

Hong Kong on Location (Issue No. 7)
The Film Services Office Quarterly Newsletter
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More International Films to Shoot in Hong Kong

Victoria Harbour to Appear in *Tomb Raider 2*

After *Rush Hour 2* was shot successfully on location in Hong Kong last year, Hollywood's billion-dollar mega production *Tomb Raider 2* is set to follow suit. About half of the film will be shot in the territory as the director finds the city look of Hong Kong unique, in particular its contrast between the old and the new. The director also intends to include Victoria Harbour in his shots and to stage a series of chase and action sequences on busy, neon-decked streets. FSO has already held three meetings with production company October Pictures to provide general information on location filming in Hong Kong and to explore the feasibility of lane closure arrangements regarding a number of busy streets. In July, the US film crew came to scout locations in Hong Kong. They will return in August to finalise more details. If all goes well, filming will commence early next year. By that time, some 50 production people from overseas will be working closely with approximately a hundred local crew members in the project.

Joan Chen's Hong Kong Film Project Expanded

We reported in *Hong Kong on Location* Issue No. 5 that Joan Chen intended to build a large set simulating San Francisco's Chinatown for her new film *Fusong* in Hong Kong, where half of the film's shooting would take place. With the size of the required site expanded from 10,000 to 30,000 square metres, the original idea of using a plot of government land in Tai Po had to be abandoned. Filming is now deferred to October this year and would take approximately four months to finish. Our follow-up services include sorting out the details of 14 pieces of government land with the District Lands Offices and, with their support, arranging for inspection of government lands in Tuen Mun, Sai Kung, Tseung Kwan O, North District, and the old Kai Tak airport site. Right now, we are still helping to find an ideal site so that the idea to make Hong Kong the main backdrop for the film can be realised.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Hong Kong Story

Applause Pictures, which made *Jan Dara*, is planning to film *Dark October*, directed by Teddy Chen. As the film is about Dr. Sun Yat-sen's founding of the Hing Chung Hui in Hong Kong in 1905 and the events surrounding it, Applause sought FSO's assistance in identifying a piece of flatland of about 4,000 square metres for reconstructing a scene of the Central District at the beginning of the 20th century. We enquired of various District Lands Offices and arranged for the film company to scout possible venues. In the end, a vacant plot in Kowloon West was chosen and approval for lease was subsequently secured from the Lands Department. However, as the director is still being engaged in another filming project, shooting is not likely to commence until the end of next year. Hence the building of the set in Hong Kong still awaits confirmation.

Wong Kar-wai's Favourite Set

Director Wong Kar-wai requested our assistance in finding sites for two of his productions. On both occasions, he chose the former San Po Kong Magistracy Building. The first was *Six Days of War*, a music video he was shooting for an American singer. He needed a building with long corridors and a feel of the 1960s era for a scene showing the heart-broken jail-bound protagonist. Among the 10 options we proposed, he chose the former San Po Kong Magistracy Building. His application for the site was approved by the Lands Department.

In the other case concerning the former Magistracy Building, Wong was anxious to see the authorities expedite the approval of his two-week lease so that he could wrap up the promotion reel of *2046* in time for the Cannes Film Festival. With our assistance, the Lands Department made necessary arrangements to accommodate his request. However, the leading actress could not come to Hong Kong as scheduled; hence, the filming had to be cancelled. But Wong Kar-wai was too fond of the site to give it up. He made another request, this time for a three-month lease. But news from the Lands Department was that the location had been included on the list of land sale scheduled for June and was no more available for lease, much to Wong's regret.

Making Way for Horses and Movie Stars

In the past quarter, there were 12 applications for lane closure and intermittent traffic control, which were all approved with FSO's facilitation.

Horsing Around Town

MTR's new advertisement features a horse and a bicycle racing regular cars. During the shooting, cars had to move out of the horse's way. The film company, Another Factory, filed four applications, which included the closure of Wan Lung Road and Tong Chun Street, both in Tseung Kwan O, closure of a lane in St. Francis Yard, and intermittent traffic control on Pik Wan Road before the traffic lights. The Tseung Kwan O applications were approved after FSO's coordination. While processing the St. Francis Yard application, FSO became aware that it was in fact a private road. This meant that the matter had to be negotiated between Another Factory and the landlord. The Pik Wan Road application posed greater difficulty as intermittent traffic control was required for shooting the scene of a horse stopping in front of the traffic lights. Fortunately, traffic police were on the spot to help out and the scene was completed without difficulty. Later, Another Factory applied for temporary suspension of four parking meters on Dunbar Road and Tweed Road in Kowloon to film a jockey mounting his horse in a parking space in the manner of a driver getting into his parked car. Thanks to the cooperation of the Transport Department, the application was given speedy approval.

