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Umetsugu Inoue: Japan's Music Man

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Hong Kong Nocturne

Umetsugu Inoue: Japan's Music Man

Umetsugu Inoue (1923–2010) made movies in a variety of genres, but his musicals set him apart. The phenomenal box-office success of Inoue's *The Stormy Man* saved Nikkatsu Studios from financial ruin in the late 1950s. A decade later, his musicals caught the eye of the Shaw Brothers, who hired him to lend cosmopolitan glamor to their Hong Kong productions. Now, we celebrate his musicals with this traveling retrospective.

I am tempted to add an asterisk to the term “musical” as it applies to Inoue. As a contract director at Nikkatsu in the '50s, he was expected to be proficient in several genres and to mix them up when necessary. Unlike traditional Hollywood musicals, in which song-and-dance numbers occur as fantasy sequences triggered by overflowing emotions (think *The Wizard of Oz* or *Meet Me in St. Louis*), the music in Inoue's films almost always arises logically from the action. It occurs to a lesser or greater degree according to the demands of the story.

In *The Stormy Man* and its Hong Kong remake *King Drummer*, the musical numbers are nightclub performances by competing jazz bands. In *The Winner*, an intriguing mash-up of boxing picture and ballet melodrama, a dance performance prompts a wonderfully surreal musical number. *The Eagle and the Hawk*, a blend of murder mystery, high-seas adventure, and love story, includes only one musical number but is pervaded with a haunting whistled melody that is integral to the plot. Even *Hong Kong Nocturne*, the most traditional musical presented here, justifies its many numbers through the film's protagonists, a hardworking show business family singing and dancing their way to the top.

Though it includes a fraction of the more than one hundred films that Inoue directed, I hope the retrospective will bring him well-deserved international recognition. Three of the films—*The Stormy Man*, *The Winner*, and *The Eagle and the Hawk*—are debuting in newly subtitled digital versions. *The Green Music Box* is a one-of-a-kind 35mm print from the National Film Center in Tokyo, restored through the rare Konicolor process that Inoue used to make it. And *Hong Kong Nocturne* and *King Drummer* are supreme examples of Inoue's Hong Kong style, showing why he may be even more famous there than in Japan.

I first saw Inoue's work more than a decade ago, when several of his films were included in a survey of Asian musicals at the Far East Film Festival in Udine, Italy. I'd like to thank the festival's Sabrina Baracetti, Thomas Bertacche, Roger Garcia, and Mark

Schilling for bringing Inoue's sparkling art to my attention and for allowing us to adapt Schilling's writings here. Thanks also to Michael Raine for the subtitle translations, which were originally created for the screenings in Udine. Mami Furukawa and Emico Kawai of Nikkatsu Corporation deserve a shout-out for helping to create new digital versions of the films that Inoue made at Nikkatsu Studios.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Inoue & Tsukioka Movie Foundation for making this retrospective possible. Thanks to them, more movie-lovers than ever before will be swept up in Inoue's colorful cinematic world.

Tom Vick, Freer|Sackler Curator of Film

The Inoue & Tsukioka Movie Foundation

The Inoue & Tsukioka Movie Foundation celebrates the work of Umetsugu Inoue, a director who heavily influenced Japanese film and theater, and Yumeji Tsukioka, a famous actress (and Inoue's wife). Along with preserving and presenting these artists' works, the foundation develops human resources in the film and theater industries. It sponsors the Moon Cinema Project (mooncinemaproject.com), a yearly scholarship program to foster an up-and-coming filmmaker. *And So We Put the Goldfish in the Pool*, the first film produced through the Moon Cinema Project, won the Short Film Grand Jury Prize at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Learn more at inoue-tsukioka.com.



Umetsugu Inoue

The Sensei: An Interview with Umetsugu Inoue

Mark Schilling

Reprinted with permission from *Asia Sings! A Survey of Asian Musical Films* (2006), curated and edited by Roger Garcia and published on the occasion of the eponymous retrospective (Udine Far East Film Festival 8).

