



Photo: Don Wong; Artwork: Yen Yok

Veteran villains Margaret Chan, Jerry Yeo and Shaun Chen tell us that narrowed eyes, maniacal laughter are just the tip of the iceberg



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On a dark and stormy night, you just want to get out your Count Dracula Halloween costume, stand at the window, wait for a flash of lightning, rub your hands together in unholy glee and cackle your icy cold heart out.

Okay, maybe that's just me.

When it comes to a non-cartoon villain, the real drama is on the inside. A good villain in any given show is somebody we love to hate, regardless of whether he or she comes straight out of a fairy tale or appears to have been based on your boss.

Some actors seem cursed — and we mean that in a good way — with endless villainous roles. Remember when Cynthia Koh was always cast as the home-wrecking vixen?

Others couldn't bag an evil temptress role even if they tried — hello, Felicia!

What, then, does it take to be a really good villain? We asked the actors who know best to share their valuable experience and advice.

Our line-up of the usual suspects: Jerry Yeo, needless to say — the man recently won a Star Award for Most Unforgettable Villain for his depraved bad-guy role in *The Ultimatum*.

Shaun Chen, who plays the bad guy in currently-airing Channel 8 serial *Your Hand In Mine*, and has a slew of bad guy roles under his belt.

And the queen: Local TV's most unforgettable villain of all time, Margaret "I will crush you like a cockroach" Chan (picture).

Oh, and one final word: *Mwahaha*.

MARGARET CHAN

One villain to rule them all

Her infamous cockroach line is etched forever on the hallowed annals of notoriety. It was the Internet meme of that era — specifically, 1994, when she played roach-hating matriarch Madam Tan Geok Neo in Singapore's first English drama, *Masters Of The Sea*. Do you remember that the *Emily Of Emerald Hill* star also played the grand old villain in Channel 8's *The Golden Pillow* in 1995?

Are people always quoting the cockroach line when they meet you?

Very, very often. To this day. Just on Monday, I walked by and some people sort of chuckled and said, "Oh, oh, oh!" But that's fine. It's something that they share with me; something that I can bond with them over. It's absolutely great.

How does it feel to know that you're the No 1 TV villain of all time?

I think that's terrific. The other villain that I'm fond of is the matriarch in *The Golden Pillow*. I preferred that particular villain. On the side of the good, there was Zoe Tay, Fann Wong and Alex Man — three heavyweight stars versus the one villain. It's the villain who has to push and make things happen, because the villain is the catalyst.

Why do you prefer that villain?

Well, she had far more resonance. She had



Margaret Chan in *Emily Of Emerald Hill*.

far more reasons to be who she was. She was less cardboardish. Whereas, I think, in the particular soap opera genre from America, the villains were required to be more cardboard. Just more pure out-there and upfront.

You must also know the context: *Masters Of The Sea* was produced by Joanne Brough, the executive producer of *Falcon Crest*. Very often, with that kind of TV series, the villain actually pushes the show on. So you have to portray a far larger than life character. You can't go to a soap opera and expect things to be normal. It's not meant to be normal. It is larger than life.

How do you play a convincing villain?

There is always a thin line that the actor draws. For example, I just finished *Emily Of Emerald Hill* at the Victoria Theatre. When you're on a very big stage, you pitch differently; when you're in an intimate space, you pitch differently; when you're on TV doing soap opera, you pitch differently.

If you do a more intimate piece on TV, you very often must not choose action. You only have to think the thought. You should believe that the moment you think it, it actually comes across your face. And I think that it's a pleasure for an actor to be able to do that for the camera.