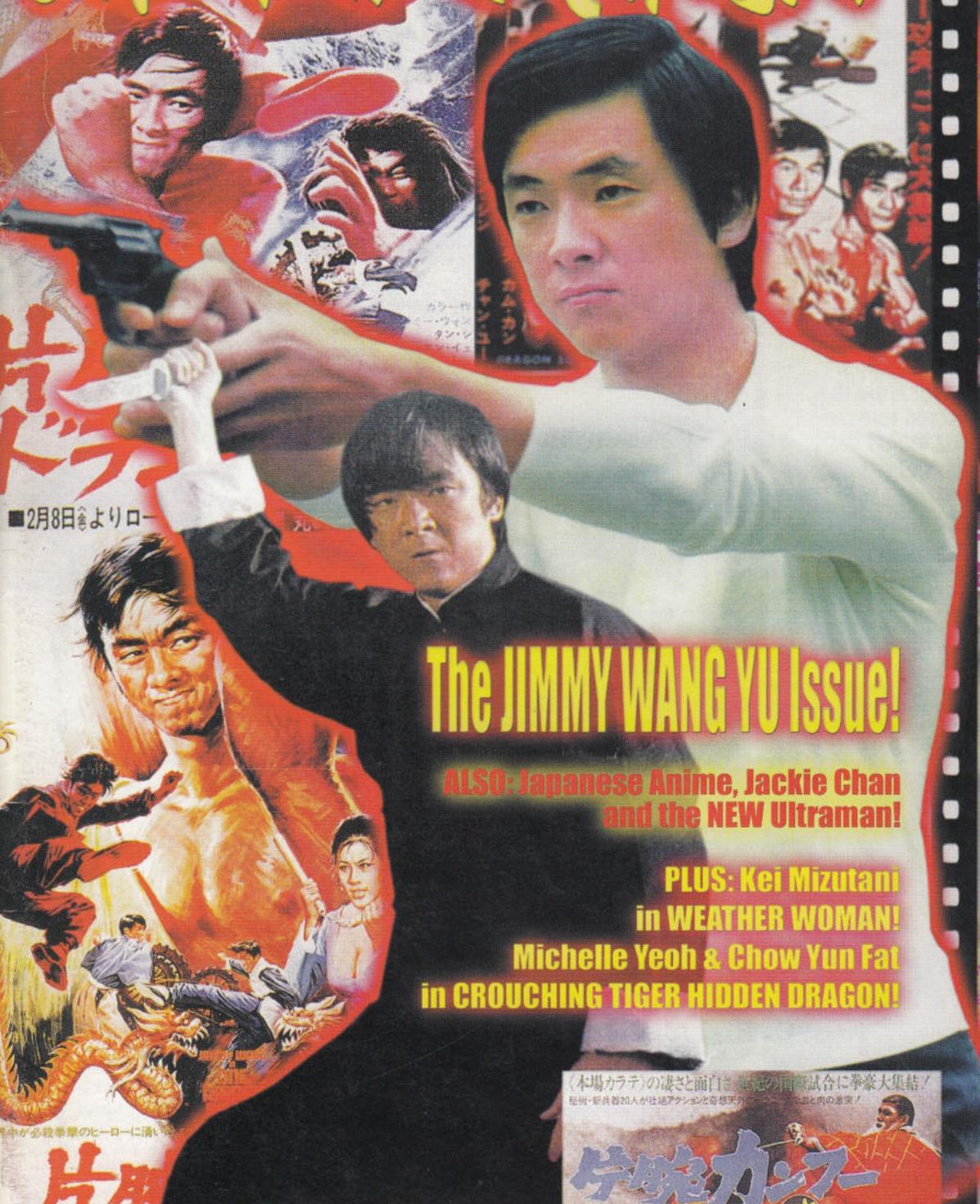


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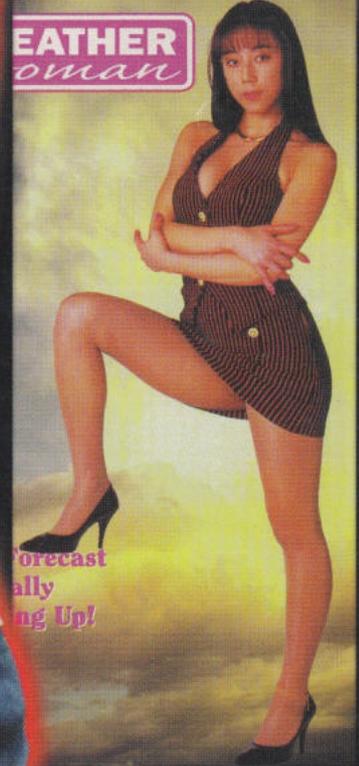


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ORIENTAL CINEMA

#19 - WINTER 2001

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So far, the year 2000 has been a busy year for me. For one thing, there was completion of the recent *ORIENTAL CINEMA: GODZILLA 2000* issue, which many readers have considered *OC's* "comeback"! I find this strange, because *OC* never really disappeared! It comes out irregularly, but *OC* has been an ongoing thing since it's beginnings back in the mid-1970s. But *OC* is only a small part of what's been keeping me busy; I've got creative projects a plenty. Though it's been a great many years since my previous feature-length video, *AGE OF DEMONS* (a video I'm embarrassed about now, for it's stereotypical portrayal of witches & warlocks—oh yeah, and the Mexicans too), I have finally dusted off the old videocamera & given it a good spit shine; and begun work on another amateur film. I know I got disillusioned about movie-making a few years back, and swore I would never write another script as long as I lived, but the recent turn of events have prompted me to re-consider. Since my upcoming video first got exposure on numerous "goth" and/or "occult" websites, I've received a lot of email from people who are baffled about my temporary dabbling with the "darkside" of things. So for the remainder of my 34th Editorial, I shall set the record straight, and of course give my new video, *DEVILS, DRAGONS AND VAMPIRES* a shameless plug.

I've been through a lot of pressure & heartache these last few years. I'm sure you can all relate; we all go through botched relationships and stress-inducing career changes, at one time or another (that's one reason I made the foolish statement, a few years back, that I would retire from *OC*— no chance!). I had to start over again, career-wise, and accept a

job as "low man on the totem pole", making way less money than I was accustomed to. I was working as an entry level Architectural Drafter at a huge company, the nature of which involved tons of unskilled labor. Immigrants, mostly Filipino & Hispanic were herded in like cattle. Don't get me wrong, most of them were nice people and I enjoyed hanging out with them; I would talk to the Mexicans about El Santo movies, and would chat with the Filipinos about how cool their *DARNA ANG PAGBALIK* movie is (they were often shocked that I knew so much about their pop culture!), and about famed Filipino folk hero Panday (China has Wong Fei Hung, Japan has Musashi Miyamoto, Korea has Hong Gil Tong, so the Filipino equivalent is hero Panday). But in working with these people, I couldn't help but notice a plague of cross pendants, eventually. It's no major secret that Catholicism is the fastest growing religion in the world, but when one woman started telling me about this variation of Christianity (as though I was foolish for not having the same upbringing as her), I became quite annoyed. I've always been somewhere in-between atheistic & agnostic, but have never tried to "convert" anybody to my way of thinking. The fact that this bitch was trying to tell me that her way of thinking was the best, and that her upbringing is right really irritated me. I became more and more aware of the crucifixes & hordes of Catholics in my area, and became concerned. It's like Captain Kirk said in the *STAR TREK* episode, "*The Trouble With Tribbles*", "*Too much of anything, even love isn't necessarily a good thing*". Truer words were seldom spoken. There's definitely too much Christianity out there, and no



Kung Fu mystics in *DEVILS, DRAGON'S AND VAMPIRES*



Gothic cat-fight in *DEVILS, DRAGON'S AND VAMPIRES*.



body agrees with my opinion that this is an enemy of true ethnic diversity ("ethnic diversity" is more than varied language & skin color; let's not forget culture & spirituality). I found it kind of ironic & hypocritical that the local Christians would wear the cross to show pride, when "pride" is one of their "7 Deadly Sins". Anybody who knows me is aware that I'm a loner who doesn't join cliques or follow the crowd. For whatever reason, I've usually avoided the old "go with the flow" approach. As Devo once said, "Irresponsible conformity is the downfall of modern man." When I see too much of something, I sometimes tend to rebel from it.

I became increasingly critical of the whole Judeo/Christian church (churches), and was wondering just why anybody would care about something which happened in the likes of Bethlehem or Nazareth 2000 years ago last Tuesday. If I were raised in Jerusalem, or some other part of the Middle East, I could see why such a religion would seem traditional, & appropriate. But this is America, the 21st century, damn it! I don't have an ounce of Middle Eastern blood in me, and couldn't care less what happened in ancient times, in a foreign country I've never been to and never will. I was, however, feeling left out. Being a skeptical atheist can get boring. Besides, I was ready for a change and a new gimmick. So I decided to dabble in religion, for the first time in my life. But the question was, just which religion? Which one should I toy around with? I thought long and hard. As an American, if I chose a faith, perhaps it should be that of Cherokee or Apache! Native American Shamanism was once practiced on the soil I live on (before my barbaric ancestors came and slaughtered the indigenous tribes), so it would make more sense to me than a set of values so foreign. But American Indians never really interested me. So then for the first time ever, I started thinking about my heritage; something I've always been cut off from, deprived of. I therefore studied the ancient mystics of Europe, like the Celts, Pagans & Druids. Suddenly, I actually had some pride for being Caucasian, because the topic of Pagan witchcraft is full of mystery and decadence. In other words, it's fascinating!

As someone raised on monster movies, horror stories, gothic styles and death rock music, I felt right at home in the "left hand path". For me, it was an act of rebellion, another cool way to tell society to fuck off, a way to stand my ground against intrusive, opinionated Christians, etc. But if I was going to master this gimmick and claim to be into the dark arts, I needed some background, and it was time to do some research: History is really interesting, especially how the Christian crusaders spread from the Middle East into Europe, "converting" the Europe-

ans into the semi-Islamic, Judeo Christian way of thinking. Anti-Pagan propaganda labeled the European customs (i.e. wicca and paganism) as "sinful", and thus whole cultures were butchered, converted or wiped out. In order for the Christians to accomplish this, I believe they needed a scapegoat, and that goat became known as "Satan". According to what I've read, his devil was based largely on the deity of "Pan", an old European god of lust. Pan was mischievous & lustful, and because this mythical character's nature wasn't of Christian/Middle Eastern values, he became a convenient target, and his horns & hooves were easy to re-interpret as something evil, or demonic. When I read about this, I thought, "Cool! I'm descended from the so-called Devil Worshipers!" I was really only into witchcraft on the Pepsi & Dorito's level (to me, Satanism is as harmless as Halloween and THE ADAMS FAMILY; and damn similar), much like the obligatory metal-heads who go through these phases, but when I opened the Satanic Bible and similar books, I read a lot of descriptions of the modern Satanist. Down to the tiniest of details, the analysis it fit me to a "T"! I began meeting actual Satanists and attending their macabre events, and even went to the home of the late Anton LaVey— and later met his daughter Karla LaVey (founder of the "First Satanic Church"). I made a lot of new friends and learned a lot about myself.

But as quickly as I got into the dark faith, I got out of it. It was the old slingshot effect (I got into it way over my head and then snapped back out of it, quite disgusted with the whole thing). It was fun for about a year, but I met a lot of psychos, druggies, unstable freaks, arrogant pricks, perverts and politically correct snobs. I still have my pentagrams and sport a "devil-ish" look (for the sole reason that it looks "cool"!), but my dealings in the

local occult groups disillusioned me. It was a fun period which did me a lot of good, and absolutely no harm at all, so I'm glad I took part. But I'm simply not a superstitious person, and I'm way too open-minded to accept any one religion and believe everyone else is wrong. However, I look back on that phase fondly, as its incredible experiences were very educational and helped me to do some much needed personal growth— and I also banged a lot of chicks in the process.

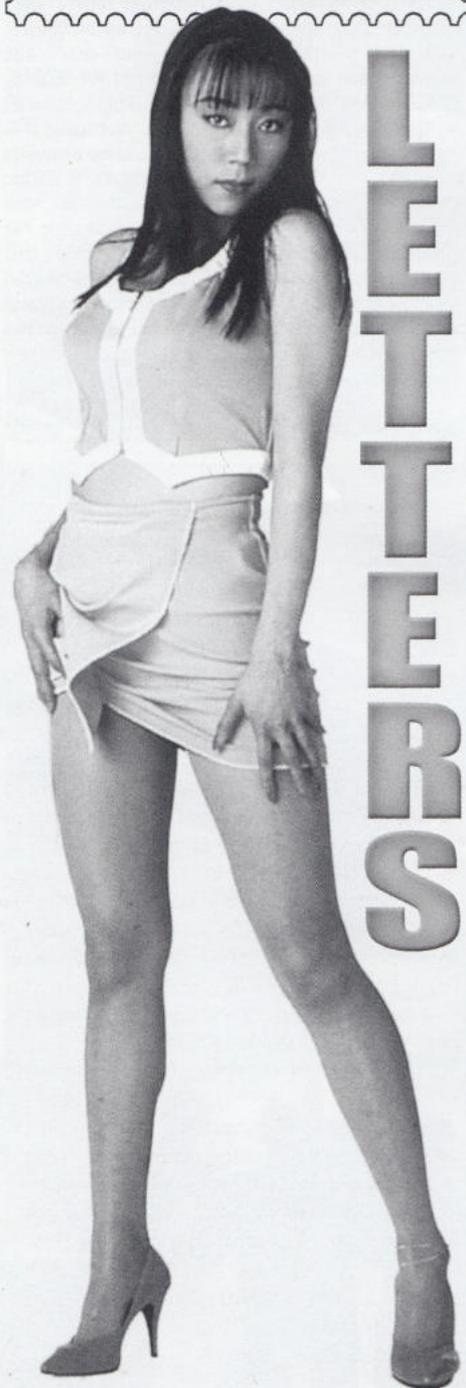
My temporary encounters with people from the First Satanic Church and other nearby groups (I met people from both the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set) was quite productive. It inspired me to get off my ass and finally write another script! It had been years since I made a film; the motivation just wasn't there. My year or so as a "warlock" (yeah right; whatever) was quite influential. I lost friends and had debates with Christians because I refused to accept their Middle Eastern views. These friendly arguments were amazing, and prompted me to think, "What if rival monks, of conflicting faiths, were forced to work together and tolerate each other?!" So I spent several months doing rough-drafts and re-writes, and came up with the script for DEVILS, DRAGONS AND VAMPIRES, which is in production as we speak— I mean, as I write this. Naturally, this feature-length video will have all the same elements as 1993's AGE OF DEMONS (marital arts, a gothic atmosphere, monsters, buxom females, punk rock and slapstick comedy), but with an added twist: For once, the Satanist is the good guy! I've made this wacky story about a team of heroes called the Heaven & Hell Squad, which consists of a sorcerer, a priest and a feng-shui, and how all three of these mystics must overcome their differences, and combine their three different types of mythical magic to defeat

(continued on page 4)



Top: Nina Kempf, Atty Ferry and Celia Damon.
Above: Damon vs. Paolo.
Below left: Paolo Quilici, Damon Foster, Becca Torez & Perry Wong. Below: Eric Matson, Damon Foster, Paolo Quilici & Phil D. Boteilho.





LETTERS

Damon-

I just picked up *O.C.: Godzilla 2000* and enjoyed it a great deal. I miss the Superhero magazine (*Heroes on Film*) you published briefly, but still use all three issues when compiling my "search" lists. I was especially intrigued by the letter you published from Erol Imre concerning Turkish superhero movies. I've been tracking alot of these titles down for several months now, and thought you might like some info on some of the titles you were interested in.

The two Turkish Batman films (BETMEN YARASA ADAM and FANTOMA ISTANBULDA BULUSALIM) appear to be lost. This also appears to be true for the Turkish Spider-man film, ORUMCEK ADAM. I have it on good authority that these films haven't ever appeared on tape, and probably never television either. The films in the ALTIN COCUK series do turn up occasionally on Turkish television, but I've been unable to locate copies. I don't know anything about the "Kilink" film you listed, but a different film in the series, KILINK VOY SE OLDUR, was broadcast on Turkish television and is available from Shocking Videos. The film TURIST OMER UZAY YOLUNDA or "Omer the Tourist in Star Trek" can be ordered from Uludag Video, a Turkish video outlet located in Brooklyn (go to www.uludagvideo.com).

As for other Turk Superhero movies, there are a few that haven't faded into obscurity. YILMAYAN SEYTAN is a fun remake of the American serial THE MYSTERIOUS DR. SATAN, SUPERADAM ISTANBUL DA features a Turkish version of Superman and has one of the longest fight scenes I've ever seen, on a freshly waxed floor, no less! SUPERMEN DONOYUR is a virtual remake of the first Christopher Reeve movie, on about 1/1000 of the budget. ORUMCEK features a motorcycle riding hero with a Spider on his chest. The three TARKAN films (TARKAN GUMUS EGER, TARKAN VIKING KANI and TARKAN ALTIN MEDALYON) are all worth checking out as well; think Conan the Barbarian, but skinnier.

A lot of these movies can be purchased from Shocking Videos. The Tarkan films are also available from Uludag Video. So, what are the chances that you could send me the address of this Erol Imre chap so I can get in touch with him? / Unfortunately, I lost his address. But Erol, if you're out there, keep in touch! Many of us are interested in Turkish superhero movies!!- DF/
David White
d-white@northwestern.edu

Dear Dfoster@sirius.com,

After reading *O.C.: Godzilla 2000*, I was laughing so hard from Charles Bowersock Jr.'s letter I practically had a nose bleed. Again, your magazine is full of great information and it was an entertaining read this evening. Highly enjoyed the GODZILLA 2000 review and agree with most of the review. Also, I was amazed at the information provided in "Kaizo Ningen Update" on Japanese superheroes. I would love to find something on Hurricane Polymar, this seems like a very interesting character and I wish that American comic books and Asian comic books would start

crossing over their characters. Wouldn't it be cool to see Spiderman team up with Hurricane Polymar or Batman with Shadowlady? This would give Anima/Manga better exposure to the mainstream American market. Food for thought. Keep on doing the fine work that you are doing with your publication....it's the best!

Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts,
Arbitrator Jazma Universe Online!
<http://www.jazmaonline.com/>

A RESPONSE TO LAST ISSUE'S HATEMAIL FROM "E":

Dear -E-,

You sniveling worm. You're a disgrace to the alphabet, or at least the letter E. You sniveling cowards are all alike, too chickenshit to even give your full names. Well here's a rebuttal to your points.....

1. Cleaning the cat box. Here's an idea: drop to all fours (you most likely do that pretty often anyway), open your lower jaw, and scoop out the shit with it. The meal will do you some good. Why waste a good magazine?

2. Spelling. Yeah, none of us can spell, but WE write for a magazine. You buy that magazine to jack off. /I must interject here, on the topic of spelling errors and poor grammar, for which I've been attacked before. I proofread OC over and over, and contrary to popular opinion, I do use a spell-check program! Even so, the deadlines demand I work fast, which means I'm rarely thorough in my proofreading. OC has no office, no real staff, and supplies no full-time day jobs for anybody. I'm rarely able to work on OC, so catching all the errors isn't possible. Also, there are slight differences between the programs on my computer, my publisher's computer, and the software & hardware used at the printers. So by the time the issue comes out, there are all these strange gaps and punctuation problems that were not visible on the original proofs that I was correcting. So if people still think I'm an illiterate moron just because OC's typing is less than perfect, they should know the facts. -DF/

3. Damon is a nazi? Well, here's some news: You're an asshole. If Damon were a nazi, he could get over it. You will ALWAYS be an asshole. Tough luck, I guess.

4. A refund? Fuck you. You bought it, you dumb shit. Try looking through something before you buy it next time, numb nuts. Obviously your literary desires begin and end with "Asian chicks with big tits..." Why read at all. Just buy a skin rag. Your level is obviously just looking at pictures.

As for liking Asian Cinema less, if a few words in a magazine can do that to you, then you're just a weak minded, sniveling loser. By all means contemplate suicide. Do the world a favor. I'd try seppuku if I were you. At least your death would

entertain.

OK jerkoff, here's some real philosophy for you. Instead of criticizing the people who are actually DOING SOMETHING, get off your lazy ass and try it yourself. Then you may have EARNED the right to be critical. If that's too much for you, fuck off and die screaming.

Best wishes,
John Emma
Japan, The Far East

Dear Damon Foster!

Just wanted to tell you in the first place that your mag has at least one reader in Germany (...me!). I'm quite a new reader (since O.C.: The Sammo Hung Issue- but managed to get a copy of Vol.3/#1 [January 1994], O.C.: The Ninja Issue, too!). I don't get the actual point that anonymous "-E-" guy wants to make in the letters section of the current issue (O.C.: Godzilla 2000). He obviously doesn't really know what he's talking about (why did he call you a nazi?). /For years, my personal approach to writing has caused all sorts of responses from people. My motto continues to be "Inform but Amuse". So unsuspecting readers (insecure ones in particular) buy OC and are expecting dead-serious critiquing, and some of these paranoid first-timers can't comprehend the fact that I joke around while I write my articles. The Politically Incorrect approach results in all sorts of hasty comments ("nazi", "offensive", "racist", "sexist", "illiterate", etc.) from disgruntled (and easily intimidated) readers who just don't get it. But low-self-esteem-endowed people like that overlook the fact that for every time I've upset any one person, there must be at least five people who found that joke humorous. I can't please all of the people all of the time, so I'm not trying to. -DF/. The articles in your mag are straight to the point & honest I especially loved the Samo Hung reviews (Samo Hung filmography in O.C.: The Sammo Hung Issue) and the whole Hung article in general - what a MASSIVE data collection! Thanks!!!! Keep up the good work!

Yours,
Yasha Seliger
Freiburg, Germany

Dear Damon,

You do a great job with your magazine, very informative. If it wasn't for the fact that I happened to pick up a copy of the "Godzilla" issue a while back, I would never have known about all the new Godzilla movies (not counting that awful Iguanadon, I mean um, American Godzilla). I picked up my 1st new Godzilla film at a convention (GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA) and it was like I was in heaven. I had no idea anyone still made good movies like that any more, just like the old ones (not quite as good but pretty damn close). After I finally ran out of Godzilla films, someone suggested Jackie Chan films; through which I discovered Michelle Yeoh, Moon Lee, Oshima, Sammo, etc. Needless to say, I have a strong dislike for Hollywood films if you can call them films (they seem more like music videos to me). The

main reason I have come to enjoy these films so much (especially Godzilla) is because they are professionally made & the subject matter is taken seriously by the actors, writers & directors.

I like what you said in your review of THE MIGHTY PEKING MAN, some people "force out fake laughs to make themselves feel like they're 'above a movie like this.'" I couldn't agree more. I can't stand these phony types who seem to feel that the only way to watch or make a film like this is to make fun of it. American films seem to be written & acted by fugitives from SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE or something. Anyway, thanks in part to your magazine I discovered a whole new world of highly enjoyable movies. One last thing. Where the hell did you find those videos starring such incredible beauties as Miki Sawaguchi & Mariko Morikawa among others? /Japan Video, a store in San Francisco's Japan Center. -DF/ Keep up the good work,
Guy
dublex@webtv.net

I'm new reading your marvelous OC. I brought the issue, GODZILLA 2000, and it was awesome! I found really interesting one letter from Germany, signed by a guy called Erol Imre. He was asking for you to put more Mexican wrestler/hero flicks. Yes, in fact it's pretty hard to put those masked heroes in OC, but I believe you already missed a lot of brand new flicks!, and I'm talking about the odd wrestling/action/horror ones! And those flicks aren't from the 60's & 70's era, I'm talking about the films made in early, mid and final of 90's!!! For example: -EL CHUPACABRAS (THE GOATSUCKER '94) -GUARDIANES DE LA DIMENSION PROHIBIDA ('96) -EL NAHUAL (Jason/Halloween-ish horror/gore; '96) -KATUWIRA (psychedelick sci-fi;'97) -LOLA LA TRAILERA 1, 2 & 3 (female spy/Mad Max!'87) -LA GUERRERA VENGADORA 1&2 (female warrior, some sci-fi) -RELAMPAGO (LIGHTNING, gadget car adventure; '89) -CRONOS (vampire, gothic)

And there's a lot more! Talking again about wrestlers flicks, well in the 90's the productions were dead, but in the fall of this year comes the (same as Godzilla's newest title) EL SANTO 2000 (Jr. of course)! I have my site in which I trade and sell some of these flicks! It's called "Aztec Pit of Blood", it's full in English, with brief synopsis of each flick. Mr. Foster, feel free to ask for whatever you need for your OC mag, I'm sure I can help you! Cheers, Mr. Foster; I'm now addicted to OC (I just hope I'll still find your mag here in Mexico).

Frank Uribe
frank_uribe@yahoo.com
<http://paginas.infoSEL.com/miembros/fernando70/Archivos/Englishcatalog2000.com>

Dear Damon,

I know you won't remember me, I'm an old reader from about 10 years ago. By a happy accident I saw the "new" OC at a book store here and picked it up. Though you've toned it down a bit, it's still O.C. I love your language and style of writing, typos and all. It's refreshing in this age

of "political correctness" to see someone still has the balls to speak their mind.

Who the hell is that -E- character? Is this "hate mail" something new? The guy sounds like a real winner. It's easy to be critical, but I'm sure it's a lot tougher to actually produce something. Personally, I always enjoyed your "disaffected punk" style of writing. In fact, while I probably wouldn't really watch too many of the movies, I enjoy you and your staff's way of writing about them. Well, that's about it. I hope to see many more O.C.'s, and I'll be ordering some back orders.

Bob Ross,
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Damon,

Just wanted to drop you a line to congratulate you on another excellent issue of OC. Nobody else does justice to so many genres. Anyway, regarding GAMERA STRIKES BACK, I've seen just enough of it to confirm that it is GAMERA VS. BARUGON (Sandy Frank dub) rather than WAR OF THE MONSTERS (AIP-TV dub). The Sandy Frank dub was done in Hong Kong and is characterized by the usual voices from HK dubs. Beyond that, I can't say. I've only seen the first five minutes or so.

As a postscript to O.C.: The Sammo Hung Issue, isn't it weird that MARTIAL LAW got canned almost simultaneously with your coverage of it? /Once again, I missed the boat. -DF/ I saw Arsenio Hall on THE TONIGHT SHOW a few months ago badmouthing it. I thought it was pretty jerky of him, especially since he was the least effective part of the show. Oh well, it's a moot point now. Chuck Norris gets favored over a Chinese martial artist yet again.
Christopher Elam
Reeves, LA

Dear Damon,

While looking up something in O.C.: The John Woo Issue, I came upon a review for LICENSE TO STEAL which contained a major mistake. Michiko Nishiwaki no more appears in this film than the editor of O.C. does! It's Filipino/American Agnes Aurelio who plays the villainess in LICENSE TO STEAL, not Japanese actress Michiko Nishiwaki (the latter, incidentally, now lives in .LA.; she's a single parent and works as a stuntwoman). /Wow, really?! I keep hearing stories of all these Asian stars now living in America. It makes me wonder why so few of them make appearances at conventions, etc. Somebody like Michiko Nishiwaki, who's been in assorted genres, would be great to do a magazine interview with!! Does anybody know how I would go about contacting her, or other stars?! -DF/ The two women may share a similar hair-style, but otherwise do not resemble each other. Speaking of corrections, why did no one write to complain that the editor got the ends of two John woo movies wrong? The three heroes of A BETTER TOMORROW 2 are very much alive at the end (granted, the editing could have made that clearer). Likewise, hero Wei Pai is alive at the end of LAST HURRAH FOR CHIVALRY.
Lana Zukowski
Phoenixville, PA

EDITORIAL CONTINUED...

the local villains. The idea is that the feng-shui, skilled in Taoism would summon the power of "Chi", while the Christian would use the power of his lord Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the Pagan warlock would enlist the help of his devil leader, Satan. The three powers would unite and create a positive force able to destroy a marauding monster.

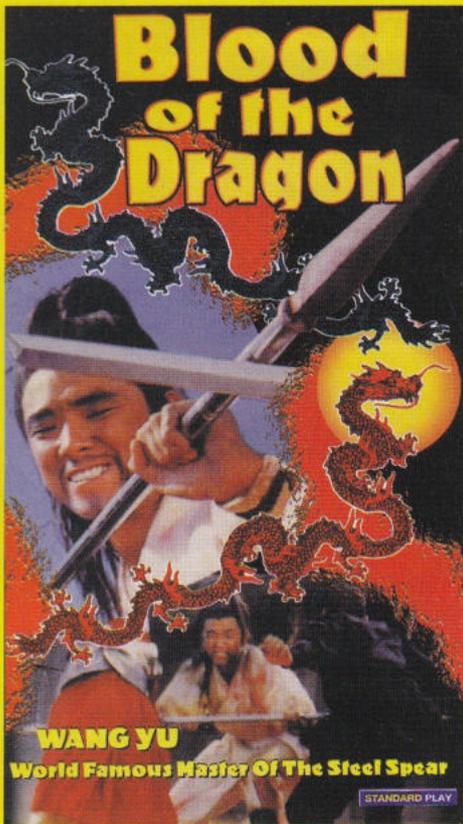
But already, I reached a snag. As I understand it, true Satanists (technically, they're atheists with a more cynical attitude) do not interpret Satan as an evil god/deity or any such living creature— that's a Christian character. The worship of a horned goat-god is largely the work of Hollywood and the media. As Anton LaVey said in the Satanic Bible, "Mankind has always created his gods, they did not create him." So this dilemma kinda' threw a monkey wrench into my whole script. I wanted an accurate portrayal of a Satanist, and not one which involved the sacrifice of animals & people or other such nonsense shoved down our throats by the likes of ROSEMARY'S BABY, THE DEVIL'S RAIN or RACE WITH THE DEVIL. So in order for DDV's Satanic character to summon the power of his great devil Satan, I had to offer a skeptical, scientific, rational explanation for the conjuring of such magic. So I ended up going the "telekinesis" route (explaining that Satan is all in the mind— and the mind is a powerful thing), because although I don't believe in that either, I think it makes more sense than a subterranean goat carrying a pitchfork who wants our souls.

DDV, however, will actually be light on substance and heavy on flash. There's really no message in DDV, despite the slight doses of history & culture which are just barely visible among the swordfights,

gore, gunshots, one-liners and titties. My hope is to complete DDV in early 2001. DDV shall be complete by the time the next issue of OC comes out, and that issue will have ads & ordering information. If it's the hit that 1993's AGE OF DEMONS was, then I might make a sequel, and if this happens, I'm interested in recruiting any local (Northern California's Bay Area) artists, actors or actresses willing to take part in these eccentric student films.

Sincerely Mine,
Damon Foster
<http://www.capecod.net/~jhorton/foster.htm>
DAMON FOSTER, P.O. BOX 576, FREMONT, CA 94537
MORE PICTURES ON PAGE 48!





王 WANG YU



หวัง อพย

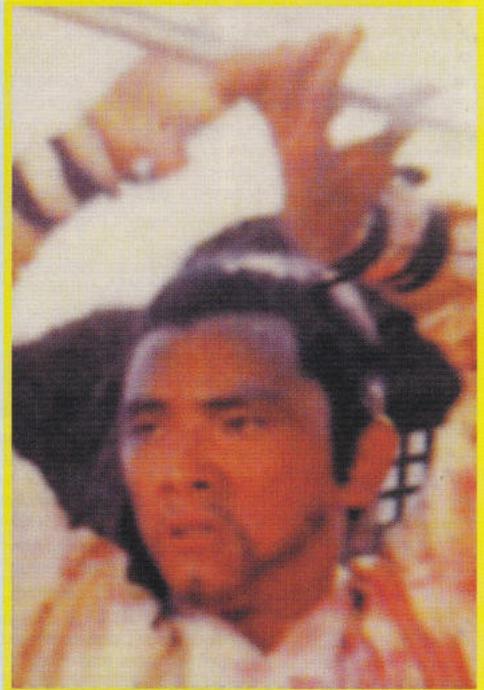
AKA: Wong Yu, Jimmie Wong Yu, Wang Zhengquan
 Date of Birth: March 18th, 1943
 Place of Birth: Wuxi (AKA Wushi), in the Jiangsu (AKA Chiangsu) province of Shanghai.

by Damon Foster

The genre of Chinese sword movies dated back to the silent period, thanks to the various filmed stage-plays meant to preserve old Peking opera performances, but as the years went on and sound was added to film, non-acrobatic actors who specialized in dialogue-heavy drama and singing became the stars of such films. According to an interview with Liu Chia

Liang (one of the only pioneers in the old days, to actually know martial arts) in the documentary CINEMA OF VENGEANCE, most of the sword fights were made up on the spot, and from the looks of available footage, it certainly showed. Things began to change in the early 1960s though. HK audiences had grown tired of historical musicals, and were flocking to the more thrilling samurai movies imported from Japan. So it was decided, finally, to hire real martial artists, or at least, athletic performers, to stage the battles, and star. Predictably, many of the "daintier" actors and actresses began to shy away from the more action-oriented movies being made in HK, and oldtimers stuck to dramas and "classics" like THE KINGDOM AND THE BEAUTY, THE GRAND SUBSTITUTION, THE THREE KINGDOMS and LAST WOMAN OF SHANG. It was at this point that "tougher" stars were hired. So timing couldn't have been better for Wang Yu. He had moved from his hometown of Wuxi, and came to HK in 1960.

In an interview (pardon the broken English) also in CINEMA OF VENGEANCE, Wang Yu stated: "I was a Hong Kong swimming champion during 1962, 1963, 1964 and the summertime because we have water polo contest. I was fighting, so I was be forbidding to continue the contest. And I had a chance, that told me Shaw student need some people can really know kung fu, can fight." He went on to say that out of three thousand people, only four (including Wang Yu) were chosen at this series of auditions. Wang Yu never studied a lot of kung fu, but as a youngster, had become quite adept at streetfighting; in one interview, he stated that he had studied some karate (there are those who say he earned a Black Belt, but this is just an unconfirmed rumor) in his youth. He was naturally athletic, being a former swimming champion. He entered the Shaw Brothers in the early 1960s, auditioning for their 1963 movie TIGER BOY (an important film historically, as it was allegedly rather bloody for it's time and was a mile-stone in HK martial arts movies). While I'm on the topic of TIGER BOY, I pause here to ask if any of you have this elusive ground-breaker on tape! This



rare film deserves to be reviewed, I've never seen it. Anyway, like Yue Hwa, Chang Lei, Lo Lieh, and other then-young actors, Wang Yu began appearing in Shaw swordplay fantasies. So the 1960s ushered in a whole new generation of actors; there were many sword films in HK, but Wang Yu had a certain charisma, and his movies, like *TWIN SWORDS* and *THE ASSASSIN* were box office hits. In the 1994, documentary *CINEMA OF VENGEANCE*, Wang claimed that after his first two or three Shaw films, he had gained enough experience to know how to act, and do cinematic fighting. Then he states: "Then a good script come in; *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN*. Very difficult, you know; because I am used to using right-hand." He also elaborates how the script involved the character's right hand being chopped off, and that it was difficult practicing to become a left-handed swordsman. Later, the narrator states: "*THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* was such a smashing success that it spawned numerous sequels, even after Wang Yu left the Shaw Brothers." *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* became the most successful of the 1960s sword-films; in fact, today *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* ties with *A TOUCH OF ZEN* (see *O.C.: The Sammo Hung Issue*) as being the most remembered and nostalgic of the 1960s sword capers. *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* made its premiere on July 26, and quickly became the first Hong Kong movie to gross one million HK dollars (I differentiate because HK dollars are worth less than half of U.S. dollars, or at least they were back then). The likes of *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* and *THE TWIN SWORDS* had a little bloodshed & vengeance, which is what made them different than the previous wave of HK martial arts films; the B&W Wong Fei Hung oldies (starring Kwan Tak Hing), which had faded in popularity. Other HK martial arts films of the period included James Bond ripoffs like *THE BRAIN STEELERS*, *OPERATION MACAO*, *SUMMONS TO DEATH* and *JAMES BOND: CHINESE STYLE*, but these movies paled in popularity, had a limited shelf-life, and couldn't compete with Wang Yu's timeless sword capers.

In the January 1969 edition of *Southern Screen*, Wang's growing interest in business & investments is mentioned. The article was titled "Wang Yu Settles Down" (a catchy eye-grabber, or "scoop"), but during the piece, Wang (called a "million dollar actor") insisted "Filming is my way of life", and "Who says I'm going to give up?" Then the article finally goes on to elaborate on the headline, explaining that Wang recently expressed the wish to switch to modern roles as a change from his usual costume parts. This didn't mean he dislikes swordplay roles; rather, he believed an actor must not be typecast. The article went on to read: "The handsome he-man, star of such knight-hood classics as *THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* and *THE ASSASSIN*, has undergone a striking change in character. Hitherto, he had a reputation as a flashy, rip-roaring type. But all that has changed. Nowadays, he's soft-spoken, dresses conservatively and drives an elegant saloon, instead of his former racer." Looking

back on it, this article appears to be a publicity deal, to prepare audiences for the regular dramas & love stories he was about to appear in, such as the rarely seen *MY SON*, which also came out in 1969.

When politician Chou En Lai criticized HK's swordplay thrillers as being cheap imitations of the Japanese product, Run Run Shaw decided to experiment with another form of action film which hadn't been popular in a few years. From here it would appear that he handed the concept

over to Wang Yu, since in separate interviews, both Wang Yu and Shaw claimed to have instigated the rebirth in the new age of fist films, that which would be called the Kung Fu Movie. Regardless of who's idea it was, it's becoming apparent that differences were separating Wang Yu from the Shaw Brothers. So Wang Yu's final movie for the Shaw Brothers was 1970's *THE CHINESE BOXER* (which broke all box office records in HK & Taiwan, and turned Wang Yu into the first Chinese actor to become a millionaire— by HK standards).. According to the narrator in *CINEMA OF VENGEANCE*: "Wang Yu's biggest film was *THE CHINESE BOXER*, in which only empty-hand fighting was employed." Wang Yu himself had this to say about *THE CHINESE BOXER*: "That picture was my idea and I make the script, I direct, I'm leading actor; because I have a good idea." Like I mentioned earlier, however, the Shaws claim it was all their concept— according to a piece I read in some old Bruce Lee book (I don't recall the title, but the book was big and red) many years ago last Thursday. According to the Shaw interview, Run Run Shaw (concerned over Chu En Lai's attacks on sword cinema) sought out history books and decided to make a movie set around the time of the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. Regardless of who truly created *THE CHINESE BOXER*, Wang Yu's interview has him saying "Karate is so powerful," and "Chinese kung fu also is so powerful", and it was decided to bring them both together, in one film. What followed was a clip of the obligatory Chinese vs. Japanese battle, pitting kung fu against karate— however, the clip isn't from *THE CHINESE BOXER*, but a later film, *WANG YU: KING OF BOXERS* (AKA just *KING OF BOXERS*, *TEN FINGERS OF STEEL* and *SCREAMING TIGER*). While further elaborating on *THE CHINESE BOXER*, Wang Yu makes the following statement: "I showed this script to Mr. Raymond Chow. He was fully supporting me at that time; he's knows I have good experience and I know how to fighting. So this is good idea, and he let me try it." Wang implied that Run Run Shaw was less supportive of the concept of *THE CHINESE BOXER* (despite it being a success), but Shaw Bros. Executive Producer Raymond Chow (who, about a year later would defect from the Shaws to form their biggest rival, Golden Harvest) saw promise in the concept and gave Wang Yu the "go ahead".

Special thanks go out to the amazing Seaton Chang, for supplying me with invaluable, precious information and a magazine called *Hong Kong Movie News* (dated December, 1970!) which ran a piece written on the set of *THE CHINESE BOXER*: "In mid-1969, Wang Yu had requested Shaw Brothers to allow him to direct his own film, *THE CHINESE BOXER*, and his wish was granted. The movie-goers had shown much interest in Wang Yu's first efforts to direct a film, and so they were eager to watch him in his work. All the people, including his movie colleagues, were astounded by his unusual talent & energy. And they admired him not only for his acting ability but also for his capacity in making *THE CHINESE BOXER* a great film. As a director, he went about his work humbly, modestly and diligently. It was rather fortunate for him that his lack of experience as a movie director had been compensated by the guidance given him by Tang Chia (the boxing instructor), Wu Szu-yuen & Yang Ching-chen (the assistant directors), Hua Shan (the cameraman) and several young men. All of them were experienced in the movie field. In addition to them, Wang Yu's colleagues (Lo Lieh, Fang Mien, Kang Hua, Wang Chung and Chao Hsiung) were also of great help to him. *THE CHINESE BOXER* is a magnificent, action-packed picture, proving once more Wang Yu's talent. Its plot concerns the fierce clashes between Japanese-trained judo ruffians and the patriotic Chinese boxers in the period just after the Chinese Revolution. It has been a box-office hit in Taiwan. It's also interspersed with scenes of love, sex, as well as tender emotions. Just before this film was completed, Wang Yu, the well-known swordplaying actor suddenly left HK for Taiwan. It cannot be denied that Wang Yu could one day become a fine director if he continued to devote his energy in this field. But now he seems to have ruined



his own career as a young promising director by his quitting the Shaw Brothers."

Despite its importance historically, and the backing of a major company like the Shaw Brothers, *THE CHINESE BOXER* is pretty cheap when seen today; it's stupid at times. Jimmy Wang Yu was now a huge star in Asia, and it seemed he was going up hill. Wang Yu: "That was first kung fu movie. Because of this one, a lot of directors copy my idea, they make very similar script. So then, Bruce Lee has opportunity to come back to Hong Kong, to make a picture— to be success." The Shaw Brothers could have easily afforded to give *THE CHINESE BOXER* a better budget. Maybe this was why Wang decided he needed more control of his films, and why he left them during the movie's final edit. The flick was successful enough that it inspired a whole new age in fist films; shortly afterwards the Shaws invested more money in the genre to make the derivative yet superior *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH* (their first international hit). Though his contract had not yet expired, Yu had left the Shaw moguls, apparently convinced that his progress was impeded by his contract (negotiated before anyone knew how hot a property he'd become), and he took them to court. The Shaws tried to sue him for breach of contract, and made it known to all rival film companies, that Wang Yu was not allowed to make movies in HK. This, however, didn't stop him from working with other companies (including a lucrative contract or two with Golden Harvest), shooting in Taiwan (where he founded his own production companies), Japan, Thailand, and Australia.

