



STAGING FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY FOR ACTION SHORT FILM

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**Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours
(Cinematography)
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Staging Fight Choreography For Action Short Film

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honors (Cinematography)

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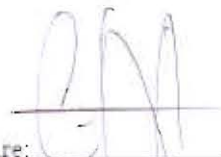
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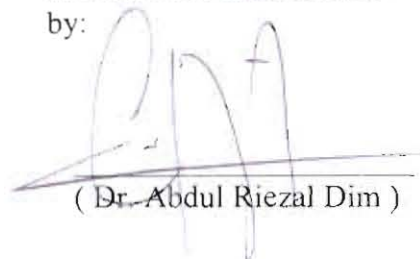
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ABSTRAK

Mengarah aksi lagak berlawan dalam filem berdurasi pendek

Oleh

Juliana anak Mullen

Mengarah lagak ngeri untuk pelakon dan pelagak ngeri filem aksi adalah berbeza serta mengikut kemampuan mereka kerana ia berperanan menggambarkan aksi berbahaya serta ganas. mempunyai Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana mengarah pelakon dalam aksi lagak negeri dalam sebuah filem pendek aksi serta mengambil kira cara mengatur pergerakan kamera. Kajian ini menumpukan kepada penggiat seni atau pembikin filem di Malaysia yang berminat menceburi bidang lagak ngeri. Pengkaji telah melakukan kajian ini melalui *content analysis*, *action research* dan menemu bual Rustic Bodomov, pelagak ngeri professional dari luar negara. Pengkaji telah mengaplikasi hasil kajian dengan mengarah pelakon mengikut perwatakan, fizikal dan kemampuan beraksi serta melakukan pergerakan kamera.

ABSTRACT

STAGING FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY FOR ACTION SHORT FILM

By

Juliana anak Mullen

Performing stunt choreography for the cast are different and according to their different level of talent and skills in performing the action because its intend to portrayed violence and dangerous scenes. This research is aimed to understand and show the variety lies in action film-making especially in planning the technical aspects and prepare the cast to perform fight choreography. The researcher had collected data by conducting the content analysis, action research and also interviewed Rustic Bodomov, professional stunt coordinator. The researcher had applied the techniques on how to staging cast according to their characterize, features and performance and also inserting the camera movement to show great result of shots.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

The researcher aims is to study the effective of staging cast and applying camera movement into action short film. The researcher aware this is an ambitious project therefore will do approach this through experiments and data analysis to justifies this research. The researcher had study the difference of making of action film in Malaysia and Indonesia film which is Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (2011) and The Raid : Redemption (2011). The researcher also analysis the importance of staging cast and camera movement in fight choreography and applied methods that can be implemented to make Malay action short film in the end.

Fight choreography is known as stage combat in earliest day. It is part of stunt which is an action displaying spectacular skill and daring (Oxford Dictionary). It is popular in 1970s across western and eastern country and used before in theatre and ballet production. However, due to advance of cinema and television it finally uses in filming action films as fight choreography.

Preparing an actor for action film takes time and a great deal of preparation. The director is in charge of the story telling and deciding factor on how to make the action sequence. So, he/she have to collaborate with stunt coordinator, cinematographer and the

cast to plan the blocking and fighting sequel. The actor or stunt performer responsible to determine the reality of the scene while maintaining an awareness so they will prepare mentally and physically before or during the real film shooting. David (2011) stated that she/he can make it look like it is the first time this violent scene have ever occurred, performance after performance and without adequate rehearsal time, its only takes one unsafe performance to end that actor's run.

Action film cast also train in different of martial art to diverse their fight choreography in filming(Boughn, 2006). The training may includes unarmed combat skills such as illusory of basic stunt (Fencing, Rapier, Dagger etc), uses of weaponry (knife, guns or melee etc) and different martial arts skill (Akido, Wrestling, Boxing).

Thus, making action film also requires cooperation from special effects team to ensure mechanical setting and safety. The stunt coordinator and director had to conclude on camera angle and plan choreography to make realistic move, greater sense of action and pacing. The researcher believe that the design of illusion of physical combat and applying effective camera movement can be done without causing any harm to performers in this research.

1.1 Problem Statement

Fight choreography intend to portrayed violence and dangerous fight scenes. So, the film director must design the stunt choreography physically for the cast/stunt performer according to plot narrative and work with multiple camera cinematography to make realistic move on the camera.

