

HONG KONG ON LOCATION (ISSUE NO. 3)

The Film Services Office Quarterly Newsletter (May 2001 – July 2001)

May's Not Dead, June's Not Finished, July's For Reincarnation

Film people believe that the most difficult time for the film market is between Spring and Summer. This was proved not the case this year. From May to July, we tried our very best to assist 17 local films to search for suitable locations. Pursuing the stink of public toilets. Flying through the lower deck of a bridge. The difficulties simply can not be understood by outsiders.

Dayo Wong: From Legal Assistant To Security Guard

While the role of legal assistant Yu Lok-tin, played by Dayo Wong in the TV drama "*War of the Genders*", is still fresh in our minds, he has already transformed into a security guard on a housing estate. This is Dayo Wong's first film as a director. In addition to himself, the cast includes Sonya Kwok.

The story centres around a low-cost security office serving the neighbourhood. Because it tells of common people's daily lives, a public estate became a major location for this film. After deciding on an estate in Tuen Mun, the film company asked us 8 times for help to apply for a vacant residential unit, a corridor, a rooftop, a garden and a basketball court for filming, as well as a Light Rail Transit compartment and an LRT stop.

It was not easy to find a vacant residential unit. We contacted quite a few housing managers, but they all rejected the application on the grounds that the filming might affect the residents. So we suggested that they consult the residents before accepting the application, and a suitable vacant unit was secured.

The film company also requested a private residence belonging to the YMCA. So we persuaded the organisation concerned. After they realised that the FSO fully supported the filming, and the residents supported it, approval was given.

Also, the film company wished to film on location in a garden on Yau Oi Estate, Tuen Mun. Yet the housing manager was worried that the filming might cause disturbance to the residents of the lower storeys. So he suggested that the filming be stopped at 11 p.m. Later, the film company selected a place far away from the estate and the Housing Department lent them some space to park the film crew's vehicles.

After our lobbying, the Tai Hing Estate Housing Manager agreed to make the Tai Hing Estate basketball court available for filming. Dayo Wong also wished to go to the rooftop of Hing Wai House to film the basketball court from above. But the manager said that the rooftop was full of water pipes and TV cables. If anything happened to these public facilities, the residents would be severely affected. Since the Housing Department was so concerned, the film company withdrew its application.

We also enabled the crew to film in a corridor in Hing Wai House. Although the housing manager was worried that it might cause residents inconvenience, after several attempts to persuade him and suggesting several alternatives, including the film company reducing the size of the crew and not causing any blockade to the exits, the application was finally approved.

Dayo Wong also selected the unique Light Rail Transit in Tuen Mun. The film company would like to film in an LRT compartment and at the Melody Garden Stop a scene in which the male and female leads walked out from a restaurant to the stop and took a ride. But the LRT officer was concerned that the service and passengers might be affected, so he asked the company to film at a less busy stop instead. However, they had to use that stop because a restaurant right next to the Melody Garden Stop had already been booked for the filming. After several negotiations, the LRT officer eventually relaxed the rules and allowed the company to film at that stop, with the condition that the film had to rent a train that was not in service.

Besides, the film company wanted to set up lighting on the canopy near the five flagstaffs of Star Ferry. Because no specific Government department is responsible for that particular spot, we consulted the Architectural Services Department (ASD) awning, Lands Department, the Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force. The ASD suggested that the film company should take sufficient safety precautions, plus all the affected area should be returned to normal. The Police Force demanded that no citizens should be inconvenienced during filming. We therefore relayed the message to the film company and asked it to pay attention to pedestrian safety and take all security measures suggested by the departments. The filming was done smoothly.

Chin Ka-lok Courageously Invades Bride's Pool Road

Chin Ka-lok's first film was "*Absolutely No Problem*" with Yuen Biao, Candy Lo and Okamura Takashi. Same Way Production wanted to close a parking lot on Bride's Pool Road to place a crane for filming. Since they did not know where or how to apply, they came to us for assistance. We contacted the Transport Department and the application was readily approved. But because Bride's Pool Road is restricted to vehicles weighing less than 5.5 tons and less than 11 metres long, a permit was required for the huge crane. So the director came back to us. Although time was tight, after several negotiations, the Transport Department issued a permit for the restricted area and the filming was finished on schedule.

