

## Girls Love Story Outcry Hits iQiyi in Malaysia

Chinese Streamer Pulls Drama Series, Apologises, Commits to Edits

Mainland Chinese platform iQiyi's new original drama, "Madu Atau Racun", is being hammered by Malaysian authorities for crossing religious and cultural boundaries in suggesting a romantic entanglement between two women.

The Malay drama, produced by Malaysia's MiG Production, is directed by Eyra Rahman for iQiyi, which is also the home of blockbuster global period drama "Pursuit of Jade" and is pushing its original production slate in Southeast Asia.

"Madu Atau Racun" – translated as "Honey or Poison" – is about a wife whose life changes when her husband brings a second wife into their home. As the two women picked through their complicated history, viewers started commenting on a romantic dimension.

The series, starring Singapore's Aliff Aziz, Uqasha Senrose and Elisya Sandha, has never been marketed as a GL title.

On 2 September, Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for Religious Affairs, Zulkifli Hasan, went public, rejecting the drama and talking about maintaining appropriate religious and cultural boundaries.

The producers and iQiyi were summoned by Malaysia's media authorities to explain.

iQiyi said conversations were held with numerous agencies – including FINAS (National Film Development Corporation Malaysia), MCMC (Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission), JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia), CMCF (Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia) and others – and that it was "currently reviewing and making the necessary edits to all episodes to ensure the content complies with local guidelines".

GL drama fans say the Chinese streamer

More on page 7

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From L to R: Moski Chen, Taigi TV Station (Taiwan); Pichayada Promchertchoo, Mediacorp/CNA; Chia-Hsin Li, Chieh Tu, Yu-Jhih Tian and I-Hsien Ho from Jhost Studio/SET Metro Channel (Taiwan); Audrey Anthony, Protagonist by M (Singapore); and Aaron Tee, August Pictures (Singapore)



From L to R: Thanadul Lam, representing National Geographic; Maiha Fukushima, Tokyo Broadcasting System Television (Japan); Linfield Ng, NBCUniversal Formats; Najin Kim, CJ ENM (Korea); Ili Lo, Hakka TV (Taiwan); and Roger Cheng, Go Inside (Taiwan)

Kongthap Peak, Thai actor, singer and model; and Mai Chatchawat, Thai actor and model, presenting at the Awards.

Pattaravadee Laosa, Natsiya Prommart, Anunya Thamvichukorn and Panward Srivirut, casts of "Heart Code", winner of Best LGBTQ+ Programme Made in Asia, Viewers Choice: Favourite TV Series and Viewers Choice: Most Romantic Moment



From L to R: Angelica Panganiban, nominee for Best Female Lead in a TV Programme/Series Made in Asia; Aaron Don Don, nominee for Best Male Lead in a TV Programme/Series Made in Asia; River Huang, winner of Best Supporting Actor in a TV Programme/Series Made in Asia; Asri Welas and Wulan Guritno, casts of "Mama Mama Pengejar Cinta", winner of Best Comedy Programme Made in Asia; Hosts Utt Panichkul and Cindy Bishop

## Adrian Teh's "Chelot" hits RM10.7m BO in Malaysia

Action feature takes #1 spot for 11 days – but still nowhere near "Tarung: Unforgiven"

Director Adrian Teh's action film "Chelot" hit RM10.7 million (US\$2.65 million) gross domestic box office in Malaysia on Sunday night, overtaking "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" but still nowhere near the year's top draw, "Tarung: Unforgiven", which currently leads with RM20.6 million (US\$5.1 million). "Chelot", released on 27 August, has been the country's top theatrical title for 11 consecutive days.

"Chelot" is about a Special Operations Unit officer Haqqim who, crushed by financial problems, becomes entangled in an arms smuggling syndicate and is forced to act as an inside man, risking everything – including his career, his family's safety and his own life – to bring down the syndicate.

The film made headlines in the run-up to its release for its record-breaking longest single-take action sequence in a movie in Malaysia.

The unedited action sequence, filmed using a single camera, covers 1.9 kilometres and runs for five minutes and 19 seconds



"Chelot"

and, producers said, involved 300 crew members, 150 days of preparation, 60 hours of rehearsals, and 50 prop vehicles. "Chelot" is produced by ACT 2 Pictures, Golden Screen Cinemas, Astro Shaw,

SunStrong Entertainment and Marvellous Culture & Film. The marketing partner is Primeworks Studios/Media Prima.

The film stars Beto Kusyairy and Shukri Yahaya.

