

HONG KONG ON LOCATION (ISSUE NO. 1)  
THE FILM SERVICES OFFICE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
(11.2000 - 1.2001)

**Message from the Commissioner**

The Chief Executive announced in his 1997 Policy Address to promote the local film industry. To implement this policy initiative, Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority established the Film Services Office (FSO) in April 1998. It has been three years since its establishment and, with the support of other Government departments and related organisations, the FSO has achieved considerable results.

For example, more than 180 Government departments and public bodies have agreed to hire out their premises and facilities for location filming. To ease the burden of high production cost, the Government Property Agency and the Lands Department have reduced substantially the fees for location filming on Government lands and properties. We have also reached agreement with the Airport Authority not only to lower the rate of filming at the airport but also to streamline the application procedures and make available more sites and facilities for filming. As for lane closure, we are drawing up guidelines with relevant Government departments to facilitate the application from the filming industry.

In addition, we are also providing a “one-stop” service for location filming requests of a more complicated nature. In the first two years of our service,

we dealt with a total of 47 and 57 applications respectively. Last year, the number jumped to 142. The success rate in dealing with these applications has also grown from 94% and 96% respectively, to 98%.

Our *Hong Kong on Location* aims to facilitate the film industry to have a better understanding of the services and assistance we have provided every quarter. More importantly, we hope to urge the industry to give us its valuable suggestions, so that we can provide a better service in the future.

We hope this newsletter can enhance our communication with the industry, to create a better environment conducive to the long-term development of the Hong Kong film industry.

Mr. Eddy Chan, JP

Commissioner, Television and Entertainment Licensing

### **There is a Way When There is Creativity**

Creativity is the key to the survival of the film industry. It is also the key to solving problems for the film industry. In the past three months, many local companies have sought our assistance. The process of assisting them to deal with their difficulties is a race with time and requires quick thoughts. It was hard work, but also interesting work.

## **Ann Hui works with Visible Secret**

Ann Hui's new film, *Visible Secret* has sought our assistance five times since last November. That by itself is an indication of the director's insistence on her requirements. The assistance included lane closure (please refer to "Lane Closed, Filming in Progress"), filming traffic accidents as well as filming in housing estates and vacant old buildings in the Western District.

The story takes place in Hong Kong through a span of 15 years, with a cast that includes Anthony Wong, Eason Chan, Shu Qi and James Wong. In one scene, the father, played by Anthony Wong, is hit by a tram. However, the Hongkong Tramways is reluctant to hire out a tram for the film, owing to the concern that an accident scene would affect the image of the company. After our repeated attempts, a consensus was reached. Director Hui agreed to use a truck instead in the accident scene and signed an undertaking promising not to include any image of a tram hitting a pedestrian. It was then that the company agreed to hiring out a tram. The film now includes a scene in which a tram drives along with its characteristic "ding dong" sound.

Hui is also fond of old Chinese-style buildings in the Western District. She wanted to use a vacant building in Davis Street. The building is owned by the Land Development Corporation. The company was concerned that the building lacked maintenance and could pose danger to the crew. It suggested the film company to commission a safety assessment of the building, but the latter could not afford the time and, with our assistance,

chose to film outside the building and in the seaside area of the Western District. Because of Hui's fondness for the area, the audience will have a chance to savour the beautiful scenery at western harbour and Belcher Bay.

The film also wanted to film the Hong Kong's oldest housing estate. They applied to film on the Upper Wong Tai Sin Estate. The Housing Department was concerned that the estate was undergoing repair work. Also, the shooting dates of January 20 and 21 were very close to Chinese New Year and filming might inconvenience the tenants. The department suggested that the shooting schedule be postponed but the film company appealed against their decision. On the company's behalf, we contacted the housing manager and arranged a meeting between the film company and the tenants. Only after that was permission granted to the film company to shoot as scheduled in Block 14 of the estate.

### **What is Ekin Cheng Doing at the Revenue Tower?**

Director Jingle Ma wanted to use the rooftop of the Revenue Tower for his new film *Goodbye Mr. Cool*. After their initial request made in November was turned down, they contacted us. The film company, Red on Red, would like to shoot a major scene at that location and it would send a crew of over a hundred members to shoot a fight scene starring Ekin Cheng. We made some inquiries and realised that the Government Property Agency turned down the application because of the potential hazards with so many people working on the rooftop.

