's too funky in here."

PHILIP: Cinema seems to have become a bit of a career opportunity today. Was that on your mind when you started out? What were you thinking and hoping then?

U-WEI: Even though film is among the youngest art forms, it's the sexiest of them all. Everybody is attracted to it. It looks democratic, it's a beauty, it's accessible, and it's relatively easy to get involved and be a part of it. Yes, traditionally cinema has always been a career opportunity especially for the actors here. As politicians here do, actors use cinema as a career opportunity for building a name to get other lucrative jobs.

But I'm just a kampong kid who started as a 'kaki wayang' (film buff). I fell in love with the images first and then the medium. Later I realised I not only love watching films but also reading about it. Then I thought it might be fun to have talented people acting out the stories that I have. Then I thought, since J D Salinger only wrote four novels, Thelonious Monk only composed some 33 songs and Captain Beefheart stopped when he was still at his peak, I don't have to be so prolific. My problem is I'm still trying.

PHILIP: I salute you for being an original "kaki wayang" (film buff) but I think you need to tell us how a village boy from Pahang could devour so much cinema...For goodness sake, this was a long time before multiplexes!!!

U-WEI: I grew up in a village (in Pahang) nearby (within walking distance) to a town with two cinema theatres and another nearby town with another cinema theatre. So I have access to three cinemas. How about that? It was the perfect place to be if you're planning to skip school. When you're not a sportsman or a musician and do not have many friends, you run to the movies. But when you have a camera strapped on your waist, they start running towards you! Ha Ha!

I was brought to the movies quite early in life by my father. A friend of his told me not long ago they used to tie me to the bicycle to go to watch some Hindi films. That surely would be in the 50s. The earliest moving image I remember was a villain-like person running on top a parked train to open the lions' cage.

Back then adults hate bringing their children to the cinema. They cry halfway wanting to go out. You'll see them taking their kids out a bit then rushing back into the cinema. I remember kids crying during film screenings but not me. Maybe being in the dark watching the images soothed me. So that might be a reason my dad had no problem bringing me along when he had to babysit me. Little did he realise that I might be enjoying it much more than he did.

So my cinema habit followed me ever since I suppose. I remember watching films in the newly-opened multiplexes in the South in United States around 1976.

PHILIP: Francis Ford Coppola took a big risk in the early period of his career with *Apocalypse Now* but you took your big career risk with *Hanyut* in the late part of your career. It marks you as a driven soul, who just wants to look after his art. Was *Hanyut* some kind of summation of your creative obsessions and what was it that you think you achieved with it?

U-WEI: Making films are 'berdoa' (a personal prayer). It's a problem-solving profession and when one is having problems (or tests) in life he will 'doa' (pray). And making films is just that, right from the beginning choosing the text until the film screens in the cinema.

You begin also to realise that the process of making a film is like science fiction. Anything can happen in making a film, just as anything is possible in a science fiction story. (My late wife) Gail gave me three books that she felt might really interest me. The first was William Faulkner's short story 'Barn Burning' which became 'Kaki Bakar' (The Arsonist) and also Joseph Conrad's 'Almayer's Folly' which then became 'Hanyut'. The word 'Hanyut' (roughly translated to mean meandering) itself sounds quite apocalyptic doesn't it?

When you reach a certain age you begin to say, "if it's not now, then when?" Putting aside most of the fears and risks, you do what you feel you need to do. This film I couldn't have done without Julia (Ed.: Uwei's wife and film producer). She never stopped till the film was ready.

Then after that, I'll be doing my 'doa' again. God willing....



Philip Cheah is a film critic and is the editor of BigO, Singapore's only independent pop culture publication. He is Vice-President of NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema).

He is programme consultant for the South-east Asian Film Festival, the AsiaPacificFilms.com website, Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival, Shanghai Int'l Film Festival, Hanoi Int'l Film Festival, and the Dubai Int'l Film Festival. He is co-editor of the books: Garin Nugroho-And the Moon Dances, Noel Vera's Critic After Dark and Ngo Phuong Lan's Modernity and Nationality in Vietnamese Cinema.

