

Film Archive's "Morning Matinee" to feature Nancy Sit and Michael Lai (with photos)

The Hong Kong Film Archive of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will bring audiences two household names, Nancy Sit and Michael Lai, screening 17 of their films, which include their works as child stars, in the "Morning Matinee" series at 11am on Fridays from June to October.

Nurtured thoughtfully by her parents since childhood, Sit acquired the skills of Cantonese opera, northern-style martial arts and Peking opera. Because of her talents, Sit was discovered by a film producer to perform onscreen, giving rise to her glorious film career. She has acted in over 100 films, encompassing different genres and a wide range of characters.

Lai joined the entertainment industry when he was young. He was often portrayed as a nice child in Mandarin films. Later he switched over to the Cantonese movie industry, starring as a mischievous child through many characters, which became his signature onscreen persona. Lai appeared in over 30 films at the age of 17. After leaving the film industry, he then devoted himself to his music career and became one of the maestros of Hong Kong popular music.

The duo co-hosted their first variety show entitled "Nancy and Michael" in 1975 with huge success, earning them the title of "Best Onscreen Partners". They then co-directed and performed together in "Dog Bites Dog Bone" (1978), an uproarious comedy satire on how people pursue money at all costs. Riding on the popularity of Sit and Lai, the film was a big hit in Southeast Asia.

In her acting debut "The Grand Re-union" (1960), Sit, who played one of the 15 children of Yu Lai-zhen and Law Kim-long, stole the show with her expressive eyes and acting, standing out among a huge cast.

"Bunny Girl" (1967) features Sit as an unprivileged and uneducated but clever girl who attracts the attention of a wealthy young man (Lui Kay).

"That Frightening Sword" (1968) tells of Kenneth Tsang's "frightening sword", which is stolen by villain Sek Kin. Tsang later meets Sek's daughter Sit and discovers that they are biological siblings. This wuxia film, with an ever-twisting plot, is animated in Eastmancolor. It is filled with scenes shot on location, taking audiences on a thrilling and spectacular ride.

"Spring Love" (1968) follows Josephine Siao Fong-fong, who is betrothed by her father to Lui Kay. Determined to defy the arrangement, Siao teams up with three of her best friends to deceive her fiancée and his sister Sit. The film opens with the five leading actresses forming an all-girl-band to

perform pop songs with electric guitars, a trend of its time.

Starring as a single mother in a reform school, Sit in "Teddy Girls" (1969) transforms herself from a teen sweetheart to a rebellious young woman, exuding a strong presence with a fiery performance, particularly when speaking in vulgar street slang.

In "I'll Get You One Day" (1970), Sit gets herself unknowingly embroiled in a jewellery heist in which her elder sister Connie Chan Po-chu tries hard to save her. This mystery thriller includes a number of musical scenes rarely seen in the genre of which the youthful Sit's dancing charm excels.

"Girls Are Flowers" (1966) tells of an uncertain romance between Connie Chan Po-chu and Lui Kay. Featured as Lui's younger sister, Sit unites the lovers with her shrewd and quick-minded plans. The role of Sit is adorable, and she brightens the story like a fairy-tale nymph.

The musical "Colourful Youth" (restored version) (1966) is the only colour film of its genre starring the two idols Josephine Siao Fong-fong and Connie Chan Po-chu. Playing a spoiled sister, Sit lands in trouble when fooled by her conniving boyfriend but she returns to the right path with the help of her elder sister.

In the melodrama "Year in, Year out" (1955), Lai, at the tender age of around 9, plays the complicated role of a forbearing child who, with his visual expressions, is learning to deal with life's inequalities. Despite his brief appearance, Lai plays a pivotal role, leading what becomes a happy ending.

"It So Happens to a Woman" (1955) stars Lai and Josephine Siao Fong-fong as a pair of adorable siblings and Hung Sin Nui as their beloved mother. The film also features Hung in the spectacle of singing popular songs in Mandarin.

"To Catch a Thief" (1958) is the first leading role for Lai, who demonstrates superb acting skills in portraying a mischievous, sophisticated, quick-witted and courageous shoeshine boy.

With the same cast, "Adventures of Genius Boy" (1961) follows on from the features of "To Catch a Thief". In the film, Lai plays the brother of Patrick Tse Yin, who witnesses a kidnapping and has to fight both mentally and physically against the kidnappers.

"Human Relationships" (1959) highlights the friendship between Mrs Yiu, the wife of the mansion's owner and the child played by Lai, who often steals flowers from the mansion's garden. Lai was only a child, but gained an acting reputation among seasoned veterans like Pak Yin, Ng Cho-fan and Cheung Wood-yau.

In "Autumn Wind and Autumn Rain" (1962), Lai's father is arrested on unwarranted charges and his mother falls ill. Despite the hardship of his

family, Lai often gets into trouble and doesn't take care of his younger sister. However, his playful character offers moments of sunshine in this otherwise gloomy drama.

"Happiness is for Tomorrow" (1963) centres on the Tsang family as an embodiment of corrupt traditions. Bounded by outworn values, the family's fortunes wither and the grandfather orders his son not to wed his beloved cousin. Later, the grandson played by Lai is forced to marry at the tender age of 15 for the sake of his seriously ill grandfather's longevity.

A Cantonese cinema classic, "The Great Devotion" (1960) gives a realistic depiction of the struggle of a poverty-stricken family in the 1960s. The film features the spectacular performances of the four child stars, Lai, Leung Chun-mut, Wong Oi-ming and Fung Bo-bo, which melt and break the audience's hearts.

"Autumn Wind and Autumn Rain" is in Mandarin; "Year in, Year out" and "It So Happens to a Woman" are dubbed in Cantonese; while the other films are in Cantonese. Except for "I'll Get You One Day", which has Chinese and English subtitles, the other films are without subtitles.

Tickets priced at \$30 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For credit card telephone bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme details, please call 2739 2139 or visit www.filmarchive.gov.hk/en_US/web/hkfa/pe-event-2021-nam.html.

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19, audiences should take note of the latest service arrangements for screening venues, admission and seating to be implemented. For details, please call 2739 2139 or visit www.filmarchive.gov.hk/en_US/web/hkfa/home.html.



