

Hong Kong on Location (Issue No. 9)
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In the Whirlwind Eye of Lara Croft's Hong Kong Visit

Hong Kong reminds me of all the great things about New York but it has air and it has nature.

- Angelina Jolie, female lead of *Tomb Raider 2*

I wish to thank the Hong Kong Government for their considerable help in making this ambitious filming schedule a reality.

- Jan de Bont, director

I believe our week in Hong Kong will add enormous production value to our film. It's been a fantastic experience.

- Lloyd Levin, producer

The production team of *Tomb Raider 2* began their preparation work on the film's Hong Kong round of shooting in as early as July 2002. All along, the FSO had been closely attending to their filming requests. In January this year, the crew finally arrived in Hong Kong for a tightly packed eight-day filming tour. Being at their service all the time, we were in the best position to appreciate all those ordeals that Lara Croft had to overcome.

Starting from January 6, the 70-member-strong crew under the command of director Jan de Bont were divided into a few teams and each went filming in different parts of the town. They covered 12 venues, including Victoria Harbour, the International Finance Centre, Times Square, Percival Street in Causeway Bay, Gage Street in Central, Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter, Lung Wui Road Helipad, Ocean Terminal, the former Kai Tak Airport runway, Po Toi O Pier in Sai Kung, Tai O, and Repulse Bay. The director also hired helicopters for aerial shots on several occasions, which not only made for stunning scenes but also showcased Hong Kong's scenic beauty in its full splendour.

Like the shooting of *Rush Hour 2* in Hong Kong two years ago, the filming of *Tomb Raider 2* went smoothly due to thorough preparation in advance. Right from the beginning, the FSO already arranged for the film company to meet with the government departments concerned, including the Hong Kong Police Force, the Transport Department, the Civil Aviation Department, the Marine Department, the Home Affairs Department, and the Lands Department. This enabled the departments to have a clear understanding of the company's filming needs and make corresponding arrangements. We also successfully persuaded other relevant organisations to hire out their premises for filming.

The director showed his daring sense of creativity by designing a parachute jump scene so as to give the beauty of the Victoria Harbour full play. That part of the story tells Lara being chased by a villain from the fourth to the eighty-first floor of the International Finance Centre (IFC) and finally making her escape by a parachute jump. This was the

first time the IFC, still under construction, was hired for filming. Other venues involved in the parachute scene included Lung Wui Road Helipad, a freighter at Victoria Harbour and the Ocean Terminal pier. As for the parachute's landing site, Man Kwong Street and its vicinity, the film company requested the authorities to implement intermittent traffic control. The shooting date had to be postponed for a few times due to changes of weather conditions and wind directions, hence requiring rounds of mediation by the FSO. Fortunately, all departments involved showed understanding and support and shooting went smoothly at all the locations.

The filming application for a busy location like Times Square naturally entailed difficulties. We had to do a lot of public relations work to get the support of the businesses and residents in the neighbourhood and the agreement from the Transport Department and the Police for road closure. We also assisted in the company's other applications such as those for exemption permits for the importation of modified firearms and a work permit for the parachute cameraman.

Thanks to the cooperation of Hong Kong's public and private organisations and, of course, the support of the general public at large, the filming was completed on schedule. After days of gruelling land, sea, and air ordeals, the female lead Angelina Jolie donated HK\$200,000 to Po Leung Kuk jointly with British Paramount Pictures Limited as a gesture of appreciation for the support and facilitation the Hong Kong Government had rendered to the filming of *Tomb Raider 2* in Hong Kong. The economy also benefited from the production. During the filming, the company hired approximately 200 members of the local film industry and the cost of filming in the territory came to HK\$16 million. According to an international study, the filming of *Tomb Raider 2* would bring about HK\$40 million to the local economy.

2046 Returns to Hong Kong

Director Wong Kar-wai has returned to Hong Kong to film *2046* after location shooting this latest film of his at various venues overseas. The crew are sweating it out with the hope of finishing the film in time for the Cannes Film Festival this May. Jettone Films Limited approached us for assistance recently after having problems renting two government premises on short-term leases. Wong Kar-wai had wanted to modify two buildings into nostalgic hotels of the 1960s, one of which had to have a hole drilled into one of its walls. The Government Property Agency (GPA) expressed reservations about the application on the grounds that the building was a historical structure. Nevertheless, they responded positively to our mediation. In the end not only did the two parties come to an agreement over the modification, but the GPA also reduced the hire fee.

