

1990

\$5.00

Damon Foster presents:

ORIENTAL CINEMA NUMBER 10

THE CHINESE COSTUME DRAMA ISSUE! featuring:

"THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN," "SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON,"
"ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN," "TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE,"
"FLYING GUILLOTINE," "THE KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS," "SUPER NINJAS,"
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I hope you don't mind my unique, ingenious, artistic approach to fanzine making. Other fanzines come off as dull to me, and boredom is the LAST thing I'm trying to achieve. Let's face it, I want to be different because I'm an insaniac and an artist. Once I knew this other artist who liked old paintings, and he'd only have sex with menstruating women. That's because he loved period pieces! Which brings us to the main topic of my tenth issue. Period films from China are what O.C. 10 centers around. My tendency to make each issue have a central theme is one of my many strange ideas.

"Period Films" means films that take place at a different time period than the present. So I suppose that technically, futuristic sci-fi flicks, and even movies taking place in the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s can be considered period films. But traditionally, it's generally agreed that the phrase Period Films refers to ancient and medieval settings. British knights & viking movies, Italian gladiator films, Japanese ninja & samurai stuff, and Persian movies about turbans and camels are different types of Period Films (A.K.A. Costume Dramas) as well. I am focusing on just the Chinese ones, starting with the 1960s. I have excluded titles with reference to Shaolin Temple, because there are too many of them, and my list is long enough already. I'll save the Shaolin titles for a future 'Shaolin Temple Issue'. As you read on, you'll discover that these medieval costume dramas are not my favorite things. Yet even though you'll discover my ridiculing them, I actually enjoy them much more than I'll admit. Chinese costume dramas are both fun and educational. Their fun comes from their martial arts, fancy clothes, jumps that defy gravity, and predictable cliches that generate unintentional humor. The education comes from seeing so many historic characters, incidents based on fact, and traditions handed down from generation to generation as told in old novels, Chinese operas and of course, movies. I actually love most of the movies I'll be discussing,

despite my new humorous writing style that may seem degrading, but that it unintentional. The heyday of the Chinese period films would seem to be the 1960s and 1970s, so that's what this issue will focus on. I have not included any movies from the 1950s, 1940s or earlier because I have found no evidence to my satisfaction that any Chinese costume dramas were made then. My research lists films from the 1950s and earlier, but for me to believe it, I'll have to see the films themselves!! There have also been a few period films made in the 1980s, but by then the genre had died out, to be replaced with modern action thrillers of Jackie Chan, Sam Hui, Yuen Baio, Sam Hung, Cynthia Chang and others including Ti Lung, one of the few actors to successfully make the transition from 1970s period films to modern action dramas. These action films represent the current state of Chinese martial arts. Next issue I'll go more into specifics about these crime dramas set in modern times. The current actioners are fun, thrilling and feature some of the greatest stuntwork ever put on film, but they lack the culture, art, history and graceful choreography of the long-gone period films. But there's room for every kind of martial arts movie. They each serve a useful purpose, except for TRUE GAME OF DEATH.

Fortunately, variety lives on! If this issue irritates you because you get tired of reading about Chinamen with ponytails, there are alternatives in this issue. You kung fu fans (both of you) will get a kick out of my CHOP SOCKEY REPORT column, fans of Japanese sci-fi (all three of you) may get energized by reading the second installment of TERROR YAKI, but if you're into fantasy (all one of you), get a load of SWORD & TAOISM, unless you are the one who likes Chinese horror, which is featured in CHINESE CHILLERS, and then there's that KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE, telling you everything you never wanted to know about Japanese superheroes. However, there's always the possibility that you're not familiar with any of these innovative genres. In the world of Asian pop culture and entertainment, there's still another topic. That's Japanese cartoons. Yes, my mini-fanzine ANIRAG is included again for all you unimaginative trendies who haven't the creativity to get into something unique and alternative. There are more predictable fans of that overrated genre (Japanese cartoons) than there are of any of the other Far Eastern genres I cover. I used to be a fan of Japanese cartoons until it grew out of proportion. Regardless, I hate to sell-out, but I've got expenses to pay, so included in this issue is yet another humorous look at one-dimensional TV shows. Last and certainly least, ORIENTAL CINEMA's new section! I've found yet another new film genre to cover, that nobody I know of is covering. That's all those movies from the Philippines! I got lost and somehow ended up in a Filipino video store one day and had a brainstorm. But Filipino movies aren't good enough

to devote a whole column to, as I think I can only stomach one Filipino movie per issue. So I have squeezed in a new section called FILIPINO CORNER, used as a space filler on page 31, nearly the last page in the issue. I hope you like it, I sure don't.

By the way, last issue I mentioned my appearance in an amateur video called MEET THE SUPERHEROES. The title has been changed to SECRET OF THE SUPERHEROES, and the producers are hoping for national distribution in video stores. However, I don't think any distributor will touch this cheap video, as it is so incredibly pathetic that mere words can not express how inferior it is. I have seen it, and unlike my appearance as a zombie in THE DEAD PIT, I am not at all proud to have been involved in the inferior production. I've now seen SECRET OF THE SUPERHEROES, and even though I'm in it, I honestly admit it is one of the worst movies ever made, with no entertainment value whatsoever.

Anyway, I seem to have run out of things to say and I'm already late for an important appointment. I have to go sit in the corner of an empty, lonely room and feel sorry for myself.



Disturbed & Confused,

Damon Foster

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. That's THE COVER, idiot.
2. He telling you this
3. COSTUME DRAMAS
5. CHOP SOCKEY REPORT
8. COSTUME DRAMAS (continued)
10. CHINESE CHILLERS
12. COSTUME DRAMAS (continued)
15. SWORD & TAOISM
- 16a. ANIRAG #3
17. COSTUME DRAMAS (cont.)
19. KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE
23. COSTUME DRAMAS (cont.)
26. TERROR-YAKI
29. COSTUME DRAMAS (cont.)
31. FILIPINO CORNER
32. BACK COVER
33. Nothing, there's no page 33.

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DAEMON FOSTER'S HISTORY OF CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS (for better or worse)

You know, I suppose my interest in Chinese medieval flicks peaked in the early 80s, when I must have been pretty damn bored. But to be fair, the spintangling modern-day action epics like DRAGONS FOREVER, EASTERN CONDORS, IN THE LINE OF DUTY 4, and A BOOK OF HEROES didn't exist then. Sure, the purists will argue that the old-fashioned kung fu stories were more artistic than their heroin-lifting offspring, but as an action fan, I say: "Fuck art, let's get kicked in the face and go rolling down an escalator!" But I can still accept the period tales, because in their own classical way, they still can be more fun than a barrel of monks. Since the only period features I'd seen before the late 1970s were lame European efforts like NIGHT STAR, GODDESS OF ELECTRA, these wild Chinese productions that combined fancy clothes, 30 foot leaps, and lots of "But still's in their English voice dubbing had me hooked like a trout, or better yet like an addict on drugs, or even better, like a hick on Coors Beer. For this issue, I climbed up into my attic to dig up a bunch of old motion picture reviews I wrote long ago, all about these historical yet hysterical stories. Won't y'all stumble in the dark with me as I putter around aimlessly in this spiderweb-infested world I call my attic? I keep telling myself I'm gonna do something about this clutter and I get so goddamn drunk I can not even hum the theme to FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH without falling to my knees and weeping. And so I like go through various notes and papers containing info on early Chinese creations I've never seen and probably never will, like 1926's MONKEY FIGHTS GOLDEN LEOPARD. Little is known about this early B&W silent saga, except that, like 1929's THE BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE, it was just a stage show put on film. It's like an experience I had in first grade when I was involved in the school play, playing some unimportant background character in GOLDY LOCKS IN WONDERLAND, ALICE AND THE THREE LITTLE BEARS or some such novel enjoyed by the young and the young at heart. As we performed on stage, we too were filmed (though on the now non-existent Super 8mm format), but by some geeky (but who wasn't geeky in the 1960s?) father concerned only with getting close up shots of his spoiled brat kid who was playing the lead. So I imagine the filming of the early Chinese stage plays created films that weren't a Hell of a lot better than the celluloid which captured the average school play. I just hope the background actors in historical plays performed more respectfully than I did. Can you imagine a background swordsman in THE BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE flipping the bird (middle finger) to the audience?! But seriously, another early Chinese period movie rumored to have actually existed at one time or another was a B&W drama from the early 1920s called MAN FROM

SHENSI. This was written by the late Runjy Shaw, and like that Red Lotus thing and that Golden Monkey thing before it, it too was a stage play at first. MAN FROM SHENSI was a Robin Hood-style melodrama which was pretty goddamn revolutionary for its family (the Shaws), China's film industry, the whole country, and most importantly, ORIENTAL CINEMA magazine. But unlike ORIENTAL CINEMA, MAN FROM SHENSI was a massive success, making mucho casho for the Shaw family, as they expanded both their wallets and business into directions such as film distribution throughout China. The next major period movie created by the Shaws that was remotely groundbreaking was WHITE GOLDEN DRAGON (1939). Runjy and his brothers Run Run and Run Me really outran themselves and this motion picture made them wealthy. Although I can mention flicks like THE KINGDOM AND THE BEAUTY, THE MAGNIFICENT CONCUBINE, and THE LAST WOMAN OF SHANG, I can't describe them well, as they're as illusive as a black man at a KKK meeting. But according to the minimal research I've done, I've come to the conclusion that they are all highly artificial, over dramatic and are musicals. Early Chinese features of this type are impossible to come by in the U.S.A., as there's no demand for them. Not until the kung fu boom first hinted in the early 1960s would creations arise that would later be released on video in local video stores.

As with any country's film history, there's a distinct difference between the types of productions made in the 1960s and the ones made in the 1950s. Example: Compare Japan's GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS (1954) with SON OF GODZILLA (1968). Quite an amazing difference; the first was dark, slow, depressing and boring, while SON was colorful, fast-paced, silly and fantasy-like. Another example comes from epics from our own country, like zombie stories; yet another genre I am a fan of. Just watch ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU (1953) and compare it with the infinitely scarier NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968), and you'll catch my drift. Well, the same rules for giant reptiles and zombies apply to Chinese swordsmen as well. Try as I might, I couldn't locate any Chinese tales from before 1964 in any nearby Chinese videostores. However, early 1960s adventures like THE SILENT SWORDSMAN satisfy my minor curiosity as to what the 1950s and before had to offer. The Shaw Brothers released a saga called TIGER BOY in 1964 which was one of the first Chinese sword flicks to show blood. This rarely (if ever) seen feature was inspired by Japan's equally violent (yet more stylistic) chanbara, or rather, samurai movies. Like THE YOUNG SWORDSMAN (1964) and A TOUCH OF ZEN (1966), locating TIGER BOY is as difficult as finding a reason to listen to the Carpenters. However, I have located many

many other post-TIGER BOY videotapes. None of these videos (new or old) are the mere filmed stage plays mentioned earlier, as none of those early classics (?) were ever released on video to the best (or worst) of my knowledge.



The Silent Swordsman

Producer: The Shaw Brothers, Director: Kao Li, Starring: Yu Wei, Shu Pei Pei, Liu Liang Hua, Tien Feng, Huang Ching Shun, Wang Chih Ching, Fang Mien, Lo Lieh

Yeeeeeeow! Or as them Chinamen say when in pain, "Aya! Hot damn, my brain sure hurts from trying to figure out this early swashbuckler from the beginning 1960s. It was quite a pain trying to follow this complex, ever changing plot, and those inferior English subtitles only helped a little. It seems as though they just made up this mess as they went along. Like maybe the producer said: "Maybe we stant wees ze bahd guys attack castle?" Then maybe later on the director, somewhat intoxicated, suggested: "(hiccup), how 'bout we do a wevenge scene? (burp)" Then perhaps the make up man advised: "Oooooooo, baby! I have a darling ideal Let's add some pretty ballads for the main hunk- I mean hero to sing! Shake it, studmuffin!" Of course, I'm making it all up (no, really!). But still, you get the picture. This progressive story is constantly changing. They have army battles, ballads, romance, a training scene, captures, escapes, re-captures, revenge, and a 'trading of hostages scene.' So in the long run, I guess there's no real plot, just a collection of various situations with dozens of characters, all centering around another 'righteous rebels against cruel tyrant saga.'

There are a few pretty costumes in this colorful tale. It is not the most psychedelic film I've seen, but it does have its fair share of colorful costumes. Some costumes look elaborate, like something off a Peking opera stagershow, and others are comparatively bland.

Speaking of stagershows, those live opera performances seem to have a theatrical fighting style that these movies of the early 1960s (and earlier) are based on. This is before people like Jimmy Wang Yu and Bruce Lee came along and made violent, basic kung fu popular. The duels in THE SILENT SWORDSMAN are best described with words such as: soft, artificial, graceful, mellow, light, theatrical,

and whippy, even though a head gets chopped off, and later an arm (very little blood, if any). These weapons duels which include an occasional kick hardly hint at the kind of serious martial arts action to come in the late 1960s, or of course, the superior stuff of the 1970s featuring successors like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. But the premature choreography in THE SILENT SWORDSMAN is an important link in the kung fu movie chain. If the battles in this one are lame, I can imagine how bad they must have been in the 1950s, 1940s, and 1930s! Perhaps I don't want to know.

I counted four ballads in this period drama. It is evident that the period kung fu films evolved from historical musicals, and this middle-of-the-genre movie is both a musical and an adventure.

There sure are a lot of familiar faces in this disappointing movie. Ku Wen Chung (the old teacher in FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH) plays a main villain, and so does Huang Chung Shun who would later appear as the traitors in CHINESE CONNECTION and RETURN OF THE DRAGON. One hero is played by Fang Mien, best known for his role as Mr. Shen (head teacher) in FIVE FINGERS. Even Lo Lieh makes a brief cameo. Tien Feng is an older actor who's been in too many films.

The stupid movie's plot is hard to follow. So rather than try and rationalize my notes into a real story, I'll just copy down my notes as jotted down, more or less. This way, you can know as much about this hectic script as I do! Here we go.....

Castle attacked by General Ying Sze Yun's army, why didn't General Liu send reinforcements for protection against these invaders? Heroes intercepted a corrupt messenger and kill him and read his letter he was delivering, it says General Liu is in with General Ying Sze Yun! The heroic rebels are called Sun Moon Society. But one member called Ku Ching Fu (Fang Mien) gets captured so other heroes capture General Liu to trade him back and retrieve Ku Ching Fu. Later, some weird tribe of mostly women dressed like Indians fight to retrieve their stolen heirloom from the bad guys. Eventually, this semi-Indian tribe teams up with the Sun Moon Society and they wipe out all the bad guys. The End.

Come Drink With Me

Producer: Run Run Shaw, Make up: Ng Ri Wong, Director: Johnson Tsao, Editor: Chung, Music by Wang Chuan & Ye Yang, Starring: Cheng Pei Pei, Yueh Hwa, King Chuan, Ye Yang

COME DRINK WITH ME is from the early 1960s, probably 1963 or 1964. It seems to be a borderline film for that period, representing the imminent arrival of that young stallion the kung fu film, though still having traces of the fowl stench of that rotting corpse the historic fantasy. Before COME DRINK WITH ME, most period pieces were probably musicals, me thinks. As proof for all you techno geeks (ha! as though techno geeks watch these types of films) and skeptics, I counted seven (count 'em, 7!) fights and only one (count it, 1!) ballad. The ballad isn't half bad if you like musicals. Personally, I dislike musicals because when the characters in the saga begin singing and dancing, the flick loses credibility and comes off as artificial to me (yet I have no problem accepting 37 foot leaps and hands that emit explosive smoke as a weapon). After all, I have had men converse to me in my life, and only once did I just

start singing out loud, dancing choreographed moves in sync with those strangers around me. It was in a crowded mall, and the other customers around me served as my backup chorus. It worked so well that I tried it again in a restaurant in Japan one day but nobody else in the restaurant knew the song. So the angry ushers ordered me to stop dancing on my dinner table, wipe the tears from my eyes, quit holding my soybean hotdog as a microphone, and to get my ass back to California. But as for the one singy song in COME DRINK WITH ME, it's sung by Yueh Hwa (a.k.a. Yue Hua), and is strikingly similar to his tunes in THE MONKEY (see O.C. #7). Yueh Hwa is definitely a much better singer than he is a fighter. His hilarious appearance in MONKEY KUNG FU (1978) is a classic proof of his lack of martial arts ability. This old actor's best fighting was probably in a wierd chop socky who dunnit called LUNG WEI VILLAGE, although I haven't watched it in over two days, so I'm as uncertain as George Burns is old. Yue Hwa's battles in COME DRINK WITH ME are all very short, and there's a lot of fancy edits and quick cuts so we never really do see this dude in action. This fancy camera work is still quite popular in American movies, anything from ENTER THE DRAGON (1973) to THE JITTERS (1988). This type of dishonest photography really drives me crazy but in a negative way. Once I tried to (gasp!) sit through an entire Chuck Norris film and these annoying shots which obscure the fights really drove me insane. In the middle of a fight (or so to speak), I spit gruel on the TV, and ran outside to sit down by a nearby road and rubbed gravel into my hair. Nobody knows why. But getting back to the duels in COME DRINK WITH ME, I must compliment the main heroine played by Cheng Pei Pei. Most likely, she appeared in older, opera-like movies because her fighting skills are so dance-like, though not especially acrobatic. Occasional bloodshed relieves the light dance touches accompanying her scuffles with the heavies. Unlike Yueh Hwa's half-ass duels, hers are all swordfights. Swordfights are something that the Chinese have always done well in cinema, even in antiques like this one. I must say, these swordfights aren't a Hell of a lot different from later swordfights on film, like in SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON. Moving right along, the swordfights in SEVEN BLOWS aren't much different from those in KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS. The progressive improvements have been gradual. So in this way, there is quite a massive improvement in KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS over COME DRINK WITH ME. Yet the choreography in COME DRINK WITH ME is quite great despite occasional use of high speed photography, when compared to that made in western countries made at about the same time (early '60s), like America's JASON & THE ARGONAUTS or Italy's NIGHT STAR, GODDESS OF ELECTRA. Boy, I have written so much on COME DRINK WITH ME, I think it is time for a new paragraph.

There, that's better! As for as over all production values for the film and video, there isn't a heaping teaspoon of stupid praise. At times this flick favors darkness. Maybe it was because they lacked sufficient lighting or maybe they wanted a dreary atmosphere. The gloominess is killed by its musical score, sometimes! The score is (as usual) ancient Chinese folk music, except for suspenseful confrontations where an ominous drum beat

drones on. My main complaint on production value is that the Shaws (or whoever) were so stingy with copyrights that they copyguarded the movie. Regardless, a good video pirate like me (I shouldn't have said that, I hear the sirens now) can get passed. almost any interference with my copying a tape in the privacy of my own home. I have never exploited a movie, I've never made a cent off it. Their so-called Copyguard only obscured my print a little, so my copy is still very viewable. The final joke is on the film's crew and cast, since this minor distortion only obscured the opening graphics, thereby forfeiting much of the credit for these people who made the actual movie. Ha ha ha! It's funny how an old, insignificant film like this is Copyguarded, yet classic, newer ground-breakers like Golden Harvest's DRAGON'S FOREVER are not! I tend to think that illegal copying, in its own way helps to popularize certain films. When copies of copies of rare films flow around vast underground fan networks (person to person), some fans decide they'll go back to the original video store so they can have a cleaner copy of the movie. So long as no money is made from bootlegging, this seems perfectly reasonable.

The script behind this enjoyable yet bland film deals with mountain bandits who've kidnapped a righteous politician called Mr. Chang, with the help of a traitor who was thought to be one of Mr. Chang's loyal officials. The traitor is probably played by either King Chuan or Ye Yang. Whatever his name is, he would later fight Jackie Chan in SNAKE-FIST FIGHTER, and also plays a villain in TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE. Later, there's an obligatory sequence of a girl unconvin- gingly disguised as a man who somehow manages to fool all the idiots in the movie, but the audience has eyesight. This tradi- tional sequence involves the sister of Mr. Chang who goes into a restaurant populated by the mountain bandits. Her/his attempts at negotiating her captured brother's release fail because the bandits want back one of their own; a mountain bandit held captive by authorities. Her restaurant duel with these villains does not involve a whole lot of sword- play at first, but rather impossible feats involving thrown objects being caught and deflected (also typical and re-occurring in early movies of this type). It is during this confrontation that the film's other hero Fan Ta Fei (Yueh Hwa) appears. He's a typical drunken beggar; happy go lucky, much like the drunken masters later seen in Jackie Chan's 1970s films, or Kuo Chui's Hai Tao character in KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS. Sometime later, Fan Ta Fei befriends Ms. Chang and reveals that he too is a fighting expert despite a shabby appearance. Then there's a sequence where he aids the good guys in rescuing Mr. Chang without forfeit- ing their own evil prisoner, and later an ambush sequence where the mountain vil- lains surround Mr. Chang's sedan chair and his swordsmen (bodyguards) fight valiantly. All these duels make occasional use of samu- ral pauses, common in Japanese sword movies (where opponents just stand there and stare at each other before dueling). Any-

way, the plot thickens when it's revealed that one of Fan Ta Fei's old classmates is working with the bandits. He's a skillful, cor- rupt monk called Tao Ching Hung who killed their kind teacher long ago. Once swordswoman Ms. Chang (Mr. Chang's sis- ter) defeats the other mountain bandits, the battle turns into a one on one duel betw- een Fan Ta Fei and his arch enemy, who dies at the end of the movie. Hurray for our hero!

