

# Bibik's a Material Girl

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**Flower for power: Ivan Heng's Emily is the Singapore Beauty on a bed of roses. -- PHOTO: WILD RICE**

Singapore's iconic matriarch, Emily Of Emerald Hill, may not seem to have much in common with Madonna's bubblegum hit, Material Girl. But innovative local theatre company Wild Rice found a link.

It has put title character Emily Gan, played by Wild Rice's artistic director Ivan Heng, prancing around in a kebaya and half-a-million bucks worth of jewellery to the song in an online video.

The video is to promote Wild Rice's upcoming production of Emily Of Emerald Hill. First staged in 1984, the play, which is one of Singapore's most well-known, is about the glory days of the Singapore Peranakan community. It will show at the Esplanade Theatre next month.

On why the song Material Girl was chosen, Heng, 47, says: 'The Peranakan is obsessed with the finer things in life, from refined food to ostentatious jewellery to grand homes. In short, very materialistic.'

The video has got people talking. As of yesterday, 258 people had 'liked' the video on Wild Rice's Facebook page.

Popular satirical blogger Mr Brown also posted the video on his blog, where it received 1,300 views in the first four hours. The video has since also been uploaded to YouTube and another video-hosting site, Vimeo.

Emily playwright Stella Kon, 66, tells Life! she thought the three-minute video was 'cute', adding: 'I felt very teased. I kept thinking, 'What else, what else?'

as I watched it. I also wanted to see more of Emily's other costumes.'

And she applauds Wild Rice's promotional efforts: 'Every little bit helps. They should use all the social media they can to create the buzz where necessary.'

Undergraduate Chia Jiayan, 23, is one of those who 'liked' the video on Facebook. Despite it being just 'alright', she gives the company the thumbs-up for its promotional efforts.

'It's a campy song that has nothing to do with the script, but it definitely grabs your attention and gets people interested in the play.'

Heng, calling the online video a 'creative, exciting and apt medium', says he hoped the video would reach a new audience, especially the new generation of theatregoers.

'We wanted to give a glimpse of the humour and wit of the production. We hope to make people laugh and inspire them to come to the theatre and experience Emily live.'

The two-day video shoot took place at four locations: The Intan, a Peranakan house-cum-private museum in Joo Chiat; Milk Photographie, a photography studio in Mount Sophia; the Shangri-La Hotel; and the Esplanade. All locations gave the company free use of their spaces for filming.

The video, which took director-editor He Shu Ming, Emily's director Glen Goei and Heng a week to craft, was co-produced by gsmprjct media and Wild Rice. The clothes in the video, made by home-grown fashion designer Frederick Lee, are from the play itself.

Wild Rice was also lent \$500,000 worth of jewellery from Foundation Jewellers, which specialises in Peranakan jewellery designs. The video also sees Emily on a bed amid 300 rose stalks, similar to the famous scene from the movie American Beauty.

Heng says: 'The roses symbolise her hopes and dreams, and not least, love, which is at the core of Emily.'

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