The application for the other building also encountered difficulties because the lease exceeded the one-month ceiling. With our coordination, the Lands Department put it under special consideration and approval was subsequently granted. The FSO also provided assistance of other sorts, including scouting hospitals and the YMCA centre, finding buses and telephone kiosks of the 1960s, and applying for the temporary closure of a bus-stop.

Trials and Tribulations of Shooting in Mongkok

Leading local and overseas production teams, Jackie Chan continued to film *Highbinders* (Gordon Chan) in Hong Kong a month ago. The film had two road closure requests that required our assistance. One of them—Soy Street in Mongkok—drew huge crowds that testified to Jackie’s charisma. As the application was lodged only three working days prior to the scheduled shoot, we urged the Transport Department and the Police to grant a speedy approval. At the request of the two departments, the film company shortened the duration and altered the time of the shoot and approval was granted. For the sake of safety, the Police sent over 10 staff who joined those from the film company to maintain order on the set. Due to the large number of problems that could entail road closure in Mongkok for filming purposes, approval from the Police was granted on a trial basis. Similar applications in the future will be examined individually.

Besides, the company scouted many historic European-style buildings with the help of the FSO for another scene. They finally settled on the Western District Community Centre. The Home Affairs Department initially had doubts about lending this Grade I historical building for filming, but agreed in the end after our mediation as a gesture of support for the film industry.

Sino-Vietnamese Rendition of the Ho Chi Minh Story

The company producing *Ho Chi Minh in Hong Kong**, a Sino-Vietnamese co-production, came to Hong Kong to hire real historical sites for filming Ho Chi Minh’s trial in the then Supreme Court (the present Legislative Council Building) and his subsequent imprisonment in Victoria Prison. We helped them to apply for intermittent traffic control on the section of Old Bailey Street outside Victoria Prison, and also to arrange a parking space for the filming vehicle, and lodge a request for filming the prison’s entrance and gate. All the applications were granted. As for the Legislative Council Building, the LegCo Secretariat was convinced into giving the go-ahead by the fact that the movie had to be shot at the actual sites where the events took place.

Local Films Enter with a Bang

There is hope yet for the local film industry. With the smell of *Infernal Affairs*’s gunpowder still in the air, our own Big Brother Jackie Chan is home again. All bode well for the film industry.

Jackie Chan’s Hospital Mishaps

There is no doubt about it. Jackie Chan is toiling for the benefit of a purebred Hong Kong movie. *Twins Effect*, starring Jackie Chan, Twins and Ekin Cheng (co-directed by Dante Lam and Donnie Yen), has sought assistance from FSO on a number of occasions since October last year for a range of problems including the scouting and hiring of hospital premises and the former Lingnan College campus, holding a kick-off press conference at the former Kai Tak Airport, and applying for the closure of Lung Wui Road.

The film had a ‘treasure-stealing’ scene that had to be shot in the hospital corridors and

outside the emergency ward. We scouted several hospitals on the film company's behalf, but they were either unsuitable or incompatible with Jackie Chan's schedule. Finally we found the Jockey Club Multi-service Centre for the Blind, which the film used to simulate a hospital. This was the first time the centre approved a filming application unrelated to its service targets. As for the kick-off ceremony, the company's original choice was the former Tamar site, the application for which was given speedy processing by the Tourism Commission at our request. The film company then decided to change it to the former Kai Tak Airport. We immediately discussed the new venue with the relevant units of the GPA. In the end the ceremony took place at the former airport with a multitude of reporters, local and overseas, in attendance.

Lunar New Year Films Go Chinese

Local modern dramas tend to favour locations with a European flair. Vincent Kok, director of *My Lucky Star*, however, requested that we find a building that was as Chinese as could be, probably because his was a Lunar New Year film. After investigating the locations we suggested, the director chose Tai Fu Tai in San Tin. At our urging, the San Tin Rural Committee and the Antiquities and Monuments Office agreed to reduce the hire fee, which enabled the film company to shoot at the location of their choice. As part of the film had to be shot at the Big Buddha on Lantau Island, we helped the company to apply to the Transport Department for closed road permits within a very short time. Following our mediation efforts, the company was also given a special rate by the Hong Kong Tourism Board when it loaned footage of aerial shots from the latter to include in the film. Besides, we convinced the Servicemen's Guide Association to consider the company's application to film near the Fleet Arcade.

