

Oriental Cinema AND VIDEO

Issue # 14

1992

Edited, Written,
and Published by
that Damon Foster

AN ACTION PACKED ISSUE!
FEATURING THE JAPAN
ACTION CLUB: SONNY CHIBA!
DYNAMAN! HIROYUKI SANADA!
KIKAIER! ETSUKO SHIOMI!
KAMEN RIDER! KENJI OHBA!
INAZUMAN! HIROSHI WATARI!
AND MORE!!

ALSO INSIDE: John Woo, Godzilla,
Jackie Chan, Ultraman, Bruce Lee,
Chow Yuen Fat, and lots of fan-
tasy, kung fu, superheroes and
monsters.

ORIENTAL CINEMA AND VIDEO



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BLEDITORIAL

I suppose if you've never read O.C. before, you are expecting some typical, traditional editorial where I say something generic like "It's been a good year for Far Eastern Film: GODEZILLA VS. GHIDRAH has gotten international exposure, John Woo is again getting critical acclaim, and the new ULTRAMAN . . . TOWARDS THE FUTURE is a hit." Well, that's not the way things are done in O.C. You see, OC represents the darkside of Asian film fandom. There are plenty of serious, no-nonsense, traditional, generic fanzines with no personality. OC is not one of them. Be prepared for some wild stuff.

But, if you're a regular reader of OC, and your cranial capacity is higher than that of a common fruitbat, you'll notice that this issue is, ironically, actually a little toned down & subdued, compared to my more controversial, previous issues. This issue may lack some of the cynicism and scandalous negativity which has gotten me into all sorts of trouble. I've received complaints & threats from certain individuals who will remain nameless. I never trust people who lack names, so I'll play it safe to avoid that which may be considered 'liable' or 'slandorous,' words which were just recently shoved down my throat and into my vocabulary. I don't see OC's suppression of anger to be selling out, it's just keeping me from being sued. After all, one lawsuit, no matter how small, is enough to wipe out an insignificant, tiny, little fanzine like OC.

One fact remains: OC can never become a typically technical, straight-to-the-point, apathetic, onedimensional geek fanzine because I'm just too damn angry. Far Eastern films are fun & all, but we must not forget that what's on the screen is just fiction. There's a lot of dangerous stuff in this world, and I'm not going to let you forget it. The point is, don't live exclusively for the point of watching TV. Do it for occasional fun and not as a way to hide from reality. And another thing, lose some weight & get a haircut: you look ridiculous. More than anything, I wish OC to serve as a positive inspiration for fans. When OC first started out as Japanese Movie Sci-Fi in the '70s, I wanted it to be the best of America's Oriental oriented fanzines. In my opinion (for what it's worth), OC has reached that level, although most of the competition is pretty pathetic (to me). The point is, I succeeded in my task (to my satisfaction), and I'm almost proud of myself for once. I'm just a fan, no better than you. Don't just sit there and waste away. Whether you are into fanzine making, amateur films & videos, being in a band or whatever, there's no point in just sitting there, not trying to promote yourself or let your own creativity grow & evolve. Set goals for yourself, in whatever your ambitions and hobbies



are. Just don't try anything stupid such as flying like a bird or breathing underwater! I've tried those too, and they're very dangerous!

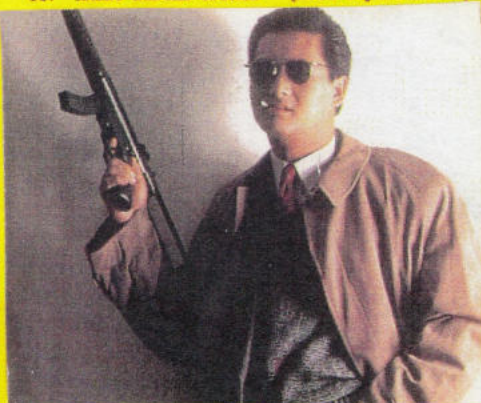
I've met one too many useless, fat geeks who are accomplishing nothing, and I shudder at the thought that many of my readers are like that. All other fanzines seem to promote stagnation, but I won't. Opposing viewpoints welcome.

If you are a new reader who's never been enlightened by my attitude before, you're probably wondering either "I thought this was a film fanzine, not some weird, psychological, preaching, bible for radical ideas," or maybe just "what?", so let me introduce all this to you. Yes, it's yet another fanzine on Asian cinema. But you see, this one is the antisocial product of a silly, obnoxious old punk, not some nerdy geek who reads comics & builds model kits, or a serious, uptight Roger Ebert wannabe. My writing doesn't get too technical, because that would be hypocritical. I write in the same way I speak, goddamnit. My parents were friends of Andy Warhol, I grew up in a liberal family of artists, hippies, & former beatniks, so freedom of expression has always been commonplace. So somehow, somewhere, I developed a preference for alternative entertainment instead of the mainstream crap: i.e. GODEZILLA VS. MEGALON instead of TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY, the Sisters of Mercy instead of George Michaels, KAMEN RIDER instead of SUPERMAN, MAX HEADROOM instead of THE SIMPSONS, and A BULLET IN THE HEAD instead of DIE HARD. Yet I'll tolerate all that middle-of-the-road shit, but do the mainstreamers tolerate my taste? No, and thus I've spent a lifetime being hassled because of the films I watch, the music I listen to, and the clothes I wear. This made me defensive

and nasty, as OC demonstrates. OC, a fanzine that bites! I hope I haven't bored you with all this talking about myself, but OC isn't getting me rich, so at least I'll use it to make a name for myself, and to try and improve the quality of the fandom.

Okay, it's like this: the subject of this issue is the work of Japan's biggest action star, Sonny Chiba, and the work of his group the Japan Action Club. But OC is multi-dimensional, so expect to see other stuff in this issue too. There are films from Hong Kong and the Philippines, and there's other stuff like kung fu, Japanese monsters, fantasy, and as always, superheroes. One column lacking is Chinese Chillers, my discontinued section on Chinese horror films. I excluded it because there are enough never fanzines covering Chinese horror, and because if I see one more lame movie about Taoist hopping vampires, I'll puke my guts out like a volcano.

I must now thank all of you who've sent me rare videos for me to review. I depend on all you collectors to keep me informed as to what rare





obscure Asian movies & TV shows are available within the last five years, I've been given (I mean I traded for them; nothing comes free in the fanzine business) unique oddities like English dubbings of Japan's SAIYUKI (see OC 8) TV series, LION MARU #1 (see elsewhere in this issue), the first few episodes of DAI TETSUJIN 1-7 (see OC #13) in the form of a movie, the first episode of ULTRA Q, and comedies like FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS and SPACE WARRIORS 2000. I hope to receive more rare English versions of these kinds of programs. Also on my want list are FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER, English or subtitled versions of A TOUCH OF ZEN, and early kung fu-type films such as THIEF IN THE CAR (1920), MONKEY FIGHTS GOLDEN LEOPARD (1926), and THE BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE (1929) which supposedly was dubbed in English (yeah, right) or subtitled! I'm also interested in obtaining any rare superhero films from Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, or any other Asian countries outside of Japan. I don't need Japanese superheroes, ordinary kung fu films & action films or Japanese monster movies; they are all quite easy to obtain.

I recently heard somebody say 'Damon doesn't like animation.' This is not true! I love some of Ray Harryhausen's work in films like JASON & THE ARGONAUTS, and I'm fascinated with the concept of suspended animation, like animals who hibernate for years and years! What I don't like is cartoons. That's right, CARTOONS! CAR-FUCKING-TOONS! You know, crap like BEAUTY PAIR, THE SIMPSONS, MICKEY MOUSE, ROBOTECH, etc. Look, all you stupid cartoon geeks, animation describes the process, not the type of TV series. An animated TV show which uses animation cells & drawings is called a 'cartoon', so quit calling them 'animation', you geeks.

And now for another gripe of mine, but broken up into two categories, (A) and (B). The topic is video bootlegging. A is about those who illegally & deviously copy and sell current HK movies, and part B is a warning to those who deal similarly with tapes of Japanese superhero programs. I don't think there's anything wrong with giving out tapes as gifts or as part of a trade, but when some jerk makes a profit by selling a copy of somebody else's movie or TV series, that's when I get mad enough to kick that crook in the nuts until his own semen drips out of his eye sockets.

A. The new popularity of Hong Kong films has made many new naive, inexperienced, glib, foolish fans get ripped off blindly by illegal video dealers. Let this be a warning to all you dumb-fucks spending big bucks for illegitimate tapes! Beware of offers from common, especially those in the L.A. area, who charge \$100.00 or more for illegally copied videos! These same crooks charge similarly high prices for mere photos of H.K. actors and actresses. I've heard many reports from various different people who were tricked into wasting hundreds of dollars for mere copies of tapes, when it would have been much cheaper to buy the original pre-records from decent, honest, legitimate, law-obiding video dealers. If you find yourself buying somebody's copy of a tape, you should only have to spend about \$10.00, which just covers the bare necessities (price of blank tape, postage, packaging). It's pretty obvious when a tape is an original pre-record; it comes in its original box with title and pictures, and has its professional labels. So if some conniving stranger calls you or writes to you and charges you more than a maximum of about \$20.00 per bootleg tape, don't say I didn't warn you.

B. Though not as big a ripoff as the H.K. bootlegging, there are now many thieves in the superhero trade too. Many of these crooks are in Southern California too, but skumbags of this nature are everywhere. I have a personal grudge against superhero exploiters because so many of them have gotten their bootlegs from me! I gave these vids to them for free, having them pay just enough to cover my expenses (buying blank tapes, packaging, postage, etc.) and these creeps have the nerve to make copies of whatever series I sent them, selling them to others for much more, so they make a profit. So far, things in

the underground superhero scene haven't gotten as bad and the HK scene, no reports of jerks selling superhero tapes for \$145.00, \$300.00 or whatever. However, some assholes sell their tapes by the episode, charging as much as \$20.00 per episode, or others who'll rip you off by selling them at \$15.00, \$20.00, or even \$30.00 per tape. But granted, sometimes the professional companies & distributors don't make such films & TV shows available to us. In this case, we must depend on bootleggers. So if you are really desperate enough to buy overpriced bootlegs, don't be in a hurry. Ask around and get the lowest price possible, which should be around ten measly bucks per tape.

I guess there's probably not much else to say, and I'm getting thirsty, and a nearby glass of whisky is looking mighty good.

"Buuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuurp",

Damon Foster

P.S. I know it's really gross; me burping in print like that. I hope I haven't killed your appetite, although many of you should probably lose weight anyway.

BACK ISSUES & SUBSCRIPTION INFO:

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT A SUBSCRIPTION: Forget it. This damn fanzine only comes out once a year because it's so hard to make. There's no telling when I might suddenly decide to cancel making OC, so subscriptions are impossible.

WHOLESALE RATES TO DEALERS: If you buy five or more of any one particular issue, that's \$5.00 each, just a dollar off regular price; no exceptions. That is, not unless you blow me, and even then, you have to be a blue-eyed blond girl wit big tits.

BACK ISSUES, \$6.00 EACH:

[Price in Canada: \$7.00 each, Price outside U.S. and Canada: \$8.00]

1992, OC #13: Hong Kongese horrors, modern action dramas, Japanese monsters, superheroes, and much more! Including: The MR. VAMPIRE movies, OUTLAW BROTHERS, IRON KING, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, ENTER THE DRAGON, AKIRA, and a lot more.

1991, OC #12: Modern H.K. action thrillers, Japanese superheroes, Chinese horror & fantasy, cartoons, Filipino films, and stuff like SON OF GODZILLA, ACES GO PLACES, WINSPECTOR, THE BLOND FURY, VOLTUS V, RETURN OF THE DRAGON and KIKAIER.

1990, OC #11: Kung fu movies, HK action movies, cartoons, monsters, superheroes and DEJIN ZABOGA, A BETTER TOMORROW, GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER, FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH, DRAGONS FOREVER, BIKIDS and tons more.

1989, OC #10: Kung fu historicals, giant monsters, Japanese superheroes & cartoons, fantasy, horror, plus ONEARMED SWORDSMAN, BLOOD RITUAL, ALI BABA, MONSTER ZERO, TWIN SWORDS, FIST OF FURY, GHIDRAH, the Space Sheriffs, and other stuff.

1988, OC #9: Horror, superheroes, kung fu, cartoons, fantasy, plus KAMEN RIDER, THE BIG BOSS, HOCUS FOCUS, DYNAMAN, and so on.

1987, OC #8: Japanese monsters, superheroes, SNAKEFIST FIGHTER, and other crap.

1986, OC #7: The Monkey King, KING KONG VS. GODZILLA, monsters, cartoons, kung fu & superheroes.

1984, & '85, OC #6: Chinese horror, Japanese superheroes, martial arts, etc.

1983, OC #5: Bruce Lee, INFRAMAN, cartoons, Godzilla, martial arts, etc.

1982, OC #4: Japanese monsters, superheroes and maybe a cartoon or two.

1981, OC #3: Japanese superheroes and giant monsters too.

1980, OC #2: Ditto.

1978, OC #1: Godzilla, Kikaidar, Ultraman, Kamen Rider.

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Chiba in Kage no Gundan

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CORRECTIONS! Last issue, I accidentally called Hiroshi Miyauchi, 'Hiroshi Yamuchi!' In this issue, I accidentally will refer to the group Ono Ken Yukai as 'Ken Ono Yukai.' This stunt group is mentioned in a couple of this issue's articles. For the record, Ono Ken Yukai means, roughly, 'Mr. Ono's Sword Group.' On page 5 of this issue, in the middle column, I made reference to a nonexistent article supposedly elsewhere in this issue, on MESSAGE FROM SPACE. There's no such article in this issue, sorry. I couldn't find room for it.

ORIENTAL CINEMA AND VIDEO is published irregularly, about once a year by Damon Foster. It's been copyright © by Damon Foster too, but he's such a nice guy that he wouldn't sue you for copying a couple of these photos if you really needed to, because DF thinks lawsuits are stupid. But DF would be crushed & hurt if you cut up OC, so please don't damage this copy of OC in any way. Also, don't make whole copies of this fanzine to sell to other people, because that would be enough to make DF cry, take drugs and probably end up in an insane asylum (again). Besides, you wouldn't want to copy the whole issue anyway, because printing prices are too high, and stapling them together can get to be a bitch.



SONNY CHIBA

[a.k.a. Shinichi Chiba, & Sadao Maeda]



There are those who see him as an inspirational visionary who changed the face of Japanese movie & TV action as we know, love & sometimes hate it today. However, there are also those who've never heard of him at all. Regardless, Sonny Chiba has left an impression on the martial arts world which is bigger than Barbara Striesand's nose.

Conceived nine months earlier, Sadao Maeda was born on January 23, 1939, which is exactly one day before Jan. 24, 1939. The location of this birth which brought him to this world was Fukuoka, in Kyushu, in Japan, in the Orient, on Planet Earth, etc. He was the oldest (and still is) of a family of five children of a test pilot in the army, and he & his family, during WWII were transferred to a base in Chiba. No coincidence that he'd later change his name to 'Chiba,' based on the city. Sometime well after his birth, he excelled at sports like Gymnastics at Nippon Taiiku Daigaku (the Japanese Physical Education University). For five years, he studied karate beside-ugh, I mean over, that is, under renowned karate teacher Mas Oyama Koncho. He attained a second degree black belt in Judo, fourth degree black belt in ninjutsu, and also tried his hand at kendo and shorinji kempo. He practiced these martial arts enthusiastically & continually, making his fists harder than Chinese Algebra. His love of exercise and the physically demanding in the late 1950s drove him to train hard for the upcoming 1964 Tokyo Olympics, until a hip injury sustained at work (construction!) forced him to take that ambition and kiss it sayonara. Oh well, the Olympics' loss was superheroism's gain!

In 1960, Sadao won Toei's 'New Faces' contest, and thus started his acting career and was given an alias, the now famous name Shinichi Chiba. Why somebody would want a stage name is beyond me; it seems to defeat the whole purpose of fame and being wellknown. To me, a stage name makes about as much sense as the time my girlfriend wore her skimpiest, tightest mini-skirt to go hang out with 'just friends.' Regardless, Sadao, Shinichi (both of them) had begun his acting career on the silver screen, not to mention the groove tube. As is often the case with painstaking research, I've discovered a slight disagreement as to what was his first movie. The Nov. 1967 edition of the Japanese entertainment magazine *AL-EYE* says it's *THE DRIFTING DETECTIVE* (Toei; 1961), but some old fanzine from the 1970s called *Fangraphic* claims it's *POLICE STATION STORY*. Who knows? Who cares? Since there will never be a special "What's Chiba's First Film" issue of *O.C.*, it will remain a mystery. So let's just assume they're the same movie, and that one of the two publications mentioned fucked up their

translation. Shinichi Chiba also played characters in two TV shows from 1968: *RAINBOW MASK* and *MESSENGER OF ALLAH*, not to mention the heroic spaceman Space Chief ("Iron Sharp," in the Japanese version) in the movie *INVASION OF THE NEPTUNEMEN*

("Uchu Kaizoku Sen," in Japan). Paying 4,000 yen a month for rent, while getting paid just 6,000 yens for acting, not to mention his disappointed father's disowning him made those years a major bummer for him. Fortunately, actor Ken Takakura (popular for a series of 'Yakuza' movies in the 1960s, as well as American movies like *THE YAKUZA* and *BLACK RAIN*) helped him out, buying him a new suit and driving him home when he hadn't enough money for the bus.

The Asian arts of groin-kicking had a wave of popularity in the mid-1960s, and although details are a bit on the sketchy side, 'twould appear that Shinichi Chiba's own dangerous exercises may be part of the cause, or perhaps a symptom. Shinichi was one of the first action stars to really know any martial arts. Regrettably, the 1960s offered very little adventures dealing with even the slightest karate-type action. Sure, there had been Ken Utsui's 'Starman' sci-fi dramas and the appallingly boring *NINJA BUT-AL GEEKO* (see *O.C.* #11) series, but the true kung fu movies and Toei's flashy superheroes were mere embryos at this point. Not until our barbarian yankees cast Chinese smart aleck Bruce Lee in 1967's *GREEN HORNET* program (see *O.C.* #6 or maybe #7) did TV experience some fist-flin, 'ball bustin' action. Hell, if it's true that kung fu is a grace similar to ballet, then 'nutcracker' has a whole new meaning.

In the mid-'60s, thanks to his modeling a car called the 'Sonny,' he got his nickname: Car Chiba. Oops, my mistake! The name is Sonny Chiba! His popularity as Japan's most popular action star was evident. This was a big deal back then, seeing as audiences all over the Far East were coughing up more and more yen to see movies depicting action, violence, deaths, bloodshed, hatred and all that other good stuff. While Chiba continued portraying various detectives, superheroes and samurais, way over in Hong Kong, actors like Jimmy Wang Yu, (*ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN*, *TWIN SWORDS*), Yue Hwa (*COME DRINK WITH ME*), and Lo Lieh (*SILENT SWORDSMAN*) starred in 'sword hero' movies (see *O.C.* #10) which were the roots of the kung fu explosion of the 1970s. As for Chiba, he got a chance to throw a few punches in the sci-fi thriller *TERROR BENEATH THE SEA* (Toei; 1966), and in 1968 starred in the successful crime drama series *KEY HUNTER* (Toei as always, and lasting 150 episodes!), which boosted his popularity considerably. Not only did he star, but wrote scenarios and put a great deal of time and effort into each episode. This typecast him into similar roles in dozens of nearly identical programs about police, including *THE BODYGUARDS* (see ad on page 6).

Anticipating an upcoming demand for actors & stuntmen who enjoy getting beaten up, that upstart Sonny Chiba started up the Japan Action Club in Ebisu during 1969. Sonny taught his students everything he knew about show biz: acting, over acting, martial arts, gymnastics, how not to get hurt too badly while doing a stunning stunt, and more. For more on Sonny Chiba's Japan Action Club, see page 11. It was also



蘭光太郎

日本が誇る名私立探偵。警察の信任もあつい。変装の名人で、あらゆる人物に化けることができる。

ABOVE: Young Sonny Chiba, as he appeared in later episodes of Toei's early B&W superhero TV series *NANA-IRO KAMEN* ("Rainbow Mask," 56 episodes; lasting from 6/3/59 until 6/30/60).

アラームの使者

昭和35年7月7日〜昭和35年12月27日



SUPERHERO CHIBA! ABOVE: As the title hero in *MESSENGER OF ALLAH*. BELOW: Sonny Chiba as he appeared in *ROBOT DETECTIVE*.

新條敬太郎



some time during 1969 that Chiba married Yoko Nogawa and they had a daughter named Juri, hopefully in that order. By 1972, the J.A.C.



stunt teams were known for working not only on **JUDO IKHO KUS-EN RIDER**, but other adventure TV programs as well, including **ROBOTO KELJI**, which means **ROBOT DETECTIVE**. Not only was his brother Jiro Chiba a main star in the series, but Sonny himself made guest appearances in this exciting Toei series.

At about the same time when Chiba and his new proteges worked on TV like **KAMEN RIDER**, **ROBOT KELJI**, and **KIKAIER**, over in China, Bruce Lee hit it big with his kung fu movies. Very few Japanese were interested in Hong Kong movies unless it featured Japanese actors (i.e. films like **SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON**), yet the Hong Kongese were quite into Japanese films. Chiba was wellknown in H.K., so mutual friends had hoped to introduce Bruce Lee to Sonny Chiba, in hopes that just maybe they'd collaborate on some sort of possible film project. But Chiba declined the offer because of his own busy schedule doing TV projects in Tokyo, and because he'd seen enough H.K. movies, most of which were a load of chop foey. Yet in 1973, Chiba finally agreed to do a movie filmed in China.

The flick is some illusive drama called **TOKYO-SEOUL-BANGKOK**, and it co-starred H.K. babe Nora Miao, longtime actress in Bruce Lee's movies! By this time, Sonny Chiba knew who Bruce Lee was, so a meeting between them was made by mutual friends (Nora Miao? Yasuaki Kurata? Maybe we'll never know). But as always, Chiba was busier than a circusman at an African tribe's puberty ritual, and previous projects postponed his filming dates in Hong Kong by 10 days. Shortly after Chiba's arrival in Hong Kong to film **TOKYO-SEOUL-BANGKOK**, much to his disappointment he learned that Bruce Lee had died just three days before! Just think of it: Chiba & Lee in the same movie! Yes, it was too good to come true. Regardless, Chiba idolized Lee, and became very much influenced by him. On the set of **TOKYO-SEOUL-BANGKOK**, Nora Miao said to Chiba, "Your height and shape is very similar to Bruce's, the elasticity of your body and the swift movements too." No doubt something is lost when this sentence was first translated into English!

It was in the early 1970s that the martial arts boom finally hit. When Bruce Lee's 1973 cockbuster **ENTER THE DRAGON** reached Japan with good enough box office results, the Japanese were finally aware that chop socky films could make lots of yens. So Chiba was more in demand than ever before. Actually, Japanese movie makers had wanted to make chop socky-type fighting films before, but Chiba felt that such films would fail in Japan. But not only did **ENTER** prove profitable in Japan, but Chiba was personally inspired by the performance of Bruce Lee. If then Chinese will make kung fu movies, then the Japanese shall make karate movies. The first was 1974's **THE STREETFIGHTER**, and later **THE EXECUTIONER**. Sequels and variations followed. In comparing Chiba's karate films to H.K.'s kung fu films, it becomes apparent that Chiba lacks (perhaps intentionally) the grace of his Chinese counterparts. This put certain idiots under the assumption that Chiba was not a great fighter. In fact, Chiba's skills are excellent, though not as flashy or theatrical as the Chinese competition. Chiba's style isn't as dancelike or artistic, but it's effective, brutal & lethal, and more

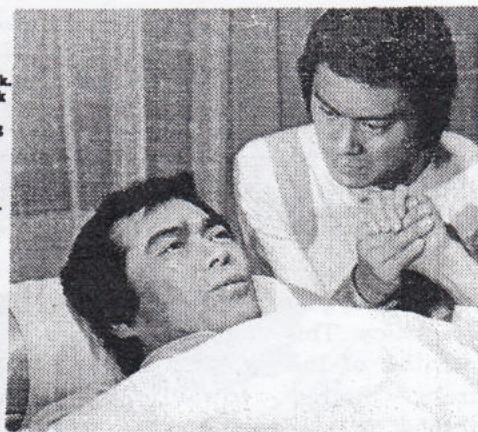
sulted to the rugged anti-heroes Chiba usually played. The karate films are independent of the kung fu movies, for better or worse, and more closely resemble their true roots: samurai films. This is a bit unfortunate for me, as I consider most samurai films to be about as fun as spending a week with your face up Claude Akins' asscrack.

Ironically, in 1977 (during the peak of Chiba's karate movie period) there was a bare-knisted, full contact sparring karate tournament in Hawaii that Chiba took part in, as part of Mas Oyama's (Chiba's real life instructor) team, up against the Hawaii All Stars. Up until Chiba's bout with Greg Kauffman (former East Coast Champion), there was, as always the case with skeptics and nerds who live boring lives, suspicion that Chiba's fighting abilities are strictly theatrical. People who whine about such things miss the whole point of cinema anyway, but this tournament proved Chiba's incredible skills to be authentic. Chiba is the only actor I know of to effectively perform a theatrical stunt in a real fight, and one which scored, knocking his black opponent down. The stunt was a handspring (an acrobatic act best described as a forward cartwheel) which kicked Kauffman and then Chiba landed on top of him! Chiba later won the fight by a knockout in the second round, using a front kick.

By the late 1970s, Chiba's proteges of JAC & his brother Jiro Chiba were all starring in various films & TV shows. Chiba would frequently star with JACsters like Hiroyuki Sanada and Etsuko Shiomi in movies like **MESSAGE FROM SPACE** and **SHOGUN'S SAMURAI**, both of which were made into TV shows as well. For more on the **MESSAGE FROM SPACE** TV series (which featured Sanada, but not Chiba), see page 4. **SHOGUN'S SAMURAI** is part of Chiba's successful "Plot of the Yagyu Clan" genre, which was a series of films & TV series based on the real-life Yagyu ninjas from Japanese history. The 26-part TV show (see page 4) was shown in California with English subtitles as "The Yagyu Secret Scrolls," and an English dubbing of one of the Yagyu films (**SAMURAI REINCARNATION**) was reviewed in O.C. #10. Even more successful than all that Yagyu stuff was the **HISATSU** (or **HISATSU JIKEN**) series & movies from Schokiku, yet another ninja adventure starring Chiba & other JAC members. Indeed, the overworked Chiba had been in more movies & TV shows than Joan Rivers had had face-lifts.

In the 1980s, Chiba appeared in **TIME SLIP**, **VIRUS**, **THE BUSHIDO BLADE**, **HUNTER IN THE DARK**, and made guest appearances in Hiroyuki Sanada's films like **SHOGUN'S NINJA** & **ROARING FIRE**, and guest starred in a couple of episodes of 1982's **SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN**.

sci-fi TV series. This dramatic performance was a nonaction role, but it was one of Chiba's most effective performances. Regrettably, most Chiba fans in this country have never seen him in this outstanding program. Even more regrettable, if not a downright pinner, is that so



ABOVE: Chiba and Kenji Ohba in a tragic scene from **SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN** (Toei; 1982).

many American 'fans' of Chiba actually have no interest **SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN** (despite Chiba's appearance) or any other superher programs that Chiba and/or JAC worked on. On the reverse side, a great many superheros fans who love **KAMEN RIDER**, **GAVAN**, **ROBOT KELJI**, etc. ignore Chiba's feature films because they're narrowminded low-lives. Oops, I'm getting into another of my unprovoked, typewritten rampages ages again! On to the next paragraph.

Although I've been a fan of Sonny Chiba since the mid-1970s when I was a little kid (**GUERRILLAS SEVEN** and **RUN! DOBERMAN DETECTIVE** were broadcast locally, in Japanese), I have never actually met him personally. However, I saw him in person when I was in Japan in 1985. Thanks to friends at *Terebi Kus* and *Uchusen* magazines me and Ed Martinez (FX director for **THE DEAD PIT**) got to see an



excellent JAC stage-play featuring not only Chiba, but Hiroyuki Sanada, Etsuko Shiomi, Hikaru Kurosaki and Kenji Ohba! It was also that time I spent abroad (no, "time I spent abroad" does not mean I always dressed as a dumb girl) that I got to watch Chiba's **EAGE NO GUNDAN** TV show, yet another series involving samurais and ninjas.

Chiba is now in his 50s, so he's older now than he was when he was younger. Naturally, at this age, he's not doing the same kind of karate extravaganzas he did in his "Street Fighter" days. However, he still acts frequently, and continues to exercise at least a couple hours a day. Whether you know it or not, or even if you're one of those goddamn assholes who doesn't care, Chiba is a major influence on the state of movie & TV action worldwide. Without Chiba, there might never have been a **KAMEN RIDER**, without which there never would have been a **GAVAN**, and without that, there sure as hell wouldn't have been a **ROBOCOP**.



ABOVE: Behind-the-scenes, on the set of Toei's best karate film, 1974's **THE EXECUTIONER**, the film's stars prepare for a fight scene or two. Left to Right . . . 5
Some guy who's name I don't know, Sonny Chiba, and Yasuaki Kurata!

THE

BODYGUARDS

TOEI
TELEVISION

IN COLOR

26 one-hour episodes

Six bodyguards risk their lives for justice. This drama depicts the activities of the six, who harbor a strong hatred toward crime, whether it be a small incident on a backstreet or a scheme by an international syndicate.

They don't care who brings the case to their attention as long as their efforts will defeat criminality.

Their silly mistakes provoke laughter and their kind hearts and sincerity will move you to tears. The six bodyguards don't possess any weapons or modern machines. They fight with logic and quick action as numerous perilous traps await them.

This drama is replete with thrill and suspense, laughter and tears.



SONNY CHIBA'S KARATE MOVIES (some of them, but not all of them, but hopefully, most of them)



THE STREETFIGHTER

[Japanese title: KUGUKI SATSUN-KEN, which means *Sudden Attack! The Killing Fist*] Produced by Toei in 1974. Screenplay: Koji Takada & Steve Autrey. Photography: Ken Tsukakoshi, Art Direction, or Lack of It: Takatoshi Suzuki. Title Sequence: Jack Sholder. Martial Arts Director: Masafumi Suzuki. Wrestling Director: Harada Reggy Jones. Kick Boxing Direction: Ken Kazama. Music: Tony Sushima. Filmed in Actionscope. Directed by Shigeiro Ozawa. CAST: Sonny Chiba as Terry Tsurugi, Doris Nakajima as Sarai, Tony Cetera as Jadot, Gerald Yamada as Ratnose, and also Starring: Teijo Shikihara, Etsuko Shiomi, King Stone, Jiro Chiba, Masashi Ishibashi, Akira Shioji, Yusuep Osman, Angel Cordero

It's hard to say exactly when them Japanese decided to produce only terrible movies. I tend to think it was the late 1970s, or whenever *THE WAR IN SPACE* came out. But this early 1970s fiasco proves that them Japanese were practicing early on, on how to make a pathetically awful, awfully pathetic movie. But it takes time to perfect the art of imperfection, so *THE STREETFIGHTER* still has a little more going for it than most latter examples of Japan's cinematic ineptitude. Yes, *THE STREETFIGHTER* sucks like a homosexual vacuum cleaner, but it amazes me that it took so long for somebody to come right out and say it. And don't give me any bullshit about it only seeming inferior because of the way the American censors butchered it in the 1970s, after it's uncensored version supposedly gave it an X rating. It's a lame film even in its Japanese version. It bewilders me that it was Rated X because of "excessive" violence. I guess some of the violence could be considered shocking for its time but it could get by with an R rating if it were released today. But the film's reputation is over rated; there is at least one blood-spitting scene, and a scene where Chiba rips out a rapist's family jewels, but otherwise the excessive violence isn't very excessive. If that's a big enough deal for an X rating, then a lot of films should be rated XI Hell, in the uncensored *THE KILLING MACHINE*, Chiba cut out a guy's genitals and threw them on the ground, so a cute little dog ran off with them!

I've got *THE STREETFIGHTER*'s "restored" version, featuring English voice dubbing scenes which cut awkwardly to letter-boxed, Japanese language scenes taken from some other tape or laser disk, to replace that which the Americans spliced out in the 1970s. Numerous fight scenes are brought back into the movie. Why did they ever cut out the fights in the first place? What's a karate film without fights? That's about as logical as a bookie without a vagina.

Was it art, politics, experimentation, samurai traditions or stupidity which gave *THE STREETFIGHTER* its slick yet pretentious style? To me, it comes off as complex & dull, yet atmospheric. *THE STREETFIGHTER* takes itself much too seriously, is badly paced,

and worse written. The decent production values may fool some people into thinking it's a good film, until you try to follow the story.

Sonny Chiba is beyond a doubt, a karate kind of guy, yet the rushed, sloppy choreography keeps his skills well hidden. One of his 'talents' which is shown off excessively in *THE STREETFIGHTER* is his annoying habit of over acting. His frowns are menacing, but too exaggerated, too caricature-like. Etsuko Shiomi cameos too, but her martial arts scenes appear only in the Japanese and restored versions. Sonny's brother, Jiro Chiba has a small role too, but like those of Sonny and Etsuko, his role is as fun as watching George Burns do a striptease.

The only thing about *THE STREETFIGHTER* which I think is great is the theme song. Done by Tony Sushima, it's a fast, fun, energetic tune which highlights an otherwise unhighlighted film. On second thought, I also liked some of the fights, but that doesn't make me want to marry them.

Terry Tsurugi (Sonny Chiba) is the ultimate anti-hero. He's a nasty guy who could easily be a villain in any other movie. The only thing which even makes him seem remotely heroic is that the villains are even meaner. He's a half Chinese, half Japanese hitman who, when he was a child, had witnessed the death of his father; shot by a firing squad who accused him of being a spy.

Terry never quite got over that assassination, so he became a coldblooded killer who'd mastered martial arts. He's an assassin, a free-lance detective, and a hitman, but not a 'streetfighter' despite the dumb title, since he dislikes being involved in gangs. One such gang is that of Mataguchi. This mob of yakuza kidnapped some girl called Sarai (Doris Nakajima) because she's rich and more-or-less own some big oil company. Terry and his annoying pal Ratnose were hired to protect her from the various Japanese yakuza and Chinese triads, but there are other subplots too. Like in one scene, he takes on the grand master at a karate school. Also there's this vengeful martial artist called Junjo (Masashi Ishibashi) who's pissed off at Terry, and why? Junjo's brother (Jiro Chiba) failed to pay Terry the money he owed him so Terry accidentally killed him in a fight, and then Terry sold Junjo's sister (Etsuko Shiomi) into prostitution. And just because of these two factors, Junjo actually wants revenge on our hero! Junjo hates Terry, even though it was Terry who snuck him out of prison. Yes, the whole film is a mess. The gory, though disappointing series of battles has Terry rescuing Sarai from the yakuza villains on a ship. He defeats a number of villains including a Chinese bitch and Junjo, who's throat he apparently tears out. Unfortunately, he's not exactly in the best of shape either by the time all this comes to its thankful end. For the record, at the conclusion, nothing is concluded. This crap ends on a rainy ship, with an injured Terry Tsurugi standing while a villain points a loaded gun at him! The villain is never defeated, so we assume Tsurugi would have been shot dead once the screen blackens. Yet he returns in the sequels, and there's no mention of his enemy, who would have shot him easily! *1/2

直撃!地獄拳

THE EXECUTIONER

[Japanese title: JIGOKU KEN, which means *Hell Fist*] produced by Toei in 1974. Starring Sonny Chiba, Makoto Sato, Ryo Ikebe, Doris Nakajima, and Yasuaki Kurata

I was reading Salman Rushdie's new book, *Buddha, You Fat Fuck*, when suddenly I remembered it was time for me to critique *THE EXECUTIONER*. So without further delay, here we go Surprisingly, *THE EXECUTIONER* proves that Japanese karate-dom got off to a good start. It was made shortly after *THE STREETFIGHTER*, also in 1974. I feel it's Sonny Chiba's best; full of action, comedy, sleaz, and gonad clenching suspense. Surprisingly, this outstanding movie didn't have much effect on the Japanese karate films to come out after this. No other karate movie succeeded at, or attempted at being as enjoyable as *THE EXECUTIONER*. Not only is this my favorite Chiba film, but one of my favorite karate action films ever!!!

The original Japanese title is *JIGOKU KEN*. I rented its uncensored, letterboxed Japanese language version from a local Japanese videotape store which rents out Japanese videotapes of Japanese movies from that Japanese country called Japan. I had also gotten its English dub off late night TV, which had been censored. Though time-consuming, I eventually managed to edit & audio dub both versions together, to get the best of both. Now I've got a letterboxed, restored version with all the bloodshed & nudity intact, and in English! I have called my new & improved version "Hell Fist," the literal translation of *JIGOKU KEN*. Doing all this was very frustrating and time-consuming, but I recommend other fans do this too, syncing English soundtracks over foreign versions for their superior quality. If this little trick

of mine catches on, 'fan-made adaptations' like this could become valuable collector's items the wave of the future! After all, nobody supports a film genre better than its fans. Hell, if fans had control of distribution and promoting such films, the scene wouldn't be such a mess (i.e. locating rare versions of such movies can be a bitch). If professional companies aren't going to supply us with decent quality, uncensored English versions, we just might have to create our own. But back to the movie!

THE EXECUTIONER is a serious adventure, but has enough humor to keep the whole story pretty amusing even during scenes of dialogue. There are scenes of gore & deaths and yet somehow, it remains lighthearted and fun throughout. This can not be said of any other Chiba movie, unless you're on drugs.

Like other Chiba thrillers, there are a lot of karate conflicts, yet for once they're done well. After this movie, it was all downhill. *THE EXECUTIONER* was before Toei's cameraman contracted epilepsy, and they even used a tripod for this movie! And amazingly, the editing is done in such a way that it actually highlights Chiba's spectacular talents, not hiding them with tricky cuts & close-ups.

Kyushu Koga (Sonny Chiba), a modern day ninja who never wears a ninja hood has been hired to attack drug dealers. Also hired is a former police officer turned hitman played by Makoto Sato (*THE KILLING MACHINE*, *WHIRLWIND*, *LOST WORLD OF SINBAD*, *WARING CLANS*, etc.). Aided by Sakurai (a horny martial artist who just got out of prison), they're at

NOW!
THE INCREDIBLE
SONNY CHIBA
IS BACK TO BACK
AND TWICE AS MEAN!

THE STREET
FIGHTER



RETURN
OF THE
STREET
FIGHTER

IN ACTIONSCOPE AND EASTMANCOLOR FROM NEW LINE CINEMA

東映ビデオ株式会社
TOEI VIDEO. TOKYO, JAPAN



This shot of Chiba kicking an opponent in *THE STREETFIGHTER* is actually a better look at Chiba than the film itself.

ABOVE: Sonny Chiba goes into action in *THE STREETFIGHTER* films. Inspire of the title, he fights people, not streets.

odds with the villainous gang of henchmen of the obligatory bad guy, Mario Mitsuhashi. Makoto Sato's character has a friend played by the legendary Yasuaki Kurata, in a heroic role. The ever-so-grande finale has Makoto Sato and Yasuaki Kurata coming to Sonny Chiba's rescue in one hell of a battle against Mitsuhashi's bodyguards. For more exciting details on this motionful picture, read the equally exciting *O.C. #101*! I did, and it was great!! *****



being incompotent. Upon arrival, Terry (Sonny) discovers that Costello's boys have brutally killed a friend of his, a Japanese Pippy Longstocking-type called Klitty. After T.T. (S.C.) kills off all of Costello's henchmen, he kills Costello in a fiery explosion involving a gasoline truck. Bye. *

THE BODYGUARD

Produced by Toei in 1971, but not released to America until 1978 by Media Home Entertainment Inc., Presented by Nippon American Productions, U.S. Production Unit: August Films N.Y., U.S. Director: Simon Nutchern, Dialogue Director: Joseph Ellison, Director of Photography: Joel Shapiro, Editor: Victor Zimet, Music: Maurice Sarli, Executive Producer: Terry Levene, Starring: Sonny Chiba, Judy Lee, Aaron Banks (Mr. Karate, USA), Bill Louie (6th dan U.S.A. Black Belt Champion & Kaio Impersonator)

If fair is worse than good, then bad is worse than fair, then this film is worse than bad. It's either awful, horrible or terrible; which ever of them is the lowest. This incredibly poor film is actually the first two episodes of Chiba's early 1970s crime drama TV show. The program was *THE BODYGUARDS* (see page 4), a *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*-type program made before the martial arts craze of the mid-70s, and yet the devious American releasers tried unsuccessfully to turn this slow drama into a karate film when they brought it out here some time around 1978 or '79. From the looks of all this crap, 'twould appear that the first two episodes of the original Japanese TV show are pretty pathetic in their own right, or maybe in their own wrong. The fights are very short & horribly staged and there are so few of them. There are numerous gun shoot-outs, but this is not to imply that this dull tale is action packed. It's boring, complex, technical, talky, a complete waste of time, makes me respect *THE STREETFIGHTER*, and is almost bad enough to compare with *AMSTERDAM CONNECTION*!

This American release, amazingly, manages to go even lower! Yes, the American releasers couldn't leave 'hell-enough' alone. In trying to make a dull detective tale seem like a martial arts film, the opening credits feature practicing karatekas in the background. These scenes are most likely from some later episode; no relation to the events in this film. The credits may list Chiba's name, but lack any other Japanese cast or staff credits! Instead, they have a fictional name, Judy Lee! Some jerk called Maurice Sarli is given credit (or blame) for the music, yet that sounds strikingly similar to the tunes of Japanese composers like maybe Richira Minabe or Shunsuke Kikuchi. The only music added by the yankies is a bunch of idiots saying "Viva Chiba" over and over again. This Maurice Sarli sounds like a really talented musician, instructing a bunch of drunk bums to say "Viva Chiba." But by far, the most mind-bogglingly ridiculous scene in the movie is a bit of filler at the beginning, cheaply filmed for insertion to the American release. It takes place at a New York dojo, and features two stupid looking goofballs; one is an ugly Phillipino guy called Bill Louie, and the other is Aaron Banks. Supposedly, both are (or were) well-known sparring champs, and I seem to remember them in a terrible yet mildly interesting Bruce Lee rip off called *FIST OF FEAR: TOUCH OF DEATH*. In the beginning of *THE BODYGUARD*, they both spar with students and say things like, "That's pretty good, but not the way Sonny Chiba would have done it," and "But Bruce had speed," "Yeah, they're both pretty good, hey, I hear Sonny Chiba is on a plane back to Japan" (then it cuts to Chiba on a plane, the beginning of the actual Japanese episode). This intro is of course, incredibly stupid, but I must confess it's utter stupidity made it the funniest scene in an otherwise bland romp. And, to be fair, Bill Louie and the others in the karate school are good fighters.

Other interesting points: In later episodes of this program, Etsuko Shiomi, Meguro Yukl (later in ACB's *SHOGUN* mini-series) and Sonny's brother Jiro Chiba joined the cast. Less importantly, brief clips of this movie were shown in *BASKET CASE* (an American horror movie) in a scene where the main characters are watching it in a theatre. Maybe this is why Belial was in such a bad mood, and started killing people.

Perhaps the reason it seems so complex is because it's not interesting enough to pay attention to. Supposedly, Sonny Chiba is playing himself. After thwarting an airplane hijacking, he gets enough publicity to hire himself out as a bodyguard against mobsters. This is all part of his scheme to destroy whatever gangsters may be nearby. And so the righteous, do-gooder Chiba is hired by the beautiful Reiko, to be her bodyguard. Damn, if I was her bodyguard, she'd need a bodyguard! Anyway, she's aware that a local group of tough nightclub bouncers are dealing drugs with sloppy, gross American G.I.s, you know the type. She stole drugs that the nightclubbers want, so Chiba has to protect her from them. Then a yakuza gang steps in briefly to try and get the valuable drugs, so the nightclub runners shoot them. Eventually, Chiba kills the nightclub bullies, but Reiko tries to run off with the drugs and gets shot to death by her ex-boyfriend Takami, also involved with mobs. Takami dies too because someone stabbed him about five minutes ago. Rating: No star, not even one (1) (uno) (ichi).

STREETFIGHTER'S LAST REVENGE Video

Produced by Toei in 1976, Released to the U.S. by New Line Cinema, U.S. Post Production by August Films, Joseph Ellison & Simon Nutchern, Director: Shigehiro Ozawa, CAST: Sonny Chiba, Sue Shiomi, Masafumi Suzuki, Frankie Black, Reiko Ike, Willey Dosey

Why must them Nipponese nitwits always disappoint me? Or is it just me, my taste? Maybe I should lower my standards, and I'll have more fun. In my opinion, this is not an absolutely horrible film, but it's a mediocre one. The production values are good, but that doesn't mean the farce is a valuable production. Chiba, as always, proves to be a great martial artist, and his occasional acrobats are dandy. But the choreography and photography are so sloppy that they make the fights (which are also quite short) look bad. Hell, I've seen superior fights in films where the hero could not fight nearly as good as Chiba, but decent choreography & photography saved the day. A good example is Sam Hui in some of his films. Sam Hui is not nearly as tuff as Chiba,

RETURN OF THE STREETFIGHTER



Produced by Toei in 1975, Screenplay by Koji Takada & Steve Aubrey, Photography: Teiji Yoshida, Art Direction: Tokumichi Igawa, Music: Tony Sushima, Martial Arts Direction: Masafumi Suzuki, Wrestling Direction: T. Harada & Reggy Jones, Kick Boxing Director: Ken Kazama, filmed in Actionscope, Directed by Shigehiro Ozawa, Released by New Line Cinema, Starring Sonny Chiba as Terry Tsurugi, Masafumi Suzuki as Masaoka, Yoko Ichu as Kitty, Milton Ishibashi as Junjo, Donald Nakajima as Otaguro, Zula Yachi as Yamagami, Claude Gannyon as Don Costello

I reckon this is mine favorite "Streetfighter" flick, although I am indecisive. Well, no, actually I'm not; just sometimes. *RETURN OF THE STREETFIGHTER* isn't especially fast-paced, but it's got enough fights, and a unique story. I think this story is the most interesting of the three. Of course, preferring this one over the other two is like preferring the electric chair over the hangman's noose. Yet as far as Japanese crime dramas go, this one is decent. Among other things, there's a good display of weapons and the experts who use them: Nunchaku, tanfa, staff, sword, spear, kama, and sai. Chiba is more respectable than in *THE STREETFIGHTER*. As Terry Tsurugi again, he's more believable in his fights, rather than the slobbering, over acting clown he was in the first film in this series. In fact, the only time we see him do all those stupid, exaggerated facial expressions which look like that of a constipated kid on a toilet seat are during flashbacks to *THE STREETFIGHTER*!

Fortunately, I have only two complaints against it. First: Why no link-up with the ending of *THE STREETFIGHTER*? That one had a confusing ending where nothing was really resolved. Like, whatever happened to that Chinese villain on the ship, the one with the gun? He was never killed off. This attempted follow-up should have begun with Chiba on that same ship. Third: /Forgive me! I'm terrible with numbers! Again, as with most of Chiba's flicks, why are the battles staged so poorly? In American movies, bad editing & photography is used to hide the fact that the actor can't fight his way out of a paper bag. But Chiba is one of the greatest karate guys of our time, so why use the tricky editing, zoomed in photography, and shakey camera? What am I asking you for? It's not your fault! Some say them Japanese do this awful editing & staging in the cause of art, but I say it's in the cause of stupidity. My solution is that if they really want to have shakey, unsteady photography, save that for the dramatic scenes of dialogue. I want a good look at the fighters in action so that's when they should use a tripod. When it's just a scene of men in an office talking, then they can use shakey camerawork and choppy editing, as far as I'm concerned.