We sought the advice of the Fire Services Department on this issue. The department advised that fire safety facilities at the Revenue Tower were sufficient and that, in case of a fire, the rooftop was actually an evacuation area. It was their opinion that filming on the rooftop would not be a safety hazard. After we relayed that information to the Government Property Agency, it allowed the film company to shoot there, though the crew size was to be limited to 85.

Now that the application for the location had been approved, a new problem arose. How would 85 people answer the call of nature? Red on Red contacted us again and we agreed to lend our restrooms at Level 40, but not before we obtained the consent of the other user departments on the same floor.

*Goodbye Mr. Cool* also applied to film in a twin-tower block of a housing estate and at the New Horizon Vietnamese Refugee Centre. Looking for a twin-tower block was not an easy task. Both Wah Fu Estate and Shun Lee Estate turned down the request because they were both undergoing repair works. Our effort to lobby the Housing Department was unsuccessful. Eventually, we contacted eight estate offices and found out that there were twin-tower blocks in four of them. The film company was in favour of Sun Chui Estate, but ran into obstacles. Finally, we approached the housing manager of Shun Tin Estate and, although the estate was to undergo repair work soon, he agreed to let the crew film in its Tin Chi House. Later, when the company needed additional shooting, the housing manager of Oi Man Estate agreed to hire out a twin-tower block after we negotiated with him.

As for the film's request to shoot at the Refugee Centre, Christian Action asked us to be the mediator. We also had to get approval from the Education and Manpower Bureau. Another film, Cheng Kim-fung's *Game of Compassion*, had also picked that location and asked to film there at about the same time in November. We coordinated the two films' schedules and both were able to complete their work on time. Because applications are often hurried due to last-minute changes involved in filmmaking, the Education and Manpower Bureau asks film companies to obtain permission from Christian Action first before handing in their applications. It requires five working days to process an application.

### **Would Western District Be the Same in 2046?**

To recreate the 1960s Hong Kong for *In the Mood for Love*, Wong Kar-wai went to Thailand. For his upcoming film, *2046*, he had his eyes set on a vacant Government office building in the Western District. He liked it for its high ceiling and spacious floor plan. But when Jet Tone Films Ltd., his production company, wanted to visit the location, its request was turned down by the Government Property Agency.

On behalf of Jet Tone, we talked to the department. It was concerned about the time-worn condition of the building, which it feared would pose danger to the crew. We negotiated with the department and we eventually reached an agreement. The company was required to buy public liability insurance in the name of the Government before its application could be considered.

After that, Jet Tone's request was approved and was allowed to visit the location on January 3.

2046 is yet to decide whether to film in the building. Although it is uncertain whether the old building will last, its image may be able to last forever in film.

**Also ...**

Other productions we were involved in this quarter were Joe Ma's *Feel 100% II* (Brilliant Idea Group), Andrew Lau's *Blue Blood* (Bob & Partners) and Nicholas Tse's *The Beloved* (PCC Skyhorse Ltd.).

Starring Joey Yung and Eason Chan, *Feel 100% II* is a story about a group of young people who get involved in a web of tangled love. Brilliant Idea contacted us twice. For the first time, the film company applied for filming at the Wan Chai Environmental Resource Centre and their request was approved by the Environmental Protection Department. For the second time, they wanted to shoot at the office of Helping Hand for three hours, using it as a mock-up of a university dormitory. With our assistance, Helping Hand agreed to hire out the office. We were also able to help Brilliant Idea reach a rental agreement with favourable terms.

Andrew Lau's *Blue Blood* features the love affair between adventurer Wisely and an alien with blue blood. Bob & Partners wanted to use the Murray House (see "Location Snapshots" below) in Stanley as a foreign

location. We made inquiries on their behalf and the Housing Department replied that filming would be approved if the film company agreed to comply with certain conditions to protect the building, which is a declared monument. Bob & Partners visited the location. Since the script had yet to be finalised, the company had not decided if the building would be used.

*My Beloved* is a short film directed by Nicholas Tse. The production company contacted us twice in December, looking for a mock-up prison and an emergency ward of a hospital. Through our mediation efforts, Christian Action agreed to process their application for a mock-up prison. For the emergency ward, we suggested the film company to contact Tuen Mun Hospital and Auxiliary Medical Service.

### **Television Commercials:**

#### **A City of Economic Vitality**

The commercials we assisted in making this quarter were mostly overseas productions aimed to capture the economic vitality of Hong Kong. Locations such as the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and large conference halls were their targets. There were also off-beat requests, like renting ambulances, using an operation room of a hospital or shooting the Sha Tin Racecourse when the large crowd dispersed.

