

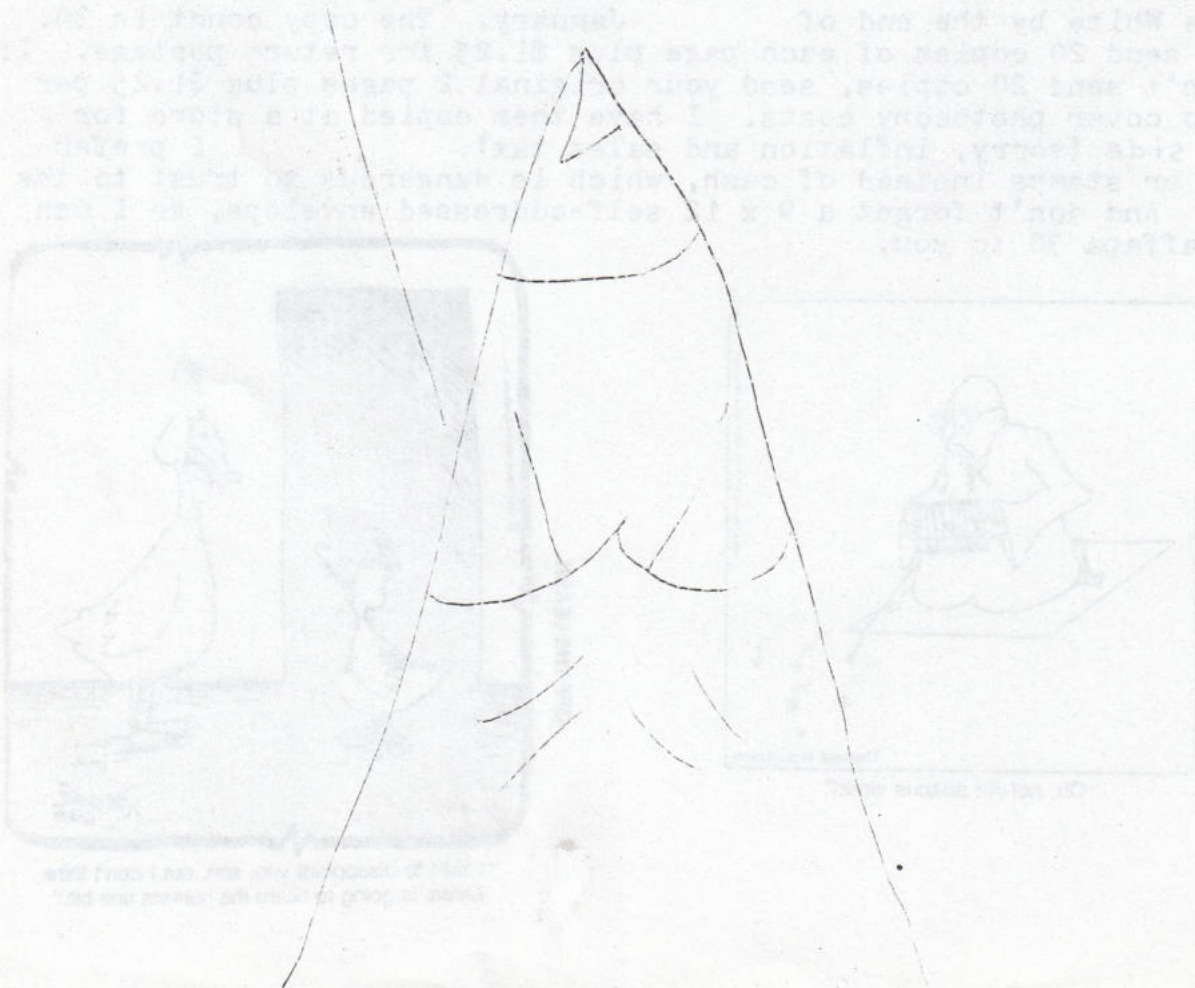


MAFF APA

OCTOBER,
1989

29

WE'RE HEERREE!!!



This is the 29th issue of MAFFAPA, Martial Arts Film Fan (and Asian Culture) APA, for October 1989. The following people sent in contributions:

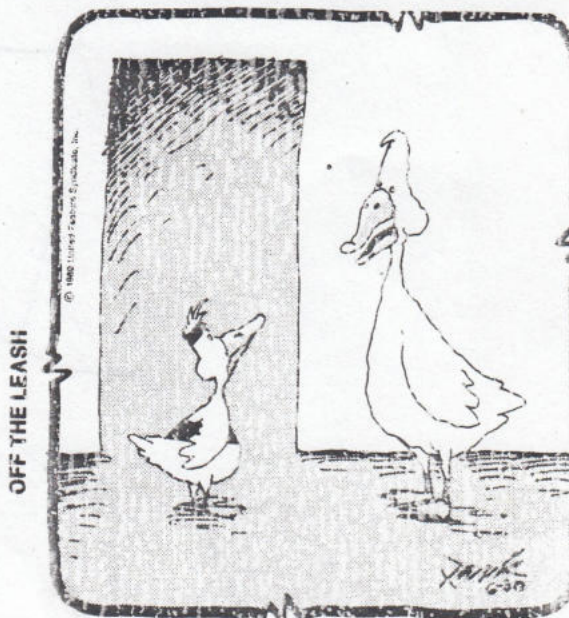
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 Jacqueline D. Sims, 309 16th Ave. No., Birmingham, AL 35204-2163
 (new contributor)

This and the last issue's cover art by Ed Luena were copies I bought and decided to use for the covers, with the artist's permission. I hope that by next issue, Ed will be contributing cover art for real. The previous cover artist is now too busy.

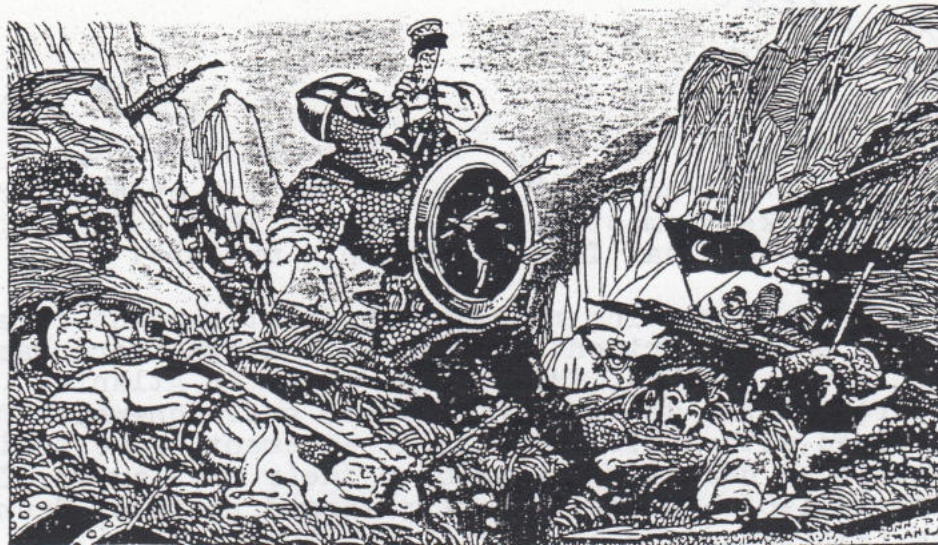
The deadline for Maffapa 30 is January 31, 1990! If your name is not listed above as a contributor, you must contribute to the next issue to receive it. Your contribution, 2 typed pages, must reach Laurine White by the end of January. The copy count is 20. Please send 20 copies of each page plus \$1.25 for return postage. If you don't send 20 copies, send your original 2 pages plus \$1.25 per page to cover photocopy costs. I have them copied at a store for 6¢ per side (sorry, inflation and sales tax). I prefer checks or stamps instead of cash, which is dangerous to trust to the mails. And don't forget a 9 x 12 self-addressed envelope, so I can send Maffapa 30 to you.



"Oh, no! An abacus virus!"



"I hate to disappoint you, son, but I don't think karate is going to scare the hunters one bit."



HE PLAYS
A CATCHY
TUNE

Mark Jackson/2043 SE Isabel Road/Port St. Lucie, Florida, 34952
407-337-2303

Hello, Friends,

WE HAVE
A HOME!

At 2:00 PM, October 25, 1989, the postman delivered two advance copies of NINJA--MEN OF IGA. Not to toot my own horn, but at long last I have taken the mountain and have planted my flag at the crest. I am grateful to all of you for your encouragement. I think the most important factor in MAFFAPA is the support we give each other. Let's all do our best to keep MAFFAPA the positive force it is.

Dragon Books did an excellent job in publishing MEN OF IGA. There are less graphics in this book than the Katsumi Toda novels. The pages have a grey trim outline in the margins. Photos of Ninjas training with muskets and katana, a diagram of a typical Japanese house, a woodblock print of two Ninjas spying on a warlord painted circa 1800 by the artist Kuniyoshi (who also painted the cover). and a photo of Old Tokyo that hasn't changed since 1600 AD, the time of my novel. The photo itself was taken around 1890--1900 and might be one of the first taken in Japan. These illustrations appear in the introduction. The illustrations for the narrative are drawn in forced perspective and have a quaint charm of their own.

For those who would enjoy an autographed copy, I have the following details: MEN OF IGA is a trade paperback that measures 6"x9" and weighs 9oz. It costs .38.95. I don't ~~KNOW~~ what it would cost to mail a copy to your homes so ask your local postal authorities and add that amount, plus 50¢ for an envelope specially made for shipping books. In return, you will receive a personally autographed volume with my individual acknowledgement of your contributions to MAFFAPA. (I know I sound like a guy on cable tv with an 800 phone number, but so does every guy selling a book. So ...)

WERE
HOME!

DID I
TURNED YOU UPSIDE DOWN

Well so far Tuttle has had 150 orders for MEN OF IGA
(Can he make a smooth transition, or what? WHAT!). At any rate,
I'll be doing what I can to promote my epic.

On viewing my book, my first thought is a recollection
of the book department in Rich's downtown store back in Atlanta.
Rich's was, and is, THE upscale store in Atlanta. The book
department was designed with their green-on-white motif that,
combined with their lighting arrangement, gave their merchandise
a luminous quality. I remember their display for IN COLD BLOOD
back in 1965. Along with an enlarged photo of Truman Capote,
they exhibited photos of the family who was killed and the two
men who murdered them. As we know, I had seen KING RAT and read
the book so I was feeling the writing bug starting to germinate
then. Ironically, as I look back, I probably would not have
written a book had I stayed there. Back in Birmingham, there
just weren't the opportunities for developing a career in Atlanta.
In the afterword for the new edition of his horror novel BA'AL,
Robert McCammon describes the limited options Birmingham offers
people in my field. That is a shame. I keep in touch with a lot
of friends I left back in Birmingham. We'll have a grand cele-
bration when I have my book signing. Perhaps one day soon Alabama
will have the support network writers enjoy here in Florida.

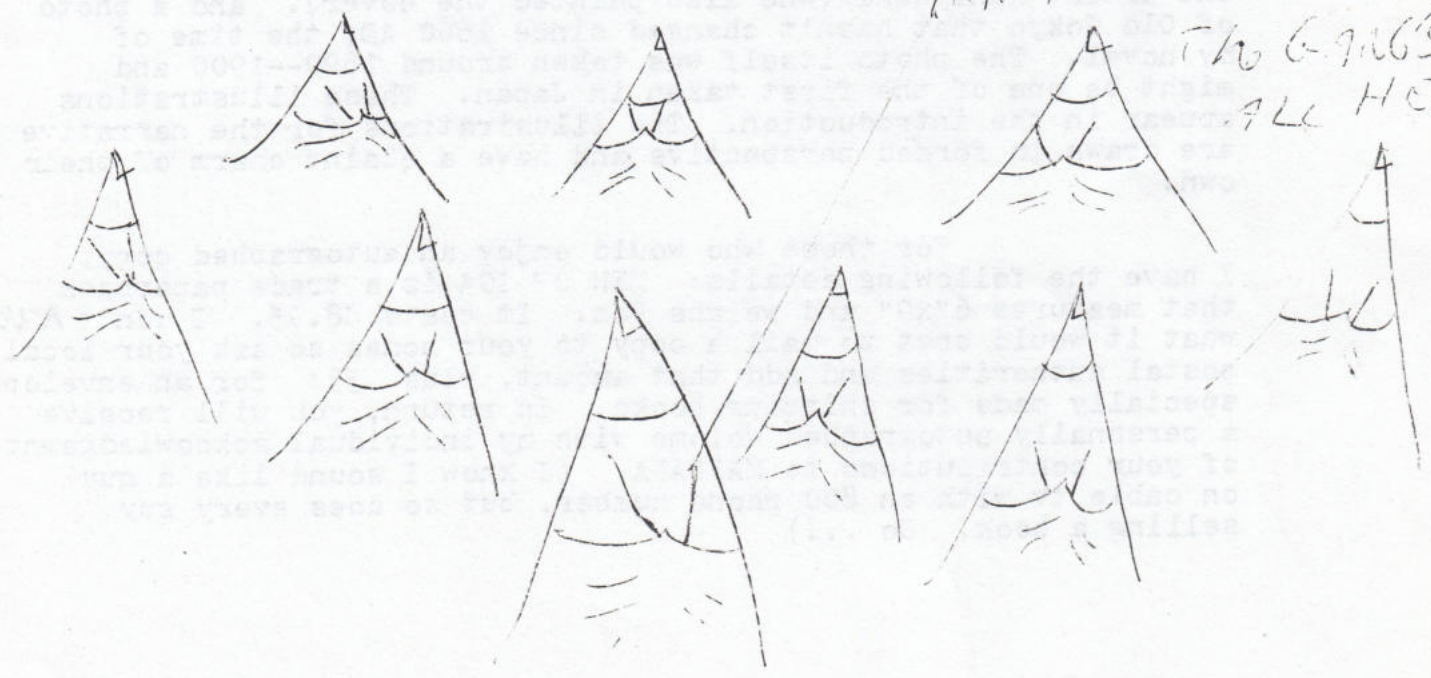
The printer in London should have the books shipped to Tuttle
by November 15. They are hoping to have the novel in bookstores
for Christmas and will continue to feature it in their Spring,
1990 catalogue.

Local newspapers have been most eager to report on
my book. I shall leave now so I can coordinate my promotional
efforts. Good luck, all. We do have fun!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HAIL HAIL -

THE GAGS
ALL HERE

THIS
IS
A
MARGINAL
EFFORT



THE FILMS OF HIDEO GOSHA

Japan's most visual director Hideo Gosha creates brilliant works of motion picture art. Each shot is composed like an oil painting, and can stand alone in freeze frame. A complete statement conceived and executed with a balance only available in the wide screen format.

Powerful swordsmen with a ferocious, almost beastlike style fight in realistic battles. The duels are usually over quickly, and in his later films the sights and sounds are quite graphic.

Gosha's first feature film, "THREE RONIN"(Sambiki no Samurai) brought his television series to theatrical release. It details how the three protagonists met and became allies.

Tetsuro Tamba has the centerpiece role as Shiba, a ronin breaking with his past, who happens upon a magistrates daughter abducted by peasants to protest exorbitant taxation. He is drawn into the skirmish when her father's men attempt a rescue.

Mikijiro Hira plays Kikyō, the magistrates bodyguard, and Isamu Nagato is Sakura, a spearman, the earthiest of the trio.

Although the three start out on opposite sides, their disgust with the magistrates cruel ways lead them to unite and defeat the evil tyrant.

"THE MAGNIFICENT TRIO" a Chinese version of this story was released by Shaw Brothers starring Wang Yu and Lo Lieh, and is available with subtitles on video. "THREE RONIN" is only on tape in Japanese, with a semi letterboxed format.

"SWORD OF THE BEAST" (Kedamono no Ken)1965, stars Mikijiro Hira as Gennosuke, a ronin pursued by his former clan. Go Kato co-stars as Yamane, a loyal retainer of a clan which has sent him to prospect gold illegally. Their paths cross in the wilderness, as do their swords briefly. One of Gosha's recurrent themes is the stealing of official gold.

"THE SECRET OF THE URN" (Tange Sazen Hien Iai Giri)1966, stars Kinnosuke Nakamura in the definitive version of the legendary one-armed, one-eyed swordsman. Nakamura gives his finest performance fighting with one arm as he throws his body into each swing. This is Gosha's first color film, and his first for Toei.

After two more features for Toei "SAMURAI WOLF I&II" (Kiba Okaminosuke,1966, Kiba Okaminosuke Jigokugiri, 1967) Gosha reached the zenith of his career with two films he directed in 1969, "GOYOKIN", and "TENCHU".

"GOYOKIN", which means 'official gold' again explores the pilfering of the Shogunate's gold supply. Tatsuya Nakadai stars as Magobei, a high ranking samurai, and brother-in-law of the chamberlain, Tatewaki, played by Tetsuro Tamba. Magobei leaves the clan after he discovers the slaughter of an entire fishing village where the shipwrecked gold washed ashore. Before going he is given assurance that the murder of innocent fisherman will not be repeated.

When it again becomes necessary to sink the gold ship the clan is forced to try to assassinate Magobei.

Kinnosuke Nakamura as Samon, a shogunate spy, has been sent to investigate. GOYOKIN is the most thoroughly enjoyable of Gosha's films, with strong fighting, suspense, and top grade production values from Toho, Japan's best studio. An American version of this film THE MASTER GUNFIGHTER, stars Tom Laughlin of 'BILLY JACK' fame, but does it no justice.

"TENCHU"(Hitokiri)1969 Daiei rises from chambara to fine art to life imitates art. After portraying a samurai who commits hara kiri, Yukio Mishima disemboweled himself as a political statement. The movie chronicles the rise and fall of Izo Okada, forcefully portrayed by Shintaro Katsu, a powerful raw swordsman who joins the 'Tenchu' group of political assassins, led by Tatsuya Nakadai as Hanpeiti, a minor official of the Tosa clan.

Tenchu means 'heaven's revenge', and is shouted as a battle cry when attacking. It was forbidden to say anything else. Okada's problems begin when he breaks this cardinal rule. As with the other Gosha anti-heroes the real betrayal comes from above. This movie is intensely visual, and is the only Gosha work available in a full letterbox format that shows his composition to full advantage.

In "BANDIT VERSUS SAMURAI SQUAD"(Kumokiri Ni Zaemon)1978, Tatsuya Nakadai is superb as "Fog" Nizaemon, a gangleader, and former samurai of high rank, pursued by his former clan who eventually mounts an attack on the clan. There are realistic sound effects, the gurgling sound of a stab wound adds dimension.

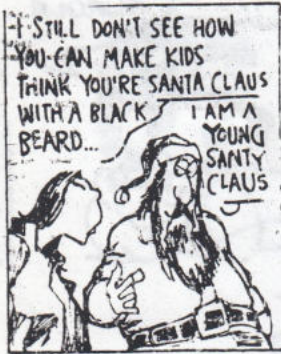
LINDA KONCAK - 703 Georgetown Rd. - Red OAK, TX 75154

WIZARD OF ID



There are more ASIAN comic strips than movies on TV. Hope you all have HAPPY Holidays!

