

# Oriental Cinema AND VIDEO

1993; #15

Written, edited, designed & published by Damon Foster

BRUCE,  
KUNG FU GIRL

BRUCE LEE  
A DRAGON STORY

Bruce Lee  
The Invincible

The "Bruce and the other Lees of kung fu issue!" With Bruce Li! Bruce Lee! Dragon Lee! Jason Scott Lee! Brandon Lee! And of course, Bruce Lee himself!!

But wait! There's more! John Woo! Godzilla! Jackie Chan! Japanese superheroes! Monkey King! Korean sci-fi! Filipino fantasies! Chow Yun Fat! A beautiful cover! And more!!

Legend of  
Bruce Lee

THE GREEN HORNET



## EDITORIAL

Half-damn-spit-shit! Has it really been 16 years of OC? That's 16 years too much! Continuing it any further would make as much sense as jerking off to women's professional Tennis. Welcome to what is possibly OC's final issue. Although each issue warned of its potential demise, it's now more likely than ever. OC#14, the best issue ever (the way OC wishes to be remembered) reached its peak; it was as far as I could go. I spent a fortune to complete it, my asking price per issue was not enough to break even. OC#14 hurt my financial situation seriously, and this was before I moved out on my own. I now have bills (rent, car payments, doctor bills due to a stunt-related injury in my action videos) to pay, and can't possibly continue publishing OC all by my lonesome. I could easily fizzle it out to being yet another newsletter or meesly rag, but that would be too anticlimactic and not worth the effort.

I had hoped by now that I could pass the torch on to some younger, newer fans, and that their Asian filmzines would fill the void left by the legacy of OC. I figured that once I informed everyone about all this great stuff coming out of the Far East, local boys would make their own informative, groundbreaking publications, carrying on the tradition that OC started in the 1970s. Sure enough, there are at least six fanzines out there about oriental movies. However, they're virtually identical in subject matter. Why all these endless rehashes of Tsui Hark's and John Woo's films? There's more to Asian fun than new films out of HK. With only a few exceptions, the current plague of fanzines seems only concerned with what is trendy and over exposed. They have yet to expose anything groundbreaking. I'm NOT attacking them or their noble efforts, I respect what they're trying to accomplish, and regularly entertained and informed by their work. But the fact remains that a lot of these dudes are pathetically new to the scene, they're just finding out about oriental films, and have a lot to learn. But the point is, their naiveness proves OC is still needed, to set the record straight. I'm not claiming my knowledge or skills are better than anyone else's, but the results speak for themselves.

The only way I could maintain OC's

many topics and full color cover would be with the help of a publisher. So after all this time, that's what's happening! At the time of this writing, details are in the planning mode, I'm negotiating with a potential publisher. So the next volume of OC, if there is one, will be somewhat different. So far, I don't like all of the publisher's decisions, but it's either do a few compromises, or make no OC at all. I think a 'slightly altered' OC is better than no OC. It's too early to go into specifics at this point, but most of you, my preferred readers, will be kept informed. It'll be a new experience for me, but it's absolutely the only way to continue OC, since I lack the money, time, energy, will, concern, and resources which made previous OCs (the 'Golden Years'; OCs #9-14) so great. A publisher will take the burden off my back, and insure a new beginning for OC.

You'll notice that this is a very haphazard, clumsy looking OC. The changes in format are a result of my moving out, no longer having easy access to my family's Mackintosh computer. So me and my girlfriend are struggling like hell, to get her IBM to come out with pages which look somewhat similar to that of the Mac's Pagemaker. But Wordperfect, which should be called Wordimperfect, just isn't the same. You'll notice that this issue contains several fonts, type styles, printed on a variety of printers; whatever was available at the time. While some articles look fairly clean, others look like what would happen if you over ate, drunk a ton of laxatives and did hundreds of jumping jacks in the nude. Other articles and columns will no doubt appear unledgible. Sorry, but this issue was as frustrating to make as it will be to read!



Susan Richie, Becca Torres & Alice Cooper  
in Damon Foster's AGE OF DEMONS.





DF directs behind-the-scenes of AGE OF DEMONS.

Being a transitional issue of OC, it's awkward. Looks to me like a starving, suffering, dying animal, in serious need of a mercy killing.

Yes, I've got a grudge against the invasion of trendy movies out of Hong Kong. I like the films themselves, but not when some professional, profitable American magazines steal ideas or info from a 'little guy' like OC, without so much as a credit or 'thank you.' OC has become reference material for a bunch of corporate magazines who regurgitate my nonprofit words into packaged press material. It's amazing how many readers tell me, "Don't end OC! Oriental films are so big now, with all these HK Film Festivals at art houses, independent theatres and colleges." To me, the so-called 'chic underground' is almost as trendy and monotonous as the mainstream. I've seen too many glossy, pretentious magazines and/or newspaper articles on John Woo. Where were these posers when John Woo & other HK big-shots really needed the publicity? Quite frankly, over rated genres annoy me, especially if it means endless reviews of Jackie Chan OR ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA. I'll only watch these films on video or in a Chinatown theater, not in some homo theater full of pretentious trendies and hypocrites.

So I turn my back on HK's new hits, choosing the ancient originator, Bruce Lee, as this issue's main topic! I began working on this 'Lee issue' long before the completion of DRAGON: THE BRUCE

LEE STORY, and while Brandon Lee was alive and well, completing RAPID FIRE. His death, and the major success of DRAGON had put Lee's name in the spotlight 20 years after Bruce Lee died. Neither occurrence (DRAGON or Brandon's demise) was anticipated when I began work on the Lee issue. So this issue may look trendy; had I known all this Lee-hype was going to happen, I'd probably have made this a 'ninja issue' instead (oh well, maybe next time!). It disgusts me to go into a magazine shop and see Bruce Lee (or Jason Scott Lee as Bruce) on all these covers of lame martial arts money-zines, exploiters are again making a buck off the poor guy! I'd like to see more covers with Sonny Chiba, Jimmy Wang Yu, Ti Lung, Samuel Hui, or other action stars. I don't go for over exposure on any one individual, there's too much neglected talent out there. So then you ask, why did I put Bruce Lee on this issue's cover, not to mention making it a 'mainly Bruce Lee issue'? Well, I wanted to write about lesser-known Lee productions, like his TV appearances in the 1960s, and his many imitators. We all know about Bruce Lee, but I figure it's about time we remember the living tributes to him: Bruce Li, Bruce Le, Dragon Lee and the others. So to an extent, this 'Lee issue' again focuses on more obscure stuff, not endless reviews of ENTER THE DRAGON.

Speaking of obscure, OC#15 continues its coverage of superheroes, Japanese sch-fi classics, Filipino oddities,

and, for the first time since my review of YONGARY MONSTER FROM THE DEEP in OC#8, a look at Korean films!!! This is my favorite section in this issue, since few of you have ever seen the UREME films or anything out of Korea.

Thanks to all of you who ordered my amateur film, AGE OF DEMONS, photos of which are scattered all over these opening pages. As for those of you who didn't buy it, fuck off and die. Were it not for those who purchased my video, this issue would have come out much later. While I'm on the topic of AOD, I'd like to comment on its mixed reviews. After all, the movie was costly and a bitch to make. Sure, it's no budget, but that doesn't make it a piece of cake to produce! One of the better reviews was in an issue of MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES ASSOCIATES, but even they stated "no matter how bad the jokes are," which confused me. So its jokes are bad? Then why, at my screening, was everyone busting up at the many gags? BACKYARD CINEMA seemed impressed by our fights and stunts (these guys have never seen a professional action film from HK, I guess), but they too complained about the humor, saying it's on the high school level. If they really think so, I'm curious to see what they consider genuinely mature humor. Oh well, the reviews continue to come in, some good, some bad. It's inspirational, hopefully I'll learn from my 'mistakes' the next time I produce an action video.

Later, Damon Foster

*Damon Foster*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Allen Westby, August Ragone, Susan Richie, Butch Portillo, Barrie Evans, Marvin Quon, Alun Fairburn, Amasia TV, and, above everyone else, a big thanks to Robert Mallory. Robert has been a major help at both this issue and OC#14, the amount of material on Sonny Chiba (OC#14) and Lee imitators

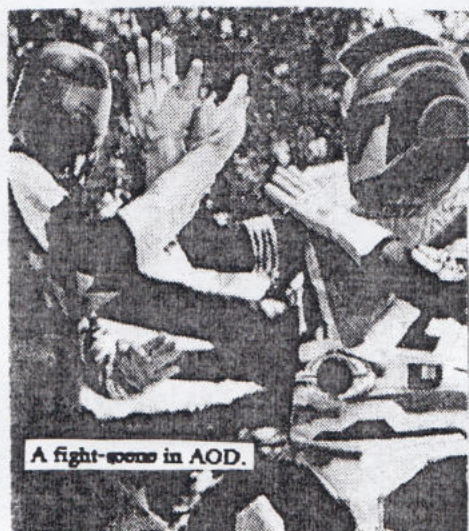


A fight-scene in AOD.



(this issue) that he painstakingly dug up is invaluable. Robert Mallory is a major asset, a kind & giving person and all around cool dude! Don't let anyone tell you otherwise! Also, a big thanks to Damon Foster for giving you all such a wonderful time, and a big thanks to his parents for having him.

**© COPYRIGHT CREDITS**  
**Bruce Lee & Jackie Chan** copyrights: Golden Harvest, ZIPANG, Godzilla, Hedorah & EDO NO GEKITO copyrights: Toho, POWER RANGERS copyright: Seiban Entertainment, ZYURANGERS, ABARENBO SHOGUN & KAMEN RIDER ZETO copyright: Toei, AGE OF DEMONS copyright: Damon Foster, STAR WOLF & ULTRAMAN POWERED copyright: Tsuburaya Co., SAIYUKI copyright: NTV. All remaining photos are the copyrights of their respective companies. OC assumes no rights over the characters & films depicted herein, OC is strictly a nonprofit magazine of critical review.



A fight scene in AOD.

## NOW AVAILABLE!! AGE OF DEMONS

### Damon Foster's latest dirt cheap video!!!

Comedy, fantasy, sleaze, martial arts, sci-fi, punk rock, horror are combined to form a bizarre tale of witchcraft.

**WARNING:** Contains mature and immature subject matter, not recommended for the squeamish or upright.

**CAST:** Eric Matson, Damon Foster, Anthony Houk, Becca Torres, John Grace. Running time: 1 hr., 15 min.



**PRICE:** \$15.00 per tape (VHS only), make check payable to Damon Foster. Also for sale: HOT DOGS ON THE RUN (kung fu spoof, VHS) \$10.00 O.C. back issues; 1-14 (\$6.00 each) DAMON FOSTER, P.O. BOX 576, FREMONT, CA 94537-0576

#### DESK OF CONTENTS:

1. Yo, 'dat be 'da cubba' 'n shit, kno' whahm' saying, homeboy? So just chill, or ah's gon 'dis you.

2. Editorial

4. Me telling you this.

5. BRUCE LEE, STILL DEAD AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

6. CHOP SOCKBY REPORT [BEACH OF THE WAR GODS, KARADO THE HK CAT, ANGEL TOWN, DRAGON FIST, BLOODY FISTS, GOLDEN SWALLOW, THE NEW ONEARMED SWORDSMAN]

10. CHINESE CHILLERS [MR. VAMPIRE 1992, GHOST BALLROOM, GHOST NURSING, VAMPIRE SETTLE ON POLICE CAMP, GHOSTLY VIXEN]

12. BRANDON'S BRAND OF ACTION [Brandon Lee's films]

15. SWORD & TAOISM [The Monkey King's fantasies]

16. THE EARLY FILMS OF THE LATE LBB [old Bruce Lee stuff]

22. FILIPINO FILMS [MAD DR. OF BLOOD ISLAND, BIG DOLL HOUSE, DARNA, CROCODILE JONES-SON OF INDIANA DUNDEE, English version of BIKIDS]

28. MODERN HEROES OF H.K. [Anthony Houk interview, FIGHTING FIST, ROYAL TRAMP, HAPPY DIN-DON, FRACTURED POLLIES, SAVIOR OF THE SOUL, PEOPLE'S HERO, FULL CONTACT, MAGIC ATHEMYST, OPERATION CONDOR, and more John Woo crap]

36. KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE [Superheroes from Japan, like SILVER KAMEN, ABARENBO SHOGUN, THUNDERMASK, & EDO NO GEKITO. Introducing Korea's UREMB series.]

45. BRUCE LEE'S CLONES [The movies of many Bruce Lee wannabes.]

53. LETTERS

56. TERROR-YAKI [Japanese movies like ZIPANG, GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER, and English adaptations of STAR WOLF.]

57. BEAUTIFUL BACK COVER [GREEN HORNET TV GUIDE cover from 1966, Amy Yip, KAMEN RIDER ZETO, BRUCE LIANG, ULTRAMAN POWERED, UREMB 6, Chow Yun Fat, Shangkuan Linfeng, DAI RANGERS]



# リー ショウロン 李小龍 ブルース・リー

## BRUCE LEE, STILL DEAD AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!!

Ever since I was an immature, hyperactive, spoiled rotten brat, I've been a big (if not tall) fan of Bruce Lee. Like many people his race, he is Chinese. So were his parents, in fact, and his pops Li Hoi Chen was an entertainer in some sort of Chinese opera. His opera toured in 1939, so that's when he went to San Fransissy, where he and his wife gave birth to a son on Nov. 27, 1940. The child was named Li Jun Fan, I think, and other Chinese dialects pronounced it Li Shao Lung, Li Xiaolung, possibly Lee's Sure Long, and many more names I won't include because some technogeek or obsessed Lee fan



IRONSIDE, LONGSTREET, and of course, THE GREEN HORNET. Still remembered as a decent actor in HK, and because of GREEN HORNET's success in the Far East, Chinese movie companies were eager to kiss his ass. America's GREEN HORNET series was produced shortly before HK crews created ONEARMED

SWORDSMAN, marking the roots of the martial arts movie genre. So after all these bit parts on American TV, Bruce Lee returned to HK at the beginning of a major martial arts boom. Golden Harvest had recently been formed, John Woo was learning under sword-hero mogule Chang Cheh, and young HK stars like Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, Angela Mao, & Samuel Hui were also getting their big breaks. While over in Japan, Sonny Chiba's students were hard at work on the series KAMEN RIDER! It was also at this exciting period, roughly, that David Carradine starred in the American production KUNG FU. Needless to say, the early 70s were THE age of martial arts adventures! It was at this thrilling period that Bruce's HK thrillers (produced by Golden Harvest) THE BIG BOSS, FIST OF FURY, and RETURN OF THE DRAGON came into existence. Their amazing international success, caused by Lee's unique charisma and unbeatable fighting, lead to ENTER THE DRAGON, America's first and best kung fu movie. ENTER made Bruce the most super of superstars. At this point, Lee supposedly got egotistical, and big headed. Bigheaded, in more ways than one, since he died of swelling of the brain (cerebral edema). What a pity that this common disorder killed him shortly before ENTER's release! Irony can be pretty ironic sometimes. But you can't keep a good man down! Lee's disappointing death wasn't about to

stop him from continuing to appear in numerous movies, like 1979's GAME OF DEATH. Not only does this exploitive stinker show a shot of Lee in his coffin during his funeral, but older, unused fights he'd filmed before ENTER. Anyway, Bruce Lee is long gone, 86'd, six-feet under, he's late, gone to that great dojo in the sky. We'll never forget him though, his legend lives on. Sure, I joke about him & everything else in the world, but this does not change the fact that Lee is one of my alltime idols, possibly the greatest epileptic action star who ever lived.

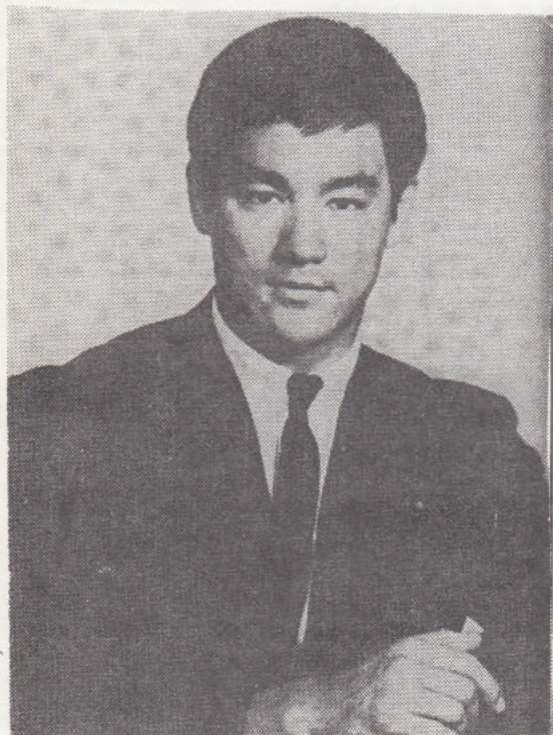
I first became a Lee fan when I was an impressionable two-year-old in 1966, watching Lee as Kato in GREEN HORNET and BATMAN. Years later, my great admiration for the guy increased considerably when his HK movies thrilled the hell out of me. I've been a Lee freak for most of my life (except for my first two years, when I hadn't seen his work yet), and will most likely be a Lee freak for the rest of my life (which may be a mere two more years, if my writing style gets me in any more trouble).

Before Lee grabbed the HK film industry by the lichi nuts, kung fu films were overly dramatic imitations of stageplays,

featuring actors who's skill at kung fu is comparable to a common aardvark's skill at reciting quotes from Franz Kafka's THE METAMORPHOSIS. Sure, 1960s oldtimers like Jimmy Wang Yu and Yueh Hwa were efficient at 'grappling hands' techniques (a complex form of patty cake), and basic swordplay (and I do mean 'play'), and their films are fun (except when everyone starts singing), but it was Bruce who popularized violent, basic, no bullshit kicks and punches; featuring power and form that you could never do, you wuss! Bruce gave the Hong Kongese kung fu film scene a much needed facelift, transforming the period operas into chop sockey thrillers which take no prisoners. Bruce's influence on the Far East is comparable to his influence on Western audiences as well. Before 1966, can you think of an American or European film which featured any real martial arts? 'Karate' seemed to be merely a way to break boards with your hand while yelling a popular American greeting. Before Bruce Lee, most Americans knew very little about the truth behind martial arts. The best example of pre-Lee, bad martial arts on film was in the Mexican wrestling thriller, SANTO VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMEN (1960). In a scene where the

masked Mexican wrestler battles a werewolf in the ring, the beast showers Santo ('Samson,' in English) with supposed karate chops. Karate is presented as a lethal form of hand chopping, the werewolf does no karate kicks or stances. Fortunately, once Lee exploded on the scene in 1966, non Asian audiences finally got a taste of real martial arts.

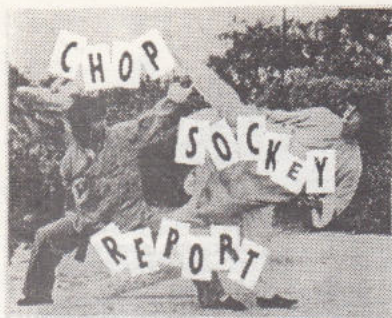
OC has covered all five of Lee's kung fu movies, but rarely have I had an opportunity to view his earlier, lesser known, lesser fun cameos. Not until this issue, that is. For an opinionated (supposedly) look at Bruce Lee's films & TV shows of the 1960s, turn to page 70. For my reviews of Bruce's more wellknown kung fu movies, see back issues of OC. For boring retreads of Lee's art & history, check out all them lame martial arts magazines at the magazine racks of your local liquor store.



might write to me, correcting me on how I spelled something wrong, as though I give a damn. That's why we dumb yankees call him by his English name, Bruce Lee, given to him by some nurse at the San Francisco hospital where he was born. The family returned to HK shortly after the birth, and after the after birth. By now you've already read (a jillion times) that Bruce Lee started his career as a child actor in films like THE ORPHAN. This film was shown locally on a Chinese TV station about six years ago. I tried to watch it, but it was as fun as watching paint dry, in slow motion. Between lame dramas, Lee took kung fu lessons since about the age of 12, learning how to kick the groin, 500 different ways. Bruce Lee had become a problem teenager, so his parents decided to send him to America in 1959, where all teenagers are problem teenagers. Lee's years in America didn't stop him from wanting to be a movie star, nor did it stop him from perfecting his already formidable Wing Chung (a species of kung fu) skills. Throughout the 1960s, he taught kung fu to them problem Americans, attended college in Seattle or some place, and had a few cameos and guest appearances in American TV shows and movies, like MARLOWE, something called HERE COME THE BRIDES,







week (except for Friday, when I'm so drunk I can't remember all the words to the old 1966 BATMAN theme song).

## BEACH OF THE WAR GODS

Produced from 1970 to 1973, Presented by Raymond Chow, a Golden Harvest Production, Screenplay & Directed by Jimmy Wang Yu, Lung Fei, Tien Fen, Hsueh Han, Tsao Chien

It was in around 1972, that Wang Yu made this throwback to his 1960s phase. For those of you morons who don't know, that was when he was in his 'sword hero' phase for the Shaw Bros. In the early 1970s, his brief kung fu/fist phase ended once the superior talent of Bruce Lee took HK audiences by storm. So, while Angela Mao worked with Sam Hung on HAKIDO, and as



"Hold it! Damn you, all you goddamn Jap bastards! Listen, you killed my teacher! My parents! And my dog! But still, you're no match for my snake technique! Right, let's fight, straight away!" Aah yes, traditional words of dialogue, now considered classic by fans of vintage kung fu movies! Forget "Play it again Sam," "They're coming to get you, Barbara," or "Your stupid minds! Stupid, stupid, stupid!" Get used to "But still," "Hold it," "Right then," and "Listen then, you bastard," as the new classic lines of cinema greats! I've been a lover of kung fu movies almost since I was an infertile egg, and yet even now, when I'm so old that when I burp, dust comes out, I still find and hear of rare kung fu gems I've somehow missed out on! One such example is Lo Lieh's 1973 comic caper SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT! I've never seen

Bruce Lee created RETURN OF THE DRAGON, Wang Yu dredged up the past; stuck in this dull period drama. His career was fading and becoming as obsolete as pork at an Islamic party, and it's apparent in this generally disappointing film. In the 1970s, the only ones making decent costume dramas were them Shaw dudes (which Wang Yu had bailed out from); films featuring more limbs flying around than in a lepper disco.

Disappointing, yes, but not downright bad. Wang Yu's swordsmanship has always been fun to watch, so I can almost recommend the film on that alone. The problem is that for every fight, you gotta' tolerate lots of dialogue and unimpressive drama. Thank Damon- err, uh, thank God I saw this one dubbed in English. We all know how the Japanese ("Jap bastards" in this film) ravaged & oppressed China in the early 20th century (but then, who didn't?). This movie tells us similar conflicts arose way back in 1556, when Japanese ships routinely attacked the Chinese coastline. Wang Yu plays Hsiao Feng, a wandering drifter who arrives to see Japanese cruelty at a Chinese fishing village called Li Town. Hsiao Feng is like a Clint Eastwood/spaghetti western type, but with a sword, Chinese uniform & nationality. To avenge the death of his uncle (killed by the 'Jap bastards'), he rounds up a group of Chinese swordsmen, so they can beat the E-E-double hockeysticks out of the approaching samurai. The Jap bastards have already wiped out or conquered other Chinese villages. And so the inevitable battle occurs between the Chinese and the J. bastards. Many bastards are killed by traps in the sand, and many get cut up by our heroic Chinese swordsmen. Even so, Hsiao Feng himself cacks in a duel with the leader of the bastards. The battle seems to continue afterwards, but we never see it; the flick ends.

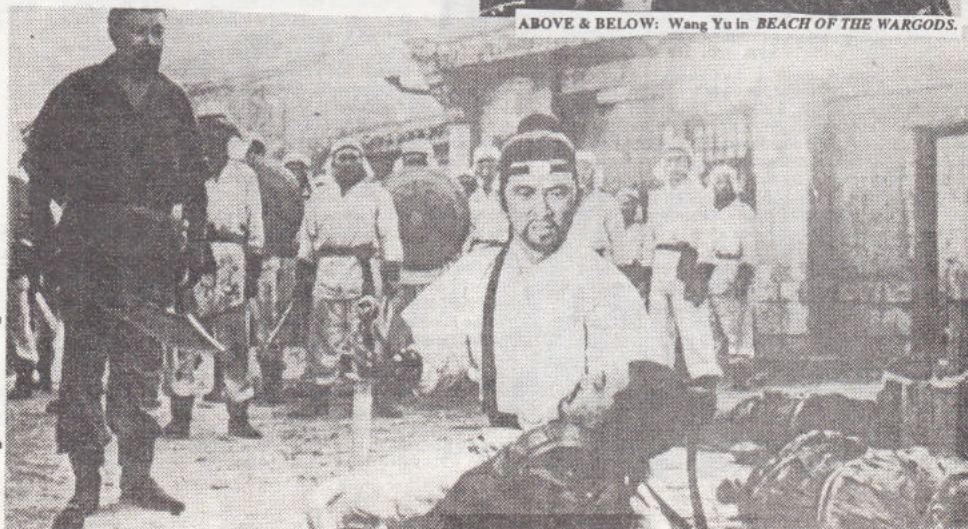


ABOVE & BELOW: Wang Yu in BEACH OF THE WARGODS.

1973'S SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT: Sal Borgese, Cantafora, Shih Szu, Lo Lieh, and Robert Ross.

this tale of superheroes rescuing a pair of Hong Kong narcotics agents! This unique movie is rarer than a condom at an all-dyke orgy, so let me know if any of you get this illusive fantasy on tape! Other ultra-rare examples of early kung fu on film include 1960s secret agent films like OPERATION MACAO (1966), JAMES BOND CHINESE STYLE (1967), and of course, THE BRAIN STEALERS, a 1960s "Our Man Flint" -type film featuring a female secret agent and costarring Betty Ting Pei (many years before the Bruce Lee controversy). Needless to say, there are still many 'final frontiers' to be explored. I doubt we'll ever unravel the many mysteries of the Chinese martial arts movie genre. Fortunately, while there are numerous lost, forgotten films, there are just as many commonly seen films; enabling this exploratory column to exist.

Ironically, the old-fashioned kung fu films of yesteryear seem to be experiencing a slight revival. Period films like DRAGON INN, the Chinese Ghost Story trilogy, and of course, the over rated ONCE UPON A CHINA films indicate that movie dude Tsui Hark is bringing back the old-style film, after endless crime dramas of the 1980s, involving either gangsters, cops or mobsters. But the 'new age' of Tsui Hark-influenced period films lacks the innocence, simple nature, heart and fun of the older classics, replacing them with big budgets, highly formalized plots and humor which rarely arises higher than the Ruckelberry Boud level. Personally, I'll take the works of master innovator Chang Cheh over master regurgitator Tsui Hark any day of the







Ocean Shores changed the title). He strives for truth, justice and the Chinese way as he gets mad at his



older brother's involvement in a corrupt mob (backed by an equally corrupt government. 'Corrupt Government?' Now there's a redundant phrase). The brother is Man Ho, who doesn't finally rebel from Tiger's (Yeung Si) gang until near the end, when he finds out the henchmen killed his mommie. During the battle, Man Ho is killed along with a few righteous revolutionaries, so Lung (Karado?) wipes out all the baddies in a long duel climaxing on a fishing boat.

possible to forgive the film. That's the fact that I enjoyed it, and you all love me so much! Socially and psychologically, ANGEL TOWN offers nothing not found your typical 1970s chop socky farce. The plot is basic; based on one vendetta after another, the villains are relentlessly evil, the hero is righteous and kind-hearted, but easily provoked to slaughter, and the whole film is violent, brutal, counterproductive and all that other fun stuff. The setting, of course, is different from those in HK films; instead of some Chinese village, it's set in gang



ABOVE: OPERATION MACAO (1966), see previous page.

## KARADO THE HONG KONG CAT

[A.K.A. "SUPER KUNG FU KID," released by Ocean Shores Video in 1986] Starring: Chung Lick, Yeung Si ('Bolo' in America), Man Kung Fan, Mars "Don't pretend, let's fight!", says one of the film's characters before one of the many battles. That line says it all; this is an action packed, cheap sockyker from the early 1970s. There's a fight about every five minutes, and most of the fights last more than five minutes. Chung Lick licks Yeung Si (AKA Yang Sze) and other villains with impressive skill & talent (both words mean basically the same thing, though spelled differently).

The fights are slightly above average, but the remainder of KARADO THE H.K. CAT is entirely average, if not mindbogglingly predictable. There

## ANGEL TOWN

Presented by Imperial Entertainment & Sunil R. Shah, a Shah/Karson Production, Associate Producer: Juan C. Collas, Art Dir.: Brian Denamore, Dir. of Photography: John Le Blanc, Starring: Olivier Gruner, Theresa Saldana, Frank Aragon, Tony Valentino, Peter Kwong

I never thought I'd ever see an American martial arts film, completely free of Asian backers, that I liked. But then, I never thought anybody was stupid enough to watch BEVERLYHILLS 90210 either. But ANGEL TOWN is one of those rarest of things, an American kung fu thriller which doesn't make me want to jump into a barrel of rotten maggots rather than watch it! ANGEL TOWN, unlike RAPID FIRE or any USA film which even mentions "ninja's", actually has a vague amount of entertainment value! This is largely due to the valiant effort of lead hero Olivier Gruner, some French dude who has at least twice the talent & charisma of Belgian belch Claude Van Dumb. Gruner has serious kicking ability, with the type of skill usually only seen in HK flicks. His acting seems decent, but his accent is a handicap. He's been in at least one other

American action film since ANGEL TOWN. With karate skill like that, I think he should move to HK and hook up with Jefferrey Falcon. Gruner could do well as a caucasian villain in any HK cops & robbers thriller!

infested East LA, with low riders (latino gangs) replacing Japanese as the unbelievably bad villains. ANGEL TOWN is fairly fun, but I was hoping for cultural diversity, like more real info on real gangs, besides endless dialogue like, "I'm gonna fuck you up, vato!" For example, there are a couple shots involving some black gangs who apparently have a rivalry with the gangs of illegal immigrants from Mexico, but there's no major conflict, comparison or social commentary! in the film. It's just a feature length excuse to show cholos (and very stupid ones at that) attacking Gruner every five minutes.



## ABOVE: 1967's JAMES BOND, CHINESE STYLE

is revenge, a bedroom scene, a casino scene, and the acting & dubbing is even more stupid than average! There are no 'let still's, or 'right's, which shocked the hell out of me, but they say "God damn" about eight times, so that made it okay.

Chung Lick plays a righteous do-gooder who does good, called Mein Lung and Ah Lung (despite the title, there's no "Karado", maybe that's why

ANGEL TOWN is as far from realistic as Alabama is from intellectualism. The flick is far-fetched, one-sided, stereotyping, unbelievable, simpleminded, and possibly offensive to hispanics. Oh well, that's their problem. Despite these flaws, there's one thing that makes it



Olivier Gruner kicks hispanic hiney in ANGEL TOWN.





ABOVE: Despite this lame-ass movie poster, Wang Yu never appears in *KARADO THE HONG KONG CAT*, reviewed on page 7.

## DRAGON FIST

Presented by Lo Wei Motion Pictures, Producers: Hsi Li, Martial Arts Choreography: Jacky Chan, Photography: Chien Ying I, Art Dir.: Chao Lu Mang, Zer Hook Liang, Production Manager: Li Sien Jang, Dir.: Lo Wei, Starring: Jacky Chan, Nora Miao, James Tien, Lin Yin Ju, Kao Chiang, Yen Si Kuan, Hsiao Hsieh STORY. Forget all the narrowminded fans of only post 1980 Jackie Chan films. This mid 1970s actioner is true kung fu, based on traditional techniques, and performed in an artistic manner. Perhaps some of Jackie Chan's earlier efforts can disappoint, but not *DRAGON FIST*! It delivers. Any bloody fool can rent & review a newer Jackie Chan film, for some trendy sleaze rag, but it takes a curious, cultured person to voyage into Chan's past.



*DRAGON FIST* offers more fun than *MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE*, *ISLAND ON FIRE* and *TWIN DRAGONS* combined, although I must admit to having low expectations at the film's beginning. It started out quite typically and predictably with its share of "right's", and "but still's". Aside from the obligatory "you killed my teacher" routine, the beginning again makes use of that honor & pride bit, when a fighter destroys & takes a rival school's sign. But it quickly takes a turn for the offbeat, in a confusing story, but with more fights than backed-up toilets in a Mexican bus station. Chan, James Tien & others demonstrate ample skills at martial arts, be it fists or staffs and pointed sticks. In this film alone, Jackie Chan shows off more martial arts than Steven Segal will in a lifetime.

A complex story of this nature can't be described in full detail, unless I become one of those lifeless, formal technogeeks who writes overly intricate, in-depth, never ending, ultra dull plot reviews. Since I've got a life, let's just say that *DRAGON FIST* starts off average, with Hau Yan (Jackie) planning to avenge the death of San Tai (his teacher). Master Chung, who starts off as the villain who wasted San Tai, later reforms & repents, once his wife commits suicide (upset of her husband's harsh attack on the teacher). He even hacks off his leg to beg forgiveness from Hau Yan (J. Chan). But the plot thickens when a rival kung fu clan gets Hau's friend addicted to a drug. Thinking the drug to be a medicine, Hau serves them rivals as an assassin, to get more of the "medicine." But between the fights of both gangs, numerous betrayals occur, until Hau actually fights more villains to rescue his teacher's guilt-ridden killer! An abnormal story indeed. . . .

## BLOODY FISTS

Producer: Jimmy L. Pascual, Editing: Cuo Teng Hong, Fighting Dir.: Yuen Wo Ping, Starring: Chan Sing, Chan Kuan Tai, Liu Ta Chuan, Henry Yu Young, Lindy Lim, Yue Mei, HK TVB Star Ho Shaw Soon

Sometimes I think that reviewing an unoriginal, typically average kung fu farce like this is a waste of my unique writing style. My journalism shows more creativity than this movie, which is more than similar to Wang Yu's *CHINESE BOXER*. It also features a number of familiar faces, has the same old dubbings as those who always say "but still," a brief training shot, revenge, a rape scene, evil Japanese, not so-evil Chinese, one



evil Chinese, and whatever else kung fu cheapies are known for.

Fortunately for my wallet, known to be emptier than the skull of a Seattle grungehead, I didn't have to venture beyond my own bedroom to check this one out, broadcast late at night on *Kung Fu Theatre*. So I checked out *BLOODY FISTS*, I mean, what the hell? Then, less than two months later, I tune in to the same late night program, again hosted by a martial artist called Tat Ma Wang, and see they're showing the same movie again, under the title *DEADLY BUDDHIST RAIDERS*! You'd think these idiots at Kung Fu Theatre would screen their films before they buy or broadcast them!

Chen Sing plays a former criminal trying to go hetero- uhh, I mean, to go straight. But he finds out that a Chinese traitor who got exiled to Japan, is back. The villain now knows Japanese karate, and so does the Japanese sensei, played by Chen Kuan Tai, in a rare, villainous role (but some guy in a mask doubles for him in many scenes, perhaps he was too unreliable to show up to the film's set). But he and his samurai fail to obtain a village's "Dragon Herb," because it's needed to cure Chinese villagers of some plague. Chen Sing and Chen Kuan Tai battle to the death, both of theirs.

## MOONLIGHT SWORD AND JADE LION

Presented by Pao Yung, Produced by Cheung Kao Yam & New Shui Kam, Executive Producer: Joe Hang, Art Directors: Chow Chi Leung, Chu Yai

Starring: Mao Yin, Wong Do, So Chan Ping, Lung Kwan Yee, Man Kwong Long, Kwong Ming, Tong Lik

Fans of them old Shaw fantasies should get kick out of this comparatively cheap (-ish) variation. Call it a period film, costume drama or sword flick and you'll get a feel for this one; y'know what? Ahm sayin'? This action-packed adventure is neither good nor bad; it's an average kung fu historical from the late 1970s, or maybe the early 1980s at the latest. I sat through it late night on *Kung Fu Theatre*, dubbed in English. This was the result of a brief case of insomnia, because I kept worrying about the turkey baster I'd borrowed from the neighbors; realizing their household consisted of 3 dykes and one kid (no adult males in their household!). I wonder how they conceived that child.

Angela Mao's ("Mao Yin" this week) career was sagging like breasts on a 50-year old stripper by the time this one came out. Her more wellknown films (*ENTER THE DRAGON*, *HAPKIDO*, *WHEN TAE KWON DO STRIKES*) were all behind her by the time this one came out. Regardless, she doesn't really look much older, and still showed considerable skills at hapkido and swordsmanship- I mean swordswomanship, Wang Tao (Wong To) co-stars as the co-hero. His career would also disavow once these cute little chop sockies became as obsolete as a Christmas tree at a Barnimtree.

It's a fairly typical script featuring revenge, rivals in a restaurant who toss utensils at each other with incredible precision & catching ability, a sexual harassment scene, a house of traps & gadgets, "right" is stated at least five times, "but still" is used five as well, although I left the room once or twice, so I might have miss a few thousand. The TV just played on, oblivious to my presence or nonpresence in the room. So anyway Chu Sau Yen (Angela Mao Ying) looks all over for Chan, a friend of her teacher. She also has a small statue (a jade lion) which all the baddies flock to like flies to a corpse. Speaking of baddies, the nasty, mysterious Chu Pau looked up the venerable Lu Chan! So she gets help from Wang Tao (as another mighty sworddude) and they chop away at all these different villains until they rescue Lu Chan. With all these battles, it deserves two stars. But the excessive characters and needless complexity made my brain hurt, so I'll subtract one star, if only to show you how good I am at math. \*

## GOLDEN SWALLOW

Produced by the Show Bros. In 1968, completed & released in 1969, Producer: Runme Shaw, Screenplay: Chang Cheh & Tu Yun Chih, Film Editing: Chang Heing, Photography: Pao Hsieh Li, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Starring: Wang Yu, Cheng Pei Pei, Lo Lih, Ng Ma, Ku Feng, Mars

Between kung fu movies and so-called classic samurai films, there would appear to be a gap bigger than the one between David Letterman's teeth, until you check a 1960s sword film from HK, the revolutionary links between the two genres. Those ratty shaws borrowed only a few ideas from the likes of Toshirō Mifune & Akira Kurosawa, and from there, the "Chinese samurai" sagas evolved into kung fu adventures. But you read OC, so you already know that! You also know that Jimmy Wang Yu was a big hit in 1960s period films! You know that, since *GOLDEN SWALLOW* is a 1960s actioner, there are on-slaughts as Wang Yu hacks away at dozens of swordsmen! You know there must also be a lot of dialogue, some romance, bloodshed, and scenes where skilled marksmen throw & catch darts, coins & knives with incredible accuracy! You know all sorts of stuff! You know how to tell when a writer can't think of anything interesting to write!

It took me 25 years to finally watch *GOLDEN SWALLOW*; from its title, I thought it must be some perverted, unbelievably kinky porn film. It's a sequel to King Hu's *COME DRINK WITH ME* (1965), reviewed in O.C.#10. *GOLDEN SWALLOW* is actually based on some old legend, about some...







there have been other movies based on her.

Other than historical background, it's not much different than other Shaw costume dramas. The subtitles are an eye strain, the characters all toss & catch darts & knives with unbelievable accuracy & precision. Interesting to note an early appearance by that wierd actor called 'Mars' (anybody know his real name?). He makes a cameo in this movie, when he was a little kid, at about 12 years old! He'd later get kicked into a pond in *GAME OF DEATH*, play 'Cowboy' in *DRAGON LORD* and wear a ninja hood in *MY LUCKY STARS*. Additional familiar faces appear through out *GOLDEN SWALLOW*.

### THE NEW ONE- ARMED SWORDSMAN

Produced by Run Run Shaw in 1972, Screenplay: I Kuang, Film Editing: Kuo Ting Rung, Cinematography: Kung Mu Tu, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Kua, Art Dir.: Johnson Tsao, Props: Lyu Ay, Lighting: Kuan Ying Chuan, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Starring: David Chiang, Ti Lung, Ku Feng, Chen Haing, Wang Chung (not the band), and that girl from *FIVE*

#### from *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH*

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. So Jimmy Wang Yu bailed out, no more Shaw bros. bullshit for him! So then Shaw guys needed another onearmed swordsman to remake the little Wang's film series. So David Chiang was cast in this semi-halfway partial remake, and Ti Lung got to play the co-hero. But even dubbed in English, it has its boring moments, it doesn't live

villains is more vengeful soldiers from the Golden Dragon gang, who Wang has fought all through the it. Regardless, Wang Yu defeats them all, but because of owies sustained in his duel with Lo Lieh, he too ends up deader than the audience at a Barrie Manilo concert.

up to the original *ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN* from '67. Regardless, it is an average,



adequate, decent movie, with its share of swordplay, honor & pride, beautifully lavish sets, and has more limbs flying around than in a lepper disco! The flick was especially well received in 1973, when it broke all box office records in South America. Ironically, sometime after this film, David Chiang also left the Shaws, and teamed up with Wang Yu, the original Onearmed Swordsman! They made *THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN*, the movie brought both heroes together.

Lei Li (David Chiang) hacked off his own arm as part of a bet; the loser in his duel with Mr. Lung (Ku Feng). Ironically, Ku Feng's villainous character isn't entirely villainous at first; he comes off as honorable & righteous, until we

learn he's affiliated with a bandit clan at Tiger Port! Enter traveling hero Ti lung, who plans to wipe out Ku Feng (as Mr. Lung), henchman Chen Haing and others. As for David Chiang's Lei Li character, he's got only one arm, but he eventually recovers and befriends Ti Lung. Then Ti Lung gets killed by Ku Feng and his followers. So David Chiang, despite only one arm, wipes out Ku Feng and other bad guys on a bridge.



IF *GOLDEN SWALLOW* weren't overly talky, I could give it a more intricate synopsis. But then subtitles hurt! As near as I can figure out, Silver Roc (Wang Yu), Golden Swallow (Cheng Pei Pei) and Han Tao (Lo Lieh) are fencing classmates separated when they were kiddies. The villainous Golden Dragon gang probably killed their family members; you know how them villains are. Years later, they've all grown up and eventually manage to re-locate each other. Silver Roc is quite a swordsman, and a merciless, angry one. There are scenes of that little Wang through out, of him chopping up all comers. The most memorable scene has him wipe out an army and set fire to their base. Ironically, Lo Lieh's (Han Tao) character comes off as more righteous (for once) than Silver Roc, and it's their difference that leads to the climactic duel. Wang Yu dies, Lo Lieh feels guilty about it. Oops, while I was writing this, an army of soldiers comes in and attacks Wang Yu, who I thought was dying! Doesn't this story ever end? I have to go to the bathroom! Next time, I'll be sure to watch the whole tape before I start writing, trying to finish my article before the movie ends. Anyway, I assume this gang of



#### PHOTOS, THESE TWO PAGES:

Wang Yu, as he doesn't appear in *KARADO THE H.K. CAT* (far left corner of page 8), Jackie in *DRAGON FIST*, Chen Sing in *BLOODY FISTS*, and Cheng Pei Pei in *COME DRINK WITH ME*. On page 19 (this one), Ti Lung (upper left corner) in *NEW ONEARMED SWORDSMAN*, Wang Yu (with a knife in his mouth above, and flying to the left) in *GOLDEN SWALLOW*, and David Chiang (directly above) in *NEW ONEARMED SWORDSMAN*. Oh, I almost forgot: Above, rt. corner; David Chiang's stunt double flips away from Ku Feng in *NEW ONEARMED SWORDSMAN*.