### **One More Use of an Ambulance**

When an ambulance is not in service for saving lives, it can be used for other purposes like making a commercial. Of course, an ambulance cannot be driven by just anyone, so its driver is part of the package. The company with such a demand is Salon Films (H.K.) Ltd. It was making a commercial for an Anderson Accenture product and it will be shown all over the world. The company wanted to hire two identical ambulances to show them driving along Nathan Road through the glass-and-steel jungle.

Salon Films approached us and we turned to the Fire Services Department, but the latter held that renting out two ambulances from a city station on a holiday (December 17) would affect its operation. An alternative was to arrange an ambulance from a far-off station, but few drivers would be willing to drive all the way into the city. Only after extensive persuasion on our part did the department agree to rent out two ambulances, though the rental time had to be reduced from six hours to three and a half hours. Saving lives is important and the film crew had to work a little faster to complete their task.

### **A Closer Look at a Hospital, the Racecourse and the Stock Exchange**

Genie, a division of British Telecommunications, came to Hong Kong to shoot a commercial for its mobile internet services. To capture the reality of the city, Salon Films, the commercial's local co-production company, contacted us three times for assistance. They wished to film on a footbridge

near the Sha Tin Racecourse, the viewing gallery at the Stock Exchange and the operation room of a hospital. All three were difficult cases. An operation room is busy twenty-four hours a day. The Stock Exchange is always brimming with frantic activities, and it had never allowed filming on its premises. The Hong Kong Jockey Club even has a rule against filming of television commercials on its properties.

We advised Salon Films that renting the operation room of a busy public hospital was impossible, so it was better to turn to private institutions like the Union Hospital or the Yan On Hospital. The company approached the Union Hospital and was successful. The Stock Exchange also relented to our lobbying, making exceptions to allow the crew to shoot the activities of the trading hall from the viewing gallery. The only conditions were a recommendation note from our office and a letter of undertaking from the film company.

But the Jockey Club would not budge. We turned instead to the Sha Tin District Lands Office for assistance. It suggested that we should try the walkway at the Jubilee Garden Shopping Centre, where crowds could also be seen leaving the racecourse. It was a good suggestion, but the film company eventually decided against filming the scene.

### **Seeking Large Conference Halls**

The Zurich Financial Group also commissioned Salon Films to produce a commercial. It looked for locations with Hong Kong characteristics. The

concourse in the new wing of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre was one of their targets. We liaised with the related authorities on the company's behalf and obtained the approval from the HKCEC Management Co as well as the Hong Kong Trade Development Council to film at the location.

The company Moviola was also seeking large conference halls for making a television commercial for Siemens to promote the MP3 functions of the latter's mobile phones. With MP3 in hand, the lead in the commercial can switch from one location to another at will – from a conference hall to a music hall, from home to a conference room ... We searched high and low, inquiring with organisations with large conference rooms, like the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Housing Department as well as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Finally, we obtained the help of the last, which rented out its conference hall at the department's headquarters.

We also provided assistance to the following television commercials: lining up Tai Po Waterfront Park for Lanza Bank, arranging shooting at Tai Tau Leng Playground for Sunday and obtaining the use of Rocky Bay in Shek O for Sony. All three applications were approved.

### **“Lane Closed, Filming in Progress”**

Roads are integral parts of any city. To capture the reality of city life, films must take to the roads. In the past, whether shooting car chases on busy

highways or night scenes in quiet streets, filming on the roads could be dangerous. To promote local filmmaking and to ensure safety, we began taking requests for lane closure in March, 2000. So far, 15 applications had been processed. Of those, ten were approved and all had successfully completed their shooting schedules.

In the past three months, two projects, *Goodbye Mr. Cool* and *Visible Secret*, had applied for lane closures. *Goodbye Mr. Cool* requested that one lane in Un Chau Street and another on Hollywood Road between Peel Street and Graham Street be blocked off. The main location of *Goodbye Mr. Cool* was the Tai Wah Cafe in Un Chau Street and the film company asked for the lane to be closed from 9 p.m. on November 15 through 5 a.m. the next morning, so that they can shoot interior scenes in the restaurant and the 15 motorcycles parked outside. For every application, we have to confirm that there was no objection from the Hong Kong Police Force, the Transport Department and the Highways Department. In this case, the Transport Department was concerned that the traffic in Un Chau Street was still busy at 9 p.m. and asked the film company to shoot on a weekend instead. We negotiated with it on the company's behalf and the department finally held on objection after the company had delayed the shooting to after 10:30 p.m.

