

Malaysian filmmakers doing well Down Under

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(From left) Co-producer Darryl Westrup, director of 'Lurking Woods' Rizal Halim, producer and filmmaker Rodney Manikam, Penang Film Committee member Zairil Khir Johari and Penang Film Committee chairman Cheah Kah Peng post with posters of films by Rodman Pictures at Komtar, Penang. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Hasnoor Hussain, July 30, 2015.

There is a two-year-old film production company in Perth, Western Australia, named Rodman Pictures. With a name like that, very few would expect that the small production company is actually the brainchild of a Penang boy, who had always dreamed of being a movie star.

Rodney Manikam, who comes from a family of musicians, acted part-time for some years, and appeared in the 2005 movie "The Hired Killer" before he moved to Perth nine years ago to be a chef.

His career in the kitchen did not last long as his passion was in film, so he opened his production company and in two-and-a-half years later, he and his team had made three movies and two short films.

"We made 'Wild Justice' in 2013 which was directed by Julian Cheah, another Malaysian. The following year, we filmed 'Infected Paradise', which was also directed by Cheah.

"'Infected Paradise' was nominated at the 26th Annual West Australian Screen Awards for Best Feature Film – Long Form," the 46-year-old, who produces and acts in his own movies, told a press conference yesterday at Komtar, Penang.

Manikam has also tried his hand at directing in two short films – "Sofie" and "Man in the Mirror" – that would be screened at short film festivals this year and next year.

Rodman Pictures' latest movie "Lurking Woods", a suspense thriller, is currently in post-production and expected to be ready for a movie premiere in September or October.

The movie, which its producer is working on getting released all over the world, is directed by Malaysian Rizal Halim, who may well be the first Malay to direct an Australian film.

Rizal, an actor and former stuntman who also appeared in 'The Hired Killer', said he was surprised to be asked to direct the movie by his old friend of 12 years.

"We were initially thinking of an action flick but that would cost a lot of money so we talked and decided on something with a smaller budget. We created 'Lurking Woods', which is a slasher film.

"Desmond Hew, another Malaysian who works in a bank, wrote the script. We went to work and the filming in Western Australia took only nine days," he said.

Rizal, 44, said they were now planning to send the movie, which is about 80 minutes long, to various film festivals.

"We should be ready for the movie premiere in September or October. We hope to have the movie released in cinemas around the world," Manikam said.

Rodman Pictures' films so far had been a collaboration of talents and skills from Malaysia and Western Australia.

After the success of the films and some of its local Australian actors, who had since moved on to develop their acting careers in the United States, Manikam said they were hoping to create successful films in Penang too in the future.

"We want to bring out the talents in Penang as well... We don't have any concrete ideas yet but a production involving two countries cost money and a lot of work.

"We have another movie planned for the year so hopefully we can plan something for next year," he said, adding that they welcome support from interested parties like the state government.

His co-producer, Darryl Westrup, said Penang would be a great place to make a movie due to its colourful people, cultures and locations.

Penang Film Committee chairman Cheah Kah Peng and committee member Zairil Khir Johari said filming could be an alternative industry to boost the state's economy.

They said Penang was becoming a competitive location for filming with its multilingual people and facilities that can support the growth of the industry.

Cheah said the state was continuously chosen as the location for many foreign filmmakers for documentaries, drama series, movies and others.

"Penang gets roughly RM100 million a year when filmmakers come to shoot here.

"They spend on hotels, transport and various other expenses. We have the potential because we are also cheaper than other places," he said.

Cheah said Penang could also attract its own talented filmmakers to come home.

"Penang has grown its own talents. We have many Penangites doing well in the industry and even winning awards for the productions abroad," he said. – July 30, 2015.

- See more at: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/citynews/georgetown/article/malaysian-filmmakers-doing-well-down-under/malaysian-filmmakers-doing-well-down-under#sthash.DR8nQwi8.dpuf>