McGONIGLE OF THE CHRONICLE



By Rodrigues

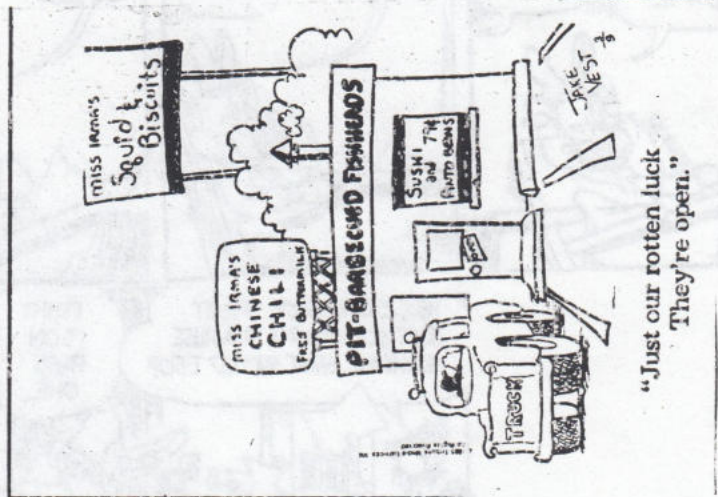
CHARLIE

by Leigh Rubin

RUBES

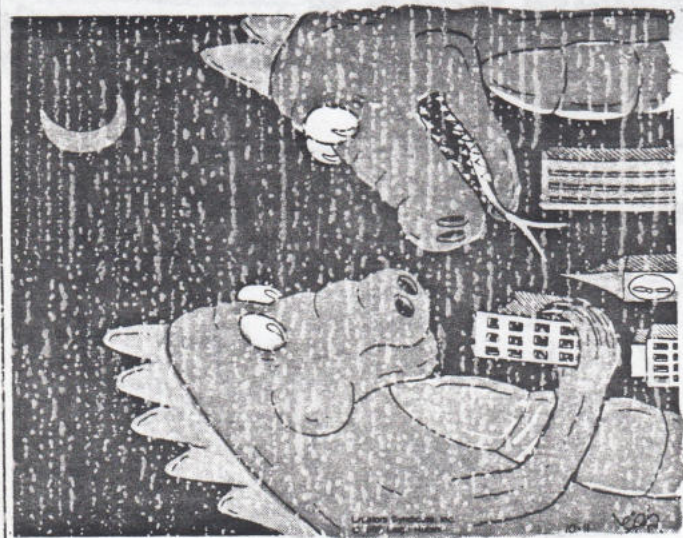


THAT'S JAKE



"Just our rotten luck. They're open."

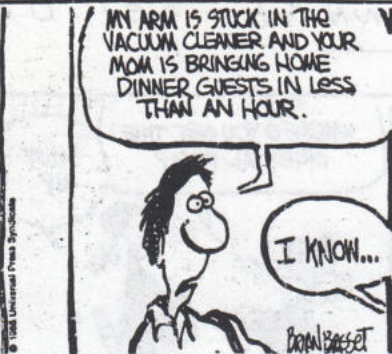
"No suites for me. . . . They'll ruin my diet!"



NEW BREED



Godzilla and Mothra agree to submit their differences to binding arbitration.



For LAURINE
A different
kind of
Robot.

MARVIN



9-28



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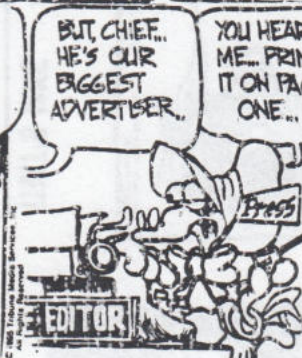
GRIZZWELLS



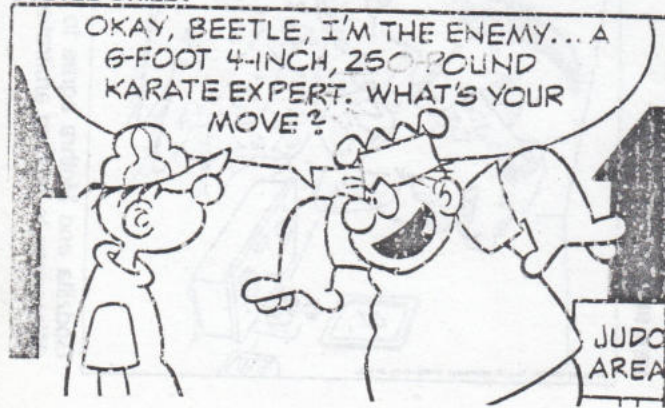
By Bill Schorr

HMMFH... NO WONDER THE JAPANESE ARE BEATING US...

CONRAD



BEETLE BAILEY



NOOT WALKER

3-11

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KAMA #29 from Laurine White, 5422 Colusa Way, Sacramento CA 95841
(916) 332-7461

First Team Press Inc., "in color, and printed with our reputation for quality first," presents "A Bad Night for Ninjas" by Jim Lee. It's a 2-part print, one showing Wolverine with his long steel claws against a group of attacking ninja. The other shows The Punisher blowing away sword-carrying ninja with his powerful guns. Both attacks take place in Japanese neighborhoods, with all the street signs in katakana. My sympathies are with the ninja, not the vigilante "heroes". Oh yeah, you can order the set for only \$95.

Two weeks ago a syndicated series called "Secrets and Mysteries" ran an episode on ninja. The host is Edward Mulhare, probably hired for his British accent, but he comes across too stiff and cold. The show included a clip from a Sho Kosugi movie, interviews with Stephen Hayes and some American ninjitsu students, an exhibit of ninja weaponry, a clip from a Japanese kiddie cartoon called Hattori Kun, and humorous scenes from a Japanese news show parodying Americans' fascination with ninja. Much was made of ninja abilities to breathe underwater, walk on water, fly, etc., and how these exploits were actually accomplished.

From TV Guide for October 21: "Carrie Mitchum thought she'd started her career several years earlier. Dad Christopher - who, in the early 70s, starred in a slew of grade-B, Asian-filmed action flicks - often pacified the pre-teen Mitchum and her baby brother, Bentley, by pretending to hire them as extras. "But since there usually aren't a whole lotta towheads in the Oriental outback, he'd put us on a water buffalo about a mile from the camera," she recalls. "At sundown, he'd hand us a 10-dollar bill and we'd go back to our hotel and tell Mom, "Whew! Rough day on the set!" It took us years to catch on."

There really is an Usagi Yojimbo action figure as part of the line of Ninja Turtles toys. He is 5" high with a most ferocious expression on his face, and comes with a naginata (the long arm of ancient law), wakizashi (the short sword; never leave 16th century Japan without it), tanto (the dagger; deadly), katana (the long sword; for those hard to reach places) and wacky weapons rack (perfect for storing Usagi's hare-raising weapons). Usagi is 5'6" with ears fully extended, weighs 125 lbs with carrot and armor, and his favorite holiday is Easter. "Hundreds of years before sewers were even invented, Usagi Yojimbo (Rabbit Bodyguard), a skilled but masterless Samurai, wandered ancient legendary Japan. In a freakish burst of reception through Donatello's trans-dimensional portal, this medieval hare wound up thrashing his way through the Turtle's lair, kicking shell and more or less proving a few points with his Katana. Splinter recognized the ronin's skills at once as Usagi repeatedly put the turtles on the cutting edge. Trapped in Turtle-time, Usagi Yojimbo quickly became a trusted and honorable ally in the ongoing pursuit of pizza and a Shredder-less world." After 30 episodes, Usagi still hasn't made an appearance in the animated series.

No, the earthquake didn't have much effect on Sacramento. I didn't feel it, since I was riding home at the time. Nothing fell off the shelves. One news show had film a couple of days later, to show how things were returning to normal in San Francisco, included Chinatown residents doing early morning tai chi in the park. The Japanese Association of Travel Agents admonished the 1,000 or so Japanese tourists in S.F. after the quake to "Be polite." Residents wouldn't be happy to see Japanese tourists crossing police lines to take pictures of collapsed Marina District homes. There is some question about the

safety of the buildings in Chinatown during a powerful aftershock. They were built of unreinforced masonry after the '06 quake.

Have you been watching any of the many cable and PBS shows about China that have been broadcast the past few weeks? Bravo ran "New Chinese Cinema", a program on new Chinese directors of the '80s, with interviews and film clips. The most innovative work is being done by directors in Xi'an. As in America, such films are not appreciated by the average moviegoer. They are financed by profits from more popular movies, like kung fu. The only kung fu film clip came from a movie called "The Magic Braid", which parodied the traditional m/a cliches. A man with floor-length queue stands in the middle of a moving circle of armed enemies. He whips his braid and disarms them. Arts & Entertainment showed a subtitled film, "The Yellow Earth", about a young Communist soldier staying at a poor village in the late 1930s. A&E also ran 2 documentary series: "The Yellow River", about the ethnic peoples living in the Yellow River basin, from the eroding mountains and plateaus downstream to the mouth; "Red Dynasty" had a 2-part show, "Memories of China", about a successful Chinese restaurateur visiting China after a 50-year absence. He brought along some Epicurean Westerners. Forget the sightseeing. The focus was on food available in the marketplace and culinary delights(?) to be tasted at regional restaurants. Not everyone had the same taste buds.

The Discovery Channel played "The Great Wall of Iron", a series on the Red Army. If you can't receive those cable channels, PBS ran several specials, like "China in Revolution, 1911-1949" and "The Emperor's Eye", about Chinese art objects collected and commissioned by the Chien Lung Emperor (a Shaw Studio favorite). During the turbulence of the '30s and '40s the collection was moved around, to remove it from danger of theft or destruction by the Japanese or Communists. It is now in the national museum in Taipei. "Taiwan: The Other China" is a new PBS series. The Taiwan government must have invested in this, because the first episode came across as a propaganda piece. How Taiwan, abandoned by former allies (like us), pulled itself up by its bootstraps, transforming from an island of farmers to a manufacturing power. The middle class seem a lot like the Japanese, living in apartments, working hard 6 days a week to save money, and going as families out to the parks on Sunday. Daughter studies hard to get into university. Her folks pay for her to attend boarding school, to give her a head start. Grandfather complains that the old days were better, that changes happen too rapidly. He watches swordplay series on tv.

On Monday, October 9, a group of us went to the "Finest Asian Music Festival" in downtown Sacramento. The master of ceremonies was Susan Hirasuna, a local tv reporter and weekend anchor. She was selected because she is a prominent ^{she} local Asian announcer. She was poorly briefed, given program notes ^{she} should could barely read in the dim light, a hasty intro to Chinese pronunciation, and turned loose. The "Asian" in the title referred strictly to China, Han and minorities. The Camellia Dance, specially choreographed for this evening, was supposed to represent the coming of the Chinese to Sacramento. The Sacramento Asian Performing Arts Ensemble danced, each girl holding 2 feather fans and wearing white blouses and long red skirts.

"The High Moon" was a piece of Tang dynasty music (of 3000 years ago, Susan told us; with that she lost all credibility) performed by Liu Qichao on flute (xiao?) and 3 ladies playing zhengs (Chinese harps). Liu Qichao graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and performs at Yale, Harvard, etc.

"The Voice of the Dragon" was a sword dance with a hero of a thousand years ago dancing on Dragon Mountain to celebrate a joyful spirit (or something like that). The dancer was David Z. Chen, a choreographer of classical and folk dance and tai chi instructor. Wang Linghua danced a very sinuous and sexy "Mermaid", a folk dance. She wore a red skirt with a silver overwrap and sleeveless top and red slippers. The music reminded me of the Asian steppes. Wang Linghua is famous for her role in the musical dance drama, "A Journey to the West". (Maybe she played the Ox Demon's mate?)

Liu Dehai played the pipa (a Chinese relative of the lute) for "Chiao Zhen Farewell" (the story behind this one may be the basis for IMPERIAL WOMAN, a new novel by Andre Norton and Susan Schwartz) and "The Ambus" (Han dynasty music, but what's an ambus?). Lily Cai created and danced "Status of the Dun Huang Goddess", in the classical style. Two local Asian Ensemble dancers were dressed in classical costume with long streamers, but they remained statues for the entire number. Lily Cai was principal soloist dancer with the Shanghai Opera and conducted original research at the Dun Huang caves. "Reflection of Moon in the Second Spring", composed by a blind man (Hua Yanjun?) in the 1940s, was performed by Ding Lufeng on the erhu (see illo) and Han Zhiming on the yangqin (a Chinese dulcimer, sounds a little like a harp). Han Zhiming also performed "The Butterfly Lover" on yangqin. "The Butterfly Lover" (no relation to "Butterfly Murders") is a famous classical love story. "Flying to the Moon" was a classical ribbon dance performed by Cheng Yin, who graduated from the Chinese Army Dance Troupe. The dance is about Chang'o, who finished off her husband's elixir of immortality. The gods punished her by making her light enough to float to the moon, where her only company for millenia has been a rabbit pounding mochi. (The rabbit-pounding-mochi dance was performed several years ago at a local kabuki presentation.) The next dance was a substitution, a folk dance of "Little Sisters Play on the Grassland". With a storm coming, the sisters try to round up the herd animals. Then Lily Cai danced "The Bird" with short, quick steps, almost floating, around the stage. Ding Lufeng composed and performed "The Beautiful Tashiquen" (what's a tashiquen?) on banhu (similar to erhu), accompanied by Han Zhiming on his dulcimer. "The Love Scene" was supposedly a Zhen Zhang folk dance, a love dance performed by David Z. Chen and Wang Linghua (aka Amy, not the Maffapa Amy). Someone had turned both music and dance into a slow boring Chinese ballet. I saw no trace of folk dance. The final musical number was "Flying White Pigeon", played by Han Zhiming on dulcimer, Liu Dehai on pipa, somebody on the zheng, and Liu Qichao playing a mouth organ (see illo). The performances were beautiful, as was the music. But the atmosphere would have been considerably enhanced by a painted backdrop, instead of a completely barren stage. Susan Hirasuna was a disaster. Someone behind us whispered that she was a disgrace to Channel 3. She threw names out of a hat (we were supposed to fill out our ticket stubs and leave them at the door) for a drawing. Most of the audience was Chinese or of Spanish descent. She mangled the Chinese names, but her 6 years of college Spanish were good for something. Someone who'd driven down from Lake Tahoe won a weekend at Lake Tahoe. Most of the others won a free music lesson on one of the Chinese instruments.

*Highly Recommended new trade paperback from Tor Books:
SAMURAI CAT IN THE REAL WORLD, stories and art by Mark
Rogers. Hilarious action as Samurai Cat takes on the Chicago
mob, Nazi Germany, and Stalin.*

Chinese Instrument.

Pipa Guzhang

The Chinese pipa is a relative of the lute, derived, according to Farmer, from the Persian *barbat*. In China, it was first a popular instrument and had no part in the strictly regulated ceremonial orchestras. It is first mentioned in the 2nd century B.C., and came to be a favorite instrument of poets in the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907), a period of great cultural achievement. A popular poem, *The Song of the Pipa* (Pipa Xing), for example, by Bai Ju-yi (Po Chu-i) describes the playing of the instrument.

The pipa is a pear-shaped instrument, some three feet long, resembling the Western lute. It is held upright on the thigh and has four strings which are plucked by the hand. There is considerable use of *vibrato* in playing, and also a technique of repeating notes with great rapidity to give the effect of *tremolo*. The modern pipa is capable of producing twelve half tones and can modulate through twelve keys. With advances in pipa technique, the instrument has acquired a greater volume and a wider range, enabling it to function as a solo instrument as well as in ensemble playing.

The *guzhang* or *zheng* is a plucked string instrument known as the Chinese zither, and in Japan the *koto*. It varies from thirteen to twenty-five strings tuned to the pentatonic scale with a range exceeding three octaves. Changing the positions of the slides produces chromatic scales and modulation.

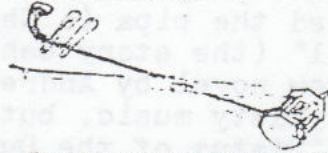
The *zheng* holds a unique position among Chinese musical instruments, having a resonant, clear, and enchanting timbre which covers a wide range of notes. It plays an important role in the musical repertoire as a solo instrument; in song, dance, and operatic accompaniment; and as part of orchestral ensembles.

The double *zheng* is actually two instruments, one tuned to the pentatonic scale and the other to the diatonic scale. A pedal is added to control modulation.



Erhu

The *erhu* resembles a ladle with a long handle fitted with two strings and a bow inserted between them. Its range spans about three octaves, having some qualities of the violin, but with voice-like tonalities. In the modern orchestra, the *erhu* are divided into two sections.



The *erhu* is one of the most widely used bowed instruments in China. Throughout its 500 year history, it has been periodically modified. The rich and varied playing technique contributes to the *erhu's* popularity for accompaniment, orchestral, and solo performances.

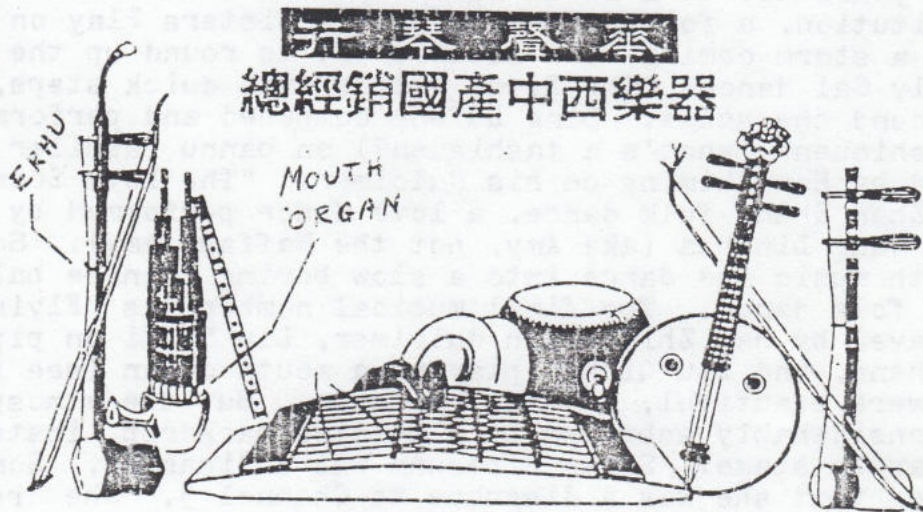
Percussion

The Chinese orchestra has a rich percussion section which includes both Eastern and Western instruments. Modern ensembles have adopted the concert timpani, while pitched membranophone instruments include the *paigu*, or small drums in a set of five to seven. Drums come in varied sizes, emitting very high to quite low pitches. Other examples of pitched percussions are the *yunluo* (gongs with tuned pitches) and *qing* (bronze bowls with a bell-like tone). The *jingluo* (small gong used in the Beijing Opera) gives a characteristic *portamento* tone. Metal ideophones include cymbals, gongs, bells, and hand bells; wooden ones are clappers, claves, and temple blocks.

The percussion instruments are used mostly for operatic accompaniment and orchestral performances.

The *gaohu* is the smaller and shriller version of the *erhu*.

The *zhonghu* is the Chinese equivalent of the viola. It is slightly larger than the *erhu*.



