

Hong Kong On Location (Issue No 5)

The Film Services Office Quarterly Newsletter (November 2001 — January 2002)

New Year's Review

More and more overseas film and TV productions came to shoot in Hong Kong. Aside from American and Japanese film crews, Irish and Czechoslovakian ones were also here. With more frequent overseas crews coming, this means a stronger proof of Hong Kong's enchantment, a greater opportunity for employment for Hong Kong people and their skill development, and an improvement to Hong Kong's economy and international status. This benefits Hong Kong in many ways.

Flying The Blackhawk Landing On Lung Kwu Tan

Jackie Chan playing a lead role in an overseas production is nothing new. Although his new film, "*Highbinders*", is produced by local Emperor Multimedia Group, it is a co-production with an Irish company. Thus, it is shot in a non-local style. Jackie plays a Special Duty Unit member. Many action scenes required the assistance of various Government departments. The Hong Kong Police Force and the Government Flying Service approved the use of marine launches, fast patrol craft and a Blackhawk helicopter. With the mediation of the Film Services Office, the Civil Aviation Department granted exemption permits for the helicopter to perform low flying tasks and flying in densely populated districts. The shooting was carried out smoothly owing to the Government departments' earnest assistance.

The film crew also wanted to shoot on location at Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun. We liaised with the Tuen Mun District Lands Office and found out that this location is a piece of government land but lies within the Lung Kwu Tan archeological site. Knowing that the filming would take place in just a week's time, we advised the film company to submit their application immediately. We then urged the Tuen Mun District Lands Office, the Antiquities and Monuments Office, and the Hong Kong Police Force to expedite the processing of the application. The application was approved in time for the shoot.

"Highbinders" needed to have intermittent traffic control of three lanes on a major road, Queen's Road Central, to shoot a scene of Jackie Chan leaving the Grand Millennium Plaza. However, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Transport Department required a more detailed shooting plan before deciding whether the request could be entertained, because there are numerous bus stops in that section and the traffic is always busy. To deal with this, the Film Services Office called a meeting, at which all departments concerned and the film company reached an agreement on the shooting time, location and conditions for the conduct of intermittent traffic control. In addition to this, the Film Services Office assisted the film company in applying to the Transport Department and the Highways Department to temporarily remove some of the railings at Queen's Road Central and the permission for two trucks to park in a restricted area. The shooting was done smoothly with the police-assisted intermittent traffic control.

Hong Kong's Friendliness Towards Japanese *Friends*

The Japanese TV drama series “*Friends*” came to Hong Kong for location shooting because the story began with the lead characters, played by Fukada Kyoko and Won Bin, meeting in Hong Kong. To accomplish this, Motion Link Creations sought our assistance four times. The first time, they applied for a lane closure on Hollywood Road in Sheung Wan in the morning so they could place cameras to shoot Fukada Kyoko strolling by herself on the opposite sidewalk. We consulted the Hong Kong Police Force, the Transport Department, the Highways Department and the Home Affairs Department and they all found the arrangement acceptable. Besides, the crew needed to film Fukada Kyoko walking from the Mid-Levels Escalators to Lyndhurst Terrace. Since the management of the escalator and the walkway system would soon be handed over to a new management company, the film company asked us to apply to the new management company on its behalf. We contacted the Transport Department and, as we were running out of time, the department agreed to liaise with the new company while the film company also promised that walkway operation would not be affected during shooting. The application was approved. After that, the film company applied to shoot in the forecourt outside the Legislative Council Building. However, the scheduled date of the shooting clashed with the Chief Executive's Policy Address. Reporters would gather around, so the authority concerned was worried the shoot might be affected. We suggested the shooting be done early in the morning, but the company decided to withdraw its application. The film company also submitted an application for lane closure of a section of Chatham Court to place a camera track to shoot Fukada Kyoko on the opposite sidewalk. The Hong Kong Police Force, the Transport Department and the Home

Affairs Department raised no objections, and approval was granted subject to the applicant's compliance with a number of conditions, such as not blocking the traffic, set by the departments. The shoot was carried out as scheduled.

