

# Explore 'Turksploitation' cinema at film festival

John Lui

You may have heard of exploitation movies, the cheap knock-offs that steal ideas from bigger, better films, usually in the realm of horror, soft porn and action. You might even know about Ozploitation, the wave of trash cinema from Australia and how it spawned *Mad Max* (1979).

But of the regional variants, perhaps the most blatant thievery occurred in Turkey, in what is now known as Turksploitation cinema.

In the scope of its pilfering, it approached greatness, and by mashing up films, it invented an art form of its own.

After remaking Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* (1982), Turkish film-makers spliced in shots from the *Star Trek* television show, for example. Turkish remakes lifted, without permission, plots and characters from James Bond and superhero films, *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Rocky* and dozens of other Hollywood works.

In the documentary *Remake, Remix, Ripoff: About Copy Culture & Turkish Pop Cinema* (R21, 96 minutes), director Cem Kaya says the industry was created by film distributors in the 1960s and 1970s, desperate for content to serve the rural poor. For these patrons, dubbing Hollywood films into Turkish would not work because they would still be culturally too

different. The stories had to be "Turkish-ised". Plot points explained out loud by characters, for example, so that people used to a verbal story-telling culture could understand.

"The whole family would go to the outdoor cinema. The dialogue had to be simple, suitable for the grandparents, parents and children," says Kaya, 40, in a telephone interview with *The Straits Times* from Berlin, Germany, where he lives.

The documentary, to be screened as part of the Scum Cinema's Singapore Cult & Underground Film Festival (Scuff 2016) has interviews with directors, who talk about how they had to be creative with the minuscule budgets they were given.

Matchbox toy cars are used to simulate crashes, for example, and black-and-white film had to be tinted in various colours when colour film became too expensive.

More audaciously, footage from imported films, especially complicated special effects sequences, would be spliced into the local product. In the 1980s, when restrictions were loosened, there was a thriving market in soft-core reels.

*Remake, Remix, Ripoff* mixes clips with interviews with film stars talking about the days when rules about health and safety on the set were non-existent or ignored. Actors would perform dangerous stunts, such as leap from roof to roof, without anything to break their fall.



Kaya's parents emigrated from the Anatolia region of Turkey to the then-West Germany in the 1960s, along with thousands of others in a diaspora that filled a need for workers in the West.

In a provision shop owned by his step-father, there was a videotape rental section, featuring plenty of these low-budget works, nicknamed "Yesilcam" movies, after the district in Istanbul that was home to production houses. These movies, with their often laughable production values, were a revelation, opening a window to a time and place that looked impossibly exotic, sparking a lifelong interest.

"In the 1980s, German television was clean and neat. Turkish video

was dirty, X-rated and colourful," he says.

"For a kid growing up in Germany, Yesilcam was as far away as Hollywood. So I had a fascination for the films."

*Remake, Remix, Ripoff* is one of four films in Scuff 2016. The programme includes the domestic horror work *Goodnight Mommy* (NC16, 96 minutes), the New Zealand horror-comedy *Housebound* (NC16, 109 minutes) and *Raiders!: The Story Of The Greatest Fan Film Ever Made* (PG13, 95 minutes), a documentary about how three Mississippi boys set out to make a shot-by-shot recreation of their favourite movie, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* (1981).

A scene from the documentary *Remake, Remix, Ripoff: About Copy Culture & Turkish Pop Cinema*. PHOTO: SCUM CINEMA

## BOOK IT / SINGAPORE CULT & UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL 2016

WHERE: 6001 Beach Road, Golden Mile Tower, The Projector, 05-00

WHEN: March 24 to 27, various timings

ADMISSION: \$13

INFO: For schedule and bookings, go to [scumcinema.com/events/scuff2016](http://scumcinema.com/events/scuff2016)