The Assassin

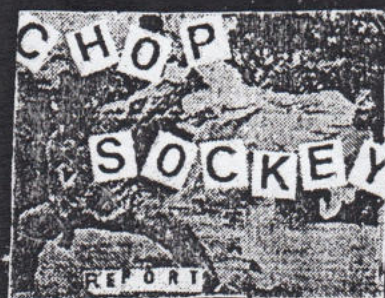
Producer: Run Run Shaw, Photography: Yuan Tseng Shan, Kwang Han Lu, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Assistant Directors: Hsung Ting Yu & Wang Yien Sheng, Film Editing: Chiang Hsing Loong, Art Director: Chen Chi Ruey, Mus- ic: Mang Chu Jen, Lyrics: Chang Chueh, Make up: Fang Yuen, Screenplay and Directed by Chang Chueh, Starring: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Li Hsing Chun, Chiao Hsin Yen, Huang Chung Shun, Tien Feng, Chang Fei Shan, Cheng Lei

Not one of the better 1960s attempts, not one of the worst, not really much of anything. But I suppose on the whole, I like this film as much as I love a lot of the other shit that also came out of the 1960s, like drugs, the Beatles, long hair, violence, riots, those terrible movies about bik- ers and those hideous striped pants where the bottom parts of the leggs are wide, sticking out really far. One of my main dislikes is this bor- ing feature's title. There are at least two other

movies called THE ASSASSIN. One is a pathetic Sonny Chiba movie (see ORIENTAL CINEMA #7, page 10) that actually makes this confusing ex- ercise in boredom seem more fun than a barrel of drunken monkeys. The other was a British crime drama I seem to remember from reading TV GUIDE, back when I was so into that vast wasteland known as TV. I have since chosen a different publication to serve as the sole Eng- lish language magazine I read regularly. The current publication that gives me my culture, arts, entertainment, and news of the world is that holy bible, National Lampoon. But it sure hasn't affected my writing style any (snicker).

There's a gory opening title sequence featur- ing a sword plunging out of somebody's back, and after graphics (credits and narratives) we

(Continued on Page 8)



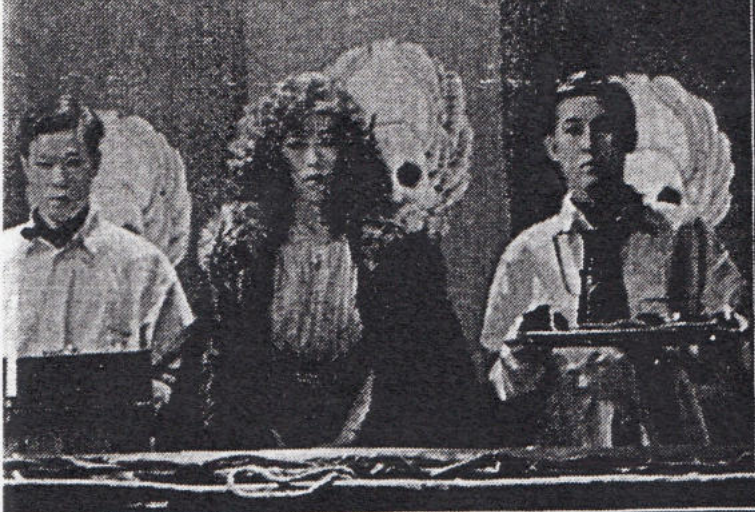
BLOOD RITUAL

Presented by Parry Chow & Amy Li, Executive Producer: Harry Lam, Production Coordinator: Kwong Shek Kay, Producer: Ricky Ng, Cinem- atographer: Jim Pak Hung, Lighting: Tan Hon Pong, Martial arts director: Tsui Siu Ming, Director: Li Yuen Ching, Starring: Chiu Siu Keung, Gina Lam, Lam Ki Yam, Dion Lam

I saw the photos for BLOOD RITUAL a good (or bad) six months before them Chinese fin- ally released this 1988 movie onto video. During this wait, I looked forward to seeing it, although nobody else I know showed much interest because it didn't star Jackie Chan, Samo Hung, Yuen Balo, or any other mega star that all you trendies are so into, thanks to easy access and over exposure. But as the unique individual that I am (with enough guts to be different), I gave it a try. It's a damn good thing for you readers that I'm publishing this innovative fanzine! How else might you discover rare (but not necessarily good) flicks like BLOOD RITUAL. This is as opposed to big-shot films like the newest Jackie Chan movies that you can always read about (over and over; I wonder who's doing a Jackie Chan film list this week) in a number of other fanzines. It's great to be one of the elite few who dares to take a chance. I suppose you can't relate to this, so never mind.

"Wo, cool! Like check out them tittles, man!" I said to myself as I observed the open- ing of this sexually exploitive film. Cock in





and, I watched the opening scene where a naked lady (her body glistening with shiny, arousing liquid meant to look like sweat) was chased by freaked out cultists who tie her down and stab her to the accompaniment of mucho blood. Wait a minute, she was wearing funny looking shoes & socks, so she wasn't entirely nude! Damn it, I want a refund! The whole flick is pretty hard edge, definitely not for the squeamish. It has nudity, chases, bloodshed, martial arts, numerous stabs, gun firing, motorcycle stunts, a finger bitten off and swallowed, and the most disgusting, sickening bathroom humor I've ever been grossed-out by!

BLOOD RITUAL has good photography and is witty at times, but it has its bad points too. The main heroic actor is Chiu Siu Keung. I wrote about another of his films called WE'RE GOING TO EAT YOU ALIVE in ORIENTAL CINEMA #7 on page 9. Back then, I used a different spelling of his name; Tsiu Siu Keung. WE'RE GOING TO EAT YOU ALIVE is similar to BLOOD RITUAL in that both have him as a martial artist battling it out with degenerative maniacs. But WE'RE GOING TO EAT YOU ALIVE is more or less a typical old-fashioned chop-socky kung fu romp, whereas this one tries to be another modern day action adventure, best known for their incredible stuntwork. Chiu Siu Keung (also

known by the name Norman Chu, among others) may fight adequately in the earlier, artificial chop socky stuff, and his appearance on Hong Kong TV's historical soap operas aren't half bad, but as a star in modern action films, he just doesn't cut it. It is blatantly obvious that he is always being doubled for, having a stuntman do even the simpl-

est of stunts and kicks. His double looks nothing like him, and this obvious switch makes me scrutinize what few fighting moves he did on his own. Now I think he only learned a little martial arts, just for his roles in films. Regardless, his best moves are saved for the final battle. His co-star who's character dies halfway through the movie is probably either Lam Ki Yam or Dion Lam Ming, according to the credits. This unfamiliar actor is a great martial artist and stuntman.



PLOT: Officer Ma has been assigned to thwart the evil ceremonies of a religious cult who are into human sacrifice. One of the church's high priestesses is the daughter of an elderly tycoon called Mr. Fung. He left his daughter in charge of the company, but her involvement with the cult is taking its toll on the corporation so Mr. Fung fears imminent bankruptcy, so he hires a tough guy called Lui Kwan (Chiu Siu Keung) to do some investigating. There is also a subplot about a singer



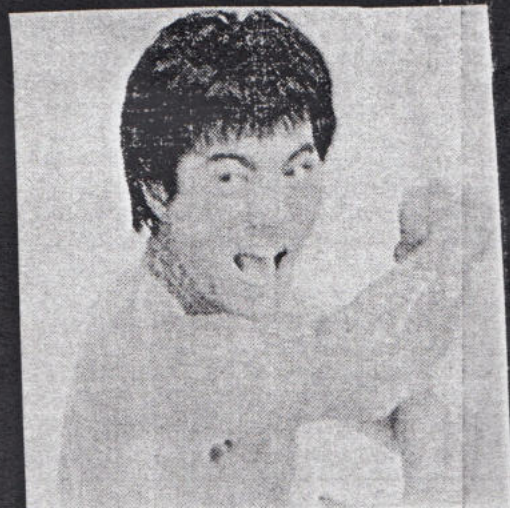
whom Lui met when he accidentally smashed her guitar during a brawl in a nightclub. Eventually, she's captured by cultists so Lui has to break into their church and save her.

SOUL BROTHERS OF KUNG FU

SOUL BROTHERS OF KUNG FU Produced in 1978, starring: Ho Hung Tao/Bruce Li, Carl Scott, Jim James, Ku Feng, Kuan Lun

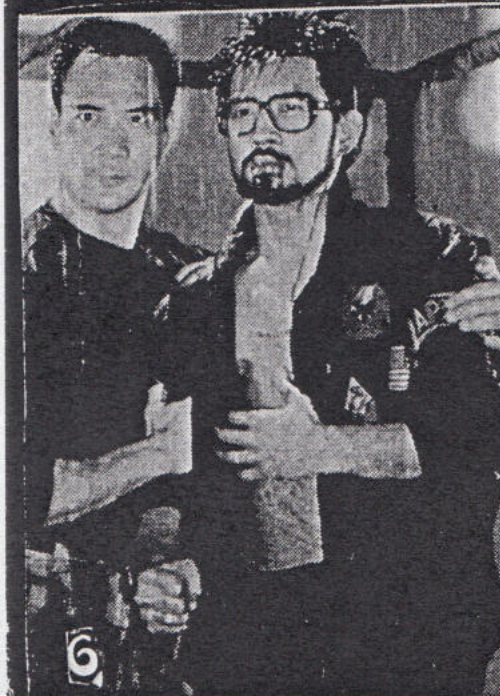
Illegal immigrants from China have arrived in America, and end up fighting a devious opponent in an international championship title.

This silly movie features quite a few interesting actors, Bruce Li is right at home in this film, since all his movies are damn near



identical. Also in this typical 1970s kung fu crime drama is a very young Carl Scott. From Shaw Bros. Film Co comes Ku Feng.

This acceptable crime drama is neither good nor bad. It's a typical, modern time period kung fu film. SOUL BROTHERS OF KUNG FU is not my cup of tea, but that's because my cup of tea is made of ceramic porcelain and it is in the sink right now, about to be emptied and washed.

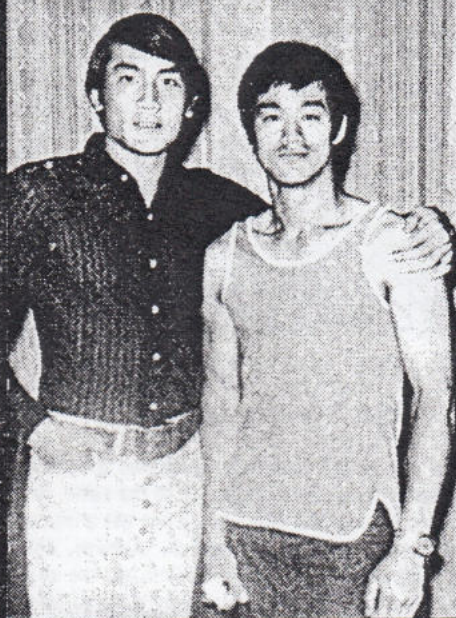


20 MOVIE—Adventure, 2 hrs.
"The Big Boss." (Chinese, 1971) A factory worker (Bruce Lee) defends his colleagues against drug-smuggling, murderous owners. Maria Yi Yi. Hsu Chien: James Tien.
31 BARNEY MILLER—Comedy

THE BIG BOSS

THE BIG BOSS (1971) Assistant Directors: Chin Yao Chang, Chen Cho. Cinematography: Chen Ching Chu. Music: Wang Fu Ling. Fighting Instructors: Han Ying Chieh. Film Editing: Sung Ming. Director: Chien Hsin. Producer: Raymond Chow. Assistant Producers: Liu Liang Hua, Lei Chen. Screenplay & Director: Lo Wei. Starring: Bruce Lee, Maria Yi, Miao Ke Hsiu, Li Qun, Han Ying Chieh, Tony Liu, Chin Shaw, Mai Al Ene, Li Hua Sze.

Like most of you fans of Chinese kung fu movies, I too was greatly inspired by the early Bruce Lee groundbreakers like **FISTS OF FURY**. But not until 1988 did I finally decide to check out its original Chinese language version, **THE BIG BOSS**. The version I examined was a video rental from Rainbow Video. It's often a bad sign when Rainbow collaborates with the movie's creators, Golden Harvest. Like many other results of this merging, **THE BIG BOSS**'s English subtitles are partially covered by two super-imposed logos that they think will discourage illegal copying. It never works for me anyway when I try to copy a video tape. I always stick the tape in a xerox machine and copy it, but all I get is a picture of the tape. I just don't see what all the fuss is about. But because of the super-imposed logos, I consider the English dubbed videos of this film to be better, since they're cleaner, not obscured by the two patterns. Also, there are at least a couple scenes cut out from the Chinese tape which are still in the English one. One is the scene on the porch where Cheng Chao An (Bruce Lee) meets his relatives and the other is where a villainous manager of the ice factory tries to bribe a couple of workers when he tells them about the drugs the company has been smuggling.



However, the Chinese **THE BIG BOSS** has its advantages over the English **FISTS OF FURY** version as well, which puts them both at an equal level, I suppose. The main thing that comes to mind is that, in **THE BIG BOSS**, we actually get to hear Bruce Lee's original high pitched war cries during the fights. Also, the music is more appropriate for the scenes in **THE BIG BOSS**, more so than in **FISTS OF FURY**. All the songs for both versions are off one soundtrack from Wang Fu Ling, but neither country chose the same score, the result seems like two distinctly different movies. The Americans ended up choosing some funny, upbeat music which was really out of place in some scenes, making **FISTS OF FURY** seem like a lighthearted comedy despite its final 30 minutes where nearly everybody dies. But I enjoyed all the music for both versions, especially the hard-edge guitar stuff that was so ahead of its time.

Other changes between both versions include the opening title animations, although both make use of the same shot of Bruce Lee doing that flying jump kick. In the credits, we get to see Nora Miao's real name, Miao Ke Hsiu. There are minor differences in dialogue, according to the English subtitles. Example: In the English dub, they say rice cakes, in the Chinese, they say dumplings. In the scene where Tony Liu's character takes money from his father, the villain, he says 'thanks' in the English version and 'stop counting' in the Chinese version.

There's an early appearance by Lam Ching Ying when he was much younger. Here he plays a background character, a member of Cheng's family slaughtered by villains at the end. Lam Ching Ying would later appear in **MAGNIFICENT BUTCHER**, **MY LUCKY STARS**, **HEART OF THE DRAGON**, **I LOVE MARIA**, and would star in **MR. VAMPIRES 1, 2, & 3**, **HOCUS POKUS**, **EASTERN CONDORS**, and **VAMPIRE VS. VAMPIRE**.

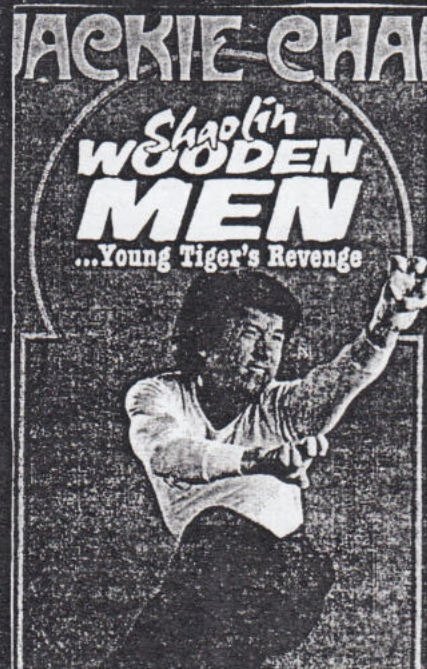
The script of both versions, as though you didn't already know, has an insecure looking Bruce Lee playing a naive martial arts expert called Cheng Chao An. Perhaps Lee's uncomfortability was caused by his disliking the

director Lo Wei. Anyway, Cheng works with his relatives at an ice factory where the boss is involved in drug smuggling. When Cheng's relatives discover this illegal business, the big boss (hence the title) orders the whole family killed. The only survivors are Cheng and his kidnapped cousin Chow Mae (Maria Yi), and Cheng sets out to kill the villains and rescue Chow Mae. And so when Bruce Lee (as Cheng) eventually starts displaying his magnificent fighting skills as he kills all the bad guys, the movie comes to life. It ends when he gets arrested by the pigs, for having murdered the villains. A nice film, but a rotten ending.

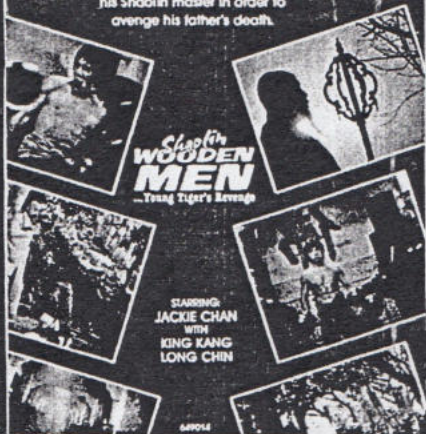
SHAOLIN WOODEN MEN

1976, Executive Producer: Lo Wei, Producer: Hsu Li Hwa, Consultant: Liu San Ming, Production Manager: Li Hsien Chang, Executive Director: Chan Chih Hwa, Director: Lo Wei, Starring: Jackie Chan, King Kang, Long Chiu, Author: Chin Hsin

This videotape starts off with an interesting ad for Jackie Chan's older videos from All Seasons Entertainment, including this oldie. Then the movie starts and the first thirty minutes has the usual excessive training scenes where he carries buckets of water forever. This early Jackie film is rather predictable, featuring stock music, more practice sequences, a sexual harassment scene, and the usual British voice dubbers who say "right" (at least three times) and "but still" (I counted four). It is hard to tolerate this dull bullshit, even if it is Jackie in his third or fourth film. By the time I eventually rented **SHAOLIN WOODEN MEN**, I had seen so many of Jackie's imitators doing the same things. It's basically serious



Witnessing the death of his father by a masked martial artist, Chan takes a vow of silence and revenge. Trained by a renegade Shaolin master, Chan makes ready to take on the awesome 100 wooden robot like warriors of the Shaolin monastery. After passing his test of skill, Chan finds out in an ironic twist that now he must fight his Shaolin master in order to avenge his father's death.



chop sockey, but it occasionally almost leans toward Jackie's destination: humor. Jackie's fighting isn't really choreographed or filmed well this time, but he tries his best.

And now I comment on two aspects of faces in the picture. First, the unrealistic facial hair. Some of the characters have fake beards & mustaches that are obviously makeup appliances. Second, Jackie's eyes. SHAOLIN WOODEN MEN was filmed before Jackie had the cosmetic surgery which made his eyes open wider. In this movie as well as NEW FIST OF FURY (see O.C. #9) and SNAKEFIST FIGHTER (O.C. #8) Jackie's eye openings are so squinty that he could have probably been blindfolded with dental floss.

There are a couple of unique things about SHAOLIN WOODEN MEN that I have jotted down on my note pad. First, the Shaolin Wooden Men themselves. These wooden training devices appear to be robots. Futuristic technology of this type didn't exist in the old days when this picture takes place, so I assume these wooden automations are either meant to be monks in costume, or statues activated by magic. The other weird thing which comes to mind is that there is occasionally a tendency to mimic the old American KUNG FU TV show with David Carradine. There's the scene where Jackie's character gets the obligatory Shaolin tattoos just like in KUNG FU, and even a bright-eyed monk bearing a striking resemblance to Keye Luke's Master Po character!

On the whole, I didn't enjoy this movie, I think even SNAKEFIST FIGHTER was more amusing. Hopefully, next issue when I review Chan's next 1970s chop sockey flick in this series, I will enjoy watching it more. Watching this one made this hobby seem like a job.

The villain in this tale is Yun Fat Chu, who was a Shaolin kung fu master until he betrayed the enlightened temple's teachings when he joined some bandits called the Green Dragon Gang and committed a murder. So now the monks have chained him in a cave. But the son of the victim he killed vowed to avenge his

father's death. And of course, he was given a pendant from his late dad. Ironically, the son (called Dummy because he doesn't speak) ends up learning kung fu from the same chained monk who killed his father. Then Dummy (Jackie Chan) discovers a girl called Mei Mei has been kidnapped by the Green Dragon Gang. Yun Fat Chu escapes the cave and returns to the gang. Then Dummy battles the gang, and duels with his former teacher when he discovers the deceitful monk killed his papa.

CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS from 5

are introduced to two students at a fencing school who are both attracted to the same girl called Hsiang Yi, who's boobs we get a look at later on, thanks to a stand-in. Anyway, both young swordsmen (villain Hsu Shih and the infinitely nicer Nieh Cheng played by Wang Yu) don't like each other and the bad one goes to a local military dictatorship. Hsu Shih tells the prime minister that the school is planning a revolution against the fascists. So Hsu Shih and the government warriors destroy the school and Nieh Cheng is just about the only survivor. At this point, I kept saying to myself: "For its time, the plot seemed to serve a purpose but today it seems old and repetitious." Over and over, I said this outloud and the neighbors threatened to call the cops. Not wanting to take the police officers off their donut breaks, I settled down to watch the rest of the film. I noticed in the swordfights, there are finally sound FX for the stabs and slices. Sound seemed missing from the stabs in the early films. But the fights themselves are clumsy. And so is the remainder of the plot. It seems that our once noble hero has lost all self respect and joined the baddies. Or maybe it was a among royalty until his death at the end. Before he commits hari kari, he wastes probably a hundred soldiers in a spectacular onslaught that makes the film's previous mumbo jumbo worth sitting through. Wang Yu gives one of his best performances of the 1960s as he swordfights, jumps, and even rolls down stairs briefly. It takes balls to do something like that, although I don't know if they'd be fully functional afterwards.