Born in Kyoto on May 31, 1923, Umetsugu Inoue graduated from the Economics Department of Keio University in 1946 and in 1947 entered Shin Toho studio as an assistant director [AD]. In 1952 he made his directorial debut with *Head Cheerleader of Love* (*Koi no Oendancho*). He filmed dramas and comedies, but made his biggest impression with musical films.

His first hit in this genre was *Sweet Sixteen's Jazz Festival* (*Musume Juroku Jazz Matsuri*, 1954), whose success launched both [singer and actress Yukimura] Izumi's stardom and Inoue's directing career. Inoue made eight more films with Izumi, including *Tokyo Cinderella Girl* (1954).

In 1955, Inoue signed with the new Nikkatsu studio. His first musical there, *Tomboy of the Back Alley* (*Uramachi no Otenba Musume*, 1956), starred Eri Chiemi, but it was *The Stormy Man* (aka *The Guy Who Started a Storm*) (*Arashi o Yobu Otoko*, 1957) that became the biggest-ever hit for both director and punkish star Yujiro Ishihara, and single-handedly pulled Nikkatsu out of the red. Its success made Inoue a studio power, with his films becoming templates for dozens of Nikkatsu productions in a range of genres.

Inoue often preferred an austere one-scene, one-cut approach, but he also knew how to present glamour and spectacle in the stage show segments that were to become a Nikkatsu signature. Usually set in fancy clubs, these segments gave pre-television era audiences a rare chance to see singers and bands the studio and its record company partners were trying to sell. In other words, they were an early form of MTV.

In 1960, Inoue left Nikkatsu. He made a jazz movie, *The Band That Started a Storm* (*Arashi o Yobu Gekidan*), for Takarazuka Pictures, and subsequently worked for the major studios Toei, Toho, Shochiku and Daiei.

From 1967 and continuing five years, Inoue spent three months a year making films in Hong Kong for Shaw Brothers, including the musicals *Hong Kong Nocturne* (1967) and *Hong Kong Rhapsody* (1968), frothy concoctions with big production numbers.

During this period Inoue made the occasional musical film in Japan, including *The Performers* (*Misora Hibari Mori Shinichi no Hana to Namida to Hono*, 1970), [singer and actress] Misora Hibari's last feature. In 1971 he released *All about Hibari* (*Hibari no Subete*), a documentary recording Hibari's concerts and personal life to celebrate her twenty-fifth year in show business.

As box office for Japanese films shrank and the studio system collapsed, Inoue shifted to television in 1977 with drama series for the TBS, Fuji and Asahi networks. In 1983 he released *The Guy Who Started a Storm* (*Arashi o Yobu Otoko*), the second remake of his 1957 hit. (Toshio Masuda, an AD and scriptwriter under Inoue, shot the first remake, *King Drummer*, in 1966.)

Inoue's last feature was *Code Name Black Cat* (1987). In all he made 116 feature films and directed nearly 300 TV dramas. In 1987 Inoue published *Yujiro Was Under My Window* (*Mado no Shita ni Yujiro ga Ita*), anecdotes about his film career and essays on his filmmaking philosophy. One of his assistant directors in TV was Takashi Miike, who recounted his experiences with Inoue in his 2003 autobiography *Director Poison* (*Kantoku Chudoku*).

The following transcript is from an interview that Schilling held with Inoue in Japan before the 2006 Far East Film Festival.

How did you get interested in films?

I went to the Kyoto Municipal Number One Commercial High School, and in my third year we [were] taken to a funeral for a graduate (of the high school) who had died fighting in the Sino-Japanese War. I had no idea who it was—then afterwards I learned he was the great [director] Sadao Yamanaka.

I wanted to see his films but it was forbidden for junior high school students to go to a movie theater alone. I managed to sneak into a screening of Yamanaka's *Humanity and Paper Balloons* (*Jinjo Kamifusen*). I was really impressed by that film—it made me realize how wonderful movies were.

I became an enthusiastic film fan and snuck into theaters in various ways . . . but I never thought in a million years I would enter the film world myself.