Chinese Traditional Musical Instruments

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BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA 35204 - 2163

My interest in martial arts movies began in 1976 with a movie called "Attack of the Kungfu Girls." To me this was only a so-so movie so I kept going back to the movie theatres thinking surely something better would come along. I have seen more than my share of killer classics and woof-woof dog movies over the years in the movie theatres which is where I prefer to see martial arts movies.

The independent TV station in my area began showing martial arts movies in my area in April 1982, this contributed directly to the closing down in 1984 of all movies that used to show double and triple features on weekends and holidays; the lines used to wind around the street corners and down the road. The theater owners reasoned that as long as we could see movies at home for free we would not shell out hard-earned money to go out. They could not have been more wrong because being in a movie theatres with other movie fanatics can be an experience within itself.

The independent TV station showed movies from 1982 to August 1987. During this time they showed Chang Cheh's first and second teams' killer classic movies and Liu Chia Liang great late seventies and early eighties movies along with a few dog movies, but they kept showing the same ones over and over and at one point I burned out of them. The next thing I knew the movies were taken off completely with only one movie being shown once in blue moon. At the point I started to miss seeing them.

One day I was at the library and I came across a reference book called "Martial Movies from Bruce Lee to the Ninjas" and I was intrigued. I did not anybody other than Bruce Lee's real name apart from the roles they played. One day I wrote Richard Meyers inquiring about what became of Chang Cheh's second team. I received a reply two weeks later that contained a subscription letter for Martial Arts Movies Associates. I immediately subscribed and this led me to William Connolly which led me to Damon Foster which led me to Laurine White. Even though I can no longer go to any movie theater I can still find the best movies on videocassettes through these wonderful people.

I used to be prejudiced against anything Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung and any cop and robber/car chase movies. I realize now that the acting is much better in these movies than what I was used to seeing.

I am so glad there are other people who like me want to know more about the genre.

HERE IS A LIST OF MY FAVORITE ACTORS

(1) Ti Lung all the way

His English was surprisingly good in the movies "A BETTER TOMORROW and CALL HIM MR. SHATTER much better than David Chaing's was in "LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES". I suspect that this may have contributed of their partnership.

(2) Lo Mang

His excellantly kept up body put everyone else's to shame. I wonder if I am the only person to notice that there seems to be a small part of his thumbs missing where the thumbnails should be, but this does not take away from his physique at all.

(3) Fu Sheng

Enough said.

(4) Chi Kwan Chun

Unusually tall for an Oriental person (this is my opinion) and I have seen better fighters Mr. Chun has an acting charisma that I like to see. He and Fu Sheng were a great acting team.

(5) Kuo Chui
Chaing Sheng
Lu Feng

A great fight choreography and acting team, second only to the Lui Brothers.

(6) Carter Wong

His presence kept "Big Trouble in Little China" from being a total bust to me.

(7) Meng Fei

I really enjoyed his work in "Matching Escort" and "Bruce Tuan's 7 Promises" even though it's hard to take his apple shaped face seriously sometimes.

- (8) Chen Kwan Tai
- (9) Liu Chia Liang
Liu Chia Yung
Liu Chia Hui

I have liked him since
seeing him in Dynasty
of Blood.

While making "Challenge
of the Masters" and
"Legendary Weapons
of China" I wondered
if they may hurt each
other accidentally doing
dazzling fight choreography.

- (10) John Liu

He does not look like
he could put fear in
anyone until they taste
the bottom of his shoes
after being given one
of his fantastic kicks.

Do you agree or disagree with my choices?

ASIAPHILE #24! WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY AMY HARLIB, 何安美,

HELLO MAFFAPANS! I ENJOY EVERY ISSUE!

MAILING COMMENTS: LAURINE I HATE ARTSY FARTSY PRETENTIOUS STUFF TOO! THAT'S WHY MY SHOWS ARE ALL DONE POP ENTERTAINMENT STYLE! I ESPECIALLY LIKE YOUR 'SOMETHING EXCRETED BY GODZILLA' COMMENT, MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY!!

MERLIN - YEAH! ZATOICHI MOVIES ARE PURE MAGIC! I'VE SEEN 13 OF THEM AND WISH I COULD SEE THEM ALL. MY FAVORITES ARE THE ONE IN WHICH THE MASSEUR HAS TO TAKE CARE OF AN INFANT (FORGET THE TITLE), 'ZATOICHI MEETS YOTIMBO', 'THE BLIND SWORDSMAN'S CANE SWORD' AND 'ZATOICHI'S PILGRIMAGE' THOUGH ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SEEING.

DAMON FOSTER - I'M A BIG FAN OF YOURS! WRITE ABOUT YOUR PROJECTS AND DO PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR TRIP TO JAPAN.

NIKKI WHITE - HOW I WISH I COULD SEE VIDEOS OF 'THE SAMURAI' TV SERIES - IT SOUNDS LIKE LOADS OF FUN. AS FOR THE RUTH MANLEY TRILOGY - SEVERE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES HAVE PREVENTED ANY SUCH PURCHASES FOR A LONG TIME BUT THINGS HAVE IMPROVED A BIT, SO, IF YOU COULD PLEASE SEND ME INFO ON HOW I CAN ORDER ALL THREE BOOKS (PAPERBACKS PREFERABLY BUT I'LL TAKE 'EM ANY WAY I CAN GET 'EM) FROM THE USA I CAN DO SO. HOW DO I CONVERT USA \$\$ TO AUSTRALIAN \$\$? ETC.

WALSDORFFS: I DO ENJOY YOUR REVIEWS & NEWS VERY MUCH BUT LONG, TECHNICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF KARATE MOVEMENTS ARE NOT SO INTERESTING (FORTUNATELY THERE WEREN'T ANY THIS TIME).

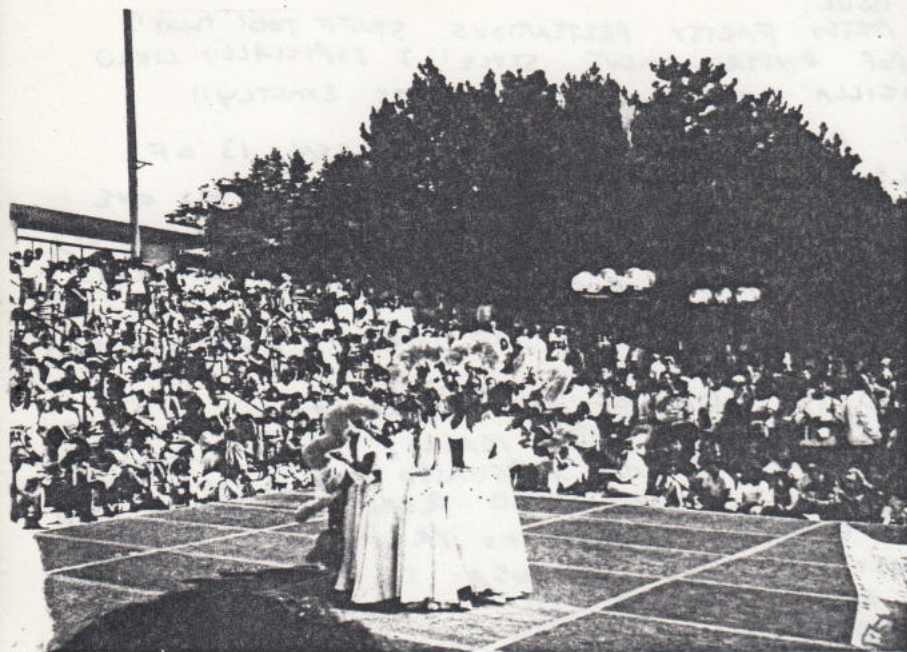
PAUL KILIANSKY AND MERLIN - HEY GUYS, SINCE WE'RE PRACTICALLY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS GEOGRAPHICALLY, HOW ABOUT GIVING ME A BUZZ AND GETTING TOGETHER AROUND THE 'VCR ?? OR SOMETHING.

CHINESE KUNG-FU STORY THEATRE - SEPT. WAS ALSO A GOOD MONTH FOR ME WHAT WITH SHOWS FOR THE AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL IN A CHINATOWN SHOPPING MALL; A BRIEF SCENE AS A STREET ACT IN CENTRAL PARK (AS MY SWORD HERO CHARACTER) FOR AN INDEPENDENT LOW BUDGET FILM 'ONLY IN AMERICA' TO BE RELEASED (HOPEFULLY) THIS SPRING (IF I DON'T END UP ON THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR!); THE CLOISTERS MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL (MORE FUN THAN LAST YEAR!); THE USUAL LIBRARIES; AND A GREAT BIG CHINESE FESTIVAL IN NEW JERSEY (PHOTOS FROM THIS ONE ON PAGES 2 & 3 OF THIS CONTRIBUTION). OCT. WAS VERY BAD (ONLY ONE BIG THAT PAID REAL BIG TIME COLLEGE BOOKINGS ARE NOV. 3 & 4 AT THE U. OF ROCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE (MORE ON THIS NEXT MAFFAPA) & NOV. 5 AT THE NASSAU COUNTY & ARE PRESTIGIOUS, I ALSO HAVE LIBRARIES & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES COMING UP. DECEMBER IS STILL A BIG QUESTION MARK BUT THAT'S SHOW BIZ

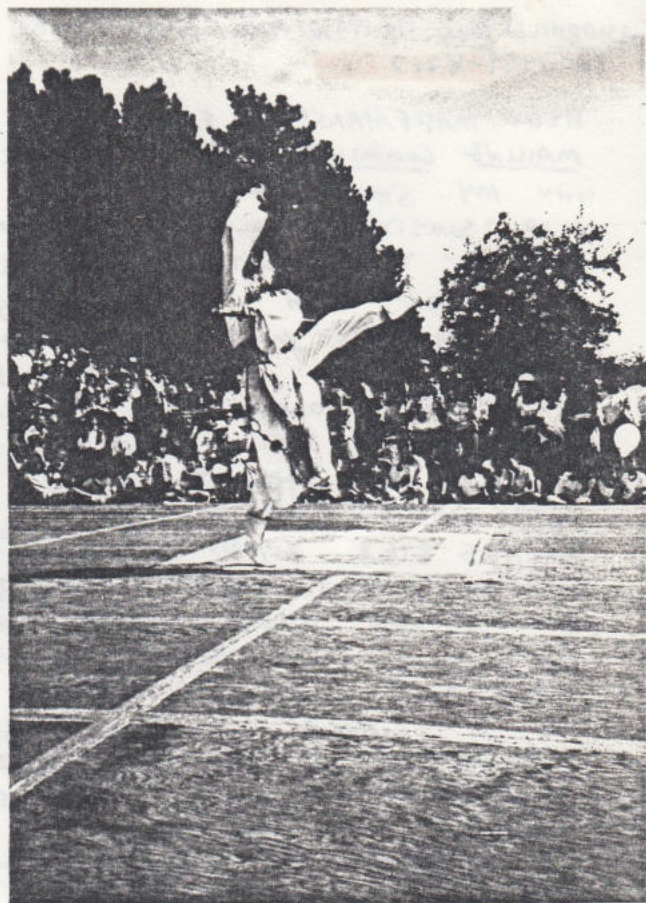
ALSO IN MY CONTRIBUTION IS A XEROX OF A NY TIMES COMMENTARY ON THE DREADEFUL INCIDENT IN TIEN AN MEN SQUARE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. I THINK REMEMBERING THIS TRAGEDY IS IMPORTANT SO I INCLUDE IT HERE. EVER SINCE JUNE 3 & 4 I'VE BEEN MAKING A BRIEF SPEECH AT ALL MY PERFORMANCES DEDICATING THEM TO THE HEROIC SPIRIT OF THE STUDENTS, PEOPLE AND WORKERS OF CHINA WHO, JUST AS BRAVELY AS THEIR ANCIENT COUNTERPARTS THAT I PORTRAY, ARE LITERALLY DYING, PUTTING THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE IN THE ETERNAL HEROIC QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM FROM TYRANNY AND OPPRESSION!! THEY ARE THE HEROES OF MODERN TIMES.

FOR FURTHER READING: STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE! A HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS BY RONALD TAKAKI (LITTLE, BROWN & CO., BOSTON) 1989. THIS IS A LONG OVERDUE COMPREHENSIVE HISTORICAL PANORAMA OF ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY FROM THE 19TH CENT TO THE PRESENT COVERING DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUPS AND USING A VARIETY OF SOURCES INCLUDING VERY PERSONAL AND MOVING ORAL ACCOUNTS. THIS IS NOT ONLY A BRILLIANTLY SCHOLARLY BOOK (WELL DOCUMENTED) BUT A FASCINATING, MOVING READ AND AN EYE-OPENING LITANY OF RACISM, EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION AND TOWERING ACHIEVEMENTS BY AMERICA'S HERETOFORE LARGELY IGNORED ASIAN POPULATION. IT'S A MUST READ FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN 'THINGS ASIAN'. BEST TO ALL OF YOU!!

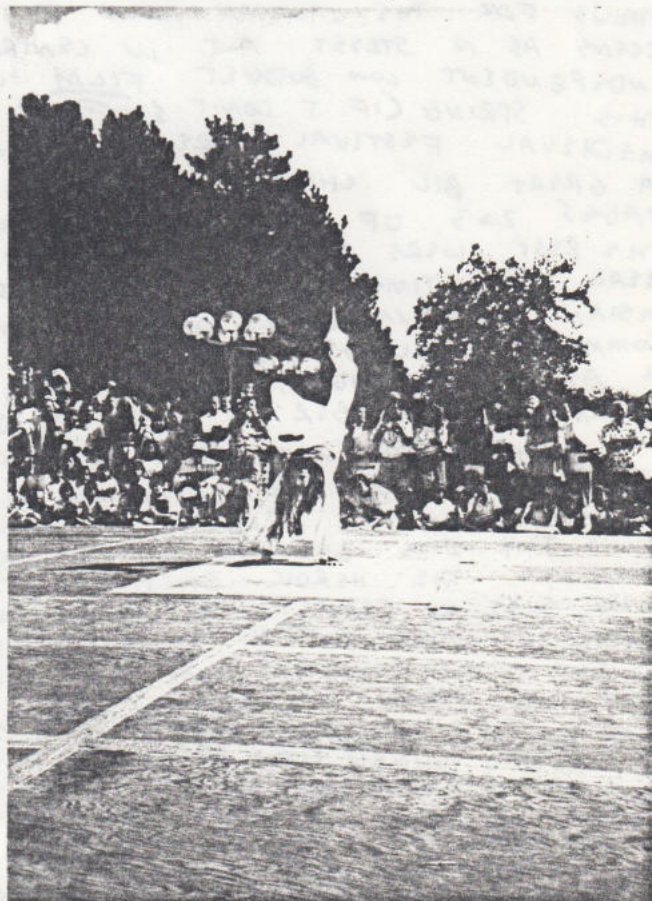
AMY HARLIB ⑤

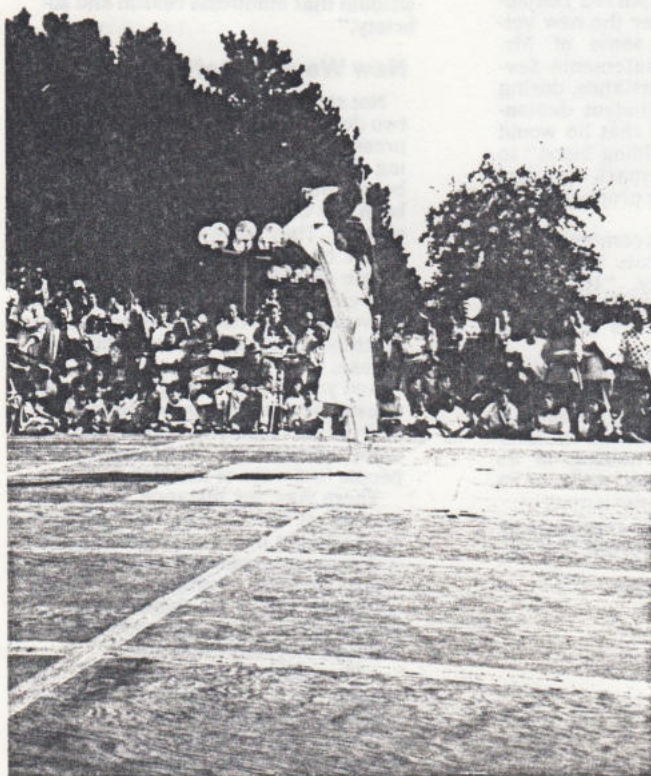
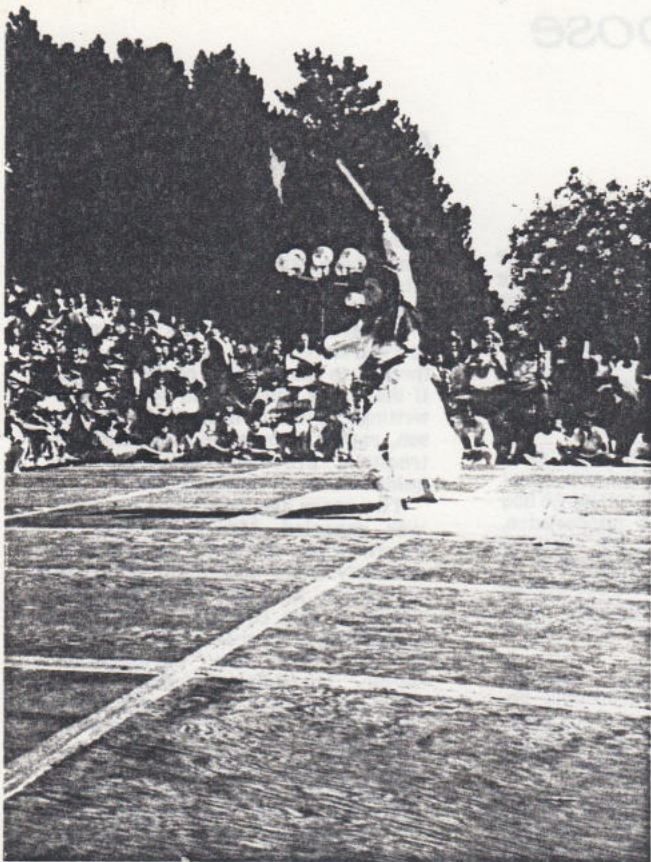


YOUNG GIRLS DOING FAN DANCE ↑



YOURS TRULY'S ACROBATIC DOUBLE-EDGED
SWORD DEMONSTRATION





All Fire and Vengeance, The Dragons Are Loose

By RICHARD BERNSTEIN

Special to The New York Times

BEIJING, June 23 — The dragons are everywhere in Beijing, and they are multiplying. Two of them twirl around the concrete pillars of the newly built International Hotel. Another pair, recently hatched, stretch over the entrance to the 16th-century Drum Tower.

There are other emblems of China now, but it is the dragon that after all is a kind of exterminating angel, a fierce and vengeful fire-breathing beast, that seems to prevail in these days of executions of political protesters and raw dictatorial power. And therein lies the story of a crushed cultural investigation.

Some months ago a television series called "River Elegy" made a stir in China, precisely because it examined the symbols of the country most favored by the present Government. The dragon was there, and so were the Great Wall and the Yellow River, all of them tending, by virtue of their forbidding qualities, to smother the gentler, kinder, more poetic and humanistic aspects of the culture.