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## TIFFCOM sign-ups 20% up on 2025

1st wave of Tokyo conference sessions released

Japanese market TIFFCOM has released the first wave of conference sessions for this year's three-day event in Tokyo (28-30 Oct), led by domestic commercial powerhouses Nippon TV and TBS Holdings, as well as industry agency, the Broadcast Program Export Association of Japan (BEAJ).

Organisers say visitor registrations so far for this year's 23rd edition are running about 20% ahead of last year.

Nippon TV puts its global journey front and centre of its presence on the conference stage, with global strategy president Kazuo Takaya, Gyokuro Studio head Ken Akiyama and content business EVP Shinji Enari talking about global initiatives. The session will also include a case study of "Merry Berry Love", a Nippon TV co-pro with Korea's CJ ENM Japan.

The second session announced so far has TBS talking about its investment and partnership with Hollywood's Legendary Entertainment and inside its Studio-Monowa JV with Korea's CJ ENM and Japan's U-Next. Speakers include Katsuaki Setoguchi, who is president/CEO of TBS' The Seven among other roles; and Shinya Watanabe, TBS global division president.

The BEAJ session looks at Japan's IP frontier to business beyond broadcasting, featuring Fuji Television, San-in Chuo Television and Hokkaido Television Broadcasting, among others.

The full conference programme covers AI, IP strategies, international co-production and the overseas expansion of Japanese content.

The market runs alongside the annual Tokyo International Film Festival.

## Media "Consensus and Action" highlighted at Asia-Pacific Media Forum in Guangdong

Southern China's Guangdong Province is making a play for Asia Pacific media attention – and delivering an unequivocal message about the role of media in regional development.

The keynote of the Asia-Pacific Media Forum, held this weekend under the banner of "Building a Path to Shared Prosperity for the Asia-Pacific Community: Media Consensus and Action", was delivered by Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee.

The event attracted other political leaders, including Huang Kunming, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and secretary of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee.

As the event closed, organisers said development and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region depend on the active participation of media.

"The media are expected to share stories of openness and integration, provide comprehensive coverage of the region's progress and achievements across various fields, and help foster a favorable public

opinion environment for the region's open development," the note said, quoting delegates at the event.

Participating guests "noted that the media should actively promote outcomes of the series of APEC activities, interpret policies and measures of various economies to support scientific and technological innovation, and build regional consensus for innovative development," the closing press material from state media agency Xinhuanet said.

They also called for "deepening results-oriented cooperation in joint reporting, technological innovation and personnel training, and leveraging media exchanges to carry forward civilizations, spread culture and convey goodwill, so as to enhance mutual understanding and closer bonds among the peoples of the Asia-Pacific".

The forum was co-hosted by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, Xinhua News Agency and the Guangdong provincial government, and organised by the Shenzhen municipal government.

More than 400 representatives from over 40 countries/regions attended the event.

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## Live Emmys heads for HITS NOW

Primetime Awards leads Rewind Networks' new line up



Mariksa Hargitay, Primetime Emmy Awards Host

Rewind Networks has unveiled its new lineup for three-and-a-half-year-old entertainment channel HITS NOW, leading with the exclusive live broadcast of the 78th Primetime Emmy Awards on 14 September. This will be followed by a slate of returns along with three new first-run series over the next five months, the Singapore-based regional channels operator said today.

All the titles air express from the U.S. and are first-run/exclusive in HITS NOW's six territories.

New shows are Wolf Entertainment's "FBI", from executive producer Dick Wolf; limited series "The Miniature Wife", about a scientist who accidentally shrinks his novelist wife to six inches tall; and CBS Studios' supernatural comedy "Eternally Yours",

about a vampire couple, who have been together for 500 years, struggling to accept their daughter's human boyfriend.

U.S. drama titles returning to the regional network include "Matlock", starring Kathy Bates; "Chicago Fire" and "Chicago P.D." from Wolf Entertainment's Chicago universe; "Fire Country" and spin-off "Sheriff Country"; and comedy "Ghosts".

The unscripted slate includes "Survivor" season 51 with host Jeff Probst; "Shark Tank" season 18; and a new season of Gordon Ramsay's "Hell's Kitchen".

The newest of Rewind Networks' three channels, HITS NOW is available in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

## Ekta Kapoor/Balaji, YouTube tie up

Five shows head for YouTube in new exclusive deal

Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms has partnered with YouTube to release five exclusive shows on YouTube in a move the Mumbai-listed production house described as "shaping the next chapter of digital storytelling".

The digital-first titles named so far include "Haq Se" season 2, "Phir Pyar Ki Yeh Kahani Suno", and "Kehne Ko Humsafar Hai" season 4. All will be available globally.

Kapoor retains ownership of the IP. You-

Tube will lead ad/brand deals.