Life for Wang was well; he married Lin Tsui, and they produced two daughters (one of which is Linda Wong Sing-ping, who would become a Taiwanese pop star many years later). He and his wife (and their daughters) moved to Taipei, on "Grass Mountain", a gorgeous villa. The whole family was big on horseback riding, swimming, and automobile racing. Wang Yu loved fast cars and initially owned a Porsche, a BMW, a Mercedes Benz, and didn't stop there. Wang would become the first kung fu star to own a Rolls Royce. Later on, both Lo Lieh and Tony Liu would also get a Rolls Royce each, but unlike Wang's theirs were used cars. A year or two later, it's said that Bruce Lee too ordered one, but died before delivery.

He still had the rights to his "one-armed swordsman" character, and so his first solo project was the legendary Japanese film *ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* (AKA *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL*). Japan's Zato Ichi movies were originally the work of Daiei, who dropped the concept when the movies lost popularity at the box office. So Toho Co. picked up the reigns and took over. Toho wanted to





even has two different endings: The one we've all seen ends with both Zato Ichi emerging victorious. But supposedly, when Katsu wasn't looking, Wang Yu took the liberty of shooting an extra insert where he gets up and leaves, leaving us to think that he, like Zato Ichi, survived the battle and won. Yet, his choreography (especially in his various, later "one armed" movies) began to rely heavily on Zatoichi-style camera setups. Regardless, ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN was a decent enough hit, and why not? It combined a Japanese originator with Wang Yu's own successful format, and helped to bring back a slight revival in sword film popularity, at a time when Bruce Lee's empty-handed chop-socky was about to

break box office records. ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN never had a sequel but an imitation or two was inevitable, such as the Chinese ripoffs (which don't have anything to do with Wang Yu) ZATO ICHI DIES and BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE (AKA "The Blind Swordsman's Revenge"), reviewed on page 32. As I understand it, the "flying guillotine" weapon was a Shaw Brothers invention. Speaking of which, the Shaws were understandably upset with Wang for deserting and then making an unauthorized, hit sequel (ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN) to their ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN. Their retaliation was their own alternate version of ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN; the remake NEW ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN (1971), which highlighted some of the Shaws' newer young stars like Ti Lung and David Chiang (AKA David Chiang & David Chang). Confused yet?!

Though they made excellent movies, the Shaw Brothers held their actors by the lychee nuts. So in the mid-1970s, David Chiang (like Wang Yu & Raymond Chow before him), left the Shaw Brothers as well. Chiang was at one point, the Shaw Brothers "New One-Armed Swordsman", so to cash in on this, he reprised his role when he teamed up with producer Huang Feng (formerly of Golden Harvest) and of course, the original "One-Armed Swordsman" himself, Jimmy Wang Yu. This latest team-up movie, THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMEN (plural), brought both heroes (and a one-armed villain; played by Lo Lieh—confused yet?) together, and seems to have been made just to spite the Shaws. The movie is okay, but it ends similar to that of ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARM SWORDSMAN in that once again, both heroes end the film dueling each other—only this time, it freeze frames, we never see the outcome.

Though the old Kwan Tak Hing dramas (B&W "Wong Fei Hung" movies of the 1940s and 1950s) offered the first hint of a possible kung fu movie boom, we really have Jimmy Wang Yu, and his former colleagues like the Shaw Brothers & director Chang Cheh to thank for the kung fu movie genre, as we know it today. Wang Yu worked magic with very few actual kung fu skills. It's been commonly reported (in the English-speaking world) that his career took a nose dive after his first two Golden Harvest movies (THE ONE ARMED BOXER and BEACH OF THE WAR GODS). Granted, his independent movies of the mid-to-late 1970s did not have the commercial impact of THE ONE ARMED SWORDSMAN or THE CHINESE BOXER, but the movies still entertained (and many were major commercial hits in Asia), as Wang Yu continued to go all-out. It's unfortunate that while many writers in Asian film fandom have discussed his 1960s films, most have labeled his 1970s movies (made by Lo Wei and others), as being insignificant; the genre has largely been ignored; as though Wang Yu simply disappeared off the face of the earth in 1973. It's as if Wang's ongoing battle with the Shaw Brothers really killed his career, when in fact he made numerous decent martial arts movies in the years that followed. After Bruce Lee, Golden Harvest's only strong box office draws were the Hui Brothers, so they were really grasping at straws by thinking Wang Yu could

help them (Sammo Hung's movies did not start catching on until WARRIORS 2). Though Bruce Lee's skills in authentic kung fu made him an international star and cultural icon, Wang Yu made several entertaining yet under-rated movies at the same time as Bruce's films. In 1973, when Lee was being "Mr. Macho" in ENTER THE DRAGON, Wang Yu went against the heroic "he-man" stereotype by running over an old lady in KNIGHT ERRANT, a wacky Taiwanese caper. In the movie, Wang allowed himself to be beaten up by a tubby little woman, and when driving his taxi over her body didn't work, he's forced to zap her (an unarmed woman) to death with a nearby electric cable! Bruce Lee never would have had the guts to end a movie this way! As the years went on, Wang Yu had to find more ways to make his flicks stand out from the average kung fu movies of the 1970s. In the documentary THE TOP FIGHTER, the narrator summed it up pretty well: "After breaking away from the Shaw Brothers, Wang Yu worked for many independent companies, and showed that he had an unusually creative side to him. His choice of characters both for himself and his opponents kept him popular well into the 1970s." In the early 1970s, Wang Yu made many exciting yet under-rated films, thanks in part to stuntmen like Tommy Lee, who went on to choreograph some other movies, and even star in a couple of his own, but he never hit the big time as an actor.

In 1973, Wang Yu's reputation as a trouble maker got its first notoriety. An article in Cinemat (August, 1973) had the following headline: "Is it News At all? Wang Yu Had a Fight with Someone." The piece went on to read: "It is no news that Wang Yu



has had another fight with someone, this time in Thailand. The reasons for Wang's getting involved in so many fights could be that, firstly, he is the most manly of all men, always ready to interfere or help when he sees injustice being done. Secondly, Wang Yu, rated the superstar of action films, would perhaps like to show himself to be an invincible fighter, both on screen and in reality. Thirdly, Wang Yu is a character that bends to no harsh treatment but readily compromises with friendly gestures. Finally, regarded as a box office guarantee, Wang always works under great mental pressure. This coupled with the too hot and too humid climate of Thailand, makes one easily lose one's temper, and hence a fight." As we shall see, his offscreen fights would become a regular occurrence in the years to follow.

As the 1970s rolled along, Wang Yu made what I can describe as "too many movies"! As a fan of the genre, I didn't know this was possible; making "too many"! I feel that where Wang Yu made his big mistake was running his "one-armed fighter" into the dirt. THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN made its point, and THE ONE-ARMED BOXER has its moments. But obsolete repetition set in (big time!) when he made stuff like the disappointing ONE-ARMED VS. NINE KILLERS. I had thought this would be a sequel to ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, because of the setting. Yet his heroic Liu Cheng-I is more of a fist-fighter than a swordsman, and the movie is confusing with stupid plot twists. Through out the movie, we're lead to believe he's got only his right arm (as opposed to his more wellknown characters, who are lefties), until that gets chopped off in the final duel. Just when we think he's now the "Armless Boxer", he reveals his left arm was hidden in his clothes, tucked away, all along! So he's still a one-armed man, but now he's a left-handed martial artist, again. Adding to the con-

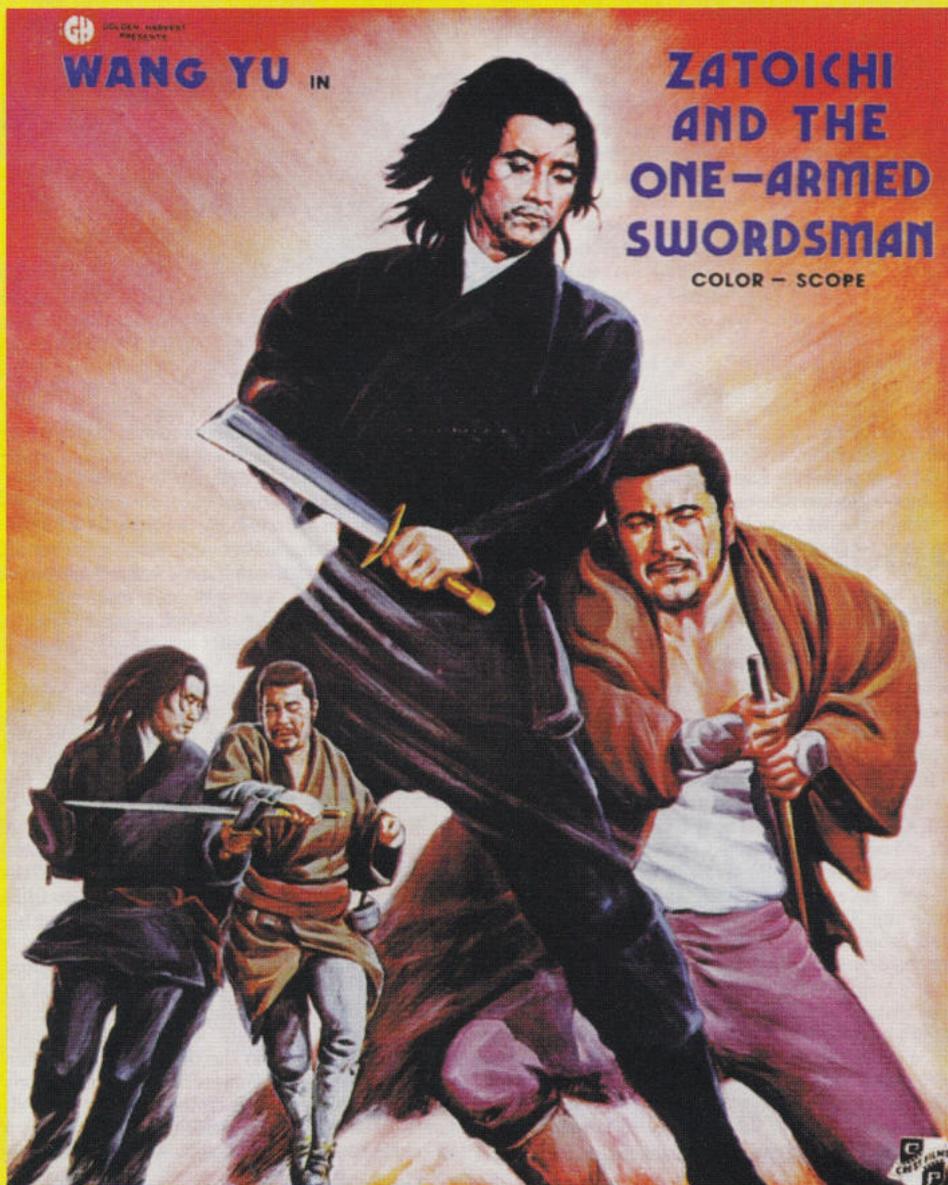
deviate slightly from the Daiei format, and the series took on an experimental slant. The reason Wang Yu made ZATOICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL was because Zatoichi films were popular in all asian film markets. By putting "One Arm" in an Ichi film, it guaranteed solid box office through out the East, particularly in HK and Taiwan. The Zatoichi films were kind of stuck in a rut of routine formulas, so maybe Katsu thought Wang Yu would bring some new lifeblood into the series. Back in 1971, co-productions between Japanese and Chinese were rare. But Japanese cinema was in a slump, so more and more Japanese began working on Chinese kung fu films during its wave of popularity. Many Japanese were embarrassed about this, and assumed Chinese aliases! Even Sonny Chiba was approached about working on a HK movie with Bruce Lee of all people, but Chiba declined because at that time, he had never heard of Bruce Lee, and also he wasn't impressed by the Chinese movies he had seen. Though Yasuaki Kurata & Riki Hoshimoto were working in Chinese movies playing Japanese villains, ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN was unique in that Shintaro Katsu played a hero, the same Zato Ichi (means roughly, the "Blind One") seen in numerous Japanese samurai movie hits from throughout the 1960s. By bringing both film series (Wang Yu's One-Armed Swordsman and Daiei's Zato Ichi) together, Asian cinema had its biggest barrier breaker since Toho's KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (1962). I guess the official rumor, fueled by the old KUNG FU:CINEMA OF VENGEANCE author, was that Shintaro Katsu & Wang Yu clashed terribly behind-the-scenes. Wang Yu spent so much of the rest of his film career destroying "beastly Japanese", that something must have been sticking in his craw. It's rumored that the movie



Wang Yu and Ros Spiers in THE MAN FROM HONG KONG.



Right: (l to r) Chang Yi, Wang Yu, Chen Sing and Kam Kang in DRAGON SQUAD!



fusion, and a sense of irony, a treacherous woman (via subtitles) says to him: "You're a real one-armed king boxer!" Don't get me wrong— ONE ARMED AGAINST NINE KILLERS is action-packed and decent fun; there's enough energetic fighting to make this confusing mess of a film decent, and it's about average, worthy of the two stars David McRobie gave it. But the movie is a classic example of Wang Yu's deterioration: The movie lacks originality and a coherent script, and instead plays it safe via the predictable format of revenge. At about this time, other last-ditch efforts came out, like ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY (1976), and ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY FIGHTS AGAINST ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY (Golden Harvest; 1976), according to [The Encyclopedia of Martial Arts Movies](#). However, the book fails to review either movie. Researching for this issue had me carefully examining the credits for ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY, and comparing it with the American video-release we know as POINT THE FINGER OF DEATH, and I've not only come to the conclusion that ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY and POINT THE FINGER OF DEATH are the same film, but that ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY FIGHTS AGAINST ONE-ARMED CHIVALRY is just another alternate title of the exact same film. I could be proven wrong again if somebody supplies a videotape though.

He did his own stunts in modern day action films, directed his own movies, and dealt with the triads behind-the-scenes (not uncommon in the Chinese film industry). Stuntmen hated working with him because he didn't pull his punches. He's been considered a "Chinese Clint Eastwood", because of some roles where he played "Dirty Harry" type characters; his role in BEACH OF THE WAR GODS is a good example. Depending on who you ask, Wang Yu could be considered a hasbeen in the late 1970s, because audiences were flooded with a plague of chop sockey films, and the taste for the genre was dying out. By this time, it didn't matter much to Wang, because he and his three daughters lived in a large, luxurious home; a blue & white building that looked like a palace.

In 1974, Golden Harvest began work on their first major international movie since Bruce Lee's ENTER THE DRAGON. It seems that many HK kung fu stars got international exposure through East-West co-productions; Lee did ENTER, Ti Lung did CALL HIM MR. SHATTER, David Chiang did SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA, Yueh Hua did AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN, Lo Lieh appeared in Italian capers like THREE SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT and THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER, Jackie Chan's American debut was THE BIG BRAWL, and even Bruce Li starred opposite Bruce Baron in DRAGON FORCE. Wang Yu's turn up at bat was THE MAN FROM HONG KONG (Golden Harvest; 1974), where he appeared with former James Bond actor George Lazenby (who Golden Harvest had





signed-on to do no less than three movies) and the two of them became good friends (good drinking partners too). According to an article in the Chinese newspaper *Golden Movie News* (July; 1975), Raymond Chow took *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG* to the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, where it was "the most sought after film in the marketplace". Before the festival was over, the movie's rights had been sold to 12 European countries (U.S. rights were picked up by 20th Century Fox). Despite a decent budget & epic locales, it's a pretty stupid movie, and today is only of value because it officially gave Wang Yu his Western nickname, Jimmy Wang Yu. Though the movie itself has been forgotten, the name hasn't; round eyes like myself have called him "Jimmy" ever since. *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*, looking back on it, is really dumb. But I do recall reading some interesting behind the scenes stuff. Wang Yu was injured when he jumped a great distance from a glider (Wang does most of his own stunts) and though he didn't suffer any broken bones, he did have some internal bleeding; and George Lazenby's hand caught on fire when he removed his flame-proof jacket at the wrong time (eye-witnesses said Wang Yu jumped onto George's back and the two of them rolled on the Golden Harvest floor until the fire was out— and then George had to spend some days in the hospital). As the story goes, Lazenby had originally negotiated with Golden Harvest about appearing in *GAME OF DEATH*, but some how the plans got changed and he ended up in *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*, *STONER* and *QUEEN'S RANSOM* (AKA "International Assassins", and "Operation Regina").

Perhaps every HK movie star was involved with organized crime at some point, and it appears that Wang Yu was no exception; he occasionally got in trouble. It would seem he may have been depressed & a little intoxicated, over the mid-1970s divorce from his wife Jeanette Lin Tsui (the break-up is said to have happened around 1975, resulting in a full-fledge divorce by 1976. According to an article which appeared in the HK movie magazine *Milky Way* (July 1976), called "Wang Yu, How Much Foolery Have You Done?", Wang Yu was involved in another fight. It happened in the restaurant Han Hwa Kwok, in Taiwan, and he was prosecuted. Details are sketchy, but it seems a death was involved (however, I should point it it's never been said that Wang Yu killed anybody during this encounter). According to the awkwardly translated interview, his account of the incident went something like this: "Being a real man, I deny nothing, but I really didn't do such thing. I am innocent. I'm just the one who observed the occurrence of such a conflict, but I may say that those people who fought are my friends." The article went on to state that many people thought Wang Yu was simple-minded, having a reputation for doing silly things without being aware of it. To quote *Milky Way's* broken English: "He always loses himself but not realizes. He can't make sure of that whether those people he makes friends with are good or bad. So these people, his so-called 'friends' cause him so much troubles." Wang Yu further elaborated by stating: "I know what kind of people they are, but I don't mind, because I need friends, especially after Lin Tsui left me. Lin Tsui is the only woman I love most in my life, her leave is actually a great hit to me!" Wang Yu seemed extremely depressed when speaking about this woman. Regardless, after the incident, Wang Yu decided not to return to the restaurant. He sought to clean up his

life, and put ballrooms and casinos on a lower priority.

Wang Yu's mood seemed to change a year later, according to an interview in *Cinemart* (October 1977), another HK movie magazine. This article, tentatively translated as "This Is The Style of Wang Yu", said that after the incident in the Han Hwa Kwok restaurant, this was the second time Wang Yu returned to Hong Kong. By now he was a lively person again, but had changed a lot and done some personal growth after his divorce. He took the responsibility of educating his daughters, being a positive role model to them. Though he had to behave better, the article went on about how wine & friends always get him into embarrassing situations. Wang Yu regards chivalry highly, and liked to fight for his friends (especially when he's had one too many glasses of Tsing Tao). When asked about whether he'll re-marry, young Wang Yu would say, "I am so free now. Why should I get married?" Among other women, he had relationships with both Tsui Tai Ching and a young Bridgitte Lin Ching Hsia! However, by 1977, Jimmy was definitely remarried, but there was great strife between his daughters and his new wife. Other newspaper articles and tabloids continued to talk of Wang Yu. Wang Yu had gotten a reputation of being a playboy, and it's been said that he publicly dated Jeanette Lin Tsui (his ex-wife) when she was married to another director with a son. It's been said that eventually, the director committed suicide. Wang's controversial antics were also mentioned in *THE TOP FIGHTER*, where the following is said: "One of the reasons he became so popular, was due to the fact that he seemed to get carried away by his movie roles—and tried to re-enact them in real life! It wasn't unusual to read about Wang Yu fighting a dozen men, and getting the better hand."

Wang Yu's movies weren't popular in America (though in the 1980s, several did appear on late night TV out here, such as *THE IRON MAN*, *WANG YU: KING OF BOXING* and of course his international caper *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*), but today several of his movies are in local videostores. In the 1970s, it seems he was quite a workaholic, working his fingers to the bone, making enough money as actor and director; and apparently investing his profits wisely. Though his cinematic career was down-sized by the late 1970s, he was involved in many "businesses."

Back in France, where at one time, Wang Yu was more popular than Bruce Lee (what do you expect from a country who worshipped Jerry Lewis?!), a lot of the viewers were feeling misled when the credits of a film listed Wang Yu and featured some other young whippersnapper (whom many of the more modern kung fu fans preferred over the original). Be that as it may, a lot of people couldn't tell which guy was in which film. Shaw Brothers, who possibly had a grudge against Wang Yu, seemed to decide they still wanted a Wang Yu of their own. They decided at first to name the new guy Huang Yu, and later opted to call him "Young" Wang Yu, AKA "Yung Wang Yu." It appears that Wang Yu (will the real Wang Yu please stand up?!) was being followed by the same types of

ripoff artists who cluttered the Bruce Lee genre with names like Bruce Li and Bruce Le. In fact, there's an add for the movie *BRUCE LEE- SUPER DRAGON*, which blatantly states "Plus Special Guest Appearance by Jimmy Wang Yu" (I've not seen the movie in years, but don't recall Wang Yu ever appearing in any "Bruce Lee genre" farces)! Regardless, as for Young Wang Yu, the dude resembled the one and only Wang, and can be seen with Gordon Liu in *HE HAS NOTHING BUT KUNG FU*, and also *FLYING GUILLOTINE*, where Young Wang Yu made his debut. I don't know of the original Wang Yu was angry that the Shaws had taken his name and given it to some other man, but it seems that in retaliation, Wang Yu stole their name, "Flying Guillotine", when he made his own *MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* (AKA *ONE-ARMED BOXER VS. FLYING GUILLOTINE*). There's a slight debate over whether the Shaws were in fact the inventors of the Flying Guillotine. Though I know of no such weapons existing in real life, there are old Chinese legends of what is called a "flying hatbox" which sounds almost identical to those used in the movies, but let's not lose our heads over this. According to an article in Eric Nakamura's *Giant Robot* magazine, *MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* was documented by *Variety* (during the film's 1977 U.S. release) as being number 14 in grossing films, falling just below *PETE'S DRAGON* and *CARRY*. The piece went on to state "It was widely believed that the original negatives were lost and only a lone dubbed print floated around art houses a few years ago. But after a lot of detective work, a negative was found among a sea of celluloid in some Hong Kong alley". From there, the article states that Greg Hatanaka (negative tracker and owner of the rights to the film for the next 12 years) proclaimed, "Officially, the subtitled version has never been seen before in the U.S. It's going to be smokin'!" At the time of this writing, it's been said that Greg Hatanaka will release the movie (presumably to video) some time this year.

Another example of mid-1970s Wang Yu exploitation is the action packed caper *QUEEN OF FIST* (***), which has an elusive English dubbed print called *KUNG FU MAMA*. I reviewed the farce on page 31 of *O.C.: The Femme Fatales Issue*, and although *QUEEN OF FIST/KUNG FU MAMA* is fun, Wang Yu's cameo (in the credits) is a mere second or two of stock-footage, taken from *SCREAMING TIGER* (the scene where he fights sumo wrestlers)! This hardly makes *KUNG FU MAMA/QUEEN OF FIST* qualify as a Wang Yu movie; though some idiot did list the film in an inaccurate Wang Yu filmography I stumbled across. Adding to this confusion is that a couple *KUNG FU MAMA* cast members do appear in a legitimate Wang Yu movie, *KNIGHT ERRANT*, causing misinformation that *KNIGHT ERRANT* and *KUNG FU MAMA* are the same production— but they're not. Both are distinctly different movies. The errors are understandable, in fact I once erroneously reported that *QUEEN OF FIST* was a "sequel to" *KUNG FU MAMA*, not knowing they're the same movie.

Wang Yu had befriended Jackie Chan when both starred in *KILLER METEORS* (1976). Wang had be-



Wang Yu's family including daughter Wong Sing Ping (far right) and future ex-wife Jeanett Lin Tsui.

come a "big man", and Jackie was stuck in a contract making lame kung fu comedies for Lo Wei. In an interview in CINEMA OF VENGEANCE, Wang said: "Jackie Chan was my junior, you know? When I was a superstar, he was a very young kid. But at that time, he was already in this movie business." Interesting to note that we then see rare footage of Jackie in some 1970s movie called POLICE WOMAN (courtesy of Alpha Film Corp.), a movie title appears in few or no Jackie filmographies or retrospectives (so it can be assumed that Jackie has only a minor role as a henchman). Since this fight & car crash scene took place near a Wang Yu interview, I made the assumption it was Wang Yu whom Jackie was fighting, and through OC, singlehandedly managed to feed this misinformation to my readers when I made O.C.: The Jet Li Issue about a year ago. Thanks to Lana Zukowski for correcting me; Chan's opponent in POLICE WOMAN is Charlie Chin (later of MY LUCKY STARS, etc.), and not Wang Yu at all. Anyway: I don't know much about Lo Wei (except that he can be seen as far back as the 1960s, acting in Shaw movies like SUMMONS TO DEATH), but it would appear that many actors hated working with him. Even Bruce Lee threatened to kick his ass on the set of CHINESE CONNECTION, so Lo Wei issued a restraining order against Lee, and went so far as to embellish the threat (after Lee's departure from the mortal world) by claiming Bruce pulled a knife (yeah right; like Bruce Lee would need a knife to deal with a fat old geek like Lo Wei?) on him! To add insult to injury, Lo Wei also put Jackie, and former Lee co-star Nora Miao alongside himself in his lame NEW FIST OF FURY. So regardless, as the story goes, Wang Yu helped Jackie Chan rid himself of his unwanted obligations to Lo Wei. Supposedly, both Jimmy & Jackie were "adopted" as Lo Wei's God sons (but not for long, as we shall see). The Jackie Chan/Lo Wei triad showdown happened in 1979, if I'm not mistaken. Supposedly Wang Yu was powerful enough to back Lo Wei off without incident, but there are legends of a meeting between the two that led to a Mexican standoff between knife-wielding gangs in a Taiwanese restaurant. Additional "accounts" persisted: Allegedly, it was Wang Yu, in the 1980s who faced down more triad guys to get them off Jackie Chan's back. Another story has it that Wang Yu was having lunch in a trendy restaurant when he was attacked by four thugs, and according to witnesses, the four guys literally tried to kill Jimmy, who fought them off and they escaped. As for Jimmy, who was with a young woman at the time, was quickly rushed to the hospital, but by the next day, it was business as usual.

So Jackie was free to join Golden Harvest, and the rest is history. Jackie became a huge superstar, the most famous man in the world. When he was in a position to pay Wang Yu back for the big breaks, he did so. To return the favors, Jackie agreed to appear in Wang Yu's lame movies like FANTASY MISSION FORCE (1982) and ISLAND ON FIRE (1991). To watch Jackie Chan and Jimmy Wang Yu in either of these star-studded fiascos is truly an embarrassing experience; it's obvious that in the 1980s and 1990s, Wang is past his prime, and his movies weren't as fun as before, and seeing Jackie Chan share space with lesser-talented people, in scenes far below his ability is just plain painful. I've heard that Jackie only did these films because he felt he had to, and he's more-or-less disowned them; they're not flicks he's proud of. Alternate rumors stated that Wang Yu himself, at this point was a triad leader (not unlike the villainous characters he plays in both movies!), and that he "pressured" Chan and the celebrities to be in those films, though we'll never know for sure. When I attempted to get more information on Wang Yu's current "businesses", it seems there are people who know a lot about him, but they don't wish to repeat any of it. He's got a lot of power still. Nothing I've discovered, however, states that Wang Yu's associates & activities (behind the scenes) are much different than those of average HK moviedom; since the line between "gangster" and "movie maker" gets blurry at times.

In 1979, Wang Yu was supposed to have co-starred in some film with the one and only Toshiro Mifune, but this two million dollar film deal apparently fell through. Jimmy was in a list of thirty-six nominations as one of the top kung fu actors and made it to the top ten, but didn't take first.

The Shaw Brothers are no more, so Wang Yu is free to appear in HK movies. But he's made Taiwan his home; he's currently still producing films and TV in Taiwan, and though his major acting years are well behind him, he still makes an occasional cameo. He's managing his daughter actress/singer Linda Wong Sing-ping. She's is a pop star in Taiwan, once managed by Fu Sheng's widow Jenny! Supposedly they were embroiled in a nasty legal battle. Anyway, Wang Yu still makes an occasional cameo in current Chinese movies. In comparing the new with the old, Wang Yu stated, in a 1994 interview: "I think films in older days, that time not many camera tricks. We had to do every dangerous stunt ourselves. Now, because camera tricks & technique is much better, so the actors is easy to make action pictures; that's the difference between old days and now."

Making a Jimmy Wang Yu issue of OC has proven to be a completely enjoyable experience. I can not say this about making the Jet Li Issue. Hell, even making the Samo Hung Issue had me sitting through some unpleasant films which bored the hell out of me. Wang Yu may not have the best reputation, and he obviously was never a master of kung fu, but for sheer

entertainment value, his movies are hard to beat. I dare say some of his movies are more fun to me than most of Bruce Lee's over-rated films. Ironically, I read somewhere that a few years back, Wang Yu claimed to have actually beat Bruce Lee in a feat of strength; not surprisingly, Wang was branded a liar. Anyway, I've been aware of Wang Yu's films most of my life, and though I grew up on his work, he wasn't one of my personal favorites until now, having seen most of his stuff. I've really come to respect him for the rich legacy of exciting movies he's provided for us. He was the first to bridge the gap between Chinese kung fu and Japanese chanbara (ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN), and were it not for his THE CHINESE BOXER, Bruce Lee might never have made kung fu films. Wang's help on Jackie Chan's career is well documented. Though all his movies are cheesy when seen today, he was always willing to try new ideas and experiment, which make his pictures more creative than the standard chop sockey films which flooded theaters in the 1970s.

Now that he's not a kung fu star, current information on what he's up to is hard to find, especially here in America. However, I heard he made the papers before Xmas 1999 because his wife was caught being unfaithful by Wong Yu and the Police; adultery seems to be a real crime there, you can get arrested for it. Meanwhile, his name was misused in America, placed in the credits for an Angela Mao re-release now called REVENGE OF KUNG FU MAO! The credits on the movie poster say "Wong Yu" is in the film, but that's probably a mis-print, the actor is actually Wong Tao; a star in his own right.

吳綺莉否認
拿了收口費。

王馨平 好想賞陳沖一耳光

接演萬人情婦 兩個女人戲裡水火不容

【本報台北訊】中影公司跨國電影「萬人情婦」的第二女主角敲定王馨平，戲裡陳沖搶她老公，王馨平滿心期待好好賞陳沖一耳光。

跨國投資拍攝的「萬人情婦」，演員都需要以英語說對白，片中陳沖透過與許多男人肉體關係，最後肯定女性自覺，理所當然第一女主角，不過導

姚樹華很坦白和王馨平說，第二女主角戲分有限，但頗有發揮，戲裏王馨平的老公和陳沖搞外遇，王馨平知道了，跑去找陳沖理論，並狠狠地打了陳沖一耳光。如此剛烈的女性，擺脫過去怨婦的情緒，讓王馨平聽起來就過癮。

演姚樹華求好心切，第二女主角挑不馬虎，遍尋台港一雙語一女星，和王馨平通過多次越洋電話，又看了王馨平以前的電影作品，終於拍板定案。

Wang Yu's daughter is Taiwanese pop singer Wang Sing Ping. She recently completed the movie MAN YAN CHENE FU (EVERYBODY'S MISTRESS), which also stars Mainland China actress Joan Chen. This article is from a Chinese newspaper dated 2/26/00.





THE MOVIES OF JIMMY WANG YU

As is often the case when being an American trying to compile a filmography of a foreign topic (in this case, Wang Yu), inaccuracies are expected. For example, in the lower middle of this page I mention the confusion over just how many martial arts films got called "ASSASSIN blah blah blah". Re-titling of foreign films is a magazine editor's worst nightmare (no, actually my worst nightmare was that I was gay, and I was stranded alone with Dom DeLouise on an uncharted island). For example, in the 1980s, a Wang Yu sword film called "SHOGUN SAINTS" appeared on American TV. Since such a title doesn't appear in any Wang Yu filmographies I've seen, I suspect SHOGUN SAINTS is just another re-titling (no doubt inspired by the SHOGUN mini-series with Richard Chamberlain) of some other Wang Yu movie already reviewed here. It also doesn't help to have movies with titles like WANG YU, KING OF BOXERS when we know damn well Wang never made a film called that— I don't think he's that egotistical! Adding to the confusion is the way different movies are released, depending on the country. For example, the grim chop sockey movie FURIOUS SLAUGHTER: At least one videotape version bills Wang as "an Asian Indiana Jones" and claims the flick is a "big budget adventure". And what's with all this "one armed this" and "one armed that"?! One could do a whole magazine on his confusing, bottomless pit of one-arm movies! Needless to say, sorting out the facts for the filmography has turned out to be quite a challenge. And another thing: As I watch these movies again (several of them I've reviewed before), I find that now that I'm getting to understand his style, so I really appreciate them more. Don't be surprised if I now give them higher ratings & more favorable reviews than I did in back issues. What follows are reviews of many of the movies Wang Yu acted in, but not the countless additions he's produced— that would take a lifetime.

ASIA-POLE- This oldie has got to be one of Wang Yu's first movies, and my god— what a miserable piece of excrement it is! Oh well, you gotta' start somewhere, I suppose. ASIA POLE has a modern 1960s setting, and at times reminds me of HK spy capers like SUMMONS TO DEATH or ANGEL WITH THE IRON

FISTS. But ASIA POLE isn't completely Hong Kongese, it has plenty of help from Japanese, which makes it remotely similar to the otherwise superior THE BRAIN STEELERS. But ASIA POLE is mostly just drama, not action. I suspect it was inspired by the then-popular Japanese TV show, THE GUARDMAN— but I could be way off. There are some explosions and a few shoot-outs, but the emphasis is on talking and lots of it; not action. There are even a couple short (lasting mere seconds) fist fights, but both are only intriguing for the sheer novelty of seeing Wang throw punches in a non-martial arts manner— remember, this oldie predates THE CHINESE BOXER by many years. When ASIA POLE was made (I'm guessing, but I'd say maybe 1964, or 1965), kung fu was still too exotic for mass appeal on the silver screen, so the first move we see in Wang Yu's nightclub brawl with Wang Hsieh (INFRAMAN, SUMMONS TO DEATH) is where Wang Hsieh karate chops a table in half, and although he doesn't yell "hi-ya!", it's pretty typical of 1960s ignorance. Later, Wang Yu even tackles Jo Shishido (best known for his role in Seijun Suzuki's BRANDED TO KILL, but also starred in STAR WOLF) on a yacht. Wang Yu actually kicks the pistol out of Shishido's hand, and for once he fully extends his kick! It's odd that once he would found the chop sockey genre (five or six years later, I'm guessing), he would lose that skill. Regardless, this combination soap-opera and crime drama has Wang Yu as an agent for some sort of secret police, and he's chasing the bad guys from HK, to Japan, to Macau and back. Along the way, he laments the death of his parents and meets his long lost sister for the first time. *Prod.: Run Run Shaw, Film Editing: Chiang Hsing Loong, Photography: Iisusin Imasa (?), Art Dir.: Masamura Tsusano, Make Up: Fang Yu Fen, Cast: Fang Ying, Wang Yu, Wang Hsieh, Asaoka Uriko (?), Jo Shishido.* -Damon Foster

ASSASSIN (1967)- There are several martial arts movies with derivative titles like ASSASSIN, ASSASSINS, THE ASSASSIN, THE ASSASSINS, etc. Two are Japanese (ANATSU/1964 and MARIJUANA SOSHIKI/1977) and it's been rumored Wang Yu was in three movies (one in 1981) with the variable "Assassin" etc. title (s). However, since this is the only one anybody has

seen & reviewed, I'll assume the others are research errors. It's one of the oldest Wang Yu movies released to video; a swordplay classic of its type. I could do without the occasional talkiness and less-than-perfect-subtitles, but any movie where Wang single handedly wipes out countless bad guys is okay with me. The story gets complex because of rival warlords and some "treaty", not to mention a couple whiny women who ramble on frequently. But basically, Wang Yu is a top student at a swordplay school who gets the girl— much to the regret of a jealous student who therefore tells a Prime Minister the school is training rebels intent on a revolution. So the Prime Minister's soldiers wipe out the school, forcing Wang Yu and Tien Feng to flee into exile. Eventually, Wang Yu disguises himself as a rich man to sneak into the villains' district, and pretty soon he's using his mighty sword to kill not just the main villain, but plenty of soldiers, in a thrilling climax where Wang Yu takes a swipe from Japanese cinema by performing what the Japanese call "hara kiri". *Shaw Bros.; 1967. Producer: Run Run Shaw, Dir.: Chang Chueh, Cast: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Li Hsiang Chun, Chiao Hsin Yen, Tien Feng, Huang Chung Shun, Chang Pei Sham, Cheng Lei, Hao Li.* ***1/2 -DF

BEHEADED 1000 - This is an unusual film that's a cross between the Mr. Vampire and Chinese Ghost Story series and an old Jimmy Wang Yu film. This is the most recent film Wang Yu has starred in that I know of and he still looks the same as he did in his heyday. Wang Yu plays an executioner who is two executions away from beheading 1000 criminals and retiring. Joey Wang plays Blood Lotus, a member of the Blood Clan, who Wang Yu has destroyed with the exception of Joey and her brother. When Blood Lotus is killed and her brother's execution is botched by Wang Yu's idiotic student, all hell breaks loose literally as the Blood Clan come back as demons bent on revenge. This film has lots of FX, but they're the old cartoon and plastic monster kind like they used in the SEVENTH CURSE, as opposed to the crappy CGI stuff they use now. Wires are used, but only for Joey Wang's scenes and when Wu Ma shows up as his Taoist Priest at the end. Though a little uneven (it needs more Wang Yu and



羽教授武功

less Joey Wang) and long at nearly 2 hours, the Saturday matinee FX along with Wang Yu's performance and unusual touches like Wang Yu burning holy symbols into his hands to fight the demons and some cool old school Wang Yu fight scenes (he still doesn't extend those legs!), make this worth a look. 1992, A.K.A.: "Thousand Person Beheaded", Dir: Ting Shan Si. Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Joey Wang Cho-Yin, Chin Siu-Ho, Monica Chan Fat-Yung, Wu Ma, Anita Mui. ***1/2 -Linn Haynes

BEACH OF THE WAR GODS- Wang stars as Hsiao Feng (famous Chinese swordfighting patriot), whom he plays rather like Clint Eastwood, as he battles Japanese pirates in the period of the Ming Dynasty. A rather blatant remake of SEVEN SAMURAI (but actually more entertaining than the Shaws' version, THE SAVAGE FIVE). He rounds up several different masters of various martial arts to protect a town from those nasty invading Japanese. After several fights, he succeeds! I think I have an edited version, as the one I saw is about ninety minutes, shortening the talking, and upping the action quota. AKA "Blood Dragon", "Beach of the Warlords", Golden Harvest; 1972, Dir.: Wang Yu, Cast: Wang Yu, Lung Fei, Tien Yeh, Xue Han. **1/2 -David McRobie

BIG LEAP FORWARD (1978)- Not available review, but photos I've seen indicate it's some sort of modern comedy (it's not a martial arts movie), and is probably better left avoided. -DF

BLACK FRIDAY- Unavailable for review. It's a modern 1973 movie involving action, motorcycles, and romance, etc.

BLOOD OF THE DRAGON- This 1973 release stars Jimmy Wang Yu as White Dragon, a wandering spearman in old China who gets involved in a battle between Imperial guards and a band of rebels seeking to overthrow the Mongol-backed Emperor. A boy gets hold of a list of rebels and is pursued by the guards, but is rescued by Wang Yu who opts to take the list to Prince Ma Tung, leader of the rebels. But Ma Tung has a beef with Wang Yu, who had once defeated Ma Tung's father in a duel. There is a lot of back-and-forth and misunderstanding before Ma Tung gets over his grudge and helps Wang Yu fight the bad guys. Chiao Chiao, Wang Yu's frequent co-star, plays the sympathetic innkeeper Miss Yen and is the only familiar cast member besides Wang Yu. While the fight scenes are not as imaginatively staged as in Wang Yu's own directorial efforts (e.g. THE CHINESE BOXER, BEACH OF THE WAR GODS, ONE-ARMED BOXER), the film does offer a suspenseful plot and plenty of sword- and spear-fighting action, with lots of leaping and acrobatics. Wang Yu plays an intriguing lone wolf who is moved by Ma Tung's patriotism and opts to help him out of loyalty to his country. The chief villain, General Tai, has a cool weapon, a sectional sword that opens into a lethal whip studded with sharp blades. This film has sometimes been referred to as a sequel to BEACH OF THE WAR GODS. It's not. My copy is a Woodhaven Entertainment release in

standard play (SP) offering a sharp video transfer made from an original film print with good color, although parts of the print are scratchy and worn. Still, it's a lot better looking than most 1970s kung fu films in circulation. It cost only \$3.99 at Record Explosion in New York. The English dubbing is better than average, utilizing a different (American) cast than the Australian crew that did all the Shaw Bros. dubs (there's not a single "But, still" on the soundtrack!). However, the original music was thrown out and replaced with a slapdash rock score composed and performed by something called Flood and recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, as the credits are so eager to tell us. The credits on this version, which lists no production studio or distributor (American OR Hong Kong), give far more space to the American sound and dubbing crew than to the original Chinese cast and creators. AKA "Dangerous Chase", "Pursing Spear", "Desperate Chase", Dir.: Kao Pao Shu, Prod.: Vengee Park, Ex. Prod.: Michael Thevis, Cast: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Nu Lung, Yang Yang. *** -Brian Camp

BLOODTHIRSTY RIDERS OF LEI FU- Not available for review.

