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the mad chinaman — Dick Lee

Why the Mad Chinaman? Well, sometimes, trying to identify the Asian in my Western make-up is enough to drive me crazy! I suppose this clash of cultures is really easy to take for granted, so through my music I'm trying to face the paradox, and perhaps come up with some answers. You see, going all out Oriental is too easy, too obvious, and frankly, isn't natural (to me) — and if I just wrote straight from the heart, it just comes out — well, Western! So I picked out the local elements of my Asian, (more importantly, Singaporean) heritage and applied it to the musical medium most comfortable to me — ie POP, with just a hint of fusion. Most of the songs were inspired by folksongs and nursery rhymes I grew up with. Mine was a musical household, and we were always singing — from my nanny chanting "Ai Te Loti Ai" to Pa's Glen Miller — these tunes have always stuck with me. I'm not sure if it's the right direction to take, and I don't want to force my issue. Just take this as a tiny experiment from a mad Singaporean. I might be on the way to a solution.

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RASA SAYANG 5:30
THE DING DONG SONG 5:20
MUSTAPHA 4:00
LITTLE WHITE BOAT 2:13
I AM BABA 4:54
THE WINDCHIME SONG 6:02
THE CENTRE OF ASIA 6:03
BENGAWAN SOLO 4:08
WO WO NI NI 2:00
LET'S ALL SPEAK MANDARIN 5:00
THE MAD CHINAMAN 6:27

RASA SAYANG

Featuring Moe Alkaff, Leslie Pillay and Rizal Ahyar in the ultimate Singaporean rap. What better way to begin than to summarise the way we are in a folksong.

D : Once upon a time there were only trees
And a lion or two enjoying the breeze
M : Then a boat arrived one sunny day
And human beings were here to stay
L : Well, the king of the jungle couldn't really complain
He got the whole damn island named after him
R : And as for the lions, here's news for you
You can see their descendants at the Mandai Zoo
D : The island since has come very far
All thanks to the man named Utama
L : No we couldn't forget him if we tried
R : Eh, what about Raffles?
All : We love that guy!
M : So here we are having so much fun
Can hardly believe this was a jungle once
D : Sometimes I can still hear the lion's roar
Going
All : Singa — Singa — pore!

Chorus: Rasa Sayang, eh, Rasa
Sayang Sayang eh
Eh lihat nona jauh rasa sayang
sayang eh.

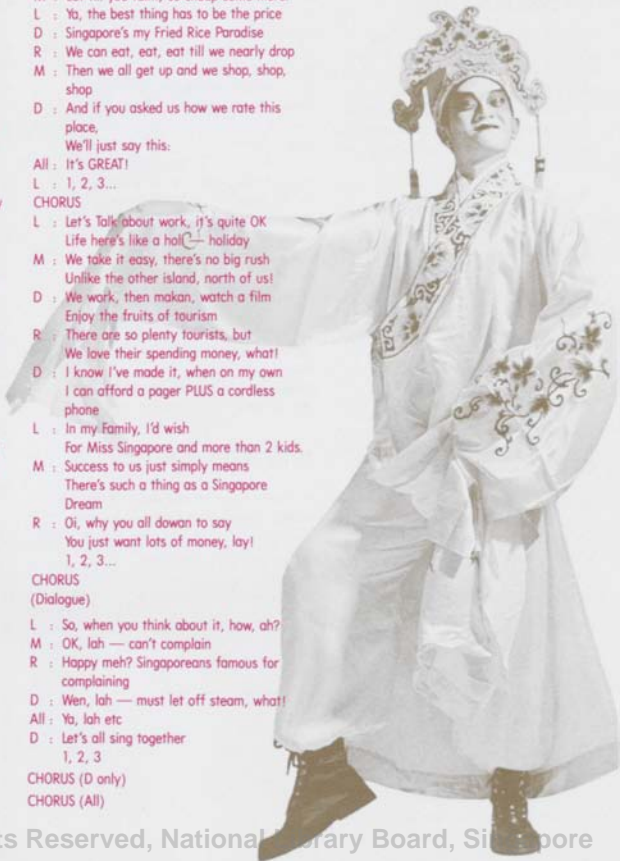
M : Now we can explain in a little while
This is not an ordinary tropical isle
R : Everything we have has to be the best
Of the fabulous East and the wonderful West
D : Of all the things we've got that's good
At the top of everybody's list is
All : FOOD!
L : We've got prata, mee pok — so sedap
R : What about the ketupat at the satay club?
D : If no chye tow kway, then kai tau, lor!

