

PRODUCING FOR A SHORT FILM: SHORT FILM ABROAD AS A STUDY CASE

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Abstract: ABROAD is a short film, which tells a story of an Indonesian student, Priyo (23) who lived in Brisbane. He had to live in his yellow car, after finding out that his scholarship had been corrupted. Priyo began his new journey when he met Pamela (17), a runaway musician who was stuck in Brisbane for a night during her trip to Sydney. Their friendship grows stronger when they played music and performed together at Brisbane streets. Unfortunately, Priyo's car was vandalized due to his religion. Later on, their friendship was tested as they explore the city for the first time. The film explores the journey to find the meanings of passion, dream, and faith. Depicted by the main character who is an Indonesian student, the film attempts to share the experience of students who chose to travel outside their home country, in search of better education for better life. Although most part of the story is fiction, the main character (Priyo) is inspired by the real life experience of an Indonesia student in Canberra. He lived in his car for two year while trying to complete his master degree. Dramas that were presented in the storyline were based on the writer's observation toward his surroundings, friends, and communities. Living and studying in another country could bring great experiences to international students, but at the same time, living through differences in values and beliefs could be a challenging task. The meaning of 'abroad' is not just about people who live outside their home country. But, it could also depict people's experience when they try to get out of their comfort zone in order to achieve a higher goal in their life. Based on these reasons, the main targeted audiences of the film are people from the age of 25 and above. Additionally, the film also attempts to target local audiences, especially parents, as a bridge between parents and children. Hopefully it could prevent the rising number of runaway's children. The outline of the production begins with the script development, which will be completed by the end of November. As soon as the final script is done, the production will proceed with the pre-production from December until early January. This process includes assembling the crew, finding cast, art design, and composing music. The crew will consist of GFS students for the production crew and some Indonesian students who voluntarily want to help in funding and marketing. The production will start around late January or early February,

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and the post-production will begin in March. There are some challenges in this project. Firstly, the project has to combine two different cultures between Indonesia and Australia through out the process. However, having an Australian as the director and an Indonesian as the producer can solve these. The other problem is related to the sensitive issue around religion, especially Islam. Recently, the religion feels being judged in Australia because of the action of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) and ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and Levant). There will be three problems that are going to be discussed in order to resolve the challenges of the project.

Keywords: short film, film production, Abroad

Indonesia-Australia Culture Collaboration

In the beginning of script development, the writer did not feel this cultural collaboration would be a problem. On the contract, the writer expected that the cultural collaboration could enhance the richness of the story. The production is planning to involve an Australian director and an Indonesian producer. However, the production is not absolutely sure whether Australian audience would accept collaboration film. The main audiences that the production has been aiming are both Indonesian and Australian citizen.

In their article, Henderson and Jetnikoff stated that there an indie film had previously been through the same idea. The film was titled *Bondi Tsunami* (2004), and directed by an Australian Rachel Lucas. The production combines two different cultures between the Japanese pop culture and Australian surfing culture. When it was released in cinemas, the movie gained positive critics because of the interesting blend



Figure 1. Bondi Tsunami

of cinematic styles that were shown on the screen.

“The mise en scene incorporates iconic aspects of both Japanese culture and kitsch alongside Australian clichés and stereotypes, tourist and landmarks.”

Most of the reviews were made beyond the traditional film review, which is more receptive toward the mixture of cultures rather than the selling point. It was being used as a study case in schools as well to become a media for Asian and Australia discussion. These mean that there were some short films, which were made by the collaboration between Australia, and Asian’s countries are wel-

comed in Australian audiences.

However, there is not any finding of Australian and Indonesian co-production. There were some Australian films with Indonesian elements such as *Indonesia Calling* (2009), but there is not any films that were made between the two neighbors. Hopefully the production, *ABROAD*, can follows the successful steps of *Bondi Tsunami* and strengthen the relationship between cinemas through co-production.

Religion Issues

Since some of the scenes were inspired by true events, the purpose of the project is not to blame who made the event happen. The film is not only telling about the recent reality, but also the resolution that need to be done to solve the problem. Being a country, which has 5 different religions (Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhism and Hinduism), Indonesia had used films as a media for discussion between religion and also between the civilians to the government. Films like *Cin(T) a* (2009) and *Tanda Tanya* (Question Mark, 2011) were made when there were some conflicts between beliefs.

In the opposite with Australia, which is the majority is Christians. Films with religion theme as the background were made around Christian's problem like LGBT and anti-mainstream Christian's practices. Some of the films, like *The Trouble with St.Mary's* (2011), were made into documentary instead of as a feature film.