Chater Road Stays Open to Newspaper Vans

The new Fuji Film advertisement has a grand scene in which Kelly Chen arrives in style in her car and fans swarm up to her. The shoot required the closure of Chater Road. The original idea was to close it from Sunday evening to six o'clock the next morning. Since Chater Road is made a pedestrian zone every Sunday, it simply meant extending its duration as such. The Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force both felt that the extension should not be a problem, except that Chater Road had to remain open to vehicles for the delivery of morning newspapers. The application was approved after the production company promised to put up special signs and arrangements to allow passage for these vehicles.

Twists and Turns for ICAC Promo

The Film Factory applied for the closure of lanes in Bank Street and Yau Hong Street to shoot the promotional film for the ICAC. With FSO's facilitation, approval was granted by the Transport Department, the Highways Department, and the Hong Kong Police Force. But as the script was not ready before the filming, the application was cancelled. When the script was finalised in July, the film company re-submitted the application and it was approved by the relevant departments. However, the Yau Hong Street filming session had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. The film company had no choice but to submit a third application. This time, with nature in their favour, filming was completed smoothly after two months of tortuous planning, frustration and patience.

Cool off the Summer with Movies!

On a hot summer's day, watching a film in air-conditioned luxury is one of life's greatest pleasures. Filmmakers busy themselves to prepare for the golden days of summer, and we, as the support team, give them our undivided attention. This quarter, we were involved in 14 local productions. Among them, *If You Care* was the most challenging. *Mama's Angel*, by Ching Siu-tung, who has returned to the director's chair after a long spell, also sought FSO's assistance on many occasions.

***If You Care*: a Film Flamed by Trouble**

Directed by Adrian Kwan and aiming for a summer premiere, comedy *If You Care* sought the assistance of FSO many times over diverse issues during its filming.

The film is about a fireman, played by Eason Chan, who falls in love with his female colleague (Gillian Chung). The film has several fire scenes. The film company had applied to shoot a fire-fighting scene at the North Point Government Offices Building, but the application was rejected by the Government Property Agency (GPA) on the grounds that the proposed filming time fell within office hours. We suggested that they should consider making use of the vacated former San Po Kong Government Offices Building. The film company agreed and then filed an application to the Lands Department. A discharge permit

for the use of special effects involving pyrotechnics was also required. In order to facilitate the arrival of fire engines and ambulances at the “fire scene”, lane closure and intermittent traffic control had to be implemented in King Fuk Street. The application was approved after the film company had accepted the Police’s request to shorten the duration of intermittent traffic control.

The company’s request to use the ex-Hollywood Road Police Married Quarters was, however, unsuccessful. The application was rejected by the GPA on the grounds that the use of pyrotechnic special effects materials would cause damage to the building structure. We explained that the film company had just finished shooting a fire scene at the former San Po Kong Government Offices Building without causing any damage to the building. After lengthy negotiations and deliberations, the two parties failed to agree on the post-shooting repair costs and the film company withdrew its application. In the end, the scene was shot in the former San Po Kong Government Offices Building trouble-free.

Other areas where the FSO had rendered its services included location filming at hospitals and Government offices, using a large exhibition venue as a mock-up for a conference centre, extension of shooting duration at Cayman Rise, and parking of vehicles in a white hatched zone. Most of the applications were approved and the film is now expected to be released in early September, to the relief of all parties involved.

