

= I Not Stupid =

I Not Stupid ( Chinese : 小孩不笨 ; pinyin : Xiǎohái Bù Bèn ; literally : " Children are not stupid " ) is a 2002 Singaporean comedy film about the lives , struggles , and adventures of three Primary 6 pupils who are placed in the academically inferior EM3 stream . Written and directed by Jack Neo , and produced by MediaCorp Raintree Pictures , the movie stars Xiang Yun , Richard Low , Selena Tan , Shawn Lee , Huang Po Ju and Joshua Ang .

Released in cinemas on 9 February 2002 , I Not Stupid earned over S \$ 3 @. @ 8 million , becoming the second @-@ highest grossing Singaporean film . Its satirical criticism of the Singaporean education system and social attitudes in Singapore sparked public discussions and parliamentary debates that led to reforms in the education system . Its sequel , I Not Stupid Too , was released in 2006 .

= = Plot = =

The film 's storyline revolves around the lives and families of three students in the EM3 academic stream , Terry Khoo ( Huang Po Ju ) , Liu Kok Pin ( 刘国斌 Liú Guóbīn ; Shawn Lee ) and Ang Boon Hock ( 洪文福 Hóng Wénfú ; Joshua Ang ) . Terry , pampered and from a rich family , is a meek and obedient boy , with a domineering mother ( Selena Tan ) and a negligent businessman father ( Richard Low ) . Kok Pin is pushed to excel at school by his mother ( Xiang Yun ) , but he shows a talent for art , not academics ? much to the consternation of his family . Boon Hock and his mother struggle to make ends meet by running a small wonton noodle stall ; to make up for the lack of a father figure , he places high value on loyalty and " manliness " in his friends .

The boys are often bullied for being in the " stupid " stream , which eventually leads to a fight during which one of the bullies is accidentally injured . In the principal 's office , Boon Hock and Kok Pin explain what happened , but Terry declines to testify on their behalf , following his mother 's instructions to " mind his own business " , which infuriates his friends and causes trouble between the boys .

Meanwhile , Terry 's father , Mr. Khoo gets in a fight with a man who turns out to be Kok Pin 's father , Mr. Liu ( Jack Neo ) , over a parking space . Mr. Khoo 's company is a client for Mr. Liu 's firm , an advertising agency , and their new @-@ found enmity causes Mr. Khoo to select the marketing campaign of John , an American expatriate , over that of Mr. Liu . As John 's ideas are totally incompatible with Chinese customs , Mr. Khoo 's business suffers as his customers are driven away .

As the boys deal with their problems , a new teacher at school helps by inspiring Boon Hock to excel in Mathematics , while reaching out to the other boys . Kok Pin continues to struggle , and enlists Boon Hock to help him cheat in the Preliminary examinations , but they are caught . Unable to face his mother , Kok Pin attempts suicide , but fails . When he finally tells her , she tries to punish him but collapses ; a doctor later diagnoses her with leukaemia , and tells Kok Pin that she will die without a bone marrow transplant .

As the end of the year approaches , Boon Hock excels in the PSLE Mathematics exam , while the other boys manage to scrape by ? Kok Pin only marginally . Contrary to Kok Pin 's fears , his mother is satisfied because he has tried his best . When visiting Mrs. Liu at the hospital , the EM3 teacher announces that one of Kok Pin 's drawings won second prize in an international competition , but the moment is overshadowed by the rush to save Mrs. Liu 's life . Mr. Khoo passes the transplant test , but refuses to donate after discovering the intended recipient is his enemy 's wife . He eventually relents , but it is revealed that due to a mix @-@ up Terry , not Mr. Khoo , is the suitable donor . Despite protests from his parents , he insists on undergoing the operation , which is a success . A grateful Mr. Liu offers to help Mr. Khoo 's business with his proposal . As a result , Mr. Khoo 's business booms , and the two enemies become good friends . The film ends with Terry being bullied again , as in the beginning of the movie ? but this time , he stands up for himself and fights back .

= = Political satire = =

I Not Stupid criticises many aspects of modern Singaporean culture , including streaming in the education system , deference to authority , and sociocultural stereotypes . The film can be read as an allegory for Singaporean society ? the pampered protagonist and narrator , Terry , is an " everyman ; " deferent and coddled , with a domineering mother and affluent father . Terry 's intellectual failings lead him to be placed in the inferior EM3 stream , which becomes the driving force behind the storyline . The subsequent stigma placed upon the narrator illustrates how the Singaporean education system promotes academic elitism , with students in lower streams looked down upon as inferior , making it harder for them to catch up and realise their potential ( see golem effect ) , even if they are not necessarily stupid . This kiasu mentality puts mounting pressure upon the protagonists of the film , confounding them as they attempt to improve their standing and ameliorate their reputation in a society which judges them " worthless " .