BLOODY STRUGGLE- The scene of the Japanese villains sexually harassing a female doctor who then kicks their asses is all too similar to a sequence in Angela Mao's HAKKIDO, and to the average viewer, BLOODY STRUGGLE is typical of turn-of-the-century chop socky capers; it's complete with the usual revenge, brothels, familiar dubbed voices, and a woman puts on a wisdom cap and then she was a he (hey babe, take a walk on the mild side!). But to a die-hard fan/expert like myself, I can see some uniqueness & originality in its approach. For one thing, this movie seems to begin with a "climactic" battle where Wang Yu takes on the army of hatchet-carrying villains. It's as though they tried a new approach: We've all seen movies where the hero wipes out all the bad guys at the end, but we never know what happens afterwards. In the case of BLOODY STRUGGLE, what happens is Wang Yu recovers from the "grande finale" just as more villains arrive to avenge their comrades. It's an interesting approach. BLOODY STRUGGLE is decent, with nifty cinematography and classy sets, but some classic blunders really subtract points. For example, the scene of the lady lip-syncing in the brothel to entertain the villains! Are we suppose to swallow this, to believe she's really singing?! Worse yet is a truly moronic botch-up in the editing: Watch for the scene where Wang takes on a Japanese toward the end of the movie. Their weapons (samurai sword vs. pick axe) are clashing, but then both of them pause simultaneously for a second, as the director was probably yelling "Cut!" in Chinese. It's amazing that they left this glitch in the finished product. In general, it's just your average kung fu movie (if not a little on the gory side), quality-wise, and tells the story of the Axe Gang, whom Wang Yu's sister is determined to wipe out. Actress Sally Chan plays her part well and though her fighting skills could be better, her strong character commands considerable respect from the audience and upstages Wang Yu

himself, who spends most of time recovering from an earlier battle which may very well be from another movie (though if BLOODY STRUGGLE is a sequel, I don't know what part one is). Wang really only has a supporting role, although it's he who finally takes over during the thrilling last 20 minutes as he fights off Chinese wearing kimonos, so we're supposed to believe they're Japanese. Wang and Sally kill all the bad guys, but Wang receives one too many axes and expires too. One more thing: There's erroneous information that this movie (released by Ocean Shores in 1985) came out in 1993. Nothing could be further from the truth (except maybe BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA isn't stupid); BLOODY STRUGGLE came out about 20 years earlier. Fighting Instructor: Chan Shih Wei, Photography: Ye Ching Piao, Film Editor: Sun Ming, Dir.: Ting San Si, Cast: Wang Yu, Chan Sally. *** -DF

BOXERS OF LOYALTY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS- After a traitorous general in gold lame' murders Wang Yu's father, he dedicates himself to dishing out dynamic violence to entire armies with an incredible Slice-O-Matic style of sword play. After a pit stop spent on the warlord's torture rack and numerous fallen comrades whisper "avenge me" as their final words, it all comes down to a final duel on top of a precariously perched wagon to determine which will prevail: Jimmy's sword or the general's deadly "flying dagger system." Little things like plot and characterization tend to fall by the wayside, but with a massive amount of skirmishes on tap I'm not going to complain. 1973, A.K.A.: "Boxers of Righteousness and Loyalty" ** 1/2 -Patrick Macias

BRAVE AND THE EVIL- I sat through (Scanned through?) the subtitled, Mandarin version, so I was bored and didn't care about the characters. This is a shame; I'm really missing out because it's got a good budget and the over-all quality is better than average for 1970s chop socky. There's also an early appearance of a gyonsi (perhaps pre-dating Carter Wang's LEGEND OF LIVING CORPSE), although this hopping vampire ends up being exposed as a hoax. There's also a really slick scene where Shang Kuan Linfeng (1970s kung fu queen; topped only by Angela Mao Ying) must fend off men who wield burning ropes, and the fire is beautifully filmed. The kung fu and swordplay are okay (about average for a 70s kung fu caper), and the theme song is a catchy organ version of spaghetti-western scores. Despite the castle and swordfighting bandits, this is still a kung fu movie (not a costume drama) where the men have short hair, not long hair. The story has Wang Yu and the one and only Shang Kuan Linfeng team up to wipe out the bandit army at their castle. In one unique sequence, that crafty Wang gains the villains' trust by putting a patch on his eye, and then after a duel, puts fake blood in his mouth so the bad guys think he's weak, and not much of a threat— until the climactic swordfight, that is! The grand finale has our boy slaughtering a whole army on solid ground, in a castle moat, and on a draw-bridge! Prod.: Sha Yung-fung, Dir.: Wang Yu, Prod. Supervisor: Hsia Wu, Leung



Feng, Martial Arts Instructor: Wang Yu, Planned by: Chang Chiu Yung, Prod. Manager: Sha Hsi Tao, Cast: Wang Yu, Shang Kuan Linfeng, Chang Chung. **1/2 - DF

CHINESE BOXER, THE- I counted seven "But still"s, three of which all happen within 30 seconds of each other. Though some people consider Kwan Tak Hing's old, B&W "Wong Fei Hung" films to be kung fu films (just because they used some empty-handed combat), it's this one which goes down in history as founder of the genre we call kung fu films. In fact, the English language text (in HK publications like *Southern Screen*) didn't know what to call this movie, how to label it! It's called an "action-packed drama", and a description just says: "Swords and other weapons are not employed— it's always fist-to-fist confrontation". Perhaps the phrase "kung fu movie" probably hadn't officially appeared in English yet. THE CHINESE BOXER can almost be considered a classic for its period, but it's not timeless. Today, it comes off as ultra-typical of the genre, unless you're aware of its nostalgia and know it in fact founded the genre in question. The setting is a Chinese town south of the Yangtze River, in the 1930's. There are some abnormal elements too though; like in the training scenes, Wang Yu is practicing in an old house full of statues which appear to "laugh" (the dubbed voices are more symbolic than anything, it's not implied the statues came to life) at him as he practices; this is meant to show him conquering his demons. Another unusual aspect is that, to disguise himself from Lo Lieh, Chen Hsing and the other villains, he walks around town in gloves and a surgeons's mask— go

figure! The climactic battle between Lo Lieh & Wang Yu was shot in Korea in the snow, where the cast & crew shivered and suffered during the cold season. Otherwise, the movie's crudeness makes it enjoyable and unintentionally humorous. THE CHINESE BOXER isn't as fun as FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH (which came out shortly after, and featured many same cast members), but I really enjoyed this predictable story of Chinese martial artists against evil Japanese ones. Plenty of high energy fights, revenge galore, casino scenes, a hilariously bad scene of evil Lo Lieh over-acting in a restaurant, and even a groundbreaking training scene— something which wouldn't get utilized heavily in kung fu films for about another six or seven years when Jackie did all that "drunken" crap. A caption in *Southern Screen* (Sept. 1969) stated, "Wang Yu as the famed Chinese boxer Lei Ming", which leads me to suspect that the film's title character is based on a real person— much like all them Wong Fei Hung movies. *Shaw Brothers; 1970, AKA "Hammer of God", Written & Dir.: Wang Yu, Asst. Dir.: Ng See Yuen, Cast: Wang Yu, Wang Ping (her debut as leading lady), Chen Sing, Lo Lieh, Chen Hsing, Chen Kuan-Tai, Yuen Ho Ping, Chen Lei (AKA Cheng Lei), Kao Hsiung, Wang Chung (not the band!), Fang Mien, Pan Pan, Hao Li, Wang Ching. *** -DF*

CHOW KEN- Chow Ken was China's beloved revolutionary sweetheart who cried out "down with foreigners, the Empress Dowager, and the Ching Dynasty" and was beheaded for all her troubles. Luminous opera starlet Kuo Sau-chuang plays the title role in a blameless manner befitting a two-fisted saint. She's a master of fencing and poetry who edits a women's newspaper and lives under the casual nickname "hero" — despite the fact that she's left her husband and children behind for a punishable-by-death Patty Hearst-like existence. Jimmy Wang Yu is stuck with a minor role; Chow's co-conspirator and the author of the book "Hatred for Russia." Together they enjoy the outlaw status that comes from being traitors, go undercover as spies, and beat the crap out of a cross-section of racial stereotypes (Thai kick-boxers, turbaned Pakistanis, and heavily bearded Russians). Things begin to slow down for the exposition-heavy mid-section, but be warned, the last half hour of hyperactive kung fu, sword, and bayonet combat — as Chuang and Jimmy do a tag-team act — is punishingly violent. Intensity is to be expected when all political change hinges on how good your kung fu is. Or your cooking. At one point, a rebel defuses a tense situation with his "iron buns" - high explosive dim sum hand grenades. *AKA "Chow Key". *** -Patrick Macias*

CINEMA OF VENGEANCE- I assume by now you've all seen this outstanding documentary from Britain; I've been raving about this movie for several issues now. An enlightening, educational epic which tells you everything you need to know about HK movies; it's very informative. Tons of highlights & clips from movies, new and old— plus, rare interviews; anybody from Kwan Tak Hing to Don "The Dragon" Wilson (his interview is out-of-place in what's mainly Chinese films). Being a Wang Yu issue, our main interest this time

around is in his input, of course. As the narrator explains the evolution of the Shaw Brothers, and how important they were in upstarting the kung fu movie genre, their main ticket, Wang Yu himself, is introduced. The following is said: "The Shaws first major action star was an athlete from Shanghai, Jimmy Wang Yu." We see photos of a young Wang Yu, and then cut to an older, current Wang Yu as he's interviewed. He explains that he was originally a champion swimmer, until his belligerent behavior got him kicked out of a water-polo contest. It was time for a career change, and he decided to use his athletic skills & fighting ability when he auditioned for the Shaw Brothers in the early 1960s. He was chosen out of thousands, and his acting career in the swordplay movies soon followed. *Vengeance Prod.; 1994, A Toby Russell Film, A George Tan Production, Exec. Prod.: Roy McAree, Dir. of Photography: Kenneth Stipe, Edited by Scott Mary, Featuring: Jimmy Wang Yu, Chen Hui Min, Samo Hung, Jackie Chan, Simon Yam. ***** -DF*

CLASH OF THE PROFESSIONALS, THE- Everybody reaches a "hasbeen" stage, as this late 1980s catastrophe demonstrates! The attempt, of course is to mimic the action extravaganzas (DRAGONS FOREVER, A BOOK OF HEROES, TIGER ON BEAT, etc.) coming out at that time, but since Wang's successful movie career was in the past, the budget had dropped back to his 1970s chop sockey phase. Budgets of that nature are fine if it's for an old-style kung fu movie, but "epic" actioners need more than that. So CLASH OF THE PROFESSIONALS misses the mark and is badly made. Hell, there's even stock-music (in this case, it's that of Goblin, taken from the soundtrack of DAWN OF THE DEAD or NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES), another trait I associate with 1970s chop sockey exploitation, and not 1980s HK thrillers!! Wang looks old and bloated, but this doesn't stop him from at least trying to do the same types of stunts Jackie Chan was known for back then. There are stunt-doubles a plenty, but for a 48-year old, Wang comes off as fairly energetic. His kicks are terrible (worse than ever) and dead slow, but he makes up for it by climbing from a speeding motorcycle onto a speeding bus, and actually landing on his backside (you know that had to hurt!) after kicking a guy off a motorcycle. All this plus another of his underwater fights, some car demolition, and half-ass kung fu stuntwork! Even so, this movie is lame (the "kicking-the-motorcycle-driver stunt" and underwater kung fu are reshapes from THE MAN FROM HONG KONG and SEAMAN 7). The only good thing (aside from a brief shot of some chick in a red bathing suit) is that Wang offered roles to other 1960s hasbeens, including Chan Hong Lieh and even Susume Kurobe (GHIDRAH: THE THREE HEADED MONSTER, LATTITUDE ZERO, KING KONG ESCAPES, WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, etc.), best known as Hayata in ULTRAMAN (TBS; 1966)! Just think, Ultraman and the One-Armed Swordsman crossed paths during the production of this otherwise inferior movie! But not only do Susumu Kurobe & Wang Yu not fight each other (they do exchange pistol fire though), but we never really see



THE CHINESE BOXER:
Above: Wang Yu & Lo Lieh,
Below: Wang Yu & Wang Ping.



Wang Yu as director on
THE CHINESE BOXER.



them both in the same shot— so the climax is one hell of a let down!!!! Oh, what could have been. Regardless, the setting is Tokyo (shot on location for once), where Wang is wiping out the local yakuza bastards because they're getting Wang's girlfriend (young enough to be his daughter) addicted to drugs. So once again, it's heroic Chinese Wang Yu against evil Japanese, and this theme was pretty outdated when this unsuccessful, last-ditch effort of a movie came out. *Producer: Peter Yu; 1987, Dir.: Wang Yu, Cast: Wang Yu, Susumu Kurobe, Chan Hong Lie. (AKA FLASH OF THE PROFESSIONAL) -Damon Foster*

DOUBLE DOUBLE CROSS, THE- Not available for review.

FANTASY MISSION FORCE- A Taiwanese costume drama, where reality doesn't exist; it's much different than the HK style of movie making where portions are somewhat coherent. FANTASY MISSION FORCE is incredibly non-realistic, definitely the most far-fetched caper Wang Yu has worked on! Even stranger is Jackie Chan's guest appearance; it's way over the top, even more so than Jackie's CITY HUNTER! It's "anything goes", in this zany comedy which is basically set in 1944, but there's no continuity or respect to the period; there are references to things (ROCKY, Karl Makka's ACES GO PLACES films, there's a semi-demolition derby involving 1970s car models, etc.) the setting obviously pre-dates. It's highly entertaining, which isn't always a good thing— the plot is fast-paced with tons of comedic gags, about half of which I found funny, but some of it is stupid too. Though amusing (in a "guilty pleasure" sort of way), it's sad to see Wang Yu relegate himself to only a co-starring role, and as a villain at that. He doesn't look too much older than his 1970s films, and still seems quite energetic in his climactic bout with Jackie, so I wish both could have been heroes and wiped out all the villains side-by-side. The story involves a rescue mission, against the Japanese. This gaudy adventure comedy involves a squad of heroes, not just under-used Jackie Chan & Wang Yu, but there's also Chinese guys wearing Scottish kilts, and even a gun-toting Brigitte Lin (decked out in black leather), in what's probably her best film. During the course of their adventure, they deal with amazons (with obvious male stunt-doubles), a haunted house, Chinese nazis (?), samurai chiefs, wrestlers, medieval body-armor, and any other Halloween costumes Wang Yu could get his hands on. There are spatterings, here and there, of innovative acrobatics and them witty stunts that only Jackie Chan can do. Being a villain, Wang Yu dies at the end, as do most of the characters. Were it not for a scene of Jackie torturing a live chicken, I would rate this fun, silly movie three stars. Stock music from PLANET OF THE APES and THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN is plentiful. *Presented by Ming Film (HK) Co., Wang Yu & Lin Jung Feng, Distributed by Chang Chiang Film (Taiwan) Co., Supervisor: Chian Wen-Hsiung, Shen Hsiao-Yin, Prod.: Shen Hsiao-Yin, Dir.: Chu Yen Ping, Cast: Jackie Chan, Lin Ching Tsia, Jung Shao Chiu, Wang Yu, Shiu Bu Lin, Fang Jung, Sun Yuih, Tao Da Way, Gon Ling Fring, Chang Ling. ** -Damon Foster*

FAST FISTS, THE- A fun one, I enjoyed it. However, scan-transfer (on video) is so bad that the title on TV is cropped, looking like "FAST F!" Better yet is a scene at the end of a movie which is so badly cropped, that the whole scene takes on an accidental new meaning: Watch for the final minute, where the rebels say good-bye to each other for their parting of ways. A woman says: "Good-bye, take care." , and then a guy (not seen on the TV screen) says: "Ah, take care!" As he says this, watch the horse on the far right; he nods and anybody would think it's a talking horse saying: "Ah, take care!", the timing is perfect!!! Otherwise, all the humor (i.e. Wang Yu's hilarious "musical interlude" which he does to piss off some triads) in THE FAST FISTS is intentional, in this complex tale of traveling Peking opera acrobats, rebels, bandits, corrupt officials, and a sole chick who comes to town and all the guys fight over her. They wear furry hats to keep warm, and I believe the setting to be 1913, because the setting is similar to that of the vastly inferior PEKING OPERA BLUES. Wang leads a gang called the "Red Lantern", because at night, they carry red lanterns. Much is made about the lanterns. I suppose there's a lot of significance to them in Chinese culture, which I'm familiar with. There's a similar (yet inferior) Wang Yu movie called THE LANTERN STREET. Despite excessive characters and a confusing approach, there's decent gunplay, and plenty of Wang Yu's typically fun 1970s chop socky as he takes on all comers. *American video release: 1982, AKA: "Fists of Vengeance", Presented by Yang Ching Fung, Prod.: Yan-Shu San, Martial Arts: San Mao, Music: Chow Leung (not including what they snatched from BARBARELLA), Dir.: Deng Seu S., Cast: Wang Yu, Kok Shie Jong, Cheung Chown, Tin Yieh, Yu Yuen, Chu Fook San, Ngai So, Hon So, Shu Hong. *** -DF*

FLYING FISTS OF DEATH (1988)- Not available for review.

FOUR REAL FRIENDS- My enjoyment of Wang's films has nothing to do with the quality of martial arts; the fun will depend on the characters, imagination & originality (but if I see one more "One-Armed" film of his, I'll break the damn tape!). While FOUR REAL FRIENDS isn't terribly original, it doesn't read the same as previous Wang film do (he doesn't lose an arm in this). Its screenplay was written by Yi Kwan (in his time, he was the most famous playwright in the Mandarin film circle), and it's different by surrounding Wang with a trio of then-HK's more wellknown villains, except that they're playing heroes. Although Wang is the main hero, it's Chen Sing who nearly steals the film as the shamed karate master. There's plenty of action too; though the choreography is typically crude, the fights are always staged in interesting locales. This film is super neat groove fun. *First Scope Production; 1974, AKA "Dragon Squad", Prod.: Wong Cheuk Hon, Dir.: Wong Yu, Cast: Wang Yu, Chen Sing, Kam Chang, Chang Yu, Lu Chuan, Lung Fei. **** -Jeff Goodhartz*

FURIOUS SLAUGHTER- "I've only the fists" is Jimmy Wang Yu's strangely phrased and curiously subtitled

raison d'tre from this 1972 Mandarin film. In the role of turn-of-the-century tough guy Ma Yung Shen (who Takeshi Kaneshiro played in 1997's THE HERO), Jimmy is a wandering gambler who lives on a diet of cooled strawberries and beef noodle bowls, and can guess the roll of the dice from the rattle in the cup. He's come into town with an ulterior motive: to rescue his cousins from becoming fallen women at the local gangster-owned bawdyhouse. With the help of his just-off-the-wagon pal Teddy Bear, Jimmy plots from the darkened crevices of Fairy Cave emerging to gamble and to take on the bad guys despite everything they throw at him including two ever-hissable pairs villains: Japanese martial artists and an inexhaustible army of goons wielding little hatchets. Attacked by a master of iron palm kung fu, Jimmy says, "my bone his harder." Realizing that his noodles are salty, he tosses the bowl into an opponent's face, simultaneously throwing down the gauntlet and "feeding the dog." All things considered, this is a pretty good Wang Yu flick. Fighting with the acrobatic aid of some trampoline and editing work that's in deep denial of gravity, you can't help but root for him. *Released on video by Ocean Shores; 1986. Dir.: Tin Shan Si, Cast: Wang Yu, Kwok Sui Po, Sally Chen, Tien Yeh. *** -Patrick Macias*

GALLANT, THE- That rarest of all celluloid birds: a three-in-one karate anthology film. All the stories revolve around a triple-decker performance by Jimmy Wang Yu. Episode one of this tidy Greatest Hits package, "The Stranger" is easily the best of the three: a noirish tale of a mysterious, vampish woman who enters Jimmy's swinger bachelor pad -complete with Brady Bunch furnishings - trying to escape from her cruel nightclub "magnate." Suave as all hell, using "I'm skillful on fighting," as a pick-up line, Jimmy beats the crap out of worthless nightclub rascals to the pulse of a surging soundtrack that would do Lalo ENTER THE DRAGON Schifrin proud. It is a perfect sleazy seventies karate film in miniature. With more exposition and less imagination, Episode II, "The Mourner," showcases the tragic "I look like I'm going to cry in every shot" side of Jimmy as a gang of out-of-town burglars squeeze him and his beloved sister for a buried box of cash in olde tyme China. Episode III, "The Revenger," places Jimmy in the roaring '20s, a time when hoodlums wore cheap fedora hats and silk shirts. Jimmy gets out of jail and finds his best gal married to the rival who put him in the clink in the first place. Exciting stuff, but by now, the enthusiasm of even the heartiest of Wang Yu aficionados will be worn down by the hail of blows and Jimmy's Captain Kirk-like arsenal of haymakers, double ax-handles, and cheap foot sweeps. Either way it seems rude to complain about an over-abundance of Jimmy Wang, especially when, as the subtitles put it, "a brave guy is highly adorable." ** -Patrick Macias

GIRL WITH THE THUNDERBOLT KICK- This 1969 Shaw Bros. costume swordplay drama is notable for co-starring Wang Yu with Shaw's then-reigning washbuckling diva Cheng Pei Pei (THE THUNDERING SWORD). He plays the notorious killer Silver Roc and she plays



his childhood sweetheart Golden Swallow, whom he hasn't seen in years. She follows his trail of blood, sometimes getting blamed for his killings, accompanied by Golden Whip Hand (Lo Lieh) who is in love with her but helps her track down Silver Roc. Midway through the film they all meet, but Silver Roc quickly challenges Whip Hand to a duel, based on the latter's revulsion at Roc's cruelty (Roc had killed a bad guy's groveling servant in cold blood). That's pretty much the whole plot and it takes a long time getting to the final duel. This film has its fans but doesn't hold up as well as such other Wang Yu vehicles of the 1960s as ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, RETURN OF THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE and THE ASSASSIN. There are plenty of swordfights here, but they're fairly stylized, with lots of leaping around and twirling, soft blows, and unconvincing fighting skills. The tragic ending, however, is quite bloody. Cheng Pei Pei has great screen presence, but she's more of a dancer than a fighter. There's an undertone of unrequited love that's rather poignant at times. My copy of the film is an original video from World Video, which has Cantonese dialogue dubbed over the original Mandarin soundtrack, which remains slightly audible. The transfer is full-screen, cutting off the widescreen subtitles on the sides, making some of the dialogue difficult to decipher (The credits are letter-boxed. Why couldn't they have done that with the rest of the film?). The Cantonese sound mix includes music cues lifted from John Barry's soundtrack for the James Bond film YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE and awkwardly plastered in over the very lovely original music track. *Original title: "Golden Swallow", aka "Mistress of the Thunderbolt", and "Shaolin Swallow", Shaw Bros.; 1968, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Ex. Prod.: Runme Shaw, Martial Arts Instructor: Tang Chia, Liu Chia-liang, Cast: Wang Yu, Cheng Pei Pei, Lo Lieh, Yang Chih Ching, Chao Hsin Yen, Ku Feng, David Chiang. ** -Brian Camp*

GREAT HUNTER, THE- In this one, Jimmy plays a government agent investigating the slaughter of a town militia and the theft of their guns. The film is a little talky the first thirty minutes or so, but really gets going the last hour. By introducing guns into a Jimmy Wang Yu film, it opens up a whole new can of worms. Jimmy's flying around doing trick shots and jumping, as only he can, mowing down people left and right at the beginning of this, but for some reason the gun sort of disappears halfway through the movie. I guess because the final fight would be kinda anti-climactic if Jimmy just blew Chang Yi's head off at the end of all this. Chia Ling is her high kicking self and has quite a few good fights and Chang Yi plays his usual excellent villain. Jimmy and Chia Ling make a good team and I'm surprised they didn't team up for more movies because they play off of each other really well. A little slow in some spots, but this one's worth a watch. *Distributed by Unifilm Intl.; 1986, Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Hsu Feng, Chia Ling, and Chang Yi. ***-Linn Haynes*

HERO, THE- It starts off (a vengeful ex-student comes back to his old school for revenge and has his new, evil friends with him) just like THE CHINESE BOXER, except this time, the villains are wearing these really funny looking shorts, and wrestling-ish attire. Otherwise, THE HERO is more original, and Wang Yu's screentime is limited until he finally enacts his revenge later on. THE HERO does offer some unique elements, like some acrobatic, busclebound women performing in the marketplace, and a knife thrower demonstrates his skill too. It's also interesting to see that cutie Chiao Chiao use some empty-handed martial arts to fight off several villains; she's more energetic than expected from a chick more known for playing romantic leads. But THE HERO misses the mark as a kung fu movie, and is slow-paced & boring. On the whole, the martial arts are inferior—these are not Wang Yu's most exciting battles. There are also some really stupid scenes, like where Wang escapes from several Thai boxers by using a reverse-jump (the film played backwards when he's actually jumping down), getting him up onto a roof. You'd think the Thai villains would be amazed by his jumping ability, but one henchman instead says: "Damn,

he runs fast!" The print I sat through was an edited, censored Mandarin print with barely legible subtitles, and the censored knife fight at the end is quite choppy; we never actually see the main villain's death, or what happened to the two knives Wang was originally holding! Wang's climactic battle with more bad guys on the beach is anything but climactic. I think that if I were to see an English dubbed, un-cut version, THE HERO would earn a whole star. Anyway, this movie features Wang as some momma's boy who won't use his kung fu skills to fight the villains, even though they run brothels & casinos and enjoy kidnapping women. Eventually, all Wang's loved ones have been killed by the bad guys, so Wang breaks his vow and seeks revenge—again. *AKA: "Rage of The Tiger", Producer: Young Chih Hsiao, Dir.: Wong Hong Chang, Supervisor: C.Y. Yang, Presented by Young Tim, Exec. Prod.: Huang Mong, Starring: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao. -DF*

INVINCIBLE SWORD, THE- This cool film (which costed about eight hundred thousand HK dollars to produce) was made the same year as ONE-ARMED BOXER and the casts are almost identical. Jimmy plays a valiant rebel fighting to get into a castle to free the captured General Yue so that he can lead Jimmy and the rest of the boys against the Japanese. Along the way, he runs into an acrobat troop and falls for the pretty sister of their leader. After his first attempt to free the General fails, Jimmy recuperates and with the help of the troop, storms the castle. This is a classic sword film and it's got all of the hallmarks of a good Wang Yu film along with some unique touches. I mean, how often do you see an evil general with a single gold glove (he uses it to catch swords) that makes him look like a Japanese Michael Jackson? Or how about a swordsman so cool, that he catches knives (that are thrown at him) with his sheath and slings them back to kill his opponents? Not often enough I say! My favorite moment has got to be when the evil general does one of those cool jumps (that they did with trampolines) to the top wall of the castle and right as he reaches the top, one of the acrobats just kicks him right back down! I have always wanted to see someone do that! It's a sad thing when you can't enjoy a film that tries so hard to entertain. Just cut your brain off and enjoy some slicing and dicing as only Jimmy could do! 1971, Golden Harvest, in association with Sui Jang Hung's then-new company "Hui Gan" (which means "hard working") *Directors: Tsu Tsan Hong (AKA Sui Jang Hung, Hsu Tseng-hung), Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Shu Feng (AKA Hsu Feng), Chang-I, Chang Chung, Chen Hung Lieh (AKA Chen Hung-lieh), Tien Yea, Yo Hua. ***1/2-Linn Haynes.*

IRON MAN, THE- Again Wang Yu seeks revenge on unbelievably evil Japanese, loses a limb, foils cheating gamblers, and says "But still" (four times). However, THE IRON MAN isn't absolutely typical of his movies. For once, it's his left hand (not his right arm) which gets chopped off, and the setting is modern 1970s. As is often the case with mid-1970s actioners, this one isn't very good. I was angered by a scene of a few goldfish getting killed (do them Chinese have no shame?!), and though the abundant kung fu fights are entertaining, they get clumsy, and it's silly that Wang Yu never learned to fully extend his kicks. It's not uncommon for Wang Yu to slow down the movie camera to speed up his fights, and usually just the right speed is chosen. However, they overdid it once or twice in this one and made it obvious: Sure, Wang Yu is moving quickly, but the people in the background look like chipmunks on speed. THE IRON MAN is slow in parts, sometimes it gets downright dull. But Wang's charisma & righteous vengeance makes this otherwise standard film work, on occasion. Storywise, it starts off with a B&W flashback to Japanese occupation in WWII Shanghai, and the "Japs" kill our hero's father, rape his mother and chop off the kid's left hand. Slick music then high-lights the opening credits as the vengeful boy grows up to be martial artist Wang Yu, who wears a black leather glove to cover his false hand. Then he travels to Japan; a stock shot of Tokyo Tower is suppose

to convince us that it's Japan and that these obviously Taiwanese actors are Japanese—yeah, right. It's also not explained how a Japanese villain gets the name "Fang Wu"! During the course of Wang Yu's dead-serious quest for revenge, a number of interesting subplots happen inbetween the abundant fights: A drunken, gambling leech loses his gorgeous sister in a bet, Wang Yu captures & holds a main villain captive, the prisoner nearly escapes and he falls near a sawblade (Wang has to rescue a villain for once!), and Wang's character comes right out and admits to "hating all Japanese", much to the regret of a stunning Japanese beauty who's coming on to him! Not Wang's best film, but it's all fun, with decent skirmishes and emotional complexity. *Supervisor: C.Y. Yang, Martial Arts Instructor: Leung Sui Chung, Music: Chow Leung, Producer: Pan Se Wai, Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Lung Fai, Chang Chi Min, Sit Hong Chow Chung Lim, Hon Kong, Don Fon Mei Fung. **1/2 -DF*

ISLAND ON FIRE- I feel too kind giving ISLAND ON FIRE two whole stars, which is almost doesn't deserve. It's a depressing, downbeat movie, and I think it takes itself way too seriously. As the story goes, an aging (yet powerful) Wang Yu produced this movie and "influenced" many stars to appear in it; which explains why a crappy men-in-prison film can star not only Jimmy Wang Yu, but Jackie Chan, Samo Hung, Tony Leung and Andy Lau. It's grim, the fights aren't particularly good, and if you're interested in seeing a prison farce which is actually entertaining, seek out STORY OF RICKY instead. ISLAND ON FIRE has interesting characters and is worth sitting through once, but it won't go down in history as being a masterpiece. *Da Shyue Film Co.; 1991, A.K.A.: "Burning Island", "Island of Fire", Screenplay: Fu Lee & Yen Yu Chiao, Producers: Tsai Shun Fiu Shen & Wang Yu, Dir.: Chu Yen Ping, Cast: Tuo Chung Hua, Ko Chun Hiang, Tony Leung, Andy Lau, Jimmy Wang Yu, Jackie Chan, Samo Hung. ** -DF*

KILLER METEORS, THE- The fights and swordplay in this one are energetic & fun, but are diminished by the approach: KILLER METEORS is too rushed for such a complex script. Were it a simpleminded (i.e. Chinese vs. Japanese in the turn-of-the-century) chop sockey quickie, that would be different and the half-ass approach would suffice—they could get away with this hasty method. But instead it's a confusing, character-heavy, dialogue-driven story set in the Ming Dynasty (such scripts are commonly confusing) which, due to the limited budget, lacks clarity. My attempts at locating an English dubbed print failed, even though such a concept ran rampant back in the 1980s (where did all the videotapes disappear to?). So instead I dug out an old Chinese language print I got in some Chinese videostore a while back and attempted to read the subtitles. I still couldn't quite figure out what was going on. One minute, Jackie Chan (in a rare villainous role) wants his ex-wife to give him some medicine for an illness, and later some bald guy is bending iron bars so some swordsmen can get their hands on a treasure chest. There's also some poison that causes bodies to instantly rot and melt down. In the middle of all these strange scenarios is Wang Yu, who uses martial arts to take on any swordsmen who pick fights with him. Wang's weapons are these strange spiked balls which can cause bodies to explode. Why these iron bombs are called "meteors" is anybody's guess; it's most likely a translation error. All in all, it's an okay movie, though certainly not "average" or "conventional" by any stretch of the imagination. *Prod.: Hsu Li Hwa; 1977, Dir.: Lo Wei, Cast: Wang Yu, Jackie Chan, Yu Lin-lung, Nan Yu-li, Kao Fei. ** -DF*

KNIGHT ERRANT- Jimmy Wang Yu runs over an old woman with a taxi cab. That's right; in 1973, the One Armed Swordsman burnt rubber over the body of midget matron Yueh Feng and it's no stunt. Those are genuine martial arts trained stomach muscles at work, and this battle between youth and age, Japan and

Taiwan, isn't even half over. Jimmy plays an unassuming cab-driving Joe who simply loves to fight; with thieves, with drunken Americans who tell him "You go the hell", and the guy who tells his girlfriend "I don't want to eat the best vegetables. . . but you!" Since Jimmy is forever paying his victim's hospital bills, his family suffers from a low cash flow. Back in World War II, Jimmy's dad helped spring a Japanese spy from jail; an act of kindness that had tragic harakiri consequences. Trained under the tender ministrations of their adoptive kung fu mama, an orphaned trio of brothers (one of whom is Yasuaki Kurata) spend their childhood trying to break blocks in half with their heads and, once grown, leave for Taiwan to seek revenge on Wang Yu's family. After some close-to-home beat downs, Jimmy figures out what's going on and declares himself "Japan's malignant star." He spars with Kurata and company in a well-choreographed sawmill brawl, before risking life, limb, and credibility in an auto-driven showdown with a mean pit bull of a little old lady. Astonishing. 1973, *Ocean Shores*; 1986, AKA "Knight Errants" & "Kung Fu Mama" (yeah right), supposedly. Cast: Wang Yu, Yasuaki Kurata, Eddie Kou Sheng. **** -Patrick Macias

LANTERN STREET, THE- Four "But still"s, but even with the English dubbing, this is a real mess (one minute, the atmosphere comes off as a horror film, and later, it's a talky drama). The kung fu fights are good (courtesy of Wang Yu's acrobatic stunt-double, who works Over-Time), but because I couldn't quite tell what they were fighting over, I didn't really cheer anybody on, in this confusing, talky story of law enforcer Wang Yu, part of some Narcotics Bureau. He and his squad of vengeful kung fu girls are eager to wipe out a couple local gangs of opium pushers. So far, so good. But instead of concentrating on this basic premise, THE LANTERN STREET gets experimental on us, resulting in a long, dragging sequence involving a coffin-maker and some guy's dead mother. The sequence makes little sense, much like the rest of this disappointing, offbeat movie. I gotta' give them credit for trying a new idea though. Story: *Chu Yu*, Dir.: *Tu Chung Shun*, Cast: *Wang Yu, Chia Ling, Chan Hong Lieh, Chang Yi, Ying Chung-Cheng, Cheng Ching, Chin Sze-yu, Liu Shan, Chang Shao Ching, Wang Feng Ying*. (AKA: TENG LUNG STREET) ** -DF

MAGNIFICENT CHIVALRY- Not available for review. I don't care anymore.

MAGNIFICENT TRIO (1966)-Wang Yu is the white-clad hero of this costumed swordplay adventure (a remake of Hideo Gosha's THREE OUTLAW SAMURAI). Unlike his other 60's films where he's a loner, Wang is joined by two partners: Cheng Lei and Lo Lieh. Wang Yu plays Lu Fang, an ex-soldier who intervenes in a dispute between villagers and a corrupt magistrate. The villagers have kidnapped the magistrate's daughter and prepared a grievance petition for the visiting Minister Yuan. Wang Yu helps the villagers and is soon joined by his army buddy Huang Liang (Cheng Lei). A deal is made with the Magistrate and Wang Yu returns the daughter, who falls for Wang Yu,

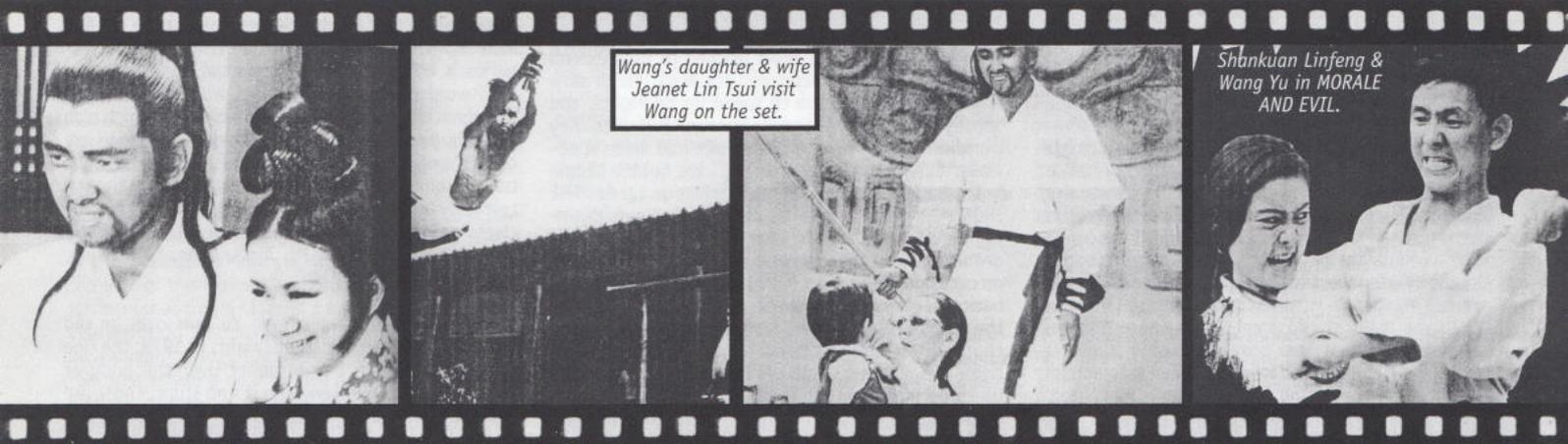
and offers to accept the punishment that would have been meted out to the three kidnappers. The Magistrate breaks his word and the daughter's maid helps Wang Yu escape. He is soon joined by Yen Chih-Ching (Lo Lieh). The Magistrate's men try to stop the heroic trio from delivering the petition to the Minister. Much bloodshed ensues. There is lots of swordfighting of the slash-and-swing variety, in which the heroes kill their opponents with one slice, while they themselves suffer repeated blows and arrow punctures yet keep fighting. It's not terribly realistic, but is vastly exciting and benefits from beautiful color photography and lavish sets at the Shaw Bros. studios. The film has been likened to the Japanese film THREE OUTLAW SAMURAI and does indeed play like a Samurai film. However, it's much more overwrought and melodramatic in the Hong Kong fashion. There is a very lovely music score, although there are no songs (there are plenty in TWIN SWORDS, if that's your cup of tea). Shaw Bros. regulars in the cast include Wu Ma as a bad guy and Tien Feng & Ku Feng as good guys for a change. There are five important female characters. Three of the actresses are quite beautiful. None of them fight. The credits list only Margaret Tu Chuan, Chin Ping, and Fanny Fan. Lo Lieh is very good as a reluctant hero and manages to incorporate some kung fu kicks into his sword-fighting repertoire here. Cheng Lei is a familiar face from many Shaw Bros. films of the 1960s and 70s and here has the biggest part I've ever seen him in. If you like Wang Yu's other 1960s classics (TWIN SWORDS, THE ASSASSIN, THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE, and RETURN OF THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN) you'll like this one also. Shaw Bros.: 1966, AKA "Three Brothers of Border Castle", Dir.: *Chang Cheh*, Cast: *Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Cheng Lei, Ching Ping, Fanny Fan*. *** -Brian Camp

MAN CALLED TIGER, A- I'm not sure when Golden Harvest made this one, since one source claimed it was 1975, while another stated it was 1972. Since Lo Wei directed, and appears in it, I'll assume 1972 is about right (because I suspect by 1975, Lo Wei had left Golden Harvest). It doesn't really matter, because A MAN CALLED TIGER has got to be Wang Yu's least interesting film. It's a yakuza movie, and as such, gets pretty boring. There are dull gambling scenes which drag on forever. Han Ying (THE BIG BOSS himself) Chieh is a good choreographer, but in this case, his work couldn't teach Wang Yu to fully extend those kicks; and though the battles are entertaining, Wang Yu's lack of real kung fu ability becomes too apparent—he even makes co-hero James Tien look good. The story is a stupid one; Wang goes to Japan to avenge his father's death, and in doing so, actually joins a Japanese mob (and he seems quite villainous at first). Inbetween unintentionally humorous fights (so bad, they're good!), it seems every cute chick in Japan has the hots for him, it happens over and over (enough! We get the point already!) but he's too good for them and isn't interested. I do believe that for once, a few shots were actually filmed in Japan. Lo Wei, young Lam Ching Ying & Han Ying Chieh don't look very Japanese, but Kawai Okada adds

some credibility. One of Wang's better fights is on a sky-tram, where he drops an immense distance to a lake—quite a nifty stunt, with no double. But as an actor, he sucks in this one; he's facially expressionless. But the frequent bursts of action don't last because a huge portion of the film's latter half involves a gambling scene, and it introduces all these different characters. Something to do with Maria Yi trying to find her father. It gets confusing and boring, and eventually, my attention wandered. The climax involves men with hatchets, bloodshed, and Wang's eventual battle with Kawai Okada, who he knocks off the roof of a building. But by then, I had lost interest. *Golden Harvest*; 1972, Music: *Joseph Koo*, Cinematography: *Chen Ching Chueh*, Martial Arts Instructor: *Han Ying Chieh*, Dir.: *Lo Wei*, Cast: *Wang Yu, Kawai Okada, Han Ying Chieh, Maria Yi, James Tien, Tien Feng, Lam Ching Ying, Chien Yuet Sun*. *-DF

MAN FROM HONG KONG, THE- The demolition car-chase goes on forever, there's an embarrassingly tacky romantic interlude at one point, and they overdid the hang-gliding scenes, but otherwise it's a pretty tolerable crime drama. At one time or another, it seems every major HK action star has had his international debut, and this Australian/HK co-production was Jimmy Wang Yu's obligatory attempt. Sammo Hung plays the main villain for the first ten minutes (like when Wang Yu roughs him up in the jail cell) and just when you think he's the main character in the movie, he's shot by a sniper, to make way for villainous George Lazenby (former superstar of the Bond movie ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE). As a movie, it has its moments. Wang Yu's gritty, non-graceful interpretation of kung fu is always welcome, and he does a few great stunts, like where he kicks a guy off a motorcycle. But there are stupid technical glitches throughout; for example, watch for the car chase, where the windshield breaks. It's so obvious that the driver himself is intentionally bashing his own window. I think the movie's best fight is when Wang Yu sneaks into the karate school, located on a floor in a skyscraper that he first climbs. Interesting to note that the movie's theme song, "You've Blown it All Sky High" was a minor hit on radio stations at the time. Wang Yu also directed some of this film, but wasn't credited in the English print. Interesting to note that on the set of the film, a hang-glider accident in Sydney almost killed him. While filming the HK hang-glider scenes, he flew over skyscrapers and was declared a UFO, people called the police! AKA "Dragon Files", "The Dragon Flies", "The Dragon Flies", Japanese title: "Sky High"; *Golden Harvest*; 1974, Prod.: *Raymond Chow & John Fraser*, Executive Producers: *David Hannan, Andre Morgan*, Dir.: *Brian Trenchard Smith*, Cast: *Wang Yu, George Lazenby, Hugh Keays Byrne, Roger Ward, Frank Thru, Ros Spiers, Rebecca Gilling, Grant Page, Samo Hung, Deryck Barnes*. ** -Damon F.

MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE (1974)- As far as I'm concerned, this is Wang Yu at his finest! There is nonstop fun and action all the way through this fantastic film. Once again, Wang Yu returns as one



Wang's daughter & wife
Jeanet Lin Tsui visit
Wang on the set.

Shankuan Linfeng &
Wang Yu in MORALE
AND EVIL.

of his most popular characters, and once again he "borrows" something from the Shaws (the flying guillotine of the title). I wonder if it was because he had "connections" that the studios let him do all this stuff. Anyway, the titular master goes after Wang because he off'd his two students. Of course, there is a martial arts tournament going on, and several more one-armed martial artists bite the dust. Eventually Yu figures out a way to stop the baddie, and he does. This is just a wonderful, fun film. The lame American movie MORTAL KOMBAT resembles this film a lot, and is maybe a tenth as fun. Not to be missed. AKA: "One Armed Boxer 2", "One Armed Boxer vs. Flying Guillotine". Prod. Co.: First Films, Dir. Wang Yu, Prod.: Wong Cheuk-hon, Martial Arts Instructor: Liu Chia-lina, g. Liu Chia-yung. Cast: Wang Yu, Lung Chung-erh, Lung Fei, King Kong, Liu Chia-yung, Jimmy Lee, Yu Sung Chao, Shan-tsin Po, Li Chien Min, Shao Kao Shan, Chi Fu Chiang, Wang Chiang, Hau Pai Cheng, Chen Sing, Wang Ming Fei, Chu Tien Wu, Wang Lung, Wang Wing Sheng, Hsieh Hsing, Hsieh Han. *****-David McRobie

MODERN CINDERELLA- This 1985 movie isn't available to view, and if the title is any clue, then maybe its ellusiveness is a good thing.

MORALE AND EVIL- Another rare movie, now considered a "lost" movie unless it returns (or has returned?) under another title. So this 1971 rarity wasn't available for review. The photos show Wang Yu actually wearing a Japanese karate gi and/or Korean tae kwon do uniform, fighting Shangkuan Lin-feng, attired the same. Supposedly, she and Wang didn't get along and were both angered as to who got top billing. Despite personality/ego conflicts the studio did get them to return for THE HERO.

MY SON (Shaw Bros.; 1969)- Modern soap opera of gripping tragedy— not available for review. Wang Yu plays a jobless youth who leaves home after an explosive argument with his detective father (Tien Feng). He rescues & befriends nightclub artiste Margaret Hsing Hui and because of her, gets drawn into a world of hoodlums and gamblers. Wang is cheated of all his savings. Meeting his swindler one day, Wang gives chase. His father happens on the scene and thinking his son is about to do violence, shoots him dead. Dir.: Lo Chen, Cast: Wang Yu, Tien Feng, Margaret Hsing Hui.

MY WACKY, WACKY WORLD- This is a bewilderingly bad, excessively long drama with ample doses of talking, plus some comedy, and a few balads thrown in for bad measure. There are familiar faces a plenty (i.e. Dean Shek and Hao Li), but the appearance of martial arts trio Jimmy Wang Yu, Sammo Hung and James Tien is brief; toward the end of the film. The guys do take on henchmen in one lame fight, but their involvement is small, they really add nothing to this absolutely boring, useless drama set in the Ming Dynasty, with James Wong (he used to produce commercials, write songs and direct films) as a judge who accepts bribes then must do some cover-ups when some official inspectors come to town. *Golden Harvest*; 1975. Released: August '75, Script & Dir.: Ting Shan Si, Music: Joseph Koo, Asst. Dir.: Ku Hua, Cast: James Wong, Deborah Lee, Helen Poon, Wang Tsuin, Wu Chia Hsiang, Chiang Nan, Feng Yi, Shih Tien, Miao Tien, Ouyang Sha-Fei, Lo Lan, Chiang Ke Hsin, Chin Ti, Wei Ping Ao, Hao Li-Jen, Tien Jen. -DF

ONE ARMED AGAINST NINE KILLERS- Wang Yu plays yet another one-armed fighter, who has to fight (you guessed it) nine killers. From what I remember, this wasn't the most involving Wang Yu flick. I only watched it once. It has a "surprise" ending that I saw a mile away. Not a bad waste of time, but certainly not in the higher echelon of Yu's pics. Dir.: Tsu Tsan Hong, AKA "One Armed Swordsman Annihilates the Nine Disciples of Chu School", and "One Armed vs. Nine Killers", Dir.: Tsu Tsan Hong, Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Chung Hua, Lo Lieh, Lung Fei. ** -David McRobie

ONE-ARMED BOXER, THE: After Wang Yu left the



Shaws, he made this film for Golden Harvest. Well, I guess you should steal from your best work, right? In the course of events natural to Chinese martial arts studios, one gets offended by another one, and a big fight ensues. The masters go to have some duels to settle matters. During a brutal match Wang Yu gets his right arm karate chopped off by a Japanese Karate master. He then learns the deadly one-armed boxing form, in which all of the nerves in his arm must get numbed. After that event (which turns his left arm black, by the way) he then goes out and battles several different fighters, from all styles. Excitement abounds as Yu gets his revenge. I never knew Japanese people had fangs! Wang Yu packs more fun and action in five minutes than most 90s movies have in two hours. A few years later came its only sequel, MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE. *Golden Harvest; 1970, AKA: "Chinese Professionals", Presented by: Raymond Chow, Martial Arts Instructor: Chen Shi Wei, Screenplay Dialogues: Wang Yu, Dir.: Wang Yu, Cast: Wang Yu, Tien Yen, Lung Fei, Tang Hsin, Ma Chi, Lei Chun**** -David McRobie*

ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN (1967)- You see a lot of "One-Armed" this & that in this filmography, but this film is the first, possibly the best, and the official beginning of a huge series. Generally regarded as the first martial arts flick, this is one awesome movie. Wang Yu is NOT the normal humble do-good-for-others type of hero. He comes from a lower caste, poor folk. His father gets killed and the teacher of a noted sword school adopts him. He's so good at sword play that some of other students are jealous. He gets his arm hacked off (by Pan Yin-tze), his sword broken, and then learns the secret one-armed sword style (from Chiao Chiao's book), and continues to use his broken sword. It has an emotional punch that most "mainstream" movies lack, and it's exciting as well. Not too much kung fu, but a lot of swordplay, all with a minimum of wires! I'm not sure, but Jackie and his cronies may have worked on this film. This film sure influenced a lot more of Yu's films in the future, as we all have seen. *Shaw Brothers; 1967, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Prod.: Runme Shaw, Screenwriter: Chang Cheh & I Kuang, Film Editing: Chiang Hsing Loon, Cast: Wang Yu, Tien Feng, Ku Feng, Lina Chiao, Pan Ying Tzu, Chen Yen Yen, Cheng Lei, Chang Pei Shan, Huang Chung Shun, Hung Liu, Chao Hsiung. ***** -David McRobie*

ONE-ARMED SWORDSMEN, THE: Wang Yu teams up with David Chiang (after they left the Shaws) to form their own company. Naturally they brought together their two most famous characters (I guess they didn't have to worry about the copyrights). This is a fun mid-1970s film, and we see a lot of both swordplay and kung fu, plus some use of chi. Apparently there are a lot of one-armed sword guys all over China. The bad guys try to trick Wang into fighting David, but they are on to it all along. They chase the one armed killer clear to Shaolin, and then the film gets confusing. But all in all, it's quite a rousing film. *Dir.: Wang Yu & David Chiang, Prod.: Huang Feng, Cast: David Chiang, Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Chang Yi, Li Mang*

Vin. **** -David McRobie

POINT THE FINGER OF DEATH- Spies of the corrupt Ching Dynasty attempt to undermine an alliance of Ming patriots. Patriot leader Wang Yu survives an assassination attempt but loses an arm (naturally) in the process. Later still, he is framed for a rape/murder and must root out the traitors within his own alliance to clear himself. Meanwhile, another mysterious, one-armed fighter (Liu Chia-yung) appears on the scene with his own private mission of vengeance. The two one-armed men eventually meet, duel and then combine forces to expose and destroy the true villains. The story is typical and the budget meager, but the direction is clean and economic, and fighting director Liu (AKA Lau Kar Wing, of the legendary Liu brothers clan of filmmaker/choreographers) gives the action a sense of tension and flow which makes everything seem better than it is. Jimmy Wang Yu has never had a one-armed fighter move so smoothly on screen: Liu's tight choreography allows Wang to gracefully butterfly kick and one-arm somersault his way



POINT THE FINGER OF DEATH.



through slashing hordes of fighters, his queue flying, his sword a graceful whirl. In fact, the inevitable combat between the two handicapped heroes is better conceived here than it was in Yu's earlier ONE-ARMED SWORDSMEN (with David Chiang). A strong supporting cast also helps things along: At the finale, it's Liu chia-yung versus Liang Chia-Jen, then Wang Yu versus Lung Fei amid the water-wheels and flour sacks. Unusually good choreography (for a Wang Yu picture) makes this one to look for. *AKA: "One-Armed Chivalry", "One Armed Chivalry Fights Against One-Arm Chivalry" Golden Harvest; 1977, Released: 1978, Dir.: Chin Shang-En (AKA Jin Shen-gen, Chia Sheng-en), Fighting Dir.: Lau Ka Wang [sic] (AKA Liu Chia-yung), Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Liu Chia-Yung, Hsi Hsiang, Wang Kuan-hsung, I Huang, Lung Fei, Liang Chia-jen. *** -Dale Bery*

PROFESSIONAL KILLER, THE- Sources indicate this slow-paced talker came out in 1980, but unless Wang Yu had just took a dip in the Fountain of Youth, I suspect THE PROFESSIONAL KILLER to be a few years older. Anyway, this movie should not be confused with the three-part Japanese film series (A.K.A. "Hissatsu Shikakenin") of the same name. I think this movie came out in the early 1970s, shortly after Wang Yu's arrival in Taiwan. Whatever the case, it seems to be made during a low point in Wang's career; it's a cheap, sometimes boring flick with Taiwanese extras & unknowns throughout— I couldn't spot a single familiar face except for Wang himself. Most of the swordfighting stuntmen aren't particularly good, and to compensate for this, the fights are sped-up too much and it gets obvious. The production quality is somewhat below par, and there are technical glitches throughout: In one scene, he's fighting off swordsmen (wearing leopard print) at night, but then they suddenly do all these reverse-footage high-jumps and land in a daytime setting! Later, after Wang Yu's girlfriend is captured & tortured by the villains, it appears as though the actress quit the production. Not only do they suddenly kill her off, but her death scene has her covered in a black sheet, and when Wang Yu dramatically carries her corpse away at the end, we still don't see her face. This could probably be considered one of Wang's worst movies, but even so, there's plenty of exciting entertainment! Even though my print lacks any translation, I still managed to give it some attention, because there are a lot of swordfights. If I found a subtitled or dubbed print, I would understand the script and have really liked this movie. In it, Wang is a hitman in old China, who demonstrates his swordsmanship at one point, by slicing candles in mid-air. He also slices bad guys— sometimes they're in mid-air too. *Producer: Hsi Cho Kwang, Executive: Chu Ken, Screenplay: Chu Hsiang Kin, Dir.: Hsin Chi, Starring: Wang Yu. ** -DF*

RETURN OF THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN- Perhaps the only truly legitimate, genuine sequel to THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, since it's the only other One-Armed film where both responsible parties (Wang Yu and the Shaw Brothers) cooperated. *RETURN OF THE*



ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN is almost as good as the original, and if I find an English dubbed print, I'll think it's even better, possibly. There's more swordplay, and my favorite spat has Wang Yu up against several swordsmen who swing weapons resembling saw-blades. We also get glimpses of young stars like Wu Ma, Chen Sing & Ti Lung, who I believe made their debuts here. Liu Chia-liang also looks pretty young, but he gets killed off early (as does Ti Lung). Though **RETURN OF THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN** is a classic for its time, it's obvious that the HK martial arts film scene wasn't very organized back then—they didn't quite know what they're doing. A real martial artist like Liu Chia-liang only plays a hench-villain. The main villain is played by non-martial arts actor Tien Feng, so his climactic duel with Wang Yu is anything but climactic. The beginning is slow (talky, too many characters), and I could do without the small, sappy subplot about the One-Armed Swordsman's pregnant wife, but there are plenty of epic sword fights in the film, as Wang Yu leads a squad of white clothing-clad swordsmen through a forest to wipe out an army of corrupt martial artists bent on supremacy of the swordplay community. Wang Yu's ending (before he squares off with old-fart Tien Feng, that is) battle with black-clothed swordsmen (near a mill with a wheel in the water, etc.) at some neat little town is interesting for the usage of the wire & pulley effect. There are a couple outrageously impossible high-leaps, but unlike in the 1990s movies, they're not overdone, and instead of detracting from the battle, they make it more fun. *Shaw Bros.: 1968, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Cast: Wang Yu, Tien Feng, Wu Ma, Chen Sing, Ti Lung, Liu Chia-liang. *** -DF*

QUEEN'S RANSOM, A-Ye Gods! A DAY OF THE JACKAL/MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE style assassination thriller starring George Lazenby, Jimmy Wang Yu, a washed up Hollywood starlet (can't remember her name) and grainy newsreel footage of Queen Elizabeth. Really awful stuff. Fight sequences are poor, it's badly directed, there are garish 70s fashions (bellbottoms and sideburns), and we see why Golden Harvest only sporadically cracked the international film market in the 1970s. Sammo was the action director, but you can't tell from watching this tripe. Those idiots at EASTERN HEROES were praising this one in their magazine because they were selling the bootleg at their shop. Don't listen to them! *Golden Harvest; 1976, AKA "Operation Regina" and "International Assassins", Stunts: Sammo Hung, Cast: Wang Yu, George Lazenby, Angela Mao, Sammo Hung. * -John Grace*

RETURN OF THE CHINESE BOXER- First off, don't be fooled by the title; this period fantasy has nothing to do with THE CHINESE BOXER, which the story quite obviously predates! This movie is more imaginative, and over-the-top than the average chop-sockey revenge drama. It's absolutely action-packed, and were it not for cruelty to birds (in this case, a duck and a pigeon or two), I would have given it five stars. Sorry, Wang Yu; you blew this movie's only chance to get a five star rating in the pages of O.C.! But still! (which is said once in the whole film), it's still one of

my favorite Wang Yu films. Though it too has Japanese villains, at least this time, most of them (except for the knife-thrower) can pass for real Japanese, they're pretty convincing. The kendo fight on the train is good; in fact all the Japanese characters at least have depth and there are large stretches of film where Wang Yu himself isn't even present. The Japanese uniforms look just as accurate as that of any samurai film, and the duels between the Japanese are a lot of fun (it's only here that it becomes apparent that it's Chinese martial artists dressed as Japanese, because the choreography is blatantly Chinese). Wang Yu again threw in a lot of unexpected surprises in this movie: 1. His opening training scenes where he fights some really weird looking, fake sparring partners; I can't quite figure them out. 2. I also can't figure out the walking dummies (their feet are suppose to be moving because of wires and pulleys, I assume) used to distract a Japanese gunslinger. It's a strange effect, that's for sure. 3. In one brief scene, the Japanese even bring three corpses back to life, giving Wang Yu a chance to fight zombies! Anyway; all in all, it's a really entertaining movie—highly recommended! *Cheng Ming (H.K.) Film Co.; 1977, Producer: Jimmy Wong Yu, Exec. Prod.: Tsai Yi Ming, Prod. Manager: Cheng Shea Yin, Action Dir.: Hsieh Hsing, Dir.: Jimmy Wong Yu, Cast: Jimmy Wong Yu, Lung Fei, Cheung Ying Chen, Chin Kang. **** -DF*

ROYAL FIST- Awkwardly uneven, and though it doesn't absolutely suck, it's far from being Wang's best movie. The first hour or so is truly painful to watch (full of infantile slapstick and Benny Hill style high-speed running around), so I never copied the rental when I watched it years ago—now that the Chinese videostore is long gone, I regret that I didn't maintain a dupe for myself. Wang plays some sort of Chinese Robinhood during the turn of the century, and tackles corrupt, bumbling soldiers, mobsters, Japanese & bandits while boring us with romantic subplots. The latter portion of the movie is alive with kung fu, swordplay and another of his long, entertaining battles which seem to cross the country. Wang Yu pushes the last of his foes into a burning hot geyser, and although the ending is as exciting as always, this videotape lacked any sort of translation, making too much of it tedious. For a more detailed commentary, see my review on page 42 of O.C.: The Femme Fatales Issue. 1972; A.K.A.: "Showdown" and "Robin Hood Chino", Prod.: Lee Chiya Un, Music: Chow Rian, Dir.: Ting San Shi, Exec. Prod.: Ng Tien Ting, Yang Ming, Cast: Wang Yu, Chang Ching Ching, Fu Pi Fei. ** -Damon Foster

SCREAMING TIGER- The American theatrical release came to local TV as WANG YU: KING OF BOXERS; and there are minor editing differences at the beginning, like the cheap, hasty video-generated title for the WANG YU: KING OF BOXERS version which I taped off of Kung Fu Theatre (hosted by Tat Ma Wong) one Saturday evening/Sunday morning. The setting is Japan, and though Wang Yu made resourceful use of every kimono & Japanese tea-garden Taiwan had to offer, the fact that all the so-called "Japanese" have

Chinese names is a dead give-away. Even so, the film is unique in that for once, not all "Japs" are portrayed as evil; he actually befriends a kendo master or two, and even a Korean. It seems that they'll all team up to get revenge against the three main Japanese who slaughtered a fishing village (on the China Coast), but before the film ends, all of Wang Yu's co-heroes (Japanese or not) and other poor souls are dead, allowing for Wang Yu to be the sole avenger, or rather, "soul avenger". Wang tries his best to keep his comrades alive; in one scene a disgraced samurai tries to resort to the stupid act of hara-kiri, so Wang Yu kicks the sword out of the guy's hands and says: "That's useless!" There's really only one other dumb thing about the movie: Some annoying lady (who's lame martial arts nearly ruin the flick) played by Chang Ching-Ching is wearing a Japanese kimono, and Wang Yu grabs her leg to get his goods back (she's a pick-pocket too). From grabbing her leg, he makes the brilliant deduction that she's Chinese. Did I miss something? Otherwise, the chop-sockey action is plentiful and I really enjoyed this variation on the old Chinese vs. Japanese martial arts" theme. Kung fu, judo, sumo wrestling, samurai action all in one film, and the plot is simple enough to follow without paying migraine-inducing attention to every detail. AKA "Escort of the Tangs", "Wang Yu: King of Boxers", "Fury of King Boxer", and "Ten Fingers of Steel". Dir.: Jian Lung & Lee Siu-Hwa; 1973, Prod.: Zhang Wen-bin, Shih Chao Chin, Martial Arts Instructor: Huang Lung, Cast: Wang Yu, Zhang Chao-qing (AKA Chang Ching-Ching), Kang Hai, Zi Lan, Lung Fei, Lu Ping, Wei Chao-ru. *** -DF

SEAMAN NO. 7 (AKA "Wang Yu's Seven Magnificent Fights" and "Bloody Struggle")-Dude. This is it. Dude, this is the shit. Modern 1970s cheap-sockey, complete with butt-ugly clothing—Wang Yu's pants alone make Keith Partridge look cool even by today's standards. This film, which I viewed as WANG YU'S SEVEN MAGNIFICENT FIGHTS, starts off as another unintentional comedy along the lines of PLAN 9 FROM OUTERSPACE, HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS and CASABLANCA, and it's complete with Wang Yu's own facts of life: Chinese are all 100% good, and 95% of all Japanese are inherently evil! Such blatant, embarrassing praising of one's own race has simply got to be making up for some sort of insecurity; but this ridiculously pro-Chinese theme makes this zany farce a relentless laugh riot! But by the middle of the movie, Wang Yu was once again gaining my respect, thanks to the many fights (there are way more than seven, so ignore the title!), stunts and innovative action scenes! So for several reasons, be it intentional or unintentional, this is one very, very fun movie and I loved every minute of it! Though trashy to an extent, and featuring Wang's sappy friendship with some chick (Mariko Jun), I dare say it's become one of my favorite Wang Yu movies!!! His swimming skills are put to good use as we see the first ever underwater kung fu fight, and his chain-swinging duel with Lam Ching Ying (here credited Lin Cheng Ying) on a speeding truck is nothing short of brilliant. Wang Yu plays a Taiwanese sailor who likes to fight &



QUEEN'S RANSOM.



whistle, stuck in Kyoto, battling the local yakuza and sumo wrestlers, although I can't tell just how much was shot on location—I suspect Taiwan has plenty of Japanese tea-gardens. Much of the time, he's whistling, but he also takes time out to tackle a gang lead by a bleach blond James Tien! But before Wang wipes out bad guys like James Tien and Han Ying Chieh, Wang Yu shocks me by learning judo from the one and only Masafumi Suzuki, the Japanese karate instructor who would later battle Sonny Chiba in *THE STREETFIGHTER*! Wang beats Chiba to the punch—or rather, to the flip! The sequence in the dojo where Wang Yu wears a karate gi and studies Japanese martial arts is brief, but it does add a new element to the plot: While helping the Japanese authorities (good guys!) to wipe out his enemies, Wang uses them short Japanese swords, the sai, to defeat villainous James Tien during a thrilling, energetic bout! How often does Wang Yu use Japanese techniques to defeat villains?! Not too often, I think. This movie turned out to be an unexpected pleasure, from start to finish. *Golden Harvest; 1972, Prod.: Raymond Chow, Asst. Prod.: Lau Leung Wah, Cinematography: Chen Chin Chu, Asst. Dir.: Wu Shih, Music: Joseph Koo, Choreography: Han Ying Chieh, Screenplay & Directed by: Lo Wei, Cast: Wang Yu, James Tien, Mariko Jun, Tien Feng, Lee Quin, Lo Wei, Hang Ying Chieh, Chin Shan, Ko Hsiang-Ting, Masafumi Suzuki, Lin Cheng Ying, Yasuyoshi Shikamura, Chien Yeun-Sheng (AKA Chien Yuet Sun), Li Shao Chia, Lin Cheng Ying, Shang Kuan Liang, Ma Wen Chun ***** -DF*

SHANGHAI EXPRESS- Too many talking, silly characters for me to enjoy its original Chinese version, *MILLIONAIRE'S EXPRESS* (AKA "Noble Express")—but this here English dub (I found a PAL transfer in a videostore) is quite enjoyable! There's an awkward glitch (some sort of unintentional freeze frame) in the opening credits, but otherwise, *SHANGHAI EXPRESS* (aka *MILLIONAIRE'S EXPRESS*) is a blockbuster, by Chinese standards! It's got an all-star cast, I just can't list all the superstars and familiar faces in this one. This is really a Sammo Hung film, so see a more precise review of it in the *O.C.: The Sammo Hung Issue*. As for Wang Yu's pointless cameo, it's really just an in-joke; a role I suspect was written for Kwan Tak Hing. Kwan Tak Hing long-time rival Shih Kien is at odds with Wang Yu in a couple comedic scenes, as they satirize the old "Wong Fei Hung" films. Wang Yu seems out of place in these goofy shots, and a better salute of this nature was in *ACES GO PLACES 4* (also in 1986), where Kwan Tak Hing does indeed reprise his role, making the minor conflict with Shih Kien have a point. In *SHANGHAI EXPRESS*, Wang Yu seems miss-cast in this role. *Golden Harvest; 1986, Dir.: Samo Hung, Martial Arts Instructor: Samo Hung, Cast: Samo Hung, Yuen Biao, Hsiao Ho, Eric Tsang, Lam Ching Ying, Rosamund Kwan, Yuen Wah, Jimmy Wang Yu, Shih Kien, Kenny Bee, Wu Ma, Mong Hoi. **** -DF*

SHANGHAI 13 [*orig. title: Shanghai tan shi san tai bao*]-A star-watcher's delight, as director Chang Cheh creates a film whose sole purpose is to allow an amazing parade of some of the finest talent in martial arts film to all take turns beating one another to death. Set in the mid-1930's, it's the story of a man named Gao, who possesses proof that a government minister has been negotiating secret treaties with the invading Japanese in Nanking. In order to expose the culprit and the "treacherous" triad organization that protects him, Gao must be smuggled from Shanghai to Hong Kong by a secret, rival, "good" triad group known as the Shanghai Thirteen. The film details how each member of the Thirteen sacrifice themselves, one after the other, to help deliver Gao to his ship on time. This premise allows Chang Cheh to dispense with the plot early and deliver scene after scene of precision choreography and bloody carnage (easily on par with anything devised for the "Venoms" films). Each guest star walks on, engages in an incredible set-piece fight, and then dies handing Gao on to the next guest star. The linear structure of the film is not unlike earlier Chang slaughter-fests, such as *ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS*, or *FIVE ELEMENT NINJA* [a.k.a.



羽王

演自·導自·編自

飛龍

演主銜領

野田

漢薛

演主

鄒文懷

監製

WANG YU
in
BEACH OF THE WAR GODS

戰神灘漢

片影佳最 GH 獻貢禾嘉

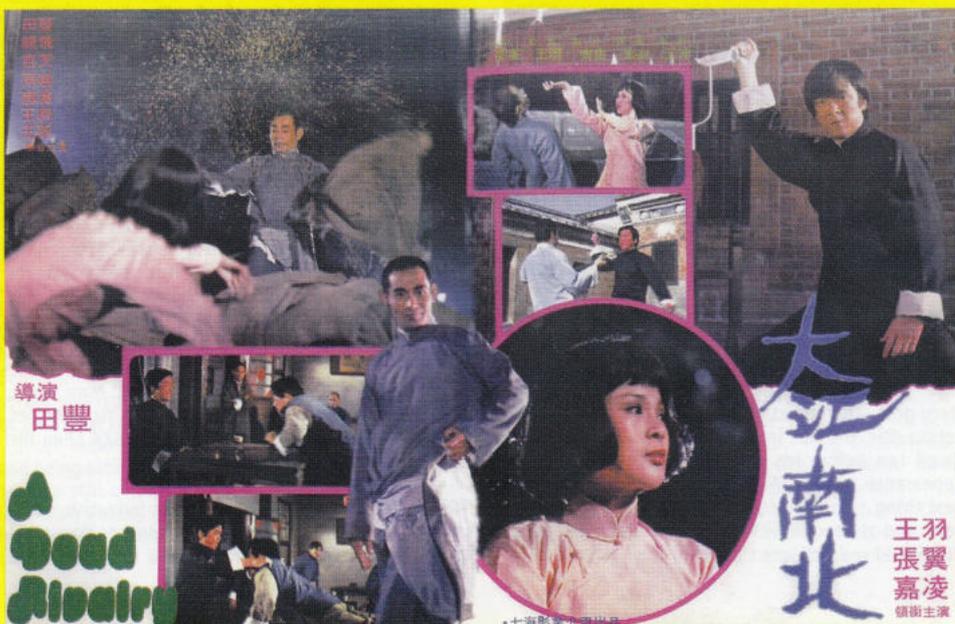
DYALISCOPE

SUPER NINJAS]- other movies of his that abandon story in favor of battle scenes- and each vignette showcases the actors to their best advantage while framing the creative and bloodthirsty action perfectly. The only drawbacks are the non-period details that come from using modern-day locations to stand-in for 30's Shanghai (humorously obvious, at times), and the soundtrack lifted directly from various American action-films. But these are quibbles, considering the movie delivers so much on the pure action-performance level. Jimmy Wang Yu starts the whole thing off as the agent who invades the minister's office and liberates the secret treaty documents. A small part, but a smooth star-turn. *Hong Kong; 1981, Dir: Chang Cheh (also screenplay), Cast includes: Ti Lung, David Chiang, Chen Kuan Tai, Jimmy Wang Yu, Chen Sing, Kuo Chui, Lu Feng, Chiang Sheng, Liang Cha Jen, Li Hsiu Hsien, and many other Shaw Bros. Studio alumni from the 60's and 70's, all of who look like they're having a blast. Bad cinema, heartily recommended. ***1/2 -Dale Berry*

SHOGUN AND LITTLE KITCHEN- Ronnie Yu Yan-tai-prior to enjoying success among the "mocha-swishing-I'm-so-ironic" art house bastards with his BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR- found the time to knock out this enjoyable low budget comedy which unfortunately has been all but forgotten. Boasting an impressive cast, this quickie tells the tale of a spoiled brat (a young, still reprehensible Leon Lai Ming) who runs out on his rather luxurious existence in search of a simpler way of life. By accident, he finds this in the form of a poor apartment-complex community headed by the wily Bo (Stephen Chow's cinematic lacky Ng Man-tat), and his diverse line of cohorts (including the age-defying Yuen Biao as his uncle and Maggie Siu as his daughter/obligatory love interest for Leon). Though not necessarily strong on plot, SHOGUN AND LITTLE KITCHEN more than makes up for in quality performances, amusing bits, and a strong eagerness to please. Ng Man-tat delivers a restrained, subtle comic portrayal that is the polar opposite of his wildly over-the-top roles in the Stephen Chow vehicles. Leon Lai Ming is unbearably wooden in this early role, while Maggie Siu adds little to the mix. Old-school kung fu enthusiasts will be somewhat pleased to find out that Jimmy Wang Yu and Leung Kar-yan make appearances in supporting roles, but they will be equally disappointed in finding out that they have very little to do in terms of anything whatsoever (Kar-yan is decked in crutches, while Wang Yu carries a permanent scowl as Leon's emotionally-drained millionaire father). Unsurprisingly, the show is stolen by Yuen Biao, whose acrobat role allows him to engage in wonderfully refreshing kung-fu cooking scenes, guaranteed to please even the most jaded of Hong Kong film buffs. Be sure not to pass this one up, as it's at least worth a rental. *Hoventin Films Production Co. Ltd.; 1992, Dir.: Ronnie Yu Yan-tai, Cast: Ng Man-tat, Yuen Biao, Leon Lai Ming, Maggie Siu, Jimmy Wang Yu, Leung Kar-yan. ***-Victor Nguyen*

SHOGUN SAINTS- We tried locating this elusive gem on video, but no such luck. So this review is written from a television viewing 15 years ago. This was Jimmy Wang Yu as a swordsman in what looked like the Sung dynasty, as there are no samurais or shoguns. The flick was retitled to capitalize on the success of SHOGUN ASSASSIN, and we all know that U.S. distributors can't tell the difference between Chinese and Japanese films. The film was bloody, with decapitations and slashings galore, and I remember Wang Yu was protecting a woman and an orphan. Back when I was a teen, this movie rated *** on my quality scale. But hell, I thought BLOOD OF THE DRAGON was great when I was 13. If anybody has this on tape, let us know. (aired on USA Network in 1985). *Starring Jimmy Wang Yu. *** -John Grace*

SILVER SPEAR, THE- Not available for review, but I did locate a trailer (in some bizarre language I couldn't identify) for it. It appears to be somewhat inspired by the likes of BEACH OF THE WAR GODS, and seems action-packed. In one scene, Wang Yu engages in an underwater swordfight! A.K.A.: "The Deadly Silver Spear", "The Deadly Silves Spear", Fortona Films (HK.,



導演 田豐

The Deadly Silver Spear

大江南北

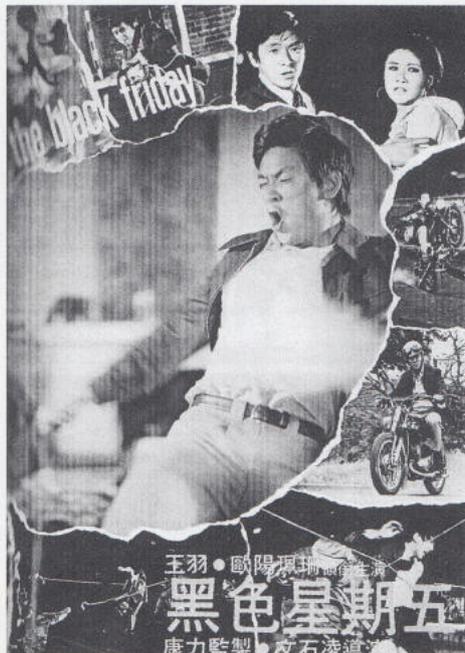
王羽 張翼 嘉凌 領銜主演

·七海影業公司出品

Cast: Wang Yu, Hsu Feng, Chang Yi, Hu Chir, Wu Chia Chi.

SWORD AND THE LUTE- Not all of Wang's 1960s sword farces are action packed, as this disappointing sequel to *THE TWIN SWORDS* (Shaw Brothers; 1965) proves. Lots of subplots, and pointless conversations accompanied by eye-straining subtitles. This movie was rather a pain to watch. Fortunately, the swordfights they do have in *SWORD AND THE LUTE* are decent, and almost make the movie worth two stars. There's a part of me which really regrets only rating *THE SWORD AND THE LUTE* a single star (*), because I know it can amount to two, maybe even three stars worth of entertainment, if: A half hour of boredom was on the cutting-room floor or if there was an English dubbed print. The tale involves the quest for weapons: Lo Lieh is after the "Curved Sword", the Flying Tiger Gang (villains) is interested in the Lute (an instrument which fires lethal darts), and Yueh Hua, injured by a Lute dart, needs some magic rock as a cure. So that's what takes up most of the story—at least I think so, but much of it takes place in the dark, and it's hard to see what the hell is going on. Needless to say, action returns (eventually) when Lo Lieh, Wang Yu, Yueh Hua & Ivy Ling Po finally get pissed off enough to tackle the villains of Flying Tiger Castle, but villainous Ku Feng escapes. For a more detailed description, see my review on page 18 of *O.C.: The Robo Hero Issue*. *Shaws; 1966, Screenplay: Wang Wing Loong, Dir.: Siu Jang Hung, Asst. Dir.: Shen Kuang, Art Dir.: chen Chi-Puey, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Song by Shen Kiang, Lyrics: Chang Chieh, Cast: Wang Yu, Yueh Hua, Lo Lieh, Ivy Ling Po, Chin Ping, Hsing Hui, Lily Ho, Wu Ma, Bobo Fung. * -Damon F.*

THE SWORD (a.k.a., *THE SWORDSMAN*)- I've heard this film compared, favorably, with the chambara classic *SWORD OF DOOM*, and I can see why: it's not in the style, but more in the flavor. Both are compelling studies of self-destruction. This costumed epic was one of Jimmy Wang Yu's earliest independent, post-Shaw productions. Jimmy plays an arrogant and selfish young noble in the service of a conniving ruler. Out of greed, and against his word, this young warrior competes for a treasured sword, winning the tournament and the weapon but alienating himself from several court factions. A Taoist seer informs him of another legendary sword, rumored to be the most fabulous in the world and able to make its wielder the greatest of swordsmen. Torn between his political and filial obligations and his desire to possess this legendary blade, the young noble begins to slay his way across the land (and through his rivals at court) seeking to locate the sword, and its retired master. Unusually, the story concentrates on the human cost of that ambition instead of on the fighting, as Jimmy loses his loved ones -and sacrifices his humanity- in the pursuit of his goal. Soon, his world begins to tragically crumble. Wang Yu, capitalizing on the same nihilism he showed in *GOLDEN SWALLOW*, portrays this obsessive anti-hero with all the intensity and focus he can project ...and probably comes closer to playing a true psychotic than ever before, God bless 'im. It's a measured, well-done performance, probably the best of his career: as the noble's murderous obsession progresses, he becomes more and more wolfish in appearance - behaving not unlike a sword himself, a thing of cold steel, without human feelings. The film also allows Wang to show his rarely expressed sexuality onscreen, as his doomed protagonist is driven to seduce the master's daughter to further his goals. But don't be confused, this is no action movie. It's more of a character melodrama, with a slower pace to match. This moody film nonetheless benefits from its striking costumes and layers of period detail, evoking bleak, wintry settings and the latter days of China's Bronze Age empire. The fighting is slower, too, filled with big, swooping sword-work intended to give a sense of weight and realism, not unlike movies about the knights of Medieval Europe. It's all worth the ride, however, the conclusion is hypnotic



and emotionally taut, perhaps even brilliant. *THE SWORD* stands as a fine example of gothic wuxia, and a classic, old-fashioned Prestige Picture. *Pan's Production /East Asia Film Co.; 1971. Dir: Pan Lu (Lei Pan). Cast: Wang Yu, Lee Kuen, Chi Lung Wu, Mian Tien. ****1/2 - Dale Berry*

SWORD OF SWORDS- Not one of my favorite 1960s Shaw movies, but it's powerful none the less— *SWORD OF SWORDS* is so grim it's almost depressing. Tien Feng plays what's probably the most savage villain in his career, and his atrocities give a good excuse to make the swordplay more brutal than average. But on the whole, I think this uneven movie misses the mark. The first section, with Wang Yu (as Chen Hsiao) bullied by swordplay classmate Tien Feng, is effective. But later too much of the flick has to do with some magic sword (hence the title) which creates powerful winds that send all the attackers flying backwards. Wang Yu inherits this powerful, and much sought after sword, so he's burdened with his battle between conscience, pride and country; he wants to slaughter Tien Feng's evil army (the Shangs), but in doing so, they MIGHT get the magic sword, and therefore be a threat to all of China. So the middle section is talky, long and boring. The latter half finally has Wang take on the villains, but he gets blinded by darts. From here on, it's another Zato Ichi ripoff, with Wang using the power of hearing to stab all the bad guys. Though the movie (on the whole) was boring and uninvolved, the climactic swordfights make up for it and I really cheered him on. By the time Wang finally kills Tien Feng and dozens of swordwielding henchmen, they've already slaughtered all his friends and relatives, not to mention their kidnapping, torturing & framing of damsel-in-distress (and how!) Pai Feng. Plenty of mayhem throughout, but a slow middle detracts points. *Shaw Bros.; 1968, Prod.: Run Me Shaw, Screenplay: Cheng Kang, Cinematography: Li Yu Tang, Dir.: Chang Kang, Action Scenes Arranged by Tang Chia & Liu Chia Liang, Cast: Wang Yu, Li Chung, Shu Pei Pei, Tien Feng, Huang Chung Hsin, Ching Miao, Liu Chia Liang, Hao Li. ** -DF*

TATTOOED DRAGON, THE- Filmed on location in Thailand, it's one of the few movies (and an enjoyable one at that) where Wang Yu shared space with a co-hero: Then popular musician Samuel Hui. As the story goes, the pop star wanted to try a career as an action star, and was in the midst of negotiating with Bruce Lee before his untimely death; and a guest appearance in *THE TATTOOED DRAGON* was the next best thing. Ironically, Sylvia Chang makes her debut here, and as anyone with a brain knows, she and Sam Hui would reunite less than ten years later for Cin-

ema City's big hit *ACES GO PLACES*, which spawned one of the most popular HK film series of the 1980s. In *THE TATTOOED DRAGON*, Wang Yu also has a third helper: A German shepherd, rather a Thai equivalent to Korea's Deng Chiri, or our own Rin Tin Tin. Anyway, *THE TATTOOED DRAGON* entertained the hell out of me, it's one of my favorite Wang Yu capers! For once the gambling scenes make sense, these casino sequences actually build character development instead of being the pointless, obligatory filler they always are. And yet again, Wang Yu wiggles his ear to indicate he can hear the exact position at which the dice are landing! Additional unintended humor includes an overly drastic suicide pact when a mother and three kids drown themselves. That dorky twerp Li Kun, best known as "Ah Goon" ("The smart one, the one with the good head!") in *THE BIG BOSS* (Golden Harvest; 1971), basically reprises his role (or is typecast?) for this movie. *THE TATTOOED DRAGON* isn't Wang Yu's most action packed film, but when he fights, he looks damn good this time. Of course, it helps that most of the Thai extras make him look good by being such no talents. Sam Hui doesn't fight well either, but he attempts the same type of "comedy kung fu" that people would think Jackie Chan invented about five years later. Also ahead of Jackie is Wang Yu, for in this film, he uses a bench as a weapon, in moves quite similar to what Chan would later make famous. The story has Wang up against some corrupt, casino-running racketeers in Thailand, and somewhere along the way he befriends Thai boxer (yeah, right) Sam Hui, sporting the same Peter Tork haircut he would have on into the 1990s! Sam gets killed by the casino henchmen, so Wang seeks revenge and kills all of them, including leader James Tien. The bout between Tien and Yu is really cool; James Tien actually fights while his clothes are on fire, and it's not a stunt-double! *AKA: "Pit of Fury", Golden Harvest & Paragon Films; 1973, Dir.: Lo Wei, Prod.: Raymond Chow, Martial Arts Instructor: Hsu Erh-niu, Cast: Wang Yu, Samuel Hui, Sylvia Chang, James Tien, Li Kun. **** -DF*

TEMPLE OF THE RED LOTUS- Ivy Ling Po again plays that surly diva the Scarlet Maid and saves the day, rescuing good guys (i.e. Wang Yu & Lo Lieh) from the bad guys— who, in this case are bandits disguised as monks. I still think *THE TWIN SWORDS* is my favorite in this series of 1960s sword fantasies, but even *TEMPLE OF RED LOTUS* has its moments. I felt too much time was spent on immature romance stuff, but once Wang Yu, Ivy Ling Po and the other good guys finally battle Pan Pan, Wu Ma and the other evil monks from the Red Lotus Temple, there's enough swordplay and flying darts to make *TEMPLE OF RED LOTUS* about average. For a more thorough look at this one, see my review on page 17 of *O.C.: The Robo Hero Issue*. *Shaw Bros.; 1965, Dir.: Sun Jan Hung, Producer: Run Run Shaw, Cast: Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Ivy Ling Po, Chung Ping, Fung Bo Bo, Tien Feng, Ku Feng, Pan Pan, Ng Ma. ** -Damon Foster*