My high school also produced Masahiro Makino, Tameyoshi Kubo, Seiichiro Uchikawa and me—five film directors altogether. Kyoto was a center of film-making, so perhaps it was only natural. Even so, it's interesting that five film directors could come out [of] a commercial high school.

In 1946, when you were still a student at Keio University, you got a job with Shin Toho. How did that come about?

One of my seniors at Kyoto Number One Commercial, Seiichiro Uchikawa, was an assistant director at Toho. That was when Toho was having its labor troubles and some of the actors and staff broke off to form the Shin Toho union.

With Uchikawa's help I was hired as a third assistant director for a film Tamizo Ishida was directing for Shin Toho. *Alien Green* (*Midori wa I na Mono*) was a period drama comedy. They didn't have enough staff, so in addition to my work as an AD, I helped in other ways. But I had no idea what I was doing—I was always screwing up and getting scolded.

I thought they wouldn't ask me back, but instead Shin Toho hired me after I graduated—that was in 1947.

But to get promoted to director, you had to write scripts, didn't you?

That's right. I'd studied economics at university, so I didn't know a lot about literature. I'd seen a lot of movies so I had a lot of ideas, but I didn't know how to structure them. So I studied scriptwriting. How to plot—to how move the story from point A to B to C.

Toward the end of 1950 a gap opened up for the New Year's lineup. They only had two months to make a film and no script. One of the producers proposed a film based on a story by Masao Shiro—*The Casebook of the Young Samurai Lord* (*Wakasama Samurai Torimonochō*)—but it was too short for a film. I had an idea to use just the atmosphere of the story and write something original, with all the action taking place in one house. So the producer asked me if I could write a script and got me a room in a *ryokan* [Japanese-style inn].

I dashed off an outline by about seven in the evening. I thought it would take me three or four days to write the actual script, but after dinner I got so caught up in what I was writing that I forgot to go to sleep. I finished the

script by about nine o'clock the next morning and took a nap. Then around eleven I went to the studio. When the producer finally came in I slapped the script down [on his desk]. He couldn't believe that I'd finished it in one day—he thought I was lying. But this old woman—Granny Hirata—at the *ryokan* told him, “What are you talking about? He was hard at work! He was going scratch, scratch, scratch all night long—I couldn't sleep.” I'd written it all night. But from a business point of view writing a script in one night isn't a good idea. *(laughs)*

A critic, Eto, wrote about promising young movie people in the *Mainichi* newspaper. He said that Inoue has something interesting coming out for New Year's—that he's a promising newcomer. After that the requests flooded in, even though I was just an AD.

It wasn't because I was that great—it was because I was quick and cheap. I would dash off something in five days and get ¥50,000 or ¥100,000 for it.

That's how I got promoted to director so quickly. Even so it took me four years to make it to director. When I became a director the studio was divided—all the assistant directors under me were with me, all the directors above me were against me. Also, all the old-timers on the staff were against me.

How did you start writing musicals?

I liked music—I could play the harmonica, guitar and ukulele pretty well. Some piano too—but mostly classics. I didn't know anything about jazz. But when I became a director at Shin Toho, there was a jazz boom. After the end of the war [singer and actress] Eri Chiemi appeared. Then she went to America and along came Yukimura Izumi.

Shin Toho's new president called me in. “You're young, Inoue, and you like music. I want you to do something with Izumi now that we have her under contract.”

I didn't know anything about jazz, but I met Izumi and tried to learn as much as I could. I met this couple, Danny and Mary, who had this jazz band. Also there were all these jazz coffee shops, mainly in the Ginza. With Mary's help I learned all I could about jazz. I went to the Ginza every day with her. This was the time when live jazz was at its peak.



How did you come to make *Tokyo Cinderella Girl*?