"Needles In Love" Better Than Video-games.

Chow Wai-kwan, director of "*Needles in Love*", wanted to film a scene showing a child visit an adult amusement game centre to see a friend. But under the licensing conditions, no children are allowed in adult centres. Neither was it possible to start shooting after 11 p.m. when the centre was closed, because children are not allowed to work after 11 p.m. We thought of a way out by cordoning off part of the amusement game centre as a non-business section, so the scene with the child actor could be filmed in the centre during business hours without violating the law. So the problem was resolved.

Besides, the film company spotted a boxing ring in the Pei Ho Street Complex Indoor Games Hall. Because the application was submitted with short notice, and the filming would be on a weekend, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department was concerned that the other users might be inconvenienced. They asked the company to postpone the filming. But the actors were only available that weekend. We talked to the venue manager many times. The company promised to film only in the room with the boxing ring and not to inconvenience the other users. The department finally approved and the filming was done as scheduled.

Misfire For A Gun, Desperate For A Toilet

Public toilets are supposed to be for people to pay the calls in, not for misfires. Why and how can there be a misfire in a public toilet? Such an interesting question could

only be answered by director Lam Wah-cheun, because he wanted to film “*Misfire*”. But before he could answer, he had to apply to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to shoot in the Battery Street public toilet a scene of criminals trading guns. The department rejected the application for fear inconveniencing the public. After several negotiations, both parties came to the compromise that Lam Wah-cheun would use only the second floor male toilet, so the female toilet and the toilet for the disabled on the ground floor would not be affected. He also agreed to shorten the filming time so as to reduce the possible inconvenience to people. The department agreed.

Leaving For The Hospital

Marco Mak’s new film “*Leaving*”, with Francis Ng and Sam Lee, needed to film on location in a hospital for one day. But many hospitals rejected the application because the daily operations might be affected. We discussed this with the Auxiliary Medical Service and gained their support for shooting at its headquarters. The director found the venue an ideal place. Although the Number 8 typhoon signal was hoisted on the day of shooting, filming was completed on schedule.

TELA’s Office Transformed Into A Police Station

Director Cheng Po-sui’s “*Angel with a Broken Wing*” had to film a scene with Francis Ng and Josie Ho on Wednesday, May 2nd. He selected the Civil Servant Training Centre for a mock-up of a police station. But the Centre insisted that it was only available for 4 hours on Saturdays. Brilliant Idea Group tried to change the location to the corridor outside the Executive Suites in Hong Kong Stadium. Unfortunately, there was a match on that day. So the film company came to us for assistance. We came up with the solution that the company could use our corridor and conference room at TELA’s office. The director agreed to the idea on the location scouting. We made the arrangement for the filming to be possible on May 2nd.

Swimming In the Southern District

Beaches in the Southern District are always very crowded in summer, so the Southern District Leisure Office rarely approves applications for filming on the beaches at that

time because it might affect swimmers. Yet, because the storyline of the film “*My Schoolmate, the Barbarian*”, starring Nicholas Tse and Stephen Fung, required it, director Chung Siu-hung had to seek to film at that spot. The film company came to us for help. We tried very hard to persuade the Southern District beach officer and hoped they could arrange for us to use one of the beaches as a location. The film company promised that they would accept any time and place recommended by the Leisure Office. Finally, the filming was done in Deep Water Bay.

Breakthroughs

Many filmmakers in Hong Kong are very serious about their work and are willing to go anywhere required by the storyline. In the past 3 months, these people tried to film in the Government’s restricted areas. They selected the Lo Wu Railway Station, Tsing Ma Bridge and Perowne Barracks Explosives Magazine. Every case was unique and every case was difficult, but, we made it with them after all.

Lee Sam-kit Flies Over Lo Wu

Sylvia Chang’s “*Princess D*” included an important emotional scene with Lee Sam-kit and her mother Ha Man-chik. Red on Red considered the Lo Wu checkpoint to be an ideal location for the scene, but their application was rejected. They came to us for assistance. After several negotiations, the Immigration Department finally gave the approval, but only after the checkpoint was closed and the crew had to comply with the conditions laid down by the department for security. The film company, nonetheless, changed to shoot at the Lo Wu Station platform. Lo Wu Station is KCRC property. This was also the first time that filming was approved there. The problem of venue was resolved but the Lo Wu Station platform is a restricted area and permits from the Police are required for entries. After several consultations, the Police gave each actor and crew member a permit for the restricted area.

