A Review of Malaysian Film Workflow: Towards Better Colour Management
Abdul R. Dim
Faculty of Creative Arts, University of the West of England, UK

ABSTRACT: In relation to contemporary Malaysian films, this research will examine the theory and practice of film workflow and colour reproduction in Malaysian Film. Film workflow includes several film-processing steps in production and post-production filmmaking. The focus of the study has also been refined towards the argument and responses from Malaysian filmmakers on existing film facilities, film practice and environmental effects through out the film workflow process. These filmmakers were chosen because they have played an important part in the Malaysian film industry and have valuable opinions to contribute to my research. Colour temperature is the colour-rendering qualities of a light source. With regard to existing film technology and industrial film expertise in Malaysia, how much does colour temperature in its environment/climates influence film/video footage and how does it influence film workflow?.

‘Draftsmen may be made, but colourists are born. The secret of colour theory? Why call those principles secrets, which all artists must know and all should have been taught. The colourist’s ability might be innate, but there might be a lack of understanding in the Malaysian film industry about colour management workflow for tropical climates. This research hopes to inform industry practice and government funding of Malaysian film.

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND

Light produces colour temperature and is an integral component of visual filmmaking. The depiction of the existing colour temperature in the lighting environment gives convincing perceptions in the cinematographer’s view. Part of this research involves documentary interviews with film practitioners equally important is an examination of real practice film colour workflow. I intend to systematically explore how colour temperature in light and the depiction of light works in film colour re-production.

Selecting the Malaysian film industry as a case study, both historical and contemporary, this research will examine the theory and practice of colour reproduction in Malaysian film. With regard to existing film technology and industrial film expertise in Malaysia, how much does colour temperature in tropical climates influence film/video footage and how does it influence colour reproduction in colour management workflow? There is a lack of understanding in the Malaysian film industry about colour management workflow for tropical climates. This research hopes to inform industry practice and government funding of Malaysian film.

Several films that have been shot by Malaysian filmmakers and foreign filmmakers that were shot in the Malaysian environment will be analysed in their approach to colour film workflow. This will attempt to differentiate strategies and related techniques, which may have relevance to the industry. This should lead to an understanding of how in how they might inform an alternative process and strategies for film production that has been shot in a tropical country environment like Malaysia.

As well as this technical analysis, I propose to explore the artwork itself through a systematic comparative analysis of film re-production colour workflow on selected works and (Malaysian films). To establish a clear basis for examination there will be a need to create and use practice-based processes of analysis to inform and illustrate theories and practical processes of film colour re-production workflow.
RESEARCH FOCUS
Initially, this research began with a process of literature study, past experience with film practice, feedback from discussions in conference and interviews with several Malaysian filmmakers about colour temperature differences in Malaysia compared to temperate countries and film workflow processes application in Malaysia. Through interviews, reading, observations and discussions with the research supervisor, a decision was made for the study to focus on workflow management in the Malaysian film industry. Employing an action research method will identify, reflect and solve some problems in colour re-production in film workflow in the Malaysian film industry. Qualitative and quantitative research methodology also will be applied in this research to enhance and clarify data analysis.

National Film Development was the main government agency that was responsible for the development of the Malaysian film industry. Since 1981, there have been applied a lot of strategies to develop Malaysian film, but the Malaysian film industry still struggles locally and internationally. In practical application locally, Malaysian filmmakers still prefer to employ foreign expertise and rental foreign facilities for their film. Millions have been spent to develop film facilities, and according to interviews with Malaysian filmmakers, it is hard for them to recognise local expertise and the technology behind it. In response to this situation, the researcher wants to explore the underlying current issues affecting the Malaysian film industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES
This research will produce an evaluative case study that examines film workflow in Malaysian film industry. Its main purpose is to develop better understanding and better film workflow processes among Malaysian filmmakers through existing practice. A high proportion of the work in Malaysian film has been using foreign facilities and expertise. It is envisaged that this research will raise awareness among Malaysian filmmakers and help them develop their film technologies and expertise locally. In order to do this, the identification of a suitable methodology was required. One such research technique appeared particularly promising in relation to the needs of the project.

“Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities”. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008)

In accordance with these ideas, the researcher will try to develop practical knowledge by observing and participating in Malaysian film workflow. Throughout these action processes the researcher will gather reflections from Malaysian filmmakers on film workflow processes. Furthermore, a few filmmakers will get involved in researcher data sampling processes to comprehend the participatory action research. Acting on these reflections, participation, and knowledge transfer, the researcher hopes to pursue practical solutions.

To realise this approach the researcher will apply an action research method and get involved in the Malaysian film industry. The researcher will participate and work together with Malaysian filmmakers in order to fully identify how action research will be applied. Through participatory problem solving, the researcher will experience and perform shooting practice in the Malaysian film industry and try to achieve alternative film workflow by optimising the facilities and film expertise in Malaysia.

‘a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote change and social analysis” (Greenwood & Levin, 1998)

The researcher will implement a cycle of action research which plans, acts, observes and reflects. Working with preliminary research, Malaysian filmmakers’ reflection on film workflow processes will be the basis of research action and strategies to implement the next stage.
This research also involves engagement with certain elements of technical data and its relationship to physical nature, more specifically in physical natural lighting. The physicist studies the nature of the electromagnetic vibration and particles involved in the phenomenon of light, in the several origins of colour phenomena such as prismatic dispersion of white light, and the problem of pigmentation. From the point of view of this physicist, in research, the researcher will explore and examine physical differences of light colour temperature through workflow processes.

