

# the scum of cinema

What happens when you throw together three “men-children” with very different tastes in B-grade films? Well, you get a passionate collective that wants to share with you the most bizarre and unusual films the reel world has to offer. Herman Ho, Aaron Corbett and the very illusive and mysterious Masked Mentor are the operatives running the Society of Cult and Underground Movies (SCUM). Born out of the boredom of regular films and a huge collection of ludicrous DVDs, SCUM Cinema wants to introduce Singaporeans to a parallel universe of movies that don't follow conventional structures, plots or imagery. They want to arouse your interest by offering reviews and news on cult films of the past, present and future. Get this – they even screen these films bi-monthly for free! Don't we all just love that word? You literally have nothing to lose. All you need to do is to attend these screenings with an open mind and decide for yourself if you like them or not. Why not download or stream them instead, you ask? Simple – it's not the same watching movies on your 15-inch laptop with built-in speakers compared to a big screen with a surround sound system. They're not in it to make a quick buck or become famous, obviously, and neither are they elitist. They're happy to take in suggestions and comments from you to generate discussion and hopefully create a community of eclectic filmgoers. Herman and Aaron bring us into their world of motion pictures and joke about playing a part in a film that involves 120 days of physical, mental and sexual torture. Hmm... By [Adam Kerr](#)



## IS THERE A DOUBLE MEANING TO THE ABBREVIATION OF YOUR COLLECTIVE?

**Herman:** Hahaha. When we first started, we focused a lot on alternative B-grade movies. So the word “SCUM” is, in a way, related to these B-grade movies. But we wanted it to have a bigger meaning. That's how it became the abbreviation for the Society of Cult and Underground Movies.

## WHAT DO YOU GUYS DO FOR DAY JOBS?

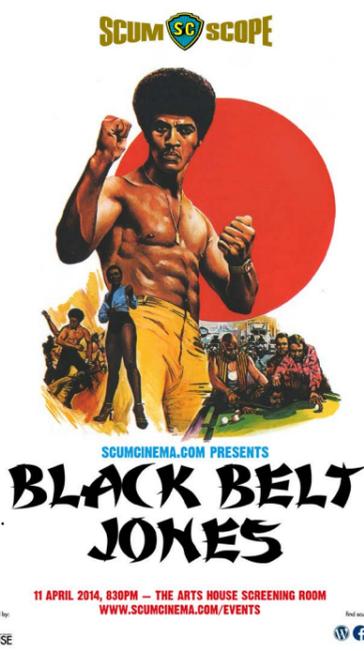
**H:** I'm running my own creative agency, so I do design, advertising and branding.  
**Aaron:** I'm in the communications line, but I'm in between jobs at the moment. Definitely enjoying life as long as I can now.

## HOW DID SCUM CINEMA COME ABOUT?

**H:** It started in 2007. Our third partner, The Masked Mentor, had this idea of screening movies to share his bizarre collection of DVDs. It went on for a while but we realised that it wasn't the right way to do it; we had to clear the rights and licensing. He stopped for a while because at that time, it was a one-man show. And then last year, I said to him, “Why don't we revive SCUM? And this time round, we'll add in a website and a blog to write movie reviews.” So he said okay. And now there are three of us – we share the same love for these kinds of movies.

**A:** Having said that, our tastes are not quite the same. The Masked Mentor is more into B-Grade movies. Herman's more into Japanese and action films...

**H:** ...the more extreme films. Aaron's more into the arthouse films, the European stuff. That's why our reviews are very diverse.



## WHAT WAS THE VERY FIRST CULT FILM YOU WATCHED?

**H:** I think it was “A Clockwork Orange” and “Akira”. I'm not sure if you'll consider “Akira” a cult movie. But at that time, “Akira” was so hard to find. A friend's friend came back from UK with a recorded-on-VHS version. That was the first time I watched something that's a non-cinema release, non-mainstream and non-Hollywood. I was very young then.  
**A:** Back in primary school, I used to hang out at his place on Saturdays and rent movies from a video store down the road. They had stuff like “Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!”  
**H:** Maybe that was our first film.