M : Eat till you faint, so cheap some more.
L : Ya, the best thing has to be the price
D : Singapore's my Fried Rice Paradise
R : We can eat, eat, eat till we nearly drop
M : Then we all get up and we shop, shop, shop
D : And if you asked us how we rate this place,
We'll just say this:
All : It's GREAT!
L : 1, 2, 3...
CHORUS
L : Let's talk about work, it's quite OK
Life here's like a hol — holiday
M : We take it easy, there's no big rush
Unlike the other island, north of us!
D : We work, then makan, watch a film
Enjoy the fruits of tourism
R : There are so plenty tourists, but
We love their spending money, what!
D : I know I've made it, when on my own
I can afford a pager PLUS a cordless phone
L : In my Family, I'd wish
For Miss Singapore and more than 2 kids.
M : Success to us just simply means
There's such a thing as a Singapore Dream
R : Oi, why you all down to say
You just want lots of money, lay!
1, 2, 3...

CHORUS
(Dialogue)

L : So, when you think about it, how, ah?
M : OK, lah — can't complain
R : Happy meh? Singaporeans famous for complaining
D : Wen, lah — must let off steam, what!
All : Ya, lah etc
D : Let's all sing together
1, 2, 3

CHORUS (D only)
CHORUS (All)



THE DING DONG SONG

Here's an old Chinese number that was popular in the fifties, dedicated to my dear mother, who, incidentally, kindly consented to sing on the track. Thanks to her, I was introduced to Rebecca Pan, Asia's songbird. This song is a bit of a family affair, with my brother Wah going, "What is this thing called love?"

I hear that bell go ding dong
Deep down inside my heart.

Each time you say, "Kiss me"
Then I know it's time for Ding Dong to start
Each time you say, "Hug me", Ding Dong,
Ding Dong.
Each time you say, "Love me", Ding Dong,
Ding Dong
I hope I won't wait too long
You hear my bell go Ding Dong
You hear my bell go Ding Dong

MUSTAPHA

This song figures vaguely somewhere in my childhood. I've resurrected it — with new lyrics — as a tribute to my favourite Saturday afternoon pastime — Tamil movies! (P.S. This also features my fave Tamil Actress — Jacintho!)

CHORUS:

Cherie je t'aime, cherie jet t'adore
My darling I love you a lot more than you know

Cherie je t'aime, cherie je t'adore,
My darling I love you a lot more than you know.

Oh Mustapha, Oh mustapha
Yen Kathalan my Mr. mustapha
Sayang, sayang, na chew sher wo ai ni
Will you, will you fall in love with me!

Oh your lovely eyes, I feel I know them well.
Let me look into them and fall right under their spell.

Oh, my sweetness what a beauty
You are such a pretty cutie
I can't tell you, tutti frutti,
All the things you're doing to me.

(Repeat chorus)

Honey, honey, sugar's not as sweet
Oh, my papadam, you're good enough to eat.
Mama, mama, you are such a tease,
Oh, my harm cheen pang, can
I give you a squeeze?

(Repeat chorus)

Putumayam, I am asking, please
Won't you come and give your Mustapha a kiss?
Onde-onde, can I quench your thirst?
But to take a sip, you have to catch me first!

LITTLE WHITE BOAT

A Chinese nursery rhyme with an endearing melody. Something I've always wanted to redo.

Sailing in my little white boat
Far as I can be
Drifting in my little white boat
Set my spirit free.
Take me deep inside my dream
over seas of blue
To your magic place
Where I can be with you.

I AM BABA

A "soundtrack" based on my recollections of Peranakan songs, sung to me by my granny when I was a child. Folksongs featured: Lenggong kangkong, Chan Mali Chan, Tek Tek, Suah Suih Kemuning. As a true Singaporean, you ought to know the words!





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THE WINDCHIME SONG

A little tribute to my musical upbringing in the various choirs to which I once proudly belonged. The impromptu choir I assembled was great, and brought back a few memories. The song of the windchimes rings quietly every so often, reminding one of one's heritage.