# CHINESE CHILLERS

[Hong Kong horrors reviewed this issue: MR. VAMPIRE 1992, GHOST BALLROOM, GHOST NURSING, VAMPIRE SETTLE ON POLICE CAMP, & GHOSTLY VIXEN.]

Here it be! The return of my Hong Kong horror column! I excluded it last issue because too many other rags are suddenly writing about these flicks now.

But giving them a second look, then gorehounds aren't giving me much competition because all them lousy dickheads care about are FX and gore. I've loved Chinese horrors since I first discovered SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA

in the 1970s, and various locally broadcast Chinese TV shows (combining the supernatural with adventure) I also drooled over as a little twerp. So is an experienced oldtimer like me going to abandon Far Eastern chillers just because every drip and his brother likes them this week? Of course not; the genre deserves better than that, and fans deserve articles by somebody other than just a bunch of trendy posers and horror geeks.

## MR. VAMPIRE 1992

Screenplay: Lo Wing Keung, Prod. Designer: Cheung Kai Ling, Dir.: Ricky Lau, Prod. Managers: Ricky Ng & Dolly Ku, Starring: Ricky Hui, Lam Ching Ying, Sandra Ng, Tsien Siu Ko, Lau Lam Kwong, Kwan Sau Mei, Tsui Man Wah, Tam Hoi Yam

I think MR. VAMPIRE 2 (see O.C. #13) will always be the mighty

yardstick when measuring just how terrible a MR. VAMPIRE can be. However, this disappointing 1992 edition comes in a close second place. It more closely resembles MR. VAMPIRE 4, as its plot structure involves seemingly endless stupidity and clowning around before the ghosts, witches and vampires finally attack. In the case of MR. VAMPIRE 1992, the main problem is nearly a full hour of predictable Chinese humor, known for its incredibly childish level, and of course another blatant, unapologetic shot of kid taking a piss (full frontal nudity). The perverts who make these films think nothing of showing child pornography such as this, and yet the film's 'wet t-shirt' scene is blacked out on the film! Of course,

Sandra Ng isn't the ideal actress to look at while slamming the old ham, but I'd rather look at her breasts than all two millimeters of some six-year old boy's dick! But after nearly an hour of fooling around, the horror element finally sets in. There's a scene where Tsien Siu Ko and Ricky Hui visit the haunted village, Tan Tan Town. On its own, this suspenseful sequence deserves two stars. But the remainder of the film never again lives up to this, lowering its value to me as a whole.

The FX are cheap, the vampiric gyonsis aren't remotely scary. After all the bullshit I had to wait through, I had hoped for a better climax. Granted, the martial arts are okay. Tsien Siu Ko does his best, but old fart Lam Ching Ying now favors the use of a stunt double. Speaking of stunts, they suffice, but are nothing compared to those in the original MR. VAMPIRE.

Script has the return of Man Choi (Ricky Hui) and his two fellow gyonsi-busters played by Lam Ching Ying and Tsien Siu Ko. They're aiding yet another military general who's father (once more) is a vampiric corpse. It comes to life and hops away. Meanwhile, Sandra Ng plays a horny wizard trying to thwart the atrocities of a possessed foetus. Seems some lady's unborn baby is possessed by an evil ghost desiring reincarnation, and who turns a wetnurse into a witch. And if all of this isn't enough horror, a nearby ghost town, called Tan Tan Village, is populated by more hopping vampires! With all these destructive denizens of the occult, you'd think we'd see more action, battles and horror. But NO! For every effect, every kick, every acrobat, there's twice as much nonsense and bullshit. Amazingly, our heroic Taoists still manage to defeat all the creatures in time for a happy ending. \*

## 猛鬼舞廳

### GHOST BALLROOM

Presented by Attraction Film Co., Ltd. in 1989, Starring Liu Chia Hui, Norman Chu

Fortunately, GHOST BALLROOM was worth every penny I paid to see it, since I saw it for free (thanks to a 3 for 1 deal at Halloween time). So for the price of one bad Chinese horror film, I got to see three of them, making the deal almost three times as bad. GHOST BALLROOM is cheap, boring and stupid. I can tolerate its low budget, but not the boredom or stupidity. It's overly talky, duller than a lecture on embroidery delivered by a forgetful 84 year old, and its pointlessly nonsensical plot is full of illogical filler. The FX are practically nonexistent. The only decent things in

it are a couple fights performed by veteran kung fu star Liu Chia Hui. Hui's best work was in period fantasies, but he plays his part well in this modern farce too. He and Norman Chu actually don't get much screentime until the later half, most of the romp deals with lesser known actors, and unfamiliar actors destined to stay that way.

Mei, an

attractive call girl, refuse to have sex with a Middle Eastern customer, possibly because there's no end to those pricks. Turban or no turban, a paying customer is a paying customer, so her nasty pimp Condon gets mad. He hires his thugs to kill her, so her ghost comes back to life to haunt the club she used to work at. Liu Chia Hui plays a righteous bouncer at the club, and a retired kung fu champ. His buddy is a gambling taxi driver played by Norman Chu. Both heroes help Mei's ghost to kill Condon & a couple henchmen, so that she can rest in peace. \*

### GHOST NURSING

gold City Films Co., Producer: Norman Chu, Supervisor: B. Chan, Dir.: Wilson Tong, Starring: Norman Chu, Suit Li, Melbourne Wang, Tom Chin

To me, this standard late 1970s/early '80s (whatever) horror cheapie is nostalgia. Hard to believe that when I sat through this horror drama for the first time, there was probably no MR. VAMPIRE, or any other influential blockbusters we've come to know and almost love. GHOST NURSING was one of the very first Chinese horror movies I ever rented (sometime around 1983), and one of the first I ever reviewed (in the long dead punk fanzine PACK, in the mid-80s). I guess I enjoyed this bleak thriller more back when these kinds of movies were new to me. Supposedly, a few 'serious fans' like GHOST NURSING. However, I've never really taken degenerate, sleazy films seriously; I prefer horror movies which branch into diverse directions, like into comedy, or martial arts. However, this non-comedic, non-martial artistic chiller isn't completely bad. And I must say, the script is quite intriguing (you really can't predict what's going to happen, from scene to scene), there are a couple decent effects, eerie music, and it only gets boring two or three times.

There's this Chinese chick called Jackie, who, because of atrocities committed in her previous life, lives a life of misery and tragedy. This can get pretty depressing after a while, so she hires some wizard to cure her. He gives her the petrified foetus of some baby who died long ago, and by taking care of it (involving daily rituals) for about a year I guess, the problems in her life will end. Then one day, some nosy friends uncover the little guardian and tamper with it. One of the friends is killed by this evil statue, and the other (Norman Chu) gets possessed by it. He kills Jackie's friend and turns on Jackie herself. So she requests the assistance of that same wizard.

There's some sort of magical chase in a forest, but then the wizard subdues the zombie guy, and like many older Chinese flicks, there's an abrupt ending. \* 1/2

## 幻家族

### SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Produced by Eagle Film Productions in 1991, Presented by Leung Wai Fun, Wong



チュウ



モン





Ying & Mak Tak, Executive Producer:  
Wong Ying & Chin Chung, Line Producer:  
Alex Chong, Production Manager: Lim  
Chan, Asst. Dir.: Lau Kwok Wai, Chin  
Man Kei, Art Director: Danny Yuen,  
Director: Andrew Lau, Costume Designer:  
Ng Po Ling, Director of Photography:  
Mui Kin Fai, Lighting Dir.: Wong Chi  
Ming, Original Music: Phil Chen, Action  
Director: Curry Lau, Featuring: Lam  
Ching Ying, Chen Siu Ho, Wong Pan,  
Carrie Ng, Lau Shun, Wo Chi Yeung, Kuk  
Fung (a.k.a. Ku Feng), Joanna Chan

This horror comedy isn't too scary.  
What's scary is the concept of what if  
this had been the first film of its type  
I ever saw? If SPIRITUAL FAMILY  
(though misspelled "Spiritual Family" on  
the video boxes & posters) had been my  
first typical Lam Ching Ying as Taoist  
Priest Against the Undead movie, I  
would have forever avoided this 'ups &  
downs' genre. Had this disappointing  
drama been my initiation to the 'Mr.  
Vampire' legacy, I'd probably be  
critiquing THE CARE BEARS MOVIE about  
now, if there is one. SPIRITUAL FAMILY  
features Lam Ching Ying and Chen Hsu Ho  
who have both starred in MR. VAMPIRE  
(see Ocs 6, 8 & 13) and VAMPIRE VS.  
VAMPIRE (Ocs 9 & 13). Both these  
charismatic superstars are impressive  
martial artists, although not in  
SPIRITUAL FAMILY, because they perform  
very little kung fu, and the movie is  
the opposite of impressive. Depressive,  
maybe? Veteran ancient 1970s star Ku  
Feng makes a cameo, but he too does no  
kung fu. But just because it lacks a  
lot two-fisted action doesn't make it  
inferior, since there's no unwritten  
rule saying it has to have kung fu.  
After all, I ate a cake last night which  
tasted great. The fact that the cake  
failed to perform an impressive martial  
arts kata doesn't make it a bad cake.  
SPIRITUAL FAMILY just lacks sufficient  
entertainment value, despite a fairly  
interesting script. The comedy is  
stupid, the drama is dull, the music is  
unflattering, and the special effects  
are anything but special. Despite all  
these blows against it, it's not  
necessarily a bad movie, just a barely  
average one. Like I admitted a few  
seconds ago, the story is mildly  
interesting, however, the characters  
aren't very well defined. As a typical  
Chinese horror fantasy, SPIRITUAL FAMILY  
offers: a silly freeze frame ending,  
ending credits with out takes, a gyonsi  
scene, Taoist rituals, an attractive  
female ghost in love with a human,  
filmed cruelty to animals which should  
be grounds for putting the film's  
producers in jail, one or two kung fu  
kicks, minor bathroom humor, and maybe a  
stunt or two.

For me, the savior which gives it  
the standard, common 2 star rating is  
the existence and explanation of what me  
& my fans (I mean readers) call 'Clown  
Ghosts.' Such creatures have appeared  
in countless Chinese horrors &  
fantasies, and although automated and  
eerie, are always presented as goodguys  
who thwart the atrocities of vampires  
and ghosts. In this otherwise  
disappointing tale, they're called the  
'Hell Police' and they make sure all the  
spooks behave themselves. But  
otherwise, there's not much to praise in  
this standard movie. It seems as though  
HK companies want to see to it that at  
least three post-MR. VAMPIRE movies are  
made each year; whether they're great,  
okay or bad is unimportant. The motto  
would appear to be, "Do it and get it  
done, and don't give a shit."

#### DF'S RECOMMENDATIONS

##### PAGODA

Garro's Asian filmzine, especially the 2nd issue,  
tells it the way it is! For a two-issue sub-  
scription, send \$8.00 to Garro Nigoghossian, 2  
Holworthy Terrace, Cambridge, MA 02138

##### MONSTER ATTACK TEAM

What started out as a community access series for  
superhero & monster fans is now a thriving fanclub &  
newsletter! Whether you're into Godzilla, Ultraman or  
Kamen Rider, you'll want to buy your \$10.00 membership  
now! Ed Holland, Rt. 5 Box 1373, Sanger, TX, 76266

More than once upon a time in Hong  
Kong about a hundred years ago last  
Tuesday, there was this group of Taoist  
ghostbusters! Despite a striking  
resemblance, mannerisms & voices  
identical to other characters of the  
time, there's no relation. Why the hell  
don't the movie makers just have each  
identical movie be part of the same  
series instead of changing the names all  
the time?! Lin Feng Chiu (Lam Ching  
Ying) is a wise 40-year old wizard who's  
assistants Wan Chai and Chaleson Lau  
are so inept & inefficient they'll  
probably end up marrying pregnant women.

These two blunderers are always doing  
mischievous acts that get ghosts pissed  
off at them, like the time they put  
talismans on the Hell Police, allowing  
ghosts to run amok. Or what about the  
time they played a seemingly harmless  
prank on a young villain? The young  
rapist had it coming to him, although  
the prank (too complex to describe  
without wasting even more space)  
indirectly resulted in the culprit's  
death. His father is an evil wizard who  
could have saved his dying son, but  
would rather use the messed up lad in an  
experiment. He turns the guy into a  
weird zombie/vampire who stalks our  
heroes. Meanwhile, we got a subplot  
here too. With sex on everyone's minds  
these days (as opposed to the 1970s,  
when it was on their breath), here we go  
again with another exotic erotic ghostly  
love story. A female ghost called Le  
has the hots for Lin Feng Chiu (Lam  
Ching Ying), and Charleson Lam (Chen Su  
Ho) has the hots for Li. However, Lin  
(Lam) has no interest in her, so he must  
be either married, crazy, blind, or a  
homo. But don't get me wrong, I'm not  
anti-gay. I believe gays have rights  
too, and that homosexuals CAN get into  
Heaven. But they have to enter through  
the back door. Regardless, unlike the  
ghostly love story in MR. VAMPIRE,  
there's very little sexual reference in  
SPIRITUAL FAMILY. It kind of relieved  
me, because I object to too much sex on  
TV. That's because I keep falling off.  
Anyway, by now in the story, our three  
(four, if you count the ghost babe)  
heroes have used their Taoist spells to  
eliminate a flock of spirits, a clan of  
hopping gonsies, and a gang of  
post-George Romero zombies, not to  
mention the evil wizard's vampiric son.  
The final confrontation has them in a  
life or death struggle with the  
monstrous wizard himself. The good guys  
are the victors. That's strange, I  
thought they had CHINESE names. \*\*

## 一眉道姑

### VAMPIRE SETTLE ON POLICE CAMP

Presented by World Video in 1990  
Starring Kou Sheng (a.k.a. Eddy Ko),  
Sandra Ng

Stupid. Goofy. Preposterous.  
Ridiculous. And yet, in its own way  
this cute little comedy is oddly  
satisfying. A low budget film with  
rather cheap FX, and it's got slapstick  
comedy through out, of the nature that  
only a complete moron could enjoy. As  
only an incomplete moron, I only  
partially appreciated the excessive  
clowning around. However, there's a lot

of nice kung fu, something I wasn't  
expecting from a spooks & cops comedy.  
In one fight, a man and woman are  
battling it out using typical  
post-1980 HK movie fights, of the same  
basics as Jackie Chan, Cynthia  
Rothrock, etc. Then both fighters are  
possessed by Ching Dynasty ghosts, so  
the karate/streetfighting tactics  
become old traditional Chinese kung fu  
stuff.

Kou Sheng/Eddy Ko stars as



Inspector Chang Chiang, who's  
routinely hassled by vampire-like  
ghosts because of atrocities he  
committed in a previous life, before  
his reincarnation. He goes off to  
teach rookie cops at a training camp,  
alongside fellow cop Madam Li. Then  
the flick becomes yet another ripoff  
of POLICE ACADEMY I think, but then,  
I've never seen a POLICE ACADEMY film  
because life is too short to waste  
time. Lots of goofing around between  
the male rookies & female rookies,  
like our heroes becoming peeping toms  
when a voluptuous heroine does  
aerobics in her bedroom. Other  
typically stupid filler occurs too,  
like training scenes and the  
obligatory 'hoax' scene, where heroes  
try to scare each other, disguising  
themselves as spooks. After all this  
fairly amusing mumbo jumbo, them  
vengeful Manchu ghosts return! That's  
when this modern day comedy comes back  
to life, as cops & spooks battle it  
out with kung fu, slapstick,  
swordplay, Taoism, goofiness,  
acrobats, and theatrical costumes.\*\*

## 天師捉鬼

### GHOSTLY VIXEN

Directed by William Chang in 1989,  
Starring Sandra Ng, Amy Yip, Fung Shui  
On, & Fiong Tsui Feng

GHOSTLY VIXEN got off to a good  
start. Amy Yip as a stacked spirit,  
who really gave my spirits a lift, and  
who kills some disco geek, using a  
fatal blowjob. Then there's an  
FX-fueled battle, featuring Fung Shui  
(THE KILLER) On as A HERO, for once!  
But never judge a book by its cover.  
The farce quickly becomes yet another  
stupid comedy. However, this time  
there are at least a couple true  
laughs, like the sexually frustrated



GOOD guy who beats up beautiful, innocent females! You'd never see this in an American flick!

Vipe, it's Yip! the ghostly vixen is a sexy spirit with big tits, played by Yip Chi Mei (her real name), an actress with big tits.

Unfortunately, she (the ghost, not Yip, at least, I don't think so) 'sucks' her victims to death. Enter heroic Fung Shui On, who's a type of Chinese ghostbuster, out to bust this busty ghost. As he pursues her from Thailand to Hong Kong, we're introduced to more characters than there are airheads

at a Bon Jovi concert. Among the characters is some guy with a long dick (we don't see it, the whole film is PG material) and Sandra Ng as some sort of Taoist wizard. The long dick dude has a 3 ft. (approx.) cock, which keeps down one trouser leg. When he gets aroused, he looks like a member of the 'Ministry of Silly Walks.' He (and the male hetero audience who views the film) gets turned on frequently because there's an abundance of sexy females through out the movie. After more foolery, it's finally revealed that the ghost needs to suck from 100 men, to become reincarnated. Meanwhile, Shing Fui On goes around in a leather jacket with more chains than the Ghost of Christmas Past, as he unsuccessfully tries to convince skeptics that he's a spook hunter. But by this time, I kept my finger on the 'Scan' button, to skip the bullshit. Sandra Ng's character dies during one of the battles with Yip, so she comes back as a ghost too. The final battle of female ghosts involves the usual assortment of stunts, falls, flips, swords, arrows, kicks, FX, and even a tug-war of ten ft. tongues! Perhaps I'm making it sound more interesting than it is, it's standard HK stuff. \*\*



## "BRANDON'S BRAND OF ACTION"

ブランドン・リー

Brandon Lee

李國豪

"Like father, like son" isn't really in effect here. Where as Bruce Lee virtually introduced kung fu to western filmdom, Brandon came into the scene a little late. Lee's son, born in 1965, didn't make his acting debut until 20 years

garbage, full of quick cuts & edits, annoyingly deceitful camera angles and slow motion. KUNG FU the movie offers as much fun as picking crab lice off a



stranger's balls; using your teeth. KUNG FU never convinced me that Brandon had even 10% of his legendary father's skills, and

maybe he's as bad as David Carradine. Fortunately, Brandon Lee's later films proved otherwise. If nothing else, it got Brandon's foot in the door; his motion picture career was just beginning.

龍在江湖

**LEGACY OF RAGE-** In 1986, Brandon was off to Hong Kong to appear in this suspenseful drama, a talky gangster film, not unlike John Woo's A BETTER TOMORROW. LEGACY OF RAGE's Japanese title is FIRE DRAGON.

Although Brandon was born & raised in the U.S., he fits the part well being dubbed in Chinese. Almost the whole film is in Chinese, and what few English lines he has are dubbed with a Chinese accent! The English subtitles are barely legible. Full of mobsters, treachery, romance, prison scenes and gunplay, it's a typical HK crime drama, though a little on the tragic and/or depressing side. Produced by D&B Films and directed by Ronnie Yu, it features Michael Wong, Ku Feng, Mong Hoi, Yang Sze, Fung Shui On, and even Chen Hui Min! And yet, it's not a martial arts film! Nobody said Brandon had to follow in his father's foot kicks- I mean footsteps, but I was hoping for a fight-filled actioner! Brandon's fight with oldtimer Yang Sze lasts mere seconds, and the remainder of the action scenes are shootouts & car-chases. No stunts, no major kung fu. However, as a movie on the whole, it delivers. Brandon's character is interesting, and it's hard not to cheer him on, considering all the suffering he suffers. He plays Brandon Ma, who's deceitful friend Michael (Michael Wong) gets him framed, in order to kill a mobster called Sharky. Brandon is now the scapegoat, while a mob run by Michael and his father (Chen Hui Min) profits from the death of Sharky. Brandon ends up in a strict Chinese prison, and yet it's full of caucasian prisoners! Are most communist prisons full of whities? I wouldn't know. Brandon's girlfriend (Regina Kent, who looks very Chinese, despite the name) gives birth to their son at about the same time a mutual friend informs him he's a scapegoat, that Michael got him arrested. By the

KUNG FU, David Carradine's 1985 sequel to his ultra lame TV series. Let me sidetrack a moment to mention I've watched a few episodes of Carradine's new 'sequel' program, KUNG FU: THE LEGEND CONTINUES (I think that's what it's called). The stories are remotely interesting, although Carradine's martial arts skills are still too bad for words. Oh well, he's old, but what was his excuse for horrid fighting back in 1971? His Kwai Chang Cain character talks too soft & slow, I've never heard any Chinese immigrants talk that way! Anyway, back when David Carradine first auditioned for the role of KUNG FU's

soft-spoken priest, Bruce Lee also wanted the part, but was rejected, basically for being TOO CHINESE! Ironically, Lee eventually appeared in KUNG FU, only it was Brandon, not Bruce. In 1985's TV movie, Brandon played (double ironically) Kwai Chang Caine's son! The 1985 KUNG FU sucked like a black hole, and never indicated whether Brandon could do kung fu! The fights were typical American





time Brandon is released, Michael has kidnapped Regina & her son. The guy's obsessed with her, even though he's got more pussy around him than a tampon. So Brandon and another released prisoner (Mong Hoi) raid the mob's high-tech headquarters to rescue her and the kid. She ends up dead sometime during the gory shoot-out, but they manage to rescue the child. \*\*\*

#### SHOWDOWN IN LITTLE TOKYO

(1991)- I try to be openminded, accepting of all films, even unrealistic, far-fetched crap like this. But within a minute of the film's beginning, I roll my eyes; the yankees have disappointed me for the eleventy-leventh time! SHOWDOWN is overly theatrical & stagy in a negative way, it's got continuity problems and its whole derivative concept is



identical to dozens of other American crime dramas; a lame film, with lame fights, lame comedy and made for a lame audience. Among other things, I see America still hasn't outgrown its non-



creative, anti-artistic approach to choreographing fights. Despite Brandon Lee's apparent skills, these poor fights amount to little more than typically nongraceful barroom brawling, like in some cowboy film. Otherwise, Brandon doesn't detract from the film, he plays a geeky detective, at least adding comic relief. However, I wasn't relieved until the end. The main hero, for some reason known only to horny females, is played by Dolph Lundgren. His martial arts look worse than his ability to speak English, but that doesn't stop him from playing a vengeful cop who's father was killed in Japan, by a mean yakuza. Now his character is fullgrown, and he discovers his dad's killer to be

starting a new mob in L.A.'s Little Tokyo. All the footage of these 'Japanese' gangsters is artificial and unauthentic, despite convincing gambler tattoos they all have. Dolph's police partner, Brandon Lee, is an American-Japanese half breed, raised in L.A. In between short & poor fights, shoot-outs, nudity and smashed cars, Dolph finds time to fool around with Tia Carerre (well wouldn't you find time, no matter how busy you were?!) who plays one of the unfortunate babes forced to ride the yakuza's baloney pony. Shortly after overcoming the trauma of being raped, she hops in a hot tub with Lundgren. Why do all American action films have the obligatory erotic subplot? Do they think we need to see this? Is sex new? Do they think none of us get laid? Who do they think we are, anime fans?! I myself have had a very active sex life since about 1981, although not all my partners have had breasts like Tia Carerre's stand in, used in this flick's nudie scenes. Anyway, it's Brandon who steals the film, and as far as I'm concerned, he can keep it. Like I said, he plays a naive cop who helps Dolph Lundgren wipe out the yakuza boys, who smuggled drugs in beer bottles. Party at 11. \*

**RAPID FIRE** (1992)- Eeeyuck! This was pretty much the first Brandon Lee thriller I sat through, and unfortunately, I'm sort of like a film critic (one without pay), I suppose, so this won't be the last Brandon flick I'll get stuck seeing. I haven't seen a lot of American crime dramas, but enough to find this horrid piece of trash to be virtually identical to all them other typical American cop flicks. Of course, you gotta realize that I'm opinionated, an asshole and biased as hell (for the record, I'm being sarcastic, believe it or not). So all you **RAPID FIRE** fans need not care that I think it's unimaginative, non-fun and a



retread of cliches from **INTO THE NIGHT**, **BEVERLYHILLS COP** and any other cops & mobsters films. Of course, the average **RAPID FIRE** fan probably can't read anyway, so I have no need to apologize. The plot did nothing for me, nor did the music, or even the action, which I hear is good for an American martial arts movie. Really?!?! That shows how bad American martial arts films must be, not that I know. The only scene which amused me even remotely was where Brandon rides a motorcycle with a villain held on the front, and they crash through a panel display with glass flying everywhere. This shot is right out of Jackie Chan's **POLICE STORY**! Otherwise, the fights don't match HK kung fu movie fights, the stunts are lame by comparison, and **RAPID FIRE**'s many shootouts lack the excitement and thrills of a John Woo movie. Shortly after returning from the drive-in where I saw **RAPID FIRE**, I turned on the TV to watch another late night showing of **FISTS OF VENGEANCE** (a typical chop sockey cheapie with Yasuaki Kurata as a Japanese villain). Despite its being nearly 20 years older, and its having 25% the budget of **RAPID FIRE**, it easily blew away Brandon's film, for its many fights, superior choreography and far more entertainment value. I'm not blaming Brandon Lee for this film; for better



**PHOTOS, PG. 22:** Amy Yip, two shots.

**RIGHT** corner, young Bradon in 1973, at an unfortunate family get-together. **THIS PAGE:** TOP: Brandon with sister Shannon & mother Linda at Bruce's funeral. **MIDDLE:** Brandon in **LEGACY OF RAGE**. **ALSO:** Baby Brandon in mid-sneeze, and a fight in **RAPID FIRE**.



or worse, he played his part well (for what it's worth) and did all his own stunts, except for a couple motorcycle scenes. Anyway, this unamusing, darkly lit, boring, poorly written drama has Brandon as Jake Lo, a son of one of the victims of the Tien An Men Square massacre, but he now lives in the U.S., and accidentally stumbles across gangland warfare between an Italian mafia and a Chinese triad. He's a witness to some killing, and now the Italians, Chinese and a few renegade cops are after him. But he gets help from friends, and they kill all these bad guys before the ending credits.\*



weapon of this nature should never be used in a film, even if such usage has been common since the old westerns. Empty cartridges rarely kill people, so I suspect foulplay. The film THE CROW was plagued by all sorts of disasters before Brandon's death, as though somebody was up to no good. One technician got hospitalized by an electrical charge, and another freaked out and drove his car through a plate glass window. But who could possibly have a grudge against THE CROW and Brandon Lee? For the first time, I'm wondering if Bruce Lee's fatal aneurism wasn't accidental. Maybe the many

rumors of the Far East are true; that somebody is responsible. Chinese history tells of rival gangs & warlords who'd quickly kill each other's adult males, but never the children. But when the boys grew up, to about 25 or 27 I suppose, that's when they'd assassinate them. Coincidence?! You think some triad or cult is responsible for this?! Probably not, but I'd say something fishy is going on around here. Adding to the irony is that Brandon's death is virtually identical to a scene in

Bruce Lee's GAME OF DEATH, where Bruce Lee's character, the actor Billy Lo is shot on the set of a film, by a prop gun! Neither GAME OF DEATH nor THE CROW were completed with the actor in question. Just as GAME OF DEATH relied on Bruce Lee doubles once Lee died, I'm sure THE CROW may require similar editing to complete it. So what's next?

A series of Brandon Lee imitators? Will we hear new names like: Brandon Li? Brandon Le? Brandon Lei? Brandon Bruce? Brandon Dragon? Brandon Conaan? Brandon Bronson? Brandon Willis? Brandon Cockburn? Brandon Leroy? Brandon Jackie? My god, a whole new genre of kung fu movies may be imminent.

TO CLOSE THIS BRANDON LEE ARTICLE, ONE OF HIS MOST ILLUSIVE FILMS:

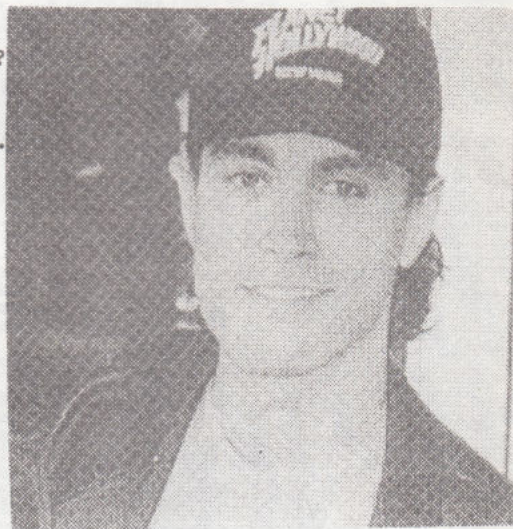
**LASER MISSION**- Rarely seen, and destined to stay that way, this American-German coproduction was probably made shortly before SHOWDOWN IN LITTLE TOKYO. Earnest Borgnine is in it, and since it was filmed in Africa, features a small cameo by that bald African who was in KILL AND KILL AGAIN and THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY. I discovered and viewed this little known farse a month after Brandon's death, so I won't be as cruel this time (reviews of those other Brandon films were written when he was alive, so I had no guilt about tearing them apart). But LASER MISSION is just another stupid, predictable, romantic adventure. Again, Brandon does practically no martial arts, and yet there are numerous fist fights, shoot-outs, chases and bloodshed. As a common American adventure, it succeeds, but I haven't lowered my standards enough to enjoy common American adventures. The version I saw was cut; like the scene where Brandon beheads a guy, or the shot where the villain falls on a spiked fence. Its stunts are pretty good though, for an American film. But there's too much cuteness and romance for my taste. The story has Brandon as a mercenary hired to rescue a scientist (Borgnine) from terrorists in Cuba. The scientist knows lots of stuff about



ブランドン・リー  
Brandon Lee  
李國豪

1965年2月1日、米カリフォルニア州オークランド生まれ。香港映画界のスター・スクーター・ブルース・リーの長男として生まれた。リーの死後、普通の少年と同じように進学し、映画製作を学ぶためにボストンのエマーソン・カレッジに入学するが、一年半で中退する。86年、ロサンゼルスのレストランでスカウトされ、人気TVシリーズ「燃えよカンフー」の後日談をTVムービー化した。カンフー・ザ・ムービーに出演し、ブルース・リー二世として注目をあびる。放映後に殺到した出演依頼の中で、カンフー映画やブルース・リーの伝記映画でないD & Bフィルム作品を選び、86年「ファイアー・ドラゴン」で本格的な映画デビューを飾る。  
「日本公開作品」  
「ファイアー・ドラゴン」(86)

lasers, so the evil soldiers want to use him to make weapons. So Brandon ventures across a desert with his female partner and eventual love interest Debbie Nonahan. Attired in a low cut, skimpy outfit the whole time, her cleavage is showcased through out the



film, from various angles & positions. I'd like to watch her ride a pogo stick in slow motion. Anyway, with the help of a couple goofy renegade soldiers, the villains all get defeated at their desert fortress, after the climactic shoot out. Earnest Borgnine has been rescued, but better yet, the movie is over. \*

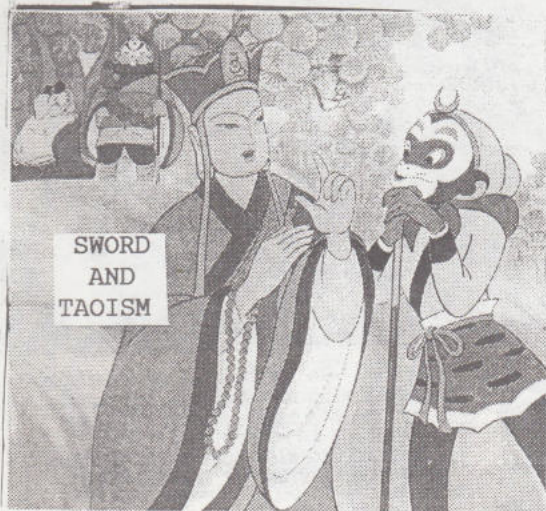
LATER . . . .

The night after Brandon died, I tossed & turned. Sleep was as rare as a condom at an all-lesbian orgy. When I eventually got my full two hours of sleep, it was full of dreams of Brandon, many of which told me, "Don't worry, it was just a publicity stunt!" Nope, the dreams never came true. Brandon ceased living 20 years after his father also ceased living. His death is even more bizarre than Bruce's, since he was killed by, of all things, a prop gun! While shooting a scene for his film THE CROW, a prop gun fired a blank which punctured his abdomen, and got lodged in his spine. I know nothing about guns and bullets. But it seems to me that a



**BRANDON LEE**  
Born: 2/1/65, Oakland, CA  
Died: 3/31/93, Wilmington, NC  
Films: KUNG FU, KUNG FU: THE NEXT GENERATION, LEGACY OF RAGE, LASER MISSION, SHOWDOWN IN LITTLE TOKYO, RAPID FIRE





Vietnamese and some Japanese.

Sun Wu Kung, the magical Monkey King is not only the most popular character in Peking's acrobatic operas, but the world's first superhero as well, so take note, all you pretentious comic book geeks! Sun's legends date back to the 7th century, when a factual pilgrimage took place. The Indian religion Buddhism was popularized in China, largely due to the efforts of a benevolent Chinese priest knows by many names including Tripitaka, Chuan San, and Oshu. He was a real person who acquired Buddhist scrolls in India, thereby founding Buddhist monasteries in China (one which would become known as Shaolin, another legendary story!). Regardless,

misused their magic, so guiding that annoying priest to India is their only hope of forgiveness against Buddha's strict attitude. To insure that the monkey kisses ass and remains a good little boy, a golden ring is placed around his head, one which causes pain if he disobeys the priest. The whole novel is incredibly long, reading it was a royal pain in the gonads, so no single movie could possibly include every chapter (not unless the movie was longer than a sperm whale's cock). The entire novel actually starts way before the actual Journey occurs; dealing with Sun Wu Kung's birth, when he leaves his fellow monkeys' home at the waterfall to go learn magic, and of course the infamous "Havoc in Heaven" chapter. This is where he flies up to Heaven to raise a little hell. He drinks a forbidden elixir, tries to take over, calls himself "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven," and eats all their immortality peaches (in Chinese legends, peaches are believed to have magic powers. Yeah, right). This makes him invincible, so an angry Buddha buries him underground for about 500 years. He gets released only to assist the priest on the perilous voyage to India, and thus starts the journey mentioned earlier. Another important factor, in virtually every version of the story, is the introduction of that magical pig-monster, Pigsy. Expelled from Heaven for being the horny, fat swine (sounds like many sci-fi fans I know) he is, this ex-angel continues his mischievous harassment on Earth, trying to seduce and marry a young Chinese babe. Fortunately, the monk and monkey have begun their journey, and thwart the obese bore's rape attempt. After the Monkey King uses magic to impersonate the girl and tease & confuse Pigsy, the pig offers his services on the journey. Hopefully, his help will gain him forgiveness in Buddha's eye, and he may return to Heaven as an angel once more. Later, the oceanic cannibal Sandy/Wu Ching joins them, and thus

# 西遊記

This is my fantasy column, "Sword & Taoism", and for all you idiots who still pronounce the Tao as 'tayo', it's correct pronunciation is Dow, as in Dow Jones. Unless you're one of O.C.'s trendy, stupid new readers who only reads it for the "Modern Heroes of H.K." column, you know that not all the films in "Sword & Taoism" involve swords or Taoism, but rather, I chose that title as a contrast to the phrase 'sword & sorcery.' Oh well, this edition of OC's fantasy column is my long overdue tribute to the Monkey King of "Journey to the West." Of course, OC #7 was a special Monkey King issue, but THAT was many years ago, and besides, the issue is probably sold out by now. So it's about time I recap the Monkey King. Naturally, a mere column such as this hasn't the space to be as informative and detailed as a whole issue (OC #7). But this issue's SWORD & TAOISM shall include as many Monkey King productions as I have time for. I'm afraid I still haven't located some illusive Japanese puppet film version, nor do I have a complete copy of HAVOC IN HEAVEN, a Chinese cartoon from 1960. There are hundreds of Monkey King movies & TV shows in existence, some Chinese, some



by the 13th century, the monk's journey to and from India had evolved into numerous unrealistic legends, and upon these, novelist Wu Cheng En based his fantasy/comedy novel, "Journey to the West." In it, the gods team up the benevolent monk with a magical monkey (Sun Wu Kung, AKA the Monkey King) and two fallen angels: the magical pig Pa Chieh ('Pigsy,' in the English adaptations of the novel), and a reformed cannibal called Wu Ching ('Sandy,' in English). Pa Chieh/Pigsy, Wu Ching/Sandy, and our heroic primate all had caused grief as they

SELECTIONS FROM  
CHINA'S GREAT CLASSICAL NOVELS

## THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST

BY WU CHENG-EN





begins the bulk of the story, as they go on a dangerous, magical journey, battling bandits, cannibals, demons, dragons, amazons, giant spiders and vampires.

Having been a fan of the legend for so long, I sometimes get all teary-eyed when I see the traditional, classic image: Four jolly travelers surrounded by wilderness; one is a priest on a horse, the Monkey King scouting ahead, and a rake wielding pig trails behind them. The image conjures brilliance, mystique and adventure. What follows are reviews of a few of the many movies and TV shows based on this masterpiece of all fairytales.

### ALAKAZAM THE GREAT

[Original Japanese title: "Saiyuki"]

Produced by Toei in 1961, Scenario: Keinosuke Uegusa, Directed by Taiji Yabushita, Written by Osamu Tezuka, Producer: Hiroshi Okawa, American version by Lou Rousoff

By far the most wellknown version of "Journey to the West" in the U.S.A.

I'm not a big fan of all them Japanese cartoons, I've got better things to do than hang out at comic cons, gain obesity and beat off to THE DIRTY PAIR; however, this early example of 'Japanimation' was the first time I ever saw the Monkey King. As a child, I preferred this imaginative, feature-length cartoon over any Disney 'classic', and as I grew up, became as familiar with the Monkey King as Bugs Bunny. I later came to realize, through extensive research at libraries, that Alakazam's real name is Sun Wu Kung ('Goku', in Japanese), Prince Amat's real name was Tripitaka, Sir Quigly's real name is Pa Chieh,

etc. Regardless, ALAKAZAM's English dubbing featured the voices of Jack Grimes, Frankie Avalon, and Jonathan

Winters, and changes a pro-Buddhist theme into a 'be kind to your neighbor' theme. But isn't that what Buddhism is really all about? Anyway, aside from the name changes, ALAKAZAM remains faithful to the Japanese version, which remains faithful to the original Chinese novel, I guess. One thing ignored in ALAKAZAM is how our mighty ape came to possess his weapon; a magical staff. In this movie, he merely grabs it from an opponent in battle. Actually, it's a much more complex tale of the King Dragon, in an underwater kingdom (where the weapon came from). Wu Ching/Sandy, called something else in the English version, is presented as an Indian native, and not the Chinese warrior he is in later films. I do tend to prefer the original Japanese version, "Saiyuki," over ALAKAZAM. The music is a little different, and a few death scenes (quick cuts) are removed from the USA version. Even though it's just a dumb kiddy cartoon, I recommend it for its great animation, equally great artwork, its colorful imagery, and semi-amusing comedy.

A magical monkey must abandon his home at the waterfall to aid travelers on a musical pilgrimage, during which they must obtain a magical fan, (if they can defeat its evil owner, a bull-like demon) in order to stop a massive fire (one of the novel's most wellknown, and often repeated chapters). In the end, a one horned demon-boy becomes their



friend. To the best of my knowledge, this character wasn't in the novel, but there's some authentic Chinese mythology in effect here; this demonic kid also appears in another cartoon, A STORY OF CHINESE GODS! \* \*

### THE MONKEY

["Monkey goes to the West", on the Chinese video rental box]

Produced by the Shaw Brothers in 1968, Directed by Ho Meng Hua, Producer: Run Run Shaw, Story: Eng Kang, Film Editing: Chiang Hsing Loo, Music: Ng Fo Ling, Starring: Yueh Hua, Ho Fan, Pan Pan, Tien Shen

Them thar Shaw dudes made this one in the 1960s, a revolutionary film in that all previous Monkey King films (i.e. 1926's MONKEY FIGHTS GOLDEN LEOPARD, a B&W, silent film) were mere operas; filmed stage-plays.

Unfortunately, THE MONKEY has a lingering stench of ballads, left over from the heyday of Chinese musicals (ironically, this live action movie actually has more ballads than ALAKAZAM!). My tape of





PHOTOS, THESE TWO PAGES: Various shots from 1979's **SAIYUKI** series. BELOW: A couple ads from Britain's TV Times.



THE MONKEY has most of the musical song & dance numbers mercifully edited out,

thanks to the Pause button on my remote control (Which explains why my copy is so short). What's left is an enjoyable, fast-paced fantasy. There are numerous swordfights, though crude ones, after all, the only one doing decent sword duels back then was Jimmy Wang Yu, in his thrillers. Still, the high speed photography (or editing, however they do it) and occasional acrobats add to the excitement. There aren't really a whole lot of special effects, but being a Shaw film, they put their money to good use. The makeup, costumes, and sets are quite good for such an old movie. But ya gotta suspend your

### 3.00 Monkey



#### Monkey needs a fan club

*The Fires Of Jealousy:* Only when Monkey succeeds in settling a lovers' tiff will he be able to ask the woman, otherwise known as the Queen of Fire, to lend him her magic fan. No, it's not that he's a little hot under the collar, but it'll come in handy to cool down some dodgy volcanoes. Remember, we are in the realms of fantasy here.

who plays Pa Chieh ('Pigsy' in the English subtitles) would later make a cameo in ENTER THE DRAGON, in the banquet scene (he eats rice and catches a piece of fruit).

The priest Hsuan Chuan is off to India to get them Buddhist scriptures and releases the magical monkey, Sun Wu Kung, from subterranean imprisonment by Buddha. That's basically where this saga starts, no intro about Monkey's 'havoc in Heaven', etc., or the peaches. We assume all that happened before the film's starting. With the disciplinary ring around the monkey's head (his scalp! Not the other head! It's NOT that kind of ring!), they take on a hungry dinosaur/dragon, and later thwart Pigsy's illegal marriage plans. Even so, the horny pig demon assists them on their voyage, and later gets them in trouble when he watches naked ladies swimming (a re-occurring factor in several versions). Their 4th fellow adventurer, Sandy, doesn't really join them until the end (he's their enemy through out most of the film).