In 2004, he was awarded the Korean Cinema Award at the 9th Pusan International Film Festival, for his contribution to Korean film. In 2006, he was awarded the Asian Cinema Prize at the 8th Cinemanila International Film Festival, for his contribution to Asian film. He is the patron of the South-east Asian Screen Academy in Makassar, Indonesia.

JOGHO 1999

DIRECTOR: U-WEI HAJI SAARI

DURATION

100 minutes

DIRECTOR

U-Wei Haji Saari

WRITERS

U-Wei Haji Saari, S. Othman
Kelantan

PRODUCERS

U-wei Haji Saari, Makoto
Ueda, Sota Yamamoto

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Khalid Zakaria

MUSIC

Embie C. Noer

EDITOR

Kamaruddin Abu

CAST

Khalid Salleh, Normah
Damanhuri, Sabri Yunus,
Adlin Aman Ramlee





SYNOPSIS

A masterly work on the issue of identity in multi-ethnic societies. It tells the tale of Mamat, who is forced to leave his native Malaysia when his industry, bullfighting, is outlawed. Mamat returns to Malaysia to avenge the murder of a relative. But living in a foreign country has changed Mamat, and he comes to see the futility of traditions such as the vendetta. The theme of cultural and inter-generational conflict has universal appeal.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

A native of Pahang, Malaysia, U-Wei Haji Saari studied filmmaking at the New York School for Social Research in New York City. He is an active member of the Malaysian Film Director's Organization. He is the first Malaysian director to be invited to show at the prestigious Directors' Fortnight at Cannes ('95).

NOVA (TERBAIK DARI LANGIT) 2014

DIRECTOR: NIK AMIR MUSTAPHA

PRODUCER

Anwari Ashraf, Anwari Ashraf
Hashim, Tuan Faisal Azmy
Tuan Kob, Priya Narayanan,
Megat Sharizal

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Najwa Abu Bakar, M. Kabir,
Gayatri Su-Lin Pillai

DIRECTOR

Nik Amir Mustapha

CO-PRODUCER

Redza Minhat

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Jordan Wei Meng Chiam

EDITOR

Rewan Ishak

CAST

Bront Palarae
Iedil Putra
Amerul Affendi
Megat Sharizal
Nadiya Nissa





SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker Berg, obsessed with an unidentified blob he saw in the sky when he was a student, reunites his old friends on a whim, calling them to go on a road trip for old times' sake, while capturing this alien spacecraft on film. Despite their doubts about this shaky premise, and Berg's filmmaking abilities and drug habit, they all agree to go on this expedition, as each of them have their personal reasons for doing so. As they reminisce about their old school days, tension arises as they start to disagree on what happened back then. This chase for this elusive UFO becomes more than what it seems.

A quirky genre mash-up of comedy, sci-fi, road-trip and buddy movie, this engaging film contains several homages to Malaysian cinema.

BIOGRAPHY

Nik Amir Mustapha was trained in engineering but became a filmmaker after pursuing training in the medium. His first feature film, *Kil* (2013) won Best Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actress in the Malaysian Screen Awards 2013. The film also won Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best New Actress at the Malaysian Film Festival 2014. *NOVA (Terbaik Dari Langit)* is his second feature.

JAGAT 2015

DIRECTOR: SHANJHEY KUMAR PERUMAL

DURATION

90 minutes





SYNOPSIS

The plot centers on Appoy a spirited kid who would rather watch gangster flicks and make prank calls than memorize his multiplication tables. Desperately trying to keep his son on the straight path, Appoy's hard-working father becomes increasingly abusive, as the boy is inexorably drawn to the criminal lifestyle of his uncle, a henchman for a local Malaysian gang.

Set in the early 1990's, a critical period in Malaysian Indian history, the story subtly underlines the plight of the Malaysian Indian. Forsaken by the estate owners who had employed them for generations and systematically marginalized by the ruling government, they are forced to move to the cities and survive under harsh circumstances. Left out of the nation's urbanization and development plans, many live in squatters and work at minimum wage jobs.

BIOGRAPHY

Shanjhey Kumar Perumal is a Malaysian director and writer with over 10 years of experience in the creative media industry. After earning a Communication degree in Film and Broadcasting from Universiti Sains Malaysia, he went on to write and direct more than 300 projects that featured on Malaysian television. Over the years, he has been involved in a diverse array of media ranging from documentaries and short films to musicals and children's programmes.

