

Film from china in the 80s essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Comedy](#)



32977035_Film from China in the 80s Hong Kong was the single most credible and consistent contributor of quality film from China during the 80's. The eastern and southeastern region of Asia houses the "four economic dragons" as these were known to the world in the late 70's and during the 80's. These dragons included South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

All of these booming Asian economies had their passion of making quality films for their cinemas and for the cinemas around the world. But it was only Hong Kong cinema producers who succeeded in the pursuit to produce films that were acknowledged not only by the domestic viewers but also won unparalleled acclaim from the cinemagoers all around the world. The economic boom infused a sense of self-importance and self-belief in the people of the whole region of "four economic dragons" during that time of the 80's. Only Hong Kong among the fellow dragons that was able to produce quality films because of the laxer sociopolitical conditions, as it was the colony of the United Kingdom. It was only the Hong Kong cinema that was able and equipped to take up more progressive and liberal subjects in its movies given the liberty of opinion and openness provided under the British rule. All others though enjoyed the socioeconomic uplift to the same unprecedented level as that of enjoyed by Hong Kong, yet could not establish the cherished goals of freedom and liberty. The comparison between the cinema industries of the region would be helpful in understanding the significance and importance of the Hong Kong's contribution to the films from China.

There was no significantly developed film industry in Singapore and its cinemas were dependant on the entertainment imported mainly from Hong

Kong and the West in the 80's. Page-1 While the Taiwanese cinema, on the contrary to its economic and social development, was experiencing a decline in the quality as well as in the number of production. The cinema in Taiwan though created some good movies but the industry was succumbed to the thriving rival, Hong Kong, who bulldozed the local cinema by virtue of its optimum quality movies that captivated the spectators in every show. Same were the reasons of the South Korean cinema that failed to deliver any substantial production. It is not only the specific region, as discussed above, that had no match with the Hong Kong cinema, but the film industry around the world felt difficulty in producing successful master pieces with the consistency as delivered by the Hong Kong cinema.

Contribution of sociopolitical situation The dense population in a small cosmopolitan city, with relatively relaxed censorship, liberty in choosing the subjects of sex and politics the Hong Kong cinema had an ideal opportunity to produce successful films. Being situated in the vicinity of the Mainland China the Hong Kong cinema never had broken its relationship with the tradition and the folklore while taking up the modern subjects as well. The blend of kung fu and the Western-style gangster thrillers attracted the audience as evident from the lines, " The Hong Kong cinema is a double-headed dragon. It possesses both Chinese and international qualities and aspires to be both East and West. This is its attraction. Because the territory has a large degree of freedom, it is the richest and most dynamic production center of Chinese cinema, including the industry in the Mainland. Hong Kong movies are the most representative examples of Chinese cinema as inheritors and carriers of the special characteristics of Chinese culture and

popular folklore, as well as of Chinese people absorbing Western influence on the road to modernization.

“ In our present context of multiculturalism, thePage-2east-west fusion of Hong Kong cinema is probably not a big deal to most of us”. In this respect, the Chinese-style kung fu genre and Western-style gangster thrillers are typical and successful examples”(Kei, Page 1). The Hong Kong cinema was a true, progressive, and comprehensive producer of Chinese films as compared to its competitors in the region. Another factor that is contributory to the subjects of Hong Kong films is the tormenting dogma of reunification of Hong Kong with the Mainland China that was haunting in the minds of Hong Kong its people and its filmmakers alike. This dogma was created during the late 70s and early 80s by the clear picture of political situation about the reunification in 1979.

It was sensed as crises to be taken up by a protective and closed regime, Peoples Republic of China, of a liberal and open Hong Kong. The machinations of Chinese protectionism and censor are very aptly revealed in the lines, “ The reason why Chinese filmmakers do not want to make any more films is very simple. To shoot a film is like having a baby. And censorship is like the doctor who tells you, when you are nine months pregnant, that your baby isn’t normal.

They tell you first there is a problem with the leg; then they cut off the leg. But it isn’t over. Next they tell you that the hand isn’t right. They get that cut off.

But the problem hasn't gone away, because it's the baby's head that's wrong. They get it cut off for you. So that on the day of the birth you don't recognise your child and you wonder whose it is (...) The problem with Chinese cinema is not financial but ideological", says a lighting cameraman, whose last film got banned by the censors, and who has now had recourse to advertising" (Loussouarn, page-20). The filmmakers took advantage of the situation and produced films in the painful political background of reunification, a feature that is identical to the Hong Kong cinema of the region only. Films like *Chasing Girls* (1981) and *Aces Go Places* (1982) hint the trend of change in the upcoming political scenario.