In his article, Fitzgerald mentioned that films with religion spectacle were already well known and commercially success from the familiar story of *The Ten Commandments* (1923) and *The Jazz*



Figure 2. *Cin(T)a*



Figure 3. *Tanda Tanya*

Singer (1927). In Australia, there were quite a huge number of religion themes, which are made into animation, films, TV series and documentaries. Despite the majority were Christians, there were 5 films represented Islam in Australia: *Golden Cage* (1975), *My Journey, My Is-*



Figure 4. *The Trouble with St. Mary*

lam (1998), *Afghan Alphabet* (2001), *Serenade* (2001) and *Zo'har* (2002). They were made into 2 feature films and 3 documentaries.

From the research, we could see that religion themes have their own audiences in Australia. Although there is not much, the markets for religion films will always growing in Australia. It is because the county is still developing towards a nation with multicultural background, not only cultures but also beliefs.

Finding Style for Night Scene

The main problem of the film is the scenes mostly going to be shoot at night-time. The story happens only in one night, from morning until the next morning. An Indonesian film, *Lovely Man* (2011) inspired the storyline, which happens in one night. However the main attention that the production needs to work for is the style for night scenes. Charlie's scene in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012), when he passed through the tunnel, is one of the inspiration of *ABROAD* will look like. However the production still looking for the right style that combines the cinematic way of Australia and Indonesia.

The film is constructed with three events, which are the scholarship student's problems, the fear from ISIS, and the forbidden love between the main characters. Although it seems like a melodramatic story, there are some heart-warming scenes, for example when the characters sing together, that need to be treated differently with the other scenes. There were some several films from both countries that have different cinematic styles of night scenes and the production tries to married those styles. From Indonesia, there were inspiring films like *9 Summers, 10 Autumns* (2013); *Lovely Man* (2011); and *Selamat Pagi, Malam* (*The Absence of the Sun*, 2014). From Australia, there were films like *Samson & Delilah* (2009), *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), *One Night The Moon* (2001), and *He Died with a Felafel*

in *His Hands* (2001). Those films have their own strength, weaknesses, and differences between the two styles.

Indonesia's cinematic style mostly depends on the environmental lights which make them look naturalistic, while Australia's cinematic styles are created with more addition of studio lights. However, Australian films have wider approaches than Indonesia which usually rely on medium shots and close ups. The different approaches are based on genre which mostly Indonesian stories are drama which tight shots reveal the emotional journey of the character. In the opposite, Australian wider shots are more revealing the situation of the scenes.



Figure 5. 9 Summers 10 Autumns



Figure 6. Lovely Man

Since the project is a drama, following the main character emotional journey and showing the wonderful city of Brisbane, the production team might combine the tight shots on some emo-

tional scenes and wider shots for revealing the situations. That would be the best plan to marry the two different cinematic natures.

From these findings, they are shown that ABROAD would be accepted in the market of Australia. The production is planning to do the production when the issue is still rising in the society. It is a



Figure 7. Selamat Pagi Malam



Figure 8. He Died with a Falafel in His Hand

story of a human being trying to survive through the dynamic and diversity of the real world. Nowadays, the world has been watching films that brought up so many questions about the problems and how do humans live their life. However, there are not many films can provide the answer. In the development process, the film will try to take the audiences through the main problem and how do they solve in a simple way with metaphorical actions and the power of the camera shots.

The main market of the film is for the Indonesian citizen, to know the live of living outside the country, and the Australian citizen, to inform them by not judging some societies because of a problem they do not commit. However the film will also be planned to enter several film festivals to distribute the story even wider.

The production will be scheduled to finishing the script in the end of November. The film is going to be shot in the early of the year between January and February. Between the gaps, the producer and director will try to organize for looking the crew and cast. There are some actor agents in Brisbane for the Australian character, but there isn't any experience Indonesian actor in Brisbane. So the producer might need help from the Indonesian Student Association in Australia for helping to cast the right person for the role. The production also needs to find a great composer of the film because it is one of the most important elements of the story.

In summary, ABROAD has a potential to become an interesting film that can be watched not only by local audiences but also international audiences. The film would become an example of good collaboration between two different cultures, presenting an honest story of being a human in this diverse world. However the story hold a big responsibility because it is showing a recently sensitive issue. Hopefully the audiences can understand and related with the message of the film. Living outside our comfort zone is never easy but if people believe on their dream for someone/something they love, they will find the strength within. God never pushes His children further that they can take.

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