\*\*

### NEW TILGRIMS TO THE WEST

Presented by seasonal Films in 1979.  
Producer: Lo Wei, Director: Chang Ping  
Yes, "Tilgrims" is a misspelling of

TELEPHONE # 1-718-456-0663  
CALL FROM 7:30 PM. TO 10:30 PM.  
"EVENINGS ONLY" No Collect Calls Please



## JARS VIDEO COLLECTIBLES

P.O. BOX 113

LITTLE NECK N.Y. 11363

Specializing In Martial Arts Movies, Animation,  
Science Fiction and Westerns.

Largest Collection Of Kung Fu Movies In The World.

Also, We Have A Video Rental Club Thru The Mail

Giant Catalog: \$4.00

And We Buy New And Used Pre-Recorded Video Tapes. "MAIL ORDER ONLY"

"MAIL ORDER ONLY"

pilgrims, but that's this classic's only major flaw. It's about time we have a non-musical variation on "Journey to the West." This wild actioner basically gives a big 'fuck you' to the Peking Opera and would rather dazzle us with special effects and sword duels! Needless to say, this is a fun thriller full of epic proportions! The FX are quite good for a 1970s film, and the many battles are more fun than a barrel of monkey kings! I won't go heavily into the story, since I already did that in OC#8, back when I was more of a technogeek (sadly, most of my fellow writers

still are; going into intricate detail about scripts. Get a life, dudes!). Let me just say that the charismatic Monkey's exploits make him a respectable hero who'd easily give Superman, Batman Ultraman, and even Kamen Rider a run for their money. To try and make it as brief as possible, it starts off with the "Havoc in Heaven" chapter. Monkey Sun's (his name in the English subtitles) abusive behavior gets Buddha all pissed off, so he forces that damn chimp to go on a pilgrimage; it's either that or remain trapped in a cave! So about the first portion of TILGRIMS deals with Monkey's first meetings with his fellow adventurers, Sun Tsung (Buddhist monk), Pa Chieh (horny pig), and Wu Ching (sea-dwelling cannibal) in familiar stories we've seen re-enacted many times. Later, they go on a couple incredible adventures: Monkey Sun must rescue his pals from hungry demons (disguised as bathing beauties to tempt the pig) who possess a powerful suction gourd, and later, have it out with Buffalo-fairies to get that magical fan to put out forest fires! And I thought MY day-to-day adventures were complex! \*\*\*\*

### 3.00 Monkey



#### Monkey searches for his Earth Mother

Pretty As A Picture: Pigsy and Sandy have mothers, but poor old Monkey was born from stone but then again, that makes Earth — all of it — his mother, who plays Pa Chieh ('Pigsy' in the English subtitles) would later make a cameo in ENTER THE DRAGON, in the banquet scene (he eats rice and catches a piece of fruit).





**RIGHT [or Left, if you're dislexic]:** Our heroic Monkey tangles with some bitch in *SAIYUKI*, as it's known on TV in Japan, though called *MONKEY* in its illusive English language dubbbs.

the whole saga from beginning to end, unlike the films reviewed thus far (trying to squeeze Wu Cheng En's entire tale into a mere feature length film is harder than frozen chocolate).

So them Nipponese dudes simply changed each chapter into an episode of the program. My only two complaints on *SAIYUKI* are as follows:

1. Once again, our heroic monkey 'Goku' (the pathetic Japanese mispronunciation of Wu Kung!) is an actor with no real mask or makeup appliance. He looks more like a Japanese comedian with a suntan, than a real (or even fake) monkey.
2. Why the hell did they cast a female to play the Buddhist priest? The actress's face is attractive, and she even wears eyeliner. I guess that lame casting director can't tell the difference between males and females, or maybe he sniffs glue. Super Glue, that is. Anyway, there were apparently two seasons of *SAIYUKI*, the second being *SAIYUKI II*, which I assume has the pilgrims returning from India, back to China. There's supposedly some new character in the series, which I never saw.

My opinion of *SAIYUKI* is higher than Lebanon's death rate. It's very enjoyable, and a good recommendation to the first time Monkey King viewer. Rather youth-oriented, (though aimed more at young adults, not stupid little kids), the only vocal songs are those of Godaigo, some Japanese pop band from the 1970s. Better than Pink Lady, but not as cool as Shonen Knife or the Blue Hearts. I don't like Godaigo's disco pop very much, but it's a refreshing change from the Peking opera tunes of earlier Monkey musicals. But those silly disco-rock songs are only featured at the beginning credits ("Monkey Magic") and ending credits ("Gandhara") and as incidental background songs, it's NEVER implied that the characters are singing.

Getting more into specifics as to why this series is the greatest thing since condomless sex, take the action, for example. Although our main heroes are comedians (NOT action stars), they perform their swordplay with speed and energy. There's usually at least one duel per episode, sometimes more. As for the FX, they're not that bad, yet semi-scarce in usage, but seem to suffice. Interesting to note the involvement of Jun Fukuda, who, as you know, works or worked for Toho as a director. So it's no massive surprise to see Akihiko Hirata (and other familiar faces) make an occasional cameo or guest starring appearances. But what really baffles the hell out of me, much like when former president Bush was baffled at the American public's not being satisfied by his use of 'voodoo' trickle down economics, is the amazing fact that *SAIYUKI* was purchased by Brits who dubbed it in English! This is the first time for an English Monkey King, since 1961's *ALAKAZAM!* But this one is dubbed accurately, so *SAIYUKI*'s transition into *MONKEY* is a faithful, flawless, English adaptation of the novel! And a damn fun one too, although much of the Japanese/Chinese humor sounds strange when dubbed in English. Worse yet, when British twits try and talk with a Japanese

Planning: King Chung Liang & Hsiung Hsih Ming, Produced By Lin Chi Fong, Asst. Prod.: Lin Ho Ping, Screenplay: Yao Chin Kang

Being so closely related to *TILGRIMS*, both films are nearly identical; you could splice them both together and come up with a convincing 4-hr. film. Since I loved *TILGRIMS* it as much as safe sex (but not as much as unsafe sex), of course loved *MONKEY WAR* just as much! As parts 1 & 2 of a short film series, you can't like (or dislike) one without reacting similarly to the other. Certain scenes look faithful to the novel, while much of the film seems completely original (new adventures, I think). Interesting to note that an issue of *ASIAN TRASH CINEMA* says this movie was made in 1984. This indicates my record of time-keeping is flawed; I could have sworn I saw the flick in a Chinatown theater in 1982 or '83! But I agree with ATC in that it's "one of the best examples of Chinese fantasy", and "lots" of action and comic book excitement. Unfortunately, that's pretty much all they had to say about it!

As for the plot, it's the further adventures of our wild & crazy, laser firing heroes, as they continue their journey to the west. Their trip is

interrupted when they rescue a group of Taoists, treated as slaves by a couple ridiculous Goat Gods (one is played by Wei Ping Ao). So Monkey Sun, Wu Ching, Pa Chieh and the priest take on monstrous giant spiders, hungry fairies (magicians, not homos) and in an alltime climax to end all climaxes, take on winged warriors of Flying Men Valley (characters not unlike the Eagle Men from that old *FLASH GORDON* serial). Fantastic, outrageous fun to be had by any viewer with taste (and you too!).

#### MONKEY

(original Japanese title: "Saiyuki", & "Saiyuki II") Produced by NTV & Kokusai Hosi in 1979, Directed by Yusuke Watanabe, Costumes: Kotaro Watanabe,

Leave it to them wild & crazy Japanese over in Japan to blow our minds like Madonna blew her first record producer. This 1979 TV series is an ingenious, hilarious, 1-hour-an-episode masterpiece of Japanese pop culture and the ancient Chinese novel. As an ongoing show with more episodes than New Yorkers in jail, there is, of course, more room for complex, intricate details of the story. This exciting fantasy/comedy is informative and tells



accent, it can get unintelligible. The series was mentioned in a trendy, teenybopper rag called Star Hits, because Boy George played the priest in a beer commercial, based on SAIYUKI. Surprisingly, the article had less-than-flattering things to say about the series. Regardless, there's a lot of jokes, gags, puns, and laughs for the more patient viewers. With this program being such a fun combination of philosophy, humor, & fantasy, why the hell haven't these English episodes of MONKEY ever been released to the USA? Despite rumors of redtape and copyright problems, I believe the reason American viewers never saw it was simply because of a lack of interest in something so exotic. Also, this fanatically Christian country possibly has no tolerance for a pro-Buddhist series, as though it'll convert people. That's as likely as finding an air conditioner in an igloo. Like when the heroic priest says, "There's no heaven or hell; it's all in your mind," in the 5th or 6th episode. As someone who borders between agnostic and atheist, I see religious rivalries/narrowmindedness/intolerance as proof of a screwed society. Regardless, SAIYUKI ("Monkey") has been seen in Europe, Australia and Puerto Rico (San Juan), so it's thanks to the valiant efforts of tape collectors & traders in these three countries that I can write this review for you.

You should know this story by now. A magical monkey called Goku is born from a rock and he leaves his tribe of monkeys in favor of magic and fighting. His infamous 'Havoc in Heaven' causes a wager between him and Buddha. Goku loses, so Buddha locks him up in a cave for 500 years, until he agrees to aid the priest Oshu ('Tipitaka' in the English dubbing) on a voyage to India. So along with Hakai ('Pigsy') and Gojo ('Sandy'), they're off to see the Buddha, the wonderful Buddha of India! Along the way, they get annoyed by the usual assortment of bandits, demons, dragons, and critics. \* \* \* \*

## JOURNEY TO THE WEST

[Chinese title: "Sai Yao Kei"]  
Produced by Wang Feng & Ran Ruolin, consisting of 25 episodes, Original Story: Wu Cheng En, Screenplay: Da Yinglu, Zou Yijing, Yang Jie, Director: Yang Jie, Cameraman: Wang Chonggiu, Asst. Directors: Ma Yunhong, Zheng Yueyang, Art Directors: Ma Yunhong, Li Xiangfeng, Lighting Engineer: Feng Jingshan, Makeup Artist: Wang Xizhoung, Music Director: Wang Wenhua, Lyrics: Yan Su, Composer: Xu Jingguing, Solist: Jiang Dawei, Conductor: Hu Bingzu, Performed by China Central Ballet Ensemble Orchestra, Costume Designers: Yan Xiumin, Wong Yunji, Ge Baodong, Martial Arts Directors: Lin Zhijian, Xian Bohua, CAST . . . . . Monkey King: Liu Xiao Lingtong, Monk Xuanzang: Xu Shaohua, Bajie Pig: Ma Dehua, Friar Sand: Yan Huaili

Yes, this is the same classic soap opera I forced you to read about

in OC#11, but I'm reviewing it again because it was recently re-broadcast in my area, thanks to the otherwise incredibly dull series INSIDE CHINA (see sidebar). This time, it was broadcast on Ch. 38 (in association with Rainbow TV, a division of Amasia TV Productions), formerly a 24 hr. religious fanatic station. Amazingly, the whole series had English subtitles, making this series priceless, a must for any Monkey King enthusiast like myself and anybody else with a brain. Regrettably, people with brains are rarer than a Julia Childs porno movie. So with me being the only one videotaping (let alone watching) this classic fantasy series, never can I simply get a re-dupe of the first 10 minutes of episode 1, since nobody else cared enough to record this masterpiece of mainland Chinese videotape. You see, I wasn't able to tape the first ten minutes (which I may never see again), that's the price I pay for preferring unique, obscure, TV over all the mainstream, monotonous shit.

As I mentioned about 98 words ago, this period drama has English subtitles, making it all the easier to understand what the hell is going on. Of course, being the USA's #1 fan of the Monkey King, I already know the whole story like I know the back of my dick, but the subtitles clarify every scene, situation, and conversation. The subtitles are indeed needed, as this overly talky program can get dull or confusing to we who are Chinese-language



impaired. But the excessive, seemingly pointless dialogue is worth sitting through, as this beautifully taped series has an occasional fight and impressive visual FX too. And, unlike all the other live action movies & TV shows reviewed thus far, this one actually has a decent, post-PLANET OF THE APES makeup appliance for the Monkey King! Where as numerous films had a decent mask for Pigsy, most of them had no real mask for the monkey. For once, the actor playing Sun Wu Kung (in this case, Liu Xiao Lingtong) has a genuine, rather realistic, ape mask glued to his face! As a product of the late 1980s,

this program features kicks, swordplay and other kung fu too, even though this martial art didn't exist during the story's time period, and subsequently, most other Monkey films & TV shows involve less kung fu, and more Peking opera-type dances and acrobats. Again, the overdone dialogue sucks the big one, the fights are great, and I have nothing but praise, 'oooooooooh's and 'aaaaaaaah's for the lavish sets, costumes, editing, music, theme song, editing, humorous antics, and faithfulness to Wu Cheng En's ancient novel.

As for the script of this remake, it's been told before. But this time, every aspect of this story is explained in detail, being a long series, not just a feature-length movie. It's all done in a very traditional manner, unlike Japan's filmed TV show SAIYUKI, which was full of camp and zany pop-culture overtones. Again, a mischievous monkey, the king of a tribe of monkeys at a waterfall, acquires magic to piss off all them gods in Heaven. So Buddha forces him to aid the Buddhist priest Xuanzang (according to the English subtitles) as they shove off to India to get that Buddhist stuff. The first episode ends with the Monkey Sun learning magic from a wizard, and the other characters join later in the series. Pigsy's name is spelled Bajie this week, and that aquatic cannibal Wu Ching is called Friar Sand. The only thing which really separates this

program from other versions is that our fun lovin' ape doesn't use a cloud to fly; he just spins and flies, kinda' like Ultraman, but without the "Swatch!" (hhmm. You think maybe Ultraman was a collector of teenybopper watches?). \* \* \*

VIDEO GRA / FX  
YOUR SOURCE FOR JAPANESE  
SPECIAL EFFECTS FILMS  
High quality VHS tapes  
of your favorite tok-  
usatsu movies & TV  
series-forget lousy  
3-gen copies at out-  
ragious prices-VIDEO  
GRA/FX guarantees ex-  
ceptional image and  
sound quality for the  
discerning fan & col-  
lector. ALL TAPES \$20  
PPD! SEND \$1.00 FOR  
COMPLETE LIST Make  
Money Orders out to:  
Loren Portillo, 354  
Valencia Dr., South  
San Francisco, CA 94080

[Sold from one collector  
to another, no rights  
given or implied.]

## LASER DISCOVERY

When in the Bay Area, drop by. These stores carry a wide assortment of HK laser disks and video rentals. Two locations:

1520D S. El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94402

348 Gellert Blvd., Daly City, CA 94015



## INSIDE CHINA

Director: Anthony Chan, Footage Supplied by Central Chinese TV, Produced by Amasia TV Productions in 1990, hosts: Jacqueline Chun, David Chavez, Curtiss Kim

Can you imagine a weekly, 2 hr. an episode TV show all about Red China? If you can't imagine such an informative newsmagazine, keep it that way! You haven't missed a thing; **INSIDE CHINA** is so horrendously, appallingly dull! Dull! Dull! Our three hosts talk about Chinese oil paintings, various folk dances from Taiwan to Shanghai, and interview Taipei's most experienced rice piker! In other words, **INSIDE CHINA**'s ultra safe, pleasant reports give us the impression there's not a helluva' lot going on in the ultra-oppressed dictatorship we call China. I'd like to know more about its underground pop art (i.e. that old Chinese new wave band the Dragons! Whatever happened to them?) and the civil unrest! How about an update on those involved in the Tien An Men Square massacre?! Of course not, **INSIDE CHINA** seems backed by Chinese Central Television! So the series rambles on about silk making and the Grand Canal (whatever the hell that is), so as to tell us everything is nice & peachy in this country where everybody is forced to either dress like a janitor or a reject from **MY THREE SONS**. However, I'm not anti-communist, every type of government has its advantages and disadvantages, and its the extremes of ANY type of authority which causes unrest or oppression. Regardless, our American hosts make the most of **INSIDE CHINA**'s conservative atmosphere. They all try to show a sense of humor, including Chinese American Jacqueline Chun, the only female host. David Chavez, the only caucasian host manages to seem cool despite a geeky suit & tie, while Curtiss Kim, the oldest of the three, is the most amusing. When David Chavez said they were going to talk about Chinese new year celebrations, the ever horny (so it seems) Curtiss said: "Does that mean we're going to be celibate?" Most interesting is how they try to introduce the Monkey King to the American viewers, comparing his antics to Scooby Doo, Luke Skywalker and Yoda. Apparently, **INSIDE CHINA** was broadcast locally a full year before they included **SAI YAO KEI** as part of their time slot, before that, they showed feature-length movies from mainland China, like one of Jet Li's Shaolin films. After airing all 25 episodes of the weekly Monkey King series, they began showing another subtitled, period soap opera, **JUDGE DEE**. Despite subtitled, I still found this series to be even duller than the American TV movie **JUDGE DEE & THE MONASTERY MURDERS** (1974), so I didn't bother videotaping it. The last time I tried watching **INSIDE CHINA**, their full 2 hr. timeslot was a Chinese musical special, with music like that of Lawrence Welk, but without the edge. Despite subtitles, David Chavez's interruptions & voice overs, it was unwatchable. Most ridiculous was when Chavez said: "Now we're going to get down & dirty with some Taiwanese rock & roll." Obviously it's some bizarre new usage of the term 'rock & roll' unless you consider mellow love ballads not unlike Don Ho or Julio Iglesias to be rock & roll.

## THE EARLEE FILMS OF THE LATE - LEE

### GREEN HORNET

1966; Produced by Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox, Created by George Trendel, Starring: Van Williams, Bruce Lee, Wende Wagner



Way way way back in them roaring 40s (or was it the 30s that supposedly roared?), George Trendell, the mastermind behind **THE LONE RANGER** came up with a

tellanyone! That's why he wore a mask), so his nephew is Britt Reid, alias the Green Hornet. **GREEN HORNET** was a B&W serial, and a radio show featuring the adventures of this mysterious phantom & his Chinese accomplice Kato.

Bruce Lee's kung fu debut in the US all started when he kicked serious ass at a 1964 karate tournament at Longbeach, CA. The late Ed Parker (by that I mean he too is dead, not that he never showed up on time) filmed portions of Lee's performance (footage of which is widespread among underground bootlegging networks) and let celebrity hairdresser Jay Sebring check it out. Sebring later met that nazi/hippy/folk hero Charles Manson one fateful night and reached the afterlife, if there is one. Thankfully, long before Jay Sebring became no more, he had William Dozier get a load of Lee's martial arts footage from the tournament, and coincidentally, Dozier was planning a new (in 1966, that is) TV show about **THE GREEN HORNET**! Dozier was also responsible (some say irresponsible) for the **BATMAN** series as well. Always an exhibitionist & show off, Lee agreed to audition for the role of Kato in **GREEN HORNET**, and the rest is history.

Beyond a doubt, **GREEN HORNET** is my favorite American TV show; cross my heart and hope to listen to a Michael Bolton album. Of course, what American TV shows are worth

comparing it to? Let's face it, competition isn't exactly fierce. **GREEN HORNET** is a one-of-a-kind superhero series, the only American one to feature good guys rebellious enough to smack even an occasional police officer if need be. The plots for every episode (except for the awful one with John Carradine in the wax museum) are unique, intriguing & interesting, though a touch on the complex and/or dull side. It's enjoyable, though not exactly action packed, and Lee's part, at best, is a mere co-starring role. However, every episode (except the one with the wax museum) has Lee in at least one brief fight, although his kicks & punches lack the speed & grace of his work in later films.

In comparison with its sister series



modernized sequel, sort of. Check this out; the Lone Ranger's real name was John Reid (but keep it a secret, don't

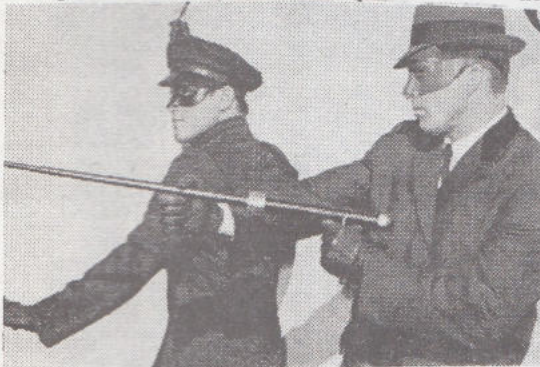




BATMAN, both have similar music scores and fast-paced plots, and deal with masked superheroes, but the similarities end there. Batman & Robin are clean-cut, goody-two-shoes types, while Green Hornet & Kato are renegades. They're good guys, usually aiding police in their own devious ways, and border on being questionable & ruthless. GREEN HORNET lacks the synthetic stupidity (I mean camp) of BATMAN. Ironically, Green Hornet & Kato appeared on a few episodes of BATMAN, see OC#7 for details.

The staff & crew wanted the series to change from 30 minute episodes to 1-hour episodes, so conflicts arose. On the set, that prankster Lee was always showing off, and at one point, he accidentally broke a skeptic's nose! But inevitably, what canceled GREEN HORNET after a mere 30 episodes (1966-'67) was its less-than-perfect ratings.

Storywise, the Green Hornet is a superhero who thrives on his false image as a criminal to operate freely in the underworld; solving cases, dodging police and tackling mobsters. He and his partner in anti-crime Kato (Bruce



Lee) travel in their high-tech car the Black Beauty, equipped with fancy weapons. Hornet's gas gun, an electronic baton called the 'Hornet Sting', and Kato's kung fu ('gung fu' as he pronounces it) are their main instruments of combat. Hornet's real identity is Britt Reid, editor of a newspaper with a staff of unimportant characters added to the show, thereby taking more screentime from Lee. What follows is a brief (hopefully) synopsis of one of the most wellknown episodes:

#### "TERROR OF THE TONGS"

Kato & Green Hornet investigate tong rivalry at a local Chinatown. Lo Sing (played by Mako, that often seen Japanese American actor who'd later work with Jackie Chan & Chuck Norris) leads a nasty gung fu school to harass the Golden Lotus Cafe as part of Duke Slate's protection racket. Ironically, Dan Inosanto doubled for Mako in a scene where a hooded Lo Sing knocks Lee into a garbage can, to which Lee later replies "If we ever meet up with that masked gung fu man again, I want him." Lee eventually gets his revenge, but only after a dull subplot about some whiney little witness called Jimmy Ki. Regardless, the episode's 3rd and final confrontation is the best, for what it's worth. Our heroes meet the villainous mobsters and kung fuers at what they call a Buddhist Temple, which actually looks more like a heavily decorated theater or stagehouse. Lee quickly (way too quickly) dispatches a few Chinese gung fu students before confronting Lo Sing (Mako & Dan Inosanto, alternately) in a fair duel lasting 30 whole seconds.

#### IRONSIDE

1968; Starring Raymond Burr and a wheelchair

I never saw the full episode with Lee (or any full episodes of the show), just the sequence with Bruce Lee himself. The link up has Raymond Burr in his office, mentioning they'll

have to question the instructor of a 'karate school', while looking at a phonebook ad which reads "Judo" and "Aikido." As always, Lee is seen wearing his Chinese kung fu uniform, but teaching students who wear karate gis, fighting on totami mats! Lee does some impressive sparring, and even an acrobat, before some lady comes to ask him questions



Gung-Fu, advanced form of Karate

about some missing jewel or pendant. The scene ends after some dialogue.

#### MARLOWE

1968; Starring James Garner & Rita Moreno

This feature-length crime drama stars James Garner as a detective. The movie is bad, the story is uninteresting despite Bruce Lee's cameo as hitman Winslow Wong. Bruce comes into Garner's (as Marlowe) office and kicks holes in the wall. Later, he tries to beat up Garner on top of a building, but falls to his death. Lee's martial arts and performance is great as always, the highlight of an otherwise poor excuse for a movie.

#### LONGSTREET

1969, Starring James Franciscus, Marilyn Mason, Peter Mark Richman, sometimes Bruce Lee, Executive Producer: Stirling Silliphant

The only American crime dramas I ever really liked were POLICE SQUAD and maybe SLEDGE HAMMER. And you know what; I've seen LONGSTREET now, and there's still only two cop shows I like: POLICE SQUAD and SLEDGE HAMMER! Bruce Lee's short cameos through out the first few LONGSTREETs make them worth seeing, but only for Lee's appearances. Otherwise, LONGSTREET is an excruciatingly uninteresting drama. The first few episodes are the only ones with Lee,



PHOTOS; BOTH THESE PAGES: Bruce Lee and Van Williams kick ass in the GREEN HORNET. ABOVE: Rare glimpses of a GREEN HORNET comic book from the 1960s. RIGHT: Lee with James Franciscus in LONGSTREET.



**PHOTOGRAPHS, DOWN THERE:** Well let's see. There's a shot of Bruce and son Brandon working out, preparing for their deaths. Also a shot of Kato kicking some guy, and another shot out of a **GREEN HORNET** comicbook, and way, way below, John Ashley fights fire with crowbar in **MAD DOCTOR OF BLOOD ISLAND**.

and therefor, the only ones worth seeing. I don't know how many episodes they made after Lee went to HK, and hopefully, never will. Regardless, so far as I can figure out, it's a series about some blind detective called Mike Longstreet (James Franciscus) who gets by with a little help from his friends: His seeing-eye-dog Max, a blond lady called Nikki, and maybe a cop or two. Oh yes, and on rare occasion, there's another good guy, Li Chung (Bruce Lee). My favorite characters are Li Chung and the dog. Neither of them are alive now.

Episode #1, THE WAY OF THE INTERCEPTING FIST, by Stirling Siliphant

As you know, this title refers to Jeet Kune Do, the kung fu system developed by Bruce himself, so this pilot was written with Lee in mind. Bruce Lee's first appearance is at the episode's very beginning when he (as Li Chung) accidentally stumbles across a beating one fateful night. Seems a gang of paranoid smugglers is beating up Longstreet (Franciscus) for trespassing.

"Stop!", Lee says, and then he kung fuses them. The fight is pathetically brief at best, and dimly lit (or dimly unlit), so nothing is clear. Regardless, the remainder of this episode has Lee training our blind naive hero in the art of Jeet Kune Do, so he can avenge himself against the boss of the hijackers. During the episode, Lee shines out like a florescent crayon under a black light, and demonstrates some magnificent kicks! Lee also does a lot of intelligently written dialogue, quite philosophically; a pre-lude to his student's learnings ("It's Lao's time") in ENTER THE DRAGON. Lee's wisdom in this episode comes off as honest and natural, I believe he wrote much of the dialogue based on Taoism and Jeet Kune Do. He performs brilliantly & enthusiastically, even though he's got only a co-starring (at the most) role. Nobody else in this program went on to become legendary, and since this episode has the most footage of budding superstar Bruce Lee, it's the best in the series. The anti-climactic climax shows James Franciscus getting revenge against the villain. Despite what Lee taught him, this fight only has a little martial arts. Most of the battle looks like wrestling in the dirt. \*

The second (I think) episode is to viewers what a yeast infection is to a woman. Not even Lee's minor appearance can save this one. There's a quick sparring scene at the beginning, but otherwise, it's a story about how Longdick tries to stop a girl from getting stabbed and instead his dog gets hurt. This episode is called "I See, Said the Blind Man," and the third has something to do with a bomb scare. Lee has some dialogue in these episodes, but mostly sits around in background shots looking forward to his return to HK. The 4th episode was possibly Lee's final appearance. By this time, GREEN HORNET repeats made Lee hot stuff in HK, so this would be his final appearance on American TV. LONGSTREET #4 looks like a warmup for THE BIG BOSS, we actually see Lee fight a couple kidnappers! He takes one thug out with a single kick, and has a suspenseful (but short) fight with a knife-wielding criminal! This is my second favorite LONGSTREET episode.



Kato and the Green Hornet

## FILIPINO FILMS

I peel zat Pilipino pilms are pairly pun. Oops! That sentence has a Filipino accent! I meant to say: I feel that Filipino films are fairly fun. Sometimes, Filipino movies are shown on American TV; kung fu films (dubbed in English) like **HARD AS A DRAGON** and **BLOOD HERO** are mistaken for Chinese. Filipino kung fu movies are easily dismissed, since they're ultra cheap, terrible, and nearly identical to the worst of the Chinese films. Otherwise, to U.S. fandom, there are basically two genres of flicks from the Philippines:

1. The old days; the likes of Hemisphere Productions. This 'quick buck' movie company made numerous Filipino/American coproductions, putting American actors in Filipino settings. John Ashley, who acted in some films and financed others, collaborated with noted Filipino moviemakers like Gerald De Leon and Eddie Romero. The result was a series of low budget films from the 1960s and 1970s, shot in English, though set in the Philippines. Exactly why John Ashley chose the Philippines is anyone's guess. I bet everything is so cheap





over there that movies are more affordable to make. Subject matter usually involved horror or sleaze.

2. The more recent wave of Filipino films of the 1980s and 1990s exists to a small cult of viewers, but will forever remain obscure. No more John Ashley, no more American coproductions, I doubt Americans will ever again show interest in these cheap movies. However, as with the superior films of Hong Kong and Japan, the Fili-films are attracting a small (nearly microscopic) cult following, as occasional whities like me venture into Filipino videostores. Their genre has progressed little since the old days, though there have been slight improvements.

I'll be including films from both eras in this column; the new and the old. I'm doing this only because I'm a naturally curious person, and feel even the crudest, most obscure movie genres deserve to be discovered (for better or worse). The rest of you can stay closedminded and remain well within your main interest or genre. There's nothing wrong with being selective, just as there's nothing wrong with being dull and one-dimensional.



# **MAD DOCTOR OF BLOOD ISLAND**

A Group IV Presentation, Produced by Hemisphere Pictures, Inc., Written by Reuben Candy, Dir. of Photography: Justo Paulino, Music: Tito Arevalo, Assoc. Producer: Beverly Miller, Exec. Prod.: Kane Lynn, Produced by Eddie Romero, Directed by Gerry De Leon & Eddie Romero, CAST: John Ashley, Angeli-  
 que Pettyjohn, Ronald Remy, Alicia Alonzo, Ronaldo Valdez, Tita Munoz

A 1969 effort from John Ashley (acting) and Eddie Romero (pro-

duced & directed) again spoken in English, though filmed in the Philippines. It maintains a cheap look, average by Filipino standards. I first became aware of MAD

DR. OF BLOOD ISLAND when I was a little kid, when I bought FAMOUS MONSTERS #99 (in 1973! That's when I bought my first FM). I tried to read their article on MAD DR. OF BLOOD ISLAND, but as always, FM printed an overdone plotline, amounting to little more than packaged press material. I knew I'd see this movie one day, but was in no hurry. Now, in 1993 (that's 20 years later), I finally found, rented & scoffed at this Filipino flick.

It stars John Ashley and Angelique Pettyjohn, best known for her role as 'Shauna' on a STAR TREK episode, but has also appeared in REPOMAN, and Kitten Natividad's

TAKING IT OFF, one of her breast films- I mean, one of her best films. I met Angelique Pettyjohn in person at a sci-fi con in 1983, and she looked more gorgeous and sexier then, than

in her earlier appearances! She was in great shape, so I can't figure out why she died in 1992. I'd heard of her death, but nobody will say the cause. There are rumors of pornography and AIDS, but what I've heard is strictly speculation, by word of mouth. Regardless, her cleavage



was the highlight of MAD DR. OF BLOOD ISLAND. The film is typical low budget 1960s stuff. The photography and editing are terrible, and there are continuity problems (the opening

scenes on the boat are especially poor). The music is flavorful, the acting & suspense are sufficient. As for FX, the only real effect is the monster costume. It's effective, just a mask and monster hands, basically. The creature is a messed up mutant, so the mask could be made of anything: Makeup? Rubber? Paper mache? Pizza topping? The only other FX I recall are occasional, severed limbs and gore.

This tape starts off with a bizarre, out-of-place opener obviously not intended for this film; why they added it makes as much sense as pineapple and pizza. Something to do with a bunch of teenagers drinking green blood. The monster in the rest of the film does have green





blood, but I fail to see why these dumb kids are drinking it. I guess you had to have been a teenager or older in the 1960s, to get the feel for this scene, trying to add the then 'rebellious' sex & drugs gimmick to the film. I personally don't remember the 1960s; that's ancient history, as far as I'm concerned. But enough on the old 'baby boomer' generation, I'm sick to death of having THEIR nostalgia shoved down my throat! The story starts with crewmembers on a boat reaching Blood Island. Sheila Willard (Angelique Pettyjohn) is there to find her father, a wino who lives on the island, for some reason explained while I was using the restroom. There's this evil scientist on the island called Dr. Lorca. The guy is

sort of a Filipino answer to the doctors Jekyll & Frankenstein. He turned a guy called Ramon into a plant-like 'Chlorophyll Monster!' The creature is murdering the local villagers. So heroic John Ashley, who plays a doctor visiting Blood Island, decides to get to the bottom of things. He sneaks into the evil scientist's laboratory and fights off a couple henchmen. Then he rescues some captives Dr. Lorca had hoped to experiment on. Then something happens which sets the lab on fire, and the vengeful plant-guy supposedly kills Lorca before the lab explodes. But there's one of them 'trick' endings. As our heroes leave Blood Island, a hand reaches up out of the sea, and grabs the side of the boat. Apparently, Lorca didn't die, he's climbing onboard. That's where this movie ends, but there have been two sequels involving blood island. I haven't seen them, but one supposedly starts with a burned & scared Lorca climbing onto a boat, making it a very direct follow-up.

Roberta Collins, Pam Grier, Brooke Mills, Pat Woodel, Sid Haig, Christaine Schmidtmer

This typical John Ashley & Eddie Romero movie of the 1970s movie actually seems entirely American, despite the Filipino setting. All the main actresses & actors in this average Women In Prison (W.I.P. for short) flick are Americans. The many Filipino actresses serve as background prisoners and henchguards, the Americans get all the dialogue, close-ups and credit. But I looked at BIG DOLL HOUSE not as a Filipino movie, not as an American one, but as a typical WIP movie. As a fanzine writer, and as a movie buff, I've never been into WIP movies. However, as a male, I enjoy them somewhat. BIG DOLL HOUSE has, of course, pretty girls through out in tight clothes, there are a few boob shots, a mud wrestling scene, the obligatory shower scene, and softcore sleaze. As a movie, there are suspenseful moments, and the characters are interesting. Not bad on the whole, except for the downbeat ending.

It's a weird setting; I suppose it's a Filipino prison, yet there are dozens of American prisoners too. The prison only accepts prisoners who are attractive females in their 20s. In the cell where the Americans are held, there's the usual conflicts, sleaze, and harassment which occurs in all WIP films. In this particular movie, even the warden is a blue-eyed blonde with big tits. The leader of the prison guards (yet another American) has a torture chamber, for torturing prisoners she doesn't like. The prison doctor (one of the only males in the film) seems righteous, at least worried about all the cruelty at the prison. The film's two other males aren't corrupt either. They're a couple delivery guys who come to the prison, occasionally doing a little smuggling on the side. One ends up raped (at knife point) by a prisoner, and it's their delivery truck which is used in a climactic escape. One prisoner was married to a revolutionary at some place called the Banana Republic, but never mind, because she ends up dying after a shoot out in the jungle. In fact, only one prisoner survives the shootout with the prison guards, and she ends up taken back to prison. We're lead

to assume that the prison becomes a nicer place, thanks to the noble doctor's efforts to improve the place. \*\*

#### THE BIG DOLL HOUSE

Production Manager: Mario David, Music: Hal Daniels, Screenplay: Don Spencer, Exec. Producers: Eddie Romero & John Ashley, Produced by Jane Schaffer, Cast: Judy Brown,



**DARNA**  
Produced by William Leary, Production Designer: Benjie De Guzman,



Costume Designer: Ernest Santiago, Cinematography: Ramon Marcellino, Sound: Rolly Ruta, Film Editor: Ike Jarlego Jr., Music: William Cruz, based on MARS Ravelo's original Pinoy comic character 'Darna', adapted for film by Eddie Rodriguez & Bey Vito, Screenplay: Frank G. Rivers, Asst. Dir.: Bey Vito, Assoc. Prod.: Edith Manuel, Directed by Joel Lamangan, CAST: Nanette Medved, Edu Manzano, Pilar Pilapil, Tonton Gutierrez, Bing Loyzaga, Dennis Padilla, Atong Redillas, Donna Cruz

At this rate, Filipino movies' budgets just might catch up to those of Hong Kong movies in 30 years or less! Although the Philippines have proved that low budget films can be fun, DARNA is not blatantly cheap; nor is it blatantly fun. The quality of the film, lighting & cinematography is quite good for 8mm (supposedly, most Fili-films are still shot on 8mm). The only one area where some of this movie comes off as cheap are in a few FX, like the comedic snake puppet (a humorous character). However, many of the shots of our flying heroine are pretty convincing, and could be accepted in an American or Japanese film. DARNA is far from being a blockbuster, but it's resourceful, never going beyond the realistic limits of its budget.

DARNA may not be everyone's cup of tea, but then, I don't normally drink tea anyway. But even though it's 97% in Tagalog with only a few English sentences thrown in for good measure, it's still entertaining (somewhat) through out, despite a few dull scenes. The story is easier to follow than a snail, and Nanette Medved has an excellent bodd, making all scenes of her fun to watch if you're male, alone in the room, and in the mood to choke the chicken. Just be sure to keep your frontroom drapes closed! I forgot and was nearly evicted. Medved's best asset is her ass, but manages to do some tolerable martial arts. Her form isn't bad, but her kicks are dead slow. All the film's stuntwork sucks. Medved isn't the only gorgeous female in DARNA, there are others, including some older, European-looking actress. Another character is some school teacher who gets turned into a type of Aswang, which is where the story takes on a bit of history. Aswangs date back to old Philippine legends, basically their variation on the vampire theme. Another dialect called these flying demons 'Mananangals' (see my review of ELIAS PANIKI in OC#13), but what confuses me is how the films alter the legends. Supposedly, Aswangs & Mananangals

were flying heads, but movies like ELIAS PANIKI & DARNA show them as flying upper halves! Seems they leave their legs & groin behind (standing upright), while everything from the stomach up sprouts wings and flies off. It later returns to its dormant lower half and reconnects, once it's bitten a few necks. Another interesting thing about this film is Darna herself. This is the first Darna movie I've seen, but it's based on some old Filipino comic book. I think it's a safe assumption that Mars Ravelo, who created the Filipino comic series "Darna," was very familiar with our own "Wonder Woman" comic.

This comedic adventure deals with evil archeologist & playboy Dominique, who, in 1900, uncovered a magical, demonic pendant in South America. This is a slick little intro, as he and some helpers fight over the evil jewel in a large cave full of relics and dinosaur skeletons. One explorer gets impaled on a dino bone's dorsal spine! Regardless, I guess this Dominique crook becomes immortal, spending time in Europe, adding European witchcraft to his other powers. Then, in 1975, a righteous girl in the Philippines is informed by an angel that she'll be gifted; changed into a mighty superhero. Sure 'nuff, a meteor lands and out comes a 'pill that turns her into super vixen' Darna! Then I suppose the story evolves to the present, as our crimefighting babe (now adult) has her inevitable conflicts with magical millionaire Dominique (not aged a day). Dominique changes one chick into a murderous Aswang, and takes possession of a voluptuous model called Valentina. She's changed into a snake haired witch, not unlike a Gorgon (the most famous being Medusa). Dominique, his two monstrous female recruits and dozens of hench soldiers are up to no good,

while Darna thwarts crimes and suicides. So the villains try to convert Darna, but she gets rescued by some newspaper reporters. The villains frame her, she gets put in prison, but gets released, all sorts of stuff happens. Anyway, Darna eventually tangles with the villains, and once she crushes Dominique's South African pendant, he, his magic and followers all die. \* \*

### CROCODILE JONES, SON OF INDIANA DUNDEE

Produced by Regal Home Entertainment in 1992, Distributed by Regal Capital, Inc., Starring: Vic Sotto, Ritchie D'Horsie, Panchito

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't a parody meant to be funny? If so, then this bewilderingly terrible drama isn't a parody, but a shameless, blatant RIP OFF of the two American film series with Harrison Ford and Paul Hogan. To show you how much I despise CROCODILE JONES, even I, who

normally dislikes American movies, found the 'Indiana Jones' and 'Crocodile Dundee' films to be a lot more fun than this overly talky, blasphemously boring heap of crap. Unlike other Asian imitators of the American adventures, like Jackie Chan's "Armour of God" films and the HK stories of the heroic 'Wisely,' CROCODILE JONES remains a thrill for Filipino audiences only. Nearly two solid hours of that incoherent mumbling they call Tagalog isn't my idea of entertainment.

This movie should

be used as punishment; criminals should be forced to watch it, and if they don't clean up their acts, must watch it again, with their eyelids taped open.

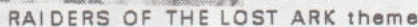

Jones is played by a horrid Filipino comedian called Vic Sotto, who starred in a slapstick boxer farce called ROCKY + V (another Filipino ripoff trying to be a spoof),





these stupid jerks enter into all sorts of odd jobs to survive. At Jones' father's death bed, he learns of hidden treasure in the jungles of Toro Toro. Somehow they get a map and talk their way through these snake-infested jungles. They meet numerous tribes like one lead by Ka Tumbong (Panchito, who played the Joker in ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN), and later a tribe of rather unattractive amazons. One of these native women (who seems strangely city-like, and afraid of animals despite her upbringing) joins them on their quest. Somewhere along the way, our heroes encounter

lame  
slapstick  
humor (i.e.  
the old  
'drinking  
from the  
creek and  
discovering  
somebody  
has pissed  
in  
it' gag.  
Hardee har



A Regal Films Production of an  
M-Zet Film, Directed by Tony Reyes  
and Burt De Leon, Starring: Vic  
Sotto (unfortunately)

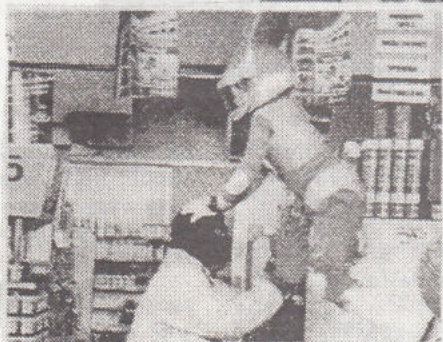
At one point, I thought maybe this film indicated some Filipinos wanted to join the rest of the world and make watchable movies. But nope; they're setting the same standards for movie making as they do for cooking. But it's a fantasy, and it's got potential. There are fairies, an empire of evil witches, a couple scattered FX here and there, pretty girls, and a dragon! The dragon is a huge prop, far from cheap. This creature is beautifully designed, so why the hell did them idiots wait until the end to show it? Like CROCODILE JONES, this one is an unbearably long, talky combination of embarrassing comedy and boring drama. This Vic Sotto guy is really starting to annoy me, neither of the two Sotto films I've seen offer much, unless you're a horny Filipino girl, and I don't think any OC readers are. If you are, and you're attractive, I'd love to hear from you. If nothing else, this fiasco is better than CROCODILE JONES; but then, AMSTERDAM CONNECTION is better than CROCODILE JONES. With crap like this, them Filipinos will never break the international market. The only chance for these

Vic Sotto films would be if somebody would somehow edit together just the highlights of CROCODILE & JONES and OKAY KA FAIRY KO, combining them into one film, eliminating the idiocy; then they might have something remotely watchable. The plot you're about to read doesn't



sung with Filipino lyrics. The movie gets no star, but even THAT'S too good for it!

get very good (in my humble, nonopinionated, noncritical, nonbiased opinion. Contrary to popular opinion, I do accept other people's opinions) until the last 30 minutes of the film, when our heroic Sotto enters the forbidden lands of zombies, witches and dragons. If they'd had more of these fine FX through out, I just might have recommended this flick.