The suggestion of the program was that these oppressive but powerful symbols of China's identity, so beloved of tourists and encouraged by the Communist Party leaders, actually crushed the national spirit, implicitly encouraging authoritarian rule. They helped the rulers of the country to suppress dissent and to inhibit democratic change.

The link between Communist rule and these cultural colossi was too much for the party authorities. One of them, Wang Zhen, a longtime leader believed to have favored the use of troops against students in the violent crackdown in Beijing in early June, called "River Elegy" an example of "national nihilism." A transcript in book form of the program and videotapes of it were banned and removed from the shelves.

Even though now banned, "River Elegy" serves as a reminder of just how deep the Chinese self-exploration was in that time of virtually open debate, brought to an abrupt end three weeks ago with the arrival not of dragons but of tanks in Tiananmen Square.

Many people have begun to look at the symbols of the country in a different way, to see them as illustrations of backwardness and tools of repression rather than as images of national glory. On the Great Wall, for example, one man had this to say:

"It is a deterrent to man's search for the truth because it is symbolic of the Emperor Qin Shi Huang, who was one of our worst tyrants.

"The one and only time I went to the wall, I saw nothing wonderful about it. I remembered the million young men who died building it. I always preferred the legend of Meng Jiangnu. She was a woman who came to see her lover at the Great Wall, and when she discovered that he was dead, she wept so bitterly that a part of it was washed away."

Is Deng Now the Dragon?

There is no question that the dragon in China now is seen to be Deng Xiaoping, the 84-year-old senior leader, who until only a few months ago was deemed the genial, moderate figure who had rescued China from the oppressive rule of Mao, turning the country down the path of pragmatic change.

Mr. Deng seems now to have taken on some, but not all, of the attributes of Mao. In the last three weeks, he has made only one public appearance, giving a speech before the Military Affairs Commission, of which he is chairman. The speech has become an object of reverential study and comment here, much the way Mao's quotations once were.

The rest of the time, Mr. Deng has remained secluded, presumably behind the guarded walls of the Zhongnanhai compound, the former home of China's emperors and now of the Communist leadership.

Mr. Deng seems to have chosen just this moment to give permission for a new version of his selected works — published with little fanfare a few years ago — to be printed by the army. Some here recalled that Mao's Little Red Book of quotations, a kind of bible of the Cultural Revolution, was also initially printed by the army.

The announcement stirred conjecture here as to whether the new volume would include some of Mr. Deng's most famous statements. Several months ago, for instance, during an earlier round of student demonstrations, he declared that he would not be "afraid of shedding blood" to quell the unrest, a remark that has taken on an ominously prophetic tone in retrospect.

But his most famous comment is no doubt the one about cats and the irrelevance of ideology. "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white," he has said, "as long as it catches mice."

Students at a university here are reported to be circulating a T-shirt that refers to that famous remark. It shows a black cat — though its color is not important — holding in its claws two student mice, while in its

stomach can be seen the remnants of a third mouse that the cat has already devoured.

Antithesis of the Dragon

The works of Fang Lizhi, the astrophysicist and dissident who remains in the American Embassy here, where he sought refuge during the crackdown, will not be published in this country, at least not before there is another major political upheaval.

But Mr. Fang's essays, if they could be read here, would be entirely antithetical to the ideology of the dragon. If there is a single main point in his writings, it is that untrammelled reason, rather than blind adherence to tradition, provides the only sure guide to a better political life.

Two years ago, before his passport was canceled, Mr. Fang went to Capri, in the Mediterranean, for an astrophysicists' meeting. While he was there, he wrote an essay, published in this country in which he stated a kind of credo:

In it, he wrote about "the moral law within," borrowing the concept from Kant, opposing it to what Mr. Fang identifies as the quest for "overbearing power." Science, he said, has "only disgust and disdain for the curses by totems, the barbarities, the addiction to lies, and the worship of the nonexistent" that are the bulwarks of political dictatorship.

"What is it that enables man to overcome suffering?" he asked. "It is not war cries of ignorance and benightedness, nor even less threats of bloodshed against freedom," he replied. "What brings man happiness and freedom is first of all wisdom, a wisdom that manifests reason and sobriety."

New Ways of Defiance

Not since the Cultural Revolution of two decades ago has there been a repression so brutal as the one unfolding here now. Since the crackdown began three weeks ago there have been few Chinese ready to talk to foreigners. They were fearful that they might be suspected of giving away "state secrets" or simply overheard expressing unacceptable opinions. Now that executions have begun, the atmosphere of caution is bound to increase.

And yet, like the young man seen on television screens around the world in early June standing alone and unarmed in front of a line of tanks, some people find ways of showing defiance.

There was, for instance, the young woman at the free-market clothing stall who got into a conversation with a foreigner about the "baotu." The word, meaning "ruffian" or "thug," officially refers to those being arrested in the search for people active in the democracy movement.

"The baotu are citizens," the woman said. "They are students, workers, ordinary people."

Then, while those around her looked on nodding, apparently in approval, the woman ventured into dangerous polemical territory. Looking at the foreigner, an expression of absolute seriousness on her face, she said, "I am a baotu."

* VISITOR FROM JAPAN *
* *
* by Robert Walsdorff *

Last year when I visited Japan I met a Japanese student named Yuji Miyazaki. We were in Nara. The professors who conducted the seminar for the 18 teachers (of whom I was one) introduced us to two UTC students who were studying and living in Japan for a year. They were named Rob and Millie. With them was Yuji.

Yuji was then 19 and was attending the same university as Rob and Millie were attending in Osaka. His major was English because he considered it to be "the universal language." He was bright and friendly. He could speak English fairly well as long as you talked slowly and directly to him. Sometimes there were language difficulties when we talked to him, but for the most part communication back and forth was possible. Most people seemed to like to talk to Yuji but three of us particularly monopolized his time. We walked for at least six hours on this day, through Nara Park, the streets of that area, and many tourist sights. Most of the time we talked to him. He didn't seem to mind, in fact he seemed to like it. We also saw him all the next day when visiting the many sights of Kyoto.

Yuji is tall by Japanese standards as he is six feet. He was born in a small town in the far south of Japan called Sakurajima. He moved to Osaka when very young and has lived there ever since. His father works in a factory and his mother is a nurse. He has an older brother and younger sister and always refers to himself as "poor." When he graduates he wants to work for a trading firm.

I saw Yuji for the last time in Japan when we were in Osaka. He came to the hotel we were all staying at, along with Rob and Millie. Yuji asked me if I would help him. He was studying for an English slang test he was taking the next day. There were some expressions he didn't understand. I did. Three of us gave him our addresses and asked him to write to us. To our surprise, he did.

I had been corresponding with him for over a year. This summer he was one of 20 Japanese students who had been sent to the United States to study. They were sent all over to different cities. The location was picked by drawing. Yuji was sent to Wisconsin. He was very unhappy about this. He wanted New York or Los Angeles or some other major city. He was scheduled to meet a host family there in September. He left Japan in late July and spent about 5 weeks visiting different people he met who were once exchange students in his university in Japan. He had a special airline ticket that enabled him to travel free as part of the grant he won. He went to California, New York, New England, Washington D.C., Virginia, Tennessee, Chicago, and finally Wisconsin. He stayed for two and a half days in Nashville.

Yuji was supposed to arrive in Nashville on Wednesday and leave on that Sunday evening. Jewel, a teacher in Knoxville who he also corresponded with, and Josie, the other teacher he corresponded with in Murfreesboro, as well as a pen pal, were all going to come to Nashville to meet him on Saturday. Jewel was also going to contact another teacher who went on the trip and she was also going to come. Jewel was then going to take him to Knoxville, because he wanted to go hiking with her and her friends in the Smokey Mountains. This had all been arranged by letter.

The day he arrived my brother Howard picked him up at the airport because school had just begun here and I had to be in work. The first thing that he told Howard was that he was going to be leaving that Friday. This cancelled out all the plans for the weekend and all the people who were coming. He had not told them. I had him call Jewel. He spoke to her on the phone. She was disappointed. He called his pen pal. She was not home. He left a message. She never called back. I didn't have Josie's number. He was angry with her because she never answered his last letter. (Josie did call the day he left. She had planned to come that Saturday and was surprised he was gone.) So I was the only teacher from the trip he got to see.

He was not in a good mood the day he arrived. Howard couldn't understand why he was so cranky. Finally he found out that he was suffering from a hangover and getting but an hour's sleep that night. He had gone out drinking with his American marine friend the night before in Virginia. When I saw him later that night he didn't seem like the friendly, cheerful person I knew in Japan. He told me that he was homesick and that he wished he was back in Japan. He said he was suffering from "culture shock." He complained that the only place he had seen any orientals was in California. He said he was almost attacked by a gang in Washington D.C., and that he barely escaped. He complained about how filthy New York was, and said he had seen someone on the street in Los Angeles who had been shot. To say the least, this did not seem like a promising opening to his visit.



That night we treated him to dinner at the Kobe Japanese Restaurant. This really seemed to change his mood. It was the first time he said since being in the United States that he had Japanese food. The atmosphere of the place also made him feel at home. We also talked to the Japanese chef who asked Yuji if he was from Japan. I also talked a great deal about the trip I made to Japan last summer and the different things we saw and people we met. This seemed to do the trick. Yuji now was much happier & thanked me repeatedly for taking him there. The day he left he also thanked me quite sincerely for everything.

The next day Yuji was completely sober and fully recovered from his hangover, and seemed more like the person I met last year. Howard took him to downtown Nashville and showed him around. He seemed to enjoy everything, particularly the Japanese Room at the Cumberland Museum, which I take my students to each year. He apologized to Howard for being so rude and cranky the day before. That evening we took him to a Chinese restaurant, which he liked very much. He then spent literally hours showing me these photographs he had of himself, friends, and family in Japan from the time he was a little boy, and telling me various stories. He also showed me all the photographs he had taken in America and the places and people he visited. He also asked to see the photo album I had of the pictures I took in Japan. This all seemed to make him happy. We went to the mall and bought him a Nashville Sounds tee-shirt to wear.

On his last morning here I took him to my school. Howard was going to pick him up at lunch time to take him to the airport. He had taken three days off from work for Yuji's visit since it was impossible for me to do so. I thought he might be bored, but the opposite was true. Yuji really seemed to like visiting the school. He taught my students how to count to ten in Japanese and showed each student how to write their names in Japanese. They appeared to really enjoy his visit. When we were doing math, he even went around and helped them. He said my teaching methods were totally different from what he was used to in Japan. He said in Japanese schools they didn't use as much two way communication, and the pupils were much more orderly and well behaved than he had been led to believe about American students. He took pictures galore, and seemed reluctant to leave. Howard said he acted similarly at the airport. Quite a difference from his first day.

I just heard from him recently. He's enrolled in his classes in Wisconsin and just celebrated his twenty first birthday. When he leaves the U.S. next summer he'll be going to Germany to visit a friend there before returning to Japan. He's now studying German.

I have never had a visitor from a foreign country before. His visit was an interesting experience.

 * JAPANESE GARDEN IN NASHVILLE *
 * by Robert Walsdorff *

When former MAFFAPA contributor, Mikki Wildstarr, visited my brother and I this summer, one of the places we took her to was Cheekwood. One of its features is a Japanese garden. The man who laid the foundations for it had visited many Japanese gardens in Japan and tried to make it as authentic as possible.

Having had seen a couple of Japanese gardens in Kyoto and Tokyo last summer, it is in many ways very similar, though on a smaller scale. It does capture much of the mood. There is a forest path of young bamboo trees. There are stone lanterns, a small Japanese wall with tiles on top, sand raked to look like ripples of water, stones and shrubbery and greenery arranged similarly to the real thing. There is also a viewing platform.

It is really quite beautiful. They also give classes each summer in Japanese arts to children. I arranged for some of those instructors to visit my class last year to show them slides of the garden, and give my students a lesson in sumi painting. They really enjoyed it.

If you ever come to Nashville, I highly recommend visiting Cheekwood. You probably would enjoy it as much as Mikki did.

 * JAPANESE SHOW BIZ SCANDAL *
 * by Robert Walsdorff *

Kondo Masahiko has been in the scandal sheets in Japan a great deal lately. A couple of years ago Matchy's mother died in an auto accident. His mother's ashes were stolen and his life was threatened unless he withdrew from the prestigious Taisho record awards (comparable to our grammys). He didn't withdraw, but was said to be extremely nervous. He won.

He has been romantically linked to Japan's top female singer, Nakamori Akina who replaced former female queen Seiko Matsuda. This summer Akina attempted suicide in Matchy's apartment when he attempted to leave her for the recently married Seiko, or so the scandal sheets say.

Recently Japanese newspapers carried the headline stories about a child rapist and murderer, supposedly influenced by American horror movies. This caused an uproar in Japan. Now the confessed rapist and murderer claims to have been the one who stole the ashes of Matchy's mother. He also claims to have threatened Matchy because he wanted him to withdraw so that Akina could win the Taisho Award, claiming to be in love with her.

Such scandals in America often help performers. How it will affect these Japanese performers may be different. Only time will tell.

T.V. REVIEW: "MUSASHIBO BENKEI" Series

Presented on the N.H.K. DRAMA

In Japanese Language with English Subtitles.

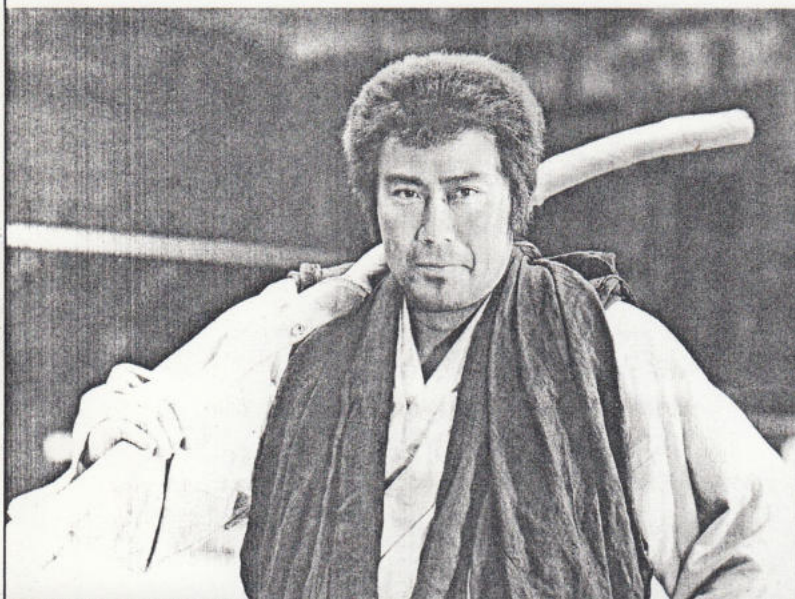
Leading Performers: Nakamura Kichiemon, Kawano Taro,
Okayasu Yumiko, Oginome Keiko, Kato Cha.

One of the best NHK Drama Series was "Musashibo Benkei" pertaining to the legendary strong priest who was the son of a Buddhist monk from a temple in Kii. He died with Yoshitsune in 1189, but Benkei's birthdate was unknown. First I will discuss the historical background pertaining to Musashibo Benkei, then I will write about the television drama "Musashibo Benkei" presented on the N.H.K. DRAMA.

Benkei encountered and opposed the Heike clan prior to his meeting Minamoto-no-Yoshitsune who was walking across the Gojo Bridge playing his flute. Benkei challenged Yoshitsune to a fight since Benkei had been collecting swords that he acquired by challenging samurai to fight with him in succession. However, it was Benkei who was defeated this time. Benkei was defeated by the young man who only used a flute in the fight, and as a result of the fight, Benkei became a loyal follower of Yoshitsune. "I rather be a follower than a leader", Benkei told Tamamushi, his future wife, who was upset by Benkei's decision to serve Yoshitsune since she served the Heishi family, the enemy of the Genji family. Yoshitsune (1159-1189) was the military commander of the Genji family. Not only was he a genius in martial arts but he was an exceptionally handsome man. Although Yoshitsune helped defeat the Heishi family, he died a violent death caused by his elder brother, Yoritomo, who was jealous of Yoshitsune's reputation. The tragic hero, Yoshitsune, has been very popular with the Japanese. The Heishi family perished in the battle of Dannoura. Yoritomo, Commander-in-Chief of the Genji, came to regard his brother, Yoshitsune, as his antagonist and dispatched an army to subjugate him. Following defeat, Yoshitsune disguised himself as a "yamabushi" (esoteric Buddhist priest) & wandered about the country together with his lover, Shizuhagozen, and a loyal follower, Benkei. Benkei, long since sent away by Yoshitsune was living happily with Tamamushi, his wife, until someone managed to get to Benkei and beg him to return to Yoshitsune's side and help him. Retainers were eliminated one by one prior to Benkei's return. Yoshitsune made a mistake by visiting a member of the Fujiwara family in northeastern Honshu where Yoshitsune was seeking help. Yoshitsune's lodging was raided by his brother's army who received secret information from the Fujiwara family. Musashibo Benkei died standing firmly in front of the gate to Yoshitsune's shelter while Yoshitsune was committing "seppuku" (honorable suicide).

The NHK DRAMA teleplay was really more of a "historical drama" rather than "jidai-geki" although classified as the latter. Nakamura Kichiemon gave a brilliant performance as the legendary Musashibo Benkei. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Nakamura Kichiemon is a magnificent actor. Kawano Taro was an excellent choice to portray Yoshitsune because he is exceptionally handsome as the character was supposed to be according to history and the actor was convincing in the role. "Musashibo Benkei" was an outstanding screenplay, far better than other top-notch NHK DRAMA series that have been presented. Benkei had two love interests in the play: Tamamushi and Hokuro. Tamamushi was an ultra-feminine personality, a refined character who did a lot of whining throughout the play. Her rival was Hokuro, a swordswoman who lacked the social graces because of her rustic background. Although Hokuro matched with Benkei, it was her rival, Tamamushi, whom Benkei had chosen for his wife. There were many characters in the teleplay but the ones I've mentioned were the most important in this outstanding series.

'MUSASHIBO BENKEI'



Nakamura Kichiemon
as Benkei

Starring
Nakamura
Kichiemon,
Kawano Taro,
Oginome Keiko,
Aso Yumi and
Mano Azusa.
The story of
Musashibo
Benkei, the
loyal and super
strong follower
of Minamoto
Yoshitsune.
Don't miss it!



(L to R) Aso Yumi, Kawano Taro,
Oginome Keiko, Nakamura
Kichiemon and Mano Azusa

"MUSASHIBO BENKEI" WAS ONE OF THE BEST N.H.K. DRAMAS.

Susanne Moyers Porter
1406 Canyon Tr SW
Albuquerque, NM 87121
(505) 831-0924

I hope you find these reprints as interesting as I. Most of us will never have an opportunity to see the films discussed in EWFFJ, so this is all most of us will ever know of them.