Hong Kong Happily Makes The Arrangement As Czechoslovakia Is Happy With It

Hong Kong is so well known internationally that it attracted a film crew all the way from Czechoslovakia to shoot a segment for a documentary called "*Travelmania*". As the filming schedule was tight, the Film Services Office obtained Milkyway Image's approval for the crew to shoot behind the scenes of "*Running Out of Time 2*" in a studio in Lok On Pai. Although film director Johnnie To was too busy for an interview, the Czech crew was still content with our arrangement and found actor Lau Ching-wan very friendly, which gave them a further positive impression of Hong Kong.

An American Game On Hong Kong Soil

The American CBS TV network arrived in Hong Kong in January to film a game show at more than ten venues. A container terminal, Central Plaza, Po Lin Monastery, Wong Tai Sin Temple, Hong Kong International Airport and Airport Express were selected at the suggestion of the Film Services Office. Since this production would elevate and promote Hong Kong's international image, the Hong Kong Tourism Board gave its full support and the people-in-charge of numerous venues also offered great help. Moreover, the management of a container terminal voluntarily made the venue available for the shoot. This reflected the film-friendliness of Hong Kong people.

At the same time, the management company of Central Plaza held a few meetings with the production company to explore the possibility of shooting in the building. The management company said that arrangements could be made so long as the tenants raised no objection and the shooting would not cause any inconvenience to the building.

CBS also hoped to shoot the traditional side of Hong Kong, so they selected Po Lin Monastery and Wong Tai Sin Temple. It is natural that the crew decided to choose the monastery since it is a famous tourist attraction. However, since the shooting time might go beyond the monastery's opening hours, the production company wanted to apply to film beyond the opening hours. At first, the person-in-charge of the monastery rejected the application for security reasons. After our persuasion, approval was given. The crew was also interested in Wong Tai Sin Temple and Fortune Alley nearby. The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals approved the application for Fortune Alley, but the management company of the temple, Sik Sik Yuen, was seriously concerned about security. In order to allay their concerns, we suggested the production company to hire its own security officers and approval was given. The Hong Kong International Airport and the Airport Express were also among the venues selected. Both the Airport Authority and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation gave their support and granted approval.

After directing "*Autumn in New York*", internationally known film star Joan Chen has been planning a world-class film with San Francisco Chinatown as the background. She has got a budget as high as HK\$ 40 million, and Hong Kong was high on the priority list as the venue for location shooting. The local

person-in-charge of the production sought our assistance for a 10,000 square metre vacant site to reconstruct the Chinatown of the old days. We sent letters asking for help from various district lands offices, short-listed several vacant sites from among the offers, and arranged site visits for the production company. Finally, the company found a site near Tai Po Industrial Estate most suitable and submitted an application with our assistance. It is estimated that filming will start in May this year. As this is a "mega" production and many local production people will participate, this will boost the local film job market and provide exposure for local film workers.

Road closure is not an uncommon event. The Transport Department, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Highways Department usually give their full support if the application is submitted with enough time and details for processing. The departments concerned may even recommend solutions to the problems the applicant encounters. Their efforts to facilitate the Hong Kong film industry's work is deeply appreciated.

Obeying Traffic Regulations While Six Roads Were Closed

As before, the road-closure cases we provided assistance included both films and TV dramas as well as many promotional films for TV. The film "*U-Man*", starring Anthony Wong, required the closure of Peel Street in Central to shoot a scene of the Special Duty Unit chasing a criminal. Due to the fact that it is a dead-end street, its closure would not affect any traffic. The departments concerned did not object to the application. For "*Inner Senses*", starring Leslie Cheung, Filmko wanted to apply for intermittent traffic control in Battery Street

between Jordan Road and Nanking Road to shoot a scene of a stuntman falling onto a car and smashing the windows. Although the application was made at a short notice, the departments concerned were still willing to expedite the application procedure after our persuasion, with the conditions that the production company must take enough security measures and comply with the other imposed conditions.

