

# Chang & Eng

Thailand / Singapore / USA

## Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM



Genre: Drama, Musical  
Format: 35mm  
Estimated Running Time: 115 min.

Budget:  
US\$ 18,000,000 (HK\$ 140,400,000)  
Funds Secured:  
US\$ 3,000,000 (HK\$ 23,400,000)

Producer:  
Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM

Writing Credit:  
Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM

Production Company:  
Spicy Apple Films

HAF Goals:  
Funds, Co-producers

Contact:  
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## INTRODUCTION

An epic film adaptation of one of Asia's most successful and longest running stage musicals, *CHANG & ENG* tells the amazing but true story of the original Siamese twins born in Thailand during the early 19th century. The musical premiered in Singapore to regional acclaim at the 1997 Festival of Asian Performing Arts and has since been restaged numerous times and become the nation's longest running and most traveled homegrown musical. It has played to full houses and widespread critical acclaim in Thailand, Malaysia and in China where it became the first-ever English-language musical to be staged in the country.

## SYNOPSIS

Joined at the chest by a mysterious band of flesh, the world famous twins, *Chang & Eng*, were destined to spend every moment of their lives together. Condemned during childhood by their neighbors as a bad omen, the brothers were saved by their mother's love and invited to appear before the King of Siam. Subsequently brought to America and exhibited as a special attraction, the conjoined twins eventually became U.S. citizens, fell in love, married two American sisters and went on to father 21 children.

Fascinating, magical and uplifting, *Chang & Eng* traces the twins' childhood, their travels around the world, their romances and marriages, and their dreams of living separately – an incredible and moving tale spanning six decades in Thailand, America and Europe.

The film adaptation will be brought to life by the stage musical's original creator, producer and director, Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM, who is also an award-winning film director. His wide-ranging film credits include the internationally acclaimed biopic *Beautiful Boxer*, the Cannes Official Selection, *Pleasure Factory*, and the regional box office hit, *The Coffin*. More recently, he directed and co-wrote a new Thai stage musical entitled *Breathe* which broke box office records in Thailand, outperforming Broadway imports like *Mamma Mia!*, *Cats* and *Chicago*.

The screen adaptation of *Chang & Eng* will feature all the songs from the original stage show as well as additional new musical numbers composed especially for the film by renowned composer Ken LOW.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Like many who grew up in Thailand, I had long heard of the two brothers who were joined together forever; two brothers who gave birth to the term Siamese twins. The little I knew about them had always intrigued me. There's a play here, I thought. A dark one, like *The Elephant Man*.

In the 1990's, I revisited the idea of doing a play about the Siamese twins. After more in-depth research, the story of Chang and Eng began to take shape in my mind, but in a far different form from what I initially imagined. There was more warmth and vibrancy in their story than I had thought, and a dark and gloomy treatment would no longer be appropriate because I no longer saw it as a story about "freaks."

On one level, the twins' story illustrates the power of the human spirit in turning their perceived weakness into strength. On another level, Chang and Eng tell us something about the value of tolerance and interdependency. Many a time, nations go to war or people fight because they want to be separate, to be free from one another. But can we ever really be free from each other?

With the help of my two friends, composer Ken LOW and playwright Ming WONG, we created *Chang & Eng – The Musical* and when it had its world premiere at the Festival of Asian Performing Arts in Singapore in 1997 it was so warmly and overwhelmingly embraced by the audience that it took us all by surprise.

The continued success of the musical over the years is a testament to the power of the twins' story. We're just so privileged to have had the opportunity to share it with the world. I hope that through the magic of cinema, more people will come to know about Chang and Eng, their incredible courage and their uplifting life story.

## DIRECTOR

An award-winning film and theatre director, Thai-born Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM is also the Founding Artistic Director of ACTION Theatre, one of Singapore's premier professional theatre companies and the recipient of the Excellence for Singapore Award. His first feature film *Beautiful Boxer*, based on the true story of Thailand's famous transgendered kickboxer, Parinya CHAROENPHOL, has won 15 international awards to date. UEKRONGTHAM was named Asia's Most Promising Director at the 2004 International Film Festival of India and Outstanding Emerging Talent at Outfest 2004 in Los Angeles. *Beautiful Boxer* was also nominated for the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film in the United States, alongside *Brokeback*

*Mountain* and *Transamerica*. It has been released in more than 30 countries and invited to over 100 film festivals. His second feature film, *Pleasure Factory*, was the first film shot entirely in Singapore's red-light district. Starring YANG Kuei-Mei and Ananda EVERINGHAM, it was an official selection of the 60<sup>th</sup> Cannes International Film Festival's Un Certain Regard.

## PRODUCER

See above.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

Singapore-based Spicy Apple Films was set up by award-winning film director and producer Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM. It aims to produce feature films that tell compelling and meaningful Asian stories that also have universal resonance. *Beautiful Boxer*, the first film that it co-produced with Thailand's largest entertainment conglomerate, GMM Grammy, traces the life of the transsexual kickboxer, Parinya CHAROENPHOL. The acclaimed biopic had its international premiere at the 54<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival and has since won 15 international and local awards. To date, the film has been invited to more than 100 film festivals and sold to over 30 countries around the world.

*Pleasure Factory*, produced by Spicy Apple Films, was an official selection of the 60<sup>th</sup> Cannes International Film Festival (Un Certain Regard). It has been released in many territories, including the U.S. and France. Other film projects in the works at Spicy Apple Films include a supernatural martial arts epic, *Swords & Spirits*, and a dramedy set in Singapore called *Poledancing Queens*, which has been awarded a script development grant by the Singapore Film Commission.