TIGER AND CRANE FISTS-If you enjoy old school kung-fu like I do, this personal favorite of mine is right up your alley. Jimmy Wang Yu and Lung Fei play two patriots who know Tiger Fist and Crane Fist and before you can say, "You killed my master!!!" They team up to take on Liu Chia Yung, a Manchu practitioner of Iron Armor kung fu and wielder of a deadly weapon that looks like a cross between the Flying Guillotine and a chicken foot! This is the way it's supposed to be, lots of great fights choreographed by Liu Chia-Yung and action with that unique Jimmy Wang Yu feel to it. Highly recommended! *A.K.A.: "Savage Killers" and "Savage Fists", First Film Co.; 1977, Dir: Jimmy Wang Yu, Script: Ngai Hong, Screenplay: Wang Yu, Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, Lung Fei, Liu Chia Yung, Ma Chi, Chen Wai Lau (AKA Chen Wei Liu). **** -Linn Haynes*

TOP FIGHTER- This devastatingly informative documentary is sort of a "sequel" to another documentary, the equally excellent *CINEMA OF VENGEANCE*

(1993). **TOP FIGHTER** is really an enlightening look at martial artists, not just the obligatory pieces on big-shots like Bruce Lee, Jean Claude V.D., Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung and Jet Li, but it goes deeper into the genre, featuring portions on lesser known, but equally important heroes of the genre, little known stars who are familiar faces to anyone raised on low-budget, HK chop-sockey. On discussing Wang Yu's rise to fame, the narrator states: "In the mid-1960s, Jimmy Wang Yu came to cinema screens in Asia, and became a superstar. Signed on as a contract player with the Shaw Brothers movie studio, Wang Yu was in great demand by his loyal fans. But many will be surprised to find out that Wang Yu never studied formal martial arts. Most of his fighting experience came from streetfighting, coupled with the fact that he was an olympic class athlete." Later, Wang Yu himself (in the same interview seen in **CINEMA OF VENGEANCE**) compares new and old martial arts movies, and says: "The competition is very hard now. That time, there's not many movie companies. Stories, very difficult to get. Very very good stories now. I love old days, but movie now is also much better." Full Plate Productions; 1994, Producers: Toby Russell & George Tan, Featuring: Larry Lee, Bruce Lee, David Weeden, Jean Claude V.D., Larry Tan, Jackie Chan, Chan Sing, Sammo Hung, Bruce Li, Jet Li, Yang ("Bolo") Sze, Jim Kelly, Casanova Wong, Ron Van Clief, Gordon Liu Kar Fei, Huang Jeng Lee, Jimmy Wang Yu, etc. ***** -DF

TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE (1967) Directed by Chang Cheh, with Jimmy Wang Yu and two very good actresses (one is Chiao Chiao), some good unidentified actors, as well as early Shaw Bros. regulars Wu Ma and Tien Feng as bad guys. There is lots of fighting, but it's simply staged, as was the style during the mid-1960s, with no real martial arts, just acrobatics and sword slashes a la Samurai films; but without the samurai technique or the ferocity of the samurai swordsmen. It's amazing how the heroes in these early films can kill several opponents at a time with soft, half-hearted sword blows, but when they get wounded they can fight forever. Good storyline: Li (Wang Yu) kills the official who framed his father and goes on the run. His girl, Miss Liu, pines for him. Her father invites Fang, a swordsman who protected her, to stay and teach her to fight. Fang loves Liu, but she only wants Li. So Fang goes searching for Li, who is now a stable groom in a little town. Fang shows up and forms an immediate instinctive bond with Li. (male bonding over love for the same woman is something we rarely see in U.S. films.) The bad guys show up. The leader issues a challenge to Fang and splits to Flying Fish Island. Li follows the bad guys and swims to the island. Liu and Fang arrive and get stuck in a cave filled with traps. All the characters have leaping powers. Ending has Li dying and wishing Liu would mate with Fang. But instead she kills herself to die with him. And then we see the two spirits, immaculately dressed, fly up to the beautiful heavenly sky. Amazing. Very elaborate studio production with beautiful cinematography. Lots of studio sets,

plus many outdoor locations (shot in Taiwan?). Very nice music—all original. Some pleasant Chinese songs on soundtrack. My copy is an original Tai Seng tape in Mandarin, with subtitles: a very good copy but the subtitles are chopped off on the sides. Like all of the Shaw Bros. films on tape, it cries out for letter-boxing. Shaw Bros.; 1967, Directed by Chang Cheh, Cast: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Wu Ma, Tien Feng. *** -Brian Camp

TWIN SWORDS, THE- One of several movies (at least three) to deal with Red Lotus Temple; other movies (**TEMPLE OF RED LOTUS** and **SWORD AND THE LUTE**) involve many of the same characters. **TWIN SWORDS** is probably my favorite movie in this trilogy. The music is obnoxiously oldfashioned, but **TWIN SWORDS** has plenty of swordplay; hell, the first swordfight happens mere seconds into the movie, during the opening credits! There's also a nifty gore shot or two, like the effect where Wang Yu slices into Wu Ma's chest. I spotted familiar faces everywhere, in a tale of evil monks (actually bandits disguised as monks) who kidnap women and install a huge assortment of traps in their pagoda. So it's up to Wang Yu and his clan to break in, evade the traps, butcher the many villains and rescue the real monks kept prisoner there. Ivy Ling Po (then a super star) makes a guest appearance as The Scarlet Maid, who comes in every now & then; just in the nick of time to fire her throwing darts (and other flying projectiles) at the stronger villains. Producer: Run Me Shaw; 1965, Dir.: Sui Jang-Hung, Production Designed by: Chang Chieh, Costumes: Kamber Wong, Art Dir.: Chen Chin Sheng, Mae-up: Fung Yueh, Music: Wang Chi Jen, Lyrics: Chang Chieh, Cast: Ching Ping, Wang Yu, Tien Feng, Bobo Fung, Ivy Ling Po, Ching Miao, Lo Lieh, Wu Ma, Ku Feng. **** -DF

TWO CAVALIERS- Okay here we go! I watched this one with my girl friend. She dug it like hot chocolate! This is not the Angela Mao/ John Liu film that everyone knows and loves. This rare film is the only (that I know of) chance to see two of the most prolific actors in kung fu films together in one movie, Chen Sing and Jimmy Wang Yu! In this period film, Jimmy plays a government agent sent to bring in the Lady Flower gang and Chen Sing plays an escort whose company was attacked by the gang. Jimmy falls for the black widow of the film, Lady Flower, and decides not to arrest her. But Chen Sing has violent, raging, vengeance that he just can't let go. This sets up the classic, and almost required in Jimmy Wang Yu films, final confrontation in a gorge. This movie kicks some serious ass! This has got an actual plot that won't bore you. Chen Sing may be at his high kicking best in this film. Most of the time I don't like him because he's stiff as a board in his films, but with those crazy faces he makes like he's in pain just walking down the street, let alone fighting, and some good old school kung fu, this is easily his best outside of Sammo Hung's **IRON FISTED MONK**. Jimmy gets a chance to act a little and you can tell he was really beating the hell out of a lot of the fighters in this film. Some of

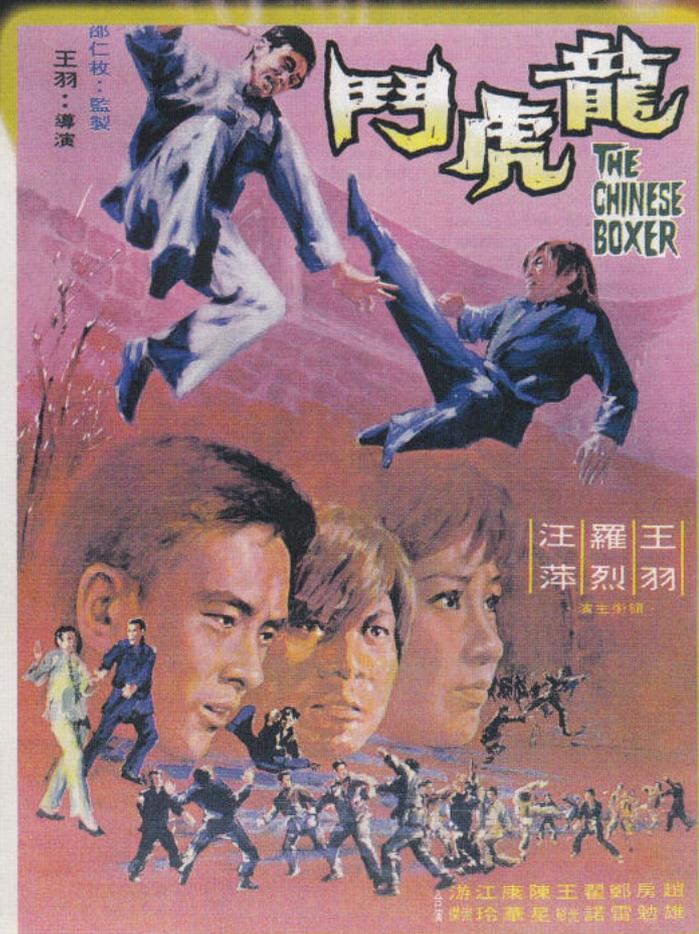
the kicks are just brutal! Recommended for those that still yearn for the good old days when all they had was a trampoline to help them fly and choreography was just who they hit next. Distributors: Ocean Shores Video, Cast: Wang Yu, Chen Hsing, Kuo Shao-chun, Bruce Liang. Dir. Yueh Fung, Prod.: Huang Chak Han, First Films; 1973. A.K.A.: "Dragons go in Twin", "Two Heroes at Sea." ***-Linn Haynes and Monica Nalin.

ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL- A definite oddity among martial arts films, for having sent Wang Yu to Japan to co-star with Shintaro Katsu! Even after all these years, I still can't get over the amazement of seeing these two superstars in one movie! If only the over-all film could have been better, it showed such promise. Despite Wang Yu speaking all his dialogue in Chinese, this is definitely a Japanese samurai film. Japanese chanbara always lacked the non-stop action of Chinese kung fu movies, and it certainly shows here. **ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL** is talky, boring and not only did I have trouble staying focused, but I began dozing off. Wang Yu needs more screentime, but instead he has to compete with useless female characters, a little kid, bumbling gamblers and even another (not Zato Ichi) blind guy. That's one too many never-was-been actors hogging up the film. There are a few amusing touches, like in a scene where a villain refuses to answer the blind swordsman's question, our hero says "Since you're deaf, you won't need this ear", and he slices the guy's ear off! There are some swordfights, but it looks rather uneven—Zato Ichi is using the more "realistic" form of cinematic swordplay seen in most samurai films, while Wang Yu is delivering out-of-place kung fu kicks and even doing those reverse-affect high jumps most common in Chinese kung fu capers, not Japanese samurai movies. The over-all theme of the movie is about the hazards of communication gaps, and that's why Zato Ichi takes on his one-armed equal from China. Both are good guys, and both manage to slaughter the entire Nambu (despicable, villainous samurai) clan before turning on each other. So far, so good. But I didn't like the climax where Zato Ichi wins, killing Wang Yu's equally prolific character; theoretically ending that film series (though Wang Yu "forgot", and went on to make many more one-arm' films), but allowing Zato Ichi to leave alive. The film is well worth three stars, but because of Wang Yu's insulting fate, I'm subtracting a star. As mentioned elsewhere, Wang Yu isn't the only one to make illegitimate follow-ups; a few years later, the illegal sequel **BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE** came along! Toho; 1970, In Association w/ Katsu Productions, AKA: "Zato Ichi Meets the One-Armed Swordsman", "Zato Ichi Yabure! To Jin-ken", "The Blind Swordsman Meets His Equal", Dir.: Kimiyoshi Yasuda, Prod.: Shintaro Katsu, Co-Producers: Nishioka Hiroyoshi, Original Story: Shomozawa Kan, Screenplay: Yamada Takayuki & Yasuda Kimiyoshi, Music: Isao Tomita, Cast: Shintaro Katsu, Hama Yuko, Yoshida Michie, Jimmy Wang Yu, Abe Toru, Sasaki Takamaru, Chang Yi, Hanazawa Tokue, Tang Ling. ** -Damon Foster



TWO HEROES AT SEA







DEE
(A.K.A. "D", whatever) Buildup Entertainment; 1999, Story & Executive Producer: Nobuya Okabe, Music: Michael Verta, Art Dir.: Takamasa Suzumura, Mechanical Design: Masayuki Gotoh & Nobuya Chiba, 3d Computer Generated Images: Koichi Hirata, Visual Effects Storyboard: Koichi Ohata, Special Visual Effects: Nobuya Okabe, Produced & Dir.: Nobuya Okabe, Cast: Daisuke Nagakura, Masanori Machida, Hideki Shirakuni, Mayumi Kohsaka, Maximilian Von Schuler, Hiroshi Shimizu, Reviewed by Damon Foster

I'm so sick of these Computer-Generated-Image FX! The marauding giant monster in this made-for-video film looks like Tri-Star's Fraudzilla with the face of a bulldog. The C.G.I. monster isn't the only blow against this independent, 40-minute video. Most of the scenes take place at night, and the dark, grim approach has never excited me. The 3rd and final complaint against D (or whatever they're calling it) is its hero— if you can call him that. Anti-heroes are cool, but this guy is completely despicable, rather like Sonny Chiba's character in THE STREETFIGHTER; probably worse. Hell, I was almost going to root for the villainous monster, since there really are no good guys in this tale.

So much for the bad points. D has its moments, it wasn't boring. The characters are interesting, and even though I don't like the ever prominent CGI effects, they do serve their purpose. I'm only giving it two stars (**), which means "average", "so so", sometimes even "fair" or "poor" at the very worst. D is watchable, and considering that it's damn near a student video, the two stars can be considered most flattering.

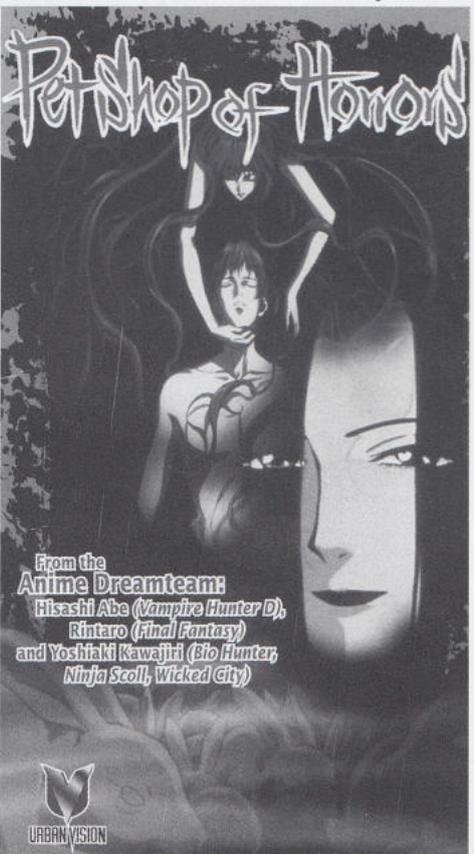
A meteor crashes, and after a shameless, blatant ripoff of a scene in THE BLOB, we end up with some cannibalistic mutant who slaughters people all over the city. It gets kinda' gory. Meanwhile, some tough, rugged, nearly evil guy likes roughing up people. He's really rude to some stupid bitch who has a crush on him. It also turns out that this unpleasant fellow has access to some of that "battle armor" stuff that we've seen in numerous sci-fi movies, and many a superhero TV show. Once in this mechanical suit, he looks like another generic robot (i.e. GUNDAM comes to mind, as does the robot villain from ROBOCOP), and begins firing his gun at the monster, who's grown to be rather gigantic. Their battle & chase is okay. Our "hero" does kill the creature, but many innocent people are butchered in the cross-fire. So this trigger-happy prick ends up deserted by his friend, who flies away in his helicopter. The guy is left to fend for himself as the police approach. It ends there, but there is a sequel out there, apparently. ** - DF

PETSHOP OF HORRORS

Urban Vision Entertainment; 1999, Originally Broadcast on TBS, Based on the comic by Mario Akino, Exec. Prod.: Masao Maruyama, Animation Prod.: Masao Morosawa, Dir.: Toshio Hirata, Screenplay: Yasuhiro Imagawa, Character Design: Hisashi Kato, Opening Animation: Rintaro, English Language Version Written & Directed by Jack Fletcher, Released by Urban Vision (www.urban-vision.com), Reviewed by Damon Foster

Is it my imagination, or are all these Japanese cartoons starting to grow on me? It's common knowledge that I scoffed at Japan's anime throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but as Japanese live action sci-fi & horror becomes harder to come by now that I've reviewed everything, I'm forced to pad out with animated productions. As such, I think I'm finally developing a taste for this crap! I haven't enjoyed Japanese cartoons since the 1970s, when I would watch classic programs like SPEED RACER and YUUSHA RAIDEEN! Don't get me wrong; I still think most cartoon freaks are a bunch of pathetic geeks (hell, I knew one anime fan who was still a virgin at 25 years old!!), but if PESHOP OF HORRORS is any indication, some of these obese fanboys do have some degree of taste.

PESHOP OF HORRORS is confusing at times, but it never gets outright complex. The artwork and animation is about average for the genre, though there are a couple of semi-CGI intros to break up the two episodes ("Daughter" and "Delicious") which are on this tape. As I understand it, it's a TV series being released to America as pre-records. Compared to some truly adult anime I've seen, PESHOP OF HORRORS is rather tame, but it's still got just a little too much gore and nudity for American TV. At the time of this review, I've only seen the two episodes on this videotape, but if the remainder of the series is anything like these, well then I actually look forward to seeing more tapes. It doesn't have the non-stop thrills of MAZINGA Z, but it also doesn't gross you out like UROSUKIDOJI. This English-dubbed, hour long (well, almost) videotape fascinated me and kept me on the edge of my seat. After watching it once, I don't think I can watch any one episode a second time. It really doesn't have the same affect, once I know the outcome. Naturally, I recom-



From the Anime Dreamteam
Hisashi Abe (Vampire Hunter D),
Rintaro (Final Fantasy)
and Yoshiaki Kawajiri (Bio Hunter,
Ninja Scroll, Wicked City)

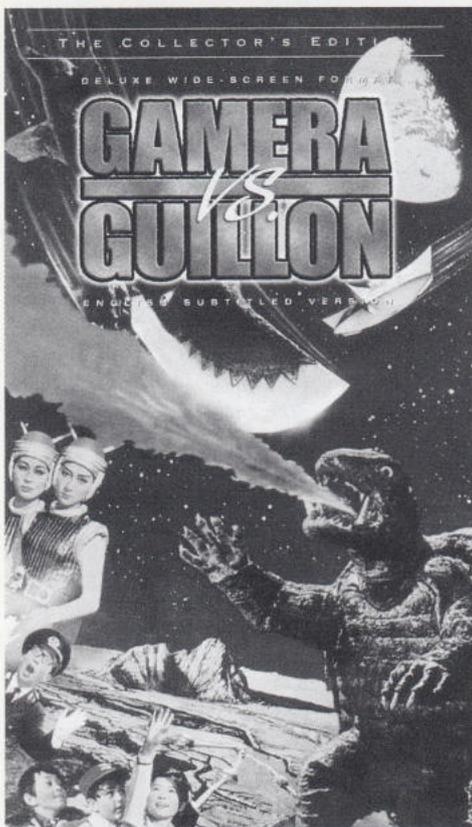
mend this to anime fans. To all you anime fans, check this video out; it's better than average and you'll love it, so I'm giving it three stars! As for live action fans, I think you guys might kinda' like it as well— it won't convert you into gaining weight, wearing ill-fitting T-shirts, having greasy haircuts and wearing glasses, but it's worth a look.

As good as it is, I think PESHOP could use improvement. The concept is mainly serious, so I think a little logic would be appreciated. For example, the story concerns the efforts of cop Leon, who's investigating this bizarre petshop which has demonic tendencies. He's mislead at first and thinks this odd store is selling drugs. He's proven wrong, and the drug trafficking allegations are dropped. But the owner of the place, this freak called "The Count", has this little pet monster that resides on his shoulder. It looks like a Pokemon character (the yellow bunny rabbit), but it has bat wings! First of all, I don't know why a Pokemon-inspired monster is in such a mature cartoon, but in real life, the cop should be shocked to see this unknown species! It seems to me that any level-headed police officer would notify the proper authorities to determine just why there's this winged bunny flying around. Think of it, if you were investigating a normal crime and saw flying little monsters, monstrous fish or were attacked flesh-eating rabbits, wouldn't you at least do a double-take? Not in PESHOP, the detective just treats these unusual (and sometimes aggressive) critters as routine, like a jay-walker or something. If they wanted to make this over-the-top, comedic or kiddo fodder, then these gaping inconsistencies could be more acceptable. I for one would freak if I paid somebody a visit and saw a mermaid licking blood from the ear of a corpse. There are other strange botch-ups & plot holes in the script too which are never explained. Obviously, PESHOP takes on a surreal approach at times, and only makes sense if you're on drugs or are Charles Manson.

The story has a lot of mystique and intrigue. It's all pretty mysterious, and therefore isn't the type of saga where I should tell you the full details. I don't want to give anything away, should any of you seek this tape out. It's not a clear cut case of good guy vs. bad guy. The setting would appear to be America (they have a blond-haired, blue-eyed hero), or some other place where they have Chinatowns. In Chinatown, there's this bizarre pet-store controlled by this androgynous person called "The Count". He's no vampire though, in fact he (she? it?) looks like a Dragon Lady of old Chinatown brothels. The Count sells rare species embodying second chances for love, hopes & dreams—the customers are confused people; usually disturbed individuals who've lost a loved one. The animals at this magical store are like the Salt Vampire (from "The Man Trap"; episode #1 of STAR TREK) in that they can take on the forms of people— including the deceased. Naturally, foolish buyers therefore purchase these deceitful creatures, despite the fact that these beasts can become carnivorous rabbits or seductive, blood-sucking mermaids. Selling creatures which can prove to be harmful is illegal, however. So The Count cannot be held responsible for the aftermath of a broken contract, which always state just how much care these unique "pets" require. But if the pet owners didn't deviate from proper care and accidentally turn their pets into hungry demons, we wouldn't have much of a story, would we?! *** -DF

GAMERA VS. GUILLON

Daiei; 1969, American video release: 1999, Distributors: Neptune Media & Hearst Entertainment, Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Planned by Kazumasa Nakano, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Screenplay: Niisan Takahashi, Photography: Akira Kitazaki, Special Effects Photography: Kazufumi Fuji, Recording by Kimio Tobita, Lighting: Shoichi Uehara, Art Dir.: Akira Inoue, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, "Gamera March" sung by Daiei Children's Chorus (unfortunately), Lyrics: Hidemasa Nagata, Composed & Arranged by Kenjiro Hirose, Art Dir.: Tomohisa Yano, Optical Effects: Yuzo Kaneko, Lighting: Shichiro Ishimori, Wire Effects: Yoshio Kaneko, Sound Effects: Akita Kojima, Cast: Nobuhiro Kajima as AKIO, Christopher Murphy as TOM, Miyuki Akiyama as TOMOKO, Eiji Funakoshi as DR.



SHIGA, Kon Omura as OFFICER KONDO, Yuko Hamada as KUNIKO, Edith Hanson as ELSA, Reiko Kamahara as FLOBELLA, Hiroko Kai as BARBELLA, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Either you love them or you hate them, but nobody can deny that Neptune Media does a flawless job with its product. I imagine even their harshest critics grit their teeth & clench their fists as they pay for the absolutely outstanding tapes from this revolutionary company who bring video releasing to new heights. I really, really enjoyed their latest version (just how many variations of this film exist?!) of GAMERA VS. GUILLON, which, over the years, we've seen as ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS, GAMERA VS. GUIRON, GAMERA VS. GIRON, GAMERA TAI DAI AKUJU GIRON, GAMERA VS. EVIL BEAST GIRON, etc. It's a film made for little kids; there was a point in my life when I suspected this childish laugh-riot to actually be made by little kids. I first saw it on TV (of course; no old Gamera film ever got major theatrical release in America) when I was a tiny little child, definitely well within the age range of its target audience. Naturally, as a tike, I absolutely loved every minute of this infantile fantasy. Sure, it wasn't as serious, intelligent or well-made as the Godzilla movies, but compared to other kiddie movies I recall at the time, such as Disney movies, this multi-titled epic came off as a major ass-kicker! As a twerp in the 1970s, I absolutely could not stand the likes PETE'S DRAGON and PIPPY LONG STOCKING— and looking back on it, I now see why: GAMERA VS. GUIRON/GILON etc. involved over-the-top battles, slicing and dicing! Once I had seen this sort of thrill in a kiddie film, I could never look at Walt Disney or Sid & Marty Kroft with the same thrill— there was no going back. Considering the quality of kids' entertainment back then, I think I can safely say that this movie fucking grabs you by the balls and takes no prisoners. It fuckin' rocks! I vividly recall viewing it about 25 years ago, and really getting into it; becoming passionate about it. When the evil space babes thought they'd killed Gamera and say, "Serves him right!", I took it personally, and distinctly remember flipping off the TV screen and telling the gals, "This serves you right!" My baby-sitter found my devotion to be funny, and laughed up a storm at my action.

I can remember watching the film at the age of 8, and being totally enthralled by it. Then I watched it at 14, and still enjoyed it, but I chuckled. The scene of Gaos's leg already getting chopped off before the beam hits it was pretty funny, but watch for the scene of the two unconscious boys on the flying saucer. Why, just

why, does one kid have his arm on the other kid's dick?! This scene had become a major laugh getter in my teen years. It's a good thing that at that point, the print I saw didn't involve the bewilderingly bad theme song sung by kids. I would have had a field day. Regardless, thanks to the subtitles, I can now sing this whole stupid song for you! Here goes: "You are strong, Gamera! You are strong, Gamera! You are strong, Gamera! M! M! J! V! (Mars! Mercury! Jupiter! Venus!) Monsters coming from Mars... or some other alien world? Come on, space monsters! Bring it on! Let's cut and poke! Okay, go-go-go— Using spinning jets... He will win! You are strong, Gamera! You are strong, Gamera! You are strong, Gamera!"

Anybody know whatever happened to the cast from this movie? What became of Christopher Murphy? I'm sure he didn't pursue an acting career (most American kids in Daiei films were already in Japan; either students or the offspring of businessmen or soldiers stationed there), but I do think Edith Hanson (who plays his mother) also portrayed a character in the SPACE GIANTS program.

Neptune Media has released a number of Gamera movies, and always seem to bring us more than one version of the same movie! In this case, they have two different tapes of GAMERA VS. GUILLON— or whatever you choose to call it. There's the English dubbed version (which I'll critique in the next issue), and this here English subtitled print. As I watch & review this subtitled variation on the often told story, my first thought is: "There's a subtitled print of this too?! Yikes, some guys will subtitle anything! With all the other versions available, why bother? I guess there's an audi-



ence for everything." Regardless, I eventually sat down to watch the tape; it wasn't something I was eager to view— it sat around for several months before I finally took the plastic wrapping off. I suppose I wasn't too eager to sit through this one again. Like I said, I adored it when I was the same age as the films' main protagonists, but when I tried viewing it later, like in my teens and 20s, it seemed that not only had I outgrown it, but had developed a strong distaste for the relentlessly childish approach. Perhaps it was because I had entered manhood and was intimidated by infantile entertainment; maybe subconsciously, I felt that to enjoy such a film would deprive me of my adulthood. I don't know. Regardless, I eventually plopped Neptune Media's subtitled version into the VCR and was pleasantly surprised! Could it be that what irritated me was the English dubbing? Or is it because I'm now so old, and have experienced some fatherhood that's made me tolerant of little kids?! I can't tell what's gotten into me, have I gone full circle? Regardless, hearing these kids in Japanese isn't as obnoxious as the dubbed version I'll re-watch next issue. After the movie, the videotape shows promotional photos and Japanese trailers. Best of all is a TV spot for the English-language print we all grew up on, ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS. The editing, and narration is true nostalgia, and it gave me goose-bumps— I dare say it's better than the completed film itself. They certainly advertise it well, making it look like a genuine sci-fi thriller, and not the infantile farce it really is.

Though I don't hate the kiddies as much this time around, I still feel that the only scenes which are worth a damn are those of the monsters. That's what it's all

about, right?! Gamera looks as neat as always. The distinctive fangs, those cute eyes! He sure had a more appealing look than the mutant turtle who appears in the more recent movies. The only real problems are some of the scenes of him flying in space, here he's obviously some sort of mechanical puppet. There might still be a guy in the suit, but the mechanics are over done, making his eyes constantly look back & forth, reminding me of something from them hillbilly bears from some Disneyland ride. Gamera looks much better standing up right, in costumed form. Rival monster Guillon looks good in all his shots. He's called "Guillon" this time around, since his head's design is obviously inspired by a guillotine. There are some scenes (like when Guillon keeps crashing down on Gamera's shell, causing Gamera to bleed blue water) where miniatures of both monsters are used. By now, I can tell which is a costume and which is a plastic model; but back when I was a stupid little kid, I believed they were all genuine costumes. Another monster on hand is the ever popular Gaos, he's the "Rodan" of Gamera movies. No monster besides Gamera himself has appeared in this many Gamera movies. In this case, it's obvious they only chose Gaos because they needed a third monster, and the Gaos costume was still lying around. They did paint the damn thing silver this time, but the existence of an established Earth monster (his cousin, called: "Uchu Gaos") on an alien planet is just too conspicuous, and a blatant budgetary strategy.

After some twerps play pranks on a police officer who practices kendo, a run-away flying saucer accidentally takes these two kids (Akio and token white boy Tom) to an alien planet where they must contend with pretty yet cannibalistic women. The planet's sets are really pretty; both the miniatures and interior sets are just as good as anything appearing on the original STAR TREK, but because they're more imaginative and colorful (not to mention Japanese), they're considered "cheap". STAR TREK is American, so it was never considered cheap even though its production values were about equal to this movie, got it? Anyway, the villainous ladies Flobella and Barbella (an obvious swipe from Jane Fonda's BARBARELLA) keep unleashing their subterranean monster Guillon, who not only slices an Uchu Gaos (Space Gaos) to pieces and laughs about it, but also challenges the kind-hearted turtle Gamera! Unfortunately, these monster battles are all disappointingly short; and considering how much time is wasted on the boys, the pouting little girl and the inept adult characters (i.e. the moronic police officer), it's frustrating that the monster footage is comparatively scarce. Though there's some bloodshed, it's never red (monsters in Daiei movies usually have green blood), and unlike the Godzilla movies, the fights don't have much savage intensity. The final portion of the movie involves enough monsters, action and explosions to kill off not only Guillon, but both the space bitches. So Gamera returns Akio & Tom to Earth. *** -DF





ASIAN ODDITIES

From Japan:

WEATHERWOMAN お天気お姉さん

WEATHER WOMAN

Tohokushinsha Film Corp.; 1995, Written & Directed by: Tomoaki Hosoyama, Prod: Tetsu Adachi, Co-Executive Prod: Tetsuji Hayashi, Story based on a popular manga *Otenki Onesan* (by Tetsu Adachi), Co-Producer: Akihiko Yose. Based on the Manga by: Tetsu Adachi, Music: Kunihiko Ida, English Version by Central Park Media Corp. (in association with Asia Pulp Cinema); 1999 Running Time: 84 minutes (approx.), Cast: Kei Mizutani, Takashi Sumida, Yasuyo Shirashima, Ren Osugi, Hideyo Amamoto. Reviewed by Crash (AKA Ash Dragoon)

I have to admit that I'm a little new to this scene. A few months ago I ran across Kei Mizutani at a San Diego Convention and had no idea who she was. An autographed poster later I at least knew she starred in a couple of movies that I'd heard about but never seen. Let's just say that my eyes have now been opened. Appearing with Kei Mizutani in WEATHER WOMAN is Kunihiko Ida. His talents stretch beyond acting, as he did a great job creating the music for the film. Born in 1963, he has been acting since childhood. He has performed on stage, TV, and film with his most well known role as the lead character in ZERAM.

Director Tomoaki Hosoyama (born in 1962) is the self-proclaimed "John Waters of Japan", as his other film titles (see way below) demonstrate. This influences include Yasujiro Ozu, Akira Kurosawa, Shuji Terayama, John Waters, Luis Bunuel, David Lynch, Russ Meyer, Ed Wood, and Woody Allen, not to mention innumerable anime and manga that he grew up with. Today he specializes in so-called "Pink" (erotic) films. He started his movie career as an assistant director while a student in the Art Department of Nippon University. In 1984, he made his debut as a Pink Film director, with the production of such motion pictures as FAMILY HOOKER. WEATHERWOMAN is the first feature-length film he produced and has proven to be a huge hit playing at countless film-festivals. Though he's had a cult following for years, WEATHER WOMAN has made him sought after, and he's been considered movie director of a new age (much like ZEIRAM's Keita Amamiya), capable of producing new movies that are strikingly original and beyond the traditional Japanese film styles. His other various productions include: FAMILY HOOKER ('84), YURIKO: THE ORGASM ('86), THE SUMO-WRESTLING GIRLS ('86), BIG-MILK SECRETING 2 ('86), THE LESBIAN COLONY ('87), IMMORAL HUSBANDS AND WIVES ('88), LEWDNESS: TOYOMARU ('89), HOW TO WALK THE MODERN AGE IN JAPAN PART 1 ('93), HOW TO WALK THE MODERN AGE IN JAPAN PART 2 ('93), STRANGE STORIES episode "A Green Ballpoint Pen" ('93) AIKO GIBO: "A Japanese Psychic Woman" ('91), AIKO GIBO "A Japanese Psychic Woman 2" ('92), THE SPY CRISIS ('94), THE SCHOOL MYSTERY ('96), WEATHERWOMAN RETURNS ('96). His latest works in the planning stage are CROSS DRESSERS and something called KEIBA: THE RACING.

First off, I can't claim that WEATHER WOMAN (despite its cult status) is a masterpiece in any way, shape or form. But that didn't stop me from being entertained. The plot can be summed up in a few words. Ratings poor network J-TV gets a part time weather woman to fill in for the vacationing regular. She decides to keep her spot by flashing her panties. Audience and network owner loves it. Owner's daughter does not. Both decide that the only way to succeed is to be able to control the weather. Chaos and fetishes ensue. You can't go



Kei Mizutani

水谷ケイ

Born: 1974.

Her career started as a model (for some magazines) and she also gained some production experience when she was an assistant working on TV programs. But she didn't officially become an international star until her debut starring role in WEATHER WOMAN. She's been in demand and in the public eye ever since, and her films now include TOKYO DECAMERON and LADIES PHONE SEX CLUB and the TV show GINGAMAN.

wrong with a formula like that folks.

Now there is plenty more going on in the background than what I described above. It was quite entertaining to try to figure out where the french bread would appear next. There is even a small amount of character development, but it is dwarfed by Kei Mizutani and Saori Taira's other assets. Plenty of screen time is devoted to scenes of bondage, enema, and submission fetishes. Interesting to note that the Chairman (Shimamori) is played by: Hideyo Amamoto (who also appeared in the recent BIG BOOBS BUSTER), formerly known as Eisei Amamoto when he appeared in Toho classics such as KING KONG ESCAPES and WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY. Born in 1926, he is well known for his love of Spain and the broad number of fields that he is involved in. Performing on stage, acting in film and TV (including appearances in superhero fare like KAMEN RIDER, KYODINE and SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN), in addition to his many essays.

Over all, I have to call this movie a good twisted movie that entertains in many ways. Plenty of the wall humor, lots of good looking breasts - I mean babes, and a few rather sick moments are the main highlights. Oh yeah, there's a couple of extravagant musical numbers as well. *** - Crash (AKA Ash Drago)

From America:

LEGIONNAIRE

Sterling Home Entertainment; 1998, in Association

with Edward R. Pressman Film Co., A Long Road Production, Quadra Entertainment, Produced by: Edward R. Pressman, Jean-Claude Van Damme & Peter MacDonald, Story: Sheldon Lettich & Jean Claude Van Damme, Dir.: Peter MacDonald, Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agraje, Steven Berkoff, Nicholas Farrell, Jim Carter, Ana Sofrenovic, Benial Caltagirone, Joseph Long, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Elsewhere in this issue, I talked about a SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE episode where a Jean Claude Van Damme imitator mentioned some little-known film called LEGIONNAIRE. I assumed no such film existed, since so few of us had heard of it. But this bomb is readily available in video-stores, much to my surprise! Yes, it actually exists. It seems that ever since Jackie Chan made it big in the U.S., lesser talented martial artists like Jeane-Claude V.D. have been pushed aside. I hear Claude V.D. makes direct-to-video movies now. I don't know if LEGIONNAIRE made it to theaters or not, but it didn't seem to have a lot of advertisement. LEGIONNAIRE seems to be a change of pace from the martial arts films VD used to make. Perhaps this is for the better, because I always felt VD made some of the worst martial arts films I've ever seen. I've seen most of his films, and none of them have left much of an impression; I can't say I ever watched any one of them more than once. One thing about VD though, is that his English has finally improved. His European accent isn't as intrusive as before. I had thought he was Welsh, but he's actually from Belgium, so that makes him Belch.

Now that Jackie Chan and the flood of HK martial arts masters are all over American TV & cinemas, VD has decided this might be a good time for a career change. To keep from competing with the good martial artists, LEGIONNAIRE places VD in a completely non-karate setting. There's no martial arts at all in this one, and since there's no Asian influence whatsoever, LEGIONNAIRE doesn't even belong in this magazine; so I'll make it brief. LEGIONNAIRE is just a typical adventure film, not a karate film. The budget is quite good for a hasbeen like VD, and the over-all production is decent. As regular desert-adventures go, LEGIONNAIRE isn't bad, it's typical of American actioners. There's only one thing which keeps this movie similar to his past films: His ass. Over and over, I heard about VD talking about his ass. This time he goes so far as to give us a good view of it, in a shower scene. I guess this sequence is for the gays and the ladies, but I don't know if

he's much of a heart throb any more. They're still trying to hold on to the romantic/beef cake stuff; the movie interrupts itself about every 15 minutes so VD can have these flashbacks about some chick he's romancing. I don't think this will win over the female audience though, because otherwise, the flick is too grim, and dead serious. It's realistic though, the approach seems possible. If this sort of thing entertains you, go for it.

The story is set in 1925, and tells of the French Foreign Legion, an army of mercenaries stationed mainly in Arabia, Egypt and places like that. I don't know much about this group, but I do recall both Abbott & Costello and Laurel & Hardy making movies about the topic back in the 1930s and 1940s. The French Foreign Legion was mentioned on an episode of HAPPY DAYS (I used to watch this garbage when I was a kid), so I assume it lasted at least until the 1950s. According to LEGIONNAIRE, the army consisted mainly of losers and ex-cons, rejects of society; the scum of the earth. In LEGIONNAIRE, VD plays a boxer who refuses to take a dive in the ring, so the mob is after him. This all seems a little too much like Bruce Willis's character in PULP FICTION. Anyway, VD is on the lamb, and escapes via the French Foreign Legion, where he and other reject soldiers are assigned dangerous tasks in Northern Africa. From here, it gets really depressing as all these ill-equipped, doomed soldiers march around in the desert. There's a lot of character development and male-bonding during their perilous trek across the hot sand, and dodge attacks by crazy Arabs who keep shooting them. The shoot-outs are okay, it's typical war-movie stuff. What I don't understand is why the Arabs are on horses, and yet the French Foreign Legion, composed of people from Europe, are walking! The whole movie is just a depressing suicide mission, it's so obvious that these bumbling soldiers are all going to die. After the Arabs destroy the army base, VD is the only surviving Legionnaire. The leader of the towel-heads allows VD to survive, and delivers a message about how the deserts have always been the home of the Arabs, and that if the westerners continue to invade, they'll all suffer the same fate. VD is suppose to say this to the authorities, but he's way out in the middle of the desert, exhausted. He's got no horse, and probably no food or water. I don't believe this fictional character will survive the long walk back to Morocco. It's a depressing ending. * - DF

YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI

(AKA "Young Gu and Tteng Chiri") 1989, Directed by: Nam Ki Nam, Starring Shim Hyung Rei (AKA Shim Hyung Rae, Shim Hyung Lei, and Ray Shim), Reviewed by Damon Foster

Ah yes, Korea's favorite mentally-challenged clown, Young Gu is back. The fictional character Young Gu is a pop icon, popular with Korean children since the 1970s (Young Gu is originally from the 70's trendy drama YER RO), and in his various movies and TV shows, has been played by many different actors. This Korean combination of Lou Costello and that "Ernest" guy is often played by the one-and-only Shim Hyung Rei, AKA Ray Shim. Ray Shim first played Young Gu in the 1980s, starting with the movie YOUNG GU YA, YOUNG GU YA, and Shim made the character even more comedic than he originally was. If you STILL don't know who Ray Shim (owner of Zero Nine Productions, Korea's sci-fi king, etc.) is, then you haven't been reading O.C. very long, and I certainly don't have the time & space to re-introduce him to you all over again. Regardless, as I watch YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI, I can't help but think again that Shim Hyung Rei's version of Young Gu is the most annoying, irritating bumpkin on the planet earth. He also confuses me, because Shim Hyung Rei seems to portray him in a few different film serieses. It seems that the first series of movies was of course the UREME movies of the 1980s, where Young Gu becomes the superhero Esperman. As Esperman, Young Gu ditched the stupid clowning around he was known for. The last film in the UREME series relied heavily on stock-footage from the previous UREME flicks, making it look like "hasbeens at work", much in the vein of Japan's GAMERA: SUPER MONSTER, a similar last-ditch effort. So with the UREME movies dying out, it would appear that in the 1990s, Ray Shim Hyung Rei started out fresh, leading to a new series with a new time-line, which included YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT (see review in O.C.: The Robo Hero Issue), and maybe even YOUNG GU AND THE DINOSAUR JUJU (see O.C.: The Jet Li Issue).