Ching Siu-tung Misses the Chief Executive

Mama’s Angel, an action romance directed by Ching Siu-tung, starring Maggie Q and Kelly Lin, came to us for help on nine occasions, four of which were related to the shooting of a dragon boat race. The plot tells a big gun’s narrow escape from an assassination attempt made while he was watching a dragon boat race. At first the film company planned to shoot the real dragon boat race on Shing Mun River and requested that the temporary spectator stand be retained for the shoot. But the company changed its mind and decided to shoot the International Dragon Boat Race that was to take place off the Wanchai waterfront. As the Chief Executive would be there to officiate at the Chief Executive Cup on the second day of the race, the Home Affairs Department and the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Association rejected the application for security reasons. We intervened and succeeded in obtaining the department’s agreement for the film to be shot on the first day of the race. Unfortunately, the

production crew, then in the Philippines, could not make it back to Hong Kong in time, and the project had to be cancelled at the last minute. Shooting was finally arranged to take place on the sea off Tai Po Waterfront Park. During the shooting, the company requested to use the park's public pier for transporting the filming equipment and dragon boats. We liaised with the Tai Po District Lands Office and the application was granted.

My Left Eye Sees Ghosts Meets Audience on Time

The production that best illustrates filmmakers' dynamism and the FSO's determination to get results this quarter has to be *My Left Eye Sees Ghosts*, directed by Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai. The film premiered in July but the shooting was still taking place at the end of June. Milkyway Image wanted to use the arch bridge in Tuen Mun Park as the backdrop for the parting scene between Sammi Cheng and Lau Ching-wan, but they did not have sufficient time to apply for permission. We explained the difficulties to the Park Manager and approval was obtained within a very short time. The film also contains many shots of freeways. The service we provided in this respect included the arrangement for lane closure on Wu Kau Tang Road (for a car crash scene) and application for a restricted zone permit for Big Wave Bay Road. The latter normally takes three weeks to process but the Transport Department gave their approval within four and a half days.

No More All-nighters for *Mighty Baby*

Mighty Baby, directed by Patrick Leung and Chan Hing-kar, had its share of problems. There was a scene of an infant and a young mother at the airport's departure hall. The Airport Authority would only allow the crew to shoot the scene at midnight because of the obstruction likely to be caused to the airport's normal operations at other times. But it would not be reasonable to expect the baby to be still awake at that hour. After contacting the Airport Authority, and explained the constraints caused by the baby actor, we were pleased that common sense eventually prevailed. The company agreed to reduce the area required for filming and the Airport Authority allowed them to shoot the scene in the morning.

Application for Hospital Locations Made Easier

The demand for filming in hospitals has always been high. In this quarter alone, there were over 10 applications. To give filmmakers more choice and to make the application procedure more uniform and convenient, FSO has reached a preliminary four-point agreement with the Hospital Authority (HA):

- (1) HA and FSO will both assist in the shootings that take place on HA premises;
- (2) HA is drawing up a filming policy, complete with a guideline on location application and an application form;
- (3) HA is compiling a standard charge list for the reference of all hospitals; and
- (4) HA and FSO will jointly process shooting applications, which they will then hand over to the relevant hospital for approval.

The HA has already consulted the film industry regarding the standard charge list. They are now considering the possibility of a downward adjustment and a mechanism to charge on the basis of the nature of venues.

Movies that have applied for location shooting in hospitals in the last three months included *The Eye*; *Sugar Cane**; *Hot-blooded Youth**; *If You Care*; *Three Brotherly Pairs**; *I Love the Lisp**; *Gourd, Fish, and Red Bean**; and *King of Gamblers 2002**. The advertisement for Eagle Star Insurance and Andy Lau's music video also used hospitals as backdrop. Among the medical institutions, North District Hospital is the most popular among filmmakers. It was the location for *Hot-blooded Youth**, *King of Gamblers 2002**, and Andy Lau's music video. In all these cases, the applications were approved and filming went according to schedule.

The Pang Brothers also sought our service when they wanted to film *The Eye* at an out-patient clinic of the Department of Health. The venue of their choice was the Ha Kwai Chung Polyclinic and they could only film on 21 April when the female lead from Singapore was in town. However, the Department of Health indicated that the venue had been reserved by another film company on that day. We discovered after some investigation that this company had not yet finalised their decision to film, the Department of Health subsequently approved Pang Brothers' application.

Putting Commercial Imagination into Action

This quarter, 17 advertisements sought our help for up to 29 times on a wide variety of issues. We are glad to report that they have all been resolved to the satisfaction of all.

Star-gazing and Sheep-counting

Star-gazing, undoubtedly too lofty a luxury for most city-dwellers, is a selling point of Nokia's new commercial. With a plot revolving around watching Halley's Comet, the ad was to be filmed on a government land at Pak Shing Kok, Tseung Kwan O. But as there was not enough processing time for the application, the production company's request was rejected. We contacted the Sai Kung District Lands Office immediately and succeeded in obtaining a speedy approval.

