

Estate movie night - the main 'table topic' for young and old

By [Ravindran Raman Kutty](#) - January 8, 2023 @ 12:15am



Once a month, the estate union leader, Mr Palanisamy, would diligently collect RM10 from every employee of the estate and make everyone happy. - NSTP file pic

"SAMBALAM divasam" was a day eagerly anticipated not only because it was payday at the estate, but because it was also Movie Night.

When I was young, such movie nights were the only form of entertainment for the community.

Once a month, the estate union leader, Mr Palanisamy, would diligently collect RM10 from every employee of the estate and make everyone happy.

On the wall of the latex-processing storage building, where the latex was weighed and checked for its viscosity, was the poster with details of the upcoming movie – its title, venue, date and time. I would dutifully count the days to Movie Night.

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If it was an MGR movie, then I would pray doubly hard for the magical night to come even sooner.

When the day arrived, school seemed never-ending for me. Whether I was in the morning or afternoon session, I would rush home excitedly and complete

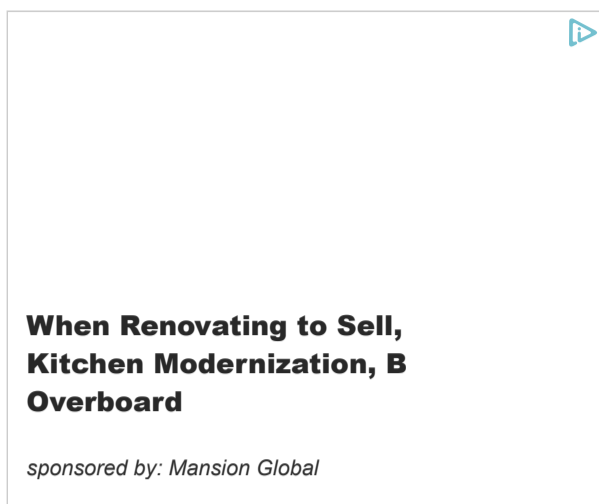
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all my homework assignments and household chores, including tending to my father's garden and laying out the cotton mattresses for me and my brothers to sleep on once the movie was over.



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I would gulp down my sumptuous dinner, prepared by my elder sister, and then rush over to the movie venue with my younger sister to find a good spot for my family – plastic chairs for my parents, and plastic mats for me and my siblings.

However, one very important and compulsory ritual had to be carried out in our home before the movie to ensure that it would not rain on Movie Night. Should the heavens decide to shower upon us, then the movie would be stopped and postponed to another day, much to the dismay of everyone.

Such a ritual called for us to stick a broomstick through a dried chili; then we would burn the chili and leave it outside the house while saying "Please don't rain. Please don't rain".

I must admit that this ritual did work at times.

The familiar dark blue van, Shaw Brothers, would drive up and be greeted with thunderous cheers and applause by the children upon its arrival.

The event was always held at the football field, and some boys would gather around Shaw's projector in awe, wondering as to how this invention could work its magic and bring the movie to us on a large white screen standing on two poles.

I would rush my mother and sisters to the field to ensure we did not miss out on the trailers before the movie was aired.

We would also pick up some discarded film roll clips from the field as souvenirs.

The movie would start around 8pm, with *kacang putih*, *ais kacang* and *cendol* stalls suddenly appearing to provide us with our movie snacks.

Kacang putih and black melon seeds were the highlight snacks of the evening. More than 300 pairs of eyes were glued to the screen. The audience became part of the movie; emotional and action scenes would be heard and felt by the audience.

Commentaries would flow freely among the viewers who may have seen the movies in cinemas or have their own opinions on how a scene or two should have been shot by the director.

The movie normally ended at at 10.30pm. We would all pack up, fold the mats and chairs and return to our respective homes, chatting along the way about the movie that we had so thoroughly enjoyed.

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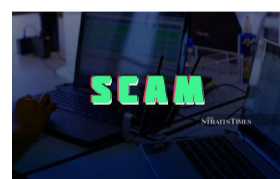
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That night, we would dream of the movie world and its never-ending excitement. Tomorrow, we would be back to a normal day at the estate – our reality.

On our way to school the next day, we would see a green football field that had been turned into a landfill carpeted with plastic bags, papers, and even mats.

The estate management would later help the footballers to clean up the field. Although we were clearly culprits of open littering, our crime would be miles away from our minds, and instead, this would further remind us of the joy and laughter that we had experienced the night before.

The night before, we had escaped from the mundane life at the estate for almost three hours. Now we were back to reality and would continue our daily routines whilst our hearts waited patiently to be whisked off again into another world at the end of the month.

But the movie's story, songs, and, of course, the actors and actresses would still remain as the main "table topic" for everyone ranging from young to old.

The elderly ladies would usually gather in a common house and I heard comments like "MGR, being an old man, should not act with young actresses", "Actor Sivaji was so good in his expressions". Any steamy or sexy dance scenes were a "no-no for the elderly folk, but the young and the men would usually crave for such scenes, going into the gross details too.

Such was life at the estates – an absolutely beautiful one.

The next instalment of the Estate Chronicles will be published in a fortnight

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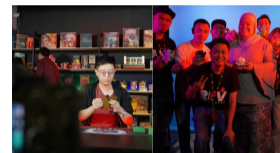
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