Masaoka (Masafumi Suzuki, who also directed many fights), the karate grand master of the first movie is suspicious that a devious businessman is not really constructing the Asian Martial Arts Center after all! It seems that this businessman, called Mr. Otaguro is actually using the money from donors to the mock project, to invest in the mafia! Sergeant Yamagami (a cop and Masaoka's student) is sent to investigate all this stuff about Otaguro's association with a corrupt, bigoted mafia leader called Don Costello (no relation to Lou or Elvis). Meanwhile, the assassin Terry Tsurugi (Sonny Chiba) is asked by the sinister Otaguro to kill Masaoka, but Tsurugi (Chiba) still kind of likes the old guy, so he refuses. Therefore, Otaguro sends dozens of different martially artistic types to do Terry (Sonny) bodily harm: weapons experts on a ski slope, bare-handed karatekas at a spa, and even what started out as a one-night-stand with an ugly yet willing female ended with yet another unsuccessful attempt on his life. Afterwards, T. Tsurugi (S. Chiba) has a rematch to the death, with Junjo (villain from the first film). It turns out to be a rematch to the death of Junjo, but Terry T. (Sonny C.) get injured too. Sgt. Yamagami gets shot by Don Costello's henchmen, so Tsurugi (Chiba) pays a visit to Costello's building, shortly after they killed Otaguro for



The Bodyguard (1979)

Aaaaa-chill! Sonny Chiba is the biggest karate hero since Bruce Lee. See why as he fights the yellow mafia -- a bunch of nasty men out to clobber the king. Judy Lee. 89 min. 03-1107 \$29.99

Shogun's Ninja

When Sonny Chiba gets mad, you're in for it. He's a furious fighting machine here. 115 min. 03-1159 \$49.99

The Killing Machine

Sonny Chiba stars as Doskin, a man who returns to Osaka after WWII and uses his martial arts expertise to defend the poor townfolk from black marketeers. 82 min. 46-5149 \$49.99

The Bushido Blade (1980)

Thrilling Samurai and martial arts action set against the first American trading expedition to Japan in the mid-1800s, as shogun warriors and Americans battle for a priceless sword. Toshiro Mifune, Sonny Chiba, Richard Boone, James Earl Jones star 92 min. 44-1024 \$69.99

Kowloon Assignment (1982)

Sonny Chiba is Goigo 13, top hitman for an international drug syndicate, whose latest assignment takes him to Hong Kong, where he'll need his guns and martial arts skills to come out alive. Action-packed thriller. 93 min. 53-1598 \$59.99

yet the style of his film fights (i.e. the ones in the *ACES GO PLACES* flicks, *LEGEND OF WISELY*, *DRAGON FROM RUSSIA*, etc.) are a lot funner than many of Chiba's. *STREETFIGHTER'S LAST REVENGE* lacks the 'excessive violence' of the original, and replaces it with excessive stupidity. There's this one pointless, minor subplot involving telephone operators. The plot is a dull, slow-paced, incomprehensible fiasco. The best scene is where some girl takes off her blouse and exposes a pair of decent breasts. But even this sequence doesn't last long enough for a good, decent masturbation session. I tried, but it was kind of rude of me to do so, seeing as my girlfriend was also in the room.

If anyone stands out in this picture, it's Sonny Chiba's protegee, Etsuko Shiomi. Her role as a master of kung fu is as small as her role in *THE STREETFIGHTER*, but her duels, though brief, are the best scenes in this tale. She's fast, precise, and more graceful than Chiba; but then, a malformed penguin on LSD is more graceful than Chiba.

Oh boy oh boy and gee wizz willickers, not to mention gosh. Now it's that point where I go into vague detail about the plot. I envy you, you can probably read this whole thing in five minutes, whereas I must actually sit through this entire movie! Terry Tsurugi (or Suguri, whatever) isn't nearly as ruthless as before, but he's still against corrupt mobsters. Somehow, somewhere, somehow, somebody has come up with a way to make synthetic heroin. The problem is, the formula is kept on two separate audio cassettes which must be played simultaneously to get the full recipe. So Terry Tsurugi is being paid to get these tapes to the right mob. Or the wrong mob. He encounters politicians, businessmen, sluts, & cops, during his adventures as he tries to get the tapes as well as the money owed to him. At the end, after he defeats a main villain, his supposed girlfriend turns greedy and shoots him. She tries to run off with a case (containing either the tapes or the reward money) but her car explodes because some bad guy had put a bomb in it. Writing this article, and watching this film has proven to be as fun as watching ice melt in slow motion. * 1/2

SHOGUN'S SAMURAI

TOEI
TELEVISION

26 one-hour episodes

Television series version of the 1978 Toei blockbuster. The 26 episodes were developed from the feature film that made audiences of all ages appreciate the entertainment values of the period drama.

The story starts in the heart of the feudal Shogunate castle where the two sons of the Shogun are engaged in a succession dispute. It expands to show the battles be-

tween the Yagyu samurais and those who try to usurp their leadership, as well as the scheming of the court nobles who desire the favor of the most powerful.

The first three segments depict how Iyemitsu, the third Shogun, gained the throne through the Yagyu samurais' efforts. Beginning with the fourth episode, the plot focuses on Jubei Yagyu (Sonny

Chiba), who uses his prowess and brains to maintain the Shogun's authority throughout Japan. With the help of his sister Akane (Sue Shiomi), he leads the Yagyu ninja to crush the conspiracy of the Daimyo and defeat opposing ninja groups.

Throughout the series, numerous historical figures and fascinating characters emerge.



THE KILLING MACHINE

Produced by Toei in 1976, Photography by Yoshio Nakajima, Screenplay: Isao Matsumoto, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Directed by Noriaki Suzuki, Starring: Sonny Chiba, Makoto Sato, Yutaka Nakajima, Naoya Sel, Etsuko Shioml, Tetsuro Tanba, Kenji Ohba, maybe Jiro Chiba

I guess if you compare *THE KILLING MACHINE* to *THE BODYGUARD*, *THE STREET-FIGHTER* and all that other trash, this is one of Chiba's better karate tales. *THE KILLING MACHINE* is actually very wellmade and with a decent budget. The acting and other production values are good, and best of all, the fights are actually visible this time, not just off-screen hits with sound effects! We can finally see Sonny Chiba kicking and punching the bad guys, and occasionally making contact! These are some of the best Sonny Chiba fights I've seen! I do like this film enough to give it at least two stars, but since I recently had the best fuck of my life and am now at peace with the world, I'm feeling happy and generous. What the hell, I'll give *THE KILLING MACHINE* three whole stars!

But other than *THE EXECUTIONER*, no Chiba flick is outstanding or even excellent. For some reason, after *THE EXECUTIONER*, it was decided that every Chiba movie has to be disappointing in one way or another, as this romp shows. Toei has discovered, and sometimes invented a wide variety of ways to disappoint their audience. They've perfected the art of imperfectionism. Although on the whole it's not a bad movie, its main flaws lie in its sappy, dead seriousness and ineffective tear jerking attempts. Man, the human drama takes itself way too seriously. I don't laugh at tragic films if they're directed by somebody cool like John Woo, but in this case, the depressing subplots amused and bored me. These doomed characters did not make me cry nearly as much as the old Warner Bros. *WHAT'S OPERA, DOCK*, the Bugs Bunny cartoon where Bugs nearly dies at the end and says: "Well what do you expect in an opera, a happy ending?" So remember, if you find yourself watching *THE KILLING MACHINE*, keep your finger on the Fast Forward button of your remote control for your VCR, and only watch its excellent fights at regular speed. Had I done that, I might have ended up giving this movie four, maybe five stars!

This movie is based loosely on a factual character called Doshin Soh, a Japanese who brought Chinese kung fu to Okinawa in the 1940s. From there, it was developed into Shorinji karate. But for this English dubbing, the name was changed to Mishomi Soh. Mishomi Soh (Sonny Chiba) is a Japanese soldier who learned Shaolin kung fu in China, sometime around WWII. Once Japan surrendered, he freaked out and decided (swearing on his mother's grave) to be a nice guy. That's an understatement for this morally kindhearted, goody-two-shoes dude. Next up is a seemingly endless heap of pro-Japanese scenes, denouncing Americans, Chinese and Russians. Japanese people are featured as innocent, oppressed victims this time, harassed by westerners and Chinese. The victims at Pearl Harbor, and the countless Chinese victims of WWII paint a somewhat different picture of who the real culprits were. Regardless, *THE KILLING MACHINE* proves that war is hell for everyone, and that in every country, the innocent suffer. Anyway, I suppose this film's 'for the love of Japan' attitude is tolerable, seeing as how many Chinese movies of that time were treating the Japanese as cruel monsters. Regardless, getting back to the plot, Mishomi Soh befriends orphans of Osaka's post-war poverty class, and later fights some black marketeers, typically evil Americans much like me and you (yeah right), and and police. He flees to some other city (possibly Okinawa, according to history books) and opens a Shaolin martial arts school. His students are played by actors like Makoto Sato, Etsuko Shioml again, and even Naoya Sel. Naoya Sel is best known for his role as Red Ranger in the old *HIMITSU SENTAI GORANGERS* superhero TV show, and was also in the crime drama series *SPECIAL CRIME INVESTIGATION FRONT*. But unfortunately, trouble follows Mishomi Soh like hippies follow the Grateful Dead. Some mobsters cause trouble, like raping a school girl, and chopping off the arm of Red Ranger! Soh also loses his cool once of twice and feeds some nuts to a dog. Nothing wrong with that certainly, but these nuts were cut from the

THE FIRST FILM THAT FEATURES "SHOALIN" THE PUREST AND HIGHEST FORM OF THE MARTIAL ARTS



body of a villain. There goes my appetite. Inbetween fights, there are embarrassing skits of tragedy: Otaki (Makoto Sato) is a warhero who's wife left him, Red Ranger gets drunk because he only has one arm, and back in Osaka, Kiku (an old friend of his) dies of V.D. because of her horizontal services for G.I.s. Then after the mobsters and black marketeers team up and kill Otaki, Soh wastes the baddies from both gangs, singlehandedly. Nope, come to think of it, he used both his hands. Final note: Though not perfect, I say check out *THE KILLING MACHINE*! ***

GOLGO 13: THE KOWLOON ASSIGNMENT

Produced by Toei in 1977, released to America by Embassy Entertainment, Executive Producer: Koji Shundo, Associate Producers: Naoyuki Sugimoto & Masao Sato, Original Story by Takao Saito, Screenplay: Nobuaki Nakajima & Isao Matsumoto, Director of Photography: Shigeru Akatsuka, Art Director: Norimichi Igawa, Music by Harumi Ibe, Film Editor: Isamu Ichida, Assistant Director: Toru Dobashi, In Association with Callan Film Co. Ltd. in Hong Kong, Directed by Yukio Noda, Starring: Sonny Chiba, Callan (?), Elen Sung, Koji Tsuruta, Etsuko Shioml, Emi Shindo, Jerry Ito, Kenji Ito, Kenji Takahashi, Toshimitsu Takahashi, Hirofumi Koga

I'll never forget the first time I viewed this movie, which is called, ugh, ummm, hmmm. And just when did I first see it? Let me start all over, with a fresh new paragraph.

The first time I saw this movie I had fairly high expectations just because it stars Sonny Chiba and was filmed on location in Hong Kong. So naturally, I was, as usual, disappointed, and considered *GOLGO 13: KOWLOON ASSIGNMENT* to be boring, cheap, pointless, badly made and with terrible music. But I eventually watched old *GOLGO* again, either 12 months later or maybe a whole year later. Again, it was boring, cheap, terrible music, etc. The only difference is that the second time around, I actually enjoyed it a little! Wow, I'll watch it again next

year and love it to death! It's not a spectacular movie, but certainly not much worse than the average *Streetsfighter* flick. I guess once I came to terms to the fact that it's not a martial arts film, I could accept it as the slow-paced crime drama it is. There's more gunplay than karate, but not really enough of either, and too much running around. It isn't too imaginative, exciting or outlandish, but rather, more realistic, almost believable. What few (3 or 4) fights they have are short, decently photographed and adequately choreographed.

Getting more specific about the film's scenes, the headquarters of the villain is the same castle used in *SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL*, a Chinese superhero film, also assisted by Toei of Tokyo. The villain in question is played by Jerry Ito, who played that nasty Nelson in *MOTHA* (see O.C.#8). There are at least a couple familiar Chinese actors I recognized but I don't know their names. What's the name of that funny-looking Chinaman who played a background character in *ENTER THE DRAGON* (see O.C.#13), and an evil wizard in *KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE* (see O.C.#10)? Whoever he is, he plays a cop in *GOLGO 13: KOWLOON ASSIGNMENT*. Also, there's this Chinese actress who's so beautiful that every time I look at her, a tree grows in my lap. Not only does she appear in this movie, but was the She-Demon in *INFRAMAN* (see O.C.#9), and some other character in *IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE* (see whatever O.C. reviewed this film, and let me know when you find it! I forgot). No Sonny Chiba movie would be complete without a typical cameo by Etsuko Shioml, so she does appear in *GOLGO* etc., does a few kicks and then quickly gets killed off in the first 20 minutes. All these actors are dubbed in annoyingly familiar voices, and yet I counted only two 'but still's! The Chinese & Japanese actors are dubbed speaking English of course, but during the fights, all the sound FX and yells are distinctly Japanese. The acting is decent, but in at least one scene, background characters on the streets of Hong Kong stare at the movie camera, giving the flick an atmosphere of cheapness. Speaking of acting, Chiba's character, though intimidating is calm, cool, chic, quiet, charismatic and silent. Very unlike his Terry Tsurugi

character, who was a sloppy, growling, intensely hateful killer. Golgo 13, like Tsurugi, is a fatal fighter but never lets personal vendettas get in his way, and has no emotion, not to mention facial expression. His character, Golgo 13 is based on a comic book character of the same name. Actually, I don't know what came first, the movie or the comic (or 'manga,' as called by the Japanese, and by jerks in this country who, over night, have learned to speak Japanese).

Golgo 13 (Sonny Chiba), supposedly named after a character in the bible or some other novel (wasn't Golgo 13 the one who took a bite out of an apple while aboard an ark where he got crucified?), is an expert shooter who never misses, and makes a living as a hired sniper. He'll shoot anyone if the price is right. Though coldblooded, he's not actually evil. His first assignment (in this movie, anyway) is to shoot a corrupt businessman called Chu Lu Fang, in Hong Kong. Golgo 13's appearance in Hong Kong triggered the interest of a police officer called Smith, even though he's Chinese. I think the actor playing Smith must be 'Callan,' according to the credits, who also was involved in production. 'Callan' could be a misspronunciation of Cau Lan, another unfamiliar name, but sounding more Chinese than 'Callan.' Regardless, Chu Lu Fang is successfully assassinated, but there's a new skumbag to kill now. An ambassador called Polanski (Jerry Ito) is using diplomatic immunity to bring drugs into Hong Kong. But never fear, Smith is here! The cops like Smith want proper evidence to arrest Polanski, while Golgo 13 (their rival) simply wants to get the job done and shoot Polanski. Eventually, the cops raid the Embassy, so Polanski and his young, innocent daughter escape by helicopter. Fortunately, that crafty Golgo 13 still manages to shoot into the helicopter and shoot Polanski deader than the audience at an opera, but neither the little girl nor the driver was hurt. The next day, Smith encounters Golgo 13 at the airport, leaving H.K. They haven't enough evidence to land him in the hoosegow, so Smith simply gives him a good punch to the face and warns him that he'll arrest him the next time he shows his face in Hong Kong. *1/2

BELOW: Two more shots involving Sonny Chiba's character in the *SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN* TV series. The program's title here keeps photos of his parents (Chiba as the father) in his watch or pendant.



ABOVE: Sonny Chiba (right) with an actress playing some other character (left) in *SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN* (see elsewhere in this issue).

SOUL OF BRUCE LEE

(also released briefly as "Soul of Chiba.")
starring Sonny Chiba, Tadashi Yamashita,
Etsuko Shiomi, Yang Sze, and absolutely no
Bruce Lee whatsoever and nobody who even
remotely looks like Bruce Lee

Don't let the two stars at the end of this review fool you into thinking this is a great film. It isn't, or at least, not in my opinion. However, I do like the fight-scenes, and it's for them alone that I give *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE* two stars. The fights are 3, possibly 4 star material, but as for the film itself, *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE* is as good a movie as George Bush is a liberal. So back to the battles of *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE*! It would take a Chinese film like this to finally show Chiba at his fastest, and most furious! What a relief that this motionful picture's staff & crew didn't resort to the pathetic, sloppy editing that contaminates most Japanese martial arts movies! I always admired Chiba's sensational karate moves, but his work in *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE* shows he's capable of being even speedier than I thought! In one scene, he's tackled by Thai boxing show-offs on a bridge, and later he takes on a group of bizarre, animal-like monkey kung fu stylists in a jungle. Both duels are Chiba at his best! Most of the other battles are pretty good as well, even though one or two may have been speeded up slightly in the film studio.

Since there aren't any credits on the movie, I'm not sure exactly who made it, or what its real title is. No way was it's original title *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE*, *SOUL OF CHIBA*, *SOUL OF ADAM RICH*, or any other bullshit titles made up by some exploitation artist! It would appear to be a Japanese and Thai co-production, filmed entirely in Thailand. Most of the cast members are native to Thailand, except for the ones anyone has ever heard of. Chiba is joined by fellow Japanese dude Tadashi Yamashita, Hong Kong's Yang Sze, and naturally, being a Chiba picture, he made sure Etsuko Shiomi guest starred just long enough to kick some Thai ass and get killed again. As for Tadashi Yamashita, he's no great actor, but I saw him in *BRONSON LEE*, *CHAMPION* (okay, so technically, as I type this, I haven't actually seen *BRONSON LEE*, *CHAMPION*, but I do have it on tape, so I will watch it some day), some awful Chuck Norris film, a background shot in *ENTER THE DRAGON* where he broke boards over Bob Wall, and in the CBS 1974 TV movie *JUDGE DEE & THE MONASTERY MURDERS*, where he stole the film. Until Yamashita's appearance in *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE*, I thought the world's ugliest actors came from places like the Philippines and Thailand. But in this tale, Yamashita out-uglies the Thai actors! It's great to finally see a hero with an ugly mug for once, that's equal opportunity!

The mere fact that it was made in Bangkok is usually good enough reason to avoid it. Yes, it's dirt cheap (to me), stupid (to me), badly written (to me), and the Thai guys wear the funniest-looking shirts since *ROOM 222*. The sideburns and mustaches are pretty geeky too. The English voice dubbing is typical for most other 1970s chop sockies like this, making the whole mess seem like your average Chinese kung fu film. However, some shots are distinctly Japanese, Chiba's abnormally speeded, fighting shots. This is where he is seen fighting in slow motion until his blow hits the target, when this hit is shown at normal speed for a



UP THERE: Chiba in *KARATE WARRIORS*, read my review of the movie in *O.C.* #13 if you get a chance.

fraction of a second, and then it switches back to slow motion. Chiba has done this in many films and passed it on to his JAC followers who used it in TV shows like *GOGGLE V* and *DYNAMAN*. They used this in *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE* too, an otherwise typically Thai film.

Chiba and Yamashita apparently play citizens of Thailand, despite Chiba's character being called Moyamushi! Moyamushi, a Thai war orphan learned kung fu under elderly Master Shing Chi Kan, who also teaches you how to catch a cobra singlehandedly. Like cobras go around starting fights with people. By the time Moyamushi grows up, teacher Shing Chi Kan has supposedly been killed by a mean student called Sam Wan, so Moyamushi vows revenge. Enter Tadashi Yamashita, an undercover cop who's out to waste Sam Wan's gang of jewel thieves, and they also killed his brother. When Moyamushi/Chiba and Yamashita first team up, it's funny to hear these two Japanese actors dubbed saying things like, "You're teacher was a Jap!", "No! It can't be, you're a goddamn liar!" Moyamushi had additional training after the 'death' of his teacher; training by Etsuko Shiomi, wearing an exotic, colorful Thai getup. She nurses Chiba back to health after he was visited by that #1 killer known as death, because Sam Wan kicked him off a cliff.

Se trained him how to improve his fighting for his rematch with Sam Wan. Unfortunately, her training involves an addictive drug and electro-shock therapy! After the villains discover Shiomi (as Litha) has helped Moyamushi, they attack her so she uses 'shorinji', taught to her by her Chinese uncle. So Moyamushi decides it's time to bang cocks in Bangkok! After Moyamushi and Yamashita kill Sam Wan, Yang Sze and numerous henchmen, the old master, Shing Chi Kan shows his face. He was never killed, it was all just a trick to keep anyone from finding out he was actually a Japanese drug smuggler. As Yamashita slaps the cuffs on the old fart, Chiba appears to die from either exhaustion or as a side effects from the electricity and drugs which made him fight so good. I guess there's a message there, somewhere. I guess it must be, "Just Say No- To Electricity." **

CHAMPION OF DEATH

Produced by Toei in the mid-1970s, made by Japanese people, and starring many more Japanese including Sonny Chiba, Jiro Chiba, Masashi Ishibashi, and Kenji Ohba as a background henchman

For this review of one of several films that nobody can really tell apart anyway, I came to realize that my understanding of the Japanese language has declined considerably since my months in Tokyo, 1985. In around 1977, I recall *CHAMPION OF DEATH* playing on a double bill with *INFRAMAN!* But I was unable to go see that exciting double bill. Having never seen *CHAMPION OF DEATH* in English, I had no choice but to rent its Japanese language version; it's all I could find to base this review on. My Japanese language abilities are decent enough to vaguely figure out what the hell is going on in an episode of a naive, half hour superhero series, but in a more serious, technical, mature movie like this, there were a few things I didn't understand. Why can't them Japanese be as helpful as the Chinese? The Chinese have the kindness to at least put subtitles on most of their movies. However, I still managed to enjoy *CHAMPION OF DEATH* somewhat, which I can't say about other Chiba films which were in English and I understood them. If ever I see an English dubb of *CHAMPION OF DEATH*, I might actually give it three whole stars. But maybe we should get used to hearing Japanese language. As American businesses meet their new samurai boss, there are phrases we'll need to learn. To keep employed, we may need to know how to say certain useful phrases in Japanese, like "I'm sorry, boss", "I did not understand that- could you simplify the concept for me?", and "Could I go home at 9 PM tonight?"

This movie was the first movie where Sonny Chiba played his real-life instructor Mas Oyama. But if anyone is fooled into actually thinking this is an authentic biography, then they're more full of shit than Devine during an infamous scene from *PINK FLAMINGOS*. *CHAMPION OF DEATH*'s script was taken from a fictional comic about Mas Oyama. If *CHAMPION OF DEATH* was passed off as a factual story of the guy, old Mas would have been quite annoyed, since in one scene, he rapes a girl, and he's a racist bigot,

DOWN THERE: Sonny (right) tackles a bad guy (left) in one of his many 1970s karate films, most likely *KARATE WARRIORS*, reviewed in *O.C.* #13. At least, I think the photo below is from *KARATE WARRIORS*, but then, I'm only human too, I make my share of mistakes, so I can't be expected to know every fuckin' thing about these movies, and besides, who cares, life goes on regardless.



and somewhat of a bully, occasionally almost making Terry Tsurugi look like Captain Kangaroo. But to make up for his occasional nastiness, the character becomes far more kindhearted toward the movie's end. In other random comments of mine, I noticed that Etsuko Shiomi does not appear even briefly. Next random comment: The fights are okay, but only slightly above average for a Chiba film. Some of *CHAMPION OF DEATH*'s duels are downright good, while others are the usual incomprehensible mess of shakey camera work and poor editing. Third or fourth random comment: Did I already mention that Etsuko Shiomi does not make a cameo in this one?

Nihongo wa wakari masu ka? Me neither, so figuring out this story is harder than concrete. Mas Oyama (Sonny Chiba) is a karate expert who apparently denounces some local school's tournament because their karate is too dance like. To prove he's tougher, he spars with one of their students (Masashi Ishibashi) and blinds the poor fool in one eye! Needless to say, any character played by Masashi Ishibashi, especially one who's become an involuntary cyclops, wants revenge. As a result of that barbaric display, Oyama has his first student (Jiro Chiba), who was impressed at Oyama's fighting and/or blinding skill. So as Oyama learns his new pupil how to be a coldblooded yet hot-tempered killer, some bull gets loose and rampages the local village! Good thing that village isn't a china shop. And another pointless comment: where the hell did this angry bull come from? My guess is that somebody opened a can of Schlitz Malt Liquor. After he kills the bull singlehanded (and Oyama was singlehanded too!), he's revered as a hero. Personally, I think the whole concept was a load of bull. Then for some reason too complex for my limited Japanese, Oyama's protege totally freaks out and begins fighting & killing anyone who even remotely disrespects Oyama's prowess. After the cops pump Jiro full of bullets, Oyama gets sad and drinks in a bar. A bar room brawl breaks out, resulting in Oyama's killing of a knife carrying thug. Being that it was in self-defense, the cops release him just in time for the deceased brawler's wife & son to lay an effective guilt trip on him. Out of sympathy, Oyama goes to work at their farm for free and they treat him like a slave until they eventually gain his trust. With all these problems (i.e. the bull, Jiro's death, the widow, etc.), Oyama plum forgot about the vengeful karate guys he attacked right after the opening credits! Then one stormy night, his past catches up with him, thanks to a subtle reminder: a ninja-like assassin with a sword, hired by the avenging karatekas! After sending the masked would-be killer to meet his Buddha, Oyama returns to the karate school, or 'karate dance' school as he calls it! He challenges these sneaky, conniving dudes to a legitimate, all-out, blood spitting, chunk blowing, knockdown, dragout, gripping duel to the death, where somebody could get hurt. And that's just what happens, at some pretty green meadow, later to become a pretty partially red meadow, and I don't mean Communism. Oyama wins and survives, his many opponents do not. **



Changing the sheets at a convalescent hospital is probably more rewarding than watching this movie. Much of my disdain for it is because, like its superior prequel, I've never seen it dubbed in English. My copy looks like a 4th-gen dupe, so it's blurry and distorted. There are English subtitles, but they're almost as hard to read as the ones for many cheap, older films from Hong Kong. The movie, filmed in widescreen, was all cramped together, making everyone on the screen look like Kareem Abdul Jabbar infected with the H.I.V. virus. Either that or maybe the entire lousy flick was filmed with a big glass of water right in front of the camera lens. Pathetic production values aren't limited to the film-to-video transfer either, so siree. The whole film is dark enough to make the fights practically invisible, and the photography & editing appears to be the work of Stevie Wonder, assisted by Helen Keller. It's as though the crew was actually trying to make the worst fights ever seen on film. Just when Chiba is in the midst of delivering an excellent kick, the shot immediately cuts to a different angle, making the formidable blow only implied, not seen. If it weren't for the sound effects, I never would have known that some fights were taking place! A couple of the fights occur outdoors. These scenes are brief, but are decent enough to almost

make this crap worth paying attention to.

As for the dramatic, human elements, they almost save the flick. Some of the characters are almost remotely interesting. The subplot about the little kid is vaguely watchable, but absurdly predictable (i.e. he's poor and a thief). Most interesting is how Chiba again plays Mas Oyama, the man who originally showed Chiba all about karate. Toward the beginning, like in the prequel, Oyama is portrayed as a pro violent, nearly evil S.O.B. But the real-life Oyama didn't seem offended, seeing as he did some martial arts demonstrations at both films' opening credits. Regardless, there's no way I'd consider either movie biographical, this one is just another stupid crime drama, and not a realistic movie based on real incidents. Like I mentioned before, this and *CHAMPION OF DEATH* are based on the exaggerated comic book series on Oyama (the Japanese seem to enjoy doing fictional 'life stories' of real people in their comics).

Storywise, in 1951 Mas Oyama (Sonny Chiba) gets another karate school pissed off at him, and he later works for an old friend who's now a gangster who supplies Japanese hookers are more evil American (I'm so ashamed!) G.I.s so after he beats up one of them traditionally corrupt Americans (aren't you ashamed of yourself?!), he must turn against



けんか空手 極真無頼拳

KARATE BEAR FIGHTER

[Japanese title: "Kenka Karate, Kyokushini Buraiken"]
Produced by Toei In 1978, Story: Ikki Kajiwara, Photography: Yoshio Nakajima, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Directed by Kazuhiko Yamaguchi, Starring: Sonny Chiba, Masaaki Yuhara, Masao Ishibashi (a.k.a. Masashi Ishibashi and Milton Ishibashi), Jun Fujimaki, Masutatsu Oyama

My videotape of *KARATE BEAR FIGHTER* would get better usage as a door-stop, or paper weight, because I sure as hell didn't enjoy watching this movie. It's critiquing awful films like this that makes *O.C.* seem like a job, not a hobby.



カラー一作 1978

けんか空手 極真無頼拳

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his former employers. Damn, I wanted this paragraph to be all one sentence. Anyway, Oyama raises money by fighting a captured bear. This scene is **VERY** stupid, and would be even worse if any of it were watchable. Later he defeats the same nasty bunch of karate guys he tangled with at the beginning. To waste their leader, he relies on some silly technique taught to him by some weird old man. *



CONCLUSION: You've been reading *O.C.*'s section on one of the greatest martial arts stars of our time; Sonny Chiba and his 1970s karate movies. I admire Chiba greatly, despite my blatant way of saying most of his movies suck. However, obsessed & avid Chiba fans should check them all out (who knows? You might actually like them even if I don't), and should also check out his rarely seen works on Japanese superhero programs. As for his karate movies, the ones I liked, and recommend to all fans of martial arts and Japanese cinema are **THE EXECUTIONER**, **THE KILLING MACHINE**, **SOUL OF BRUCE LEE**, **CHAMPION OF DEATH**, and **KARATE WARRIORS**, which I described in the previous issue. In future issues of *O.C.*, I hope to eventually include other Chiba works, like another crime drama called **THE ASSASSIN**, and his seemingly endless appearances in various samurai & ninja productions.



INCOMPLETE, PARTIAL CHECK LIST OF CHIBA WORKS:

THE DRIFTING DETECTIVE
POLICE STATION STORY
RAINBOW MASK
MESSENGER OF ALLAH
INVAION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN (see O.C.#9)
TERROR BENEATH THE SEA (see O.C.#10)
KEY HUNTER
THE BODYGUARDS
TOKYO SEOUL BANGKOK
ROBOT DETECTIVE
THE STREETFIGHTER
RETURN OF THE STREETFIGHTER
STREET FIGHTER'S LAST REVENGE
THE EXECUTIONER
CHAMPION OF DEATH
KARATE BEAR FIGHTER
GOLGO 13, THE KOWLOON ASSIGNMENT
SOUL OF BRUCE LEE
KILLING MACHINE
SISTER STREETFIGHTER
THE ASSASSIN
SHOGUN'S SAMURAI
SAMURAI REINCARNATION (O.C.#10)
DRAGON PRINCESS
TIME SLIP
BUSHIDO BLADE
TIME SLIP
FALL GUY (NOT the American TV show)
HISATSU JIKEN
GUERRILLAS 7
LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI
RUN! DOBERMAN DETECTIVE
HUNTER IN THE DARK
SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN
SHOGUN'S NNJA
ROARING FIRE

NEW COLUMN! NEW COLUMN! NEW COLUMN!

MODERN HEROES



This is the first edition of this new section geared toward the so-called 'New Wave' of Chinese cinema, a phrase which makes about as much sense as pineapple on pizza. I don't like considering these film genres 'new,' since I've always been into H.K. films, even before they became overrated. I see oldies like *ONE ARMED SWORDSMAN* & *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH* to be every bit as important as the trendy newer stuff like *ANGEL* or *MR. CANTON* & *LADY ROSE*. I'm annoyed at all the pretentious new fans who ignore the earlier masterpieces, and yet praise more recent garbage like *PEKING OPERA BLUES* or *A BETTER TOMORROW* part 3. In recent years, the current Hong Kong blockbusters have attracted quite a cult following in America. I too love these new movies as much as Rosanne Barr loves eating, but until about 43 minutes ago, had no intention of starting a whole new section aimed exclusively at the trendy H.K. films. But the current HK hits are enlightening: the pages of numerous degenerate fanzines which normally focus on the genre(s) of sleaze, exploitation, and trash films. If those gorehounds are going to expose and praise *THE KILLER*, I'd better get in on the craze and offer my opinions as well. After all, with a title like *Oriental Cinema*, I'd better not avoid such important Asian genres, especially if Americanized publications are going to review these movies! I really don't understand why the exploitation crowd is so into HK films now, which I think are superior to that perverted exploitation stuff. Do you see much of a connection between a HK classic like *A BULLET IN THE HEAD* and Euro art stuff like *NECKROMANTIC*? Fortunately, many of the American sleaze freaks & gorehounds who are losing the HK stuff are not the same kind of traditional uptight, whiney technogeeks who plague the fandoms for animation and Japanese sci-fi. The sleaze HK fans are a newer, funner breed, not afraid to offend or say things

like, "Fuck you, you cocksucking, dicklicking, asskissing, bloodpissing, brotherfucker who sucks the farts from dead rats in hell!" Although I'm no fan of *HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER*, I respect the fans of the sleaze and trash genre, not only because of their acceptance of HK's new age in cinema, but because they've got guts, humor, intellect, and unlike so many other fanboys, these guys have lives. But the sleazy trash fans aren't the only class of moviegoers to be touched by the New Wave (no relation to new wave music) in HK movies. Another group, and one which I have far less respect for also is getting into the Hong Kong swing of things: Professional American film critics! I don't like most serious, technical, dull journalism, but have an even greater distaste for mainstream film critics. It's kind of scary when some nerdy old critic who enjoyed junk like *THE BREAKFAST CLUB* or *HOME ALONE* also praises the likes of *A CHINESE GHOST STORY* or *DRAGONS FOREVER!* Is HK cinema losing its chic, innovative underground appeal? Will its fans get as uplight, narrow-minded and deadserious as the fanboys for Japan's sci-fi and cartoons? If and when that does happen, I suppose I'll end up getting yet another group of fans pissed off at me, and to which I'll again say, "Sorry. Just trying to have fun, you humorless, onedimensional snob." But regardless, no matter who likes HK films, and how much popularity the genre gains, HK's creative New Wave in moviemaking will remain a major part of *O.C.*

And now a brief history of HK's 'New Wave.' Although it actually evolved from the chop sockey kung fu movies of the 1970s, the first film to influence this new genre was a modern day action comedy called *ACES GOPLACES* (1982). It broke new grounds, kung fu movies failed in popularity, and innovative movies about cops, gangsters, assassins, guns, and gamblers have dominated the box office ever since.

All of the heroes in this crime drama are attractive females. The two main heroines show their breasts during erotic sex scenes, so I guess neither of them are Chinese. Chinese girls rarely show their tits on film, unless it's hardcore pornography. The main actress is Japanese Yomo Miyamoto, and the other is some girl called Maria Jo, who I think is Philipino. Chinese girls are too insecure, modest, uptight or embarrassed to let us check out their boobs. Sybelle Hu is the only wellknown star in this movie. She's best known for her role in *MY LUCKY STARS*. She gets top billing in *LETHAL PANTHER*, even though she has less screentime than the other two actresses.

LETHAL PANTHER tries hard to be like a John Woo film but there's just no comparison. Lots of gunfire, slick photography & cinematography, attempts at intense drama, and some ideas look blatantly stolen from *THE KILLER*. Of course, nobody can do a John Woo film, except for John Woo. The emotional drama in *LETHAL PANTHER* did nothing for me, because there are too many characters and the story is hard to follow. It looks like they had filmed a great many gun shootouts and later decided to film around them to try and make a story out of it. They edited it together and came up with a mess. Fortunately, it's a partially enjoyable mess. It's not a cheap movie, the action scenes are okay, the girls are pretty, the subtitles are legible, and there's even a couple of martial arts fights.

You see, there's these two female hitmen - I mean, I mean hitwomen who get paid to shoot mobsters in Hong Kong, Tokyo and sometimes the Philippines, where most of this movie takes place. One of these female killers is Yun Ling (Yoko Miyamoto), a former soldier who learned gunplay during the Vietnam war. Another hitwoman, who doesn't know Yun Ling is Susan Wong (Maria Jo). Meanwhile, righteous cop Bettie Li (Sybelle Hu) is out to arrest them both, because sniping is illegal! But both hitwomen are hired by rival mobs to kill each other, they both try, they both get shot, but both survive. Some rich Philipino hooker nurses them back to health and they both become friends of each other. Later, the hooker gets raped by mobsters. How can a prostitute get raped? Did the check bounce? After the mobsters have their way with her, then their bullets do. Even later, Susan Wong gets shot dead by her boyfriend, also part of that meanie mob. Just when it seems like Ling will have to avenge their deaths all by her lonesome, out of nowhere pops Ling's long-lost brother (raised in France), who also happens to be a sharp-shooting assassin! Both have yet another bullet duel with the mobsters until in the end, Ling is the only survivor. That's when Bettie Li arrives and arrests Ling. * 1/2

SYBELLE HU

Born on 5/24/58, she first auditioned as an actress in 1979, and started appearing in films immediately thereafter. She's 158 cm tall, and weighs 51 kg. Her movies include *LETHAL PANTHER*, *MY LUCKY STARS*, *BURY ME HIGH*, *DEVIL HUNTERS*, *FIRE PHOENIX*, *THE GAMBLE GODDESS*, *INSPECTOR WEARS SKIRTS parts 1 & 2*, *RAID ON ROYAL CASINO*, *MARINE*, *THE 7TH CURSE*, *DRAGON FIGHTER*, and *THE MAGIC AMETHYST*.



LETHAL PANTHER

Presented on Sunny Video, Distributed by Filmswell International, Directed by Godfrey Ho, Starring: Sibelle Hu, Maria Jo, Yoko Miyamoto, Alex Fong, Harold Low, Raymond Wong

I thought it fitting to choose *LETHAL PANTHER* as the first ever review for this new column. This film is no groundbreaker, and has never won any awards, so perhaps using this flick as your intro to the genre is one of my many strange ideas. But I had a much stranger idea a week ago. It was a new game I'd designed called 'Burp'n Guess'. The player is to eat something and then immediately burp in the other player's face, and if he guesses what the burper has just eaten, he wins! But Parker Bros. and Milton Bradley both turned down this great idea, so I just gave up, and settled down to write this review of *LETHAL PANTHER*. As I was saying, I feel this is actually a good movie to start with because it is average; standard for the genre. *LETHAL PANTHER* just exists, it's neither good nor bad. I've seen better, I've seen worse; I've seen all kinds of stuff.

*** the "God of Gamblers" trilogy ***



GOD OF GAMBLERS

Produced by Wins Motion Picture & I/E Co. in 1990, Directed by Wong Ching, Starring Chow Yuen Fat, Andy Lau, Joey Wang, Wong Pan, Cheung Man, Michiko Nishiwaki, Shing Fui On

This is a historic occasion, so do whatever you traditionally do on such important events. Drink champagne, throw a party, sacrifice a virgin, or whatever. This review of *GOD OF GAMBLERS* makes it official; I've broadened my horizons. Five years ago I never would have critiqued, let alone sat through, a gambler film because I was just a stupid young punk back then. Now I'm a stupid old punk.

As far as Hong Kong movies go, *GOD OF GAMBLERS* is one of the mellowest melodramas I've ever seen. But unlike other laid back comedies, I, the emperor of superheroes and karate guys, actually did not hate *GOD OF GAMBLERS* at all! I liked it a lot! Don't faint! Its scenes of comedy are fairly funny,



胡慧中



and its scenes of drama are fairly dramatic. Sadly, not all gambler movies are this good. So remember, the next time you decide to rent a gambler movie, rent *GOD OF GAMBLERS* instead of *ALL FOR THE WINNER* or *CASINO RAIDERS*. *GOD OF GAMBLERS* may be rather tame for my previous standards, but it's a cute, charming, heartwarming, dandy little film. Sounds like I'm getting old & senile.

Super dooper star Chow Yun Fat has been in more films than an average immigrant family from Vietnam has children, and yet he never became the super cool stud he is until his role in John Woo's *A BETTER TOMORROW* (1986). Good old Chow Yuen Fat continued that fiercely heroic tradition in *THE KILLER* and the pathetically overrated *A BETTER TOMORROW pt. 2*, but *GOD OF GAMBLERS*, for the most part, offered a change of pace for him. Other cast members include Andy Lau (co-star), Michiko Nishiwaki (cameo), and Joey Wang (a.k.a. Wang Tsu-Hsien). Joey Wang is female, despite the first name 'Joey.' Regardless, I'm sure she could do wonders with my wang. Back to



Michiko Nishiwaki. She's an attractive though muscular Japanese actress who made her debut in the equally Japanese sci-fi series *DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPI-ELVAN*, and got into the Hong Kong groove (thanks to her appearances in Chinese films like *MY LUCKY STARS*, *OUTLAW BROTHERS*, and of course, *GOD OF GAMBLERS*) once Japanese movie & TV show makers decided to become garbage makers. Back to Andy Lau. He's a good actor, adequate fighter and a HK bigshot who seems to have been in nearly 50% of all recent HK movies produced. One of his earliest roles was a fight scene in *TWINKLE TWINKLY LUCKY STARS*. There are two actors who appear not only in *GOD OF GAMBLERS*, but the two sequels as well. One plays a heroic bodyguard in all three stories. His name is spelled "向華強", which can be mis-translated many different ways, including Cou Ka Kyo, Cou Hua Kyo, Cou Hua Gou, Mu Hua Gou, Kau Hua Kyo, Cou Ke Gou, Mu Ka Gou, Kau Ke Kyo, and perhaps a jillion different variations. Do any of you know what the fuck the correct interpretation is? In this art-

icle, he's pictured aiming a gun in some guy's mouth. Whoever this actor is, he plays a heroic bodyguard and steals the film. The other mysterious actor plays a villainous loneshark in this movie, but but he plays a good guy in the other two. I think his name is probably 吳孟達, which could mean either Wu Myo I, Wu Mo Ei, or something completely different. Whoever he is, he's a successful actor in HK, and has won major awards. Somewhere in this article, he's pictured aiming a knife at Joey Wang's face. Can any of you identify him?

The final paragraph is, as always, the film's storyline, although it may not seem like it yet because I'm rambling on like this. Sorry. Cow Yuen Fat plays Kao Jin in the Mandarin version, but the character is called Ko Chan in the Cantonese version, or vice versa. I'll compromise and call him Ko Jin.

Ko Jin (a.k.a. Kao Chan?) is perhaps the most skilful, talented, unbeatable gambler. He's been given a nickname, 'God of Gamblers,' possibly named after an ancient mythical character from Chinese legends. Ko Jin is quite rich, so he frequently donates his winnings to charitable organisations.

He's a slick, chic, no-nonsense kind of guy. Despite Ko Jin's (Chow Yun Fat's) charisma and tough reputation, vengeful mobsters who suffered defeat at his mighty gambling skills are intent on sending him to that great casino in this sky. So he's got this intimidating bodyguard called Lone Wu (played by some actor who's name I'm not entirely sure of, but possibly Cou Hua Kyo), who knows kung fu and bang bang. Then one fateful night Ko Jin gets injured in a trap meant for one of those snobby Middle Easterners. The boobie trap was set by an unsuccessful, poor gambler called Scar in either the Cantonese or Mandarin version, and called Knife in the Mandarin or Cantonese version. I'll compromise for this article, and call him a little of both. I'll hence forth refer to him as Scarf. Scarf (Andy Lau) lacks the wealth & luxury of Ko Jin, because he loses everything whenever he gambles. Scarf finds Ko Jin, still unconscious because of that dangerous trap. Scarf does not know that Ko Jin also happens to be the legendary

'God of Gamblers,' but he and his girlfriend (Joey Wang) nurse Ko Jin back to health, in the run-down little shack they live in. But the nasty fall caused by the trap has given poor Ko Jin amnesia, not to mention making him eligible for the Special Olympics. The only things about the retarded Ko Jin which make him anything like his old self are his obsession for chocolate and unbeatable, possibly magical gambling abilities. Once Scarf realizes that Ko Jin has gambling skills far superior to his own, he takes advantage of Ko Jin. He takes him to casinos so he wins lots of money, making Scarf & his girlfriend rather rich. They exploit his gambling talents, and yet a good friendship develops between Ko Jin and Scarf, resulting in a couple touching scenes which could make even the most coldblooded viewer shed a tear. But ironically, Scarf owes money to the same gambling mobsters who were chasing Ko Jin back when he was officially known as the 'God of Gamblers.' These villains are after Scarf, and don't know that Ko Jin (their other target) is also living with him. A villainous character called Yee (played by yet another new, unknown actor), who is supposedly a good friend of Ko Jin, is conspiring with the enemies too. The jealous Yee tried to rape Ko Jin's girlfriend Janet (played by the mind-blowingly sexy Cheung Man, an inaccurate name, seeing as a man is just the thing she is not), but accidentally killed her instead, so he became a neckerofiliac for about an hour. For an encore, Yee is now trying to kill Ko Jin himself, out



of fatal envy. So there's this chase and shoot out, with Yee trying to shoot a terrified, bewildered Ko Jin, and those mobster henchmen trying to shoot Scarf. Luckily, the mysterious bodyguard Lone Wu arrives just in time, having finally tracked down Ko Jin. Seeing that Ko Jin and his new pal Scarf are under attack, Lone Wu shoots dozens of henchmen, and lends Scarf a gun so he too can shoot dozens of henchmen. This whole shoot out is the high point of the film, and gets even better once Ko Jin loses his temper. Scarf has chased after Yee, and Lone Wu has been injured and temporarily subdued by one of the many villains. Seeing that the only way to escape is to fight back, the previously hysterical Ko Jin has a flashback to when he was a super slick winner, and his adrenaline goes on overdrive!



JOEY WANG
(A.K.A. Wang Tsu Hsien)

BIRTHDATE:
Jan. 31, 1967

HEIGHT:
170cm

FILMS:
LEGEND OF WISELY
A CHINESE GHOST STORY parts 1, 2, & 3
AN ETERNAL COMBAT
GOD OF GAMBLERS



Ko Jin picks up a pistol and furiously hunts for all the remaining henchmen not killed by Scarf or Lone Wu. It's hard not to cheer wildly as Chow Yun Fat (as Ko Jin) blows away a number of villains, in a scene which looks like it's right out of Chow's movies for John Woo (i.e. *A BETTER TOMORROW* and *THE KILLER*).

The shootout almost seems out of place in an otherwise lighthearted comedy. In fact, it's all downhill after this shootout, I feel they should have ended the story right after this would be climactic battle. The remaining 15 minutes (or whatever) is anticlimactic, showing Ko Jin retrieve his sanity & memory in a hospital (he ended up injured in the battle). He seems to forget about his friend Scarf, and goes back to palling around with Yee, pretending he doesn't know that Yee killed Janet. Then, after defeating more evil villains in a card game aboard a ship, he frames one particular baddie, tricking him into shooting Yee dead. The touching ending has him reuniting with his old friend Scarf, and the two of them decide to go gambling at Las Vegas, which they pronounce strangely. ***



賭俠

GOD OF GAMBLERS 2

Produced by Win's Movie Production in late 1990 and early 1991, Starring Andy Lau (a.k.a. Lau Wah), Stephen Chow (a.k.a. Chiau Sing Chi), Cheung Man, Shing Fui On, Wu Mo Ei (?), Cou Hua Kyo (?)

I guess the tradition of inferior sequels disappointing fans of the original is once again in effect. But then, a great many fans seem to prefer the second *A BETTER TOMORROW* over the original, but I'll be a drunken monkey's uncle if I know why. Where as the original *GOD OF GAMBLERS* was a drama-comedy, this offbeat sequel is more of an action-comedy, but not with enough action to satisfy the common *ACES GO PLACES* fan. *GOD OF GAMBLERS 2* has twice as much martial arts as the first film, which is no major accomplishment, since the first one had practically none. Both *GOD OF GAMBLERS* films are of different genres, so comparing them is harder than frozen

chocolate. But I'll give it a damn good try. The first one is better, because it's more serious and we care more about the film's characters. Main star Chow Yun Fat was quite charismatic in the first film, and yet he's not in the sequel. Maybe he wanted too much money, or maybe he simply didn't want to share the screen with Chiau Sing Chi, a young new actor. He's quite a heart throb in HK now, and many rival actors seem to dislike him. With Chow Yun Fat's character, the 'God of Gamblers' out of this film, the character is referred to often in part two, the characters seem to worship him as a real god.