Film Factory was shooting an ad that involved sheep. The idea was to shoot a sheep-counting scene on a vacant government land in the former Cheung Sha Wan Estate. But they were pressed for time and did not know where they should hand in their application, so they sought our assistance at short notice. After enquiry, we found that the vacant site was under the jurisdiction of the Lands Department. We contacted the Kowloon West District Lands Office, which suggested that filming be postponed as time was running short. We helped the District Lands Office to collect views from other departments and eventually managed to obtain approval from the relevant authorities a day before filming was to begin. The District Lands Office, however, did remind the company that they should give the relevant departments ample processing time in their next application.

Ad Gives Timely Encouragement

Centro Digital Pictures' *Bounceback Hong Kong* series had intended to shoot a scene involving children playing at the Waterfall Bay Park and the Kwun Tong Recreation Ground. They came to us for assistance as they were running out of time. We immediately contacted the Southern District and Kwun Tong District Leisure Services Offices, and asked whether approval could be given in time for filming to proceed. With their co-operation and understanding of the difficulties involved, both applications were given speedy approval and shooting proceeded according to schedule.

Bank Ads Reflect High Taste

Shots of Hong Kong's high-rises are popular in bank commercials, local and overseas alike. Hang Seng Bank, which wanted to film at Shui On Centre, was required to apply for a restricted zone permit for parking a power generator on Harbour Road. It contacted us for assistance when it was told that the Transport Department would only allow filming to take place after seven in the evening. But the company considered it important to shoot the film at 4:30 in the afternoon in order to capture the twilight hours. After discussions with the Transport Department, the company's application was approved. CitiBank New York also sent a crew to Hong Kong to do an aerial shot of the central business area from the rooftop of the Queensway Government Offices Building. They did not allow sufficient time for the authorities to process their application and we took their case up with the Government Property Agency. The application was approved the very next day.

Hong Kong Postman on American TV

The US Postal Service flew specially to Hong Kong for its commercial. The production crew needed to hire Hong Kong Post vehicles and uniforms, so we made enquiries for them and found out that both could be on loan to the company. They also needed a helping hand in their application for filming on a tower of the Tsing Ma Bridge. After their application was approved by the Highways Department, the production company changed the time of the filming session. Fortunately, the Highways Department did not object and the second application was approved just on time. Smoke Films also applied to shoot the 'Bellagio' TV commercial on the tower of Ting Kau Bridge with an intention to capture the view of Tsing Ma Bridge from there. With the kind assistance of the Highways Department, the application was approved.

TV Drama Chase Scenes

TVB planned to film its drama serial *The Tragedy of the Emperor's Daughter* at Tai Shing Stream, Shing Mun Reservoir. Although it had the approval of the Water Supplies Department, it still needed a permit issued by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Department as the site lies within a country park. The latter, however, indicated that the site had been reserved earlier by another production company. TVB came to us. We discovered after contacting the relevant departments and the film company that the sites were in fact situated next to each other. We came up with a solution that met the needs of both parties. They were allowed to film on the same day on the condition that they would not shoot beyond their respective preset boundaries.

ATV had the runway of the old Kai Tak Airport in mind for a car scene in its drama serial *Follow Up a Victory*, but the Lands Department rejected its application on the grounds that the runway was not properly designed for vehicular traffic movement. We consulted the Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force. Both parties had no objection to filming on the runway. Finally, the Lands Department reconsidered the application and allowed ATV to film there on the condition that the other users of the venue raised no objection.

Bang Productions was making a television documentary entitled *Bamboo Screen*. The production reviews the development of Hong Kong cinema and is to be broadcast on television in Europe, America, and Japan. To trace the Kung Fu film genre to its origins, the filmmaker intended to take some of the rehearsal scenes of the Zhejiang Peking Opera Troupe in Hong Kong. However, he was not able to get in touch with the performing company. After enquiry, FSO found that the opera troupe was staging a performance at the City Hall but there were no martial arts scenes. With the assistance of the Theatre and Chinese Opera Office, LCSD, *Bamboo Screen* was later arranged to film the rehearsals of the Hong Kong Youth of Chinese Opera Troupe.

Production Statistics

In the second quarter (April to June) of 2002, 15 local productions had difficulties with their applications for location shooting and sought the FSO's assistance for 45 times in total.

