

QUEER AS PUNK

A FILM BY YIHWEN CHEN

88 min. | Malaysia/ Indonesia | 2024

OFFICIAL SELECTION

BERLINALE 2025

PRESS CONTACT

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Logline

In Muslim-majority Malaysia, a queer punk band led by a transman are outliers of the system — carving out spaces to exist through their music while challenging conservative traditions and religious extremism.

Synopsis

Faris is the transman lead singer of Shh..Diam!, an openly queer punk band in Malaysia. Together with his bandmates Yon and Yoyo, they use their music to fight for LGBTQI+ rights in a country where human rights and freedom of expression is severely curtailed by a conservative Muslim society. Faced with increasing discrimination, Yoyo decides to leave Malaysia. Despite the challenges, Faris chooses to stay, determined to continue using their music as a platform for advocating for freedom and equality, refusing to let the pressures of society silence their voice.

Director's Statement

Queer As Punk is a deeply personal and unapologetic exploration of resilience, identity, and the fight for freedom of expression in a world that often seeks to silence the unconventional. In Malaysia, where conservative traditions and religious extremism dominate public discourse, this story unravels the courage it takes to be true to oneself.

Through the lens of Shh..Diam!, a queer punk band led by Faris, a transman, the film dives into the raw reality of those who dare to defy societal norms. It is a portrait of individuals fighting for their right to exist in a space that grows increasingly narrow. Their music is not just an art form but a medium — a bold, raucous declaration of identity and resistance in a climate that stifles freedom.

For me, this film is not only about documenting a moment in time but it is a mirror reflecting society's fears and prejudices and a window into the perseverance of those who rise above it. At its heart, *Queer As Punk* is a celebration of human spirit, solidarity, and the power of chosen family. It showcases the relentless pursuit of authenticity, even when the cost is personal sacrifice.

This film also invites audiences to challenge their own biases, beliefs, and stereotypes. It asks us to reconsider the ways we view those who are different from ourselves and to see them as equals — normal people navigating life with the same hopes, fears, and dreams as anyone else. By opening a window into their world, the film seeks to bridge the gaps between us, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

My hope is that *Queer As Punk* will inspire conversations about the importance of diversity, acceptance, and the universal human desire and right to live freely and authentically.

The Filmmakers

Yihwen Chen (Director/ Producer/ Cinematographer)

Wen is a Malaysian documentary filmmaker and journalist. Her body of work primarily focuses on human rights, social issues and gender equality, politics and environmental justice. Her documentary on female circumcision, *The Hidden Cut*, won the Society Of Publishers in Asia 2019 Awards for Excellence in Reporting Women's Issues.

In 2019, her debut feature documentary, *Eye on the Ball*, about Malaysia's blind football team premiered in London. Most recently, Wen's #MeToo short documentary, *The Boys Club*, won the NETPAC Award during its world premiere at the Busan International Short Film Festival 2022.

Wen's second feature documentary, *Queer As Punk*, spotlighting marginalized communities in Malaysia, was supported by the Hot Docs CrossCurrents Fund and IDA Pare Lorentz Documentary Fund and premiered at Berlinale 2025. She is also an alumna of IDFAcademy and American Film Showcase.

Mandy Marahimin (Co-Producer)

Mandy Marahimin established Talamedia in 2013. With her current production company she produces feature films, documentary films, and shorts. She is also an alumni of Rotterdam Lab and Berlinale Talents. She now has more than 15 films under her belt. She also co-produces with other countries. In 2013, a short documentary titled "*No One is Illegal*" (directed by Ho Yuhang, a co-production with Malaysia) premiered in International Film Festival Rotterdam, *Waves of War* (directed by Daan van Citters, a co-production with The Netherlands) opened Movies That Matter in 2023 and is now on Amazon Prime, *Sweet Dreams*, (directed by Ena Sendijarevic, a co-production with The Netherlands) which was selected to Locarno main competition, and *A Distant Call* (directed by Andrea Suwito, a co-production with UK and France) which recently won DAE Award from Cannes Docs. She is currently producing and running an impact campaign for a series of short documentaries on buried histories in Indonesia.

Angen Sodo (Editor)

Angen Sodo began his career in documentary filmmaking as a cameraman with *Die Before Blossom* (2011–2013), a film exploring the educational system in Indonesia. The documentary premiered at IDFA 2014 and won several accolades, including the Silver Hanoman Award at the Jogja Netpac Asian Film Festival 2014, Special Jury Mention at the Salaya International Documentary Film Festival, and Special Jury Mention at FFD Jogja 2014.

In 2020, he edited his second feature-length documentary, *You and I*. This film won the Best Feature-Length Documentary Award at the 2020 Indonesian Film Festival, the Asian Perspective Award at the DMZ International Documentary Film Festival in South Korea (2020), and the Next: Wave Award at CPH: DOX in Copenhagen, Denmark (2021).

Queer As Punk is his third feature-length film as an editor.

MAIN CREDITS

Directed/ produced/ filmed by

Yihwen Chen

Co-Producer

Mandy Marahimin

Associate Producer

Takeshi Hata

Edited by

Angen Sodo

Yihwen Chen

Assistant Editor

Krisna E. Putranto

Colour

Super 8mm Studio

Sound Design and Mix

Digital Orange

Original Songs

Shh...Diam!

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