With the mighty Chow Yun Fat out of the way, Andy Lau (only a co-star in part 1) enjoys taking over as the main character. His co-star, Chiau Sing Chi (a.k.a. Stephen Chow) is an okay comedian I suppose, who

I first saw a couple years ago in serious adventures like *DRAGON FIGHT* and *JUST HEROES*. He didn't leave much of an impression on me until I saw him again, trying to be funny in *FIST OF FURY 1991*. Many of his movies seem to be obnoxious spoofs of superior films. As mentioned earlier, many HK stars

have been pissed off at him because of his lame satires, or attempts at it. *GOD OF GAMBLERS 2* is not downright abysmal, but much of it is boring. Fortunately, some of the comedy generates a few decent laughs every now and then, and toward the end are a few unexpected kicks, acrobats and gun shots. I'll give it 1 1/2 stars, which may be unfair. If its many boring, pointless, stupid scenes were cut out, I would give it two whole stars. If you like subtle Hong Kong comedies, you might want to check it out. But don't expect any hilarious, wild, *ACES GO PLACES*-type thriller.

The story is even more simple than the brain of an anime fan. The main hero is Knife (Andy Lau) from the first movie, but he's called Little Knife (Little Andy Lau) this time around. Having learned how to gamble, thanks to the one and only 'God of Gamblers' from the first film, he now lives luxuriously. Stephen Chow plays a bumbling conman with telekinetic powers. He tries to impress our hero Little Knife, and after some mumbo jumbo they both become friends. They're on the run from vengeful gamblers somehow related to the ones in the first film. Somehow, these nasty gamblers manage to kidnap the bodyguard Lone Wu, and even conspire with authorities to go through red tape and impersonate Little Knife, and take over his home. For revenge, Little knife and Stephen Chow foil these cor-

rupt gamblers on a ship. The villains cheated every time, using advanced equipment like video cameras, hidden microphones and surveillance devices to insure they'd win. If that's not devious enough, one hench villain called Tai Kun has telekinetic powers, which he uses to help his bad leader win the dice & card games aboard their massive ship. Tai Kun, who has an ugly eye, engages with Stephen Chow, in a brief, silly war of illusions, which is one of the movie's funnier ideas. Meanwhile, Little Knife exposes the enemy's electronic cheating methods. Then the bodyguard Lone Wu, who was kidnapped by the villains earlier in the film after an impressive shootout, escapes with the help of a sexy, leggy female secret agent. They arrest the villains on the ship, and Stephen ties two plungers together to form a nunchaku! There's an amusing battle at the end. *1/2

賭俠II之上海灘賭聖

GOD OF GAMBLERS 3: BACK TO SHANGHAI

Produced by Wins Motion Picture Company in 1991, Starring: Chau Sing Chi, Wu Mo Ei, Tien Feng, Cou Hua Kyo, and a small cameo by Cheung Man

First of all, you'll notice the roman numeral 2 (II) on the Chinese writing for this movie's title, and yet in English, it's part 3. This is no typing error, it's just that the original Chinese titles of these films are different than the English titles. I suspect that the second two *God of Gamblers* films are actually called something else in Chinese, like maybe "*Saint of Gamblers pt. 1*," and "*Saint of Gamblers pt. 2*." Maybe we'll never know, maybe we'll never care.

After the disappointment of that silly farce *GOD OF GAMBLERS 2*, I almost didn't want to hand over my hard earned cash to Chinatown's Great Star Theatre for the bay area's premier of *GOD OF GAMBLERS 3*. But with *CRAZY SAFARI* as a co-feature, I couldn't go wrong. So I got in line, handed the ticket lady my six bucks, looked down my nose at the Chinese immigrants who were annoyed to see a white in a Chinese theatre, and sat down to enjoy a fun double bill. As is often the case, I ended up seated next to some old Chinese guy with excessive phlegm. Why can't I ever get a seat next to an uncontrollably horny Amy Yip lookalike? But the day was not a total loss because *GOD OF GAMBLERS 3* was, and still is, magnificent! It blows away part 2 like a wind storm, and I even prefer it over the original. Actually, parts 1 and 3 can't be easily compared because they're so entirely different; part one is a mellow, realistic, perhaps believable drama. Part 3, like part 2, is a wild & crazy comedy. Where as most of the humor in part 2 had me rolling my eyes, the humor in part 3 had me rolling around in the aisle at the crowded theatre, though I've seen wierder things in San Francisco. The

point is, *GOD OF GAMBLERS 3* made me laugh harder and more frequently than the first two combined! It has more fantasy and adventure than the second, which had more of those than the first, which was basically just a soap opera. Although part 2 links the phenomenally different 1 and 3 together, the over all trilogy is very uneven; with the first being a drama, the second being a comedy, and this one



being a magical fantasy! Another discrepancy in continuity is the change of cast again. Andy Lau's last appearance was in the second one, leaving Stephen Chow to be the main character throughout. The only regular character to appear in all three movies is the bodyguard.

GOD OF GAMBLERS 3 has possibly the same amount of martial arts as part 2, which isn't really a whole lot. These are not martial arts films. **GOD OF GAMBLERS 3** has possibly the same amount of gun shots as part 2, but these aren't shootout films either. As far as the action content of **GOD OF GAMBLERS 3**, there are also a couple brief chases, so combined with what little punches and bullets it has, there's a good amount of action on the whole. Another type of exciting excitement are its two (approx.) magical duels, looking like something out of a period fantasy. There are some beautifully photographed special effects, and some wacky, outlandish concepts! The flick is more full of surprises than a magician's hat. Are you wondering how **GOD OF GAMBLERS 3** can squeeze in so much fun? Well, they saved room by having less footage of actual gambling than in the first two movies.

The story starts out with that same magical villain Tai Kun from part 2 with the wierd eye. In part 2, he and our heroic 'Saint of Gamblers' Sing (Stephen Chow) gambled at a card table on a ship, using their psychic and/or telekinetic powers. Sing won, so now his ugly-eyed rival Tai Kun wants a rematch, and has hired a group of other magical guys. When they combine their powers, emmense, unbelievable magical spells occur. Unfortunately, such bizarre feats often have amazing side effects, like time-warps! And so a magical yet hilarious confrontation occurs, which accidentally sends Sing and rival gambler Tai Kun back to 1937 Shanghai! Sing meets and befriends Chow Tai Fook (Wu Mo Ei), an ancestor of his uncle, played by the same actor. Chow Tai Fook, unlike Sing's uncle in the 1990s, is a real sissy, very much on the feminine side. Personally, I'm getting pretty sick of all these stereotypical portrayals of homosexuals. Haven't those fellows got it tough enough? After all, there will never be a



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cure for AIDS unless scientists can train rats to buttfuck. They both accidentally get involved in a gangland warfare (something Shanghai was full of back then), and end up befriending a wealthy gambler called Ding Lik, who runs a casino which is frequently hassled by mobsters and Japanese soldiers. Sing uses his gambling to out-gamble the baddies (including Tai Kun, now with the Japanese) and also uses his magic and a bizarre kung fu technique to fend off gangsters, but still manages to find enough time to go chasing after a cute girl (Ding Lik's fiancée), with hilarious consequences. Speaking of hilarity, the humor reaches its peak when Mr. Fook opens his own fastfood restaurant serving buns, all based on advice Shing gave him about the 1990s. The new restaurant, McDoomfook, is the setting for an excellent, extremely funny spoof of musicals. But the fun, music & frolicking doesn't last because the town's mayor (movie legend Tien Feng, still alive after all these years!) is in with the gangsters & Japanese invaders who aim to wipe out the righteous Ding Lik's legitimate business and replace it with sleazy corruption! Sing and a few friends get surrounded and nearly shot by a troop of Japanese, until they're rescued by Brother Five (a.k.a. Lone Wu), the same mighty bodyguard from the first two movies. Brother Five, along with a troop of green beret soldiers materialize into 1937 Shanghai ironically, via another magical timewarp, just in time for a spectacular shootout; beautiful cinematography abounds! Again, the bodyguard Brother Five steals the film. The Japanese army men are now dead,

so they failed to keep Sing Keung, the Saint of Gamblers out of an upcoming casino game. He reaches Ding Lik's tournament just in time to play for Ding, against the villainous mobsters. If Ding's side loses, he forfeits everything he owns, must give it all to the villains, and has to leave Shanghai. Former villain Tai Kun leaves the baddies who treated him badly, and combines his own magic with Sing to win against Pierre Cashon, the French God of Gamblers. The bad guys are defeated, so by using another telekinetic timewarp, Sing returns to Hong Kong, 1991. *****

= = End of G.O.G. trilogy. = =

賭 聖

ALL FOR THE WINNER

Produced by Seasonal Film Corporation in 1990, released by "Wonderful" (?) Video, Starring Stephen Chow, Cheung Man, Wu Mo Ei

Here's a list of mysterious questions we may never know an answer to: 1. Is there a Loch Ness monster? 2. Who told Roger Moore he could act? 3. Why doesn't Damon dump this magazine and use the money he'd save on printing costs to get mental help? 4. Since when does this stupid farce **ALL FOR THE WINNER** classify as a 'satire' of the infinitely better **GOD OF GAMBLERS**? That's what many seem to think it is. Of course, Stephen Chow's films are always goofy, scatterbrained, and often such big ripoffs of other films that they could possibly be mistaken for a spoof. There are a few scenes in **ALL FOR THE WINNER** which are definitely mockeries of **GOD OF GAMBLERS**, but there are a couple of scenes where he mimicks Bruce Lee's actions (which he does in many films), not unlike he did in a similarly bad film, **FIST OF FURY 1991**. No doubt **ALL FOR THE WINNER** spoofs other movies too, ones which I somehow missed. Besides, **GOD OF GAMBLERS 2**, though considered a legitimate sequel to **GOD OF GAMBLERS**, more effectively parodies the original than this awkward mess does! Watching **ALL FOR THE WINNER** makes me somewhat glad I won't live forever.

This article is being written in mid-1991, at a time when I was so intrigued by this overrated new star, Stephen Chow. So far I'm starting to think he annoys me. But each of his movies seems to offer one major laugh (or sometimes 3, at the most) which almost makes the movie worth renting. It's too early to tell whether or not I like this silly clown, but he's not likely to put Samuel Hui or Jackie Chan out of business.

CHIAU SING CHI

aliases:

STEPHEN CHOW
STEVEN CHOW
BLACKIE LO



films: **MY HERO, JUST HER- OES, DRAGON FIGHT, FIST OF FURY 1991, GOD OF GAMBLERS 2 & 3, ALL FOR THE WINNER, LOOK OUT! OFFICER, MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRAIS, SLEAZY DIZ- ZY, CURRY AND PEPPER, TRICKY BRAINS, FIGHT BACK TO SCHOOL**

I can't figure out why this loose, derivative ripoff out-grossed *GOD OF GAMBLERS*. *ALL FOR THE WINNER* has the same amount of kung fu as *GOD OF GAMBLERS 2*, and it's just as good. However, my favorite scene is a comedy scene, where Stephen Chow does a hilarious imitation of Chow Yun Fat's character from *GOD OF GAMBLERS*. If there was more action and good comedy like this, I'd give this movie two whole stars, which it almost deserves. In this case just one star is more accurate. I still can't figure out why this silly farce exists, except that Seasonal Films wanted to make their own illegitimate sequel to *GOD OF GAMBLERS*. Since *G.O.G.* is the work of Win's Movie Production and not Seasonal, all these Seasonal dorks could come up with was a ripoff, not a genuine sequel, remake or satire. Of course, this is all just my personal opinion; but then, my opinions have had a big affect on me, more so than the opinions of anyone else.

Another funny thing at the beginning of the tape is the word 'Wonderful,' a video/graphic imposed along with Chinese writing. My guess is that the movie was distributed by some company called maybe 'Wonderful Video.' This misspelling of theirs is one of the funnier things in the flick.

ALL FOR THE WINNER starts out the same way as *FIST OF FURY 1991*, with a new arrival in Hong Kong trying to get a drink from a soda machine. In this case, his name is Sheng (Stephen Chow) and he's from Canton. He now resides in a H.K. apartment with his friends Hua, Ping, Tsai, and Uncle Yuan. Like in some of his other movies, Stephen's character again has super powers; in this case it's a combination of telekinesis and X-ray vision. Yuan, a destitute gambler makes use of Sheng's unique powers whenever they go out gambling. Are you still awake? By this time, the movie had me snoring outloud. Fate changes for Sheng & Yuan when they somehow get involved with two rich mobs of rival gangsters with a taste for knuckle sandwiches. There are a couple enjoyable fist fights and shootouts between both gangs of gamblers, and Sheng's girlfriend Yi Meng (Cheung man) is kidnapped by a mafia lead by Mr. Hung who has a throat problem. Yi Meng was kidnapped despite protection from a gang of female bodyguards, not to mention her own formidable fighting abilities. With her gone, Sheng's magical powers fade away like my attention to the film. Sheng now loses all his gambling games until Ping and Tsai rescue Yi Meng. With her back, Sheng's magic and confidence returns, so he's once again the King of Gamblers. *

ABOVE, & RIGHT:

Unique actors flock together! Stephen Chow, the star of *ALL FOR THE WINNER*, *FIST OF FURY 1991*, and *GOD OF GAMBLERS 2* & 3 hangs out with the African bushman Ni Xuan, seen in *THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY*, *THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY pt. 2*, and *CRAZY SAFARI*, reviewed on page 49.



Rainbow
Audio & Video
Incorporation
星河視聽公司

殺之戀

FATAL LOVE

Produced by Raymond Wong in 1987, Production Designed by Catherine Hun, Directed by Pochih Leung, a Cinema City Production, Starring Leslie Cheung, Cherie Chung, Melvin Wong

Sitting in front of the TV set doesn't bother me. Bending and laying down isn't what gets to me. The problem is getting back up again! Otherwise, I might never have sat through this cute little, slow paced love story. This is not an absolutely terrible film, but soap operas in general are as appealing to me as golf. I rented *FATAL LOVE* accidentally, because *TV Guide* listed it as having been shown out here on a UHF station. I tuned in and caught the last 30 minutes of what I think might be *TIGER ON BEAT*, apparently an exciting adventure with Chow Yun Fat, Norman Chu and Conaan Lee. Later, I decided to watch the whole film, thinking what I'd seen to be *FATAL LOVE*. Imagine my disappointment when, after watching about 30 minutes of the rented *FATAL LOVE*, I realized this was not the action film I'd had a glimpse of on TV. But I

still had hopeful expectations, keeping my fingers crossed that with a title like *FATAL LOVE*, it would be a silly rip off of *FATAL ATTRACTION*. But no way, Jose.

So I came to grips with reality. I had to accept the fact that there wouldn't be a lot of gunshots, stunts, kung furiosness, or car chases. Once this was established, I could tolerate it in the manner it was meant to be tolerated. Fortunately, the subtitles performed their duties with adequate results. Parts of *FATAL LOVE* are funny, parts are dull, parts are suspenseful and some parts are heartwarming. Or is it heartburn? Oh well, it's one of the two. I'll give it only one star, but that's because I don't find melodramas all that appealing. If you enjoy romantic dramas, you'll like this film because it too is a romantic drama, I mean romantic comedy. Hmmmm. This article is getting as boring as the movie itself. Let me awaken all my readers by adding an interlude: Edited highlights from reviews in previous issues!

....."Wo, cool! Like check out them titles!" - critiquing *BLOOD RITUAL* "The villains suffer defeat, not to mention de' hands". -article on *PEACOCK KING* "You no good, son of a bastard" -review of *RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE*

Now that your adrenaline is flowing again, let's start chillin', and mellow out with the script for *FATAL LOVE*. Get ready to laugh, this will be quite funny!

The main villain is one of the world's deadliest predators, a shark. Not a Great White, not a hammerhead, but the most dangerous kind: A loan shark! This rich villain has a girlfriend who's also a model. The girlfriend is called Cecilia, and so is the model. The model (Cecilia) is played by Cherie Chung, possibly named Cherie because we'd all like to have popped her cherry. The wealthy bully more or less owns her because of some corrupt business deal incorporating murder and scandals. Cecilia (Cherie Chung) somehow falls in love with a 27-year old artist called Chi Ken Wing (Leslie Chung), pronounced Chicken Wing. Hey you readers, hold down the laughter, you're making me nervous! For about the first ten minutes, Cecilia acts all mystical and illusive, trying to convince Chicken Wing that she's just a ghost so he'll avoid her and not feel the wrath of her evil boyfriend. But eventually, the jealous shark loses control and has his hench-Chinamen kidnap the two discreet lovers. Inner mob vengeance occurs during some sort of power struggle, giving Chicken Wing a chance to break free. Then, for about five or less minutes, it becomes an action film as bullets fly through the air in exactly the same way that bricks don't. Chicken Wing and Cecilia both get bloodied up, but it's the shark who dies when a chandelier falls ontop of him. *

火燒島

ISLAND ON FIRE

Produced by Da Shyue Film Co. 1991 in Association with Golden Harvest, Producer: Ka Chuen Hsiung (a.k.a. Ko Chun Hsiang), Screenplay: Fu Lee & Yen Yu Chiao, Producer in Taiwan: Tsai Shun Fiu Shen, Executive Producer: Wang Yu (as in Jimmy), Production planner: Ka Chuen Hsiung & Wang Yu, Planner: Chan Wen Ho & Lee Chin Hsiung (a.k.a. Lee Jen Shu), Production Manager: Fung Chi Chia, Scriptwriter: Yu Yi & Yeh Yuen Chio, Director: Chu Yen Ping, CAST: Samo Hung, Andy Lau, Jackie Chan, Tony Leung, Tuo Chung Hua, Ko Chun Hsiang, Jimmy Wang Yu

I feel too kind giving *ISLAND ON FIRE* two whole stars, which it almost doesn't deserve. Maybe it doesn't deserve two stars, but I watched this videotape shortly after returning from a drive-in theatre where I saw a boublebill of *STAR TREK IV: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* and *THE ADAMS FAMILY*, and both movies sucked like a perverted vacuum cleaner. After those two awful flicks, even *ISLAND OF FIRE* seemed decent! *ISLAND OF FIRE* is a depressing, downbeat movie, and I think it takes itself way too seriously. That's right, I said I think it takes itself way too seriously! I THINK! There, you see, I'm not subjective! But then, my not being subjective is my opinion too. I also don't happen to like the theme song for *ISLAND OF FIRE*, though some of its other tunes are okay. The only really good thing I can say about it is that it's my favorite prison film, not that there's really anything worth comparing it to.

There's an interesting cast in this crime drama. During the latter portion of the production schedule, a few big name actors all suddenly agreed to be co-stars, acting behind some main hero I can't identify. An ad indicates he might be called Tony Leung, but it's not the same Tony Leung in *BULLET IN THE HEAD*. Jackie Chan was working on *ISLAND* at the same time that he was working on his *OPERATION CONDOR* (he frequently makes smaller appearances in other films since his own take so long to complete, that's why he filmed *PROJECT A* at the same time he appeared in *WINNERS AND SINNERS*). Jackie dislikes *ISLAND*, and only agreed to do it as a favor to the producer, a friend who'd helped him when he had problems with some Chinese triad. Jackie's childhood buddy Samo Hung also makes a guest appearance in *ISLAND OF FIRE*. Samo is uglier than the rear end of a bulldog, and has more chins than a Chinese phone book, but he's a great martial artist. But unlike Jackie, he does no stunts or fights in this flick. Andy Lau makes probably the most effective performance in this film, and even chop sockey oldtimer Jimmy Wang Yu appears! There are many other actors, but nobody I could recognize yet. In fact, there are too many characters, making it quite dull.

Actionwise, the fights are good. Jackie's duels lack that unbeatable stuntwork he used to do (he's getting too old for that shit!), but these scenes are still pretty exciting. Unfortunately, the movie is over two hours long for some reason, so the fights seem short and spread far apart. The overall concept of this story is intriguing, but the effect is ruined by excessive subplots and pitiful drama. Basically, it's all just another stupid prison film derivative of *THE LONGEST YARD*, *BAD BOYS*, *COOL HAND LUKE*, and its concept of 'reformed criminals turned into assassins may have come from *LA FEMME NIKITA*.

With the gloomy commie year 1997 coming, more and more Hong Kongese are fearing the imminent Communist take over of Hong Kong, possibly forcing the previously democratic citizens to dress like toilet attendants on the Orient Express. So *ISLAND ON FIRE* is set in the year 2000, at a cruel commie prison. The main hero, Wang Wei intentionally gets himself arrested in order to get sent to prison. It seems that prisoners, supposedly executed at this harsh prison are turning up as assassins at the outside world, so he goes into this jail to investigate. Rivals Du Chiu (Jackie Chan) and a mobster (Andy Lau) are prisoners too. Earlier, Jackie accidentally killed Andy's brother, and although it was in self-defense, Andy wants revenge. Samo Hung plays another prisoner, one who keeps escaping to visit his son. The lead prisoner is a respected, tattooed, yakuza-type called Kui (Wang Yu), or at least until prison guards gun him down midway into the film. The prisoners don't get along, there are various grudges and conflicts, somebody always wants



looking back on it, my article wasn't nice. Confession #2: When I was a 10 year old prankster (as opposed to a 28 year old prankster), I gave a small child next door a glass of Palmolive and told him it was lime Cool-Aid.

Movie director John Woo was born in 1948. The place of this important occasion was Canton (a.k.a. Guangzhou), although I also read somewhere he was born in Korea! Maybe it was a very long birth and it took place on a plane that flew from Canton to Korea. For now let's just assume it was Canton, and that he lived there for three years. At the age of three, he and his family moved to Hong Kong. In the 1960s, when he was in high school, he developed an interest in movies. At 18 or so, he was into stage drama and was enthusiastic about European cinema for some reason, specifically the French films of Jean Pierre Melville and some guy called Truffaut. This Truffaut dude can't have many 'true faults' if he inspired the works of John Woo! John Woo was also inspired partially by the knight & chivalry tales of director Chang Cheh, but the western movies like *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, *MEAN STREETS*, *THE GODFATHER*, *TAXI DRIVER*, & *BONNIE AND CLYDE* were a more powerful inspiration for his films. Speaking of John Woo's films, his first ones were amateur shorts on Super 8mm when he was 18 & 19. Then he got his first professional film job in 1969, as a production assistant and scriptboy for the now closed Cathay Studios. From there he worked temporarily for Shaw Bros. as an Assistant Director under Chang Cheh. Using his skills & experience he acquired from his days at Shaw & Cathay, not to mention the help of a friend who put up the money, he made *YOUNG DRAGON* ('73). This was the year that Bruce Lee died, and the kung fu craze was in full swing. So Golden Harvest showed interest in John Woo's first directorial (*YOUNG DRAGON*), and liked it enough to buy the film. John Woo had gotten his big break. He worked for Golden Harvest for



tighter than a floozy's skirt. Woo hopes to move to America or some other place where quality film making is still permitted. If and when John Woo comes here, will he make the same kind of action thrillers he's known for, or will he sell out and make lame American-style movies? For the time being, let's check out his Hong Kong movies. For the remainder of this article, I'll review as many of his movies as I have time for. But first, *Modern Heroes of Hong Kong's* obligatory John Woo film checklist.

to make life either miserable or short for somebody else. Because of fights or bad behavior, Wang Wei, Jackie, Andy and Samo are supposedly executed. In reality, they're given new identities and forced to be assassins, like so many other prisoners before them. The climax is my favorite scene in the movie, as our heroes gun down a wealthy drug dealer at a Philippine airport, and waste a few soldiers in the process. According to an article by Ric Meyers in an issue of *Inside Kung Fu*, these scenes' filming dates were delayed by the Persian Gulf War, but shortly before the eruption of the volcano Mt. Pinatubo covered the place with volcanic ash. Amazingly, Jackie, Andy & Samo end up shot to death, and only the main hero, whoever he is, survives! Later he returns to prison to arrest the warden, who masterminded the whole scheme of turning deathrow prisoners into hitmen. I wish the warden would have died, and the three superstars could have escaped safely. Oh well, I rarely get what I want. **



John Woo woos his Audience! Whew! *

I, Damon Foster, have realized that in order to write this article about director John Woo, I'll have to start off with a humiliating confession. You must keep it a secret! And since I'm being so honest about my past, I'll admit something else; that's *two* confessions! Two gut-spills! Confession #1: I admit it! I never saw a John Woo gangster movie until 1989. There, it's out in the open. I'm new to this genre. Normally, I'm an older fan of most of *O.C.* film genres. But in this case, I first became a fan of this sensational director when I saw *A BETTER TOMORROW* on a UHF TV station which frequently showed Chinese films with English subtitles. I liked it a lot and even critiqued it in *O.C.#11*. But



the remainder of the 1970s, directing martial arts films and comedies. In the mid-1980s, he left Golden Harvest and began directing films for Cinema City, Tsui Hark's (who'd left Golden Harvest a few years earlier) Film Workshop and later formed his own company, Milestone Pictures. John Woo is a soft-spoken, married man with three children.

I said it before, about *A BETTER TOMORROW* being one of the first John Woo movies I ever saw. I also think it's John Woo's best; rivaling two other action masterpieces: *THE KILLER* and *BULLET IN THE HEAD*. Although I don't consider the rest of his movies to be that good, I still consider myself a decent person and a fan of John Woo. He's probably my favorite director. Like many democratic Hong Kongese, John Woo hopes to leave Hong Kong in 1997 when the communists start imposing restrictions

- ☐ *YOUNG DRAGON* (1973)
- ☐ *THE DRAGON TAMERS* (1974)
- ☐ *PRINCESS CHANG PING* (1975)
- ☐ *HAND OF DEATH* (1975)
- ☐ *MONEY CRAZY* (1977)
- ☐ *FOLLOW THE STAR* (1977)
- ☐ *LAST HURRAH FOR CHIVALRY* (1978)
- ☐ *FROM RAGS TO RICHES* (1979)
- ☐ *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL* (1981)
- ☐ *LAUGHING TIMES* (1981)
- ☐ *PLAIN JANE TO THE RESCUE* (1982)
- ☐ *SUNSET WARRIOR* (1983)
- ☐ *THE TIME YOU NEED A FRIEND* (1984)
- ☐ *RUN TIGER RUN* (1985)
- ☐ *HEROES SHED NO TEARS* (1986)
- ☐ *A BETTER TOMORROW* (1986)
- ☐ *A BETTER TOMORROW pt 2* ('87)
- ☐ *THE KILLER* (1989)
- ☐ *JUST HEROES* (1989)
- ☐ *BULLET IN THE HEAD* (1990)
- ☐ *ONCE A THIEF* (1991)

HAND OF DEATH

[Chinese title: *COUNTDOWN IN KUNG FU*]
Produced by Raymond Chow, Director of Photography: Liang [first name didn't fit on screen], Editor: Chang ?????. Sound Effects: Wang ?????. Music: Joseph Kuo, Action Choreographer: Samo Hung, Written & Directed by John K. Woo, Starring: Tan Tao Liang, Jacky Chan, Samo Hung, James Tien, John Woo, Yuen Wah

So this early John Woo directorial is one he's ashamed of, and would rather forget it was ever made? That's how I feel about the various articles I've done for other publications who either censored or hacked them to bits. But I think *HAND OF DEATH* is a lot of fun, light years better than some of John Woo's later works like *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL* and *ONCE A THIEF*. *HAND OF DEATH* is a typical 1970s kung fu / period film / chop sockey, and actually belongs in my *Chop Sockey Report* column, not *Modern Heroes of Hong Kong*. But *HAND OF DEATH* is a John Woo film too, a must see for any serious fan of Woo's work. Woo's earlier coachings from Shaw sword-hero director Chang Cheh are in effect here, 19

this historical adventure is recommended for Chang Cheh fans as well. To the untrained eye, *HAND OF DEATH* looks like any other costume drama. But cunning Woo fans like me and you will carefully analyze and scrutinize *HAND OF DEATH* to see if there's any hint of John Woo expertise here. Like John Woo's gangster epics of the 1980s, this one also has male-bonding and a lack of any female heroes. But these elements are only slight. *HAND OF DEATH* is not unmistakably Woo, it more closely resembles the other swashbuckling kung fu films of its age. In fact, this tale of Shaolin rebels vs. Manchu soldiers was ahead of its time, made a full year before *FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH*, possibly the most wellknown of the Shaolin movies. After this movie, many more Shaolin-type films came out. Could John Woo be an unsung hero of 1970s chop sockey schlock?!



HAND OF DEATH was made in 1974, just a year after the death of Bruce Lee, and filmmakers were trying to come up with an actor who was at good as kung fu as Lee. So *HAND OF DEATH* has an impressive cast of martial arts guys. The main hero is played by Tan Tao Liang, one of the most incredibly marvelous kickers ever put on film! He's as far above Claude Van Damme as a human being is above an amoeba. Tan Tao Liang would later kick ass in *MAGNIFICENT KUNG FU LEGS*. But being a 'gathering of heroes' type film, there are other co-heroes. One of them is played by a young Jackie Chan a couple years after his kung fu debut in *SNAKEFIST FIGHTER*, but before he got the cosmetic surgery to make his eyes look caucasian, ugh, I mean bigger. Former Bruce Lee co-star James Tien (*BIG BOSS*, *FIST OF FURY*, *GAME OF DEATH*) also stars as a villain, but his fights lack the skill & grace of his work in *THE CHASE* and *ATTACK OF THE KUNG FU GIRLS*. Samo Hung plays a bad guy too, and seems to be wearing a set of false buck-teeth. Samo Hung also choreographed the fights which explains why they're so fun. Here's one final bit of trivia on the film, just to satisfy all you diehard fans of

HAND OF DEATH. It made its debut on Japanese TV on 4/20/83, broadcast on TBS. Now, this is a story. You want more? Okay, this is a story of former Shaolin monks who are pissed off at the Manchurian Ching Dynasty for having wiped out the Shaolin Monastery. One of these vengeful Shaolin guys is Yin Fei (Tan Tao Liang), who is gathering rebels to assist him on his crusade to go kick Manchu butt. One such hero is an angry swordsman they've dubbed "Zoro!" No, he's not Mexican. Another hero is a wood cutter called Shu Ping (Jackie Chan), who's brother was killed by the Manchu creeps. There's a fourth hero who comes in toward the end, played by none other than John Woo himself. Chang Yi (John Woo) isn't a fighter, just a messenger. Regardless, whatever the message he carried was, it somehow helped the heroes to confront the villainous Shir Hsiao Feng (James Tien) and his followers (Samo Hung, Yuen Wah, a few others). After a series of duels involving fists, kicks, swords & spears, many people, good or bad, are dead. The only survivors are Yin Fei (Tan Tao Liang) and Chang Yi (John Woo). ***

帝女花

PRODUCED BY CHANG YI

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1975, released on video by Rainbow in 1987, Directed by John Woo

NO! NO! DON'T WATCH THIS ONE NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU LIKE JOHN WOO! I can't make it any clearer than that!! This is a filmed opera, a stage play! There are no English subtitles, in fact there probably isn't any real dialogue, just tons of singing in this historical musical, actually a remake of another musical from the 1960s. This is an opera, and although it features lavish sets & costumes, I can't recommend it because it's NOT the kind of film I'm into. There's no real action, its 'sword-fights' are mere dances; I've seen kindergartners swinging sticks, which looked more convincing and thrilling. I dreaded up this video in the back section at a Chinese video store; in a small closet off in a corner, full of other movies nobody would rent! There's better fun to be had picking crab lice off Sam Kinnison's balls.

TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1981, Producer: Raymond Chow, A Leonard Ho Production, Editing: Chung Yao Chun, Screenplay: Chow Shao Lung,

Directed by John Woo, Starring: Ricky Hui, Hsu Sye, Sing Shu Fa (a.k.a. Fung Tsiu Fan), Nat Chan

This is a pretty good movie, no doubt about it. *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL* is a comedy-fantasy with occasional special effects; I would call it a Hong Kong *BEETLEJUICE*, but I've never seen *BEETLEJUICE*, so that ends that comparison. There's no point in seeing all these American films when there's a whole world of bizarre movies like *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL* to see. All you mainstreamers can just shove your TVs up your asses, motherfuckers. Anyway, *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL*, being a fun fantasy-comedy, might be acceptable to any audience, even narrowminded Americans, but then, I'm in no position to be guessing what Americans will be watching. It's a decent film, but it does have a few stupid gags, but then even *O.C.* has an occasional stupid gag, believe it or not! Actually, I can think of only one complaint against *TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL*, and that complaint is targeted at the video release only. If Golden Harvest and the video distributor had to go and super impose their trademarks through out the whole damn movie, it should have been at the top of the screen, not the bottom where English subtitles are partially covered. For a more detailed review, see *O.C.* #9 if you haven't thrown it out yet.

The setting is modern Hong Kong, and the goofy hero is called Bruce Lee (Ricky Hui), even though he

knows as much about kung fu as an avocado. Bruce is an out-of-luck musician, a poor starving artist who hates some rich, snobby, rival actor/musician/dancer who ripped off his music. If that's not enough of a problem for Bruce, there's this wierd yet silly demon dude (Fung Tsiu Fan) who's trying to sell Bruce's soul to the devil. The devil comes off as a funny clown despite eerie makeup and eye-lazers which fire from his eyes. Luckily, Bruce has a guardian angel/priest/ghost etc. who's protecting Bruce from the demon guy. The climax, as the angel guy battles the demon guy is a madcap, crazy-ass, chase/battle in what appears to be the haunted house the villain lives in. Among other things, there's a silly spoof of video games. The priest/ghost gets injured, but also scores significant blows against the demon. The demon repents, and both he and the priest-ghost become angels up in Heaven. Bruce lives happily ever after, while the two angels have harmless wargames up in the Heavens.**



RICKY HUI

Born in 1947

The brother of Samuel and Michael Hui, two other famous HK celebrities. His movie debut was in 1972.

A BETTER TOMORROW

Produced by Cinema City in 1986, Lighting: Chik Kim, Cinematography: Wong Wing Ha, Art Director: Bernie Lui, Costume Designer: Bruce Yu, Music: Joseph Ko, Composed by David Wu, Lyrics: James Wong, Editor: Kam Na, Screenplay: Chan Hing Kai, Leung Suk Wa, Action Director: Cylon Or, Tung Wai, Executive Producer: Wan Ka Man, Post Production Manager: Tony C., Coproducer: Tsui Hark, Screenplay & Directed by John Woo, CAST: Ti Lung, Chow Yuen Fat, Leslie Cheung, Emily Chu, Lee Che Hung, Waise Lee, Tien Feng, Tsui Hark, Shing Fui On

It's very unlikely that I could ever agree with any majority, that's about as rare as a Mr. Rogers porno movie. Yet even in America, there are many fans of *A BETTER TOMORROW*, which includes me and anyone with even the slightest sign of taste. *A BETTER TOMORROW* is both a classic and a masterpiece, which are probably both the same thing; though spelled differently. As of 1986, *A BETTER TOMORROW* was John Woo's most successful film, as well as one of the highest grossing movies in Hong Kong history. This





uniquely outstanding movie couldn't have happened at a better time, when HK action dramas consisted mainly of martial arts romps and repeated formulas. *A BETTER TOMORROW* broke all the rules, broke hearts, broke records, and broke new grounds; the only thing not broke were its makers. For once there was a modern crime drama in HK which didn't rely on kung fu to succeed. The real power behind *A BETTER TOMORROW* lies in its powerfully effective drama, its superb character development, magnificent performances, I'm using too many adjectives again, and of course, John Woo's ingenious directing. Part of what makes this drama so successful is its male bonding. This was influenced partially by John Woo's own close friendship with movie producer Tsui Hark. Both had become good friends who had the same goals, making HK films better than they were (now, if only America's film industry had such inspirational pioneers!).

Surprisingly, I discovered this classic only because I happened to turn on the TV when it was broadcast locally on a foreign TV station. Naturally I liked it the first time I saw it, but only to a certain point (hell, I only gave it two stars in *O.C. #111*). The movie has grown on me, it's now one of my alltime favorite things, rivaling sex and cake. I still enjoy many different HK film genres, whether it be modern action thriller, period costume drama, chop sockeys, Jackie Chan's films, etc., but believe me - I think the impact of *A BETTER TOMORROW* makes those films look obsolete. There's room for many kinds of movies, they all offer something. Yet *A BETTER TOMORROW* gets my vote (for what it's worth) as one of the more important ones. Amazingly, I love this movie even though it's tragic and depressing. Normally, I'm a sucker for happy endings. This time there was nothing to suck.

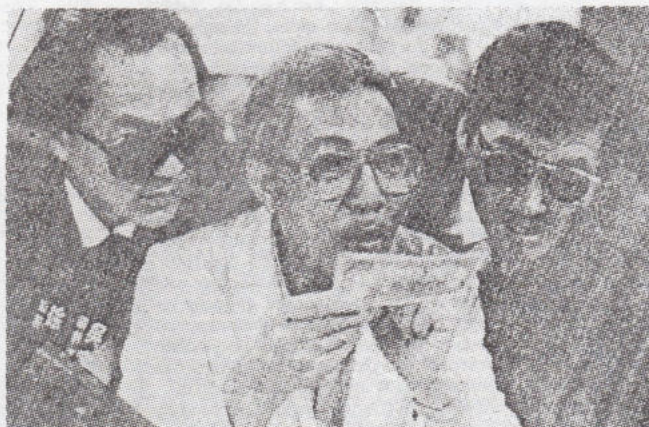
In the action department, the main form of goodguys-against-badguys is gun-shots, although there are a couple of fist fights too. The gun shootouts are remarkably intense, as the heroes blow away dozens of villainous henchmen, resulting in a bodycount higher than a burnt-out metalhead at a Motley Crue concert. The assaults are staged quite innovatively, and yet echo a certain tradition; only ten years ago, the hero would defeat his enemies via fists & kicks, and ten years before that, a sword would have been the instrument of cinematic bloodletting. Ten years before the sword films, I imagine the hero would have bored his enemies to death. But seriously (or kind of! I'm rarely serious), the shootouts in *A BETTER TOMORROW* probably blow away those in domestic crime dramas like *DIE HARD*, Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* films, whatever. But then again, I haven't seen enough American films to know what the hell I'm talking about, so just ignore me. No, wait! Hey come back! Don't ignore me yet, the article wouldn't be the same without you!!!

Castwise, the only actor I'm not too fond of is Leslie Cheung. I've never really liked him in any roll, he'd be better off working in a fastfood restaurant. But the other cast members make up for it. Ti Lung, now called Dick Lung was re-elevated to stardom thanks to *A BETTER TOMORROW*. Before this, Ti Lung was best known for various kung fuers of the 1970s. Co-star Chow Yuen Fat [who had an 'English' name a couple years ago, Aman Chow! But even American fans call him Chow Yuen Fat] came from a different genre; serious drama in movies like *STORY OF WOO VIET*. All his early films bombed, and yet John Woo saw promise in him, and cast him in *A.B.T.*, making him a star. His chic, slick look inspired many young men in HK to immitate his look in *ABT*, wearing the same kind of dark sunglasses, expensive clothes, and black trench-coat. Waise Lee, a young new star made his debut as the main villain, and has appeared in numerous movies ever since. Even oldtimer Tien Feng cameos, he's been in many many many movies, including: *ONEARMED SWORDS-MAN*, *CHINESE CONNECTION*, *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH*, and *SNAKEFIST FIGHTER*. So if anyone thinks *ABT* stars a bunch of talentless nobodies, I'll hit him with his white cane.

Tom, A.K.A. Sung Tse Ho (Ti Lung) works for a counterfeiting mob, and so does his partner Mark (Chow Yuen Fat). Though criminals, they're not actually evil. They work for gangsters, but try not to be too hard on them; after all, it's only a movie. Tom's younger brother Kit (Leslie Cheung) happens to be a cop, unaware of brother Tom's sneaky occupation. Then one day, while on business in Taiwan, Tom is framed and attacked by rival gangsters led by a traitor called Wang [Wang is a common name in China, the American equivalent being Dick]. Wang gets off scott free, while Tom ends up in jail. Before Tom's eventual release from prison, Mark settles the score with that lousy Wang jerk. This vendetta is a powerfully executed

shootout in a restaurant, the brilliance of which can not be accurately explained in my feeble excuse for journalism. Let's face it, John Woo directed Chow Yuen Fat's blowing away the baddies in one of the greatest onslaughts filmed. Wang dies, but so does Mark's leg. A few years later, Tom is released from prison and his own brother Kit, still a cop, hates his guts. Tom gets a job as a taxi driver, despite his old mafia's attempts to re-hire him. The new leader is a

nasty young fellow called Shing (Waise Lee) who was originally only a rookie before Tom got arrested, but Shing took over once Mark's leg got shot in the restaurant. As for cop Kit, he's out to arrest Shing, who's ready to kill Kit if the investigations persist. So Mark and Tom, fed up with the added corruption of their mob now at the hands of the treacherous Shing, unite against Shing. Mark wants a lot of money he feels the



ABOVE: The cover label for a Chinese music tape, featuring music by numerous HK celebrities including Anita Mui and Leslie Cheung. The picture is satirical; featuring the publicity ad for *ABT*, with the film's cast; and Jackie Cheung, who isn't even in the film!

mob owes him. Tom wants to gather evidence against Shing, to help his brother to arrest the bastards. During the grand finale of blood & bullets, Kit finally forgives Tom for having been a mobster, just as Shing shoots Mark dead. So then Tom does the same to Shing. More police arrive on the scene, so Tom insists that Kit arrests him, so that Kit can get his job promotion on the police force.

As far as I'm concerned, the story ends with Kit taking Tom to jail, but there were two sequels; *ABT 2* & *ABT 3*. I don't like either one, they seemed made only to cash-in on the success of the first one. As strictly lifeless blood & guts actioners, they succeed, but are nowhere near as successful as



BORN: 8/3/1946

Ti Lung joined the Shaw Bros. movie studio in 1968, and was trained in acting and theatrical martial arts. His movie debut was *DEAD END*. Other films:

- HAVE SWORD WILL TRAVEL
- DUEL OF THE IRON FIST
- THE HEROIC ONES
- BLOOD BROTHERS
- 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON
- YOUNG LOVERS ON FLYING WHEELS
- THE YOUNG REBEL
- SAVAGE FIVE
- CALL HIM MR. SHATTER
- FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH
- LEGEND OF WISELY
- A BETTER TOMORROW
- RUN DON'T WALK
- JUST HEROES



チヨウ・
ユンファ
Chow Yuen Fat
周潤發

a.k.a Chow Yun
Fah, Aman Chou

Born on 5/18/55

debut: 1974, the HK
TV movie *THE
REINCARNATION*

other films

LAST AFFAIR (1983)

LOVE IN FALLEN CITY (1984)

HONG KONG 1941

WOMEN

STORY OF WOO VIET ('81)

SCARED STIFF

OCCUPANT (1984)

THE 7TH CURSE (1986)

CITY ON FIRE (1987)

PRISON ON FIRE (1987)

A BETTER TOMORROW

A BETTER TOMMOROW 2

A BETTER TOMMOROW 3

ONCE A THIEF (1991)

HARDBOILED (1992)

Rainbow's trademark is still visible beneath the new label and its glue. Maybe Rainbow changed its name to Pan Asia Video at the last moment, or maybe Pan Asia wanted credit for Rainbow's work. Regardless, one of the two companies is responsible for splicing out gory scenes, which also screws up the story line, damaging plot continuity. I think that from now on, when a grisly death is cut from a movie, that same fate should happen to the idiot who edits it from the film. My other major complaint for this Mandarin version is that there aren't adequate background noises and sound FX. There are voices for people talking, but sometimes that's all. One unique thing about this saga is that there aren't really any villains. Some characters do nasty things, but their victims usually deserve it.

Chinese people have more aliases than there are nerds at a comix shop. Chiang Tai Wei, for example, used to be called David Chiang in the 1970s when he appeared in Shaw Brothers kung fu farces like *7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON*, *7 BROTHERS MEET DRACULA* and *FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH*, all of which have been in previous *O.C.s* for your amusement. His new alias this hour is John Chiang,

according to the opening

credits for *JUST HEROES*. Another Shaw veteran still fairly active in films is Li Hsiu Hsien, the name he used in *THE SAVAGE FIVE*, *GOLIATHON*, and *INFRAMAN*. Li Hsiu Hsien's new name is Danny Lee. He stars in *JUST HEROES* and so does a young Chiau Sing Chi. This is one of Chiau Sing Chi's first films. His character is played entirely straight, with none of the humor and slapstick stupidity he'd later become known for. After his deadserious roll in *JUST HEROES*, he would act in another serious film, *DRAGON FIGHT*, and get a number of aliases including Stephen Chow, Steven Chow and Blackie Lo. Getting back to 1970s oldtimers, there's also Chen Kuan Tai (*SAVAGE FIVE*, *EXECUTIONER OF DEATH*, *IRON MONKEY*, *FLYING GUILLOTINE*, etc.), but if this film is any indication, I've been spelling his name wrong all these years! He's now Chan Koo Tai. Additional familiar faces appear throughout.

The story is hard to follow because an occasional dark background blurs the almost transparent subtitles to the point of being unlegible. I think *JUST HEROES* might be about the death of a businessman called Mr. Tsou. He probably gets shot by a mysterious assassin, so this crime drama is kind of like a who dunnit. After the guy's death, I guess his followers and employees encounter confusing unrest. They search for each other, blame each other, and accuse each other of killing Mr. Tsou to speed up their own promotion in the company, mob or whatever. David Chiang's character left the group long ago to be a fish seller, but got involved again when his friend Sou (Danny Lee) got accused by Stephen Chow's character. Stephen Chow tries to kill Sou's girlfriend by run-

ning her over, and in an unrelated scene, gets put in jail and killed by violent prisoners. An additional character is a fish farmer who's a fan of *ABT*. He quotes from and imitates the movie, and wishes he can go along with the 'real life' gun & blood adventures that our heroes keep in getting 'fired up' in. After additional subplots and space-fillers, it's revealed that Tsou was actually killed by Tai (Chen Koon Tai), so Sou (Danny Lee) and David Chiang set about wasting Tai's henchmen and Tai's person. Amazingly, both heroes survive the finale! That's odd; finding a John Woo movie with such a happy ending is even harder than finding a 17-year old Catholic Latino girl who hasn't had at least two kids yet. **

THE KILLER

Presented by Tsui Hark in 1989, a John Woo Film, Written by John Woo, Directors of Photography: Wong Wing Hang and Peter Pao, Art Director: Tuk Man Wah, Costume Designer: Shirley Chan, Music by Lowell Lo, Theme song also by Lowell Lo, Lyrics by Susan Tang & James Wang, Sung by Sally Yeh, Edited by Fan Kung Ming, Music Editor: David Wu, First Assistant Director: Patrick Leung, 2nd Asst. Director: Leung Chi Ming, Executive in Charge of Production: Claudie Chung, Production Managers: Patrick Yip & Virginia Lau, Directed by John Woo, Cast: Chow Yun Fat, Danny Lee (aka Li Hsiu Hsien), Sally Yeh, Chu Kong, Tsang Kong, Shing Fui On (a.k.a. Shin Pui On, Sing Fu On)

Most movies are funner to see on a theatre's big screen than on a TV. I suppose *THE KILLER* is that way too, but not when you see it at a theatre like the Roxie, as I first did. The audience was full of pretentious, trendy 'art' types, and ones who felt the need to laugh out loud at scenes not meant to be funny. Many of these laughs were artificial, people just forcing themselves to bring out a fake laugh to be heard, to prove they weren't intimidated by the excellent H.K. flick which easily blows away any American movie these snobs have seen. The high point was when I bought a coke in the cramped lobby, and one of those annoying whimps said to me, "Water is actually

the first. I won't review either of them, because that would mean actually having to watch them! John Woo himself wasn't as involved in the script for *ABT 2*, and not surprisingly, didn't like the flick very much. Woo didn't work on the third one at all; it was mostly just a Tsui Hark project (which explains why I hated it so much). For negative comments on both, see *O.C. #12*. As for *ABT 1*, I give it five stars!