Production Co.	Title / Director	No. of Assistance
Applause Pictures	<i>The Eye</i> / Pang Brothers	2
	<i>Dark October</i> / Teddy Chen	2
Jing's	<i>The Peeping</i> / Marco Mak	1
Singing Horse	<i>Hot-blooded Youth*</i> / Cheng Po-sui	5
Mandarin Films	<i>I Love the Lisp*</i> / Steven Cheng	1
Icon Pictures	<i>Mighty Baby</i> / Patrick Leung, Chan Hing-kar	2
Buddy Film	<i>Three Brotherly Pairs*</i> / Herman Yau	2
	<i>Gourd, Fish and Red Bean*</i> / Law Wai-tak	1
Films Station	<i>If You Care</i> / Adrian Kwan	10
Celestial Pictures	<i>Mama's Angel</i> / Ching Siu-tung	9
Milkyway Image	<i>My Left Eye Sees Ghosts</i> / Johnnie To, Wai Ka-fai	3
The Storm Riders	<i>King of Gamblers 2002*</i> / Cheung Man	2
Charming Loyal	<i>Scattered Spirit*</i> / Patrick Leung	2
People's	<i>My Wife Is 18*</i> / James Yuen	2
Kam's	<i>Sugar Cane*</i> / Riley Yip	1

* Direct translation from the Chinese titles as official English titles are not available.

We provided assistance to 2 overseas film productions for 6 times in total.

Production Co.	Title / Country	No. of Assistance
Kam's	<i>Fusong</i> / USA	5
Jet Tone	<i>Sons of the Wind</i> / France	1

We also provided assistance to TV commercials, TV dramas, promotional films, music videos, etc., for 48 times in total.

Production Co.	Production & Title	No. of Assistance
Jet Tone	<i>Six Days of War</i> music video (USA)	3
	<i>2046</i> promotional film	3
Centro Digital	<i>Bounceback Hong Kong</i> promotional film	2
Image Boutique	"Hang Seng Bank" TV commercial	2
Tiny Film	"US Postal Service" TV commercial (USA)	4
Shya La La	"HSBC" TV commercial	1
Such Partners	"Nokia" TV commercial	1
	"Eagle Star Insurance" TV commercial	1
	"PCCW" TV commercial	1
The W Partners	"Hi-C Lemon Tea" TV commercial	2
	"IBM" TV commercial	1
	"Fortolin" TV commercial	2
TVB	<i>The Tragedy of the Emperor's Daughter</i> TV drama	1
Square Box	"Citibank New York" TV commercial (USA)	1
Adbrownies Ad	<i>Brand Hong Kong</i> promotional film	2
Blue Arc	"World Gold Council" TV commercial	2
ATV	<i>Follow Up a Victory</i> TV drama	2
	<i>Lucky Mission</i> TV drama	1
Film Factory	"ICAC" promotional film	2
	"Wincafe" TV commercial (Taiwan)	2
Handmade Films	"Fuji Films" TV commercial	1
Bang	<i>Bamboo Screen</i> TV documentary	1
Another Factory	"MTR" TV commercial	6
Smoke Films	"Bellagio" TV commercial	1
S & C Satcchi	"置業家居" commercial photos	1
October Pictures	Andy Lau's music video	2

Besides, we made 51 location suggestions and provided assistance to location scouting on 32 occasions.

Contact us:

(Principal Entertainment Standards Control Officer)

Ms MAK Kwan-hung, Camy

Tel: (852) 2594 5757

(Chief Entertainment Standards Control Officer)

Miss LAU Fong, Kathryn

Tel: (852) 2594 5743

(Entertainment Standards Control Officer)

Miss SO Mei-fong, Dionne

Tel: (852) 2594 5758

(Entertainment Standards Control Officer)

Miss NG Ka-po, Clarrie

Tel: (852) 2594 5759

(Entertainment Standards Control Officer)

Ms HO Yin-fan, Fanny

Tel: (852) 2594 5712

Address: 40/F., Revenue Tower,
5 Gloucester Road
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2594 5758

Fax: (852) 2824 0595

Email: info@fso-tela.gov.hk

Website: www.fso-tela.gov.hk

The quarterly newsletter is produced by the Film Services Office of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority. For any enquiries or suggestions, please contact the Film Services Office.

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