It's so strange that we are walking
With the windchimes rining in our ears
On tiled and polished pavements
Blanketing away the years
Of past and present history
We may not know it's there.
But don't we know that yesterday's
The answer to tomorrow's prayer.

CHORUS

Don't forget where you've come from
Take a little time to see
Everything you'll ever be
Is told within the windchime's song.
Don't forget where you've come from
Take a little time to know
Everything your feelings show
Is only you
Really you.

Somewhere deep inside our memories
Lie the cultures that we surely know
Our father's father's fathers
Handed down with hopes they'd grow
From ancestral dreams into what seems
To be very much the same old thing
And true enough, as we proceed
We can hear the windchimes ring.

REPEAT CHORUS

The way to be
Lies deep within, you'll see
Won't you listen now
Let the windchimes show you how.

Do you feel the stirrings deep inside
When you watch your neighbours or they war?
Do you lose your roots as they guard theirs,
Do you lose your pride, or more?
When you carry on in the scheme of things
When you grow old as you know you will
Keep an inner eye on your heritage
And you'll hear the windchimes still.

REPEAT CHORUS

Don't forget where you have come from
Take a little time to see
That the message in the windchime's song
Is all you'll ever need.
Don't forget where you have come from
Let the windchimes proudly show
That the past is all you'll ever need to know.

Let the windchimes lead the way
Tomorrow depends upon yesterday.
We've recognised it all along
The sound of the windchime's song.

THE CENTRE OF ASIA

This song is the result of an urge to do an uptempo, fast and furious ditty, about the exoticism of this fabulous continent. My inspiration is, of course, the exciting Bond movies, and the two Anns who sing with me, my Bond girls.

CHORUS

We all belong, deep in our hearts
In the centre of Asia
This is the point where it all will begin.
You realise, under these skies
Is the centre of Asia
Open the earth and swallow you in.

Where were you before?
Looking for a reason to be.
Could you ask for more?

Now you've found your home do you see?

Through the sun and the rain
On the equator I'll be
Trapped by my desire,
Please come and free me.

BENGAWAN SOLO

This is dedicated to my father, who nurtured me with jazz and kroncong (an Indonesian musical style). I've written English words, (with escape as a theme), and tried to do a tropical fantasy in today's package-tour language. Bengawan Solo, by the way, is the name of a river.

Bengawan Solo, the river of my dreams
Drifting through my secret life
To places where I haven't been.
No one needs to know
Where you can carry me
You can take me down your streams
And show me what my wishes mean.

River of desire

When you are calm you only soothe me
But when you overflow with fire
You spark my wildest dreams.

Bengawan Solo take me away to where
I don't have to be myself
Like you, I'd flow without a care.

Bengawan Solo riwayatmu ini sedari dulu jadi
Perhatian insan!

WO WO NI NI

Yet another irresistible little number by the talented Rebecca Pan. N.B. The broken English is original.

Hey ni ni ni ni ni ni ni ni wonderful
Oh wo wo wo wo wo wo wo wo
I love you
No matter what I do dear
I always think of you dear
But never know if you think of me
Hey ni ni ni ni ni ni ni ni wonderful
Oh wo wo wo wo wo wo wo wo
I love you
I always dream about you
I just can't live without you
But never know if you're in love with me.

Whenever you need me
I hurry come to you I won't be late
But next time you need me
I say, I have another date!

Hey ni ni ni ni ni ni ni ni wonderful
Oh wo wo wo wo wo wo wo wo
I love you
Next time, I, I be clever
And let you wait forever
And then I know if you're in love with me.

LET'S ALL SPEAK MANDARIN

An ode to my inability to communicate in the Supreme dialect, and also my frustration at being unable to fully comprehend those engrossing Chinese TV dramas! This is the sad tale of a man in love with an actress.

RAP:

There she sat on Orchard Mall, as pretty as can be.
Black hair, brown eyes, 'bout 5 feet tall.
A star from SBC
And though she was consuming lunch, she did it with such grace.
So I bought burgers, one whole bunch,
Sat by and stuffed my face.
I smiled at her, mouth full of beef. She pretended not to see.
So, casually, picking my teeth
I said, "I seen you on TV."
Finally after a while The actress turned to me
And with a look which frozen my smile, she said
Jiang Hua Yu

THE MAD CHINAMAN

The "title track": an endless dilemma regarding this identity problem. Now you know what it's like to be a banana (ie yellow on the outside, white inside.)