He first came to prominence in 2006 when his short film, 'Thaiposam', was screened at the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam in the Netherlands. In 2009, his short film 'Machai' was awarded the Grand Prize at the BMW Shorties Malaysia. His short film 'Jagat' went on to win Best Cinematography at the International Toronto Tamil Film Festival in 2011. The following year, he was invited to be a jury member at the BMW Shorties Malaysia. In 2013, his documentary, 'The Day That River Ran Red', won the Jury Award at The KOMAS Freedom Film Festival.

'Jagat' is his debut film under his own production house Skyzen (M) Sdn.Bhd.

THE SHORT FILMS OF EDMUND YEOH

DIRECTOR: EDMUND YEO

KINGYO

DURATION

25 minutes

EXHALATION

DURATION

21 minutes

INHALATION

DURATION

17 minutes

LAST FRAGMENTS OF WINTER

DURATION

24 minutes





BIOGRAPHY

Edmund Yeo's works have screened at major film festivals around the world, garnering critical acclaim. He was the youngest Malaysian director to ever compete at the Venice Film Festival in 2009 with his Japanese-language short "Kingyo" (2009). The following year, he won the Sonje Award for Best Asian Short Film at the Busan International Film Festival with his Malaysian short, "Inhalation" (2010) and competed at Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. Some of his other short films, like "Exhalation" (2010) "Last Fragments of Winter" (2011) were also invited to film festivals, the latter receiving a special cultural award from the Japan Tourism Board commissioner.

His debut feature film "River of Exploding Durians" premiered at the Main Competition section of the Tokyo International Film Festival 2014. The first Malaysian film in history to attain this honour. "River of Exploding Durians" later played at film festivals in Rotterdam, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seoul etc.

Aside from directing, Yeo is also a producer and partner of the film company Greenlight Pictures. He produced, edited and co-wrote Woo Ming Jin's films "The Elephant and the Sea" (2007), "Woman on Fire Looks for Water" (2009), "The Tiger Factory" (2010), which premiered at Cannes Film Festival, and "Second Life of Thieves" (2014). In 2016, Yeo produced Japanese director Isao Yukisada's segment of the Asia Three-Fold Mirror omnibus project.

BUNOHAN 2011

DIRECTOR: DAIN ISKANDAR SAID

DURATION

97 minutes

PRODUCER

Nandita Solomon

DIRECTOR & WRITER

Dain Iskandar Said

CO-PRODUCER

Tim Kwok

**DIRECTOR OF
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Charin Tong Pengpanich

EDITOR

Herman K Panca

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Tan Yan Wei (Yuan) / Imaginex
Studios

CAST

Faizal Hussein

Zahiril Adzim

Pekin Ibrahim

Wan Hanafi Su

Bront Palarae

Namron

Soffi Jikan

Amerul Affendi





SYNOPSIS

Set in a border town in northeastern Malaysia of the same name, **BUNOHAN** tells the powerful story of three estranged brothers – Adil, Bakar and Ilham – and their ailing father, whose fates become tragically intertwined in a web of deceit and corruption. After fleeing a deathmatch in Thailand, Adil the kickboxer is on the run from Ilham the hitman. The chase brings them to Bunohan, where they crash into the shady schemes of the ambitious businessman, Bakar. The trio's unlikely homecoming brings to light the past of Pok Eng the patriarch, whose secrets will unravel the lives of all. Each man's unfulfilled struggle for reconciliation and forgiveness leads to the violence of loss, betrayal, corruption and murder.