## WHAT MADE YOU GUYS PICK UP THAT FILM?

**A:** The cover looked interesting. Also, we were reading this magazine called Fangoria at that time. It's something that all three of us read.  
**H:** Fangoria is a magazine that specialises in horror and special effects. I think I picked it up when I was at the airport going to Indonesia.

## BESIDES FILM, WHAT ELSE DO YOU GUYS LOVE?

**H:** Music! But even for that, we're exploring the lesser known stuff. Comics too. I mean, after Spiderman, Superman, Captain America... what's next? We started exploring the lesser popular titles.  
**A:** All three of us were comic collectors.  
**H:** Comic collectors, toy collectors, music, movies... it's the same kind of interest.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE AIMS AND GOALS YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH SCUM CINEMA?

**A:** We wanted to start off the website to share movies we're interested in with the general public through reviews and features. But more importantly, we wanted to continue conducting more screenings. And that's what we've been doing over the past few months.  
**H:** There wasn't a big master plan; we didn't do this to rule the world. It all started with our passion and finding a way to share it with others. Hopefully we can make contact with like-minded film buffs and create a sub-community. We'll see what happens from there. We wanted to screen movies that are more alternative, offbeat and weird while still keeping the fun element.

## THE SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS IN DECEMBER FOR ITS 25TH EDITION. WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING FROM THIS YEAR'S LINE-UP?

**H:** I think the main guy that's running it is pretty good. He knows his foreign films. Hopefully at least 10 to 15 percent of the selection are not serious arthouse films. Please bring back that crazy, whacky kind of bizarre stuff just to add some flavour and variation to the whole festival. We don't want to see 50 movies that are so serious to the point you feel like killing yourself every time you step out of a cinema. That's not a film festival anymore.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES YOU'VE FACED WITH SCUM CINEMA?

**A:** So far, probably resource, because all of us work full-time. Finding time to run the website as well as organise the screenings is quite challenging. Oh yes, funding too.  
**H:** We're 100 percent independent; we're all doing this out of our own pocket money. So the finances is always something we need to manage. Paying for all the movies, rights and venues is not exactly very cheap. We're in the process of looking for sponsors as well. Once we have a funding boost, we can find and secure films directly from the directors themselves instead of waiting for the DVD to be able to screen it. But that costs a lot of money you see, and of course we'll need a bigger venue for something like that.  
**A:** We're quite happy with the arrangement with Arts House; they have been very helpful as well. So we'll probably stay there for the next year or so.

## WHAT DO YOU GUYS CONSIDER A CULT FILM?

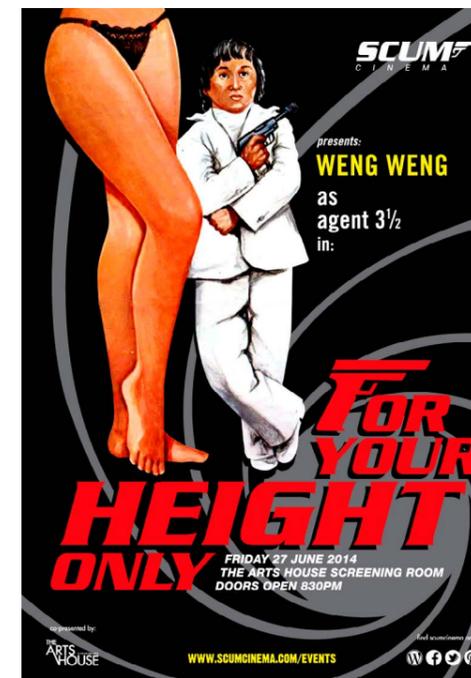
**H:** A cult film should deal with very controversial issues. And of course visually, it has to be unique; whether it's like that Salvador Dalí's “Un Chien Andalou” where he cuts the eye or like something that makes you react – turning away or feeling disgusted or excited – when you watch it on screen. It needs to have that element of danger and risky kinds of visuals. Better still, if the film got banned before. Haha.  
**A:** But generally cult movies are already branded by certain media outlets as being “cult”. Sometimes I don't know why certain films are branded that way. We try not to follow that kind of labelling.

## HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT FILMS TO SCREEN, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU GUYS WATCH VERY DIFFERENT KINDS OF CULT FILMS?

**H:** We will shortlist what we like first, and then from there we will debate among ourselves if it's worthwhile to screen them. Then we have to check if we can acquire the licenses to screen them. We can shortlist like 20 to 30 films but end up with only eight to screen. It's a very long and uninteresting process, unfortunately.  
**A:** And besides the licensing process, we also need to submit the films for classification/ratings, which is tedious.  
**H:** We have to wait three to five months for the ratings to be confirmed. That's why we have to plan very, very early.

## WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE DIRECTORS?

**A:** I like Sion Sono, a Japanese director, because his movies are warped. It drags you in. And... I don't know how to describe it. It's twisted. For example, this movie called “Love Exposure” is four hours long. But when you watch the whole thing, it doesn't feel like four hours; and not many directors can do that.  
**H:** For me it's the Chilean director, Alejandro Jodorowsky. He's the one who did “El Topo” and “The Holy Mountain”. He's not just a film director; he's basically an artist who's done a lot of comics. You should read his comics – it's very weird. He conveys his stories through a series of imagery and it's all very strange. He was supposed to do the movie “Dune”. He gathered all the film actors, the artists, and even did a full storyboard! But he didn't go into production at the end because he couldn't find the money. In fact, it was Hollywood that refused to give him the final few million dollars. They had to give it to David Lynch in the end.



## HOW IS IT DIFFERENT BACK IN 2007 AND NOW?

**H:** One of the most obvious differences is that we're actually communicating a lot more with the older generation, thanks to the Internet. Back in 2007, the audience was pretty much in the same age group because of word-of-mouth. Now we get senior citizens coming who actually know more about the kung fu movies than we do. They can even tell us about the history of the actors and directors! It's great that we make contact with these people because suddenly we're talking to a much bigger audience. But whether they can appreciate our subsequent screenings is a whole different thing altogether.  
**A:** It gives us an opportunity to build a community.

## IF YOU WERE TO MAKE YOUR OWN CULT FILM, WHAT WOULD IT BE ABOUT?

**A:** Something that doesn't require a big budget and is personal.  
**H:** I've been thinking of doing documentaries. I don't know why, maybe it's the age thing... I just want to document certain real life situations. If I can do a documentary like “The Act of Killing”, that would be awesome.

## WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE THIS YEAR FOR SCUM CINEMA?

**A:** Screenings and getting sponsors just to sustain for the moment.  
**H:** It'd be nice if SCUM Cinema had their own film festival to supplement the various other festivals here in Singapore. We'd screen more of the bizarre, weird, cult, B-grade films to give variety in Singapore.

## IF YOU COULD BE PART OF A CULT FILM, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

**H:** I would be in “Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom”. There are many weird scenes in there, so I don't mind being one of those that is being abused... Hahaha. Or maybe play a small role just to see how the production is being made. But it's quite sick really.  
**A:** It's actually a commentary on fascism in Italy during the World War. There are many different levels of meaning.  
**H:** I also wouldn't mind being in “Caligula”. It's about a mad emperor in the olden times. There's really something wrong with him. There's lots of naked scenes, orgies... and we don't mind being in it, hahaha.  
**A:** I would like to be an extra in that as well because the set was very elaborate and they got actual porn actors to take part in this, just to make it look and feel real. I thought it was quite interesting.

Visit [scumcinema.com](#) for a full list of recommended movies and screening dates.