

## 30 Years of Showmanship Part IV

After the 1991 success of the “Turbo Tour” attraction at Taiwan Film Culture Park, Taiwan’s other state-owned movie park, Central Motion Picture Studio Park, expressed an interest in some similar type of Hollywood attraction, though at a much lower cost than “Turbo Tour”. Charlie remembered seeing the live “Western Show” at Universal Studios in Hollywood years earlier, and thought he could produce something like that in Taiwan at a reasonable cost. Toward that end, He and Brad visited the cowboy show at Knott’s Berry Farm and got one of the cowboys to help them find enough western stunt actors to bring a similar show to Taiwan.

Luckily, the Taiwanese official in charge of the Central Motion Picture Studio was visiting Los Angeles in 1992 on a business trip. Unluckily, every Hollywood official and Chinese - American community organization in the city had booked up all of his scheduled time during his short stay. They had arranged a limousine and a welcoming reception for him. Charlie had to find a way to get around all this and meet the official, alone, in order to pitch his “Old West” show idea. At that time, the LA riots were going on and LAX was closed to public traffic. Charlie bluffed his way through the police barricade (saying that he had to pick up his Grandpa, who speaks no English), got in to meet the arriving official, and drove him to his hotel, while pitching his idea the whole way. Later, Charlie and Brad took the Taiwanese bigwig out on Brad’s boat, only to succeed in getting their guest seasick! Meanwhile, back at the airport, the Hollywood entourage, the community delegation, and

even the limo driver was furious at Charlie for short-circuiting their whole welcoming reception! But, none of that mattered, now – the pitch had been made and the Taiwanese official was interested. He referred Charlie to the chief executive of the theme park in order to pursue the idea.

When Charlie met with the theme park official in Taiwan, he seemed interested in the cowboy show – but only if real guns were used. Apparently, the official thought that was the whole key to a successful western show, but Charlie (knowing how illegal it was for civilians to acquire firearms in Taiwan) took it as an excuse to turn the idea down. Still, Charlie was determined to make it work! It took him a month to cut through all the red tape and get all the necessary permits from several different government departments, but he finally did it. The show had permission to import six vintage revolvers and two shotguns (along with 5,000 rounds of ammunition) on the condition that the stage manager account for every spent shell (by collecting and returning them after each performance).

All this was done, and the show went on! Being the first-of-its-kind live western show in Asia, it was a big hit with Taiwanese audiences. After a month long run, Charlie was approached by the general manager of Janfusan, a new theme park opening in the South of Taiwan, about bringing the show there for his grand opening. Thus, it got another two-month extended run at Janfusan! This was Charlie and Brad's first venture into live entertainment – which would soon become the main specialty of Mirage entertainment.