Tokyo Cinderella Girl had a lot of singing—so much that the drama had to be cut quite a bit, but that may have made it a success. It was the first real jazz movie made in Japan. The composer of *Sukiyaki* (*Ue o Mite Aruko*) saw *Tokyo Cinderella Girl* and told me that it was unheard of to give the lead role to a skinny kid like Izumi. But Shin Toho was a small studio. I had to do what I could with a sixteen-year-old star.

Shorisha was your first film with [singer and actor Yujiro] Ishihara?

It was released in Golden Week [a cluster of holidays in late April and early May]. There was a ballet scene in a British film—*The Red Shoes* [Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger]—that went on for 15 minutes. I did something similar around 13 minutes. [Actress] Reiko Kondo did a great job.

That film did well at the box office, so the producers wanted to do another film with Inoue and Ishihara for the summer Obon holiday [the Festival of the Dead in August]—that was *The Eagle and the Hawk* (*Washi to Taka*). It was based on a script I'd written a long time before about a detective on board a ship. There had never been a Japanese film shot entirely on a boat.

We took the boat out on Tokyo Bay and got hit by a typhoon. The waves were coming right over the deck as we were filming. I wanted [to] shoot the big waves just as they hit—splash! But when we were ready to film, none of the actors—Yujiro and all the rest—came out. They'd all gotten seasick waiting. (*laughs*)

We finally had to dock. The waves were dangerous and the boat wasn't built for them—it had a flat bottom. We shot on the boat a total of four days—after that, nothing but sets. It was a hard film to make, but I really love it. I got married to [Yumeji] Tsukioka [one of the stars of *The Eagle and the Hawk*].

After that I filmed *The Guy Who Started a Storm* (*Arashi o Yobu Otoko*) for New Year's. That was really a tough shoot for Yujiro—he had to work like crazy learning drumming so he could look convincing with the real drummers in the film. It turned out to be a huge, huge hit—I realized that Yujiro's era had begun.

Did you think he was going to be big from the very beginning?

I didn't know he was going to be that big. He wasn't a pretty boy like Shin Uehara. He was really smart—he'd graduated from Keio University. Also he

was very modern. And he was a good-looking kid, but just a cut or two above the average. He was a new type—a member of the intelligentsia and a man of the people, all mixed together.

How did you happen to make *Hong Kong Nocturne*? It's reminiscent of the *Three Girls* (*Sannin Musume*) series with [actresses] Misora Hibari, Eri Chiemi and Yukimura Izumi.

More than the *Three Girls* films it's a remake of *Tonight We'll Dance* (*Odoritai Yoru*, 1963), a film I did for Shochiku. The three girls in that picture were Yoshie Nieta, Chieko Baisho and Taeko Waniguchi. The story is exactly the same.

The first film I did for Run Run Shaw, the Hong Kong producer, was a spy movie (*Operation Lipstick*)—comic action—something about the Hong Kong government. It was a story of political intrigue, about separatists who wanted independence from England and China . . . Run Run wanted me to do something else right away, but I had a three month visa and thought I could only shoot one film—that's what I thought anyway. (*laughs*)

Hong Kong Nocturne had a lot of good actors in it. Run Run was overjoyed. It became a big hit—a million dollar movie. It really did well in Hong Kong. We screened it for the British governor at a Christmas party. Then Run Run Shaw showed it to the king of Thailand. In Japan they were making period dramas with a musical flavor. You couldn't make modern Western-style musicals then in Japan—nobody was doing that kind of thing, including me. So [Run Run] was surprised to see me do it [in *Hong Kong Nocturne*].

I returned to Hong Kong the next year and saw that the actors I had worked with were still there. So I said I'd make two films in three months. At that time one of those films cost ¥50 million to make. If you spend a year or two making a film, that 50 million is not working for you. But I could make two films in three months and they'd get their money back right away. (*laughs*) They'd get ten times their money back! So Run Run wanted Inoue. I went there every year for six years and made 17 films.

When I did *Hong Kong Nocturne* I wanted to use newcomers in the main roles. Run Run thought that a foreign director would want to use veterans and said casting newcomers was hit and miss. I said that if young people see the film then young people are better in the main roles. It became a big hit. After that, when I couldn't come, he brought in all these other Japanese directors.