According to Comscore data cited by Balaji, YouTube reached over 75 million people in India aged 18+ on Connected TV (CTV) in April 2025, and according to Comscore, holds the #1 reach across CTV screens in India amongst media (May 2025).

The new titles will stream on the @TheIndianKDDramas channel on YouTube.

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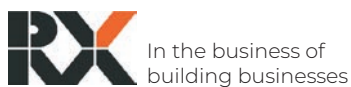
**ReelShort inks multi-year exclusive partnership with Asia Productions; new deal fast-track Asia-Pacific expansion as microdrama engagement hits new highs**

U.S. microdrama platform ReelShort has inked a multi-year global partnership with Asia Productions to fast-track expansion in the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement comes as ReelShort's top shows, including "True Heiress vs. Bee", hit record views. "True Heiress" has attracted 395.2 million views, while "Found A Homeless Billionaire Husband for Christmas" not far behind at 287.1 million. "How to Tame a Silver Fox" at 282.3 million.

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From page 1



"Madu Atau Racun"

has now pulled the six episodes of "Madu Atau Racun" released so far, and has put the content of the other six under a microscope for fear of causing further uproar.

iQiyi's official statement acknowledged concerns and apologised "for any discomfort caused". The platform said it was taking the concerns seriously and respected "the religious and cultural values as well as the sensitivities of Malaysian society".

As other religious bodies weighed in on the harm being done to religious values, MiG also apologised, saying that no offence was intended.

"The production has always taken into account the guidelines and advice given regarding sensitivities. There was never any intention, nor did it ever cross our minds, to touch on or raise any controversy," the production house said, adding: "We respect the views of all parties and take this matter as a lesson for us to improve going forward".

A new release date has not been confirmed. iQiyi said it would wait for clearance before resuming broadcast.

"We remain committed to providing full cooperation and implementing all agreed-upon improvements. Thank you for your patience and understanding," the Chinese platform said on Friday (4 Sept).

Malaysia's stand on LGBTQ+ content is no secret, and the sharp differences between markets like Taiwan and Thailand and Malaysia prompted GL site, girlsloveinfo.com, to talk about the "very different environments in which Asian Girls Love stories are produced". While Thailand and other Asian countries are "developing their own sapphic stories", "Malaysia presents a particularly complex environment," the site said.

## Utopai's "Half Moon" begins filming

### AI company's APAC integration kicks in under Hyun Park



Picture: Utopai Studios

Hyun Park, President, Utopai Studios APAC

"Half Moon", the German-Korean feature that marks writer-director Hyo-joo Yang's move from shorts to her first full-length film, started rolling cameras in Germany this month, just days after AI company Utopai Studios finished redrawing its Asia-Pacific org chart.

The new APAC operation folds Korea-Japan joint venture, Utopai East, into the parent company, and hands the keys to the newly unified region to Hyun Park, a media veteran with stints running CJ ENM's Studio Dragon global division, co-running Warner Bros Korea, and co-founding U.S.-based Korean streaming platform DramaFever. Park's new title is president, Utopai Studios APAC.

"Half Moon" is the poster project for Utopai Studios' effort to look less like an AI company and more like a studio with taste and respect for traditional filmmaking.

Yang's directorial debut, backed by Germany's In Good Company and Korea's Paper Barn Studios, arrives with a Silver Bear-winner's pedigree from her short "Broken Night". Utopai insists the production will stay firmly filmmaker-led, with its in-house AI system PAI limited to "select visual elements."

Given that Utopai also has a fully AI-

generated "Journey to the West" series in the works with China's Huace, "Half Moon" sits at the more traditional end of what the company means by "AI-assisted".

The integration of the Korea/Japan-focused activity is a fast and tidy piece of consolidation.

Utopai East launched in November 2025 as a joint venture with Stock Farm Road, and acquired Hyun Park's Seoul-based production house Alquimista Media (bringing 15 scripted projects with it) in February this year. Utopai East's founding CEO, Kevin Chong, becomes Utopai Studios' global COO in the new structure.

Utopai says the integration brings in a pipeline of more than 18 film and television projects from the Korea/Japan operation, with a total 25 titles in development/production. First titles from the wider slate go into production this year, with releases pencilled in for 2027.

So far the APAC footprint over-indexes on Korea, which leads with "Half Moon" and "Bedford Park" – the Sundance-winning feature that kicked off Utopai's Korea operation earlier this year.

The Japan contribution – live action and animation – remains vague at this stage and the rest of the region unmentioned.