英雄本色

JUST HEROES

Produced in 1987, Screenplay: Nieh Kuang & Tommy Haw, Director of Photography: Cho Wai Ki & Yee Tung Lung, Art Director: Ringo Cheung & Andy Lee, Original Music: Romeo Diaz & James Wong, Music: Choi Hung & Sherman Chow, Production Manager: Debbie Tsui, Directed by John Woo & Wu Ma, A Magnum Presentation, Produced by Tsui Hark, Associate Producer: John Chiang & Danny Lee, Starring David Chiang (John Chiang, this week), Danny Lee (Li Hsiu Hsien), Chan Koo Tai (Chen Kwan Tai), Ng Ma (Wu Ma), Kelly Chu, Cally Wong, Stephen Chow (Chiau Sing Chi), James Wong, Shing Fui On, Ti Lung, Chiu Lui, Chiang Tao, Tung Pui

JUST HEROES is one of John Woo's lesser known films. I'm giving it two stars because it's good, but not great. It's got a number of decent gun battles and the usual John Woo bloodshed. Unfortunately, the video I rented had a few of the gory scenes mercifully edited out for my own protection. This tape was originally released by Rainbow video, but 22 glued over that label is one for Pan Asia Video!





much healthier for your body," so I gave him a cold stare which implied, "my body will give your pecker-sucking face one hell of a spinning-back kick if you don't mind your own business and get back in your closet." But regardless of the incidents at the theatre, the Americans seemed to enjoy *THE KILLER*, which is all that matters. In fact, of any John Woo film, this one is the most liked by American cult audiences. By now you've all heard that. Warner Bros. has bought the rights to make their own ripoff, with Richard Gere replacing Chow Yun Fat in the title role. This proves beyond a doubt what I've always said, about Americans being a self-centered, closed-minded audience. To think that nobody except me and most of you would go see a Chow Yun Fat film, but would see a Richard Gere film. The USA is indeed #1, but I think it could be even better without the excessive ego. This Yankee narrow-mindedness is the same reason why crap like *THE SIMPSONS* is overrated; and yet obscure, innovative brilliance like *MAX HEADROOM* is ignored. Do you detect another DF outburst of anarchic cynicism about to occur? Yes, and it's once again a futile attempt by me to make everyone aware of lesser-known entertainment, as opposed to the bigshot American productions we've grown up with all our lives. Many of you supposedly dislike my excessive whining and/or negative viewpoints. If you're one of these people, then you're quite fortunate, seeing as all other fanzines lack this attitude of mine. I've always been annoyed at how almost everything I like remains disliked by everyone else, but this American bastardized version of *THE KILLER* takes the cake. John Woo himself will not direct Richard Gere's remake because he's got better things to do.

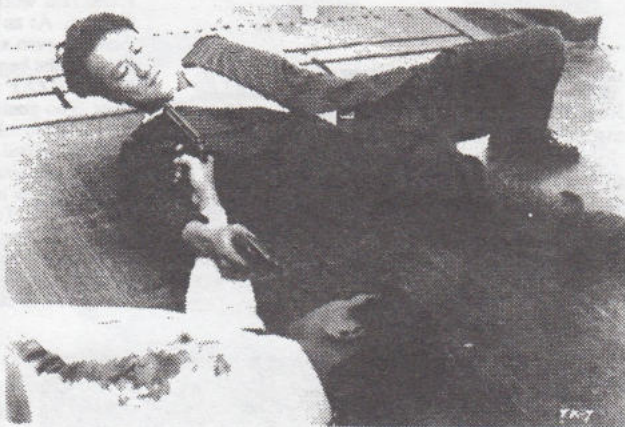


artment. This implies that whole night lasted a few days. But otherwise, *THE KILLER* is excellent, with even more gunfire & bloodshed than *ABT*.

Chow Yun Fat plays a hitman this time, and the co-hero is none other than Danny Lee, also in John Woo's previous film *JUST HEROES*. Sally Yeh also stars, she's an attractive actress with a long face and penetrating eyes, she was also in *PEKING OPERA BLUES* which I thought stunk like a rotten skunk's fart, and also in *ACES GO PLACES 4*, which didn't suck at all. Shing Fui On, a big, ugly, scary guy who played a background henchman in *ABT*, plays the main heavy, which I'm sure the actor is (nearly 180 pounds I guess).

The story follows the disillusionment of Jeff (Chow Yun Fat), a precision-trained marksman and assassin who accidentally blinded a nightclub singer called Jenny (Sally Yeh) during a shootout with mobsters. He got the job done, but regrets Jenny's loss of eyesight when she was unintentionally caught in the crossfire. A determined cop played by Danny Lee is determined to either kill Jeff or send him to the slammer, and is using Jenny as bait (Jeff has become Jenny's friend, out of guilt). Meanwhile, mobster Weng (Shing Fui On) wants

I enjoyed *THE KILLER*, though not as much as I enjoyed *ABT*. *THE KILLER* is stylish, atmospheric, a classic of its type and very depressing, more depressing than *ABT*. My personal preference doesn't necessarily mean *THE KILLER* is inferior to *ABT*, unless you happen to be me, which you're not.



Jeff killed because he no longer wants to work for Weng (Weng is the one who hired Jeff to assassinate rival mobsters). Weng fears now that Jeff has retired, he may spill the beans. Jeff's only intention is to get back the money Weng owes him, and use it to pay for an operation which will restore Jenny's eyesight. But the cop (Danny Lee) is still hot on Jeff's trail, but both rivals gradually attain mutual respect for each other. Eventually, they both become good friends, but that doesn't last long. Weng's henchmen surround Jenny, Jeff and Danny in a church. There's a massively mas-

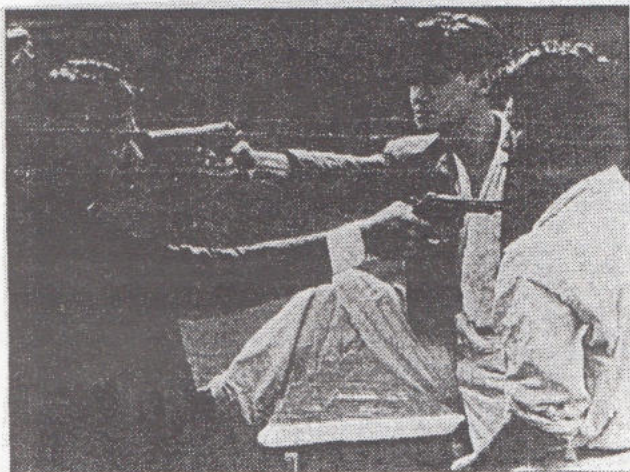


sive gun shootout with bullets, blood, explosions and all that good stuff. Dozens of henchmen get shot up! If there are fewer henchmen, there wouldn't be so many of them; numerically speaking. The most tragic scene is Jeff's death, where his eyes are shot out, eliminating any hope that his eyes be transplanted to Jenny in case of his death. Ironically, Weng survives and the cops arrest him. This ending is similar to that of *ABT*: An evil murderous villain surrenders to the cops knowing his wealth will get him out of jail anyway, so the hero (before it was Ti Lung, this time Danny Lee) shoots him dead to avenge Chow Yun Fat's death. My words can't conveniently demonstrate the excellence of John Woo's work here because I'm no master writer. You'll just have to see for yourself. ****



BULLET IN THE HEAD

A John Woo Film, Production Designer: James Leung, Costume Designer: Bruce Yiu, Directed by John Woo, Cinematography: Lau Kwok Wa, Chan Pui Kai, Somchai Kittikun, Wong Wing Hang, Music: James Wong and Romeo Diaz, Screenplay: John Woo, Patrick Leung, Janet Chun, Associate Producers: Patrice Leung & Catherine Lau, Edited by John Woo, Starring: Tony Leung, Jackie Cheung, Waise Lee, Simon Yam, Fennie Yuen, Yolinda Yam



Things don't always come out the way they started. Hell, *O.C.* started out as yet another serious Jap. sci-fi technogeek fanzine, not a smartass combination of cynicism and uniqueness! One other such transition happened in this movie. It was originally intended as another gangster-type film, but *BULLET IN THE HEAD* became very much influenced by the 1989 massacre at Tien An Men Square, when protesting students went on a hunger strike, and how Communist leader Li Peng more-or-less implied that the students impaled themselves on the soldiers' bayonets and seemed to dive under the army tanks. Encouraged by these crazy acts of Commie cruelty, John Woo turned *BULLET IN THE HEAD* into a semi-political, pro-democratic adventure; echoing war movies at times. Some scenes are war movie-ish, some are love story-ish, some are crime drama-ish, but the overall film is more than spectacular-ish! That's the whole point of this paragraph, though stated in a 'round about' way; *BULLET IN THE HEAD* is excellent! I enjoyed it even more than *THE KILLER*, perhaps as much as I enjoyed *ABT*! If I like it, and John Woo likes it, so will you.

Like *THE KILLER*, I also saw this classic at San Francisco's Roxie Theatre, where it definitely had a much greater affect than seeing it on video. However, the video version and the theatrical version both have certain scenes that the other lacked. In the theatre, there's a scene where the heroes are at the mercy of the villains, who force them to drink piss at gunpoint. Only a sick mind wouldn't find this concept sickifying, but the scene was effective; making the villains all the more despicable. This scene was implied in *A BETTER TOMORROW*, when Chow Yun Fat's character talked about badguys forcefeeding him pee, but it wasn't actually shown. In *BULLET IN THE HEAD*, it was carried a step further by showing it, but only in the theatrical version. However, the video rental has a whole different ending, an additional ten minutes lacking from the theatrical print. It's a car chase and gun shootout! But even without the 10-minute extension, *BULLET* is great stuff on the big screen. I recommend you see it if it plays in your local theatre, even if you have it on tape.

Amazing to me is the fact that *BULLET* was not successful in H.K., even among action fans who were into Woo's earlier thrillers. As an action film, it succeeds, there are even a couple martial arts-type fights at the beginning, and very effective ones. *BULLET* has just as much action as other Woo gunfests, but its depressing politics took its toll at the box office.

Action, blood & explosions aside, the real strength lies in this story's heroism.

There's more male bonding, similar to that in *ABT*. Tony Leung plays the most heroic of heroes, Jackie Cheung is an abused child-turned-smart alleck, and Waise Lee, as in *ABT* starts off as a good guy who goes bad later in the story.

SYNOPSIS:

Jackie Cheung (as Frank), Tony Leung (as Ben), & Waise Lee (Paul) are 3 disillusioned youths in 1967 H.K. who gradually come to realize their lives are going nowhere in particular. Then Waise learns from a seedy old businessman called Shing that because of the war in Vietnam, there's no law and order. So otherwise questionable occupations like smuggling are 'easy money' there. Coincidentally, Tony kills a rival gang member on his (Tony's) wedding night, so all three dudes flee H.K. for Saigon, Vietnam. Almost immediately, Waise gets a taste of greed, but their smuggling goods get destroyed accidentally, by an assassin's bomb which was actually intended for an army general. Our heroes begin to realize that you gotta' either be tuff or be an asshole to live in Vietnam, especially when military

bullies steal their passports! Vietnam's corruption rubs off on Waise, who gets a gun for thieving and they befriend a CIA agent called Luke (Simon Yam) who hangs out in a mob-run night club. Luke pretends to be a friend of the villains who run the club, but he's only doing it to foil their corruption. The evil mobsters are well stocked by the American army, so the club is rather Americanized (the band plays the Monkees "I'm a believer"). One singer (Fennie Yuen) at the club used to be a performer in HK but was lured to Vietnam by a nasty (and ugly) thug called Mr. Leong who beats, 'owns,' and rapes her. When the heroes take a little too much pity on this attractive singing babe they've always admired, Leung and his henchgooks attack them. Luke helps them to escape from the club, and to obtain a case of valuable gold plates. After this magnificent & stuff shootout, Waise gets corrupted all the more by his own greed.



Taking the female HK singer with them, they make it away to a river to catch a tugboat, but get ambushed by whatever henchmen survived the nightclub massacre. They all get exploded or shot to death, and the girl also gets visited by that #1 killer: Death. Tony & Jackie both end up bummed out, but Waise is only obsessed with keeping his newfound wealth at any cost. What a downer that their tugboat floats downstream right into a Prisoner of War camp run by the incredibly evil Vietcong! Our heroes are captured, and in a scene which would make the overly squeamish become the overly wet & smelly, our captured heroes are forced at gunpoint to shoot American prisoners. Waise is only concerned with retrieving his gold from the Vietcong killers, just as Luke (who escaped earlier) leads an American battalion to slaughter the V.C., and rescue our heroes. After another spectacular shootout, Waise finally goes all out psychotic and shoots Jackie in the name of greed. A couple years later, Tony has fully recovered from the various injuries from the gunfights, and Waise is back in HK. He's invested his new wealth wisely (that's why he's called 'Waise Lee'), but thanks to that bullet still in his noggin, Jackie is somewhere between being a vegetable and a retard. He can't talk, is constantly in pain, has amnesia, and to be vulgar but accurate - he's all fucked up. Tony shoots Jackie dead to put him out of his misery. In 1971 (see *BIG BOSS* poster in background!), Tony finally returns to HK and tracks down the now wealthy Waise at the major company he now works at. He freaks out Waise by giving him Jackie's skull (he promised to bring him back to HK in some form or another). Then he shoots his former friend Waise. Depending on what version you see, Waise's death is one of two different ways. In the theatre, he merely shoots him dead in the office. On video, he chases after him in a car and they have a shootout at a shipping yard. Either way, Tony remains among the living and Waise re-locates. *****

ONCE A THIEF

Produced by Wins Motion Picture Co in 1991, Written & Directed by John Woo, Screenwriters: John Woo, Clifton Ko & Janet Chun, Music: Violet Lam, Cast: Chow Yun Fat, Leslie Cheung, Cherie Chung, Chu Kong, Kent Tsang, Wu Fung

This is a new release. What?! Did I actually say "new release" in *O.C.*? Unlikely, seeing as *O.C.* only comes out once a year. But believe me, *ONCE A THIEF* was very new when I first wrote this.

I went into a Chinatown theatre expecting nothing and came out with even less. I guess John Woo got tired of making action films, just as I got tired of watching *ONCE A THIEF*. To think that I wasted a whole day to see *ONCE A THIEF* when I could have stayed home and watched *BEWITCHED* for free. I was really disappointed by *THIEF*, despite earlier warnings from Woo fans about what a stupid flick it is. To me, all the humor in it is naive, cute, predictable, simpleminded and obviously ripped off from somewhere else. The action is more subdued than in violence extravaganzas like *BULLET IN THE HEAD*. There are about three long gun-fights, and a couple decent kung fu kicks, but because this is a lighthearted comedy, there's far less blood-



鍾楚紅

CHERIE CHUNG



BORN: 2/16/1960

Cherie Chung's first claim to fame was in 1978 when she won a beauty contest, and was recruited by a talent scout for Shaw Bros. She made her movie debut in 1979. Her films include *HONG KONG PLAYBOYS*, *PEKING OPERA BLUES*, *PHANTOM BRIDE*, *GOLDEN SWALLOW*, *FAT-AL LOVE*, *ONCE A THIEF*, and more.

shed and no disturbing material. Needless to say, I don't love this film. But if you actually do like *ONCE A THIEF*, it doesn't necessarily make you a bad person. I forgive you. But just this once.

The reason I'm so willing to forgive you for this sin is because *THIEF* has its decent qualities too. If you can ignore its poor comedy and poorer drama like you'd ignore a streetcorner bum asking for money, it's possible to enjoy its story, great production values and its action scenes. Again, like previous Woo flicks there's a nice bodycount during the lengthy shootouts as our heroes gun down dozens of henchvillains. It's most definitely not a kung fu film, but that doesn't stop Chow Yun Fat from doing some acrobatic stunts and a Bruce Lee mimickry during the climactic confrontation. Everybody and their pet venus flytrap knows Chow is no martial artist, so it's pretty obvious that a stuntman doubled for him in the minor fight, but this is still my favorite scene in *THIEF*.

What we've got here is a confusing, silly, lively drama about these three adults, raised to be thieves called Joe (Chow Yun Fat), Cherie (Cherie Chung) & Jim (Leslie Cheung). They were raised and trained to be criminals by some mean old man called Mr. Chow (Kent Tsang), so by the time they're grown up, they're flawless thieves who always get the job done. Some of their scenes of theft are intriguing for their ingenious ways of eluding traps, but the concepts are far-fetched, much like a *Pink Panther* movie. One of their friends is Mr. Chu (Chu Kong), a policeman who knew them since they were mischievous kids and wants them to avoid their jobs as high class robbers. But double-heck goshdarn it, Joe supposedly gets crippled in a battle with rival criminals (he drove his car into a sniper's boat), and in the meantime, Cherie and Jim fall in love with each other. By the way, this is not advisable! Do not fall in love, for it will stick to your face. Anyway, Cherie & Jim are on the verge of marriage, Joe is confined to a wheel chair, and that ruthless Mr. Chow is pressuring them to steal valuable paintings. Later that same film, our heroic thieves wise up about Chow and decide to steal back a valuable painting they so foolishly stole for him. This causes the final confrontation where Joe and Jim fire bullets into the bodies of villains trying to retrieve the stolen painting. Joe turns out not to be crippled at all, he'd been faking it. Joe & Jim survive the climactic free-for-all, but so does Chow, so Chu slaps the cuffs on him. Hey you, wake up!

Well, that wraps it up for *Modern Heroes of Hong Kong's* John Woo section. Assuming there will be another issue of *O.C.*, it will include more of John Woo's movies. *

At the request of many male readers, *Modern Heroes of Hong Kong* presents an obligatory section on . . . [drum roll, please!] . . .

AMY YIP! ! ! !

Reviews of a couple of her movies are on the next page, but first, the following newspaper article in the San Francisco Chronicle, on Jan. 17, 1991:

Ex BofA Executive Jailed in Scheme to Pay Porn Starlet

By Kenneth Howe
Chronicle Staff Writer

A former Bank of America executive in Hong Kong, said to be obsessed with a soft-core porn starlet known as the "Asian Jane Russell", was sentenced yesterday to 27 months in jail for attempting to improperly transfer \$2.37 million to her account.

Peter K.L. Chan, 39 pleaded guilty to a charge of making a fraudulent accounting entry and was sentenced by a H.K. district court judge. Police said that Chan became

'obsessed' with Amy Yip in 1988 when she was a budding actress for a Hong Kong TV station and he was an assistant vice president at BofA's Hong Kong branch in Kowloon.

On September 20, the authorities said, Chan signed a money transfer document that, if entered into the bank's computers, would have shifted \$2.37 million in U.S. dollars into Yip's account.

A lower-level employee spotted the transfer document, noted that it lacked a required second signature and alerted his supervisor.

Chan, who started with the bank as a messenger in 1970, was immediately placed on suspension without pay, and the matter was turned over to the police. He was fired in November, said a spokesman at BofA headquarters in San Francisco.

According to the Associated Press, Chan told investigators that Yip was his girlfriend and that her demands for money drove him to commit the offense. Yip could not be reached for comment. Hong Kong newspapers reported that Chan, who was earning \$3,600 per month in his banking job, had sold his home and moved his mother into low-income housing so he could finance the relationship with Yip.

Yip has appeared in many spicy Cantonese-language films, among them "Erotic Ghost Story," and "Jailhouse Eros." She was involved in controversy earlier this year over a sexually suggestive phone message she recorded for a pay-telephone service, according to the Associated Press.

"She's a real bombshell," said Man Lee, editor of the Chinese Times, a daily newspaper in San Francisco. He said Yip had appeared in the Chinese edition of *Penthouse* magazine.

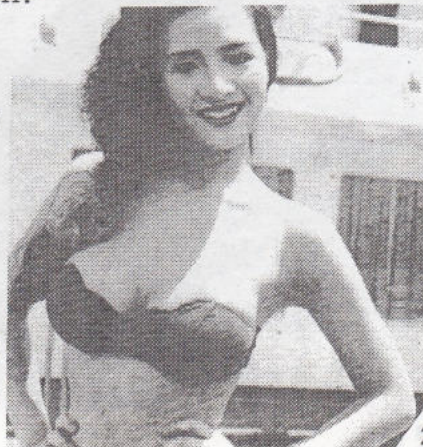
"All the erotic starlets are jealous of Miss Yip because of her bust line", said Lee. "She's known as the Asian Jane Russell."

Another article appeared in the SF Chronical (Jan. '92) mentioning Yip. It told of HK stars (i.e. Jackie Chan, Amy Yip, Chow Yun Fat) holding a protest rally against the triads' control of showbiz. The following excerpt mentions Amy Yip:

Hong Kong Stars Blast Crime Ties

Associated Press

"I have been threatened to make movies I did not want to make. These bad people will do anything to get money [Look who's talking - DF]", said Amy Yip, Hong Kong's buxom soft-porn queen, who was decked out in a purple sequined coat.





女機械人 ROBOTRIX

[A.K.A. "BUSTROID", supposedly] Produced by Golden Harvest in association with Schouchiku Films in 1991. Cast: Amy Yip, David Wu, Okako Seiyama, Vincent Lyn, Roger Thomas

If *ROBOTRIX* were any indication, I would guess Amy Yip to be the inspiration of an old joke, if the joke weren't older than Yip herself. The joke was made up back when so many people thought all Asian women were flatter than pancakes. The joke goes a little something like this: This Chinese chick got jealous when she saw some female American tourists a bit overflowing in the mammary department. So she had a magical Taoist place a spell on her which guaranteed that she'd have an increased bosom each time somebody pardoned her. The next day, she bumps into some guy who says "Pardon me," and sure enough, both tits immediately grew an inch! But then she bumped into an old wiseman who said, "Oh, a thousand pardons!" I imagine the lady ended up looking like Amy Yip. Her boobs are shown off in *ROBOTRIX*, but never completely bare. However, she looks awesome in the police station scene, where she stretches a tight pink tanktop, and is also seen in seductively silver dance attire, bra & garter belt, and a couple of sexy space-age amazon outfits. Do any of you know of any films where she shows all? Although she appears to get top billing in *ROBOTRIX*, she's actually more of a co-star in this Chinese exploitation film. Since portions of its budget was financed by a Japanese company, there is a Japanese actress who actually has a bigger part than



葉子桐

Amy, though anatomically, it's Amy who has bigger parts. The main Japanese star has a name which I couldn't translate too well, but it's probably Okako something; the last name possibly being Seiyama or Shoyama. From the neck up, she's better looking than Yip, her hooters are almost as massive, and she's not afraid to show them off a few times in the film (Japanese actresses are less conservative than Chinese ones; more willing to remove their blouses if it will add spice to the movie).

I think there should be a lot more sex exploitation in *ROBOTRIX*, since that's really all it has going for it. I don't envy any guys who watched this one in the theatre, this one can only be enjoyed in the privacy of your own bedroom. That is, unless you wear a trench coat to the cinema; but then, look what happened to Pee-wee Herman. Without Amy's & Okako's ample assets, *ROBOTRIX* is nearly (but not entirely) worthless. With dynamic figures like that, I wonder why the moviemakers bothered having so many other characters in the flick, causing distractions; taking screen time from these two (I mean four) starlets. But seriously, the special effects are simple, the humor is predictable, the action staging is child's play, and the plot is thinner than an anorex. Obviously, Amy Yip is too unevenly proportioned to do any serious kung fu or stunts. Sometimes I wonder how she even manages to stand upright [but from what I hear, maybe standing up has very little to do with her rise to stardom. It wouldn't surprise me if she had to do a little 'horizontal auditioning' to get some film roles!]

But about *ROBOTRIX*, one of Yip's first nonporn rolls. It's kind of crime drama, kinda sci-fi, kinda superhero. You could call it a 'superhero film for adults,' or a Chinese equivalent of a Russ Meyer film. Erotic at times, gory at others. It's similar to *I LOVE MARIA* (a.k.a. *ROBOT FORCE*); another HK robot adventure, except that *ROBOTRIX* actually has entertainment value. *ROBOTRIX* is pretty fun; what's not to like about exquisitely shaped amazons battling to the death? Some of the costumes could be better, but otherwise the special effects (especially the sets) are adequate. But I don't think Amy Yip will ever make a good career out of serious adventure films because she's too sexy; a sex object. I too am a sex object, but that's only because I ask girls if they want to have sex, and they object.

Riuchi Yamamoto (not to be confused with musician Riuchi Sakamoto) is an evil Japanese scientist who managed to turn himself into a powerful robot who terrorizes Hong Kong. One of his first crimes was to break into an embassy and kidnap a rich Arab shiek. During the process, he shot to death a female cop called Linda Lin (Okako Seiyama). Meanwhile, there also happens to be a



Future Expo taking place elsewhere in Hong Kong, showcasing many new gadgets, including robots. An American debates with a German as to which country makes better robots, so both robots (the yankee and the kraut) are put to the test. Unfortunately, the film's budget didn't allow decent superhero costumes for these battling androids, so the filmmakers thought spandex pants and sunglasses would suffice. After a semi-decent fight, one robot goes out of control, so a generic female robot subdues him. This chick robot, called Eve R27

has the best costume of the three, covered head to toe. But the helmet looks like a rejects from the 1970s movie *STARSHIP INVASIONS*, and the overall suit's design is outdated. Scientists and cops agree that by combining Eve R27 with the remains of cop Linda, they'll have a powerful female robocop.

This mecha-warrior will be the perfect weapon to destroy Riuchi Yamamoto who still has the Arabian prince held captive. Riuchi has gone on a rampage of raping and killing (thanks to his robotic powers). In one scene, he kills a group of foreigners. There's a lot of bloodshed, but a lot was edited out (i.e. he apparently decapitates a guy, using a suitcase). Cop Chu (Linda's boyfriend) has difficulty in accepting the fact that she's now a robot, and in one scene, says something like, "And I suppose I'm a Masked Rider?!" Regardless, Linda is assisted by another curvaceous female robot; the voluptuous Anna (voluptuous Amy Yip). To track down Riuchi, who stalks sluts, Anna goes undercover (pardon the pun) as a hooker. This fails to attract Riuchi, but it does attract every other heterosexual male in Hong Kong!





情聖

MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS

Released on King Video, Produced by Cinema City & Magnum Films in 1991, Executive Producers: Carl Maka & Danny Lee, Editor: Ma Chung Yiu, Music: Richard Lo, Art Director: Danny Yuen, Cinematography: Abdul Rumjhan (H.K.S.C.), Production Supervisor: Michael Fu, Production Manager: Jo Chan, Associate Producer: Tsang Kwok Chi, Admin. Producer: Richard Cheung, Scriptwriter: Lee Lik Chi & Richard Leung, Story: Wellington Fung & Tsang Kwok Chi, CAST: Steven Chow, Mao Shun Kwun, Tim Nao, Amy Yip, Wu Ma/Ng Ma, Roy Cheung, Yuen Wa, Carl Mac, Sandra Ng

I think only the most inquisitive, openminded, completist fans of Hong Kong films should even consider renting this HK comedy. The only reason I bothered to check

out this nearly actionless farce was because the video rental box showed Amy Yip wearing a bikini, standing next to the main star, Steven Chow. In fact, Yip only gets 3rd or 4th billing, but at least gives us a chance to drool over her in a bikini, evening wear, and other formfitting attire. This is not an action film, despite the appearance of Yuen Wa (raised with Jackie, Yuen & Samo, and has played villains in *EASTERN CONDORS*, *ICE-MAN COMETH*, *DRAGONS FOREVER*, and *SPOOKY SPOOKY*), who finds time to throw two or three kung fu kicks. *MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS* is 100% comedy, not much action, no serious drama, and absolutely no fantasy. But as a comedy, it succeeds; it's fairly funny at times. It's hard not to like a film, no matter how cheap and lackluster, when the characters are so lively, silly, positive and energetic. I'll give this movie two whole stars, even though it's less entertaining than sci-fi and/or action movies which also got two stars.

Steven Chow is well-cast as a blumpling con-man. A few pages ago, I mentioned that I wasn't sure whether I liked him or not. I guess by now, I've seen enough of his work to safely say I like his work. He's quite funny in *MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS*, his antics, gestures & expressions

are very humorous with overtones of being slightly hilarious. In one scene, when surrounded by gangsters, he does a Zato Ichi impression which scares them off. Later, thinking Amy Yip is in a swimming pool, he frantically makes his way to the pool while combing his hair. He combs it as he rolls down stairs, and even while underwater. Amy Yip is also funny, and there's something I like about her; I just can't put my finger on it. Carl Maka (formerly Carl Mac) cameos, he's best known for his *ACES GO PLACES* flicks, and that he co-founded Cinema City with Dean Shek. Sandra Ng, a strange-looking, though not necessarily unattractive actress cameos at the beginning. She was also in *ALL FOR THE WINNER*, *FIVE LUCKY GHOSTS*, and *GOD OF GAMBLERS 3*; but I gave her no credit because I didn't know what the hell her name was until 0.3 milli-seconds ago, give or take a fraction of a second.

Steven Chow plays Shen, a goofy con artist (some say this is no act) in Hong Kong who keeps getting in trouble. His real trouble begins when he defends a lady friend from mobsters who insist she owes them money. Now these badguys are annoyed with Shen too, and insist that he pay them lots of money. So Shen decides to con people overtime, to pay the mob to get them off his back. Coincidentally, Fa (Wu Ma) is also in debt with those villains. So their leader has a proposition for him; go into a high-tech mansion and steal its valuable antiques to give to the mob. But upon arrival, he discovers that the mansion's wealthy owner is away on vacation, so he decides to temporarily move in, and impersonate the owner. It's not entirely clear as to what the fuck is going on, but Fa hopes to do business with other antique dealers, making not only enough money to pay off the mobsters, but get him rich as well. He hires a friend to pose as his wife, and also hires a drunken whore played by Amy Yip, called Apple, but 'Cantalope' might be a better name. Apple poses as Fa's daughter. Meanwhile, Shen (remember him?), not knowing that the mansion is lived-in by these people also manipulated by the same mob as he, breaks into the mansion one night. Fa's mock family thinks Shen is a rightful owner to the house, he thinks they own it. Anyway, he lives there with them for a while as both groups try to con each other with funny results. When it becomes clear that none of them belong in the mansion, and that they're all exploited by the same mob, they unite to outsmart the bastards, and trick one into kicking the shit out of the other. It's very funny! **

ABOVE: In *ROBOTRIX*, Amy Yip wears this spectacular costume, but only for about a minute.

Plan 2 is more effective; Anna, Linda and Sara (s scientist who invented both robots) dance seductively to music in a nightclub, and attract a lot of attention. Music soothes the savage breast.

Yamamoto appears, and a battle breaks out. Yamamoto escapes, but the mechanical heroines have a close lead. After one confrontation, Yamamoto is beheaded and both his head and body are taken back

to Sara's lab for examination. In a scene similar to one in *REANIMATOR*, the head still controls its disconnected body, and it appears as though Sara gets raped; but nothing explicit. Just as he's about to kill her, Anna and Chou arrive, resulting in a flashy battle. Sara gets injured, and Linda gets damaged, so Chou & Anna chase the villain outside, to a nearby junkyard. This where Yamamoto's base is

and where the prince is held captive. Anna rescues the prince, and then Chow uses an electro magnet to put Yamamoto in a trash compactor along with other pieces of debris. **



Amy Yip: 'I have been threatened to make movies I didn't want to make'

G-men'75

TOEI
TELEVISION

IN COLOR

201 one-hour episodes

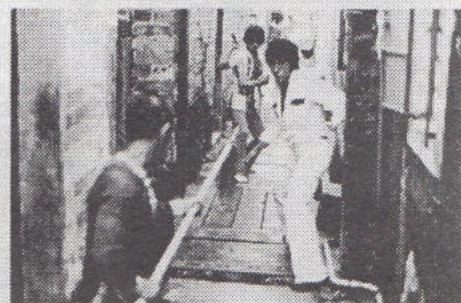
This is a hard-boiled detective drama loaded with exciting action. A group of seven secret police officers known as G-Men 75 work against crimes that fill today's complicated world. Their activities cover both the domestic and international arena, as well as out of the law's reach.

Rumors surface about the mafia's infiltration of the Japanese underworld. Inspector Kuroki decides to eliminate the cosa nostra

before it's too late, carrying on operations in strict secrecy.

He begins by selecting the cream of the professionals among police officers. To face the terrifying syndicate, each must be tough and coolheaded at the same time.

In this manner, G-Men 75 was formed with each member having a special skill, including a karate expert, sharpshooter and a beautiful girl with an explosive judo technique.



SONNY CHIBA'S Japan Action Club (J.A.C.)

にほん
日本のアクション・スター

ジャック くんねん ジャック
JAC訓練レポート/JACメンバー

When Sonny Chiba founded his Japan Action Club in Ebizu during 1969, do you think he trained actors how to do karate and stuntwork? Is the pope Catholic? Does Rose Kennedy have a black dress? The first TV program that these young, new JAC members (protégés of Sonny Chiba himself) worked on was an obscure, rarely seen, heard of or even talked about drama called *JUDO ICHO KUSEN*, which means roughly, "One Line of Judo." At this point, the JAC members were mainly just extras, stuntmen and background characters. The main martial arts choreography & action was done by a ten-member martial arts group called "Ken Ono Yukai". 1971's *KAMEN RIDER* offered more of the same, with JAC members again playing second fiddle to the members of Ken Ono Yukai, who still had the spotlight. Regardless, JAC gained more popularity each year, as

they collaborated with Ken Ono Yukai for more superhero thrillers like the adequate *HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI*, the decent *BAROM 1*, and the excellent *KAMEN RIDER V3*. 1972's *KIKAIDER* program broke new grounds (and maybe bones) in that finally, the JAC stuntmen had bigger parts than the guys from Ken Ono Yukai. *KIKAIDER* marked the debut of two young JAC actors

called Kenji Ohba and Junichi Haruta, who did stuntwork and wore monster costumes on the show. As JAC members continued to flourish at Toei, Ken Ono Yukai's bunch faded out, but were still involved in the remaining *Kamen Rider* programs of the 1970s, but not the 1980s ones. In fact, the last Toei non-*Kamen Rider* TV show that Ken Ono Yukai had any involvement in at all, was 1974's *GORANGERS*. After this, JAC took over doing Toei superhero programs, while Ken Ono Yukai worked for other companies - in TV shows like *RED TIGER*. As for JAC, their martial arts, choreography, acrobats and stunts got more

BELOW: A JAC stage play, featuring Etsuko Siomi, Hiroyuki Sanada and others.



ABOVE: Etsuko Shiomi (right) at a JAC jazzdance class.



SPECIAL CRIME INVESTIGATION FRONT

TOEI
TELEVISION
IN COLOR

104 one-hour episodes

Crime is the most dramatic element in human society. In today's keenly competitive world, everyone has the dangerous potential to become a criminal.

This drama concerns six detectives in the Special Crime Investigation Section who do the utmost to solve every case. A helicopter transports them to the sites of

crimes and they tackle perilous and difficult cases as they risk their lives.

The six differ in age, background, experience, personality and motive for having become a detective. The main character is section chief Kamishiro, a top-notch sleuth.

Kamishiro entered the police force after graduating from a

university. He rose by leaps and bounds and became a professor at the police academy. He is a tough and energetic intellectual who was once called "god of the razor blade." He is now 47 years old — a man of insight, strong will and severity, but also of kindness and considerateness.



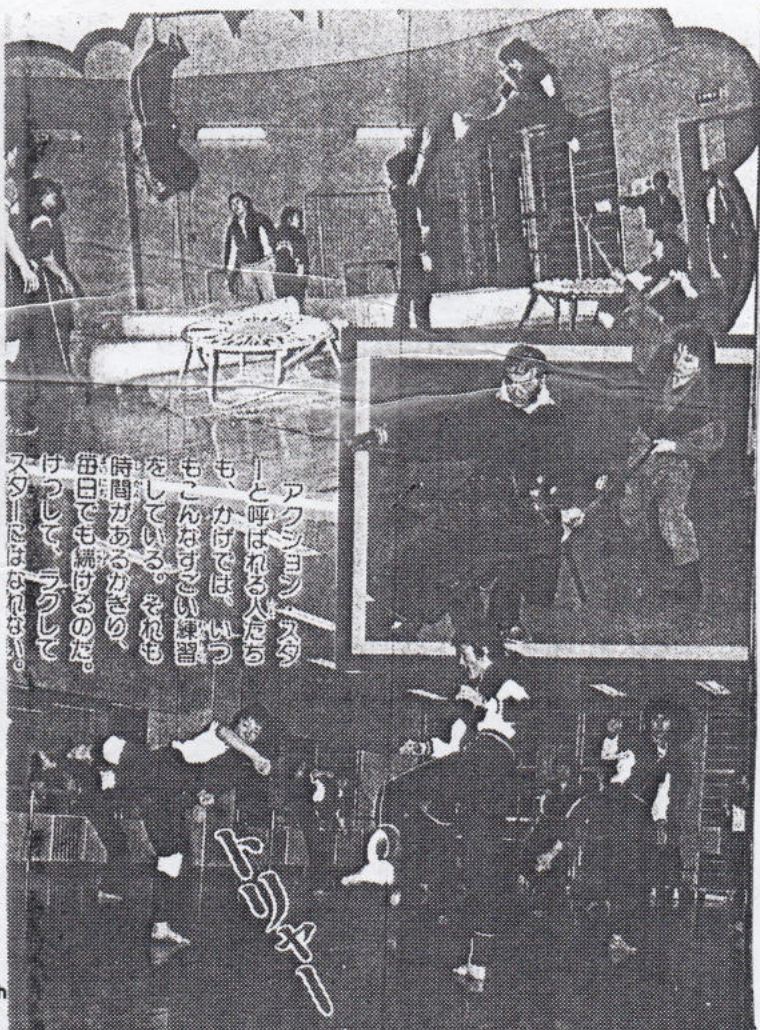


and incredible each year. Their action in shows like *SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN* and *SUN VULCAN* (not to mention movies like *ROARING FIRE* and *SHOGUN'S SHADOW*) was first rate, in fierce competition with all that Chinese kung fu stuff, and easily blowing away the fights in most American films (which is not an unusual accomplishment). But by 1983, things had changed. Japanese parents had complained of all the violence their twerps were viewing on the tube. As I see it, if you don't like something, don't watch it. Parents should communicate with their spoiled brats and not the TV stations. If they don't want their kiddies to watch such programs,

they shouldn't forget that most TVs have On/Off switches, not to mention channel changers. Enough shillheads whined to Toei & TV Asahi, so the quality of action in such programs was reduced. With decent fights less in demand, JAC nearly went bankrupt. So Chiba formed a new JAC branch in 1983, the JAC Training Center, which specifically trains stuntmen. This helped the JAC group to make ends meet during a time of near bankruptcy, but didn't keep JACress Yuki Yajima from leaving the series *BIOMAN* after about the first ten episodes, because JAC still couldn't afford to pay her. The original concept was for Yajima to have frequent duels with Yukari Oshima (who played a villain) during the course of the program. But with Yajima quitting, the script had to be changed, her character was killed off and replaced by someone else. Fortunately, there are still enough 'adult' movies and TV shows made to keep JAC in business. JAC members have also expanded their services to other types of entertainment, such as Broadway-like stage shows and plays. JAC members have learned many entertaining talents besides acting and stunts, many members have learned singing, comedy and dancing. Since JAC's debut in 1969, they've been involved in thousands of movies and TV shows. Their only TV series ever released to America was *DYNAMAN*, but Americans can also see their work in movies like *MESSAGE FROM SPACE*, *ROARING FIRE*, most of master Chiba's films, and *LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI*. What follows are a few mini-articles on some of JAC's members.

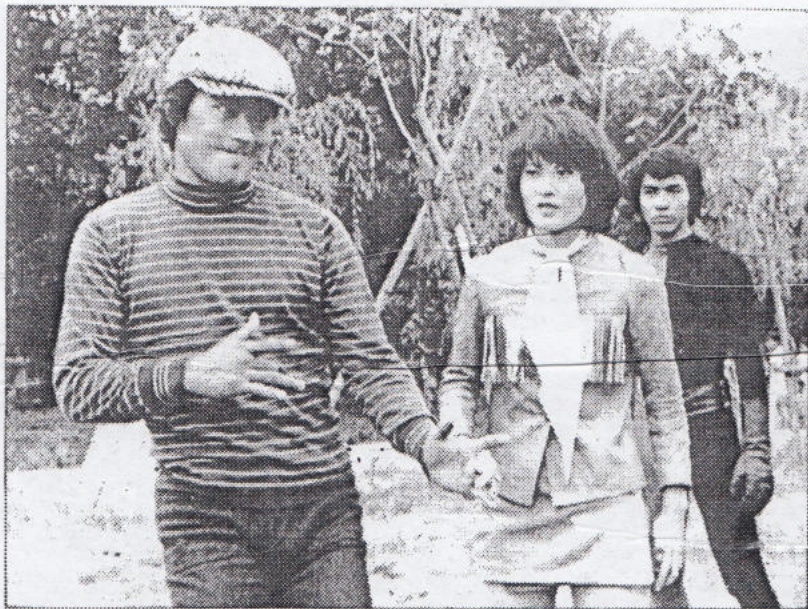
ETSUKO SHIOMI (志穂美悦子)

Other than Sonny Chiba himself, she's the most wellknown JAC member. And, to avoid confusion, yes, this is the same actress as 'Sue' Shiomi, as she's called in America. I always knew of her from her original Japanese TV shows where she used her real name, Etsuko. That's why I rarely remember that I'm an American and must call her 'Sue.' Anyway, she was born on 10/30/55 in the town of Nishidaiji in Okayama prefecture on the main island of Honshu. As a youngster, she was active in many sports, somewhat of a tomboy. By the time she was in high school, she had become a fan of Sonny Chiba's action



packed performances in movies & TV shows. While in her third year of high school she wrote many letters to Sonny Chiba, asking that he take her as his protege. Eventually, she received a letter from him, suggesting that she take the admission test to be in his then-new Japan Action Club in Ebisu. There were two other women who passed this test also, but only Etsuko remained at JAC. The other two dropped out because they were unable to take the rigorous training. Under Sonny Chiba (not literally!), Etsuko Shiomi learned karate, gymnastics, acting, stuntwork, and whatever else them JACers were teaching at the time. She became somewhat of a daredevil. One day later in her career she walked on a tightrope stretched from one building to another, 100 feet above the ground. The rope was over 100 feet long. Talking about this stunt, Etsuko said, 'I had a lifeline tied around me of course, but it being the first time for me, I was very tense.' It didn't take her long to start getting roles in numerous JAC & Toei TV programs including *THE BODYGUARDS* and *KIKAIKID 0-1*. Her first movie for Toei was called *FEMALE ASSASSIN*.





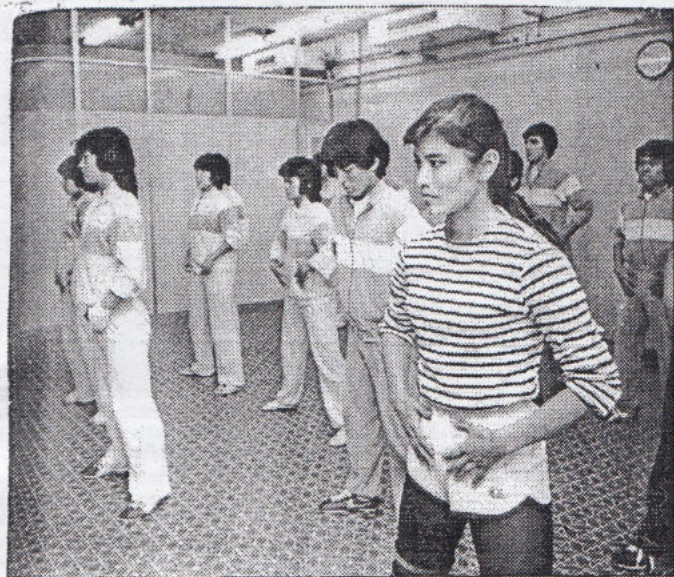
To close this Shioimi section,
a review of one of her films:

SISTER STREETFIGHTER

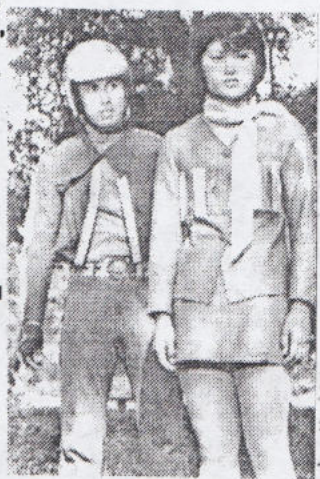
Produced by Toei, Written by Masafumi Fukuda, Director of Photography: Yoshio Nakajima, Starring: Etsuko ('Sue' in America) Shioimi, May Hayakawa, Harry Kondo, Sonny Chiba, Misashi Ishibashi, Kenji Ohba

I reckon it's your typical Japanese karate film from the 1970s. It's plain dumb fun, has a great musical score, the usual familiar faces in a Toei karate movie, and the obligatory scene of various martial artists working out & subtitles stating their weapon or technique. The English voices are by those who dubbed *SPEED RACER*. Though predictable, it's enjoyable; but I gotta' admit, I might never have bothered to see it if it weren't for the sake of this review I'm writing now- that is, I mean, I'm not writing it right this moment as you read this, but I was definitely doing so back when I wrote this. The plot of *SISTER STREETFIGHTER* is thin, but how thin is it? I considered two possible one-liners: (A) The plot is thinner than Karen Carpenter. (B) If the plot were any thinner, the tape would be blank.

Tina Long (Etsuko Shioimi), a Chinese kung fu girl, moved from Hong Kong to Yokohama to find out what the Jigoku happened to her brother. Seems her brother Li Long disappeared when he was poking his nose into a mob of martial artists who smuggle wigs made of heroin! So Tina goes to Yokohama's shorinji karate school, the place that Li hung out at before the baddies nabbed him. She befriends Sonny Hibashi (Sonny Chiba) as well as a sexy female ballerina martial artist whom I'd like to get in the sack. Li Long is in the custody of Toki, leader of a bizarre gang of drug smuggling martial artists. I must say, some of these villains are too flamboyant and theatrical for a modern city. There's a gang of Thai chicks called the Amazon 7 who wear Fred Flintstone-type clothing, a blowdart master who carries around a totem pole, and Misashi Ishibashi leads a team of henchmen (i.e. Kenji Ohba) who wear bee hives on their heads. It's an action packed flick and most of the fights are fun, but not the one where she takes on the Thai cavewomen wearing paper mache' masks. By the time all these silly villains dead, so is her captive brother, who'd been forced drugs and stabbed by a former priest's (a Chinese Guido Sarducci) spike projectile gun. So with the help of Sonny and a couple female students from the shorinji school, Tina kills Toki and his followers at their estate. **



ABOVE: On the set of *KIKAIER 01* Sonny Chiba (far left) choreographs a fight between JACers Etsuko Shioimi (middle) and Junichi Haruta (right)! LEFT: Etsuko Shioimi working out with other JACers in a class. BELOW: Shioimi with Shunsuke Ikeda & Jiro Chiba, in *KIKAIER 01*.



Making a complete list of all her films and TV appearances would be impossible, not to mention a whopper of a headache, so I won't even attempt it.

(Toei; 1974), but many of these uninformed fans don't know of her very first debut in the TV series *KIKAIER 01* (Toei; 1973). It really annoys the fuck out of me, about so many 'fans' of Chiba, Shioimi & JAC being strictly into the English dubbed, feature length karate movies, and yet ignore the equally important, yet far superior superhero programs from the same group. Regardless, after co-starring as a cybernetic heroine in *KIKAIER 01*, she appeared in movies like *FEMALE ASSASSIN*, *KARATE LADY*, *13 STEPS*, *THE GREAT CHASE*, *SURE KILL*, and had guest appearances in damn near every Chiba karate flick ever made. Additional TV shows to her credit include *GUERRILLAS SEVEN*, *HISATSU JIKEN*, *THE BODYGUARDS*, some of that 'Yagyu' stuff, and *THE YOUNG DETECTIVE* (see page 33).

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE

TOEI
TELEVISION

IN COLOR

190 half-an-hour
episodes

The hero of this series is a young detective, fresh out of training and still with a lot to learn. Despite his demanding occupation, the youth is a cheerful boy-next-door type. However, he dispatches his duties as a police officer with the indefatigable spirit and vitality of youth, though sometimes he makes mistakes and goes too far.