Trail of The Broken Blade

Producer: Run Run Shaw, Starring: Ching Ping, Chiao Chuang, Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Chen Hung, Lieh, Wei Ping Ao, Tien Feng, Chen Kuan Tai

At first, I really thought this early Shaw tale would be a real winner. But then, I'm such an airhead that once my girlfriend blew in my ear and I said, "Thanks for the re-fill." THE TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE starts out nifty enough, with a young Jimmy Wang Yu as Li Yuen tiptoeing into a palace, making a few soldiers deadlier than doornails and then reaching his goal, killing an official called Chiao, I think. Don't recall the name, but it was a Chinese one. Anyway, the corrupt elder had framed Li Yuen's dad General Li Tien, so that's why our hero slashed the elderly dictator's throat. The battles during Li Yuen's infiltration & escape from the castle, as well as the later ones all look about as convincing as Burt Reynolds' hair piece. As an early 1960s movie, there are still a few left-overs from previous historic epics and musicals. There are three ballads, and not very catchy ones. One is part of the opening credits, one happens later on as part of a series of flashbacks, and the final one comes at the very end. Speaking of music, I'm beginning to recognize background tunes. It seems that stock music was popular in Chinese flicks even way back in the 1960s. Anyway, the saga roles along now that Li Yuen is a travelling fugitive using aliases. His fiancée whom he deserted is a cute chick who's bones I would like to jump, her name is Cheng Erh. Righteous swordsman Fang Chun Chao has a crush on her and decides to help her by reuniting her with the illusive Li Yuen despite the green eyed monster within him. Unfortunately, Fang is being pursued by bandits from Flying Fish Island. Fang killed one of their members who tried to rob Cheng Erh, and they never quite got over it. After about this point, the adventure aspect is lost and it becomes a slow moving melodrama for nearly a whole hour. By the end, both Li Yuen and Fang Chun Chao are good friends and Li feels obliged to protect his new comrade. So Li swims to the island and wipes out the bad guys. The climactic duel is a

visual delight, despite sloppy swordplay. But it's still pretty damn thrilling, as Wang Yu takes on about 50 bandits. Part of the fight happens in the water, and then he climbs up onto a ship and duels with Chen Kuan Tai and others, climbs a rope, jumps into the ocean, climbs up

onto shore, and a nice long battle occurs on a beautifully designed set. These confrontations make the previous staleness worth sitting through, so long as you get up and stretch every now and then. All through this production, it's obvious that one of the heroes will die, there's an ominous atmosphere of doom. And at the end, sure 'nuff, Li Yuen dies as he kills the bandit leader played by Tien Feng. By this time, Cheng Erh and Fang Chun Chao have arrived to aid in the swordfighting. After Li dies, Cheng Erh kills herself so they can be together in the afterlife, if there is one.

The Onearmed Swordsman

Producer: Run Me Shaw, Sound by Chang Chien and In Kwang, Editing: Chiang Hsing Leong, Photography: Yuan Chen San, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Assistant Director: Huang Yuan Sheh, Make up: Fang Yuen, Director: Chang Cheg, Starring: Wang Yu, Chiao Chiao, Pan Yan Tze, Huang Ching Shun

It was as definite as Orson Wells was fat that THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN was the most popular Chinese period epic of the 1960s. This 1967 Shaw effort definitely played an important role in the evolution of Chinese medieval dramas, although I think that book "Martial Arts Movies: From Bruce Lee to the Ninjas" exaggerates its uniqueness perhaps a tad (or two). After viewing numerous 1960s period adventures out of China, I can see that THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN doesn't stand out as a Hell of a lot, although its story isn't as dull as most others of its type. In this way, I consider it a little more entertaining than average. It is interesting to see how it relates to later martial arts films, as it too deals with revenge, and has three obligatory sexual harassment scenes. One other typical scene is a fight in a tea house near the motion picture's climax. It's one of my favorite scuffles in the film, despite predictability. It's derivative of other films; there are Japanese samurai pauses and traditional Chinese scenes involving amazing accuracy as objects are thrown and caught, while the hero asks for a big jug of wine. Supposedly, THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN was dubbed in English, but as yet, all I'm familiar with is the subtitled version.

This bland (non-colorful), sometimes dark movie made a star out of its main actor, Jimmy Wang Yu. After this, he seemed to be in big demand through out the late 1960s in period features. His fighting skill was merely adequate by today's post-Bruce Lee standards, but back in 1967, Wang Yu's martial arts abilities would keep him flourishing in the 1960s. Naturally, in the 1970s he was succeeded by Bruce Lee, but that's another story. As a sword film, there are only a couple fist fights and they're even briefer than the average life expectancy of a Haitian bisexual drug addict. These fist duels are also pretty pathetic.

And now for the script, which may seem oldfashioned today, probably because it is. Once or twice upon a time there was a Chin-

ese fencing school. One student was Fang Kang (Wang Yu), who was raised at the school because his late father (played by Ku Feng) saved the life of Mr. Chi, the owner of the school. Then one day Mr. Chi's bitchy daughter Pei Erh quite simply hacked off Fang's arm with a single swing of her sword, as though it were made of paper. Her unjustifiably lenient father never really seemed to give her the punishment she deserved for this particularly destructive outburst of bad temper or P.M.S. Anyway, while Pei Erh's allowance was probably suspended for a week, Fang is being nursed back to health by some lady who has given him her a family heirloom; a secret book on left-handed sword techniques. I take time out here to mention that I too am a lefty, and I'm glad there's a kung fu superhero who is also left-handed, although not voluntarily. Anyway, the plot thickens like a mother-in-law's gut as some mean old man called the Longarmed Devil decides to wipe out Mr. Chi and his disciples. The villains use an efficient sword locking technique which allows them to defeat the Chi students and kidnap Pei Erh. But by now Fang Kang has mastered onearmed swordfighting and rescues her so the Longarmed Devil and his groupies confront the Chi school on the night of its master's birthday. Most of Chi's students are wasted in the slow-paced duel, but then Fang arrives and sends all the bad guys to their deaths. That's the basic story, and a major highlight that comes to mind is Fang's charisma. He's insulted and occasionally abused earlier in the film, making it easier to cheer him on when he tears up the town. I just wish he'd chopped up that bimbo that relieved him of his right arm.

The Twin Swords

Directed by Sui Jang hung, Producer: Runme Shaw, Production Designed by Chang Chieh, Asst. Director: Sun Kwi, Photography: Wang Yung Hwa, Make up: Fong Yueh, Editing: Ing Hsing Loong, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Starring: Wang Yu, Ivy Ling Po, Hing Ping, Bobo Fung, Chiang Miao, Lo Lieh

The original theatrical trailer is on the pre-record, right before the movie. That's one good thing about early Shaw movies put on video like THE TWIN SWORDS, THE SILENT SWORDSMAN and THE MONKEY (see O.C.#7). Sometimes, these nostalgic sneak previews are better than the movies themselves. Seeing these rare promotion clips makes me feel almost as though I'm in a Chinatown theatre in the 1960s, minus the rock hard seats that made us so sore, that super sticky floor our shoes clung to so we nearly fell flat on our faces, and the rude Chinese lady who sells the tickets and speaks no English.

I assume this movie came out after THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN, because generally, most of the swordplay is quicker & more polished and there is a little more bloodshed (some bloodspitting deaths, a hand chopped off and Lo Lieh's decapitation). But on the reverse side, this flick has three short ballads, which may indicate it is actually even older than THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN. Fort-

unately, the ballads are mere background music, not being sung by the characters in the film. But whatever the case, I still tend to assume this is a late 1960s film. And it's one of the 1960s' best!

Why are there stairs in this film? Nobody, especially the heroic members of the Lotus Gang needs to use them. Lien Chu, her fiancé Kwei Ku (Jimmy Wang Yu), Tu (Lo Lieh) and the other members of this righteous clan have that amazing ability to jump higher than a hippy on drugs. The villains also can fly through the air with the 'greatest of ease. These guys took over a large church and imprisoned the original inhabitants; the monks. Now the bad guys are impersonating the monks and frequently kidnap females, probably to sell into prostitution or something. The baddies have also constructed many traps throughout the temple, and it's up to the Lotus Gang to rescue Lien Chu, now held captive in the booby trapped temple somewhere. During the confrontations between good guys and not-so-good guys, a mysterious phantom called the Scarlet Maid frequently appears to rescue our heroes in tough, cornered situations. She turns out to be a long lost relative of the family, and she rescues Lien Chu and defeats the main villain with the help of Kwei Ku.

Knight of Knights

Producer: Run Run Shaw, Director: Hsih Chur, Starring: Li Ching, Chiao Chiang, Lily Ho, Ku Feng, Pan Pan

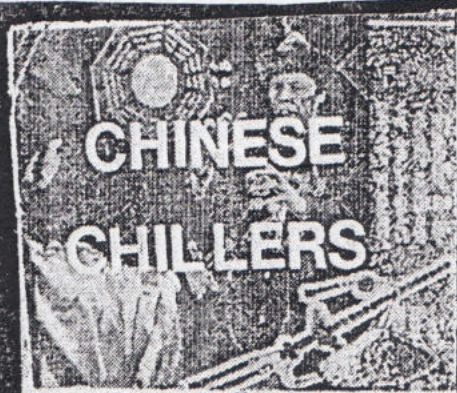
I sure am glad I'm not a girl in old China. In fact, I'm just glad I'm not a girl, period. I'm having too much fun being a guy, although I must admit that much of my fun as a guy wouldn't have been possible without the existence of girls. As for the girls of medieval China, I feel sorry for them because a group of rather disrespectful monks at Chin Monastery keep on kidnapping and molesting them in THE KNIGHT OF KNIGHTS. But we never do see any real nudity, except for a lady's back and maybe a leg shot. So five young men sent by scholar Wu sneak into Ching Monastery one night but fail in rescuing the female prisoners. Interesting to note that one of the dying heroes was played by the same unknown actor who played villains in COME DRINK WITH ME, TRAIL OF THE BROKEN BLADE, and SNAKE EAT IST FIGHTER. One of these days, maybe we will figure out what the bloody Hell the guy's name is. There's no matching single name that appears on the credits for all the movies I've reviewed so far in O.C. that feature this mysterious actor. Anyway, the deaths of the five heroes feature a nice series of battles with the usual swordplay, reversed jumps, and bloodshed.

I'm taking a break from the plot to say that the tape starts off with the original trailer (theatrical sneak preview), and then graphics super-imposed over nifty artwork. Regrettably, the English subtitles drop out of screen for the first 30 minutes, but it's still possible to follow the plot of this colorful adventure, but only if you pay really close attention and eliminate any distractions from the area. For example, there were little kids near me, playing and screaming loudly, so I suggested they go play out in the middle of the street, or I'd see to it that their faces would appear on the back of a milk carton later that month. The swordplay in THE KNIGHT OF KNIGHTS is dandy; it's quick, precise & fast, but basic (not a lot of variety to their noncre-

ative swings). Familiar stock music from other 1960s flicks abounds, and there's one horrible ballad with singing, yet I still had fun. KNIGHT OF KNIGHTS is one of my favorites from the 1960s.

Getting back to the script, those damn monks are in trouble now. A scholar called Master Wu and his faithful servant Wen Lung are coming to town. Secretly, Master Wu has an alias as a righteous masked assassin called Wen Su Chien. His righthand

(Continued on Page 12)



7 BROTHERS MEET DRACULA

A.K.A. LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES, Japanese title: "Dragon vs 7 Bloodsucking Demons," 1975, Directors of Photography: John Wilcox and Ray Ford, Filmed in Panavision, Editing: Chris Barnes, Assistant Editor: Larry Richardson, Special Effects: Cés Bowie, Martial Arts Sequences staged by: Cang Chia & Ciu Chih Chiang, Make up: Wu Hsu Ching, Costumes: Chiu Chi Ya, Musical Supervisor: Philip Marcell, Composer: James Bernhard, Editor: Freddy Sweet, Screenplay: Don Houghton, Produced by: Don Houghton and Vee King Shaw, Directed by: Roy Ward Baker, A Hammer & Shaw Production, Distributed by Dynamite Entertainment, Cast: Peter Cushing as Dr. Van Helsing, David Chiang as Hsu Ching, Julie Ege as the lady with the tits, Robin Stewart as Leyheed Van Helsing, also starring: Shih Szu, John Corbes, Robert Sul, Whines Inh, Cui Fui Cing, Ciu Chih Fung, Wong Chi Chi, Chen Chen Toug, Tong Hong Air

Like the other two Chinese horrors in this column, I have already written about this movie before too. I just didn't have the energy or concern to go rent any new videos these last few months. The past few months have left me crushed, tired and empty. I don't even beat off to reruns of DYNAMAN anymore. The life force just isn't there.....Ahhh hell, what am I groaning about? I always have you don't I? You've always been there for me, to understand, to console, to give me a little pat on the shoulder and say, "A job well done" when I needed it said. But most of all you have always been there to listen. To hear me when I have something to tell you. Haven't you?...Well?.....I said, haven't you?.....Hey, I said.....HEY! HELLO? IS ANYONE.....?

If you're paying attention, this is the granddaddy of Chinese horror. That is, the 1st Chinese horror flick that most American fans (including yours not so truly) of the genre ever saw. It's popularity in

western countries comes from its being half British, with English actors right along side the Chinese ones. England's Hammer Films supplied wellknown British actor Peter Cushing to again play Van Helsing, who he'd already played in earlier Hammer Dracula films. But as a half Chinese film, Shaw Bros. chose David Chiang as a main co-star. It is very interesting to see both wellknown stars in the same film, as partners Peter Cushing has been in anything from an old Laurel and Hardy movie to STAR WARS, and his co-star David Chiang has been in many Chinese kung fu movies including THE ONE ARM SWORDSMAN, discussed on page Peter Cushing also worked with Ti Lung in a modern crime drama called CALL HIM MR. SHATTER. It's always interesting to see different superstars from various countries starring together in the same international films. In this case, the British and Chinese actors seem to mix well.

THE 7 BROTHERS MEET DRACULA's internationality is also interesting culturally. There are discussions and comparisons between European

I like just about any picture that combines horror, martial arts, boobs and gore, and SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA is no exception. But some of its technical production values could use improvement. It's edited badly, and an opening sequence where the vamps raid a village is shown twice, though reversed (left becomes right, right becomes left) the second time. I guess they were so proud of this sequence that they felt it required an instant replay. Since these scenes (first shown as background for opening credits) introduce a main character, their showing it twice screws up continuity. There are a couple of very unrealistic bats in some scenes who don't even flap their wings as they fly. The photography has too many tight close ups of faces. And I hate to say it, but the kung fu isn't very good. As I make this issue, I'm constantly reminded that most of the Shaw actors aren't the greatest martial artists. As I watch SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA, I see that David Chiang isn't as good a fighter I thought he was when I first saw him in FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH (see O.C.#8) about ten years ago. Although I still respect, admire and

and est ray cre fr
npir is
than run and walk
a separate identity
the Chinese vamps
from the other Chinese actors

7 BROTHERS and 1 SISTER take DRACULA



It's Dynamite!

"The 7 Brothers meet DRACULA"





It is nice to finally hear David Chiang's real voice, since he's not dubbed. Better yet, he speaks entirely in English. His voice is kind of high-pitched and he has an accent, so he sounds a lot like Bruce Lee did. David Chiang plays his part decently, and is one of the few to come off effectively, since his European counterparts tend to under act all the time. I just wish David Chiang's character didn't die toward the end. He should have survived throughout. Hardly any



Chinese language is spoken, since the background characters usually remain silent. The story of this bloody film involves Dracula, who for some reason not explained is now in a village called Ping Gwei, in China. For some reason, the legendary vampire even enters the body of some old Chinese guy, possessing him. Dracula has teamed up with China's own Seven Golden Vampires, although there's only six now. One had his life sustaining medallion (a gold bat pendant) stolen by an old man. Now that old man's grandson Hsiu Ching (David Chiang) is leading his family of martial artists (six brothers and a sister) to Ping Gwei to kill the remaining vampires and their army of zombie henchmen. Between them, they have a number of weapons like a spiked club, spear, sword, knife, and bow & arrow. Also tagging along this expedition are three Europeans, noted Dracula hater Van Helsing and his son, and some large-breasted lady called

Princess Baron who financed the journey. But her beautiful mammaries that make me want to watch her do jumping jacks without a bra go to waste because she ends up dead along with most of the heroes by the time the ending credits role. All the undead villains get destroyed too. □

ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND

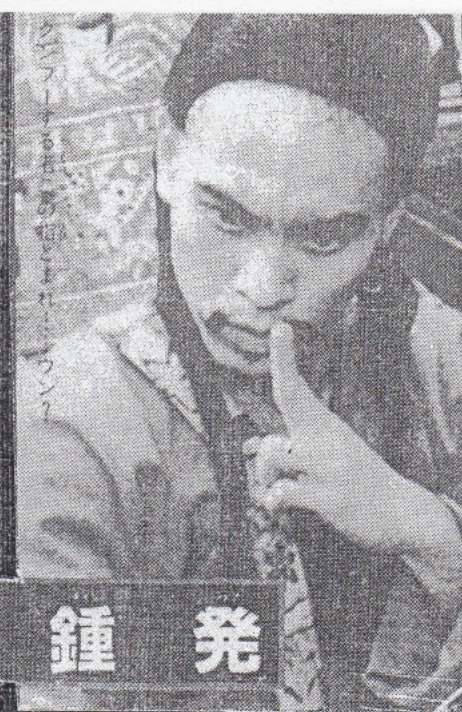
Presented by Golden Harvest and Boho Films, Produced by Raymond Chow, Screenplay: Samo Hung & Huang Ying, Action Choreographers: Samo Hung and his group, Production Supervised by Louis Sit, Directed by Samo Hung Kam Po, Starring: Samo Hung, Lam Ching Ying, and Chong Ha

I suppose it was either in 1987 or 1988 (one of those years, I know it had a one, a nine and an eight in it) that I first reviewed ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND in an obscure, radical fanzine called PACK. PACK was a punk publication catering to all kinds of alternative entertainment. But its target audience, the so-called 'progressive' crowd, turned out to be unsupportive and PACK folded as a result. Interesting how them punks consider themselves so unique, creative, individual and open-minded, yet they have no interest in buying the late PACK because only about half of the magazine catered to the various forms of garage rock (i.e. punk, metal, gothic, etc.). Though I too still have my new wave roots from my days as a teenager, I consider the so-called 'punks' of today to be a bunch of hypocrites, and about as punk as Shirley Temple. Anyway, because the artistic fanzine failed miserably, nobody ever got to read my review of ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND. I recently re-read that old movie review of ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND, and decided that it wasn't good enough for ORIENTAL CINEMA so I'm re-writing it here.

ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND is not a classic like MR. VAMPIRE, but since both kung fu horrors were made by Golden Harvest and Boho Films, there are similarities. Both have horror, comedy, kung fu, and an obligatory hoax scene to start the movie. ENCOUNTER pre-dates MR. VAMPIRE by about five years, and begins to set up the trend toward the backbreaking stuntwork seen in MR. VAMPIRE and other mid-1980s martial arts-oriented movies. ENCOUNTER is from around 1981 and features numerous excellent stunts and backfalls, but still has traces of typical late 1970s chop sockey fighting, that which I still call 'patty cake kung fu,' because that's what these various artificial armblocks resemble. My out-of-print 'gyonsi' (Chinese vampire) issue (#6) of ORIENTAL CINEMA over praised MR. VAMPIRE as an original, groundbreaking innovator, when in fact it was heavily inspired by ENCOUNTER.

ENCOUNTER is a very good movie, but it's not scary. The only scene that offers even a few chills is the opening nightmare scene which happens during the opening credits. It features Samo outside in the dark and he's attacked by varying denizens of the occult. It is here that the film's best FX-gore scene occurs where a zombie bites a bloody hole in Samo's leg.

Once upon a time there was a fat guy (played by Samo Hung) in late 1980s China who knew kung fu, although we never learn what style, nor



鍾 癸

do we see him training. Yet his experience in martial arts is undeniable, as we see him in three or four splendid battles later on. Anyway, the obese fighter's wife is pretty damn cute though flat-chested, and she's having an affair with some wealthy politician. When the hero becomes suspicious, the corrupt politician hires a magical Taoist to use his spells to kill the curious husband. The politician's reputation is at stake, and the man he's deceiving could make him lose face for fooling around with a married woman. So the Taoist revives the dead, causing about five different zombies to attack our hero. The first is a typical hopping vampire, in traditional Manchurian attire. Later, a zombie more like a George Romero (NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, etc.) zombie comes to life but the spell doesn't work right, at first. Rather than attacking the main character, it mimicks him like a reflection in ENCOUNTER's funniest moment. Later, Samo Hung duels with three cadavers who can fly like bats. Toward the middle of the movie, Samo's wife conspires with other villains to fake her own death and frame Samo. This makes him a fugitive, pursued by a police officer probably played by Lam Ching Ying. This subplot is the subject of a nifty battle in a restaurant. Samo is rescued by a former partner (Chong Ha) of the main Taoist villain. At the end, both Taoism wizards duel with each other using their magic. They change their pupils (including Samo) into different personalities (i.e. monkey, little girls, others) based on ancient stereotypical Chinese characters. After some nifty, witty duels, only Samo is alive. Then his deceitful wife appears, very much alive but Samo doesn't fall for her fake tears. In a surprise ending, he beats up the helpless woman and tosses her into the fire. It's about time we have a tough hero who doesn't take any shit. □





KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

Producer: Pal Ming, Coordinator: Wo Wing Ping, Screenplay: Lo Fung, kung fu instructors: Chui Jong Shian and Sung Kam Shing, Cast: Billy Chong, Law Lit, Lo Lieh, Sung Kam Shing, Lal Kim Hung

How do you do? How nice of you to take time out of your busy day to read this article! Nothing but praise goes to this exceptionally good combination of horror and kung fu. KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE is good for both genres, and as a comedy as well. I think this is the best movie I've ever seen Billy Chong in. From start to finish, KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE is very very very very very very very very very very very very very very very very fun. The fact that it's



dubbed in English allows us round-eyes to concentrate fully on the excellent entertainment value, rather than suffer through those subtitles that strain our football-shaped eyes.

Billy Chong's Chinese name is Chuang Chuan Li, also spelled Zhong Quanli and Jon Chen Li among others. He was born in Magelang, Indonesia sometime in 1958. Supposedly, KUNG FU BEYOND THE GRAVE is his first film, apparently called KUNG FU ZOMBIES in its Chinese version. Coincidentally, Billy Chong also starred in another kung fu horror called KUNG FU ZOMBIE in the English version. That one was inferior to KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE. Other kung fu (non-horror) flicks to Billy Chong's credit include THE JADE CLAW (1979), KUNG FU EXECUTIONER, SUPER POWER (1980), A FISTFUL OF TALONS (1983), FEARLESS JACKAL and A HARD WAY TO DIE, a movie so stupid that I call it A WAY TO DIE HARD. His martial arts styles like Shantceng and Laithe Thierk kung fu demonstrate his incredible ability. Despite his supreme talents, he never became a superstar because most of his movies were rip offs of Jackie Chan's earlier films. Regardless, the martial arts in KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE are magnificent, better than in most other independent kung fu movies of the late 1970s.

