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# PEARL 珍珠

*a BRYAN CHRISTOPHER TAN film  
inspired by the music of COLDPLAY*

陈彦光 作品

受 酷玩乐队 音乐启发

*on YouTube  
February 18*

*在 YouTube 上  
2月18日*

*M.S. கார்த்திக்*

*கார்மென் வூ*

*M. S. KARTHIK*

*CARMEN WOO*

# முத்து MUTIARA

*sebuah filem BRYAN CHRISTOPHER TAN  
diinspirasi oleh muzik COLDPLAY*

*பிரையன் கிறிஸ்டோபர் டானின்  
ஒரு திரைப்படம்  
கோல்ட் ப்ளே இசைக்குழு  
இசையால் ஈர்க்கப்பட்டவை*

*YouTube இல்  
பிப்ரவரி 18*

*di YouTube  
18 Februari*

## Synopsis

Inspired by the music of Coldplay, PEARL 珍珠 முத்து MUTIARA is a short film directed by Bryan Christopher Tan and captures an experience between two childhood friends. One has lived in Penang, Malaysia all his life, while the other studied abroad in the USA. Over a video call on their phones, they share a conversation of a lifetime: a timeless bridge connecting their lives to each other's.

## Objectives

- Reflect on issues and challenges that young people face as they mature into adulthood, such as complex relationships and societal pressures, in a non-judgmental manner.
- Represent independent filmmaking as a means of artistic expression as well as an art form with significant cultural value.
- Make cinematic stories accessible to Malaysians of all backgrounds through the use of Subtitles for the Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) translated into 4 languages: English, Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay.

## Cast and Crew

- **Bryan Christopher Tan — director, writer, producer, editor**

Before attending university, Bryan was a national figure skater for Malaysia while living and training in Shenzhen, China. Throughout his adolescence, his enthusiasm for sport as well as the arts led him to explore avenues for self-expression such as football, theatre, and dance. At the University of Edinburgh, Bryan discovered his affinity for cinema and experimented with making creative videos combining the fields of writing, photography, and music.

After graduating with an undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature, he is now an ice-skating coach in Johor, and is preparing to go to France to begin his Master's studies in sociology.

- **Karthik Mohan – lead actor**

Karthik began working as a host for various TV programs after graduating in 2017 from Help University as a Mass Communication (Media Studies) major.

In 2018, he acted in the telemovie “Rail Payanangal” for Astro Vaanavil (CH 201), which was also released on Astro Go, Malaysia Airlines, and AirAsia. He has also done music videos and theatrical movies (Saalai Oram, 0013, Aalamaram, Nambikei and Kathai) for well-known production studios, Story Films Sdn Bhd and One Merge Sdn Bhd.

Last year, he started up his own production house called iBEYOND and has created content for Astro and RTM.

- **Carmen Woo – lead actor**

After majoring in Dance and Vocal Performance at Columbia College Chicago in 2014, Carmen pursued her passion for acting and undertook classes organised by East West Players, an Asian American theatre organization in Los Angeles.

At What About Kuching 2018 festival, she was part of “The Food Play”, a dining event which combined theatre and storytelling into one. The following year, she acted in “Gostan”, a short film showcased at Cannes Short Film Corner. She also did commercial work for Volkswagen and Boat Noodle. Carmen is currently producing and acting in a mini-series on YouTube about e-hailing experiences in Malaysia.

## Director FAQs

### 1. What made you pursue film making?

Being able to access an incredible variety of films — blockbusters, arthouse, studio, independent — during my studies in Scotland opened my eyes to what was possible in terms of cinematic experiences. When I wasn't studying, my countless trips to the cinema made it become something more; it became a spiritual endeavour for my soul.