This comedy drama starts out with a decent shootout between cops and criminals, and things get suspicious when the body of a shot villain vanishes into thin air! Enter Enteng (Vic Sotto), who happens to see this and discovers the baddie was a member of some hell-like cult consisting of magical witches. Evil Queen Luka must meet a quota of wicked deeds to regularly feed their guardian dragon or lose her throne to a sexy, younger sorceress called Monyita. Meanwhile, in what I assume is Heaven or some place down the street from Heaven, the crystal ball which serves as a communication link to all good fairies & leprechauns gets broken. I don't know what significance that has in the story, but thought I should mention it. Monyita wins the queenship after capturing Enteng's daughter called Aiza. The only way to win her back is to slay the dragon, who's blood serves as an antidote to the possession. But before that, Enteng (Vic Sotto) wastes over an hour in dialogue, romance, poor comedy, and, at an alltime low, serenades his girlfriend by singing "Unforgettable." You mean that's a real song? Last time I heard it was in the 1970s, as part of a Camay commercial. I never thought anybody was so lifeless as to actually record & release such a song. After this sappy, mushy scene, I quickly cleansed my system by cranking out some Ramones, Metallica, or anything I could blast out from my stereo at ultrasonic volume (even Ted Nugent would have been welcome). By this

time in the film, I had hoped the villains would have wasted all the heroes. As stated before, the monstrous villains are cool. They're witches & goblins, living in a cave. Fortunately, there's a spark of fun toward the end, when Enteng takes on a group of zombie-like knights in shining armour. He defeats them (bloodlessly) using a magic chainsaw. Once in the dragon's cave, he pulls a sword from a stone and beheads a dog-sized allosaurus that keeps biting his leg. Later, he slays the dragon while the fairies and witches battle it out, using magical zaps. He takes the dragon's blood to his suffering daughter in the hospital, but due to exhaustion, collapses. The jug is broken, there's dragon blood everywhere. Fortunately, the cross & Jesus hanging on the wall cures the girl. Why didn't they just do that in the beginning? Oh well, it's a cute little happy ending regardless, except for those of us who like dragons. \*

**AND NOW ...the English (1991) version of 1989's . . . . .**

### **BIONIKIDS**

Released in English by Shine Home Video, Produced in the Philippines by Filmstar, Asst. Dir.: Roger Fuentebella, Sound Supervisor: Rolly Ruta, Film Editor: Ike Jarleco Jr., Musical Director: Mon Del Rosario, Production Designer: Melchor Defensor, Cast: Katrin Gonzales, Rr Herrera, Susana Lozada, Bembol Roco, Phillip Gamboa, Dick Isreal

Hard to believe somebody recently dubbed this one in English, I thought I was the only American who'd seen it. I first discovered BIONIKIDS around 1989, when it was brand new, in an obscure Filipino videostore rarely visited by blue-eyes like myself. I eagerly rented this Filipino variation on Japan's BIOMAN (Toei; 1984), and thought I was on the verge of some major discovery. I enjoyed it a lot, and understood the whole thing, even though it wasn't in English. Yet now it IS actually dubbed in English, you think maybe its American releasers read my review of its original Filipino version in OC#11? Me neither. Regardless, being an English speaking American with quite an ego, I do prefer this new English edition over the old Filipino one. Now I can understand every scene, every shot, every line; and appreciate more of its humor. Even in Tagalog, I understood its overall, basic story, since its script is the most predictable and simple thing since the law of gravity. The dialogue is accurately translated and dubbed, although the occasional puns

and jokes make it seem humorously dubbed almost like WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY. But all this humor is intentional, BIONIKIDS is a comedy on purpose, even in its Filipino version.

As for the quality of these laughs, some are dumb, while others are indeed quite funny; and I should know, I'm still the funniest person I know.

Visually, this English version seems to be enhanced somewhat, it's cleaner than the foreign language version at the Filipino stores. However, it's still pretty obvious that it's shot on 8mm; it's 'kinda' dark, and the resolution could be better. Despite an adequate budget by Filipino standards, it's far cheaper than its Japanese predecessor BIOMAN. The FX are okay, the fights and acrobats are decent.

The story & characters are childish, but the movie can be enjoyed by the whole family. No, not just whole families consisting exclusively of 9-year-olds. It tells the story of a bunch of schoolkids who befriend a mad scientist who they call Controller. He turns them into a group of space-age superheroes called Red Lion 1, Green Dragon 2, Blue Eagle 3, Yellow Tiger 4, and Pink Panther 5. The only one I don't like is the youngest one, Blue Eagle 3. This annoying little twerp is too small to do martial arts, so he ends up goofing off through out, using the two most stupid examples of bad humor: Bathroom and slapstick. Using their karate tactics, rayguns, gymnastics, and motorised tricycles, these Bionikids battle crime. There are plenty of fights even before we meet the main villain, a disillusioned "Bozo the clown" type. This evil clown got tired of entertaining little kids, and decided to rip off BATMAN's Joker villain. He now has his own mafia, and a computer wiz. Using a 'Super Microchip' they stole, they've manufactured a group of computer generated wrestlers called Exxors. In one scene, one of these silver-skinned warriors tears a living room apart, and slips all over the floor. It's hard to tell if this is a joke or a blooper. The Exxors and other henchmen get defeated by the Bionikids eventually, but the leading clown escapes; though they never made a sequel that I know of. \* \*



## MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG



You think maybe THIS column is obsolete already, like the rest of OC's topics? This column, MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG was intended to cover the more recent wave of HK hits flooding theaters, trendy arthouses, and of course, films which have become a haven for overpriced bootleggers and sleazy slimeballs. When I think of 'modern', I think of semi-fairly recently (let's say post-1980) made HK films normally set in urban, modern HK. But at a recent trip to Chinatown, I only saw one modern actioner playing in a theater, Jackie Chan's CITY HUNTER. No John Woo, no Chow Yun Fat. The remainder were seemingly endless ripoffs of Teui Hark's overrated ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA movies. Is that the new trend? A return to 'Boxer Rebellion' (circa 1860s-early 1900s?) dramas? If so, it lacks the fun of the 1970s kung fu period films. So every new action film is inspired by Teui Hark's films? I hope not. I see no reason to critique the likes of WHAT'S UPON A TIME IN CHINA, not when every OC-wannabe rag is already give them the overexposure they don't deserve. If current HK cinema is bringing back the costume drama (in an inferior mutant form of the classics of the 1960s & '70s I might add), then caucasian villains like Jefferay Falcon might be out of business. So if OC continues, I'm going to try to give coverage to the American martial artists who so valiantly get their asses kicked in HK gangster films. In this issue, I had hoped to do a big article on the great Cynthia Rothrock. So I did a ton of research on her and her films, and completed the article. Then INSIDE KUNG FU's April 1993 edition comes along, with an informative article & interview on her. They even had a complete film list, proving how misinformed my article is! At that

time, she'd been in about 20 films, I'd thought she'd only been in about seven! So I'm scrapping that article I wrote, I'll update & rewrite it later. Such an informative article on her was unexpected, since I'd quit reading IKF since her "Rothrock At Large" column seemed to disappear (I still think that Rothrock, Ric Myers and maybe Dave Cater were the only writers for IKF I ever bothered reading). The article mentions "every green-eyed critic with an ax to grind and an unpublished script under his arm predicted Rothrock's imminent doom," and goes on to point out how wrong they are. With all the unjustified criticism aimed at Rothrock, and this article, it really seems like nobody gets along in the film business. Another conflict I read about recently was in a back issue of KARATE ILLUSTRATED (or some such magazine), from about two years ago. An editorial mentions some rude jerk in LA who hassled them because they'd rather not write about his proposed film project. The guy supposedly had the nerve to show up at their office and try to make threats nobody took

seriously! Yes, each time I read about the movie business in LA, it never ceases to amaze me how many assholes there are out there. No wonder Cynthia Rothrock made films way over in HK! Anyway, as stated earlier, before I rambled on endlessly about nothing in particular, my Rothrock article has been canceled due to misinformation on my part. So instead, I'm doing a feature on a lesser known American in HK films, Anthony Houk. But first, a movie review.

### MAGNIFICENT WARRIORS

D&B Films; 1986, Executive Producer: Dickson Poon, Produced by John Sham, Assoc. Prod.: Yan T. Wong, Prod. Superv.: Linda Kuk, Chief Prod. Manager: Norman Chan, Starring: Michelle Kheng, Richard Ng, Yee Tung Shing, Lowell Lo, Chindy Lau, Tetsuya Matsui

Thanks go out to the Bay Area's Chinese Community, not for the immigrants, job competition, or the tuberculosis-ridden Chinatown, but for HK Theater (broadcast Fridays on ch. 26, KTSF). That's the only reason I bothered to watch this typical war/action flick, not unlike EASTERN CONDORS. It's fast-paced, action packed, full of kung fu, some stunts, gunplay, a few weapons duels, and even an airplane dogfight. The main star is Michelle Kheng (as written in this film's credits). I generally avoid writing about her, because she's got too many names, the most recent one this week being Michelle Yeoh. Richard Ng tries to add comic relief which is almost

funny, and Ku Feng, Huang Cheng Li and other familiar faces appear through out. With these many thrills, MAGNIFICENT WARRIORS must sound like the greatest thing since the cavemen invented the wheel; but what subtracts points is the script, or lack of it.

The saga would appear to be about Japanese oppression in the 1930s or '40s, in Tibet, India, Bakersfield or some place. It seems that the country's prince, Youda (wasn't he in one of the STAR WARS movies?), is now the figure head of Japanese soldiers determined to harass, kill, conquer and all that other stuff we all know the Japanese do (hell, each time I go into a Japanese restaurant, I fear I won't get out alive). Luckily for Tibet, and life in general, righteous Chinese rebels lead by Michelle Kheng/Yeoh keep attacking them. Thank god we have Chinese heroes, that's the only reason I can sleep peacefully. \*\*

and now . . .

## THE ANTHONY HOUK INTERVIEW

KUNG FU STAR ANTHONY HOUK, WHO



FIRST MET AUGUST RAGONE IN A SAN FRANCISCO NIGHTCLUB DURING A DRUNKEN BINGE, HAS APPEARED IN APPROXIMATELY TEN FILMS TO DATE. SO I CAST HIM IN MY AMATEUR VIDEO "AGE OF DEMONS," AND LATER INTERVIEWED HIM FOR O.C. THANKS TO RAGONE FOR MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE, THANKS TO ANTHONY HOUK FOR TOLERATING TO THE NONSENSE OF THE FILM AND THIS INTERVIEW. THANKS TO BUTCH PORTILLO FOR SHUTTING HIS MOUTH WHEN I SAID NOT TO ASK ANYMORE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANTHONY'S APPEARANCE IN ONE OF THEM 'NINJA TURTLE' MOVIES, WHICH I DON'T LIKE!! SO THERE!!



DF= Damon Foster AH= Anthony Houk  
AR= August Ragone

DF: "Okay we have here Anthony Houk, who's been in many HK action films, so tell me: what was the first kung fu film that you were in?"

AH: "It was here in San Francisco and it was called OUTLAW BROTH- oh, excuse me: I rephrase that, it was THE DRAGON FIGHT, and it was filmed in SF by a HK film company."

DF: "Wasn't Chau Sing Chi (AKA Steven Chow) in that?"

AH: "Yes he was, he was- that was one of his uhh, first films- well, not his first film, but one of his main films before he uhh, became like a quite popular movie star in HK, before he was even popular."

DF (SUDDEN OUTBURST OF LAUGHTER): "Snicker, he he. 'I'm just thinking of how funny I am.'"

AH & DF clear their throats and get serious.

DF: "Who would you rather bone? Nina Li Chih or Amy Yip?"

AH: "Oh, definitely Li Chi."

DF: "Really? WHY?"

AH: "Well, uuhh, from, uuhh, you know, the umm the media in HK, they brought Yip up as a lower class prostitute-type character."

DF (GETTING EXCITED): "Oh yes, I'm familiar with the type."

AH: "Yeah, well, I'd say I would- I'd say her body is quite attractive and Li Chih, I believe is well educated, and very well put together; a much more classic type of woman."

DF: "I've HEARD of people like that. Well, so what martial arts style have you studied?"

AH: "Aaah, that was Wan Hop Kwon Do, a form of umm, a kaji kembo root, the first kung fu style that I encountered."

DF: "Why is it that- uuhh, I'm skipping around; one minute I'm talking about girls, then movies, then martial arts. Why do you think it is that whiteboys, or rather non-Chinese are always portrayed as the evil scum-sucking pigs that we are?"

AH: "That's a good one because I think that's just their stereotype of foreigner, it's the Chinese chance to pick at us, through their films. We die quick in the films, we don't have such a good

character; for whatever reason, revenge on their parts. They'll never let us go beyond their movie stars, so we're always down rolled."

DF: "I guess it's the same way out here, like Bruce Lee's supposed starring role in ENTER making enough room to give John Saxon almost as much credit. Ummm, let's see. I bet many of them Chinese who make fun of us will be out here in 1987, you just watch."

AH: "I'm sure they will, so I'm looking forward to that."

DF: "Yeah, and I'll say, 'who's the evil foreign devil now, huh? Huh? Huh!'" [NEARLY FALLING OFF HIS CHAIR] Oops, I think I mighta' gotten some spit on the microphone. [DF FACES THE VIDEOCAMERA & ITS OPERATOR, RAGONE] Can you still see us - I mean can you still see me okay?"

AR: "M-hm."

NOTE: FOR THE NEXT COUPLE MINUTES, DF GOOFED OFF WITH THE MICROPHONE, PUTTING IT IN HIS MOUTH, MAKING FUNNY NOISES. EVENTUALLY, THE INTERVIEW RESUMED.

AH (CHUCKLING): "That's very uhh, talented."

DF: "So you say the first film you were in was DRAGON FIGHT, wasn't Ti Wei (Dick Wei in English) in that?"

AH: "Yes he was. He was a pretty strong character in the film."

DF: "So being that the film was made in San Fransissey; was that how it came about? Did you know someone locally involved?"

AK: "My teacher was assistant director, so he used a lot of his students."

DF: "So I guess you got phone numbers on the set of that film, and took them to HK with you afterwards."

AH: "I did, but the numbers didn't help me when I went to HK, it was just basically do or die once I got there. Right after DRAGON FIGHT I took off and waited six months before I got my next film role. I only had a one-way ticket, and two hundred dollars in my pocket. I stayed two and a half years there."

DF: "Not including AOD, how many professional films WITH BUDGETS have you done?"

AH: "Nine films; eight in HK, one in Taiwan, and one up North, NINJA TURTLES 3."

DF: "That's 10 films. Since the Ninja Turtle films are sort of partially American and partially HK, was it your HK connections or U.S. connections which got you into that?"

AH: "It was my American connections, thanks to an agency up north. They gave me a call and had me do a demonstration for the casting. I was the only non-Asian. You'd think American films



are safer to make than HK ones, but there were some injuries on the set of NINJA TURTLES. Like the battle field scene, we're dodging all these horses coming at us while fighting opponents.

There's the danger of getting stomped on by one of these horses, which happened. A guy got a broken rib & thigh."

DF: "You said you once passed as Hong Kongese and appeared as a good cop in some film. Did you speak Chinese?"

AH: "I spoke mainly English and was dubbed, but in some scenes they needed me to speak Chinese, so I had to learn a few lines on the spot. That was my only nonbad role."

NOTE: DF WENT OFF HERE, GOOFING AROUND AND MAKING A FOOL OF HIMSELF. EVENTUALLY, THE INTERVIEW RESUMED. DF HAD AUGUST RAGONE ASK HOUK A QUESTION.

AR: "What after-shave do you use?"

DF: "Yeah, inquiring minds want to know."

AH: "I use a special HK brand, which I'd



## ANTHONY HOUK

D.O.B.: 11/3/66

TRAINING: Studied

Acting at San Francisco

City College for one year,

studied gymnastics at

California Academy of Gym-

nastics for three years, and

learned martial arts, having

studied Wushu, and is a member of

San Francisco Wushu Teams. Has

performed in tournaments, expos,

and Chinese New Year parades.

FILMS: DRAGON FIGHT, OUT LAW BROTHERS, STONEAGE WARRIORS, DRAGON FROM RUSSIA, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 3, GUYVER 2.



hoped would drive the women crazy. But it hasn't worked, so I'm going to change it." DF [ATTEMPTING A BRITISH ACCENT]: "I recommend Rancid Polecat, it keeps my skin nice & scaly." MORE SILLY ANTICS FOLLOWED. THEN:

DF: "When you first started appearing in action films, were you already a fan of martial arts films? Did you grow up on kung fu films? Were Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, or Sonny Chiba influences on you?"



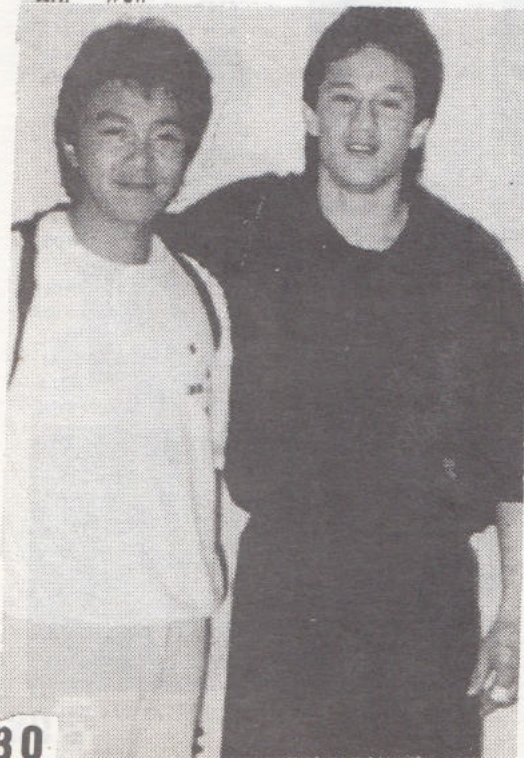
AH: "It's been a great love, I always knew I'd pursue this career; at the age of 12, after school my mother would take me to matinees to see Bruce Lee's films. It was a long love for it."

DF: "We talked before that you had hung out with Samuel Hui, and I wasn't recording it because we were busy walking across the street. So if you could repeat what you said, I mean not word for word, but you see, Samuel Hui has always been a hero of mine."

AH: "Yeah, he's -"

DF [INTER interrupting]: "I've always liked his work."

AH: "Well -"



DF [INTER interrupting MORE RUDELY]: "So just tell me about him."

AH: "Well, let me tell you. He's a really nice guy, we worked together for two weeks, in Moscow, Russia, for DRAGON FROM RUSSIA. We talked on the plane, all the way to Russia. We talked about martial arts & different topics."

DF: "Is his English good?"

AH: "Oh yes, he's married to a caucasian lady, so he's perfected it over the years. Many stars, including Maggie Cheung &

Nina Li Chih speak very good English. Li Chih attended school in San Francisco and England. They're all very nice. The thing about them is that you have to approach them and talk to them: to break the ice, but once you do, it's really an eye opener."

DF [ATTEMPTING TO IMITATE

KEENAN IVORY WAYANS IMITATING ARSENIO HALL): "What was the worst injury you had, doing a film?"

AH [HE PAUSES AND THINKS ABOUT IT, INDICATING HE GETS HURT A LOT]: "Probably my wire stunts, falling 40 feet from trees. Getting pulled, landing places that the human body doesn't normally bend. My neck got pulled by cables, that sort of thing. Cables are scary because you don't know where you're gonna' land. I've had bruises, black eyes, cable burns, but nothing broken. My worst injury was probably here in the U.S., getting kicked by one of the Ninja Turtles, he kicked me in the jaw."

DF: "That thing about the cables is ironic, because I attempted the same stunt in my video HOT DOGS ON THE RUN, wrapping a wire around me so that when I jumped out of a tree, doing a horizontal spin, like a yo-yo. I still have this big scar on my arm from where the cable cut me. I didn't know if I was gonna' land on my front, back, side, or what direction my arm would be bending. Of course, that was only a nine foot fall."

AH: "Be it 40 feet or nine feet, it's scary: hopefully, I won't have to do any more wire work. Many injuries and deaths have occurred in the HK film industry over the last few years. I've been bruised & kicked, and accidentally kicked others hard. It usually happens later on, when you're tired and lack precision. The actresses take a lot beating too, even some overseas ones like Cynthia Rothrock."

DF: "Uuhhmmm, of the films that you have worked on, which one is your favorite. I mean to sit back and watch it?"

AH: "I'd say as far as beauty & experiences I had were in Russia, doing DRAGON FROM RUSSIA. It was just a great story & script, and really fun and a lot of energy in it."

DF: "THAT'S what I've been telling everyone! I don't know why so many people don't think it's that good. I praise it, I give it five stars, uuhh-well, [CLEARING HIS THROAT] Well, I'm glad to see YOU agree."

AH: "Oh I do, it had a big budget, a lot of great actors & actresses, packed energy and excitement. It's interesting how different versions of the story interpret the Japanese culture; their yakuza, and how they go from HK to Russia, and all the espionage. It was like a novel, eye-catching, a great movie. The script was actually taken from Japanese books called CRYING FREEMAN. It was nice seeing Russia in 1990 before it changed. The other film was in Indonesia, STONEAGE WARRIORS. I had more movie time, a bigger role, and that's the one with the crazy wire & cable stunts."

DF: "I forgot what I was going to say, uummm-"

AH: "You're going to ask about his school."

DF [CHUCKLING]: "Okay, what school did you go to?"

AH: "I've trained in a few different schools in San Francisco, mainly in Chinatown. My main style is a actually Wushu."

DF: "When you first started going to a Chinatown martial arts school, was there any resentment, you're not being Chinese? I know a long time ago, traditional Chinese schools didn't want westerners to learn their techniques. So I'd always assumed most caucasians learned from suburban 'Joe's Fish, Chips & Karattie' type places."

AH: "It's more open now, they need



money, that's the main issue. When I started, it took time for them to accept me. But now it's changing. I've stuck with one school though, and I'm still its only non-Asian."

[THE INTERVIEW CONTINUED FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER HOUR, UNTIL I GOT BORED. I STILL HAVE THE WHOLE INTERVIEW ON VIDEOTAPE, BUT I'M TIRED OF TYPING ALL THIS DIALOGUE. BESIDES, MY FATEFUL MEETING WITH ANTHONY MADE THE INTERVIEW ITSELF OUT OF DATE. AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW, ANTHONY WAS CONSIDERING GOING TO JAPAN. BUT THIS VERY NIGHT, AS HE WORKED ON MY VIDEO, "AGE OF DEMONS", FATE CHANGED. BECAUSE OF PEOPLE HE MET WORKING ON THIS VIDEO, AND CONNECTIONS MADE THAT SAME WAY, HE ENDED UP CAST IN "THE GUYVER 2." JAPAN'S LOSS IS GUYVER'S GAIN. HARD TO BELIEVE THAT AN UNDERGROUND VIDEO LIKE "AOD" COULD HAVE ANY EFFECT WHATSOEVER ON A MAINSTREAM HOLLYWOOD MOVIE! THE ANNOYING IRONY IS THAT HIS APPEARANCE IN "GUYVER 2" SCREWED UP CONTINUITY AND SCHEDULING OF "AODI" OH WELL. MONEY TALKS, "AOD" WALKS.



## HAPPY DIN DON

Starring Michael Hui, Carle Chung, Wong Ching

There's stupid comedy, and there's a subtle comedy; and then there's HAPPY DIN DON, which is subtle stupidity. Sure, Cherie Chung, being female, has curves. And sure, Michael Hui has two talented brothers who don't waste time in this film, and sure, this film isn't worth the price of a cheap, Korean-made, K Mart brand videotape. HAPPY DIN DON or whatever is a ridiculous farce, inspired by a long line of ridiculous farces like TOOTSIE, SOME LIKE IT HOT, and an episode of THE LOVE BOAT (the funny one, where John Ritter dresses as a woman). It's a HK comedy, as such, maintains yet another minor action subplot, loosely involving evil smugglers lead by Wong Ching. It be dumb, or if I want to be positive, call it goofy or remotely silly at best. I did, however, chuckle at a fight scene where Wong Ching hassles Hui, and in the process, they watch some old Shaolin vs. Manchu flick on TV and tend to mimic the characters. Otherwise, the flick offers a gun shoot-out and a chase or two. But these scenes are microscopic in comparison to the vast deserts of HK comedy (a.k.a. bad comedy), cutesy romance, and an occasional song. Flicks like this make me think most HK comedy sucks, and don't give me any of that "it's exotic, foreign comedy" bullshit! Bad gags are bad gags in any language.

Don Don (Michael Hui) witnessed a mob-related shooting lead by a baldheaded villain with a bionic pincher. Don Don also happens to be a musician so he gets a job as part of an all-female band who's performing on a luxury cruise ship (instead of a train, as in SOME LIKE IT HOT, which this film rips off 100%). The villains still want to kill him/her, and pursue Don Don & friends to Thailand or some place. They fall in a pond, the villains get eaten by crocodiles, but not the good guys. Because of the crocs and/or alligators, I'll give the film a whole star. Lizards are always so cute!

## FIGHTING FIST

Directed by Sonny Chiba, in association with the Japan Action Club, Sonny Chiba Enterprises and Toei Co., Starring: Shogo Shiyutani, Sibelle Hu, Chen Hsiao Hu, Sonny Chiba

When I first heard that Sonny Chiba & JAC were collaborating with HK movie makers, I was happier than a lesbo working at an all-girl school. But when I heard Sibelle Hu would be in this Japanese & Chinese coproduction, I expected little, knowing how many pathetic flicks she's been in. So if you expect FIGHTING FIST to be pathetic, you won't be disappointed. Being the former Sonny Chiba fan that I am, I was excited to see him in action again, since I still haven't bothered to see IRON EAGLE 3 (a.k.a. ACES), an American war film. Actually, HK involvement on this Japanese crime drama is minimal. Since most current Japanese films are garbage, I had hoped that Hong Kongese crews would have had more control of the script, stunts & choreography. It's amazing how, despite the success of John Woo & Jackie Chan internationally, the Japanese aren't at all influenced by their Chinese cousins. The two countries are close to each other, but only geographically. I suspect that maybe the Japanese aren't aware they now produce awful films, they apparently still

watch them. Chiba is featured prominently on the rental boxes of both the Japanese & Chinese versions of FIGHTING FIST, and yet, his presence in the film amounts to less than five minutes total. He never appears in the same shot with any HK stars, and does NO ACTION whatsoever! Granted, he's too old to re-lapse into his STREETFIGHTER phase, but he doesn't even raise his voice in this one.

The main Japanese hero is Sato, played by Shogo Shiyutani, best known as one of the heroes in CYBERCOP (see OC#14), an enjoyable Japanese superhero series. His JAC karate skills may suffice in half-hour episode kiddie programs, but he comes off as painfully slow in this action film. Hell, he misses one opponent by a mile in the flick's first fight, and this awful kick is painfully obvious! During this fight, Sato kills three mobsters, sons of triad kingpin Jimmy Lee. So assassin/undercover cop Sato returns to Japan, satisfied with a job well done. So two HK cops (Sibelle Hu, and I think maybe Chen Hsiao Hu, but I could be wrong) follow him, angry that he took the law into his own hands. Meanwhile, Sato gets advice from actionless, aging Sonny Chiba, in a couple pointless dialogue shots. Villainous Jimmy Lee hires henchmen to chop up cop Teddy (Chen Hsiao Hu?), much to Sibelle Hu's regret. I must say, Teddy's dismembered body is a cool effect, though too edited (those damn censors ought to have boards placed on them, then have heavy rocks placed on top). Sato has been framed for Teddy's murder, but later, Sibelle Hu discovers he's innocent. Then there are some action scenes:

Shoot outs, and some martial arts battles. None are impressive; JAC hasn't done a decent fight since the old days of DYNAMAN! Sibelle Hu's presence disappears dramatically in the last half hour, as Sato takes over, defeating villains in HK & Japan.

## ROYAL TRAMP

Presented by King's Video in 1991, Starring Stephen Chow (AKA Chau Sing Chi)

Hong Kong's period fantasies have always been crazy-ass tales of chivalry, high flying leaps, romance and acrobats. The ones of the 1980s are classics for their primitive yet influential approach. The superior ones of the 1970s offered more overdone, impossible leaps, more elements of traditional drama, but with an added ingredient: kung fu. By the 1980s, the films were less frequent, since the kung fu genre favored modernday cops & robber tales. As for the 1990s, it would appear that the period films are enjoying a (hopefully brief) comeback.

Fueled by the pretentious work of Tsui Hark, who I consider overrated like crazy, this new age in period fantasies features the return of acrobatic leaps, old-fashioned settings, lavish sets & costumes. But the new age of historic films lacks the innocence & straight-to-the-point scripts of the good old days, replacing the traditional fun with overly technical plots, excessive dialogue, meandering, space-filler, comedy which makes the antics of Bugs Bunny seem quite intellectual, and the ultimate taboo: Excruciating boredom.

No doubt trendies, art creeps and other wannabe cool people will eat up this three hour comedy/drama/fantasy, since it so closely resembles the work of HK trendsetter Tsui Hark. Did you like A CHINESE GHOST STORY, SWORDSMAN, or ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA? If so, you'll go crazy-ape-bonkers over this never-ending ripoff. Hell, EVEN I got a kick out of its occasional FX and fights, and by now you know I find this revivalist genre as worthwhile as whacking off to an episode of MAMA'S FAMILY. Granted, ROYAL TRAMP has a big budget, massive production values



FIGHTING FIST star Shogo Shiyutani (left) as Mars (right) in CYBERCOP.

and a few breathtaking, magical fights and/or chases, but these elements are becoming commonplace in this new age of derivative historicals.

I had such hopes of Steven Chow, after his hilarious performances in MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS and GOD OF GAMBLERS 3. However, in any other farce, including this one, he's disappointed me (not that he cares; he's never heard of me!). I do think he's better off in gambler films than historic fantasies, so not even his silly antics can save ROYAL TRAMP.

Script? Story? Is there such a thing here? I don't know, I fell asleep twice, rented both tapes (it's an unbearably long film) and hated every second, except for its few magical duels, which were dwarfed by tons of pointless meandering. I guess the story is about guy who joins an imperial army to help them battle an evil, magical warlord so strong he kicks off his enemies heads! The few battles involve high flying leaps utilizing wires & pulleys.



## FRACTURED FOLLIES

Starring Chow Yun Fat, Nina Li Chi

Nobody said all HK films had to involve action, adventure, horror, or even entertainment value, for that matter. That's good, since FRACTURED FOLLIES lacks all of these. This is strictly a comedy, and a subtle, mellow slowpaced one. This cute, dull drama was made before Chow Yun Fat made it big in A BETTER TOMORROW, so I take it this boring, generally stupid movie was one of his many box office bombs before John Woo made him into somebody. Even a guest appearance by the beautiful Nina Li Chi (a real cock stopper, I mean, a real heart stopper!) won't save FRACTURED FOLLIES. Hell, if this romp weren't shown on TV here, I never would have wasted two whole hours of my life watching it. But to be fair, it offered a couple mild chuckles, like Chow in drag. I don't mean to say that this film is 75% horrible and 25% terrible, but let me put it this way: There's better fun to be had staring at a puddle of dog diarrhea while eating/drinking chocolate pudding.

Anyway, the story has Chow as a cabdriver who accidentally injures a girl in an accident. So he helps her family run their market, with lackluster, uninteresting results.

## SAVIOR OF THE SOUL

Produced by Teamwork Production House Ltd. in 1992. Directed by Corey Yuen & David Lai. Starring: Anita Mui, Andy Lau, Gloria Yip, Aaron Kwok, Kenny Bee

A bizarre, unpredictable mishmash like this looks like it was inspired by a Japanese comicbook, much like the infinitely superior STORY OF RICKY, SEVEN DRAGON PEARLS or DRAGON FROM RUSSIA. Either that or it looks like what might happen if you had the flu and tried over eating while watching a dissection of a dead, fat person. But instead, I gather SAVOR OF THE SOUL

to be influenced by old sword fantasies, but with a modern (?) setting. It has the same kind of swordplay, flying leaps, acrobats and FX as in those old costume dramas & fantasies of yester-decade, but its modernday setting confuse things. My only positive comments on this escapist/romantic thriller is in its technical values: Lighting, artistry, FX, photography, choreography, cinematography, and this & that-ography.

However, to go and praise these elements and ignore its many more faults would make as much sense as pineapple on pizza. I feel this flick is too long, talky, and either boring or dull, which ever of the two words has a stronger meaning.

This romantic comedy got off to a good start: The villainous martial artist

Silver Fox (Arron Kwok) uses his magical swordplay to rescue his corrupt teacher from prison, and masterfully butchers a group of security guards in the process. After this, the story focuses on a couple of assassins played by Andy Lau & Anita Mui. For assassins, they don't do much assassinating, just a lot of romancing, goofing off and being pretentious, all in some weird city which looks like reject sets from Inter Zone, from the movie NAKED LUNCH. Anita Mui killed an acquaintance of Silver Fox, so once or twice, he attempts revenge. Their magical battles are nice: full of imaginative crap like swords, flying projectiles, sparks and acrobats. But for every minute of action, there's at least fifteen minutes of dragging romance and/or drama. \*

## 人民英雄

### PEOPLE'S HERO

1989 Loong Hsiang film Co., Maverick Films Ltd., Executive Producer: Wang Ying Hsiang & John Sham, Produced by John Sham, Starring: Ti Lung, Tony Leung, Leung Kar Fai, Elaine Jin, Paul Chun, Ronald Wong, Bowie Lam, Bene Kong, Sabrina Ho, Hansook Ahmed

This should be a fairly easy review to write and hopefully, it won't take too long. I've got things to do today (i.e. wax my pole, do volunteer janitorial at the Home for the Terminally Ill Victims of VD, and throw my watch in the air to see time fly), and I can't be bothered to write another conflicting review. Some bad films (VAMPIRE STRIKES BACK, RUN DON'T WALK, ELIAS PANIKI, ARMOUR OF GOD, etc.) offer a few good moments, amazingly, thereby confusing matters. But fortunately, PEOPLE'S HERO offers nothing good, it's entirely awful, except for some scenes which are terrible. The video box



showed Ti Lung holding a gun, and with a title like PEOPLE'S HERO, I was expecting a crime drama. PEOPLE'S HERO is a cheap, boring drama with practically no action at all, tons of slow dialogue and offers no entertainment value (or at least, none than entertained me; entertainment value is in the eye of the beholder.

THERE! You see, I'm trying NOT to be opinionated!). This lame melodrama proves that OC's taste has reached an alltime low, even those pathetic Filipino cheapies I occasionally see have more going for them than does this dull, pointless, PEOPLE'S HERO garbage. All the caffeine in the world wouldn't keep me awake if this movie is playing! By the way, there's this ugly little actor who plays a whimpy, whiny, epileptic geek. He was in GOD OF GAMBLERS and I don't like to look at him.

Bank robbers try and rob a bank and take hostages but a hostage (Ti Lung) turns out to be a criminal too, so he takes over and locks up the bank robbers but gets shot at the end when he tries to get his bitchy girlfriend out of prison. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

## FULL CONTACT

Produced by Golden Princess Film Productions in 1992, released by Long Sheng Pictures, Cinematography: Teddy Robin Kwan, Editor: Tony Chow, Art Dir.: Roy Yem, Prod. Manager: Ricky Fung, Asst. Dir.: Ronnie Yu, Cinematography: Stephen Lee, Action Director: Lau Kar Wing, CAST: Chow Yun Fat, Simon Yam, Ann Bridgewater, Anthony Wong, Bonnie Fu, Lee King Sang, Frankie Chan

Yest! Cill Ouil Hail! So desul Indeed! Yep, high praise for this crime drama from Ringo Lam (at least, I THINK he directed it)! As a disillusioned John Woo fan (possibly a FORMER Woo fan), this thriller couldn't have come out at a better time. FULL CONTACT came out after HARDBOILED, right as Woo started working on the American actioner HARD TARGET. So to me, FULL CONTACT brings back fond memories of John Woo's peak, echoing A BETTER TOMORROW and THE KILLER. Woo has apparently left the HK film scene, so will Ringo Lam fill the gap? The new king of HK gangster films? FULL CONTACT is nearly one of my favorite films; it's got car chases, gunplay, knife fights, fist fights, explosions, melodrama, sexy scenes, a rockin' soundtrack and a little romance. It's actually not quite action packed, but the story is interesting, as are the characters.



## 俠盜高飛



Chow Yun Fat never looked cooler than in this violent story; dressed as sort of a grunge biker, it's his ultimate anti hero. Simon Yam plays a gay villain, but not a stereotypical, flaming queer. The character is no caricature, far less outrageous or flamboyant than many real-life homosexuals. Yet when FULL CONTACT played at some trendy 'arty' theatre in San Francisco, queers in the audience were yet again offended! I'm not homophobic, gays have their rights too; whether it be protesting movies or laws against fags in the military. But they even get uptight about a positive gay character in FULL CONTACT? Okay, so he's a villain, but otherwise, it's a cool character.

So if them gerbil killers are gonna whine about everything, now's my turn: I demand heterosexual rights! I demand special rights & privileges for heterosexuals like me! I suggest that if you can't take a joke, either quit shoving tangerines up you ass or go back in your closets and forever hold your penis! So as the theatre's audience finally quiets down, I notice Anthony Wong (HARDBOILED, AN ETERNAL COMBAT) also appears in the film. He actually seems to play a good guy in FULL CONTACT.

Chow plays Jeff, a nightclub bouncer, who, along with his geeky friend Sam (Anthony Wong), takes part in an armed robbery with new partners: Judge (Simon Yam), Virgin (a sexy slut; she turns more heads than a screwdriver), and Deano (who has an exaggerated, 'punk' look, but is punk in appearance only). These three criminals betray Jeff, forcing Sam to shoot him. Many innocent people are killed in the crossfire. Sam & the gang make off with the goods, while Jeff rescues a dog & burn victim from an explosion; the result of the robbery. Jeff recovers in time to see how the gang has prospered. Sam married Jeff's ex-wife Mona (she thought Jeff died in the shootout), an exotic erotic dancer in a nightclub. There are plenty of bloody scenes and squibs as Jeff and Sam (now betraying that fudge-packer Judge)

battle the gang. They steal many of his weapons from his secret arsenal. In one of the climactic shootouts, we see a visual effect, a computer animated bullet; close up as it reaches its target. Eventually, Jeff shoots all the bad guys, and seems seriously injured (but survives) by the time he wastes Fudge. I mean Judge. \*\*\*\*

#### THE MAGIC AMETHYST

Produced by Super Power Motion Picture Co. in 1991, released by Entertainment Lazer Disc & a few other companies. Starring Sibelle Hu, Alex Fong

If Sibelle Hu keeps appearing in disappointing disappointments like this disappointing disappointment, her career may live up to her last name. People will be saying, 'Sibelle Who?' This isn't to say that this adventure/comedy is completely worthless. Its got a lot of gunfights, high bodycount, pretty girls, exotic locales, and decent stuntwork. Its many comedy scenes aren't funny. Some of the gags are fair, some gags are bad, and worst of all, the gags are Chinese. Chinese gags usually make me want to gag, but THE MAGIC AMETHYST isn't worth the effort. The romp seemed unbearably long to me, even with my finger on the Scan button. The drama & comedy had my eyes rolling like greased heads down a hill. These annoying, dragging, talky scenes are grounds for a no star rating. Yet them guys managed to pull through at the end, stuffing the later half with John Woo-inspired shoot 'em ups, and at least a couple kung fu/action duels. Maybe I'll give it a star after all. Who knows? If I viewed it with a few drunk, wisecracking friends, I might have given it two stars.

Back to Sibelle Hu. After MY LUCKY STARS, she's never really impressed me. Seems she gets top billing in a lot of cheap films (i.e. LETHAL PANTHERS, see OC#14) where she makes cameos; like maybe she charged an arm & a leg, so they filmed all her shots in one day. But in this

case, she seemed more generous; she probably worked on ATHEMYST for a day and an hour.

Knowing that most of THE MAGIC ANTHEM-whatever was filmed on location in India, I'd hoped for more of a cultural, ethnic comparison between Indians and Hong Kongians. There's really none of that, just endless chases, pointless jokes and shootouts. Numerous Indian actors are involved and I wonder if any of them are movie stars in their own native India. Indian and/or Middle Eastern films are rare; I hope one day to include such obscure efforts in OC. For example, any of you seen a flick by Satyajit Ray? Not me. And unfortunately, other than the appearances of actors & temples, there's nothing distinctly Indian about the film; it could just as easily be set in Taiwan, the Philippines, Bakersfield, or on Saturn, although that might cost too much, especially if it were filmed on location.

Being a widescreen/letterboxed etc. videotape, the subtitles are very readable, making this simple plot even simpler to follow. Sibelle Hu plays an evil Tibetan bitch called Mrs. Hua, who's cult-like followers, like the brutal righthand man Leo, are after a six handed Buddha statue. That's weird, isn't this the same Indian goddess as in GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD? I'm no historian (or much of anything), but I thought it was called something like Kali. Nope, that can't be right; that's a species of dog. Oh well, the statue and a magical jewel within it can somehow lead you (or me) to a treasure beneath a similar, though larger statue in India. So a Hong Kongese couple who got their hands on the miniature statue & jewel, are off to India. They join forces with a church of Indian Buddhists. This large army of robed Buddhists seem to know more about sharp shooting and loading machine guns than enlightenment or reincarnation. Then Sibelle Hu's gang of 7-11-rejects come after our heroes, and both groups fight over the statue. Then, for some reason, there's a subplot: A main heroine (a Chinese orphan raised in India, by the Indian Buddhists, and speaks fluent Chinese like the rest of the world) was born on April 15, making her an important person (Hu's cult thinks she's a reincarnated goddess). They capture her, the heroes rescue her, they locate the big statue with the treasure, double crossers are shot. After an enjoyable climax, many people, good and bad, be deadier than a snail in a jar of salt. \*



#### OPERATION CONDOR

Produced by Golden Harvest, Raymond Chow & Leonard Ho in 1980 & '91. Directed by Jackie Chan, Prod. Supervisor: Willie Chang, Edward Tang, Script Writer: Jackie Chan & Edward Tang, Co-Director: Chan Chi Wah, Frankie Chan, Editing: Cheung Yiu Chung, Costume Designers: Thomas Chong Carol Gordon, Art Dir.:



Eddie Ma, Oliver Wong, Dir. of Photog.: Arthur Wong Ngok Tai, Production Managers . . . . . HK: Alice Chan, Chan Pui Wah, Spain: Diego Sempere, Philippines: Sammy Intorno, Morocco: Zakaria Alaoui, CAST: Jackie Chan, Do Do Cheng, Eva Cobo, Shoko Ikeda

Remember all the hype for this one back in the late 1980s, up until its early 1990s release? Everyone seemed to think this blockbuster would bring Jackie Chan into the international spotlight, & the American mainstream. It was the biggest budgeted HK film in history, for years we'd all read it would have an international cast. Supposedly, Jackie himself & leading lady Do Do Cheng were the only Hong Kongese yet another main character was a Japanese actress, Shoko Ikeda. She was (like the film's other non-Chinese) dubbed in Chinese, making her look & sound very Chinese. In short, OPERATION CONDOR disappointed every idiot who thought this would make Jackie an international star. I recall it's opening day at a Chinatown theatre, the line of Americans outside the theatre who'd never even been to a Chinatown theatre before, the promotional campaign, the merchandise sold. The theatre turned out to be less than half full. Even though I knew the force wouldn't make Chan America's next Steven Spielberg, I was anticipating an outstanding thriller, especially after the utter drabness of Chan's previous hunk of crap, MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE. Needless to say, we were yet again disappointed.

