

# New director for Thaddeus film

Money No Enough director Tay Teck Lock replaces late film-maker Yasmin Ahmad in movie about the teen triathlete

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**T**he director of Money No Enough, the highest grossing Singapore-made movie to date, is ready for his follow-up, more than 10 years after the release of the hit movie.

Tay Teck Lock's money woes comedy starring comedians Jack Neo and Mark Lee grossed \$5.8 million in 1998.

His new project is something altogether different: Go, Thaddeus! is not a commercial, surefire hit but an uplifting drama, based on the real-life story of 17-year-old Singaporean triathlete Thaddeus Cheong, who died in 2007 after finishing a South-east Asian (SEA) Games selection race.

While some might focus on the fact that this is Tay's comeback film, the 45-year-old film-maker says: "I hope the attention will be on the movie itself."

"I hope that this movie can bring across a message about healing and relationships and how we accept, forgive and move on."

Cheong was a first-year Raffles Junior College student who had been tipped by local coaches to be Singapore's top triathlete.

The film would likely touch on his life as well as how he inspired the people around him, even after his death, and the healing process his family went through.

There could also be a link made to the Youth Olympic Games to be held in Singapore this year.

The main reason Tay did not make another film for such a long time after Money No Enough? Well, it seems like it was a case of "time no enough".

He found it tough to juggle the running of his father's transportation business with a hectic shooting schedule.

He even said no when Neo, who scripted and starred in Money No Enough, approached him to direct the sequel.

The lack of time also made him initial-



From a money woes comedy to an uplifting drama, director Tay Teck Lock's (above) new project is a film about triathlete Thaddeus Cheong (left) who died in 2007 after finishing a race. PHOTOS: ST FILE, COURTESY OF THE CHEONG FAMILY

ly reluctant to helm Go, Thaddeus!

Of his change of mind, he says: "It's destined to be me. I can feel Belinda's passion and commitment to the project and I'm in now."

Mrs Belinda Wee, 45, is the aunt of Thaddeus and author of his biography, Running The Full Distance: Thaddeus Cheong.

Malaysian film-maker Yasmin Ahmad was slated to helm the film but, during pre-production, she suffered a stroke and later died of brain haemorrhage on July 25 last year at the age of 51.

Tay says of her: "She's a very open-minded and sincere person and if she were around, she would definitely be the right person to direct it."

He is going to bring his own vision to the film, however.

"I will not try to guess what she would

have done with the film because that is not fair to her. I must have my own feel for the material."

Producer Caroline Kwauk says there had to be a complete rethink of the project after Yasmin died.

"We had to start from scratch and decide whether we could continue and whether we could find the right director and even what language the film should be in. We sought a lot of opinions from people in the industry within and outside of Singapore."

The 46-year-old is also the executive director for home-grown production company Ascension Pictures, one of the co-investors in Go, Thaddeus!.

Tay, who is married with an 18-year-old daughter, was first brought on to help with a first draft of the script after Yasmin's death and was eventually asked to direct the film as Ms Kwauk says "his analysis was impressive and touching".

**'His analysis was impressive and touching'**  
Film producer Caroline Kwauk on why Tay was eventually asked to direct the film after being roped in to help with scripting

Details of the appointment are currently being worked out.

Things seem to be falling in place for the project.

Mrs Wee posted on the movie's blog on Jan 5 that the Media Development Authority (MDA) has confirmed

that it would fund 50 per cent of the film, whose budget has not yet been drawn up.

When contacted by Life!, she clarified that MDA's interest depended on the

producers coming up with a proposed budget and production, distribution and marketing plan.

This was corroborated by Mr Kenneth Tan, MDA's director of film, animation and publishing.

He says: "Ascension Pictures approached MDA for possible co-investment, and we have indicated our interest to consider investing in the project once more details about the production and distribution are confirmed and given to us."

He adds: "We believe the film will resonate with audiences in Singapore and elsewhere and its timing is great, given our hosting of the Youth Olympic Games here this year."

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