



Runme SHAW 邵仁枚 (1901–1985.3.2)

Producer, Executive Producer

A native of Zhenhai, Ningbo, Zhejiang, Shaw was the third son of the eight Shaw siblings. Like his brothers, he adopted the alias, Shao Shanke when he grew older. But he changed back to using his original name after going to Singapore to develop his family business. Shaw divorced in 1938 and remarried in 1940. He had two sons with his second wife. Shaw was responsible for distribution when Unique Film Productions established in Shanghai in 1925. In 1926, bringing with him Unique's first film, *Repentance* (1925), he arrived in Singapore, only to find that cinemas there screened mainly western films. Later, due to the boycott by an alliance of six Shanghai film companies (known as 'the Liuhe Encirclement') and the fact that Singapore's film distributors and major cinemas had signed contracts with Star Motion Pictures, which precluded them from screening Unique's films, he turned to small theatres and small towns that lacked the means to show western films and persuaded them to screen Unique's productions. After the success of *Repentance*, Run Run Shaw, who was in Shanghai at the time, was called over to help. The two brothers later decided to distribute the films themselves. Using a van equipped with a projector and a screen, they toured around small towns and villages in Singapore and held outdoor screenings. The mobile cinema later travelled around Malaya, to places such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Malacca and Penang, bringing Unique's films to new markets. Period films were the most popular among all Unique's productions.

Later with the support of Wang Jingcheng, the then richest tycoon in Penang, the Shaw brothers started their amusement park business. In 1928, they opened a chain of Shaw cinemas and a distribution network in Southeast Asia in alliance with cinemas in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Malacca. Shaw had built up a good social network, which helped him to develop his business. He became friends with Huang Yubin, one of the former owners of Star, and together they set up a distribution network in Southeast Asia to counter the Liuhe Encirclement. He also made acquaintance with the wealthy Singapore merchants, the Ong Boon-tat and Ong Bon-hock brothers, acquiring the operating rights of the New World Amusement Park. In 1930, Runme Shaw and Run Run Shaw set up the Shaw Brothers Ltd and took over the Great World Amusement Park and a number of cinemas. By 1937, Shaw Brothers had over 50 theatres, making it a major player in the Southeast Asian entertainment industry.

After the region fell into Japanese occupation, Shaw was forced to work for the Japanese troops as a coolie in Singapore for three years. After the war, he re-organised Shaw Brothers in no time and acquired a number of cinemas to distribute and exhibit Shaw & Sons Ltd's productions in Southeast Asia. The company's business bloomed again and had broken new grounds. Runme Shaw and Run Run Shaw had worked together for 30 years until 1957, when the two brothers went in separate ways. Run Run Shaw came to Hong Kong to take charge of the production business while Runme Shaw stayed in the Southeast Asia to look after film distribution. In 1983, he had a stroke and was in deep coma. Shaw passed away in Singapore on 2 March 1985.