BMA Film's "*Silence of Time*" needed to build a stage on Patterson Street's pedestrian walk in Causeway Bay to shoot a song and dance scene on a Sunday. Although the filming schedule had been changed numerous times, all departments concerned still showed understanding and granted the approval. As for Vincent Kok's "*Marry a Rich Man*", there was a scene in which Richie Ren, driving his high-class sports car, ran into Sammi Cheng, on her bike. For this scene, the company applied to close about 100 metres of Cape D' Aguilar Road near the junction with Shek O Road. After the submission of photos and the filming plan, both the Hong Kong Police Force and the Transport Department objected because the arrangement would affect the bus services. So we suggested intermittent traffic control when there was no bus driving by. Approval was granted.

As for the TV drama productions, Television Broadcasts applied to close one lane of On Kwan Street, Shek Mun, in Shatin to shoot a scene of two cars colliding and exploding for "*The Golden Years*". None of the departments concerned objected and the shooting went smoothly.

Later, we also assisted Television Broadcasts to apply to close two lanes on Canton Road for a car-chase scene in its "*Upcoming Programmes of the Year 2002*". Approval was also granted.

From the applications that were handled recently, one can see that the scope of subject matters of local film and TV productions have expanded. The themes of the productions varied from comical, socially uplifting, spooky to realistic in nature. The applicants were nonetheless equally serious and persistent in their pursuit for filming locations while maintaining the flexibility that is a distinctly characteristic of the people in the Hong Kong film and TV industries.

Evil Lady vs Evil Love Letter

We gave assistance to many local productions, most of which were feature films. In “*Dance of a Dream*”, Andy Lau and Sandra Ng were supposed to chat and take a walk together holding beer in their hands. The venue selected was a park near Lung Wui Road. Team Work Motion Pictures asked us to liaise with the Lands Department to expedite the application procedure. Approval was given before the day scheduled for the shoot. “*The Stewardess*” was looking for a partially completed flyover to shoot some heart-stopping scenes. The film company first had its eyes on a slip road leading to Penny’s Bay. While the Highways Department was considering the application, it was discovered that the slip road was about to be handed over to the Civil Engineering Department. The film company switched to a flyover on Texaco Road. The Film Services Office asked the Highways Department to expedite the application procedure so the crew could film on schedule. A night scene in Lo Kim-wah’s “*Shadow*” had to be shot in front of a funeral home. However, the Hung Hom Funeral Home that the company applied for was only available within office hours. The person-in-charge had reservations about the application, given the fact that there

would not be any staff members on duty. We tried our very best to persuade the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. After several discussions, the person-in-charge finally permitted the crew to stay until 10 pm. We also urged the film company to co-operate well with the funeral home staff. The shooting was carried out without any mishap.

Fantasy In A Quarry Ugly Women's Union In A Disco

Director of *"Beauty and the Breast"*, Yip Wai-man, asked us to contact the Leisure and Cultural Services Headquarters for a scene to be shot in its lobby. After receiving the site, he found it unsuitable. Eventually, he applied to the Government Property Agency for the lobby of the Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices and succeeded. Another application went to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for shooting in the Harbour Road public toilet, approval for which was also given. *"Marry a Rich Man"*, which was released over the Lunar New Year holiday, had applied for location shooting at Shek O Quarry, where such applications were usually not considered. This time was no exception. With the support of the Civil Engineering Department, we wrote to the director of the company, and approval was granted. In addition to this, the film company applied to remove a set of traffic signs from the roundabout on Shek O Road and place some sets there for the scenes to be shot there for ten days. We sought advice from the Transport Department, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Highways Department. The result was that the film company agreed to revise the size of the sets to avoid blocking the view of the drivers. The application was approved.