However, I like to contradict myself. Well, no, I don't; but I sometimes do. The point is, despite my previous cynical paragraph, this paragraph will say its good points. It has its fun moments, and is entertaining. So long as you don't expect another stunt-filled extravaganza, like DRAGONS FOREVER or POLICE STORY 2, you should enjoy OPERATION CONDOR. I prefer it over its prequel, 1988's ARMOR OF GOD. Now THAT was a dull film! The first five minutes and last 30 minutes are the only reason to watch that one. At least for OPERATION CONDOR, the chases, acrobats, and other action are divided evenly through out, far more consistent.

So we're in the Great Star Theatre, expecting big fun. Sure 'nuff, it starts out much like the original, with Jackie as that same Chinese adventurer, stealing treasures from another African tribe, with funny results. His escape from the spear-wielding primitives involves some incredible vehicles and gadgetry, like parachutes and gliders. We were excited, already we could see why this movie cost so much to make. Still set in Africa, the story unfolds as Jackie goes on an adventure to locate a hidden arsenal left over from whatever war involved Nazi Germany. At this point, we thought, "Give him time. He's just warming up." Well, 'warming up' consisted of kicking guns out of the hands of his enemies, but never shooting. There were occasional acrobats, but no real fights. Fortunately, there was a nice car & motorcycle chase, where Chan performed a couple great stunts. "That's more like it," we thought. But as Jackie and three females travel the desert, along comes a stupid song! Who told Jackie he could sing?! His ballad for PROJECT A was bad enough. As for the occasional humor, some is funny, some is Chinese. It's rather hard to follow, but after more foolery in the Arabian (or Egyptian, I get

them both mixed up!) desert, Jackie and the three annoying bitches reach the long sought-after hidden fortress. Then the villains (an old nazi and his mercenaries) show up, resulting in excellent battles! The sets & props are massive and Jackie's acrobats & kung fu are superb. We all know he's in bad shape; MIRACLE proved he'd never again do the exceptional stuntwork of DRAGONS FOREVER or PROJECT A. Yet for a guy pushin' 40, his action is still impressive. But after the fight, there's some new story about an airplane and a giant fan! There are plenty of weird gags about the fan, interrupting our hero's fight. I don't know what the hell this was all about. Anyway, the base explodes, our 4 heroes escape. The ending had us all confused. The sets were huge, but the nonsense about the plane & giant air-conditioner was stupid, me thinks. Regardless, it's a very entertaining film, at least, parts of it were. \*\*\*

#### MODERN HEROES OF HK'S FINAL SECTION ON JOHN WOO

Since this may be the last edition of "Modern Heroes of H.K.", I think it's safe to assume this is my final in-depth look at famed Hong Kong director Wu Yu Sen (John Woo). He's made thrilling adventures in HK since the 1970s, but has finally sold out to America's big bucks, directing Claude Van Dam's HARD TARGET. I'm not criticizing Woo for selling out, since we all want more money (hell, I'd probably sell out too, if I'd had any offers, since I'm sick of being poor). But now John Woo is wooing the American mainstream, he's no longer a part of ORIENTAL CINEMA's subject matter. So will we never again see Hong Kongese Woo classics like Jackie Chan in HAND OF DEATH, or Ti Lung in A BETTER TOMORROW? Because of the Communist threat to HK in 1997, many moviemakers in HK, including Woo, have decided to immigrate. So if John Woo remains in America working with the likes of Claude Van Dumb or Steven Segal, action classics

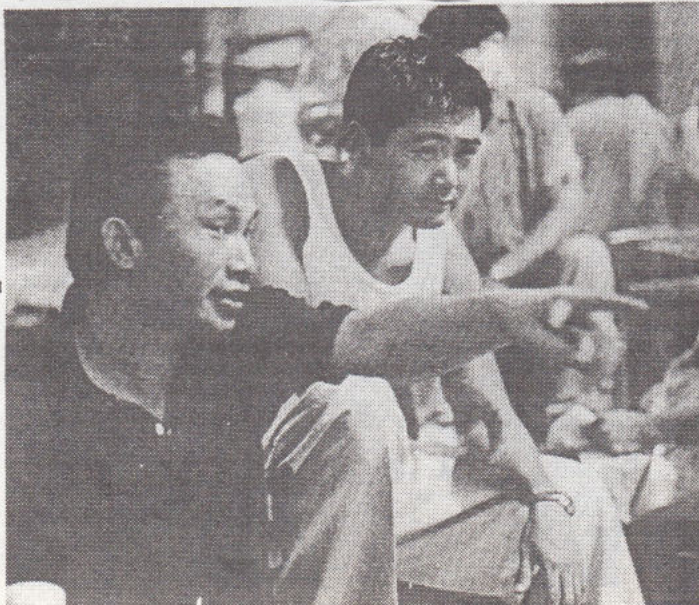
like BULLET IN THE HEAD and LAST HURRAH FOR CHIVALRY will be as rare as feminists in a stripjoint. OC's continued existence is unlikely, as is this column, but should both happen to return, you won't see many articles on John Woo. I'm disillusioned with his last few films (but still admire him a lot), and OC is suppose to cover obscure stuff, not something you might see on SISKLE & EBERT or ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY; you've heard of over exposure, right?! So here are my obligatory John Woo films for this edition:

**LAST HURRAH FOR CHIVALRY**  
Produced by Golden Harvest in 1978, A Raymond Chow Presentation, Written & Directed by John Woo, Action Choreographer: Feng Me Am, CAST: Wei Pai, Li Hai Sheng, Fennie Yuen, Chien Yuet Sun

The first time I watched this early Woo actioner, I enjoyed it more than this time, because then I was only watching it, NOT reviewing it. This time I actually have to pay attention, like reading them damn subtitles! This widescreen film isn't letterboxed, and Golden Harvest keeps their little swastika on the lower left hand corner, making them harder to read. But still, despite its dialogue and some dumb scenes, I still love this typical costume drama from 1978. Maybe I should clarify that: since to me, a true costume drama TAKES PLACE in 1978. The setting is medieval, therefor involving the usual swordplay, costumes, sets, ponytails, honor, kung fu, revenge, brothels, acrobats, and casino. I like period films like this a lot; it resembles a Shaw film, and seems to be John Woo's homage to onetime movie mogule and onetime mentor Chang Cheh. The quality of my print isn't outstanding, the story has its pointless moments, and I wasn't really even in the mood to write this review, but this is a spectacular adventure! It's action packed, and I love Chinese sword stuff!

Wei Pai, best known as Swordsman Li in KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS, plays mighty martial artist, Chang. Along with a drunken bum/master

swordsman called Green, he's hired by some rich guy called Kao. Kao's longtime enemy is Pai (Li Hai Sheng), a ruthless villain. Pai & his followers are mean, they'd probably kill somebody just for snoring too loud. Regardless, Pai's rival Kao has befriended the two peasant heroes (Chang & Green), resulting in the same Woo-maleboding which would later make A BETTER TOMORROW and THE KILLER so successful. So there's





an epic battle as our two swordsmen take on dozens of Pai's swordsmen, including a bizarre fighter played by Chien Yuet Sun. The guy fights best while he's asleep. When I'm asleep, all I fight are tormenting dreams of my childhood. Pai suffers a gruesome fate, though one which is practiced in San Francisco, but recreationally (he gets stabbed up the poop-shoot). Anyway, after Pai's death, you'd expect the story to end. But not! There's yet another spectacular duel on the way! Seems Kao is no hero! He's no better than Pai! Kao just wanted to get his hands on a valuable Moonlight Sword, and to defeat our two heroes! Aah yes, no Woo film is complete without treachery among onetime friends! So the two good guys gang up on that Kao dickwad, and kill him and his henchmen. Kao dies, but so does the drunken hero. Wei's character Chang seems to survive, but not in the best of shape. \*\*\*\*

#### FROM RICHES TO RAGS

A Golden Harvest Presentation in 1979. Presented by Raymond Chow too. Lyrics: Samuel Hui & Pater Lai, Music: Polygram Records, Lighting: Lam Wo & Chang Wai Yin, Cinematographer: Bill Wong, Asst. Dir.: Yeung Wah, Written & Directed by John Woo, CAST: Ricky Hui, Johnny Koo, Jo Jo Chan, Yick Kar, Tong Ching.

I guess John Woo started out with a stupid yet brief story, too brief to make a whole, feature length movie. So they added more stupidity, and nonsensical slapstick to pad it out. Sure, this pathetic comedy offers a chuckle or two, but that's not good enough to save this completely useless flick. Maybe I just don't like cute little romantic dramas, but since I also hated HAPPY DIN DON, maybe it's Ricky Hui himself I could do without. He's okay in smaller roles, like in MR. VAMPIRE and at least one of the PROJECT A movies, but on his own, he's annoying. Not only is this goofy caper dull, but rips off superior flicks like Sam Hui's NAUGHTY NAUGHTY and Steve Martin's THE JERK.

Despite its boredom (which is considerable), I managed to follow the story, if there is one. Ricky Hui is poor, and one day, while in his kung fu class (a brief spoof of chop socky training, but this is NOT a martial arts film), learns he's won the lottery. He's rich now, lives luxuriously and romances a female or two, insults his own employer and goes disco dancing. Then a health problem occurs

which gets him hospitalized. I'm not sure what happens here, because I kept changing the channel to GILLIGAN'S ISLAND. A satellite had landed on the island, and Gilligan was out collecting feathers. But in FROM RICHES TO RAGS, I assume Ricky ended up at the wrong hospital. He's at some bizarre mental institution! The murderous maniacs want to kill him! One guy tries to inject him, and another is trigger happy! Actually, I guess one of these culprits is an assassin, not a maniac. I'm not sure, because by then I was watching the scene where the castaways were covered with glue and ran into Gilligan's pile of feathers. Then the assassin is killed in a riot of maniacs, so Ricky can live happily ever after. Then scientists at NASA see transmitted images of the castaways covered in feathers, and think they're Martians!



#### HARDBOILED

Produced by Long Sheng Pictures Ltd., Golden Princess Film Production Ltd., A Milestone Pictures Production, A John Woo Film, Story: John Woo, Screenplay: Barry Wong, Dir. of Photography: Wang Wing Heng, Music: James Wong & David Wu, Art Dir.: James Leung, Joel Chong, Costume Designers: Bruce Yu & Janet Chun

CAST: Chow Yun Fat, Tony Leung, Teresa Mo, Philip Chan, Cheung Jut Lam, Anthony Wong, Bowie Lam, Tung Wai, Y. Yonemura, Kuo Chui

Everyone else seems to think HARDBOILED is the greatest thing since the wheel, and I can't figure out why! Okay, sure, it's a HK action thriller. But why do you all consider it as good as THE KILLER or A BETTER TOMORROW? I've watched HARDBOILED at least four times, trying to find out if I missed something. I've come up with two possible conclusions:

1. The people who praise HARDBOILED are a bunch of degenerate gorehounds, sleazewads, bootleggers & couch potatoes.

They're not concerned with interesting characters or compelling stories. They just want guns & gore. Like earlier Woo classics.

HARDBOILED has its share of action and violence.

2. By now, maybe it's too late to take Woo reviews seriously.

Everybody else seems eager to kiss his ass, so films like HARDBOILED and ONCE A THIEF get overpraised regardless, simply because they're Woo products. Had somebody else's names been on the film's credits, the reaction wouldn't have been as

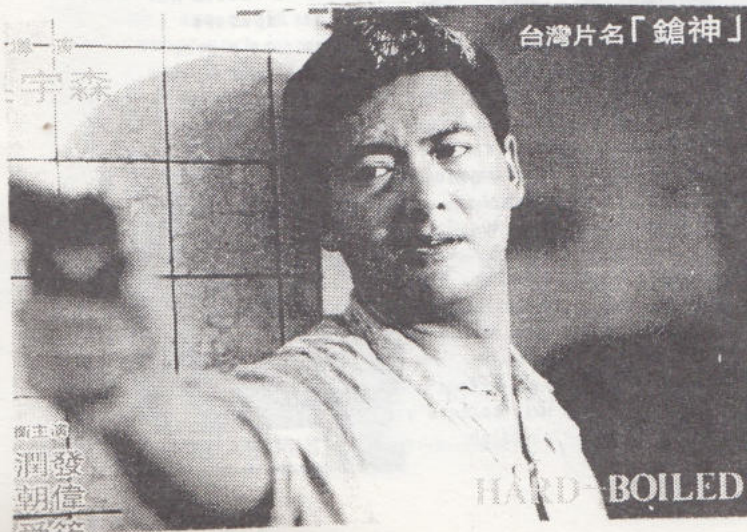
positive. John Woo could puke all over the sidewalk, and I'm sure these same fans would praise that, too.

Although HARDBOILED disappointed me, I don't hate it. It's an average thriller, certainly not inferior. It's got the usual excellent production values: cinematography, photography, acting, editing, and lighting are all magnificent. And being a Woo gangster epic, the gunplay is superb; plenty of explosions, gory scenes, and flying bodies. But the heroic exploits of Chow Yun Fat and Tony Leung didn't get me cheering like their battles in previous Woo films, because I didn't care about the characters. Tony Leung's character comes off as a coldblooded killer toward the film's early half, so when he died at the end, I didn't give a damn. I also thought the scenes of Chow Yun Fat and Teresa Mo in the office were pretty stupid, like when

they sing about flowers. My other minor gripe is that the film drags on a little too long, the story isn't complex enough to justify the never ending running time. But again, these

complaints don't make it a bad film, and I guess its superb violence and adventure make it pretty entertaining at times! Don't let my opinions alter your opinions of the film, even though I've liked these films longer than you, know more about them than you, I've seen more of them than you, and I'm probably a much better person than you.

Chow Yun Fat plays a cop who plays in a jazz band, but only during the opening credits. The character is called Tequila. After a shoot out in a restaurant which allows pets (everybody in the place has brought their birdies along), we're introduced to undercover cop Tony Leung. As he infiltrates a mob run by Johnny Wong (played by Anthony Wong, the apparent half-breed from AN ETERNAL COMBAT and FULL CONTACT), Tequila battles them. Eventually, Tony admits to Tequila that he too is a cop. So they team up to locate Johnny Wong's arsenal of explosive weapons. Wong owns a hospital, and our two heroes discover that's where the guns and bombs are smuggled, under the hospital. Numerous innocent patients are shot in the crossfire, as the good guys and bad guys battle it out. Plenty of fire, gunplay and heroics as the hospital becomes an inferno of fire, gunplay and heroics. Chow rescues a newborn baby, henchvillain Kuo Chui turns good just in time to get shot dead, and Johnny Wong blows Tony Leung's brains out. So Chow does likewise to Johnny Wong. Then the movie ended, so I wrote this review. Then I, uhh, well, I don't know. I haven't done it yet. \*\*1/2





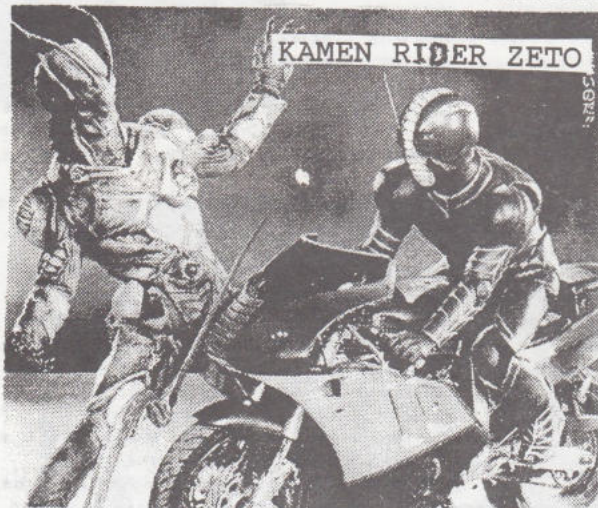


"Kaizo Ningen?" I can't believe I'm incorporating Japanese phrases into my everyday conversations! Am I no better than the cartoon geeks who think they're so cool for using Japanese words like "manga," "anime," and "watashi wa otaku desu"? Hell, I hear there are even a few live action geeks now, who pretentiously use "henshin!" Oh well, I guess we're all geeks to somebody, everyone defines it differently. Maybe I shouldn't use "Kaizo Ningen" in this superhero column's title, even if the phrase is widely used in Japanese superhero programs.

Speaking of Japanese superheroes, did anybody bother watching last year's programs from Toei, as mentioned in OC#14? First, there's 1992's *Sentai*, **ZYURANGER**, mentioned last issue, it has come to America as **MIGHTY MORPHING POWER RANGERS**. This is the first Americanisation of a TV-Asahi series since 1983's **DYNAMAN** came here in 1987. Again, the differences are drastic, I prefer it in Japanese! But even in the Japanese version we all watched last year, it's just another typical superhero team, featuring the usual monsters, robots, explosions, swordplay, sci-fi stuff, and acrobats. Like its many predecessors, it's flamboyant, outrageous, colorful, outlandish, exciting, childish, features Machiko Soba as a villain and shamelessly rips off the likes of **GORANGER** and **DYNAMAN**. Each superhero team has its own individual gimmick; in this case, it's a group of heroic robot/dinosaurs! These great props are our five heroes' vehicles, which can combine to form the same big robot we've been seeing in these 'Sentai' programs since the existence of dinosaurs themselves. Also running amok on Japanese TV and Tokyo amusement parks in 1992 was **EXCEEDRAFT**, which was the last in the 'rescue mission' genre. This successful legacy evolved out of blatant



**ROBOCOP** ripoffs of the 1980s like **JIBAN** (see OC#7), but soon evolved into a category all its own. These various programs of 'androids to the rescue' are slowly evolving back to Japanese superhero roots, having battles with villains, not just car wrecks & burning buildings. From what I've seen, **BXCBBRAFT** looks more violent than predecessors like **SOLBRAIN** or **WINSPECTOR**, there are shootouts and even occasional bloodshed. There's some martial arts this time, and an obligatory guest appearance by Junichi (Dyna Black) Haruta. **BXCBBRAFT** lacks the far-fetched fantasy of **ZYU**



**RANGER**, and replaces it with complex stories which don't make sense unless you know a little Japanese. I know a little Japanese, it's amazing how short he is. Regardless, those programs are long gone, to make way for the 1993 programs: Of course, there's the obligatory sentai **DAI-RANGER**, but more interestingly, we got **JAN PERSON**, also mistranslated **JUM PERSON**. Whatever its stupid name is, it owes more to **ROBOT KIBIJI** (see OC#14) than the defunct 'rescue mission' genre. The most interesting new series is **GRIDMAN**, intriguing because it's from the Teuburaya



Company, who finally started making superheroes again because of

**ULTRAMAN: TOWARD THE FUTURE**. Otherwise, **GRIDMAN** is childish, worthless crap about a computer-generated superhero (the show is a cross between **TRON**, **CYBERCOP** and **WEIRD SCIENCE**). Teuburaya's American branch, Ultracom, has produced **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO**, the first US-made Ultraman! There's also a new Kamen Rider out, **KAMEN RIDER ZETO**.

For this edition of OC's continuing superhero section, I've chosen not only a few Japanese

productions, but some rarely seen Korean stuff too, which won't be of interest to those of you who are narrowminded assholes who won't watch anything not out of Japan, regardless of quality. But aside from this column's childish





cyborgs from Japan & Korea, we'll also get a load of some more adult-type superheroes. They're Japanese samurai TV shows, something I used to watch in the 1970s (that's how I learned to read, thanks to subtitles on programs like HAWK OF JUSTICE, NHK TAIGA DRAMA, MITO KOMON, & TOYAMA NO KINSAN). Again, many of you won't be too interested in the samurai TV shows, partially because they lack rayguns, but also because



some of you are so onedimensional. I suppose it's better for me that way, otherwise, you'd be making OC, writing whatever you damn well pleased while I tried to wade through it to get info on shows, trying not to be offended.



## SILVER KAMEN

Produced by Nippon Gendai Planning & Sonkosha from 11/28/71 to 5/21/72, broadcast on TBS, consisting

of 26 episodes. Created by Mamoru Sasaki, Written by Shozo Uehara, Directed by Akio Jissoji. Music: Masanobu Higure, Starring Toshio Shibamoto and Kazuya Aoyama. Bither I've got the memory of an amnesiac on acid, or this series's episodes are of variable quality, to say the least. I could have sworn that when I wasted time in that overcrowded puepool called Tokyo, I'd seen several exciting episodes of this program, SILVER KAMEN. Images of epic battles of giants like those in ULTRAMAN, plus human-sized karate fights up the yinyang. I left Japan (quite relieved, I might add) thinking SILVER KAMEN to be one hot series. Now, many years later, I finally check it out again, and no longer find it hot; it's luke warm at best. What happened? I learned to drink (quite heavily) alcohol while in Japan, is this the reason I found SILVER KAMEN so fun? More likely, my more recently discovered batch of episodes are the worst in the series, the ones I saw in Japan are the best.

Had I written this article in Japan, this series might get 3 or 4 stars and a rave review. But because I'm reviewing some far worse episodes, I feel like giving it only one, or maybe none. So I guess what we have here is an average series, not much better or worse than the rest; because the varying quality of episodes balances it out.

So I guess this is what Nippon Gendai Planning and them guys at



Senkosha produced before they made the infinitely superior IRON KING. Where as IRON KING is flashy and action packed, SILVER KAMEN is technical and way, way overly talky. Where as IRON KING is lively and

comedic, SILVER KAMEN is slow moving and dead serious. The stories are technical and full of dialogue. This is fine if you speak flawless Japanese, but comes off as a dreadful bore otherwise.

About the first half of this program features a human-sized hero, who battles human-sized monsters. As far

as I can tell, each monster (usually only one per episode) is of a different origin, so there aren't really any henchmen. The fights are pretty poor, they could have learned something from KAMEN RIDER. Many of these lackluster episodes make SPECTREMAN look like a blockbuster. But at some point in the program, they felt they were losing ratings to TBS's MIRRORMAN, so they decided to change Silver Kamen into a giant. Though the latter episodes have miniature cities as added production value, I still think EVEN THESE episodes vary in entertain-



THUNDERMASK



ment value; some are thrilling.





some are as exciting as an interview with Ed Asner. But, on the whole, it's



a decent series. Not always action packed, but you can't help but applaud the occasional brutality, so unexpected and gutsy for children's TV (although its stories are intelligent to appeal to adults too, reaching the STAR TREK level at times). For example, there was one remotely interesting episode where Silver Kamen's helpers got framed by an imposter. One hero threw a knife, stabbing a lady (an imposter) in the chest! In another, a woman hangs at the noose. Stuff too violent even for adult TV in America!

Heroic cyborg Silver Kamen has an alias as Kasuka Kouji (played by

Toshio Shibamoto of GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER), who, of course, is a member of a team of dogooders. Their leader is played by Kazuya Aoyama (later of GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA and SUN VULCAN). These human heroes may lack the Science Patrol's budgets, but that doesn't stop them from getting in the way of numerous monsters & invaders out to cause mayhem. In the first ten episodes, the marauding creatures were human sized, but for the remaining episodes (#s 11 through 26), they were all much, much bigger. That's why on episode #11, our mighty hero Silver Kamen switched from 175 centimeters tall to a whopping 50 meters high (!). \*

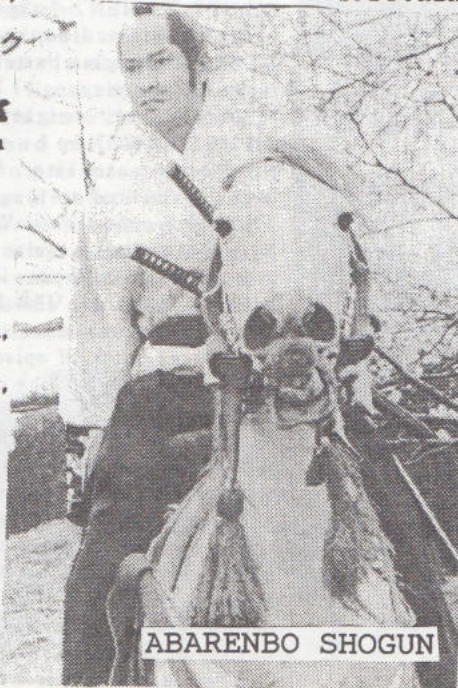
サンダーマスク

## THUNDERMASK

Broadcast from  
10/3/72 to  
3/27/73,

Produced by  
Hiromi  
Productions,  
Created by  
Shogo Tanaka,  
Written by  
Shozo Uehara,  
Directed by  
Susumu  
Tanaka,  
Music: Nidai  
Nakamura,  
Starring:  
Kazutaka  
Sugawara

This  
article won't  
be incredibly



ABARENBO SHOGUN

informative. The problem is that I've only seen one episode of THUNDERMASK, and that's not much to base this review on. However, OC has always lacked THUNDERMASK, and I've always wanted to write about it, SO THERE! The episode I have is the final one, and being the final episode, they're more concerned with wrapping up a fairly intricate plot, rather than dazzling us with tons of battles. There's a flashback at the beginning where our heroic Thundermask takes on his own impersonator. Although he won that duel with his evil twin, he lost his eyesight. No matter where he looked, he just couldn't find it. Toward the beginning of this semi-climactic episode, he's attacked by rooster-like henchmen who beat up our blind hero Koichi (Thundermask's human form) and toss him down a hill, while a giant monster goes on a Godzillaian rampage through a city. It sounds good so far, but then the episode gets boring for a few minutes (unless you're fluent in Japanese) as Koichi strives to regain his eyesight. Once that happens, he triumphantly goes back to that hill with them bad guys, for the enjoyable grande finale! If all the episodes are like this, the show is pretty good. If most of the episodes have more action & FX, then the show is great!

From what I've seen, I'd say THUNDER MASK is most similar to SPECTREMAN if anything. Again, a cybernetic alien comes to Earth to battle monsters. And like Spectreman & Silver Kamen, Thundermask can grow giant or remain human size. Ironically, the actor who plays Koichi bears a resemblance to Sam Hui from certain angles. The program's production values are not unlike those in SPECTREMAN, but perhaps a little

better. The martial arts fights with gangs of henchmen are kind of crude (characters enjoy rolling around in the dirt), and the giant-against-giant battles are more ULTRAMAN-inspired. In fact, the hero is even a member of a Science Patrol-type army. The sound FX were obviously bought from Toho, there are familiar noises & growls throughout. Again, it's basically a positive review here, so I recommend this program to anybody who gets a chance to see it. \*\*\*





### ABARENBO SHOGUN III

Produced by Toei for TV Asahi.  
 Narrator: Genzo Wakayama, English  
 Subtitles: JN Productions Inc. Hawaii,  
 Subtitling Supervisor: Jerry Maltezo,  
 Video Supervisor: Fred Harris,  
 Translation: Karen Corpuz, CAST:  
 Tokugawa Yoshimune: Ken  
 Matsudaira, Osai: Yoko Asaji,  
 Hanjiro: Bisaku Sato, Oyo: Tsukasa  
 Ito, Kozue: Reiko Takashima, Saizo:  
 Takayuki Godai, Tadasuke O'oda:  
 Tadashi Yokouchi, Magobei Tanokura:  
 Biji Funakoshi

ABARENBO SHOGUN is one of the many samurai adventure TV shows from that country where all them Japanese live. Like MITO KOMON, HAWK OF JUSTICE, & TOYAMA NO KINSAN, this period series is a superhero program for adults. It's specifically similar to Sugi Ryutaro's TOYAMA NO KINSAN series in that it too deals with

two.

Matsudaira Ken masterfully plays our heroic shogun, Yoshimune Tokugawa. He's very charismatic and respectful, sometimes seeming

invincible. The type of reliable, perfect person we'd all like to know. In this way, he's the ideal folk hero, unstoppable, non vulnerable (I've never seen an episode where a villain injured or even scratched him). His honor also adds to his character. He's noble & righteous, although factual history paints a different picture of samurais and shoguns. My impression is that they were actually a bunch of oppressive bullies. But this doesn't mean we can't fantasize in adventures like this! If you get to see this program with English subtitles like I did, it's got interesting stories. Some episodes are tragic, some are funny, some are cute and some are downright stupid. Regardless, each episode averages two swordfights, the best saved for the end.

Once or thrice upon a time, there was a mighty Shogun, Yoshimune Tokugawa. But when he heard of treachery & corruption among certain samurais & warlords, rather than send his followers to punish them, he'd sneak out of the castle and do it himself! His secret peasant identity is that of Shinsuke Tokuda, nicknamed 'Shinsan' by the townsfolk. He's master of the Yagyu Shinkage style of kendo. He hangs out in Edo (now Tokyo), and is a buddy of the Megumi Firemen. Another supporting character is Kozue, who looks like a geisha by day, but she's a tough ninja by night. Shinsan, Kozue and fellow ninja Saizo battle & kill the bad guys at the end of each episode. The climax is always the same: The evil warlords or yakuza are up to no good, until Shinsan arrives to save the day. At first they threaten him until they recognize him as the shogun. They cower and bow, but to no avail. Their crimes are unforgivable, so they sick their swordsmen on him and his two ninja helpers. During this excellent, traditional duel, pitting one hero against about 30 men, the two ninja helpers (Kozue & Saizo) arrive. Now it's three against 30! Though outnumbered, the good guys easily kill all their corrupt enemies. When the shogun orders his ninjas to kill the evil

leader, he says in Japanese what sounds like "Shame on you" in English, offering unintentional humor. \*\*\*

### EDO NO GEKITO ["The Fierce Battles of Edo"]

Broadcast on Fuji TV, Produce by Toho, Co., Ltd. 1991 [?], Consisting of 26 episodes, CAST: Kusaka Hajime: Ishibashi Shoji, Tamauchi: Tsuyuguchi Shigeru, Shinohara Michinosuke: Nadaka Tatsuo, Oyuki: Nohira Yuki, Hanasaki Chobei: Kobayashi Keiju, Taki Shinpachiro: Shiba Toshio, Sakai Kingo: Hidari Tonpei, Bto Rinpei: Chii Takeo, Kyuroku: Ono Yasushi, Masukichi: Morita Hiroya, Kemanai Izo: Tsuyuguchi Sigeru

Another adventure series about samurais, or 'superhero program for adults.' Most of you superhero fans, despite your various ages (14-45), are quite infantile, so don't read this article. The series lacks robots & spaceships, so it's too mature for most of you. Anyway, I first discovered this typical period series on cable TV's International Channel, unfortunately. This station is badly organized, they're not listed in TV Guide, there are no programming booklets I know of, and their scheduling is chaotic! During EDO NO GEKITO's 26-episode run, I tried to watch the whole series, but only managed to see four episodes! One week, they'd show an episode, but the following week, they'd show some stupid variety show in its time-slot, with no prior notice to its pre-emption. So I assume EDO was off the air permanently, and didn't bother checking out the International Channel for a while. Then, a month later, I accidentally tune in and see they've started showing it again! But the following week, in its time-slot is some stupid teenybopper soap opera about tennis players! Obviously, this article won't be too informative, thanks to those morons at the TV station.

Thanks to ABARENBO SHOGUN, NHK Taiga Drama, and of course, EDO NO GEKITO, 1992 was a good year for TV samurai fans in my area. Both ABARENBO SHOGUN and GEKITO NO EDO aired locally (bay area) that year, so it's hard not to compare the two. ABARENBO SHOGUN was far more traditional, based loosely on history, and geared toward an older crowd, and features morally correct, old-fashioned characters. Plenty of swordplay, but no blood. EDO NO GEKITO, however, is aimed more at young adults, and features not only swordplay but bloodshed and occasional nudity (crudely blacked out! The infrequent T&A shots aren't present in the American TV release. Again, thanks to

### EDO NO GEKITO



A Shogun who secretly leaves his palace and assumes an identity as a commoner. I've loved programs such as this since I was a little twerp, thanks to Japanese language TV stations in my area. As I write this, I'm actually watching ABARENBO SHOGUN III, since it's the program's 3rd season currently broadcast, I've never seen the first



the International Channel for ruining a good thing), and less of the clean cut stuff. One hero, Hajime Kusaka openly boasted the only reason he killed villains was for whiskey money, needed to pay his liquor tab! Of the two programs, I like both equally. Much of the music in GBKITO NO BDO comes from old 1970s samurai shows like HAWK OF JUSTICE. In fact, I suspect this series to be from that decade too. Shoji Ishibashi stars, and he looks just as young as he did in IRON KING, an outstanding SF series reviewed in OC#13. So BDO must be pretty old, yet Toho's copyright (English subtitles throughout) says "1991"! Having an adding problem, Toho boys?! Speaking of Toho, actor Yosuke Natsuki (DAGORA, GHIDRAH THE 3-HEADED MONSTER) makes a guest appearance in the final episode.

Well, I guess it's a familiar tale of a team of ronin (masterless samurais) who meet each other and join forces to battle all comers back in Tokyo's (then Bdo) feudal times. Our heroic, rough & rugged swordsmen easily defeat their enemies, even if there are three times as many villains. That's as much of the script as I could get, thanks to them idiots at the International Channel. \*\*\*

## THE URBMB FILMS

Since the mid-1980s, I've been aware that them Koreans over in Korea were making their own space-age movies. This was surprising, since I was under the impression that the entire Korean population had immigrated to California. So I eventually ventured into a local Korean videotore in search of this series called URBMB (which means "THUNDERHAWK"). The Korean bitch behind the counter gave me the dirtiest look imaginable, refused



to speak English and was incredibly rude to me. If that cunt doesn't like Americans, she should go back to Korea. Regardless, I saw on the news what happened to that black girl

accused of shoplifting milk in some Korean-owned store in LA! No

superhero video is worth getting shot in the back of the head, so I cautiously, slowly left the store, walking backwards so as not to lose eyesight of the lady behind the counter. I was very careful not to make any sudden moves. Even outside the store, I trembled, not knowing if there was a Korean sniper on the roof (this was shortly after the LA riots).

After years of going into local foreign videotores, it never ceases to amaze me that minorities can be just as prejudiced as rednecks; and even more hypocritical (if they don't like whites, they shouldn't be here). Some immigrants remain oldfashioned and traditional, faithful to the country they fled from. That's about as logical as me walking around in a kilt, & playing the bagpipes because of my ancestry.



Regardless, I gave up on ever seeing an URBMB film until a Korean I work with, one of the nice ones, Doojin Park found an URBMB film in a Korean videotore. I guess he asked them more "politely" (meaning he asked them in Korean), and so, I viewed the tape (URBMB 4, the first one I saw) religiously! I was hooked! I was on a crusade to get the whole series, in original pre-records. This has been accomplished, thanks to Alan Westby, a reader of mine who moved to Korea (don't ask me why).

While Japan, the founders of Japanese superheroes perfected ineptitude, them Koreans (over in Korea) gave sci-fi heroes a try! This 1980s film series borrows certain elements from Japanese TV; KAIKETSU ZUBAT, AIZENBORG and VOLTRON come to mind. And yet, Koreanmade URBMB movies are Korean. Their techniques aren't as advanced as the Japanese, but being so close to Japan, they're almost as good. Better than cheap superheroes from the Philippines at any rate. The URBMB

films should prove inspirational to amateur and/or low budget moviemakers. Despite limited budgets, these wild & crazy movies are full of colorful, outrageous FX. They make resourceful use of mattes, superimpositions, double exposures, visuals and force perspective shots constantly. Many FX are blatantly fake-looking, filmed errors aren't always edited out, and continuity sucks like a black hole. But the FX are flashy, lively and outrageous!





Fun abounds in each URBMB motion picture.

The cheesy (though plentiful) FX add unintended humor, but actor Shim Hyung Lei does not. This lame comedian made his acting (badly) debut in this film series. Granted, these are children's films, so we can't expect intelligent humor of my incomparable level. But I've never met a Korean who thought Shim Hyung Rae was funny; but then, I don't know many 4-year old, retarded Koreans. The amount of Koreans who are proud of this actor is equivalent to the number of hispanics who are proud of Paul Rodriguez, and blacks who are proud of Sinbad; the amount being roughly two each. Comedians like this aren't worth their weight in shit.



The overall format of these adventure comedies is live action; but plenty of animation is included. Giant robots, nearly identical to Japan's many animated robots are an essential ingredient. Sometimes, superimposed cartoons with live actors is effective, other times it's as convincing as a K-Mart toupee. VOLTRON-clones aside, other shots feature cartoons of the actors, a cheap way to show a hero flying, passage of time, or somebody getting into a spaceship or exploring an alien landscape. Getting back to them robotic Raideen-wannabe's, don't be fooled by the shot of Mazinga & pals on the box cover of URBMB 4. These wellknown heroes of Japanese TV NEVER appear in the film, and I don't see how them damn Koreans can get away with such deceitful exploitation! Maybe they could only afford the rights to one picture, and not the actual Japanese TV series. The Korean robots in the first few URBMB films are of inferior animation when compared to the Japanese inspirations, but later URBMBs would achieve average GUNDAM level.

## 우리매

### UREME #1

["Wei ge ah seo on- Ureme", which means "From the Alliance- Thunder Hawk"] Producer: Kim Chung Gi, Assistant Producer: Kan Do, Script & Continuity: Hon No & Hei San, Editor: Kim Chung Gi, Director: Kim Chung Wong, Animation: Cheh Dong Gun, Animation Assistant: Choy Hang Ni, Animated at Seoul Animation

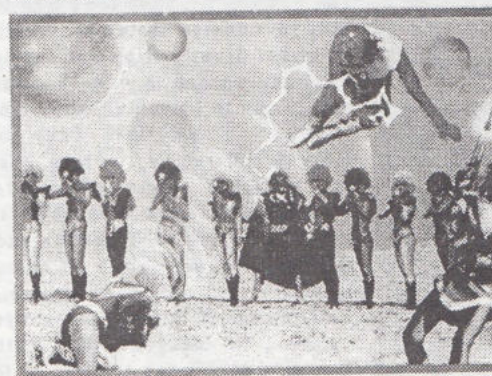
Studio, Starring: Shim Hyung Rei, Kim Jong-Ah, Released on video: 4/28/88, running time: 90 min.

This tape starts off with a commercial for SKC, a Korean brand of videotape. Then Korean tapes are actually pretty bad; their magnetic particles flake off and damage VCR heads! Hell, even these original pre-records have an unhealthy, unsettling rattle when I rewind them! I'd better review these tapes & complete this article before they selfdestruct, taking my VCR with them. But I didn't care, at first! I was just so happy to finally have all these Korean fantasies around me! I felt like a leech in a bloodbank! So anyway, as I watched this first film in the series, I'm under the impression that the Koreans, like the Chinese, film their movies silent and later dub them (and badly!). I'm afraid URBMB #1 reaches new levels in stupidity, it's impossible not to watch this one without touching your 'Scan Forward' button at least five times. There's too much family stuff at first, I felt like I was watching THE BRADY BUNCH in Korean. These scenes drag on forever.

The costumes are cheap yet colorful, and once or twice the suspension wires (for flying people) are clearly, unapologetically visible! The battles are crudely filmed, looking like the photography & processing of some independent, 8mm quicky. Last & certainly least, lead actor Shim Hyung Rae is just NOT the superhero type! He's short, stocky, and uglier than the

rear end of a bulldog, and has more chins than a Chinese phone book. Amazingly, once he's in his red costume, he plays his part effectively, he's quite serious as the heroic Esperman. He's no martial artist; which explains why there's virtually no two-fisted action in this movie, and very little in the remaining films. Each movie averages only about four or five kicks total, which is surprising, considering how big Tae Kwon Do is in Korea (I've never known a Korean who wasn't a black belt). So with very little (if any) martial arts, the battles consist mainly of super imposed laser beams. Though crude, they suffice, and there are a lot of them through out. Other duels are cartoons of spaceships & robots, mixed in with the live action heroes. The latter half is full of astonishing sci-fi battles! If you just see these scenes, that's about two or three stars worth of entertainment, but again, the very beginning is pretty stupid. The opening comedy does not deserve anything, so on the whole I'll round the movie off to a single star.

There's only one Korean word I know, and that's 'Korea.' That's the name of the country most of them Koreans lived in, until they discovered America. Since 'Korea' is the only Korean word I know, the film's dialogue is entirely alien to me. So I'm guessing, but it looks like ugly alien transvestites are planning world domination. Meanwhile, jolly campers are fooling around. In one scene, a kid's pants fall down. Is this child pornography, or more feeble humor? Later, an alien spaceship, the animated 'Ureme' crashes. A lovable buffoon (Shim Hyung Rae) stumbles inside and meets Dae-Illi (Kim Jong-Ah) a sexy space babe who wears a common aerobics leotard. Also in the spaceship is some old wizard, injured in a battle with the evil invaders. Exactly why, I don't know, but they turn the Korean clown into a mighty superhero, Esperman! And it's a damn good thing too, because them outerspace rejects from THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW are hassling Korean scientists! Despite their battles with Esperman, they still manage to burn down buildings (cartoon jets super-imposed over actual footage of crumbling buildings, taken from some newscast!), and kidnap that sexy space heroine Dae Illi (pronounced "Daily"). So Esperman, driving the spaceship UREME is off to rescue her! The enemy's Barth Base is located at Antarctica or some other place with lots of snow.







The heroic rescue is rich in lasers, maybe a chase or two, and cartoon giants, mixed in with shots of real glaciers. Ureme becomes a robot, who battles an alien robot, and even a green monster! Devilman, eat your heart out! After all the evil aliens, robots & monsters are wasted, Dai Illi and Beperman fall in love with each other. While Dae Illi is quite delectable, Beperman still looks like a Korean Lou Costello. \*

## UREME #2

Producer: Kim Jung Gi, Script: Cahn Dong Gun, Starring: Sim Hyung Lei, Video Release: 10/11/88, 90 Min.

Amazingly, #2 is even worse than the first one! Some of the FX may be a slight improvement, but the epic battles

of the first saga aren't matched; part 2 is lackluster by comparison. There are no animated "Transformer" ripoffs this time! I'm no cartoon freak, but the "Shogun Warrior" imitations of Part 1 were half the fun! Although this inferior sequel lacks the decent fights & destruction of the original, it maintains another UREME trait to the full extent: Complete & utter stupidity. Once more, the pointless clowning around dominates, in this case I dare say it takes up half the movie. Twice our heroic idiot runs around trying to change into Beperman. But he rarely succeeds, because there's always somebody watching him, and he must protect his identity. This is a running gag, which appears in each film.