The researcher had found two popular Asian action film in 2011 which is Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (2011) and The Raid: Redemption (2011) as case study. Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa has good storyline background, well built-set, using foreigner cast and CGI techniques. However , the fight choreography in this film less scenes and use safe shoot frequently especially in battle scenes. Stephen Rahman-Hughes, the foreigner main actor was not prepared well to act as he can't speak fluent Malay in the film. Plus, the selection for extra cast was not suitable to characterize the pirates characters because they look skinny.

This film also shows bad CGI techniques on certain scenes and heavily critics because the original epic story failed to adapt into the film. In studies of Winstedt (1938) stated Kedah Annals tell about a Kedahan ruler, which is name Raja Merong Mahawangsa, who has ties with king of the Roman that trusted in mission from Rome to China. However, on his way of sailing from Rome to China, he was suddenly attacked by legendary giant phoenix Garuda. He was crashed into a shore and found a state called Langkusaka (Kedah) and became its king. He is said to be descendent to alexander the great, Hindu king and had three sons and a daughter that later ruler the kingdoms after Raja Merong Mahawangsa left to Rome.

Differently from the real epic story, the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa was a story about a servant man who eventually made himself assigned by Rome kingdom to assist prince rome on his journey to marriage princess of china. However, the ship was

attacked by the Garuda pirates that use magic and sorcery. Merong Mahawangsa separated from the prince and later found langkusaka, trained to revenge and be king of that state. In short, Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa tell a story about Rome servant that becomes King of Langkusaka and save everyone in the story.

The Raid: Redemption (2011) received good critic on it first released. In Weintraub (2012) report stated that the film takes four months to finalization the script and design the choreography for the fighting scenes. The actors reported sent to boot camp military training with KOPASKA, where they learned how to use weapons, strategic attack and defense techniques. The Raid was shooting handheld and using fig rig to make camera operators change angles and position rapidly. The direction of film was improved from Merantau (2009) which critics on taking action scenes too long. Therefore, the Gareth Evans, both of the films director change The Raid : Redemption into full-on action.

1.2 Research Objectives

The researcher had concluded three objectives for this research ;-

- i. To study the difference making of action film between Malaysia and Indonesia.
- ii. To analysis the importance of staging cast and camera movement in fight choreography.
- iii. To staging cast and applying camera movement techniques in fight choreography to make action short film.

1.3 Research Questions

The researcher had come to think of these question :-

- i. What is the difference making of action film between Malaysia and Indonesia action film.
- ii. Why staging cast and applying camera movement important in fight choreography.
- iii. How to staging cast and applying camera movement in fight choreography to make action short film.

1.4 Purpose Of Research

The reasons why the researcher conducting this research is to show the variety lies in action film-making especially in staging cast and technical aspects. The researcher had collect data from content analysis, a research method to describe written, spoken or visual communication and provides quantitative or qualitative description (Kort-Butler, 2016) and the effective of staging and applying camera movement into action short film. The researcher have study two popular action films in 2011 to state the differences. factors and process of making of the action films.

Thus, the researcher also conducted action research, a studies that carried out in the course of an activity or occupation, typically in the field of education to improve the methods and approach of those involved (Oxford Dictionary). The researcher was conducting a interview from a professional stunt coordinator with several questions. The purpose of the interview is to collect information about stunt performance in action film. The researcher asked questions about the stunt experiences and how he/she conducting

stunt choreography for action film. Lastly, the researcher manages to solved the problem and applied the approaches that can implemented to staging cast and camera movement through experiment.

1.5 Restriction And Limitation

In conducting this research, there are certain limitation and restrictions that cannot be avoided due to limitation of sources especially in professional guide and time to prepare the rehearsal for cast. This research is focus on Malaysia and Indonesia action films.

1.6 Audience

This research give benefit to any filmmaker that wish to make action design, audiences that loves watch action genre and guide for stunt performer.

1.7 Conclusion

This research related to action genre and highlight on technical aspect and how to prepare and staging cast for stunt choreography. The researcher believes staging cast for action film challenging as its need proper train and technical aspects to give best visual effect to sync with it. The researcher conclude the background of the research, problem statement, objectives of this research, research questions, purpose of research, restriction and limitation, audience that stated for this chapter. Thus, the researcher will discuss about available findings and past studies that can support this research in the next following chapter 2 then proceed to chapter 3 to define what activity of research is,

chapter 4 is to describe the design and the implementation that the researcher will conduct and lastly chapter 5 is overall conclusion about reflections and findings of this research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The researcher make a literature review about staging cast and applying camera movement in stunt choreography into action film. The researcher have conducted new research from available written works to support this research.