Horrorwise, it's not really scary, but it gets vaguely chilling at times. KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE is a little gory but that's to be expected from an adventure combining frights and fights. The spec-

ial effects manage to suffice because they are adequate; they aren't really great, but at least the producers knew better than to overdo showing off too much low budget FX. GRAVE's FX may be slightly cheap, but restrained enough so that they're still effective.

Remember all those background henchmen in Bruce Lee's ENTER THE DRAGON (1973)? Well, there's a panning shot somewhere in that wellknown movie where we see a background actor (wearing an orange or yellow gi I believe) with funny eyebrows. He's not a background actor anymore. In GRAVE, he plays a villain, the evil Taoist wizard. Another familiar face in GRAVE is former Shaw star Lo Lieh, again cast as a main villain. When he was younger, Lo Lieh frequently



played good guys in 1960s films, but in the 1970s, he was usually cast as a villain.

This humorous tale has Billy Chong as a kung fu master out to avenge his father's death. Not surprising, since it seems that cinematic martial artists like this main character are always trying to avenge the murder of their father, mother, grandfather, teacher, pet fruitbat or whatever. Only this time, the villainous murderers are aided by an evil Taoist with magic powers. He's using human hearts taken from victims who must be in the midst of having an orgasm (an excuse to show nudity in combination with minor gore), because the hearts will help to make his corrupt boss (Lo Lieh) invincible, immortal, indestructible, and so on, and so on, and so on. So at one point, Billy's character even teams up with some gyonsi-like zombies who help him to attack the bad guys. So the wizard summons the western vampiric legend Dracula to kill Billy Chong and his undead assassins. This Dracula is played by a caucasian, though he's not as effective as the one who played Dracula in SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA. Despite scary fangs and makeup, he comes off as a cartoonish clown. Regardless, the hilarious sequence allows for an intriguing comparison of Eastern and Western views of the occ-



ult. Billy's book of Taoist magic (sought after by the magical villain) may work against Chinese ghosts & demons, but not a European monster like Dracula. So Billy defeats Drac with a crucifix and garlic! Two policeman ghosts appear sometime during this confrontation to reprimand the zombies for interfering in the battle of the living. These two characters (one black, one white) are dressed like wizards and have long tongues. Both these mythical characters also appeared in SHAOLIN INVINCIBLES (See O.C. 8). But Lo Lieh's days are numbered because Billy later attacks the mafia again, aided by a mob of angry villagers. After Billy buries Lo alive in a grave, he lets the vengeful ghosts underground kill what's left of him.

Your presence at this article has made it truly a festive occasion. Thank you. ☐

CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS (Continued from Page 10)

man Wen Lung dies trying to rescue a girl called Hsin Yen in a battle first started when the bad monks tried to aid warlords in assassinating an honorable politician. Not only does Master Wu (in his ninja-like attire to conceal his identity) rescue all the kidnapped ladies, but defeats all the corrupt monks too.

Zato Ichi Meets The Onearmed Swordsman

Japanese title: ZATO ICHI MEETS HIS EQUAL, Produced by Daiel Company in 1971, Directed by Kimiyoshi Yasuda, running time: 94 minutes

Maybe this one is out of place in an issue meant to cover Chinese films, since ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN is actually a Japanese film despite the appearance of Chinese superstar Jimmy Wang Yu. And this isn't a case of tricky editing, it is obvious that Wang Yu really was in Japan when this boring feature was filmed. Wang Yu again plays Fang, the onearmed swordsman first seen on Chinese movie screens in 1967. Japan's own handicapped swordfighter was Zato Ichi, the blind swordsman. Shintaro Katsu has been playing this character in numerous chanbara since 1964. Chanbara is the

Japanese word meaning period films, and another phrase meaning the same is jidal geki. The idea of bringing together the two top film heroes of China and Japan was a great idea. But you all know how disappointed I get when I eventually see team ups in films, if you've read past issues of ORIENTAL CINEMA. Team ups of this kind are always promising, but rarely do I end up liking them a lot.

My samurai days are long gone, even though I am currently playing a samurai in a satirical video friends and I have been working on over a year now. I was most heavily into samurai films way back in the 1970s, back when things like THE MAGIC SERPENT, KING OF THE MONG-

RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN, COZURE OKAMI, MITO KORI-ON, HAWK OF JUSTICE, and TOYAMA NO KINSAN used to be shown on TV in my area. Back then, there also used to be a Japanese theatre called the Kokusai Theatre where I saw flicks like WHIRL WIND, WAR-RING CLANS, Toshiro Mifune's MUSASHI MIYAMOTO trilogy, HUNTER IN THE DARK, SEVEN SAMURAI, RASHOMON, YOJIMBO, SANJURO, ZATO ICHI MEETS YOJIMBO, and even the horrendously boring LOVE & FAITH. The shitheads at the Japan Center staff eventually closed San Francisco's only Japanese theatre and (get this), turned it into a Denny's. This did little to re-generate my interest in Chanbara, or Dennyburgers either, for that matter.

Laurine White sent me the Japanese TV version, so that's the only version I've seen. I hope one day to get the Chinese version, since it may have English subtitles. I don't believe there ever was an English dub. My ability at understanding Japanese is limited, and my ability at understanding Chinese is non-existent. In this saga, Japanese people speak in Japanese and what few Chinese there are speak Chinese with Japanese subtitles. It's amusing to hear Wang Yu say something in Chinese to Shintaro Katsu (or some other Japanese actor), who responds to him in Japanese. Though uninteresting generally, it does manage to intrigue during the fights (which are spread far apart with large gaps of talking), as it demonstrates a difference to the theatrical martial arts of China and Japan. Katsu still does the usual Japanese samurai moves and gestures, the same kind of pauses and sword swings common in all samurai flicks of Japan. Though this film is mostly Japanese, Wang Yu is allowed to fight as stereotypically Chinese as possible. He does a number of typical Chinese high jumps, a few kung fu kicks, and maybe an acrobat or two, all of which are more common in Chinese productions than Japanese ones.



I really couldn't make heads or tails of the script, since there was absolutely no English translation at all, and I had to rely on what little Japanese I could remember. It seems that Fang Kang is in Japan for some reason, accompanying a family of Chinese acrobats on tour there. The parents apparently get killed by the henchmen of some corrupt warlord during a mock funeral probably meant to cover up something. The only surviving member of the family is a little kid who witnessed his parents' deaths. The villains are now after the little kid, and others want to get their hands on Fang, thinking he is the killer. The finale has both handicapped swordsmen battling it out with an army of villains, though neither fights side by side, or back to back. The scene switches back & forth, going from one duel to the next until both heroes defeat their many foes. After this, they both seem to want to fight each other for some reason. Their duel is okay, though I can't figure out why they'd fight each other, as they seemed like friends early on. Both end up cut up, it turns out to be a tie. The picture ends with both stumbling away from the scene of the duel.

The Chase

Producer: Raymond Chow, Assistant Producer: T.K. Leung, Cinematography: Chen Chin Chu, Music: Wang Fu Ling, Directed by: Wang Tin Lin, Starring: Maria Yi, Paul Tien, Chin Shan, Fang

THE CHASE is pretty good, but that does not mean I have to like it. During its suspenseful sword battles, I enjoyed it, but its scenes of long dialogue reach new levels in utter boredom. This is a bit of a pity too, since this highly formulated story is probably quite intriguing if you understand Chinese. The English subtitles are cut off (far left and far right) when viewed on TV, and frequent light backgrounds make what few words in frame to be damn near invisible. So don't expect another one of my devastatingly informative, in-depth plot synopses. Of course, who cares to read about the stories anyway?!

This is a Golden Harvest effort, and one of their very first, even before any of their Bruce Lee movies. There is even a different opening logo than is commonly seen on all the later Golden Harvest features. Their original logo (shown at the beginning of THE CHASE) is more literal with the name of the company, showing a golden harvest of wheat, blowing in the wind. THE CHASE may have been inspired by the 1960s Shaw stuff, but this has a distinctive difference. As always, the fights are more brutal and basic, less dance like than all that artsy fartsy stuff them Shaw boys were churning out in the 1960s.

THE CHASE has all the sets and attire of a period film, but the sword duels maintain a typical early 1970s chop sockey brutality, despite the traditional high jumps common in all period movies, accomplished with wires and reversed film. However, THE CHASE proves that the kung fu film had arrived, the 1970s have chosen violent action over the historical intrigue and artificial fantasy that it evolved out of.

Both Paul Tien and Maria Yi are best known in this country as co-stars of Bruce Lee in the chop sockey FISTS OF FURY (A.K.A. THE BIG BOSS, see page 11). Well, I have got news for all you cultureless idiots! Both Chinese film stars are talented performers in their own right, with or without benefit of Bruce Lee's top billing! The



MARIA YI

attractive Maria Yi (who I think was also in THE ONE ARMED SWORDSMAN, though under a different name) is actually given a chance to act well this time, unlike when she played that naive bimbo in FISTS OF FURY. Her swordplay isn't bad either. Paul Tien (A.K.A. James Tien) is the main hero, and he does it quite well. You may remember him from FISTS OF FURY, CHINESE CONNECTION, and as Charlie Wang (killed by Kareem Abdul Jabbar's character) in GAME OF DEATH. His best work is definitely in THE CHASE, as he demonstrates his sufficient athletic skills added for good measure. He gives it his all, and fights valiantly against up to 50 armed henchmen.

Plotwise, it seems to make as much sense as pineapple on pizza. It gave me a headache just trying to understand even the most basic script lines. It has got something to do with a traveling swordsman known as Master Shih who prizes his sword religiously. It is called Red Sword even though it's silver. According to messy flashbacks, this magic sword is some sort of family heirloom he dares not part with. A rich army of soldiers would love to get their hands on this valuable weapon, so they have placed a reward on it. So despite occasional subplots (romance and more arty flashbacks), the remainder of the saga more or less has our master swordsman Shih battling everyone and their brother, to keep his sword. Additional characters are in the movie, but that would just complicate things even more.

7 Blows of The Dragon

CAST: David Chiang as Young Dragon, Lily Ho as the Tigress, Ti Lung as Magic Sword, Wang Chung (no relation to the band) as Fearless One, Chin Feng as Clever Star, Ku Feng as Welcome Rain, Yueh Hua as Leopard Man, Tetsuro Tanba as Jade Dragon, Toshio Kurozawa as General Wen, Fan Mei Sheng as Steward Li Ku, Ling Ling as Lady Lu, Li Yun Chung as Governor Liang, Ching Miao as Master Chen, Tung Lin as Heavenly King, Co-Directors: Dao Hsueh Li & Feng Wu Ma, Asst. Directors: Ho Chih Chiang & Wu Yu Shen, Cinematography: Kung Mu To, Film Editors: Keo Ting Hung & Jeff Young & Barbara Dokras, Music: Chen Yung Yu, Art Director: Johnson Tsao, Set & Costume Design: Kamber Hwang, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Sound Effects: Conway Records, Titles & Opticals: Imagic, Inc., Presented by New World Pictures, Written by I Kuang and Chang Cheh, English version by Lisa Lu, Produced by Run Run Shaw, Directed by Chang Cheh

I consider this movie a classic. But then, I consider ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND and INFRAMAN to be classics as well, and consider 'traditional classics' like CASABLANCA to be as fun and exciting as sandals and granola. But SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON is a landmark movie for one, well maybe two, possibly three, well okay, for many reasons. For one thing, it was probably one of the first Chinese historical epics to be released to America. I suspect this because of Imagic's fantabulous English title and credits. Me thinks that the releasers put less effort into graphics as more and more



Chinese pictures received American release. Their is one flaw in the opening credits though, and that's seeing Chen Kwan Tai's name second to David Chiang, making it look like he's a main co-star. Chen Kwan Tai's appearance in SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON lasts a few seconds, and he plays a background character. As for other criticism on English release, I think maybe all the characters should have had their original Chinese names pronounced in the English version, rather than translating their meanings into English. For example, Chow Pai is called Heavenly King in English. Other names which sound more like titles than names include Devine Whirlwind, Fearless One, The Tigress, and Welcome Rain.

There's an all-star cast in this early 1970s adventure. David Chiang plays the main hero. He was 24 when he appeared in this movie, probably his third kung fu movie, the other two maybe being VENGEANCE, and DUEL OF THE IRON FIST. His aliases include Garth Lo, John Keung, Chiang Tai Wei, and Chan Ta Yen. Another young Shaw actor to appear is Ti Lung, though his part is much smaller than David Chiang's. Oldtimer Yueh Hwa is also featured, and he has come a long way since his appearances in mellow fantasies of the 1960s like THE MONKEY & COME DRINK WITH ME. For SEVEN BLOWS, no more of his singing, and instead he had to improve his martial arts skills. Most surprising of all was to see the Japanese actor Tetsuro Tanba in this Chinese movie. He doesn't play a Japanese villain, but another Chinese character, wearing Chinese clothes and using a Chinese staff technique. Most people could easily be fooled, though I could spot him and his opponent (played by another Japanese actor) as being a little slower in their fights than most of their Chinese counterparts.

As I mentioned earlier when I discussed Yueh Hwa's improved performance, the drama's weapons duels are more crisp, more polished than the Shaw stuff from the 1960s, reviewed a few paragraphs ago, though not as fast or evolved as the duels in later pictures. SEVEN BLOWS is an important, borderline link in that chain. This is another reason why I like it so much and consider it a classic. However, it has a few fist fights which show very little improvement since the days of THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN. In this case, most of the moves are more like wrestling.

SEVEN BLOWS is an important film historically, taken from an old Chinese novel ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS (A.K.A. OUTLAWS OF THE MARSHES and THE WATER MARGIN). A title like SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON is an unfortunate American adaptation, since the movie is more of a historical adventure than a kung fu movie.

The story involves the righteous 108 bandits who reside within the Yang Chang Ho Mountains. Though outlaws, they were regarded as heroes by peasants for their justifiable rebellion from fascist dictators. The story concerns their revenge against an army general called Golden Spear (Toshiro Kurozawa) who killed a kind bandit leader called Heavenly King. They request the aid of Master Lu, the Jade Dragon (Tetsuro Tanba). Jade Dragon's deceitful though neglected wife is having an affair with Steward Li (hence a bedroom scene featuring semi-erotic nudity), and the two of them are plotting against her husband. When they inform authorities that there are two bandits negotiating with Jade Dragon in his palace, he is arrested. From this point, the bulk of the script drags on with seemingly endless captures, escapes, re-captures, rescues and the like as Young Dragon (David Chiang) who is Jade Dragon's bodyguard keeps fighting guards with occasional help from more bandits. These scenes drag on, and seem merely added to make a short story long. They could be edited heavily and the plot wouldn't suffer. After our heroes slaughter Jade Dragon's wife and corrupt, sniveling lover, they confront Golden Spear and his soldiers. Long ago, Golden Spear and Jade Dragon were classmates at the same martial arts school. But now they are enemies because they're on opposite sides of the law. Jade Dragon wins the duel but ref-

uses to kill his one time friend so Devine Whirlwind jumps in and does it for him.

Flying Guillotine

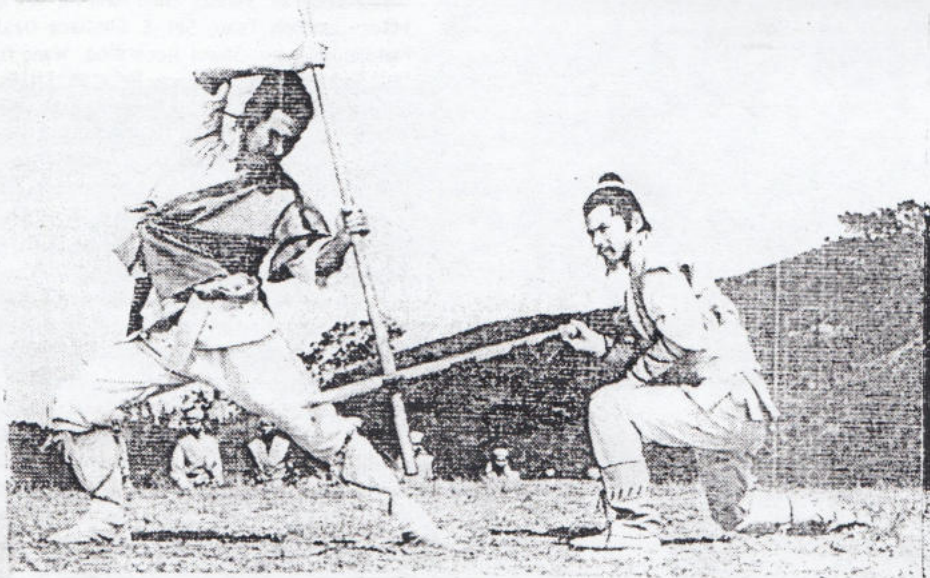
1972, Producer: Runme Shaw, Screenplay: I Kuang, Cinematography: Tsao Hui Chi, Lighting: Chen Fen, Art Director: Johnson Tsao, Editor: Chiang Hsing Lung, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Props: Yuan Hsiang, Executive Producer: Chen Lieh, Assistant Director: Hung Ke, Costumes: Liu Chi Yu, Make up: Wu Hsu Ching, Fighting Instructor: Hsu Erh Niu, Music: Wang Fu Ling, Directed by Ho Meng Hua, Starring: Chen Kwan Tai, Ku Feng, Frankie Wei, Liu Wu Chi, Ai Ti, Lin Wei Tu, Wang Yu, Chiang Yang, Li Peng Fei, Li Shou Chi, Lu Wei, Lin Feng, Shen Lao, Chiang Ling, Wu Chin Chin, Hsu Kuan Ying, Lei Lung, Ho Han, Wang Han Chen, Ma Yung Po, Tsai Yung Chang

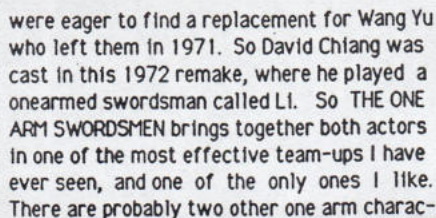


Odds are this issue would have been a lot more film-historically educational if I were viewing & reviewing these motion pictures in the order they were made. You know, like watching the early stuff (1960s) like COME DRINK WITH ME first, then doing the 1970s epics like this one, and eventually working my way up to THE SWORD, DUEL TO THE DEATH and other 1980s efforts. But it's a little confusing, since I somehow am ending up going out of order, reviewing FLYING GUILLOTINE out of sync. This is one of the last reviews I've written for this issue. So in this way, I can compare FLYING GUILLOTINE with other historicals I've discussed, made before and after. FLYING GUILLOTINE is more advanced and evolved than its previous ancestors like THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN, but it's not necessarily better.

Great production values! Sets, costumes, photography, acting and dubbing are well-done. And it's an overall wellmade film, even by American standards. But it's not really the most kung fu-iest of kung fu films, definitely not for the most critical fans of chop socky stuff & Bruce Lee. I think FLYING GUILLOTINE blows away THE LAST EMPEROR like ice cream blows away sticking your head in a bucket of dogshit.

In this intriguing adventure that has at least one dubbed "but still" and several "right"s, the nasty emperor Yun Ching proves to be one of the most despicable villains on film. This Manchu meanie of the Ching Dynasty doesn't really fight or kill, but is ruthless in his merciless commands, forcing his soldiers to do all sorts of dirty work. These Manchus have killed many





ABOVE: A 1987 REUNION OF VETERAN ACTORS. LEFT TO RIGHT: LI HSIU HSIEN ("INFRAMAN," "THE SAVAGE FIVE," "GOLIATHON," & "THE CRIMINAL HUNTER"), CHEN KUAN

ABOVE: A 1987 REUNION OF VETERAN ACTORS. LEFT TO RIGHT: LI HSUI HSIEN ("INFAMOUS," "THE SAVAGE FIVE," "GOLIATH," AND "THE CRIMINAL HUNTER"), CHEN KUAN TAI ("FLYING GUILLOTINE," "IRON MONKEY," "HERO TATTOO WITH NINE DRAGONS" AND "EXECUTIONERS OF DEATH"), DAVID CHIANG ("THE ONE ARM SWORDSMEN," "SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON," AND "SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA"), AND THE ONE AND ONLY TI LUNG ("SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON," "AVENGING EAGLES," "CALL HIM MR. SHATTER," "LEGEND OF WISLY," "A BETTER TOMMOROW," AND "FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH").

I only have three major complaints; one is a continuity flaw for the outdoor duels during the bright morning or afternoon. They apparently continued filming on into the dark evening. This sudden change in color and lighting is distracting. My second complaint is that there are occasional references to a previous movie (perhaps ONEARMED SWORDSMAN VS FLYING GUILLOTINE) I haven't been able to see. My third and final regret is the last half hour where for some reason, Shaolin Temple is added. From there, the story changes, loses much of its fun and goes downhill.

The script behind (or in front of) this well photographed 'whodunnit' begins with some killings at a funeral. A masked phantom who is called Brother Dragon is actually stealing

(Continued on Page 17)

the One Arm Swordsmen

Presented by Wang Yu Film Company, Screenplay: Ku Lung, Producer: Wang Feng, Directors: Jimmy Wang Yu and David Chiang, Cast: Jimmy Wang Yu, David Chiang, Lo Lieh, Chang Yen, Liu Meng Yin

That renegade of celluloid Jimmy Wang Yu rebelled from those overbearing dictators of Chinese cinema, the Shaw Brothers. His leaving their clutches in 1971 resulted in his making a number of features on his own, such as this one in the mid 1970s. Wang Yu produced and directed this witty yet wierd film, with the help of another ex-Shaw actor, co-star David Chiang.