The section sought to be closed on Hollywood Road is just outside the Aqua Restaurant. Shooting was scheduled for December 28. However, the Transport Department considered that there would be busy vehicular and pedestrian traffic on that day, partly because it was during the Christmas and New Year holidays and partly because of the location's proximity to popular nightspot Lan Kwai Fong. The department asked the film company to

shorten the time. The company agreed by dropping a fight scene, reducing the filming time to two hours and starting it only after midnight.

*Visible Secret* has a “focus” on traffic accidents. The film company applied for lane closure in Catchick Street in Kennedy Town and on Ha Heung Road in Tokwawan, both locations were to be used for shooting accident scenes. The request concerning Catchick Street was for December 19 and 20, both mornings from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. This was the scene that required a tram and there was a tram stop in the part of the lane applied to be closed. The Tokwawan application was for January 12 and 13, from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. on both days. To avoid creating traffic congestion, the Police suggested that the shooting time should be put off to start at 11 p.m.

During the actual filming, the film companies must also abide by certain rules. They are required to take safety precautions according to the circumstances of each case. For example, the crew’s lighting should not cause any disturbance to drivers on the other lanes. The crew must wear vests with reflective strips and place warning signs and safety cones in appropriate positions.

To ensure the most efficient application, the Film Services Office, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Transport Department and the Highways Department have drafted guidelines on filming involving lane closure. Views from the industry are being collected. The guidelines are scheduled to be announced in March.

### **The Chinese New Year Deadline**

Last year, 128 film productions, television programmes and commercials were shot in Hong Kong by overseas production companies. In January, the MBC Broadcasting Company of South Korea was able to obtain quick approvals for filming with our assistance. The crew was in Hong Kong for only two days, but it managed to shoot footage for its television series in three separate locations.

On January 15, MBC came to the Film Services Office to inquire about shooting in Hong Kong. Two days after returning to South Korea, it contacted us through the Bananas Location Co-ordination Co, seeking help for shooting on January 28 and 29 at Repulse Bay, Kowloon Park as well as the clock tower and the waterfront promenade near the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Their request was urgent, falling short of the normal application period of two weeks. In fact, because of the Chinese New Year holidays, there left only six days for the processing. We contacted the respective offices – Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Southern District Leisure Services Office, Hong Kong Life Saving Society and Kowloon Park Management Office – asking for simplified and expedient processing of the applications. We also had to accommodate the production company's schedule of shooting at Repulse Bay on Hong Kong side in one day and in Kowloon the other day for the filming at Cultural Centre and Kowloon Park. For several days, we made frequent contacts with the production company by email. Fortunately, all the related offices were very cooperative, patiently accepting

the frequent changes in the schedule. Eventually, applications for all three locations were approved and the filming was conducted as planned.

### **Scouting for Locations**

It is not an easy task to find a location that fits perfectly all the requirements. The Film Services Office launched its location scouting service since October 1999. In 2000, we provided that service on 30 occasions. For instance, we assisted Jackie Chan's *Rush Hour 2* twice, to scout for locations on 15 occasions. Finally, the American company New Line Cinema has decided to film in Hong Kong in March this year. We will give a more detailed report on its filming activities in our next newsletter.

When film companies have difficulties with locations, they can also contact us for suggestions. Last year, we made 130 suggestions. The number indicates that there is a need for such a service.

The film industry can visit our website for information about venues under the management of Government departments and public bodies. The Film Services Office has put on line information on all such venues available for filming.

### **Lowering Rental Fees**

In the past, the rate for renting Government lands for location filming is HK\$12,200 a day. To help film companies cut down on expenses, the Lands Department lowered the rate substantially on July 1, 2000. The fee is now HK\$4,860 for each application for a period of up to one month. Extension for another month is possible at the cost of another HK\$4,860.

From last July through the end of January, the Film Services Office successfully processed 23 applications for renting government lands. In the past three months, TVB made four applications, for shooting at Ma On Shan, Tsok Pok Hang in Sha Tin and on Sai Sha Road. Tuckshop Films Ltd and Cinevision Top Choice Productions Ltd rented, respectively, Tai Mo Shan Road and the junction of Pei Ho Street and Apliu Street in Sham Shui Po.

### **A New Year, A New Scene**

Those who had paid attention must have noticed that our website had the same look for some time. After the Chinese New Year, our site put on a new face, with a changed design and more convenient access. You will find a new scene on our website.

The site includes location photographs, information on regulations governing location shooting and application procedures. You can also find film industry information and a guide to filming in Hong Kong.

Last year, there were 19,191 user sessions on our website, while the number of successful hits reached a staggering 507,650.