The Storm Rider Management's "*Ugly Women's Union*" required overnight shooting in a disco in Theatre Lane in Central. This is a pedestrian area and parking is prohibited, so they needed to apply to park a generator van outside the disco. The Transport Department suggested that the film company should submit an application for parking the generator van at the junction of Theatre Lane and Queen's Road Central. However, the film company considered it unsafe to park the van there, since the traffic is busy on Queen's Road Central and a longer cable would be needed from the generator. They asked the Transport Department to reconsider their application. So the Film Services Office explained to the department the difficulties of the film company, and approval was granted in the very last minute. Also, the film company needed the lobby of a commercial building with an escalator for location shooting. We recommended the Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices. Although the timing was tight, the Government Property Agency promptly granted the approval.

In addition to the above applications, "*Ugly Women's Union*" had got the approval to film at the former Marine Police Headquarters. When the film company asked to extend the filming time, there was only half a day left. The Government Property Agency was concerned that there was insufficient time for the processing as it had to consult the Antiquities and Monuments Office first. So we contacted the Antiquities and Monuments Office direct. They raised no objection and approval was granted.

Love Undercover In Police Magazine

Joe Ma's "*Love Undercover*" used our services most frequently for as many as 6 times.

As the film is about a police cadet, Brilliant Idea Group wanted to visit the Wong Chuk Hang Police Training School to learn more about the training courses. We contacted the Police Public Relations Branch, which recommended the applicant to watch the episode of “*Police Magazine*” on police training and arrangements could be made if the film company still needed further information after that. We obtained the videotape easily with Radio Television Hong Kong’s help. The film company collected ample information from the tape and was able to go ahead with shooting.

This film also required different venues for scenes of a training school and a police headquarters. Brilliant Idea Group wanted to shoot at the Police Married Quarters on Hollywood Road. Later, the company discovered that the varied structures at Perowne Barracks suited their purposes better and submitted an application to the Government Property Agency . The Agency was willing to grant approval. At the same time, Brilliant Idea Group wanted to apply for the San Po Kong Government Offices as the police headquarters in the film. The Lands Department had to process the application in a very short time. Finally, approval was granted the day before the shooting was scheduled.

Brilliant Idea Group asked us about shooting in a red-coloured building, the Woodside Arts Exhibition Centre. We consulted the person-in-charge and he accepted the application. Unfortunately, the film company changed its plans and withdrew the application. When the Leisure and Cultural Services Department processed the application for location shooting in the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, the film company notified us that the application was cancelled. Our efforts again were to no avail.

There's The Good Airport There's The Not-So-Good Airport

In this issue, the focus on TV productions seeking our assistance was “*A Little Sugar for my Lemon Tea, Please!*”, produced by Stanley Kwan. The female lead, Amy Kwok, and her family are supposed to be middle class, so the production company spotted a flat in Sea Crest Villa and obtained the owner's consent for shooting there. The company also needed to shoot in the lobby and the podium area. Yet the management company of the villa expressed concern that the shooting might disturb the residents and rejected the application. We then contacted the management company. We explained to the person-in-charge the government's policy to facilitate location filming in Hong Kong and persuaded him to reconsider the application as well as to persuade the Owners Committee. Approval was granted.

Then the filming moved on to the Hong Kong International Airport and the company applied to film in the arrival hall, the footbridge and the car park. However, the Airport Authority rejected them because the shooting might affect operations and it suggested the crew to switch to filming in the night-time instead. But the director insisted on filming in the arrival hall in daylight. An agreement was reached after the two sides met; the Airport Authority permitted shooting to be conducted in the early morning in areas of the hall where access for airport users would not be affected.

In addition, the Film Services Office assisted in the location shooting of Ho Wan-si's music video on the former Kai Tak Airport runway. The runway is managed by the Government Flying Service and a commercial driving range

company. The Government Flying Service would only consider applications for charity purposes, so we got in touch with the golfers' company and arranged a site visit. After the visit, the production company found the venue unsuitable and withdrew the application.