It's a good film, definitely one of my favorites from the "Onearmed Swordsman" series. As a later effort, it is much more advanced, experienced & evolved than 1967's THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN, and it really blows away 1971's ZATO ICHI MEETS THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN as well. The martial arts are choreographed better, it's more enjoyable and amusing, faster paced, and most important, I have located an English dub! The dubbing is typical, with six "But still" phrases and more people saying "Right" than there are Chinese in this film. There are also a lot of one arm swordsmen in this follow up. Of course there is Wang Yu's main character Fang, plus another one arm swordsman who was also in his own film called THE NEW ONEARMED SWORDSMAN (Shaw Brothers: 1972). Them Shaw guys

SAMURAI 魔界転生
REINCARNATION

Presented by Marquis Video. Produced by Toei.
Executive Producers: Haruki Kadokawa. Assistant
Producers: Masao Sato, Tatsuo Honda, Seiji

Inaba. Based on a story by Tatsuo Nogami, Takato Ishikawa & Kinji Fukasaku, Photography: Kiyoshi Hasegawa & Shozo Sakane, Lighting: Etsuaki Masuda, Sound Recording: Shigeaki Nakayama, Editor: Isamu Ichida, Art Director: Tokumichi Igawa, Yoshikazu Sano, Music: Hoza Yamamoto, Mitsunori Sugano, Script Girl: Misae Tanaka, Wardrobe: Takashi Matsuda, Assistant Director: Toru Bobashi, Special Effects by Nobuo Yajima, Directed by Kinji Fukasaku, Starring: Sonny Chiba, Julie Sawada, Akiko Kona, Henry Sanada, Mikio Narita, Asao Uchida, Yuko Asuka, Masataka Iwao, Genji Kawal, Masuharu Arik

awa, Tetsuro Tanba, Katsutoshi Akiyama,
Noburo Umezawa, Kojiro Shirakawa, Tomisub-
uro Wakayama, Ryuko Azuma, Saburo Hayashi,
Kinji Nakamura, Kaoru Beni, Fumio Takeda,
Kyoko Furukawa, Tomoko Taguchi, Osamu Yam-
akazi, Osamu Yamazaki, Mayumi Tokunaga,
Mieko Hoshiro, Tatsuo Inada, Shoji Sawada,
Takaaki Yoshizawa, Nakoto Kenimochi, Kayoko
Shiraishi, Toru Yamamoto, Hitoshi Sakitsu,
Ken Ogata

Boohoo! Wo is me. Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
 Forgive my tears, sniffle, I'm crying now, just
 like that psychological terrorist Jimmy Swagg-
 art did a couple years back when that old
 hypocrite sinned against us. But now it's my
 turn for emotional pain, as I confront my own
 dishonesty. I have lied to you, my unfaithful
 readers. The scandal is that neither of the mov-
 ies in this fantasy column involve Taoism even
 though the title of the section is still SWORD &
 TAOISM. However, to make up for this sacrilege,
 both fantasy films do have swords in them! In
 the case of this Nipponese tale, SAMURAI RE-
 INCARNATION, the swords are of course long,
 straight, made in Japan, and are used mainly for
 kendo, hara kiri, seppuku, and as pretty decorat-
 ions.



ortment of dead people, each from a different walk of life. What they all had in common was a certain regret about something in their previous unhappy life. One of these revived people is an elderly ninja (Tomisuburo Wakayama) who's son is Jubel Yagyu (Sonny Chiba). This is not the first time Chiba has played this oneeyed swordsman. Jubel Yagyu sets out to defeat these undead villains. I take time out here to say that some of these so-called villains including their leader Shiro Amasa don't really come off as especially evil. There's actually some justice behind their vendettas. Anyway, Jubel has a master sword maker played by Tetsuro Tanba create a magic sword that can slice through demons. Once the sword is made, he defeats the ghost of Musashi Miyamoto on a beach, and also must kill his now corrupt father (another possessed zombie) during a duel in a burning temple. Not much comes of Jubel Yagyu's eventual confrontation with Shiro Amasa. It's neat when he chops off the spirit's head, but then Shiro laughs and leaves, vowing to return if they make a sequel.

ALI BABA

Do any of you know anything about this rarely seen oddity? I often come across obscure Chinese movies, but they're usually low budget films of inferior quality and won't amount to anything. But this is a big budget movie with excellent production values. It's not a martial arts film, despite a few kicks and acrobatics. There are decent stunts that look vaguely similar to those hard edge, high-tech stunts seen in nearly all the action movies (more on these modern crime dramas next issue) since 1984's PROJECT A. So from this I gather ALI BABA is a fairly recent release, having been made in the middle or late 1980s. What really baffles me is that why a movie as wellmade and detailed as this is so rare and obscure. There's only one familiar face in it. It is that of Eric Tsang, the Chinese Lou Costello who has been in MY LUCKY STARS, 'TIL DEATH DO WE SCARE and THE CRIMINAL HUNTER. But there is nobody else in this amusing movie I could recognize. It must not be from a Hong Kong film company, or at least not from a company I'm familiar with. Regardless, it is a major Chinese movie.

It's based on the Middle Eastern or Arabian fables. I'm not sure what country this tale originally came from, but it's one of those countries that keep sending people over here to work in 7 Elevens and factories, and it's many of those same people who have never heard of anti-perspirants or deodorants. You know the type. Those Middle Easterners who all seem to hate America so much thanks to assholes like Ayatolla Komeni (when he died, it should have been declared a national holiday), yet they all seem to be immigrating out this way. But putting my prejudice aside, this Chinese movie seems derivative of the original legends of "Ali Baba & The 47 Thieves," but also involves a magic lamp, so I guess this story also takes in a lot from the Aladin story as well.

It's kind of funny to see Chinese actors in turbans and other middle eastern attire instead of the usual Chinese uniform seen in most other period films. Some of the actors appear to have

悪魔の化身かそれとも亡霊の使者
無念の死を遂げた怨霊が今甦る

魔界転生

25 土

I rented this intellectual drama and looked forward to watching it on the big screen in my living room, only to discover the room and TV hogged by my brother and his similarly cultureless friends. They were drinking beer, most likely Coors, Budweiser or some other watered down American brand for hicks, and were wasting the TV watching (not to mention yelling and clapping) some sort of sport game like Football, Basketball, Ping Pong, or that one where the players where stupid-looking hats and hit a ball with what resembles a caveman's club. I really can't tell which, since I'm as likely to be seen at a sporting event as a bottle of Perrier is to be seen at a cowboy bar.

So in my room I watched this dark (in more ways than one) movie on a much smaller TV screen. SAMURAI REINCARNATION is both dark for its depressing gloom and for its insufficient lighting which makes it hard to see what the Jigoku is going on. Eventually, I had to use a flashlight. The other production values are standard for the average early 1980s Toei chanbara. Nobuo Yajima did the FX, though his work is better, more plentiful in superhero programs. The guy has been handling FX in Toei films since the 1960s at least, and worked on TERROR BENEATH THE SEA, which is included somewhere else in this issue. The music of SAMURAI REINCARNATION manages to suffice adequately.

The high points of SAMURAI REINCARNATION are its dramatic human aspects, not its technical achievements. Like many other chanbaras, there are many interesting characters involved in many interesting situations, interesting problems, and interesting subplots. Very interesting! It's intriguing, almost fascinating if you don't view SAMURAI REINCARNATION too often. Unlike an action film that we can always watch over and over, this movie's high points are plot and character development, so it's not much fun to watch too often unless you manage

to forget what happened the first time you viewed it. Despite the appearances of Shinichi Chiba and Hiroyuki Sanada, this is not an action adventure. I also don't consider it a martial arts movie, but there are some who say all samurai films are martial arts movies. Yeah, and Jackie Chan shops at K Mart.

Two things I noticed are its funny captions and tendency to include real life characters that actually existed at one time. The captions appear throughout about the first half hour of the film, and each chapter is called "Hell". They sort of go something like this: CHAPTER "HELL" PART 1; CHAPTER "HELL" PART 2; CHAPTER "HELL" PART 3, etc. As for my other notation written on the back of an empty condom box I'm using to write the original review on, there's occasional reference to historic people like Musashi Miyamoto, being a villain this time.

This English dubbed picture deals with an angry, exotic-looking ghost called Shiro Amasa, who was killed by the Shogun Tokugawa's samurais for being a Christian. The vengeful demon is upset over the deaths of himself and many other Japanese Christians so he revived an odd ass-



gotten suntans to play their parts, and some are obviously wearing make up to make their skin look darker. Other than the fact that facially, all the characters look more Chinese than Persian, everything is pulled off quite convincingly. Much of the outdoor footage in deserts looks like it really could be Arabia, and the sets are pretty believable as well. The structures, turbans, skimitars etc. are all excellent props, and they used real camels too.

But the splendid production values aren't limited to the attempts at creating an authentic Moslem-looking environment. As a fantasy (the topic of this whole column), there are some fantabulous special effects. Gorgeous super-impositions, nice double exposures and mattes, and even a model of a Pegasus (winged horse) which is either a mechanical robot or an animated model. There's a statue that comes to life; it is an octopus lady based on the same many-armed statue of a woman as in *GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD*. In *ALI BABA* she's played by a beautiful caucasian actress. Her make up, costume, and powers, also demonstrate more marvelous special effects.

This comical fantasy has both good music and good subtitles. Musically, the semi-disco theme is sung nicely and reminds me of Hiroyuki Sanada's singing in the theme for *HOIRO TE KEN* (U.S. title: *ROARING FIRE*). As for the subtitles, they're just about the best in a Chinese movie, since the film is in semi wide-screen, but not too much. Regardless, the subtitles are clear and entirely readable!

This colorful comedy deals with an evil magician, called Adua who wants to get a magic lamp out of a cave but its guardian demons will only let Ali Baba do it, because he was the only one born on the right day. Ali Baba is nearly killed by the 40 thieves after he stole some of their treasure, so Adua rescues Ali, but only to exploit his hereditary magical abilities. When they arrive at the magic cave (where the lamp is) on Mt. Sullivan, Adua nearly kills Ali after he goes in and gets the lamp. Adua wants Ali dead because he too now knows the secret of the lamp. A brief struggle between Ali and Adua occurs, and both Ali and the lamp get stuck in the cave and the angry Adua closes the only exit. Now Ali has control of the genie from the lamp called Doraemon (no relation to Japan's cartoon cat). But Adua tricks Ali's girlfriend into giving up the lamp and with these new powers he kidnaps her and steals the big palace Ali had created with the genie's power. So using his own weapons (flying carpet and magic crossbow) created when he commanded the genie, he single-handedly defeats the Octopus Lady, rescues his girlfriend and battles Adua. The climax is a thrilling display of FX and magic as Ali (on his flying carpet) pursues and fires at Adua (on his flying horse/robot) in a *STAR WARS*-inspired chase. It ends when Ali's magic arrow makes Adua and his Pegasus explode. □

CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS (Continued from Page 15)

and smuggling jewels hid in the funeral's casket. During a battle at the graveyard, a law officer from Hunan called Ching Chu Ying loses his arm, but so does Brother Dragon when Fang arrives. By the way, Jimmy had to change the character's name from Fang Kang to Fang Peng, because the Shaw Bros. still have the rights to that original name. Every now and then through out the film, we are treated to Fang's philosophical advice. The plot thickens and we're introduced to two more onearmed swordsmen played by David Chiang (as Li Hua) and Lo Lieh (as the evil Master Hua). A little boy is the sole witness to his teacher Chin Chu Ying being killed by the onearmed Brother Dragon, whom secretly, Master Hua (who has two arms, but he keeps one hidden) is affiliated with. When rumor gets out that a onearmed killer is at large, various bounty hunters attack both heroic



'cripples' Fang and Li, to the accompaniment of many great battles. Some are representative of an old traditional scene repeated in many Chinese period films for generations. It's that old cliché where a hero goes into a restaurant, orders wine and finds himself surrounded by enemies. There are a few skillful throwing scenes where small weapons are tossed, caught and arranged neatly within a second, and other outrageously far fetched traditions. Eventually, both heroic single armed fighters become friends and decide to figure out who the Hell keeps framing them. Their inquiries lead them to Shaolin Temple which brings up more far fetched powers and an overdone scene we've already seen a million times before, where two duelists battle it out while standing on sticks and boards sticking up out of the ground. The masked killer (Brother Dragon) turns out to be that tricky Ching Chu Ying, very much alive and now impersonating the head abbot at Shaolin Temple. The ending duel has Fang battling it out with this dishonest imitator in a farmhouse among pannicky chickens scrambling everywhere.

General Invincible

(NOTE: These credits are probably inaccurate because my video of this film is too messy to correctly read the opening credits. So I

tried my best at figuring them out, and then I got all pissed off and made up my own credits.) Produced by Ching Lin and Liu Huah Jin, Screenplay: Chen Huang Jin, Directed by Chang Fi, and additional staff members. Long Wang, Hung Well, Fat Cock, and Enormous Genitals.

I'm a little drunk as I review this film, so forgive me if my writing seems even less organized than usual. This movie is a typical mid 1970s period thing, full of high speed sword-fighting, acrobats, flying jumps, ethnic music, culture, a romantic subplot, and some costumes which are unbelievably psychedelic. It is without the budget and class of a Shaw movie, but this 1970s adventure is entertaining in a predictable, typical way. Yet it's not one of my favorites, nor is it one of the better period pictures I've seen.

I sometimes wonder if the movie is half Korean. There are a couple of battles which seem more Japanese samurai influenced than the rest of the typical, post-Chinese opera fights. In the samurai-ish battles, the sword-fighting looks like kendo, and there are the usual Japanese pauses & camera angles.

About the script. Like I (hiccup) said, I'm rather intoxicated now, so this complex plot is even harder for me to follow. The hero is an attractive swordswoman who is apparently a female general. At first, there is a practice session or two, but later she ends up in numerous confrontations with the followers of another corrupt dictator, aided by her humble servant Yen Nhu. The story is, of course, more complicating and detailed than this, with various attacks, searches, escapes, quests, a little bloodshed here & there, and magical elements of fantasy on occasion, but there's a unique element added; the heroine is an epileptic who occasionally goes into seizures and foam comes out of her mouth. Oh well, back in the 1970s, I guess them Chinese over in China were cranking out about 30 martial arts movies a month, so I figure they had to try out each and every available idea at least once. As for the fantasy element, that doesn't really kick in (pardon the pun) until the grand finale, as Tien Feng (as the villain) engages in a high-tech magic duel with our flamboyant heroes.

To Kill With Intrigue

Produced by Lo Wei in 1977, Starring: Jackie Chan, Chu Feng, George Wang, released in Japan on Toei Video

For the first time, a fanzine will attempt to cover this film as a period movie and not just because it's a Jackie Chan vehicle. Of course, Chan's presence is what makes this saga worthwhile. Otherwise, it's just another medieval flick, and a low budget one at that, especially when compared to the superior works of major companies like Shaw Bros. and Golden Harvest. Interesting to note that this film's producer (Lo Wei) came from Golden Harvest, which is an off-shoot of those legendary Shaws, since Golden Harvest founder Raymon Chow got his big break work-



ing for them Shaw moguls. But despite its restricted budget, *TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE* manages to hold its own. The colorful costumes suffice, and only a few sets had to be made, since Lo Wei made resourceful use of outdoor scenery including authentic temples. So its cheapness isn't blatant. And the opening mystical sequence where demon-like villains attack Jackie's clan is intriguing, and adds to the production value. Stock music abounds, like stuff from Japan's Akira Ifukube.

Regrettably, there's too much romance. This kind of subplot is common in many historic adventures. But in this case, the love story drags on forever and makes me want to barf in my neighbor's pocket.

My only copy of this adequate adventure is off the Japanese pre-record from Toei video. Them Japanese really seem to spice it up, adding goofy pop tunes (sung in English rather poorly) and a stupendous opening credits sequence probably not in the English or Chinese versions, neither of which have I seen. At the beginning of the tape was a trailer for this film, and at the end, trailers

for *FEARLESS HYENA* (Japanese title: *CRAZY MONKEY*), *HALF A LOAF OF KUNG FU* (*CUNNING MONKEY*), and *WINNERS AND SINNERS* (5 LUCKY STARS). Them Japanese have the right idea; exploit anything that will make them rich (er).

The majority of the swordfights occur early on. They're the standard mid-1970s stuff, you know, better than those in *SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON*, much better than the *ONEARMED SWORDSMAN*, but still, not as good as those in later successors like *DUEL TO THE DEATH*. But Jackie soon takes over *TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE* and from there it becomes a fist & kick film. Beyond a doubt, it is not Jackie's best work. But he easily shines out as this piece of celluloid's fastest, strongest, and most acrobatic actor. And for 1977, I can't think of any other actors who had the kind of skill and talent that Jackie demonstrated. This is not to say I prefer this over rated actor's work over that of all the other period film stars of that era like Fu Sheng, Carter Wang, Ti Lung or Chi Kuan Chun, as each has his own highlights and individual specialties.



Trying to follow a film in Chinese with Japanese subtitles is no easy task, unless you are Chinese, Japanese, a half breed, or if you understand Chinese or Japanese or both, or if you have a translator, or maybe a really great book that translates one language or both. As for me, I know a little Japanese. His name is Hideki and he's just three feet tall. No, but seriously, our hero is Hsiao Lei Fong, I think, and he wants revenge against a group called either Killer Bee Clan or Bloody Rain Clan because they killed his parents, and at one point some thugs try to rape his girlfriend and junk, and then there is some strenuous training that really mess up our hero, and ugh, ummm, oh yeah, the good guy kills the bad guy. Can he go now? ☐



IRON MONKEY

Created by Chang Hua Films, Starring: Chen Kuan Tai, Chi Kuan Chun, Sun Chia Lin, Liang Chia Jen

There are Chinese subtitles at the beginning of this English dubbed movie. And they are dropped way low, hard to read! Hah!! It's about time, after all the Chinese language movies I've gotten a headache over, trying to read their equally poor English subtitles. As for the English dubbing of *IRON MONKEY*, they say "but still" about four times, and "right" a few times as well. Another thought in regards to the soundtrack is that there is more stock music from Japan's composer Akira Ifukube. The 1970s feature a lot of Chinese costume dramas with songs from Japanese monster stories like *MAJIN- THE MONSTER OF TERROR* and *KING KONG ESCAPES*.

IRON MONKEY seems kind of like a Shaw film, but it isn't. You know, the same thing, only different. I suppose it was made after actors like Chen Kuan Tai, Chi Kuan Chun and Liang Chia Jen had left the Shaws and ended up in independent features like *IRON MONKEY*. The production values are decent, almost the same as the average epic from a company like the Shaws or their offspring and rivals Golden Harvest.

I didn't like Chen Kuan Tai when I was younger, seeing him in *EXECUTIONERS OF DEATH* for the first time. I later saw him in *FLYING GUILLOTINE* and had the same negative reaction. I've seen him in *HERO TATTOO WITH NINE DRAGONS* and this film, and although he's still not one of my favorites, I have gradually come to respect him. He was born in Canton in 1948, and learned Monkey style kung fu when he was eight, and in 1969 won the light-heavyweight championship at the East-Asian Tournament in Singapore. His fights in *IRON MONKEY* are pretty good, and I was especially impressed by his sword kata during a practice scene. Chi Kuan Chun and Liang Chia Jen also play parts in *IRON MONKEY*. But then, they play parts in a lot of movies, especially Chinese ones.

The story behind this average movie is all about yet another cruel dictator in the Ching Dynasty. One Chinese survivor of a Manchu raid is Iron Monkey (Chen Kuan Tai), who goes to learn monkey style at a Shaolin Temple (this is before the Manchus got to it). After the blazingly original (sarcasm) training scenes like fighting on top of ceramic pots, our hero goes to work as a Manchu soldier. At first, he seems like a villain as he kills righteous rebels alongside the other corrupt Manchurian soldiers. But this treacherous behavior is getting him promoted higher, so he's among royalty, closer to the Manchu general who ordered the death of his family. At first, it was hard for me to accept such a diabolical hero, but as I see it, if Chen Kuan Tai's character



CHEN KUAN TAI

(Continued on Page 23)



I'm afraid there's really not much of an update on Japanese superheroes this time around, as I'm writing this at an awkward time. Currently, the previous programs like KIDOU KEIJI JIBAN (see O.C. #7) and KOSOUKU SENTAI TURBO RANGER (see O.C. #8 & #9) are going off the air to make way for the new Toei superheroes of 1990. By the time O.C. #11 comes out, things will be more clear since both 1989 programs will be out of the way and the newer programs are going to be in full swing. By then, I'll be ready to write about them with the usual criticism and complaints. In the meantime, the only real update is basically a continuation on the shit covered in the previous issue. Thanks to O.C. #9 (the superhero issue), you now already know about the Ultra Brothers, Kamen Riders, and Sentais. So now you're ready for the next step; the next phase in Japanese superheroism following on the heels of the Sentais. This article on the five Space Sheriff programs was written long ago, and was meant for O.C. #9, but it had to be excluded to save room in that issue.

the exception that proves the rule. UCHU KEIJI GYABAN is probably the best superhero series of all time. Of course, I also say that about DENJIN ZABO-GA and many other programs. Let's face it, I'm indecisive, I like them all! But critically, as far as production values go, GYABAN ('Gavan') is superior. I really can't praise this one enough, what can I say?! I love this program.

The special effects are fantabulous. After all, what do you expect from a 1982 series? Nice FX are a characteristic of all the superhero programs of the 1980s. So the FX can be taken for granted, but deserve honorable mention. The hero's costume is wonderful, as are the miniatures, pyrotechnics, sets and super-impositions, all of which are featured consistently in each and every episode. One thing not to be taken for granted is the human action. Kenji Ohba from Sonny Chiba's group the Japan Action Club was well cast in the title roll. He's a spectacular martial artist, definitely one of the Japan Action Club's best, rivaling Junichi Haruta and Hiroyuki Sanada. Many episodes of GYABAN are Kenji Ohba showcases, allowing the athletic actor to fight and do acrobatic stunts that most other superhero actors would never attempt. It's sad to say that this program was probably the last one to have duels of this magnitude.



It's soft, slow, sweet, and cute. But fortunately, there are no voices of little kids!

