

Kit Chan: Versatile artiste

By **Jaime Koh**, written on 29 December 2013

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Kit Chan is a multi-talented artiste who has recorded numerous albums in Mandarin, Cantonese and English. She has also performed in musical productions and television drama serials in Singapore and Hong Kong. The versatile artiste has also starred in feature films and took on the role of album and music video producer among others. She has authored two books and is a partner in two boutiques.

Early life and education

Kit Chan, also known as Chen Jieyi, was born in Singapore in 1972.¹ Chan's parents owned the Chan Hong Kee provision shop in Chinatown, which they have since sold.² Chan attended Fairfield Methodist Primary School,³ Raffles Girls School and Raffles Junior College.⁴ During her school days, Chan was in the school choir and performed in various school productions.⁵

Instead of going to the university after completing her 'A' Levels in 1990, Chan enrolled in LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts to study drama.⁶⁷ She recalled her parents being upset with her for choosing music and drama instead of going to the university: "My mum was very mad. But my best point when I was arguing with her was that if I went ahead and did whatever she wanted me to do, I might end up being mediocre. But if she would give me the chance, I might be really excellent."

During her LaSalle course, Chan did a month-long attachment to theatre companies in London. This cemented her dream to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. "I wanted to perform ever since I took part in my school's talentime when I was only 13," Chan said.⁸

A singing star is born

Before her singing career was officially launched, Chan performed at road shows with the Singapore Armed Forces Music and Drama Company.⁹ In 1994, Chan dropped out of LaSalle, a year before graduation.¹⁰ She had caught the attention of Ocean Butterflies, a record company, when she sang in a songwriting competition and had been offered a recording contract.¹¹ She signed with the label and went on to release her first Mandarin EP, *Do Not Destroy the Harmony* (别伤了和气).¹²

¹ Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

² Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³ Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴ Kit Chan: first youth ambassador. Infopedia. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_429_2005-01-14.html

⁵ Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁶ Jingles only a stepping stone for Kit. (1993, August 6). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁷ Wong, S. (2000, August 27). On passion road. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁸ Jingles only a stepping stone for Kit. (1993, August 6). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁹ Jingles only a stepping stone for Kit. (1993, August 6). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁰ Wong, S. (2000, August 27). On passion road. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹¹ Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹² Chan, B. (2011, January 28). Kit Chan comes of age. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

In 1995, Chan released her first Mandarin album in Taiwan, *Heartache* (心痛), which propelled her to stardom in both Taiwan and Singapore.¹³ That year, Chan was named Best Local Artiste in local Mandarin station 933's Hit Awards. In Hong Kong, Chan's *Heartache* won silver at the FM99.7 Pop Music Awards.

Musicals

In 1997, Chan's Mandarin singing career was stalled by a contractual dispute between her production house, Ocean Butterflies, and distributor Ponycanyon.¹⁴ Because of the dispute, Chan could not release any Mandarin albums that year.¹⁵ Instead Chan took her career into a new direction – she started acting and singing in Cantonese. Her breakout performance was in Jacky Cheung's Hong Kong musical, *Snow Wolf Lake* (雪狼湖). This helped Chan gain a strong following in Hong Kong.¹⁶

After her successful debut in *Snow Wolf Lake*, Chan acted in several other musicals. In 1998, she played the lead role in *The Legend* that traced the life and loves of the Taiwanese singer, Teresa Teng.¹⁷¹⁸ She played the role of a young Empress Dowager in a Singapore Repertory Theatre musical, *Forbidden City – Portrait of an Empress* in 2002.¹⁹ This was a role she reprised in 2003 and 2006.²⁰ ²¹ In 2003, Chan starred in her first Mandarin musical, *What's Love About*, opposite Hong Kong star Kenny Bee.²²

Drama serials

In addition to musicals, Chan also started acting in drama serials. In 2000, Chan took on a leading role as a doctor in a Hong Kong TVB drama serial, *Healing Hands II*. She acted opposite stars like Bowie Lam and Flora Chan.²³ This was followed by another role in a SPH Mediaworks' drama, *Cash is King*, in which she played a gawky nerd.²⁴ On acting, Chan said: "I do enjoy acting and I do miss it. I will continue to sing, but if the acting job offers are very attractive, I don't see why I can't do both."²⁵

Back in the recording studio

¹³ Wong, S. (2000, August 27). On passion road. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁴ Chin, S. F. (1997, January 29). Kit Chan dispute goes to court. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁵ Chin, S. F. (1997, December 12). Cantonese songs are music to Mum's ears. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁶ Chin, S. F. (1997, December 12). Cantonese songs are music to Mum's ears. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁷ Convincing Kit stirs up tears for Teresa. (1998, November 20). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁸ Lee, S. H. (1998, November 24). I cry after each performance. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

¹⁹ Wong, T. (2002, August 8). Boy, it's tough to find an emperor. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁰ 韩咏红 (2003, August 13). 英语音乐剧《慈禧太后》重演加场也加新歌. *联合早报*. Retrieved from Factiva