You Need It, You Got It

Hong Kong 2002 Film & Video Production Directory has already been published. In it, there is detailed information about film production, distribution and other items such as film industry associations and the Hong Kong Film Archive, for the reference of the industry. There is no charge for the book and you are welcome to pick one up. If anybody wants to update their record, or if any new companies have been established, please notify us as soon as possible.

Sometimes the power of a good commercial is really amazing. The filming location is no less important than the storyboard. That is why big companies such as the United States Postal Service and New York Life Insurance were willing to travel all the way here to Hong Kong. What reasons are there for them to do so if it is not the enchantment of this Pearl of the Orient and our countless photogenic venues?

US Mailbox Filled By A Hotel's Generosity

As usual, many famous buildings were selected as venues for local and overseas commercial filming. Film Factory of Hong Kong was looking for an appropriate

venue for the “*United States Postal Service*” overseas commercial. The theme was that the postal service serves every corner of the world. Film Factory picked 3 places that were rich in local colour, viz the Hongkong Bank building, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing trading hall, and a computer centre in the Information Technology Services Department. This commercial depicts a US mailbox in different settings to show its postal service can reach any corner of the world. Film Factory planned to shoot the entire Hongkong Bank building from the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, but the application was turned down. We contacted the hotel and suggested to Film Factory that they change their schedule to fit in with the hotel’s daily operations. After careful consideration, approval was granted.

The application to Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing was relatively more complicated. Film Factory wanted to film the trading hall from the viewing gallery, but Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing had very strict security measures. It was apprehensive that the shooting might affect its operations and the application was initially turned down. So we acted as mediator, and when Film Factory was willing to cut the filming time down to 30 minutes, approval as well as a reduced fee were granted.

For the application to the High Technology Computer Centre, we sought help from Information Technology Services Department. Since the centre operates 24 hours a day, the department concerned was worried that operations and security might be affected and asked to meet with Film Factory for details. The latter explained its arrangement and was willing to shoot with fewer crew members and for shorter time. The department granted the approval, which was also the first time the department had given consent for location shooting.

Business As Usual Logistics As Usual

Another overseas TV commercial, “*New York Life Insurance*”, favoured the sea view in Hong Kong. Salon Films wanted to capture the full sea view of the Victoria Harbour and the stunning skyscrapers from the window walls in the concourse area on the second floor of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The application was rejected. We tried our very best to persuade the management company of the centre. The person-in-charge replied that there were trading exhibitions and the shooting would affect the management logistics of the centre, so no space would be made available. Although we tried hard to mediate, the application was again rejected. We did not give up and continued to persuade the people concerned. Finally, approval was granted subject to postponement of the shooting day.

U Long No Laughing Matter Construction Project No Postponement

A Japanese “*U Long Tea*” TV commercial starred Kelly Chan. A film crew of over 50 flew to Hong Kong from Japan, and, along with local members, formed a team of 90 for location shooting. At first, the crew looked for some classical walled villages or a Chinese mansion with an atrium. We recommended the Law Estate, the Tsang Tai Uk, Tai Fu Tai Mansion and the Wing Lung Walled Village. Later, with our assistance, the production company considered conducting location shooting at the Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware and Murray House. After careful consideration, the venue chosen was the vacant land between Central Piers No 4 and 5, where the sea views of Central and Wan Chai could be fully appreciated. A temporary teahouse would be set up. But work would soon

be conducted to build a bus stop on that location, and the Highways Department was worried the shooting might cause the work to fall behind schedule. We continued to explain to the department the importance of the commercial for the promotion of Hong Kong, and approval was thus granted.

