

# Memories of run-ins with drugs and bullying bring Dick Lee to tears when filming biopic Wonder Boy



The cast of Dick Lee and Daniel Yam's movie production, Wonder Boys, (from left) Richard Herrera, Zachary Ibrahim, Constance Song, Michelle Wong, Benjamin Kheng, and Julie Tan. PHOTO: MM2 ENTERTAINMENT

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SINGAPORE ([THE NEW PAPER](#)) - Reliving some of the toughest years in his life.

That was the challenge faced by local composer and director Dick Lee on the set of his upcoming biopic Wonder Boy, which the 60-year-old icon is co-directing with Daniel Yam.

"There's a lot that people don't know about my early days and how it all started for me, and I've decided to share a lot of things that are not publicly known," Lee said at a press conference held on the film set in Penang last Friday.

Reporters gathered in a recreated version of Lee's family home in the 70s where the cast, including singer-songwriter and actor Benjamin Kheng, actresses Constance Song and Julie Tan, and crew were preparing to film the last few scenes of the entire production.

The cast of Dick Lee and Daniel Yam's movie production, Wonder Boys, (from left) Richard Herrera, Zachary Ibrahim, Constance Song, Michelle Wong, Benjamin Kheng, and Julie Tan. PHOTO: MM2 ENTERTAINMENT

Lee said: "Going through and working on this whole movie was tough.

"(Daniel) has only seen me cry once, but there were so many moments when I shed tears while filming this movie... (and) nobody knew about (it).

"For example, the scenes at school, this house and every other aspect of it reminded me of painful things I went through - one of it was the bullying which I (felt like I) was facing again after 40 years, so it has been quite a journey."

Lee revealed that the movie, which follows the story of Richard (Kheng), a teenager and aspiring musician who comes from a rich family, is based mostly on his teenage years from 1972 to 1974.

The movie, scheduled for an August 2017 release, is split into four parts, with each part depicting "an episode" in his life.

### **UPS AND DOWNS**

Lee said: "The two themes that affected me the most (while filming this movie) was watching my desire to be heard (as a young boy).

"The movie starts off with Richard going to a school, where he wasn't the cool guy, and (watching) that was quite emotional for me.

"The second part was when I got to the other end of the spectrum, where I became the cool guy, but got too big for my boots and I went through this terrible descent.

"That is the part in the movie where we portray how easily accessible drugs were in those days."

When Lee, a former St Joseph's Institution student, first revealed that this part of his school life would be incorporated into the film, he received backlash for "giving the school a bad name".

He said: "I'm sure I'm going to get some flak for this, but it is my experience and what I went through. I'm not inventing it."

"It was a dangerous time and it's certainly not like it is now."

"But there is a lesson there - after taking all those substances and turning into the monster of the family, and (yet being able to) come out of it."

Lee does not know what rating the movie will receive, but he hopes that "younger kids can see it so (they) will learn from it".

Kheng, 26, said: "I've played Dick before and while I knew most of the things he went through in his life, I don't think I understood the extent of it."

"After a full day of filming and being in character, I come out of it needing a massage and just a break from it all because it gets quite dark."

It was not just difficult for Lee to delve into his past. The sequence in which the film was shot also became a challenge.

"When filming movies, you never film them in sequence. So to go in and out of scenes of my life in a jumbled-up manner was like an emotional roller coaster for me."

"At the end of almost every day of filming, I have to just escape for a while and be by myself. Yet, when I get out of it and take a break, I end up missing it," Lee said with a laugh.

"All the memories (I've had to relive) are bittersweet and that's what I really hope to capture."