Tsing Ma Bridge: Above And Below

Filming on Tsing Ma Bridge had never been approved, so Tiny Film Unit’s application to make a telecommunications commercial there was rejected. We explained to the Highways Department about the Government’s policy on assisting the development of the film industry. After careful consideration, the Highways

Department approved filming on top of one of the towers, on the condition that the film company had to take out insurance.

Yuen Kwai's "*Virtual Twilight*" also wanted the Tsing Ma Bridge. This film thematized high technology combat and starred Shu Qi, Karen Mok and Zhao Wei. The Eastern (HK) Film Production wanted to film on the lower deck of the Tsing Ma Bridge. Because it is an emergency access to the airport, it had never been opened for such a use. However, after several mediations, the Highways Department finally approved the application, on the condition that the crew would clear immediately in case of emergency. But after inspecting the venue, the film company wanted to change the date and script so they stopped at that point.

Angel's Adventure In Explosives Magazine

While "*Virtual Twilight*" wanted the Tsing Ma Bridge, "*Angel with a Broken Wing*" set the eyes on the Perowne Barracks Explosives Magazine. We consulted the Entertainment Special Effects Licensing Authority and it suggested hiring a special effects operator and a special effects assistant to transfer the explosives from the magazine to temporary safe storage. These people would also have to supervise the whole course of filming to ensure the venue and the crew's safety. The application was finally approved and the filming was completed on schedule.

Hong Kong: Endless Inspiration And Scenic Spots For Commercial Filming

Hong Kong's commercials long ago reached international standards and have won countless awards. This season we assisted a few big local companies' productions. Filming locations like parks, a parking lot, a public swimming pool, etc. helped enhance their reputation and business. We feel honoured, too.

Early Bird Special

Salon Films applied to make TV commercial "*Progress Energy*" in the Peninsula Hotel and was rejected. So they changed to filming the same scene in the Gloucester Road Garden near Revenue Tower. Although the filming schedule was very tight, we tried our best to help. We asked the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to

expedite the process. Salon Films also agreed to start 30 minutes earlier than initially scheduled, at 6 a.m., and to finish by 8 a.m., to avoid inconveniencing the people going to work. The application was approved and the filming was done.

Facial In The Parking Lot

Such Partners were making a commercial for a bank. It wanted to shoot a scene in the car park next to the City Hall in that a man would do a facial massage in front of his car after parking it. Since the application was not sent in 7 working days in advance as required, the company came to us for assistance. We talked to the Transport Department and Wilson Car Park. The application was finally approved, yet one cannot always rush through applications. Everyone has to follow the application procedures and it takes time to handle applications.

After all, submitting applications on time makes things easier for both sides.

Six Vehicles In On Lan Street

Tiny Film Unit needed to park 6 vehicles in On Lan Street in Central for shooting a cosmetics commercial. But that was a restricted zone and required a permit. Since the application required 3 weeks, Tiny Film sought our assistance. After our mediation, the Transport Department expedited the processing of the permit and the filming went ahead on schedule. Yet we need to harp on the same old tune: the earlier the application, the better.

The Legend Of The Brick on Castle Peak Road

Cinetech Production Group was making an API for the Buildings Department. In one of the main scenes, the male and female leads would drive into a parking lot while a brick falls from an old building nearby. They selected a parking lot on Castle Peak Road, but the application did not go smoothly. The company managing the car park was worried that the scene would affect its corporate image, so it was unwilling to approve it. Later on, we tried our very best to explain about storyline and the presentation of the API. At last, the management company was moved by our sincerity, the application was approved, and filming went ahead on schedule.

The Yam O Interchange Mystery Revealed

The Clan wanted to make a telecommunications commercial and hoped to go to the Yam O Interchange controlled area at Tsing Ma for weekend shoots. But the company did not know where to submit the application. When it contacted the Lands Department, there was only a little time for processing. After several negotiations, the Lands Department was willing to help and the application was approved. Because of the rain, the company had to change the shooting date several times, but eventually the filming was finished on schedule.