The segments mainly relate the detective's joys and sorrows and his involvement with the people around him, rather than focusing on the crimes.



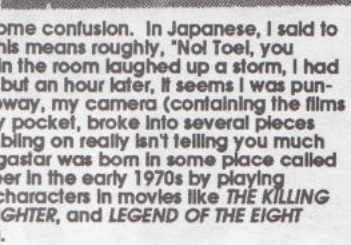


HIROYUKI SANADA (真田広之)- Born in Tokyo on 10/12/60, his real name is Hiroyuki Shimozaawa, but Americans seem to call him Henry Sanada for some reason, and don't give me any of that 'Duke' Sanada bullshit! He's 170 cm tall and weighs 60 kg, but more importantly, he made his movie debut in Chiba's *THE EXECUTIONER* (see page 7), at the age of 14. He seems to excel at everything JAC set out to learn him, like karate, gymnastics, stunts, acting, dancing, and even singing. Additional movies and TV shows to his credit include the *MESSAGE FROM SPACE* movie & TV series (which made it to the USA as the movie *SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK*), *SHOGUN'S SAMURAI*, *SHOGUN'S NINJA*, *SAKAMOTO RYOU*, *BIOMAN*, *PLOT OF THE YAGYU CLAN*, *SAMURAI REINCARNATION*, *LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI*, *ROARING FIRE*, Hong Kong's *ROYAL WARRIORS*, and more additions than there are anal infections in San Francisco.



HIROYUKI
SANADA
(真田広之)

KENJI OHBA (大葉健二)- Kenji Ohba is one reason to take good care of your camera, which I found out the hard way. I'm referring to 1985 when I met Kenji in person in Tokyo. Between his broken English and my fractured Japanese, we managed to reminisce about his roles in superhero programs like *SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN*, *DENZI-MAN*, and *BATTLE FEVER J*. Longtime friend Ed Marlinez was also on hand, and his Japanese is as good as his ability to communicate with bricks. Trying to communicate with Kenji, Ed tried to describe how great Kenji's production company Toei is, but accidentally called it 'Toho', causing Kenji some confusion. In Japanese, I said to Ed, 'Iyehi Toei, baka-yaroi!' In English, this means roughly, 'No! Toei, you idiot!' After Kenji and the other JACers in the room laughed up a storm, I had several pictures of me with Kenji taken, but an hour later, it seems I was punished for my rudeness. As I left the subway, my camera (containing the films just taken with Kenji Ohba) fell out of my pocket, broke into several pieces and film was ruined! Oh well, this rambling on really isn't telling you much about Kenji Ohba himself. This JAC megastar was born in some place called Ehime on 2/5/54 and he started his career in the early 1970s by playing monsters in *KIKAI*, and background characters in movies like *THE KILLING MACHINE*, *TIGER'S CLAW*, *SISTER STREETFIGHTER*, and *LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI*. Height: 170 cm, Weight: 62 kg.



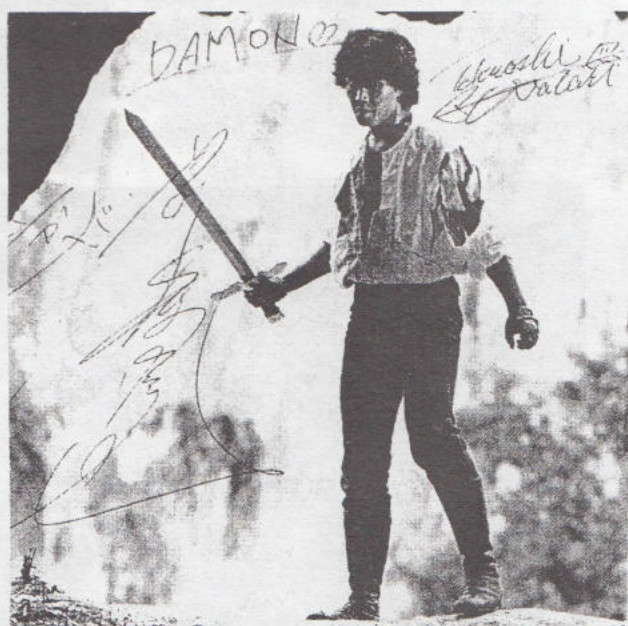
JUNICHI HARUTA (春田純)- His real name is actually Misao Kiruta and I met him too, on the set of a Japanese superhero program at Toei studios. Though polite, his personality was rather cool, perhaps a little egotistical, not nearly as humble or polite as Kenji Ohba. He was, however, just as surprised as Kenji that anyone in America had seen his programs. Like Ohba, this 174 cm tall, 64 kg stuntman also first made a name for himself by playing bit parts in older TV shows & films. His best work was as Goggle Black in *GOGGLE V*, plus as Dyna Black in *DYNAMAN*, but has also appeared in *JUSPION*, *MET-ALDAR* and *CYBERCOP*. He's one hell of a martial artist & acrobat, and was born on 3/17/54, somewhere in Japan.



HIROSHI WATARI (渡洋史)-

It's been a few years since Hiroshi Watanabe (his real name) has been in California, where he stayed for almost a year, trying to

get a job as a stuntman, and working in an L.A. sushi bar. The embarrassment of Japanese tourists recognizing him as the former superhero *Space Sheriff Sharivan* lead him to wear



lenseless glasses (just the frames) and grow a beard. Unfortunately, his only film role in America was an amateur superhero satire, shot on video, produced by yours truly, directed by August Ragone. To add insult to injury, the damn video spoof was never finished! So it was back to Tokyo for Hiroshi, where he continued working for JAC, and has become quite successful on stage. Aside from having title roles in *SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN* and *DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN*, he was also in an episode or two of *METALDAR*. He was born on 3/20/63 in Nigata, is 175 cm high and weighs 64 kg.



KENJI OHBA
(大葉健二)



HIROSHI WATARI
(渡洋史)



KEIJI TSUJI (辻啓嗣)

KEIJI TSUJI (辻啓嗣)- Also unsuccessful at stardom in the U.S., the same country which makes careers out of inferior no-talents like Steven Seagal and Claude Van Dumb. But in Japan, Keiji has had his stuntwork in some incredible stage fights, and TV shows like *GOGGLE V*, *DYNAMAN*, and *KUNG FU CHAN*. Born in Osaka, and he's 164 cm tall. Weight: 53 kg. Interests: Sports, movies, all kinds of stuff.

PLAY GIRL

TOEI
TELEVISION
IN COLOR

358 one-hour episodes

Play Girl is an action drama series starring six young, charming and curvaceous ladies. The stories feature thrills, suspense and action spiced with eroticism. The title is the name of a private detective agency which is established by the sextette with Tamaki Sawa as the leader.

Why did they set up such an agency? One early autumn day,

Tamaki Sawa was driving home from a swimming club, when all of a sudden, a beautiful young woman darted out in front of her car. Tamaki braked in time and the girl was not hit. She scrambled up and ran away, pursued by three suspicious men.

Tamaki found a handbag on the ground, apparently left behind by the girl. During the following six

years, Tamaki enjoys a luxurious life until she becomes involved in unexpected trouble. In the course of the story, five other ladies appear on the scene and help her.

The six girls derived such joy from settling the affair that they decided to set up a detective agency, Play Girl, to help the underdogs in society. Spectacular episodes unfold one after the other.





YUKI YAJIMA



矢島由紀

YUKI YAJIMA (矢島由紀) - D.O.B.: 2/1/62, this gorgeous martial artist is unforgettable in the tight spandex pants she wore in the first ten episodes of *BIOMAN* when she got to do the rarely seen, seemingly impossible task of kicking Yukari Oshima's ass! Yuki Yajima was also in several episodes

of *SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN* before she retired from JAC due to financial reasons (JAC lost money when their stuntwork became obsolete, thanks to protestors against TV violence). Height: 160 cm, weight: 47 kg. Hometown: Chiba.



HIKARU KUROSAKI (黒崎輝)

HIKARU KUROSAKI (黒崎輝) - A.K.A. Selki Kurosaki, DOB.: 1/31/62, in Osaka. The star of *MONSTER HUNTER JUSPION*, into stunts, tennis, making belt buckles and stage acting. 175 cm high, 63 kg.



JUNYA TAKAGI

高木淳也

JUNYA TAKAGI (高木淳也) - D.O.B.: 7/15/65, 166 cm high, & weighs 60 kg. Junya Takagi is the star of the exciting *KUNG FU CHAN* TV show. I really haven't seen him in anything else, but he played a part in *KABAMARU*, a JAC movie featuring all their members. Other than the fact that Junya Takagi can fight like the dickens, little is known (by me anyway) about the guy.

NAOMI MORINAGA (森永奈緒美) DOB: 3/12/64, 164 cm, 52 kg, from Kanagawa. She's as skillful as she is beautiful, her stuntwork in *UCHU KEIJI SHADA* is outstanding! Additional TV shows to her credit include *SUN VULCAN*, *GOOGLE V* and *SPIEL-VAN*.

There are thousands of other JAC members, but all this typing is getting me tired and irritated.



NAOMI MORINAGA 森永奈緒美



"KABAMARU" 伊賀野力丸

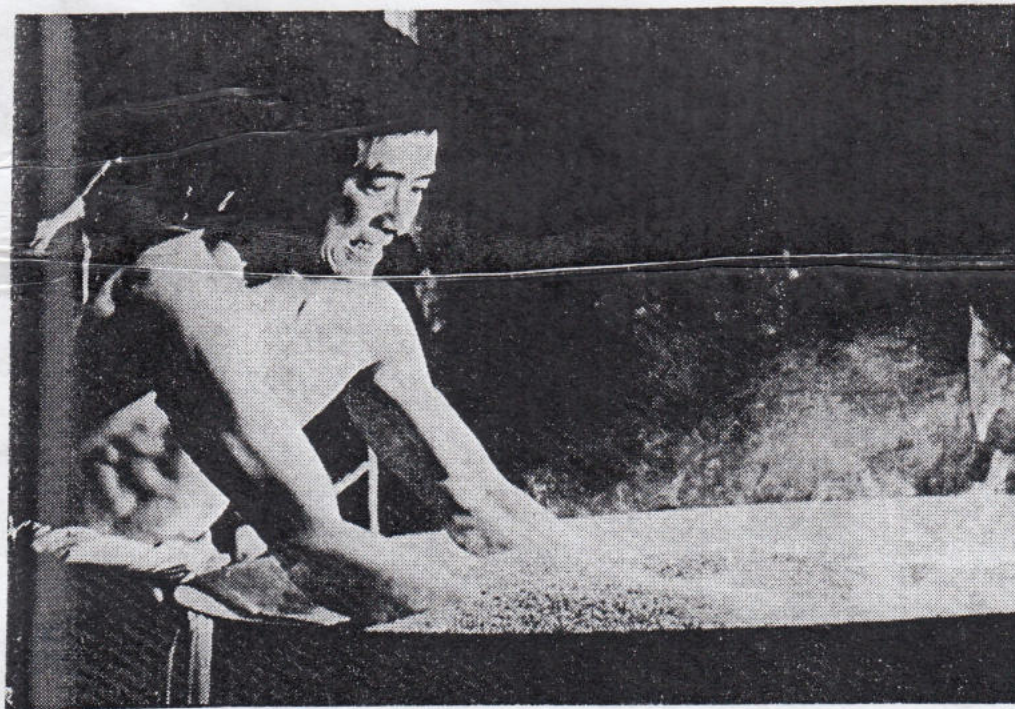


As you can see unless you're blind-er than a religious fanatic, now it's white lettering on a black background and you know what that means, right?! You don't? You must be one of my newer readers. Where the hell were you five years ago when I needed you?! Oh well, the point is, this sudden change in text, as always, means that we're getting into one of *O.C.*'s regular columns; one which appears in each issue. Welcome to 'Chop Socky Report', a section which focuses on kung fu movies. For starters, let's check out the first kung fu movie made:

「片腕ドラゴン」

THE CHINESE BOXER

[A.K.A. 'HAMMER OF GOD'] Produced by Runme Shaw in 1970, released to Japan in 1971, Written and Directed by Jimmy Wang Yu, Photography: Chiang Hsiang Loong, Art Director: Hua Shan, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hwa, Fighting Instructors: Yang Ching Chen & Wu Shu Yuan, Additional work by Johnson Tsao, Starring: Jimmy Wang Yu, Lo Lich, Wang Ping, Chao Hsiung, Fang Mien, Cheng Lei, Wang Kuang Yu, Vhang Ling, Pan Pan, Chen Sing



VENGEANCE

[released to America is *KUNG FU VENGEANCE* for some stupid reason] Produced by Runme Shaw in 1970. Screenplay: I Kuang & Chang Cheh, Film Editor: Chang Hsing Lo, Assistants: Ku Hsi, Chen Yun Kang, Costumes: Li Chi, Props: Liu An, Cinematography: Kung Mo To, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Lighting: Kuan Fang Chan, Action Scenes: Tang Chia, Yuan Hsiang Jen, Art Director: Johnson Tsao, Makeup: Fang Yuan, Music: Wang Fu Ling, Director: Chang Cheh, Starring: David Chiang, Wang Ping, Ti Lung, Ku Feng

Hot on the heels of *CHINESE BOXER*, then Shaw boys quickly churned out *VENGEANCE* shortly after. Though an action film of a sort, this thriller lacked the solid kung fu content of *CHINESE BOXER*. Exploitive releasers labled it "*Kung Fu Vengeance*" in the English dub, which is as stupid as saying, "Two plus two equals five." Other than even the simplest math tests, I'm rarely wrong, and feel that *VENGEANCE* will disappoint the traditional fans of typical chop sockey, especially if you're expecting another *CHINESE BOXER* or *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH*. Since damn near every fight in *VENGEANCE* makes excessive use of knives, it's probably as much a slasher film as it is a kung fu film. But still, *VENGEANCE* is important historically, because it's the first Shaw drama to feature both Ti Lung and David Chiang (although neither are really shown in the same shot). Also, it's mildly intriguing to see how insecure them shaw dudes were, afraid to go all-out kung fu during the fights. Of course, from the looks of it, the characters are pretty clumsy anyway; Shaw's martial artists never really were much of a match for Jackie Chan's groups or JAC. But more than anything, me thinks the reason there's so much knifing and 'getting all bloodied up' is because it was directed by Chang Cheh. In the 1960s, Chang Cheh became notorious for making gory swordhero films for the Shaws. Since *VENGEANCE* took place in the early 20th century instead of medieval times, Peking opera performers replaced swordsmen as heroes, gangsters replaced Manchus as villains, and knives replaced swords as weapons. On the whole, *VENGEANCE*, with its chivalry, romance and gore, looks like a thinly disguised costume drama, passed off as a gangster movie. I don't mean that in a bad way, since I like sword films and fist films equally. I like them all; there's room for all types of martial arts films, except ones that involve turtles or American ninjas.

Unfortunately, I found *VENGEANCE* to be about as interesting as a high school textbook on the history of agriculture. There are too many characters for my taste, the script is boring to me, and overall, it's too complex for me. There! That's my non-opinionated comments about *VENGEANCE*. And now, those same basic observations again, but in an opinionated form! Don't continue reading if you liked *VENGEANCE*, as you'll get pissed off!

VENGEANCE is not only one of the very worst I've seen, but it's pretty damn boring! It sucks! It stinks! It's the shits! Don't bother with this one because your time is too valuable. Better fun to be had jerking off to a photo of Barbara Bush, fantasizing about Barbara's bush.

Before his death about ten minutes into the story, Kwan Yu Lu (Ti Lung) was a performer in one of the many Chinese acrobatic operas. But he got killed because he opposed Shang Kai Shan (Ku Feng), who kept hitting on his wife. In one scene, Kwan attacks Shang's kung fu school, causing the obligatory scene of the attacker tearing down the school's sign. Some time after this vendetta, Shang plots with others, including a villainous town marshal to kill Kwan, and their assassination is successful. But this film is called *VENGEANCE*, so that's why Shao Lu (David Chiang) comes to town. He goes around stabbing the various villains responsible, and Kwan's slutty widow ends up killed by more villains too. Inbetween stabbings, Shao manages to find time to screw the dead widow's sister, but not for long, because she's no neckrophiliac. Yes, our hero dies a bloody death during the bland finale, but so do all the henchmen. If you've enjoyed reading this review half as much as I enjoyed watching this movie, then you must have really hated reading it! *

Remember a few issues ago when I told you *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH* was the first kung fu film? Well, I lied; it's actually the 5th, 6th or 7th. The very first one ever made in Hong Kong, to the best of my knowledge for what it's worth, was this early adventure, *CHINESE BOXER*. No, hey! Wait a minute; in this English dub, they never say 'kung fu'! They say 'boxing,' or 'Chinese boxing!' Hahl! There, you see, I was right all along! *FINGERS* was the first kung fu film, *CHINESE BOXER* was the first Chinese boxing film! Let's face it- I'm always right, everyone else is always wrong, I'm god, a whale is a fish and an owl is an insect. I'm sorry, this paragraph is boring you and wasting your valuable time; I'll start over. While I'm at it, I'd better reduce the text to save space.

In 1970, the sword hero films of the 1960s had died in popularity, and gotten more rotten than the ex-lead singer of the Sex Pistols. To replace the fading costume dramas, the Shaw Brothers invented a new type of Chinese adventure; martial arts films! Some politician called Chou En Lai had labled them older period films as imitations of Japanese samurai stuff, so the Shaw guys came up with this new type of thriller, replacing swords with fists. Jimmy Wang Yu had become quite a stud in numerous swashbuckling epics of the 1960s (see *O.C.#10*, I insist), so they let him try his hand (and feet) at fist fighting in this influential movie. There were other leftover stars in it too, who'd also been in 1960s historical. Ironically, numerous actors in *CHINESE BOXER* would later appear in *FINGERS*, which I think blows this one away. But *CHINESE BOXER* is pretty gosh-dam-heck-fuck entertaining too. Wang Yu was never an outstanding martial artist, but he always gives it his all in his action films, displaying strength, speed, energy, and shows he's not afraid to take a few painful falls. To be fair, this was before Bruce Lee made it big, so I think Wang Yu was one of the more impressive stars in the pre-Bruce Lee phase. In

CHINESE BOXER, he even proves to be handy with a kendo sword, using the Japanese two-handed technique.

Like I said, it's good but not great; but I think it's important historically. It sets up a lot of the typical cliches later repeated over and over in other kung fu flickers. You gotcher rival styles, you gotcher gambling scenes, you gotcher revenge, you gotcher training scenes, you gotcher characters saying 'but still' a lot, you gotcher blatantly anti-Japanese racism, and you gotcher sexual harassment scene. The tale is influential and fun. Check it out if you can find it. If you can't find it, check out some other fun film instead; there are lots of them out there! And if you enjoy whatever film you check out, be sure to thank me for recommending it to you!

This saga starts off with the arrival of Chau Erh, an evil creep played by the same guy who would later play the Japanese bad guy in *FINGERS*. Whoever he is, he's got a bad case of the uglies. Seems his character in *CHINESE BOXER* was kicked out of China for being such an asshole, so he went off to Japan for a few years and learned judo. Now he's back to harass a Chinese kung fu school. At first the school's teacher whips him good but he later returns with a gang of Japanese karate experts. At about this point in the film, there's some cultural, historical interest as they discuss the history of karate, and how it evolved from Chinese kung fu during the Tang Dynasty! I thought the Tang Dynasty lasted from about 600 to 1000 A.D., and that the Okinawans didn't invent karate until about the 1920s! I guess the film's historical revision could be an error in dubbing or translating. The lead Japanese villain is played by Lo Lieh, who looks as Japanese as Delta Burke looks anorexic. Only one Chinese boxer survives the battle when the Japanese attacked the kung fu school, and that's Lei Ming (Wang Yu), who gets nursed back to health by Chao Ling, the daughter of the school's deceased teacher. As Chao Ling lays Lei Ming, he also practices his fighting techniques. There seems to be some romance between them, so I assume he hardens more than just his fists. Meanwhile, the villains have turned the old kung fu school into a casino, and are giving the villagers a bad time. But Lei is back with a vengeance or two, and wears a surgeon's mask & gloves to conceal his identity. He looks pretty stupid in this getup, but still manages to waste all the villains gradually, sometimes one at a time, other times in groups of three or four. **

ジミー・
ウォンク
Jimmy Wang
王羽 (ワング ユー)



BORN: 3/18/1943, not in 1934, as I foolishly reported a few issues ago! His movie debut was in 1964, and he became Hong Kong's top action star of the 1960s. Film credits include: *TWIN SWORDS*, *ONEARMED SWORDS-MAN*, *ONEARMED BOXER*, *MAN FROM HONG KONG*, *BLOOD OF THE DRAGON*, *A MAN CALLED TIGER*, *BEACH OF THE WARGODS*, *FANTASY MISSION FORCE*, *MILLIONAIRE'S EXPRESS*, and much more.



死亡遊戲

GAME OF DEATH

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1978, released to America in 1979, Director of Photography: Godfrey A. Godar, Film Editor: Alan Patillo, Music: John Barry, Theme Song: Joseph Koo, Assoc. Prod.: Andre Morgan, Prod. Manag.: David Chan, Original Screenplay: Bruce Lee, Action Choreography: Bruce Lee & Sammo Hung, Production Supervisor: Leonard K.C. Ho, Producer: Raymond Chow, Directed by Robert Clouse, CAST: Bruce Lee, Gig Young, Dean Jagger, Colleen Camp, Hugh O'Brian, Danny Inosanto, Mel Novak, Bob Wall, Sammo Hung, Casanova [?], Kareem Abdul Jabar, Tae Jeung Kim, Marn

Some people consider this Bruce Lee's legitimate fifth film. These are probably the same idiots who still think the Earth is flat, and that abortion should be banned. I consider *GAME OF DEATH* to be a devious ripoff which exploits Bruce Lee. It's no more honest than many other exploitive films like *BRUCE LEE IN NEW GUINEA*, *BRUCE LEE - THE INVINCIBLE* or *SOUL OF BRUCE LEE*. Those older films got a lot of flack from supposed Bruce Lee purist fans, and these same hypocrites praised *GAME OF DEATH*. Many of the previous

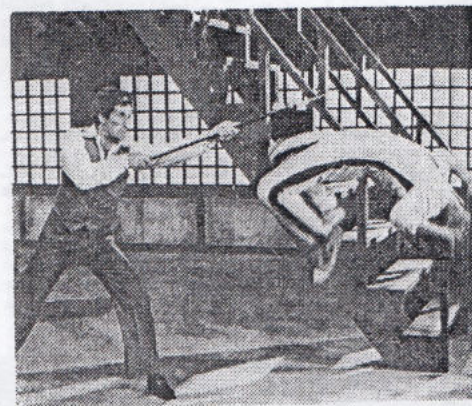
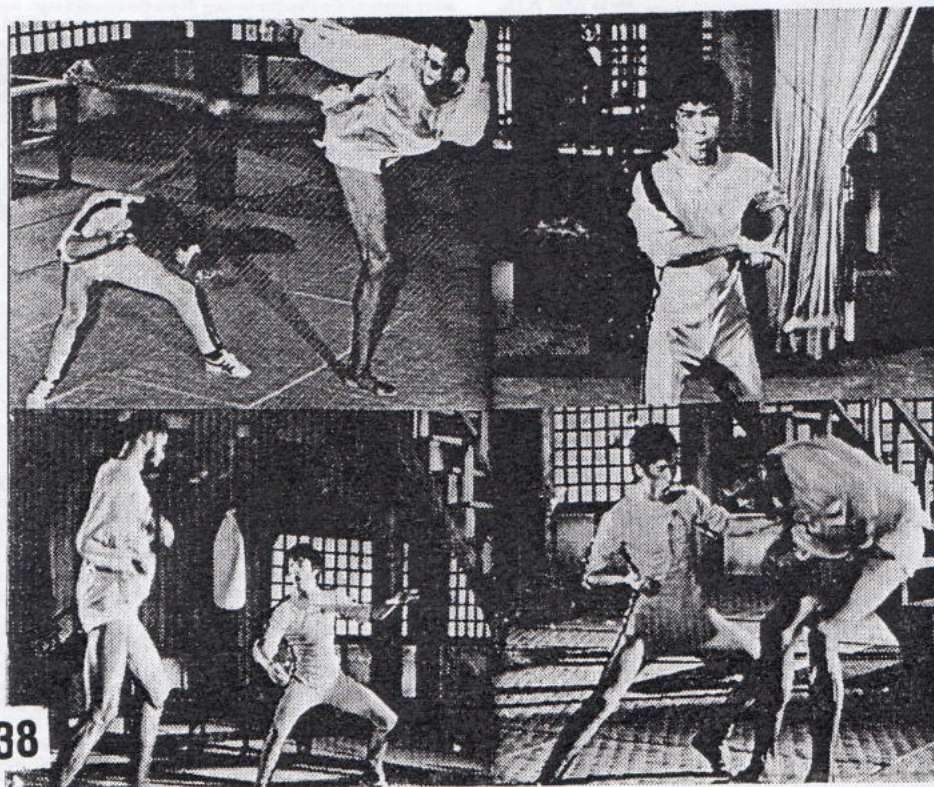
Lee ripoffs mention Bruce Lee's name in the credits only, and are otherwise innocent, fun adventures. This is not true of *GAME OF DEATH*; it's a desperate, last ditch effort to make big bucks off Bruce Lee's name, face and films. Bruce's original concept was to make the ultimate martial arts fight fest, casting some of the world's most wellknown martial artists (perhaps this was why Lee had supposedly considered getting to know Sonny Chiba at about this time! We'll never know for sure.) and athletes; one of which Lee had hoped to recruit was Mohammed Ali. It was shortly after completion of *RETURN OF THE DRAGON* that Lee had hired a small film crew to film scenes for *GAME OF DEATH*, featuring longtime friend Dan Inosanto, basketball star Kareem Abdul Jabbar and kung fu co-star James Tien. But Lee never came up with a whole film because them bastards at Warner Bros. came up with the promise of big bucks if he'd neglect *GAME OF DEATH* and sell out to their upcoming blockbuster, *ENTER THE DRAGON*. Lee cacked before *ENTER* ever got released, so a few years later, Golden Harvest mogul Raymond Chow decided to 'finish' *GAME OF DEATH*. Unfortunately, Chow & Golden Harvest didn't stick to their Chinese roots and instead sold out to American 'big bucks' once more. Needless to say, the finished project is nothing like that which Lee had hoped for, and the result could make Lee turn over in his grave. Despite the film's setting in Hong Kong, it's got an almost all American cast, and where did they find these lame-ass motherfuckers? I can't figure it out. Who's Gig Young? Wasn't he on an episode of *TWILIGHT ZONE*? Collen Camp? Decent breasts, but was she in anything other than *GAME OF DEATH* and *VALLEY GIRL*? What about these other nobodies, like Dean Jagger, Hugh O'brian or Mel Novack? They're as out of place in a kung fu movie as an issue of *O.C.* at a cartoon convention! Bruce Lee, now six feet under, naturally wasn't going to return from the dead to play in this bastardized *GAME OF DEATH*, since there's no point in playing a game when you've got the real thing. So they hired two or three different imitators to take



ABOVE: A rare photo, taken around the time of filming of *GAME OF DEATH*, of two of the greatest martial arts stars ever, not to mention some cute Chinese babe (middle). Could it be that Japan's Yasuaki Kurata (right) was the one who had hoped to introduce Bruce Lee (left) to Sonny Chiba?!!?!? Also, since Bruce Lee's concept of *GAME OF DEATH* was suppose to have featured many of the world's greatest athletes and martial artists, could it be that maybe Yasuaki Kurata just might have appeared in the movie, and possibly had a chance to fight Lee?

up the slack, none of which looked anything like Lee, proving the western notion of all Asian's looking alike to be a load of buffalo piss. Fortunately, one of the imitators, a Korean kid called Tae Jeung Kim was not only a fantabulous fighter, but mimicked Lee fairly well. Frequently, the editors excerpted small clips (taken from other movies) of the real Lee, in and around

Tae Jeung Kim and the Chinese stuntmen also doubling for Lee. Those who've never seen the earlier movies could easily be fooled into thinking that all this footage really is Lee throughout *GAME* (despite the sudden



changes in the film grain!), and that it's a real movie, not a celluloid scrapbook with a vague story. On the whole, with all its American nobodies, non-Lee filler, dull music and dialogue which makes it look like a TV movie, *GAME OF DEATH* is that most dreaded of DF hates, a venture into boredom.

So if this corrupt flick is inferior, why am I giving it two whole stars? Well, one star goes to what little Lee footage (all ten minutes) there is. After all, there's no other way to see these three fights where he takes on Dan Inosanto, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, and some mysterious martial artist. I couldn't identify. The second star goes to the work of the one and only Samo Hung, one of the most important action stars ever. Before *GAME*, Hung worked on Angela Mao's *HAPKIDO*, and Lee's *ENTER THE DRAGON* with good results. So it was only natural that Golden Harvest would have him choreograph the martial arts and organize the stunts for *GAME OF DEATH*. Samo Hung takes on Bob Wall during a sparring tournament, but my favorite battle

is in the locker room, where Bob Wall (who fought the real Lee in two earlier flicks) fights to the death with Tae Jeung Kim, aided by cleverly effective clips of Lee in *RETURN OF THE DRAGON*. The duel is great, and revolutionary in that it features numerous 'powder puff' effects to show that the fighters are making actual contact; a gimmick to be used often in 1980s actioners. Speaking of which, I just saw Samo hung's latest disappointment in a sleazy Chinatown theatre. The movie is *SLICKERS VS. KILLERS*, and it makes Samo's earlier films like *GAME OF DEATH* look like masterpieces.

U.S. adaptation, the duel happens at the end, when our hero (s) finally locates the villains at the Red Pepper Restaurant. But Far Eastern audiences saw a slightly different story; where he also visits the restaurant in the film's middle and battles the guy! It's basically the same confrontation on both sides of the globe, except that the Oriental version has the unknown villain talk first. There are additional discrepancies between the two dubbings, such as genuine Lee kyaais (war cries) used in the Chinese movie! The Yankee one had some obvi-

ous immitator who audio dubbed the Lee yells, and it sounded ridiculous. The far better Chinese flick has unmistakably Lee screams (synced from other movies) dubbed in, which must have been a painstaking job. All the sound FX in the Chinese movie are like those from any H.K. martial arts movie, and I prefer them over the dull American sound FX used in the English dubb and *ENTER THE DRAGON*. The Chinese soundtrack is a real plus, making the whole tale a lot funner. Neither better nor worse is the Chinese theme song, not used in the caucasian adaptation. It's got some silly guy singing what sounds like a Chinese superhero song. Unfortunately, the opening graphics, credits and clips are inferior to the opening mon-

tag of the whtie version. That's one thing that we Americans have going for our version, a much more interesting beginning. Another change between versions is in the opera theatre, where Lee's character visits his uncle backstage and gets attacked by Dan Inosanto and Bob Wall. This isn't in the Chinese flick, or at least, not the version I recorded off a local Chinese TV station. Who knows, maybe the TV channel condensed it; no major loss. One last thing before moving on to the next paragraph - the English subtitles aren't very easy to read.

Billy Lo (Bruce Lee & Tae Jeung Kim) is a successful martial arts star who makes a startling discovery on the set of a flick where he fought Chuck Norris (stock footage from *RETURN OF THE DRAGON*). Seems that some all-white triad operating in Hong Kong want him to join them, to get a piece of his profits. They are hassling him and his girlfriend Ann (Colleen Camp) who's successful at singing incredibly awful music which sounds like a muzaak version of "Muskrat Love," which she records at an all-white recording studio in Hong Kong. Like other successful celebrities,



Billy & Ann keep getting bugged by these mobsters. Then one day on the set of one of Billy's films looking strikingly similar to *FIST OF FURY/CHINESE CONNECTION*, they shoot him and try to make it look like an accident. He retaliates by faking his own death, organizing a mock funeral. Here's where we see actual footage of Lee's real funeral, including a glimpse of an authentic, but very stiff Lee in his coffin, shortly before the export to Seattle's Lake View Cemetery. But as for the fictional Billy Lo, he's alive and plotting his sneaky revenge against the white gangsters who kept bugging the hell out of him. Wearing a beard, mustache and sunglasses (a lame excuse to try and hide the fact that it's not really Lee), he gradually, singlehandedly wastes each of the mobsters one at a time. He kills villains played by Mel Novack, Kareem Abdul whatever, Dean Jagger, Dan Inosanto, Bob Wall, and an annoying old man called Gig 'Young', who plays the evil Dr. Land.

I hope the negativity of this review hasn't hurt your feelings. You see, I'm in a bad mood because when I watched *GAME OF DEATH*, I had hoped to eat milk & cookies; it's always a nice treat to dip cookies in milk. Unfortunately, I had no milk in the refrigerator, so I had to use icewater. **

ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS

Producer: Thomas Tang, Co-Producer: Lau Sang, Executive Producer: Chang Chung Liang, Photographer: Patrick Chan, Continuity: Helen Chang, Wardrobe: Joyce Kong, Lighting: Kang San Lin, Make Up: Yip Fat-Ming, Music: Brian Tsang, Effects: Man Chan, English Version: Melissa Miller, Action Director: Ken Yuen, CAST: Wang Tao, Lung Fei, Anne Lee, Marc Pao, Jerry Han, Ko Tin Yin, Stuart Young, Master Li Nin, Raph Wong, David Kung, James Chiu, Wang Tai Yi, Rod Kay, Chow Ping

NOTE: Don't read the first paragraph because it's offensive and has nothing to do with the movie. The safe article begins on the second paragraph, at the bottom of the page.

Hard to believe how many out-of-date American viewers think that old films of this nature represent current Chinese cinema. In my area, typical chop sockey movies like *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS* are still repeated frequently, proving that some Americans, though illinformed, have tastes for Chinese films. I long for the day when local American TV will see the likes of *DRAGON FROM RUSSIA* or *ACES GO PLACES IV*, instead of painfully oldfashioned romps from a hasbeen genre. Needless to say, the 'new wave' of Hong Kong masterpieces has evolved as far above 1970s kung fu farces, as we have evolved from apes. Those of you who doubt the theory, ugh, I mean fact of Evolution probably don't know what I'm talking about. Let me explain. H.K. actioners evolved from 70s kung fu movies (i.e. *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS*), which evolved from 1960s historicals (i.e. *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN*). So the gradual progression occurred a step at a time, just as we evolved a step at a time. You know, first as apes, then as neanderthals, then cromagnon cavemen, etc. And don't give me any of that 'Adam & Eve' nonsense.

Since the title of this article is *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS*, I should write about the film, instead of my usual anti-establishment cynicism. Despite my instinctive negativity in general, I do actually enjoy this naive kung fu movie. It may be just plain dumb fun, but that's better than just plain dumb, right? The only unintentional humor which had me smiling was its typically silly dialogue (though dubbed convincingly)

and perhaps a few familiar clichés (a character's weapon is his ponytail-whip). Overall, the plot has credibility (for chop sockey standards, that is), and the production values are decent, the martial arts & gymnastics are great - performed by skillful, talented actors and stuntmen.

In some ways, it's a typical period film, and/or costume drama. In other ways, it's not especially typical. One untypical scene is where a girl cuts off part of her lover's body as he sleeps. No, not that part! This is *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS*, not *REALM OF THE SENSES*. On the whole, it's an okay little drama, though lacking the lavish look of Shaw Bros. blockbusters also made in the 1970s.

ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS is a kung fu film, so it has a hero, one called Chin Wai (Wang Tao), a.k.a. Shaggy Dog. But *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS* is also a kung fu film, so we gotta' villain called Master Ma Ching Pao. Thirdly, *ASSAULT OF THE FINAL RIVALS* is also a kung fu film as well, so the hero and villain are kung fu perfectionists who hate each other. Villainous Me Ching Pao kidnaps the mother of Ah Ming, a girl who happens to be Chin Wai's main squeeze. With Ah Ming worrying about the fate of her captive mother, she's ordered to give our hero Chin Wai an involuntary haircut to weaken him, just like in *Samson & Delilah*. The hair is trimmed, the hero loses his kung fu ability and Ah Ming's mother is killed regardless. After the bad guys like totally waste Chin 'Shaggy Dog' Wai, he recovers, thanks to some girl (but not Ah Ming because she became a nun) who nurses him back to health. Then he kills the bad guys like Ma. **

TAK MOR, ORIGINATOR OF KUNG FU

Presented by Crown Heights Video, An Avi Garber Production, Produced by Production III, Starring: Liang Chia Jen

A sniveling, humble thanks goes out to John Auker for sending me this rarely seen TV series, as part of one of the seemingly endless videotape trades I seem to be doing 24, pos-

sibly 25 hours a day. This is an obscure program I would never have discovered otherwise, and one full of mystery! If you live in a spot like I do, heavily populated by excessive Asian immigrants who form clicks & communities, speak only their native tongue and avoid Americans, you've got one thing to be thankful for: the films and TV shows they bring over! Like in Chinese theatres and video stores, for example. And thanks to San Francisco's tuberculosis-infested Chinatown, this bay area has at least one Chinese TV station, and on it, they've shown historical soap operas since the 1970s, not unlike Japan's NHK Taiga Drama series. As a kiddie in the 1970s, I remember watching these exciting adventures, like *FUNG YING HWEI* and *LUNG HU FUNG* every weeknight, on ch. 26 (KTSF). These suspenseful sword dramas lacked subtitles or translation of any kind, but that didn't stop me from loving the costumes, the intrigue, the fights, and the fact that I was the only whiteboy who'd ever seen them; although some guy called Morris Wienberg is sometimes given credit in the opening graphics of a few of these martial arts mini-series. Shot on video, using open microphones (the actors actually talk, they're not dubbed), scenes are taped both outdoors and on sets in a studio, they've always been good examples of current state-of-the-art Chinese TV. Over the years, many celluloid stars including David Chiang (as a hero), Nora Miao (as a blind swordswoman), and others have starred. The early 1970s soap operas were old-fashioned Peking opera type things, but in time, they became more realistic, more adventurous, and much like period kung fu movies of the Shaw era. In recent years, I've seen ones based on the Monkey King and The Last Emperor.

Imagine my shock to learn that one of these Chinese dramas, the 6-part *TAK MOR, ORIGINATOR OF KUNG FU*, was actually dubbed in English!! !! All six episodes, lasting about an hour each, were put onto a series of three tapes (two episodes per tape) and bought by only a few videotapes across the



country! The dubbing sounds like the voices of those same Brits who always say 'but still.' They're professional dubbers, so why couldn't this company afford to add English credits? All the credits, even the title is in Chinese, yet once



the credits have rolled, we got characters speaking in English! This is a bizarre combination! The only reason I know its title is because it was written in English on the video rental box. The dubbing does not seem all bad, but the whole series' soundtrack seems to be a half second late, making it all unrealistic and uneven. Everything is translated literally from Chinese, which sounds silly at times (simple, stupid sentences), and educational at others.

My opinion of this series is higher than an addict in a crackhouse, this is an excellent program. Good production values, despite a limited budget, and the story is quite fascinating, captivating, involving, and all those other big words. But it's got more than just cultural intrigue. There are swordfights, swordfights and more swordfights; at least a couple per episode! And there are plenty of bloody scenes like stabbings and lots of spitting blood. Hell, in one scene, a guy spits blood for no reason at all! He's told his teacher is dead, and he suddenly gets so sad that his mouth appears to cry tears of blood! I don't recall ever having spat blood just because somebody said something depressing, but the point is, this series is not only fun, but weird. Lots of victims end up drinking poison in this series too. There are moments of bad acting, stupid dialogue, and ridiculous voices & accents - but on the whole, it's a great show.

Liang Chia Jen, an actor from kung fu movies like *FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH & THUNDERING MANTIS*, the horror film *CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE VAMPIRE*, and the crime drama *RED SHIELD*, plays the title role in this historical adventure drama. He plays the role flawlessly and really steals the series. His character is that of an ingenious, enlightened Buddhist monk. He's an unbelievably righteous individual, and quite heroic. He's the type of person we

would all like to know in real life. There are other interesting characters in the series too. Being a whole TV series, there's a lot more room for character development than that in a mere kung fu movie, where they're too pressed for time to let us really get to know the characters. There are heroes and villains in this show, but there's a lot of grey area; not solid blacks & whites. Villains occasionally almost seem humane, and heroes might do mean stuff occasionally. The video box spells the lead hero's name "Tak Mor" for some reason. The characters verbally pronounce it 'Dat Mo', which is a little more accurate. I've heard this fact-based character's name pronounced two other ways: Dahmo and Damo. These are the Chinese abbreviations of Bodhidharma, the original pronunciation from India. In reality, this here Bodhidharma/Dahmo/Damo/Dat Mo/Tak Mor dude was an Indian monk who walked from India to China. During this pilgrimage which took place in approximately the year 525 A.D., he observed the actions of animals like snakes and birds, and used the basis of their movements and instincts to invent kung fu. He arrived at China's Shaolin Temple of Buddhism, and taught the monks how to kung and how to fu. His lived there for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, this TV show says nothing about how Dahmo/Tak Mor (both of them) created kung fu, and we never really see him on his journey. The whole story deals with the people he meets in China, and I doubt highly that this story is accurate, but only loosely based on that there Dahmo guy's life at Shaolin.

According to the narration, it all starts in 530 A.D. (as opposed to 5:30 PM) as Mr. Goody-two kung fu shoes, Dahmo (Liang Chia Jen) himself walks to China as though it were down the street. Shortly after showing his noble face, he discovers that the Buddhists of Shaolin are a bunch of deceitful ripoff artists feuding with a rival monastery of corrupt Taoists. In this show, Taoists are presented as conniving culprits which seems only fitting for any religion which promotes the gory sacrifice of small animals like chickens or frogs. Most devious & evil of the Taoists is a slimeball called Mo Yung Tin Wai, a whining, annoying, tricky, funny-looking swordsman. His former colleague is Sun Kwang

who defected from the Taoist bad guys in favor of Dahmo's enlightening Buddhism. The scene where Dahmo proves his self-sacrificing kindness to Sun Kwang is quite a tearjerker (he allows Sun Kwang to slash him with his sword). Sun Kwang later chops off his own arm to punish himself for leaving his Taoist teacher, and for converting to Buddhism. The Taoists are jealous of the Shaolin Buddhists, as both temples want their head monk to be the



emperor's prime minister. So while Dahmo, Sun Kwang and the other Shaolin monks do benevolent deeds to win favor in the emperor's eyes, the Taoists do mean things to frame our heroes; resulting in numerous sword duels. One conflict is Dahmo's having to reform the previously ignorant Shaolin monks into proper monks, and another deals with an irritating bitch called Ah Ming, who was Sun Kwang's girlfriend before he became a Buddhist monk. Now he refuses to marry her, getting her quite annoyed. The climactic episode has the evil Mo Yung Tin Wai leading Taoists and swordsmen to raid Shaolin. But master Dahmo convinces the emperor of his kindness & helpfulness, so the emperor thwarts the attack and orders Mo Yung Tin Wai to surrender. He tries to escape, and after a swordfight with the heroic Sun Kwang, falls off a cliff, along with his misguided lover Ting Kyu, to their deaths. Buddhism is allowed to flourish, and Sun Kwang gets his head shaved by Dahmo, to become a full fledged monk. ***



LOCAL, LOW BUDGET, KUNG FU!

In celebration of the long overdue completion of the amateur video *HOT DOGS ON THE RUN*, this column *Chop Sockey Report* presents a special mini-section on other American fanmade martial arts films! This may or may not become a regular part of *Chop Sockey Report*, in future issues.

EYE OF THE MOSQUITO 3: MASTER OF THE FLY- ING GUILA MONSTER

Produced by & Starring Steven Ross

Another low budget, 8mm comedy, but a resourceful one; it doesn't look blatantly cheap. As a satire, it's very effective! These guys must have watched a ton of kung fu films to come up with such accurate mannerisms, dialogue and dubbing. Some of it is fairly funny, like the audio dubbed news cast which a hero watches on TV. Unfortunately, Steve Ross plays both the hero and the villain, so there's no real fighting on the screen, just closeups, off-screen hits, and quick editing. I'm giving it a whole star, which is quite good for an amateur film. After all, I usually review professional films only, under this same 5-star system, so *EYE OF THE MOSQUITO* holds its own. The story deals with the violent martial artist called Wang Fu Ho, who leaves his school to go beat up innocent civilians and using his flying guila monster on a rope, obviously satirizing Shaw's *flying guillotine* movies. To the accompaniment of a catchy tune, the heroic teacher locates & defeats the villainous Wang. Not excellent or even great, but not stupid or boring either. Running time is approximately five minutes.

カンフー ラスカル KUNG FU RASCALS

Produced & Directed by Steve Wang

Again, I must thank them dudes over at *FILM THREAT* for getting me into this one, which is not actually an amateur film, but definitely fanmade, and supposedly low budget despite excellent production values. The whole production

looks at least equivalent to many of the 1970s chop sockey films still shown on late night TV. I remember working with Steve Wang & Johnny Saiko (in their amateur phase) when they lived in the bay area, as we made the awful *ULTRA CYB-ORG* in 1984. Back then, I thought I understood their sense of humor, but this bizarre movie proves otherwise. Some say *KUNG FU RASCALS* is hilarious, but to me most of the humor is predictable, naive, embarrassing to watch, very unfunny, and

lacking that certain something, like a joke without a punchline. I've heard funnier jokes on *CAPTAIN KANGAROO*. Some gags, like excessive bathroom humor look blatantly ripped off from other kung fu movies (but maybe they're satirizing H.K. cinema's obsession with bathroom humor, it's hard to tell what they're trying to accomplish). Also, I've heard one too many one-liners taken from old Bruce Lee films. To me, this whole feature-length movie was so disappointing because it can't compare with the original, hilarious *KUNG FU RASCALS* 8mm demo they made in 1985. They chose 1985 to make that ingenious, 20 min. adventure, the one time in my life when I happened to be in Japan. After returning to Calif., I was told that I could have played a character, but since I was in Tokyo at the time, they used August Rag-



one instead. I was quite upset. Regardless, the amateur 8mm prequel was a hilarious, fight-filled, creative parody. Sadly, this glossy sequel tries hard to be as professional and mainstream as possible. Nobody can blame them for wanting to make money, but serious movies of this nature rarely impress me. There are familiar cliches throughout, and its overall plot structure looks more influenced by American films than Hong Kong ones. But as an American martial arts film, it's

HOT BUTTERED KUNG FU Produced by Victor De Anda & Edward Holland

I don't know what to make of this videotape; perhaps a paper weight or a doorstop, because it sure as hell isn't worth playing on my VCR! You see, each time you play a tape, that's a little wear & tear on your VCR, and this tape doesn't justify putting your VCR under any strain at all. I'm quite fortunate that David Williams of *Film Threat Video Guide* gave this to me for free, since I otherwise would have had to pay a whoppin' \$20.00 for this thing! Even for an amateur film, this comes off as ultra cheap, stupid, boring, hard to understand, even harder to enjoy, and a pointless waste of time. My only positive comments are to the enthusiasm of those involved; the actors really ham it up, and most of the lighting, filming & editing is decent, for 8mm films, that is. The first section is what appears to be a trailer for another godawful amateur short, *HIRO NO TOJO*. Though filmed by a bunch of American con-geeks, the whole thing (about three minutes) is dubbed in Japanese. It looks like a dull suspense drama. Next up is another sneak preview for something called *MR. HANDS OF DEATH*. It's probably the best of the three, which still gives it room to suck like a gay vacuum cleaner. Then finally the awful 'feature presentation', probably called *HOT BUTTERED KUNG FU* meanders on for about ten minutes. I don't get the point of all this crap! Everyone is so lively & over acting that I thought this was a comedy. Yet it's 100% unfunny, just ridiculous, pathetically silly at best. None of them can fight for shit; there are the worst fights I've seen, obviously performed by stiff-limbed non-martial artists who'd be in serious trouble if they went up against cast members for *HOT DOGS ON THE RUN*! I had hoped *HOT BUTTERED KUNG FU* to be a spoof of martial arts films, but there's not much fighting, and the characters are nothing like those in kung fu flicks I've seen. The main hero does a Clint Eastwood mockery throughout, and comes to town to beat up some ugly geek who killed his relative.



one of the best, deserving at least two stars! *KUNG FU RASCALS* easily puts the complete works of Chuck Norris, Steven Seagull, & Claude Van Damme to shame, and definitely blows away any of that "American Ninja" trash. In comparison with other American martial arts flicks, *KUNG FU RASCALS* is one of my alltime favorites! It's a fantasy, vaguely similar to *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA* or any of that 'Ninja Turtle' garbage. Being an American-made movie, it's excellent; I'm glad there's finally a cultural fantasy in the U.S. that's partially inspired by exotic Far Eastern traditions. The plot may be domestic, but the Asian trappings are very interesting; demons, swords, ninjas, a Pa Chieh-type villain, samurai-like giants, etc. This movie would go good on a double-bill with *ZU, WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN* or *MAGIC SERPENT*.