Although my Korean language ability rivals my ability to smell tuna and not throw up, I gather that this script isn't bad. It seems intelligently written, and yet my Korean correspondent recently told me them Koreans always say 'no' when he asks if they have sci-fi films. Obviously, they don't take the genre seriously, which explains why such talents are wasted in cheap kiddie films like this.

The villains this time are three cute little ghosts; one is blue, one is green, and one isn't. They look like little kids in monster costumes, wearing awkward diver's flippers, causing them to stumble when they walk. The red one seems to be their leader, and they're up to no good. They go into a morgue and revive a corpse, turning it into a mighty warrior. They also activate a bunch of toys which then attack people. So Beperman and Dae Illi reduce their Ureme jet down to the size of a toy. For once we see a 3-dimensional Ureme, and not just a cartoon. It engages in battle (the mini Ureme model) with a squad of toy tanks. Meanwhile, at the bidding of the

three spirit/monsters, the magical zombie has captured Korean scientists and imprisoned them in a cave. After a battle and brief tearjerker (Beperman and Dae Illi think each

other is dead), Beperman confronts the zombie-guy. This is actually the best duel in the story, featuring martial arts (for once!), far-fetched acrobats which can only be accomplished with fancy editing & photography, and of course, more rays and beams. By now, Dae Illi and a little kid have rescued the scientists, so Beperman seeks the three "B.T. gone bad" little devils responsible! This fight over-does it on the suspension wires. But the wires aren't visible, because they blurred the upper half of the film as a cover up, making the shots look even worse! The tiny three elf-demon dudes suffer defeat, and the zombie becomes a normal, happy human. His life resumes. \*



## UREME 3

Producer: Kim Jung-Gi, Released on video: 5/12/88, 90 min.

Slightly better than the first two, which almost deserve two stars each. Once more, there's the obligatory foolery which wastes the first half of the movie. Fortunately, part of that takes place on a beach, so we see one of the female regulars in a bathing suit, and a dumb scene of our equally dumb hero getting ink squirted at him, from an octopus. The creature is a mere cartoon, and looks like a reject from SQUIDDLBY DIDLBY. Regardless, for better or worse, the point is that all the pointless stupidity is at least amusing this time; not 100% boring. I only used my "Scan/Fast Forward" button once! There's a spaceship battle at the beginning, but the first live action duel (a nice one!) doesn't occur until 45 minutes into the film, if played at normal speed. Overall, the mattes, visuals and costumes are a slight





improvement over the prequels, but what really did it for me was the return of cartoon robots! These Korean giants are just as fun as any of Japan's 'anime' crap, and bring back fond memories of UFO DAI APOLON and YUUSHA RAIDEN (my exposure to 'Japanimation' became somewhat limited once I 'declared war' on cartoon geeks back around 1980).

It's hard to tell, but I guess the actual story starts with an evil army of space creatures on some space station. The henchwomen all wear brightly colored afros (some are green, some are red, some aren't), the likes of which I haven't seen since ROOM 222. I'm sorry, but the only person who ever looked cool in a 'fro was Bozo the Clown. One female on board, and the only one to have an old Bo ("10") Derrick haircut instead of an afro, lays an egg and must send it into exile. Why? Would the monstrous commander kill the baby alien inside it, out of fear of another mouth to feed? Or would the egg end up hardboiled? I don't know, I'm not Korean. For whatever reason, the alien husband & wife send their egg into outer space, and it ends up on Barth. It hatches and the newly born alien befriends a Korean kid. Miraculously, this B.T. wannabe masters fluent Korean immediately after hatching! The two tykes goof off, and in one scene, the Korean boy actually laughs at how small the alien's dick is! I'm serious, this actually happens in the movie. This is the same boy who dropped his pants in the first film, and he's in no position to laugh.

Regardless, his two alien parents left the evil space station against orders. After test driving a new race car called 'Turbo', Esperman battles the invading parents. If that's not rough enough for them, they get attacked by their own kin next, for having gone AWOL. The father gets killed, so Esperman's giant robot takes on the giant robot of the villain. The villain all die in their battles with Esperman, Dae Illi and scientists in the Turbo car, not to mention a helicopter that looks like a shoe. UREMB 3 ends with the young monster and his beautiful, far more human mother returning into space. \* \*

## 우리대4탄 신인물출동

### UREMB 4

Released: 1/5/89, Starring: Shim Hyung Rei

The story's beginning and ending are two different worlds! The first portion, as always, has that retard Shim Hyung Rae, trying to ruin the film with his lame excuse for comedy. I've seen funnier antics in a 'beach party' movie.

There is one amusing gag though; during his obligatory transformation into Esperman. As always, he can't transform if people are watching him, so he hides in a vacant bathroom and does his post-Kamen Rider modification, right next to the urinals. The latter half of URBMB 4 really kicks ass though! The sets, mattes, costumes, animation, and other FX have really improved, but I see they still let an occasional suspension wire remain seen. Yet this is a fun, exciting flick, full of action, pretty girls, cheap FX and other dandy stuff. Though still an infantile comedy, it's the first in the series which I'd consider acceptable to a U.S. audience. The production values



are good enough, and it's colorful & lively enough to appeal to all ages! After all, Americans accepted BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE, STAR WARS, STARBLAZERS and VOLTRON, and URBMB 4 is all these films combined, but is a hell of a lot more fun. URBMB 4 is a sci-fi lover's dream come true, and highly recommendable to all you superhero nuts!

Seeing an epic though obscure film such as this, from Korea, is like having a whole new world opened up. It's a major discovery; not many Americans have seen this wild fantasy. It makes me wonder how many more undiscovered treasures there are out there! There's all kinds of stuff out there, and if more people would open their minds, such fun could be had by all. Ooops! This paragraph was meant to be yet another cynical attack on narrowminded people who aren't like me and won't accept bizarre stuff like URBMB 4. The whole paragraph ended up too positive, implying there's hope. Let me start again: Only an asshole doesn't want to see URBMB 4!

I guess every URBMB film has a ballad. But it was never so noticeable

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

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

### NEW MACHINE: UREMB 5

Story: Cheh Dong Kun, Cameraman: Be Song Han & Ing Jung Hwo, Lighting: Bi Song Gun & Kim Sok Yung, Editing: Pak Jun Bih, Special FX: Chung Do Ang, Original Story: Pak Hei Wong, Screenplay: Chung Choi Su, Art Dir.: Pei Chung Jun Head Dir.: Chow Mei Wa, Music: Nam Wu San, Starring: Shim Hyung Lei, Bi He Jin, Kim Woo Jong

The fifth film is great stuff! It's incredible how much FX, costumes, monsters, miniatures, cartoons, robots and other stuff they can cram into a



single movie. The common rule is that the later the film, the better the production values. So I think it's safe to assume URBMB 5 is the best to date, although the fourth one is hard to beat. This is not to say URBMB 5 is flawless. There are minor problems, like unsteady animation and visible wires, once again.

My mastery of understanding Korean (and Koreans) will never happen, but this complex script tells me I was wrong in my assumption that Beperman, Ureme & Dae-Illi are aliens. URBMB 5 seems to imply that perhaps our heroes are descended from an ancient race of advanced (?) Barthlings! There seem to be all these Ureme robots in different places, they're dormant until needed. They all have the symbol, the 'Thunder Hawk.' Some new robot appears in each film. In this one, the robot is within a giant statue (a cheap Majin) worshipped by natives. The primitive jungle dwellers appear in the first half of the tale. It seems to take place in India, Bangkok, Tibet, or whatever country has tigers and elephants. Whatever the country is, it

Sang Yul & I Jung Ho, Music: Nam U-Yung, Fine Arts: Joo Yung-Shim, Animation: Yun Chun-Guk, Drawing: Jang Hyu Lyun, Martial Arts Director: Kim Yun Ok, Martial artists: Han Myung Ho, Jung Bo Yung, Choe Wun Suk, I Ham Lak, Asst. Dir.: Im Jong Ho, Recorder: Gwan Wang Le, Prod. Dir.: Chae Chang Don, Yang Gun-Bok, Planning: Kim Suk, Song Man Suk, CAST: Beperman: Han Jung Ho, Dae-Illi: Kim Jong Ah, Uppasa: Um Yong-Soo, Kim Yu Sa; Moon Jung Sook, Bomi: Kim-Bo Lana

A spectacular epic, which starts off with a trailer for HO HANG KIL DONG, a Korean fantasy full of FX, rather influenced by the likes of RAI RAI KYONSHI and maybe even ZU, WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN, but I won't hold that against it. This period comedy involves a couple vampires; a Dracula and a Chinese hopper! Then comes the thrilling URBMB 6! If you like flamboyant adventures about robots, rayguns, explosions, acrobats, stunts, dinosaurs and martial arts, you just might lust after this exciting thriller! I did! As I

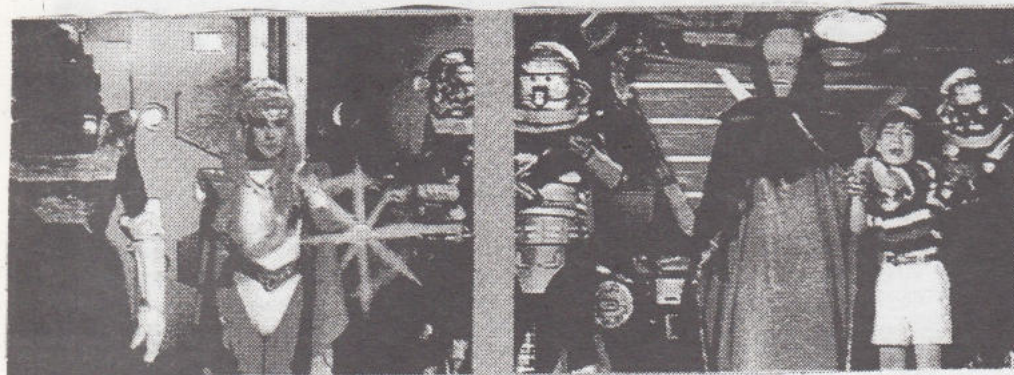
sound FX from GAMBERA VS. BARUGON add unintended humor. As mumbled at the beginning of this paragraph, there are robotic cartoons up the ass, and the usual post-Terry Gilliam FX too.

They got some new actor playing Beperman. What happened to the old guy is anyone's guess. Somehow this new guy doesn't irritate me like the original jerk, of the other five films. Regardless, he follows the script, playing the same stupid character played by Shim Hyung Rei previously. Though equally stupid, he's taller & thinner than his predecessor, and fits in the superhero costume better. He fights a little better too. One funny scene has him go into a restroom to transform into Beperman. Strangely, there are females coming out of the stalls, and yet there are also urinals in the room. I guess Korea has coed restrooms. Regardless, the scene is amusing because the girls who exit the toilet stalls get scared to see this guy in funny positions, facing their stalls like some pervert. There are additional characters & comedians as filler, almost funny at times.

The movie was produced back in 1990, I don't think they've made one since then. I hope they continue, it would be a shame if the series ended when it had gotten up to this fun level! More URBMBs, please!

More alien invaders; in this case, two rival groups have chosen a Korean forest as their battleground. The 'good' side sends an ugly, monstrous warrior to Earth. It's actually their beautiful princess in disguise. She assumes this monstrous form whenever she battles the space androids. The androids are after a little glowing ball, which summons & controls one of the many mechanical cartoons in this tale. Beperman and Dae-Illi agree to help the princess, so she uses her magic to enhance their combat capability. They're given this armor plating which reminds me of those in CYBERCOP or CAPT. POWER & THE SOLDIERS OF THE FUTURE. Their final battle with the villains takes place on some alien planet, which, as you know, involves an abundance of colorful FX and robots of all shapes & sizes! \*\*\*

**ATTENTION! SUPERHERO FANS! WANT TO INCREASE YOUR COLLECTION OF VIDEO-TAPES? CAN'T GET ENOUGH KAMEN RIDER, SPACE SHERIFFS, GORANGERS, etc.? Want to trade videotapes? So does Channing Smith. Channing Smith, PO Box 7594, Tacoma, WA 98407-0594 [please enclose an SASE to assure a quick response]**



all starts when the Ureme crash-lands in the jungle after a dogfight with an alien space craft. The evil invaders in this movie are okay, even if their leader has a rotten pumpkin for a head, and the remainder look like rejects from LOST IN SPACE. Regardless, Beperman's climactic duels with these monsters and robots are pretty damn entertaining. Beperman's motive is to rescue the commander of that same Yamato-ish spaceship from the previous movie. \*\*\*

watch some of the great fun in URBMB 6, a gripe comes to mind. I know many American fans of Jap. superheroes. The likes of Ultraman & Kamen Rider are indeed wonderful, but I can't understand why some narrowminded fans won't watch a film unless it's Japanese. So if you'd never watch URBMB 6 because it's Korean, not Japanese, eat shit and die. You're no better than an anime freak. Get with it! Jap. superheroes are old news. URBMB 6 and other new Korean films offer a refreshing change as they alter and re-shuffle the traditional elements, you onedimensional, boring old fart!

The usual animated giants abound, as do the many super-impositions, visuals and mattes. But the sets, especially for a low budget film, are beautiful. And them robot miniatures! Electric or wind-up toys I saw in toy stores a while back. Be it Tonka or Mattel, these robotic dinosaurs make effective miniatures! The occasional

**제3세대  
우림대**

### THIRD GENERATION: UREMB 6

Director: Kim Ching-Gi, Producer: Kim Jung Gi, Planning: Kim Jung Bum, Script: Chae Dong-Gun, Lighting Director: Son Yung-Chul, Lighting: I



## BRUCE

## LEE'S

## CLONES



Contrary to the opinions of people I don't like, there are some movies so bad that even I, the swami of cheesy schlock, won't critique. Supposedly, many of the worst films in existence are the 'Bruce Lee ripoffs' which came out immediately after Lee's death, and kept being produced until about 1979. No doubt these cheap films were made by connen eager to make a buck off Lee's name, although he had nothing to do with these stinkers (how could he? He was 6-feet under!). Ironically, Linda Lee settled out of court with four film companies over the depiction of family members in two films (DRAGON DIES HARD & BRUCE LEE, SUPER DRAGON). In 1975. In order to make these exploitive films, martial artists who looked & fought like Bruce Lee were in demand. Ho Chung Tao (born in 1952), the best of the bunch, and the only one to have even a vague resemblance to Bruce Lee, was given the stage name Li Shao Lung (a variation on Lee's Chinese name), and in the U.S., he's called Bruce Li. He studied boxing, judo & karate after high school, and spent two years at the Taiwan Provincial Drama College. In the early 1970s, he became a stuntman, and amazingly, got the lead role in 1972's CONSPIRACY, just one year before Bruce Lee's death! So once Bruce Lee died, Ho Chung Tao became Bruce Li and his career finally grew. There were actually two different Bruce Lis, the lesser known one being the Vietnamese Nguyen Ly, also called 'Jimbo Lee', who was supposedly in an American film called REVENGE OF THE DRAGON. The second most wellknown of the Lee mimickers was Bruce Le, AKA Huang Kin Lung. Bruce Le made his debut two whole years after Bruce Li, although he was a bit player in early 1970s Shaw films. Le's first real appearance was in the sci-fi hero epic INFRAMAN (Shaw Bros.; 1976), where he co-starred alongside Danny Lee (later of THE KILLER). Bruce Le had been an extra, contract actor & background actor in numerous Shaw Bros. films. Bruce Le (AKA Huang Kin-lung) is a native of Thailand who'd studied kung fu in Burma. Le was dumped by the Shaws in 1977, and formed his own company, Dragon Films, and was determined to fill the gap left by Bruce Li (Li, by this time, was outgrowing his 'Bruce Lee clone' phase). Eventually, even Bruce Le desired more original roles, so he moved on, and in came Dragon Lee, aka Bruce Lei. Little is known about this Korean tea kwon do stylist. By this time, actor Leung Siu Liang began calling himself Bruce Liang & Bruce Leung. Additional mockers included names like Bronson Lee, Consen Lee, Jaguar Lee, Bruce Ly, and in more recent years, Jet Li. With all these fighters hoping to be the new Bruce Lee, films with words like "Bruce," "Bruce Lee," "Enter," and "Connection" became more common than fudgepackers in a salon. In their own tacky, campy ways, these films can be codies of fun! Like I pointed out earlier, some of these flicks are so bad,

they're not worth the paper I print OC on, so I won't review them. These are horrendous atrocities like SPIRITS OF BRUCE LEE, FURY OF THE DRAGON (featuring a picture of Bruce from ENTER on movie posters or videos), REVENGE OF FIST OF FURY, MEAN MAN LEE, ROCKY LEE, BRUCE ALI, BRUCE IS LOOSE, BRUCE AND THE KUNG FU GIRLS, BRUCE LEE FIGHTS BACK FROM THE GRAVE, and BRUCE, DRAGON AND LEE. These are especially misinformative and deceitful, since they don't even have Bruce Lee impersonators! Such is the case with SOUL OF BRUCE LEE, reviewed last issue. There have also been Bruce Lee parodies, like THE DRAGON LIVES AGAIN. Sam Hung's ENTER THE FAT DRAGON, and the most wellknown: the hilarious American satire, FIST FULL OF YEN, from KENTUCKYFRIED MOVIE. However, Bruce Li and the boys at least tried to keep Bruce Lee's memory alive; Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. What ever happened to these Bruce Lee wannabes? Well, I assume they became obsolete once the Bruce Lee craze died in the late 1970s, to make way for the 1980s wave of HK gangster films. Their careers dwindled, although Bruce Le made an attempt to return to stardom in the 1980s. In various war and/or action films you'll soon read about. In fact, I hear the Lee imitators were never that big in HK, they were more wellknown in the U.S. and South America! Regardless, now for reviews of Lee imitator films, in alphabetical order (almost! I've never been good at alphabetizing). I'll cram in as many of these as I have time for.

**BLACK SPOT:** Bruce Le's 1990 comeback, meant to revive a career which had sagged like the tits of a 100-year-old Dolly Parton! He was better off in his old 1970s Bruce Lee-wannabe phase, than in this typical, modern HK actioner, derivative of John Woo's & Jackie Chan's superior films. There's on-location filming in France, Hong Kong, Thailand and the Golden Triangle, whatever THAT is. BLACK SPOT has the same decent production values of recent HK films (way above his '70s chop socky), but there are faults & continuity flaws throughout. Yet it's nice to see Le back in action. His fighting skill hasn't deteriorated, but it's amazing how old he looks! He's virtually unrecognizable. I saw BLACK SPOT in Chinese, from a Chinese store. But there's possibly an English dub available, since it has many caucelans: it's possibly a HK/U.S. co-production. The first half of BLACK SPOT looks like a typical HK gangster film, with chases, recaptures, escapes, gunplay, martial arts, dull dialogue, and urban setting. Le plays a very fortunate Chinaman, working as the only male at a 'kung fu health spa,' full of white models, mostly blonde. From there, this far-fetched, unrealistic story becomes kind of like a war film (EASTERN CONDORS and BULLET IN THE HEAD come to mind) as Le (playing Wong Lung) is forced by mobsters to go smuggle drugs. In one scene, he fights a huge, barbaric guy in the ring, an excuse for more gore. The tradition of babes & blood continues as he deals with mobsters (Lo Lieh & Chiang Tao in cameos) in HK, until he ends up in some oppressed Thai village. Lots of insightful inquiries and social statements as Le discovers a pitiful village where even the children's livelihood is based on the growing & manufacturing of opium. Then an army of soldiers & Interpol agents, lead by a sexy blonde who can't act for shit arrives, and it's

a big, explosive shootout between the two groups. Le does a few more kicks until he's shot dead by one of his own comrades who's gone trigger happy. \*

**BLIND FIST OF BRUCE:** The only blind thing about this lame Bruce Li chop sockeyer is the writer. A quick steal from SNAKEFIST FIGHTER and EAGLE'S SHADOW, with Simon Yuen again playing a drunken bum who eventually teaches kung fu to the hero Tin Lung (Bruce Li). The only major twist is that Yuen's character is blind, sort of a kung fu Zato ichi. He was blinded by a master of snake technique, who somehow actually uses a type of blinding venom, much like a cobra. Bruce Li plays a banker who learns kung fu from two bogus teachers. These fake techniques are no match for Chiang Tao's gang, who conquer the bank and the whole village. So after Yuen teaches Li in the usual dull, post-Jackie Chan training scenes, the two get their revenge against Chiang Tao and his followers. \*

**BRONSON LEE, CHAMPION:** A Japanese karate film, making even the worst Sonny Chiba movie look good! It stars Tadashi Yamashita, some time after his appearances in American films like ENTER THE DRAGON and JUDGE DEE & THE MONASTERY MURDERS. The original Japanese version has nothing to do with Bruce Lee or Charles Bronson, so ignore this moronic title! There's really nothing good about this hunk of crap, except maybe its music. The fights are pretty bad, its attempts at serious drama are laughable, but the comedy isn't. The thing starts off rather like a Chinese film; Yamashita performs karate at the opening credits, much like Jackie in EAGLE'S SHADOW. Later, a karate school tears down a rival school's sign to start trouble. But the similarities end there. The humorous co-hero is stupid, silly at best, but never funny. Lead hero Tadashi Yamashita may do well assisting Chiba in last issue's SOUL OF BRUCE LEE, but on his own, he just doesn't cut it! And if all these complaints subtract this film's rating down to one star, then its constant boredom eliminates that one star. The story is of Bronson Lee (Tadashi Yamashita), who was raised in Ohio, which they present as an old western town, like in a cowboy movie. He's dubbed in a southern accent, and goes to Japan to enter a karate tournament. Among the martial artists involved, he meets Suzuki Masafumi (old guy from STREETFIGHTER). He also meets numerous martial artists from all over the world, attending this tournament. After some unexciting bouts in the ring, his hippie friend gets shot by mobsters. Seems the mobsters are infiltrating the tournament.



During one of Bronson Lee's battles against them yakuza, he gets blinded. So he has a life saving flashback to when he was a kid; his father

(a Zato Ichi wannabe) teaches him how to deal with swords while blindfolded. So in a valley near cliffs, though sightless, he defeats a villain using kicks, punches and maybe a sword or two.

**BRUCE AND SHAOLIN KUNG FU:** Heroic Ching Lung (Bruce Le) is from Ching Wu Gym, and there's a 'Bruce' in the film's title. Otherwise, this action packed war



story hasn't a thing to do with Bruce Lee. This is a thrilling adventure, a fun cheap sockeyeer from the late 1970s. Bruce Lee imitates both Lee and Jackie Chan in this tale of Japanese oppression in Shanghai & Korea. The Japanese characters have character development & depth, although the dubbing pronounces these warriors 'eamyeral!' At times, this thriller gets vaguely cultural, almost educational. Storywise, Bruce Lee kicks serious ass against Jap soldiers & martial artists played by Chiang Tao & Yang Gze, to avenge the death of his brother & teacher (Chen Sing), and countless Chinese victims of Japanese occupation of China. After Lee learns tee kwon do in Korea, he wastes more Jap bastards until they gun him down, like in **FIST OF FURY**. Highlights include a catchy though stupid disco theme song ("Seven! Seven! Super seven"), a sexy Korean babe, and of course, fights, sword & acrobatic

" " 1/2

**BRUCE: D-DAY AT MACAO-** Right then, brother: nothing at all to do with Bruce Lee. But still, Bruce Liang (Liang Shau Lung) leads a band of young pickpockets to aid a detective (Wong Yuen) around wartime, against more of them goddamn Japanese spies, samurais and bastards. Chou Li Chung (the world's geekiest scrobbat) is typecast as always, and so are the other familiar faces. Listen then, the fights are great, the story & comedy are the same old stuff. " "

**BRUCE LEE, HIS LAST DAYS-** Whether you know this depressing love story as **I LOVE YOU BRUCE LEE** or **BRUCE LEE: HIS LAST DAYS & NIGHTS**, this is Betty Ting Pei's version of Lee's fate. The actress, and Bruce Lee's controversial lover, co-wrote and starred in it, playing herself. It's definitely more about Betty Ting Pei than Bruce Lee. It's her effort to make us feel sorry for her. The movie tells of her difficulties in being an actress, and how everyone in HK abused her. Maybe this is all true, or maybe she exaggerated it. Produced in 1975, it seems fairly faithful to the many Bruce books I've read, except that Betty Ting Pei downplays her success; I know she was in other films, like some 1960s film called **THE BRAIN STEALERS**, and of course, Sam Hui's **NAUGHTY NAUGHTY**, which she also made in 1975. Supposedly, she appeared in movies up until about 1983, when she retired and devoted herself to Buddhism (supposedly living the life of a nun, which I doubt). Again, just rumors. As a HK movie, it's pretty typical: a gambling scene, David Cassidy clothes, sexual harassment, and more "but still" than Arabs in a 7-11. Interesting to note that it's the Shaw Bros. only Bruce Lee ripoff, so its budget is slightly higher than the average flick of Bruce Li & the boys. Filmed just two years after Lee's death, it's intriguing to watch, almost informative. But considering all the shit Betty Ting Pei went through (i.e. lawsuits involving HK tabloids), it's no surprise that the flick is opinionated, almost a cover-up. Shaw actor Li Hui Helen, who'd later appear in **THE SAVAGE FIVE**, **INFRAMAN** and **GOLIATHON**, plays Bruce Lee. How ironic that he didn't get his English name, Danny Lee, until the 1980s! Had he been called Danny Lee in 1975, he might have been typecast. Instead, he survived, and continues to act until this day (by now you've all seen him in **THE KILLER**). Danny Lee fights well, but not like Lee at all; it's obviously Shaw-training stuff, not Jeet kune do. Don't ask me why, but a couple of the film's fights were later spliced into **DYNAMO**, even though Danny Lee and Bruce Li look nothing alike. Storywise, **BRUCE LEE, HIS LAST DAYS** is a flashback, as Betty Ting

Pei tells a bartender about all the abuse she's gotten in the film industry, and how Lee was her guiding light. He helped her, and beat up rude males & foreign devils when she got harassed. She was an aspiring actress at the mercy of greedy, sexist, exploitive moviemakers who saw her as a sex object. That's because they all want to have SEX with her, and she OBJECTS. During the course of the film, we see her in maybe a couple of sexy outfits, but there's supposedly an uncensored version out there where she shows it all. I lack that version, unfortunately. Lee gets Golden Harvest to agree to give Ting Pei the leading female role in **GAME OF DEATH**. In reality, Lee AND Raymond Chow went to her apartment to have her sign the contract, and Chow left at 7:30. Lee stayed to take a nap (supposedly), after complaining of a headache. He never awoke. Yet this film tells it differently, as though to cover up certain details of the infamous night of July 20, 1973. Lee arrives at the apartment alone, telling her she's got the part in **GAME OF DEATH**. They get ready for a high class party, and Lee goes into pain and faints on her bed. After the flashback, she gets attacked by angry Lee fans led by Chien Yuet Sun. They think she killed Lee, so the bartender beats them up. Upon seeing the completed film, Betty Ting Pei regretted her involvement and refused to join the Japanese publicity tour of the film. On the whole, the flick is dumb. It's interesting

如 斯 里 止 小  
花 島 嘉 遜 利 龍



though, almost average, but not quite. "

**BRUCE LEE IN NEW GUINEA-** Only a complete moron, like the types who listen to Michael Bolton, could be fooled into thinking there's really a Bruce Lee in this film. There's nothing Lee about it. Ignore the exploitive, inaccurate title, and get ready for an action packed, fast-paced, mucho funno. Jungle adventure! Bruce Li gives it his all in this thriller: kicking, blocking, punching and doing his own gymnastics. There are at least five "but still"s, revenge, sexual harassment, a training scene, and yet this is not your typical kung fu farce. Li plays Wan Li Chang, an anthropologist who visits a primitive island with fellow explorer Chin Sek (guy from **THUNDERKICK**), who later gets shot to death by evil whites in search of the snake pearl. Another brief, supporting character is Chang (Chung Lik), a greedy Chinaman also after the pearl, but he gets killed by an evil wizard (Chen Sing) leading

the snake tribe. Speaking of which, Li would rather poke the tribe's sexy, kindhearted princess (who has high heels despite her tribe's primitivity) than his female cousin, much to his parents' dismay (inbreeding used to be the 'in thing' until Chinese realized why so many of them have bad teeth). Regardless, Bruce Li and the gorgeous princess do the old 'in out,' resulting in a child who's in danger, thanks to the evil snake wizard, his spells and snake kung fu. The princess, called Lankawa, is protected by a man in a gorilla suit meant to be a real gorilla, but Li is still needed, to kill the usual villains: Chen Sing, Yang Gze, and Li Hui Sheng. " " 1/2

**BRUCE LEE SECRET-** Several times, Bruce Li's character is referred to as "Lee," or "Bruce," but they never come right out and call him Bruce Lee. That's good, because this silly, goofy romp has little or nothing to do with Bruce Lee (except for Lee's real-life rivalry with a Chinese who didn't want him teaching kung fu to non-Chinese). The remainder of **BRUCE LEE SECRET** is a typical revenge chop sockeyeer, and a painfully naive, simpleminded one. They say "Right" a few times, villains slam down a rival school's sign, and Wei Ping Ao is typecast as always. The most stupid things are the caucasian villain! Where do they get such ugly whites?! Some of them are dubbed in the most bewilderingly stupid voices imaginable. From start to finish, this is an unintentional comedy but the biggest laughs are toward the beginning. Though cheap & stupid, it's a fun film about oppressed immigrants in 1970s Chinatown. Bruce Li pisses off some thugs in a restaurant, so from then on they keep sending more thugs to hassle him. Carter Wang & other members of his kung fu school. Later in the film Li develops the technique 'Chie Chun Dao,' a variation on Jeet Kune Do. From that point on, Li mimics Lee as he takes on the evil American karatekas. The film would be better without the annoying little kid. " "

**BRUCE LEE, THE INVINCIBLE-** Believe it or not, there's some historical accuracy in this one. Martial artist Ho Yuan-chia (1862-1901) was a real person from around Huang Fei Hung's time. He's played by Chen Sing in this film, though called Fok.

the Cantonese pronunciation. This action farce and **BRUCE LEE IN NEW GUINEA** were possibly produced at the same time, they're both quite similar. Both feature: jungle adventures, native tribes, cheap gorillas, excellent kung fu, fun galore, beautiful females, inaccurate titles since they've nothing to do with Bruce Lee, revenge, rape attempts, and performances by Bruce Li, Chen Sing and Chung Lik (aka Chang Lik & Cheng Li). Chen Hui Min plays the villain, and back in the 1970s, he was one helluva fighter! Since he battles it out with Bruce Li and Chen Sing, the battles are great. It's the tale of Shaolin disciples in the early 1990s (I think), there's even a flashback about Dahmo, the Indian founder of Shaolin. Our heroes (Li, Chen Sing) venture to Malaysia to take care of Chen Hui Min's character, their former student, now gone bad. With the help of funny-looking natives, the villain has kidnapped a gorgeous Malaysian girl who would rather marry her



own cousin. So the cousin (Chung Lik), also a Shaolin guy, along with Chen Sing and Li attack all the baddies, who (of course) run a crooked gambling casino. Later on, for added fun, our heroes even fight a couple of ridiculously cheap gorillas! Anyway, it all ends after the chick is rescued, and the main villain is captured (I don't recall any deaths).  
 \* \* 1/2

**BRUCE LEE, THE LEGEND.** The advertisement calls this Lee biography "priceless," and "gripping." They forgot to say "excellent," "informative," or "outstanding!" This incredible documentary is all of them, a must see for every Bruce Lee fanatic! A 1984 effort from Golden Harvest, it's beautifully edited, and answers a lot of questions. Among other things, it says Bruce's mother Grace was half German! Other little known facts come into light, thanks to rare interviews with Nora Miao, Chuck Norris, Betty Ting Pei, Siu Hong Hung (one of Bruce's teachers), Raymond Chow, Bruce's American art teacher (who shows some incredible artwork Bruce did in Seattle), and there's footage of Samo Hung at Golden Harvest. I was impressed with the Nora Miao interview, not only did she look her best, but speaks perfect English. There are plenty of fights from Bruce's five kung fu movies, showing his best & fastest kicks; always spectacular, though seen before. Other non-Lee films are shown too, to prove points raised in narration; we see clips from ZU: WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN, WARRIORS TWO, WINNERS & SINNERS, and even a Zato Ichi film! Early Lee footage shows him as a kid with his father Lee Hoi Chen in MY SON AH CHEUNG, and additional clips from BOYS ON THE STREET & THUNDERSTORM. Again, no shots from THE DELINQUENT, which looks like the most interesting of Lee's early films. Other rare footage includes Bruce's screen test, LONGSTREET, young Brandon playing with friends in a living room, and footage of Liang Chia Jen, Wang in Sik, Danny Inosanto, and Tee Ho Jai working out. Tee Ho Jai, for the record, is the Korean hapkido master Lee fights in GAME OF DEATH (thanks to this film for finally identifying the guy!). Speaking of GAME, we finally get to see Lee's outtake! It's so strange to see more rare footage of him, it seems new! And my god, these fights show how good GAME could have been, had it followed his script! There are shots of Lee, James Tien and some other guy battling Danny Inosanto and Tee Ho Jai. Two teams of fighters battling it out, and yet the inferior, completed GAME eliminates all the HK co-stars, in favor of non-martial arts American actors who ruined the film (some of them are interviewed too). These rare shots of Lee, James Tien, and Tee Ho Jai made me freak out! How much other Lee film is out there to be discovered? The narrator also discusses the imitators used in GAME, and we see Samo Hung coaching Kim Tae Jeung behind-the-scenes, on how to act like Lee.

There's some rare outtakes from ENTER, like Lee instructing Han's daughter on how to judo toes John Saxon. So Bruce dies before ENTER's completion, but the movie doesn't end there. Here's the most complete footage of the funeral we'll ever see! More shots of Shih Kien, Tony Liu, Nancy Kwan, George Lezenby & Nora Miao paying their last respects, plus Linda's arrival with Raymond Chow. The camera even follows the Lee family from the funeral to the airport; and there's a disturbing scene with Brandon. He looks confused & nervous, and beginning to resemble the ill-fated Brandon of his adult years. We even see & hear Linda speak on the plane, mere hours after the HK funeral. She requests the HK press let Bruce be remembered for his accomplishments and not

accuse people of killing him. Then comes the second funeral & burial, in Seattle, attended by James Coburn, Jim Kelly & Steve McQueen. We see Lee's corpse again, from a different angle than in all the other films. This footage is depressing yet fascinating. It's taken from what looks like home movie footage. But the movie isn't over yet. There's footage from a couple Betty Ting Pei movies, and a brief discussion of Lee imitators. But the final fight is of Jackie Chan, showing him as the one who rose above all the Lee exploitation films of the late 1970s. But the ending credits offer more glimpses of unused shots of Lee in GAME. Things go wrong, Lee laughs and looks at the camera. It shows the real Lee, not acting, but having fun inbetween takes.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

### BRUCE LEE; THE MAN, THE MYTH-

Although the Bruce Lee 'life stories' have no masterpieces, I guess this Bruce Li farce is the best. The script is more simple than a 1st grade math test for Special Children, it's basic & to the point; yet manages to be as faithful to Lee's life as any movie is likely to get. The only problem besides its utter simplicity, is its many fights. These constant challenges and repetition are great for an ordinary kung fu movie, but gets in the way of the truth, distracting from what could have been an accurate biography. The production values, like the photography, music, dubbing, cinematography and editing are pretty bad. But I still seemed to enjoy it.

At the beginning, Lee/Li is briefly taught by Yip Man, played by Yip Man's real son, Yip Chun. Then he's immediately off to teach kung fu at Seattle University, where his class is challenged by a karate school. Although Lee received challenges his whole life, such fights lasted mere seconds. In this case, the fight is the usual "Japanese karate vs. Chinese kung fu," involving revenge & honor. So later, Lee is greeted by a familiar Chinese actor (usually a background henchman, like in FIST OF FURY) in San Francisco's Chinatown, where he briefly confronts a local kung fu expert. Like in BRUCE LEE SECRET and DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY, the rival didn't want Lee teaching kung fu to non-Chinese. Later, we see Li in a Kato outfit; a very cheap one, implying this is the time period where he made GREEN HORNET. There are no challenges in this scene, not until he goes to Thailand to film BIG BOSS. I must say, they did well, at re-creating that film's ice factory, looks like many of the actual actors from Lee's movie. Behind the scenes Lee supposedly beats up a gang of Thai boxers. Like the film's many other fights, it's outstanding. Bruce Li is incredible! This duel is especially impressive because Li takes

on genuine Thai boxers of Bangkok, not more Hong Kongese extras. Later, Li is challenged by Italian mobsters in Rome, and they fight among Roman ruins. Then comes more stupid dialogue (the film is full of it) and at one point, Mare plays a construction worker hassled by a jogger, who was also in RETURN OF THE DRAGON. This is a stupid fight, just space filler. Unicorn Chan makes a cameo at one point, some time before Li works on ENTER THE DRAGON. The set is decent, the American film crew, karatekas and flags are decent replicas from ENTER. We all know there were jealous stuntmen and background extras who challenged Lee while making ENTER. So naturally, it gave the filmmakers an opportunity to add another fight involving Li Hal Sheng. Which brings us to Lee's fate.

We see him at home, with a Linda Lee-look-alike playing her part well. Also accurate is the actress playing Betty Ting Pei. But Li asks her about her husband! Husband? They're obviously changing the truth here! The relationship seems innocent in this film. Innocent but brief, all because of a headache, a pill, and a dead guy in bed. Then comes even more footage of Bruce's HK funeral, and two rumors are speculated, about Lee's fate:

1. Was Lee ambushed by swordsmen one night? Did he actually die on the sidewalk? Or was this a last-ditch effort to throw in another pointless fight?
2. Lee isn't really dead! It's a hoax, he'll be back in 1983, ten years after his death. I first saw this film in 1979, and hoped he'd return. So, in 1983, I looked around, so sign of him.

It ends at Lee's grave in Seattle. I visited that grave, and there's a different picture on it. Why they taped a different shot over it is beyond me. The actual picture on the grave has him wearing sunglasses. In BRUCE LEE, THE MAN THE

MYTH, they have some shot of him in a suit & tie. \*\*\*

**BRUCE LEE, WE MISS YOU-** It's very 1970s, all the males wear the ugliest shirts imaginable! I wonder if such attire will come back in style. After all, lame trendies are again sporting sideburns, goatees, beards and mustaches (whatever it takes to be 'cool'). Yeah, right! So anything is possible. But as a film, BRUCE LEE WE MISS YOU isn't horrible, but it's far from being one of Bruce Li's best. Li did more than just act in this one, he directed, wrote and produced it. That's why in most films, he sticks to what he's good at: Fighting. The best fight has Li dueling with Shaolin monks toward the beginning. There are numerous fights of course, and although they're not poor, they're not as thrilling as other Bruce Li efforts. Instead, unintended humor is the highlight, like Li's ridiculous over acting in a scene where he plays Bruce Lee dying in Betty Ting Pei's apartment. The story, though vague, would seem to be loosely based on speculations on Bruce Lee's real-life death. It's never proven that mobsters really killed him, but this barely



### BRUCE, KUNG FU GIRLS

Starring: Sun Kuan-Lih Feng

Starring: Sun Kuan-Lih Feng, Sun Kuan-Yue, Betty Pei. Bruce Li efforts. Instead, unintended humor is the highlight, like Li's ridiculous over acting in a scene where he plays Bruce Lee dying in Betty Ting Pei's apartment. The story, though vague, would seem to be loosely based on speculations on Bruce Lee's real-life death. It's never proven that mobsters really killed him, but this barely



adequate film hints at it (though a few names are changed. Betty Ting Pei is called Betty Chin, and Jeet Kune Do is pronounced differently). Bruce Li plays a Lee fan, devastated by news of Lee's death. He gets drunk one night and dreams about Bruce Lee's ghost. Later, he thwarts some sexual harassment in a club, gaining him a new girlfriend (Betty Chin) and new enemies: The same mobsters, coincidentally, who killed Lee! The villains think Bruce Li is Bruce Lee, fearing they failed to kill him (for not joining their mob). So Li defends himself & Lee's honor by singlehandedly defeating them all, though it could have been done better. " 1/2

#### BRUCE LE'S GREATEST REVENGE-

17 this really is Lee's greatest revenge. I'd hate to see his worst! Though logically & coherently written, this is one of the most typical & predictable in a genre of already typical & predictable films. Scene by scene, it's almost a complete remake of FIST OF FURY, with Bruce battling unbelievably barbaric Japanese who poisoned his teacher. Le does Lee kiais (screams) through out, and there's the usual honor & dishonor BS involving signs (Le destroys an anti-Chinese sign, and the Japanese school's sign). The only scenes not mocking FIST are at the beginning, when Le attempts Jackie Chan's EAGLE'S SHADOW. The remainder is pretty common & average repetition, treating us like idiots (which I got used to, very early in this whole article). I almost don't want to give it a star, but since the fights of Bruce Le, Yang ('Bolo') Sze and Ku Feng are fun, and because all the heroes actually survive the climactic duel, what the hell?!"

#### BRUCE STRIKES

BACK- Bruce Le's last gasp as a Lee imitator, but this late 1970s thriller represents the upcoming Le of the 1980s. Filmed on location in Rome & Paris, it's otherwise has typically cheap HK production values. Music from ENTER & James Bond films, despite an over abundance of upbeat disco through out. Lots of great kung fu, and curvaceous babes galore; little action abound in a drugged female orgy scene. I beat off to a close of a girl licking what appears to be ample female breasts. When the shot zooms out, the breasts turned out to be those of Yang Sze! I instantly became disgusted, and softer than Charmin. Script has Le as an ex-mobster, still hassled by Italian mobsters because he resigned. He also must rescue some gals who've been kidnapped & drugged by that same mafia. This involves battling not only Yang Sze, but a Chinese Goldfinger (combining ENTER's Han and Bond's Oddjob), Italians, ninjas and a climactic duel with Huang Cheng Li. It's set at the Roman Coliseum, and shamelessly ripe off RETURN OF THE DRAGON. But the whole movie is big fun, they even have animation of the villain's x-ray, as he breaks his bones (aka STREETFIGHTER). ""

BRUCE VS. BILL- Aside from some poor photography (bad focusing, occasional bluriness), BRUCE VS. BILL rules! A lame title like BRUCE VS. BILL doesn't exactly do wonders for an all-out action adventure like this fun, thrilling, suspenseful, immensely entertaining, motionful picture! There are

fights from start to finish, and the script tends to be amusing, witty and sometimes goofy or silly, but never stupid. The setting would appear to be modern, because they have cars, and certain characters, like rich mobsters & foreigners wear fairly up-to-date attire. However, there's an absence of ugly shirts (the trademark of '70s kung fu farces), and many lower class characters (peasants and kung fu students) wear traditional Chinese garb. There are many characters, but I gather Le plays a hitman, sort of an anti-hero. Attired in disco dude (but spends most of the film shirtless), and with his wisecracking pet parrot, he and another hero are protecting their keys to a safe. The hidden safe contains lots of money, so all the film's bad guys are dying (literally) to get them key! But Bruce Le and his partner take on all comers, get double crossed a few times, battle villains on a moving train, and Le defeats Chiang Tso to retrieve the much sought after money. ""

#### CALL ME DRAGON [SUPERDRAGON AGAINST SUPERMAN]-

My memory of this 1976 Bruce Li actioner is hazy. Isn't this a cheap, crude, meesy, badly made farce about Kato's further adventures? I think Bruce Li only dresses as Kato for the first few fights, and later goes on a mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist, and battles a bunch of guys in a field, who wear black leotards! The highlight has Bruce Li give a villain a sex change operation, the hard way! Later, the 'Green Hornet' appears, but he and Kato wear red capes and look more like Captain Marvel! I seem to recall them flying off into the sunset, so my memory must be flawed! Please tell me I imagined all this! ""

#### CHALLENGE OF THE TIGER-

Another Bruce Le chop sockey from the late 1970s; Hong Kongese, though featuring plenty of caucasians.