2.1 Relationship Between Stunt Choreography And Action Film

Stunt work is under second unit to perform dangerous action during the shooting. The main purpose of stunt is to create success illusion to ensures audience not knowing stunt performance involvement. Stunt performer are known as daredevil ,stunt double or cast substitute on the set. They are conducted physically according to plot narrative and work in multiple camera cinematography. In this research, the researcher studies two popular action films in 2011 which is Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa and The Raid Redemption. Both films have the physical actions of the characters to drive their obsession to reach the exterior goal. The physical actions are depends on difficult choices that character make and choices are driven, in turn, by the character's self concept as shaped by their inner need in the end of story. However, the films has its own lackness on certain techniques, values and weak storyline. Both films misunderstood how to use their benefits to make success action film genre.

There are few differences between the two films in term of cinematography techniques and storytelling. The researcher found that *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (2011) directed by Yusry KRU received bad critics because it doesn't reflect on Malay cultural. The cast selections not suitable in this film especially the main cast. Stephen Rahman Hughes not prepared well because he is foreigner actor and can't speak fluent Malay in the film. This film also shows less fight scenes and bad CGI techniques on certain scenes. Its also heavily critics because the original epic story failed to adapt into the film (Zainooddin, 2011).

Elbert (2012) stated *The Raid : Redemption* (2011) showed no appreciation for human dimension, meaning and morality. This is because the film is emphazing on full-on action combat without considered humanity. He stated that everything is well choreography but the lackness character's emotion and puzzling plots make it essentially more visualized as video game. The critics is based on the storyline involving a conflict between the police and criminal as the main character had to fight his all way to the top of 15-story building.

According to Hicks (2002), action adventure genre is most misunderstood genre where great many lower-budget and foreign attempts at the genre fail as they overpowering the visual and understandably mistake the action-adventure genre. Action as physical pyrotechnics on the screen is not enough to make a movie and physical action such as stunt, car chases, fall etc can be meaningless. He also stated that imitation of the genre can be done if the filmmaker use what they have at hand : cars, guns,

natural terrain and limitless enthusiasm instead of overpowering visual. The researcher found that the films filmed admirable for the skills, rich visual and imaginative cinematography and editing instead of understand the action genre.

2.2 Variation Of Fight Choreography

Fight choreography is also known as stage combat in earliest day. It is commonly uses and practices in action film. This art performance is believed popular in 1970s across western and eastern country. Stage combat is a technique used and designed to create physical combat without causing harm to the performers. It usually uses in theater and ballet production but due to advance of cinema and television it finally uses in cinema as fight choreography. It is part of stunt which is an action displaying spectacular skill and daring (Oxford Dictionary). With the entrance of Bruce Lee in film industry, the action film divided into major areas which is wuxia period times. Wuxia genre is sword-fight film-weapon driven action with cinematic flourish of effects and techniques and kung fu film- dedicated to a projection of hand to hand. The new wave make young filmmaker had to reach against standards to meet market demand and introduced to modernized concepts in filmmaking and storytelling (Kar, Bren and Ho, 2004)

Hollywood films begin to look for martial art from Asian since 1980s. Park (2010) stated a new style which is Oriental - a move that many have regarded as deracination or westernization of fight choreography. Park uses the example of films such as Batman Begin (2005) and The Dark Knight (2008) as clear examples explained the martial significances uses by western film in eastern culture and martial art. The Batman Begins

in particular show aesthetic in oriental style as park refers Bruce Wayne characters trained in temple, marked as ninja in several times in films and the costume of Batman resembles version of traditional/mythological black masks and costume of ninja. The character trained ninjutsu especially in swordplay, deception, illusion ,distraction, stealth and evasion. The variety of martial arts make Hollywood interested to explore and creating new fighting style in choreography.

2.3 Action Genre Between Malaysia And Indonesia Films.

The researcher studied two action films from two country which is Malaysia and Indonesia. Both films was popular action films on 2011 and received many awards from local and international film festivals. However, the two films have its own lackness in making of the films. For example, Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa has good storyline background, well built-set, using foreigner cast and CGI techniques. The fight choreography in this film less scenes and use safe shoot frequently especially in battle scenes. The selection for casts for this film was not suitable to characterize few characters. This film heavily critics because its different from original epic and doesn't reflect Malay cultural . In studies of Winstedt (1938) Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa tell about a Kedahan ruler, which is name Raja Merong Mahawangsa, who has ties with king of the Roman that trusted in mission from Rome to China. However, on his way of sailing from Rome to China, he was suddenly attacked by legendary giant phoenix Garuda. He was crashed into a shore and found a state called Langkusaka (Kedah) and became its king. He is said to be descendent to Alexander The Great, Hindu King and