

Podtalk: Kenneth Tsang, Lifetime Achievement Recipient at Asian Pop-Up Cinema, Oct. 10, 2019

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CHICAGO – Season Nine of Chicago’s Asian Pop-Up Cinema (APUC) is coming to its grand finale, and it closes by honoring one of the most prolific character actors in Hong Kong cinema with its Lifetime Achievement Award ... the incomparable Kenneth Tsang. The actor, who has also appeared in Western films like “Die Another Day” and “Rush Hour 2,” began his career in 1955 and has over 250 credits in his long career. He also appears in the APUC film finale and wrap up to Season Nine, “The Attorney” (Hong Kong), which will screen on October 10th, 2019, at the AMC River East 21 Theatre in Chicago. For tickets and more info, [click here](#). [21]



APUC Honors Actor Kenneth Tsang Kong with Lifetime Achievement Award

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

After a false start in the film industry (listen to the Podtalk below), Tsang studied architecture at Berkeley in San Francisco. When he settled back in Hong Kong he couldn't connect to a building design career, so he went back to acting in films. The Chinese and Hong Kong film industry was an assembly line in the 1960s and '70s, and Tsang took full advantage of it, racking up an astounding 60 films from 1967 through 1970. Eventually, his path crossed with legendary Hong Kong director John Woo, with roles in "A Better Tomorrow" and "The Killer." In his later career, he's appeared in mainstream films like "Anna and the King" and "Memoirs of a Geisha." Kenneth Tsang will receive the APUC Lifetime Achievement Award before the screening of "The Attorney."

This Chicago Premiere of "The Attorney" is part of the program-packed Season Nine of APUC, as their new format (multiple films per week) highlighted a different Asian country or theme every week. APUC is facilitated by founder and veteran film programmer Sophia Wong Bocchio, and Season Nine featured films from South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, among others. The films mainly screen at Chicago's AMC River East 21, with various other locations throughout the season (click link below at the end of the article for more details).



Kenneth Tsang in Season Nine APUC Finale, 'The Attorney' (Hong Kong)

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

In a Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, Kenneth Tsang talks about his brilliant career, and his Life Achievement acting advice.

On Page Two, Patrick McDonald talks to Executive Producer Cherrie Lau and screenwriter Frances To of “The Attorney.”

The APUC Season Nine finale “The Attorney” is a taut mystery/courtroom drama combining politics, the law, money and murder. Powerhouse attorney Lui (Patrick Tam) has won 12 cases in a row, so it’s a bit bewildering when he agrees to take on the defense of a young kid who wakes up next to the murdered daughter of a billionaire Hong Kong businessman ... with no idea what happened the night before. The film is also a surprising relationship film, which also features Season Eight’s APUC Career Achievement recipient, Nina Paw Hee-Ching ([click here](#) [22] for that interview).



A Scene from the Season Nine APUC Finale, 'The Attorney'

Photo credit: AsianPopUpCinema.org

Both Cherrie Lau (Executive Producer) and Frances To (screenwriter) are long-time veterans of the Hong Kong film industry. They spoke through an interpreter.

HollywoodChicago.com: Frances, this film is more complex than just a simple crime and courtroom drama. Is it risky putting in portrayals of Hong Kong wealth in the film and how they can corrupt the system?

Frances To: To me, it's about the story. And to tell a good story it doesn't matter if we're taking a risk or not, as long as the context of the story is being told correctly, and feels accurate for the audience.

HollywoodChicago.com: Cherrie, since this was a different type of crime film, told mostly in the courtroom, how did you want to cast the film that was different than what had been done before?

Cherrie Lau: The very typical Hong Kong film is usually an action film, with gunfire and car crashes. We obviously don't have any of that, so we cast it with a different type of more serious actor. Alex Fong has portrayed a lawyer on a television drama, and Patrick Tam is a very honored actor in Hong Kong. They also did their research, talking to real lawyers in the Hong Kong legal system, to get the jargon correct.

HollywoodChicago.com: Frances, in your study of putting together the legal scenes of the movie, what did you find out about the court systems of Hong Kong that really surprised you?

Frances To: Lawyering in Hong Kong is a collaborative business. In typical courtroom dramas, it's usually one lawyer to one client. In Hong Kong, I found that most law firms have a number of lawyers working for that one client. It's much more complex than the one-to-one legal style, and I wanted to show that in the film.

HollywoodChicago.com: Cherrie, the film industry is changing rapidly and I'm sure that is also happening in Hong Kong. What is most different about the Hong Kong film industry in the 15 years you've been a part of it?



Cherrie Lau and Frances To in Chicago

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Cherrie Lau: Basically the markets we're going after have expanded beyond Hong Kong, especially into China. And you'd probably think that Hong Kong and China would have similar audiences, but actually there are cultural differences. For example, comedy doesn't translate very well from Hong Kong to China. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: Frances, since you are a veteran screenwriter, how have you reached a comfort level writing for men as well as women, and how did that play out in 'The Attorney'?

Frances To: I observe that men and women do talk differently, and one of the most interesting journeys I've had as a screenwriter is learning how men talk. I think that women explain more, with the goal of having the listener understand what she's saying. Men talk less, but have more subtext. When two men talk, they seem to be hiding something, preferring action to words.

I like reading a man's mind, although I'm never sure if I'm doing it right. [laughs] For this film, the main men characters are lawyers, and they are canny and smart, but since the job is the same for women, I didn't have much dialogue difference between the men and women lawyers.

HollywoodChicago.com: Cherrie, which character in the film do you most relate to, in the sense that they feel like what you would do in that situation, and why?

Cherrie Lau: It is the young lawyer portrayed by Alex Fong. He has strong beliefs in justice, but he has a lot to learn. In working in the film industry, I'm always seeking fairness, and looking for role models that will help me achieve that fairness.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally for both of you, with the current situation of street clashes in Hong Kong, how do you think the justice system as you know it can help to solve some of the issues?

Cherrie Lau: I believe in the Hong Kong legal system. From the outside, this seems like a big problem, but I believe that uphold the law, respecting the law and following the law is the ultimate goal of the Hong Kong people.

Frances To: To add to that, everyone should be responsible for their own beliefs and behavior. Also everyone should do their best to resolve the situation.

The Season Nine finale of Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema is "The Attorney" on Thursday, October 10th, 2019 (7pm), at at the AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago. Actor Kenneth Tsang, screenwriter Frances To and Executive Producer Cherrie Lau will appear on behalf of the film. For a complete overview on APUC, [click here](#). [23]



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