Chinese Urban Cinema: Hyper-realism Versus Absurdism

CHRIS BERRY

UNTIL recent years, the cinema of the People's Republic of China was marked by an amazing uniformity of style equal to that of the classic Hollywood cinema in history and ubiquity. With the emergence of two younger, post "cultural revolution" generations of filmmakers, all that has changed. Distinctive styles have become associated with individual directors, cameramen, and genres. In the case of urban subject matter, two directors have marked themselves out. One is Zhang Liang, from Pearl River Film Studio. His enormously successful films have tended to what, in the Chinese context, might be termed a sort of hyper-realism. The other is Huang Jianxin, from China's most innovative studio, Xi'an. Huang's expressionistic films have been spoken of as "absurdist" in China. Although somewhat less successful at the box office than Zhang Liang's films, their influence in the film industry itself has been enormous and many urban films now bear their mark.

The traditional cinematic style against which Zhang Liang, Huang Jianxin, and the majority of young and middle-aged Chinese directors are trying to distinguish their works is the Chinese variant of socialist realism. It is a didactic fusion of classic Hollywood filmmaking and Soviet Stalinist style. I have already analyzed some of the cinematic characteristics of this style (Berry 1985). Editing codes are similar to Hollywood's, but their relation to the representational level is different. Two shots are dominant, with harmony and consensus signified by maintaining groups of characters or couples within the same frame. Shot reverse-shot tends to signify the collapse of harmony.

This cinematic system meshes well with narrative structures in which harmony and disharmony are expressed as separation and reunion. This is the dominant narrative pattern in classic mainland Chinese cinema,

whether the order of the day has been class struggle or "unity and stability" as now.¹

On the representational level, the "realism" of the classic Chinese cinema aims for typicality rather than naturalism. As an interpretation of the didactic demands of the Yan'an Forum cultural policy that insists art is in the service of politics, characters tend to minimal internal contradiction.² It is clear whom the audience should learn from and who is the enemy. Other characteristics follow Hollywood. Interiors and many exteriors are studio sets. Lighting is full, with speaking characters centered in the frame and positioned so that their faces are clearly visible to the audience. Costumes and sets themselves are usually a cleaned-up, in-style version of what members of the audience might like to recognize as their own lives.

The realism of Zhang Liang's *Yamaha Fish Stall*, made for Pearl River Studio in 1984, and *Juvenile Delinquents*, made for Shenzhen Film Corporation in 1985, are strikingly different from traditional socialist realism.

As the first of the two films, *Yamaha Fish Stall* had a particularly strong impact. The plot traces the efforts of a young Cantonese man to establish a privately run fish stall with the help of two friends. The name derives from the Yamaha motorcycle he uses to transport live fish back from the docks. Just to get the business going, the three young friends have to pay off petty officials and people with connections. These bad experiences encourage them to move beyond fair competition whenever they run into difficulties. Eventually this gets them into trouble. For example, when they are unable to sell their stock one day, they decide to turn the dead fish into fish balls. However, to stretch them out further, they make the fish balls with enormous quantities of flour. In no time at all, they are surrounded by a mob of angry customers. However, through these experiences they come to understand that cooperation with other private businessmen and honesty help best to cushion against the insecurity of an independent life outside the state system.

The three main characters of *Yamaha Fish Stall* are very far indeed from traditional Chinese socialist realism. Private peddlers are hardly typical "cultural revolution" heroes, nor are they even the modern-day equivalent of the politically upright brigade leaders and barefoot doctors who populated these films. (This role has fallen to efficiency- and profit-minded state enterprise managers in the "reform" genre.) In fact, private businessmen have a rather unsavory reputation in China today, and the antics of the characters in the movie further confirm an ambiguity of characteriza-

tion that marks this realism out as something different. The naturalistic effect of these characters is enhanced further by the casting of people who were unknowns or even amateurs at the time in the main roles.

At least as important as the characterization and casting are the settings. Probably 70 or 80 percent of the film takes place in the open air: in the markets, on the streets, at the docks, and even on a floating restaurant. Many of the interiors are commercial rather than domestic. These include teahouses, coffee shops, dance halls, and even a barber shop. The masses of people milling around in the background of all these scenes and the dense traffic in the street scenes help to signify not only location shooting but also settings that are unorganized, unrehearsed, and thus somehow more "real" than the studio sets of socialist realism. Even the clutter and dilapidation of the domestic interiors add to this effect. Zhang Liang is careful to avoid "impossible" camera positions in these scenes, and so it becomes unclear whether these are carefully naturalized studio sets or locations.

Additional techniques add to and even draw attention to the "realism" of these settings. The techniques signify "realism" by virtue of their difference from traditional socialist realist techniques, as does the use of cluttered locations as opposed to organized studio sets itself. Artificial lighting, if used, is low-key and motivated. Main characters are often partly in shadow. For example, when the rival woman stallholder speaks the first dialogue in the film, she is centered and facing the camera, but she is in the shade of the stall itself while the backs of the people between her and the camera are brightly lit, at least apparently by sunlight.

The scenes in large public places also contain cutaway shots that are totally unmotivated by the plot. For example, in the teahouse, when the would-be young stallholders are treating a local big-wig to dim sum in an attempt to get a trading license, there are shots of old men eating their snacks and reading their newspapers, apparently unaware that they are being observed by the camera. When the hero makes his first fish-buying trip to the docks, again there are cutaways to trading and unloading scenes on the docks. Apart from building "atmosphere," these shots function to draw attention to the realism of the film. It is for these attention-seeking qualities that I would like to refer to Zhang Liang's comparatively naturalistic realism as a sort of hyper-realism.

Juvenile Delinquents continues many of the tendencies of *Yamaha Fish Stall*. As the title suggests, it examines the world of young criminals. A

middle-aged woman reporter decides to make an extended visit to a reform school to research an article she intends to write. The longer she stays at the school, the more involved she becomes with certain cases, working with wardens in their efforts to reform the young criminals. As time goes by, she neglects her own son and comes home only to find the police hauling him off.

I cannot claim that *Juvenile Delinquents* uses its settings to signify realism in the same way as *Yamaha Fish Stall* does. Most of the action takes place in a reformatory. This is an interior location not much different from those used in traditional films. It lacks the power to signify a different realism in the way the crowded streets of Guangzhou do. Furthermore, not many of us are familiar enough with such a place to judge the mimetic qualities of the institution and studio sets used in the film.

Characterization is the mainstay of realism in this film. Underage lawbreakers are even further from the traditional socialist realist hero than private peddlers. The journalist's character seems a cipher at first and then an embodiment of maternal virtues in her growing concern for the inmates. However, even she is made highly ambiguous by the final arrest of her son, which throws into question her responsibility as a parent. This is further underlined by the fact that the delinquency of various inmates has been traced back to poor upbringing in the course of the film.

The attention-grabbing, hyper-real aspect of *Juvenile Delinquents* lies not in the text itself, but in the casting. As advance publicity made sure every filmgoer in China knew, all the inmates in the movie were played by real juvenile delinquents. These lucky individuals were wheeled out for every premiere of the film and given early parole or reduced sentences in reward for good behavior during the shooting. When they were later successively reported to have been arrested for committing crimes, this must have only added further sensationalistic evidence of the new "realism" of this film. These weren't "typical" juvenile delinquents; they were real juvenile delinquents.

Zhang Liang's hyper-realism is one of a number of new realist directions in Chinese cinema that have defined themselves by their difference from traditional socialist realism. It is as part of this broad tendency that his films must be understood. To give a precise account of the different critical debates and films that have informed and composed this tendency would probably take a book-length study. However, I would like to point to one or two elements here.

First, why were new forms of realism necessary at all? The reasons for this lie in the fall of the "Gang of Four" and the end of the "cultural revolution" period in 1976. With this event, all the films associated with the period 1966 to 1976 immediately fell into disrepute. However, the Yanan policy on culture continued to be applauded. Other policies and slogans that had been espoused during the "cultural revolution" continued to be cited with approval until at least 1979. For example, a volume detailing the crimes of the "Gang of Four" in the film industry still speaks approvingly of "the direction of art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers" in 1978 (Zheng and Ding 1978). (This triumvirate has since become a joke in the recent film *Ormosia Inn*, where it is revealed that the old name of the inn was "Worker-Peasant-Soldier Inn," to the guffaws of all the Chinese audiences I have seen it with.) Other slogans and policies current during the "cultural revolution" still continue to this day. The date of Mao's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum" is commemorated every year, and a popular film award called The Hundred Flowers Award, after the cultural policy of the same name, is awarded almost every year. "Realism" is still upheld regularly in critical articles everywhere.

This situation has presented the Chinese film world with an interesting problem. On the one hand, they are to repudiate "cultural revolution" films totally. On the other hand, they must uphold the policies and slogans such as the Yan'an Forum, the Hundred Flowers policy, and "realism," in the name of which these very films and indeed all other films produced since 1949 were made. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the pronouncements about the "cultural revolution" period made immediately after 1976 detailed plenty of malpractices and crimes, but spent little time analyzing what was actually wrong with the films themselves. However, what little space was devoted to the films themselves attacked them for a lack of authenticity (Zheng and Ding 1978). A cultural policy particularly associated with the "Gang of Four" led this attack to be concentrated on characterization. This was the "Theory of the Three Prominences," which required that greatest prominence in a work of art be given to the purest, most typical, and most heroic characters. At the same time as this policy was being singled out for attack, famous films from the early 1960s which featured more ambiguous "middle characters," such as *Early Spring in February*, were being rereleased. Articles also appeared regularly in the professional press discussing the problem of remaining "gangness" in characterization and how to make characters more complex, credible, and "realistic."

However, a batch of urban films made by teachers at the Beijing Film Academy and released in 1980 and 1981 suggests that the return to middle characters alone did not prove enough to establish a realism profoundly different from that of the "cultural revolution." The revival of films from the early 1960s indicates that because these films were condemned in the "cultural revolution" it was thought that they had to be very different from those of the "cultural revolution." Yet I would suggest that different though they might be, the two sets of movies are variations on the same dominant socialist realist tradition. The basic characteristics described at the beginning of this article can be found in both groups. However, my interpretation here of the drive necessitating the emergence of further new realist directions after 1980 must remain unsupported, if for no other reason because political considerations preclude anyone in the People's Republic agreeing to it for attribution.

The urban films that appeared in 1980 and 1981 were *The Drive to Win* and *Neighbors*. The former was made by the woman film theorist and director Zhang Nuanxin. The latter was directed by the current head of the Beijing Film Academy Directing Department, Zheng Dongtian, and Xu Guanrong. *Neighbors* was followed up by a very similar film called *Sunset Street*, directed by Wang Haowei.

All three films make moves in the same naturalistic directions that Zhang Liang's films take up later. *The Drive to Win* follows the ups and downs of a female basketball player's career and personal life. Set in crowded apartment blocks and at sports events, it features understated lighting and occasional use of a hand-held camera. Unlike the carefully organized drama of traditional socialist realist films, *The Drive to Win* is designed to appear more spontaneous. Characters move in and out of frame while they talk, and their dialogue sometimes overlaps. Both *Neighbors* and *Sunset Street* are slice-of-life movies. One is set in a city apartment block. The other is set in a small alley. Both accommodations are due for demolition, and the inhabitants' everyday dramas are further complicated by the prospect of the move. They feature crowded locations and multiple plots with complex characters who are far from the typical heroes of the past.

These films were the last major burst of realist innovation before Zhang Liang's films first appeared. What remains to be explained is why both Zhang Liang's films and these earlier films are urban in setting. Why have cities been particularly associated with realist innovation over the last decade? I think the key to understanding this lies in realizing that these new

realist directions are distinguished by their difference from traditional socialist realism. Only shooting on city streets provides the crowds, the play of shadow and light, and the speeding traffic in the background that could never even be approximated in the studio settings of the past.

In fact, more and more rural films have also been shot on location over the past ten years. However, the countryside simply doesn't provide scenes that are so radically different from what can be simulated in a studio, and so these films cannot signify their difference so well as urban ones do. Peasants sitting around and talking in their houses can look much the same as actors sitting around in a studio set. The slower pace of life doesn't make overlapping dialogue and bustling movement so likely, either. Only in one area have rural films been marked out for realist innovations of their own. This is in the use of synch-sound as opposed to post-dubbing, a practice first introduced in a major way in the award-winning countryside film *In the Wild Mountains* in 1985. However, the countryside was a more suitable location for this innovation precisely because it lacked the complex and difficult hubbub of the city. Even though over 90 percent of *In the Wild Mountains* was filmed with synch-sound on location, because the background noise was limited and the dialogue measured, the results are difficult to distinguish from a more traditional, post-dubbed studio effort. Similarly, many rural films feature more complex, naturalistic characterization than the typical heroes of the past. The main character in Wu Tianming's film *Life*, made in 1984, is a good example. He pulls strings and dumps his girlfriend, but all for reasons anyone could sympathize with. However, without the other new realist elements made possible by the urban settings in Zhang Liang's films, *Life* and other rural films do not stand out as a new realism in the same way as Zhang Liang's urban hyper-realism.

Huang Jianxin's urban films make an even more radical break from traditional socialist realist filmmaking than Zhang Liang's, and they move in completely the opposite direction. Where *Yamcha Fish Stall* and *Juvenile Delinquents* move toward a more naturalistic realism, *Black Cannon Incident* and *Dislocation*, made in 1985 and 1986, respectively, move away from realism altogether. In China, they have been spoken of as "absurdist" because of their plots, but the overall style of the films could also be said to be "expressionistic."

Black Cannon Incident gets its name from a Chinese chess piece called a "black cannon." Engineer Zhao Shuxin loses his black cannon on a busi-

ness trip. When he cables back in an effort to retrieve it, the farcical or "absurd" plot line begins. A telegram operator suspects a secret code. Contacted by the police, the elderly woman Party vice-secretary at his company begins to suspect him of engaging in industrial espionage with a German engineer who had come to China to help install some imported equipment. When the German returns, Zhao is given various excuses and not allowed to work with him again. The German is furious because his new translator lacks technical vocabulary. Various misunderstandings ensue. By the time Zhao is cleared, the German has already left. Due to a translation error made during Zhao's absence, an industrial breakdown costing the company a large sum of money occurs.

The farcical or absurd character of this plot, where the logic of a small misunderstanding is allowed to snowball to a devastating conclusion, is clear enough. But what was even more remarkable than this already revealing comedy was the expressionism of the film. Noticeably, however, the expressionistic elements do not include characterization. Precisely because of this, *Black Cannon Incident* can be said to be almost a reversal of the Chinese socialist realist filmmaking tradition. The latter aimed at some level of mimesis in settings, costumes, and so forth, but veered furthest away from this in its use of "typical" characters which lacked the contradictions perceived to exist in real-life people, especially during the "cultural revolution" period. In *Black Cannon Incident*, on the other hand, the settings, costumes, and use of color are very evidently not mimetically motivated, but the characters are. They are all too full of contradiction. No one appears as a pure expression of a certain moral line, or as a perfect hero, or as a villain. Even lovable Zhao Shuxin, the engineer who loses the chess piece, is clearly a fool not to stand up for himself or even realize he is under investigation. As for the Party vice-secretary, instinctively xenophobic as she is, her behavior is clearly the product of her past training. It is made clear that she is acting out of a concern for what she believes Zhao's best interests to be when she keeps him away from the German; she doesn't want him to get into any more trouble than he is in already.

The expressionistic elements in *Black Cannon Incident* combine to give the film a decisively modern look. This look is modern in a way completely new to Chinese film. The urban setting does not simply help signify modernity. It is part and parcel of the qualities that compose the modernity signified in the film. *Black Cannon Incident* is set in an unspecified

city that does not correspond to any specific city outside the movie itself. For the first time ever in a Chinese film, we get a city with no views of old alleyways or old buildings. The only exception to this is a scene when Zhao Shuxin visits a Christian church. Since his parents were Christians, we can interpret this as a return to his past, a moment of review, reflection, and escape from the modern world. Significantly, this is also the only moment in the film in which any significant stretch of green appears: a park outside the church. Apart from this scene, the city appears as a new town composed of modern hotels, high-tech factories, model housing estates, a new airport, and so forth. This is a city of the present, a city without a history.

However, the modern urban world of *Black Cannon Incident* is not the paradise of modernity predicted in traditional socialist realist films from the boy meets tractor dramas of the 1950s to today's "getting rich is glorious" celebrations of rural prosperity. Certainly there is gleaming machinery everywhere. But these machines are usually massive, noisy pieces of equipment that dwarf human beings and drown out their conversations. For example, there is the earthmover that roars past the Party vice-secretary and the plant manager when they are discussing Zhao Shuxin's case and envelops them in a cloud of dust.

The use of colors, settings, and camera work add to the overwhelming aspect of modernity. Outside neutral earth tones and so forth, the predominant colors are red, white, and black. Gleaming red Japanese taxis transport people in white shirts and black business suits around town. On the whole, I do not think that specific, symbolic meaning is consistently attached to these colors. Red does sometimes figure with conflict and anger. The coffee bar where Zhao Shuxin and his German counterpart have a major fight is decorated totally in bright red plastic. Even the wall behind the stands at the football match which degenerates into a punch-up is being painted red when the scene opens. But for the most part, these colors simply signify an aggressive starkness that like the machines overwhelms the individuals set against them. This is most vividly illustrated in the repeated Party committee meeting scenes. Men and women dressed in black and white file in and sit around a long white table in a white room with white curtains. Dominating the entire scene is an enormous wall clock in a modern design. Placed above the head of the table, its hands and numerals are made of large chunks of black plastic. As decision after decision cannot be made, time ticks visibly by. The camera maintains a

relentlessly fixed confrontational position through much of these meetings, recording the scene from a point perpendicular to the clock and the head of the table. This confrontational positioning and lack of movement are often found throughout the film and are as expressive as the colors and the settings themselves. Part of this modernity, then, is an anomie similar to that expressed in so much Western modern art produced in the industrialized and urbanized societies of this century.

As the camera maintains a fixed position and the figures don't move much in the committee meeting scenes, it is not surprising that these stylized, almost-tableau shots take on the qualities of modern art. And indeed modern art, with its connotations of sophistication and advancement, is also one of the qualities of the modern sensibility produced in *Black Cannon Incident*. The film is punctuated by montages of very abstract images with no direct plot motivation, such as composites of an orange sun setting in a red sky over a black silhouette of an industrial plant. These provide a space calling on the viewer to reflect on the rest of the film. It seems to me their interpolative qualities are similar to those of much modern abstract art. This reflection required of the audience is very different from the didactic mode of traditional films. It is both a part of the total break with the past that *Black Cannon Incident* makes and a part of the integrated complex of urban life, modernity, anomie, expressionism, and abstraction that makes the break possible.

Dislocation continues where *Black Cannon Incident* leaves off, in terms of both plot and style. Zhao Shuxin has now become a bureau head in a large high-tech concern. However, he faces a problem that besets all Chinese people of position. There are so many meetings he must attend that he can't get on with his research. To solve the problem, he builds a robot indistinguishable from himself to attend the meetings in his place. As the robot develops into a sort of id-on-the-loose, the plot develops along farcical lines again, until Zhao Shuxin eventually has to destroy it.

Dislocation takes the modern look of *Black Cannon Incident* to new heights. If industrial is the adjective that sums up the first film, high-tech would be the word for *Dislocation*. Chrome, steel, and plastic in red, black, and white are the order of the day again. Zhao Shuxin rarely goes out of doors, and when he does it is usually in the black of night, where restricted vision gives the world a stripped-down, abstract quality. Again, abstraction and modernity are integrated with and expressed through the urban environment constructed by the film.