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### Rewind

Incorporated and headquartered in Singapore, Rewind Networks is a multimedia branded entertainment company, dedicated to providing the best-in-class TV content to audiences across Asia. Home to HITS, HITS MOVIES, and HITS NOW, Rewind Networks has expanded into 12 markets and secured partnerships with major telcos and pay-TV operators since its founding in 2012. Founded by seasoned media leaders, Avi Himatsinghani and Sandie Lee, Rewind has established a strong foothold in over 22 million homes and continues to thrive in the era of streaming.

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#### Trends & Outlook 2026

“AI adoption in workflows and operations in addition to the widely talked about contributions in content production and storytelling. Short form vertical videos and micro dramas will proliferate rapidly providing overwhelming choice to viewers on the move - but this will lead to renewed appetite for quality long form storytelling that is more meaningful in a lean back large screen experience. Curated playlists and ease of discovery will be a critical driver for marquee content consumption. Ancillary sports content and programming will be key to maintain and drive sports fandom and to sustain viewer interest for live sports. Short form social content and match highlights alongside docu-style reality elements and high-end sports documentaries will be a critical component of wholesome sports television offerings.”



Avi Himatsinghani,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Rewind Networks

#### Asia focus in 2026

“We are constantly trying to improve the proposition of our channels and yet retain the essence of each channel. Loyal viewers are hard to come by and we don't take them for granted so we experiment with time slots, scheduling and content mix to up our ratings and prove our overall value to our affiliates and viewers. We are also looking into how AI can improve overall efficiency in terms of time and effort across all facets of our operations.”

Sandie Lee, Chief Content Officer,  
Rewind Networks



Rewind Networks' maiden venture launched in 2013 as a linear pay-tv service, featuring a curated selection of the greatest television drama and comedy series from the past few decades in HD.



Launched in 2018, Rewind Networks' second channel showcases a curated collection of iconic HD films from the 1960s to the late 2000s, featuring titles from major studios.



Launched in 2023, HITS NOW is the ultimate destination for top-rated drama series, exhilarating reality shows, the best entertainment news, and exciting game shows. With its clever, cutting-edge, and up-to-date content, HITS NOW appeals to the most discerning audience looking for the best in entertainment, all in one place.

#### Target Audience

The channels attract a core audience aged 25-65, with a balanced gender profile and a slight female skew. HITS appeals to fans of iconic TV series, HITS MOVIES to blockbuster and classic film enthusiasts, and HITS NOW to viewers seeking top-rated dramas, reality shows, entertainment news, game shows, and live events.

#### Channel

The channels are available as 24/7 linear TV services, delivering a curated entertainment experience on a unified regional feed. HITS and HITS MOVIES offer catch-up on demand for selected titles, while HITS NOW provides catch-up access across almost its entire content library. Localisation is supported through selected subtitle languages for key markets.

#### Advertising

Available through regional pay-TV platforms, the channels offer sponsorship, advertising, and promotional partnership opportunities across Asia.

#### Content

Content is sourced through long-standing partnerships with leading studios and distributors, including Paramount, NBCUniversal, Amazon MGM Studios, Sony Pictures, Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery, Lionsgate, Fremantle, Banijay, Hallmark, ITV Studios and New Regency. This broad catalogue delivers a premium mix of scripted series, blockbuster films, reality formats, entertainment specials and timeless favourites for audiences across Asia.

#### 2026 Highlights

Beverly Hills 90210 in HD on HITS, Kenny Rogers as The Gambler movies, a Bruce



Lee tribute and The Matrix Trilogy on HITS MOVIES, alongside star showcases featuring Marilyn Monroe, John Travolta and Paul Newman. HITS NOW continues with major premieres including Survivor 51, the Live Emmy Awards, and Hell's Kitchen.



Beverly Hills 90210

#### Original Productions

While no local original productions are currently in development, opportunities remain under active consideration. Discussions with rights owners and production partners are ongoing, with the aim of bringing original Asian productions to the portfolio in the future.