When I first discovered that Steve Wang & the gang were making a professional *KUNG FU RASCALS* movie, I'd hoped to interview him for this issue, but he either never got my messages or is still mad about the time I accidentally crashed into the back of his car and caused over a hundred bucks worth of damage. I had wanted to ask him what it was like to work on such important American & Asian crossover films such as *THE JITTERS*, *THE GUY-VER* (a.k.a. *MUTRONICS*), also making the new Kamen Rider costume that looks like a piece of celery with TV antennae, and most of all, inquiring about the making of this new *KUNG FU RASCALS* movie. I had hoped to ask him questions like, "Was anybody seriously hurt doing the fights & stunts?", and "On the set, was there somebody aiming a gun at you guys, forcing you to use such corny humor?"

So I guess I have mixed reactions to this comedic fantasy. Some scenes are hard to watch due to stupidity or boredom, but any scenes involving fights or FX are outstanding. The martial arts are a lot of fun, and the climactic battle of giants is spectacular! On the whole, I highly recommend this tale to all readers of *O.C.*, whether you're into kung fu films, fantasy, monsters, superheroes or slapstick comedy. This is the type of movie that so few people make, and I hope it's as successful and inspirational as possible.



sea. After the two statue giants battle it out and the nice one wins, there's a brief tearjerker right out of *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*. Before the flick ends, the lead villain (an incredible costume, also used in *THE JITTERS*) swears the battle isn't over! Watch for an upcoming sequel! **

End of this issue's Chop Sockey Report. And now



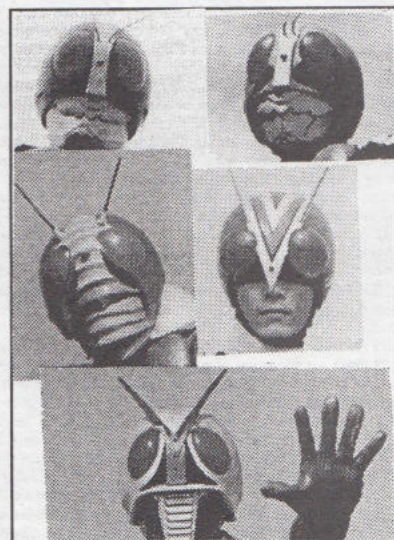
It's quite an unusual setting; it looks like medieval times, but one character has a photo of Bruce Lee! There are ancient uniforms and a pig monster dressed as a Buddhist, and yet there are caucasian characters; some dressed Chinese, some dressed western-ish. It's a mythical kingdom, and one which looks virtually identical to the kingdom in my own *HOT DOGS ON THE RUN*, which features a setting with blue-eyed samurais and Mexicans who think they're Chinese gamblers. Ironically, both *HOT DOGS ON THE RUN* and *KUNG FU RASCALS* were produced at the same time. I wonder if both adventures take place in the same non-existent dimension. As for the script of *KUNG FU RASCALS*, three traveling characters are guided by a weird little map to a treasure and/or instrument of special power. Unfortunately, an empire of monstrous demons are a dangerous obstacle. The evil demon leader hired a sheriff's posse to catch them, but the three rascals kicked their asses. At the end, our heroes reach a beach haunted by two petrified, Majin-inspired wargods. The evil pig demon hired the evil statue to trample the good guys, but they get rescued by the good statue, who also comes to life and emerges from the



JAC superheroes

Here's a little test to see if you're cool. Did you read my JAC article on pages 28-36? If you did, then you are cool, and may continue reading. If you haven't read it yet, then you're an asshole and shouldn't read the following 'sequel article', continuing where that one left off. So read that article on JAC to introduce yourself to them, and then you'll be ready to read this continuation, about JAC's superhero TV shows.

KAMEN RIDER ("Masked Rider," Produced by Toei, Created by Shotaro Ishimori & Tohru Hiriyama, Main Writer: Masaru Igami, Main Director: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Action Choreography by Ken Ono Yukai, Stunts by JAC, Broadcast on TV Asahi, Consisting of 98 episodes, Broadcast from 4/3/71 to 2/10/73, Starring Hiroshi Fujioka, Takeshi Sasaki, Shojo Kobayashi & Jiro Chiba) - The first of Japan's action heroes is definitely one of the best. It's scary to think of what the world might have been like if this influential masterpiece had never been made. Without **KAMEN RIDER**, there never would have been **KAMEN RIDER V3**, **KAMEN RIDER AMAZON**, Kamen Rider T-shirts & dolls, **KIKAI**, a reason to go on living, and worst of all, there'd be no *Oriental Cinema*! Let's face it, it's a scary thought, so let's not even think about it! **KAMEN RIDER** exists and it's a crude yet exciting classic. Being JAC's first superhero series, their action quality wasn't as slick or polished as that in later, more experienced efforts. Technically, as with **JUDO**



ICHO KUSEN, JAC only supplied the extra stuntmen for the fight scenes, it was Ken Ono Yukai who did the actual choreography and staging for the fights. Regardless, these early raw battles have a certain basic charm all their own. These fist fights are the program's highlights, seeing as the FX were put to restrained (if at all) use, though the monster costumes were sufficient. The story dealt with two motorcycle racers called Hayato Ichimonji and Takeshi Sasaki, who, against their will, were transformed into bugged superheroes meant to be super villains. Their corrupt captors are a bizarre army of monsters and mad scientists called Schocker, who not only fail to turn our two heroic riders (Kamen Riders 1 & 2) into villains, but fail to destroy either hero, using assorted creatures, henchmen & weapons.



The immense popularity of **KAMEN RIDER** demanded the production of three theatrical adventures:

KAMEN RIDER VS. SCHOCKER- Both heroic grasshoppers and scientists in retaining a top secret formula called GX. Sound easy? Well, not quite; Schocker has somehow revived an army of previously destroyed monsters, and even has a new, young feller called Sanjio. All these monsters want the formula, and unfortunately for these losers, so do Kamen Riders 1 & 2! Action galore!

KAMEN RIDER VS. AMBASSADOR HELL - Kamen Rider 2 doesn't appear in this theatrical episode, so Kamen Rider 1 is aided by Jiro Chiba (Sonny's brother) who plays Interpol agent & martial artist Taki Kazuya. They search a snow covered area in Fujino, trying to locate the base of Ambassador Hell, a Schocker general. Lots of fighting, lots of monsters including the return of Sanjio and the newcomer Kamikido, lots of praise from me, lots of fun to be had!

SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL - Some Taiwanese company bought the rights to the previous two movies, spliced out the dialogue and saved the fights. This intriguing, Mandarin



dubbed, English subtitled (!) version now features Chinese actors replacing Hiroshi Fujioka and the other Japanese actors. The fights are still good, and the Chinese apparently rented Toei's Kamen Rider suits in order to film a couple extra fights! Otherwise, the flick follows the same basic story as **KAMEN RIDER VS. SCHOCKER**. At least two other Kamen Rider movies were made in Taiwan. One was released to Germany as **FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER!** Any of you got these rarities on

tape? Let me know! The Chinese Kamen Rider flicks were successful enough to inspire a similar film, the Shaw's **INFRAMAN** (1975).

The whopplin' success of **KAMEN RIDER** and those films caused a number of sequels; TV shows like **KAMEN RIDER VS.**, **KAMEN RIDER X**, **KAMEN RIDER AMAZON**, **KAMEN RIDER STRONGER**, **NEW KAMEN RIDER**, **KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1**, **KAMEN RIDER BLACK**, **KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX**, some lame new video which has a Kamen Rider who looks like a piece of celery, and hilarious satires like **KAMEN RIDER SUANKO & KAMEN NO RIDA**. The Kamen Riders became the epitome of Japan's ongoing love affair with cybernetic TV heroes. These bug-eyed bikers guided the way, grabbing TV stations and Toei toy manufacturers by the gonads and setting the pace for Asian action as we know it (but don't always understand it) today. The Kamen Riders added life to the whole Kamen Rider era! For more on these TV shows, see O.C. #9. But for now, get a load of these lesser known, post-KAMEN RIDER JAC heroes:



SUPERHUMAN BAROM 1 "Chojin Baromu Wan" (Produced by Toei for Fuji TV in 1972, consisting of 35 episodes lasting from 4/2 to 11/26, Created by Takao Saito & Tohru Hiriyama, Writer: Masaru Igami, Directed by Katsuhiko Taguchi, Music by Shunsuke Kikuchi, Action performed by Ken Ono Yukai, stuntmen from JAC, Starring: Hiroyuki Takano) - Though this program appears to have its legion of fans, **BAROM 1** looks to me like little more than the result of a ratings war. Back then, TV Asahi's **KAMEN RIDER** had control of not only Schocker, but Japan's TV audience as well. So the jealous TV station Fuji TV hired **KAMEN RIDER** founders Toei to come up with a rival superhero program,

which was, unfortunately, **BAROM 1**. **BAROM 1** is to **KAMEN RIDER** what Bruce Li is to Bruce Lee, what Gamera is to Godzilla, etc. **BAROM 1** tries unsuccessfully (to me! Damn it, to me! You see, I'm not opinionated, just mean) to supply the same kinds of thrills and/or chuckles that made **KAMEN RIDER** so fun. More monster costumes, more fights, etc. Some of the monster costumes look good while others make me want to shove 6-inch needles (dipped in paint thinner) into my eyes. As for the duels, the karate and acrobats are adequate. However, from what few episodes I bothered to see, these battles and stunts lack that certain something which made those in **KAMEN RIDER** so successful. But, from fire to water, from love to hate, from black to not so-black, from hot to cold, from yin to yang, from me to predictable geeks who watch

Football, I try to present both sides of the story. Therefore, since the first portion of this review criticized **BAROM 1**, I shall now compliment it. No programs except religious ones or paid advertisements are entirely bad, and even **BAROM 1** has its good points. The mere fact that it's a JAC program makes it worth seeing for its battle scenes, which, in traditional early 1970s manner, consist of punches & kicks, not flashy FX. Barom 1's costume looks great from the belt up, and the mask (helmet) is one of the best designs I've seen. Unfortunately, there's no charismatic Takeshi Hongo-type to portray the cybernetic hero in his uncostumed form. Instead, there are these two little kids who combine to form the mighty Barom 1. The names of these two lucky brats are Kentaro Shiyutori and Takeshi Kido. These two young classmates become Barom 1 by jumping up really high into the air, locking arms, & they combine to form the fullgrown Barom 1. This is of constant annoyance to Dorage, a frightening alien from another planet. This monstrous insect is up to no good, and he's got an evil legion of mutations and henchmen who help him to be up to no good. Being in opposition to Dorage's monstrous army of mutants, Barom 1 is of course, up to yes good! He is a formidable opponent and drives a fancy car called Maharodo, which means Maha Road, Maha Lord of something completely different. ...

TRANSFORMING NINJA ARASHI / "Henshin Ninja Arashi" (Produced by Toei for broadcast on TV Asahi, Created by Shotaro Ishimori and Tohru Hiriyama, Written by Masaru Igami, Directed by Minoru Yamada, Music by Shunsuke Kikuchi, Starring Hiroyuki Takano as Hayate) - Not a bad show, yet this one always fails to hold my attention. The plots are rather complex so there's a lot of dialogue. Normally, my extremely limited Japanese language skills manage to help me to understand the bare essentials of such stories. But even if my Japanese was fluent,





spectacular fun, while a few of them, especially the awful final episode, are boring, about as fun as beating off to an episode of *THE GOLDEN GIRLS*. *KIKAIDER* is all about this war of androids as the heroic Kikaider battles it out with the anything-but heroic denizens of "the Dark", bad guys. The nasties like Professor Gill and Hakaida keep on doing less-than-nice things to supporting characters like Hatori Hanpei, Dr. Komyoji, Mitsuko & Masaru, so Kikaider treats the villains likewise! For more on this superhero TV series, see if you can dig up that old O.C. #12 I told you a few years ago. It could be in the basement, attic, or in the scrap-paper bin for recycling. ***

KIKAIDER 01 (Produced by Toei for TV Asahi, Created by Shotaro Ishimori & Tooru Hiriyama, Written by Shukel Nagasaka,

Director: Yasufada Nagano, Music: Chumel Watanabe, Consisting of 46 episodes from 5/12/73 - 3/30/74, starring: Shunsuke Ikeda, Etsuko Shiomi, Daisuke Ban)



- Anything which guest-stars Jiro Chiba and Etsuko Shiomi has the right to be excellent, and this TV show abuses the privilege! From what I've seen, *KIKAIDER 01* is even better than the previous



season's *KIK-AIDER*! The monster costumes are of the same quality; bulky foam rubber muppets with occasionally visible zippers. However, there appears to be more action, and the martial arts

I'd still have difficulty in concentrating on this disappointing series. The monster costumes are pretty outlandish, but our central hero looks like what would happen if you crossed Heckle & Jeckle with a ninja turtle. As for the villainous henchmen, it looks like somebody slopped together odds & ends from various ninja suites and army uniforms. Some of the swordfights between all these weird characters are okay, yet others are deadslow. Numerous duels involving the heroic Ninja Arashi look artificial & staged, like something out of a kabuki play. I don't like *HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI* very much, and neither should you. Despite my generally negative comments on this series, I don't hate it at all. I'll give it two whole stars, and two stars is my average. The series does not deserve three stars, and if I gave it just one, I'd never forgive myself. Let's face it, *HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI* may not be great, but any superhero program created by Toei and JAC is pretty nice. The opening episode of this period drama set in Japan's feudal times looks like a remake of an earlier pilot episode, from the program *LION MARU*. Again, a heroic Japanese swordsman is given magical powers to confront more demons. This time, the guy is called Hayate, not Shishimaru. The righteous wizard who gave Hayate his powers is called Kiyu Kokumo, who learned his powers at the Valley of Demons. Speaking of demons, they are responsible for making the magical wiseman deadlier than the audience at a Lawrence Welk concert. These monstrous murderers include ghoulish characters like that nasty Chiguo Majin Sai. In English, the literal translation of his name would be 'Blood-drop Demon Purification!' I guess that purifying means to transform, like maybe he changes people into demons by changing their blood. So let's just consider this guy the commanding Blood-Drop Demon. There are additional demons too, with equally silly names. But although these various villains, monsters, demons, ninjas, blood-droppers, purification dudes and warriors may be tough, they're not as tough as Ninja Arashi! He's top dog! Big cheese! Numero uno honcho! This heroic bird is aided by fellow ninjas: little boy Tsumuji, teenage girl Kasumi (killed off in episode 20), ninja man Tatsumaki, and even a muppet-like costumed hero (episodes 22 - 39) called Tsuki No Wa, which means Moon Ring. Anyway, Ninja Arashi a.k.a. Hayate is the main hero, who's always tangling with the evil bloodsuckers from the demonic valley. ***

Fifteen years later, and they're still talking about it! This magnificent series was broadcast (with English subtitles) here in Northern California's bay area in 1976, and till this day, I still occasionally meet enlightened people with vague memories of *KIK-AIDER*! During its run, the TV station always warned, 'The following program is strictly fiction. For your own safety, please do not attempt to



ABOVE: The early days of JAC superstar Kenji Ohba (left), as a stuntman, playing the monstrous Pink Tiger.

quality is a major improvement. This is only natural, seeing as our main man Sonny Chiba was personally involved in the choreography, coaching Shiomi behind the scenes. It's both a sequel & a remake of the original; it's a sequel because it features the return of so many of the same characters like Hakaida, Dr. Komyoji and even Kikaider himself. It's a remake because of the similar format. For example, the evil androids are being mean to someone until they all hear a mysterious horn being played. They look up and see the hero playing his horn to announce his presence. The only difference is that in *KIKAIDER*, it's not a horn, but a guitar. Storywise, the manning androids are lead by the demon-ish Big Shadow. This oh-so-bad, futuristic empire really has it in for kind-hearted androids like Kikaider 01 (a.k.a. Ichiro, played by Shunsuke Ikeda), his brother Kikaider / Jiro (Daisuke Ban), their sister Bijinder/Mari (Etsuko Shiomi), and even a little boy android called Akira. *****

KIKAIDER, THE ANDROID OF JUSTICE/JINZO NINGEN KIKADA (Produced by Toei for broadcast on TV Asahi, 43 episodes lasting from 7/8/72-5/5/73, Creators: Shotaro Ishimori & Tooru Hiriyama, Writer: Shukel Nakasaka, Dir.: Hideyuki Kimura, Music: Chumel Watanabe, Starring Daisuke Ban as Jiro)

imitate the characters in this story." The following day at my elementary school, not only did we imitate the characters while playing games, but would resort to these flashy, karate-hero antics in actual fights (see my factual account of my bout with a school bully, in O.C. #12). *KIKAIDER* was one of the many thrilling post-Kamen Rider programs featuring the same kind of action, stories, FX, comedy & drama. Some episodes, like the action-packed, monster-filled #14 are



HIROSHI MIYAUCHI

宮内 洋



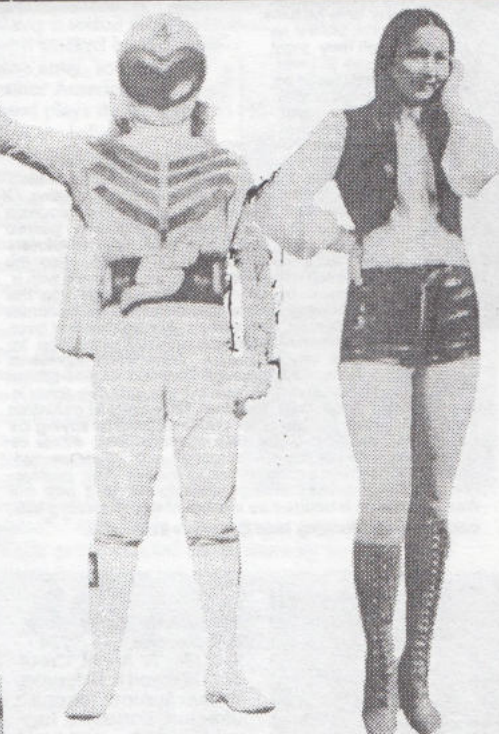
This immensely popular action star is Hiroshi Miyauchi, NOT Hiroshi "Yamauchi", as reported in *O.C.* #13!!

Hiroshi Miyauchi was born in Chiba, on 6/14/42. He originally majored in economics, but somehow, somewhere, ended up becoming an action star, thanks to crime dramas like *KEY HUNTER* and *THE YOUNG DETECTIVE*. Unlike most stars of superhero programs, he rarely had to resort to the typically infantile, happy-go-lucky characterisations of many of his colleagues in the hero business. His unique charisma made him typecast, as a cooler, strong silent type; someone who laughed in the face of danger. In a number of programs, he was sort of like Clint Eastwood's character in old spaghetti westerns, but more of a smart alleck. Hiroshi Miyauchi looks better in a cowboy hat than any cowboys ever did! Here he's pictured as Blue Ranger in *GORANGER*, but looks similar in TV shows like *KAI KETSU ZUBAT*, and *JACKERS*. Other TV series under his belt include *KAMEN RIDER V3*.

Watanabe, Starring: Yoshitaka Niwa, & Hiroshi Miyauchi again) Other than the fact that the heroine in the skintight leather hotpants looks like candy for men, this program didn't impress me like *GORANGERS* did. This female hero is not only sexy enough to make us drool like German shepherds on a hot summer day, but is one hell of a kicker. Her legs are beautiful but lethal, and yet so little is made of her skills and assets in the mere three episodes I've seen. I'm sure other episodes are better than the ones I have, but for now, just three stars will do. One star goes to the series itself, combining its costumes & FX, the second star goes to that hot female martial artist, and the third goes to the radd performance by Japan's hero of heroes, Hiroshi Miyauchi. There was even a stupid theatrical adventure called *GORANGERS VS. JACKER*, the most disappointing superhero team up since Batman met the Green Hornet. The movie failed to deliver any real thrills, but was important in that it acknowledged the existence of Kikaider & the Kamen Riders, thereby putting all these mutual heroes in the same dimension. But for what they're worth, the fights in *JACKERS*, a.k.a. *JAKQ* are what separates the enemy cyborgs called Crime, and the nonenemy cyborgs called Jackers, of the army base Joker. Spade Ace, Diamond Jack, Heart Queen, and Clover King are their names, but later in the show, a fifth hero came in, called Big One. ***

The first live action, 5-member superhero team, the *KAMEN RIDER* of the Sentais (team). Like *KIKAI-DER*, *GORANGERS* also got a limited broadcast in my area. And, like *KIKAI-DER*, *GORANGERS* saved & enlightened fans who'd otherwise might have degenerated and ended up being cartoon freaks. So *GORANGERS* still has sentimental value to me, although the show is enjoyable regardless, whether or not you grew up on it as I did, so there! *GORANGERS* may be crude, the costumes are cheaper than Kmart blue-jeans, the kicks look like the kicker was in California and the kickees was in New Jersey, and some of the miniatures look so phony they're not worthy of my witty oneliners and comparisons. But despite these minor complaints, *GORANGERS* can be described in four words: Fun! Fun! Fun! Fun! That's five words, I guess it's a better series than I thought. It's a great show that puts me in a good mood, even though the ozone layer above us is thinning out, riots & unrest are increasing, there's a killer disease out to get us, and while many people are killed due to theft and gangland warfare

cops still find time to arrest Pee-wee Herman for pulling his pud. But des-



pite these many worldly flaws, *GORANGERS* still puts a smile on my face! It can be enjoyed by all ages, not just kiddies! The cast features Hiroshi Miyauchi and Naoya Sei, a.k.a. Naoya Makoto. It's the story of five soldiers at the Eagle Station, commanded by Commander Edogawa. The five cybnetic warriors are Red Ranger, Blue Ranger, Green Ranger, Pink Ranger, and Yellow Ranger. Along with the help of their air vehicles like Vali Bloon & Vali Dorin, they're up against the Black Cross Army, a corrupt empire of cyborgs, demons, mutants or whatever. The whoopin' success of *GORANGERS* spawned additional variations, like *AKUMAIZER 3* (see *O.C.* #9) and *JACKERS* (see *O.C.* #14). ****

JACKERS, BLITSKRIEG SQUAD / JAKQ DENGKEI-TAI (Toei, TV Asahi, 35 episodes, Creators: Ishimori & Hirayama, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Direc.: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Chumel

GORANGERS was just the beginning of something really big. As *JACKERS* proves, success breeds imitation. Other remakes include JAC TV shows like:

AKUMAIZER 3 [1975]: An abnormal superhero team, there are these three heroes this time; and they're basically bionic demons skilled in fencing. Jiro Chiba stars in this camp classic! ***

NINJA CYAPTOR [1976]: Not just three or five heroes, but seven! From what little I've seen, it looks great. But ten seconds isn't much to go on * *

BATTLE FEVER J [1979]: Not even the acting & fighting of JACster Kenji Ohba can save this simpleminded, sometimes stupid series. This is the first Sentai to offer a giant robot. **

DENZIMAN [1890]: Kenji Ohba is back, in this influential series which set the pace for every ripoff Sentai show to follow. *DENZIMAN* is not a bad show though, and, like *B.F.J.*, has 5 heroes, and one giant robot against evil monsters. ***

SUN VULCAN [1981]: A personal fave of mine, full of good special effects and great martial arts duels! Three cyborg

{ CONTINUED }

avengers and a superb pre-Transformers robot are hard to beat, since it's they who beat the living crap out of the monstrous Black Magma! *****
GOGGLE V [1982]: Junichi Haruta, one of JAC's unsung heroes of the 1970s, finally gets his big break as one of five (6, including the giant robot) generic heroes aided by, unfortunately, a group of whining kiddies who think they're the Science Patrol and have their own cheap version of the Starship Enterprise's Bridge. Other than these twerps and a few dumb-looking monsters, the program is as popular as the flu! *****

DYNAMAN (1983): Don't let the English language, bastardized American TV version shown on *Nightflight* fool you! **DYNAMAN** was always meant to be campy & silly, but its original Japanese version is pretty damn good, with great FX, action galore, Junichi Haruta as Dyna Black, robots, monsters, pretty girls and more. *****

BIOMAN (1984): The FX are flawless, and the plots are logical. For once. However, the quality of martial arts stuntwork was inferior to that in the previous three Sentais. The action had reached its peak in **GOGGLE V**, so starting with **BIOMAN**, it's all downhill. *****

CHANGEMAN (1985): Not bad, but worse than **BIOMAN**. This is where the stagnation really starts to set in. Although the action staging isn't as good as **BIOMAN**'s the FX are an improvement.

FLASHMAN, LIVEMAN, TURBO RANGER, FIVEMAN, MASKMAN, & JETMAN :

Forget it! The stagnation has set in. Although the name changes each year, it's all the same series, with 5 heroes, their robot and other weapons against monstrous empires. The special effects are the only worthwhile aspect, because the action & stuntwork stink like the fart of a skunk who's been forced rotten beans. I give them all two stars for their imaginative FX, but since this is a JAC issue, and these shows don't make heavy use of JAC anymore, that's enough said on them.

AND NOW THE CURRENT SENTAI, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

ZYURANGER [1992]: Toei doesn't impress me or anyone else who remembers the good old days of **GORANGERS** or **SUN VULCAN**. You've been reading O.C.'s regular coverage of Sentai programs in previous issues, right? Well, then you know my attitude on this new remake as well. The characters are infantile, the plots are silly, the action choreography is as lame as that in the last few, and the special effects, as always, are great. The superimposed visuals, miniatures, and monster costumes are all excellent. There are five heroes: each in a different colored uniform and representing an extinct animal of some kind. The red leader is Tyrano Ranger, the pink female is Pteran Ranger, the other guys are Torike Ranger (blue; and a triceratops dinosaur), Tiger Ranger (yellow; saber toothed tiger), and Manmos Ranger (black; a woolly mammoth). My favorite things about this show are the heroic team's five giant robots based on dinosaurs! These just barely make the show worth watching. The alien villains are



pretty fantastically designed too. If you can forget that battles in such programs used to be really excellent, then **ZYU RANGER** can be pretty fun in its own stupid, predictable way. Just don't compare its stunts & action quality with the superior oldies like **DYNAMAN**! Plotwise, there seems to be some wierd castle from outer-space called Bandra Palace, and within it lies a massive squad of badder-than-bad monsters of all shapes & sizes! But these villains don't get a chance to kill us because the members of Zyu Ranger keep stopping them! The members are Dan (blue), Geki (red), Goutsu (black), Mei (pink), and Boi (yellow). **

VIGILANTE ZUBAT/KAI KETSU ZUBATO

(Produced by Toei for TV Tokyo, 32 episodes broadcast from 2/2/77 - 9/30/77. Creators: Shataro Ishimori & Tohru Hirayama, Writer: Shukel Nagasaka, Director: Hideo Tanaka, Music: Kensuke Kyo, Star-ring: Hiroshi Miyauchi)

Heroic, charismatic, cool, slick, somebody to look up to, ingenious, but enough about me! Let's talk about Ken Hayakawa, alias Kai Ketsu Zubat! Ken Hayakawa, played by the ever chic Hiroshi Miyauchi is the wisecracking hero of this inimitable program. Hiroshi Miyauchi has a certain amount of karate skill, though not as theatrical as the average JAC member. Regardless, **KAI KETSU ZUBAT** is a 'thumbs up' program! Hiroshi's Ken Hayakawa character is a witty, super cool dude. It is his performance which highlights the scenes.

Production values: Special effects- You'll notice that I'm including this disappointing category first. That's to get these painful comments out of the way. The FX aren't extremely bad, but a smidgen on the simple side. Some FX are crude, some are seldom used. The only people who'd actually say **KAI KETSU ZUBAT**'s FX suck are geeky FX hounds and boring old farts who watch Godzilla movies exclusively. Grow up, sci-fi nerds, there's more to brilliant TV than artificial FX. Scripts- creative, though sometimes too complex & confusing to follow. If you are Japanese language impaired. Otherwise, generally,

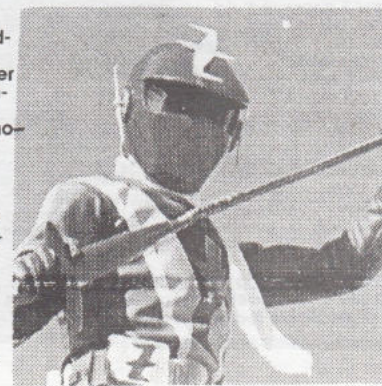
for the most part, it's usually just the usual good hero vs. bad villains plots. Whatever, so long as it allows for Miyauchi's sleek performances and various fights & chases. Music: Excellent tunes! Traditional Japanese superhero music mixed with Spaghetti western influence!

Perhaps this may be considered an insult to **ZUBAT**, but this program seems as similar to the 1966 **BATMAN** program as it is to any Japanese superhero series. Like the wellknown **BATMAN** program, it's about a guy who has a secret identity as a superhero once he puts on his costume, and he battles human criminals, not monsters. Kai Ketsu Zubat's car makes the Batmobile look like a tricycle. And like **BATMAN**, this Japanese successor is tacky, campy, silly and full of impossible odds & feats.

When a righteous secret agent called Goro Asuka (pronounced "Askah") is killed by high tech criminals, his longtime pal Ken Hayakawa (Hiroshi Miyauchi) gets quite annoyed. Already Hayakawa is a precision-trained marksman, unbeatable at hitting targets, whether it be with guns, bow & arrow, blow darts, knives, shurikens, boomerangs, and anything else people throw. He also happens to be creative & brilliant, so he singlehandedly slaps together the materials to make a red space-age costume, not to mention an unbelievably advanced car called the Zuba Car, which flies! When Hayakawa gets in his red suit, he's called Kai Ketsu Zubat, and makes extensive use of a whip. Zubat battles the sinister forces of Daka while trying to find Asuka's killer and avenge his death. In the words of Ken Hayakawa, "Aasskaaaaaaaaal!" The only problem is that it's hard to breathe and

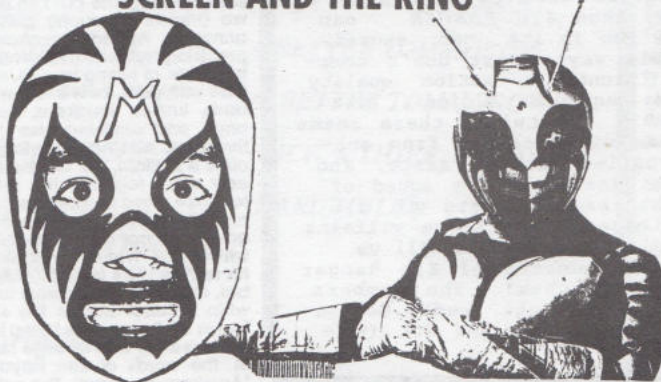
fight under that red helmet, so he's got a small oxygen tank continually supplying air to him. But the air maker only lasts a few minutes, and once it does, the front of the mask automatically opens and exposes his face, so he can breathe. So to keep his identity a secret, he must defeat the villains before the air runs out. As a vigilante, sometimes the cops are after him too. Their only clue is that he leaves his own personalized insignia card

near the unconscious or dead bodies of enemies he's defeated.



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SPIDERMAN (Toei, Broadcast on TV Tokyo, 41 episodes, Created by Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Dir.: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Chumel Watanabe, Starring Hirotsugu Kayama)

For what my opinion is worth (about 0.7 ¢), **SPIDERMAN** has blows against it for being a remake, a retelling, a new beginning, an alternate version; it's an egotistical, pretentious, possibly racist, bastardized new story which shows no respect for Marvel's original comic book (not that I read or even like comics). The original concept, according to *Uchusen* magazine's Sakl Hijiiri, for the story was that Peter Parker was to go to Japan, but of course, that proved to be too brilliant for these snobs. So what we got here is actually more of a ripoff. Spiderman looks the same as in the American original, but he calls his web 'spider string' and the whole script is your usual Japanese 'robots vs. alien monsters & henchmen' stuff. I feel that Toei are real skumbags for making this 'new & improved' adaptation, but the real culprits are them moneygrubbers at Marvel, who really sold out on this whole deal. If they really had to prostitute Spiderman to Toei, they should have seen to it that this Japanese series would have been released to the U.S. for fans of Spiderman to see it. If I were a Spiderman fan, I'd want to see all available footage, even if it's in Japan-

ese. But no, the Japanese series remains a thrill for Japanese audiences exclusively. But in all honesty, I'm not likely to be seen wasting time at a comic book store, and to be frank, this Japanese TV show is more creative and exciting than any American comic or TV show about Spiderman. The story would appear to have something to do with alien races from outer space again, coming to Japan of course. Our heroic Spiderman is some Japanese guy (Hirotsugu Kayama) descended from a race of 'spider warriors.' He has his own high-tech car much like the one in *KAI KETSU ZUBAT*, and also has an even higher tech giant robot called Leopaldon. With these combined forces, the Japanese Spiderman takes on monstrous invaders. **

SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN / UCHU KEIJI GYABAN (Produced by Toei for TV Asahi, 44 episodes, 3/5/82 - 2/25/83, Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Director: Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Music: Chumel Watanabe, Starring Kenji Ohba)

Yes! I've said it before and I'll say it again (and again), this program is the greatest! It's the best of both worlds; it's got the thrilling action of the 1970s and the advanced FX of the 1980s! The fact that Kenji Ohba, another student of Sonny Chiba's *JAC* is the program's main star is another reason to like the show. Kenji is a great fighter, gymnast & stuntman. He gives it

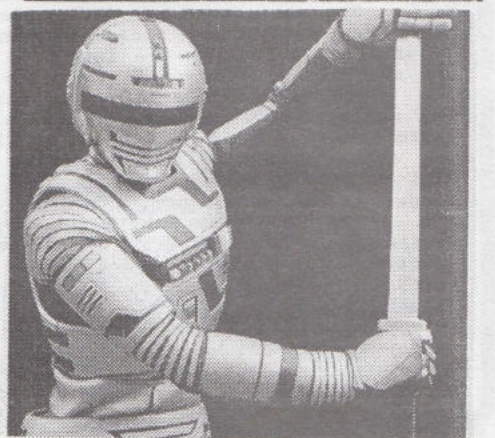
his all as Space Sheriff Gavan tackles the monstrous baddies of Maku! The program was successful enough to have numerous remakes and sequels; TV shows like *SHARI-VAN*, *SHIDER*, *JUSPION* and *SPIEL-VAN*.

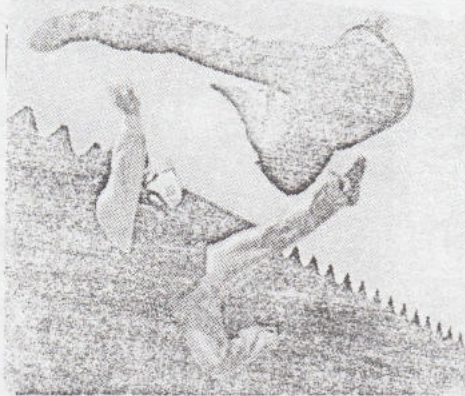
For in-depth examinations

on all these, see *O.C.#10*; I haven't enough stamina to write about them all over again. And besides, I have been sitting by this word processor too long; my ass is getting sore. *****



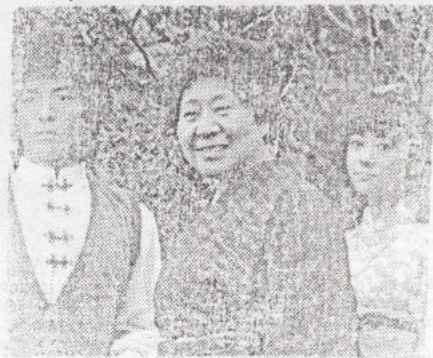
ABOVE: Another bullshit photo of Spiderman with Kamen Rider V3. BELOW: A scene from *SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN*, featuring space heroine Mimi and Gavan (Kenji Ohba) himself. FURTHER BELOW: Gavan in his futuristic, pre-ROBO-COP combat suit.





KUNG FU CHAN (Produced by Toho in 1983 for TBS, consisting of 10 episodes, starring Junya Takagi)

Not Toei, it's the work of Toho, who rented several JACers from Toei, to make this thrilling TV series. It's a superhero series concentrating entirely on martial arts, not flashy space-age effects. I enjoyed the hell out of this exciting, action packed program, and so has anyone who's ever seen it. The martial arts in *KUNG FU CHAN* are outstanding, and so is my taste in TV shows! I love me! JAC teen idol Junya Takagi stars as our hero Kung Fu Chan, a half Chinese, half Japanese martial artist raised in China. But to escape from an evil gang of mystical 'Scorpio Fighters' he relocates to Tokyo, followed by those same enemies. They are lead by an evil masked villain called Wandu. ****



ELECTRONIC BRAIN POLICE CYBERCOP / DEN-ZUNO KEISATSU CYBERCOP (Produced by Toho Planning for NTV, 34 episodes lasting from 10/2/88 to 6/14/89, Creator: Hiromitsu Muraishi, Writer: Kazuhiko Godo, Director: Toshi Obi, Music: Ichiro Nitta, Starring: Tomonori Yoshida & Masaaki Daimon)



Like *KUNG FU CHAN*, this is another non-Toei series utilizing Toei's JAC, and as such, the quality of the battles is far superior to all of Toei's recent crap. Many viewers were put off by the videotaped (non-celluloid) format, as though that really matters. Video or film, that's not where it's at, it shouldn't even be an issue. *CYBERCOP* is an excellent program in its own right; a great, exciting series loosely derivative of Toei's Sentais, *ROBOCOP*, and the Ultra Brothers, but not a ripoff of anything. It's a one-of-a-kind series, and a damn good one. The plot has a team of cops in combat suits who deal harshly with the usual assortment of villains, monsters, mutants, demons, cyborgs, and so on & so forth. The heroes are Akira/Mars, Toshiya/Jupiter, Mouri/Saturn, and Saionji/Mercury. They're played by JAC members who sometimes even wear the combat suits themselves, doing their own stunts in costumed form. If this little review of the series doesn't wet your appetite for *CYBERCOP*, get a load of my original, more informative article on it in O.C. #6. ***

WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA/SEIKAI NINJA-SEN JIRAIYA (Produced by Toei for TV Asahi, 50 episodes, lasting from 1/24/88 - 1/15/89, Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Susumu Takahisa, Director: Michio Konichi, Music: Chumel Watanabe, Starring: Shohel Kusaka)

Another oasis in an otherwise bland desert. Though abnormally childish, it's got enough swordplay, comedy and acrobats to keep it rolling. Flamboyant, far-fetched, elaborate, stupid in a positive way, and worth a laugh or two. Nice FX abound! Jiraiya is a space-age ninja who has it out with other space-age ninjas, space-age vikings, space-age samurais, and space-age other warriors from all over the place. This amusing TV show has more futuristic swordsmen than it would take to put Humpty Dumpty back together! Many of Jiraiya's rivals are indeed evil, while many others suddenly switch over and become his friend, they get heroic! *JIRAIYA* is unpredictable, and breaks all the rules! ** 1/2

SUPER MAN-MACHINE METALDER / CHO JINKI METALDER (Produced by Toei for TV Asahi, consisting of 39 episodes, from 3/16/87 - 6/17/88, Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Music: Seiji Yokoyama, Theme Song by Isao Sasaki, End Theme sung by Ichiro Mitsuiki, Starring: Akira Sano, Hiroko Aota, Hirotsuke Kayama)

The last decent (at best) Toei superhero series. This is serious stuff here; flawless FX, logical script, adequate action and an overall well done concept. For more on this tale of an innocent, naive robot stalked by demons from the Monster Bank, see O.C. #12, I'd appreciate it. ** 1/2

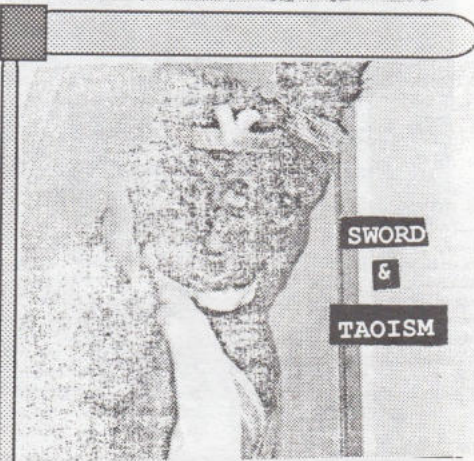
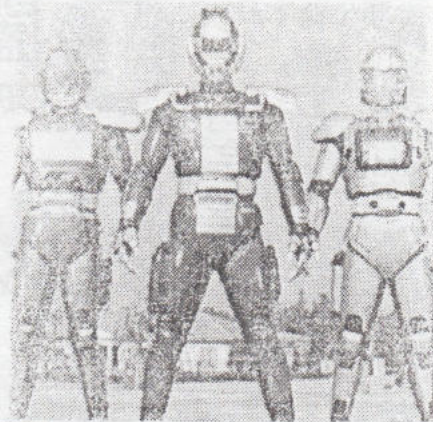
JIBAN, WINSPECTOR, SOLBRAIN, & EXCEEDRAFT -

Toei has reached an alltime low with these new programs. Because of excessive complaints from 'concerned' parents, the spine-tingling karate duels pitting cyborgs against monsters are fading like my love of the genre. *JIBAN* (see O.C. 8), the first and the best of the four, at least had excellent monsters and decent confrontations. However, the heroic android Jiban himself is a blatant imitation of Robocop; he walks just like Robocop, he drives a car like Robocop and has a similar gun. *WINSPECTOR* (O.C. #12), aired the following season, has three mighty Robocop wannabes, and they battle monsters only occasionally. Most of the time they go on rescue missions and shoot at an occasional thief or terrorist. Its sequel was the series *SOLBRAIN* (O.C. #13), which involved even less monsters and more rescue missions. This year, the current *ROBOCOP* ripoff is *EXCEEDRAFT*. It's about these three cops in robo gear called Draft Reda/Hayato Kanou, Draftbus/Kousaku Muraoka, and Draftkis/Ken Ookuma. All these programs are kind of dumb, but they've got good FX and can be quite fun. If you watch them when you're very drunk. If you watch these virtually identical programs when you're sober, they only deserve one star. But if you're drunk, they're fun enough to get two stars. **

That just about wraps 'er up for this here article on JAC heroes. There are a few other JAC hero programs that were excluded, like *CONDORMAN*, *ZA CAGESTA* and *BIBYUN*. I've never seen any episodes of these programs, and don't know how to go about obtaining them. If and when I do get my slimy, greedy paws on them, I'll write about them in future editions of O.C., to let you know

whether they are any good, and to amuse & annoy you in the usual DF manner. Some of the TV shows in this article may be critiqued again in future issues of whatever this fanzine is called, because the reviews in this article were too vague (I'm running out of space to be too informative!). So anyway, read on; I think the next column might be something completely different, but equally interesting. Maybe it will be Chinese Chillers, or possibly even *Sword & Taoism*.

!@#\$%^&* THE END !@#\$%^&*



SWORD
&
TAOISM

Maybe *Sword & Taoism & Buddhism & Wizards & Dragons & other Fantastic Things* would be a more accurate title for this continuing column on fantasy films, but that would take up too much space, and besides, I just want to get this damn issue finished. You think I've got nothing better to do than make an unsuccessful fanzine on Far Eastern films? On well, enough of my ramblings. On to this edition of *Sword & Taoism's* first movie review.

非洲和尚 CRAZY SAFARI

Presented by Golden Harvest & Sanrio Films in 1991, Producers: Charles Heung & Jimmy Heung, Executive Producers: Charles Heung & Barry Wong, Art Director:

Li King Chu, Consultant: Jamie Uys, Screenplay: Barry Wong, Director: Billy Chan, Starring: Nixau, Lam Ching Ying, Sam Christopher Chan, Peter Chow



李小龍重現銀幕

I 闔府統請 CRAZY SAFARI

非洲和尚

五大元氣結合☆笑彈連環爆發

- ◎周潤發、吳孟達、白(你試過嗎?)
- ◎非洲人用腳踢(你試過嗎?)
- ◎張國榮打中國功夫(你試過嗎?)
- ◎用手摸胸露乳(你試過嗎?)
- ◎鴨鵝鳥玩牌(你試過嗎?)

周潤發 吳孟達
旁白

「上帝也瘋狂」男主角

歷蘇

領銜主演

睇《上帝也瘋狂》裏面：

上帝賜佢一個可樂樽俾「歷蘇」

已經攞到佢過身唔得開?!

今次重大鑑，

上帝賜隻猩猩俾佢，攞到

滿天神佛!

真係唔知佢點收料??

If ever there was a movie which separated the men from the boys, it's this bizarre, possibly one-of-a-kind comedy. The average geek or sci-fi fan would have no concept of the entertainment in **CRAZY SAFARI**. This is a film for unique individuals only! It's definitely too exotic for most round-eyes. Despite the film's gyonsi, also pronounced jyansu this week, this sure as hell ain't no horror film. Don't let the

ently, these 'Bushmen of the Kalahari' films were successful enough in Hong Kong so that Hong Kong filmmakers came up with this parody. Nixuan, a tribesman of the Kalahari Desert in Africa stars in this Chinese flick too, an illegitimate sequel to the South African movies. **CRAZY SAFARI** was filmed on location at an African village. It's quite strange to see Taoist Lam Ching Ying at an African village, alongside Nixuan! This intriguing fusion of two completely different cultures is what makes **CRAZY SAFARI** so fascinating. Again, despite the former kung fu star and the slight horror aspect, this is not an exploitive, trashy flick; it's a highly cultural, possibly educational epic. I'll take intellectualism over sleaze any day of the week, except for maybe Friday.

The plot deals with the misadventures of two Hong Kongese trying to transport an antique gyonsi back to Hong Kong. The movie starts off in London where everything is in English, and the gyonsi is referred to as a 'Chinese mummy.' One of the 2 Chinese hoping to bring this hopping vampire back to China is of course, a Taoist wizard (Lam Ching Ying) who's magic controls it. But their chartered plane, enroute from England to H.K., malfunctions and they land in Africa. During their parachuting, our two heroes get separated from the dormant bloodsucker. This gyonsi falls into

appearance of this Chinese vampire fool you, there are no scares or gory scenes in this lighthearted, cute (yet not childish) fantasy. There are no FX at all. Despite Lam Ching Ying's starring role, there's not a whole lot of kung fu; just a little. So don't check out this farce if you want horror or martial arts. If, and only if you have a taste for the abnormal, or are into exotic cultures or unusual film genres from all over the world, and feel that 'anything goes' in a movie, should you even consider checking out this amusing adventure.