Dislocation is not the only film to show the influence of *Black Cannon Incident*. Zhang Liang's films are the latest in a series of realist innovations, and therefore it would be difficult to trace any similar moves directly to his films. But *Black Cannon Incident* was unique at the time of its release, and so the same is not true. Its connotations of sophistication have proved remarkably appealing. Quite a number of films bearing its stamp have appeared in the last year or two. Although they are very various, it is important to note that they all feature contemporary, modern, urban settings. This confirms my thinking that the urban is an integral and necessary part of the new style Huang Jianxin's films have carved out.

Sometimes, the influence of *Black Cannon Incident* can appear in rather superficial ways. For example, there is the Changchun Film Studio production, *Strange Circle*. A disappointingly regressive film, it starts with the interesting premise of five unmarried women who set up an alternative household together, cutting themselves off from the world of men. However, it rapidly proceeds to demonstrate that each of these women really needs a man. The women all wear black. One of them gets involved with an artist. They appear repeatedly in a shot that could have been lifted directly out of *Black Cannon Incident*. The camera is fixed perpendicular to a corrugated, bright red wall. A modern Japanese car is parked in front of the wall. Dressed all in black, the women appear, get into the car, and drive out of frame.

A more thoroughgoing instance is *Questions For the Living*. Huang Jianzhong's outrageous and still-to-be-released new film. The plot is certainly "absurd." A man is killed on a public bus. He comes back to life and, accompanied by his girlfriend, goes to visit all the people who were on the bus and asks them why they did nothing to help him. The hero is a nebbish little man not unlike Zhao Shuxin of *Black Cannon Incident*. The film is adapted from a modern stage play, and modernity in the Chinese arts in the broadest possible sense is referenced throughout the film. The hero paints modern art. Massive abstract paintings hang all over his walls. He and his girlfriend act in a modern drama troupe. The film cuts away to sections of modern drama and the primitive rituals that the Chinese modern movement, like its Western forerunner, draws upon. These punctuate the film like the montages in *Black Cannon Incident* and also provide the viewer with space to reflect on the film. The film is even the first in the People's Republic to feature what many Chinese feel is the most modern of the modern in modern art, nudity.

In conclusion, what I hope I have demonstrated in both the cases of Zhang Liang's and Huang Jianxin's films is that in the cinema of the People's Republic today, cities are not just something to be represented. Rather their settings, the style of life in them, and the activities associated with them from the economic to the cultural, have been necessary and integral to the development of new cinematic tendencies. The combinations of signification constituting different ideas of the urban are part of the means by which Zhang Liang's hyper-realism and Huang Jianxin's modern absurdism are distinguished from the socialist realist tradition.

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Notes and References

1. This is discussed in further detail in Berry (1988).
2. Probably the most useful translation of Mao Zedong's "Yan'an Talks" is McDougall (1980).

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Here we are at Hayward's Japanese Tea Garden, videotaping a fight for the WACKY CHAN video.



ying things like "No, cut! You're acting too much like Ultraman." As somebody only familiar with Asian films, it was hard to act like an American superhero. Speaking of which, I had to portray the new Batman twice recently. Once as part of a massive parade, and then again at some dumb kid's birthday party. The parade was enormous, with different businesses participating, supplying their choice of costumes, themes, floats, etc. I work for Spirit Party & Costume Co., whom I represented when I marched as Batman. The event occurred a month or so before the new BATMAN movie was released. So many in the crowd were unfamiliar with the Dark Knight character. Many bystanders kept yelling, "Where's Robin?" My response: "Killed by Kato!" As for my other reluctant portrayal of this over-rated character, it was at a kid's party. The money was great, but I feel I performed poorly, and consider it

a degrading experience. I had to interact with The Joker (played by my long time friend Dennis Lancaster who masterminded the appearance). In scarcely rehearsed skills and magic tricks, I've always hated costumed entertaining at parties, except for the one time I got to play a ninja (doing my usual flips and kicks while talking with a Japanese accent), but that's another story. The pay is always decent at these kinds of odd jobs though I don't know how to act like Michael Keaton's Batman. I haven't seen the movie, and probably never will. I grew up on the older one, so to me, Adam West IS Batman! But anyway, before I go into the main topic of this article, I would just like to say that everyone turned out to be correct in guessing which of last issue's photos was of me as the Japanese superhero Kamen Rider V3, and not actually from the KAMEN RIDER V3 TV series. Now I present an enlarged version of the photo and another view of me and the villain taken from another angle.

Howdy! there, fellow Maffapans. I guess now I'm beyond the stage of being embarrassed about writing about my own projects like my playing a zombie in the new movie THE DEAD PIT, my satirical video WACKY-CHAN and all those superhero stage plays. I chose these topics as a way of letting everyone get to know who I am, and where I'm coming from. Last issue I mentioned my next appearance in a professional movie called MEET THE SUPERHEROES. Well, they changed the title of this poetic video to SECRET OF THE SUPERHEROES and it should be out on video this January, about the same time that THE DEAD PIT should get video distribution. Playing a heroic zombie called Deadman in SECRET OF THE SUPERHEROES was a wonderful experience. The idiotic director objected to my karate inspired stances and moves, and kept se-



Attired as Toei's Kamen Rider V3, I give Ed Martinez a couple kicks while practicing for an action play in 1987.

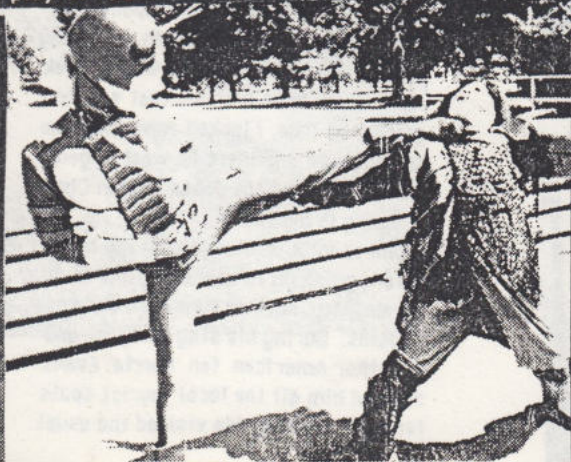
***** MAIN TOPIC *****

SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN ("Uchu Keiji Sharivan") COMES TO AMERICA!

It's great to have been a fan of live action superheroes from Japan for so long. Of course now the fandom has grown in America and there are more of us watching these shows now than there were ten years ago. When I was in Japan during 1985, American fans of Toei's heroes were still pretty uncommon. So the Japanese actors who played these superheroes were surprised and flattered to learn they have fans (though few) in the U.S.A., and this made meeting some of them easier for me.

Of course, I must thank my friend Takahiko Hamaya, an illustrator for TV Kun magazine. If it weren't for his influence, meeting members of Sonny Chiba's Japan Action Club may have been more difficult. I saw in person superstars like Etsuko Shiami, Hiroyuki Sanada, and even Sonny Chiba himself. But better yet, actually met and spoke to my alltime favorites, Junichi (Dyna Black) Horuta, and Kenji (Gavan) Ohba.

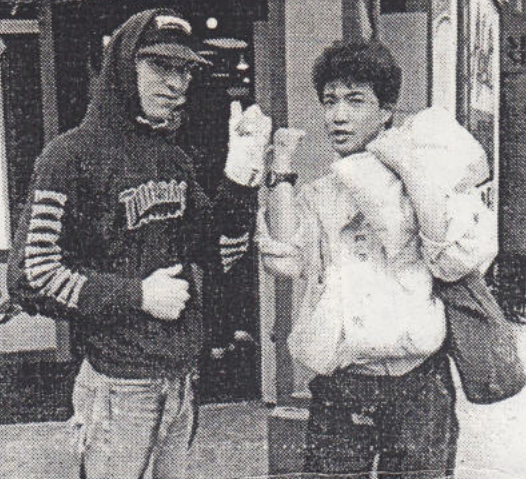
When my friend Barrie Evans went to Japan in 1987, he too was fortunate enough to meet a celebrity, the one and only Hiroshi Watarai. Hiroshi's best-



On the set of SECRET OF THE SUPERHEROES, I did paste-ups for ORIENTAL CINEMA in-between takes, still in my Deadman suit.

• ADULT •
MAGAZINES
LOVE TOYS
ACTION
GUIDES

#Hours



Barrie Evans with Mr. Watari outside one of the many stores in San Francisco we checked out.

work was when he played Uchu Keiji Sheriban (English translation: 'Space Sheriff Sharivan'). In the show of the same name. Other programs to his credit include METALDAR (cameo), JUSTON (co-starring as Boomerang), and the title hero in SPIELVAN (spelled Spielvan, pronounced Speruban), which he had just finished when Barrie met him. Hiroshi was surprised not only that he had an American fan, but also that the fan was an adult. With SPIELVAN out of the way, Hiroshi had a lot of spare time on his hands and Barrie hung out with him often.

Upon return to California, Barrie informed me of his poling around with Sharivan in Tokyo. Needless to say, I was impressed. But I was even more impressed when we heard our longtime hero was planning a series of vacations in America. This sounded too good to be true. I have grown up watching Japanese superheroes all my life. I've liked them so much that I've made amateur movies where me and my

friends get to play superheroes very much inspired by the Japanese classics. Some of these non-professional videos were shown locally on Community Access cable. I played superhero characters in ULTRA CYBORG, SECRET

Goofing off at Fisherman's Wharf.



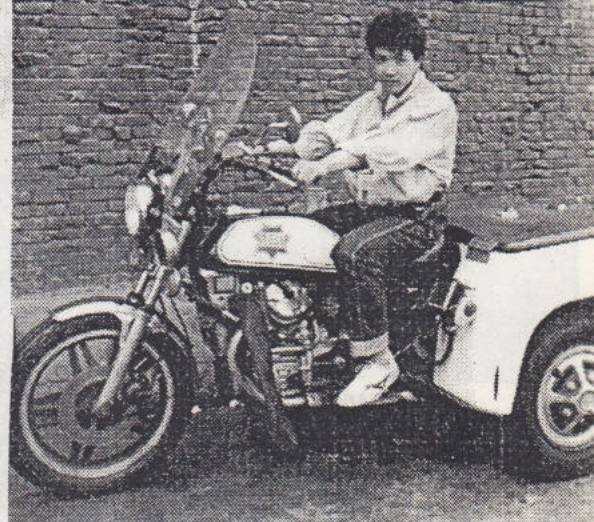
OF THE SUPERHEROES, KAMEN RIDERS VS. GENERAL DARK, and ANDROIDMAN. So as an amateur superhero, I was more than thrilled to learn that my next house guest would be a professional superhero from Japan!

April, 1987. I woke up early one morning at about 9:17 A.M. on my top bunk in my bedroom. I couldn't tell if what had been happening these last few days was a dream or what. Was it all real? Was the second Space Sheriff really sleeping beneath me in my lower bed? Thinking the whole week must have been a dream that was too good to be true, I looked down onto the bottom bunk and there he was! A genuine member of the Japan Action Club sleeping in my room!

He spent a whole week at my house before going on to see other parts of the country, such as New York and Los Angeles. During his stay here, me and his other American fan Barrie Evans showed him all the local tourist spots for sight-seeing. We visited the usual

tourist attractions in San Francisco like the Golden Gate Bridge and Fisherman's Wharf. It was hilarious. Every now and then, we'd do quotes from SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN like "Sekishai" and "Mada mehi!" What really amused bystanders is when we'd begin fake-fighting each other, re-enacting scenes from Hiroshi's TV shows, performing martial arts & acrobatics. Hiroshi turned out to be a fun-loving, wild & crazy guy. He even had the guts to

Like I said, a wild and crazy guy! What Hiroshi is doing as more dangerous than many of his stunts from his Japanese TV shows!

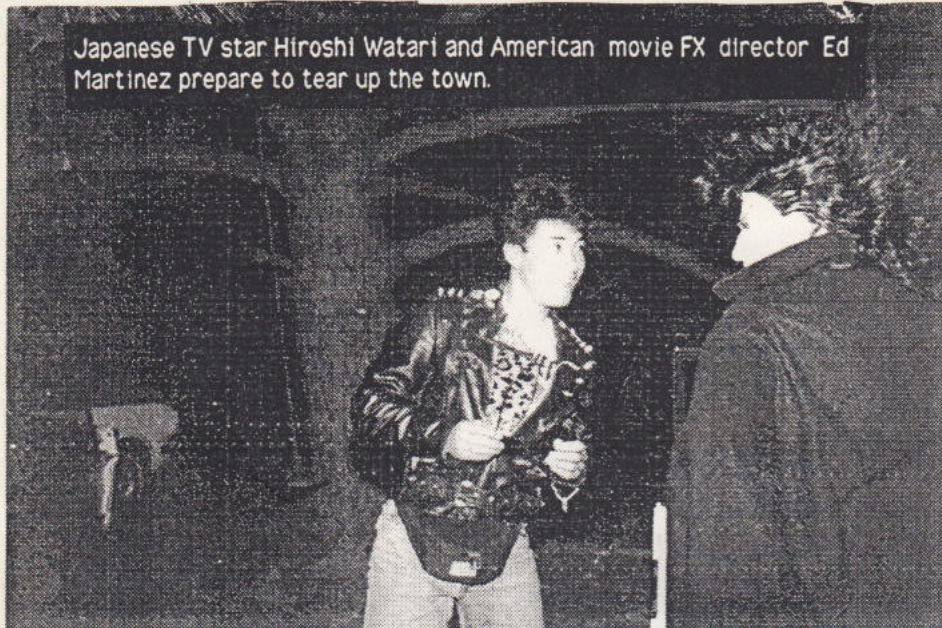


get onto a policeman's parked motorcycle when the cop had gone into a nearby store! After the sun went down, we decided to give the foreign superhero a taste of the bay area's hip & happenin' chic nightlife. So we got into our punkiest, rockin'-est attire and prepared to hit the most radical, underground dance clubs we could find. Not wanting to be left out, Hiroshi asked if he could borrow some of my new wave clothes, and asked if I would spike his hair. After these adjustments in fashion, we were off to a



Ed Martinez (top), Damon Foster, Yukari Suzuki and Hiroshi Watari.

Japanese TV star Hiroshi Watari and American movie FX director Ed Martinez prepare to tear up the town.



local club that catered mostly to death rock, punk, industrial, ska, metal, rockabilly and glam. Being in top physical condition, Hiroshi outdanced all of us and seemed to enjoy occasional stomping. As he danced to the likes of Killing Joke and the Ramones, he incorporated kicks and karate moves into his dance movements. Back then, I was heavily into the nightlife, and enjoyed doing backflips off of stages and platforms while dancing in clubs. But this was the first time I ever had a friend in a club who also knew how to thrill other club goers by doing such dangerous gymnastics on the crowded dancefloor. Both me and Hiroshi got blind-wasted-drunk that night after gulping down kamikazis and beers. Interesting to note that one foolish guy on the dance floor was in the mood for

starting trouble (an occasional occurrence at any bar) and apparently wanted to start a fight. The idiot intentionally bumped into me, and later clumsily bumped into Hiroshi. Fortunately for him, he ceased his harassment. Can you imagine Shorivan wasting some drunken fool in a nightclub? It would have been glorious! As the hours went by, and each of us had failed at picking up on any nearby females, we all sat around, waiting for one of us to get sober enough to drive. We all directed our attention to the ceiling. Hanging decorations included four inflatable Godzillas in each corner. Hiroshi: "Aaaaaa! Asoka wa Gojira desu! Tasu kete!" That means roughly: "Aaaaa! It's Godzilla! Help me!" Then Hiroshi mimicked Ultraseven and pretended to throw the character's Eyeslugger



With Cal-State University of Hayward in the background, Hiroshi practices fighting techniques for his upcoming (then it was) appearance in METALDAR.

boomerang (the ridge on Ultraseven's head) at the inflatable monsters above us. The following morning, it became apparent that even cybernetic superheroes can get hang overs. We decided to spend the day relaxing at home, just watching TV. He looked through my collection of videotapes and was both flattered and bashful to see that I had so many of his TV shows. But his main interest was 1966's ULTRAMAN program, which he hadn't seen since he was a youngster. He stuck the tapes into my VCR and laughed up a storm as he saw the Science Patrol and everyone dubbed in English. He wanted to get a copy of the whole series, so we hooked up duping cables and an additional VCR. And there he sat, quite amused as he watched nearly all 39 episodes in order, back to back! Another day, it turns out it was my birthday. We celebrated it with the obligatory cake & candles. Always a mischievous prankster, I removed the vanilla frosting from Hiroshi's slice of cake while he wasn't looking. In its place I put mayonaisse, thinking he'd take just one bite and spit it out. Yet he assumed it was some exotic American flavor that was new to him. Everybody at the table laughed to the point of stomach cramps, watery eyes and near suffocation when we explained to Hiroshi that he'd been eating mayonaisse on cake. What killed us was his facial expression upon realizing why the cake tasted so strange. Hiroshi vowed revenge upon me, saying he can't wait to treat me to dinner the next time I come to Japan! But Hiroshi didn't spend his entire American vacation at my house. Barrie took Hiroshi and another vacationing Japanese Yukari Suzuki down to Los Angeles where they hung around with former boy area artist & now Hollywood pro Steve Wang (who's supplied FX for ALIENS, FROG TOWN, PREDATOR, and THE JITTERS, not to mention my old superhero video ULTRA CYBORG). Later, despite poor English, Hiroshi even set out on his own and toured the East Coast. Little is known about his misadventures in New York, except that a dishonest taxi driver tried to rip him off. It was pretty obvious to everyone that Hiroshi knew very little English, so the driver figured Hiroshi was easy prey. The charge on the meter said \$10.00, yet the crooked driver kept trying to say it was \$100.00! But Hiroshi knew better, you can't fool a Space Sheriff! Shoriban. I mean Hiroshi angrily yelled

out "why wan handred dola?" "WHY wan handred dola?" Eventually the potential thief behind the wheel got pannicky at seeing the violently angry Japanese actor yell and clench his fists, so that scumbag in the cab gave

in, backed down and excepted the \$10.00, and wasn't given a tip. Hiroshi came back to my house a couple of days before returning to Japan. Hiroshi returned to California two more times, so maybe I'll describe them in a future

issue. On one visit, he brought along another J.A.C. member called Yuki Keiji, who was a regular on BIOMAN and has appeared in DYNAMAN and KUNG FU CHAN.

ORIENTAL CINEMA

is a deverse fanzine; always including a variety of topics: fantasy, horror, martial arts, giant monsters, cartoons, superheroes, and comedy in each issue, at \$1.50 per copy, but not for long!

O.C. no. 5 (1983)

O.C. no. 6 (1987) — Chinese Vampire issue

WARNING: This issue contains vulgar art which may offend!