²¹ 黄靖晶. (2006, August 4). 陈洁仪回家不再想飞走. *联合早报*. Retrieved from Factiva

²² Chow, E. T. (2004, January 13). A passion for music. *The Malay Mail*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²³ Lead role a first for Kit. (2000, September 5). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁴ Lee, S. (2001, March 22). Banking on Kit Chan with Cash. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁵ Wong, T. (2002, January 31). Her sun also rises. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

In 1998, Chan was back releasing Mandarin songs and albums after the legal dispute between her recording and distribution companies was settled.²⁶

In June 2001, Chan held her first solo concert in Singapore.²⁷ It was estimated that the concert cost \$800,000 and Chan's wardrobe alone cost \$60,000.²⁸ In an interview, Chan admitted that she had been apprehensive about the concert but felt that the pressure was "a good kind of pressure. Her motivation: "It's the love of performing that drives me."²⁹ Her concert, labelled as a "homecoming party of sorts", was a hailed a success with Chan "charming fans with her sterling voice, explosive dance moves and casual repartee".³⁰

National Day songs

Chan is also associated with the National Day Parade (NDP) and its songs. In 1998, Chan sang both the English and Mandarin versions of Dick Lee's, *Home*.³¹ In 2007, Chan was again selected to sing that year's NDP song, *There's no place I'd rather be*.³²

In 2011, Chan served as executive producer for a remake of *Home*. This version, produced for *Total Defence Day*, featured almost 40 of Singapore's singing stars.^{33 34} In conceiving the idea, Chan said she was inspired by the 1985 song *We Are The World*, that featured 44 American artistes. "We've had so many singers over the decades. This is something that is long overdue and a dream of mine to show the history of our creative industry."³⁵

Taking a break

In 2004, Chan took a break from her singing career and moved to the United States with her banker boyfriend.³⁶ Chan had indicated on several occasions that she wanted to take a break from her hectic work schedule.³⁷ "I've never thought of 'hanging around' forever," Chan once said.³⁸ Subsequently, she became a public relations consultant at Hill & Knowlton in 2007.³⁹ She stayed on the job for 19 months.⁴⁰

Back with a bang

²⁶ Goh, G. (1998, May 25). Kit back in Mandarin. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁷ Entertainment – The Buzz. (2001, March 21). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁸ Wee, T. (2001, April 9). Chan digs into her Kit for the first solo. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

²⁹ Wee, T. (2000, May 31). I like pressure. It drives me. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁰ Wee, T. (2001, June 12). Kit rocks. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³¹ 王英敏. 陈洁仪相隔近十年再度唱国庆歌曲. *联合早报*. Retrieved from Factiva

³² 李静仪. 陈洁仪再度获选演唱国庆主题曲. *联合早报*. Retrieved from Factiva

³³ Toh, C. (2011, February 10). Making the video; Answering the call of duty — and Kit. *TODAY*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁴ Natasha Ann Zachariah. (2011, February 27). Home on video. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁵ Natasha Ann Zachariah. (2011, February 27). Home on video. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁶ 洪铭铨 (2004, August 17). 随男友移居美国陈洁仪告别话语歌坛. *联合早报*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁷ Chiam, C. (2002, December 1). Taking time to smell the Roses. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

³⁸ Things of note. (2005, April 6). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva

³⁹ Chan, B. (2007, August 2007). PR Kit. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁰ Chia, A. (2010, March 4). Kit is back in showbiz. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

After a six-year break from show business, Kit returned in 2010 with a bang. She released an album, starred in a feature film, acted in a musical, staged concerts in Singapore and Hong Kong, and even started her own record label, Banshee Empire.⁴¹
⁴² ⁴³ Chan held her second solo concert in Singapore in 2011 and became a judge on the MediaCorp reality singing competition, The Final 1 in 2013.⁴⁴⁴⁵

More than an artiste

Although known for her performing prowess, Chan is more than an entertainer. She is also a role model, entrepreneur and writer. In 1998, Chan was appointed the first Youth Ambassador by the National Youth Council to promote good moral values, a healthy lifestyle and voluntarism among young Singaporeans.⁴⁶ Subsequently, Chan set up two fashion boutiques: Flowers in the Attic and Roses.⁴⁷ She has also written and published a collection of poetry and stories.⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ ⁵⁰

Colin Goh, managing director of Ocean Butterflies, had this to say about Chan: “Her success was a combination of her voice, good songs and the publicity that went into promoting her. She was always very professional and hardworking.”⁵¹

Quote

*“Music will be part of my life and my career but it can't always be the driving force of my entire being. I find that I need to balance it with life itself.”*⁵²

Selected Awards

- 1994 Best Newcomer - Singapore Hit Awards⁵³
- 1995 Best Local Artiste - Singapore Hit Awards⁵⁴
- 1996 Best Vocalist – Best Newcomer - RTHK 18th Top 10 Chinese Hit Awards (Hong Kong)
- 1997 Best World Chinese Female Singer - Golden Melody Award (Taiwan)⁵⁵
- 1998 Outstanding Female Artiste - Hit Radio Pop Music Awards (Hong Kong)⁵⁶
- 1999 Best Local Artiste - Singapore Hit Awards⁵⁷