What role did [producer] Raymond Chow play in making your films?

Run Run Shaw asked me to come to Hong Kong. He even met me at the airport when I first came over. After that Raymond handled all the negotiations. But Run Run Shaw talked to me about films. He asked me to watch the American film *How to Marry a Millionaire*, about three air stewardesses. He wanted me to remake it. I said there's a problem with the rights. He said, "We don't worry about that in Hong Kong." I said, "You say you don't worry, but I'm in Japan, so there's no way I can just remake it as is." Then he said, "We want you to make it anyway," so I said I would change the stewardesses into dancers and have them go to Taiwan, Japan and Thailand. He said OK—and the film (*The Millionaire Chase*) became a big hit.

How was it making films [in Hong Kong]? Were the shooting schedules about the same as in Japan?

The pace was faster. I had to shoot quickly because I only had three months, so they would give me priority. In Japan I'd have to wait for this or that, but when I went to Hong Kong, I was the first priority. I made the schedule to suit myself. We [Japanese] handled all the post-production—all the editing and music.

Why did you stop going to Hong Kong?

Raymond Chow quit and Mona Fong took over. Mona Fong had been a singer—she had a husky voice and was quite good. Anyway she was tight with money, but she didn't know she was tight. It was terrible. The last time I went they had me stay at a [cheap] hotel . . . I stopped going after that. (*laughs*)

How did you become involved with *The Performers* (*Hana to Namida to Hono*) with Misora Hibari and Shinichi Mori?

The news that I was going to quit Nikkatsu was in the morning papers. That same day I got a call from Hibari's mother: "Please come to the Toei studio in Kyoto and shoot my daughter's next picture." I was really glad to hear that, but I had several films lined up. Ten years passed. Hibari got married and divorced. She performed at Koma Theater (in Shinjuku, Tokyo) twice a year. A lot happened. Anyway, she was celebrating her 25th year in show business. I got a call from her mother just as I was preparing to go to Hong Kong. "Sensei! When can you come? It's been ten years already! My daughter

is going to be an old woman!" I said, "Uh, I'm going to Hong Kong." "Go to Hong Kong later," she said. "Your promise to us comes first." (*laughs*) Well. It couldn't be helped—I made a call [to Hong Kong] and I made Hibari's picture.

How was her performance [in that film]?

She'd gotten a lot better as an actor. She was originally a natural talent—she had been doing this since she was a child. But as she got older her acting became more powerful. She'd fight with Shogo Shimada (a veteran character actor who played her father in the film). "Sensei! That performance of his is crap!" (*laughs*)

By then she was this big diva. What was it like to work with her?

Yes, she was a big star. Just around the time I met Hibari, her younger brother was involved in this pistol incident and was found to be mixed up with the yakuza. She wanted to help him, so she put him in her show. The mass media really made a stink about that, so she had to drop him. So I really wanted to go all out for her.

I got a letter from her mother saying she was so happy [Hibari] could meet me after so many years. [She said it] was wonderful to see me working so diligently on the set.

I wrote a reply saying, "I apologize for making you wait ten years, but I'm glad that we could work together. Hibari is a wonderful performer. She gets up early and, more importantly, her performance is terrific. The mass media has been bashing her, but I am proud to be associated with her and I support her one hundred percent. I'm really rooting for her. You may think that millions of people are against her, but millions are also for her. Please believe that everyone on my staff supports Hibari."