O.C. no. 7 (1988) — Monkey King issue

O.C. no. 8 (1989) — Japanese Monsters' issue

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地獄記

notes from the netherworld

science fiction, fantasy and horror
in the martial arts film

horacio higuchi
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8

This is an interim issue, hastily put together so I wouldn't fall from grace with Your Editor for my not sending contributions recently. I'm sorry I don't have much to say within the scope of this column — martial arts films with fantasy trappings. I did start a detailed article on A CHINESE GHOST STORY — see teaser below — a truly magnificent genre movie that, frankly, deserves a feature-length piece, but since it was getting longer than usual (!!), I decided to save it for the next issue because of the deadline. (There are rumors the movie could be rereleased in a dubbed version; I hope you guys will be able to see it some time and compare notes with me later.) In the meantime, here's some assorted B.S. (Brainless Self-indulgence) for your quick disposal.

FIELD NOTES FROM A TRIP ABROAD

Last time my name was mentioned in MAFFAPA Laurine said I was in Europe on vacation. Well, not exactly on vacation, but I had a great time. One of the advantages of being a research biologist is that we often have a perfectly acceptable excuse to travel abroad — to attend a scientific meeting, to present a paper or to visit a scholarly institution — without anyone accusing us of being idle bon-vivants of the lumpen-bourgeoisie. I spent a week to ten days each in Vienna, Paris and London to gather materials for my thesis at their respective zoology museums, and had brief stays at Amsterdam and Brussels for additional research. My budget was very low and it took me a day or so to get from one place to another by train and bus: it all added up to about a month and a half in Europe. Contrary to all rumors and expectations, I worked hard and straight about 60-70% of the time (honestly); the rest I spent providing myself nourishment for flesh and soul.

Since this apa deals with things Oriental, I'll just skim through what I saw there of related interest. Laurine and Howard went East and could write long, detailed accounts of their exploits; my experience has been much less — I hate the word — exotic. (Everything is relative. I remember a great panel in the quintessentially French comic book *Astérix the Gaul*, where a sign on a travel agency in a Persian market said *Get to Know All the Mysteries of the Fabulous Occident*.) Anyway, here are some random notes on Chinese and Japanese-related items I noticed in the Old World in a very quick, biased and superficial glance in my spare time.

I had the chance to walk through a few European Oriental districts, where Chinese immigrants and their descendants share space with Iranians, Indians, Pakistanese, Turks and Algerians. Of course, those neighborhoods don't appear in any official tourist guide, as they're usually regarded as seedy areas unworthy of mention and unappealing, if not even dangerous, to visiting outsiders. But it's the visitor's loss not to search for them and enjoy the semi-assimilated culture of all those immigrant communities. (It is common knowledge that ethnic food is the only palatable variety of English cuisine. That's not exactly true, but it comes close.)

Where do you find Chinese communities in Europe? As it often happens in this country, there too they are usually located in low-income, low-rent neighborhoods of the major cities. Chinatowns do exist, although not nearly as big or lively as those in North America: immigration has been more intense to this continent. In London, the mostly Cantonese-speaking descendants of colonial times are concentrated in the Soho, now a dilapidated district where even the sleazy glitter of the strip-joints that once pervaded the West End (until the Swingin' London era, in the merry ol' late sixties) is mostly gone. In Amsterdam, the Chinese have small businesses (grocery and butcher shops, export & import outfits) along the southern tip of the Oude Zijds Achterburgwal, which — you guessed it — limits the notorious red-light district around the Zeedijk. The capital of Belgium is a French-speaking enclave in the middle of a region where Flemish (a variation of Dutch, intelligible if you speak German and English) is the predominant language; the farther you go out from downtown Brussels, less and less French is heard in the streets. I found most Chinese in Brussels living in the outskirts and speaking Flemish rather than French. The most better-off Chinatown in the Continent is probably in Paris. A very active nucleus of Oriental commerce can be found in the 13ème Arrondissement, south of the Gare d'Austerlitz, not a bad neighborhood in fact — low-rent, but dignified and well cared, it seemed to me. There are more Chinese cultural and consumer goods traded there than in London: many Oriental bookstores, a couple of movie theaters, shops of all kinds, lawyer and dentist offices, Mandarin-speaking activities of all kinds. In another part of Paris, across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower, there is the Musée Guimet, specialized in Asian fine arts. Their collection was initiated by Émile Guimet, a 19th century entrepreneur interested in Oriental religion and culture: now it includes pieces from all over Asia, from civilizations as different from each other as Korean and Afghan. It also has a good library accessible for researchers. I was told a permanent exhibit of Japanese and Chinese religious artifacts would open this fall at the museum with a proper benediction given by a Buddhist monk.

I don't know how much racial prejudice is there against (or among) the European Chinese. On Mayday I inadvertently saw in Paris a right-wing, ultrapatriotic demonstration celebrating Joan of Arc and all things French. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the arch-bigot leader of the National Front, went on in his usual verborrhea against immigrants in general, calling for sanctions against Algerians, Turks and Jews as people who steal jobs and social benefits from good Frenchmen. (Substitute Mexicans and other Latinos and we'd have a tune so familiar in this hemisphere. But assholiness is everywhere.) Chinese immigrants were not mentioned; they keep a low profile, for better or worse.

There are well-established nuclei of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii, parts of Continental U.S., Brazil, Peru and Mexico, as well as in a number of Southeast Asian countries, but not in Europe to my knowledge. But Japanese tourists are invading the Old World in unprecedented numbers. Yes, they do walk around in tightly-packed groups, all with hi-tech photo paraphernalia hanging from their necks and getting by with a smattering of English. I met some notable exceptions, though — a mother-and-son duo going to Paris (where he studied art) on the Orient Express and a gutsy lady in her forties travelling solo throughout the Continent without speaking a word of any European language (!). More stereotypical, however, were those two gentlemen from Tokyo, in their obligatory navy blue suits and maroon ties, desperately banging at the closed door of a porno sauna bar just below my hotel in Vienna, about one in the morning. (Before you jump to wrong conclusions: in that capital of high culture, some businesses we deem disreputable are considered absolutely normal, and are located all over town in the same buildings as more "respectable" ventures. My hotel was perfectly suitable for families, and the other floors of the *Gebäude* comprised an insurance company office, a dental practice and some private residences, besides the porno joint.) I was just getting back to sleep; they saw I had the key to the building and asked me about the bar. I told them I was only a guest at the hotel, and since the lights were out the bar was probably closed. *Yowatta na* — tough luck, they sighed, evidently disappointed. But, still determined to have a wild evening, they rather bluntly invited me to go along pornobar-hopping with them as their interpreter. I excused myself — after all, the last thing I'd like to do is to play pimp for middle-aged Japanese *sararimen*.

Funny things happen when you look Oriental. I was admiring the exquisite garden of the Belvedere Palace in Vienna and I didn't notice two Italian tourists behind me. One of them signaled me not to block their sight; I was taken aback and then the other woman said to me, in Italian: "Please, could you step aside? We want to take a picture." As I yielded, she clicked her shutter and knowingly told her companion: "You see? If you ask gently (*con dolcezza*), even the Chinese can understand you!"

A GREAT CHINESE FANTASY FILM... IN PARIS

High art is everywhere in Europe, but some art forms are cherished preferentially in given cities. Vienna is all classical music and opera, while the stage is deservedly the pride of London. But Paris is the place to be for movies. (Among other savory attractions after dark, of course.) There are about 300 different movies playing at any time at the 278 theaters in town, no less than eight bookstores specialized in film literature, and a dozen small *magasins* selling posters, stills and movie memorabilia. Movie tickets there are accessible to all: students and unemployed people (*chômeurs*) enjoy price breaks as moviegoing is considered a cultural activity and therefore essential to life, thus being partially subsidized by the government. (Now that's a civilized society.) Interestingly, the homevideo craze there never caught on like in the U.S. because most Parisians would rather see a movie in a theater than on a TV screen at home. And people there are extremely cultivated, and conversant on films at a highly sophisticated level. At one of those nice al fresco boulevard cafés, I had a stimulating chat with a charming stranger who could pinpoint the stylistic differences between John Ford and Howard Hawks westerns as surely as one can tell, say, a Monet from a Seurat. (No, she was no movie critic or expert, just "someone who likes movies", in her own words.) Film programmers are also impressively knowledgeable: many second- or third-run theaters organize multiple features, hommages and marathons with a common theme, director or genre. The Brady, a traditional exploitation film hellhole on the Boulevard de Strasbourg, was offering a retrospective of the works of pornographers Max Pécas and Jean Rollin, complete with reviews and press clippings adorning the façade, with the same seriousness you'd expect from a Godard or Tarkovsky festival. Even grindhouses have class in Paris.

One afternoon, after work, I called on my friend Alain Schlockoff, organizer of the yearly Paris Fantasy Film Festival and also editor of *L'Écran Fantastique*, the leading European fantasy/horror/sf film magazine. (With a name like that he had to get into a B-movie related career...) He said he was excited about the recent output of Hong Kong fantasy movies and asked me for a suggestion for the forthcoming Festival. I didn't think twice to recommend I LOVE MARIA, now being exported under the catchier title ROBOFORCE. He hadn't seen it yet, but assured me he was going to take my advice and put the responsibility of the choice on my shoulders (!). If the movie is poorly received my reputation would be imperiled; if it's a hit, he said he might consider buying its distribution rights. (Alain also has a genre-oriented film and video distribution outfit.) In exchange he gave me tickets for a showing of a flick his company owns, to be held at a small theater in the Quartier Latin: A CHINESE GHOST STORY. He told me it was a big sleeper in last year's edition of the Festival, and I was aware of the good notices it has been receiving from critics all over. It never played in Boston and there came the chance to catch it in Paris. For all the encouraging reviews, little did I suspect I was about to see an absolute masterpiece — a true classic which will certainly join the pantheon of the Greatest Fantasy Films Ever Made. (I'm saving all my adjectives for the next issue.)

To make it short: the film was enthusiastically applauded, the cheering continued long after the lights came back. Everybody in the theater started to talk about it with everybody else. Parisians simply love to talk movies, and when great filmmaking graces the screen like that, soon the ice is broken and you end up invited for a glass of wine with interesting new acquaintances.



ゴジラ バイオ怪獣と対決

東宝の正月映画

東宝のゴジラ映画が、来年の正月映画として五年ぶりに復活する。ゴジラに對抗するのは、バイオテクノロジーが生んだ最大の超怪獣ビオランテ。この「ゴジラVSビオランテ」の脚本・監督は、「ヒポクラテスたち」「恋する女たち」の大森一樹、特技監督は、ゴジラ映画で世界的に有名な田谷英二、西下の川北紘一というフレッシュコンビだ。

細胞操作で生まれた「ビオランテ」

大森一樹、特撮の川北紘一がコンビ



よりハチュウ類に近くなったゴジラと川北紘一特技監督

原案は横浜の歯科医

公算作の中から選んだのは、横浜市の歯科医小林晋一郎さんの「ゴジラVSビオランテ」これ映画と言えるエンタ

のゴジラを見たのが、幼稚園のとき。それから五本は、封切りと同時に見た記憶がある」とは言え、熱狂的なファンという訳ではなかった。そこで、三原山から出現したゴジラは、芦ノ湖で初めてビオランテと出会い、その後大阪を襲って、若狭の原発地帯で再びビオランテと決する。その背後に、ゴジラ細胞の争奪をめぐるバイオテクノロジーの国際戦争がからむという筋立てだ。

出演者は、三田村邦彦、田中好子、高島政伸ら。出演者は、三田村邦彦、田中好子、高島政伸ら。

東宝の「ゴジラ」シリーズ。「ちやうど遺伝子工」の生みの親、田中友幸、学部の映画を考えていたのロアユーサーが、公算したで、バイオテクノロジーを原案の優秀作を持って大森一樹監督を訪ねたのは、三年半前。「脚本と監督を任せろから、中から一本選んで書いてくれ特撮だけでなく、中身の濃いドラマを」という注文だった。



大森一樹監督

「昭和二十九年の第一作」の生みの親、田中友幸、学部の映画を考えていたのロアユーサーが、公算したで、バイオテクノロジーを原案の優秀作を持って大森一樹監督を訪ねたのは、三年半前。「脚本と監督を任せろから、中から一本選んで書いてくれ特撮だけでなく、中身の濃いドラマを」という注文だった。

From the Yomiuri Shinbun 31 Aug. 1989, p.8

Oval inset: director Kazuki Ōmori

Larger photo: director of special effects Kōichi Kawakita, explaining Mr. G (quoted as "looking more reptilian") his motivation.

(Clipping provided by Hideaki Itō)

GODZILLA STRIKES AGAIN

Back to the U.S.... Courtesy of Hideaki Itō, a correspondent I hadn't met in person until Laurine introduced him to me during their recent visit to Boston, here are some behind-the-scene shots of the new, just-completed Godzilla movie. This time the big guy fights a genetically engineered freak called "Biorante", spelled "Biollante" in the Western press material. (Somehow it doesn't sound like a Japanese movie monster.) Hideaki also gave me a clipping from the Yomiuri Shinbun, shown on the previous page and roughly translated below:

GODZILLA'S SHOWDOWN WITH A BIO-MONSTER

Toho's New Year Movie

After an absence of five years, Toho's Godzilla returns in a movie to be released next January. This time his nemesis is Biollante, a supermonster created through biotechnology. In GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, writer-director Kazuki Ōmori ("The M.D.s", "Women in Love") and special effects technician Kōichi Kawakita — the latter a disciple of Eiji Tsuburaya, who won international recognition for his work in the Godzilla films — join forces in a fresh new production team.

'BIOLLANTE': BORN THROUGH GENETIC ENGINEERING

Kazuki Ōmori and SPFX Man Kōichi Kawakita Team Up

It happened three and a half years ago. Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, mastermind of Toho's Godzilla series, came to director Ōmori with a number of top film projects suggested by the public ⁽¹⁾ and a proposal. "I'll trust you the final screenplay and the directorship of one of these", he said, "so pick up and develop one with good dramatic substance, not just special effects."

"I was in kindergarten when I saw the first Godzilla movie, in 1954", remembers Ōmori. "I recall having seen the following five sequels in their first run". And, though not exactly a hardcore fan of the series, he adds: "I saw the series up to 1975 once again, on video."

The title he picked up among the freelance projects was 'Godzilla vs. Biollante', authored by Fuichirō Kobayashi, a dentist from Yokohama. "I was just thinking of genetic engineering as material for a movie, and this story involving biotechnology had an immediate appeal to me", he says. "I wondered how could I convey horror in a film about things invisible to the naked eye such as germs and bacteria. But the notion that the giant monster Biollante came out from splicing the genes of a rose with those of Godzilla gave me the creeps".

After emerging from Mt. Mihara, Godzilla first meets Biollante at Lake Yoshino. Then he advances on Ōsaka and confronts Biollante again at the Wakasa nuclear power plant. The plot thickens as biotechnological industries interested in obtaining Godzilla's genes become entangled with international military interests.

"I've always wanted to make a large-scale entertainment like a Godzilla movie", says director Ōmori, who intersperses the giant monster clash scenes with car action, combat and romantic love sequences. Godzilla's ever-changing features ⁽²⁾ are now better defined and his lower body has gained more volume. "We made him more reptilian", says Ōmori.

It has been 35 years since the first Godzilla wreaked revenge upon humankind as the illegitimate child of thermonuclear experimentation. "In today's era of radiation and germs, the horror of massive destruction doesn't scare us any more. But, in dealing with the natural world, what science doesn't yet know brings us a feeling of insecurity and Godzilla can still be seen to symbolize this anxiety. I'd like the dilemma of contemporary man — the necessity of fighting that sense of helplessness by working up the unknown itself into a countering weapon — to be the message of this movie."

The cast includes Kunihiko Mitamura, Yoshiko Tanaka, Tadanobu Takashima and others.

Translation notes

⁽¹⁾ After the release of GODZILLA 1985 (which happened, incidentally, in December 1984), producer Tanaka invited fans nationwide to submit ideas for a sequel.

⁽²⁾ Godzillologists are well aware of the fact that the rubber suits worn by the actors who play the Big G change a bit from movie to movie. For instance, in the first film the critter had small, protruding ears, a pair of outward-projecting fangs and a fourth digit on each hind foot — features that disappeared along the series as the character became less frightening and more cuddly. In the hi-tech GODZILLA 1985 the designers went back to the original concept, but it appears that they're tampering with it again.

Production snapshots of GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE

- (a) Crew preparing Godzilla suit in Toho spfx tank.
- (b) Close shot of Godzilla's headpiece (notice wires on back for lighting up dorsal crest).
- (c) RC model chopper swooping down on Godzilla.
- (d) Crew puts fire on model ship (notice "sky" background and border of filming tank)



(All photos by Hideaki Itō)

RED DAWN + BLUE THUNDER = PURPLE RAIN (er, sort of)

Incredible but true: I spent five months — the entire summer season and then some — without once going to the movies! (Yup, I'm probably the only person in this country who didn't bother going to see the self-proclaimed Movie Event Of The Year — no, not without veepeeewee Dan Quayle as Robin.) Thing is, there are limits even for a certified cinemaniac like me. With all those sequels, remakes, retreadings and rehashes, Hollywood continues to pervert the first law of thermodynamics: nothing is created, nothing is transformed, everything is lost. Grade-C movie concepts are now given "A" treatment — budgets larger than the GNP of many Third World nations, big-name stars oh-so willing to do the plug-in marathon in the TV talk-show circuit, saturation booking, megahype and enough fluff to stuff all the Garfield and ALF plush dolls in the universe. (C-movies are fine, but I like my schlock cheap.) But enough's enough. I wish they had served up that neocolonialist plunderer posing as an archeologist to New Guinean cannibals. Or beamed down that senile spacecrew to the business end of one of THE FLY's telepods. And pinned down that ridiculously overpriced Übermensch in the ill-fitting cowl back to the funny pages where he really belongs.

It took a sudden visit from my brother and his wife, way down from Brazil, to take me momentarily out of my cinematic slump. They wanted to see Ridley Scott's BLACK RAIN. My brother doesn't care much for Japanese movies or Oriental matters in general, but he likes wham-bam cop actioners. (He's the Americanophile in the family.) I'd rather have waited for the similarly-titled film by Shōhei Imamura (now that's an outstanding director) and I find car chases, mismatched-buddy cops and serial killers as boring as a golf tournament on TV. But I went along for the pleasure of their company.

Well, I guess BLACK RAIN belongs in this column because it is, despite itself, a fantasy — a wishful-thinking American fantasy of control over the unfathomable. There is an appearance of reality, yes, with a cityscape, people and props that vaguely resemble some urban environments of the kind we know. The action is supposed to take place in Ōsaka, Japan, but since it comes with all the gonzo illogic and the plot shortcuts of a wild dream, the whole thing could only be a spectacular reverie in some parallel dimension. (Somehow I don't think that's exactly what the producers intended...)