Plot? Nasty aliens from the planet Maku want to conquer the Earth. So good aliens from Bado have started a Space Sheriff Academy somewhere in outer space. They teach students from all parts of the universe and instruct them on how to defend their own planets from evil invaders. The first Earthling to graduate and become a full fledged Space Sheriff is Ichijo Retsu, known as Gyaban to the aliens. Ichijo Retsu can do a fancy, Kamen Rider-inspired arm motion which is what has his combat suit (robot gear) teleported to him from his spaceship Dorugiran (220 meters long, weighing 2000 tons). But unlike the Kamen Riders who must yell 'Henshin' to make their superhero costumes materialize around their bodies, Retsu yells 'Jochyack.' His Dorugiran spaceship where he lives can fold into a dragon called Denshi Sei Ju Doru, which is 230 meters long, weighing 2000 tons. Gyaban's other space-age vehicles include a red motorcycle called Saibarian (2.3 meters long, weighing 500 kilo), an underground drilling tank called Scupa (13 meters, 200 tons), and a powerful land vehicle (basically another tank, but without drills) called Giyabiyon (20 meters, 380 tons). Also used against the sinister forces of Maku are other weapons of Gyaban's, like rays that fly out of his hands, X-ray vision and a particularly powerful sword. This is a sword meant for one hand, not a long samurai sword. By yelling the magic words 'Lazer Blade' ('Reiza Bur-eldo' as he pronounces it), the sharp weapon becomes a light saber, making it all the more deadly. And thus, by swinging it and yelling 'Gyaban Dynamic,' the episodic monster is killed every time Gyaban accomplishes these victories. Usually when he's not even on his own home turf. Toward the climax of nearly every episode, to put things in their favor, the cheating villains always transfer-



大葉健二
おちばけんじ

KENJI OHBA
[高橋健二] S 30・2・5 3
愛読 4 10cm・62kg 5 車 6 健康
こせ宝 8 車、バイク、自転車の
スタント リスタントマン物語

THE SPACE SHERIFFS

宇宙刑事ギャバン UCHU KEIJI GYABAN

("Space Sheriff Gavan" in English)

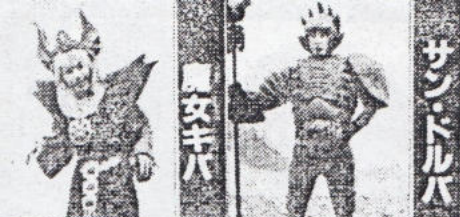
Produced by Toei, action by J.A.C., 44 episodes on TV Asahi, Music by Chumei Watanabe, Special Effects by Nobuo Yajima, Starring Kenji Ohba, Broadcast from 3/5/82 to 2/25/83

First of all, let me just point out that I do know that the English pronunciation and spelling of Gyaban is meant to be 'Gavan,' supposedly. But it is pretty damn hard to pronounce and spell it like that when in EVERY episode of the series, the Japanese characters clearly say Gyaban, pronounced 'Gyah-bahn,' or 'Gyobon,' depending on your speech patterns. The Y & A are pronounced like in the words yawn, yard, yarn, and yacht. The ending 'ban' is pronounced 'bon,' like in bonfire. Regardless, you can spell the title hero's name Gavan, but the correct pronunciation is Gyaban.

I always say how the 1970s offered the best Japanese superhero stuff. Yet this 1982 program is

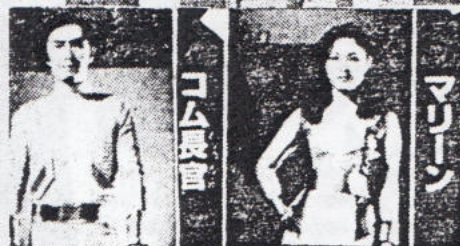
Kenji Ohba is almost as good an actor as he is a fighter. He played his part well, and came across convincingly in demonstrating emotions, be it happiness, anger or fear. In Japan, I met Kenji Ohba in person backstage after witnessing a fantastic J.A.C. stage show - also starring Sonny Chiba, Etsuko Shiomi, Hiroyuki Sanada and Hikaru Kurosaki. Kenji Ohba was the only one I got a chance to talk to. Regrettably, his English is even worse than my Japanese. However, I did manage to get him to autograph a photo of the performance. He turned out to be shy, humble and polite, and both flattered & amazed to learn he had American fans, though few. He laughed and seemed slightly embarrassed as I mentioned his older works like BATTLE FEVER J and DENZIMAN.

As good as it is, I can think of one major complaint: the ending ballad. Of course, the tunes in any 1980s series lack the excitement of those in the 1970s, but this ending song is especially annoying.



悪女キバ

サンドルバ



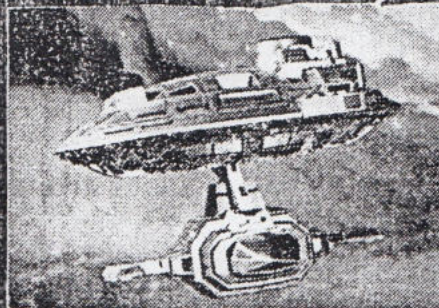
コム長官

マリリン



ボイサー

ドン・ホラー



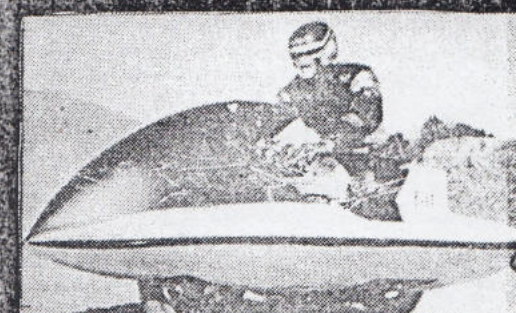
DORUGIRAN



UCHU KEIJI SHARIBAN

("Space Sheriff Sharivan") Produced by Toei, stuntmen & action by J.A.C., special effects by Nobuo Yajima, 51 episodes lasting from 3/4/83 until 2/24/84; starring Hiroshi Watarai and Yuriko Furuya, broadcast on TV Asahi, music by Chumel Watanabe.

the battle between Gyaban and his foe into an alien dimension where they think Gyaban will be helpless. Yet even though these avant garde dimensions are beyond the comprehension of the average Earthling, Gyaban is always the victor. Gyaban's hatred toward Maku is more than just professional; it's also personal. His father Boisa (played by Sonny Chiba) was killed by Maku. Boisa is, I mean was an intelligent scientist being forced by Maku to create a space cannon. The episode featuring Boisa's death is an effective tear-jerker, although nothing is ever really made of the concept of vengeance. Gyaban is never allowed to burn with anger toward his father's killers. Other heroic characters in UCHU



Rider V3. Hiroshi & Keiji, a little drunk from beer laughed up a storm to see Americans attempting to mimic Japanese superhero fights but were impressed. Hiroshi requested a copy of the tape.

Scriptwise, the invading monsters are subterranean this time, not cosmic. They are called Mado. The leader of these demonic attackers is another statue/oracle called Salco. Other devils include Gaira Shogun, Dr. Poruta, and Ms. Akumas 1 & 2. But not to worry, a Japanese lad called Iga Den has returned from Bado and is now a Space Sheriff, defending the Earth. He's called Shariban. In his costumed form, Iga Den made his debut on one of the later episodes of GYABAN as a forest ranger who was so badly beaten by one of Maku's monsters, that the only way to cure him was by sending him to Bado. By this time, Gyaban has now been promoted, he is not a Space Sheriff. He now has Comu's old job as a dispatcher and

KEIJI GYABAN include: a high ranking officer from Bado called Comu, who gives Gyaban many of his orders; via TV-like signals broadcast to Japan from Bado. Two other supporting characters who occasionally appear are Mimi and Marin, definitely two of the sexiest ladies ever to grace any Japanese superhero program. But not all the supporting characters are nice. Maku's commander is a living statue called Don Hora, and the important thing about his name is that you mustn't forget to use the third syllable, 'ra.' Actually, maybe 'Hora' is meant to be 'Horror', but I suppose we'll never know. Getting commands from that confusingly named oracle is Hunter Killer ('Hanta Kira'), a half-faced soldier who began in the first episode, but Gyaban defeated him in episode #30, so he was replaced by San Doroba and a weird little wizard called Kiba, full title: 'Mashiyo Kiba'.

As both a sequel and a remake of GYABAN, UCHU KEIJI SHARIBAN tried to offer more of the same. In fact, much of the special effects and monster costumes in SHARIBAN (oops, I forgot! I'm an American, so I'm supposed to say 'Sharivan' with a V, even though the Japanese who made the goddamn title cannot) are improvements over those in its prequel. This goes without saying, since by now you know that Toei's FX get better each year.

Hiroshi Watarai played the title hero. In many ways, Hiroshi's skills at gymnastics and martial arts would appear to be as good as Kenji Ohba's. However, this program marked the beginning of the decline in action staging, which reached its peak the previous year with GYABAN (GAVAN) and GOGURU V. (GOGGLE 5). The duels in SHARIVAN/SHARIBAN are still pretty good, but it was at this point that experimental photography was creeping in. Watarai gave the battles his all, although it's not always evident, thanks to all the pans and zooms which serve as annoying distractions. Having



Ed Martinez (top), Damon Foster, Yuriko Furuya, Suzuki, and Hiroshi Watarai

HIROSHI IN CALIF., WITH YOURS TRULY.

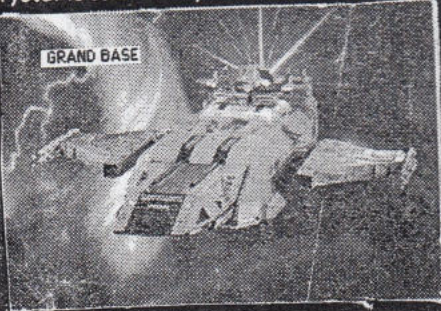


Goofing off at Fisherman's Wharf.



commander in outerspace and often coaches Shariban in this series. Shariban's giant spaceship that he lives on is called Grand Base, but it can alter into a robot called Battle Base which comes in handy when it comes to destroying Mado's spaceships that lurk in Mado's demonic dimension (another 'bad guy place' not unlike the one in GYABAN), where the ending of each climactic battle takes place. Shariban, like Gyaban also has a sword (his fatal swinging technique is called 'Sharivan Crush'), and some defensive vehicles like Motoshariban, a motorcycle. The red Space Sheriff's female assistant is Lilly (played by Yumiko Furuya). There's also some subplot that occasionally resurfaces about the search for some giant jewel called the Iga Crystal. Since the name Iga is also the family name of the main hero, I guess the magical crystal is some family heirloom or something. □

GRAND BASE



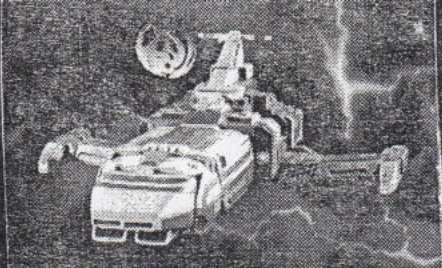
surreal series doesn't have the same kind of breath-taking action that GYABAN showcased and SHARIBAN hinted at. After all, SHAIDA was made in 1984, the year when the quality of action began to slip. But other aspects in SHAIDA are quite good. Nobuo Yajima's special effects are effective indeed, not to mention special. And the story & designs are very creative, sometimes avant garde.

But unlike many of the inferior TV shows to follow SHAIDA, this 1984 disappointment has a saving grace by the name of Annie. This female sidekick (pardon the pun) accompanies our comparatively bland hero on many of his adventures. Annie is very attractive, and she is played by an actress who is a JAC member. She makes up for the lameness of the hero. She is excellent at martial arts and does many of her own stunts. Naomi Morinaga is the actress who played Annie.



SHAIDA rarely has any mention of the other two Space Sheriff programs, unlike SHARIBAN which featured occasional team-ups with Gyaban. Unfortunately, Shaida remains a solitary hero through out. This was the last series to be a traditional Uchu Keiji sequel.

It's the story of more monstrous invaders trying to conquer the Earth, this time called Fuma. Their members include a task force of females called Girl Gundan, a strange transvestite called Shingan Po, a battle general called Hessa (Hessler?), and the obligatory commanding statue, called Cubirai this time. The episodic monsters of this surreal series look like those various ranged characters



out of old Indian folklore. When I say Indian, I'm referring to that of the country India, not American Indians, although some of SHAIDA's monsters do look like totum poles. The two heroes (Shaida and Annie) who fight these monsters spend most of their time in a spaceship called Babiros, equipped with the usual weapons, transformation abilities, and smaller vehicles.



NAOMI MORINAGA

宇宙刑事シャイダー UCHU KEIJI SHADA

('Space Sheriff Shider')

Debut: 3/2/84, Created by Toei & J.A.C., Starring Hiroshi Tsuburaya and Naomi Morinaga, music by Chumei Watanabe, FX by Nobuo Yajima again

A perfect example of the deterioration that took place in the mid-1980s. The growing inferiority I am referring to is on the part of the human elements, not the artificial FX. Hiroshi Tsuburaya was cast as the title hero. As you can tell by his last name, his grandfather was the late great Eiji Tsuburaya, the FX genius responsible for all the Toho monsters including Godzilla, as well as the monsters and heroes from the earliest Ultra Programs. But Hiroshi Tsuburaya isn't in a league with Kenji Ohba and Hiroshi Watari. He lacks the charisma, the look and most of all, the athletic abilities of his two superior predecessors. But it really doesn't matter how good or bad a fighter he is, since this



怪獣ハンター 獣魔人

KIYOJU DOKUEU JYASPION

MONSTER HUNTER JUSPION

Toei & JAC, 1985, starring Hikaru Kurosaki, 46 episodes, music by C. Watanabe, FX by N. Yajima, etc.



I can remember watching this series regularly, every Friday night when I lived in Tokyo. Back then, I looked forward to watching it and never missed an episode. But viewing it today and comparing it with other hero shows in my VHS collection, it seems to be only a small improvement over SHAIDA. JUSPION (generally spelled 'Juspion,' but pronounced 'Jaspion') has sentimental value because it reminds me of life in Japan.

The main hero Juspion is played by Hikaru Kurosaki, who I saw in person at the same JAC stage play that Kenji Ohba took part in, described in my GYABAN article. I must say, the guy was more amusing in the live performance than he was in the JUSPION series. He is not a bad fighter, since he is from JAC, amazingly. But the staging and photography is more of the same as that which first dulled SHARIBAN, and nearly ruined SHAIDA. This time, the tricky camera angles are even more overdone than in SHAIDA, which is more overdone than in SHARIBAN. Hiroshi Watari also appears in JUSPION from time to time as Boomerang, an occasional guest hero who uses a boomerang as his weapon (hence his name). Another JAC member who stars in JUSPION is the one and only Junichi (Dyna Black) Haruta who portrays the villainous Mad Gallan. Both Haruta and Watari steal this series, since the actor playing the hero is below par. He was an unreliable actor, often showing up to the set very late, and during the course of the series the dude

BEHIND THE SCENES OF "JUSPION" PHOTO BY ED MARTINEZ.

changed his hair style three times, thereby ruining the program's continuity and credibility. His disco dance scenes during the ending credits are annoying and dreadfully out of date.

In 1985, I visited Toei studios and was on the set of an episode of this program. I witnessed the filming of an insert shot of an exploding tentacle done at one of Toei's outdoor back lots, and a number of takes at an indoor set of the villain's headquarters. Best of all, I got to meet and hang out with my idol Junichi Haruta. But like Kenji Ohba, Haruta's English is also nonexistent.

JUSPION is a remake, not a sequel. It has no connection with the earlier TV programs, but it is so damn similar (almost identical) to the others that it has got to be considered a remake, otherwise, it would be a rip off. The only major difference is that instead of the obligatory ending battle in an alien dimension, the climactic battle always has Juspion's giant robot battling it out with an equally giant monster. These battles are similar to the clim-

actic robot duels in the Sentai programs, but also bring to mind the fights in the Ultra programs.

As far as the story goes, we're talking giant monsters, we're talking a main giant monster called Satangos, we're talking a heroic female android called Anli, we're talking a cute alien called Miya, we are talking Spielvan's giant spaceship called Daireon (52 meters long), we're talking a robot also called Daireon because that is what the spaceship transforms into, we're talking the sinister Mad Gallan and his spaceship Jyarudobuma, we are talking the heroic Boomerang, and I could go on about the story but we've run out of things to talk about. □



DAMON FOSTER AND ED MARTINEZ AT TOEI, PLAYING WITH MONSTER COSTUMES FROM "KIYOKU DOKUJU JUSPION."



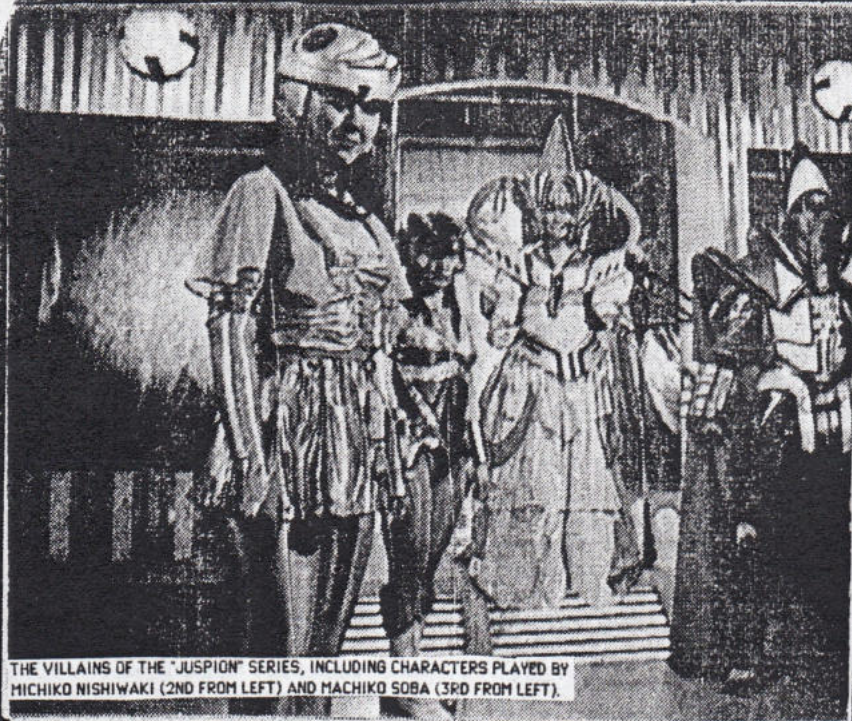
ABOVE: ED MARTINEZ (TOP ROW, 2ND FROM LEFT) AND DAMON FOSTER (TOP ROW, 3RD FROM LEFT) ANNOYING THE J.A.C. ACTORS LIKE JUNICHI HARUTA (NEXT TO DAMON) ON THE SET OF "KIYOKU DOKUJU JUSPION."

時空戦士
スピルバン

JIKUU SENSHI
SPIRUBAN

("Dimensional Warrior Spielvan") Toei, J.A.C., TV Asahi, starring Hiroshi Watari, Naomi Morikawa and Michiko Nishiwaki, 1986





THE VILLAINS OF THE "JUSPION" SERIES, INCLUDING CHARACTERS PLAYED BY MICHIKO NISHIWAKI (2ND FROM LEFT) AND MACHIKO SOBA (3RD FROM LEFT).

Despite the return of my pal Hiroshi Watari to the main hero roll, SPIELVAN (spelled 'Spielvan', pronounced 'Speruban') is not only my least favorite Space Sheriff (actually, another remake and not a sequel), but one of my alltime least favorite superhero programs, period. They could have gotten anyone to play Spielvan, yet they chose the talented Watari. He has a lot of skill never used in the show. Watari is a great fighter, although you would never guess from watching this flasco. The talented, gorgeous actress Naomi Morinaga from SHAIDA also has a main part in SPIELVAN, yet she has even less of a chance to prove her skills. There is a third familiar face whose skills are wasted in this program. Remember that Chinese movie with Jackie Chan called MY LUCKY STARS? The film takes place in Japan and deals with Chinese characters battling evil Japanese yakuza. One of the Japanese villains is a geisha played by a muscular yet attractive actress called Michiko Nishiwaki. After her success in MY LUCKY STARS, she was given a chance to act (and occasionally fight) in this otherwise inferior series. In it, she again plays a villain. Attractive females is one thing SPEILVAN has in abundance.

Synopsis: Spielvan and his female cousin Diana are from the planet Curin. Spielvan also has a sister called Helen, who he was separated from when they were little kids on their home planet. She was kidnapped by an army of corrupt invaders called Wara Teicoku, simply Wara for short. This evil empire consists of sexy girls like Riki who is played by Michiko Nishiwaki, looking prettier here than she did in Sam Hung's MY LUCKY STARS, and maybe less muscular. Two other female villains are Shadow and Gashiya. Death Zero is a black robot, and Dr. Bio is a white one. The leader of Wara is a queen called Pandora (Machiko Soba). Wara destroyed Spielvan's home planet, including Spielvan's and Diana's parents. (interesting to note that both mothers were played by caucasian actresses, yet their offspring are obviously 100 % Japanese). By the time the brother and sister have reached the Earth, both are fullgrown adults. Spielvan's attractive sister is still in Wara's possession. What Spielvan, Diana and Helen all have in common is an ability to each have their own combat suit materialize on them. But Spielvan's long lost sister is no superheroine. Once attired in her red robot gear, Wara's hypnosis takes over. So although she means no harm, she

sometimes ends up battling Spielvan and Diana. In her diabolical robot form, Helen is called Hellivira. The way Spielvan and Diana have their combat suits teleported to them (this battle armor materializes around their bodies) is by doing an arm pose and yelling 'Keshyoh'. Our two heroes' giant spaceship that they live and travel in is called Granaska, their land tank is called Galos; their jet is called Jet Galos (it's a total rip off of spaceship designs from STAR WARS), their underground tank is Drill Galos, and Spielvan's private motorcycle is called Obarlan. But those assholes from Wara have numerous battle vehicles too, like Scarl Jaws (spaceship), and Scarl Don (ground tank). Inbetween battles with these invaders who have re-located on Earth, Spielvan goes by the name Joe Yosuke, to avoid suspicion. I would do that too, because I know that if ever I met somebody with a high-tech name like Spielvan, I would stop and say to him: 'Hugh? What? That's a pretty out-of-this-world kind of name! You sure you're not some alien from outer space on the run from deadly monsters and robots!?' □

CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS (Continued from Page 18)

wasn't doing these executions, some other Manchu would. Try not to be too hard on the guy, after all, it's only a movie. Doing these militaristic atrocities paid off because he gained the trust of the Manchus, making it easier to sneak up on them, and to isolate certain evil officials from their troops. One by one he kills the officials and eventually the general himself. Then he goes back to Shaolin Temple, shaves his head to make himself baldier than a bowling ball, and becomes a fulltime monk.