The day after I sent that reply I went to the set and, when I turned on the lights, I saw Hibari and her mother in the shadows. They had been waiting for me in a dark set. They hugged me, saying they were so happy to get that letter. They both kissed me! (*laughs*) Then the president [of the studio] told me "Inoue Sensei! I heard you sent Hibari a love letter. Hibari and her mother read that letter every night over drinks and just cry and cry." (*laughs*)



The Stormy Man

Film descriptions

The Stormy Man (aka The Guy Who Started a Storm) ***(Arashi o Yobu Otoko)***

Japan, 1957, 101 min., DCP, Japanese with English subtitles

The film that made Yujiro Ishihara a star and the Nikkatsu studio solvent, *The Stormy Man* stars Ishihara as Shoichi Kokubu, a young drummer who employs both his hands and his fists in the Ginza jazz world. His younger brother Eiji (Kyoji Aoyama) supports his ambitions and helps find him a manager in Fukushima Miyako (Mie Kitahara), who is as sassy and smart as she is gorgeous. Their mother (Fukuko Sayo), however, is stubbornly opposed to Shoichi's choice of careers—a constant source of pain for him and of annoyance for the audience.

Miyako takes Shoichi into her spacious Western-style house, where he can practice without disturbance. She also begins to take a more than professional interest in him, while maintaining her all-business facade. He feels the same tug—but his first priority is to beat Charley Sakurada (Toshio Oida), the best drummer in the Ginza and an arrogant git with gang connections.

Released in the peak New Year's season, *The Stormy Man* became the third biggest box-office hit of 1957. It also solidified Inoue's reputation as a maker of hit musicals. For its young audience, who clapped and cheered as Ishihara sang "*Ore wa dorama, yakuza na dorama*" ("I'm a drummer, a no-good drummer"), the film was an event, a generational marker, and a much-revived classic. Today it still packs musical excitement—and presents Japan's premier movie star at his most charismatic. Inoue remade the film for Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong as *King Drummer* (1967).

Description adapted from Mark Schilling in *Asia Sings! A Survey of Asian Musical Films*.

The Winner (Shourisha)

Japan, 1957, 98 min., DCP, Japanese with English subtitles

Umetsugu Inoue's first film with Yujiro Ishihara, *The Winner* tells the story of a punk kid (Ishihara) who tries boxing as a lark, gets the tar punched out of him, and starts training for real. His manager is a former contender who sees the punk as way to realize a championship dream that he himself could never fulfill.

Inspired by the 1948 classic *The Red Shoes*, Inoue added a subplot about an up-and-coming ballerina (Mie Kitahara) who falls in love with the boxer. Her graceful solo dance, presented in a thirteen-minute cut, with a young Akira Kobayashi as a transfixed spectator is one of the film's highlights.

Another high point is the climactic fight scene that Inoue filmed with more than two hundred cuts over four days. To save time and money, he shot the entire scene from one side, changing the colors of the two corners to create the illusion that the action was unfolding in 360 degrees. Ishihara's opponent was a former champion boxer, but Ishihara, blessed with athletic ability and quick hands, gave as good as he got.

The Winner lived up to its name at the box office and proved, to Inoue's satisfaction at least, that Ishihara could carry a film. (The studio bosses would need a bit more convincing.) It also established the template—action with musical interludes—for dozens of Nikkatsu films to come.

Description adapted from Mark Schilling in *Asia Sings! A Survey of Asian Musical Films*.

The Eagle and the Hawk (Washi to Taka)

Japan, 1957, 115 min., DCP, Japanese with English subtitles

In Inoue's follow-up to *The Winner*, Yujiro Ishihara plays a seaman who joins the crew of a rusty cargo ship to avenge himself on his father's enemy. Also on board is another new hand with a secret, played by a buff, shirtless Rentaro Mikuni.

Ishihara's bad attitude immediately gets him into trouble with the crew, which he escapes with his fists. He finds an unlikely ally in Mikuni, who has reason to dislike and distrust him. Ishihara also attracts the attention of the two women on board, a sultry stowaway (Yumeji Tsukioka) and the captain's high-spirited daughter (Ruriko Asaoka), who has already been claimed by the short-fused first mate (Hiroyuki Nagato).





The story, which Inoue first scripted when he was still an assistant director, does not play out in obvious ways, just as Ishihara's character is hard to classify. He is neither a heartless toughie nor a pure-minded exemplar, but something new to Japanese films: a dirty hero with his own sense of justice and a way with song.

