Movies not for myths

by Dorothy Lo

In contrast to romantic movies with happy endings, fledgling director Patrick Kong Pak-leung, who is better known as Yip Lim-sum, has made romantic movies with sad endings, because he is a pessimist when it comes to relationships.

Mr Kong's latest release, *L for Love, L for Lies* (2008) is the director's third romantic movie that completes the "Love Trilogy". All the three movies are about the dark side of love and relationships among young couples, and all of them have sad endings.

"I don't think movies always need to give audience imagination and pretty fairy tales. They should know the world is not perfect in all ways, so it is better to show the audience the truth," said Mr Kong.

L for Love, L for Lies highlights the insincerity in relationships and its consequences. Alex Fong Lik-sun, one of the main characters in the film, dies as a result of his dishonesty in relationships. Meanwhile, another protagonist, Stephy Tang Lai-yan, is one of his victims who is deceived repeatedly.

"Nowadays relationships won't be perfect; the audience won't sympathise with those happy and romantic endings. Therefore I opted for a sad ending when I was writing the story," said the 30-year-old director.

"I would like to tell the audience that there are lots of lies in relationships. Starting a relationship is easy, but what matters is how to maintain it well." he said.

Mr Kong featured "timing" as the theme in his latest work. He said timing is the key element in bringing two people together. In the movie, Ar Bo, portrayed by Miss Tang, has broken up with her boyfriend because of the intrusion of a third person. "Timing is crucial to the affinity between two people. Some deviations in timing can easily make couples break up," he said.

His philosophy on relationships, which is the essence of his works, derives mostly from the stories of his friends and his observations on people around him. He described himself as a curious person, who

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is always interested in observing others. "I am not filming my autobiography, but through my own observation, I think trust within couples and the relationship itself can be frail," said Mr Kong.

Mr Kong said he wants to tell the audience about his viewpoint on love. "As a director, the greatest achievement for me is the audience sympathising with my movies," he said.

Mr Kong entered the business as a screenwriter when he was 19. He wrote many popular comedies like *My Lucky Star* (2003) and *Super Model* (2004). He also acted in some of the movies he wrote.

Turned a director in 2004, Mr Kong has been directing romantic movies for the local market, with *My Sweetie* (2004), as his debut.

"I like to watch romantic movies, and my movies should be about something that I feel comfortable with. Therefore, I choose to produce romantic films," he said.

His first title of the "Love Trilogy", *Marriage with a Fool* (2006), was a success, making over HK$7.6 million at the box office. He found that his movies attracted many female viewers. "It may be because the stories include their points of view," Mr Kong said.

The second title of the trilogy, *Love is not All Around* (2007), together with *L for Love, L for Lies*, made over HK$12 million at the box office. These successes mean that he will not change his formula of romance films with unhappy endings.

When asked if his productions are too market-oriented and commercial in nature, Mr Kong said he was indifferent to the comments of the others. Instead, he is more concerned with getting ideas for future works. "My creation won't be affected by others. Although someone discourages me from taking risks, I just stick with my own plan and do what I want to do," he said.

Looking back at his old days, Mr Kong said he would rather be a screenwriter because he could concentrate more on creation. "As a director, you have to deal with a myriad of problems, such as the box office," he said.

Mr Kong's "Love Trilogy", mainly targeted young people, starred the young celebrities Mr Fong and Miss Tang. Mr Kong explained that he would feel good when working with people he had worked with before.

"We have built up a team spirit in these four years. I could see the improvement of everyone of us. Both Alex and Stephy have improved a lot in their acting after four years of cooperation," he said.

Speaking of his leadership style, Mr Kong described himself as a department head who needs to take great responsibility and know how to work with his colleagues. Due to the small production scale in the local movie industry, he said he faced great difficulties dealing with limited time. "The orders I gave needed to be accurate and firm since the time allowed for production is short."