Incidentally, another Lunar New Year film *Love for All Seasons* (Johnnie To) also went Chinese. In one scene, female lead Sammi Cheng had sword shots at Essex Crescent Rest Garden. The related application was submitted only one and a half days before the shoot. It was initially rejected by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department owing to the lack of time for processing. But after we explained to them that an early application would have been very difficult given the tight schedules of the actors and actresses, they gave a speedy approval on discretionary consideration and the shooting proceeded on time.

Happy Hiring for a Happy Movie

A warm story and a true story. The three protagonists in *The Happy Unfortunate** (Yiu Tin-tong) are mentally handicapped, blind, and spastic (played respectively by Kent Cheng, Gillian Chung, and Wayne Lai). The crew had to interview and film organisations providing services for the blind and spastic, the footage of which would precede the film proper in the screening. They also needed to film a surgical operation at an eye hospital. We contacted the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Spastics Association of Hong Kong on their behalf. Both agreed to help out, with the former offering in addition to let the crew use their operation theatre and other facilities free-of-charge. Its nurses, instructors and members also volunteered to lend a hand. Touched by their enthusiastic support, the film company decided to hold a charity screening for the Hong Kong Society for the Blind to express their gratitude.

In the last quarter, the FSO also rendered assistance to 11 commercial and two

independent film productions locally (details at 'Production Statistics').

Use Your Imagination, File Your Application

The creative industry is about creativity. Even the most ordinary location can be turned into an exquisite sight on the screen with a twist of imagination. Kiting on Chater Road and promoting television programmes on an ocean liner are but two recent gimmicks employed by the television stations. Filming projects of this nature which involve special arrangements require the application of permits before they can proceed. However, an uninformed British production crew recently filmed at the Star Ferry without first making an application. What time they saved before the filming they had to pay back at the end.

The crew was doing a Discovery Channel documentary which compares the ambulance services of seven large cities in the world. They had filmed within the area of the Star Ferry without knowing that a permit was required. However, the Star Ferry had never accepted any applications after the fact. With our persistent lobbying and the Information Services Department's coming to our help, the footage finally got the blessing of the Star Ferry and was allowed for the world to see.

By contrast, local television station TVB was fully prepared. They approached us to enquire about possible dates available for the filming of their Lunar New Year promo film which involved kiting at the pedestrian precinct in Central. We consulted the Lands Department and relayed their reply to TVB, and that's a deal for the buoyant kites-flying scene. TVB also needed to film their Sales Presentation 2003 on board the M.V. Jimei. The programme required three actresses to bring modified firearms on board the ocean liner. We spoke to the Customs and Excise Department about the request and the modified firearms were allowed to be carried on board.

Hospitals are becoming popular shooting locations for television stations. In the last three months, we received as many as seven such requests for assistance. Among them, Cable TV's *Theatre of the Uncanny** application was the most complicated. The two hospitals involved were generous enough to hire out their premises despite the fact that the programme contained some hair-raising scenes. However, during the filming, an actor was interviewed by a local newspaper, which subsequently carried an allegedly inaccurate report on the hospital. The Hospital Authority, in the belief that Cable TV had failed to comply with some of the hiring conditions and made untrue statements about the hospital concerned, decided to terminate the hire. Cable TV apologised in writing to the Hospital Authority and was subsequently allowed to continue using the premises.

When Ad Works Meet Repair Works

What happens when an advertisement shoot is hindered by maintenance? FSO comes to the rescue!

Dancing Continues at Car Park under Maintenance

South Korea's 'LG' commercial features eight dancers dancing while playing drums. The

director intended to film on the rooftop of the Star Ferry Multistorey Car Park for the backdrop of Central behind. As the car park was under maintenance, some parking spaces had been closed off. Hence, the car park's management felt the need to turn down the production company's request for the use of 26 parking spaces, for fear that insufficient spaces would be left for public use. We discussed the feasibility of the project with the Transport Department and suggested shortening the filming duration. The department and the production company accepted the suggestion and filming went ahead without a hitch.