The Four Assassins

Produced by the Shaw Brothers, Probably Directed by Chang Chen again, starring Fu Sheng, Kuo Chui, Chi Kuan Chun, Wang Lung Wei, Carter Wang, Richard Harris, and that guy who usually has a bald scalp but not in this one.

Basically, just a remake of a superior film, FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH which I already included in ORIENTAL CINEMA #8, on page 15. Again, Fu Sheng plays a hero that survives and Chi Kuan Chun plays one who doesn't. Also like FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH, two villains are played by Wang Lung Wei and Liang Chia Jen. Liu Chia Hui makes cameos in both, though in this one he plays a villain. This is the first and last time I've seen him play a villain, since he's always been main hero in other Shaw efforts like THE MASTER KILLER and CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA (see O.C. #9, page 16). THE FOUR ASSASSINS' plot is also right out of FIVE MASTERS, only this time, instead of it being about a team of Shaolin rebels who learn martial arts to defeat an army of Manchus, it's about a team of Chinese rebels who learn martial arts to defeat an army of Mongols. But THE FOUR ASSASSINS is inferior to FIVE MASTERS.

The martial arts are all average for films of this type. This is a positive statement. Of



HIROSHI WATARI (PICTURED) AUTOGRAPHED THIS PROMOTIONAL POSTER OF THE SERIES "JIKU SENSEI SPIRUBAN," A.K.A. "DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN."

21日祝・22日(日)と
まで毎日

You haven't died until you've met...



The Four Assassins

A SHAW BROTHERS PRESENTATION

A WILD NORTH FILM

R

course, it's hard to just compare the choreography of selected period films when I watch so many different kinds of martial arts movies all the time. These fights naturally don't compare with the fights of Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee or Sammo Hung, but when compared to other Shaw period films of the late 1970s or early 1980s, these duels are standard. The Shaw company seemed to die in the early 1980s, so no new period films have come from the Shaws recently. Perhaps if the genre had continued, the fight staging would have progressed, gotten even better than this. This isn't to imply that these battles aren't good, because they are. With an all star kung fu cast like this, the fights are anything but bad.

THE FOUR ASSASSINS is not as colorful as THE KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS or AVENGING EAGLES. It's a little bland, probably intentionally, to maintain some gloom & doom in this depressing movie. The climax is one of the saddest I've seen in a kung fu epic.

Predictability. Yep, this feature has its share of predictability. There are lots of things I've seen a million times before, such as Chinese people. Oh well, I thought that last sentence would have been funny, but I was wrong. But still, the phrase "but still" is only said five times in this picture, three of which were all within the same two minute time frame. There's also the mandatory stock music present. In this case, they are Akira Ifukube tunes, snatched from Japanese monster features like WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS and MAJIN, MONSTER OF TERROR (see OC #8). There's also more than average scenes of bloodspitting. I counted at least five

blood spits. Speaking of spits, there is a disgusting old man who was only added to this motion picture to gross out American audiences. This ugly old fart has somewhat of a cold, as I counted his spitting phlegm out of his mouth at least five times! That is sickifying!

The original Chinese title is MARCO POLO, since it does feature the Italian explorer, played by Richard Harrison, obviously just some caucasian guy they met in a bar somewhere. The guy is facially expressionless, with an acting ability comparable to that of a soggy cigarette, Roger Moore and a small salad bar. As for the Marco Polo character, the film's title obviously had to be changed for English release. There's too much kung fu for a historic epic based on fact.

It's all about Marco Polo's travels in China and Mongolia, but I suppose it all starts in this story where an assassin played by Carter Wang is killed by Mongols. Marco Polo works with the Mongols who are closely watching four young men they suspect are more righteous rebels opposing the Mongolian dictator Khublai Khan. The four heroes are played by Chi Kuan Chun, Fu Sheng, Shih Szu and the acrobatic Kuo Chui, though spelled Kuo Tsui in the opening credits. The four have taken refuge in a peaceful village that has no weapons, martial arts or tools which might be used against the ruling Mongolians. But the four are each given strenuous physical labor that continues to toughen their bodies so they can be even more powerful fighters. This secret training in the disguise of work is actually strengthening their kung fu and peujalism. Somewhere about this time, Marco Polo shows signs of being a nice guy, and almost sides with our heroes. But the foreigner never lifts a finger to help the four in their fights against the Mongols. The battle ends with two of the heroes dying in a fight to keep the Mongols out of the village. □

Heroes in the Ming Dynasty

Presented by Daichin Film Co., Hong Kong, 1979, Producers: Tam Man On & Chaw Ling Kung, Planning: Ho Kok Cheung and Li Shor Dong, Production Manager: Shu Aug-Fong, Cameraman: Yau Yue Woo, Lighting: Lam Shu Yuen

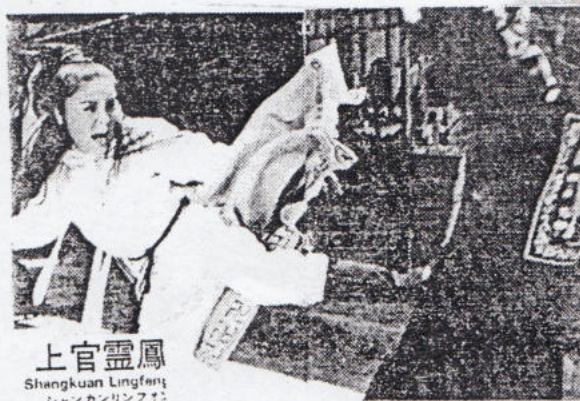
In this typical late 1970s historical epic, there's yet another scene of an attractive female unconvincingly disguised as a man who enters a bar populated by her enemies. Then there's the obligatory test of skills as she knocks a mouse off a roof by tossing a peanut at the unfortunate rodent, and an obligatory 'catching of plates' shot. The actress is the facially alluring Shangkuan Lingfeng, and she may fool the film's moronic characters into thinking she's male, but she doesn't fool the audience. Not with all that make up and distinctly feminine facial features. I must say, if dudes really looked like her, I just might switch over and become a homo. But getting back to the story's typical traditional traits, HEROES IN THE MING DYNASTY doesn't overlook the usual jumps, acrobats,



or Carter Wang as another white haired tyrant.

It has a highly formulated, technical plot which would make it as dull as a two hour conversation between an old man and his two-year old, illiterate grandson if it were not for its being dubbed in English. If this were a Chinese language version (with or without English subtitles), I could never have sat through the first 20 minutes (fight free) without my mind wandering so far, it might order a meal from an expensive restaurant I couldn't pay for. Them Chinese wasted a lot of time and celluloid in describing a story which could have been explained just as well were it to be condensed.

The script, synopsis, story, plot, saga, and tale are all basically the same thing, although spelled differently. They're about this nasty king who for some reason explained in the film while I was using the sanitary facilities, decides to frame one of his loyal generals called Shung. So the treacherous king orders the righteous General Shung escorted to the king's pad, when all along, the plans are for the king's nasty officers to kill Shung on the way there, then cover it up, probably by framing some innocent individual. This is accomplished, so General Shung's daughter and another swordfighter (one of Shung's soldiers) both team up to take on the bad guys. During the climactic duel, there are no survivors. □



上官靈鳳
Shangkuan Lingfeng
シェンカンリンフエン



FU SHENG

The Sword

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1979. Starring Adam Cheng, Norman Chu, Kou Sheng, Tien Feng

Golden Harvest has never really excelled at making good costume dramas, as this sleeper proves. THE SWORD is dullsville, the celluloid sleeping pill. Part of the reason THIS ONE is so goddamn boring is because the script is so complex, highly formulated with a lot of detail. Following this story is very very difficult to us Chinese language impaired people because of Golden Harvest's super imposed logo in the lower left corner of the TV screen. I promise, if ever I locate an English dub of THE SWORD, I'll review it in a future issue so I can describe its saga. I guess the confusing story is the result of most of the older scripts being used over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over in the 1970s. They were running out of ideas in 1979, so THE SWORD looks more like a period film of the 1980s (i.e. DUEL TO THE DEATH) than a movie from the 1970s (i.e. THE CHASE). Also distinctly different is the filming style between Golden Harvest and the Shaws. On the whole, the Shaws do it better, with superior production values. For example, their production values like lighting are better; THE SWORD is too dark.

There's practically only one song in this movie, not including the love ballad for the end credits. The tender song used for the opening graphics is repeated over and over throughout the tale to the accompaniment of much frustration. This instrumental is meant to be romantic and touching. There is a lot of romantic bullshit and the film takes itself way too seriously. Yet THE SWORD has a saving grace; that being its swordplay. Adam Cheng and Norman Chu (not to mention their acrobatic doubles) really do swing them swords in a slick way! All these swordfights are one-on-one duels, no henchmen. Too bad.

Oldtimer Tien Feng guest stars, and he has got



to be one of China's most popular actors. He has co-starred with everyone, Jimmy Wang Yu, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Ti Lung, Bruce Li and others. Movies to his credit include THE ONE ARMED SWORDSMAN, THE CHINESE CONNECTION, DRAGON LORD, FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH, A BETTER TOMMOROW, MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE and hundreds more. The main actors in THE SWORD are Adam Cheng, Kou Sheng and Norman Chu. The latter two would go on to be Golden Harvest's most commonly seen stars of 1980s costume dramas.

There aren't a lot of predictable cliches in

this motionful picture. This one offers the following: good guys vs. bad guys, a harakiri scene, gymnastics, reversed jumps, bloodshed, and a daring rescue from a burning tower of wooden poles.

As near as I could figure out, this is the story of a heroic swordsman called Lin Mak Yin (Adam Cheng) who somehow ended up with a cursed sword called "Chi Mud." Damn, that's what I had always wanted to name my sword, but they beat me to it. Anyway, this evil sword gets him in all sorts of trouble. His ex-girlfriend's husband is Lin Wan (Norman Chu), and he's the most jealous Lin Wan I know of. Not only does he kill his wife for liking Lin Mak Yin, but keeps on hiring an assassin (Kou Sheng) to attack him (and others) at night. In the end, both swordsmen duel to the death. Lin Wan's death is great! He gets chopped in half, from head to crotch, down the spine, while doing one of those outrageous flying jumps. What a way to go. □



costume dramas) in unique, different and innovative. It's more like a combination of ballet and gymnastics than a genuine martial art. This form of 'fighting without violence' is far less likely to encourage fighting among its fans, unlike a Chuck Norris flick (where the fights are violent and boring).

The costumes in this motion picture are also above average. Well designed, colorful, good detail. Hai Tao (hero) has a costume which is the least interesting of all the characters in the movie. But he is a drunk (a bum), so naturally he's not as fancy as his fellow fighters. This element helps to give depth to the flick's character development.

Kid With The Golden Arms

Produced by Runme Shaw, Screenplay by I Kuang & Chang Cheh, Editor: Li Yen-Hai & Chiang Hsing Lung, Choreographer: Tsao Hui Chi, Fighting Instructors: Chiang Shung, Lu Feng, Tai Chi Hsien, Assistant Producer: Chen Lieh, Assistant Director: Chiang Sheng, Chien Yu Wen, A Shaw Brothers Presentation, Edited for TV by Larry Benski, Producer: Mona Fong, Director: Chang Cheh, Starring: Kuo Chui, Lo Mang, Sun Chien Chiang Sheng, Pan Ping Chang, Wei Pai

[NOTE: This movie review was written in 1980 or 1981, way back when my writing style was even more naive than it is now. As I read this article, I kept wanting to change it and re-write it, but that would take too long. My writing style has changed considerably since when I wrote this review, but for the most part, my opinions are the same. This movie is still a personal favorite of mine.]

To the average kung fu viewer, KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS is probably just another typical Shaw Brothers costume drama. But to me, it's a landmark movie. It was the first movie I had ever seen in a Chinatown theatre. It's also the first Chinese movie I ever saw in Chinese, with English subtitles.

KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS is undoubtedly a fabulous film, definitely one of my favorites. The martial arts choreography is superb. But much of this style may be hard for the average American moviegoer to understand. Americans are used to seeing non-artistic violence, like that of Chuck Norris. American choreography is no different than full contact karate sparring. Fortunately, the choreography for KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS (as well as many other



3 MOVIE—Crime Drama
"The Kid with the Golden Arm." (Chinese; 1980) Government agents battle thieves. Sun Chien. (2 hrs.)

2 MOVIE—Crime Drama
"The Kid with the Golden Arm." (Chinese; 1980). (2 hrs.)

I would also like to praise the acting. But the acting is pretty much the same as in other Hong Kong swashbuckler films. No better, no worse. The voice dubbing makes the acting seem low in quality. Chinese movies are dubbed into English in Britain. Occasionally, traces of British accents leak through the dialogue. This can be distracting (to hear a medieval Chinaman talk like John Cleese), but it doesn't detract from the movie.

The musical score is good, although not often used in the film. I hope it's not stock music, used in dozens of other motion pictures.



The photography is also worthy of discussion, considering that this is only a Chinese movie. Chinese photography is often much worse. Almost the entire production was filmed in a studio. Although it's obvious that the fights are filmed indoors (the fights take place in a forest), the movie sets look well crafted and expensive.



This is one of those films that I'll see over and over again. I think this is one of the best movies I've ever seen.

A police officer called Yang Yu Han has been ordered to escort a large amount of gold through a forest, to relieve the famine at Yellow River Valley. During his journey, he is joined by some skillful martial artists who will defend the gold from thieves. These martial artists are: Yen Chu (nicknamed 'Long Axe'), Fong Chi



('Short Axe'), swordsman Li Chin Ming (a tough guy with a lot of pride), and his girlfriend Leng. Also scheduled to help escort the gold is a fighter called Hai Tao (Kuo Chui). Although skillful at kung fu, he's a drunk. He fights best when he's drunk. An evil gang of martial artists called the Chi Sa Gang plans on stealing the gold. This gang has four chiefs: Golden Arms (#1), Silver Spear (#2), Iron Robe (#3), and Brass Head (#4). Endless battles break out between the two groups. In the end, only Hai Tao and Leng have survived. □

SUPER NINJAS

Chinese title: "FIVE ELEMENT NINJAS" (1982)
 Presented by WW Entertainment and Run Run Shaw, A Shaw Brothers Production, Scenario by Chang Cheh & I Kuang, Producer: Mona Fong, Directed by Chang Cheh, Edited for TV by Larry Benski, Starring: Cheng Tien Chi, Lung Tien Hsiang, Lo Mang, Chen Hui Min, Chen Pei Hsi, Wang Lieh, Chu Ke



There's so much action in this kung fu thriller that it tends to lose itself amidst the long weapons duels and frequent gore. I love action-packed adventures, including this one even though it gets stale due to repetition. There's really not much of a story, just enough revenge to keep the Japanese villains and the Chinese heroes at each others' throats. The weaponry battles are long and fierce. Personally, if I were one of these characters, I probably wouldn't want to get up and continue swinging my spear after receiving my first stab or kick. Regardless, SUPER NINJAS is one of my favorite ninja movies because it is not really a ninja movie. I consider a ninja movie to be more derivative of Japanese chanbara, not a Chinese movie with Chinese dressed as ninjas superficially, who do all the typical stunts and mannerisms of other Chinese characters. SUPER NINJAS is more of a kung fu film, and I prefer kung fu movies over the ninja films, arguably the worst type of film ever to come from the martial arts movie genre. But SUPER NINJAS suffers from confusion, as Japanese villains

(Continued on Page 29)



GODZILLA VS MONSTER ZERO

GODZILLA VS. MONSTER ZERO (Japanese title: "Kaiju Daisenso," 1966) released to America in 1970, a Toho Co. Ltd., Henry G. Saperstein Production, Executive Producers: Henry G. Saperstein & Reuben Bercovitch, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Movie Script: Shinichi Sekizawa, Photography: Hajime Kotzum, Sound Mixing: Hiroshi Mukoyama, Art Direction: Takeo Kita, Recording: Ataru Konuma, Lighting: Shohichi Kojima, Music Director: Akira Ifukube, Sound Arrangement: Takashi Shimomaga, Assistant Director: Koji Kajita, Editing: Rayochi Fujii, Sound Effects: Sadamasa Nishimoti, Developing: Tokyo Developing Lab, Production Managers: Masao Suzuki & Taoshi Kolke, Artwork: Akira Watanabe, Special Photography: Sadamasa Arikawa, Lighting: Kyuichiro Kishida, Optical Photography: Yukio Manada & Sadao Izuka, Scene Manipulation: Fumio Nakadal, Asst. to Director: Akiyoshi Nakano, Sound Recording: Glen Glenn Sound, Production Supervisor: Richard Crown, Director of Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Director: Inoshiro Honda

Under its original English title MONSTER ZERO, this movie changed my whole life. I first saw it in 1970 or 1971, and from that point on, I was a diehard Godzilla fan. At that impressionable age of seven, I had only seen a few science fiction films I can remember. I'd encountered 200 MILLION YEARS B.C. and enjoyed it, and I had also seen FRANKENSTEIN. Even though I was only about 4 or 5 when I saw FRANKENSTEIN, it didn't scare me because I thought I was watching an unusually long episode of THE MUNSTERS, and one where Herman's destructiveness indicated he must have just been

In a bad mood, probably because his nuts are in his neck. But when I first saw Godzilla in action during MONSTER ZERO, I knew I had discovered a unique thing, and one which I never outgrew. MONSTER ZERO is a classic of its type. I suppose I enjoy this story more now, as an adult. As an infant, I really was only in it for the monster battles. One feeling has always been with me that still brings tears to my eyes. It's the scene where the Earth astronauts leave Planet X with fellow Earthlings Godzilla & Rodan stranded on this dark, cold alien planet. The monsters seem so sad and homesick.

MONSTER ZERO is a wellmade film with good production values. I have very little to complain about. Akira Ifukube's music is good, but it all sounds the same, from film to film. Eiji Tsuburaya's special effects are great, despite occasional mattes and miniatures which aren't as convincing as they could have been. One gripe I have is with continuity. But the incident I'm about to describe is a minor detail so it doesn't take away from the fun of the movie. The flawed sequence is one where the character Glenn (played by the late American actor Nick Adams) receives a letter from his girlfriend, an alien recently executed.

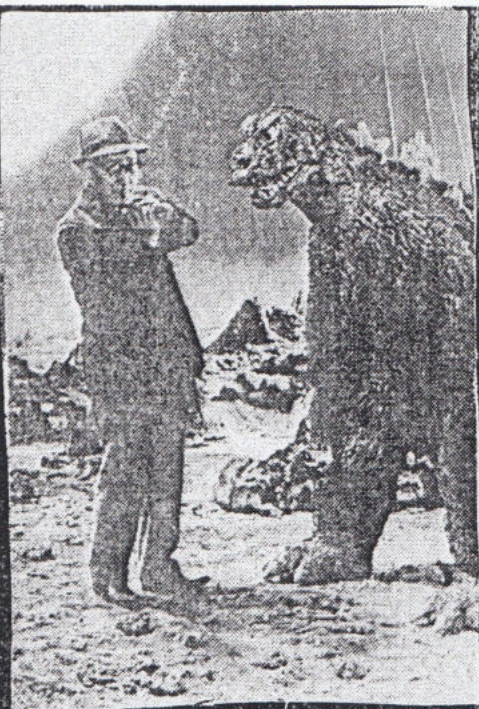
The letter makes mention of a conversation between the two of them. This conversation actually occurred as she was handing him the letter which must have E.S.P., and she's shot by aliens immediately afterwards. An interesting thought comes to mind, though having nothing to do with what was previously discussed in this paragraph. Have you ever noticed how often in MONSTER ZERO Nick Adams adjusts his shirt, tucks it in and pulls-up and straightens his pants and belt? During the course of MONSTER ZERO, I noticed his varying adjustments in his attire five times. Perhaps he does this a few more times I didn't catch.

MONSTER ZERO is Nick Adams' second Japanese SF flick. His first was FRANKENSTIEN CONQUERS THE WORLD. Sometime after the release of MONSTER ZERO, Adams committed suicide. I don't know details of his death (i.e. how or why), but rumor has it he fell in love with his Japanese co-star Kumi Mizuno. This comes as no surprise, as I think most heterosexual males have at one time in their lives been attracted to her. Supposedly, Adams asked her to marry him and she refused. Perhaps we'll never know if this is true or not, nor will we know if this has anything to do with his mysterious death.

Seeing Godzilla (the real Godzilla) and Rodan in action is a beautiful sight. They are a real charm as they destroy cities and battle the three headed dragon Ghidrah. These monsters had a unique personality lacking from more recent movies like GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE. It is sad that the interesting monsters of the movies from the 1960s and 1970s will never appear again. What we've got coming from Toho now is just the name 'Godzilla' placed on a dull dinosaur who lacks the originality and enjoyment of the older masterpieces.