LELAKI HARAPAN DUNIA (MEN WHO SAVE THE WORLD) 2014

DIRECTOR: LIEW SENG TAT

DURATION

93 Minutes

CAST

Wan Hanafi Su

Harun Salim Bachik

Azman Hasan

Azhan Rani

Soffi Jikan

Khalid Mboyelwa Hussein

Roslan Salleh

Jalil Hamid

Bob Idris

Suky San

JJamal

Rykarl Iskandar

Muhammad Farhan B

Mohammad Nizam

Acong Sweetchild

Othman Hafsham

Ahmad Suffian B Ismail

Ahmed Yomi

Hazeehan Bt Husain @
Hashim

Hishamuddin Rais

Pitt Haniff

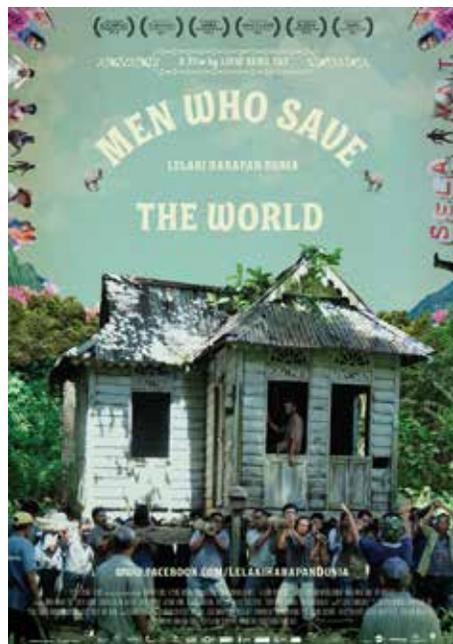
Nor Ash Kim Bt Abdullah

Nur Farhana Natasya

Nur Alleya Natasya

Nur Annisa Natasya

Fiqa Nasywa Bt Mat Ali





SYNOPSIS

In a quaint Malay village, the villagers unite to help Pak Awang to physically carry an abandoned house from the jungle into the village as a gift for his daughter who is getting married. Coincidentally an illegal African immigrant who is on the run found the house by accident and decided to hide in it. When the village drug addict, mistook the black shadow he saw in the house as a ghost, the villagers fear that the relocation of the house has enraged the devil. The relocation of the house comes to a halt much to the distress of Pak Awang. A series of wild mishaps befall the village lead to false accusations, hilarious situations and 'ingenious' actions to protect the village from 'danger'.

MALAYSIAN NON-FICTION: A SHORT PROGRAM

DURATION: 85 MINUTES

Non-fiction films allow us to critically and creatively grapple with the world, form an opinion about life and express fears, dreams, thoughts and beliefs. This collection of non-fiction films presents a diverse range of topics explored by Malaysians in their early-20s with relevance to their peers around the globe: friendship, identity, sexuality, traditions, immigration, home, religion, abuse, death, etc. Through the medium of the documentary or the experimental film, these young citizens become part of a social exchange of ideas. They make themselves heard - creatively, critically, cinematically - using the cinematic medium to its fullest: personal but global, emotional and intellectual, visual and aural.



MENCARI TEDUH (SEEKING SHADE)

2014, LUQMAN SHEIKH GHAZALI, 10'10"

According to the UNHCR, there are roughly 100,000 Muslim Rohingyas living in Malaysia. 'Mencari Teduh' follows the story of one of them - Mr Noor Alam, who has lived for decades on what he calls 'the soil of the Muslims'.

Luqman Sheikh Ghazali is a 22-year old film graduate of the MMU Cinematic Arts Programme. His passions lie with the humanitarian and social issues of the Muslim people.



NUR AN-NISA

2015, IZNI HUSAIN, 9'57"

A single mother in Malaysia shares her story of domestic violence. Following her fourth pregnancy, her husband abandons the family only to return to inflict pain. After horrific events, she finds the strength to stand up and focus on her children.

Izni Husain is an aspiring writer and director from Taiping, Malaysia. She is a student at Multimedia University's Faculty of Cinematic Arts. Nur An-nisa is her first directorial effort.



MOUNTAINEER

2015, EMMY ONG, 9'09"

John Lennon once said: "I used to think it was mere homesickness, then I started getting it at home". This is a film about home, Hazman and Gunung Ledang.

Emmy Ong is a final year Cinematic Arts student at Multimedia University and the inaugural recipient of the Rhizophora Scholarship of Excellence.



SOMETHING FISHY

2015, NABIL LUKMAN, 9'42"

Something Fishy explores the relationship between fish breeder Luqman, his fish and his employee Khan - against the backdrop of Teluk Kerang, Johor, Malaysia.

Nabil Lukman is an adventurous 23-year old filmmaker in his final year studying Cinematic Arts at Multimedia University.