I suspect that YOUNG GU YA, YOUNG GU YA (which I've not seen) is part of the same film series as this movie. Of any of the other Young Gu movies, this one seems to resemble the superior YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT, which I think it's directly related to. YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI has a similar setting, and for once, Young Gu seems to be wearing the same outfit, so finally, there's a little continuity between these movies. So it would appear that YOUNG GU YA YOUNG GU YA, 1989's YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI and 1992's YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT are all linked; it's a trilogy. Regardless, once again, Young Gu/Ray Shim is goofing off like a moron, via childish jokes & bathroom humor, hogging the movie-camera and constantly hamming it up. Ray Shim sure likes to have his ugly mug seen. Occasionally, the movie will cut away from his infantile shenanigans and we get to see the villainous vampires, and those scenes are such a relief. But the relief doesn't last long, because pretty soon, it's always back over to Young Gu, so he can once more make an ass of himself and reach new levels of stupidity. However, you're reading the critique of an aging, American punk who doesn't speak Korean. Were this written by a Korean schoolboy, no doubt YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI would earn a rave review. Its target audience is select & specialized, to say the least. In comparing this one to YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT or YOUNG GU AND THE DINOSAUR JUJU, I think it's somewhere in-between. YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT was good, YOUNG GU AND THE DINOSAUR JUJU was bad, and this one is a combination of both— so it's "okay", perhaps "fair". I don't think that YOUNG GU AND THE DINO-

SAUR JUJU is directly related to these other three, even though Shim plays the same character.

Even more of a mystery to me than Young Gu is the character of "Deng Chiri", who's name I've also seen translated as "Tteng Chli" and "Teng Chiri". I have personally chosen to spell it Deng Chiri, for the duration of this article. Deng Chiri is a fictional, heroic dog. But unlike American variations on this theme, such as Benji, Lassie or Rin Tin Tin, the whole concept behind Deng Chiri stinks. Korea's heroic mutt has no continuity or rationality. I've seen this character in one other Korean movie, the immensely entertaining DENG CHIRI AND SSANG RAITU (1990), a wrestling/sci-fi caper reviewed in O.C.: The Gamera Issue. In that film, Deng Chiri is a German Shepherd, but not in this movie! This time, the Deng Chiri is a much smaller breed of dog! Worse yet, the dog plays an absolutely minimal part in both films; blink and you'll miss him— both times! This is a really weird concept to me. In not one, but two different Korean films, a dog gets mentioned in the title, and yet the part in each flick is almost non-existent.

To try and be fair, I'm attempting to visualize what this movie would be like if it were dubbed in English or had English subtitles. This will never happen; nobody would waste money to release such a low-budget film— by American standards, it could be considered amateur. The subtitles would cost more money than the flick itself! Because YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI is so incredibly talky, the only way this farce could get English acceptance would be if it had a comedic soundtrack like that of WHAT'S UP TIGER LILY. But even that's not appropriate, because the characters are already laughing it up, almost constantly. To try and give YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI a humorous voice-over wouldn't work, it would flop like that mid-1980s DYNAMAN re-working for the late night cable program Nightflight. The first half of YOUNG GU AND DENG CHIRI is too Korean; it's beyond translating. From the disgusting scenes of naked boys' asses as they frolic in the water, to Ray Shim's constant hamming it up, this footage is a lost cause, and not worthwhile to anybody not fluent in Korean language, jokes and mental retardation.

However, the second half of the movie showed a little potential. By then we see the local villains; a family of vampires. The special effects are all pretty cheap, like something I would expect to see in a Filipino movie. But it's not blatant like in YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT, where the villains wore obvious store-bought masks; familiar ones you can get at K-Mart around Halloween time. There are a couple laser beam effects, and the vampire make-up, though cheap, manages to suffice. It's amusing, but still looks like something Ed Wood might have attempted.

The story has something to do with a group of vampires which come to live in the Korean countryside. The father can be described as a Korean Dracula, and the mother, with her long hair, looks more like the ghost women of Japanese folklore, and later, when she flies around, it's Joey Wang's character in the CHINESE GHOST STORY movies which comes to mind. There's also a little boy vampire, so naturally they chose the Chinese hopping vampire of "gyonsi" fame. This young, jumping gyonsi is typical of the cute vampire boys seen in late 1980s H.K. movies (MAGIC STORY and MR. VAMPIRE 2, to name just two out of hundreds) which were covered extensively in O.C. #15: The Chinese Vampire Issue (late 1990s). The only difference being that this Korean hopper wears a purple robe, and not the same blue design seen in Chinese movies about the Ching Dynasty. There were other purple-robed gyonsies in SUPER HONG GIL TONG (another Korean fantasy), so I suspect that the Ching Dynasty's Korean branch preferred purple over blue. Anyway, this family of vampires has a servant who appears to be a werewolf.

Taking ideas from ABBOT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTIEN, the script has something to do with the three vampires & one werewolf attempting to revive the dormant corpse of Frankenstein. Frankenstein's monster spends most of the film asleep in his coffin, but his make-up job seems to be the best of the bunch. Unlike Japan's FRANKENSTIEN CONQUERS THE WORLD (Toho; 1965), this Frankenstein doesn't mind looking Asian, and no attempts are made to make him seem Caucasian. Regardless, trouble starts for the Korean townsfolk when Young Gu, seeking the run-away dog Deng Chiri, treads into the vampires' haunted household. From there, the script takes on somewhat of a "Boy who cried wolf" format until Young Gu hires a Buddhist priest to exorcise the monsters away. The Buddhist, with his shaved head and orange robe looks like somebody right out of any of a zillion HK kung fu capers of the 1970s, and as such, is the best thing about YOUNG GU AND TTENG CHIRI. The monk doesn't really fight the monsters until the last half hour though. The martial arts and special effects are okay, and should amuse anybody who misses the late 1980s HK and/or Taiwanese fantasies like KUNG FU WONDER CHILD, RAI RAI KYONSHIZU, CHILD OF PEACH, or HELLO! DRACULAR. But those were actual Chinese movies with decent production values and something called a budget. YOUNG GU AND TTENG CHIRI's climactic fights, though entertaining, are on a comparatively small scale, and mainly take place in a claustrophobic house. ** -DF

From America:**THE MATRIX**

Warner Brothers 1998; Producer: Joel Silver, Executive Producers: Barrie M. Osborne & Andrew Mason, Written & Directed by Larry & Andy Wachowski, Martial Arts Choreography: Yuen Wo Ping, Cast: Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano, Hugo Weaving, Reviewed by Damon Foster

This semi-martial arts/pseudo-superhero/post-Tim Burton/descendent-of-cyberpunk fantasy came out in 1998, and I refused to see it because of the hype, and I was so sick of suburban idiots, normal Joes and ultra-average mainstreamers recommending it to me, and telling me "It's good". I've been critiquing movies for too long, and when some semi-stranger recommends a flick to me with the sole description of "It's good," I get irritated. "Good, eh?" My feeling is: "How do you know what I consider good?! Surely you've got some more descriptive words than that!" But that would have been too rude. So instead I asked him (them; it happened more than once during the theatrical release of THE MATRIX), "Good, eh? Well who directed it?" The person in question (I don't even recall the geek's name) gave me a surprised look and said: "Oh, uh— well, I don't know". So then I replied: "I hear THE MATRIX had martial arts choreography from Hong Kongese Yuen Wo Ping, who's films I've grown up on." Then the moron replied: "Yes, this is true." I had hoped to segue this conversation into the direction of older Chinese kung fu films, but I'm rarely successful at this. Before long, the geek was talking about Steven Segal or some such nonsense.

But today, I've finally rented THE MATRIX. What piqued my curiosity was that over and over, people are asking me if I myself am deliberately trying to dress like characters from THE MATRIX. "Didn't I see you in THE MATRIX?" is a common question. People are sometimes surprised to hear that I wasn't influenced by the film, and have in fact worn black clothes, trench-coats and leather jackets since the 1980s. But with frequent taunts like this, I decided what I always decide, which is "What the hell?!" So I went to Ultimate Video, plopped down my three bucks and finally got my video rental of THE MATRIX.

Not a bad film, I guess. Somehow though, I was expecting to see Yuen Wo Ping's name all over the place, and thought maybe there would be Chinese actors in it. That was really my only knowledge of the film, it being Yuen Wo Ping's first (or at least, one of his first) American movie. His choreography in THE MATRIX is very good. The sparring scene between Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne is great and reminds me of oldschool chop-sokey. The other fights have a darker, urban setting (obviously inspired by Tim Burton's stuff and all that old "cyberpunk" crap), like Carrie-Anne Moss's opening battle with the cops. This introductory fight involves a lot of wire work, and looks like it was a ripoff of Japanese anime. It gets really artsy and far-fetched at times, which kind of surprised me now that Jackie Chan is in America showing what real martial arts movies are all about. The stunts and wire-enhanced fights in THE MATRIX really diminish whatever impact the martial arts kicks & punches might have. This is the same problem I have with the HK martial arts movies of the 1990s, like Tsui Hark's unlimited supply of wire-and-pully fight-scenes. But unlike Jet Li's Wong Fei Hung movies, the over-abundance of gravity defying stunts in THE MATRIX seem to work. That's because THE MATRIX is a fantasy, much like the Hong Kongese THE HEROIC TRIO. As science fiction, these blatant scoffs at gravity work well. One plus for THE MATRIX, which I feel makes it better than THE HEROIC TRIO (and most of the other 1990s HK movies that are like it), is that for once there's a logical explanation which says just why some people are able to become weightless during the fights, and there are only a few people who've acquired this ability. The scene of Carrie-Anne Moss hopping away from the cops and evading all gravity comes as a complete surprise to the amazed police officers, proving this movie has some reality to it.

For once I really liked the computer FX in a film. American adventures all have Computer Generated special effects now, and usually, they're too obvious. This time, however, the FX are almost completely convincing. That scene of the electronic parasite poking down into a guy's belly-button looks both convincing and disturbing! Other scenes aren't so convincing to me, like when Laurence Fishburne jumps from one skyscraper to the next.

The story is truly unique— it's a premise we've not seen very much. Though bits and pieces do remind me of NAKED LUNCH and ROAD WARRIOR stuff, THE MATRIX still caught me off guard once or twice, and the plot twists weren't so obvious. Imagine that everything that you know and see is fake, like a dream. What if we're all actually in comas with machines depending on the electricity our body's generate! That's basically the setting, with the unconscious bodies of the entire human population hibernating, and having a simultaneous dream where everybody thinks they're inter-acting. People who actually wake up are no longer a part of this computer-generated dream, and realize they're just bio-organisms grown by machines who manipulate our thoughts. Somehow, Neo (Keanu Reeves) finds out about this and joins a group of rebels (Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne & Joe Pantoliano) who defy the monstrous machines, and their computer-generated, virtual-reality henchmen like the villainous Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving). On the whole, their fights, chases & adventures are fun. The movie gets needlessly complex at times (i.e. Keanu Reeves being some sort of "messiah" went right over my head), is a little too serious, and it's talkiness and frequent pretentiousness made me subtract a half star; it was almost worthy of three. Not an outstanding movie, but you could do much worse.

**1/2 -DF

From China:

JOURNEY TO THE WEST: BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE (A.K.A.: *SHI YO CHI JU: FUNG KUA LUN DA ZAN*, which means: "Journey to the West": *Great Battle on Wheels of Wind & Fire*) Presented by China CC Motion Picture Co., Prod.: Lei Ming, Hu Jieh, Tsun Su, Prod. Coordinators: Tsao Pan Chen, Liang Shin Ping, Tso Kua Tung, Story: Tsan Shu, Chan Bao Shien, Dir.: Du Yi Ming, Dong Hsu Hua, Mu Li Shing, Cameraman: Tsao Pun, Loi Fung Wei, Yang Li, Music: Dang Shao Lin, Martial Arts Choreographers: Du Yi Ming, Dong Hsu Hua, Mu Li Shing, Cast: Chia Yun Chien, Chan Chi Ming, Do Yu Ming, Mu Li Shi, Dong Jer Hua, Yu Chia, Tsan Ku Fang, Yao Yu, Wang Shang Wei, Huang Ping Chan, Chan Bing, Reviewed by Damon Foster



Dude. Dude! You gotta' see this movie, dude. JOURNEY TO THE WEST (AKA "Sai Yao Kei" and "Saiyuki") has got to be the most frequently filmed story (literally thousands of versions have been shot since the silent era) in history, and since I've always been a fan of this fairy tale, I shall continue my crusade to review each and every live-action version of this saga. It's no secret that I've grown up on the Monkey King (it started when I watched ALAKAZAM THE GREAT as a child), and over the years, whole issues of O.C. have been devoted to the genre. Even so, I still find new (to me, anyway), undiscovered variations on the topic at hand; ones which, for years escaped me. JOURNEY TO THE WEST: BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE is a new addition to my video-list, and because I loved it so much, it's a welcomed addition. You gotta' see this movie, dude.

I really couldn't tell which part of China this movie came from. At first I thought it might be Mainland China, because the superb martial arts very well could have been the work of wushu acrobats, and also, I know Sun Wu Kung (AKA Monkey King) is very popular over there. But Sun's vocals lack the high-pitch sound he normally has in his Red China movies. I also believe the characters are speaking Cantonese (not Mandarin), but I'm not sure. BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE could easily be a Hong Kong movie, in fact. But usually, even the cheapest HK movies have a familiar face or two; and there's nobody anywhere in this caper, that I've seen before. I thought about it long and hard, and have come to the conclusion that the movie is Taiwanese. There are a number of outdoor scenes, and there's that wild, over-the-top approach which has delighted fans of Taiwanese fantasies for years. Taiwanese think nothing of mixing conflicting genres together, and sometimes they come up with some really uneven farces. This, for example, is basically a kiddie film. And yet there are two or three brief scenes of intense gore which made me cringe! In BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE, there's a strange tendency to go back & forth, from Peking opera style make-up, to the more "realistic" (i.e. real hair on the monkey) approach that most movies use.

BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE takes some liberties and deviates from the story somewhat. For

one thing, Monkey Sun lacks the golden ring on his head! In other versions, he always has this pain-giving device, so that the Tang Priest can control the ape's violent behavior. I assume that if the ring was ever part of the story, it was removed in a previous movie, since BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE appears to be a sequel. There are flashbacks at the beginning, which show Sun's obligatory "Havoc in Heaven" chapter, and we see clips of the introduction of the "Pigsy" character (AKA Pa Chieh), which the subtitles now refer to as a "Pig Goblin". From there, BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE officially begins, with the priest, pig & monkey first encountering the aquatic cannibal Wu Chin (called "Wu Ching", "Sandy" & "Gojo" in other versions), whom they battle then team up with. From there, the troupe is complete and they go battle various bad guys. Sun Wu Kung wears different attire than in the other films, and even Wu Chin looks different— he's completely bald like a monk now, the character is usually depicted as having long hair.

So it's not real faithful to the other versions, but I don't care! BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE is every bit as fun as MONKEY WAR (my other favorite Monkey flick), even though it lacks the budget & special effects of that blockbuster. Finally, we've got a Monkey King movie with good, solid kung fu! So what if this 7th century setting pre-dates the existence of kung fu itself? The movie is still a lot of fun, and action packed! There's plenty of sword-play and spears swinging in all directions, and it's obvious that the film footage was slowed down to make the actors appear to be moving really fast. This doesn't detract from the entertainment value though, and there are also some nice kung fu kicks and incredible acrobatics, which are guaranteed to amaze. From start to finish, BATTLE ON WHIRLING RINGS OF FIRE is nonstop fun, fun, fun! What's strange though, is that much of it is played off seriously. This time, it's only the pig who acts continuously silly, Monkey Sun himself plays a it straight this time around. There is some funny dialogue though. When Sun infiltrates a palace to find out why the emperor is behaving suspiciously, he discovers that the emperor is in fact an evil goat-goblin (disguised as the emperor) and that's why the townsfolk have been oppressed. Having exposed this plot, Sun tells his friend: "We fooled around in the palace last night, it's really funny. A goat can be the emperor!"

The story begins with the introduction of the water warrior Sandy, who was "hired to suppress the river monster". Pretty soon though, he's joined the pilgrimage, and they arrive at a town where evil animal-goblins are disguised as a cult of Taoists, and they're regularly slaughtering the local townsfolk. Of course there's the obligatory temptress scene: Pigsy gets tricked & tempted by villains disguised as women, but meanwhile, our main man the "Monkey Goblin" is getting to the bottom of things and systematically wiping out all the local

(continued on page 32)



ASIAN FANTASY FILM EXPO

Place: HOLIDAY INN & CONVENTION CENTER (Saddle Brook, N.J.)
 Days: June 30 & July 1, 2000 by Kevin Frederick

On Friday (6/30/00) and Saturday (7/1/00), Club Daikatju owner Jim Cirronella ran one of the best conventions I've been too; the Asian Fantasy Film Expo. Special guests on hand were the very talented Shusuke Kaneko (director of the new Gamera series), Fuyuki Shinada (the man responsible for making fantastic monster suits such as Biollante, the Godzillasaurus, GAMERA 2's Legion, Queen Monera from ULTRAMAN TIGA & ULTRAMAN DYNA) of B-Shop, Nobuhiro Arai of Bandai Japan's toy development division, Carl Craig (the child actor who portrayed boy-scout Jim Morgan in DESTROY ALL PLANETS), and Bob Eggleton (Godzilla artist for Dark Horse Comics & Random House). I arrived early, hooked up with friends like Jay Johnson, John Desentis, Greg Cordero & Scott Horton and helped set up the dealers' room—it was one of the biggest dealers' rooms I've seen. The convention started in the afternoon and I picked up the merchandise I needed. As I was browsing through, there standing in front of me was Shusuke Kaneko. I said "hello", and he was happy to see me. He even remembered me from G-Fest '99, last year. He is a very generous man. John Desentis and I were given free posters as a gift (later in the weekend) from him. One thing I liked best were the sessions.

Nobuhiro Arai did his session on the newly released merchandise and what to expect from Bandai in the near future. So far, he announced that the Gamera '95 & '96 figures will be released in six inch form. He brought the prototypes all the way from Japan. He also had slides of the new updated Ultra Kaiju figures that will be released soon, which will be Red King, Gomora & Ele King. Each are resculpted & more accurately colored. Plus be on the look out for another Ultra Kaiju vinyl from Bandai. Mr. Arai announced that they will release a Gome figure (the kaiju from the first episode of ULTRA Q that the Godzilla suit was used for). Plus, they will be making new updated Ultraman figures as well. But the big question for Mr. Arai was: Will we see Toho monsters that were yet to be made from Bandai? A Varan was to be produced but it fell through. Finally after being asked that question numerous times, he pulled out a pen & paper and took a list from the fans. Many monsters were being called out: Gabarah, Titanosaurus, Kumonga, Baragon. He was very surprised at the reaction. When I mentioned Sanda & Gaira (the gargantuas), he took great interest. I would love to see them in with my Bandai collection. On a final note, he mentioned that there will be a box set of six inch figures that will have all the different styles of Godzilla in it (save those hard earned bucks). At the end of his Q & A, he gave out a free Bandai staff jacket to 15-year old John Desentis (lucky kid!).

I had a nice conversation with Carl Craig (kid from DESTROY ALL PLANETS). He told me what it was like on the set, and how much fun he had with director Noriaki Yuasa. At his autograph table, he had the actual ray-gun & camera from the movie! I told Craig that I was going to see Mr. Yuasa again at G-Fest 2000, and I took pictures of him (along with pictures of the gun & camera), and Mr. Craig gave me an old group photo of the cast from the movie to give to Yuasa (whom I met again recently at G-Fest 2000. I gave Noriaki Yuasa the pictures, and he had a big smile & thanked me).

Then I attended a session with the highly talented Fuyuki Shinada. He gave a great slide panel. He was showing behind the scenes shots of the construction of Biollante, Legion, Godzillasaurus, Irys & Queen Mohera. The one thing that impressed me the most was the actor who had to operate the Biollante suit. He was a little over 5', and his suit just towered over him. He had to hold it up with boards applied to his legs & Shoulders. And I thought Ken Satsuma & Haruo Nakajima had a hard job!

Over all, Jim Cirronella pulled off a great convention. and if he has one next year, I would strongly suggest to make plans to attend. It will most likely be June 15th & 16th, and probably in the New Jersey vicinity again, but hopefully this is far enough in advance that each and every one of you can start pinching pennies and save up for this worthwhile event! There are plenty of regular conventions, but ones which cater to our immediate subject matter are scarce. You now have some advance notice to start working enough Over-Time to support this one-of-a-kind event! -Kevin Frederick



Shusuke Kaneko meets the one and only Kevin Frederick -- in person!



Bob Eggleton (left) and Carl Craig (right).



The ray gun prop from DESTROY ALL PLANETS is still holding up after all of these years!



ASIAN FANTASY FILM EXPO dealers' room.





demons. This involves superb martial arts, and even a co-hero chopped literally in half (but Sun magically cures him, putting his buddy back together so he's good as new!). In one ingenious scene, Sun is betting with some sort of evil "Deer Fairy" (meaning a Chinese swordsman who wears deer antlers on his head), as they challenge each others' powers. Sun proves he can cut open his own stomach with a knife, and pull out his own guts (remember the intestine eating scene in *DAWN OF THE DEAD*?) and then put them back in and miraculously heal the self-inflicted cut! When the villain tries this, Sun sends his magical staff over, and this long stick gets entangled in the bad guy's entrails before the bastard has a chance to put them back in his stomach! The short scene of him chasing a flying staff (with a mind of its own) to get his internal organs back is nothing short of hilarious! The villain can't get his vital organs back on time, and dies on the spot! Hurray for the Monkey King! In the middle of the film, they shift gears on us, and it gets confusing though. Sun has defeated all the goat demons (and a cat demon wearing Halloween costume accessories based on the Broadway play *CATS*), so they go on their second episode involving Princess Iron Fan. For once, this chapter does not involve using her fan to put out a forest fire; it's a whole different approach. Instead, all these new swordsmen are introduced, and it suddenly gets hard to follow. There

are at least a couple additional, human-looking heroes who help the main protagonists. These new guest characters include demonic kids (wearing what look like long, one-piece pajamas with little cloth devil horns) in some big red cave. It seems that they're all being controlled & hypnotized by the evil Princess Iron Fan. Regardless, there is a huge weapons duel where all hell breaks loose, and the heroes & villains wear these sparkling roller skates (hence the film's title) as they do battle. Fortunately, a climactic explosion kills the corrupt Princess Iron Fan, so all the possessed people in the cave recover, and overcome her spell. ***** -DF

From America:

THE CORRUPTOR

Illusion Entertainment Group; 1998, A James Foley Film, Executive Producers: Oliver Stone & Terence Chang, Produced by: Dan Halsted, Written by: Robert Pucci, Dir.: James Foley, Unit Production Manager: Mathew Hart, Firstasst. Dir.: Jeff Authors, Cast: Chow Yun Fat, Mark Wahlberg, Ric Young, Paul Ben-Victor, Jon Kit Lee, Andrew Pang, Elizabeth Lindsey, Brian Cox, Byron Mann, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Chow Yun Fat's second American film [*THE CORRUPTOR*] is every bit as good, or as bad, or as average, as his previous one, *THE REPLACEMENT KILLERS*. It's nice to see that the style at least attempts

to maintain the same action, pacing & atmosphere of his HK classics. Making really cool, slick gangster movies (i.e. *THE KILLER*, *FULL CONTACT* and *A BETTER TOMORROW*) must be a really difficult task; trying to maintain that same feel and yet keep it exciting. As far as the writing goes, I think it's easier to make scripts for kung fu films and Jackie Chan's quirky capers. That's why I think there are really only a handful of great HK gangster movies, and yet there are hundreds, possibly thousands of great kung fu farces. I don't believe that even another team up of John Woo and Chow Yun Fat could create another example of excellence like *THE KILLER* or *A BETTER TOMORROW*. That period is gone, and can really only happen once or twice (oh, I forgot— some people think *HARDBOILED* is a masterpiece too). So instead, we had lots of imitations, like the sequels/remakes of *A BETTER TOMORROW*, and inferior imitations like *BULLET FOR HIRE* and countless others. At least *THE CORRUPTOR*, though no classic, is no worse than the ripoff movies which flooded HK in the wake of *A BETTER TOMORROW*. *THE CORRUPTOR* doesn't skimp on the gore, violence and shoot-outs, I think even the most jaded HK fans should enjoy this one somewhat.

But being an American film, I once again have one word which sums it all up: Predictability. Granted, it's not the most predictable mainstream U.S. effort, but very little about it caught me off guard. You got your urban setting, your cruel FBI slime-balls, your hookers, your obligatory car-chase where civilians get killed so the cop heroes can get reprimanded, and of course, the obligatory tale of two new cop partners who don't like each other at first but eventually form a powerful bond. As strictly a blood & guts thriller, *THE CORRUPTOR* delivers the machismo & action, but if you want interesting characters, you gotta' go back about ten years and watch *THE KILLER* again. If you're willing to settle for likable, semi-interesting characters, then *THE CORRUPTOR* is okay. It's not necessarily a disappointing movie, but I'm beginning to think "originality" is just a myth in Hollywood.

I must say, Chow Yun Fat's English is rapidly improving. It's a far cry from *A BETTER TOMORROW* where he says nothing but "Sure!" This is only his second American movie, and already he's more intelligible than Jean Claude Van Damme was in his millionth— and already seems more literate than Sylvester Stallone! Even so, Chow's English needs work, as do some of the other Chinese extras in *THE CORRUPTOR*. There were times when I had to rewind the tape just to guess what was just said. During the few Chinese dialogue scenes, there are English subtitles, but I think these subtitles were needed even when Chow Yun Fat speaks English.

Chow Yun Fat seems to be one of those guys who just has some sort of natural charisma, as we all know. His diverse emotional range, his ability to over-act without looking stupid, and the stunning stare from his eyes; he's still pretty intense. But I'm trying to have a second look at him and be more objective about him. He's one of those actors who, when on the screen, our eyes gravitate toward him—but is it just prejudice on our part? Could it be that we still remember the powerful gun bout in *A BETTER TOMORROW*'s restaurant scene? I think that was the first time I ever really noticed him as a major presence in HK films. Anyway, he plays his part well in *THE CORRUPTOR*, and lives up to the righteous heroes from his HK days. As for his co-star, this Mark Wahlberg dork, I don't know much about him. I think he's an uninteresting geek, and I don't see why he's so popular. I know he starred in something called *BOOGIE NIGHTS*, but as an avid hater of disco music, I won't watch any movie with "boogie" in the title. Well, that's not true—I did see *THE BOOGIEMAN* in a theater back around 1980.

Storytime: White cop hired to join a NY Chinatown

police precinct, and the Chinese officers don't like him at first. Of course, once they start going after tongs, naked hookers and blackmailers, they earn the respect of each other. Both succumb to some bribes from mobster Henry Li though, and form a temporary partnership. I was hoping Henry Li would be a good guy, because the eccentric old coot's relationship (i.e. he saves the life of the white cop's father) with the two cops (Wahlberg & Fat) was one of the better subplots in this otherwise confusing story. Unfortunately, Henry Li double-crosses our heroes, and Wahlberg even double-crosses Chow Yun Fat by tape-recording him secretly. All these excess characters and talky scenes get confusing & boring, but there are plenty of gun-fights, and they're fast (not slow motion like in a John Woo movie) paced. The ending (where Chow gets shot to death) is almost as depressing as the ends for THE KILLER and A BETTER TOMORROW. I could guess he wouldn't survive the final shoot out, because his character had negotiated with both gangsters and FBI agents, and he was in trouble from all ends. For him to have remained alive, the story would be a real mess. ** -DF

From Russia:

DERSU UZALA

(A.K.A.: "Dersou Ouzala") Mosfilm Studios (U.S.S.R.); 1977, in Association with Atelier-41 (Japan), Distributor: New World Pictures, Dir.: Akira Kurosawa, Screenplay: Akira Kurosawa & Yuri Nagibin, Camera-men: Asakazu Nakai, Yuri Gantman, Fyodor Dobrannanov, Cast: Maxim Munzuk & Yuri Solimin, Reviewed by Damon Foster

I remember when I was a twerp (physically; not just mentally like now) and this movie played nearby, within walking distance. Thinking it to be a Japanese movie, I seriously considered viewing it. But just because it was directed by internationally acclaimed Akira Kurosawa, doesn't necessarily make it a Japanese movie. Perhaps it was wise that I declined the viewing, because at a time when more exciting things (KIKAIDER, YUUSHA RAIDEEN, and GO-RANGERS) were airing on TV for me to see for free, this slow-paced (that's putting it beyond mildly) Kurosawa directorial would have bored me to death. Well, maybe not "death". DERSU UZALA isn't that bad! Perhaps it would have just "bored me to terminal illness", or at least, "bored me to being not at all well". But today, as old age makes me more mellow than a muzac version of a Kenny G. song, I find that I kinda' liked DERSU UZALA; almost.

DERSU UZALA is a Russian movie, made for, and by Russians. I don't know much about Russia, or why them Russians were rushin' to buy stale bread in long lines a few years back. All I know (about them) is what I see on TV: They wear these funny, furry hats that look like large tribbles, and the women wear these plain dresses and ugly scarves on their heads. Kinda' reminds me of this funny comic strip cartoon I saw once, where a Russian man wears dumpty clothes and a scarf on his head, and is saying: "Vladimeer, my comrade; I tell you— Russia is no glamorous place for transvestite like me." Regardless, DERSU UZALA at least taught me a little about the people & history of Russia & Mongolia. For example, "salt" is the one word them Russians pronounce correctly, and they're not too off on the word "talisman" either!

Like I mentioned before, the best thing (and reason for it's whopping two stars) about DERSU UZALA is the occasional education: Such as stuff about the last of the Mongolian hordes, and their superstition (shooting a tiger is a bad omen, etc). They also mention "Walpurgis Night", which I believe to be a pagan holiday I learned about during my brief "Satanic" phase a year or two ago. But there's not enough culture to make DERSU UZALA much more entertaining. Instead, it's just a typically boring drama. I would have much rather heard more about

the "Hounhous", Chinese renegade poachers, but little about them is said.

As somebody mainly into less intelligent stuff (like superheroes, monsters and sleazy women), DERSU UZALA didn't satisfy any of my tastes. I'm really not sure why Kurosawa bothered to go to Russia and make it (though I hear it's based on a book Kurosawa was fond of). It's about camaraderie and comparisons of cultures, so it does have it's educational moments. The cinematography manages to suffice, and the music is appropriate. There's nothing wrong with this timid, talky (and in Russian) drama. It manages to be light-hearted and low key without being too boring. Some non-dialogue scenes (i.e. the guys pulling weeds to build a shelter during a fierce snow-storm) did drag on too long and didn't increase the dramatic effect (so I scanned them into oblivion), but otherwise this decent flick is pretty much deserving of its positive critical acclaim. I assume it got positive critical acclaim; it did, didn't it? After all, it's a Russian film directed by a Japanese, and it's all about men— so naturally the liberated, arthouse queers and snobs ate it up; didn't they? So I too am giving it an incredibly high rating of two stars; which in my book means so-so, about average. That's because I'm comparing it to other talky dramas. If DERSU UZALA had just five seconds of superhero action, then it would get no star, because I would be comparing it to the likes of INAZUMAN FLASH.

Just why is it that the "classics" are made for dead-serious purists who want subtitles? This talky drama could really use some "but still's"! Or maybe it would be cool if Peter Fernandez dubbed in some of these stupid Cossacks! If nothing else, the subtitles help portray the Mongolian hunter's broken English— or rather, broken Russian.

The setting is 1910 or so, in Korfovskaia (somewhere in Russia). Colonists are spreading like rumors in a tabloid, so it's time to expand residential territories. So some Russian soldiers are sent into the wilderness to do some surveillance, in preparation for new homes to be built. Somewhere in-between the campfire songs, they're joined by Dersu Uzala (Maxim Munzuk), a semi-primitive, Mongolian hunter. The elderly Asian mountainman guides them, shows them the ropes and saves their lives. They also deal with tigers and the occasional Chinese drifter. The course of the story has it's share of dramatic male-bonding, but the over-all approach did little for me. Kurosawa's deliberate choice to avoid most close-ups helped to alienate me from the characters. There are a lot of full body shots, but not many facial close-ups, so I didn't identify with the characters. The approach was kind of predictable too. In the scene where the Russian soldiers are having target practice, it was so obvious that Dersu was going to be the sharp-shooter who hits the bull's eye and gained their respect. Later, we hear (via dialogue exclusively) that local Mongolian tribes are seeking to defeat a gang of Chinese thieves, and Dersu gets arrested for cutting down a tree in a park (a bad attempt at adjusting to city life). But neither of these potentially interesting situations are ever shown, they're only mentioned! When Dersu tries to adapt to life in the civilized world, I saw his climactic return to the forest coming a mile away. I also knew he would die at the end. They never explain why he died, though it's speculated some thief killed him to steal his rifle. ** -DF

From America:

RONIN

United Artists; 1997, An FGM Entertainment Production, A John Frankenheimer Film, Dir.: John Frankenheimer, Screenplay: J.D. Zeik & Richard Weisz, Story: ZD Zeik, Produced by Frank Mancuso Jr., Executive Prod.: Paul Kelmenson, Cast: Robert De Niro, Jean Reno, Natascha McElhone, Stellan Skarsgard,

Sean Bean, Jonathan Pryce, Reviewed by Damon Foster

That French actor, Jean Reno, has a knack for choosing to appear in misleading films! RONIN is the most inaccurate use of a title since Tri-Star's "Godzilla" movie, which Reno also appears in! "Ronin" means "masterless samurai", but this movie has none of them in it— hell, the setting is modern France and it's all about assassins. Oh well, I'll try to accept this inaccuracy in much the same way that in the 1980s, I was able to tolerate the band The Cars— they turned out not to be cars at all, but normal people. In a similar instance, there was that whimp-rock band The Police and yet I have seen no evidence that Sting ("Stink", as I call him) has any license to enforce the law. Anyway, the only real reference to "ronin" (aside from the opening subtitle which actually describes these masterless samurai of old Japan) is where some old man is constructing miniature samurai sets based on the "47 Ronin" (AKA CHUSHINGURA). So the only ronin or samurai in this movie are little plastic models.

As a typical crime drama, RONIN isn't bad. It's got some suspense and gunplay, so you could do worse. Lots of long car chases too, and some bloodshed. If international, big budget, Hollywood blockbusters are your thing, then RONIN is your thing. At times, the camaraderie between the characters does work, as the assassins (our heroes) learn to trust each other and work together. Robert DeNiro is quite crafty in the way he sneaks around and takes secret snapshots of the villains (or rather, "the human targets"; there's not enough character development to know if DeNiro's opponents are actually evil).

However, I won't give this routine crime-drama a single star. The ample amount of flying bullets didn't particularly impress me. The character development wasn't good enough to make me give a damn about anybody in the movie except for Jean Reno (he was even cool in Tri-Star's *Fraudzilla*; which is no easy task), so it didn't matter to me, who lived and who died. Most of the performances struck me as uncharismatic. Where is Chow Yun Fat when we need him? There's very little personal involvement between the heroes & the villains. It's all "business as usual". So again, this movie won't get a star because it's uninteresting, and I felt misled by the title. It could have just as easily been called "Viking", or "Spanish Conquistador".

Robert DeNiro leads a squad of mercenaries all over Europe. Much of it takes place in France and Italy, perhaps other countries too. Maybe even Germany. I don't know, but it's not Russia, because I think that country is empty— from what I've seen, the entire Russian population now resides in San Francisco's Mission District (where they have their own fuckin' church), on 27th Avenue, to be exact. Regardless, the setting for RONIN is those country's where everybody looks normal (like us Americans), but they talk funny. No, it's not Tennessee. Anyway, Robert DeNiro and a bunch of people with unintelligible accents (where are the subtitles when we need them?!) go around plotting to shoot people and get in car wrecks, and they're after some metal case. I don't quite follow who they're shooting at and why. I would have liked for the villains and so-called "heroes" (they're responsible for the deaths of innocent bystanders, and some ice skater) to at least spend a few minutes talking to each other and debating. But there's no communication between them; just bullets. These shootouts are nothing to somebody like me who's used to the infinitely superior John Woo style of shoot-outs where it's gritty yet beautiful; the gun shoot 'em ups in RONIN are just gritty. The stunts are okay, but not to somebody like me raised on Jackie Chan's unbeatable work. Eventually, almost everyone is dead, but Robert DeNiro and Jean Reno manage to survive. -DF

HONG KONG HEROES

Here we go again, with another edition of OC's *Hong Kong Heroes*. Once more, its divided into decades: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and now, it's got a new decade of coverage: 2000 (but in the coming years, I shall have to call this new period "the zeros"). Hong Kong movie fandom was obscure in the 1960s, exotic in the 1970s, chic in the 1980s, and then me thinks it became trendy & over-rated in the 1990s. Now it's a new decade ("the zeros"?), but what's the status of the HK film scene? With the disappearance of many local Chinese videostores, I think the word which sums up HK cinema in the 21st century would have to be "non-existent", or "Americanized". What little I've seen of HK's 2000 flicks looks like bad imitations of American films, they're either relying on CGI effects instead of true kung fu, or are romantic comedies and dramas—the type of movie any country could make. I'm as yet of the impression that there no longer are real HK movies; that genre went the way of dinosaurs, Ultracom, and 14-year old Thai girls who haven't had sex with American men who go abroad for "business". Correct me if I'm wrong about the HK movie scene, because this is open to speculation, discussion, debate and mindless bickering along the lines of: "Is so!", "Is not!", "Is so!", "Is not!", "Is so!", "Is not!", "Is so!", "Is not!"! But seriously, though I'm sure somebody in HK is making movies, it's just a matter of time before they start emulating the Mainland China crap, now that the commies have grabbed the Hong Kongese by the litchi nuts. My other exhibit of evidence (about the demise of decent HK flicks) was aroused because most of the real talent has sold out to Hollywood's big bucks. John Woo, Jet Li, Chow Yun Fat, Samo Hung, and Tsui Hark have all "gone west, young master".

But nobody is more over-exposed here than megadooper celebrity himself, Jackie Chan. In the *RUMBLE IN THE BRONX* period, I collected videos (dating back to a 1981 appearance on *THE MICHAEL DOUGLAS SHOW*, to promote *THE BIG BRAWL!*) of him over the last couple decades. But when the likes of *RUMBLE IN THE BRONX* and *RUSH HOUR* made Jackie more widespread on American TV than feeble minded bimbos at a Backstreet Boys concert, it became obvious that getting tapes of all of Chan's publicity stunts (and remember; he doesn't use a "publicity-stunt double!") wouldn't be possible. There's no longer enough videotape in the world to maintain a complete library of his TV appearances. I give up. He's been on many of the news programs and talkshows. He now no longer amuses me, he's got nothing left to say. I realized he was no longer chic when he was on some talk show (I didn't bother recording it, though I sat through most of it) where, despite his thick accent, he had the guts to sing that weak little Elvis Presley song, "Wise Men say" (or whatever it's called). I previously considered Jackie to be ahead of his time and very cutting edge. Throughout the song, I was expecting a surprise. "Surely", I hoped, Jackie will come up with some-

thing unexpected! Certainly he's not going to do what's predictable and sing the whole god damn song—he's to cool & witty for that!" Was he suddenly going to pick up speed and rock out? Was Jackie going to do something funny? An unexpected stunt? But alas, Jackie sung that whole lame song to admiring females and yuppie scum; an audience who probably never saw *SNAKE-FIST FIGHTER*. The song was nauseating, and made me embarrassed to be a fan of his. If any ditty was tacky and weak enough for one of those great "Golden Throats" compilation C.D.s, it's Jackie's rendition of this cheesy love song. It could go right between Leonard Nimoy's embarrassingly catchy "If I had a Hammer" (a new guilty pleasure of mine), William Shatner's generous, hearty contributions to the genre, and even Mae West's rendition of "Shake it up Baby"! Mae West rocks, Jackie Chan doesn't. In more recent months, Jackie appeared on *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*. A more complete review of that oddball appearance comes later on in *Hong Kong Heroes*.

1960's:

何日君再來

TILL THE END OF TIME

A Shaw Brothers Film, Producer: Runme Shaw, Dir.: Chin Chien, Screenplay: Chin Chien, Editing: Chiang Hsing-loong, Photography: Wang Ming, Sound Recording: Wang Yung-Hua, Asst. Dir.: Ju Yu Cheung, Art Dir.: Tsao Chung Sheng, Make-up: Fong Yuen, Composer: Ku Cha-Hui, Music: Wang Chu Jen, Lyrics: Hsiao Hung & Lin I-Lieng, Starring: Peter Chen Ho, Jenny Hu, Paul Chang Chung, Lily Ho, Reviewed by Damon Foster

A sappy love-story; and I liked it! Am I getting old, or what?! But before you start whining that I've "gone soft", hear me out: I believe O.C. is the only English-language publication on Earth that regularly covers Chinese movies made in the 1960s, which it's been doing for years. But very few movies from that place & time are available on videotape, so seeking them out is harder than a penis on the set of *SON OF THE BEACH*. With me rapidly running out of 1960s action flicks for *Hong Kong Heroes*, I have no choice but to broaden my horizons. Though I've been critiquing '60s movies for well over ten years, I believe every one of them (with the exceptions of *A TOUCH OF ZEN* and *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL*) to be part of the 1985 series of Shaw Brothers releases. I suspect almost every 60s movie I've viewed on tape is from that series of releases (the white boxes with a single, remarkably unflattering photo which never hints anything about the movie in question), and I don't know if the Shaws had any major wave of video-releases before or since—I've certainly not found any. We're lucky that any of these tapes are still around, since all

videotapes decay, and I imagine they won't last much longer. For the record, the end of this tape (*TILL THE END OF TIME*) has a trailer for Yueh Hua's action film, *COME DRINK WITH ME*.

I was expecting to completely trash this saccharine-sweet tale of marriage & romance, and was dreading watching the damn thing. Give me swords, kung fu, even gunplay—I really did not want to watch a movie from a genre I've never been into. Perhaps low expectations were why I ended up at least somewhat entertained by this slow-paced soap opera. Most of the characters are likable, and even the ones I didn't like (i.e. Peter Ho Chen's father) were at least interesting. The whole movie could theoretically be considered "boring", but because I knew what I was in store for, I had minimal problems enduring the story. Being a mere drama, it doesn't feature the familiar faces I've come to expect. The only guy I had seen before was Peter Ho Chen (AKA Peter Chi; an alias I accidentally created for him because his name was cropped off in *THE BRAIN STEALERS!*). He's a dramatic actor (I don't think he's done many action films), best known to OC readers because of his appearance in last issue's spy caper, *THE BRAIN STEALERS*. Ah yes; *THE BRAIN STEALERS*. Already I have something to compare *TILL THE END OF TIME* with. This is a bad habit of mine which won't make *TILL THE END OF TIME* look very good, but I can't help it—Peter Chen Ho appears in both.

