

ON THE RISE

Responding to the lack of theatrically released films by and about Asian Americans, Ronald Oda and his partner Kris Chin made one of their own. This year's winner of the Audience Award at the Visual Communications LA Asian Pacific Film Festival, *Asian Stories (Book III)* is the result of the novices' longtime friendship and fascination with film.

The plot unfurls around a Chinese American man dumped by his fiancée two weeks before Valentine's Day. Despondent, he asks his best friend, a Japanese American ex-con, to kill him. Oda complains that most Asian movies seen in American theaters are made in Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, and don't employ Asian American talent.

He cites Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* as the pivotal point for Black films that caught Hollywood's attention.

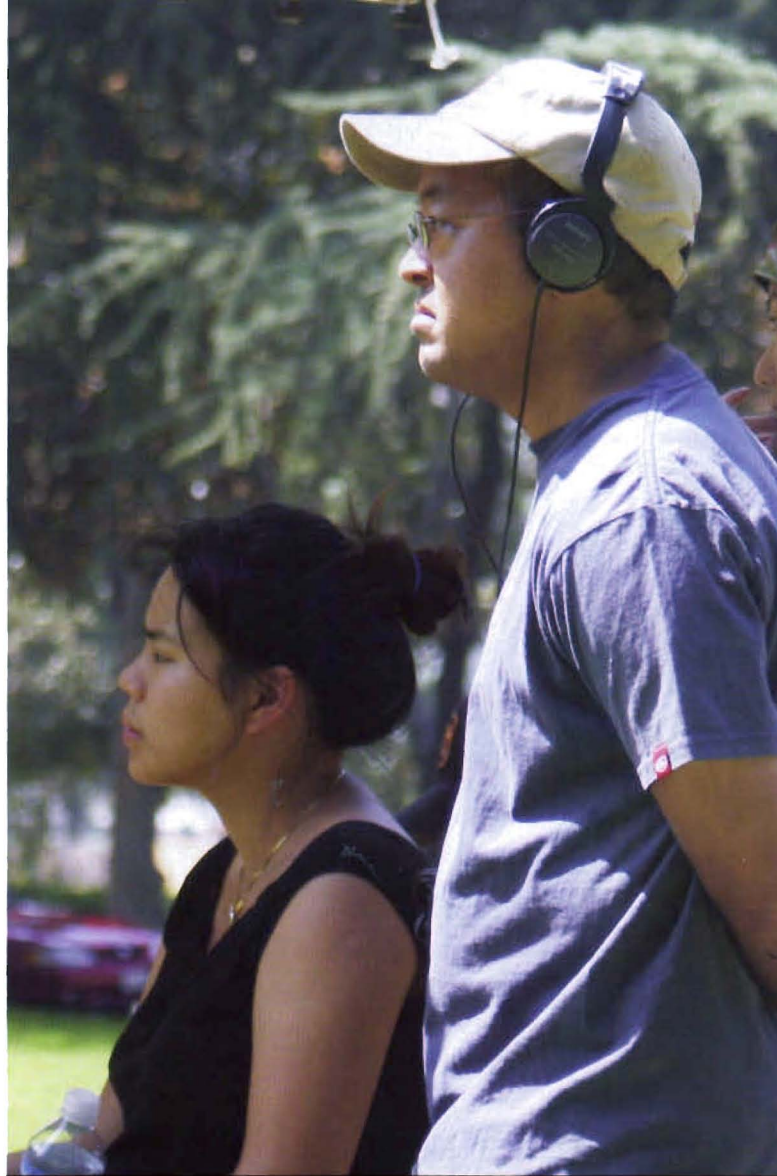
"(That) was a monumental movie for the African American community as it was able to cross over to the mainstream and do well at the box office," says Oda, adding that because of its success, "We now have a choice of African American features...at the theatres."

He's hoping to help reverse the scarcity of Asian American movies in the same way. Oda elaborates, "*Asian Stories (Book III)* was written specifically to kick the mainstream barrier doors down and...win at the box office where numbers are the only game the big boys listen to." The movie, he says, was made with crossover in mind so that audiences of any race could enjoy it.

Oda, who was born, raised, and still lives in the San Dimas and San Gabriel Valley region, says that growing up there gave him "a better perspective on interaction with people of all ethnicities." The 38 year-old with a business degree never attended film school, but wrote and co-directed the film.

"We pretty much learned everything on the job," he says, adding that he and producer Chin logged countless hours reading, researching, and watching movies.

"The task ahead is still huge," Oda concludes. "However, with the help of not just the Asian American community, but all fans of good entertainment, we believe we have a vehicle to finally crossover and start the new revolution." ■



RONALD ODA, Director/Producer

Written by YAYOI LENA WINFREY