Expressive colour effects — what Goethe called the ethical-aesthetic values of colour—like-wise fall within the psychologist’s province (Goethe:1840). In relation to that fact, the researcher will reveal the myth among Malaysian filmmakers that shooting in temperate countries is better because it has better lighting colour temperature. In relation to that myth, the researcher starts with the first phase of data collection in the form of video interview comments. The researcher has chosen Malaysian filmmakers that have played an important part in the Malaysian film industry and those who are active in the industry (imdb biography attached). Most of the questions are based on Malaysian filmmakers’ practice and film workflow. In particular, in the first phase data collection the researcher has chosen colourists, directors of photography, directors and editors. On this matter, the researcher has gone to the School of Creative Arts, University of the West of England research ethics sub-committee and already got their permission.

Pattern and practice mean that the artist and scientist share a common goal in the quest to better understand nature and the place of humanity within it (Sullivan:2005). There are some exercises on synthesis to be undertaken during experimental sessions. The researcher tries to use quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon, broadly defined by Denzin (1978) as triangulation.

The triangulation metaphor is from navigation and military strategy that use multiple reference points to locate an object’s exact position” (Smith:1975). Given basic principles in colour science and multiple viewpoints from the interviewees (filmmakers) the researcher predicts better accuracy in his findings. To realise those results the researcher will make some experiments throughout his practice research. Furthermore in social sciences, the use of triangulation has been used since Campbell and Fiske’s ideas on “multiple operationism” They have argued that such a validation process ensures that the variance is a reflection of using more than one method.

Several film strips will be shot in different colour temperature environments and these will be analysed in terms of approach to colour film workflow. This will attempt to differentiate strategies and related techniques, which may have relevance to the industry. This should lead to an understanding of how they might inform and develop the production strategies for film production shot in a tropical environment like Malaysia.

As a result of that quantitative experiment the researcher will analyze its interrelation with qualitative data from the interview method. That involves the cinematographer’s creativity in creating and manipulating the medium and developing final images. This will contribute to the development of imaging technology in the Malaysian film industry. To connect this connection of participatory action research the researcher will try to experience and perform shooting practices in the Malaysian film industry. Other co-researchers will be joining this production to enhance the participatory implementation. It is hoped that this action research methods develop better film workflow by optimising the facilities and film expertise in Malaysia.

‘In relating the outcome of creative inquiry to relevant issues in the field, there is a degree of ‘looking back’ involved, as the research process first challenges the artist by the need to create and then uses the newly arising awareness as the critical lens through which to examine existing phenomena’ (Sullivan:2005).’ In accordance with this quote the researcher tries to examine the Malaysian film industry from the aspect
workflow and how its applies in the current situation as well as how it is beneficial to the practitioners and implementations. The researcher hopes to raise the Malaysian filmmakers’ awareness and suggest a new direction critical and practical analysis.

Another idea for research can emerge from a vague but nagging hunch, a personal dissatisfaction, or some other issue within creative practices identified by the practitioner (Sullivan: 2005).

The ideas that emerge will be interrelated with the researcher’s niche area in cinematography and his awareness as an academician in Malaysia, which strongly encourages him to explore and develop the Malaysian film industry. This contribution will provide the application of better solutions in terms of shooting approach and film workflow development application in Malaysia. All these methods and processes will be documented in video.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PLANS
In view of the present focus on the formal practice in the Malaysian film industry, it can be stated that one of the areas of my research can be defined as the application of systematic film workflow leading to enhancement of understanding and networking among Malaysian filmmakers. This aim is interrelated with comparing and analyzing interviews with Malaysian filmmakers, and it is hoped that the conflict of perceptions will be resolved in the video collection. With regard to the action research approach focusing on, existing film technology and industrial film expertise in Malaysia, the researcher will try to develop a test filmstrip and analyze it. Throughout these processes, the researcher will apply practice-based analysis on his own approaches to enhance film workflow. These consist of colour reproduction in colour management workflow. It is hoped that the misperception and misunderstanding among Malaysian filmmakers will be solved and this research hopes to inform industry practice in Malaysian film industry.

Preliminary study conducted earlier, several findings have been discovered which will be used to produce series of video documentations which emphasizes the real situation of the Malaysian film industry with regard to the conflict of perception and understanding in film workflow. In accordance to the method of art practice as research, the researcher tries to examine the Malaysian film industry in regard to the aspect of film workflow, and how it applies in the situation.

At the end of this research, works produced will be used in an intensive discussion (seminar or presentation of paper), which will be held in order to pinpoint any relationship between technical issues which have been identified within Malaysian film industry workflow. This discussion hopes to provide a platform for participants to understand function and concept of common film workflow in the Malaysian national film industry. The input from such discussion may give impetus to developing an alternative approach, which will benefit the industry. Beside that, those suggestions from this research also could be use by foreign filmmakers who get involved in film practice in Malaysia or surrounding areas. The researcher also hopes that the methods used can be transferred to solve other film industry problems in those in other niche areas.
BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES


Khoo G. C, (2005) Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature, University of British Columbia