As a standard "chick flick", *TILL THE END OF TIME* is average and as good as any other, perhaps it's even better than the standard. But this magazine is not called *Oriental Love Cinema*, and being that this zine covers many other genres, *TILL THE END OF TIME* gets the short end of the stick. *THE BRAIN STEALERS* offered not just romance, but martial arts, spies and special effects. I gave *THE BRAIN STEALERS* three stars (***) and it wouldn't be fair to rate *TILL THE END OF TIME* as high as something as fun



as THE BRAIN STEALERS. I shall therefore give TILL THE END OF TIME just two stars (**). This is because I hate romantic movies, and a part of me feels I'm being too generous, and another part of me thinks I'm being too stingy. So let me re-phrase my rating, and be more specific as I cater to specific audiences:

If you're an action fan, this movie is crap, and doesn't deserve a single star. There's no swordplay, and not a single shoot-out! It's lame and dull; avoid it! However, if you're a suburban housewife who watches crap like soap operas or JENNY JONES, you need to get a life; but first watch TILL THE END OF TIME, it's a four-star (****) drama which puts any Julia Roberts movie to shame. If you're like me (then I feel sorry for you) and were raised on HK movies and are interested in a change of pace, and don't mind reading a lot of subtitles, there's no major harm in renting this watchable, two-star (**) drama. Don't break your neck trying to locate it, but if you've got nothing to do for the next few hours and are in a mood for something wholesome, and it happens to be in arm's length at your local Chinese video-store, well then, what the hell?

I think the best thing about TILL THE END OF TIME is that cutie Jenny Hu. I don't recall having seen her in any of my "regularly scheduled films" because she's a singer, not a swordfighter. She sings a few catchy ditties in this semi-musical. Her better numbers involve a little bit of surf guitar and go-go dancing, giving it that stereotypically, oh-so-1960s feel which I've always loved! Sometimes, it really has to be made in the 1960s to seem authentic, because tributes (i.e. the club scenes in the "Austin Powers" films) never quite hit the mark. When Jenny Hu sings her quirky pop tunes, the movie is cool and the songs are catchy. Unfortunately though, after every rockin' tune, there's a slow love ballad for the obligatory slow-dancing scenes.

It's pretty women a plenty (though I cringe to think what these babes look like today), as Peter Chen Ho decides to elope with hip-shaking, nightclub singer Jenny Hu. Their parents don't approve (Peter's family is rich; Jenny's family are mere "commoners"), but the marriage does happen; in fact, it's not until after the wedding that we finally see them kiss. At first, the marriage is bliss (even though the groom was disowned by his family), but later the grandmother dies and I didn't cry—I was relieved to see the old hag finally cack. Later, after the birth of their son, more tragedy falls into the script: Leading man Peter starts going blind. From here it's more of a tale of endurance, as he struggles to maintain pride and a useful purpose in the marriage, while Jenny gets a recording contract and her singing career makes them enough money to get by. There are other hardships & subplots, but that's basically the over-all script. If I told you more, then there would be not point in seeing it. This isn't a simple "good guy vs. bad guy" (there's no real bad guy, except for the arrogant father; but it's not like he would kill anybody) script, so I'm just not good at writing reviews of these types of films. Let's just say they all live happily ever after, and I hope I didn't give too much away. ** -DF

1970s:

THE INVINCIBLE KILLER

Distributed by: Tai Seng Video; 2000, Dir.: Liang Shien, Action Dir.: Cha Chi Yin, Starring: Chen Hui Min, Reviewed by Lana Zukowski

THE INVINCIBLE KILLER is either an early or mid-1970s Chen Hui Min (AKA Michael Chan Wai-Man) vehicle that can be summed up with this phrase: Much talk, little action. The storyline can be summed up with this sentence: The hero wants to leave the

triad life behind, but his former boss won't let him (and just how many times have we seen this particular plot? Too many!). While THE INVINCIBLE KILLER is a gangster melodrama and not the kung fu film its title makes it seem, its few action sequences are well staged. Chin Hui Min, one of the more under-rated and unappreciated of the 1970s kung fu stars, is in fine form here, doing the kind of brutal brawling that's the opposite of the Shaw Brothers style of acrobatic kung fu.

An impossibly young-looking Eddie Kao (AKA Kao Hsiung), then probably twenty something, turns up as a villainous bodyguard who has two memorable (though brief) fights with Chen Hui Min. THE INVINCIBLE KILLER tries to distract moviegoers from its lack of action with lots of subplots and colorful supporting characters. Another distraction is the nonstop parade of 1970s fashions on display here; bell-bottoms, hot pants, platform shoes, etc. And a singer called Lo Hua (then presumably popular, but forgotten today) shows up in a gold lame jumpsuit for a nightclub scene. He sings a pop song in a manner that can best be described as Las Vegas lounge style (and yes, the singer is playing himself).

In summary, THE INVINCIBLE KILLER is not intended for action aficionados but for fans of talky, character-driven melodramas—and also for unregenerate fans of Chen Hui Min (yes, there are some of us!) As a melodrama, it would earn three stars (***), but as an action film, just one (*).

Plot: Chen Hui Min's ex-boss tries to force him back into the gangster life but fails and is arrested at the end. Chen Hui Min is then reunited with his wife and son, and presumably lives happily ever after. * -Lana Zukowski

THE KING BOXER

Produced by Tu Tung Sun & Chang Ying, Written & Dir.: Kung Min, Cameraman: Lin Wha Cha, Musical Dir.: Wang Fu Lin, Executive Producer: Yang Huo Mu, Starring: Lee Lin Lin, Meng Fei, Liu Lan Ying, Chauateng Pao Chao, Nai Nam, Yasuaki Kurata, Wong Ching, Reviewed by Damon Foster

First of all, don't confuse this movie with FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH, which was also called "King boxer", but that was only in the Chinese version. This here KING BOXER is an official English-title, and is in no way related to the Shaw Brothers classic. This here KING BOXER isn't nearly as good, but it does have its moments, and being an early-to-mid-1970s farce, is more than similar to FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH. The similarities are revenge, rival martial arts schools, sexual harassment, and of course, relentlessly evil Japanese. Though technically speaking, no two kung fu movies are absolutely identical, KING BOXER is more than similar to the other movies coming from Hong Kong at that point in time.

I admit to having enjoyed this movie. The production values, such as sets, are pretty good. At times, they compare to that of a Shaw Brothers movie, and this movie might even be a Golden Harvest movie. There's an absence of Golden Harvest faces (neither Sammo Hung nor Lam Ching Ying appear as background henchmen this time), so I don't think they made this movie though. Yasuaki Kurata once again plays a villain, and in the early 1970s, he appeared in mainly independent films, I don't think he made a lot of appearances in Shaw Brothers (not until CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA, a few years later) or Golden Harvest movies. One of the heroes is Meng Fei, and in the film's opening credits, he's "introduced". It's his first film, I think his second being the Shaw Brothers' FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH. I was surprised to see Meng Fei killed off

shortly after the movie's mid-point, I thought he would have been the main hero. Instead, his death is avenged by some guy called Shi Tai Shan (according to the book Martial Arts Movies: From Bruce Lee to the Ninjas, though no such name is credited in the movie itself), an actor I'm not familiar with. The only minor villain I could recognize was Wong Ching (not the director), who looks to be only slightly older than when he played the main hero in Jackie Chan's EAGLE SHADOW FIST. He would later work with Tom Savini (and play a ghost) in 'TIL DEATH DO WE SCARE.

The approach is so simple and predictable that you need not pay attention to enjoy the whole story. I kinda' liked it, I kinda' didn't. It's worth a look I suppose; it's not a whole hell of a lot worse than average. The character depth is almost nil, the music is so loud it sometimes drowns out the dialogue, and the martial arts are too clumsy, sometimes even slow. The battles could have been more exciting, but as a typical revenge yarn, it's worth sitting through. It's just average for this type of movie.

The first ten minutes or so take place in Thailand. Here's where Taiwanese Meng Fei befriends Thai Boxer Shi Tai Shan, and teaches him the kung fu technique called Knife Fist. But when Meng Fei returns home, he finds that the local Japanese judo school keeps on hassling the local Chinese kung fu school, of course. They damage the Chinese school's sign, have the hots for Meng Fei's sister, and in a tricky plot twist that caught me off guard, they kill lead hero (?) Meng Fei himself! Them conniving Japs invite him to a dinner to make amends, or so it seems. In fact they ambush and stab him. Fortunately, the Thai boxer (who also has mastered the knife fist) carries out his revenge at the funeral, and kills villainous Yasuaki Kurata. Again. ** -DF

THE INVINCIBLE ONE

(AKA "Disciples of Shaolin") Producer: Run Run Shaw, Director: Chang Cheh, Screenplay: I Kuang & Chang Cheh, Editor: Kuo Ting Hung, Fighting Instructor: Liu Chia Liang, Exec. Prod.: Peng Shih Wei & Chu Keng, Cast: Alexander Fu Sheng, Chi Kuan Chun, Chiang Tao, Feng Ko An, Chen Ming Li, Han Chiang, Reviewed by Damon Foster

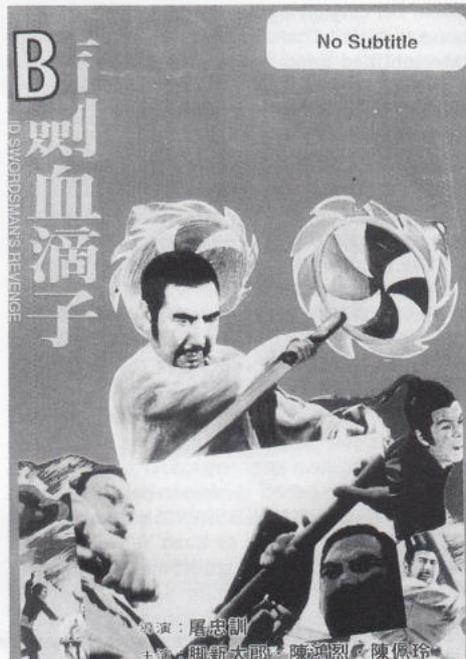
I wouldn't say THE INVINCIBLE ONE is one of the better Shaw Brothers movies. Actually, I would say that; but then, I might also say the TV sitcom FRIENDS demonstrates the work of the brilliant comedic masterminds of our time (and would be joking of course). The point being that I would be lying if I told you THE INVINCIBLE ONE was in a league with KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS or AVENGING EAGLE. The first half hour or so of THE INVINCIBLE ONE is slow-paced and borders on being dull. The humor misses the mark, even though the Shaws seemed to be pushing Fu Sheng into the "comedy kung fu" role that Jackie Chan was known for in that era. There are frequent, almost constant jokes about old shoes & dirty feet, and what's with the watches? Just like in CHINATOWN KID, Fu Sheng is willing to get into fights so he can use these little clocks as status symbols. In this case, the subplot borrows from A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS too, because the little gold watches are also music boxes and dangle from gold chains. In this instance, these trinkets represent technology (foreign technology at that) which came into China and enlarged the gap between rich and poor, and Fu Sheng is dubbed describing the object as: "A little round box, it goes ding ding dong when you open up. It tells the time." Speaking of dubbing, it's all pretty typical. I counted them saying "But still" no less than four times, but the really constant catch phrase is "Listen!", sometimes "Now listen!" They must say these words at least a hundred times.

After plenty of drama, talking and unfunny comedy, we finally do get to some martial arts action. Fu Sheng does a decent job, but Chi Kuan Chun, Chiang Tao & the others look like what they are: Actors who's only kung fu training was at the Shaw's quickie training school. Even Liu Chia Liang's choreography doesn't help them. I always knew Chiang Tao's career was based on his ugly appearance & the ability to overdue the sinister laughs, but I never really scrutinized Chi Kuan Chun's skills before (I did view FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH again, and he did look pretty weak). I guess the Shaw Brothers weren't very impressed with him either, because it wasn't long before he started appearing in cheaper films like THE WAYS OF KUNG FU (typical Jackie wannabe "training" stuff) and YOGA AND THE KUNG FU GIRL. Also present is villainous Feng Yo On, the guy with "evil eye-brows" who's name several American fans [including myself] have translated as Fong Hak On. This information came from a Japanese source, but since the credits for THE INVINCIBLE ONE list the similar name of Feng Yo An, I feel it's a safe assumption that we can henceforth consider that to be his official English name. So THE INVINCIBLE ONE is productive to us in that regard.

THE INVINCIBLE ONE looks to have been made right around the time of that Shaolin movie FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH. In fact, I think the original Chinese title for THE INVINCIBLE ONE was DISCIPLES OF SHAOLIN. Neither title is accurate though, because there's no mention of Shaolin, and although Fu Sheng is shown working out (with the obligatory blank wall behind him) during the opening credits, he gets killed later in the film, proving there's a time-limit on his "invincibility". There's a reverse role here; in FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH, it's Chi Kuan Chung who dies, but this time, it's Fu "Invincible One" Sheng who gets to do the death scene. Anyway, the setting is post-Manchu conquered China, and many of the same uniforms and extras seen in FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH are present, so perhaps both movies were shot simultaneously. Another interesting trait is the strange video effect which happens two or three times. There are these extended shots, slowed down (rather like what happened in similar prints of GOLGO 13: THE KOLOON ASSIGNMENT) or repeated. I assume this is to restore problem areas & glitches without disturbing the visual flow audio continuity on the master tape. These are digital add-ons, clearly not part of the original celluloid (not that that exists anymore!), and the whole tape is of less-than-perfect quality— for a pre-record anyway. It looks like a 2nd or 3rd gen fan-dupe, but it's a rental I picked up in an American videotore!

Though the Manchurian Ching Dynasty oppressors are hassling the Chinese, this movie has no Shaolin Temple, and seems to be set after the Manchu dogs had gained complete control. The Chinese all have to wear those demeaning pigtails as a sign of their inferiority to the Manchu tyrants, so the setting appears to be late 1800s. However, the script has a unique turn; for once it's about rival industries & corporate blackmail within the clothing industry! Our heroes are part of some union at their company where everyone must learn kung fu (an underground resistance against Manchu buy-outs & extortion) on the job, as though it were a kung fu school. I guess it's to bring their male self-esteem and machismo up to par, because working in a weaving factory is "unmanly" work. The characters are interesting, even the boss of the good guys turns out to be a real scum-bag, he cares more about his pet cricket than the well-being of his employees who are getting routinely beaten up and killed by the Manchu weavers. Fu Sheng, a new employee, uses his kung fu to beat up bad guys, despite Chi Kuan Chun's

insistence that the fighting abilities not be used. It's too derivative of Bruce Lee's THE BIG BOSS, all the way to Fu Sheng's getting promoted to be the manager, and getting star treatment from sniveling, groveling slime-balls. But Fu Sheng is stabbed in a situation not unlike that of CHINATOWN KID, and doesn't survive his fight with Chiang Tao. So Chi Kuan Chun visits Fu's grave, and its vengeance time. Chi Kuan Chun kills Chiang Tao and the bad henchmen, and then walks off into what would have been the sunset, but it's cropped badly during the video transfer, so I'm not positive he's actually walking into the sunset. It could be that he just walked around it, and unless someone releases one of them high-tech DVD's with Letterboxing, 3-d, scratch 'n sniff or whatever, perhaps we'll never know for sure. Regardless, the movie started off weak, but by the end, it was pretty average. ** -DF



盲劍血滴子 THE BLIND SWORDSMAN'S REVENGE

Original Chinese title: "MANG JIEN, SHUEH DI TSU", and "MON JIAN: SHUE DI ZI" which literally mean: "Blind Sword. Flying Round Saw Weapon" A.K.A.: "Blind Swordsman vs. The Flying Guillotine", Presented by Foo Hwa Cinema Co. and by Wong Chin Choi, Producer: Yap-Gun Han, Screenplay: Lam Gin-Hung & Tao Chung-Fun, Prod. Manager: Chen ting Te, Dir.: Tao Chung Fan (AKA Tao Chung Tao, Tu Tsung Shuin), Tu Zhong Xun, & Too Gong Shyun), Cameraman: Liao Ching Sung, Lin Tsu Ron, Lighting: Tsun Huei Bo, Huang De Fu, Asst. Dir.: Lin Jun Shyung, Martial Arts Dir.: Huang Lung & Chan Shu Wei, Prod. Assistants: Wang Fung, Fung Jieh Gung, Makeup: Jang Pi Rung & Chien Su Chun, Costumes: Li Chi Yi, Props: Tsun Shien Ling, Film Editor: Yu Chun, Music: Wong Yu Zhen, Cast: Shun Shing Tai Lung, Chang Hong Lie, Chan Pei Ling, Chiang Tao, Yee Yuen, Kien Yieh, Chiang Fun, Shiao Shi, Yu Sung Tsao, Shu Tsun Ping, Oh Yung Yuen Fung, Shiao Liang Gu, Lung Fei, San Mao, Hu Wei Shun, Shang Ju Gung, Wang Zu Ping, Bai Ling Li, Lin Tsung, Ma Chang Reviewed by Damon Foster

First of all, don't confuse this Zato Ichi movie with the Japanese Zato Ichi movie (ZATO ICHI NIDAN GIRI) of the same name, or any Japanese Zato Ichi movie! THE BLIND SWORDSMAN'S REVENGE is one of those rarest of things, a Chinese Zato Ichi movie! The Hong Kongese were always blatant about their rip offs; not only did they have the nerve to make a

movie called JAMES BOND: CHINESE STYLE, but their overnight manufacturing of names like Bruce Li, Bruce Le, Bruce Thai, Bruce Ly and Bruce Lei are legendary. In this particular instance, it's Japan's Zato Ichi character who becomes the target. But while the difference between Bruce Li and Bruce Lee was apparent, the Shintaro Katsu look-alike in THE BLIND SWORDSMAN'S REVENGE is a dead ringer! He looks so much like the legendary Japanese actor that in the theater, both myself and other people in the audience were completely fooled when we saw a trailer for ZATO ICHI DIES (this movie's sequel). The movie itself (unlike the coming attraction) never materialized, but we were all convinced it was indeed Shintaro Katsu himself, in a cheap Chinese movie about Zato Ichi!

The Chinese-language title (see lower left middle) can be interpreted a number of different ways, but I think the best way to transliterate this movie into English is to start calling it BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE, because that's what they're trying to say and "Blind Sword. Flying Round Saw Weapon" is too literal and makes no sense. So although the videobox, and the graphics on the film deliberately ripoff a legitimate Japanese movie by calling it THE BLIND SWORDSMAN'S REVENGE, I shall avoid confusion and be faithful to the Chinese script, and hence forth refer to this movie as BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE when speaking about it verbally.

Equally difficult to translate is the name of the lead actor, which is what this paragraph concentrates on (if you're unfamiliar with Asian calligraphy, don't read on— you'll just get confused). Through pain-staking research, the translated name I came up with is "Shun Shing Tai Lung", which is unusual for a Chinese name because it has four syllables when most Chinese names have two or three. But his name, Shun Shing Tai Lung, is taken right from the Chinese credits, which in turn, are meant to look Japanese, I believe this to be almost the exact same kanji as Shintaro Katsu's name (same kanji symbols, but re-arranged)! I suspect that in Chinese, Katsu's name is pronounced more than similar to "Shun Shing Tai Lung". Shun Shing Tai Lung is to Shintaro Katsu what Bruce Li is to Bruce Lee, but with the added gap of language barrier. In the credits, right next to his name we see some actual Japanese writing (supposed katakana) in parenthesis. It's as though they really, really want us to believe that this actor is Shintaro Katsu, so they added his name in katakana. This is a fine act of deception for Chinese audiences unfamiliar with Japanese writing systems like katanakana or hiragana. I, however, wasn't fooled. I can read enough Japanese to know that the supposed "Japanese" name in the parenthesis isn't accurate, and is mere gibberish. The quality isn't good enough to read entirely, but basically what it says is: "Kuso Shiro". It appears to be a half-ass attempt at writing "Katsu Shintaro", and they came close. Besides, Japanese usually use old-style kanji (AKA Chinese text) for their names, and the fact that the name is in the katakana format proves that the Chinese simply didn't know what they're doing. Japanese rarely spell their last names using the comparatively new system of katakana. This is a botch-up, a dead give away that the actor isn't really Shintaro Katsu, and that he's not really even Japanese. I don't know if the actor (Kuso Shiro? Shun Shing Tai Lung?) changed his name intentionally, or if this was the work of the filmmakers. I suspect the latter, much like when movie maker Jimmy Shaw coined the name Bruce Li and applied it to actor Ho Chung Tao. Whatever the case, I'm curious to know what other films this Chinese Shintaro Katsu has been in. Does anybody know?

Who out there knows the full story of HK Zato



Ichi flicks like *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* and the elusive *ZATO ICHI DIES?!?* This is a plea for help; an all points bulletin for all Zato Ichi fans and HK movie experts alike! These movies just exist; nothing is known about them. Your guess is as good as mine. Here's my theory on this: From the looks of *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE*, it appears to have been made in the early 1970s. This would put it just a few years behind the only legitimate Zato Ichi Chinese/Japanese collaboration, *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL* (reviewed earlier in this issue, because of the Wang Yu involvement). Not only were the Zato Ichi movies popular all over Asia, but I suspect *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL* was even a bigger hit because of Wang Yu's role. When a movie is a hit in China, blatant ripoffs always follow. Therefore, it seems only natural that this cheap movie was cranked out to cash-in on the success of *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL*. *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* and *ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL* are more than similar, except that the legitimate movie had a Chinese hero come to Japan, while this "illegal" (?) follow-up switched the format and had the Japanese hero in China. What really baffles me about *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* and *ZATO ICHI DIES* (which I've never seen) is this little thing called copyright infringement. The Japanese movie was made by Toho, who had every right to sue the Chinese over their inappropriate use of Zato Ichi. Did Toho ever sue them? If so, then how come *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* is still available on videotape? Could it be that the Chinese actually bought the rights to make their own Zato Ichi movies? It could be that this movie is so cheap and badly shot (the camera's lens used various different filters at random, causing ridiculous changes in lighting & color) that the Japanese would have simply laughed this uncoordinated movie off as harmless.

Getting past the novelty of seeing a Chinese Zato Ichi, what we've got left is really just another routine swordplay drama. It's another of them low-budget, Shaw Brothers wannabe movies with lots of forest scenes and bad photography. This one could easily appear on TV dubbed with "But still"s and shown late at night. There are a number of oldtimers and familiar faces, and the whole story is pretty average. The only stand out thing being the existence of Zato Ichi himself, in an otherwise typically Chinese setting. He's speaking Chinese like everybody else, but otherwise, it's still quite strange to see Japan's famous blind swordsman inter-acting among Chinese, in their gambling halls, their brothels, etc. There are plenty of swordfights, and although we know this Zato Ichi isn't the same Ichi seen in Japanese films, he does a good job at maintaining Shintaro Katsu's form of blind swordplay, and holds his own against the more elaborate, post-Wushu style of swordplay his Chinese enemies use. The swordfights are pretty good, except that Zato Ichi sometimes comes off as clumsy compared to the more graceful Chinese performers. Shintaro Katsu

was no acrobat or graceful fighter, and in a gritty Japanese film, this looks okay. But in a Chinese film, where everyone else uses more complex, carefully choreographed moves, Zato Ichi looks uncoordinated. In one fight, Zato is kicked, but not only did they forget to add a sound effect, but he simply stumbles backward, as though the kick was a light tap.

The real problem with *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* isn't the low budget, the lighting problems, the changes in color (they're quite jarring & distracting; making it appear entirely amateurish) or the occasional grainy look in the film quality. Its downfall is the complete lack of subtitles. This is a real shame, because the talky story has the potential to be interesting. Some movies are so simple they don't need translation— but this complicated farce isn't one of them. There are many different characters, and at least two different subplots. I'm only giving this movie a single star, because it made no sense to me. If anybody can locate subtitled print, I'm sure *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* would earn two stars, and an English dubbed print might be worth three! I don't know.

Because it's talky and untranslated, I can't go into the script. Like I said, Zato Ichi is in China, where he's speaking Chinese and inter-acting with all these Chinese people. There's a co-hero present (some Chinese swordsman), and there are several villains. The co-hero's subplot has him start off toward the beginning, dueling with some other swordsman who loses and therefore commits suicide. The hero feels guilty, and decides to take care of the dead man's wife and annoying son. I also got the impression that the defeated fighter was a friend of Zato Ichi, because he gets so sad when he learns of the guy's death. The co-hero later has a duel where he's using one of those cut off (broken in battle?) swords, just like in *THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN*; but I don't see any other references to Wang Yu's film series. Anyway, these dull talking scenes are determined to bore us to tears, but there are also enough swordfights to make this untranslated mess worth

sitting through. One villain is played by Chiang Tao, and another is played by that guy Chang Hong Lieh, a former Shaw actor (best known for 1960s sword films) who fought Jackie Chan (on the dock) in *SNAKEFIST FIGHTER*. But Zato's climactic duel is with Chiang Tao, who only appears for two or three minutes in the whole movie. His main weapon is another of those "Flying Guillotines", the ridiculous contraption seen in movies like *THE FLYING GUILLOTINE*, *THE FATAL FLYING GUILLOTINE* and of course, *MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE*. Though Chiang Tao & the Flying Guillotine don't get that much screentime, it amazes me that this movie isn't called *BLIND SWORDSMAN VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE* in the official English title. Regardless, Zato's final duel with Chiang Tao is kinda' neat— the guillotine clamps down over our hero's head just as his throwing knife stabs villainous Chiang Tao (in the mouth!). So by the time the little contraption is over Zato's head, Chiang is dead and therefore unable to pull the chain and decapitate Zato Ichi! It's pretty suspenseful, and I thought for sure Zato was going to die. But he pulls the damn thing off, just as villainous Chiang dies. * -DF

1980's:

DREADNAUGHT

Golden Harvest; 1981, Dir.: Yuen Woo Ping, Action Choreography: Yuen Woo Ping & the Yuen Group, Production Supervisor: Louis Sit, Story: Wong Ching, Cast: Yuen Biao, Lian Chia Jen, Kwan Tak Hing, Yuen Shun I, Kao Fei, Li Li-li, Fan Mei Sheng, Kam Ka-fung, Feng Ko-an, Yuen Chung Yan, Chow Yuen-kin, Tang Ching, Lau Wing, Fung Hak On, Reviewed by Damon Foster

I first sat through this one back in the 1980s, when it was relatively new. Being a subtitled print, it was hard to follow and a thoroughly unpleasant experience. Every review I read, however, was positive— so I assume the print I saw was inferior and therefore I don't think I ever actually reviewed the movie. Now that I've finally located an English dubbing of *DREADNAUGHT*, I'm giving it a second chance. But guess what?! *DREADNAUGHT* still stinks on ice!

ASIAN CALIGRAPHY OF THE ZATO ICHI ACTORS:

JAPANESE:		CHINESE:	
SHIN	新	勝	SHUN
TA	太	新	SHING
RO	郎	太	TAI
KATSU	勝	郎	LUNG



Fen Mei Sheng of *WHEN TAE KWON DO STRIKES, SHANGHAI EXPRESS* and *DREADNAUGHT*.

What does everybody else see in this crap? I think the elitists will praise any movie that has Yuen Woo Ping's name in the credits. Most of the film is bad comedy, and ridiculous over-acting. They've got that annoying crossed-eyed geek to annoy me, and with that obnoxious, high-pitch voice (voices courtesy of the "But still" people), he became almost as annoying as his partner Fen Mei Sheng, that overweight guy from *WHEN TAE KWON DO STRIKES, SHANGHAI EXPRESS* and countless other movies.

Being another of Kwan Tak Hing's "Wong Fei Hung" films, there are of course a couple lion dances. I admit that I fell asleep during one of them (it dragged on too long), but the agility & talent of the men inside the dueling lions can't be underestimated. I suspect this was the last movie where aging Kwan Tak Hing played Wong Fei Hung. The previous two movies in this series (*MAGNIFICENT BUTCHER* and its illegitimate sequel *MAGNIFICENT KICK*) were far more entertaining, so perhaps it's a good thing that they ended the series here, before it deteriorated too much. Despite his age, Kwan still looks pretty energetic, and at times, his performance is more entertaining than his younger co-stars like Liang Chia Jen and Yuen Biao. Speaking of Yuen Biao, it's interesting that he played it safe compared to his childhood classmates Sammo Hung & Jackie Chan. While they engaged in death defying stunts in their films, Biao took a tamer route, as *DREADNAUGHT* shows.

If I can praise one thing about *DREADNAUGHT*, it's that there's a unique approach. There are no major training scenes to speak of, and although the setting & voices resemble 1970s chop sockey, the setting is all its own. The main villain, for once, is a crazed serial killer. At times, the story is more like a who-dunnit than a martial arts film. This is a story which hasn't been told a lot; but perhaps that's not a good thing. The villain is played by Yuen Shun I, and the guy over-acts way too much; like a wild animal. He does manage to play a really disgusting character, and considering that the script allows him to tear off the head of a live bug, and then do the same to a chicken, the only thing more tasteless than the villain is *DREADNAUGHT*'s writer. Yuen Biao's swinging of wet towels seemed to im-

press Americans enough so that they would later rip it off, using it in one of the "Batman" capers of the 1990s.

Dr. Wong Fei Hung sure has weird ways of curing patients of whatever ails them. In one scene, a man is cured of fatigue and stress, and the remedy is fire and kung fu. Okay, sure. Was this oddball sequence meant to be humorous? Similar clowning around happens through out. There are amusing antics here and there, which could be considered "fights". It's like using all of Jackie's gags but discarding the impressive stuntwork. So anyway, the script roles along, with bumbling students Liang Chia Jen & Yuen Biao making asses of themselves while some homicidal maniac wears make-up so he can take refuge from the cops, in a Peking opera troupe. One of the more interesting fights has Liang Chia Jen battle the long tongued (one guy is black, one is white) wizard/demons of Chinese mythology, but shortly afterwards, Liang is killed by the savage murderer, still wearing make-up. So Yuen Biao & Kwan Tak Hing vow revenge. I must say, the final battle (perhaps the only real fight in the movie) is the best in the film. We finally get a good look at Biao's energy, agility and limberness. His fight with White Tiger (the killer kung fu psycho) is far more thrilling than the brief spattering of acrobatic antics which happened throughout the movie. Biao kills the bad guy, and is quite proud of himself. Now he's finally got confidence (oh, did I forget to mention that all through the farce, he had low-self-esteem and was a coward? Well, now you know). * -DF

1990s:

LETHAL EXTORTION

Released on video by Tai Seng; 1998, Directed by Godfrey Ho, Starring: Angela Wang & a cast of other nobodies, Reviewed by Lana Zukowski

The 1993 cheapie *LETHAL EXTORTION* is lethally stupid, lethally dull and only marginally an action film. Evidently, a European designer came to Taiwan, to stage a series of fashion shows which director Godfrey Ho was given permission to film. Then a writer was told to construct a story around this footage. Obviously, it's cheaper to shoot pretty European models strutting down a runway than it is to shoot gun-battles. So it should come as no surprise that *LETHAL EXTORTION* is heavy on the fashion-show footage, and light on action. Most of the action (lackluster gun-fights with a minuscule amount of martial arts sprinkled in) is saved for the end, and it's not worth the wait!

And since it's also cheaper to film sex scenes than action sequences, this movie is padded out with two decidedly un-erotic sex scenes jarringly out of place in this context. Why am I not surprised that Godfrey Ho, notorious master of schlock cinema, can't even shoot a passable sex scene? The remainder of *LETHAL EXTORTION* consists of dull scenes of dialogue—lots and lots of dialogue. All in all, *LETHAL EXTORTION* has to be one of the worst Chinese action movies ever made. Avoid it unless you want to watch tons of fashion show footage, interrupted occasionally by a little action and a lot of talk. Footnote: Godfrey Ho is called Godfrey Hall on the video box. And Andy Lau is listed in the film's credits and on the box, but is not actually in the picture.

The story, and I use that term loosely, is set in Taiwan and involves the kidnapping of Russian models by Japanese terrorists. I'm making the screenplay sound more coherent than it is. -Lana Zukowski

WHO AM I?

Golden Harvest; 1998, A Leonard Ho Production, Ex-

ecutive Producer: Barbie Tung, Original Score: Nathan Wang, Dir.: Benny Chan, Director, Stunt Coordinator & Screenplay: Jackie Chan, Cast: Jackie Chan, Michelle Ferre, Mirai Yamamoto, Ron Smaecak, Ed Nelson, Tom Pompert, Gloria Simon, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Despite the usual "international touch" commonly seen in most '90s Jackie movies, this is still obviously a Hong Kong movie, and one of his last ones before he made the American hit *RUSH HOUR*. *WHO AM I* came out after most of the local Chinese videostores closed shop, so all these years, it has eluded me! I'm no longer in touch with the HK movie scene, and when I saw it in Blockbuster (it's not that I single out Blockbuster, but it just happens to be next door to where I work and is convenient), I assumed it was some Jackie movie I had already seen under a different title. Imagine my surprise when I watched the tape and found it was all new to me! Jackie bleeds movies; every time I turn around, he's got a new flick out!

As I sat through this joke of a Jackie Chan movie, I came to realize why it's release was so scant: It's not one of his better efforts. Naturally, it still blows away regular action fare like *DIEHARD* or whatever, but Jackie has been in better flicks before and since. The script is quite routine, both in comparison to Jackie's previous projects and in comparison to standard domestic action yarns. Jackie is running out of ideas, but after all these years, that's to be expected. The opening offered a glimpse of originality: Semi-science fiction. Sci-fi is nothing new, but it's a genre Jackie hasn't experimented with too much. The beginning has some guys recover parts of a crashed meteor, which possesses dangerous radiation, allowing for some unexpected morphing and explosions. But once the movie gets into gear, it's pretty average, with Jackie on the lamb, running from double-crossers, terrorists and CIA agents gone bad.

The comedy, if there is any, is disappointing. It's hard to tell if there really is any humor, it could be that they're just acting stupid. The scene of Jackie [dressed as an African native] goofing off with some Japanese chick at a jeep was borderline amusing. He has trouble speaking because he put some weird African plant in his mouth. I guess the plant made his mouth numb, so he doesn't talk right—but this running gag makes little sense to those of us who have never eaten South African vegetation (I gotta' tell you though; Yohimbe, which is extracted from African tree bark, is damn good stuff, guys!). Besides, the joke about the speech problem is right out of *DRUNKEN MASTER 2*, only it was Anita Mui, not Jackie. Also, I noticed that the outtakes are more extensive at the ending credits. This time, there are also audio outtakes, as Jackie tries to sing some African chant before he gets into his own Chinese-language number.

He does his share of inventive stunts again, and are excellent, considering his age (he's older than he's ever been—and now he's even older). Hell, I can't think of any American action stars of ANY age who can top what Jackie does in *WHO AM I*. However, most of the stunts & antics are either too far-fetched, rushed or hastily edited; which lessens the impact of Chan's wit & agility. The scene of Jackie running across the street and narrowly missing two speeding diesel trucks was an obvious fake—it was computer effects. Does Jackie still claim to do ALL his own stunts? I haven't heard him boast of this for a while, which is a good thing—at his age, he'll die if he keeps risking his neck for these films. I'm sure there were stuntmen doubling for Jackie in some shots. Speaking of stunt doubles, there's a scene where an old man swings a stick at Jackie and the evil old fart takes a simple fall. This villain has the

second most obvious stunt double I've ever seen; ROBO VAMPIRE still takes the cake for the worst stunt double (the infamous woman jumping out the window and becoming a man in a wig shot!) though. Even so, I'm amazed Jackie would let this ridiculously unconvincing shot stay in WHO AM I. One of the better fights happens in the middle of the movie, where Jackie wears those stupid looking wooden shoes that people in Holland or Switzerland (whatever) used to wear. It's a clever gimmick, and a way to make the kicks hurt the opponents even more; and the battle, though short, is fun.

In the final analysis, I think WHO AM I is somewhat standard. It's not bad, but is really just average, and Jackie is normally an above-average filmmaker. With the deserts and out-of-HK locales, it's apparent they were aiming for another OPERATION CONDOR—but that's a hard film to live up to, and WHO AM I is comparatively rushed; lacking both the thrill, inventiveness & humor of OPERATION CONDOR. Another thing which makes WHO AM I really stupid is that he basically plays himself; or rather, another character called "Jackie Chan" (Jackie isn't a master of modesty). Pretty ironic for a movie called WHO AM I!

The setting is Africa, and after dangling from a speeding helicopter (pretty thrilling, though I think I saw James Coburn do this back in the 1960s), mercenary Jackie falls and loses his memory. No matter where he looks, he just can't find it. Regardless, his former associates, who kidnap both scientists and radio-active pieces of meteorite, decide they want him killed. The chases lead him from a primitive tribe, to the top tourist sites of South Africa. There's a car-chase where they smash a bunch of oranges, and he also saves a dog from dying! I was shocked that he caught the poodle instead of slicing it in half with a machete, like most other Chinese films would do. During his silly chases and brief spats with enemy agents, he befriends a couple women, including Michelle Ferre, who either has nice legs or wears a nice skirt—I can't tell which. By the time the movie ends, there's also the quest for some disk that everybody wants, again. But before Jackie throws it into the water (so it won't fall into the wrong hands), the army arrests the last remaining villain, and Chan has an excellent duel with a couple guys on top of a skyscraper. This climactic duel is great, and almost makes me give this movie an extra star. It's nice to see Jackie let younger martial artists (the white guy has some absolutely incredible kicking ability!) out-stage him, doing the type of youthful, energetic kicks he used to do when he was that age. **1/2 - Damon Foster

2000:

SHANGHAI NOON

Production companies: Roger Birnbaum & Spyglass Entertainment in Association with Touchstone Pictures; 2000, Distributors: Buena Vista Pictures, Written by Miles Miller & Alfred Gough, Directed by Tom Dey, Producers: Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum, Jackie Chan, Willie Chan, Jules Daly, Original Music: Randy Edelman, Cinematography: Daniel Mindel, Fight Coordinator: Yuen Biao, Starring: Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson, Lucy Liu, Brandon Merrill, Roger Yuan, Xander Berkeley, Eric Chen, Walt Goggins, Adrien Dorval, Rafael Baez, Stacy Grant, Kate Luyben, Jason Connery, Henry O, Jody Thompson, Rongguang Yu, Yuen Biao, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Though I could have done without the moronic teenage bitches in the theater who still yell "Wew, wew woooo!" (I thought that phase went out with 1970s disco), seeing Jackie Chan on the big screen was an overall pleasant experience; as is usually the

case. SHANGHAI NOON, despite the mostly Western setting, should satisfy the average fan of that dying breed of film, the Hong Kong action/period film. I'm not even certain that HK still makes kung fu movies, since all the local Chinese videostores closed up at about the same time that the Communists took over HK. So until HK and/or China again has a thriving action film scene, it seems that Hong Kong Heroes's new section on year 2000 films will cover largely the work of Hong Kongese abroad. Jackie has been making movies in America (i.e. RUMBLE IN THE BRONX and RUSH HOUR) for a few years now, but as far as this recent crop of movies goes, SHANGHAI NOON is my favorite.

I'm not saying SHANGHAI NOON is an original concept. Much is borrowed from that early 1970s Western RED SUN, right down to the train robbery and the Asian soldier (be it Jackie Chan or Toshiro Mifune) forming a partnership with one of the outlaws who created this whole mess. I also couldn't help but be aware that plenty is blatantly ripped off from Jet Li's ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA AND AMERICA! The similarities are beyond striking—does Jackie Chan have no shame?! The blond cowboy co-hero, the rival tribes of Indians, etc. It's as though Jackie was deliberately trying to piss off Samo Hung (director of ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA AND AMERICA) for having beaten him to the punch, as far as making a kung fu western. But I won't have a hissy fit over SHANGHAI NOON's ultra-obvious theft, because I found it to be an improvement over both flicks (RED SUN and ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA AND AMERICA); it lacks the obligatory, overdone wire-work seen in most Jet Li capers, and also manages to avoid the boredom and slow-pace of RED SUN. Fans of SHANGHAI NOON should also check out the Italian Lo Lih/Lee Van Clief team-up, THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER.

Don't quote me on this, but I think the only Jackie Chan movie (not including documentaries) to have an even remotely realistic approach was CRIME STORY. But along with the realism, came the boredom. Jackie's RUSH HOUR and RUMBLE IN THE BRONX, however, seem realistic and believable, compared to SHANGHAI NOON. SHANGHAI NOON is so far-fetched that at times, it almost comes off as a fantasy. There are a couple scenes which are so way out there that I rolled my eyes in disbelief and shrugged. The scene where Jackie & his white co-star are about to be hanged, for example. Jackie attempts a hopeless escape (he communicates with a horse), with all the townsfolk and sheriff's posse watching him. Coincidentally, some Indian chick just happens to be planning the old "shoot the rope before they hang" (ala Clint Eastwood and Eli Wallach in THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY) trick. Now, if Jackie had known she was doing this, then I could see why he would summon his faithful horse over to give him a ride to freedom. But unless he has some 6th sense not explained in the script, there's no way such an impossible coincidence would happen. This unfeasible action scene is typical of this film, but it was fun to watch none the less, and since SHANGHAI NOON doesn't take itself seriously, it still works and is entertaining.

I think it's about time old man Jackie stop claiming he does all his own stunts. This was true of him in the 1970s, I think. His interviews in the 1980s and 1990s assured us he did his own stunts. But today, in the 21st century, the guy is way past his prime and we shouldn't expect him to do such dangerous feats any more. I watched closely, and I believe that in at least one shot, it was a stunt-double. He falls through ropes, shelves & boards, in some old-fashioned, Christian church toward the movie's climax. We don't actually see his face during the fall—we don't see Jackie until the next

shot, when he turns over. It doesn't matter though, because the movie has various stunts and other fast-paced activities all through it, and most of the time, it's obviously Jackie Chan.