The kung fu oriented genre set in the traditional historical Chinese background of Hong Kong films was the main feature during the 70s. The *Warlord* (1972), was directed by famous director Li Hanxiang was the representative of kung fu genre with a traditional Chinese historical background that received widespread applause around the world. While later in the decade Hui won prosperity by directing comedies like *House of 72 Tenants* (1973), with an urban background and presented Hong Kong laymen as characters, marking a drastic shift in the trend that lasted throughout the eighties. In the eighties the modern urban settings took charge of the Hong Kong films and candidly brought the maturity in the trend set in the late seventies by producing *The Dead and The Deadly* (1982), *Winners and Sinners* (1983), and *My Lucky Stars and Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in 1985.

The domination of male heroes is a marked feature of Hong Kong film in the 80s. The female heroines are seen playing a second fiddle in the

industry. The era is also typical of the fact that the comedy heroes were less in demand. Comedy stars like Micheal Hui, Karl Maka, and Richard Nag were the remnants of the 70s. The detractors of Jackie Chan are of the view in the following lines, " Earlier attempts to do this date back to the '70s, when in spite of the domestic craze for kung-fu fare, Jackie was deemed unmarketable"(Morris, issue, 17). Jackie Chan the actor and the child of the age of transformation era in the Hong Kong film trends also trodden the same track of transformation that is from being a Cantonese kung fu hero to an urban comedy hero. Jackie the star took refuge to the modern trend in Police Story (1985) and Armour of God (1986). His Project A (1983) is set in Hong Kong in which he plays the role of a British loyal who is after the patriots trying to rid the country of the colonial rule.

Chan though sympathizes with the patriots yet declares loyalty to Hong Kong a trend marking the typical bent of Hong Kong mentality developed by the fear of falling into the repressive regime of Mainland China. The DirectorsThe traditional films Butterfly Murderers (1979) and We are Going to Eat You (1980) made Tsui Hark popular as director. Tsui, like Jackie Chan, switched to the modern trend by directing the blockbusters like All the Wrong Clues (for the Right Solution) (1981) a comedy. Ann Hui the female directress of the famous Hong Kong cinema directed The Secret (1979) with a setting depicting the old Hong Kong. But she also in The Spooky Bunch (1980) showed actual life in a routine Hong Kong society.

But she was daring enough to film Love in A Fallen City (1984) to show romance during the days when the Japanese had occupied Hong Kong. The

most noteworthy feature of Ann Hui's influence on the Hong Kong cinema is the congregation of females in almost every important position of filmmaking process. She had Joyce Chan the writer, Violet Lam the composer, Audrey Lee the producer, Sylvia Chang the star besides she herself was the director of the film *The Secret* (1979). *Song of the Exile* (1990) and *Starry is the Night* (1988) are the revealers of the same feminine trend in her production. The growth of Hong Kong as a progressive and modern city also gave birth to the feeling that the pre war identity of the city is about to be distorted. That is why the movies of the old Hong Kong traditions were also produced in the eighties showing the concern over the issue.

These movies include *Hong Kong 1941* (1984), *Welcome* (1984), *Rouge* (1988), and *Painted Faces* (1988). The "gambling" movies in 1989 staged a come back on the Hong Kong cinema screens. Thrillers movies were seen as big money makers and as a secure investment. *The God of Gamblers* (1989), broke all the previous box office records and was only surpassed by *All for the Winner* (1990) another gambling movie in the end of the 80s.

Conclusion The development, innovation, evolution, artistry, appeal, and demand of the Hong Kong based Chinese films can only be studied as a whole. The social factors that disturb the dwellers of the city are disturbing to the film industry as well but are not damaging to the quality and substance of the films in Hong Kong during the 80s.

The films produced and directed in Hong Kong are the best examples of arts and fine arts, dexterity in the story telling, playing with emotions, and exquisite in presentation. The multiculturalism in Hong Kong films is a typical

quality of the 80s “ In our present context of multiculturalism, the east-west fusion of Hong Kong cinema is probably not a big deal to most of us” (Teo, 2000). The films made in this industry are the only ones that could withstand the competition with the more developed and well-equipped industry of Hollywood by all means. The actors it produced during the eighties made their way to the Hollywood and participated in making the world-class movies. Page-6Work cited pageLocal and Global Identity: Whither Hong Kong Cinema? By Stephen Teo April 19, 2000Bright Lights Film Journal; By: Gary Morris; September 1996, issue 17China Perspectives: Death by a Thousand Cuts? How censorship stifles Chinese Film Industry By: Anne LoussouarnSerial No. 13, September-October 1997, page No 20Bright Light Film Journal; Achievement and Crisis Hong Kong Cinema in the ' 80s; By: Sek KeiJanuary 2001 issue 31; originally appeared in issue 13 of discounted print edition