Average for a 1970s setting, but a lack of translation (no English dubbing, no subtitles) kept me from enjoying this typical combination of violence & sex. "

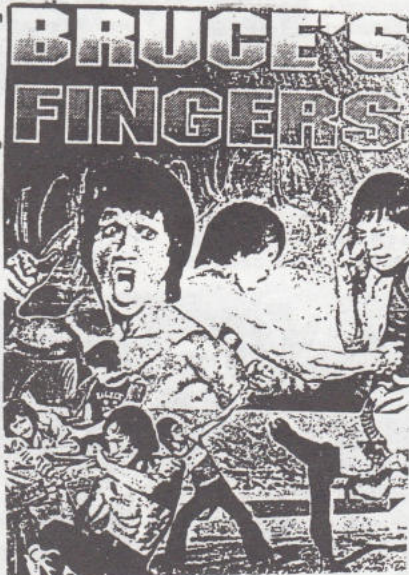
#### CHINESE CONNECTION 2 [AKA FIST OF FURY 2]-

Tien Feng reprises his role as teacher of that Ching Wu School, and Bruce Li plays Cheng's (the late Bruce Lee's equally late character) avenging brother. This exciting sequel has almost as many fights as it has "but still"! As a typical Lee ripoff, there's evil Japanese, revenge & honor galore, oppression in Shanghai, a casino, and a geeky Chinese traitor with a Hitler mustache. Overall, it's a slight step down in quality from the original, and looks more like typical chop sockey fare. Bruce Li does impossible, high flying acrobats unlike anything Lee did in the prequel. There's really no script; just enough hatred to keep evil samurais harassing all of Shanghai's kung fu schools. Again, Chinese police officers are torn between their fellow countrymen and the savage Japanese in power. Rebellious Bruce Li goes around westing Japanese, who, in turn, go around westing other Chinese. Eventually, Li confronts & defeats the commanding

Japanese, played by Lo Lieh. Lo Lieh, despite the kimono is as convincing a Japanese as he would be a Susan Sumners lookalike. I must say, racist films of this nature accidentally imply that Japanese martial arts are superior to Chinese ones. Although Bruce Li comes out ahead against the Japs, the remainder of the Chinese are easily defeated by them karatekas & samurais. Regardless, I took to this film like a hippie takes to dope, so, to put it very basic and simple: Me like movie! Movie good! ""1/2

DRAGON'S CLAW- I take it this ultra-typical romp came out during the latter portion of Dragon Lee's career. Ah reckon he followed the same path as other Bruce Lee wannabe's, starting off in Bruce inspired movies, until the realization came about that such mockery were going nowhere. So like Bruce Le and others, Dragon Lee decided it was time to progress, ripping off Jackie Chan for a change! DRAGON'S CLAW has the same types of fights, excessive training scenes, settings, script & attire of mid-'70s Jackie flicks. Of course, all the heroes sport the same Keith Partridge haircuts of that decade. But I'm smiling as I type this! This is an average, fun chop sockeyer! Dragon Lee and his fellow kung fu guys may have the acting ability of Chuck Norris in a coma, but they're spectacular fighters! There are plenty of battles (one every five minutes) in this tale of greedy gangsters after Master Kwok's shaolin book of kung fu things. The Buddhist monks don't seem to refer to their temple as Shaolin, they call it Dahmo, based on the Indian monk who brought kung fu into China. Anyway, a treacherous student kills a monk to get his greedy paws on that there book, but later commits har! kirl because of guilt. Meanwhile, Huang Cheng Li plays a villain of course, who's gang steals a golden Buddha from the temple. So Dragon Lee and a monk take them all on to retrieve it. ""

1/2



#### BRUCE AND THE SHAOLIN BRONZEMEN

Starring: Bruce Le



# 神探光頭妹

鄭文雅

高汶蒂

鄧浩輝  
何美蓮  
布魯士巴  
古士巴勃



Dragon Force

## DRAGON FORCE (aka POWERFORCE)

At one time or another, every major HK action star of the 1970s had his American and/or international movie, hoping to be known outside Asia. DRAGON FORCE was Bruce Li's failed attempt at worldwide stardom, and I think this 1982 epic was his last movie. It's a shame that his career didn't flourish after this magnificent adventure! I wish he'd have made more films like this, instead of his earlier plague of identical, predictable, cheap sockeye he'd done in the 1970s. After this thriller, he either retired or bombed at the box office. DRAGON FORCE tells me he could have continued to star in HK's 'new wave' in filmmaking, since DRAGON FORCE (produced at the same time as ACES GO PLACES) offers a hint of things to come. Though resembling '70s chop sockey, there are elements of the up & coming HK explosion of the 1980s. DRAGON FORCE can appeal to oldtimers AND fans of more recent HK crime dramas. DRAGON FORCE is half Hong Kongese, and half British. The whole thing was mouthed & acted out in English, but dubbed anyway. It's obvious that Li is mouthing genuine English, but is dubbed regardless. I imagine its TV version is heavily edited, because of its violence, T&A and bloodshed. So rent the uncut version if you can find it. Other than Li, the only familiar face I recognized was a bald henchman, who's been in GHOST NURSING, and maybe KARAOKE THE HONG KONG CAT. Even some of the comedy in DRAGON FORCE is funny at times. Synopsis: Terrorists hire ninjas to kidnap an attractive blond princess. So a British secret agent (Bruce Baron) is sent to rescue her, so he's off to the Far East. There he encounters lion dancers, a kung fu monk, more pretty girls, a kabuki samurai, and Bruce Li as their leader. Called 'Dragon Force', they're a cult of martial artists who right wrongs. Unfortunately, the evil ninjas who kidnapped the princess are wronging right! So Bruce Li leads the task force to the enemy island, where the movie suddenly decides to remind us of ENTER THE DRAGON. In order to rescue the princess, Li & Co. engage in more epic fights full of kung fu weapons, stunts and more. Twice Li uses Spock's shoulder pinch (called a 'neck' pinch in STAR TREK) to knock out female attackers. Finally, our heroes rescue the princess, after all these great fights. \*\*\*\*

## DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY

Here's America's first attempt at making a Bruce Lee biography, and as such, is even less accurate in portraying Lee's life than the

average Bruce Li cheapie out of Hong Kong! Big budgeted, slickly produced, this 1993 farce tried hard to be as trendy & mainstream as possible. Its TV promote billed it as a passionate, erotic love story. I must say, this advertisement paid off, the theater was crowded opening day, unfortunately, I caught an 11:30 matinee, hoping the theater would be empty, but every gang member, teenybopper airhead, and general beer-smuggling low life was in the theater. None of these rowdy idiots know jackshit about Bruce Lee. One guy in line said, "I hope this movie isn't all in Japanese." Regardless, the uncomfortable surroundings didn't detract from the fun of this movie. As a movie, it's not at all bad; just don't expect anything faithful to Lee's life. I would list all the story's mistakes & inaccuracies, but that would take up the whole issue. The fights are the best I've seen in any American martial arts film, except for the ones with Jackie Chen or the real Bruce Lee. This film's Lee portrayal is some Chinese-American gymnast called Jason Scott Lee, who apparently only learned kung fu for this film. The fight choreographer is HK's John Cheung, who appears as a villain, and was also in PROJECT A and IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE. There are other interesting guest appearances, like Van Williams (the original Green Hornet) playing GREEN HORNET's producer, and Bruce's daughter Shannon, appearing briefly as singer

had a certain paranoia about death, both suspected they'd die young. DRAGON implies maybe the demon had something to do with their untimely deaths. This was never proven, so I hope demons don't threaten this film with a lawsuit. Later, an adult Lee (Jason Scott Lee), using kung fu taught to him by Yip Man (Louyong Wang), beats up caucasians sailors, looking like a scene right out of some anti-foreigner HK film! The irony is that he immediately sets sail for America, despite its many evil whites!!? What gives here? Much of the remainder takes place in America, I would have rather seen more stuff on his early HK years and his gang involvement, since details are more illusive than a vegetarian at a butcher shop. So the remainder concentrates on his family life with Linda Emery/Cadwell (Lauren Holly, not a bad looker; from the neck down, anyway), who, as you know, he met at college while teaching kung fu. Then Lee gets hassled by John Cheung and other Chinese immigrants who don't want Americans to learn kung fu (a more realistic re-creation of this conflict was in BRUCE LEE, THE MAN THE MYTH). Later, after he's developed just kung do, he stars as Kato in GREEN HORNET in a fight where he rescues Green Hornet from a mad doctor in a Frankenstein-ish lab. Amazingly,

this fight was more exciting and epic than any episode of the actual show. So the story roles along, he gets into a fight or two, and when David Carradine gets the role in KUNG FU, Lee heads back to HK, where we see actual clips from THE BIG BOSS and RETURN OF THE DRAGON. DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY ends with ENTER THE DRAGON in production, to maintain a happy ending. Little of his death is mentioned, so as to maintain a happy ending, so that all the little kiddies in the audience wouldn't cry. \*\*



NINJA VS BRUCE LEE

Starring: Bruce Lee

## DRAGON'S SHADOW

Director Godfrey Ho adequately directs Dragon Lee and his cartoon-like sound FX (present in many of Dragon Lee's flicks) in this typical mid-1970s chop sockey. Dragons not draggin' his feet around, them fights are decent. The remainder of DRAGON SHOWDOWN has typical dubbing, scenes, costumes and typical everything else. Not worse than average,

but its utter predictability makes it come off as unoriginal, unimaginative and un-unique. If such a word exists. Interesting to note that the credits say: "Dragon Lee (Bruce Lee)". I never knew both were the same person, oh well. The only abnormal ingredient is that a villain has a computer-like device (w/ blinking lights) that seems to aid in battling, somehow. This futuristic prop is out of place in an otherwise old-fashioned setting (circa late 1800s, early 1900s). It's something to do with Chen Tai (Dragon Lee) setting out to avenge the death of his father and/or parents. So he roams old China in search of the bad guys, who killed his kin because they refused to sell their land. So there's some revenge, some training, a little romance, flat fights and swordplay before the baddies are defeated by Dragon; what a drag for them. Not necessarily an inferior movie, but it's as useful to me as birth control pills are to a lesbian. \*\*

DYNAMO (possibly released as BRUCE LEE-SUPER DRAGON too!) It's always funny to see Chinese guys beating each other up, but otherwise, DYNAMO is a mess. Two of

of some 1960s pop band playing "California Dreaming" (my god, I hate that 1960s hippie shit!). I guess that song was from the Mamas & Papas (who I hate), but Shannon is far too attractive to play Mama Cass. I guess she got the part because of her singing career. Then there's actress Nancy Kwan of 'Guey Wong' fame, who was at Bruce's funeral 20 years before, and appears in this film as a restaurant owner. Anyway, DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY was supposedly based on the book "Bruce Lee: The Man Only I Knew", by Bruce Lee's widow Linda. I read that book, and many others on Lee, and think this story is too far-fetched, certainly not faithful to any Lee bio I read! Obviously, this is a vision of Linda Lee's, the way SHE wants us to remember Bruce Lee! At least the cheaper HK films (with Bruce Li & the boys) were less biased, not letting personal feelings get in the way of the truth. For example, being a Linda Lee story, there's absolutely no mention of Lee's affair with Betty Ting Pei. The story starts with Lee as a child (Sam Hui) in HK, who has re-occurring nightmares of a demon attacking him. Whether this is true or not (Lee's subconscious continually haunted by a demonic samurai), I don't know, but Bruce, like Brandon,



the fights aren't even Bruce Li. It's Danny Lee in **BRUCE LEE, HIS LAST DAYS!** The film quality improves slightly when they show footage from that Shaw film, but do they really think I can't tell the difference between Danny Lee and Bruce Li? What do they think I am: a cyclops with and eyepatch? **DYNAMO** would appear to be about the overrated life of a Bruce Lee imitator, with Li playing himself (under a different name). Again we see footage of Lee's funeral, and they say Bruce died at 34. So a greedy corporation hires Bruce Li's character to become the 'new Bruce Lee,' starring in films (stock shots from **THE THREE AVENGERS** and that Shaw film) and fighting tournaments. Ku Feng plays his kung fu teacher, and Chiang Tao & Li Hai Sheng don't. After electro-shock training, Li tours Japan, Korea & America, fighting assassins along the way. Seems a rival corporation wants him dead, so that his merchandise will sell better (just like 'Bruce Lee mania,' 'Elvis mania,' which happened when those stars died). The anticlimactic climax has Li in a Chicago karate tournament, wearing a **GAME OF DEATH**-ish track suit with racing stripes. He's the film's hero, so he wins and gets the girl. \*\*

**EDGE OF FURY**- Bruce Li as chauffeur Ah Fong, who's employer turns out to be a drug dealer who got framed and executed. It's a suspenseful mystery, so Li gets accused of being involved with the drugs (which he's oblivious of), and how the dealer's deceitful widow fights to change the will. The wife is a real bitch, but is played by a beautiful actress also in **INFRAMAN** and **IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE**. This film's credits indicate she might be either 'Michelle,' or 'Danna.' In one scene, she actually shows her breasts. It's rare for established HK actresses to do this. While this rich bitch sneezes off, Li takes care of the dead man's son Helso Lung, while dodging mobsters sent by the corruptly evil Mr. King (Yasuaki Kurata), somehow involved in the death. The setting is 1970s HK... complete with standard bellbottoms and David Cassidy-hand me downs. Yet the story is interesting enough to keep it worthwhile, even if the fight between Kurata and Li isn't their best. \*\* 1/2

**CHINATOWN CONNECTION**- Bruce Ly? Never seen him before. Who the hell is he? Could he actually be the 'other' Bruce Li mentioned earlier? The Vietnamese one? **CHINATOWN CONNECTION** is a cheap American crime drama, and as such, maintains the standard level of mediocrity. Naturally, it's pathetic, predictable, stupid, and escapistly boring; but certainly no worse than other U.S. crime dramas. Regardless, this Bruce Ly dude, whoever he is, seems to be a sufficient fighter, despite **CHINATOWN CONNECTION**'s attempts at hiding his skills. Again, the damn yankees seem determined to stage their fights in the cheapest, quickest, least interesting manner! Bad editing and worse choreography abound! The kicks are unconvincing, scant on sound FX, and dead slow! The film's acting, writing and continuity stinks like the fart of a rotten corpse. Bruce Ly plays an LA cop who hires trigger-happy cops to be part of his 'kung fu police squad!' The best things about the story are a couple of pretty girls and Ly's unintentionally hilarious voice & accent. Regardless, Ly, Lee Majors II and Pat McCormack are cold on the trail of cocaine smugglers operating in Chinatown, supposedly. Actually, Chinatown is nothing to do with the story, despite the title. The movie ends sometime after Bruce Ly kicks a black villain out a window.

**DRAGON DIES HARD**- I haven't seen it, but I hear it's one of the worst. Features Bruce Li, stock-fights from other films, and supposedly a slanderous attack on Betty Ting Pei. Anybody have this stinker on tape? If so, I'd love to get a copy.

**DRAGON LIVES**- Another obscure Bruce Li movie, with Li recreating Bruce Lee's whole life. The movie appeared in American theaters in the 1970s during the shortlived kung fu craze, and was shown again in the early 1980s, when American TV revived a brief love of martial arts films. My limited memory tells me the credits role as we see Lee as a kid, and later he refuses to play the demeaning stereotypes that Americans applied to Chinese. In one scene, he's working on some American film called "Hong Kong Today," featuring see-kneeling, starstruck Chinese all too eager to wear a ponytail, so he loses his temper and kicks a strobe light to pieces. \*

**EXIT THE DRAGON, ENTER THE TIGER**- A 1976 crime drama taking place around the time of Bruce Lee's expiring. Bruce Li stars, and credits use names like Jimmy Shaw and AP Shah. Are these Shaw Brothers I've never heard of? Perhaps Shaw Bros. imitators? It wouldn't surprise me; this slick, epic production has all the production values of a glossy Shaw film. Its editing, photography, lighting, music, and video transfer (beautifully letterboxed & widescreened) are exceptionally good for a Bruce Li film. It's a great movie, but, unlike me & everything I touch, it's not perfect. There are dull moments, and too many of its fights take place in dark rooms or warehouses. The early portion shows more stock footage of dead Bruce at his funeral, and we see people like Linda & Brandon, Tony Liu, I think Yuen Wah (brief glimpse), and Nora Miao crying. I'm sure they're all thrilled to be in this movie. Li plays David, a Lee pal, double & groupie who works at Summit Studios (Golden Harvest). Betty Ting Pei is called Suzy Young. Raymond Chow is Philip Lo, and Li/David wants to find out how Bruce Lee died. He sneaks into Ting Pei/Suzy Young's apartment, only to discover she's being harassed by mobsters. Li's many battles with the villains are okay. The final duel is impressive. Li and a sword-carrying villain battle it out on slippery rocks near a beach and tidepools. It ends with a flashback, Lee names Li as his successor. Yeah, sure; right. Fun none-the-less. \*\*\*

**FISTS OF BRUCE LEE**- Not excellent or even great, but no worse than anything else played at 2am. The 1978 flick has its moments, but if you happen to be awake that late, you're better off sleeping. It's got stock music from **ENTER THE DRAGON**, James Bond films and some album by Paul McCartney (or whatever his name is; I'm referring to the



Color; 92 minutes. United International Pictures 1975  
Chen Lee, a master of Kung Fu, arrives in San Francisco as an immigrant. When he tries to stand up to a gang of white thugs they beat and torture him. The same thugs are brutally terrorizing and killing poor Mexican farmers and Chen uses his skills to protect them. The gang brings a fearsome Japanese martial arts master to fight for them, and now in a bloody and sensational ex-Battle, not Edger Bergen's puppet, both of which I get mixed up), some "but still", an evil caucasian, ugly guys in uglier shirts, and kung fu clashes through out. And yet, it's not a typical 1970s HK crime drama. The plot, having nothing at all to do with the inaccurate title, is quite complex & hard to follow. That's

**ENTER THE GAME OF DEATH**  
STARRING BRUCE LI

**RETURN OF RED TIGER**

**ENTER THE GAME OF DEATH**  
Bruce must battle an army of Kung Fu masters who guard an ancient treasure.  
88 min.

**RETURN OF RED TIGER**  
Bruce returns to face his greatest challenge — an evil gang led by the dreaded Assassin.  
82 min.

**COBRA**  
STARRING BRUCE LI

**MY NAME CALLED BRUCE**  
STARRING BRUCE LI

**COBRA Not Lo!**  
Two warriors meet in a final bloody massacre — Winner take all!  
91 min.

**MY NAME CALLED BRUCE**  
In the backstreets of Hong Kong, Bruce joins forces with a beautiful secret agent.  
90 min.

my main grudge against this tale of an Interpol Agent (Bruce Li) hired to install electronic bugs & traps in some guy's house. Turns out Li's client has a beef with two rival mobs. What they're fighting over isn't clear, but Li later defeats Lo Lei (who has an artificial 'chain hand,' much like Denjin Zeborg) and gets help from a former villain, who turns out to be another secret agent. Nice trick ending, but not nice enough to save the movie. \*

**FIST OF FEAR; TOUCH OF DEATH [aka DRAGON VS COBRA]**- Morally, this deceitful American documentary is the worst! Do the morons who made this have no shame? An exploitive kung fu movie is one thing, but an exploitive documentary? I thought documentaries were meant to inform & educate, but this one is unbelievable bullshit, it misinforms & uneducates! It features glory-seeking, stuck up martial artists like Fred Williamson, Ron Van Clief, Teruyaki Higo, Richard Berathy, and worst of all, Aaron Banks & Bill Louie! These two geeks were also in last issue's **THE BODYGUARD**, which had Aaron Banks' most intelligent line ever, "That's not how Sonny Chiba did it." Well, in this equally bad movie, Louie & Banks again make asses of themselves. Banks comes off as the most egotistical, opinionated bastard since Damon Foster, and his 'actual interview' (discussing Bruce Lee's death) looked artificial & acted, not natural. Bill Louie again tries to imitate Bruce Lee, in one scene, he's in a cheap Kato costume! His 1970s disco mustache and buck teeth make him look more like a clown, despite superb fighting skills. In another scene, he supposedly pulls out a guy's eyeballs while sparring in the ring. Who writes this stuff? The setting is the 1979 Karate Championship, featuring more ridiculously staged bouts, flashbacks (a couple attendees thwarted rape attempts on the way to the event) and of course, the halftime entertainment: A segment on Bruce Lee! As in **BRUCE LEE THE LEGEND** and **THE REAL BRUCE LEE**, it's more footage of teenage Bruce in **THUNDERSTORM**, a tearjerker they've dubbed into a Lee family 'home movie.' Through out it, they've got Bruce talking about his 'karate,' and 'samurai ancestor!' I'm not kidding! Of course, **THUNDERSTORM** has no fights, so in come clips from some old period film from Taiwan! Endless, meaningless swordplay as Chan Lee, a 'Chinese Samurai' (Bruce's supposed ancestor) fights dozens of villains for no reason. After the fights, we return to young Lee in **THUNDERSTORM**, dubbed in a foggy voice & ridiculous dialogue. Is this unintentional humor? Intended humor? It's hard to tell, the whole film seems borderline



comedic. There's other stupid Lee ripping off here. There are at least a couple interviews where Lee is shown; stock footage from LONGSTREET! As dubbed Lee speaks to Aaron Banks & host Adolph Caesar, talking about his 'karate', his voice is nothing like Bruce's and has no Chinese accent! In another short, Lee, "the greatest karate expert of them all," is supposedly seen in a film. The host says, "Here is a scene of that film," and we see a quick glimpse of some guy jumping in the air. It's obviously not Lee despite Bill Louie's dubbed voice (again trying to yell like Bruce). However, the movie has a couple decent cleavage shots, and the unintentional humor & inaccuracy makes it a comedy; a movie so bad it's fun. It's definitely in a league with PLAN NINE. For sheer entertainment value, because it's such a hilarious atrocity, it could deserve 3 stars. But that would undermine its corruption. As a movie which tries to present itself as a factual documentary, it's a true crime, deserving threats of slander, like a far-fetched tabloid. Whoever made it is an asshole."



#### FIST OF FURY 2, THE

Bruce Li's second (and hopefully final) sequel to Bruce Lee's second movie. Li again plays Lee's brother, Chen San. Unfortunately, the Ching Wu School trilogy doesn't save the best for last, this climax is anything but climactic. This is your (not meaning its YOUR personal property) typical kung fu cheapie of the mid-'70s, and a blasphemously dull one at that. Despite a pencil drawing of Bruce Lee's Chen character kept by the grieving family, this 3rd chapter is far removed from the Golden Harvest original. It's immediate prequel is known as CHINESE CONNECTION 2, FIST OF FURY PART 2, and probably many other titles. That's what happens when different companies release different films, continuity suffers. Regardless, the 3rd is the worst in the series, as Chen San goes to his family in Macao to start a new life (he killed Lo Lih and other Japanese in the previous film). But Macao is over run with evil Japanese played by Wei Ping Ao (as a nerdy interpreter once again) and Ku Feng. After the Japanese kill Chen San's family and a confused, rival Chinese kung fu guy, Chen San seeks his final revenge. The battle between Li and Ku Feng is uneven, not the flick's best confrontation. Where as Li is known for his genuine kung fu and swift kicks, Ku Feng's inferior skills came from the Shaw Bros. training school, specializing in whatever fake techniques look good on film."

#### FIST OF UNICORN, [aka BRUCE LEE AND I]

I've never seen this one! But I'd love to, since it's the only Bruce Lee exploitation film made BEFORE his death! Filmed between CHINESE CONNECTION and RETURN OF THE DRAGON, but not released until after Lee's death by sleazewade for a quick profit. Unicorn Chan stars, who was in CHINESE CONNECTION, RETURN OF THE DRAGON (as 'Jimmy'), BRUCE LEE THE MAN, THE MYTH and BLOOD HERO, not to mention BAD BOY, which starred both Unicorn Chan and childhood friend Bruce Lee when they were kids! Both were good friends, so Bruce did his best to make Unicorn (not a good martial artist) look good in FIST OF UNICORN (later called BRUCE LEE AND I, after Lee's demise). Supposedly, Bruce coached him & did choreography behind the

scenes, working with Yasuaki Kurata. Rumor has it that Bruce Lee even made a walk-on cameo, and that a hidden camera supposedly caught Bruce rehearsing with Unicorn. Is it true that Unicorn secretly put this footage in the film without Bruce's permission? Is it true that Bruce was infuriated and never spoke to Unicorn again? We may never know if all this is true, but this rarely seen film explains that photo of Bruce with Yasuaki Kurata in the previous QCI

#### FUTURE HUNTERS. Bruce Li?

That's what the credits say, yet he's nowhere to be found! This is a derivative adventure: an American/Filipino film from the early '80s, featuring Bruce Li in a brief cameo near the beginning, and he battles fellow HK chop sockey Wong Cheng Lee (AKA Huang Cheng Li). This fight is very 1970s Hong Kongese, and the highlight of an otherwise stupid movie. Unfortunately, the Li scenes are out of place in this ripoff of every type of adventure: from ROAD

WARRIOR to INDIANA JONES. This skward, offbeat fiasco also features a cameo by Richard Norton, who'd later appear with Li in REVENGE OF THE KICKFIGHTER. Had Norton, Li & Huang Cheng Li had larger roles, this movie might be good. Instead, it's just another romantic cliffhanger, recommendable to fans of other predictable adventures. The two main characters are a good-looking young blond couple I've never heard of. They're on the quest for a magic sword which can alter the future. Their adventure leads them to HK, where Bruce Li protects them, and steals the film. Unfortunately, they leave HK, so Li just disappears from the rest of the film! The remainder is an endless jungle adventure: never ending escapes and captures as they flee from nazis, tribes, dwerves, amazons, and the rapist lumberjack from Russ Meyers' UP.

GAME OF DEATH 2- AKA TOWER OF DEATH. Is proof that a movie need not be logical or intelligently written to be fun. GAME 2 is definitely one of the best Lee ripoffs I've ever seen. Unlike its inferior American prequel, this is a Hong Kongese thriller. There are plenty of fights, and they're spectacular! Made in 1981, these incredible battles are more advanced than 1979's GAME and other 1970s films. GAME 2 seems to represent the beginning of the 1980s action film craze. Yuen Biao, Mare and even Jackie Chan (credited here as Chan Lung) helped on the film's stuntwork. Kim Tai Chung, one of the main Lee-imitators in GAME, gets full credit this time, but as Tong Lung (named after Lee's character in RETURN), his stage name. Kim is one hell of a martial artist & acrobat, and it certainly shows! But GAME 2 has its faults. As I implied earlier, it's got a confusing & stupid script, and what about the scene where the man in the lion suit breaks into our hero's bedroom? Is this suppose to be a real lion? They've gotta be kidding. I've seen more convincing lions on GEORGE OF THE

JUNGLE. Oh well, this bizarre tale is about the further adventures of Billy Lo, from GAME. Again, shots of the real Bruce Lee are spliced in and around the shots of Kim Tai Chung, making it look as though it's Lee who's trying to find out who killed teacher, and defeating a gang of masked thugs in a Japanese nightclub. Also toward the beginning is a flashback to Bruce Lee's childhood films like maybe THE ORPHAN or KID CHEUNG. Regardless, Billy Lo's pursuit ends about 45 minutes into the film because he gets killed; shot in the back of the neck! So his younger brother, Bobby Lo (Kim with no stock footage of Lee) seeks revenge next. At the mysterious Tower of Death, he encounters a futuristic set with men wearing what looks like reject hand-me-downs from the scientists in INFRAMAN. Then he defeats Li Hai Sheng (AKA Lee Hol Gan) and Huang Cheng Li. There's actually more going on in the film than mentioned, but I'm too busy to go in depth. \*\*\*

#### GOLDEN DRAGON, SILVER SNAKE-

Normally, I give these films good reviews because they're fun & action packed. But with so many of the Lee imitators making wild adventures like this, I've gotta realize that not all the clone films can get good reviews on the basis of excitement alone. I've gotta be more selective and critical. Dragon Lee's GOLDEN DRAGON, SILVER SNAKE may be fun and fight-filled, but that's commonplace in this genre, it's no excuse to give this flick another positive review! Artistically, this silly romp doesn't accomplish a damn thing. I believe it's actually a Korean film, despite Chinese star Kong Tao (AKA Chiang Tao). Korean-born Dragon Lee (Bruce Lee) isn't the only Bruce Lee clone in this film, there's some other guy who appears in a training fight, where he takes on a badly dubbed black guy. Dragon Lee doesn't really appear in this out-of-place scene, I guess it's stock footage from some other film. Chung Lik makes a cameo. But the two main heroes are Dragon Lee and some stupid looking Jackie Chan (1970s Chan, that is) imitator. They're protecting a farm from evil mobsters who want to buy the property. One villain uses an electric drill, and most ridiculous is where Kong Tao pulls off his wig, as though revealing he was disguised as somebody else. Yet his hair style is the same as the wig; he looks no different with or without it! I guess the Jackie wannabe dies during the final fight, so do all the villains, but Dragon Lee survives."

#### REAL BRUCE LEE, THE- Real Bruce Lee?

How about 'Real Fake Bruce Lee?' I mean granted, there really is footage of the real Bruce Lee for the first 30 minutes. But the remaining hour is excessive 'edited highlights' from some Dragon Lee film. This rather dull documentary starts off with footage from an actual Bruce Lee promotional session with Unicorn Chan and Raymond Chow, footage later spliced into TRUE GAME OF DEATH as well. The only really rare shot is of Lee (at around the time of RETURN OF THE DRAGON, judging by his short haircut) has him talking on the phone. Then there are clips from four of Lee's child films: KID CHEUNG (1947), THE BAD BOY (1949), CARNIVAL (1950), and ORPHAN GAM (1957), aka THE ORPHAN. They show about five minutes from each movie, dubbed in English, with characters making mention of martial arts (I doubt the original dialogue has any mention of kung fu at all). There are no real kung fu fights, just a couple pushes & shoves. Being so old, these B&W films are crude, blurry, washed-out and dumb. As a child, Lee obviously had acting charm and charisma, and easily shines out in these lame oldies. Afterwards, the narrator talks of Bruce's life and death, and then the Bruce Lee imitator. We see three or four film clips of Bruce Li in action (the only film I think I recognized was



**CALL ME DRAGON.** The remainder is an edited Dragon Lee movie. With his hair so short, Dragon Lee actually looks a little like Lee for once. I don't know what movie this is, but it's a typical chop socky farce, with Dragon Lee battling corrupt Japanese. Same old dubbing, same old scene of martial artist's destroying a rival school's sign, etc. Interesting to note that in one scene, Chinese good guys actually wear karate gi! This is unusual for a 1970s Chinese film, unless the heroes are learning Korean taekwon do. I suspect this film is Korean, and that most of Dragon Lee's films are as well. There are at least two other Lee documentaries: **THE LIFE AND LEGEND OF BRUCE LEE** and **THE FINAL DAYS OF BRUCE LEE**. The early footage of Lee in **THE REAL BRUCE LEE** is rare, and Bruce Li & Dragon Lee are fun to watch, so I'll be kind enough to give this mockumentary a whole star. \*

#### FIST OF FURY 1991 PARTS 1 AND 2-

As typical Steven Chow action comedies, they succeed. But as satirical sequels to Lee's **FIST OF FURY**, they suck. Rarely do they effectively mock the Lee classic, despite the return of the Ching Wu School, the martial arts aren't very good, but Steven Chow's antics (i.e. the 'saliva fight' at the beginning of the first film) always generate a few minor laughs. In Part two, there are Tsiu Hark-influenced FX as Chow battles Yun Wah. Very little to do with Bruce Lee, despite misuse of the titles. Too bad Golden Harvest couldn't sue these films into oblivion. \*

**IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE-** Each time I tune into a modern setting, 1970s-filmed kung fu movie with Bruce Li, I expect the very worst. After all, aren't films of this genre the very worst? What am I asking you for? I'm Damon Foster. I've watched & reviewed this stuff most of my life! As an expert who knows what I'm talking about, take it from me! **IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE** is an entertaining movie and Bruce Li is a charismatic hero! He fights well and does a few of his own acrobatics! The more I watch these older films, the more I realize that, contrary to popular opinion, the 1970s movies are every bit as fun as the so-called 'classics' of the 1980s & '90s. Although **IMAGE** may have typical stuff like "but still", continuity flaws, a training scene, sexual references, and stupid, pointless dialogue, it entertains. Plotwise, Bruce Li plays one of two cops hot on the trail of counterfeiters (Yang Gze plays one, of course). Another character is Donna, thought to be a villain, though turns out to be an Interpol agent. Do any of you know who this exceptionally attractive actress is? She was in **INFRAMAN** and **EDGE OF FURY**. In one scene, she tells Li how much he looks like Bruce Lee (hence the title). Anyway, she helps Bruce Li and another cop to battle two remaining mobsters on a beach: One is played by the villain of **THE BIG BOSS**, and the other is John Cheung, who was in **DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY** and Jackie Chan's **PROJECT A**. \*\*

**LAST DRAGON-** A god-awful, staggeringly bad American Bruce Lee comedy, featuring a black hero called Bruce Leroy. Even as a comedy, this piece of crap falls flat on its face.

The best scene has our hero in a theater watching **ENTER THE DRAGON**. Not worth the price of a gumball.

**MY NAME CALLED BRUCE-** A stupid title for an equally stupid film. This modern crime drama of the '70s is a Korean movie despite the appearances of HK stars Bruce Le and veteran villain Chiang Tao. AKA Kong Tao. At about this time in Le's life, his success seemed to flourish, as a number of his films (**BRUCE AND DRAGON FIST**, **ENTER THE GAME OF DEATH**, **RETURN OF BRUCE**, **RETURN OF FIST OF FURY** & **TREASURE OF BRUCE LE**) were sold to American TV in the late 1970s & early '80s. They had high enough ratings so that Le's success in America seemed imminent, so there were rumors of international, major productions, and his own American TV series! Well, I never saw

the series; if anything was produced, it wasn't released. As for **MY NAME CALLED BRUCE**, the story is a complex, confusing fiasco about corruption in Korea, with Le as an Interpol agent from HK. Le's appearance in the film is scarce at first, but he has another decent duel with Chiang Tao at the end. Christina Cheung (who I've never seen before) steals the film (and she can keep it) as a pretty female detective (by that I mean she's both pretty AND female, not somewhat female). She fights well.

However, this is a stupid, pointless film. The credits read: "Super Starring: Bruce Le. Written by Zackey Chan." There's some actor called "Mulo Chiba." Characters have names like: Nifty, Chunky, Tiger, Baldy, and Fleisher. Anyway, it's the tale of vengeful Interpol agent Tiger (Bruce Le) who's brother was killed, and how he eventually teams up with ladycop Sgt. Li (Christina Cheung). To the accompaniment of catchy disco tunes, they're thwarting the actions of Kong Tao and other antique smugglers (by that I mean they smuggle antiques, and not that the guys are frightfully old). \*

#### REVENGE OF THE KICKFIGHTER-

Another Bruce Le war movie, a 1986 adventure starring Richard Norton & Ti Wei (now 'Dick Wei'). Bruce Le actually only has a co-starring role in this **RAMBO**-ripoff, made by and for Americans. I don't think **REVENGE OF THE KICKFIGHTER** is its original title, because there's not enough 'kickfighting' and far more "Rambo"-ish heroism. A decent budget, on location filming in Vietnam, HK and Bangkok. The acting is pretty bad, though it's hard to tell: things are sped up, and NOT just the fight! It's weird, everyone speaks English, yet it all appears dubbed. Otherwise, it's typical US made stuff, same old music & dialogue as any domestic film. The story has Bruce Le (called 'Lu Shao Lung' in the credits) & Ti Wei as brothers who learned ninjutsu from some old man in Vietnam. After the war, both went their own separate ways, and Ti Wei becomes an assassin out to kill American veterans. There's excessive gunplay through out, guaranteed to burn out even John Woo freaks. But most of the martial arts are clumsy. Our three main actors, no stranger to major HK extravaganzas, manage to fight well, but its their inferior American opponents who fail to react correctly. The only good fight is at the end, when Ti Wei finally confronts Richard Norton & Bruce Le. For a moment it looks like a scene from a HK film. \*1/2

#### SOUL BROTHERS OF KUNG FU (AKA KUNG FU AVENGERS & THE LAST STRIKE)-

Villain Ku Feng advises Chiang Tao: "That boys, Japs & Koreans should pose no problem. But there's Wong Wei Lung. He's very tough, he has no particular technique; but he fights rather like Bruce Lee. He's the biggest danger you face." That's the best line in the film, although there are so many "but still"s as fights. It's an average modern '70s actioner, full of fights, stock music, sleaze, ugly ehrls, and Bruce Li & black martial artist Carl Scott in the middle of it all. I did enjoy the average story, since they're all the same and I like them all. A typical HK tale of changing & disillusionment, with Li as an illegal immigrant (a boatperson) called Wong Wei Lung. He comes to HK to start a new life, but it's not long before he gets harassed by disco-hopping extortionists like Ku Feng, Chiang Tao (again) and Li Hai Sheng. Eventually, these mobsters kill his fiancée, so, with a little help

from Carl Scott, they tangle with the villains. Amazingly, Yang Gze does not appear in this film. \*\*

#### SUPER DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE

**STORY-** You just gotta see this one to believe it! A movie so pathetically horrid, it gives **AMSTERDAM CONNECTION** a run for its money! Even Bruce Li doesn't fight well, this must be one of his very first.

Nonsensical, bad acting, bad writing, bad editing, bad directing, bad music, and unbelievably bad dubbing! Sounds like the dubbers have thick accents and a poor grasp of English. It's supposedly the story of Bruce Lee's life, although even the Americans are dubbed calling him by his Chinese name Shao Lung, sometimes Lee, but never Bruce. Betty Ting Pei is called 'Tong,' and Bruce Lee supposedly impregnates her! But most of the rest of this fiasco is vaguely faithful to Lee's life, in a cheap, regurgitated way. The actress playing Linda Lee is almost as ugly as the original, and there are scenes of Li imitating Lee in his movies, but they're unlike any Bruce Lee

movies I've ever seen. The most amusing scene was at the beginning, in an el cheapo variation on Bruce's Long Beach karate tournament, which landed him the role as Kato (also briefly recreated in this stinker). The 'tournament' consists of little more than the usual 'my Chinese kung fu is better than your Japanese karate' racism. Supposedly, there's also a film called **BRUCE LEE-SUPER DRAGON**, but I believe it came to America as **DYNAMO**, to avoid confusion with **SUPER DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY**. Also to avoid confusion, this movie has no relation to the American **DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY**, the similarity in titles is just an extraordinary coincidence.

**SUPER GANG, THE-** The opening credits of this Bruce Le disappointment say "Directed by Yellow John," accompanied by a catchy theme song. Yellow John? Is that a mistranslation or a racial slur? The previous time I sat through this cheap, dull, nonsensical fiasco was nearly ten years ago, on late night's "Martial Arts Theater," hosted by Byong Yu. Supposedly, the guy was later deported back to Korea for boning a 15 year old girl!

I don't know whether this is true or not, but I remember working out in one of his dojos (some of his students were friends of mine), hoping to meet him. Yet none of his students seemed to respect him, they all seemed to despise him. Regardless, ten years later, I tune in and see this lame farce again, on the somewhat newer "Kung Fu Theater" this time! The host, Tat Ma Wong, has unintelligible English, his accent is thicker than pea soup. Regardless, it's interesting to note that so many of "Kung Fu Theater's" movies were originally broadcast on the previous decade's "Martial Arts Theater!" So, 'til this day, I assume most American viewers still think these old 1970s films represent current, state-of-the-art HK gangster films! As for **SUPER GANG**, it's a long, confusing, overly talky, uninteresting tale of two gangs in HK. The villainous gang leader is called Piggy Ming, and Allen (Bruce Le) isn't happy about it. A rape scene, revenge, standard fights, catchy tunes



Starring: BRUCE LI Ting Pei Na Yin Hsu



through out. In one scene, Le is in a restaurant which plays Samuel Hui's ACES GO PLACES theme. Another memorable scene is Yang Sze's death. I assume he gets his head kicked in, but at the last edit, they inserted a tight close up of a watermelon for the opponent to kick in! I just don't get it: are we suppose to think this common melon is really Bolo's head? Judging by his presence in every lame chop sockeyer this side of Andromeda, it wouldn't surprise me. Another highlight: Some villain wears a Halloween monster mask whenever he kills somebody. So heroic Bruce Le decides to get to the bottom of all this, much like his career did.