Astronauts Glen (Nick Adams) and Fuji (Akira Takarada) have discovered alien invaders on Planet X. They've taken the Earth monsters from Japan (Godzilla was hibernating under lake Miyojin and Rodan was in some mountain called Washikasawa), to Planet X in exchange for an audio tape supposedly





containing the recipe for a medicine that can cure all diseases. When the tape is played on Earth, the controller of Planet X turns out to be as honest as a politician, since the tape is actually a warning that unless we obey them and kiss their asses, they will destroy us. Their means of destruction is to control the monsters Godzilla, Rodan, and the 3-headed alien Ghidrah. The X-men (no, all you 35 year old kiddies, it's not the same X-men as in that geeky comic nonsense), want the Earth's water supply. Glen's main squeeze Namikawa (Kumi Mizuno) turns out to be an alien spy, and before she cacked, she was negotiating with a nerdy inventor called Tetsui Teri (Akira Kubo), who's been fondling the sister of astronaut Fuji, much to the uptight spaceman's regret (not that it's any of his bee's wax who his adult sister does The Nasty with). Tetsui's ingenious invention is a pretty little case resembling a make up compact (or diaphragm) which emits a loud noise that proves damaging to the computer men from Planet X. With this device and other scientific marvels, them Xmen become



ex-men. Indeed! Get it? Ha ha ha ha! I kill me! Speaking of killed, that's what happens to the invaders. With them out of the way, the monsters go back to their natural instincts and quit destroying Japan. Then Godzilla and his winged sidekick Rodan beat up Ghidrah for the second (but not last) time. So then Ghidrah flies away with both his tails between his leggs.□



TERROR BENEATH THE SEA

TERROR BENEATH THE SEA (Japanese title: "Water Cyborg"), Japanese release date: July 1, 1966, released to American TV in 1968 by Teleworld, Inc., Directed by Hajime Sato, Music by Shinsuke Kikuchi, Produced by Koji Kameda and Se-ichi Yoshino, Asst. Producer: William Ross, Executive Producer: Masafumi Soga, Photographed by Kazuo Shimomura, Recorded by Ko-ichi Iwata, Lighting by Toshiaki Morisawa, Art Shinichi Eno, Edited by Fumio Soda, Dialogue Continuity: Linda Davies, Asst. Director: Akira Tatemo,

Production Manager: Masatoshi Kono, Special Effects by Nobuo Yajima, Underwater Photography by Akira Tateishi, Filmed at Toei Studio, a joint production of K. Fujita Associates Inc.

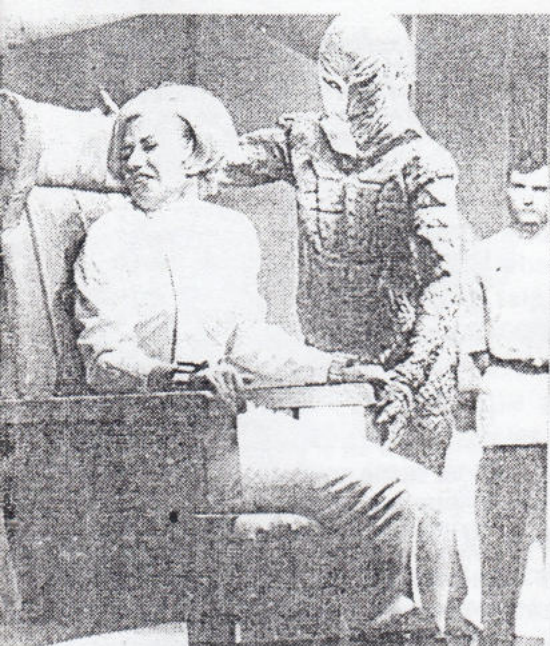
The tacky 1960s style may make traditional fans of Japanese SF unable to take this thriller seriously, but if TERROR BENEATH THE SEA isn't one of my personal favorites, then I don't know what is. I love TERROR BENEATH THE SEA like George Bush loves the idea of turning this country into a military dictatorship.

At first glance, 1966's TERROR BENEATH THE SEA may not look like a Japanese movie because of its nearly all-white cast. The only main performer in this Toei effort who is Japanese is a young Sonny Chiba, known only as Shinichi Chiba back then. A year or two later, he would act in commercials promoting a car called the Sonny and as a result, Sonny became his nickname. Being a science fiction film and not a martial arts film, Chiba doesn't display his karate skills much. There are a few fights where he displays maybe one or two kicks, but on the whole, the content of these struggles is mostly boxing hooks, grabbing, strangling, and wrestling shit. Regardless, viewing Chiba's early works like TERROR BENEATH THE SEA is a necessity for all fans of Sonny Chiba and his Japan Action Club (responsible for many of the superhero things in O.C. #9). Chiba manages to keep a straight face throughout this campy farce... TERROR BENEATH THE SEA is more worthy of his skills than his 1961 debut, in another SF movie from Toei, INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN. The other actors are all caucasians, approximately 40 of them. They're speaking English and meant to be Americans but in reality, the actors were Americans, Germans, Greeks, Turks, British, etc. and all were permanent



residents in Japan. Andrew Hughes plays Dr. Howard, and was also in productions from City Films (Paris), MGM, and would later appear in the Godzilla classic DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (Toho; 1968). At the time of his appearance in TERROR BENEATH THE SEA, he was a member of the Tokyo Amateur Dramatic Club. The manager of Pacific Television Corporation, Mike Daneen plays a mad scientist, and like leading lady Peggy Neal, would also appear in another Japanese SF film called THE X FROM OUTERSPACE (see O.C. #8 for details). Amazingly, Peggy Neal was just 19 when





she starred in **TERROR**. At the time, she was a junior at Sophia University's International Division, majoring in economics, political science, and psychology. She'd been modeling since four, although this was her first movie. As a child, she lived in Nagoya for

two years, but by the time she appeared in this adventure, her memory of the language had faded considerably. This made acting under the Japanese crew difficult. Regardless, her performance is satisfactory, though overacted, which is how the Japanese prefer it. The only actor not speaking English is Chiba, but regardless, everyone is re-dubbed into English, even though the rest of them are quite clearly mouthing English words.

There was quite a talented staff behind **TERROR BENEATH THE SEA**. Master musician Shinsuke Kikuchi

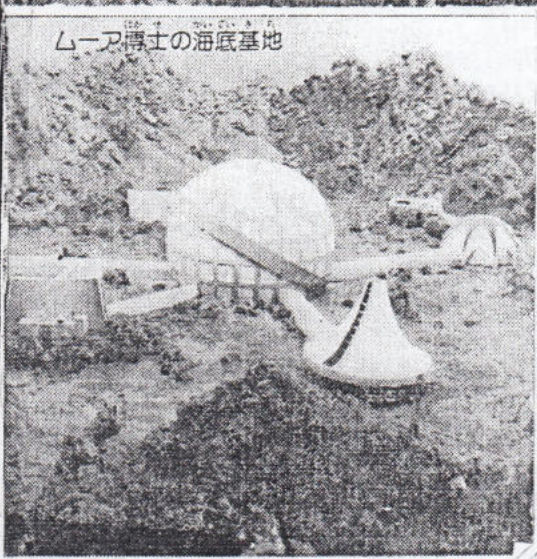
who's worked in Gamera films and superhero TV programs really outdid himself when doing the exciting, enjoyable soundtracks, and his magnificent tunes in **TERROR** are among his best. Also a master in his own right is Nobuo Yajima, responsible for special effects. In most of Toei's movies and TV shows, his FX in **TERROR** aren't his best, but they're pretty damn good. The quality and designs of the monster costumes are almost as good as the well-crafted miniatures of an underwater city.



田中耕二 5'11" 110 lbs. 23 3
福岡 4'10" 68 kg 5'8" スキー、
黒、トリコロールカラー 8 本
操、極真空手、普通自動車



ムーアの海底基地



The action packed tale deals with the adventures of two reporters called Ken Abe (Sonny Chiba) and Jenny (Peggy Neal). While investigating mysterious goings on at a toxic waste site on an island somewhere, they end up in the clutches of the sinister Dr. Moore (Erick Nelson). Dr. Moore and Dr. Helm run an enormous structure under the sea where they change people into reptilian zombies, called "Water Cyborgs." Moore's plan is to conquer the Earth by changing the population into these "oceanic robots" with no will of their own. But a kind physicist called Professor Howard helps Ken and Jenny to escape. Just as the water cyborgs go out of control because their brainwaves are generated by a computer which was damaged. This disruption was caused by a new kind of missile called a Bloodhound, fired by the American navy's submarine fleet as they combated the illegal underwater kingdom. As the cyborgs battle it out with Dr. Moore and the other corrupt scientists who mutated these vengeful gillmen, Ken, Jenny, and Dr. Howard manage to escape before the aquatic base explodes.

CHINESE COSTUME DRAMAS (Continued from Page 26)

are given Chinese names, and Chinese heroes are sometimes given more than one name.

This is one of Shaw's last period films, and it's interesting to compare it with earlier works I've covered previously. The costume drama genre has evolved a long way since **THE SILENT SWORDSMAN**. The early 1970s had Bruce Lee, making it important that all martial arts movies (including costume dramas) feature actors who really knew kung fu. The late 1970s offered Jackie Chan, who made speed and complex kung fu tricks popular. So as an early 1980s effort, **SUPER NINJAS** represents the standard requirements of its time. Director Chang Cheh had been directing costume dramas since the 1960s at least, and was involved in the Chinese film industry since 1947. His 1960s films had bloodshed, and this idea was used a lot more in **SUPER NINJAS**, perhaps his goriest film.

The skill of the actors is undeniable. The main hero is played by some unknown I have never seen anywhere else called Cheng Tien Chi, and his martial arts skills are great. The same can be said of Chen Hui Min. Chen Hui Min has been in many movies including **CHINESE MACK**, **DRAGON LORD** (as Tiger), **BRUCE LEE THE INVINCIBLE**, and even **GHOST SNATCHERS** (see O.C. 8). He was born in 1945. Along with Lo Mang (best known as the title villain in **KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS**), they all fight traditionally in this kind of film, for what it's worth. As with many flicks of this calibre, the fighting motions are rather mechanical.

al, especially the stances and armblocks.

It's attempt at character drama and historical education just barely suffice. The acting isn't really great, nor is the script, so their minor attempt at a meager love story isn't very effective, especially since both the guy and the girl are rivals. It comes as a refreshing surprise when the deceitful hero quite suddenly stabs his imminent girlfriend (an evil ninja) during what starts off as a tender moment. Historically, SUPER NINJAS just barely explains how ninjutsu was originally started in China, and later taken to Japan in 200 A.D. where it was perfected.

After a slick opening title, we see two rival schools of Chinese martial arts. Yen Chang's students Chao Tin Hao, Li Pao, Ho Fan, Pao Tung, Pa Te Yung, Li Mu, Lin Che Sa and brother Lin Chen Yi, Hwa Kan, Chen Hao (Cheng Tien Chi), and Chi Shang (Lo Mang) alias Li Yen keep on defeating all the students of Mr. Kang, so Kang hires some vengeful ninjas from Japan. The leader of these corrupt assassins is Chen Yun (Chen Hui Min). There are five kinds of ninjas he commands, each representing a different element which serves as their symbol, camouflage and what type of weapons they use. The five element ninja are: gold, fire, water, wood and earth. With their various nearly magical powers, acrobats, weapons and ability to fly up in the air in exactly the same way that bricks don't, they wipe out Yen Chang's school with the help of a sexy fe-



male spy played by the beautiful Chen Pei Hsi. The only survivor of these duels and massacre on the school is Chen Hao, who escapes and learns ninjutsu from Master Li Ying Wu, who studied ninjutsu in Japan. By this time, the Japanese ninjas have taken over the area completely and have even killed their former colleagues, Kang and his disciples. The next battle for these nasty ninjas is with Chi Hao again. But now, Chi Hao has learned a lot of Chinese ninjutsu and is aided by his fellow students. At the end of these colorful, elaborate duels, both Chen Yun and Chi Hao are dead, as well as all of the hench ninjas. The three surviving heroes look so bloody and messed up that they probably die too, after the ending freeze frame. □

Duel To The Death

Produced by Golden Harvest, Starring Norman Chu, Kou Sheng, Flora Cheung

You see a lot of things you don't normally get to see every day. For example, have you ever found yourself taking a leisurely stroll and then suddenly a 20 feet high ninja pops out of the ground who splits into several smaller ninjas that attack you?! Or how about when you're being pursued by ninjas at night who are in the air riding kites? Don't you hate when that happens?! Actually, I can't understand why these ninjas bother with kites to fly, since nobody in this flick is confined to the ground. The law of gravity is ignored in this mid 1980s flick, more so than in any other medieval adventure.



22 ADAM SMITH'S MONEY WIVES
25 MOVIE; 2 hrs.
"Duel to the Death." (1987) Flora Cheung
33 A-TEAM—Adventure; 60 min.
Hulk Hogan's visit to B.A. (Mr. T) is intern

Needless to say, DUEL TO THE DEATH is a VERY imaginative, creative movie. It's a lot of fun, and I would consider it one of my favorites if it weren't for the depressing ending. The characters are pretty brutal too. A number of characters I thought were heroes end up as the most despicable of villains by the time this uneven film ends.

Tsui Siu Keung, Tu Thieu Cong, Tsui Shao Chan, Thiu Siu Keung and Norman Chu are the names of one of the main actor in DUEL TO THE DEATH. This Chinese actor plays a Japanese swordsman called Hoshimoto, no relation to the old cartoon mouse of the same name. Attired in samurai garb, he almost looks Japanese, though his hair style gives it away, and the fact that all the feature's Japanese characters (even the ones in Japan) speak fluent Chinese doesn't help matters much. This wellknown actor is more at home in this period film than in the modern crime drama BLOOD RITUAL, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. It's easier to pretend you can swing a sword, than to do serious street fighting. His sword tech-



生死決

Duel to the Death

nique is two-handed like Japanese kendo, but otherwise it looks like the usual Chinese stuff despite superficial Japanese trappings. Oh well, so long as it's fast, right?! Speaking of Japanese, they are the villains again. They're a gang of ninjas sent to capture Chinese monks for some reason. They're portrayed badly, as evil, drunken ruthless scumbags. There's even a scene where a nasty samurai kills a puppet master at a festival because the performance featured a comical Japanese puppet insulted by a Chinese one. Even Hoshimoto turns bad at the end and must duel with his friend the Chinese hero against his will (he was assigned to kill his pal. Samurai honor stuff again). Their wild and crazy duel ends with both of them injured and bloody. I assume they die later, but then

監製

胡奇明
染野行雄

三國志

THE THREE KINGDOMS

之關公傳



the film crew must have run out of film at the last moment. All we see is both duelists standing in freeze frame as the end credits role.

The duels are fast and fun. I already praised the speedy sword fights, but there are also a couple fist fights. Generally, there are the usual 'patty cake' fights but the full contact stuntwork popular in following films is hinted at, given early recognition. Those backbreaking fights did not just pop out of nowhere.

I first saw DUEL TO THE DEATH on May 19, 1989, on TV. The TV Guide clipping indicates that the film was released on video in 1987, and since it was mentioned in the book "Martial Arts Movies: From Bruce Lee to the Ninjas," DUEL TO THE DEATH had to have been produced before 1985.



In comparison with THE CHASE, DUEL TO THE DEATH represents massive improvements on the part of Golden Harvest. My only real complaint directed at Golden Harvest is their choice to super impose their logo (not to mention the logo of the video company) over the subtitles, making them harder to read. They just assume no English language audiences care to view these movies. This misconception is understandable, considering that most Americans are egotistical, arrogant, trendy, unimaginative snobs who won't watch anything foreign. So to all you fellow caucasian idiots, it's all your fault when I must go to the optometrist for an eye examination because of poor eyesight caused by my squinting at the TV screen. I'll be expecting a check in the mail. □

Demi — Gods and Demi — Devils

Featuring Norman Chu and Kou Sheng again, and probably produced by Golden Harvest once more

No way in Hell's bathroom am I ever going to attempt to painstakingly create an indepth, accurately detailed synopsis of the plot for this fun yet insignificant creation. The story (s) isn't meant for Americans; the English subtitles are only about halfway visible, which isn't good enough for a film like this where the story is fast-paced and complex. In this case, they may as well not have subtitles, as it makes little difference. The only bit of story I could make heads or tail of was about the first 30 minutes. It starts off with Prince Yu unjustly accused of a crime he didn't commit, and he's pursued by soldiers. He gets cornered into a forest of poison toads and gets sick. He wakes up, is chased by the warriors again, is rescued by Brother Chu, learns magic powers from a manuscript at Ting Lung Temple and then burns the document so it doesn't fall in the hands of a villain played by Kou Sheng (again). Shortly after, Chiu Siu Keung's heroic character is introduced. By this time, the script has become a wild & crazy rat's maze with numerous subplots, and with more characters than hairs on Magnum P.I.'s chest.

Chiu Siu Keung (A.K.A. Norman Chu, supposedly) is one of the only recognizable actors I was familiar with, among a cast of new faces. He looks sensational, right at home in this colorful movie full of beautiful costumes. Hard to believe this is the same dude who looked so out of place in BLOOD RITUAL.

I guess this mid-1980s film could be considered a state-of-the-art costume drama. With the post-Jackie Chan action films

(more on them next issue) gaining in popularity, less medieval adventures like this are being made each year, and this is one of the last. As one of the latest in a long genre started in the 1920s or '30s, this addition is with all the traditional plots, cliches and situations seen over and over in historic dramas produced throughout this soon to expire century. But as a newer, more experienced entree, all of these elements are executed more efficiently than in ancestors like COME DRINK WITH ME. There's a flashy 1980s flair present; swordfights are super dooper fast, super-imposed FX (hand lazars for a fantasy element) are beautiful, and the plot, though confusing is more innovative. One other difference which separates DEMI-GODS AND DEMI-DEVILS from many of the 1960s innovators is that it's not quite as bloody.

This acrobatic picture represents a theory of mine (as well as everybody else on the planet) that each year, the costume dramas get less historic, fact-based and classical. The trend has been more toward action, intrigue, adventure and the like.

Highlighting the assorted chases, fist fights, gymnastics, overdone high jumps, fantasy elements (magical hand lazars), and sword duels is an interesting musical score. The theme song is typical majestic period film stuff, there's some recognizable stock music, and occasionally, some enjoyable synth pop tunes that put Depece Mode to shame.

For the record, there are no demi-devils or demi-gods in the movie, whatever the Hell they are. □

Filipino Corner

Okay, it's like this— I had errands to run downtown in the dirty city, so I put on my gasmask and ventured into deepest, darkest San Leandro. The natives on the street seemed surprised to see a white person so far from his turf. I hid in a nearby video store and noticed all the movie posters of Asian actors, though unfamiliar ones. At first I thought, "Right on! Another Chinese or Japanese videostore for me to rent from. Totally cool! Time to rock!" But I couldn't figure out why classy videostores run by Japanese or Chinese would be stuck in such a depressing part of town. The writing on the posters and rental boxes consisted entirely of English letters, though it was spelling words and names that looked Mexican to me. It turned out to be a Filipino videostore. It really surprised me that there are movie makers in the Philippines, since from what I've seen, I was of the impression that the entire Filipino population had already migrated to California. Considering how many of them Asian Latinos there are out here, I assumed the Philippines had to be empty by now.

ISANG BALA ISANG BUHAY (1989)
('One Bullet, One Life')

Presented by Viva Video & Viva Films, Production Designer: Arthur Santamaria, Cinematography: Ely Cruze, Sound Supervision: Rolly Rute, Film Editor: Edgardo Vinarao, Musical Director: Jaime Fabregas, Story and Screenplay: Jose N. Garrean, Jojo H. Lepus, Produced by Jessie Ejercito, Supervising Producer: Eric Cuatico

No English subtitles, but no problem following the ultra simple plot of this crime drama with the budget of a 3rd Grader's weekly allowance. In spite of this mild cheapness ISANG BALA ISANG BUHAY's production values are sufficient, because nothing is flaunted, overdone or exploited. Getting back to the language barrier, the Filipino language sounds basically Spanish to me, but with occasional fusions of weird Chinese dialects like maybe Vietnamese, or perhaps Cambodian. Oh well, it all sounds the same to me. The Spanish influence in these islanders' language help, since Spanish has its relation to English. Speaking of English, on occasion some characters mutter an English word or two, sometimes even a full English sentence. You see, there are so many different variations to the Filipino languages in

all those islands and villages that English is often accepted as their universal language, used at public announcements & parties, on TV, by models & their photographers, and other posh, high-class people. One thing I'll say is that there are little ideas and situations I haven't seen a lot of before. Every time I watch a Chinese or Japanese movie of a certain genre, I always feel that I'm watching the same film over and over, but since ISANG BALA ISANG BUHAY is just about my first Filipino film, some scenes seem intriguing and new to me. No doubt this intrigue will disappear as I see more and more Filipino movies and become more familiar with the traditions and cliches of this race.

Their script is a traditional crime drama about revenge, all stemming from gang-mafia (or tribe?) violence, and/or assassinations based on industrial rivalries. The hero normally works repairing cars at some typical bamboo-like village but is hired early on to take revenge for a death that resulted from criminal warfare of some kind. There is a lot of dialogue, as our determined hero Daniel (Ramon Revillo) under acts from scene to scene, most likely asking questions from various people who may know where the sought after culprits are. Among other things, there is a subplot involving his romance with an attractive model called Delores (Dawn Zulueta) who can't decide whether she wants to speak English or Filipino so she alternates, using words from both languages. In between lengthy talking scenes, Daniel shoots down individual villains using his pistol with a silencer on it. There generally isn't enough blood or pyrotechnics in most of these gunshots. There are even a couple of decent martial arts fights I keep comparing with those in Chinese, American and Japanese flicks. Being mainly familiar with the choreography from just the three countries, these Filipino duels seem derivative of the ideas of the three. However, to be fair, the Filipino stagers of fights have a style all their own. The sound FX seem kind of like those in Chinese films, the martial arts style reminds me of those used in Japanese films, and the photography & editing seems too American, with occasional quick edits and distracting camera angles. But it's pointless for me to go on discussing the kung fu, since that's a minor ingredient. This is a gun film, and a mellow, slow paced one too. At the climax there's a long, drawn out duel as the hero shoots each villain one-by-one in a warehouse. There are a number of flashy explosions, including a plane that gets blown up. Daniel gets fatally shot too. The final scene with him and Delores as he dies is meant to be a tearjerker, and it probably is, if you can understand that odd mixture of Spanish, English and Chinese they call Filipino. □