⁴¹ Ee, E. (2011, August). Finding her voice. *Jetstar mag*, retrieved from <http://www.jetstarmag.com/story/finding-her-voice/1407/1/#>

⁴² Chia, A. (2010, March 4). Kit is back in showbiz. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴³ Chia, A. (2010, March 4). Kit is back in showbiz. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁴ Boon, R. (2011, August 4). Kit ‘revelaing’ show of lights. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁵ Lee, J. (2013, April 10). Singer Kit Chan turns judge. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁶ Siti Andrianie. (1998, December 27). Kit Chan is first youth ambassador. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁷ Chiam, C. (2002, December 1). Taking time to smell the Roses. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁸ Khin, N. (2000, July 31). Singer Kit Chan turns poet. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁴⁹ Wong, S. (2000, August 27). On passion road. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵⁰ Syahirah Anwar. (2006, August 8). Princess and flea fight to be Madonna. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵¹ Mona Lisa smile. (2006, September 25). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵² Wong, S. (2000, August 27). On passion road. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵³ KitChan.com: The Unofficial fan-page, retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/kcc/kit/achievements.html>

⁵⁴ KitChan.com: The Unofficial fan-page, retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/kcc/kit/achievements.html>

⁵⁵ Goh, S. N. (2001, May 6). Sun shines at awards. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵⁶ KitChan.com: The Unofficial fan-page, retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/kcc/kit/achievements.html>

- 2000 – Young Woman Achiever (Her World magazine, Singapore)⁵⁸
- 2000 Best Chinese Artiste Outside Hong Kong and Taiwan Territories - Hit Radio Awards 2000 (Hong Kong)
- 2000 Best Local Artiste - Singapore Hit Awards⁵⁹
- 2000 Top Local Artiste of the Year - COMPASS Award 2000 (Singapore)
- 2001 Singapore Youth Award⁶⁰
- 2002 Asia Awards for Excellence in Youth Work, by the Commonwealth Youth Programme⁶¹
- 2012 Global Chinese Music Awards Outstanding Achievement Award⁶²
- 2012 12th Chinese Media Music Awards Best Hifi Artiste Award⁶³

Albums ^{64 65}

- 1993 不要傷了和气 (Mandarin)
- 1994 心痛 (Mandarin)
- 1995 逼得太紧 (Mandarin)
- 1996 傷心 (Mandarin)
- 1996 別讓我恨你 (Mandarin)
- 1997 揭曉 (Cantonese)
- 1998 Home 家 (single – in Mandarin & English)
- 1998 有你愛過 (Cantonese)
- 1998 入戲太深 (Mandarin)
- 1999 炫耀 (Mandarin)
- 2000 那天那夜 (Mandarin)
- 2000 最好 (Cantonese)
- 2000 蘿拉 (Mandarin)
- 2001 麻醉 (Cantonese)
- 2002 喜歡.潔儀.喜歡 (Chinese)
- 2002 Dreamscape <陳潔儀的異想世界> (Mandarin/English)
- 2003 Understand (Mandarin/English)
- 2004 East Toward Saturn (Mandarin/English)

⁵⁷ KitChan.com: The Unofficial fan-page, retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/kcc/kit/achievements.html>

⁵⁸ Three women of substance. (2000, March 3). *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁵⁹ KitChan.com: The Unofficial fan-page, retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/kcc/kit/achievements.html>

⁶⁰ Sportswoman Jing Jung Hong and singer Kit Chan win Singapore Youth Awards. (2001, June 27). *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from Factiva.

⁶¹ Kit Chan: first youth ambassador. Infopedia. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_429_2005-01-14.html

⁶² Kit Chan's Facebook profile. Retrieved from <https://zh-hk.facebook.com/KitChanKCC>

⁶³ Kit Chan's Facebook profile. Retrieved from <https://zh-hk.facebook.com/KitChanKCC>

⁶⁴ KitChan.com. Retrieved from <http://www.kitchan.com/albums/>

⁶⁵ Chan, B. (2011, January 28). Kit Chan comes of age. *Straits Times*. Retrieved from Factiva.

2011 Re-interpreting Kit Chan

Musicals

1997-2005 雪狼湖 Snow. Wolf. Lake

1998 漫步人生路 The Legend

2002 Forbidden City

2010 December Rain

Concerts

2001 First solo concert (Singapore)

2011 The Music Room (Singapore)

2012 Kit Chan x Chiu Tsang Hei concert (Hong Kong)

Books

2000 Cork out of my head (Poetry, English with Mandarin translation, Taiwan edition.)

2000 I write a page (Singapore/Malaysian edition of Cork out of my head)

2006 Cathy and Jodie: The princess and the flea

Television dramas

2000 妙手仁心 2 (Healing Hands II, TVB)

胜券在握 (Cash is King, MediaWorks)

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