Noodles Generated In Braemar Hill Sony Swam Across The Shing Mun River

Apart from overseas TV commercials, local TV commercials for “*Sony Handicam*” and “*Sony Digital Camera*” also sought our assistance for location shooting. For the digital camera, Such Films applied to shoot in a computer room in the Civil Service Training and Development Institute. Realising that the chance of approval was slim, Such Films came to us. We immediately wrote to the department to explain the Government’s policy to support location shooting. The department was willing to reconsider and then granted approval. “*Sony Handicam*” was interested in the Shing Mun River. The Lands Department could only grant approval if the filming could be delayed for two days after the scheduled date, because only on that day would there be a staff member of the Drainage Services Department on duty to open the gate to the river. After numerous contacts, we learned that staff of the Lands Department can open the gate themselves with the consent of the Hong Kong Police Force. We then contacted the Hong Kong Police Force and were given approval, so the shooting was carried out as scheduled.

Also, Cinetech Production Group, which was responsible for filming the “*Four Continents Soup Noodles*” TV commercial, submitted an application to place a power generator in a sitting out area outside a condominium. This was to supply

electricity to shoot a scene where a young woman was eating her noodles at home in Braemar Hill. However, Cinetech only applied for the flat where shooting would take place without realising that an application would also have to be submitted to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department for the sitting out area. We immediately acted as the mediator. The department showed its understanding and granted approval readily.

Production Statistics

2001, in the fourth quarter (October — December), 13 local productions had difficulties with applications for shooting and sought FSO' s assistance.

	Production Company	Title/Director	No. of Assts
1	Universe	U-Man/Cheung Chi-sing	1
2	Brilliant Idea Group	Dummy Mommy, without a Baby/MAK Kai-kwong	1
3	Same Way Production	The Stewardess/Leung Tak-sum	1
4	Star East BOB	Shadow/Lo Kim-wah	3
5	Eastern (HK) Film Production	Virtual Twilight/Corey Yuen	1
6	Golden Harvest	Marry a Rich Man/Vincent Kok	3
7	Filmko Pictures	Inner Senses/Law Chi-leung	1
8	Team Work Motion Pictures	Dance of a Dream/Lau Wai-keung	1
9	Bad Boy Film Culture	Beauty and the Breast/Yip Wai-man	2
10	BMA Films	*Silence of Time/Law Kit-sing	1

11	Storm Riders	*Ugly Women's Union/Lo Kim-wah	3
12	Brilliant Idea Group	Love Undercover/Joe Ma	6
13	Universe	*Planet Of Love/Lam Chiu-yin	4

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

We provided assistance to 2 overseas film productions.

	Production Company	Title/Country	No. of Assts
1	Giant Lead Profits/Emperor	Highbinders/Ireland	6
2	Media Suits/UFO	Fu Sang/US	1

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

	Production Company	Production/Title	No. of Assts
1	Motion Link Creations	TV drama "Friends" (Japan)	4
2	Bang Productions	CBS TV game show (US)	7
3	Czech TV & FEBIO Film Company	Documentary "Travelmania" (Czechoslovakia)	1
4	Artiste Campus	TV drama "A Little Sugar for my Lemon Tea, Please!"	3
5	TVB	TV drama "The Golden Years"	1
6	Such Films	"Sony Digital Camera" commercial	1
7	Film Factory	"United States Postal Service" commercial (overseas)	3

	Production Company	Production/Title	No. of Assts
8	Salon Films	“New York Life Insurance” commercial (overseas)	1
9	Cinetech Production Group	“Four Continents Soup Noodles” commercial	1
10	Such Films	“Sony Handicam” commercial	2
11	Moviola Production	“Knife Trademark Peanut Oil” commercial	1
12	Odeon Productions	“Strolling on the Web” commercial	1
13	Film Factory	“Standard Chartered Marathon 2002” commercial	1
14	Motion Link Creations	“U Long Tea” commercial (overseas)	2
15	TVB	“Upcoming Programmes of the Year 2002”	1
16	Hong Kong Academy For Performing Arts	Student productions	2
17	EMI	Music video	1

Besides, we made 47 location suggestions and provided assistance for location scouting on 27 occasions.

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