

HAF 22 The Rocks of Hua Lamphong

The background of the poster is a composite image. On the left, a black silhouette of a pregnant woman stands in profile, facing right. On the right, a train is shown at a station platform, with its headlights on and tracks receding into the distance. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, reddish-orange tones. The title text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

THE ROCKS OF HUA LAMPHONG

DEFIANCE ON THE RUN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Singapore

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME: Action, Drama, Road Trip Noir | HD | English, Mandarin, Thai | 90 mins

DIRECTOR:

JD CHUA

PRODUCER:

Juan FOO

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers, Sales agents

BUDGET:

US\$750,000

SECURED BUDGET:

US\$75,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2017 *Circle Line* (in pre-production)

2013 *Click* (web series)

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

An ex-soldier is ordered to find a Girl to clear his debts. Upon finding her defiant and pregnant, he escapes with her instead, inciting a manhunt from Bangkok to Singapore.

SYNOPSIS

The Rocks of Hua Lamphong is an action road trip film noir that follows Tong, a man out of luck and in debt, hired to find a girl, Ang, who appears to be pregnant. It turns out that she is hiding unpolished diamonds, wielding a fortune beyond his imagination. Spurred on by Ang, they set off down south, leading to a manhunt launched by Adrian, her employer, and then by Vincent, the rightful owner of the rocks who sets a bounty on their heads.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Rocks of Hua Lamphong is an action road trip film noir that follows Tong, a man out of luck and in debt, who is hired to find a girl, Ang, who appears to be pregnant. It turns out that she is hiding unpolished diamonds under a false belly, wielding fortune beyond his imagination. Spurred on by Ang, they set off down south, leading to a manhunt launched by Adrian, her employer, and then by Vincent, the rightful owner of the rocks who sets a bounty on their heads.

Their journey starts from exotically beautiful Bangkok, through the grey city of Kuala Lumpur, to the seemingly serene metropolitan Singapore. Fused with commercial genres like manhunt drama and action, I desire for it to be an homage to these films: Johnnie To's *Exile* (2006), Walter Hill's *The Driver* (1978) or Michael Mann's *Thief* (1981).

The film also offers a thesis on power. When a poverty-stricken society is controlled by powerful

people, the weak are exploited via vice and labor. They become merely indifferent living beings reduced to a single need: to survive. They only dream of a better life, observing the powerful ones from afar. If power is introduced to them suddenly, their compassion and newfound authority are put to the test.

This film hopes to enlighten audiences about modern societies driven by the economics of power.

Like the above-mentioned directors, I am inspired by Jean-Pierre Meville, who made noir, crime and action aesthetically cool. I think there is not enough film noir in Southeast Asia. They are more common in and from the West. It would be unique to have an action road film noir produced here.

To conclude, since I am of a mixed heritage of a Thai and Singaporean, it will be exciting to tap on my both cultures and experience to make an entertaining film.

DIRECTOR

JD CHUA

JD Chua is a writer-director who is known to go out of his way to achieve what he wants. He travelled across the world from Singapore to Los Angeles to convince Hollywood director Michael Mann to accept him as his first and only intern. JD succeeded! Under Michael Mann, JD learnt about directing aesthetics.

His directing career began on a 15-episode Singapore-Australian online co-production, *Click* (2013). JD's genre short films *Black & White Kings* (2010) and *Bad Throttle* (2015) were in competition for Best Thriller at the Washington DC Thrillspy Film Festival; Best Horror Short at the Molins Horror Festival and Scotland's Dead By Dawn International Horror Film Festival. JD also wrote for a television crime series *Kes 253* and flexed his comic muscle in creating and writing *On the Rocks* (2015), an online series that was the official selection for the Miami Web Festival in competition for Best Drama.

JD worked on Hollywood genre projects like Blumhouse Productions's *Dark Skies* (2013); Millenium Films' *Ninja: Shadow of a Tear* (2013), and also his mentor, Michael Mann's *Blackhat* (2015). He honed his skill sets of action choreography, special effects and visual effects, skills that would enhance his intention to direct action and film noir.

PRODUCER

Juan FOO

For many in Singapore, Juan Foo is candidly regarded as the independent producer who is 'still' around, through a variety of his achievements. He produced Singapore's first digital film, *Return to Pontianak* (2001) and first HD-feature, *Dirty Laundry* (2002). Juan also produced *Perth* (2005), Singapore's seminal homage to Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976).

Juan started off as freelance production crew and in editing. He also read scripts and assisted in distribution for a film finance company. Interestingly, Juan was also trained in traditional cel animation and worked briefly in Japanese animation.

In the early 2000s Juan was associated with 3 other Singapore independent films. He also raised small amounts up to \$1M for independent films ventures.

Juan has also worked as a public servant in media training, talent development and content quality assessment. He is an adjunct lecturer and sits on the advisory board for media schools. Juan is also part of U Creative, a creative industry community platform. In his free time, he is penning his experiences on films, filmmaking and filmmakers in a book called 'Film is a Four-Letter Word'.

He is now attached to Taipan Films developing and producing motion picture content.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Taipan Films Pte. Ltd.

Taipan Films is a Singapore-based motion picture content company. Our interest is to develop and produce entertainment content from Asia for the wider international market. With origins from live-action, animation content and IT, Taipan's value comes from our support in matching film talents with market-sensitive projects so as to encourage creative careers. Taipan Films is keen to co-produce projects that are of both entertainment and cultural value that can travel through its core voice of engaging storytelling.