Won't you come and talk to me
Pass a little moment by
I am just a listener, harmless as a fly
Maybe you should let me in
Maybe we should leave this bar
Open up until we find who we really are.
I'll lead you outside again
If I can, if I can
Making dreams, making plans
With the Mad Chinaman.

CHORUS

The Mad Chinaman relies
On the east and west sides of his life.
The Mad Chinaman will tell

To find out which is right.

I know you can get confused
I get that way a little too
When the legacy of old surfaces as new
Then the present takes control
Is the balance right again?
Am I halved, or am I whole
Or am I just insane?
We'll have our way if we can.
Just pretend, just pretend
Shaking truth, shaking hands
With the Mad Chinaman.

REPEAT CHORUS

Here's the part of me that says
I must do what I must do
The child of a united world
An oriental, too.
Though I seem to be confused
I'm the champion, barring none.
In my kingdom, all my dreams reign again as one.
We'll carry on if we can
Understand, understand.
Making fun, making friends
With the Mad Chinaman.

(REPEAT CHORUS)

Traditional, International
Western feelings from my oriental heart.
How am I to know, how should I react?
Defend with Asian pride? Or attack!

(REPEAT CHORUS)

Won't you come and talk to me
Pass a little moment by
Can you be my listener
Waste away the night.
Can we talk about ourselves
Have we really come this far?
The Chinaman in me will show who we really are.



THANK YOU X 1,000,000

All those who helped in the production, especially the guys who added the ethnic touch: SIM B.Y., yang ching; LUM Y.S., er hu; LIM S.Y., bamboo flute, on Wo Wo Ni Ni and Little White Boat. S. ANBARASAM, sitar; M.S. MANIAM, tabla, claypot, Tamilrap, on Mustapha.

SHAH TAHIR, guitar, on I Am Baba and Rasa Sayang.

Mommy Dearest, ELIZABETH LEE vocals on the Ding Dong Song

THE GARCIA SISTERS, Nonya Vocals on I Am Baba PETER LEE and JESSY CHEW, Mandarin lesson on Let's All Speak Mandarin.

THE STYLO MYLOS, on Rasa "Sayang, Wo Wo Ni Ni, The Mad Chinaman. JACINTHA, Tamil actress on Mustapha, vocals on I Am Baba.

The Two Anns, ANN HUSSEIN and ANN WEERAPASS, vocals on The Centre of Asia.

My dearest friend (since Primary One) STEPHEN JOSEPH, Vocals on I Am Baba.

THE LION CITY RAPPERS, MOE ALKAFF, LESLIE PILLAY and RIZAL AHYAR, on Rasa Sayang.

THE LION CITY SINGERS, Deborah Png, Jacintha, Karen Tan, Maittey Sun, Andrew Lee, Selwyn Lemos, Vaughan Tan, Henson Lim, on The Windchime Song.

ASHLEY LIM and ANN CHUNG from the CHINESE THEATRE CIRCLE for the exotic wayang makeup and the costumes.

KIT for the "back-to-basics" makeup, and "no-hairdo"

GREG-O for helping at the shoot.

GARY SNG for taking the pictures, thanks for the concepts!

FRANK LEE for engineering and mixing, thanks for your extremely patient patience. I'll be computerized next time! HENSON LIM for pushing all the right buttons. It'll be your album next!

AL and AZZY, my fab partners who let me off work to do this!

MR & MRS LEE KIP LEE whom I thank for bringing me into this world, and showing me so much love and understanding — I love you!

JIMMY WEE and all at WEA for their continuous support.

And finally, I thank God for blessing me with all that I have.

All songs composed by Dick Lee except The ding dong Song, Wo Wo Ni Ni, Rasa Sayang, Lenggang Kangkong, Chan Mali Chan, Trek Tek Tek and Suah Suir Kemuning, Mustapha, Little White Boat and Bengawan solo, traditional, with lyrics by Dick Lee. Dick Lee's songs published by Wea music. Copyright controlled. All arrangements by Dick Lee. Recorded at Audio Musical and Fantasia Studios. Keyboards, drum programming and backing vocals by Dick Lee. Produced by Dick Lee.



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MUSTAPHA
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I AM BABA
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