

Media Factsheet

“Spotlight on Singapore Cinema” film titles

1. *Lion City* (狮子城)



Director: Yi Sui

Year: 1960

Produced by: Cathay-Keris

Main Cast: Pan En (Lian Tong Seng), Orchid Wong (Wong Ting Ming)

Introduction:

Lion City (狮子城 in Chinese and “Bandar Raya Singapura” in Malay) tells the love story of Feng Ling, a rubber packer at a factory, and Shao Ming, who is the manager of the rubber factory. When Shao Ming learns that Feng Ling is the daughter of Cheong Ah Choy, he approaches Feng Ling and the two become friends and fall in love with each other. Their relationship goes through many challenges bringing them apart for some time but alas, fate brings them back together in the beautiful *Lion City*, with consent from their parents to get married.

Lion City is the first Chinese film produced by Cathay-Keris in post-war Singapore. The film is highly valued today for its scenic panoramic shots of Singapore in the 1960s as well as references to the political conditions of the time. It is one of the few Chinese films shot from a Chinese perspective during a time when Malay films dominated the industry. The film premiered on 6 December 1960 at Cathay Organisation’s Odeon Theatre. Among the guests of honour were then Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof bin Ishak and his wife. The premiere was held in aid of the National Theatre Fund.

2. *Chuchu Datok Merah*



Literal English translation of film title: Datok Merah's Grandson

Director: M. Amin

Year: 1963

Produced by: Cathay-Keris

Main Cast: Nordin Ahmad, Latifah Omar, Rose Yatimah, A. Rahim

Introduction:

A period drama complete with Malay symbolisms, myth and folklore, the film title *Chuchu Datok Merah* points to the mental image Malays have of themselves as descendants of Hang Tuah, the legendary Malay warrior of Malacca. Awang Janggut, the main character of Amin's film, is very much a pseudo-warrior. Instead of possessing the "keris", a warrior's weapon, he owns a prize-winning rooster. His battlefield is the cock fight arena. He lives in a big but empty house inherited from his ancestor and would rather live in poverty than go to work. The closest he comes to living the high life of a warrior was when a successful businessman employed him as a bodyguard after he prevented hooligans from taunting the businessman's daughter, Siti.

Despite knowing Awang is married, Siti continues to flirt with Awang and eventually catches his attention. Awang's pregnant wife was often left alone till late night and eventually fell sick and had a miscarriage. The story ends in tragedy when the hooligan who harassed Siti, who still holds a grudge against Awang, decides to poison Awang's sick wife by giving her some "herbs", claiming it was a delivery from Awang. The film is a social criticism of people who rest on their laurels and ancestry instead of working for themselves. It is also one of the finest examples of the anti-hero in Malay cinema.

3. *Patah Hati*



Literal English translation of film title: Broken hearted

Director: K. M. Basker

Year: 1952

Produced by: Malay Film Productions (Shaw Brothers)

Main Cast: P. Ramlee, Neng Yatimah, Musalmah

Introduction:

Kassim (P. Ramlee) returns to Singapore after finishing his studies in London and is thrust into a betrothal with the daughter of his father's benefactor, Salmah. However, Kassim has already met and fallen in love with someone who shares his interest in Persian poetry. She is Rahimah, a flower salesgirl in Singapore. They go on dates to the nursery, and spend time together (dancing) in a paradise-like garden (Alkaff Gardens). Even after Kassim returns to Kuala Lumpur to work in his benefactor's rubber plantation, he never forsakes Rahimah and has a rendezvous with her in Singapore when the opportunity arises. Together again, they watch movies at the Rex Theatre, and vow to get married.

Unfortunately, Kassim's father insists on him marrying his benefactor's daughter, Salmah, who is a rich and cultured girl. Kassim decides to fulfil his father's death wish and marries Salmah. Eventually, fate brings Kassim to reunite with Rahimah again in their twilight years.

Patah Hati was filmed around various locations in Singapore such as Kallang Airport, Rex Cinema (Mackenzie Road) and Alkaff Gardens (off Upper Serangoon Road).

4. *Taming of the Princess* (醉打金枝)



Director: Hsu Chiao Meng (徐蕉明)

Year: 1958

Produced by: Hong Kong United Co. Ltd. (港联有限公司)

Main Cast: Xiao Lizhen (筱丽珍), Jin Shanghua (锦上花), Hokkien Opera Troupe (新麒麟闽剧团), Liu Huchen, Wu Mei Yu, Sin Kee Lin (Xin Qi Lin)

Introduction:

Taming of the Princess is a Hokkien period opera film based on a popular Chinese story about Tang Dynasty General Guo Ziyi's son, Guo Ai, who rebukes his wife, Princess Sheng Ping, for not attending his father's birthday celebration. Of the three local Amoy-dialect films made in the 1950s, only *Taming of the Princess* is the sole surviving film made by Singapore studios. The other two films are now presumed lost.

Taming of the Princess was the first and only Hokkien (Amoy dialect) opera film wholly funded and produced by Singapore or Malaya film companies and talents. It was an unprecedented venture by local arts and cultural groups to document the vernacular Chinese traditional performing arts through cinema. The cinematic style was seemingly influenced by the Chinese traditional opera films that were imported from Mainland China and Hong Kong. It was filmed at the Keris Film Studio.

The film's actors and actresses were renowned opera singers and stage performers from the local Sin Kee Lin Hokkien Opera Troupe, who were widely celebrated by Hokkien opera fans in the Southeast Asian region. Discovered through a film programme put up by the National Museum Cinémathèque earlier this year, the subsequent restoration and screening will prove invaluable to our understanding and appreciation of Singapore Cinema during the golden age from the 1950s and 1960s.

5. *Ninaithale Inikkum*



Literal English translation of film title: Sweet Memories

Director: K. Balachander

Year: 1979

Produced by: Premaalaya Productions

Main Cast: Kamal Hassan, Rajinikanth, Jayaprada

Introduction:

The film tells the story of Chandru, a singer who is touring Singapore with his band where he meets his love interest Sona only to find that she is terminally ill. The movie takes a turn when Chandru finds out about Sona's cancer and decides to grant her final wish of performing on stage with his band. The film ends on a tragic note with the lady's demise.

Ninaithale Inikkum was filmed around various locations in Singapore such as Paya Lebar Airport, Mount Faber, Orchard Towers and the Singapore River.

(*For screenshots of the films, please refer to this link:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0Bzr93L91vuqJfIMxU2JzaW1DN3NkMW9USXVpMGI6ZHFaciBhWFJ1ZI80ektBWXVJY21rSIU&usp=sharing>)