An Open Door To Kowloon Park Swimming Pool

Tuckshop Films applied to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to shoot an “*Orange*” TV commercial at the Kowloon Park swimming pool, but it was not approved. So we contacted the department, which said the application was submitted less than 10 working days before shooting and filming after the pool was closed might cause problems of safety and hygiene. We acted as the mediator and eventually came to an agreement with the department that the film company would hire a lifeguard and comply with the conditions laid down by the department before the application could be approved. Although the Number 8 typhoon was hoisted on the day of filming, the shooting was not affected. It was finished as scheduled.

To Close Or Not To Close: Close!

The work and lives of the disciplinary services are always hot topics for movies and TV. Many of them involve scenes of car chases and explosions. For the sake of public safety, road closure is inevitable. In the past 3 months, road closures were one type of the most frequent cases. There were 4 cases in this quarter, half for TV commercials, one movie and one TV production.

Jet Tone was filming a telecommunications TV commercial. The special atmosphere in Central’s Staunton Street attracted the attention of director Wong Ka-wai. Jet Tone asked a section of Staunton Street to be closed to film a car chase. Both the Police Force and the Transport Department considered that the wider section of the lane in Staunton Street could be closed for shooting outside of rush hours. Because there were many shops there, the film company had to inform them and gain their support

first. After considering all the circumstances, Jet Tone withdrew the application and selected another venue.

Later on, Wong Ka-wai was still fond of the Central and Western District, so he switched to the Kennedy Town New Praya for road closure. In order to avoid affecting other road users' safety, the Transport Department advised road closure and traffic diversion. The Police also provided professional advice for the film company to get road signs, and promised to arrange for traffic policemen to be on site, conducting the traffic to avoid traffic congestion.

ATV's "*Police Adventure Story*" applied to close 2 lanes on Sheung Yuet Road and Lam Lok Street to shoot a car explosion scene with Kenneth Tsang and John Chiang running away. Because there would be a fireball shooting up in the air during the explosion, to ensure pedestrian safety, the Police asked ATV to notify the police officer concerned on site 15 minutes before the explosion. At the same time, the traffic was diverted in Wang Tung Street and illegal parking was prohibited so that the diversion of the traffic including buses, could be done smoothly. Besides, ATV had to notify in writing residents and shops in the neighbourhood and gain their support. The application was finally approved, a policeman on site monitored the traffic, and the shooting finished on schedule.

The movie "*Absolutely No Problem*" wanted to shoot an action scene on a bus. It had to apply to close a northbound section of Bride's Pool Road, for a length of 4 miles. Because the section to be closed was so long, many policemen would be needed to monitor the traffic on site, and the application was not approved. We then suggested a solution to close only 100 metres of the part of the lane at a time during filming. At the same time a set of traffic lights would have to be ready. The various departments therefore approved the application. Unfortunately, the film company withdrew the application due to some changes to that scene.

The Survival Of The Hong Kong Film Industry Is All Because Of You

"*Support Filming In Your Community*" is a 5-month promotion programme by the FSO. The opening ceremony was held on July 23rd. In order to create a more film-friendly environment, we invited Hong Kong's famous actors and directors to make a series of promotional short films to be released on TV and in the cinemas. From August to December, a roving exhibition will be held at the Hong Kong Film Archive,

the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, the Queen Elizabeth Stadium, Homantin Plaza, Revenue Tower, Kowloon Park, Yuen Long Theatre and Tsuen Wan Town Hall. In November, we and the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild will conduct a forum to allow members of the movie industry and the public to exchange opinions on location shooting. Also, promotional leaflets will be distributed from all district offices of the Home Affairs Department.

The movie industry is an important pillar of Hong Kong's economy. It not only creates jobs, it also helps to enhance Hong Kong's reputation and image internationally, and maintain Hong Kong's status as a major film producing centre in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Support filming in your community, please!

A Helping Hand For Our Guests From Overseas

Hong Kong is an international metropolis where the entertainment business prospers. Many people admire it and come to shoot their productions here, while others are contracted by Hong Kong industries to work here. On top of helping local companies, we help companies from overseas to shoot on location in Hong Kong, so that Hong Kong can benefit from their hard work.