**THEY CALL ME BRUCE-** Korean comedian Johnny Yune's international debut, starting a career which lasted him a whopping two whole movies. This comedy has a few funny scenes (like decent one-liners), and just as many stupid scenes which lack any major laughs or punchlines. It had potential: its combination of comedy and semi-action make it seem like a HK farce, like Ricky Hui's nonsense. There's a fast-paced plot, a couple kicks, endless gags, and bumbling mobsters. However, this IS an American film, so its few (and short) fights are terrible. It's the same choreography, editing & photography as other bad American martial arts films. Several of the one-liners & goofy situations amount to 2-star material, but its more inferior jokes and incredibly inferior action strikes blows against it. This 1982 story has Yune as Asian immigrant Bruce, a fan of Bruce Lee. Mobsters hire him, and trick him into dealing drugs. Fortunately, secret agents rescue him from the Italian gangsters near the end of the flick. Yune does virtually no martial arts, that's left to non-martial artists like Mergaux Hemmingway, showing that the casting director ought to be hit with his white cane. \*

**THEY STILL CALL ME BRUCE-** After the first one, I assumed its 1986 sequel could only be better, yet Johnny Yune and his American film crew only managed to sink lower. Not only does it maintain the stupidity and poor martial arts of the first one, but adds cuteness and attempts at 'touching' drama. The chaotic story had Bruce (Johnny Yune) searching for an old friend, and dealing with mobsters, hookers, karatekas, cops, bikers and kiddies in the process. Among other things, we learn that all blond bombshells have the hots for aging Korean morons. Plenty of dumb comedy, as he dresses like a geisha, flees the gangsters and avoids doing any serious martial arts. He eventually takes place in a mob-related tournament, up against Don Gibbs, who's in REVENGE OF THE NERDS, and fought Conan Lee in some film I glanced at on TV, but never bothered watching the whole thing, because GERALDO was doing a segment on large-breasted nymphomania. \*

**THREE AVENGERS, THE-** So tell me, what's wrong with THE THREE AVENGERS? That is, aside from the fact that it's incredibly stupid, the acting is pathetic, and its script is blazingly simple. This saga is ridiculous and preposterous, no wonder it's so goddamn fun! The credits call Bruce Li by his proper name, Ho Chung Tao, and this honest film never claims to have anything to do with Bruce Lee! It's an independent adventure. Bruce Li does his usual excellent kung fu, but it's Chien Yuet Sun who really stands out! He may be uglier than the rear end of a bulldog, and short enough to crawl underneath a pregnant ant, but his acrobatic, Jackie-ish fights are fantastic! Ya' gotcher: "but still", and yer' training scenes, in this silly drama about two ex-Peking Opera dudes (Li & Chien Yuet Sun) on the run from various mobsters. There's an obligatory caucasian, but he (amazingly) becomes a hero! He defects from the villain to learn kung fu from Li. This white is one seriously ugly dude, but is a decent fighter. The character is John (Michael Winston), and our Chinese heroes

make a stereotypically racist mockery of him through out. Regardless, Chien ends up in jail while Li stars in movies, until their opera teacher gets killed by a Lama martial artist (sent by the mafia). So our three avengers gang up on and waste the mighty baldy (Lee Hai Sun, AKA Li Hai Sheng). \*

**TRUE GAME OF DEATH-** This ripoff of Bruce Lee's GAME OF DEATH is one of the worst Chinese kung fu films I've ever barfed at. Why is it called "TRUE" GAME OF DEATH? It's certainly not a true story, and as for trueness to Lee's original concept of GAME, it's no truer than 1979's GAME. As I recall, Lee wanted it to take place on an island (much like in ENTER), and the beginning was to start in the snow. Instead, TRUE is a cheap, messy, ridiculous, badly dubbed remake of GAME. The fights are okay, but most of them are saved for the final 30 minutes, making the farce's beginning & middle a dull waste of your time and mine. The best part is at the beginning, rare stock footage of Bruce Lee at a press conference, with other stars like Shih Kien & Nora Miao. These vintage shots were spliced in to give them an excuse to write "Starring Bruce Lee" in the credits, and flashbacks from RETURN OF THE DRAGON appear through out the movie. The story deals with Bruce imitator Shao Lang (a Chinese mumbling of Lee's name), who's a kung fu movie star, just like his late idol. Shao's caucasian wife Alice (not quite as ugly as Linda Lee) is forced to poison him by some stupid looking mobsters. As in GAME, he takes his own death and disculces himself as an old man. He fools his wife Alice in scenes reminiscent to the Billy Lo/Colleen Camp romance of GAME. In the end, Shao attacks the various Chinese & white (and one black) gangsters. Many of these fights are ripe off of GAME, with our hero wearing the same yellow (w/ black stripe) track suit, and fighting a Dan Inosanto imitator. For some reason, they also got him fighting a couple sumo wrestlers. \*

**WARRIOR WITHIN-** It's American, and it's a documentary, so it already has two blows against it. It's dull, but informative at times. My main grudge is that it has a big shot of Bruce Lee on the cover, and that it's displayed in local stores among honest HK adventures. In its own conniving, tricky way, it too is a Lee ripoff. Lee has nothing to do with this excuse for glory seeking martial artists to show off and boast about how good they are at kicking ass. Every now & then, there are commonly seen still shots (old photos) of Lee, to remind everyone this is a Bruce Lee film! Ironically, Robert Lee (Bruce's brother) supplied the music, although he's not to music what Bruce was to kung fu. The theme is so appallingly 1970s! Interviews include: Bruce Lee's mother, Dan Inosanto, Chuck Norris, and various martial artists of different styles. It's okay when they talk about history, the invention of kung fu in ancient Chinese wars, info on Okinawan martial artists and other thing of cultural value, but when some jealous geek whines about the kung fu films' unrealistic approach, I get annoyed. The martial arts movies are a lot more fun, creative and imaginative than watching a tournament, or a bunch of students working out in a dojo. Kung fu movies aren't realistic, but neither are cowboy films, gladiator films, or films about knights & vikings. I hate this film.



LEGEND OF BRUCE LEE  
(CHINESE CHIEH CHUAN KUNG FU)

## LETTERS

PLEASE REMEMBER - THE LETTERS IN THIS SECTION ARE SOLEY THE OPINIONS OF THE WRITERS - I TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR CONTENT. I SIMPLY TRY TO GIVE EVERYONE A FAIR SHOT AT VOICING THEIR VIEWS. EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION, AND I JUST SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE MORE INTERESTING ONES, EVEN THOSE I MIGHT NOT AGREE WITH.

Hi Damon,  
well, for some time now I've been trying to obtain the rarer (for me, anyway) Japanese stuff that you've been writing about. So far I've met with success in getting Japanimation /WHO HASN'T?-DFF, but very little with the live action superhero shows of 1970s and early 1980s. A typical conversation with a collector goes like this: Me: "Do you have an original Kamen Rider shows, oth



than KAMEN RIDER BLACK and RX?" Collector: "I don't bother with that older junk." Me: "Well, thanks." See what I have to deal with? /Yes, I see, BUT I'M NOT SURPRISED, SINCE MOST COLLECTORS ARE LAME-ASS FX HOUNDS WITH NO APPRECIATION FOR GROUNDBREAKING PROGRAMS WHICH OFFER MORE FUN & EXCITEMENT THAN ALL THAT TRENDY NEW STUFF. -DFF/ Thanks for OC#14, quite possible the best Oc yet, although the two previous ones are hard to beat. It's amazing how much info you jam in each mag. I most certainly consider this to be the most entertaining fanzine going, even if your opinions aren't quite as spectacular as mine. Just got the first four episodes of IRON KING on tape and agree that it's one of the best superhero shows ever! But that's kinda' faint praise because I have yet to



see the vast majority of the shows you rave.  
Before ending this letter, let me just say that I found a copy of your old ULTRA CYBORG tape /You poor thing!-DF/. You said it was awful in one of your back issues. Personally, I didn't think it was so bad, but since you made it in 1984, I'll assume your later vids like AGE OF DEMONS offer better fights.

Jeff Goodharts  
Pennsauken, NJ

Dear Damon,  
OC is great; I wish I'd heard of your publication sooner. I'm openminded. I read the other zines too, but yours is the best; straight up, and no censorship. The superheroes in OC#14 are good, and I liked the coverage of Sonny Chiba's films. The Hong Kong section is excellent, what do you think about INFRAMAN? Not bad for live action? /WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'NOT BAD FOR LIVE ACTION'? WHILE I TRY AND FIGURE OUT THAT ONE, LET ME SAY THAT INFRAMAN IS AN OUTSTANDING FILM! FUCK ALL THOSE DICKCLICKERS WHO ONLY LIKE IT FOR 'UNINTENTIONAL' HUMOR, IT'S A THRILLING ADVENTURE IN ITS OWN RIGHT, EVEN IF IT DOES BORROW FROM TOEI'S SUPERHERO PROGRAMS. BY THE WAY, MANY OF THE COSTUMES WERE DONE BY JAPANESE FX TECHNICIANS, THOUGH UNCREDITED ONES. See OC#5 and OC#9 for more praise on INFRAMAN. -DF/ The Chinese vamp issue is interesting; lots to read! Great movie reviews. The articles on IRON KING and RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE were my fave. Do you get NGN Network? I know cable systems varie from state-to-state, see if you can get it; they show a samurai series called TOKUGAWA BURAICHO and it stars Sonny Chiba! It's full of action sword duels, the battle royales are great! Chiba must still be using JAC members, the acrobats remind me of KIKAIER. Getting back to your magazine, don't change a thing! It really shocks you if you're a new reader. Lately all zines are carbon copies rolling off an assembly line. You definitely stand out from all the rest. Thanks Damon, for great reading material.

Henry Gandalaria  
Hawaii

Damon!  
Issue #14 was excellent, I really enjoyed reading it! However, I'm sad to hear that due to pressure and harassment from geeks & businessmen freaks that you're thinking of giving up on producing any more issues of OC, which I think would be a great loss. Not only do I enjoy reading OC for the subject matter itself, but I also love the "in-your-face" sarcastic humor which tells it like it is, as well as all the different tangents you go off on in the various articles to tell us all the entertaining 'life & times' and adventures of the one-and-only Damon Foster. Thank you for all the info on Sonny Chiba, and your profiles on Hiroshi Miyaychi. I used to make fun of his character in SOLBRAIN, but later

became more impressed with his earlier TV shows like GORANGERS, JACKERS, KAI KETSU ZUBAT, & I even saw him in episodes of the Japanese SPIDERMAN series.

Rajar Shy  
Escondido, CA

Dear DF,

I've just finished reading OC #14 and it was superb. OC is the best zine around, no questions asked no guilt involved, it's a sure thing. I'd also be interested in owning a copy of your video AGE OF DEMONS and the others you've been involved with, like your stage performances as Kamen Rider and the Monkey King. In other news, I read elsewhere that OC is in troubled times. I hope and pray it all turns out well! What would us fans do without OC? I love all the stuff in it, and finally another fan of Asian films who also likes punk music, it rules!

Hey, what's up with that magazine MA/censored!/? My friend wrote them about 4 months ago, and sent them cash; no reply yet! I was going to write to them, but if they're not going to reply, fuck 'em! /I've DELETED THE NAME OF THE MAGAZINE WHICH I RECEIVE SO MANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT, KNOWING HOW SERIOUS & SENSITIVE THEY ARE ABOUT EVERYTHING. BUT HOPEFULLY, THEY KNOW WHO THEY ARE, AND IF ANY OF THEM EVER READ THIS, THEY'LL GET THE MESSAGE. I'VE TRIED TO HELP ITS PUBLISHER BY FORWARDING MAIL TO HIM, AND NEVER RECEIVED ANY THANKS FOR MY EFFORTS. I SEE NO REASON TO WASTE MY TIME HELPING SOMEBODY SO UNRESPONSIVE. -DF/

Your punk friend in Oregon,  
Ryan Potter  
Albany, Or

Damon,  
Here in West Virginia, an admitted armpit of the universe, we don't get much opportunity to see even an eighth of the movies you describe. Enter Cinemax and their recent showing of John Woo's THE KILLER. My first chance to see a complete (I hope) version of his work. Let Sam Peckinpah take a back seat. Now HERE is an action movie! I really enjoyed it. Of course, your commentary made me appreciate it even more. Like you, I hope his coming to America doesn't make Woo wimp out on his style.

I've been letting other people read your zine. They can't believe what they read (too much STARLOG, I guess). I tell them that an issue from Damon is like a letter from a friend, a good friend. One not afraid to voice his opinion. By that time, they've usually walked off with my copy, but I track them down later. Their comment was, "Wow! Someone that makes you look conservative, Tim Bush!" I think that's favorable. I mean, they like Lestat & Anne Rice, y'know? /YOU MEAN ALL THAT EROTIC EURO ART TRENDY TRASH? -DF/ Continue to kick ass on the overrated stuff like AKIRA!

Great issue, keep 'em coming.  
Tim Bush  
Vienna, WV

Dear Damon,

I really like your fanzine with an attitude, even if at times your 'asides' can sound, to put it politely, rather male chauvinist, patriarchal at times. But enough of your remarks make it clear that your heart is in the right place, humanistically speaking.

Even though most of the subgenres you cover are of no interest to me, it IS interesting to me, to know what's out there and to make my entertainment choices, besides, your unique style of coverage is fun and entertaining in itself.

As for John Woo, I saw HAND OF DEATH back in 1987, and enjoyed it very much. Modern setting films are of no interest to me, but I hope to see PRINCESS CHANG PING and LAST HURRAH FOR CHIVALRY.

Keep up the good work, your collage covers are true works of art!

Amy Harlib  
New York

Dear Damon,

I look forward to OC more than any other film publication.

Nancy Agli  
Long Island City, NY

Greetings Mr. Foster,

I'll give you another shot. My problem with OC#13 was that after a while, one film blended into the next. You heard of overkill, but you did have the right attitude.

Anyway, all the hard work shined thru in your previous issue & I imagine it continues thru the next one.

Christian Miranda  
Norwalk, CT.

Damon:

When I sent for OC a while back, I thought \$8.00 was a little high, but man, was I wrong. Well worth the price.

Robert Sorderberg  
Burbank, CA

Seventeen years after she wrote her book with Rutger Hauer in mind for "Lestat", Anne Rice is finally to see INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE become celluloid-- with Tom Cruise portraying the romantic anti-hero originally penned for Hauer.

Eight years after first optioning big screen rights to the British comic, Edward R. Pressman (who took an equal amount of time to make CONAN THE BARBARIAN) is somewhat ready to see Sylvester Stallone turn into JUDGE DREDD.

Six years after we personally broke the news about The Hong Kong New Wave Movies to Mainstream America via THE LOS ANGELES TIMES and INSIDE KUNG FU and elsewhere [before the "Beavis and Butthead" dogpiled on to claim undue credit], five years after we personally completed the First Draft



for HIGH CALIBRE [that and all subsequent drafts registered with The Writers Guild]...and three years after the tragic mishap that severely injured one former Star [thereby necessitating drastic revisions and legal maneuvers]...we are still monomaniacally working to secure all factors that will finally transform HIGH CALIBRE into reality. One prime reason why both Rice and Pressman have cleared the last hurdle is how they wisely avoid any degree of either communication with or recognition of folk like the same Robert Mallory whose typically libelous letter was so recklessly put into print by OCV many moons ago.

With the frequent exception of OCV when it wisely chooses its verbiage, The Wonderless World of FanZines and most Fanboys who drool onto their pages deserve no better than John Woo and Cynthia Rothrock.

-S.C. Dacy

Dear Damon,

SC Dacy can say anything he wants about me if it means my being in the same so honored group as Cynthia Rothrock and John Woo!

Robert Mallory  
Carolina

Hi Damon,

Many thanks for sending me your mag. Jeezus, that's what I call a pretty damn cool magazine. I enjoyed every page of it, especially those 'big guys in rubber suits' stuff and that pretty funny Fangborria (absolutely right!). The only thing I can say about you mag is to keep up the great work, you have a new reader, from far away Austria, 'till the end (dead or undead).

By the way, we starving fans of Asian cinema in Vienna are pretty lucky, because we have an Asian videostore, where I've been able to get lots of movies like THE CITY HUNTER (with Andy Lau), it's a cool movie, sort of like "The Chinese Ghost Story meets Kamen Rider!" Cool FX, pretty violent too. I'm dying to get more of this stuff!

Stay sane & bad,  
Martin Sitzwohl  
Vienna, Austria

Dear Damon,

Thanks for filling out my order for OC. Your behavior this far has led me to believe you're a conscientious and reliable person. I'd watch that if I were you.

I read it cover to cover, & was numb for three days. Of course, that was during the LA riots, but I'm sure the effect would be the same any time. I ordered a magazine, I didn't expect an epic. I enjoy many of the films you write about in a vacuum, describing them to friends who think I'm nuts. Reading OC confirms it.

-Matt Meisman  
Sherman Oaks, CA

Dear Damon,

Thanks for OCI Mags like this are harder to find than Thai redheads with big tits around here.

Best wishes,  
Ed /NO LAST NAME. -DF/  
Charleston, IL

Damon,

What's up with OC#14? I've heard it's out already but I haven't gotten a copy in my paws yet (even though, as a loyal reader, I ordered it May). After all the lousy fanzines I've waded through in the past year, yours will be a breath of fresh air. So if it's ready dude, send it to me.

Chip Eckton  
Reading, PA

DEAR CHIP & ANYONE ELSE WHOSE ORDERS I'VE NEGLECTED,

THESE SORT OF THINGS ARE INEVITABLE WHEN A SOLE INDIVIDUAL TRIES TO DISTRIBUTE A WHOLE MAGAZINE. SORRY, EVERYBODY, BUT I'M BUSIER THAN AN H.I.V GERM AT A SAN FRANCISCO ORGY. -DF

Damon,

Your caustic sense of humor, injected whenever & wherever you please, made reading about some of these films much more tolerable. I also liked the different departments throughout the zine, such as Japanese TV fantasy & Filipino section (a personal favorite!).

Adios,  
Craig Ledbetter  
Kingwood, TX

Damon,

Thanks for the copy of OC#13, I like the films covered, the attitude, and the photos & art. No complaints, no constructive criticism.

Keep up the good work!

Erik Nelson  
Houston TX

Dear Damon,

I feel like I've just woke up from a strange dream, but actually, I just finished reading issues 9 and 12 of your magazine OCI

Issue 9: Printing the text over photo etc. so that it was totally unreadable! What a stupid concept! But cool reviews, lots of humor and info about more humor than any one human should know about, made it a good issue. Also, the ANIRAG spoof was absolutely perfect. I wish I had a few hundred of them to pass them out at the next sci-fi convention to all the foul smelling, asexual animation freaks who have such underdeveloped skills that they can't even relate to live action

movies, TV and life. Thanks for still using the word 'cartoons.' Anime sounds too much like a symptom for a rare disease.

Issue 12: In response to your comment about your column "Filipino Corner"'s lack of recognition, that's what drew me to your magazine! What other magazine offers anything that esoteric? So please don't stop. And what else can I say except ROBOTS! ROBOTS! ROBOTS! It was nice to see how all the different serieses were sometimes related. You ever thought about doing some kind of family tree? /YES, FREQUENTLY!! IN ASIAN CINEMA & TV, EVERYTHING IS RELATED! SUCH A FAMILY TREE, COMBINING CREDITS, CASTS & STAFFS WOULD LINK BRUCE LEE TO GODZILLA, VIA MAJIN, AND EVENTUALLY INCORPORATE ANYTHING FROM KAMEN RIDER TO TIA CARERRA. OBVIOUSLY, THERE'S NO END IN SIGHT, SUCH A TREE WOULD BE NEVER ENDING. -DF/

All in all, two great magazines. I'm surprised you find the time to do the articles and throw in all the humor. /THAT'S WHY IT'S ONLY YEARLY. -DF/

A lot of other publications could learn a lot from independents such as yourself. Keep pissing in the establishment's punch bowl!

Any plan to do something on the SUKEBAN DEKKA series? They're just high school girls, not really superheroes, but they're cute and do a lot of butt kicking in each episode. // DID SEE ONE OF THE FIRST SUKEBAN DEKKA FILMS OR TV SHOWS, LONG AGO. I HATED IT, BUT WOULD BE WILLING TO REVIEW THEM ONLY IF IT COULD BE A COMPLETE ARTICLE, REVIEWING EACH AND EVERY SERIES & FILM, LISTING WHEN EACH WAS MADE. AS YET, I HAVEN'T THE TIME OR MATERIAL TO DO SUCH RESEARCH. ANY HELP FROM VOLUNTARY READERS WOULD BE APPRECIATED. -DF/

George Palamara  
Bay Shore, NY

Damon,

About your independent video, HOT DOGS ON THE RUN. I expected the usual home amateur video, which can be very boring. I was wrong. I found a lot of surprises, many were laughs; and not at the production, but with the production. All the references to HK films (I loved Bruce Lee's attack on the "No Sick Chinese Dogs" sign), bad American films, the music and dubbing (I lost count of how many times you had "but still" in the dialogue), etc.

Honest, I was laughing quite a bit. In fact, a lot more than in anything that passes itself off as comedy on network TV sitcoms. The fight choreography by you Butch, Perry, and Barrie also gave me some nice surprises. I saw a lot of effort, heart, creativity, and good feelings being shown in this amateur film; more than I've seen in some professional, slicker, expensive films.

Steve James  
Hollywood, CA





My god! "Terror Yaki" sure is a stupid title for this continuing column on Japanese science fiction. What was I thinking when I first called it that a few years ago? Oh well, I guess it doesn't matter, since a certain percentage of you probably define the word stupid. Why are sci-fi freaks so geeky? Are they trying to live up to the dorks on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE's satirical STAR TREK convention? I first became aware of idiot fans of Japanese sci-fi in the 1970s, when some whinny, paranoid, neurotic, apparently drug addicted, homo in Thousand Oaks, Ca. kept calling me. He was a reader of mine, and coping with his many personal problems seemed secondary to his love of Japanese SF. That's the danger of always escaping into a fantasy world and avoiding reality. This psycho fan called me in the 1970s, and even tracked me down in the 1980s, despite my new phone number. He stuttered constantly, talking a million miles a second, and managed to go into detail of six different topics all in one minute, including: "me and my gay friend did something in bed we shouldn't of," "how many Ultramen are there?", "my father kicked me out of the house," "will the next Godzilla movie be good?", "occasional drugs help overcome the traumas of the mental institution," "whatever happened to Gamera?", and "are you good-looking?" My mistake. That's seven topics; I guess he's more screwed up than I thought. It's not possible to get off the phone with this maniac if you remain polite. I tried being nice, not only making smalltalk about Japanese films, but offering advice on how to get his life together. It didn't help, so after he'd had me on the phone for at least three hours, I finally had to threaten him with physical violence. I said something like: "Get a life! Get a job! Get mental help! And quit calling me, or I'll shove your telephone up your ass, but you'd probably like it." He snivelingly, humbly begged my forgiveness and told me his life story again. I hung up on him, and had to keep my phone unplugged for three days. He no longer bugs me now that my phone number is unlisted. However, I hear he's still out there, annoying every Godzilla fan he

can locate. He's used several aliases, including John, Tony, and possibly Chris Pfaff, which I suspect might be his real name. I think 'Chris Poof' might be more accurate. But he's one of many psycho fans of Japanese sci-fi. Of all the ridiculous Japan fans, the most pathetic subgenre is still, of course, those cartoon creepers! By now you all know I like some of

the cartoons themselves (old ones like SPEED RACER), but I enjoy making fun of cartoon freaks even more! But stories persist, getting more bizarre and pitiful all the time. Last issue I mentioned an animation geek in Italy searching for a blow-up doll of a female cartoon character from DIRTY PAIR. I never thought anybody could top that ultra sad account. But a report out of Texas says at a sci-fi con, they actually had a (get this) cartoon room which, for two hours showed nothing but edited highlights of selected 'shower scenes'



(?) from various Japanese 'adult' cartoons! Nothing wrong with watching footage of females in showers (except that it's degrading to women, but we don't worry about that here), but they're mere cartoons! I always knew the cartoon fandom is full of sexually frustrated males and ugly dikes, but this is ridiculous. But the story goes lower. In this room, full of people, one guy lost control and started jacking off. If you can relay any story of pathetic anime nerds, which tops this one, send it in.

In other Japanese sci-fi news, the recent GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA was pretty damn fun, but so was Toho's previous Godzilla flick, GODZILLA VS. GHIDRAH, from 1991. Personally, I don't like the two midget girls (now called 'Cosmos', replacing the 'Peanuts' of the 1960s Mothra films) in GODZILLA VS MOTHRA, and hated the ending, I



wanted to see Godzilla tear Mothra and Batra to shreds! So of the two newest Godzilla films, I prefer GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH. Both had interesting stories, more so than 1990's GODZILLA VS BIOLANTE. Anyway, looking forward to Toho's next bastardization of another classic monster, in GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA, due out in December, 1993. By now you all know there will be an American Godzilla movie in around 1994, so nevermind. One of these centuries, OC will catch up (if OC continues), and review these newer Godzilla movies in detail. But for now, OC is outdated! This issue's obligatory Godzilla film is 1971's GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER. But first, the movie ZIPANG. So all you sci-fi freaks, put on your glasses, turn off your overheating TV, take your hand away from your groin and read this issue's TERROR YAKII! But first, get some exercise, you fat cow!

## ZIPANG

Produced by Toho Movie Co. in 1990. Presented by EXE. Directed by Kaizo Hayashi. Music by Hideki-hiko Urayama & Yoko Kumagai. CAST: Masahiro Takahima, Narumi Yasuda, Mikijiro Hira

Yes! Here's one awesome little flick, recommendable to fans of fantasy, samurai action and even superheroes! I like 'em all, so I enjoyed ZIPANG three times as much as the average person (I'm NOT average; I'm either above it or below it, you decide). This elaborate adventure has its similarities to Chinese period fantasies, but never goes over the top, with more subtlety than overkill. Ninja freaks will go bazongas over the swordplay and acrobats, and all you superhero dorks will drop your glasses & pencil boxes when you see the FX, costumes and far-fetched antics of ZIPANG's unconventional superheroes! It's a period film, or 'jidai-geki' as them







Japanese  
over in Japan  
call it, and  
yet one ninja  
has  
high-powered,  
digital  
binoculars!  
Later, a  
Shogun and  
his loyal  
samurais  
watch a slide  
show! did I  
forget to  
mention this  
is a comedy?  
Not the  
article, but  
the film  
itself!??  
Yep, and it  
satirizes a  
few things,  
including  
Zato Ichi,  
JAWS, and A

**NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET.** It's fun  
& exciting, and a creative film with  
colorful costumes & astonishing sets,  
plenty of fights, and even a little  
bloodshed! Umm, oh yeah, and it uhh,  
has cultural interest and historical  
intrigue too.

But don't let my praising of this  
samurai fantasy indicate that **ZIPANG** is  
perfect, since perfect is a myth, much  
like the Loch Ness monster, ghosts, and  
entertainment value in a Brandon Lee  
film. **ZIPANG**'s main flaw is that, like  
all films, it's got its share of drab  
boredom (but not too much). The  
dialogue is entirely in Japanese (except  
for some primitive dialect, but more on  
that later), with no English subtitles.  
There are a couple long, dull  
conversations, but there's usually a  
martial arts battle right around the  
corner.

The mythical, golden empire of  
Zipang gets its inspirations from  
history, like in 106 BC when the  
Japanese islands were called Wo.  
Before ancient Chinese migrated there  
and evolved into what we now call the  
Japanese, there were already natives to  
these islands, the first known  
inhabitants. I believe this tale to be  
influenced by the original Wo aborigines  
in some way. One of these magical  
primitives, the Warrior King (Mikijiro  
Hira) is fighting evil, armor plated  
warriors, over a golden, magical sword.  
But this Asian caveman suffers defeat

at the hands of a  
Majin-like warrior.  
Warrior King ain't  
dead though, he  
just goes into  
suspended  
animation, and so  
does his sister the  
queen, when evil  
Zipangians place  
her in an icy tomb.  
Then I assume  
many thousands of  
years pass, and the  
setting becomes  
Japan's feudal  
times: complete  
with samurais, a  
shogun, ninjas, and  
even a  
gun-carrying, sharp  
shooting geisha,  
Tepoyuri (Narumi Yasuda). Our main  
heroes are righteous outlaws, not much  
different than Robin Hood's merry men.  
The main hero is Jigoku Gokura Maru  
(Masahiro Takashima), but my favorite  
character is a cute little elephant (a  
marvelous prop) who gets only a little  
screen time. Our rebellious swordsmen  
locate the long sought after sword of  
Zipang, and accidentally awaken the  
Warrior King from his extensive nap.  
But before the radical samurai gang aids  
Warrior King in rescuing the queen from  
Zipang's empire (still around after all  
these centuries), they tangle with a  
remarkable group of ninjas, also after  
the sword. The  
Warrior King gets  
killed in the final  
battle with the Zipang  
nasties, but our heroic  
Gokura Maru kills their  
demon-like leader.  
The rival ninja,  
sporting a Freddy  
Krueger-like glove,  
manages to get the golden sword they'd  
all wanted. But by this time, its  
golden radiance is too badly tarnished  
by the scars of battle. Its value has  
been decreased considerably, so he  
can't sell it. All those battles and  
slaughters were futile, he won't get  
rich. That sucks. \* \* \*

## **GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER**

Japanese title: GOJIRA TAI HEDORAH.  
Produced by Toho & Tomoyuki Tanaka.  
Director: Yoshimitsu Banno. Art Dir.:



Morimoto. Optical Effects:  
Yoshiyuki Tokimasa.  
Running Time: 85 min.,  
Released August 1, 1971,  
Released to America on  
Feb. 1, 1971.  
theme song ("Save the  
Earth") for English version:  
Adrian Russ & Guy  
Hemrick. CAST:  
Akira Yamauchi, Hiroaki  
Kawase, Toshie Kimura,  
Keiko Mari, Toshio Shibaki,  
Haruo Nakajima, Kengo  
Nakayama

Looking back on it, was  
this movie really all that  
embarrassing? Okay, so  
maybe the jazz-rock theme  
song "Save the Earth" is  
dumb, but the lyrics were  
masterfully translated and

well dubbed. The song has a powerful  
message, as does the whole movie.  
What message did 1984's **GODZILLA  
VS. MOTHRA** have? Maybe "be careful  
when buying them big eggs!" When I  
first saw **SMOG** when I was an 8-year  
old brat in a packed theater, it  
disturbed and frightened me, despite  
the surreal, artistic, symbolic approach.

**SMOG** doesn't scare me now, it just  
grosses me out, like the scene where  
Godzilla gets shit on by his sickifying  
opponent. Getting back to **SMOG**'s  
pro-environmental social commentary, it  
almost achieves a documentary effect,  
thanks to amusing animated shorts



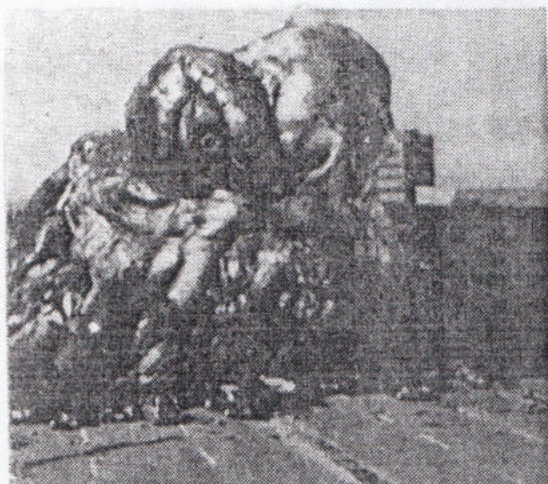
through out, which border on being  
educational. For better or worse,  
although it's campy & tacky at times,  
it's the most unusual Godzilla tale, a  
one of a kind film.

So I guess I've established that this  
is a fun film, and yet, many ultra  
critical (which I am NOT, contrary to  
popular opinion) fans have ragged on  
this film. In the 1970s, there was a  
whole plague of Jap. sci-fi fanzines,  
comparable to the HK fanzines (flooding  
the scene today (ironically, OC arose  
from that old scene, and is the only  
survivor). So many of those older  
technogeek rags pounded on the likes  
of **SMOG** and **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**.  
Not only were most of the reviews  
scathing, but overly technical, as  
though the lame writer had nothing  
better to do than go into critical,  
indepth detail about every frame of the  
film! This tells me that it's the  
overweight couch potatoes and  
convention nerds who whined about  
1970s Godzilla films. Fanboys who's  
lives are so empty that if they see a  
disappointing film, they're traumatized  
for life. The fact that these losers  
despise the 1970s Godzilla films proves



Taiko Inoue,  
Photography:  
Yoichi Manoda,  
Special Effects:  
Shokei Nakano,  
Editor:  
Yoshitami  
Kuroiwa, Music:  
Richie Manabe,  
Screenplay:  
Kaoru Mabuchi &  
Yoshimitsu  
Banno,  
Production  
Manager: Boku





Ken's older friends (played by Toshio Shikaki, the hero of SILVER KAMEN!), who, under the influence of alcohol, has a vision of mutant animal-people dancing in a bar. Ken also has visions, caused by Hedorah's underwater attack on his father, that

how great these movies are! Too cool for the geeks! Hedorah, the Japanese word for pollution

is pronounced "Head-dora," not "Heedra" as mistranslated in the English dubbing. Hedorah,

coincidentally, is the name of a plague of mutant blobs who evolved from the pollution of Taganura Bay. These murderous monsters are composed of sludge and sulfuric acid, and can modify

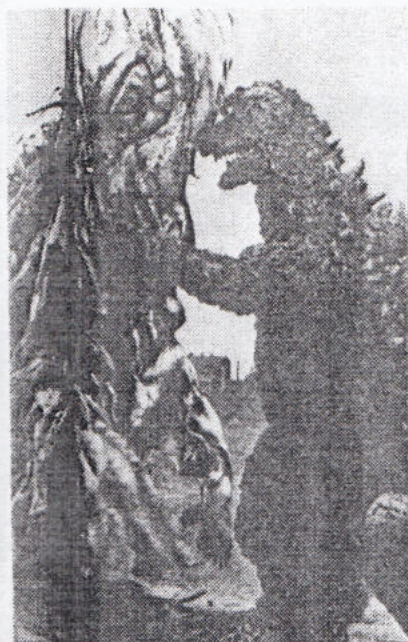
themselves into numerous forms, enabling them to swim, fly, crawl, walk, spit acidic sludge balls and even fire a death ray! Ken Yano (Hiroyuki Kawase), an annoying little brat, and his family are among the first to encounter these tadpole-like monsters. As these monsters (called Hedoras) unite and enlarge, their cravings for factory smog leads to death & destruction. One of



the army builds a totally whopper electric generator to dry out the remaining Hedorah (they all combined to form one humongous beast) and whatever tadpole eyeballs might be lying around. Meanwhile, weird 'hip kids' hold a party on Mt. Fuji, and Yukio jams

Godzilla will battle Hedorah. Ken's Godzilla dreams come true, but not even the mighty dinosaur can singlehandedly defeat all the smoggies. So Ken, his father, and the Japanese army devise a plan to clean Tokyo of them damn Hedorah dudes. It's during this research that Dr. Yano says what sounds like: "Now that substance is a tadpole's eyeball drowned fine." I never could figure out that line. So

away on his electric guitar, until Hedorah comes to our rescue and silences him. Godzilla arrives and there's a long, drawn-out battle, but it's an outstandingly excellent one! Godzilla comes off as a genius, he's cautious & crafty. I prefer monsters like



this, who have a personality. I mean, a monsteriality. Using his mouth flames, he even acquires flight capability, a great concept despite all the crybabies who thought it was too fake. Of course it's fake! It's a sci-fi film for Christ sake! If you want realism, go get a life! Even when the army's huge generator fails, Godzilla manages to fire it up, wasting Hedorah and its internal eggs. Again, Godzilla is an absolute genius, and one of the most charismatic, respectable and looked up to (pun intended) heroes of alltime. \* \* \* \*

## FUGITIVE ALIEN

Produced by Noburo Tsuburaya, Jushichi Sano,

Akiri Tsuburaya, A Tsuburaya Production. Writers: Keiichi Abe, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Toshihisa Araki, Hiroyasu Yamaura, Hiroyasu Yamaura, Hideyoshi Nagasaka, Tohohiro Andou, Music: Korie Maeda, Dir.: Kiyosumi Kikazawa, Minoru Kanaya, English Version released by Sandy Frank, Creative Consultants: Jessie Vogel, Cinemedia Ltd., Feature Concept & Editing: William L. Cooper Jr., Japanese Version: Broadcast on Nihon TV. Original Japanese title: STAR WOLF, consisting of 24 episodes, lasting from 4/3/78 to 9/25/78.

Starring: Tatsuya Azuma, Miyuki





Tanigawa, Joe Shishido; Choei Takahashi, Tsutomu Yukawa, Hiro Tateyama, cameo by Akihiko Hirata.

A sufficient sci-fi movie, but I think it's more enjoyable if it's viewed weekly, 30 minutes at a time, the way it was meant to be.

STAR WOLF the series is an outerspace program, sort of a Japanese equivalent of STAR TREK or SPACE: 1999, though more closely resembling Tosi's MESSAGE FROM SPACE series or any of that animated SPACE LOSER YAMATO junk. STAR WOLF's special effects suffice, the story is tolerable, and the dubbing is standard. The acting ranges from over acting which is unintentionally humorous, to under acting which is



obligatory female character called Himi, who, as always, wears a slightly tighter uniform than the male pilots, and it was in the actress's contract to show some leg. Anyway, the later half of the film has the crew of Bakas 3 on some Middle Eastern-looking planet, trading for crystals. Trouble begins when Ken gets attacked & arrested by drunken

soldiers. He escapes from the prison with the help of a political prisoner, and it becomes a gripping adventure of gunfights & fist fights before coming face to face with space warrior Rita ('Rijia'), the sister of the Wolf Raider who Ken killed at the beginning of episode #1. She meant to avenge her bro's death, but since she and Ken are in love (with each other), she whimps out. This minor subplot was just an excuse

to show off another pretty girl; we need more subplots like this. Predictably, she ends up dead in a shoot out, but she was never hit! She dies, but for no apparent reason. Ken's remorse over her death doesn't last long, not when he's got another potential main squeeze (Himi) waiting for him back at Bakas 3!

\*\*\*

### STAR FORCE (FUGITIVE ALIEN 2)

Distributed by King Features, a subsidiary of Hearst Corporation

As a direct sequel to the original FUGITIVE ALIEN, it's more than similar to that first film. So all my comments on that one apply to this one. Hell, I didn't even include most of the credits to this one, since they're the same as in FUGITIVE ALIEN. Neither movie is great, but both are okay, they're equal.

The only real difference I noticed is that the first one was edited better. Much of STAR FORCE seems vague, unexplained. Either that or maybe I really wasn't paying much attention.

Both films only barely get two stars, because they've got their moments. If they were even a little worse, I'd give them only one star each.

Storyline: Continuing where FUGITIVE ALIEN abruptly ended, the crew of Bakas 3 is headed to the planet Seisar to destroy an almighty weapon that those Seisar bastards created. Bakas 3's crew has Colonel (which would be spelled 'Kernel' if I wrote the dictionaries) Yurulen. I assume Yurulen got his name once he got promoted, when somebody said to him, "You're rulin' it!" Yurulen was originally a native of Seisar, but defected. The first half of STAR FORCE (not related to the Star Force in STARBLAZERS) is really dull, as Yurulen, Ken, Capt. Joe and cocky Rocky deal with outerspace problems like a black hole, a burning star, treachery among crewmen, and a malfunction. They eventually reach Seisar and overcome numerous obstacles before infiltrating enemy headquarters. They attach a timebomb to the deadly weapon, but as they sneak out, Yurulen hears his planet's anthem and goes crazy, having an identity crisis. He yells & runs, trying to go back to deactivate the time bomb, but gets shot by Seisar patrolmen. Ken & the others in Seisar 3 fly away from the exploding base, featuring impressive miniatures (watch for excellent Tsuburaya work as the spaceship leaves the exploding landscape). Then it abruptly cuts to what I believe is the final episode, as Ken thinks he keeps seeing his mother (as in all Asian films, his parents are thought to have been dead). Turns out she was just a spy, sent to attack Ken and aid other Wolf Raiders to try and steal an Earth scientist's valuable microfilm. Fed up with the latest attack by Halkan & Valna Star, Ken and the other Bakas 3 people attack the planet! The ending battle between Halkan & Ken includes swordplay, acrobats, fists and spaceships, but could have been more fun if bits hadn't been edited out. Halkan dies, and Bakas 3 comes back to Earth. But Ken remains on Valna Star (his home planet), to rebuild & repair it.

\*\*



unintentionally ridiculous.

The tale is about alien Wolf Raiders at war with Earth, specifically with Japan. Ironically, the Wolf Raiders (from Valna Star) look & sound just like the Japanese Earthlings they're at war with, so they wear these long, brownish wigs when they go on raids in their spaceships. One Star Wolf is Ken, who refused to shoot an Earth child, and accidentally shot a fellow alien instead. Whoopsie doopsyl! So the lead villain, Harukan, bannished him from the Planet Valna Star, forcing him to defect to Earth. Though reluctant for a couple episodes, he joins the crew of spaceship Bakas 3, commanded by Captain Joe, a recovering alcoholic who's family (of course) was killed by Wolf Raiders. Another crewman is Rocky ('Riyu' in Japanese) played by some bad actor entirely alien to facial expression. Also on hand is the



# Coming From Space—Quality Television?

BY RICHARD K. DOAN

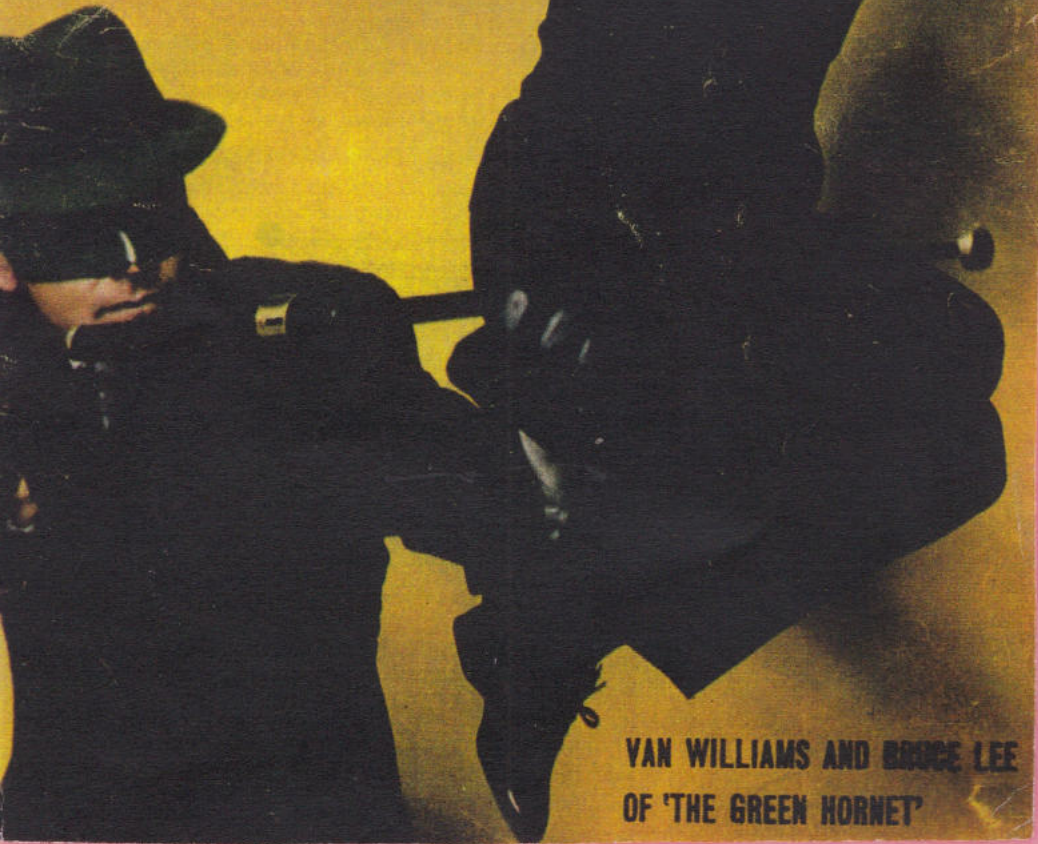
see page 4

## TV GUIDE

Local Programs

OCTOBER 29-NOVEMBER 4

5c



VAN WILLIAMS AND BRUCE LEE  
OF 'THE GREEN HORNET'