I must confess I had hoped to see Lam Ching Ying do more fighting. He only throws a couple kicks, and yet his fighting skill is far better than his poor acting skill. Like in **MR. VAMPIRE** & its clones, he again wears a traditional Taoist robe. But far more interesting an actor in **CRAZY SAFARI** is the African bushman Nixuan, who made his acting debut (playing himself) in the South African comedy **THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY**, and the inferior **THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY** part 2. Appar-

the hands of a peaceful tribe of Kalahari bushmen who are routinely harassed by greedy, exploitive Europeans and their hired tribe of Zulu warriors. Meanwhile,



Lam Ching Ying and his cowardly friend are traveling the Kalahari Desert in search of the gyonsi. Both adventurers encounter hilarious situations involving baboons, an ostrich, a

lion and that same rhino (the same two-man costume used in the South African movie) who stomps out fires. But eventually, our heroes reach the village and it's at this point that the hilarity is replaced by mere silliness. Regardless, the villainous warriors and their caucasian leaders come to the Bushmen village to cause more trouble. When Lam Ching Ying sickens the gyonsi on them, they respond with their own undead warrior; an African vampire called Makasa! This creature looks like something from old African legends, and in fact, the original, oldest legends of vampires come from Africa (they had the myth long before China or Europe). The gyonsi defeats his opponent, so after this duel of vampires, all hell breaks loose. Lam, his cowardly partner, the gyonsi, and the Bushmen unite against the bad guys. The final fight has got to be one of the most ingenious confrontations ever filmed! Lam Ching Ying uses his Taoist magic to briefly revive the ghost of Bruce Lee, who



穿梭時空五百年

AN ETERNAL COMBAT

Produced by Chun Sing Film Co. in 1991, Starring: Lam Ching ying, Joey Wang & Fung Shui On This is the type of movie which almost makes you somewhat glad you were born. Damn near all Chinese fantasies can make me smile, and this silly little adventure is not excluded from the rule. I rented AN ETERNAL COMBAT using the 'eenie meanie my-knee mo' method, trying to decide between this fantastically fantastic fantasy all about fantasies, and yet another modernday romp featuring Stephen Chow. I think I made the right choice. Mind you, AN ETERNAL COMBAT is not blazingly original. Joey Wang, best known for her part in Tsui Hark's A CHINESE GHOST STORY movies, stars in AN ETERNAL COMBAT and many other ripoffs of Hark's famous trilogy. Lam Ching Ying stars in AN ETERNAL COMBAT too, again playing a heroic wizard. His hair is longer this time, and because of the setting, wears medieval attire, instead of the usual Taoist robe he's been typecast in.

Though no masterpiece, AN ETERNAL COMBAT is a good example of a Hong Kongese 'sword and sorcery' movie, or as this ingenious column labels them, "Sword & Taoism" films. As I see it, the apathetic Americans who watch junk like RED SONJIA should also enjoy these Asian counterparts, right? After all, both genres are similar; featuring adventure, fantasy and swordplay. Yet my taste is not representational of the far more conservative, self-centered tastes of the American public. A whole mess of 1970s chop socky films were released to TV, but by the time the really imaginative H.K. films came out, the American audience had gotten burned out on Chinese films. Now the American public has a disliking toward subtitles and audio dubbing, which kills the notion of any new HK classics coming here in a big way. Let's face it, Americans are egotistical, narrowminded, culturally retarded, onedimensional fools who ought to be cut up with razor blades and then have salt sprinkled into the slices. Don't worry, this punishment does NOT apply to you because you read O.C., so you're cool.

Now that my usual cynical paragraph is out of the way, on to the production values of AN ETERNAL COMBAT. Special effects are the main highlight. Most of them are lazer beam-ish visuals and super-imposed stuff. There are also some pyrotechnical explosions, and a chilling, surprising gory scene where some guy in a church hacks himself with a knife. Other values represent standard HK film making, full of efficient lighting, photography, cinematography, editing, catering, lighting, acting, & anything else they do when they make movies.

Plotwise, there's this Japanese ghost haunting medieval China. An imperial Chinese soldier requests the aid of a local Taoist and his assistant. The three of them locate the undead samurai one night and a magical confrontation occurs. Between the various spells, explosions, acrobatics, clashing swords, and outrageous flying leaps, somehow a timewarp occurs! The three heroes and their evil Japanese enemy all end up in modern times. The samurai ghost materializes in a Christian church and the power of the cross recognizes him as a denizen of evil. The cross absorbs the evil warrior and takes him prisoner. Meanwhile, the elderly Taoist (Lam Ching Ying) has been confined to a mental institution full of, well, what should I call them? Prisoners? Maniacs? Patients? Inmates? How about 'local residents', just to be nice?! Anyway, there's this nurse called Gi Gi (Joey Wang) who's a descendent of a victim of the Japanese ghost. The Taoist recognizes her as the one whom the samurai possessed back in the old days. Gi Gi has a culprit of her own; this egotistical, sadistic actor who used to be her boyfriend. He kidnaps her, roughs her up a bit and takes her to church for an involuntary marriage. Both eerily and ironically, it's the same church where the medieval Japanese ghost has been imprisoned. It manages to escape from the cross and possess the body of the evil boyfriend. Then the Taoist (who escaped from the nuthouse and located his two helpers) arrives to combat the demonic samurai. Our three heroic heroes combat the villain in a junkyard. The

final combat offers more gymnastics, Taoist lazers, swordplay and even flying cars! Unfortunately, the good guys appear to lose the fight, so Gi Gi uses the vengeful inheritance within her (she's reincarnated from an angry ghost) and stabs the samurai dead. I mean more dead than he was. Then all three heroes just seem to disappear. Did they die or materialize back into their own time period? I don't know, and I'll tell you one thing - I haven't had a peaceful night's sleep since. **

西藏小子

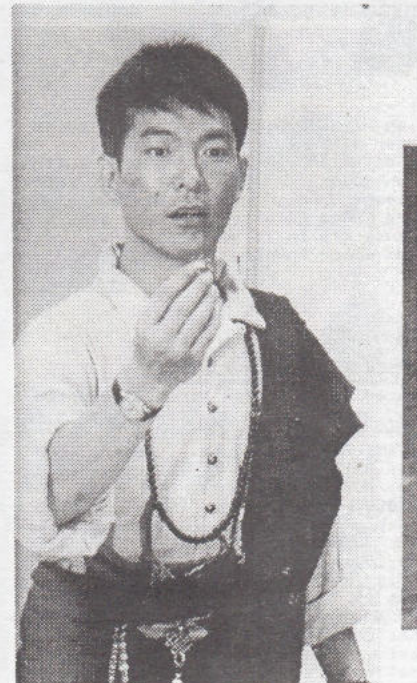
A KID FROM TIBET

Produced by Yuen Biao Productions & Tai Cheung Film Co. in 1991, Starring Yuen Biao, Yuen Wah, Nina Li Chih, Roy Chao

I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that this movie is pretty bad. The good news is that I recently met this gorgeous brunette who gave me the best blowjob of my life! But as for A KID FROM TIBET, it just goes to show that the whole generation of students from that 1960s opera school are losing it. Samo Hung, also from that class has a new film called SLICKERS VS. KILLERS which was so appaulingly bad I walked out of the theatre in the middle of the film. Their classmate Jackie Chan has a recent film, TWIN DRAGON, which played at a Chinatown theatre a few months ago. But I didn't bother to go see it, because his previous films failed to impress me. It looks like John Woo, Chow Yun Fat and Steve Chow are H.K.'s only current, worthwhile entertainers.

A KID FROM TIBET really sucks! Yuen Biao was decent (at best) in PEACOCK KING and SAGA OF THE PHOENIX, and since he again wears that same Lama robe, I hoped this would be a continuation of those two thrillers. It's not, and I don't see why he bothered to make this pointless drama. A KID FROM TIBET just sits there, it left no impression on me at all. I guess maybe Yuen just likes wearing as Buddhist robe, so once every couple years, they gotta' make a movie about it. To be fair, the fights, though few and farbetween, are okay, since Yuen does an occasional acrobatic stunt.

Biao's first two Tibetan fantasies weren't exactly the cinematic equivalent of icecream on a hot day, but unlike this one, they're at least worth the effort of pressing the Play button on your VCR. There's only a little kung fu in this farce, and the FX aren't that plentiful either. If I bothered commenting on any other production values like comedy or acting, I'm sure I'd come up with more mean comments, so let's just forget about it.



takes possession of Nixuan! Can you imagine that star of THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY doing a Bruce Lee imitation?! He does, and wastes a gang of Zulus in the process. This climax is hilarious and brilliant. If this fight were longer, I'd give the movie 4 stars. But the fight is too short. * * *



SIDENOTE ON THE BUSHMEN OF THE KALAHARI DESERT:

I never really even knew what a bushman was until I saw movies like THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY and CRAZY SAFARI. So in writing this article on CRAZY SAFARI, I did a little research to get more background on them.

Not ironically, by the time 'Bushman movies' like THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY came out, such tribes were scarce in reality. The wandering bushmen were the first known inhabitants of Africa's Botswana Nation, having arrived some 25,000 years ago. Nobody knows why the hell they settled at the Kalahari Desert of all places, or where they came from exactly. They were primitive tribes at peace with the land, and had adapted to a world scarce of water. But when the advanced, 'civilised' nations of the world showed their ugly heads, the bushmen way of life faded. Tribesmen became farmers etc., and most tribes ended up on reservations, much like the American Indians.



doesn't make me critical! It's got a lot of great kung fu and some nice FX, in my opinion! It's a fun movie, and I'm not being critical! I don't take any of these movies seriously, I only watch them for the fun of it, I'm not paid a cent to be a real critic. This first paragraph on *PRINCE OF THE SUN* is getting off to a bad start. Let me calm down.

A few hours later
PRINCE OF THE SUN amused me more so than many kung fu fantasies in recent years (now, if I were critical, I'd have said it's one of the better films of its type and I'd be all uptight & formal about it). I liked the super-impositions, the bat-like demon, and of course, the kung fu stunts. Lam Ching Ying has, in my noncritical opinion, always had the acting ability of a rusty harmonica, but in this one, he doesn't even fight well. I guess I'm just annoyed at the old fart because he said something like "I never speak to roundeyes" to a caucasian fan, on the set of this movie, according to an article in *Eastern Heroes*. Ironically, it's the 'roundeyes' who steal the show in *PRINCE/SUN*! Again, Jeffrey Falcon plays a villain, but this doesn't stop him from giving the battles his all! Cynthia Rothrock, the only non-evil caucasian in Hong Kong apparently, again plays the lead heroine. Despite stunt doubles in the acrobatic scenes, she delivers! Her co-hero is Conaan Lee, who I'm not very familiar with. I suppose he fights well, but I wasn't really paying attention. That's because I'm not critical.

On the downside, another main character is some little boy who gets way too much screentime. He makes this into an infantile kiddie film, in my humble, nonopinionated, noncritical, unimportant opinion. No H.K. film is all action & FX unfortunately, there is always a lot of pointless filler in the middle to deceive the audience and use up screentime. In this case, it's comedy. Some of it is kinda' dumb, but I was amused by one reoccurring gag; this chick keeps falling out a window and into a garbage dumpster.

Anyway, it's the story of these magical monks at some Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Yes, it's Tibet again! Don't worry, this one blows away that Yuen Biao flick (left). Despite the robes, Cynthia Rothrock and Jeff Falcon are as passable as Tibetan Lamas as they would be as African Bushmen. Fellow monk Lam Ching Ying dies trying to rescue some reincarnated Buddha now in the form of a little boy. The boy has fled to Hong Kong, chased by evil monks like Jeff Falcon and (I think) Vincent Lyn. I guess they want to kill him to drain his power and increase their own. Anyway, the reincarnated Buddha befriends some jerk played by Conaan Lee. Then righteous monkette Cynthia Rothrock arrives to fend our heroes off from the bad guys. The climax has Lam Ching Ying's ghost take on the commanding villain (a monk who became a demon) which Rothrock and Conaan kick ass on the hench-monks. The ending is surprisingly eerie, as the main baddie falls into hell and is ravaged by creepy zombies!

* * *

The only good things about *A KID FROM TIBET* are what Nina Li Chih has upfront. She made me drool in that tight black uniform she wears, and looks quite athletic in the fight scenes. I never knew she had it in her. I wasn't able to judge her acting ability; I was too busy looking at her tits. Jackie Chan also makes an appearance, it's an incredibly brief cameo in an airport scene meant to be some sort of in-joke. Hardee har har. I'll give this movie one star, but that's just because of Nina Li Chi's hooters.



Blah blah blah, Yuen Bao as a Tibetan monk, blah blah blah, evil wizards from Buddhism's darkside steal a magical antique, blah blah blah, Yuen Biao uses magic tricks to retrieve it, blah blah blah. That's about all there is to this story, there aren't even any monsters in it, unlike the two previous films which inspired this one. *

PRINCE OF THE SUN

Distributed by King's Video, Presented or Sproduced or something by First Film in '91, Starring: Cynthia Rothrock, Conaan Lee, Lam Ching Ying, Jeffrey Falcon, Vincent Lyn

This will be quite a difficult article to write, because I've just been told, for the eleventh time, that I'm 'critical!' That pisses me off, I consider that the most dreadful of insults. 'Critical' means serious, like when a doctor says the patient is in critical condition. I am not a serious film critic. Things like *PRINCE OF THE SUN* are just fucking movies! I've got other things going on in my life. If I were making money off this fanzine, then I'd consider myself a critical critic. As for *PRINCE OF THE SUN*, I enjoyed it, that



Rothrock's look (but was always impressed by her fighting skill). Previously, I sort of implied she was nothing to look at, because of the way she was presented in what few films of hers I've seen. But I shall now eat my words.

The *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT* segment was on female martial arts stars including, of course, Cynthia Rothrock and two inferior actresses I've never heard of: Bodybuilder Cory Everson, and Playboy centerfold Roberta Vasquez, who supposedly has a black belt in kar-



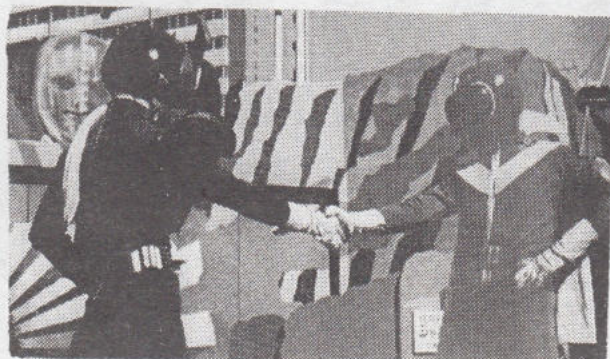
Summer 1991; Cynthia Rothrock on Entertainment Tonight

Before her interview on *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT* in around June or possibly July 1991, I was never really impressed by



ate. Could have fooled me, judging by the clip of her 'in action' in some godawful American ninja-ish film. Vasquez said something about always getting tired out doing films, but has never been seriously hurt. Proving who the real troopers are, the interview then switches to Rothrock, (wearing

a drooling sexy leotard) who went into detail about her serious injuries which happened while doing fights in H.K. movies; injuries like broken bones and internal damage! Cory Everson knew no martial arts at the time of her appearance in *DOUBLE IMPACT*, and is a female bodybuilder. In some shots I've seen of her, she's quite attractive; while in others, she looks like a guy with tits. Something she said in his interview sums it all up about the quality of American martial arts films. She said, "Claude Van Damme called me up & offered me a part in his new movie *DOUBLE IMPACT*, so I said yes, and he taught me a couple moves." A couple moves, her exact words. That's all it takes to make a lame American martial arts flick, a couple moves. Fortunately, America has real karate heroines like Cynthia!



SUPERHEROES ON STAGE

By now, I assume you were kind enough to have read this issue's other JAC articles, so you know that JAC members have performed in stage plays. When I was wasting time in Japan, I saw three of JAC's live performances. Two were superhero skits, and one was set in Napoleon's time, in France. I got a seat in the 3rd or 4th row, thanks to friends at *Uchusen* & *TV Kun* magazines. Hiroyuki



(Henry, Duke, etc.) Sanada played Napoleon, and other performers included Etsuko Shiomi, Hikaru Kurosaki, Kenji Ohba, and even Sonny Chiba himself. The only actor I got to speak to backstage was Kenji Ohba, who autographed a photo for me. The play was an excellent combination of comedy, music and dancing, and although it lacked martial arts, it featured swordplay. The other two JAC stage shows were superhero plays featuring *CHANGEMAN*.

Since 1971, Korakuen amusement park has had superhero stage shows each Sunday. The performances, lasting 30 minutes each are kind of like live versions of whatever TV programs are broadcast that particular season. In 1971, the first superhero stage fight at Korakuen was about Kamen Rider, and this play lasted about four months. Then there were these newer heroes on the airwaves like Barom 1 and Ninja Arashi. So a later play, possibly the second one, featured a superhero extravaganza: Kamen Rider, Barom 1 and



Ninja Arashi, together for the first time. Every Korakuen play (featuring JAC members), from that point on, would have basically the same script: The villains (in 1971 it was Schocker) would come out onto the stage (decorated by a fancy set) and cause some sort of crime or mischief. In the middle of this 30 minute performance, the hero (s) would arrive and beat the living fuck out of the villains. It's always a long, exciting, acrobatic, fantabulously choreographed duel of martial arts & stuntwork. These mindbogglingly awesome stage duels are always quite well recieved, sometimes attracting a larger audience than the amusement park itself.

Like I mumbled earlier in this article and I hope you were paying attention, the two stage shows I saw were all about the heroic *CHANGEMAN*, the reigning superhero program on TV at the time. Both were spectacular plays, involving the usual costumes, pyrotechnic explosions, karate, acrobats & other flawlessly staged stunts. Needless to say, these plays are the greatest; and I highly recommend that if you find yourself at Tokyo on a Sunday, go to Korakuen amusement park to see the experience of a lifetime.

The JAC hero plays were inspirational to me and two other American fans: August (*Markalite*) Ragone and Barrie (*Masked Maniacs*) Evans. All three of us went apeshit when we saw what JAC accomplished on the stage, so we decided to give it a try. Barrie Evans got Steve (*Kung Fu Rascals*) Wang to make some superhero masks, and later we wrote scripts, got together with a few other friends like Tony (*Animag*) Delgrosso and Ed (*The Dead Pit*) Martinez and choreographed some fights which were timed to music; usually the theme to whatever TV series we were imitating. We performed these various mini-plays (averaging about eight minutes each) at local science fiction conventions, during the masquerades and costume contests, sometimes as part of the halftime entertainment. Our stage fights look like the work of overweight epileptics on ludes when compared to the infinitely superior work of JAC. However, we were damn near the only life at local cons, where the average costume contestant would dress as a commonly seen character, and merely walk on & off the stage quite boringly. As a joke, we called our amateur stunt group PAC, and we portrayed the Kamen Riders, the Green Hornet, Inframan, the Monkey King and Space Sheriff Gavan. After a couple years of this shit, we gave up. It seemed



the audiences got tired of us and became less supportive, and that somehow, we ourselves had gotten progressively worse. Our first play was our best, and we won first place. Our second one was adequate, and we won second place. Ironically, on our third, we won third place! We just couldn't seem to top ourselves or come up with new ideas. Pretty soon, we weren't winning anything, nor did we even get honorable mention. Of course, winning wasn't even the reason we performed; we did it for fun and to promote Asian heroes - the same driving motivation behind *O.C.*

The real insult came at one con when we lost to some bitch wearing what looked to me like a Burger King uniform (it was actually meant to be some kind of futuristic space uniform from some Japanese cartoon). So the PAC stage plays are no more. Fortunately, I still have them all on videotape and occasionally watch them to rejoice in memory of a group of disbanded rebels who's unique contribution to sci-fi cons will be forever forgotten. We brought unique Japanese-style entertainment to America. Our performances were mini-recreations of those at Korakuen, again featuring heroes, villains, a story, and the climactic battle. □



ABOVE: Left to Right- PAC members Anthony Delgrosso, Damon F., Butch Portillo and Ken Ko backs-stage, preparing to awe an unsuspecting audience.



ABOVE: DF attired as Space Sheriff Gavan, preparing for yet another stage show.



TERROR YAKI



I was going to change the title of this regular column from *Terror Yaki* to *A Very Formal Section on Japanese Sci-Fi*; because the people involved in this fandom are the most uptight, money-grubbing, hypocritical jerks I know. These unimaginative, way serious assholes have taught me not to use names. Regardless, there's some computer network of inter-active fans who write about Godzilla all the time. If these guys wish to remain boring old farts who live in the past, that's their choice. If they wish to whine about my work behind my back and haven't the guts to confront me directly, that's their choice too, the whimps. Then I hear a major Japanese movie company responsible for the world's most wellknown monster movies is trying to make money in a devious way. They want to sue America's greatest magazine on Japanese monster movies! The mag promotes the movie company's movies, and them backstabbers turn around and try to get the magazine in trouble for copyright bullshit, as though it's really doing anybody any harm. Later, this same magazine's publishers become crybabies because of the way a certain radically innovative writer ridicules them (out of fun) in a back issue of the silliest, weirdest fanzine of Far Eastern films. The radical writer was of the mistaken impression that "Freedom of Speech" was practiced and not just implied. Nevermind the name of the easily offended publishing company, nevermind the name of the fanzine, the name of the magazine, or the name of the movie company. But I'll give you a hint: They're not Lionel Richie!

But enough on conflicts of different people, let's talk recent Japanese science fiction! *ULTRA Q* the movie had good FX, but the story was the most boring hunk of crap since *GUNHED*. *GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH* was pretty fun to me, better than *GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE*. Next up, Toho's working on *GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA*. I don't like critiquing these new films because too many technogeeks get all too serious & critical about them. They're just fucking movies, dudes! Get a life or two! Don't take them seriously. It's okay to watch a movie, but to live a movie? Oh well, maybe this rambling proves that it's me who's getting too uptight & serious, so enough of this. Now it's time to read my reviews of older Japanese sci-fi movies.

THE MANSTER

Presented by William Shelton and Lopert Pictures Corp. in 1962, Screenplay: Walt Sheldon, from an original story by George Breakston, Director of Photography: David Mason, Production Manager: Yuji Honda, Music: Hirooki Ogawa, Asst. Dir.: Dan Takahashi, Recording Supervisor: Chisato Ota, Continuity: Lynn Cariddi, Art Director: Noboru Miyakawa, Makeup: Fumiko Yamana, FX: Shinpei Takagi, Copyright by United Artists of Japan, Starring: Peter Dyneley, Jane Hyi To, Satoshi Nakamura, Terry Zimmer, Nan Hawley, Jerry Ito, Toyoko Takechi, Kenzo Kuroki, Alan Tarlton, Shinpei Takagi, George Wyman

THE MANSTER, a.k.a. *THE SPLIT*, was based on the story *Nightmare*, which, according to the film's credits was done by George Breakston. But *Famous Monsters* #114 (1975)



says it's written by Walt Sheldon. Despite the film's Japanese staff and a couple of Japanese actors, this is actually an American film, though set in Japan. There are two wellknown Japanese actors in this American & Japanese coproduction. Naah, I take that back, there's only 1 1/2 famous Japanese in it, because Jerry Ito looks like a halfbreed. He played villains in *MOTHR* (see *O.C.#8*, and read the whole issue, you might learn something), and *GOLGO 13: THE KOWLOON ASSIGNMENT*, but for his small role in *MANSTER*, plays a detective. Since this

only old Japanese SF movie I don't like is *THE MYSTERIANS*, so that means I enjoyed *MANSTER*, because it's not *THE MYSTERIANS*! Sure, it gets boring or slow at times, and its oldfashioned naiveness made me roll my eyes on occasion. For example, this story tries to be adult, or vaguely erotic. But with strict censorship codes of its time, the concept of sex between the characters

growing within him, making him primitive and murderous. He goes on a rampage and is easily driven to violence. Most of his victims are attractive females, so it's assumed that he rapes them (although it's never shown) and then kills them. In one scene, he wanders into a church and kills a chanting Buddhist simply because this old monk doesn't understand English! Eventually, the artificial primate completely separates from Larry, but only after Dr. Suzuki has been killed. The creature is now more dangerous than ever, and Larry has gone back to his nice old self. Then the creature attacks and kills the late Dr. Suzuki's attractive female assistant who's meant to be Japanese, but the actress playing her is not. And another thing, I used the phrase 'late Dr. Suzuki.' What was he when he was alive? The 'ear-



is only hinted at; left to our imagination. Fortunately, I have got a great imagination! The FX are only partially laughable, and seem to suffice. They don't show the FX too much, because that would give us more time to laugh. The funniest thing in the flick is actually some of the eerie music; meant to sound creepy, yet it sounds to me like the tunes of the "Singing Sword" (I think that's what it's called) from some old Bugs Bunny cartoon. You know, the one set in medieval times, with Yosemite Sam riding a dragon?! Back in the 1960s when them Japanese hadn't yet acquired a dominating economy, they apparently had other devious schemes. In this case, there's this determined scientist called Dr. Suzuki (S. Nakamura) who's using chemicals to change people into apes and mutations. This is not the goal of his experiments; I mean, I'm sure he means well - like trying to make people stronger or something. Volunteers are not exactly lining up at his door, so he ends up turning his own brother into a gorilla who escapes and slaughters bathing beauties at a tea house. Professor Suzuki also turns his wife into a mutant he must cage, and looks like a reject from *THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE ZOMBIE CREATURES WHO STOPPED MIXING UP AND-* naah, forget it! I can't remember that stupid title. Anyway, Suzuki's latest victim is an American reporter called Larry Standford (Peter Dynely) whom Suzuki, pretending to be a real party animal, feeds chemicals. Larry cheats on his wife, and gets violent & rude; all because of the formulas that Suzuki feeds him or has him bathe in. About a month later, inbetween drunken binges and affairs, he discovers an eye growing on his shoulder which eventually grows into a full head! It seems that a violent gorilla-mutant is



wish they'd have made a sequel with Larry's wife becoming an ape-like murderer! They could have called it *THE WOMANSTER*! Oh well, I guess this concept of mine will never become a reality, much like my other ideas such as phlegm banks and the game Burp and Guess. **

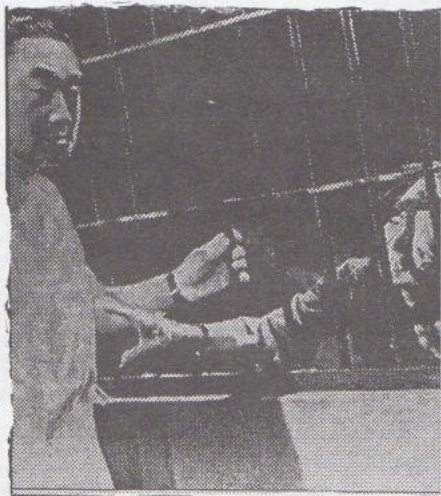


movie was filmed in English, he's not dubbed; and speaks English with no accent. Mad scientist Professor Suzuki is played by Toho star Satoshi Nakamura, who would later be in another American/Japanese coproduction, *THE LAST DINOSAUR* (see *O.C.#13* if you're not blind). Funny, in that film, he's credited as 'Tetsu' Nakamura, not 'Satoshi' Nakamura. I bet the bastards do this just to confuse me. The rest of the cast members are Americans I'm anything but familiar with.

Credits & trivia aside, as an old monster movie from the 1960s, it's pretty gosh darn prick fun. Off the top of my head, the

brother into a gorilla who escapes and slaughters bathing beauties at a tea house. Professor Suzuki also turns his wife into a mutant he must cage, and looks like a reject from *THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE ZOMBIE CREATURES WHO STOPPED MIXING UP AND-* naah, forget it! I can't remember that stupid title. Anyway, Suzuki's latest victim is an American reporter called Larry Standford (Peter Dynely) whom Suzuki, pretending to be a real party animal, feeds chemicals. Larry cheats on his wife, and gets violent & rude; all because of the formulas that Suzuki feeds him or has him bathe in. About a month later, inbetween drunken binges and affairs, he discovers an eye growing on his shoulder which eventually grows into a full head! It seems that a violent gorilla-mutant is





the pendant he wanted. Another flaw is that incredibly fake looking hand, a cheap effect far below the film's other FX, which are fine. And another complaint; why 'Frankenstein'? The character could have just as easily been a giant caveman, radio active retard or even a relative of *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN*. This silly farce has none of the traditional atmosphere established in *FRANKENSTEIN*, *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* or whatever. But do you think I really care that this movie is dumb? Of course I don't. It's not like I watch a dumb movie and am traumatised for life.

People say I contradict myself. Well, no, actually they don't, just a little, mostly. The point is, I just got through badmouthing this romp, and now I'll praise it! Though stupid and pointless, it's fun and that's all that matters, right? Movies like this are way too fun, and we're unworthy of them. We don't deserve anything this enjoyable! It's no



By oldtime fans of Japanese sci-fi movies, *FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD* is considered a classic. Fortunately, practically none of them oldtimers read *O.C.* because it's too deverse for their limited interests, so I can say whatever the hell I want about this dumb movie and not hurt anybody's witto' feelings. Let's face it, although *FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD* has good production values & it's wellmade, it is one of the most stupid, ridiculous movies I've ever seen! Why did them lame idiots at Toho even bother? The tale is full of flaws, like when Frankenstein's hand grows back in mere seconds, or when the scientists comment on Frankenstein's eyes, claiming he's caucasian. No fucking way, he is very Japanese, played by an actor who's very Japanese, with eyes so squinty you could blindfold him with dental floss. Later on, after this incredibly inaccurate dialogue, the film's FX staff briefly tried to make him look like a white boy by gluing fake eyes to his head! These glassy eyes don't blink, and are used in the scene after Nick Adams hits him with a chair.

Incidentally, this is my favorite scene in the film because of the monster's hilarious laugh, which he does once he's given



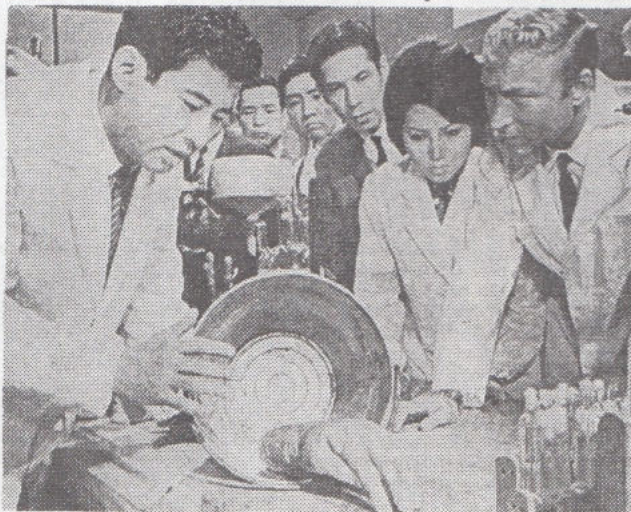
masterpiece, but definately has more going for it than all those awful sleaze/trash/exploitation/garbage films, and 2

Grade movies which offer no redeeming social values whatsoever. *FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD* is just plain clean fun for the whole family, unless its a family of rich, conservative, greedy, right wing, mainstreamers who have onedimensional taste and have lived sheltered lives. Okay, this paragraph has accomplished three things:



A. Pissed off low lifers who watch tasteless sleaze films. B. Included yet another DF stab at the establishment. C. Amused you with my wit & cynicism. D. All the while, it still maintained the topic of *FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD* being a fun movie. Wow, that's four things! I'm satisfied, this paragraph is a wrap!

On the whole, as a Toho film from the 1960s, it's got standard elements. Eiji Tsuburaya did some mighty fine special effects, Akira Ifukube did a totally awesome music score, and the stars like Kumi Mizuno & Nick Adams played their parts pretty well. It's great fun, with



「フランケンシュタイン対 地底怪獣」

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD

Released to America by American International Pictures in 1965, Screenplay: Kaoru Mabuchi, Written from a Synopsis by Jerry Sohl, Based on a Story by Reuben Bercovich, Special Effects by Eiji Tsuburaya, Art Director: Takeo Kita, Cameraman: Hajime Koizumi, Music: Akira Ifukube, Film Editor: Ryohei Fuji, Produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, Executive Producers: Reuben Bercovitch & Henry G. Saperstein, Directed by Inoshiro Honda, Starring: Nick Adams, Takao Takashima, Kumi Mizuno



heart of Frankenstein's monster. You see, the heart fell into the hands of the German soldiers, & during WWII, the Germans gave it to the Japanese for research. Now, in 1965, they find this dumb war orphan who ate the heart, & he's starting to look a lot like the Frankenstein monster. He's violent, ugly, stupid, & because of the radiation he keeps growing. Meanwhile, radiation has revived a prehistoric dinosaur from hibernation as well! This overgrown reptile, who'd later hang out with Godzilla in *DESTROY ALL MONSTERS*, causes

『オール怪獣大進撃』

GODZILLA'S REVENGE

Produced by Toho in 1969, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Writer: Shinichi Sekizawa, Photography: Kunio Miyauchi, Theme song 'March of the Monsters' by Crown Records, Assistant Directors: Masaaki Himi, Sound Recording: Ryder Sound Services, Inc., Titles by CFI, Post Production: Riley Jackson, Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Director: Ishiro Honda, Starring: Kenji Sahara, Machiko Naka, Tomoyuki Tanaka, Isei Amamoto, Hideyo Amemoto, Sachio Sakai, Kazuo Suzuki, Ikio Sawamura, Shigeki Ishida, Yutaka Sada, Shotaro Togin, Yutaka Nakayama, Yishifumi Tajima

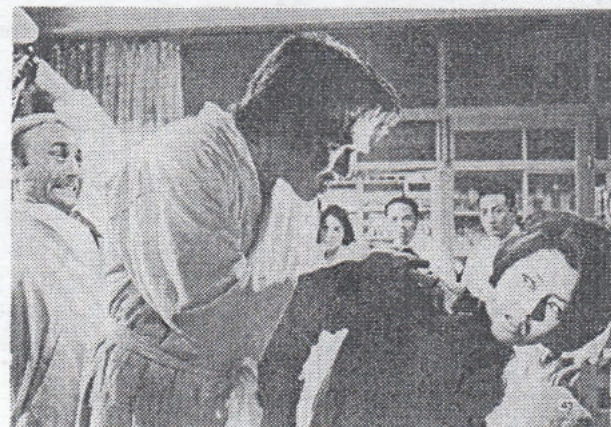


never a dull moment, and its unintentional humor adds to the fun. This was originally an American & Japanese co-production, and the American staff wanted an unlikely climax where Frankenstein quite suddenly gets yanked underwater by an octopus who pops in out of nowhere. That silly, mysteriously out-of-place scene got cut from the film, understandably. Not until the 1980s was there an uncut version released on video in Japan, featuring the climactic battle with the oversized mollusk. Regardless, this scene was never edited into any English copies. No major loss. Also cut from the English version is where Nick Adams & Kumi

& mayhem until the radio-active Frankenstein escapes. Meanwhile, the army wants to destroy both giants and the scientists don't. Eventually, the dinosaur (called Baragon) battles it out with the giant, Frankenstein. Baragon suffers defeat, after an early fight reminiscent to those in *ULTRAMAN*, which came out 2 years later. In



When I was Ichiro's age, I naturally loved this infantile film because I too was infantile! But then hey, that is because I was an infant! For many years, until about the age of 14, I thought *GODZILLA'S REVENGE* was the



most versions of *FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD*, it ends here, after Baragon's defeat, and then

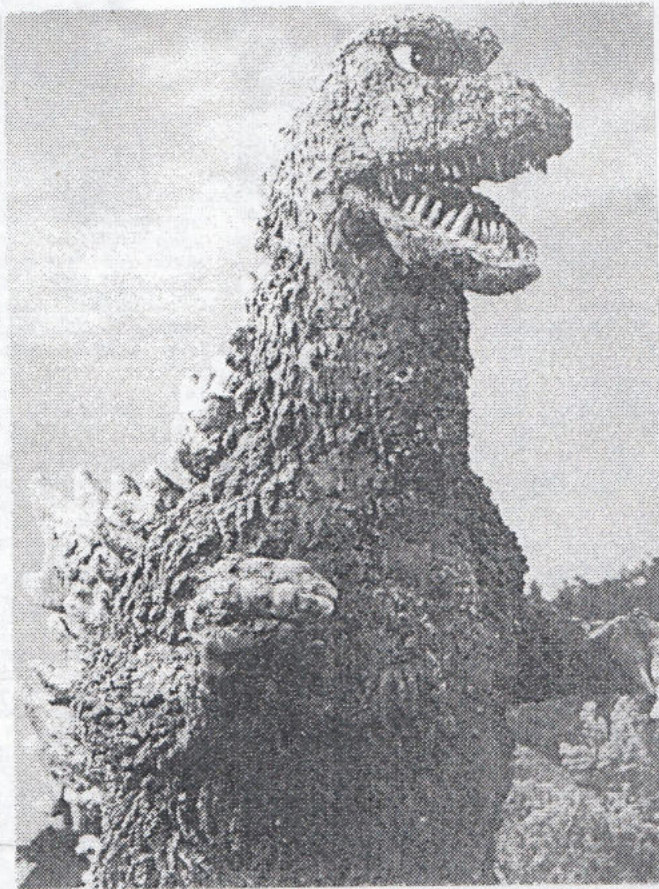
Mizuno visit a cemetery and brood over the graves of those killed in the Hiroshima holocaust (as though the Japanese army's visit to Pearl Harbor was a bowl of cherries). Another scene cut from the yankee/barbarian version was where some giant wart-hog (or wild pig) the size of an elephant runs by a crashed army tank. The whole scene didn't make much sense, but it was kind of cute.

Nick Adams, in his second monster movie (the 1st was *DIE MONSTER DIE*), plays an American scientist in Japan, assisted by Rieko (Kumi Mizuno). They befriend & capture a weird Japanese kid who supposedly ate the

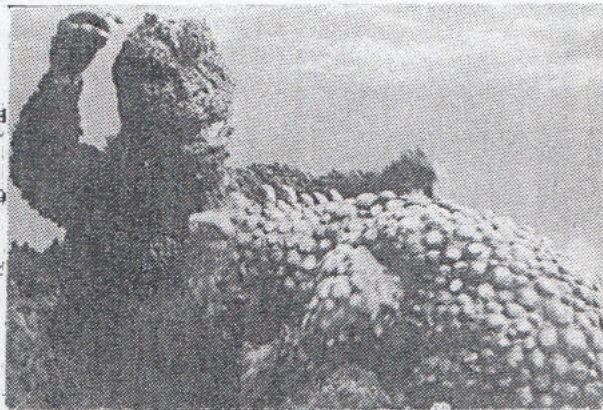
Frankenstein sinks into a volcano. But in one obscure version on Japanese prerecords, once Baragon is wasted, Frankenstein is attacked & drowned by a giant octopus. * * *



greatest movie ever made. Sure it's fun and exciting, and, to be fair, it is the most realistic Japanese monster movie ever made. The entire premise is believable. 'Til this day, I still like its flavorful music score, and Godzilla's climactic duel with that electric dog, Gabara is shitloads of fun. Godzilla's other battles in *REVENGE* are nice too, but they were snatched from *GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER* and *SON OF GODZILLA*, maybe because master Eiji Tsuburaya bit the totami mat at the time of this movie's production. If I were still an innocent, naive eight year old who hadn't been corrupted by drugs, sex, money and music, I might find it in my heart to give it a five star rating! Even today, although my love of the movie has died like a vegetarian's appetite at a slaughter house, I give it credit for being one of the better kiddie films I've sat through. Unlike Mickey Mouse, Muppets or Simpsons, this one has the guts to be pro-violent! The only moral



MEGALON! At least that thriller can be enjoyed by all ages! *GODZILLA'S REVENGE* can only be enjoyed by the very young, & the very young at heart. The real problem is that the main character is a little boy called Ichiro who's in damn near every scene! Most of us agree that twerps on film are pretty annoying, and this kid proves it. I don't like his facial expressions, antics or the annoying screech of a voice they dubbed him. *REVENGE* is made for kids, about kids, and almost seems to be made by kids; very stupid ones. I hope that once I finish this article, I never have to watch this movie in it's entirety, ever again.



For

what it's worth, the American releasers really didn't



shrink down to human size and talk to Ichiro, much like Alf. Nothing I could say could even hint at how embarrassing these scenes are. If that's not bad enough, they had to go and re-enact that whole scene

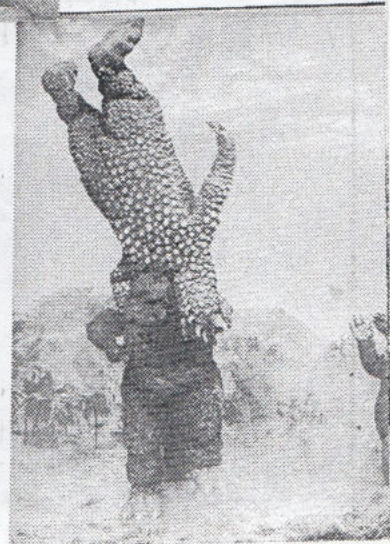
message seems to be 'Beat up anyone who bugs you!' Right on! I don't mean to offend all you concerned, 'proud parents' or concerned, proud 'parents-to-be', but this is a wild & crazy fanzine, not an issue of *Parents*, *Family Circle* or some fucking book on nursery rhymes.

Unfortunately, the cruelist years are on my 28-year old face. Old age is turning me cynical and bitter, or haven't you noticed? My current attitude can no longer tolerate too much good, clean, wholesome fun for the whole family, like *GODZILLA'S REVENGE*. My god, this film is so amazingly stupid! How could I be blind all these years? Watching this awful tale again after all these years makes me wonder why so many dickheads slag *GODZILLA VS.*

do that bad a job at dubbing it into English. One minor character, they decided, as an in-joke to give a stereotypically gay voice. Just listen to the guy who's trying to sell the car! He sounds like a real swish. I praise the releasers from editing the American version down to a mere painful 69 minutes, since the Japanese dubb was an even more painful 75 minutes long. During its 1970 theatrical release, it was on double bills, playing with either *BURNING ISLAND OF THE BURNING DAMNED* or, sometimes, more appropriately, *WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS*.

Ichiro is a lonely schoolboy frequently hassled by a gang of geeky brats in Tokyo. Their leader is Gabara, which, by coincidence, is the name of a monster at Monster Island! Ichiro has dreams of going to this mythical island to watch Godzilla fight off overgrown bugs. Why aren't my dreams as logical and coherent as that?! Mine are always about weird, abstract nonsense like motorcycles which write novels or centipedes who discuss social legislation in the 18th century. When Ichiro isn't dreaming about monsters or dodging schoolbullies, this kid who naps gets kidnapped! They're two bankrobbers who want him as a hostage, and because he found one of their wallets. Though tied up, and threatened at knifepoint, he still seems relaxed enough to doze off and dream about Minya (Minira in Japanese), the son of Godzilla. Minya is irritating in all his films, but is especially bad in this one, where he can

of Godzilla teaching Minya to blow fire again! This dumb idea is the most famous scene in *SON OF GODZILLA*, but rather than simply splice in stock footage from that film, they filmed it all over again, and it's just as stupid the second time. Minya's bully is that monster Gabara. This is an excellent monster costume! In fact, all the monsters look great. Godzilla's costume is fantastic, but it gets ridiculous when the mask changes from scene to scene, since each fight is from a different movie. Ichiro helps Minya





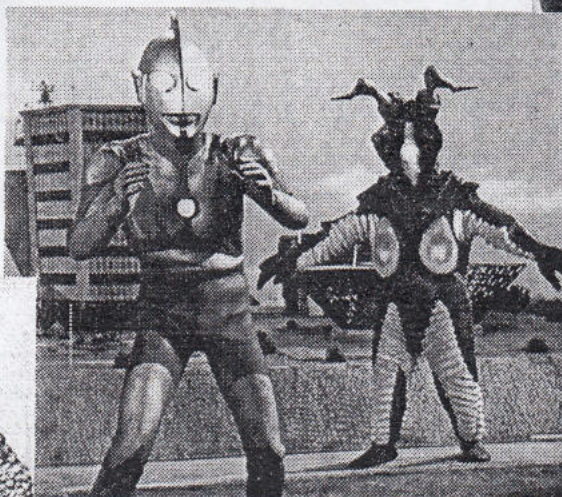
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to outsmart Gabara, which gets Gabara mad enough to foolishly bite Godzilla's leg, resulting in Godzilla's climactic duel with Gabara. After this dream ends, Ichiro escapes from the badguys, who get arrested by the police. Then Ichiro settles an old score with Gabara, that mean kid at school. Their 'fight' consists of little more than grabbing each other's jackets and then Ichiro head-butts him into the dirt. I think Ichiro should have gouged his rival's eyes out with a broken bottle and then pushed him into an electric fence. * 1/2



Dick Randal released this to the U.S.A., hugh? Well, whoever the hell he is, I guess his first name is based on his personality, and not necessarily short for Richard. When white people try to dubb an Asian film into English, they can do it one of two ways: Numero Uno: They can play it straight, dubbing it seriously; a direct translation from the original foreign version. Numero Two-o: Or, as in *WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY* or *FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS*, the audio dubbing can be done humorously, turning the finished product into an unintentional comedy. But the indecisive idiots who released this fiasco to America couldn't make up their tiny little minds! Some scenes are dubbed humorously, some are played straight, and others

As for the incoherent if not painfully simple script, the first five minutes were filmed by the Americans or British who ruined the film. Some American father gives



his British son an Ultraman toy that later turns out to be the Earth's savior; Ultraman in a compact form. The magical doll is telepathically linked to other heroic brothers at Nebula M78. Meanwhile, on other parts of the planet Earth, a huge legion of wisecracking, destructive monsters has started trouble! So a whole family of Ultra Brothers, including Ultraseven and Ultraman Ace under their new 'aliases' fly to Earth for

have no dubbing at all. This is a pointless, useless compilation from many Japanese sci-fi heroes of the Ultra genre. There are clips from TV shows like *ULTRAMAN*, *ULTRAMAN TARO*, *ULTRAMAN LEO*, *ULTRASEVEN*, *ULTRAMAN 80* and some from the Ultra movies. Europe and America both have legions of ultra fans who'll be pissed off if they see this degrading mockery of the Ultra legend. Some of the original Japanese sound FX remain intact, but bits & pieces were taken from *INFRAMAN*.

The music is almost all new, added by the American or British dubbers, and it's all inappropriate & terrible.

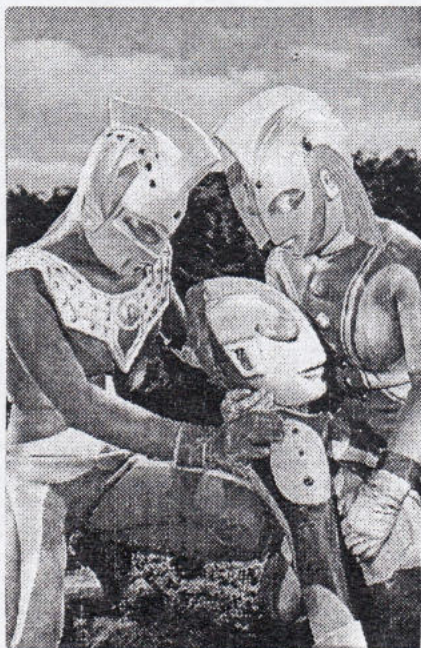
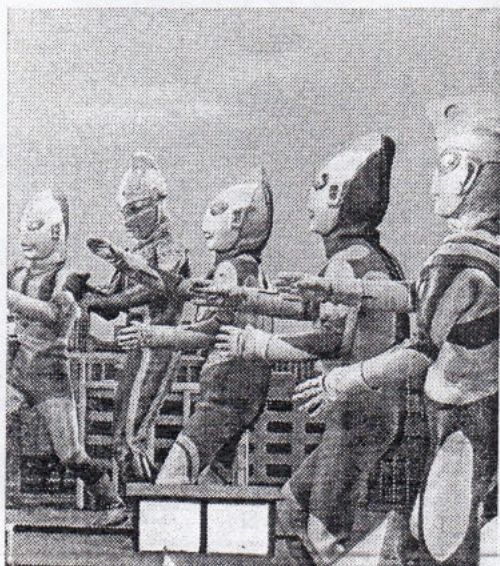
Getting back to the occasional 'humorous' dubbing, it's far from funny. It's stupid, senseless and must have been written by a small patch of brown liquid. I don't think they have any real script to go by, they just made it up as they went along. There are a few destruction scenes, and some shots of the Ultra Brothers flying, and these scenes are not usually dubbed, so it's easy to assume it's being played seriously. But then, once the fights start, these awful English voices just suddenly come on, like the opponents are arguing or something. Many fights are from the original 1966 series, as Ultraman takes on Gohora, the Baltan, Red King, Zeton and others. Americans already saw this series years ago, so why the fuck did they choose these fights to show us again?! Besides, all the Ultra programs, even the ones never released to America are somewhat known by American fans. At least when other jerks released the bastardized *DYNAMAN* episodes to the U.S., they were dealing with a more obscure series. If you turn down the sound on your TV, the battles are, of course, great fun visually. The duels of Ultraman and his brothers (Ultraseven, Ultraman Leo, etc.) have always been enjoyable, with or without a decent soundtrack. Because this audio travesty is jam-packed with ultra battles, I'll give it two stars. If you turn down the sound, give it three! But again, the English dubbing turns this paragraph sour. These bastards got our heroes names all wrong! Ultraman's name is correct, but Ultraman Taro, Ultraman Ace, Ultra Father, Ultraman King, Astora & the others are given random two-syllable names never heard of in any other Ultra adventure. The sound quality is horrid, it sounds like they dubbed it while their heads & microphones were in a lunchpale, not a recording studio.

a series of battles with monsters they've all fought before. Ultraman takes on Zeton & others again, Ultraseven takes on King Joe, and Ultraman 80 takes on whoever he takes on!