Jackie Chan's Charm Versus Takashi Miike's Endurance

In this quarter, 2 overseas companies were able to shoot in Hong Kong with our assistance. One was an American TV production company that hoped to get a location with a Hong Kong flavour for an interview with Jackie Chan in a documentary. We advised them to use the famed Lai Chi Kok Park as the background. As the director arrived late in Hong Kong, the official application did not arrive until 1 day before the shooting was scheduled. Fortunately, we gained the understanding and help of the Leisure and Cultural services Department, so the application was approved in 24 hours.

The other case was Takashi Miike, who is very fond of having Hong Kong actors in his films. He wanted to come to Hong Kong and film a suspense thriller, "*Dead or Alive III*". He selected the City Hall Public Library and the Hong Kong Central Library. We also contacted two other district libraries, to give him more choice. The

City Hall Public Library was willing to entertain the filming request. Unfortunately, the company withdrew its application because of the tight time frame.

Heart And Fire

Star East Works' *"My Heart Won't Die"*, starring Kristy Yang and Patrick Tam, applied to shoot in 3 different places: Northern District Hospital, Tsing Yi Public Library and Stanley Main Beach. With FSO's mediation, both the hospital and the library approved the applications. Yet the production company finally gave up on Stanley Main Beach and changed the venue to a bar on the shore.

Television Broadcast's *"Firemen II"* wanted to film on a footbridge construction site in Hang Tak Street. While the Territory Development Department was ready to concede to its wish at first, the contractor wanted to charge a fee. That was against the regulations, so the plan to shoot at that construction site was abandoned.

Production Statistics

This year, in the second quarter (April-June), 14 local productions had difficulties with applications for shooting and sought FSO's assistance.

	Production Company	Title/Director	No. of Assts
1	Film Power	Bullets of Love/Andrew Lau	1
2	Brilliant Idea Group	Angel with a Broken Wing/Cheng Po-sui	2
3	Teamwork Motion Pictures	Misfire/Lam Wah-cheun	1
4	Milkyway Image	Full Time Killer/Johnnie To	1
5	Eastern (HK) Film Production	Virtual Twilight/Yuen Kwai	4
6	Film Power	Bodyguard of the Neighbourhood /Dayo Wong	6
7	Red On Red	Princess D/Sylvia Chang	1
8	Same Way Production	Absolutely No Problem/Chin Ka-lok	2
9	UFO	Needles In Love/Chow Wai-kwan	2
10	Filmko Pictures	Men at Forty*/Ann Hui	1
11	S & W Entertainment	Project K/Michael Hui	1
12	Icon Group	Longing For Your Touch/ Patrick Leung	1
13	Jing's Productions	Leaving/Marco Mak	1

14	Giant Lead Profits	Highbinders/Gordon Chan	2
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* This is direct translation of the Chinese title. The official English title is not yet available.

We provided assistance to 3 overseas film productions.

	Production Company	Country/Title	No. of Assts
1	New Line Cinema/Salon Films	US/Rush Hour II	7
2	October Pictures	US/Spy Game	1
3	Legend Star (Entertainment)	Japan/Dead Or Alive III	1

In addition to the above, we also provided assistance to TV dramas, music videos and commercials.

	Production Company	Production/Title	No. of Assts
1	Such Films	“AT & T” commercial	1
2	Odeon Productions	“Pacific Cyberworks” commercial	1
3	Salon Films	“Progress Energy” commercial	1
4	Tiny Film Unit	“Orange” commercial	1
5	Such Partners	“Hongkong Bank” commercial	1
6	Jet Tone Films	“Orange” commercial	2
7	Tiny Film Unit	“SK II” commercial	1
8	Cinetech Production Group	“Buildings Department” API	1
9	The Clan	“Orange” commercial	1
10	(Film crew from Spain)	Commercial	1
11	TVB	TV drama “Female Cops III”	1
12	TVB	TV drama “Firemen II”	1
13	Star East Works	TV drama “My Heart Won’ t Die”	3
14	Legend Star Entertainment	Documentary	1
15	October Pictures	“Shaolin Soccer” music video	1
16	Filmko Artiste Management	Work permit for film acting	1

Besides, we made 82 location suggestions and provided assistance to location scouting on 10 occasions.

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