Inoue shot nearly the entire film aboard a real WWII cargo ship in Tokyo Bay, halting only when a typhoon threatened to send his ship, cast, and crew to the bottom. The real pitching, rolling, and spray of seawater he captured add to the air of danger, excitement, and, in the scenes of a cocky Ishihara singing to a wary-but-fascinated Asaoka, erotic tension.

Description adapted from Mark Schilling in *Asia Sings! A Survey of Asian Musical Films*.

The Green Music Box (Midori Haruka Ni)

Japan, 1955, 90 min., 35mm, Japanese with English subtitles

Restored 35mm Konicolor print from the collection of the National Film Center, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

The first feature-length theatrical film shot in Konicolor, *The Green Music Box* is based on the eponymous novel by Makoto Hojo. A musical action film for children, the movie typifies Umetsugu Inoue's creative use of color. It also marked the debut of fourteen-year-old Ruriko Asaoka, whose character becomes entangled with a spy trying to steal her father's secrets. The cast also includes the talented comedian Frankie Sakai. Asaoka would sustain a career in Nikkatsu action and melodrama pictures through the following decades, while Sakai brought his inimitable sly humor to a number of Yuzo Kawashima's vibrant dark comedies.

Description adapted from Il Cinema Ritrovato.



Hong Kong Nocturne (Xiang jiang hua yue ye)

Hong Kong, 1967, 128 min., Digibeta, Mandarin with English subtitles

Hong Kong's mighty Shaw Brothers studio lent a new sheen to the territory's musicals in the mid-1960s when it brought in director Umetsugu Inoue from Japan. A standout among Inoue's seventeen productions for Shaw is *Hong Kong Nocturne*, a lavish song, dance, and drama confection that reworked his earlier Japanese film *Tonight We'll Dance* against new backdrops.

The Green Music Box
Hong Kong Nocturne

Cheng Pei-pei, Lily Ho, and Chin Ping star as the Chia sisters, the backup troupe for their musician father (Jiang Guang-chao) on Hong Kong's nightclub circuit. When they become fed up with Dad siphoning away their salaries, the girls leave home to pursue ballet, screen stardom, or marriage. The trio eventually overcome personal obstacles, band together, and aim to hit the big time in the televised Hong Kong Music Lovers a-go-go stage show.

Melodrama piles on thick and fast when a show-must-go-on plot takes root, but the Chia sisters and their friends remain happy to step out with spontaneous song. Wild flights of fantasy appear in one sister's dreams, and the girls' partnership with a budding composer (Peter Chen Hou) brings a local theme to their ultimate production, a widescreen musical extravaganza on expansive, Broadway-style sets. Though the lead actresses didn't lend their voices to the movie's soundtrack—a job left to pros like singer Tsin Ting—the three display ample dancefloor talents and remain a joy to follow as they struggle to fulfill their dreams of the spotlight.

Description adapted from Tim Youngs in *Asia Sings! A Survey of Asian Musical Films*.

King Drummer (Qing chun gu wang)

Hong Kong, 1967, 103 min., Digibeta, Mandarin with English subtitles

Riding on the success of *Hong Kong Nocturne*, Umetsugu Inoue created this remake of his most successful Japanese film, *The Stormy Man*. He updated its setting from Japan's flashy 1950s to Hong Kong's swinging '60s, a colorful world of glamorous nightclubs and sequin-clad jazz combos. Its plot concerns the competition between a successful but egotistical drummer and a poor hero from the sticks who threatens to take his place. Regarded as one of Inoue's greatest Hong Kong films, *King Drummer* provides a look at how he adapted his Japanese style to the Shaw Brothers' aesthetic.



King Drummer

The Stormy Man: (c) 1957 Nikkatsu

The Winner: (c) 1957 Nikkatsu

The Eagle and the Hawk: (c) 1957 Nikkatsu

The Green Music Box: (c) 1955 Nikkatsu

Hong Kong Nocturne and *King Drummer:* Courtesy of Celestial Filmed Entertainment

Inoue Portrait: Courtesy of the Inoue & Tsukioka Movie Foundation