THE DECADE THAT WAS
An entrepreneur, a former legislator, a filmmaker and a financial planner provide their perspectives of a decade that passed

THE AGE OF MULTIMEDIA
A decade ago Jack Lau Ka-chun gave up academia to start Perception Digital, which designs and supplies consumer electronics for leading brands. He ponders life without gadgets

Netbooks, iPhones and MP3s all made their debut in the past decade. What was the most significant breakthrough?
Memory and digital processing power are just two amazing things. Almost everything digital relies on these. Your computer now can store millions of emails and photos. Back then, 10 years ago, many were still using floppy discs, and you had boxes of them.

Technology is the new sexy. Surprised?
I have always thought that technology could be sexy... c'mon, you are talking to a geek!

In 1999, you were setting up your company. What were your hopes and dreams?
I felt that consumer electronics design was very promising for this part of the world. Back then I thought I knew, and now it's pretty obvious, that the Pearl River Delta would be a major manufacturing base for consumer electronics but that these factories would focus on logistics rather than innovating.
The dotcom bubble proved disastrous for many.

Dotcom made you see new possibilities, and they weren't all wrong. Dotcom brought us the download with mp3, the upload with Youtube, video conferencing with Skype...

Will the next 10 years move as fast?
Yes, because we can't wait. We got 14 million pixels on our camera, and we want more. We want our portable netbooks to fold...

What will be the “new iPhone”?
I think there will be a Perception Digital phone! On a serious note, iPhone captured the heart and soul because it's easy to use and it does multiple jobs, but it is not without competition. You need to charge the iPhone pretty regularly – it's big, it's like holding a brick, and we will see more user-friendliness, faster connections, we won't need to charge for months. Focus will also be on well-being. As we become more prosperous you'll want to know a lot more about your body and how healthy you are. Our gadgets will respond to this.

That was the decade that was amazing – an age of multimedia and connectivity. On a personal note, Perception Digital moved from a small design hut in Tai Po village to an international design house.

POLITICAL AWAKENING
For more than a decade former legislator Christine Loh Kung-wai fought for public policy issues. In 2000, she founded Civic Exchange, a think tank, and in 2007 was named a Time magazine Hero of the Environment

Is Hong Kong a better or worse place than it was 10 years ago?
It depends on what you compare. There are more university places in local universities, and the government is now subsidising kindergarten places. Air pollution is not better, it's arguably worse. The harmonious is still a mess and will remain a mess for another decade.

What is your most vivid memory of the harbour reclamation?
I did not think when we started in 1995 that I would still be pounding away today. My most vivid memory is in fact a continuing one – tracking what is happening to the reclamation where Star Ferry used to be. It's gouging life out of Victoria Harbour.

What was Hong Kong's proudest moment?
July 1, 2003. It was quite a feat for more than 500,000 people to show up for a public protest against the Article 23 legislation in such a peaceful way.

And lowest point?
In April 2004, Hong Kong had to pay the price of July 1, 2003. In a unilateral move, Beijing gave an interpretation of the Basic Law to essentially rule out constitutional reform in 2007 and 2008 for Hong Kong to achieve universal suffrage for at least another decade.

What is your biggest personal success?
I managed to author several books. The book that I feel is my greatest effort is the one I finished this year called Underground Forest: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong. It will be published soon by the Hong Kong University Press.

How has Hong Kong's relationship changed with China?
We have gained a country – a country that is changing rapidly. The problem between the mainland and Hong Kong is over the pace and direction of constitutional development, which frequently clouds other issues, even the economy.

That was the decade that Hong Kong people began to feel they had outgrown the political and governance structure. While they are prepared to be patient, their rumblings do need to be addressed.
HOME-GROWN FILM CHALLENGE

Angel Hon Suk-lee won the Asian Festival of First Film Best Producer Award for her 2008 film A Decade of Love, a movie that tells a decade's worth of post-handover stories by different Hong Kong directors.

Why did you choose to produce an independent film now?
I've always felt passionate about independent films. I think they have more interesting themes and scripts.

Why did you want to work with Hong Kong filmmakers?
I'm proud to be a Hongkonger and I feel passionate about Hong Kong. I was born here, brought up here and made my living here. This film was about Hong Kong, so it was logical to me to use local filmmakers.

There has been a boom in co-productions. Is local film making as we know it a thing of the past?
I think it's very important that we can maintain the local talent in film making in Hong Kong and that's why I used local filmmakers, but Hong Kong filmmakers became involved with Chinese movies first. It's logical for Chinese filmmakers to "return the favour".

We have seen unprecedented rise in reality shows and celebrity magazine culture. How has this affected the film game?
I feel that perhaps the main focus of the "fame game" might have shifted in past years. It could be up to the filmmakers to make a difference, to make it "right" again, and to remind people how Chow Yun-Fat and Siu Fong-fong achieved their stardom.

Who was the decade's biggest star, on screen or behind it?
Peter Lam. He offered a lot of opportunities to any filmmakers that he believed in.

What is the biggest challenge facing Hong Kong filmmaking?
Money. It is very hard to find investors whose ideals align with yours and allow you to go towards a certain direction.

That was the decade that young filmmakers were under-appreciated.

EVIOLUTIO OF ADVISORY

When Rosetta Fong Suk-sam became a financial consultant, there was no such thing as a financial planner. The chief executive of Convoy Financial Group tells new recruits: "the person sitting next to you is your biggest competitor."

Sum up this decade in three words:
The World is Flat. One of the major changes is people becoming so closer via technology, there are no boundaries. In 2000, I never expected that, I don't think anyone expected that.

How has technology changed the way people bank and invest?
Before they relied on newspapers or TV at the end of the day, now they demand information with speed. Transactions happen 24 hours a day.

Convoxy has grown from 11 people to over 1,000 in the last 10 years. What has changed in finance?
MPF started in the year 2000, and that began Hong Kong people's education about the need to plan and the concept of retirement. Now people know the term Financial Planner. When I started they did not have any idea about this concept, there was no training. The job was cold calling and meeting clients to explain what you did. Now everyone uses advisers.

We have seen many financial highs and lows. What have we learnt?
That these cycles will keep coming, again and again. We can't always be optimistic, but we can be prepared.

What has been your greatest achievement?
This has been a special year because I became CEO.

What was Hong Kong's greatest triumph?
To a certain extent I think it is the ability to be able to maintain One Country Two Systems. If it didn't work, people would not have felt safe to stay here and invest here.

That was the decade that got everyone close (with technology) but also created a gap in communication. We should be aware that we need to treasure the human touch.