Kwai Tsing Road's Pre-opening TV Stint

In December last year, an ad agency came up with the idea of using Kwai Tsing Road, which was still under construction, for the TV commercial '2003 Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon'. The production company solicited our assistance. We negotiated with the Highways Department, the Transport Department, and the Police on the possibility of using the road. The application was approved although the shooting date had to be changed several times, and the Highways Department arranged to have part of the construction works suspended on the day of the shoot. The production company also requested to have the lights switched on in the tunnel for a more impressive visual effect. We helped them to obtain the approval of the Highways Department, the Transport Department, and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department. On the day of the shoot, 40 actors donning pyjamas paraded down the brightly-lit tunnel.

The Legitimate Way to Park Lighting

Director Stanley Kwan was filming a commercial for Taiwan's '36 Francs', which involved a romantic cello-playing scene at a European-style café in Stanley. The filming was interrupted by the staff of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) on the grounds that the company had not applied to the department for placing the lighting equipment at the Stanley Market Road Recreation Grounds outside the café. The company immediately sought our assistance. With our mediation, the LCSD accepted a belated application. The lighting equipment was allowed to be put there but had to be encircled by a wire fence to avoid endangering passers-by.

The Charm of Lung Wui Road

Lung Wui Road has become a hot spot for commercials. 'Olay' and 'Vidal Sassoon', which simultaneously chose to set theirs on this sea front highway, applied to the FSO for road closure. Coincidentally, both ads made use of a driving scene to accentuate the elegance of the female models. After we liaised with the relevant departments, both applications were granted by the Transport Department and the Police. And, as the taxi stand near the closure section had to be temporarily closed as well, the Transport Department informed the relevant parties of the changes before the shoot. All seemed to have gone well but for the weather. Sassoon withdrew its application due to unstable weather conditions on the two days designated for the shoot, reapplying instead for a three-day postponement. Fortunately, the new application was given a speedy approval by the department concerned.

Universal Pictures Tap Business Opportunities in Hong Kong

In November 2002, a delegation of five top executives from Universal Pictures paid a visit to Hong Kong to investigate opportunities for filming in the territory and to explore possibilities of collaboration with local film companies.

The FSO received the five delegates, including Executive Vice-President (Production) Ron Lynch, and prepared a daylong itinerary for them. In the morning they met with representatives from the government to learn about the government's commitment to and efforts at facilitating film production in Hong Kong as well as the benefits of shooting in the territory. In the afternoon they checked out a few post-production houses to have a better understanding of the local production of digital animation and computer special effects for films. Then they visited film companies to discuss opportunities for collaboration. Finally, as the FSO had thrown in a helicopter tour and a Chinese junk cruise into the itinerary, the visitors feasted their eyes on Victoria Harbour's unique scenery.

The Universal Pictures delegation then went to Shanghai and Beijing. Their next visit could very well bring fresh developments for the local movie industry.

Fruitful Visit to the Busan Showcase

At the invitation of the Busan Film Commission, the FSO participated, for the first time, in the Busan International Film Commission Showcase which took place simultaneously with the Busan Film Festival last November. The FSO promoted the advantages of shooting movies in Hong Kong to attract foreign film companies to come here to shoot on location. We also learnt a lot from the Busan experience and exploited the occasion to exchange views with overseas film commissions on how to facilitate location shooting.

The Showcase, though only in its second year, was clearly a great leap forward compared with its debut a year before, with participation soaring from 27 exhibition teams from 9 countries or regions in 2001 to 41 teams from 15 countries or regions this year. The FSO's booth stood out at the exhibition venue with its gorgeous backdrop of a large poster of Victoria Harbour. Besides distributing publicity materials, we played a promotional video to showcase Hong Kong as an ideal shooting location. During the three-day exhibition, we received close to a hundred visitors who enquired eagerly about the technical arrangements of location shooting in the territory. Many of them expressed an interest to shoot films in Hong Kong.

New Editions for the New Year

In the new year, we are launching the latest editions of two highly resourceful reference books for the film industry. The fresh-off-the-press *Filming in Hong Kong: 2003 Film and Video Production Directory* and *Guide to Filming in Hong Kong 2003* boast richer content, up-to-date information, and more exquisite design. The latter also has additional coloured pages. The two books were distributed for free. You are also welcome to browse the FSO web-site at <<http://www.fos-tela.gov.hk>>.