A few other Ultra dudes take on bad guys too! Among other things, a battle from the terrible Thailand Ultra movie is used, involving the Hindu ape-god Hanuman (not given an alias; the dubbers probably recognized this ancient legend from history books). As you know, Hanuman always resorts to stupid-looking Thai folk dances. These scenes, even in their original Thai & Japanese dubbings fall flat on their face, and are begging to be ridiculed. Before Hanuman & the Ultramen destroy the remaining monsters, Hanuman says "Wanna' do the Booga Boo?" He then starts dancing, to the accompaniment of that silly end theme song from *DAWN OF THE DEAD*. I found this single gag to be the only laugh in *SPACE WARRIORS 2000*. * *

SPACE WARRIORS 2000

Produced by Cinema Shares Intl. Television in association with the Tsuburaya Company & TBS, Presented by Dick Randal & Steve Minasian, Cameraman: Jon Knoller, Music: De Wolfe, Starring: Robert Sessions, Nicholas Curror, Sarah Taunton, Wendy Danvers





FILIPINO FILMS

Unlike them flicks from Japan & Hong Kong, the poor, neglected filmmakers of the Philippines have yet to attract a large (or small) cult following in America. The only time these obscure movie-making islanders ever got much publicity in America was in the 1960s and 1970s, thanks to the works of director Gerardo de Leon, who made horror tales like *THE BLOOD DRINKERS* and *CURSE OF THE VAMPIRES*. He had hoped to make the first big budget (or even average budget) Filipino movie, and to make American & Filipino cross-over films. But since he died in 1981 at the age of 68, it's not likely to happen. However, the underrated yet talented Filipinos are still making dozens of enjoyable action films, comedies, fantasies, horrors, and superhero films. It took me a while to get into Filipino movies. The first one I saw was some cheap thriller from the 1970s involving mutant natives who wore eggshells (meant to be monster eyes), and in 1980, sat through a horrid martial arts unthriller called *FIRE CRACKER*. Eight years later, I gave them Filipinos another chance when I checked out a John Woo-inspired actioner called *ISANG BALA ISANG BUHAY*. I decided, 'what the hell', and became familiar with Fil-films like *ELIAS PANIKI*, *BIONKIDS*, and even *HAPPY GHOST* pt.5, which is actually a Hong Kongese comedy, though assisted by a Filipino company, and starring HK's Raymond Wong, and the beautiful Filipino actress Chris Aquino. So already there are important crossover films (also see *LETHAL PANTHERS*, page 14) between filmmakers in Manila and Hong Kong. Regardless, a massive burst of popularity of Filipino films isn't likely, because, as yet, their budgets lack

(some were Filipino) I'd seen that same month. So aside from the fact that production cost has nothing to do with entertainment value, I'm also enjoying Filipino films because so many recent efforts from H.K. and Japan are getting me disillusioned.

FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Presented by Loyd Kaufman & Michael Herz, a Troma Team release, Re-dubbed Version written by Charles Kaufman & Joe Gaynor, Creative Consultant: Straw Weisman, Post Production Supervisor: David Yocum, Sound Recordist: Jackie Rabinowitz, Additional music: Sasha Matson, Produced by Dhamoo Punjabi & Raam Runjabi, Directed by Charles Kaufman, Director: Yopi Burnama, Starring: Eva Arnaz, Barry Prima

I've always compared that Troma company to an illness: something unpleasant that keeps re-occurring, and spreading. They started by making terrible movies like *TOXIC AVENGER*, and have long since spread their unique brand of ineptitude to TV, in cartoons like *TOXIC CRUSADERS*. But *FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS* is definitely their best film. It's a Filipino wrestling movie that these Troma sleazebags bought and dubbed into English in a humorous manner. Naturally, it's not nearly as funny as Woody Allen's *WHAT'S UP FINGER LILLY*, but a few scenes are gut bustingly hilarious! My favorite scene is the one with the snake in the bath-tub, but there are at least a couple other good laughs too. Unfortunately, it's damn near impossible to make every scene funny, so there are many scenes which sound just plain stupid (i.e. that whole bit about 'moose phlegm', proving that vulgarity doesn't necessarily mean automatic hilarity). They tried dubbing scenes where the characters weren't even talking. I suppose the whole movie can be a nonstop laugh riot for people who are easily impressed or unfamiliar with superior dubbings like *FINGER LILLY*. I, however, was only partially impressed.

As a Filipino film, it's not too good, I was more impressed by *ELIAS PANIKI* or *SHEMAN, MIST-*

the bucks. It is pathetic that the American audiences demand a whopper budget for them to tolerate a movie. Hell, I sat through the glossy, pretentious *TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY* and found it predictable and boring, and lacking the heart and fun of many low budget movies.

ting back to the actresses, they're very pretty, the eyes of the villainous female wrestler are gorgeous. The actresses have hairy underarms though, and this is ridiculed in the dubbing more than once. Another recurring gag is this joke . . . Q: What's brown & has holes in it? A: Swiss shit. I don't know how to go about describing the plot. It looks as though it's about a female judo expert who gets into wrestling to make money to pay for her little brother's medical problems. Somehow, when she gets involved in wrestling, she encounters various mobsters. At the end, some mobsters kidnap her brother & mother and won't release them unless she agrees to lose her next wrestling match. But the English version makes a complete mockery of the script. Parts are funny, even though the story is incomprehensible. It's about this wrestler called Bambi who's always getting into fights over the silliest things. One guy is an annoying seller of trophies, there's this organization called *Wrestleholics Anonymous*. So far as I can tell, it's just a collection of jokes & skits; the story is amusing, but confusing. * 1/2

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ALYAS BATMAN ON ROBIN

Story & Screenplay by Joey de Leon & Tony Reyes, Cinematography: Oscar Quarijero, Production Manager: Melchor Defensor, Music: Mondel Rosario, Editing: Efrén Jarlego, Executive Producer: Lily Monteyarde, Starring: Joey de Leon, Keempee de Leon, Rene Requiestas, Vina Morales, Panchito, Dawn Zulueta, Marilen Espino

Unfortunately, my VCR's remote control was not working at the time that I watched this comedy drama. Were it functional, I could have conveniently scanned passed its many unimportant, uninteresting,



Keempee de Leon



in the title role, who returns once more to play the main hero. As Batman, Joey de Leon lacks the charisma & fighting skill of Adam West; his punches are much slower & weaker. Joey's son Keempsee stars as Robin, and this is the first film that this father & son comedy team have both starred in. The villainous Joker is played by the one and only Rene Requiestas, a bizarre looking, and skinnier than a starving child in Ethiopia. Regardless, he is a funny actor, and seems to sing rockabilly type music in a number of his films.

As the Joker, he's pretty silly, and definitely the best Joker since Cesar Romero. The female lead is played by the immensely popular Dawn Zulueta, an attractive actress who plays a reporter, but she briefly dresses up like Wonder Woman for the movie's climax. I must say, just looking at her made me climax too, though not as much as Linda Carter did. Also involved in this film is Mondel Rosario, who did the music. The score is great, featuring an opening theme virtually identical to the original, but lacking the vocals. Other decent tunes include Filipino language remakes of "At The Hop" and "Let's Go Surfing", but with all new lyrics. For example, the latter song is partly in English with lyrics like: "Do you remember Bruce Wayne & Dick Grayson? Holy smoke, Batman & Robin!"

The production values for *ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN* are great by Filipino standards, but in any other country, would make it look like an amateur film, though a very good amateur film. The Batmobile looks like an ordinary car with a covering (dorsal fins, etc.) made of wood & plastic, though well done & faithful nonetheless. The Batcave is (intentionally) merely the garage of these two guys who decide to become superheroes. They

assemble some cheap-looking computers with blinking lights; things you can pick up at Radio Shack. Our heroes' costumes look almost as good as those in the original series. As I said before, Joey de Leon is no fighter, but Keempsee has at least as much energy as Burt Ward did, and the acrobatic stunt doubles make Robin's fights all the better. The

fights consist mainly of the same two-fisted action as in the series, but lacking the super imposed "Bam"s, and "Pow"s; and the sound effects are lifted directly from Chinese kung fu movies.



Rene Requiestas

And so I put

in the tape and see two coming attractions: the satirical *ROCKY & 5* and some lame 'Blue Lagoon' type film called *BAD GIRL*. Then there's an ad for some travel agency called Prime Travel, and then the movie finally starts. At first it starts out at some college university, with the student Kevin

and especially unentertaining scenes. So many long, out-of-place segments ruin what could have been a hilarious satire of the old American TV show. Perhaps there are too many unnecessary characters, complex stories, excessive romance & other distractions which take screentime away from the adventures of this Filipino Dynamic Duo. My guess (but then, who takes my opinions seriously?) is that the cast & crew wanted to make their own original action comedy, and not a complete remake of 1966's *BATMAN*. The basic concept is there, as the Caped Crusaders thwart the crimes of the Penguin & Joker, but otherwise, it's a completely independent story. The two heroes are romantic as they court the females of their choice, and there are numerous ballads. A few are enjoyable rockabilly and/or surf tunes, but one is an overly mushy song as Robin and

his girlfriend go on singing forever. This bewilderingly bad scene has all the entertainment value of giving birth to a hippopotamus. All the characters are unique in their own ways and have individual lives, so it frequently strays from the Batman theme.



Dawn Zulueta

However, this wild & crazy film offers its share of fun and gags! As someone who grew up on *BATMAN*, I'm glad to see a new movie which is faithful to that program, as opposed to that overrated, bastardized blockbuster with Michael Keaton. *ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN* attempts the same kind of campy action as the old TV show. Sure, some scenes are more stupid than a baby born without a brain, and many scenes are as boring as a gardener's handbook; but on the whole, *ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN* is some serious fun. It be funny and lively, and a definite must see for any fan of *BATMAN*! I understood it even though it was in Tagalog, but with a few English sentences; about one every five minutes. This is just barely enough English lines here & there, which made the plot slightly followable to an American viewer like me.

Director: Tony Reyes really seems to have it in for American superheroes! He directed *SHEMAN, MISTRESS OF THE UNIVERSE* (see O.C. #12) which starred Joey de Leon

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(Kempsee de Leon) who's a comicbook freak. A less popular student (Rene Requiestas) is a big fan of the evil Joker. Later, Kevin and his older brother (Joey de Leon) singlehandedly beat up a gang of schoolbullies and get on a crimefighting habit. Meanwhile, Rene starts working for this evil mobster (Panchito) who also seems to be into comics. They decide to become super criminals, so Rene becomes the Joker and the mobster becomes the Penguin! Coincidentally, Kevin & his brother have begun dressing up as Batman & Robin and continued their righteous crimefighting phase. The villains recruit some sexy villainess played by 1988 Supermodel winner Marilen Espino, who later does the very worst karate kicks ever put on film. Later, inbetween bank robberies, goofy musical numbers, and overdone romance, the two groups inevitably clash a few times. Batman & Robin thwart the villain's crimes for a while, until Batman gets disillusioned and flakes out. Robin is a lone crime fighter and ends up getting shot. This gets Batman upset, so he attacks & arrests the villains (Joker & Penguin) responsible. But they escape from prison and try to frame the Dynamic Duo. But these impersonators (the Penguin as Batman and Joker as Robin!) are attacked by vengeful thugs who either hate crimefighters or are after the loot they're carrying (the mock Caped Crusaders robbed a bank). Meanwhile, Kevin & his brother have once again put on their Batman & Robin uniforms, knowing somebody (in this case, the Batpenguin & Robinjoker) is being beaten up! And so Batman & Robin come to the rescue of the Penguin & Joker, by beating up the thugs! After this fight, all four become good friends and the movie ends like an MTV music video. Batman's girlfriend (a reporter) dresses as Wonder Woman, and there are other silly heroes in this impressive rendition of what sounds like some old surf/rock tune, but with different words. The credits roll as the heroes & villains all dance in the street. * *

PRAISES, GRIPEs, COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS, THREATS, AND OTHER COMMENTS FROM READERS AND FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Dear Damon,

I plain and simple, love your magazine. It is much more sarcastic & cooler than the other Japanese sci-fi magazines, which are also good, but read like a bunch of presskit reviews. O.C. brings back memories of lounging in front of the TV from the age 4 to whatever, watching *JOHNNY SOKKO & HIS FLYING ROBOT*, *Godzilla* & *Gamera* films, *SPEED RACER*, the *Starman* movies, and many more. I would definitely like to thank you for bringing back a time when we counted on these heroes, rather than today's line-up of Batman movies and TV series. It is also nice to read Steve James occasional input. I met his pal Kane (Jason) Hodder at the Detroit Fangoria Weekend of Horrors. I know you don't like *Fangoria*, but they're really nice guys. Sure sometimes *Fangoria* gets tedious & boring, but they're nice guys. I must also give thanks to your parodies of *Animag*, *Fangoria* and *Inside Kung Fu*. They're so funny that I dropped my sais on my foot from laughing.

Thanks, Vince Cornelius
Prospect, OH

Dear Vince,

actually, I don't dislike *Fangoria* or *Inside Kung Fu*. I read both of them regularly. I read them so much that I couldn't help but want to make my mockeries of them, out of fun, not hate! *Fangoria* lets me know about all the terrible new American horror trash films I'll never bother to see, and Rick Meyers' clown in *I.K.F.* adds life to an otherwise average martial arts magazine so dull it makes me want to go into a coma. -Damon.

Dear Damon,

Enjoyed O.C. #13. Here's my hard earned money for some back issues. How about an all-Filipino issue? Just kidding.

Best, Joe Titus
C.C. Hills, IL

Damon:

It's nice to read your magazine, O.C. is right up my alley. I doubt if you know of your great importance in the realm of oriental entertainment. You're all we've got. /Thanks for the compliment, but that's a scary thought! Actually, there are other great publications which cover Far Eastern films, see my recommendations below. -DF/

As for your statement about not being able to talk to people about the latest film you've seen, I can sympathize. My wife thinks they're stupid, but at least she watches them. Most people give you a blank look and try to find someone else to talk to. Anyone else to talk to.

-John Auker
Mifflintown, PA

Dear John,

let's face it, although the USA is the best country to live in, the catch is that it's full of narrowminded, one-dimensional geeks. I only have about five local friends who're into Far Eastern videos. Yet many others, though friendly and good in bed, won't tolerate Asian movies & TV shows for a second. Many of them don't even know I make a fanzine, they've never heard of O.C. / Fortunately, either through OC or forced viewings, I've turned a few nonfans into fans. So all you nonfans, there just might be hope for you. -D.F.

Dear Damon,

a few thoughts on O.C. #13. It's your slickest produced fanzine yet. I liked those min-repos. Since I'm unfamiliar with most of the actors, the picture and bio helps me to place them. As of now, the stars, and films of Asian cinema is a brand new universe to me, I'm slowly discovering its flora & fauna. But has anyone told you that John McEnroe is your evil twin? /DF here, how ironic! When I lived in Tokyo, many people who didn't know me came up to me and told me I looked like him. I was told this often, despite the Billy Idol haircut I had at the time. / There's not a lot of publications that cater to these subgenres. After you got my interest peaked, I started subscribing to *Markalite* and *M.A.M.A.* They're great, but I still think yours is one of the best. It's everything a fanzine should be. It reeks of info, it's entertaining, and clearly shows your love and knowledge of the genre.



I realize each issue is a major undertaking, especially for just one person!

My least favorite column is your Filipino section. Has anyone in the U.S. besides you seen a Filipino movie? /Yes, there's one guy, but I forgot his name. -DF/ Still, you are a trendsetter. Five years from now will I be bowing down and worshipping Rene Requiestas and Joey Marquez?

Damn right, I want your coverage of Toei's superheroes. I guess deep down, I'm a lowly comic book geek. So it's fantastic to see how another culture views the superhero theme. I too prefer live action over cartoons. It's sad, but some friends who are into *THE FLASH* or *SWAMP THING* won't even watch shows like *IRON KING* with me.

I've been trying to get anyone to watch my tapes of Jackie Chan but with little success. I turn on a great scene from *PROJECT A* and these are the comments: "Hey, don't they show this crap on the USA Network at 2:30AM? Gee, their lips move but nothing comes out." I can't believe they can find it boring. I wanted to kick the shit out of them. /That's a lot of kicking. -DF/ I guess it's three types who are aware of H.K. cinema. Asians, martial arts students, and the trendy art types. I don't mind the so-called posers, at least somebody is beginning to notice the films. The art house at least gave me a chance to see *A BETTER TOMORROW*.

Thanks for the first pictures of Mechaghid-rah, wild stuff.

Good luck with the fanzine, it's the best.

Dan Sonoda
Chicago, Ill.

CHECK OUT THESE MAGAZINES

It has only recently come to my attention that many of you are not buying these other magazines, and that some of you don't even know of their existence. I read them all, and recommend them highly. Since many of you are only familiar with O.C., you may be expecting them to be vaguely similar to O.C., which is not the case. Despite some crossovers in subject matter, no two fanzines are identical. All these publications are informative, but written in the traditional straightforward manner of all other fanzines. Unfortunately, my idea of "Inform but amuse too" hasn't been very inspirational to any of these newer, more serious publications. These are only the best of the Asian fanzines. There are many sleaze/exploitation/trash/garbage/waste/debris fanzines out there which are including obligatory articles on HK gangster movies, but I've excluded them. I don't see much point in spending full price for a single article on *THE KILLER* or *A CHINESE GHOST STORY part 8/12* if you also get stuck with endless reviews of *NECKROMANTIC* or chainsaws.

Hopefully, by buying these zines, the 'competition' won't take away any of my business, and won't drive O.C. into obscurity. But if creating a bigger unit of informed fans is what destroys OC, the sacrifice will have been worth it. One thing; I am not responsible for these guys not writing back to you, or failing to send you your orders on time. If this should happen, don't come whining to me about it. -DF

MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES ASSOCIATES

Mostly letters from fans of kung fu movies, but this highly informative newsletter will keep you up-to-date on Jackie Chan and other current Hong Kong stars! Chinese martial arts films, new and old. So far, they've usually been reliable in sending me my copies on time. Check 'em out! Small, B&W. For a one year subscription, send \$10.00 (dirt cheap, and well worth it) to William Connolly, 6635 Delongpre #4, Hollywood, CA 90028

ASIAN TRASH CINEMA

Perhaps just one issue isn't much to go on, because at the time of this writing, they hadn't completed issue #2 yet. Hopefully, they'll improve. ATC is a useful, digest size publication, but looks to me like the work of disillusioned viewers who got sick of western horror films. There's lots of inaccuracy in the articles, the guys obviously haven't grown up on H.K. films! Even though they're new to the genre, this is still an important publication that I highly recommend to fans of HK horror films! They've got about 400 reviews, and it's a great guide for anybody thinking of renting new HK horror/trash/garbage/exploitation/action/fantasy films! Small, color cover. Subscriptions are just \$15.00 for four issues, single copies are \$4.50. As I said, I only have one issue, but I didn't have to wait long to receive it. ASIAN TRASH CINEMA, P.O. Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325

MARKALITE

If *Godzilla* & other Toho monster movies is your thing, this is the magazine for you! Huge, full color cover, professional. U.S. subscriptions are \$20.00 for four issues, and to overseas readers, it's \$40.00. MARKALITE, P.O. Box 23651, Oakland, CA 94623

EASTERN HEROES

I never know what to make of these guys. I haven't heard from them for quite some time, so I'm not entirely certain that the magazine still exists. The only issue I have is #13, and it's pretty good. 40 pages, and mostly about Hong Kong movies, despite Claude Van Damme's ugly mug on the cover. Regardless, there's lots of rare info, so if you can afford \$60.00 a year for a subscription, go for it. Being a British magazine, that's the price to us Yankies, I don't know what they charge European readers. Sixty bucks to EASTERN HEROES, PO Box 409, London, SE18, 3DW, England.



Dear Damon,
O.C.#13 was great!!! I enjoyed every single page! Was it because of the great layouts? Maybe! Was it the tongue & cheek writing? Possibly. Could it be because it was filled with fun & enthusiasm! DEFINATELY!!! Maybe with your working with some of those other Japanese monster magazines, they can rise to their full potential.

Best of luck, Ed Decker
Collinsville, ILL

Mr. Foster,
I've read *Oreintal Cinema & Video* #13 pretty thoroughly (except for the old Japanese stuff, which I only read once) and I must say that I'm pretty impressed. Too bad it comes out so infrequently.

I publish a fanzine myself that's even more obscure & esoteric, & appeals to a narrower audience than OC, and I know how it feels to get an order from someone, send out a copy, and never hear from that person again. I want you to know that I enjoyed it and I look forward to future issues. Keep it up.

Vince Sneed
Baltimore, M.D.

Dear Mr. Foster,
You are, of course, aware of the extreme concern which I expressed to Bob Johnson, editor of *Markalite* magazine, about your comments on this corporation in O.C.

I have also, over the years, received actual threats of physical violence from disgruntled subscribers. They have ranged from being beaten across the face with a magazine to being told that my children would be shot 'between the eyes.' Your suggestion to your readers that they make similar menacing statements goes far enough beyond the mark of a 'sarcastic, cynical, humorous writing style' to be considered a criminal act.

Given the need for mutual support among Japanese film centered publications, particularly during a present climate of American-Japanese cultural animosity, and the passage of time since you published the statement in question, I consider the matter to be a simple unpleasant occurrence which is now closed.

Very Truly Yours,
Jeffrey Tibbetts
Pacific Rim Publishing
Markalite publisher

DF here,

I had hoped the above rebuttal to be a little more wild, like he could have said, "does DF stand for Damon Foster or Dumb Fuck?" After all, when someone else got pissed off at me last year, they referred to *Oriental Cinema and Video* as *Oriental Kness and Vidiot!* Now that's what I call a witty rebuttal! Oh well, formal means boring, boring means formal. By the way, you readers probably don't know what the hell Tibbetts is talking about anyway, since the 'original comments' in that editorial have been covered up. I'm not in the mood to get sent to jail, fighting off overly friendly prisoners trying to get acquainted with my rectum, so I simply deleted the offending statements from my editorial. And you know what I put in its place? More glorious photos of me! - DF

Dear Damon,
initial reaction to O.C. is I LOVE IT! Finally, a fanzine with an attitude (a personality!).

Craig Ledbetter
Asian Trash Cinema
Texas

Mr. Foster,
I hate to say this, but I dig the way you write your articles. They are really cool, the way you write them. You really tell it like it is, and that's what I really like in your magazines: it's the truth.

John Makishima
Hawaii

To Damon Foster,
Regarding OC #13: Excellent! The Chinese vampire movie reviews were brain twitchingly amusing. The *Fangoria* takeoff was a riot; almost as hilarious as the actual magazine. The letters section was a nice addition. As usual, the writing was acerbic, witty, and filled with the sexism and unfettered profanity that OC readers have come to love. Keep up the fantastic work.

Richard Akiyama
Honolulu, HI

Dear Damon,
thanks for the new *Oriental Cinema*, like to say to you I had a lot of fun reading it. Keep up the good work and if there is anybody out there that doesn't like *Oriental Cinema*, fuck them! JARS video likes to read O.C., thanks for a good fanzine.

Joe Ragus
Jars Video
Little Neck, N.Y.



Dear Damon Foster,
I have received my O.C.#13 and I think it's great, I like a magazine where someone is not afraid to say 'fuck' or 'asshole'. Thanks, DF. I really like the martial arts movies coverage. You scored a big knockout, I think OC is the best. Like the old saying goes, if it's not broken don't fix it. Keep up the good work, and keep kicking the rival magazines asses. Stay cool!

Eugene Thompson
Knoxville, TN

NOTE: The following letter appeared on some computer network called something like 'Proctology', and was never sent to me personally. It wasn't meant for me or any OC readers. This was sent to me by a friend. I'm deleting the writer's name. I will not offer any response (negative or otherwise) for two reasons:

1. I don't want to scare or discourage readers from giving me constructive criticism like this.
2. Responding might imply that I actually give a fuck.

PRODIGY interactive personal service
SUBJECT: Godzilla

Just obtained a copy of the 1991-92 issue of *Oriental Cinema*. Unfortunately, it seems that this edition is mainly devoted to Chinese vampire films & videos. Not much on Godzilla or other Japanese sci-fi, although I was able to find some items of interest.

First off, let me say that OC is indeed a FANZINE. It's pretty good for its kind, but publisher/writer/editor/ Damon Foster burdens everything he writes with excessive wisecracking and less-than-pure language. If you can weave through his style without either being offended or at the least bored, you can find out lots of stuff. He's obviously been around, and he knows lots of stuff. He's not always 100% correct, but he writes in such quantity that you can't help but learn something. If you like his raw humor, all the better and you're really missing out not getting his 'zine.

/The letter than rambled on quite boringly, about my reviews of Japanese monster movies and then came this paragraph:

On an additional note, I'd just like to say that my review of OC#13 was written when I was extremely tired. I was redundant and overly praiseful of Damon Foster. In fact, the publication is FULL of the most offensive language Foster can muster, and he's most insulting of many others in the genre. He's at times quite critical of *MARKALITE*, and seems to think he has something they don't. In fact, many of Foster's statements seem contrived solely for the purpose of upsetting as many people as possible. In my opinion, a fanzine should be put out for the benefit of others who share the interest, not a political or personal platform for ideology or personal grudges. I will still continue to get the thing, because I like some of what I read in it, and it does have an abundance of reading material. I would recommend it simply because it is a flamboyant & large publication when many are not present on the scene.

Dear Damon,
I enjoyed your latest issue of *Oriental Cinema AND VIDEO*. I like the magazine a lot, even though you're a woman-hating (unless they're cool kung fu babes, of course) homophobe. Ease off a bit.

Steven Levin
Chicago, Ill

Damon,
real good stuff! Thanks, Damon!
Michael Kelley
Topeka Kansas

Dear Damon Foster,
I, Robert L. Brown, must admit, your *Oriental Cinema* thingamajig is excellent with overtones of being slightly outstanding. I particularly like the reviews of *Godzilla* and *Roadin*, and all those Japanese monsters over there in Japan. You're mag is really good, that's right, it's *really good*.

Robert Brown

SKAM

So far as I can figure out, this newsletter started out as a publication for films in general, but like so many other fanzins, they've seen the light. Current H.K. hits are becoming more frequent. As you know, I would not suggest you buy this zine unless they had a lot of Asian-related material. Don't let the magazine's title fool you, it's not some typical sleaze/garbage/exploitation rag. This is a good publication, and they seem to be pretty good about filling out orders on time. Small, B&W. For a subscription, send nine bucks for four issues. Richard Akiyama, PO Box 240226, Honolulu, HI, 96824-0226

RAVE SENSATION

Have any of you heard from this guy? I don't know if he still publishes this tiny (averaging 4 or 5 pages) newsletter, and I've had trouble keeping contact with him in the past. Once I wrote to him, only to have my letter returned with "He doesn't live here, got it?" written on the envelope. Assuming he still publishes it, it's a nice little newsletter all about Jackie Chan videos, sometimes comic or kung fu movies. Send him a dollar for two copies of this cute little zine. Dan Snoko, PO. Box 23673, Washington, D.C. 20026-3673

Dear Damon,

I checked my 'records' (read check-books) & did send you \$6.00 for O.C. #13 back on 7/26/91. But I never got it, is it something I said? If not, please send it ASAP, it's my favorite magazine. If no record of payment, let me know. /DF here, sorry for the delay. Sometimes, somehow, somewhere, somewhy, I am starting to slip, and fail to maintain steady order filling. Part of the problem is that there's always a long line of scary looking people at the post office who try and start conversations with me, about cosmic crap, or the time they saw Jesus or the goddess Nephthiti at a local laundymat. / Take this chance to let you know how much I like O.C. Excellent mix of films reviewed and topics featured. I also tend to agree with your likes/sucks opinion more than some other reviewers (that's actually a little worrisome now that I think about it). As my girlfriend says, 'keep it up, damn it!'

Dick Austin
Middletown, NJ



You superhero fans must really love me now! First, this issue has an article on JAC superheroes, then there's my article on that Filipino *BATMAN* movie, & now, as always, this continuing column on Japanese superheroes! In all honesty, I wasn't too excited about doing this column, that's why it was stuck at the end of this issue. I'm becoming disillusioned with this genre too, because its new fans are destined to become as pretentious and annoying as the fans of Japanese cartoons. That whole fandom became a bunch of overweight, narrowminded technogeeks, and it seems that America's fans of superheroes are on their way to degenerating in the same manner. Recently, I've discovered more & more jerks who enjoy nothing but the newer superhero programs like *KAMEN RIDER BLACK* and *LIVEMAN*. As I see it, if you really like all the trendy new stuff, you should also learn to like the original roots; classics like 1971's *KAMEN RIDER* and of course, *KIKAI* and *KAI KETSU ZUBAT*. After all, by expressing interest in the early originals, your knowledge of the genre becomes more complete, thus turning you into an expert, not just some couch potato who watches TV all day and accomplishes nothing. Hell, let me carry it a step further; if you're really openminded, check out other genres too, like martial arts films and H.K. movies. I see superheroes and HK martial arts as a package deal, I can't comprehend liking one without liking the other. There are indeed important crossovers. By now you know that martial arts megastar Sonny Chiba and his proteges are very much a part of Japanese superheroes, and other stars, like Yukari Oshima and Michiko Nishiwaki got started out in superhero programs before making it big in H.K. adventures. Anyway, I guess I've made my point. I don't like narrowminded people (like the average *TERMINATOR* fan) who dislike exotic films (i.e. martial arts thrillers & superheroes), and I'm trying to make sure fans of Asian stuff remain openminded and united. So if you collect *ULTRAMAN* tapes and aren't openminded, or if you're overly selective, go shove a piece of broken glass up your ass.

But for now, *Kaizo Ningen Update's* superhero series review for this issue is none other than *LION MARU*.

ライオン丸

LION MARU

(original Japanese title: *KAI KETSU LION MARU*, English translation: *HEROIC LION KNIGHT*) Produced by P Productions, broadcast on Fuji TV, consisting of 54 episodes, lasting from 4/1/72-4/7/73. Created by Shoji Ushio, Writer: Fumizo Wakatsuki, Main Director: Koichi Ishiguro, Music: Asel Kobayashi, Starring: Tetsuya Oshio

The early 1970s are full of superhero masterpieces. But it was also in the 1970s that this program came into existence. For the most part, *LION MARU* is funner than pizza & safe sex, but it's not one of the alltime greatest. I guess that just makes it one of the 'sometime greatest.' It's exciting, with a number of swordfights in each episode, and a great theme song, partially inspired by those in spaghetti



westerns. Hell, the opening song even has little kids singing in the background, and yet, amazingly, I still like this tune! As for the special effects, they're rather scarce, because the technology was kinda' primitive at the time. The monster costumes are blatantly stupid looking, and our heroic samurai looks kind of like the cowardly lion from *WIZARD OF OZ*. His pegasus is obviously a regular horse with cardboard wings taped to his back. Despite this cheapness, I'd still rather watch an originator like *LION MARU* instead of some pretentious, generic, overrated & overliked new series like *ZYU RANGER*. *LION MARU* is refreshing to watch, because it's so original and full of unique ideas. However, this also has its disadvantages to us Japanese language-impaired viewers. A foreign language, in combination with a complex script results in a lot of confusion and frequent boredom. Fortunately, there's usually a swordfight at the climax, which makes the wait worth it.



Amazingly, the first episode was dubbed in English and released to America. It was discovered by accident when an American fan bought some pre-records at Toys 'R Us. The tape was four different Japanese TV shows (one episode each), all involving ninjas. Unfortunately, the other three were mere cartoons. Regardless, the translations for *LION MARU*'s English dubbing are pretty accurate; they didn't change the names of the characters, and the story remains the same. The music is all from the original Japanese version, and only a couple scenes (of stabbings) were cut. My main complaint is that the spectacular opening sequence & theme song is also absent. Instead, there's just some cheaply superimposed video-generated title, calling it "Magic of the Ninja." How this English dubbing came about is one hell of a mystery, much like 'why did Adam & Eve have belly buttons?' My guess is that *LION MARU* was purchased by Mell Welles or whoever the hell released *SPECTREMAN*. The series (*LION MARU*) apparently never found distribution in the U.S., except for this obscure, rarely seen pilot episode. The voices are all the same as those for the English *SPECTREMAN* episodes, and since both programs are the work of P Productions, perhaps they were meant to be part of some package deal. Maybe we'll never know for sure.



In medieval times, there was this evil subterranean devil called Gosun, who emerged to the world's surface, at some spot in the himilayas. You think maybe he's the reason there aren't many yetis around? Gosun and his army of monstrous demons are the program's villains, so that means they plan world domination, of course. These villains are almost identical to something which is quite similar. There's an obstacle which may keep these villains from being all they can be, and that obstacle is a Japanese wizard in Japan of all places, called Kashinichi. This old magician has all sorts of incredible magic powers, the most impressive of which is what he calls 'shape shifting.' So an army of demonic 'skull ninjas' sent by Gosun are sent to assassinate the elderly wizard. They succeed, but they're a bit late, for the late wiseman had already passed on his magic powers to his proteges! They're three war orphans skilled at swordplay. The oldest is Shishimaru, who's been given a special sword with the 'shape shifting' power, so by using this magical weapon, he shifts his shape into becoming Lion Maru, the mighty warrior. His fellow heroic warrior orphans are (as always) a woman (Sari) and a little kid (Kozuki). Another character who pops in from time to time is the mysterious Tiger Joe. Is he a hero or a villain? Perhaps neither, perhaps both. He's an illusive, one-eyed swordsman who fights both the heroes and the villains. To know just what his gripe is, I'm afraid you just gotta' know Japanese like you know the back of your dick. But our main hero is Lion Maru alias Shishimaru, who doesn't take kindly to the murderous atrocities of Gosun. * * 1/2

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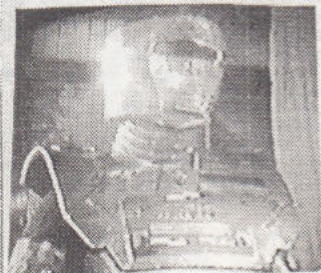
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太空戰士

[Chinese title: **TAI KONG TSAN SU**, though also pronounced as **DA KONG TSAN GAN**, the English translation is **OUTERSPACE SOLDIERS, SPACE WARRIORS**, or something to that effect. All this info is correct translation, but when I tried to translate its title by myself, I came up with "BIG, EMPTY SOIL."]

I guess at about the same time that them Filipinos ripped off Japan's 'Sentai' genre by making **BIOKIDS**, those Hong Kongese schlocksters were doing it too, with this cheap TV show about yet another superhero team. **INFRAMAN** proved that Chinese can make excellent superhero thrillers, just as this **TAI KONG TSAN SU** proves they can make stupid, low budget crap too. **TAI KONG TSAN SU/OUTERSPACE SOLDIERS** isn't entirely bad though, it has its moments. I've only seen the first two episodes, and I hope they're the very worst in the series! The opening credits are the best part, fights which easily blow away those in any Japanese Sentai series since **DYNAMAN**! Unfortunately, there's none of this extreme excitement in either of the episodes themselves. Instead, the confrontations consist of cheaply super-imposed lazer beams, which, like the whole show, were shot on video. Its production values aren't any better than that of **THE KROFT SUPER SHOW** or any of those persistently



terrible Sid & Marty Kroft programs from the 1970s. I've seen things on Community Access which are about equal to this Hong Kongese program. Most irritating are the dubbings. When a human character talks, there's a live microphone, complete with background noises. Then when one of our heroic androids answers, all the sudden, the background noise disappears completely, as the dubbed hero speaks.

Its poor production values aren't limited exclusively to its audio & video technicalities, but at least these other ones generate unintended laughs. The show is the king of ripoffs; it's more than just a ripoff, since a 'rip' implies just a piece, a strip! Does that make this a 'whole



thing-off?' Lemme show you what I'm talking about. Okay, there's these three superheroes and their costumes are damn near identical to three of the heroes in **DYNAMAN**: Dyna Black, Dyna Yellow, and Dyna Pink. **DYNAMAN** was a great show, but their costumes were the worst Sentai costumes ever! Based entirely on Baseball uniforms, these suits amounted to little more than T-shirts and white pants. So why, instead of **GORANGERS** or **BIOMAN**, did they choose to mock the inferior looking **Dynamen**?! Could it be that these lame designs were the easiest to mimick? I think not, seeing as **TAI KONG TSAN SU**'s token generic villains look flamboyant and detailed. My guess is that once **DYNAMAN** went off the air, some bum found these costumes in the garbage dumpster and decided to sell them to China's equivalent of Community Access for a buck or two. Then maybe the Hong Kongese added their own touch; buying a few second hand motorcycle helmets to complete the costumes. Even more

ridiculous is the heroes' spaceship, plainly and simply an old toy of the Millenium Falcon spaceship from **STAR WARS**. Speaking of which, the theme song to that blockbuster is used briefly, as are tunes from **S.W.A.T.**, and the theme song is none other than that from **SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN**, but with all new Chinese singing. The beginning of episode #1 shows shots of H.K. with music right out of Billy Idol's "White Wedding." Why, I don't know, nor do I know why the episode's final 3 minutes has a heroic robot dancing to Total Koolhaio's "I Eat Cannibals", in its entirety! Why? They must have had three minutes to kill at the end of this one hour time-slot. Or more likely, the dancer wearing the costume was a good mime, and they wanted to make use of his robotic, funky dance & mime moves. After all, a mime is a terrible thing to waste.



There are no subtitles on this Cantonese language tape, but I gather that three spacewarriors (two are male, the pink one isn't) who are sent to Earth by some alien Buddhist monk-type, to save Earth from an attack by demonic villains virtually identical to those



in the Japanese TV shows. So our three heroes, in their Millenium Falcon which has an interior so cheap they couldn't afford aluminum foil, come to Earth to combat the bad guys & gals. They briefly aid an Earthling hero; a gold robot (cheap but effective) who loves music. He walks like Jiban, Winspector & Robocop, dances like Michael Jackson and looks like a combination of C3PO and Gavan. He dies in the second episode while battling three imposters of our heroic heroes. After he explodes, some blind pianist cries. Later episodes no doubt featured additional quest villains & I guess had better battles. I prefer the villains over the heroes, because at least they could afford



foil! At a full hour per episode, they failed to make every minute free of boredom. But the frequent explosions and acrobats make it worth seeing. Almost. *

無敵鉄金剛

THE INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER

Directed by Albert Yue

A fake-looking set of a pond. Children singing & dancing. Bad continuity. Naked kids frolicking in the pond. Cheap FX. Tasteless bathroom humor. A film which is so incredibly childish that even children would hate it. I don't know how to say just how amazingly bad this Chinese imitation of KAMEN RIDER is. Many of the bad films I've reviewed lack even one star, and yet many of them are at least watchable. INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER is so embarrassingly terrible that some scenes are unwatchable. With a title like INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER, and all the photos I'd seen of this title hero, I was expecting this wannabe Kamen Rider to be featured sufficiently, in the same kind of thrilling duels as Japan's classic Kamen Rider genre, as our bug-eyed heroes tackle dozens of henchmen, and of course, taking on a tough monster or two for the climax. INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER has only a little of that, the rest of the movie deals with these irritating, obnoxious little schoolboys. These snotty twerps are in nearly every scene; footage of superheroes & monsters is drastically limited! Obviously, it's cheaper to film little kids running around than to hire an FX crew and martial artists, so the battle scenes are short, few & far between. If these fights were longer and more plentiful, I just might have found it in my loving heart to give this flick a whole star. As I may have mentioned before, the monster costumes are decent for a cheapie like this, and the computerized laboratories are not bad sets. Otherwise, this film is so stupid that if it were a human, it might write "2+2= 22" in a math test. The flick is guilty of being an exploitation film of the worst kind. It's deceptive, billing itself as a Kamen Rider-ish thriller, when it's just a cheap romp about stupid little kids. Regardless, I'll be nice for once, and give it a half star. If you cut out all the kids and save its full eight minutes of fights, it would deserve a whole star.

The fact that the battles are scarce doesn't imply that when these fights finally do occur, that I loved them and was dying for more. They're incredibly lame fights, actually making even Japan's newer superhero programs look good! The stuntman in the hero costume can do good kicks & chops, but we hardly see any of that. Instead, there are explosions, motorcycle chases, low budget FX, & maybe an occasional acrobat. When they actually have a fist fight, the editing and staging is choppy, confusing, & misleading so we don't see many good, solid fights. Some battles look like the extremities of bad American mart-

ial arts films, especially tricky ones where they hide the fact that the actor couldn't fight his way out of a colostomy bag.



Ripped off music includes anything from MASTERPIECE THEATRE to ULTRAMAN TARO, in this tale of a young Taiwanese schoolboy called Hsiao Po. His teacher Mrs. Lin scolds him for being irresponsible; He's a poor athlete, he plays pranks, & worst of all, he stars in this movie. Hsiao Po fantasizes becoming a cybernetic superhero. Coincidentally, some evil wizard called Dr. Wu has combined magical powers with modern technology, in an effort to change ordinary kiddies into monsters and mighty warriors. Hsiao Po volunteers, so Dr. Wu straps him down to a chair connected to some massive computer. He doesn't completely change into a superhero, but a single antenna grows on his head. He escapes, and later a more friendly scientist hooks him up to another high tech set to complete the job. And so finally, Hsiao Po becomes the white Kamen Rider of Taiwan, the invincible space streaker. Actually, he's not called that anywhere in the film, and he has nothing to do with space (nor does he go streaking!). They call him 'Superman' in the subtitles! On the film's poster (above) there's actually a painting of Kamen Rider X on his fancy motorcycle, though neither are



featured in the movie. With Hsiao Po now a fullfledged superhero, the villainous monsters & henchmen are madder than an L.A. gang member after the first Rodney King trial. The cheap henchmen make motorcycle raids on a local village, and battle heroic bikers who wear crash helmets (these guys are like an ultra-cheap version of the Science Patrol). When a classmate is killed, the mighty insect raids Dr. Wu's headquarters. The fight is okay and the hero splits into twin heroes. When all the bad guys are dead, instead of "The End," the ending graphic reads "Thank You For Your Coming." Rating: 0 1/2

So yet another edition of KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE comes to an end, much like my enthusiasm & faith in humankind. To close, here's a little something which appeared in the "Cheers 'n Jeers" section (page 4) of TV GUIDE, the March 28, 1992 issue:

👍CHEERS

To the best news for fans of bad sci-fi short of a *Lost in Space* reunion: the return of Ultraman in a new syndicated series. The last time we saw this Japanese retro superhero on U.S. television was in the '60s, when he was just a big good guy in a silver body-suit battling big bad guys in ridiculous rubber monster get-ups. Guess what? He still is! Produced in celebration of the show's 25th anniversary (it's been running in

Japan for a quarter-century), *Ultraman...Towards the Future* arrives on these shores with camp-quotient intact: lots of unspecial effects, lots of shots of people running and screaming, and, best of all, lots of Godzilla wanna-bes with names like Barraki, Majama, and Gerukadon. Does it get any better than this? Nope, and we wouldn't want it to. TV GUIDE, MARCH 28

COMMENTARY: TV GUIDE magazine promotes shit like BEVERLY HILLS 90210, SAVED BY THE BELL, THE SIMPSONS, THIRTYSOMETHING, & FAMILY MATTERS and yet they make fun of something as unique & brilliant as the Ultra genre, proving they're more fucked than a sex-starved hooker on a ship full of sailors.



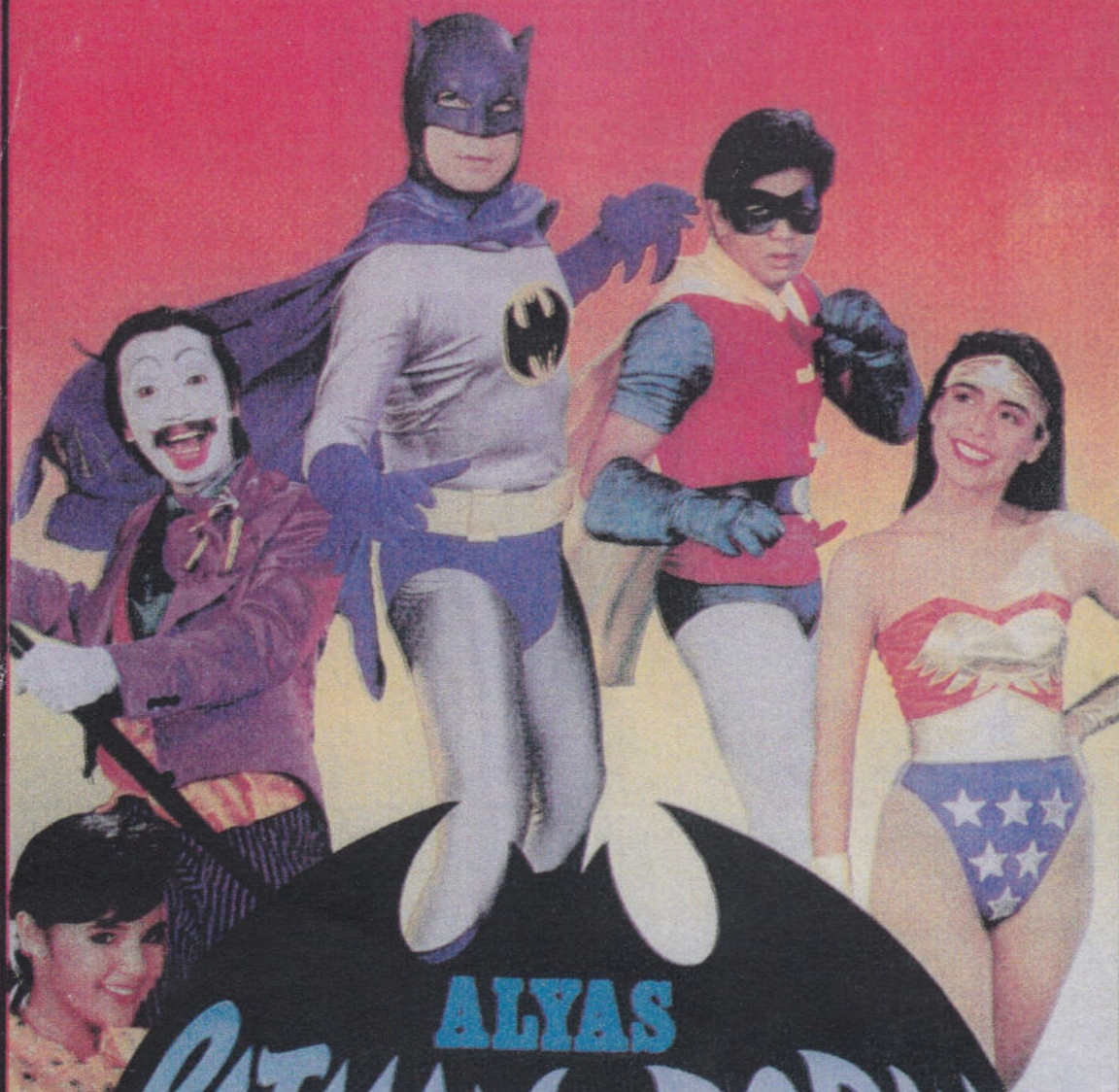
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story & screenplay JOEY DE LEON & TONY REYES cinematography OSCAR QUERLEJO production design MELCHOR DEFENSOR
music MON DEL ROSARIO editing EFREN SARLEDO line producer TONY FAJARDO executive producer LILY MONTIVERDE