



(front row, fourth from left) Yasmin, Tan, De Paul and Astro CEO Datuk Rohana Rozhan with Astro talents at the launch of the Negaraku campaign.

Merdeka bonanza

> Astro celebrates Independence Day with 50 new premieres, including a dedicated channel MyMusic

BY S. INDRA SATHIABALAN

IN CONJUNCTION with our country's 54th Independence Day celebrations, Astro is offering over 50 new premieres in terms of programming across its various channels as well as one new dedicated channel called MyMusic (Astro Channel 318) through the satellite station's Negaraku: the Best of Malaysia campaign.

Started yesterday and right up to Sept 16, Astro subscribers will be able to catch premiere titles such as *In Person: Unsung Heroes* and *Meja Bulat Merdeka Special* on Astro Awani (Channel 501); and *Hotels in Malaysia* and *Nature Keepers Malaysia* on Discovery HD (Channel 571).

Astro Arena (Channel 801) will offer *Arena Sukan ...* with Sultan Azlan Shah of Perak, Marina Chin, Ishtiaq Mubarak, Datuk Eddy Choong, Datuk Ghani Minhat and Datuk M. Rajamani; *Celestial Movies* (Channel 322) with *Reign of Assassins* (starring Datuk Michelle Yeoh); and *Makkal TV* (Channel 203) with Malaysian Short Films.

Meanwhile, catch *Samantha Brown's Asia (Malaysia)* - *Poh's Kitchen: Poh in Kuala Lumpur* on TLC (Channel 707); and *Malaysia Revisited: The Rice Way* on History (Channel 555).

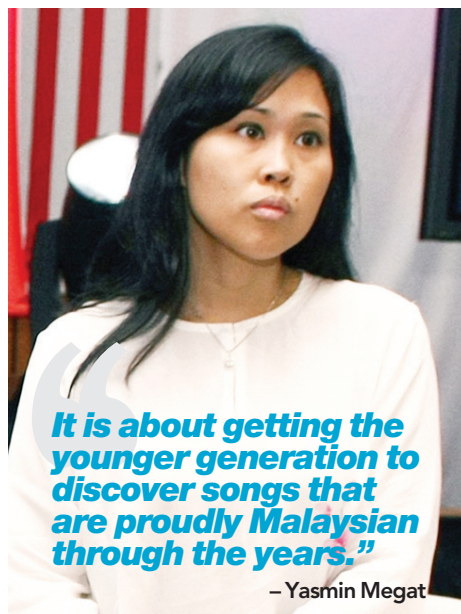
Astro news controller Vincent De Paul said that this year, the station will be airing 59 premiere titles which is six more than last year's Merdeka celebrations.

Last year, Astro dedicated an entire channel, MyStory, for invited filmmakers (amateurs and professionals) to submit short films on their views of Malaysia. This year, the MyMusic channel will have Malaysian youth showing off their music videos that not only capture their musical talents but also the sounds of Malaysia. MyMusic will come on from Aug 31 to Sept 16.

Astro is also introducing MyMusic Indiepretasi, a project that will give young local artistes a chance to reinterpret 10 songs that are considered proudly Malaysian. These songs will be chosen based on public votes.

Among the songs in the running are *31 Ogos* (by the late Sudirman Arshad), *Standing in the Eyes of the World* (Ella) and *Balada Pemuzik Jalanan* (Search).

Viewers can log on to www.mymusic.my for a chance to vote for their favourite song



It is about getting the younger generation to discover songs that are proudly Malaysian through the years.

- Yasmin Megat

which will then be given to a local artiste and released as digital downloads and an album later this year. You are also invited to submit your ideas on the design of the album cover on the website.

To kick-start this initiative, Astro has joined forces with some local talents in reinterpreting *Saya Anak Malaysia* which was originally sung by Dr Sam in 1986. The new version showcases Hafiz, Adira, Hazama, Fina, Najwa, Azlan & The Typewriter, Altimet & Aizat, Phoebe, Mei Yan, Aanantha and others.

Yasmin Megat, the vice-president of Gen Next (a new youth-related department in Astro), said: "There are a total of 50 songs that have been shortlisted that range from *31 Ogos* to *Yong Ma Lai Xi Ya De Tian Qi Lai Shuo Ai Ni* and *Sayang Kinabalu*.

MOVIE REVIEW BY ANANSA JACOB

Winter's Bone

HOLLYWOOD'S latest 'it' girl, Jennifer Lawrence (*X-Men: First Class*, *The Hunger Games*), is featured here in this indie film that brought her attention and acclaim, and it's easy to see why.

In *Winter's Bone*, Lawrence plays Ree Dolly, a teenage dropout looking after her younger siblings and invalid mother through abject poverty in the chilly Ozarks region.

Despite the difficulties, she is determined to help her family by joining the US military for the signing bonus.

However, the sheriff (Dillahunt) lets her know that her estranged father, an ex-con meth addict named Jessup, has gone missing.

Having put up their home as bond, they stand to lose it unless they manage to locate Jessup.

An angry Ree then goes on a search for her father, so that the family will be able to keep their land.

Her journey leads her to

encounters with members of the local meth-dealing crime family, as well as her own terrifying drug addict uncle Teardrop (Hawkes).

Despite repeated warnings to stop looking, Ree pushes on, gaining a few enemies along the way.

The film is a stark look at the harshness of poverty, and the strange, close-knit and yet self-hating society that Ree lives in.

Director Granik does a brilliant job bringing this violent, patriarchal world to life.

There is one problem, however, and that is its pace. It is agonisingly slow, and there isn't much action to speak of.

The film rolls along, only picking up towards the end, when Ree's journey comes to its dark, bittersweet end.

What stands out are the characters. Besides subtle, strong performances by Lawrence and Hawkes, another character to watch out for is Merab (Dickey) a multi-layered woman who treats



Ree with kindness and cruelty in turn, and perhaps best symbolises the complex mountain region.

Although the film might bore people currently used to fast-paced blockbusters, it remains a good strong film dealing with real-life issues.

- ▶ **Cast:** Jennifer Lawrence, John Hawkes, Dale Dickey and Garret Dillahunt
- ▶ **Director:** Debra Granik
- ▶ **E-Value:** 5
- ▶ **Acting:** 7
- ▶ **Plot:** 5



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