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Marchetti, Tan : Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and New Global Cinema: No Film is An Island (Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time,

and all praised Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and New Global Cinema: No Film is An Island (Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. (reproduced) A review by Konrad NgBy Hong KongHong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film is an IslandGina Marchetti and Tan See Kam (eds.)London and New York: Routledge, 2007. ISBN: 0-41538-068-5 (hbk). 286 pp. 75.00 (hbk)A Review by Konrad Ng, University of Hawai'i, USA[...]It has been a decade since Hong Kong's handover to China, an event that, in Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance (Minnesota University Press, 1997), Ackbar Abbas writes about as shaping the narrative and style of Hong Kong film culture. Abbas's work presented a cultural imaginary in which film was a chosen medium to negotiate Hong Kong's ethos of post-colonialism, hyper-capitalism, im/migration and Chinese-ness. Following the handover, scholars and academic presses picked up on what was recognized by Abbas and already popularized by Quentin Tarantino and "Midnight" film festival programmers for years: the meaning of Hong Kong cinema exceeds national borders and offers a productive point of departure for contemporary film studies.Since the millennium, publications such as Esther Yau's edited volume, *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu's edited work, *Hong Kong Connections Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (Duke University Press, 2006) have taken up Abbas's line of research by examining the transnational, diasporic and regional dimensions of Hong Kong cinema and its implications for contemporary film studies. *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film is an Island* is the latest text to join this area of film scholarship.Edited by Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam, two bright Hong Kong and Macau-based scholars in the field of Chinese cinemas, the text brings together presentations from a Fulbright Program symposium exploring the links "Hong Kong has with world film culture both within and beyond the commercial Hollywood paradigm" (xi). Marchetti and Kam frame the resulting papers with a slightly different question: in what way does the concept of 'Hong Kong film' have social, political and economic currency in world film culture? The shift in perspective is reflected in how Marchetti and Kam situate Hong Kong cinema as a phenomenon whose meaningfulness emerges from the cultural and commercial discourses that manufacture it. That is, the resonance of Hong Kong film must also be situated as an economic enterprise that is driven, in part, by strategies of branding, product differentiation and niche marketing. For Marchetti and Kam, Hong Kong film endures locally, regionally and globally because of how it positions its "brands and brand-names globally so as to find trans-local and trans-regional niches within the transnational film marketplace...[and moves] between the dictates of Hollywood's aggressive forays into the Asian market and the fashions of the international festival circuits" (5).Simultaneously, Hong Kong film (re)produces its local-ness in ways that remain conversant with other film cultures, including "European art cinema and Hollywood commercial genres...[and] resurgent filmmaking centers in the People's Republic, Korea, Japan, Thailand, and elsewhere in the region" (5). The inter-connective dynamic of Hong Kong film and the scope of the book are summarized by the publication's subtitle, *No Film is an Island*. This phrase, also the subtitle for Kam's essay in the anthology, describes the tactics within and outside Hong Kong that "involve [the] astute juggling of 'foreign' and 'local' cultural capital accrued in, and available to, the late colonial Hong Kong film-scape"; Hong Kong film "is inextricably (inter-)connected in some way, via discourse or practice" (14).Marchetti and Kam group the anthology's fifteen essays according to three broad themes. Section one assembles essays that "focus on films made by Chinese/Hong Kong filmmakers on the move in the United States, Thailand and Australia, as well as those about Chinese/Hongkongers abroad" (5). Section two brings together essays that present a "comparative" film studies. These essays examine "how popular genres travel between and across national boundaries" (7) to illustrate the contemporary cross-cultural and transnational resonance of Hong Kong film. The last section groups essays that examine "Hong Kong cinema in relation to global markets" (7) such as film festivals, international film markets, niche markets and ancillary industries to demonstrate the formation of Hong Kong film as a commodity.The chronic challenge for conference publications seems to be that the academic rhythm achieved in symposium conversation may not translate well in print. The essays, penned by scholars based in academic institutions in America, Australia, Hong Kong, Macau and Canada, are uneven in terms of analysis. For example, Amy Lee's study of Hong Kong television in U.S. Chinatowns and Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John Gammack's exploration of the branding dynamics of the Hong Kong visual-urban feel like departures from the anthology's focus on cinema. Likewise, Peter Rist's elaboration of the auteurism of often-neglected Hong Kong filmmaker, Johnnie To, contradicts Marchetti and Kam's resistance to auteurist approaches to the study of Hong Kong film (4).However, some good rhythms can be found, such as Kam's contribution to the anthology. In "From South Pacific to Shanghai Blues: No Film is an Island," Kam takes issue with David Bordwell's popular *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Harvard University Press, 2000). Kam claims that Bordwell's analysis assumes Hollywood film as a cinematic origin and as a consequence, Bordwell accounts for the innovativeness of Hong Kong film as a complimentary form of cinematic plagiarism. Kam contends that Bordwell's position offers:little insight into the interplay of intersections in cinema (or, for that matter, cross-medium borrowing and cross-territory appropriation) which account for the diverse filmmaking traditions that we know today [given how] film production, and