Production Statistics

In the last quarter (October to December) of 2002, 18 local film productions met difficulties in their application for location shooting and sought assistance from the Film Services Office for 52 times in total:

Production Co.	Title / Director	No. of Assistance
Million Channels	<i>Twins Effect</i> / Dante Lam	10
Jettone	<i>2046</i> / Wong Kar-wai	10
Golden Harvest	<i>My Lucky Star</i> / Vincent Kok	4
China Star	<i>The Happy Unfortunate*</i> / Yiu Tin-tong	4
Land Fortune	<i>Star Runner</i> / Daniel Lee	1
	<i>Love is a Little Blue*</i> / Herman Yau	2
Milkyway Image	<i>PTU</i> / Johnnie To	1
	<i>Love for All Seasons</i> / Johnnie To	1
Filmko Pictures	<i>Floating Landscape</i> / Carol Lai	1
	<i>A Family of Eight Singles*</i> / Wong Chen-chen	1
Taurus	<i>Gun Lost for 72 Hours*</i> / James Ha	2
娛樂社	<i>Embracing Youth*</i> / Lau Jak-yuen	2
Brilliant Idea Group	<i>Diva Ah Hey</i> / Joe Ma	1
Nam Yin	<i>Prison on Fire - Preacher</i> / Yip Wai-ying	1
East Entertainment	<i>My Best Friend*</i> / Yip Wai-ying	1
October Pictures	<i>A Beautiful House*</i> / Gaai Zung	1
Independent movie funded by Arts Development Council		
	<i>Uncle Fook*</i> / Wong Ching-fu	2
	<i>Night Corridor</i> / Julian Lee	7

We provided assistance to 3 overseas film productions for 48 times in total:

Production Co.	Title / Country	No. of Assistance
Paramount / October Pictures	<i>Tomb Raider 2</i> / USA	33
Golden Beam	<i>Highbinders</i> / Ireland	10
Darwick	<i>Ho Chi Minh in HK*</i> / Vietnam & China	5

We also provided assistance to TV commercials, TV dramas, promotional videos, documentaries, music videos, etc., for 38 times in total:

Production Co.	Production / Title	No. of Assistance
TVB	TV drama <i>Ghost Doctor*</i>	1
	TV Programme <i>Sales Presentation 2003</i>	2
	TV music programme <i>Juno's</i>	1
	<i>TV Music Programme</i>	
	TV drama <i>The Shepherd & the Weaver*</i>	1
	TV drama <i>Armed Reaction IV*</i>	1
	TV promotional short film for the Lunar New Year	1

Cable TV	TV programme <i>Theatre of the Uncanny*</i>	4
Artwell	TV movie <i>100% Feel*</i>	1
Cholumpi	TV drama <i>Asian King</i> (Thailand)	2
Hua Lian Zhan Dui	TV programme <i>Dream Team*</i>	1
Wall to Wall Television	Documentary <i>Global Medics</i> (Britain)	1
Shunhimgtung / Huminist Broadcasting Foundation	Documentary <i>Hong Kong Oria</i> (Holland)	1
Kam's Creation Workshop	TV music programme <i>Yumiko's</i> <i>TV Music Programme</i>	1
Production Station	'LG' TV commercial (South Korea)	1
The Commercial House of Shooting Gallery	'Olay' TV commercial	1
	'Vidal Sassoon' TV commercial	2
Spur Link	'36 Francs' TV commercial (Taiwan)	1
Such Partners	'Heineken' TV commercial	1
	'Siemens' TV commercial	1
October Pictures	'Petra' TV commercial (Germany)	1
Film Factory	'Sunday' TV commercial	1
	'2003 Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon' TV commercial	2
Such Films	'Aegean Coast' TV commercial	1
	'McDonald's' TV commercial	1
	'Amway' TV commercial	1
OFF-LO-Hi	'Siemens' TV commercial	1
Play Films	'伊利Ice-cream' TV commercial	1
APA	Student production <i>Beautiful Loser</i>	2
	Student production <i>On Wong Nai Chung Road</i>	2

Besides, we made 64 location suggestions and provided assistance to location scouting on 16 occasions.

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

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