



## KUEI Chih-hung 桂治洪 (1937.12.20–1999.10.1)

### Director

Born in Guangzhou, Kuei furthered his studies in theatre directing at the National Taiwan Academy of Arts and started making films in his spare time, upon the completion of his secondary education in Hong Kong. He directed a few Taiwanese-dialect titles such as *The Weird Gentleman* (co-directed, 1963) and worked as the assistant director to Peter Pan Lei in Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Ltd's *Lover's Rock* (1964) and *Song of Orchid Island* (1965). When Ho Moon-hwa started shooting *The Monkey Goes West* (1966), he invited Kuei to return to Hong Kong to join Shaws. In 1965, Kuei was sent to Shochiku Ofuna Studio in Japan for training. He returned to Hong Kong a year later and became the assistant to Japanese directors Inoue Umetsugu, Shima Koji (Shi Mashan) and Nakahira Ko (Yang Shuxi).

In 1970, Kuei assisted Shima in shooting *Love Song of the South Sea*, in which Peter Chen Ho was cast as the lead. Chen was terribly ill at the time and thus led to the delay of production. After Shima returned to Japan, Kuei took over the project as director and cast Chin Feng as the lead. The film, which was renamed *Love Song over the Sea* (co-directed with Shi Mashan, 1970) after its completion, was Kuei's first feature for Shaws. He later directed *A Time for Love* (1970) and several other titles, but did not gain much attention until *The Delinquent* (1973). While the film was co-directed by Chang Cheh, Kuei was actually the executive director. It contains a number of sequences filmed on location with agile and exaggerated camera movements, showcasing Kuei's fiery temperament and discontent with reality.

All of Kuei's subsequent works revealed his bold and creative spirit: *The Killer Snakes* (1974) was explicit in its depiction of sex, with some sensational and gimmicky sequences; *The Tea House* (1974) and *Big Brother Cheng* (1975), both adaptations of Chiang Chi-nan's novels, tell the story of a teahouse owner who confronts gangsters with customary practices from the triad. The two films were also regarded as major works for Hong Kong gangster cinema in the 1970s. As for the episode *The Deaf Mute Killer* in *Homicides – The Criminals, Part Two* (1976), Kuei boldly made use of black and white widescreen images and locational shots that were rarely seen in Shaws' productions, to recreate the rural atmosphere of the New Territories in the 1950s and 60s. His one and only period *wuxia* film, *Killer Constable* (1980), was also a critically acclaimed masterpiece. Kuei shot his first contemporary thriller *Ghost Eyes* for Shaws in 1974. He continued to make films of the horror genre, including the satirical *Hex* trilogy (1980-82) which featured a large amount of special effects and criticised the society and the upper classes; *Bewitched* (1981), a film about black magic and *The Boxer's Omen* (1983) that was filled with scenes of exorcism. Kuei stayed with Shaws for over two decades and made more than 40 films. He once filmed *The Gold Connection* (1979) for another company, under the pseudonym Siu Kwai. He migrated to the US and ran a pizza shop after leaving Shaws. Kuei died of liver cancer on 1 October 1999.

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