consumption, film scholarship has become globally interconnected...[and] [border-crossing professors...[can] become tourists of foreign places and sightseers of 'beautiful' things. (15-16) Kam argues for more sophisticated and reflective approaches to Hong Kong film and more generally, world cinema; for Kam, Bordwell mistakes the "Planet Hollywood tree for the forest of Hong Kong cinema" (16). Kam's response is to explore the parodic narrative and tropes of *Shanghai Blues* (Tsui Hark, 1984) to show how "Hollywood enjoys no more than a transitory existence in the cultural spaces of Hong Kong movies" (33). Kam contends that the melodramatic and anachronistic references to Hollywood in *Shanghai Blues*, playfully (re-)articulates Hong Kong-ness in a way that "summons and constructs its presence in a world structured by hegemonic cultural forces on the one hand and their fissures on the other" (34). By gesturing to an interstitial cultural genealogy, the film exemplifies a different cultural space that is not predicated upon a simple dialectic of origin/copy. Another insightful paper is Bliss Cua Lim's essay, "Generic ghosts: Remaking the new 'Asian horror film.'" Rather than read the relationship of Hong Kong film and Hollywood as a simple one-way transaction, Lim contends that Hollywood's recent trend of acquiring and remaking horror films that are both made in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand, and commercially successful in region of Asia, reveals a complex cultural dynamic that "challenges us to rethink prevailing paradigms for national cinema and its imbrication with genre scholarship in the discipline of film and media studies" (112). The emergence of the "Asian horror film" as a regional description and a term for global marketing, softens generic and national distinctions -- first, in the way that the manufactured association between "Asian" and "horror" conveys a generic intertextuality so as to appeal to a wide market and second, in the way that the commodity is predicated on the active deracination of films from Asian nations. Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong's 'Distant screens: Film festivals and the global projection of Hong Kong Cinema' is a thoughtful piece on the role of film festivals in the discursive formation of world film culture and the construction and circulation of Hong Kong-ness. Wong demonstrates how film festivals, especially large international film festivals, "create knowledge" (179) through film selections, programming and the commonly recognized role of film festivals as arbiters of art, culture, politics and identity. In the case of Hong Kong film, Wong contends that Hong Kong-ness has been "intricately embedded in negotiation with Chinese identity, and a more broadly defined Asian identity within a system of meaning and practice predicated on relations among different cultures and regions in the global festival circuit (192). Many other essays are noteworthy for their gloss on contemporary Hong Kong cinema and its relationship to world film culture. Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park traces the metamorphosis of "friendship" in John Woo's films from Hong Kong to Hollywood. Staci Ford reads how select Hong Kong films question U.S. history, culture, and identity and by doing so, "cajole[s] movie-going Americans into taking a look at themselves in a different light" (62). Adam Knee explores the role of Thailand in the Hong Kong cinematic imagination and contends that Thailand is an allegorical closet in which reside the true and hidden desires of Hong Kong and an entire realm of mysteries and alliances repressed in modern life[;] Thailand offers a way to get back to what has been paved over in contemporary, urban Hong Kong existence. (89) Joelle Collier studies the emergence of Hong Kong's "Noir East" films during a period of social, political and economic volatility similar to the era preceding the film noir movement. While similar in terms of narrative and style, Collier argues that Noir East is not an exact copy of Hollywood's film noir; rather, Hong Kong filmmakers have "appropriated and elaborated ... [and] reconfigured the genre so as to reflect the anxieties of post-modern Asia, not postwar America" (139). Laikwan Pang examines the mutuality of performativity between Jackie Chan, Hong Kong's Ambassador of Tourism, and Hong Kong's tourism discourse. She suggests that the touristic symbiosis between Chan and Hong Kong, between movie star and his or her community, is regulated by necessities of self-commodification. And Peter Hitchcock juxtaposes the filmic form and intertextual references constitutive of both *Kill Bill* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003) and *Shaolin Soccer* (Stephen Chow, 2001) to explore the dynamics of niche cinema within global film culture. Hitchcock treats *Shaolin Soccer* as an important illustration of how niche cinema, often the category for "foreign" films, displaces the cultural boundaries of Hollywood's hegemony in global film culture. The unfortunate downside to publications about Hong Kong cinema is that the topic's cultural specificity often precludes wide distribution. Since *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film is an Island* is available as a hardcover text and eBook at the outrageous price of 75.00 each, I'm certain that the book's availability will be limited to wealthy libraries with acquisitions staff who are advocates of Asian film scholarship. I sincerely hope that Routledge's release plan includes an affordable paperback edition since this collection convincingly demonstrates that the phrase "no film is an island" says much about the state of world cinema and offers some interesting directions for contemporary film studies.

In recent years, with the establishment of the Hong Kong Film Archive and growing scholarly interest in the history of Hong Kong cinema, previously neglected historical documents and difficult-to-access films have offered new research materials. As Hong Kong film history comes into sharper focus, its inextricable links across the decades to Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan, the United States, and to the far reaches of the Chinese diaspora have also become more evident. Hong Kong's connection with Hollywood involves ties that bring together art cinema and popular genres as well as film festivals and the media marketplace with popular transnational genres. Giving fresh and fascinating insights into the vibrant area of Hong Kong, this exciting new book links Hong Kong with world film culture both within and

beyond the commercial Hollywood paradigm. It emphasizes Hong Kong film in relation to other cinema industries, including Hollywood, and demonstrates that Hong Kong film, throughout its history, has challenged, redefined, expanded, and exceeded its borders.

About the Author Gina Marchetti is on faculty in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong. Her other books include *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (1993), and *From Tiananmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (2006). Tan See Kam is Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Macau, Macao SAR, China. He is Vice-Chair of the Asian Cinema Studies Society. His research interests cover media communication in the areas of film, cultural and gender studies. He is the author of *Chinese Connections: Critical Perspectives in Film, Identity and Diaspora* (with Feng and Marchetti).