Terry 's mother , Mrs. Khoo , is a " thinly veiled stand @-@ in for the [ Singapore ] government " , whose " mother @-@ knows @-@ best " mentality is well @-@ meaning , but strips her children of their freedom . She demands total obedience , and her repeated lines " Do you know how lucky you are to have a good and responsible mother ? " and " This is all for your own good " parody the Singapore government 's efforts to convince Singaporeans that government policies and actions is in the best interests of the nation . Mrs. Khoo also uses her position of power to buy off rebellion in her charges with gifts and bribes , in a pointed criticism of the government 's social policies . Other characters in the film comment on this relationship ? for instance , in one scene , Mr. Liu states that " it is difficult to catch fish in Singapore , because fish in Singapore are like Singaporeans ; they 'll never open their mouths " , poking fun at the Singaporean trait of obedience and respect for authority .

The film also touches on other issues including Chinese self @-@ loathing ( wherein Singaporean companies regard Western expatriates as inherently superior to local workers ) , suicide , the use of Singlish , and the differences between English and Chinese .

= = Production = =

Jack Neo 's inspiration for the film was the Iranian movie Children of Heaven . Neo and his wife were moved to " holding hands and crying after seeing the love shared by the children " , which motivated him to make his own movie about youth . After speaking with parents in order to find topics to discuss in his film , Neo learned that due to problems with the Singaporean education system , specifically streaming , students face considerable academic and emotional stress . This problem formed the core of his film , which he called I Not Stupid in reference to the social stigma that streaming places on students .

Neo also drew on a dissatisfaction he felt with the way the school system promoted deference to authority over self @-@ reliance ; he wanted his film to tell youth " If you don 't want to change or make a difference , you won 't . It 's all up to you . " In exploring these ideas , Neo spent over two years researching and editing the script ? checking scenes for accuracy , verifying facts , and drafting dialogue . Altogether , the work went through thirteen different revisions , and saw over 50 children audition for the lead roles , before Neo decided to send I Not Stupid into production .

This production was carried out by Raintree Pictures on a budget of S \$ 900 @,@ 000 , sponsored by Bee Cheng Hiang , Yeo Hiap Seng and Sunshine Bakeries . The production crew included Daniel Yun as executive producer , David Leong and Chan Pui Yin as producers , Ardy Lam as cinematographer and Li Yi as music supervisor . In addition to writing and directing , Neo also composed the theme song , which was sung by Chen Guorong . The actual filming took place at Braddell Westlake Secondary School and Westlake Primary School over a period of 24 days , and the film found distribution through Raintree Pictures and United International Pictures .

= = Reception = =

I Not Stupid earned just S \$ 46 @,@ 000 during a limited sneak preview run , prompting Raintree

Pictures to embark on a massive publicity campaign , including invitations for teachers to discuss the film . After showing for four months on 30 screens the movie earned S \$ 3 @. @ 8 million , becoming the second @-@ highest grossing Singaporean movie after Money No Enough . Following its success in Singapore , I Not Stupid was released in Malaysia , Hong Kong , Taiwan and mainland China . The movie also screened at the Pusan International Film Festival , Tokyo International Film Festival , the Jakarta International Film Festival and the 2005 Singapore Season cultural exhibition in London . Over 50 @, @ 000 VCDs of I Not Stupid were sold and its sole distributor , VideoVan , declared it the " No. 1 selling VCD in Singapore " . This claim was disputed by Alliance Entertainment , which said that 70 @, @ 000 VCDs of Money No Enough were sold , but VideoVan called the comparison inaccurate , as Money No Enough was a mature title , rather than a new release .

Awards that I Not Stupid won include Best Chinese Film at the Golden Bauhinia Awards and Best Chinese Humanitarian Film at the 2002 Taiwan Golden Torch Awards ; the movie was also nominated for Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards , losing to My Sassy Girl . Critics praised the film for its humour and uniqueness , noting that it touched a raw nerve among Singaporeans . For example , Sanjuro of LoveHKFilm.com wrote , " I Not Stupid covers a variety of serious subjects , but all the while maintains a light comedic touch . Jack Neo [ makes this film ] a clever , well @-@ crafted social commentary and a damn good film to boot . " Other reviewers described I Not Stupid as " one of the greatest cinematic feats I ? ve had the pleasure of experiencing " and displaying a " simple and yet excellent execution " . In contrast , FilmAsia reviewer Soh Yun @-@ Huei , found it " most shocking ... that the Singapore censors actually allowed this film through in the first place " .

Despite its political satire , the film received a positive response from the government of Singapore . Goh Chok Tong , then Prime Minister of Singapore , commended Jack Neo 's creative talent during his National Day Rally address on 18 August 2002 . In 2004 , Neo was the first local film @-@ maker to receive a National Day Award , and on 21 October 2005 , he and Dick Lee became the first pop culture artists to receive the Cultural Medallion , Singapore 's highest arts award . The movie sparked public discussion and parliamentary debate about the negative effects of streaming . In 2004 , the Ministry of Education decided to merge the EM1 and EM2 streams , and on 29 September 2006 , it announced that the EM3 stream will be scrapped by 2008 .