Our website address is: [www.fso-tela.gov.hk](http://www.fso-tela.gov.hk)

### **Location Snapshot: The Beauty of the Ageing Murray House**

A city's pace moves fast and Hong Kong is one of the fastest paced city in the world. The city has seen many of its old buildings vanish from our sight. Fortunately, some of our architectural treasures have been preserved. One such example is the Murray House used to be on Garden Road in Admiralty (where currently stands the Bank of China Tower). It served as dormitory for British soldiers and was one of the few European style buildings still in existence. In 1982, it was taken down, but the Government took care to number its over 3,000 pieces of granite so that the building could be re-erected elsewhere.

Today, the Murray House stands in picturesque Stanley, its interior used as a shopping and leisure centre. For a scene of old Hong Kong or a European style building, this is a perfect choice.

### **Fresh Off the Press**

New editions of our publications are now available, viz. *Filming in Hong Kong: 2001 Film and Video Production Directory* and *Guide to Filming in Hong Kong*. Copies have been sent to various film companies for reference. We welcome comments from the film industry on those publications.

## **An Open Plea**

We would like to make an open plea to the industry. We invite new companies and companies with changed information -- new mailing address, for example -- to contact us as soon as possible. We will put the new information on our website and in our next *Film and Video Production Directory* to provide reference for the film industry.

## **Production Statistics**

Local productions increased steadily in 2000. A total of 150 films were released (an increase of over 50% compared with the 95 releases in 1999) and the gross income was about HK\$383 million. On the other hand, 280 foreign films were released with a gross of HK\$531 million.

In 2000, 32 local productions had difficulties in applying for location shooting and sought the Film Services Office's assistance:

<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Title/Director</b>	<b>No. of Assistance</b>
UFO	And I Hate You So/Yee Chung-man	4
	Lavender/Yip Kam-hung, Riley	9
Film Workshop	Master Q/Herman Yau	2
Golden Harvest	The Accidental Spy/Teddy Chan	6
New Line Cinema/Salon Films	Rush Hour 2/Brett Ratner	4
Media Asia	Gen-Y Cops/Benny Chan	10
Milkyway Image	Comeuppance/Derek Chiu	1
	Help!!!/Johnnie To & Wai Ka-fai	3
	Wu Yen/Johnnie To & Wai Ka-fai	3
Jet Tone	In the Mood for Love/Wong Kar-wai	1
	2046/Wong Kar-wai	1
Film Business International	For Bad Boys Only/Yip Wai-man, Raymond	3

Icon Group	Somebody Up There Likes Me 2 /Patrick Leung	7
BOB	Iron Fist Tao*/Andrew Lau	3
	Healing Hearts/Gary Tang	1
	Blue Blood*/Andrew Lau	1
Brilliant Idea Group	Tropical Fish*/Matt Chow	1
	Clean My Name, Mr. Coroner!/James Yuen	3
	Feel 100% II/Joe Ma	4
China International Entertainment	China Strike Force/Stanley Tong	1
Nicetop Independent	Hollywood, Hong Kong/Fruit Chan	3
Nam Yin Production	From the Queen to the Chief Executive/Herman Yau	3
	Forever and Ever/Raymond To	1
Eunice & Tonia Entertainment	Hit Team/Dante Lam	5
Dream Art	Love Correction/Mak Tze-sin, Marco	1
The Storm Riders	The Touch/Lee Chi-ngai	2
Mythical Films	A Time for Hope/Derek Chiu	1
Emperor Movie Group	Summer Holiday/Jingle Ma	1
Red on Red	Goodbye Mr. Cool/Jingle Ma	8
	Game of Compassion* /Cheng Kim-fung	1
Excellence	Visible Secret/Ann Hui	5
Class	My Beloved (short) /Nicholas Tse	2
PCC Skyhorse		

In 2000, we provided assistance to 3 overseas film productions:

Overseas Film Production	Country	Title	No. of Assistance
Best Concept Union Films	Singapore	Ice Sweeper*	3
Parthian	Japan	Honey I Love You*	1
Foreign Exchange Films	Canada	Lunch with Charles	1

For television commercials:

Commercial	No. of Assistance
Moviola	5
Tuckshop Films	5
Chocolate Factory	2
Such Partners	2
Salon Films	9
Film Factory	2
Paciwood Music & Entertainment	1
Tiny Film Unit	1
Such Films	1

We also provided assistance to TV dramas, music videos and promotional films, etc.

\* This is direct translation of the Chinese title. The official English title is not yet available.

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