

LEE Kung Lok

Patrick  
KONG Pak Leung

WONG Ching Po



## The Circle • Lian Huan Kou

**Feature** 35mm 90min.

**Budget**

US\$1,200,000  
(HK\$9,360,000)

**Producers**

Sandy YIP Wai Shan  
Patrick KONG Pak Leung

**Production Company**

Red Flag Production Limited

**Co-production Company**

Heat Creative Workshop

**HAF Goals**

Co-producers, Pre-sales, Funds

### ■ Introduction ■

*The Circle* draws on the stylish and individualistic talents of three formidable young Hong Kong directors (Wong Ching Po, Patrick Kong Pak Leung and Lee Kung Lok) to tell three stories with a supernatural theme. Unlike the recent spate of standalone omnibus ghost films, the three stories feature inter-connected characters in one main narrative, told in reverse chronological order. The presence of ghosts is not to scare, but to highlight the film's exploration of human nature and life's cycle of karma and predestination.

### ■ Directors ■

**WONG Ching Po** has stood out with his strong, stylized visual sense even in his earlier days as a director of trailers, music videos and commercials and IFVA awardwinning independent short films. His debut feature *Fubo* (2003) was invited to many festivals. His sophomore feature *Jiang Hu* (2004) was nominated one of the Best New Directors in the 24th HKFAA. He is awaiting to film the movie *Ah Sou* in 2005. He founded Red Flag Production Ltd.

**Patrick KONG Pak Leung** (a.k.a. **YIP Lim Sum**) multitasks as a director, scriptwriter, film critic and line producer. Recent features he worked on are: *Dragon Loaded* (2003) and *Men Suddenly in Black* (2004). He actively participates in industry activities, as a committee member of the Hong Kong Screenwriters' Guild, Hong Kong Film Critics Society and as Chairman of Ying E Chi.

**LEE Kung Lok** has been an assistant director for TV and films, notably Johnny To and Wai Kar Fai's *Fulltime Killer* (2002) and *PTU* (2003). He formed Red Flag Production Ltd with Wong Ching Po, and was the co-director of *Fubo* (2003).

### ■ Producers ■

**Sandy YIP Wai Shan** has brought to the project a wealth of production experience and media connections. One of the

founders of Red Flag Production Limited together with Lee Kung Lok and Wong Ching Po, she produced the latter's short film *The Dogs* (2002) and debut feature *Fubo* (2003), which was co-directed by Lee and Wong. She is also a veteran producer of TV commercials and corporate promotional films.

**Patrick KONG Pak Leung** (see above)

### ■ Production Company ■

**Red Flag Production Limited** was founded by four innovative and expert filmmaking talents: Wong Ching Po, Lee Kung Lok, Simon Lai and Sandy Yip. For the past six years, this multimedia production house has created many independent films, web dramas, music videos and corporate videos. The company's first foray into feature films resulted in *Fubo* (2003), which was invited to festivals in Pusan, Hong Kong, Vancouver, Tainan, Taipei, and Rome. Wong Ching Po was subsequently invited by Eric Tsang to direct the action hit *Jiang Hu* (2004).

### ■ Co-production Company ■

**Heat Creative Workshop** was founded by all-round film expert Patrick KONG Pak Leung.

### ■ Synopsis ■

**The Date**

"Something uncanny is going on," muses Fung, who runs a store selling joss paper for funeral offerings. First, grandpa drops dead outside the store. Then, Chan, the neighbor, has disappeared mysteriously. Now, she's seeing ghosts!

After a long time lapse, Mr Chan suddenly turns up at the store to buy joss paper. He becomes a frequent patron. Always happy to see him, Fung nevertheless wonders why he always vanishes in the blink of an eye.

At first, she suspects that given his long absence, he may have died, and the joss paper is for ‘personal consumption.’ However, one day, he confesses that the offerings are for his wife, whom he has murdered. Love overcomes all, and without hesitation, Fung offers to smuggle him across the border to hide out in her village house.

They are stopped at a roadblock. The officer doing his routine check discovers something unusual – the female passenger, who appeared to be asleep, has stopped breathing. The autopsy reveals that Fung has died for weeks. In fact, she has fallen from the attic the day Chan disappeared, but her spirit returns only to wait for him.

#### Fatal Change

They say love is written in the stars. The Chans believe their match is made in heaven, until the fung shui master reveals that their zodiac incompatibility is the cause of Mr Chan’s financial woes. Following his advice, they decide to ‘alter fate’ by picking a prescribed time to die and reborn again. That means they have to tighten a rope around each other’s neck and release it at an exact moment so they can take the first breath of new, reborn life. All goes to plan until Mrs Chan’s turn to wake up. She doesn’t gasp or move.

Mr Chan is aghast at having ‘murdered’ his wife. But that’s not the whole story...

Mrs Chan found out from the master that she is destined to be her husband’s subordinate for life. Furious about this unfair predicament and jealous of Mr Chan’s good fortune, she has secretly swapped her husband’s ideal time of death and rebirth for the worst one. Little does she know that her destiny is linked to his, so if woe befalls him, worse will come for her.

#### Ex-lover

This is about the perils of standing up your date.

50 years ago, Fung’s grandpa was on his way to meet his first love Xia Jian when news reach him that she had taken her life. They had vowed to meet at a certain place and time to elope. Now old and gray, he is spooked to encounter a teenager who is Xia Jian’s spitting image. She makes advances to him, telling him that she is not a ghost, but his lover’s reincarnation.

However, the ‘reunion’ is broken up by her parents, who have grandpa arrested for sexual assault on a minor.

When grandpa is released on bail, the girl is already waiting for him at home. Only this time, she is gloating vindictively: “You should have known the consequences when you stood me up.” Puzzled, he tries hard to recall when he stood anyone up...

In flashback, we learn that Xia Jian’s true love was someone else named Chow, who went to the city to make a living. The only person who could help her reunite with Chow was grandpa. He demanded a huge trade-off: her maidenhood. In desperation, she consented, but he broke his word. Devastated, she jumped off the river.

When it came her turn to be reincarnated, still unable to let go of her hatred and vengefulness, she refused to drink the “tea of forgetfulness” and came back to settle her scores with grandpa.

As his wicked deeds flash across his memory, grandpa is overcome with shame and dies a broken man. Fung barely notices him, thinking he has just dosed off. Her mind is on someone else. She stares at the clock and wonders: “Why hasn’t Mr Chan passed by the door yet?”

#### ■ Directors’ Statement ■

People are made to believe that spirits are harmful and malicious, but how much more so is the nature of human beings! In *The Circle*, you won’t find scary or gratuitously ill-meaning spirits, though much is said about them. The truly terrifying element comes from what bad deeds humans are capable of. *The Circle* is a dark and ironic, yet ultimately inspirational probe into the human psyche, and a story about survival in a harsh reality.

The three stories are told backwards in a circular narrative: the first story, *The Date*, actually takes place last in real time, while the final story *Ex-Lover* actually takes us back to when it all begins. This regressive time line creates the sense of an infinite cycle that symbolizes a vicious circle of intertwining fate, lives and deaths, and reflects on the inalterable state of predestination.

That’s because not only life is a circle of events. Hate is also a circle of events. Death, too, is a circle of events.

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#### Contact: Red Flag Production Limited

Room 906-907, 9/F, Federal Building, No.369 Lockhart Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Tel:+852-2234-0778, +852-9355-4574 (Sandy Yip Wai Shan)  
Fax: +852-2234-0478  
Email: syip2004@yahoo.com.hk