BREAD

2015, CHAN HWEE LAN & MARY GRACE LIEW, 2'04"

Bread explores the life of an old couple that runs a bakery in a suburban town in Malaysia. They produce handmade bread every morning for the past 30 years, with only each other's shoulders to support for.

Chan Hwee Lan & Mary Grace Liew are final year Cinematic Arts students in Malaysia.

...Plus a rapid-fire Potpourri of eight ultra-short 'thoughts':

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

DAVID CHOO, 1'59"

AKU PEREMPUAN (I'M A WOMAN)

IZNI HUSAIN, 1'07"

UNNAMED

AIMAN & SHANKY, 2'00"

HABITS

EMMY ONG, 1'07"

PRSM

MARY GRACE LIEW, 2'00"

PURPOSE

NAQIB BIN WAN MOHAMED, 2'01"

SECRETS

FABEEHA LODHI & THEVANESAN, 1'17"

? 'S GAZE (AN EXAMINATION)

CHLOE YAP MUN, 2'13"

...and Five works from the Kuala Lumpur Experimental Film, Video & Music Festival

KLEX is an independent, artist-run grassroots international festival of experimental film, video art and music founded in Malaysia in 2010 by a cross-disciplinary group of artists. The works here present fragments of everydayness, social and meditative observations, conceptual and psychological explorations, and a play with abstract visual and sonic rhythms. A brief survey of video works experimenting with various approaches and styles. (Kok Siew-Wai)



ALOR SETAR PULSE

2015, ANDREW STIFF, 4'55"

Naturally drawn to patterns and order, we see the world sequentially, even though events and communication are not. Like pulse, the motion of blinds swaying in the evening breeze of Alor Setar is fractured into a series of cuts that balance disorder against the linear order of colour and context.

Andrew Stiff studied painting at the Chelsea School of Art in London, and gained his masters at the University of Liverpool in England where he explored his interest in digital media and architecture. Andrew is currently teaching at RMIT University in Vietnam.



LULAI

2014, LIM CHEE-YONG, 6'30"

A visitor's sympathetic portrait of the Bajau Laut and Bajau Darat people from Mabul island, off Sabah. This group of Bajau people is stateless. Without nationality they do not enjoy benefits of citizenship. Given a choice, will they choose to lead a "free" life as they are now?

Lim Chee-Yong is a Malaysian fiction and documentary filmmaker. He graduated from New Era College in 2008, majoring in Drama and Visuals; and from the National Taiwan University of Art in 2013 in the Motion Picture Department.



THE SONG OF LIFE

2015, WINSTON LIEW KHER-CHENG, 6'40"

In a forgotten place where a family calls it home, they have left a trace. As time passes by, a song of their lives is heard.

Winston Liew Kher-Cheng graduated from the New Era College Drama & Visual Department in Malaysia. He is currently a freelancer in theater and video production.



MORNING

2011, KOK SIEW-WAI, 3'50"

The artist was awakened by very loud barking of dogs early in the morning, and saw four dogs toying with a dead cat. She took out a camera and recorded the scene, witnessing a reality in nature that is blunt, intense and beyond human morality.

Kok Siew-Wai is a video artist, vocal improviser and independent artist-organizer from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She graduated from University at Buffalo and Alfred University and has shown her videos, curatorial programmes and performed in Asia, Europe, Canada and USA.



SOLI

2013, ADRIENNE MARCUS RAJA, 10'00"

Soli follows the sun, symbolized by an enigmatic figure, Sole, as he explores the city and illuminates the lives of a series of lonely people, symbolically lighting the darkness that we have in our own and the pressure that forces us to make decisions in life.

Adrienne Marcus Raja is a filmmaker from Borneo, Malaysia. She holds an M.F.A. in Documentary Media from Ryerson and a B.A. in Mass Comm from Curtin University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OF IDENTITY AND VIBRANCY: THE REAL CINEMA OF MALAYSIA 28 SEPTEMBER – 10 OCTOBER 2016

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PRESENTED BY

Griffith Film School

CURATOR

Philip Cheah, Nico Meissner

ASSOCIATE PROGRAMMERS

Kok Siew Wai, Dr. Alex Fischer, Raymond Miranda

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

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