### 2. How did you come up with the idea for your film, PEARL 珍珠

#### 珠 முத்து MUTIARA ?

On 14 November 2018, I was in Zurich, Switzerland during my post-graduation solo trip across Europe and Egypt. I went to the cinema to catch the one-night release of the Coldplay documentary, A Head Full of Dreams. There's a scene in the film where Chris Martin, the lead singer, is shown talking to the camera in 1998 as a fresh-faced and unknown 20-something. He tells us not to worry, that despite his band's tiny and forgettable set at a music festival, Coldplay will be the biggest band in the world in four years. Smash cut to four years later, strobe lights hit the stage and Coldplay is headlining the Glastonbury Festival with their heart-stopping song "Politik". It was an electrifying experience for me as an audience member, because I never knew Coldplay made hard-hitting rock songs, and from then on I immersed myself in every single piece of music they have ever produced. That experience in the cinema was the key inspiration.



### **3. How long did this project take you to complete and how much did it cost?**

From concept to screen, a little over 2 years. We had two and a half days of production in Penang in addition to a night of Zoom meetings for the other lead actor. In total, I spent around RM 2000 on this film, with generous support from my family.

### **4. Can you tell us about a funny anecdote during production?**

Because I don't drive often, I'm not a very good driver. But to get from one place to the other in Penang, it was essential. I drove a rental car around and at one point, had to parallel park on the side of the curb. My lead actor was in the passenger's seat next to me and tried unsuccessfully to guide me. After a few stops-and-starts, I decided that time was of the essence and parked the car at a 45-degree angle. We got out of the car and went on with our day.

### **5. If you were to shoot the film again, what would you do differently?**

I probably would have gotten somebody to help or teach me how to properly record sound. Audio was a headache to edit around in post-production.

## **6. How do you think your upbringing has influenced this short film?**

Spending only 7 years of my childhood in my hometown of Penang before moving to Kuala Lumpur definitely left me with a rose-coloured idea of what my hometown was in reality. Returning home and living in Penang after 16 years away brought back some fond memories, but I now had plenty of other places to compare it to due to my travels around the world. Finding a reason to love Penang became difficult, and I had to search for reasons beyond just my own faded memories. Making this short film, hence, is a way of etching my hometown permanently onto my legacy, so that it will always be a part of me, no matter where I go, no matter what memories I lose.

## **7. What was the hardest artistic choice you made in the making of this film, at any stage in production?**

It was to make this short film regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic. I think many artists feel broken whenever they have to compromise their vision in some way, and for me it was the same. The short film changed as the pandemic situation changed, and it's analogous to having to relocate to find work; we don't like it doing it, but we know it will serve us well in the long run. Any creative project is all about figuring out creative story-related solutions to real-life circumstances. It's something I'm beginning to get used to.

## **8. What other directors, films or TV programs influenced this film?**

The director Barry Jenkins is the reason I pursued filmmaking. His films strike me as overflowing with a love for humanity, irrespective of our flaws, and his ability to convey that through film is something I aim to emulate and incorporate into my work.

In terms of this film specifically, inspirations ranged from films like *Before Sunrise*, *Call Me by Your Name*, *Phantom Thread*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and *The Dark Knight* to a video game like *The Last of Us*. But in the final stages, because of our inability to get both actors in the same place due to COVID restrictions, the film *Her* by Spike Jonze became the guiding light to the finish line. In *Her*, only one actor is onscreen for the majority of the film, and that showed me it was possible to make a film interesting without two people in the same place physically.

## **9. How different were what you originally envisioned the film being like and how it eventually turned out?**

The first draft and the final draft of the script are two completely different films. This being my first short film where I've had to direct actors, I began writing the screenplay with preconceived notions of what a feature film is supposed to be and naively thought I could take the elements of a feature film and transplant them directly into a short film. I soon realised that a short film and a feature film are almost two different mediums: one is coffee, and one is tea. You should not try to mix both. The original vision could have made for a great feature film, but with a one-person crew and no budget? Impractical.

## **10. Do you have any advice for young filmmakers like yourself?**

Dig deep. If it's worthwhile to you, it's worthwhile to somebody else. Just do it.

## **Contact Information**

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