## What's on where...

|                |               |                                                             |                           |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| September 2026 | 10-13         | Gwangju Ace Fair 2026                                       | Gwangju, Korea            |
|                | 10-16         | Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Market 2026      | Toronto, Canada           |
|                | 14-16         | BCWW 2026                                                   | Seoul, Korea              |
| October 2026   | 6-15          | 31st Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) 2026          | Busan, Korea              |
|                | 10-13         | Asian Contents & Film Market 2026                           | Busan, Korea              |
|                | 10-11         | MipJunior 2026                                              | Cannes, France            |
|                | 12-15         | Mipcom 2026                                                 | Cannes, France            |
|                | 21 Oct-1 Nov  | 37th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) 2026     | Singapore                 |
|                | 26 Oct-4 Nov  | 39th Tokyo International Film Festival 2026                 | Tokyo, Japan              |
|                | 28-30 Oct     | TIFFCOM Market 2026                                         | Tokyo, Japan              |
| November 2026  | 6-9           | Taiwan Creative Content Fest 2026                           | Taipei, Taiwan            |
|                | 10-11         | DICM 2026                                                   | Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai   |
|                | 28-30         | JAFF Market 2026                                            | Indonesia                 |
| December 2026  | 1             | ATF 2026 – ATF Leaders Dialogue                             | Singapore                 |
|                | 2-4           | ATF 2026 – Market & Conference                              | Singapore                 |
| February 2027  | 12-17         | Canneseries 2027                                            | Cannes, France            |
|                | 21-26         | The London TV Screenings 2027                               | London, U.K.              |
| March 2027     | 8-11          | Australian International Documentary Conference 2027 (AIDC) | Sydney, NSW, Australia    |
|                | 15-18         | Hong Kong Filmart 2027                                      | Hong Kong                 |
|                | 19-26         | Series Mania Festival 2027                                  | Lille, Hauts-de-France    |
| April 2027     | 13-15         | World Content Market 2027                                   | Moscow, Russia            |
| May 2027       | 26-28         | Busan Content Market 2027                                   | Busan, Korea              |
| June 2027      | 7-10          | Nem Dubrovnik 2027                                          | Croatia                   |
|                | 23-25         | 20th Content Tokyo 2027                                     | Tokyo, Japan              |
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# Anime & animation win Singapore

## "Sesame Street" tops demand – Parrot Analytics

Animation, anime and stories that began life as comics won the demand week in Singapore, topped by "Sesame Street" at 33.7x average market demand for a TV title, followed by "Jujutsu Kaisen" at 26x, "Bleach" at 23.3x and "Re: Zero – Starting Life In Another World" at 20.8x, according to Parrot Analytics' demand data for the week of 17-23 August 2026.

"Lanterns", the eight-episode live-action U.S. superhero series based on the DC Com-

ics Green Lantern characters Hal Jordan and John Stewart, placed second on the overall list at 31.7x average demand – the second of the two titles that crossed the 30x mark for the week.

The top three digital titles of the week were divided across three streamers – Prime Video's "Reacher" (29.3x), Apple TV+'s "Ted Lasso" (20.9x), and Netflix's "Stranger Things" (19.4x).

## Top 10 overall TV originals: Singapore

| Rank | Title                                            | Difference from Market Average (x times) |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1    | <i>Sesame Street</i>                             | 33.7                                     |
| 2    | <i>Lanterns</i>                                  | 31.7                                     |
| 3    | <i>Reacher</i>                                   | 29.3                                     |
| 4    | <i>Jujutsu Kaisen</i>                            | 26.0                                     |
| 5    | <i>Saturday Night Live</i>                       | 25.8                                     |
| 6    | <i>Bleach</i>                                    | 23.3                                     |
| 7    | <i>Game Of Thrones</i>                           | 22.5                                     |
| 8    | <i>House Of The Dragon</i>                       | 21.1                                     |
| 9    | <i>Ted Lasso</i>                                 | 20.9                                     |
| 10   | <i>Re: Zero - Starting Life In Another World</i> | 20.8                                     |

## Top 10 digital originals: Singapore

| Rank | Title                                  | Platform           | Difference from Market Average (x times) |
|------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1    | <i>Reacher</i>                         | Amazon Prime Video | 29.3                                     |
| 2    | <i>Ted Lasso</i>                       | Apple TV+          | 20.9                                     |
| 3    | <i>Stranger Things</i>                 | Netflix            | 19.4                                     |
| 4    | <i>Badly In Love</i>                   | Netflix            | 19.1                                     |
| 5    | <i>X-Men '97</i>                       | Disney+            | 18.5                                     |
| 6    | <i>Lioness</i>                         | Paramount+         | 17.2                                     |
| 7    | <i>Silo</i>                            | Apple TV+          | 17.1                                     |
| 8    | <i>Percy Jackson And The Olympians</i> | Disney+            | 16.8                                     |
| 9    | <i>Widow's Bay</i>                     | Apple TV           | 16.6                                     |
| 10   | <i>The Pitt</i>                        | Max                | 15.8                                     |

Date range: 17-23 August, 2026

The total audience demand being expressed for a title, within a market. Audience demand reflects the desire, engagement and viewership, weighted by importance; so a stream/download is a higher expression of demand than a 'like'/comment. In this dataset we are comparing the demand that exists for each series in this market, against the average TV show. A difference of 1x represents the market average and 10x means a series is 10 times more in demand than the average TV show in this market



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