The martial arts are pretty good for a Jackie Chan movie of this period. They're about equal (well, almost) to that of RUSH HOUR or RUMBLE IN THE BRONX. As always, Jackie's witty moves and physical antics are a delight to behold. There are occasional traces of that old Buster Keaton approach, and the comedy kung fu gags we remember from HALF A LOAF OF KUNG FU and YOUNG MASTER are still alive and well. It's a good feeling to be sitting in a mainstream, American multiplex suburban theater and see Jackie in a costume-drama, battling Apache warriors, Ming Dynasty royal soldiers and cowboys all in one film! At long last, American action cinema has something that got rid of the lame Claude Van Damme 'macho man' approach where the hero was more concerned with showing off his he-man ass! I don't doubt that the pretentious he-man type of action film will still be around (I hear some idiots still waste their money to buy tickets to movies by Sylvester Stallone or Arnold Schwarzenegger), or return again if they're not popular this minute—but for the time being, America has seen the light, and for the second time (the first being the early 1970s when Bruce Lee's movies were hits out here), we've got action films starring people who know what the hell they're doing. I've had a perfect chance to compare genres, having recently sat through Ridley Scott's GLADIATOR (it wasn't my idea; I got suckered into it by a chick). GLADIATOR's duels were horrendously choreographed and the staging was headache inducing—I find this stuff to be every bit as nauseating as something out of a Tsui Hark movie. Actor Russell Crow must be awfully good-looking, because I don't see how else he got the part—he's certainly no master of swordplay or action! So the fights in GLADIATOR were obviously sped-up and made excessive use of computer "enhancing"—if you can call it that. So after that unpleasant experience, it was such a relief to see Jackie back in action when SHANGHAI NOON debuted just three weeks later!

The plot of this decent-to-good movie has something to do with a kidnapped princess (tricked into leaving Beijing, and held for ransom in the Wild West) and outlaws trying to get their hands on a lot of gold—nothing new here. But there are really only a handful of movies about Manchu soldiers coming to the old West, and SHANGHAI NOON is one of them. In this case, Jackie teams up with an outlaw with a heart of gold, played by Owen Wilson. Even though the bleach blond dude was hired for his looks, his character is still played for laughs and he jokes around a lot; in fact, he jokes around too much. I say "too much" because many of his puns are too tame & stupid to be funny. He proves that some people will laugh at anything. Anyway, Jackie and blondie go through a lot together (train robbery, the hoosegow, and the obligatory bar-room brawl) before they eventually unite and seek to rescue the princess. Plenty of fights & bloodless (very tame!) shoot outs transpire as the movie roles along. The heroes don't seem to really be seeking out the kidnapped princess much; they're not doing a lot of detective work until the end of the movie. The middle of the flick is mostly clowning around, which is okay by me. Jackie's sequence with a tribe of Native Americans is pretty funny, but when he unwittingly gets married to a squaw, it gets stupid because the actress is obviously white, not an Indian. Anyway, after all these silly skits & plot twists, Jackie and his helper finally corner the villainous slave trader (Roger Yuan) who instigated the capturing of the princess (Lucy Alexis Liu). After Jackie defeats the

bad guys, he gets the girl (one young enough to be his daughter, no less)— which surprised me for once. She didn't want to return to Beijing because she was expected to marry some butt-ugly guy over there. So instead, she, like Jackie, remains in the old west—and I presume they marry. It would appear that he got a divorce (perhaps when I used the restroom) from his cute Indian bride because she went for the white guy. *** -DF

CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

2000 Directed by Ang Lee, Martial Arts Choreography: Yuen Woo Ping, Cinematography by Peter Pau, Music by Tan Dun, Based on a book by Du Lu Wang, Starring: Chow Yun Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Cheng Pei Pei, & Zhang Ziyi, Reviewed by Louie Ambriz

I love traditional Kung Fu movies and CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON is a throwback to the days of Kung Fu Theater. The movie features Chow Yun Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Cheng Pei Pei, and newcomer Zhang Ziyi, with direction by Ang Lee (SENSE AND SENSIBILITY) and martial arts direction by Yuen Woo Ping. The story has two main characters, one played by Chow Yun Fat. Chow plays a famous martial artist who, because of his love for Michelle Yeoh, wants to leave the world of martial arts behind and gives away his rare sword. He is pulled back into action by the theft of his sword by Zhang Ziyi, the other main character. Zhang is a woman who doesn't know which path in life she should take. She has to choose between following her master (a thief), marriage, and becoming Chow's student. The Story goes on to detail the interaction of the two main characters and the supporting cast. That's about as far into the plot as I'm going to go. See it for yourself to get the rest of it. Now lets discuss the important stuff, the kung fu! Yuen Woo Ping has outdone himself here. Sure there is plenty of wirework, but there is also plenty of real kung fu. Besides, the wirework is real nice here. People jump from rooftop to rooftop and from tree branch to tree branch with wonderful ease. You have to see it, it really looks great. As for the real fighting, I'm sure they used stunt doubles for some things but every actor seems to have spent a lot of time learning the choreography. You can see their faces most of the time. Michelle is fantastic. I would rank this as her top kung fu performance, although I'm sure others would disagree. She uses just about every classical weapon in one scene and displays excellent form with each. It's nice to see her in a real action film after having starred in that stupid James Bond movie. I don't know too much about Zhang Ziyi's background but wow, she knocked my socks off. She had to have had some training when she was young. She is extremely flexible and precise in her movement. She also seems very comfortable on wires. In one knock-out scene she battles a dozen kung fu masters with ease. She flies and flips all over the place while beating the crap out of her enemies using her straight sword.

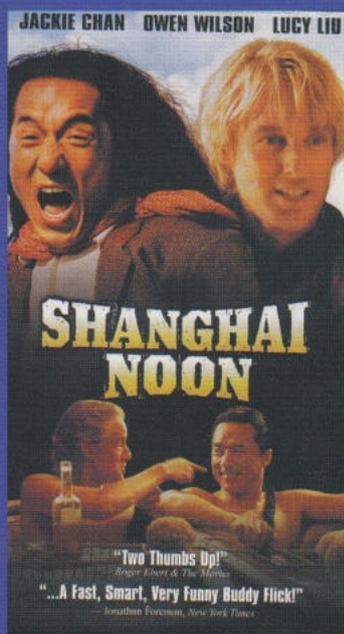
It was good to see Chang Pei Pei on screen again.



Chow Yun Fat



Above, left & below: WHO AM I?
Right & bottom: SHANGHAI NOON.



The last time I saw her was in PAINTED FACES with Sammo Hung. She still looked youthful in that movie but here she really shows her age. Regardless, it's nice to see her. She has a decent fight scene involving those cool deer horn weapons, a chain whip and what appears to be a gymnastic ribbon. I'm not sure how much fighting she did herself but she gives a good performance. Chow doesn't do too much fighting but when he does he looks powerful. Most of the time his character fights with one hand behind his back, that's how powerful he is. He mostly uses a straight sword but in one cool scene he fights his enemy with a tree branch. I never really thought of Chow as an actor that could portray a martial arts hero but he really pulls it off. He looks cool with his head shaved too. One of the things I loved about this movie is the different skill levels of Kung Fu the characters have. Zuyi is a very powerful warrior who can beat the stuffing out of an ordinary martial artist but is below the level of Michelle Yeoh. And Chow's character is more powerful than everyone else. This really adds depth where most kung fu movies have the warriors at almost equal levels. Ang Lee has done an excellent job of creating a fresh Chinese movie when most (new) HK movies are unoriginal and stale. The idea of a good guy and a bad guy doesn't weigh too heavy in this movie. Its more about choosing the best path in life. Because of this, I found the story to be much more interesting than the average kung fu film. It also doesn't hurt to have such a fine cast, especially Zhang Ziyi.

So what we have here is an incredible modern kung fu movie that should please people brought up on the Shaw Brother's classics as well as youngsters raised on THE MATRIX. It deserves to do well here in American theaters so please support it! If this works who knows? Maybe we'll get more movies like this, and subtitled to boot. ***1/2 -Louie Ambriz

Jackie Chan on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE Broadcasted on 05/20/00, Producer: Steve Higgins, Executive Producer: Lorne Michaels, Dir.: Beth McCarthy Miller, Writing Supervised by: Tina Fey, Written by: Kevin Brennan, Robert Carlock, Steven Cragg & Tony Daro, With: Jimmy Fallon, Will Ferrell, Ana Gasteyer, Darrell Hammond, Chris Kattan, Tim Meadows, Tracy Morgan, Cheri Oteri, Chris Parnell, Colin Quin, Horatio Sanz, Molly Shannon, Rachel Dratch, Maya Rudolph, Florence Henderson & Jackie Chan, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Like I said a few pages back in the intro, Jackie Chan is all over the news media and TV. It doesn't phase me any more. Endless talk-shows & commercials, and repetitious interviews which offer nothing new. So these days, if I have a choice of watching yet another Jackie ego-enhancing interview, or jerking off to a photo of your grandmother, I'll take the latter. But when I heard he was hosting SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, I stood up and took notice— this might be worth a look. So I grabbed an old videotape with a few minutes at the end, set the VCR to 6-hour speed (SLP mode) and recorded it before going off to doing something more important like going into a Chatroom all about pets or new-age bullshit. A few days later, I realize that HK Heroes obligatory "Year 2000" Section needed to be padded out due to a lack of actual movies to review. So I finally got out the SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE videotape and presto! So here we go, my first and hopefully last review of SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE:

Sitting through SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE has always been a challenge for me. That absolutely nauseating saxophone (what is it about New York and saxophones?) is bad enough, but the comedy is almost as irritating. Though occasional skits (i.e. "The Ambiguously Gay Duo") have their moments, the

series itself doesn't do much for me. To me, SNL has always been a collection of jokes without punchlines (as opposed to its silly ripoff series MAD TV, which is just the punchlines with no build-up). I've always felt that SNL is padded-out, stretched to a full hour with half-ass humor geared toward idiots, pot smokers, and alcoholics who's wit rivals that of a common floor-tile. I'm into high-octane, laugh-a-second, full force comedy like the works of Monty Python, David Zucker's comedic masterpieces, and that unbeatable god of comedy himself, Trey Parker—I could never get into SNL, where even the audience sounds bored. Don't they have those light-up signs which flash "laugh"? Probably not, or maybe the word "laugh" was misspelled because the crew is always inhaling dope.

Jackie's appearance did little to change that, but his intro, where he inter-acted with comedians portraying Steven Seagal and Jean Claude Van Damme was good; were it more scathing, it could have actually been funny! Years ago, in the pages of an old OC, I predicted that the likes of Van Damme would experience a decline in popularity, once Jackie finally made it big in America and raised the audience's standards. Sure enough, it happened, just as I speculated. Hell, I recall a news report (right at about the time when Jackie took American audiences by storm) where a stressed-out Claude V.D. was taken into custody for having allegedly beat his wife. We all know that V.D. argued with John Woo (on the set of HARD TARGET), and seemed to boast about his ass a lot. So it was great to see Jackie on SNL, putting VD (played by some comedian) in his place, albeit politely, by using a mere facial expression. Steven Segal didn't get off so lucky. Some other comedian portrayed Segal, and Jackie blatantly states that everything Segal has ever done is "a joke"! Strangely, an overweight comedian poked fun at Samo Hung as well. Though Jackie never verbally insults his adopted brother, childhood friend & co-star, I was a little surprised that Chan would let the SNL no-talents poke fun at somebody so important & prominent in the film industry. Oh well, the comments from the Hung imitator seemed to be just why Arsenio Hall is a co-star on a martial arts TV show. I've often wondered myself, though I've not sat through the defunct MARTIAL LAW for well over a year. For the record, MAD TV did a spoof of MARTIAL LAW too, but the actor (Will Sasso) did a lousy job and sounded nothing like Samo— at least the

guy at SNL sounded similar to Samo.

The sketches which followed, with or without Jackie, were as lame as always. From the couples at the miniature golf course skit, to the scene of Jackie and others digging underground with shovels, it all amounted to silliness, not actual comedy. SNL has been running strong for about 25 years, so it's obvious that there's a crowd for this nonsense, but I'll never see eye-to-eye with these people. The final sketch (the only funny one in the episode) was a spoof of them old laundry commercials from the 1970s. The one where the Chinese Laundromat lady says: "My husband, some hot shot". Jackie now plays the husband who says: "Ancient Chinese secret!" Only this time, he hops the counter and uses kung fu to beat up the customer to insure the "secret" (Calgon detergent) isn't revealed.

Also in this episode was a current teeny-bopper band, Kid Rock. I'm no music critic, but since I'm critiquing this episode of SNL, the band is under my scrutiny too. As a typical mish-mash of rock and trip-hop, Kid Rock isn't bad. But they have no originality whatsoever and are incredibly average and trendy. The singer (is he called Kid Rock? Or is that the name of the over-all, whole band?) looks like Axel Rose, and their first song performed was a trip hop number (as I understand it, "trip-hop" is a loose term for any post-1990 band which rips off both rock and hip-hop) that was identical to a lot of the ebonics-style hick-ups that the Beastie Boys, Funk Junkies, Limp Bizquit, Pappa Roach and 3-11 have been using to pollute the airwaves and contribute to gang violence. Later, Kid Rock performed again, but it was a more melodic, acoustic set. This time they all sat down so they could cash in on the post-hippie grunge trend which, contrary to popular opinion, is still going strong. If surf or rockabilly ever become popular with the herd-mentality, "cool to be identical" teeny-bopper mass, you can just bet that Kid Rock will be stealing from Dick Dale and maybe the Stray Cats too. Whatever makes a buck.

So, there you have it— my first and last critique of an episode of SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE. Having endured such horrid comedy and barely average music, I need to go take a shower to cleanse myself of impurities. Though I chuckled at Jackie's intro (& subsequent trashing of Steven Segal), and found the detergent commercial to be amusing, the episode otherwise left much to be desired. No star. - Damon Foster



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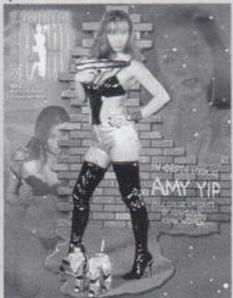
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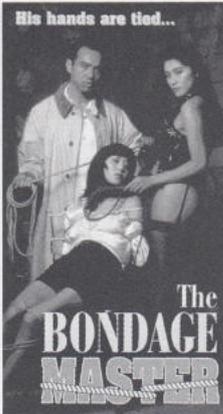
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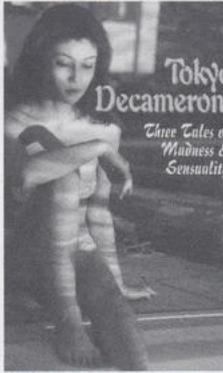
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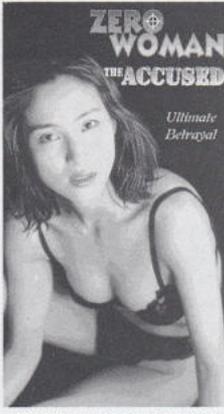
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THE LADIES' PHONE SEX CLUB: The shame of it! Lulu, the most popular woman in the phone sex business, was helpless to resist the wiles of her own - female - client! But the laws of phone sex club are strict: an operator must never be seduced by a common caller. Will Lulu's reputation be sullied beyond repair? Starring Kei Mizutani of WEATHER WOMAN fame! **\$29.99**



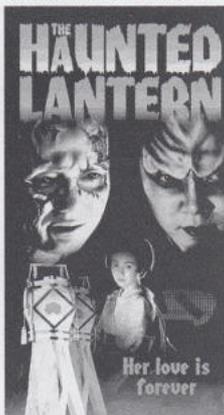
TOKYO DECAMERON: THREE TALES OF MADNESS & SENSUALITY: A collection of three bizarre and disturbing stories: Two Women Named Mariko: One is a slave to the other's every twisted desire. What dark past ties the two together? Lesbian Dream: Five women's summer vacation of playful lust turns terrifying with the discovery of a dead body. The Man in the Pillory: A dancer has tracked down the man who tortured and drove her sister to suicide. Obsessed with granting him a humiliating death. **\$29.99**



ZERO WOMAN: THE ACCUSED (sub): Rei is a woman without a past - without an identity. She's a lethal undercover agent working for the Zero Department, a deadly, shadow division of the police force. Men are turning up dead - brutally murdered with a precision worthy of the Zero Department's finest assassin. Now Rei's on the run from her own kind, hot on the trail of a cold blooded killer who is her equal in every way. Can she track down the murderer before the Zero Department brings her to justice? **\$29.99**



BIG BOOBS BUSTER! After being rejected by men for having a "less than fully feminine figure," Masako doesn't get mad - she gets even! She transforms into the vengeful vigilante, The Big Boobs Buster, who humiliates her enemies - the busty babes of the world. Also contains behind-the-scenes footage of the making of Big Boobs Buster! Subtitled, contains nudity, profanity, violence and adult situations! **\$29.99**



THE HAUNTED LANTERN (sub): Shin is living a nightmare. He dreams that an abandoned woman commits suicide, and her body vanishes in a supernatural spray of blood! Is this merely a dream? Or does the ghostly beauty walk the earth, hungering for vengeance and an otherworldly kiss? **\$29.99**

KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE

AGENT AIKA Volume 2

("Lace in Space"), Dir.: Katsuhiro Nishijima; 1999, Reviewed by George Garvey

Okay, AGENT AIKA isn't for everyone. Lots of violence, nudity and party shots. But mainly it's fast moving action and a lot of fun!! I think director Katsuhiro Nishijima is a genius!

Last time we left Agent Aika: Aika, Rion and Gusto were aboard Professor Hargen's warship. Aika and Gusto are surrounded by the mini-skirt killers. Rion and the mysterious Maypia are hiding out of sight. Sounds hopeless, right?! All of a sudden Gusto's

sidekick Bandra lands an airplane on the deck. Bullets start flying, smoke grenades cause confusion. Aika and Gusto escape, Rion doesn't. Maypia turns out to be a spy. The military has been suspicious of Professor Hargen. Hargen plans to destroy the world so he can build his version of "Utopia".

Aika, recuperating on a nearby island while Gusto and Bandra repair the plane, feels very sad and guilty for leaving Rion behind. She vows to rescue Rion. Meanwhile, Professor Hargen's warship (with its all female crew) shoots it out with the navy. Which navy? That's never discussed. You know how anime



is. Everyone speaks Japanese, but everyone looks like a whitey!! Professor Hargen wins. His warship converts into a spaceship for the final phase of his plan. Maypia is written off by the government and is told that she is "expendable".

Before Hargen's spaceship can take off, Aika and Gusto get on board. Professor Hargen has figured out how Aika's ultra metal bra works. He has created a similar device for his sister. Guns, violence, weirdness, near escapes follow. Aika and Nena engage in a duel to the death. /This is Damon. I've gotta' interject here. With all due respect to George Garvey, I need to say that I hate reviews like this. A whole review should not be a plot! The synopsis should fit nicely into a single, final paragraph. In the future, please take note all readers & writers: Reviews, for the last time (I'm really sick of saying this), should consist more of comments & descriptions of the videotape in question. We're critiquing, not writing screenplays for films that already exist. This review (which features very little credit; who the hell made this movie? All we know is the director's name!! No producers? No artists?) is exactly the type of thing I'm trying to avoid. -DF/ Rion never knew about Aika's "abilities" and she happens to witness one of Aika's "transformations". It is an eerie and effective scene with creepy music. To Aika's surprise, Rion thinks it's the coolest thing on Earth. Bandra and Aika's boss fly up to space to help out. Aika cuts off the death ray that is aimed at Earth. Nena mutates, consumes Hargen. The ship is hopelessly damaged. Earth is spared. Aika saves the day!! **** -George Garvey

우림대4탄 신더V출동

UREME #4

Released: 1/5/89, Produced by Kim Jung Gi, Starring: Shim Hyung Rei, Reviewed by Damon Foster

This Korean superhero flick's story is quite uneven; the beginning and ending are two different worlds! The first portion, as always, has that retard Shim Hyung Rei trying to ruin the film with his lame excuse for comedy. I've seen funnier antics in a 'beach party' movie. There is one amusing scene

though; during his obligatory transformation into red-suited hero Esperman: As always, he can't transform if people are watching him, so he hides in a vacant bathroom and does his post-Kamen Rider modification— right next to the urinals.

The latter half of UREME #4 really kicks ass though! The sets, mattes, costumes, animation, and other FX have really improved, but I see they still let an occasional suspension wire remain seen. Yet this is a fun, exciting flick, full of action, pretty girls, cheap FX and other dandy stuff. Though still an infantile comedy, it's the first in the series which I'd consider acceptable to a U.S. audience. The production values are good enough, and it's colorful & lively enough to appeal to all ages! After all, Americans accepted BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE, STAR WARS, STARBLAZERS and VOLTRON, and UREME #4 is all these films combined, but is a hell of a lot more fun (the second half is, at any rate). UREME #4 is a sci-fi lover's dream come true, and highly recommended to all you superhero nuts!

Seeing an epic though obscure film such as this, from Korea, is like having a whole new world opened up. It's a major discovery; not many Americans have seen this wild fantasy. It makes me wonder how many more undiscovered treasures there are out there! There's all kinds of stuff out there, and if more people would open their minds, such fun could be had by all. This reminds me of the less-than-packed audience at my Tribute To Shim Hyung Rei, a panel of discussion, and video-clips on the UREME series and other movies from that eccentric freak Shim Hyung Rei. This project happened at G-Fest 2000, and at first, I was displaying for an empty audience. Nobody had any interest in such an underground genre (not when there was tons of Toho and/or Tsuburaya stuff going on all over the place), until later when the audience really started getting into it— eventually, passerbys came in out of curiosity and enjoyed themselves, but luring people in wasn't easy.

I guess every UREME film has a ballad. But it was never so noticeable & annoying as in this one. The song just starts up, while characters talk! So we never hear their voices or background FX, all sound just drops out, in favor of a bunch of idiots singing. Who's idea was it to do this? He's a complete bastard, whoever he is.

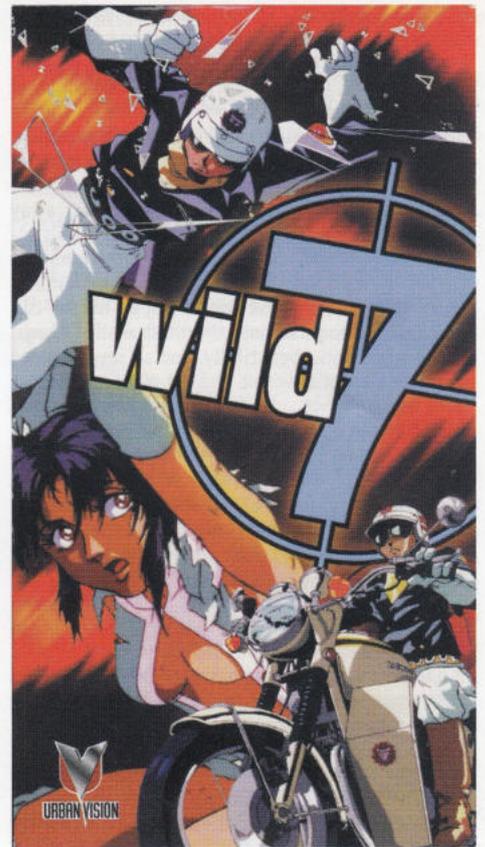
The saga begins when Esperman & Dai Illi, cruis-

ing (aboard the Ureme spaceship) through a nearby solar system, discover the corpse of an astronaut on the moon. The dead man is brought to Earth, only to come back to life in a laboratory! This slow moving automation is under the control of yet another army of space invaders (no relation to the groups in other films, each film is independent of the rest). The invading monsters live in an astroid which comes dangerously close to Earth (about 200 feet from the tops of some skyscrapers!). There's more bad news; the automated zombie likes taking control of weapons & buildings! In one scene, the aliens briefly gain control of Ureme itself. The good news is not only have Korean scientists invented another animated robot, but a space fleet is helping us too! They're a shameless rip-off of STARBLAZERS, their space vehicle looks a lot like the Space Cruiser Yamato. Even their uniforms remind me of those in the over-rated Japanese cartoon. The aliens kidnap a scientist's daughter, which is to be expected, because in Asian sci-fi, most scientists have a daughter so the villains can capture her. Our many heroes go off to the astroid (still orbiting some office buildings) for the rescue mission. At one point, there are three epic battles going on at once! Superhero Esperman, piloting the spaceship Ureme, aids the space cruiser in wasting alien spaceships & jets! Space cutie Dae Illi controls a Transformer-type robot who battles another anime-style giant! Scientists have infiltrated the stationary astroid and engage in STAR WARS-inspired gunplay with the evil creatures! Then the hypnotized zombie-robot guy has a change of heart, and sides with the humans; they rescue the scientist's brat. The astroid & aliens suffer defeat. *** -DF

WILD 7

AKA: "Wild 7 Volume 1", A Tokuma Publishing & Fuji TV Production, Dir.: Kiyoshi Egami, Screenplay: Ginzo Chojiya, Technical Dir.: Shogo Kawamoto, Character Design: Hisashi Hirai, Animation Dir.: Akira Kikuchi, Written by: Mikiya Mochizuki, American Distributors: Urban Vision (www.urban-vision.com), Running Time: 52 Min., Reviewed by Damon Foster

I really like the live-action series (what little I've seen of it) of the same name, but this animated version is pretty damn good too! As everyone knows, I prefer live-action stuff, so I'm sure I would rather watch the 1970s series (though I've only seen a



single episode of it) than this cartoon which was based on the same story and/or comic book. But this here WILD 7 video release is excellent, recommended for both anime freaks and tokusatsu fans alike! I believe this tape to be the first episode of a gory 1990s cartoon, which probably aired on TV in Japan.

This is the shit. WILD 7 is where it's at. I can rarely watch an animated movie all in one sitting, but not only was this possible with WILD 7, but I've actually gone so far as to watch it more than once! The quality of the animation isn't the best I've seen, but the artwork is decent; about average (remember, all Japanese cartoon characters look alike),



which is fine by me. There's a catchy heavy metal-ish theme song (generic guitars with no vocals) during the opening credits too.

It's a brutal, yet slick story of a special squad of motorcycle-riding, gun-firing anti-heroes. They're the Wild 7, and because of their unethical approach, they were chosen to be trained to become a team of cops who shoot first, ask questions later. In real life, no law-abiding law enforcers could get away with such blatant police brutality, and there's always the risk that they might slaughter innocent people by accident. But in the world of fantasy, where the crulest, most trigger-happy heroes can mercilessly slaughter only the most evil of thugs, the concept works beautifully, and all seven heroes generate a lot of charisma and get plenty of respect from the audience. It's rare that a mere cartoon character can get such a strong reaction out of me, but these seven scoundrels with hearts or gold managed to do it. Lead hero (if you can call these thugs "heroes"!) feels it's cheaper just to wipe out the bad guys on the spot, because the trials, attorneys and regulations just waste the tax-payers' money! This video is harsh, but it's cool.

This particular variation starts off with the seven renegades (at a local police precinct, the guys are called "the Policemen from Hell") wiping out a group of bankrobbers. These opening five minutes are the most powerful scenes on the tape. The robbers see the Wild 7 approaching, but aren't phased, because they're expecting more "normal" cops—the types who work under strict codes, regulations and ethics. The thieves are planning that while the approaching seven policemen are busy filling out forms and filing reports during this routine arrest, it would be a good time to ambush them, which the bankrobbers have presumably done many times before. Imagine their surprise when, instead of pulling out a flashlight or a pen & clipboard, heroic Hiba pulls out his gun and begins blowing the villains away! His six followers enjoy this no-nonsense approach, and laugh it up. Though the remainder of this flick isn't as intense as this opening shoot-out, it pretty much sets the pace for the remainder of the videotape. The Wild 7 later go after a major kingpin in some Mafia, and must deal with loyalty to their fellow man, vs. loyalty to their employer (Kusanami). There's a conflict toward the



end, when our heroes are ordered to go battle a squad of skull-mask wearing "Biker Knights" (motorcyclists dressed like the knights of old Europe; this is dumb and the most far-fetched thing in an otherwise rational script), even though they'd rather go help their leader (Hiba) who's trapped in an office building, being roughed up by more thugs. A subplot has something to do with a sinister yakuza called Kuramatsu, who Kusanami (who hired & manages the Wild 7) has a personal grudge against. Little is shown of their rivalry, so I assume we see their continuing battle in a later episode. This chapter concentrates on the Wild 7 taking on some other crime lord. *** -DF

ULTRAMAN TIGA: THE FINAL ODDESY {Japanese title: "GEKIJIYOU YOUSE SHINSAKU"}
 Produced by the Tsuburaya Company in 2000,
 Executive Producer: Kazuo Tsuburaya Production
 Supervisor: Koichi Takano Screenplay: Keichi Hasegawa, Director of Photography: Shinichi Ooka, Director/Special Effects Director: Hirochika Muraishi, Cast: DAIGO: Hiroshi Nagano, RENA: Takami Yoshimoto, IRUMA: Mio Takagi, Reviewed by Damon Foster

This shot-on-video (mind you, it's very good video!) movie confirms that I'm still considerably out of touch with a genre I once loved. This flick assumes we know each and every little thing which has happened in the ULTRAMAN TIGA story thus far. I have seen the previous TIGA movie, and watched several episodes of the TIGA series (albeit Chinese dubbed ones; broadcast locally), yet this movie had me stumped. So lead hero Daiga (?) is getting married? He retired from being Tiga? Somehow, I missed some very important chapters which explained a lot.

This here TIGA blah blah blah film is too generic & stale to impress. The budget only strikes me as being slightly higher than any average TV episode, but with more of those obvious CGI effects and mattes which are everywhere these days. This is more of that typical, "new age" ULTRAMAN crap for people who want their superhero settings to look like a videogame.

It's an okay story about evil Ultramen revived from an ancient time-period. Despite warnings from the G.U.T.S. leader, some foolish soldiers thaw the three giant statues so that all three destructive warriors come to life. Fortunately, some ghost/witch chick (descended from the good Ultramen) makes a magical barrier which keeps the villainous trio trapped on an island. Meanwhile, former GTS pilot (and one time Ultraman Tiga guy) Daigo is planning to marry a former co-worker. Their relationship only shows them kiss once, but I found this romantic subplot to be a change of pace for a childish superhero film, so I enjoyed it! But Daiga has flashbacks to the ancient time of the Ultra giants, and their battles (a brief dream sequence where rival Ultraman gangs fight, it's my favorite shot in the whole damn flick), not to mention "Camilia", a sultry villainess whose name he calls in his sleep as she haunts him. Daigo's fiancée hears this and is convinced he's cheating on her! Meanwhile, the three evil Ultramen (two men, one woman) have unleashed a flock of savage, CGI pterodactyls which the GUTS jets wipe out. Eventually, Daigo becomes Tiga and battles all three main villains. The fights are okay, and take place on land, underwater and even in outerspace. Too much CGI crap for my taste, but the action is somewhat exciting, none-the-less. ** -Damon Foster

Here's something funny that appeared on the alt.tv.sentai news group:

You know you watch too much Ultraman when...

- You demand that the government start up a local Science Patrol.
- Star Trek fans tell you to get a life.
- For an academic talk or show and tell, you choose the red and silver guy himself.
- You buy an extra wardrobe to store all your Ultra-stuff and, if there is no more space available, you use the old one and start putting your regular clothes in boxes.
- You take off your glasses, fold them up, and pretend it's the Ultra Eye.
- You use the Ultra Slash motion when there is a tree to cut down.
- Every time someone mentions Mount Fuji, you have certain types of fantasies about Hiroko Sakurai. (From Gomenos)
- You've written to NASA asking them to send probes to Nebula M78.
- Every time a strange object falls from space, you try to be the first person to get to it.
- You understand any of these jokes.

GO NAGAI PART 2

(The Continuing Tribute To Artist Mr. Nagai and his Work) BORN: 8/6/45. By Frank Strom

*TV--

DORORON ENMA-KUN

Created in 1973, Production Company: Toei Doga,
 Created by Go Nagai, Consisting of 25 episodes,
 Reviewed by Frank Strom



This supernatural/horror series could be viewed as something of a follow-up to the better known DEVILMAN series from the previous year, though it's by no means a literal sequel. All of Toei's 1970s interpretations of Nagai's work maintained a certain (winning) formula, and as such, they closely resemble each other - Different themes & gimmicks aside, the original DEVILMAN series for example is of the same mold as CUTEY HONEY and even MAZINGA-Z. DORORON ENMA-KUN continues with the same formula: "Monster-of-the-week" stories, with some humor and an emphasis on action (like the DEVILMAN & CUTEY HONEY shows of the same period, the action is outrageously violent for television; more on that later). However, DORORON ENMA-KUN is clearly inspired by an earlier comic book not by Nagai - The incredibly successful GEGEGE NO KITARO. I wouldn't go so far to call DORORON a rip-off, but it's definitely an example of Nagai cashing in on someone else's hit. GEGEGE NO KITARO, which is also about a wild-haired boy embroiled with traditional Japanese folklore spooks, has had multiple TV & film versions (both live and animated) over 30-plus years.

The ghosts, demons & spooks featured in the series are based on the creatures found in Japanese folklore & mythology, unlike the goofy original creations from DEVILMAN or DEMON KING DANTE. I don't



know jack shit about Japanese mythology, so I've no idea how accurate any of this stuff is. One recurring character, however, is strictly of Western origin: Dracula. Depicted here as a disheveled hobo, Dracula is total comedy relief, sometimes hanging out with the heroes, other times helping the evil spooks with their plans. He also doesn't stick to the standard vampire routine; he walks around in broad daylight & forages through trash-cans for food (not blood).

Central to the series are the action sequences. As with MAZINGA and the other Nagai TV series of the period (as well as the countless imitations), the fight sequences here are bursting with energy and directed in the most effective manner possible. The big thing that always gets ignored by so-called "discriminating" anime critics is that DIRECTING TECHNIQUE is what makes limited animation (what the Japanese companies produce) look good. Throughout the 1970s, Japanese directors put emphasis on animating key action/motion shots rather than putting focus on lesser importance shots (like characters standing around talking or wind blowing someone's hair or underage anime girls' breasts heaving). This style created the illusion that the quality of animation was better than it actually was. It's also something that's been totally lost since the 70s (or early 80s if you're kinder hearted than I am). The action in DORORON is dynamic (THE Go Nagai adjective) and alarmingly violent, especially for TV -- The permissible level of violence in these 70s series is remarkably high! You just don't see TV cartoons with such relentless violence anymore. Enma's primary weapons are a flame-shooting cane and a cape that turns into a whip. So, the little rascal is routinely burning and whipping his foes, which is a pretty disconcerting sight, believe me.

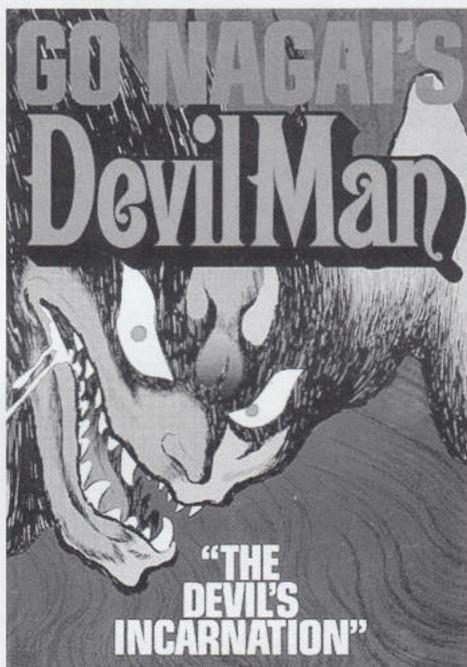
The premise: Enma, a little demon-boy from Hell, is sent to Earth to fight various rampant spooks & send them back to the netherworld. Enma's sidekicks are Oyuki (traditional Japanese snow-fairy) and Gappa (a turtle-frog monster from folklore; you may remember the giant monster version seen in MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET). The original Nagai comic book & this TV series vary a bit here. In the TV version, the trio use the basement of a grade school as their base of operations and the weekly spooks are all causing trouble in a very localized area (usually menacing the school kids, or the school kids stumble on to the monsters' schemes and Enma bails them out). Frequently, in typically sexist fashion, the girl Oyuki is kidnapped & menaced by the villains, leaving Enma to come to her rescue. In one especially crazy episode, a thorny plant-woman monster kidnaps car accident victims, takes them to her secret medical facility, where she & her evil nurses perform strange surgery on the helpless victims! Oyuki is hit by a truck (!) and winds up an unwilling patient until Enma saves the day (whipping & burning the nurses alive with hellfire! They're only plant-people, so I guess it's okay). In another episode, Oyuki is kidnapped by a demonic cab driver, who whisks hapless fares away to their doom (a scheme that had something to do with Tokyo's bad traffic problems, but I couldn't make heads or tails of that particular detail). Rating: ***

*COMICS - -

GO NAGAI'S DEVILMAN:

"The Devil's Incarnation" 198 pages Published by Dynamic Productions Co. Ltd. Publication date: 1986 (Presumably) Story & Art by Go Nagai Translation by Willard Carroll & David Lewis Art Direction by Issen Okamoto

A lot of importance has been placed on Nagai's DEVILMAN (the comic, the character, the property and the genre itself), and after all this time it's hard to say if people aren't making a bigger deal of it than it deserves. Certainly it's significant since it's one of his biggest and most pivotal creations (along with MAZINGER and CUTEY HONEY). Originally done in 1972, it's the first of many (too many, actually) demon-horror comics Nagai has turned out over three decades (the superior DEMON KING DANTE was the first follow-up, done in '73). On the basis of this comic alone, comic book critics/historians (Westerners) have depicted Nagai as some great horror maestro, when in fact his so-called "serious" horror comics are pretty silly, and his real contributions to Japanese comics have been in the areas of social satire, anarchy, humor, and action.



The Devil's Incarnation edition is a fantastically obscure collection (I picked up my copy at the Kodansha Publishing booth at the San Diego Comic Con one year and was totally flabbergasted by it), an I couldn't make heads or tails of the publishing origins of the book, and Kodansha Publishing was no help. After contacting Dynamic Productions directly, I heard from Kenji Nagai (originally Dynamic Productions was Go Nagai and his brother, I'm not sure if Kenji is a relation or not), who explained that this edition was self-published by Nagai specifically for some Comic Con that he was attending. After telling me it had a tiny print run of 300 copies and now IMPOSSIBLE to obtain, Kenji mailed me a second copy. Wow! Two copies! I was big-hearted with my second copy -- I loaned it to Ardith Carlton & Corky Visminas (two trustworthy friends), who stole it & never spoke to me again. Taught me a valuable lesson about trusting people and trying to be a nice guy. Learn from my mistake, people: Never lose touch with your inner jerk.

"Devil's Incarnation" reprints the first 198 pages of the original edition of DEVILMAN (the 1987 hardcover printing includes lots of new material at the beginning of each volume). The original Japanese DEVILMAN Vol 1 has a more natural story break, where this edition just kinda stops abruptly, even though it's only missing a few pages. The story is typical of

Nagai at his prime as a cartoonist -- It's goofy fun, strong on gags & visual humor (lots of funny or outrageous monster/demon designs are a highlight) and later lots of explosive action as only Nagai can do it. Yeah, it does take several turns to the dramatic and the whole series has a serious subtext, but none of this self-important stuff gets in the way of the primary goals of gags & action. That's what Nagai is all about as an artist, even when he's trying for drama. If you're not familiar with the DEVILMAN story, it's about the demon world (demons at one time being the main life on Earth) trying to cross over into the mortal world -- High school kid Akira Fudo possesses/merges with the powerful demon Amon becoming the heroic Devilman, and battles the evil demons. Memorable points from later in the series (not in this edition) are Devilman's fight with the awesome bird-demon Syrene, and eventually learning that his best friend is secretly Satan! Nagai has spent years & years redoing essentially this same story as many other demon comics like DEMON KING DANTE, SHUTEN DOJI, 1979's SHIN DEVILMAN, HUMANS WITH WINGS, and currently DEVILMAN LADY. 1973's DANTE is a better version -- it's shorter and more to the point -- but DEVILMAN is still a good work, albeit a little overrated by critics who aren't terribly knowledgeable in the whole Go Nagai Experience.

Another English version of DEVILMAN was published in recent years by Verotik Comics, but don't be fooled -- Verotik's version is actually the vastly inferior SHIN DEVILMAN series (in which Devilman has a series of forgettable time-travel adventures). The Verotik series is made worse by horrible computer coloring that destroys Nagai's strong clean-lined art -- A reprehensibly misguided effort to give the art a dark & serious tone like...oh, AKIRA or some such shit. I can only imagine that the Verotik crew bought into the "serious horror artist" bullshit and were shocked to see what Nagai's stuff was really like. Assholes.****

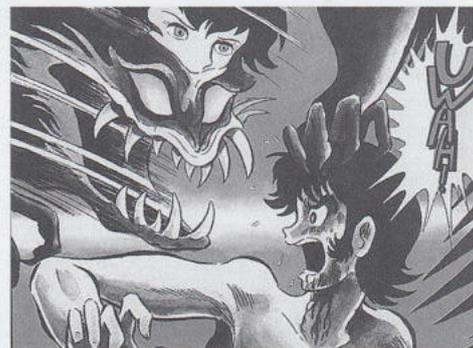
*COMICS NEWS - -

We're up to 14 volumes of DEVILMAN LADY from Kodansha as of this writing. This series has gone on way too long! A really awful animated series (typically bearing no resemblance to Nagai's art or even the comic series) made it to television but is already gone, I believe. Seeing as how Nagai's original concept is clearly targeted at a more fanboy-geek audience, I've no idea why the animated version wasn't done as a made-for-video release...

Futabasha's Action Comics line has a volume of SUPER ROBOT WARS -- Based on a video game featuring Nagai robots as well as non-Nagai characters. This comic tie-in has Shin Getter Robo and Getter Robo Go (which I though everyone forgot about). The art is by various artists and pretty much stinks...

Kodansha's ST line has a brand new 2000 reissue of Nagai's awesome mid-70s strip GARURA (this edition westernizes it as "GARLA"). It's a very rare (for Nagai) venture into the giant monster genre. This edition is a thick 365 pages and includes 144 pages of material taken from one of the old GO NAGAI SF MASTERPIECES collections. It's a little pricey at 940 yen, but this is choice stuff worth having...

-- Frank Strom



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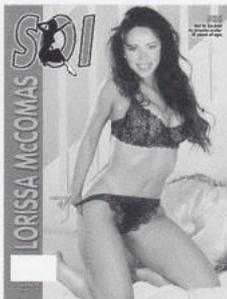
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