In this glitzy, MTV-esque, alternate-universe Japan, a *gaijin* bar hostess with a couple years' stay in town can be thoroughly comfy-cozy with the Japanese underworld and have all the big bosses' addresses and schedules at the tip of her tongue. Here, an American policeman can be decapitated without eliciting any reaction from the U.S. diplomatic corps — if such a thing even exists. A New York cop with no knowledge of, or interest whatsoever in the Japanese customs and language, can quickly find an address in this Osaka, then cockily confront a native crimelord in a duel of verbal wits and — without translation — unravel the fine details of a complicated conspiracy about which the local police is totally in the dark. A hyperkinetic, maverick nouveau-yakuza who lives fast (he drives a German car) and kills flamboyantly somehow needs the acceptance of the criminal old guard so much he accepts to perform the ritualistic finger-cutting routine to please the old *oyabun* — who doesn't even consider the ill-judgement in dealing with this lunatic if he wanted to carry out his carefully-laid plans. But perhaps the most disorienting indication of the topsy-turvy para-logic of this movie is given by having two seasoned pros like Ken Takakura and Tomisaburō Wakayama stoically bear, with painstaking *gaman*, all the hysterical mugging and screaming of a hack star whose scenery-chewing often passes for good acting in the eyes of Academy members and quote-me-in-the-blurbs reviewers. Where else but in an American wishful-thinking flight of delirium could Takakura be forced to croon à la Ray Charles to look more acceptably "human" (See? With some work he can become almost like one of us), and humbly be taught a lesson or two in big-stick law enforcement effectiveness by this arrogant jerk with all the charm of a soiled diaper?

What grabs everybody's attention in the movie is its flashy, cyberpunk-ish imagery. But I'm at a loss to understand what Ridley Scott means with all his slick visuals. He may have noticed all those howlers in the script and decided to either (a) ignore them, (b) cover them up with gratuitous good looks, or (c) camp up the whole thing with the same. Looking back at his works for a clue, it appears that he is just a naive filmmaker who likes to shoot pretty. Sure, his visuals do wonders in the appropriate context (science fiction, MTV, advertisement), and when form and substance are perfectly integrated he can deliver an indisputable classic like BLADE RUNNER. Trouble is, all his movies have the same gaudy imagery, regardless of circumstance. So what may be strikingly beautiful, atmospheric and awe-inspiring in one situation becomes clichéd, silly and grossly overblown in another — but Scott doesn't know the difference, or doesn't care. He seems in fact incapable of sparing a single frame from being suffused by his patented Six O'Clock In Late Summer sunlight, with beams of light ripping the scene from top down, filtered through a rotating fan, and loads of miasmal smoke emanating from the ground. (In his hands, I suspect, a documentary about the famine in Ethiopia would look like a commercial for French cologne.) There is nothing underneath the glossy surface: Scott is as naked as the emperor of the fairytale. (On the other hand, if the last hypothesis is correct and he deliberately opted for a tongue-in-cheek approach, then this must be the most damn expensive send-up ever put on screen.)

My brother suggested Japanese audiences could find take offense at the movie, what with this abusive Ugly American revelling in his ugliness, being always right in his obnoxiousness and getting away with it before someone gives him a well-deserved rabies shot. Naaah. If they allowed the filming, in their own turf, of insulting racist dreck like THE BUSHIDO BLADE or THE CHALLENGE, they must hold up an infinite capacity for *gaman*. (Early in the picture, the chief police inspector pours out some very appropriate qualifiers concerning the "hero" — words mercifully left unsubtitled.) I'm sure this inane piece of nonsense will be seen in Japan as nothing but an irritating but harmless, childish prank.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, Akio Morita shows he doesn't need counterfeit greenbacks to take a stab at the U.S. economy. He's got enough of the real thing to buy out Columbia Pictures...

Executive producer.....Kobayashi Toshio
 Planner.....Nishimura Shunichi
 Script.....Katō Yasushi/Igami Masaru
 Photography.....Nakamachi Takeshi/Sekiguchi Masao
 Music.....Ogawa Hirooki
 Assistant director.....Kikuchi Akira
 Director.....Funatoko Sadao/Toyama Tōru
 Editor.....Kakui Michiko
 Costumes.....Yamato Costumes
 Fight arranger.....Matsumiya Takehisa

Cast

Akikusa Shintarō.....Ose Kōichi
 Kiri no Tonbei.....Maki Fuyukichi
 Baba Shūsaku.....Omōri Shunsuke

with: Nakamura Tatsusaburō, Emi Shuntarō, Kiyokawa Shingo, Kayama Yoshiko, Amatsu Bin, Usami Jun, Izawa Ichirō, Kaga Kunio, Sawa Ayumi, Katsuki Toshiyuki, Ōmiya Toshimitsu, Takagi Jirō, Yoshida Yoshio, Saga Naoko, Toyama Takashi

Ose Kōichi ("Akikusa Shintarō"): Born 27 October 1937 in Yokohama. His real name is Ose Kazunari. He graduated from Keiō University School of Foreign Languages. In 1952 he entered the Daiei film company (they made *Rashōmon* among other films) and appeared in a number of films. In 1958 he starred in the TV series *Gekkō kamen* where he gained tremendous popularity with children as the mysterious masked hero. This series was made by Senkōsha Productions and directed by Funatoko Sadao. Its two theme songs became big hits. Next he was directed by Funatoko in *Jaga no me* which proved to be another hit. Then came *The Samurai* which further increased his popularity with the younger set. Throughout the 60s he appeared in various movies apart from the two *Samurai* spin-offs, some period pieces, others gangster films. He also appeared on stage. From 1971 he concentrated on the management of an acting agency and in 1977 finally left show business altogether. He now runs a chain of noodle shops.

In April 1964 he married actress, Hizuru Takachiho and they have one son, Yasuhiro, born in October 1965. Both were so busy in the first year of their marriage they scarcely saw one another. A few days after the wedding Ose went into rehearsal for a stage show, then spent 50 days in Kyoto making a film. Then his wife got an acting job, collapsed and had to be rushed to hospital but appeared on stage even while undergoing a course of injections. They resorted to communicating by leaving each other letters to discuss not only work but daily life. Ose had his share of accidents, falling and injuring himself during some swordplay at a theatre. He now lives in Tokyo and is an expert in iaido.

"Akikusa Shintarō" Elder half brother to the shōgun, Ienari. Being the son of a concubine, he has no claim to power. Instead, working for Councillor Matsudaira Sadanobu in the guise of a wandering swordsman, he works to protect his younger brother's position as the latter is still in his minority. His real name is Matsudaira Nobuchiyo. In his infancy he was entrusted to the Abbot Donkai of the Sainenji Temple (a temple of the Pure Land or Jōdo Sect of Buddhism which was built by Hattori Hanzō whose grave lies in its grounds. The temple is located in Yotsuya, then a town near Edo, now a part of Tokyo. Hanzō was a famous Iga ninja who worked for the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, and set up his spy network. A gate of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, the former Edo Castle, bears his name). When Shintarō was 9, he began training and became a master of the secrets of the Yagyū Shin Kage-ryū style of swordsmanship.

His first assignment was to investigate troubles in Matsumae fief in Ezo (Hokkaido) in 1789. Subsequently, he had to foil a group of 13 Kōga ninja who were after a treasure buried by Takeda Shingen in the 16th century in Kai province. During this adventure he took charge of a young orphan, Baba Shūsaku, who accompanied him on later adventures. Next he prevented a group of 10 Iga ninja from killing Lord Matsudaira and was joined for this adventure by Tonbei the Mist who was sent with his own Iga ninja to protect him by Lord Matsudaira (a wise precaution as Shintarō was wounded in a duel with Momochi Genkurō who had used on his blade). He then had to defeat Gensai the Wolf and his Black Ninja who sought vengeance on him for killing

his old master, Genkurō and for cutting off his own arm (shades of Travis!). Shintarō's next encounter was with the fiendish Fūma ninja and their quest for the lost Hōjō treasure. Here he met a wily and very dangerous adversary in Fūma Kotarō - both men respected each other's abilities and skills. Having defeated the Fūma and, supposedly, killed Kotarō at long last, his next assignment was to preserve the new Lord of Wakayama from the troubles surrounding his succession which had been exacerbated by a plot to stir up the rival Kishū and Negoro ninja groups against each other. All these adventures must have happened in 1789! No wonder he considered entering a monastery, sickened by the slaughter and futility of it all, but changed his mind when he found there was a plot to assassinate certain key figures in the shogunate, including Tonbei, his friend. Behind this plot was the Lord of Owari and his old enemy, Fūma Kotarō. Having sorted out this problem, he then encountered the Puppet Ninja and their master Genshin. He also ran into Kotarō who pursued him like a cat with a mouse. Finally, after a series of encounters with ninja of different schools sent against him by Kotarō, he went out in a boat with the master ninja, knowing he would probably not return, for one final deciding duel, leaving Tonbei and Shūsaku on the shore. He was not seen again.

He was about 28, somewhat above average height, handsome, round-faced and solemn of expression except when he smiled, something which was quite dazzling. He wore a pair of distinctive white hilted swords and usually just a kimono, though sometimes he wore a hakama over it. His hair was dressed in a shoulder-length ponytail.

He had a strong sense of fair play, kindness to the weak or those in trouble, noblesse oblige or bushi no nasake, and of the value of human life and the worth of the individual. He was open, approachable and trustworthy, not cursed with the quick temper and arrogance of many samurai. He was possessed of sensitivity and feeling and was capable of profound thought. Sometimes he was too trusting and was deceived but at other times showed himself a shrewd judge of character. He was an expert swordsman and a superb athlete.

Maki Fuyukichi ("Tonbei the Mist"): Born 28 November 1930 in Odate City in Akita Prefecture in northern Japan. His real name is Machii Nobuyuki (some sources give his surname as Okamura). His father was a public servant and he was the second son of four boys and two girls. In 1948 he graduated from Odate Homei High School and entered the Budai Geijutsuin [Stage art academy]. In 1951 he dropped out and joined a theatre group, Zenshinza. In 1955 he transferred to another theatre troupe, the Bugeiza, for 8 years. In 1960 he played the gang boss, "Captain KK" in the TV series, *Kaiketsu Harimao*, directed by Funatoko Sadao. He next appeared in *The Samurai* and *The New Samurai* and became extremely popular along with Ōse Kōichi. He made his movie debut in the two spinoffs from the series, then he appeared in *Watari the Ninja Boy* in 1966, also directed by Funatoko. Since then he has made a number of films, chiefly period pieces in which he plays a sidekick and also continues to appear in TV series. A critic wrote that his ^{ageless} lithe body and clever acting style well suit him to the part of a sidekick. He now lives in Kyoto. He claimed not to find too arduous the constant exercise necessary to portray a ninja as he'd been a gymnastics champion at high school. More arduous had been learning to wear correctly period costume and a sword which he'd first done while with the Zenshinza.

"Tonbei the Mist": Dear old well-meaning Tonbei - generally known to some as 'Tonbei Missed' or 'Tonbei the Twit' who usually came thundering in just as Shintarō was sheathing his sword after slaying a dozen ninja. Glancing down at the corpses, Tonbei would do a splendid double-take and exclaim, "Ah! Fūma ninja!" apparently not realising he was about 10 minutes too late. Although not a comic character, he was the butt of a number of ninja jokes which went the rounds of Sydney schoolyards, none of which bear repeating.

Tonbei was a wiry man of indeterminate age with strong features and big, wide-spaced eyes and a wide mouth. He wore his hair in a top-knot and his head half-shaved. He was considered to be the best of the Iga ninja employed by the shōgun to guard his castle (which rather made one wonder about the rest.... Tonbei was not the most efficacious ninja, he was usually the one to be captured or tricked by enemy ninja and needed to be rescued by Shintarō fairly frequently). His teacher was Hankurō of Nabari which is right in Iga country. He joined Shintarō during the latter's encounter with the society of 13 Kōga ninja who were after Takeda Shingen's treasure and remained with him until the latter bid him farewell to go off with Fūma Kotarō/Kongō of Kōga, a parting which caused the ever-emotional Tonbei great pain. He became very attached to Shintarō and Shintarō's ward, Shūsaku, turning into something

of an older brother figure for the boy, teaching him many things about life.

Though raised and trained as a ninja, he was usually very gentle and kind - though he could be ruthless at times with his enemies, until chided by Shintarō. He mellowed over the period of their time together and in many ways, with his more open display of feeling, he seemed more humanly fallible than Shintarō. He was loyal and dependable and saved Shintarō's life on a number of occasions and vice-versa.

Omori Shunsuke ("Shūsaku"): No information is available on this actor. Like many child actors, he seems to have disappeared into obscurity after the end of the TV series that brought him fame. He appeared in all the stories, as he had a minor role in the first story, as well as playing Shūsaku from story two to story ten.

Baba Shūsaku was a boy of about 8 or 10, the son of Baba Nobukatsu, a descendant of Baba Nobufusa, a famous general of the Takeda clan, particularly of Takeda Shingen. Nobukatsu was killed by Kōga ninja in their quest for the map of Takeda Shingen's treasure. Shintarō's attempts to help Shūsaku find his missing father led to his involvement with the Kōga ninja. When found by Shintarō, Shūsaku was living in the mountains of Kai Province (Yamanashi Prefecture) with his sole companion, a pet monkey. As the boy had no family, Shintarō took him with him and attempted to educate him between adventures, as befitted the son and descendant of samurai. (We see him practising calligraphy in Shintarō's home in Edo in one story). Tonbei and Shintarō became his family.

Shūsaku had a shrill voice and seemed forever to be screaming "Shintarō! Shintarō!" - with good reason. He was often menaced or taken as hostage by various ninja - more fools than that boy was a grade-A pain. Thus he was often in need of rescuing.

At one stage he wanted to become a ninja like Tonbei but thought better of it when he came to realise how essentially futile and heartless such an existence was.

Amatsu Bin ("Fūma Kotarō/Kongō of Kōga"; "Gensai the Wolf"; "Genzō the Spider"). Born on 16 February 1921 and died 24 July 1979. He was born in a small village in Miyagi Prefecture. He came of a long line of school teachers and graduated from Miyagi Prefectural Normal School and took up teaching in a prefectural primary school. During World War II, he joined the navy at Yokosuka. After being demobbed, he found he disliked the life of a teacher because of the changeover in the education system at the time and so he went to Tokyo. There he helped out at the iron foundry owned by his wife's family (he married Kaneko in 1944) while aiming at becoming an actor. His first film appearance was in *Hokkai no Tora* ["Tiger of the North Sea"] where he had a bit part as a sailor. That was in 1953. In 1955 he took part successfully in KRT's (now TBS) auditions and appeared the same year in the TV drama *Edo no kagebōshi* ["Shadows of Edo"]. In 1956 he played the chief villain, "Akizuki Samonta", in the period TV drama, *Kurama Tengu*, for KRT which ran for several years. He continued to appear in TV series even, in 1960, doing some of the Japanese dubbing for *The Texas Rangers*. Then came *The Samurai* and the role which was to mark the type of role he would play ever onwards and for which his name would become synonymous - Fūma Kotarō, the master ninja. So popular was the character that it became almost a semi-regular and Amatsu repeated variants of the role in the two movie spin-offs. Afterwards, he and Maki Fuyukichi appeared in the Fuji TV series, *Kamen no ninja: Akakage* ["Red Shadow, the masked ninja"] in 1967, which indicated how much their importance to that type of ninja show had been recognised. Amatsu went on to appear in Tōei's series of *yakuza* films, and one critic claimed that he cannot be ignored in any discussion of those films. He also appeared in a number of ninja and fantasy films throughout the 60s. He made a good number of films, either *yakuza* films or period pieces, usually playing the villain, occasionally a 'good guy'. He also appeared in karate films and modern-day actioners. In 1976 he broke new ground by appearing in NHK's television version of the novel, *Hi no kuni ni* ["In the Country of Fire"]. (NHK is the Japan's equivalent of the BBC). He appeared as the "Catfish Monster" in an episode of *Monkey* entitled "Catfish Monster, Saint and Shapechanger" (1978). His last TV appearance was as a detective in the telefilm, *Ikite ita shibijin byōin gisō satsujin* ["Living dead beauty - disguised hospital murderer"] which was broadcast 25 August 1979. His last film appearance was as a military officer in Tōei's *Dōran*, released early 1980. He was also in the US-Japanese coproduction, *Bushido Blade* as "Baron Zen" who stole said blade for his master, Lord Yamato, and later duelled the hero, katana versus sabre. Interestingly, William Ross, who dubbed "Shintarō" played Commodore Perry's aide in this film.

On 24 July 1979, at 2 am, Amatsu died of heart failure at the Yokohama City University Hospital. He was 58. His sudden death prompted one reader to write to Japan's most influential film magazine, *Kinema Junpō*, to say that as a player of villains, Amatsu had never been surpassed and a critic commented that his portrayal of Fūma Kotarō had left a strong impression on many people as had his later portrayals of virtual incarnations of evil in Tōei's yakuza films. He went on to say that his death was a loss to Japanese cinema as there was no player of villains with his appeal. As others had, he spoke of his voice (which was singularly deep and menacing) and his tall, thin body, and his facial features as being something special which made it unlikely that there would be anyone to replace him. In fine, he seems to have been a type of Japanese Christopher Lee (minus the horror roles). Like most screen villains in private life he was quite the opposite of his film roles, living quietly with his family in Kamakura, and doing such domestic things as seeing to household repairs himself, laying down water and drainage pipes in his house, making a dog kennel and bathing his young grandson. His eldest son had to endure a certain amount of teasing at school because his father was "that villain Amatsu Bin", but it was all in jest. Amatsu is survived by two sons (the elder of whom, Hiroshi, works for a shipping firm in Osaka, and a daughter, as well as his widow.

"Fūma Kotarō/Kongō of Kōga" Arguably the most popular of the villains in *The Samurai*, he was introduced under his actual name, Fūma Kotarō Kaneyoshi in two thirteen part stories dealing with the search for the Hōjō treasure. Fūma Kotarō was the head of the Fūma ninja and a descendant of one of Japan's most famous ninja (one of the few mentioned in old historical sources), Fūma Kotarō Nobuyuki, beheaded in 1603 by order of Tokugawa Ieyasu. There was a legend that one day that other Fūma Kotarō would return from the dead, so when Kotarō stepped out from behind his ancestor's gravemarker, the poor chap sweeping up the leaves in the cemetery thought the legend had come true and was terrified out of his wits. However, Kotarō merely tossed him some coins as a reward for keeping the grave tidy over the years. Kotarō's various entrances and departures were designed to enhance his spooky, almost witchlike character. Like his ancestor, he was very tall, taller than most of the other characters, with a mask-like face, pale and fine-boned with long, narrow, piercing dark eyes beneath fine arching eyebrows, one of which had a break in the hairline where a sword must have cut it. He usually wore a hood over his hair and a purple and gold brocade jinbaori (surcoat) over his ninja costume. His hair had a white streak through it and it was worn brushed loosely back and tied at the nape of his neck where it hung in a foxtail down his back, like an 18th century European. His movements, despite his height, were quick and agile, like a cat's. He was an excellent swordsman, and had an aura of great, controlled power and menace about him. He seemed to have supernatural powers at times in his ability to know what others were doing or thinking even at a distance. One also recalls him muttering over the mirrors that were part of the clues to the whereabouts of the Hōjō treasure "Water calls wind; wind calls fire; fire calls water" in order to track down mirrors not in his possession and his face appearing as if by magic in the mirror he was after, in the possession of a girl living on a houseboat who claimed to have seen "a horrible face" in her mirror (no taste, that female).

Kotarō had a younger sister, Oboro, (Saga Naoko) who was also a ninja. She had the misfortune to fall in love with Shintarō and defied her brother's wrath to set him free. She betrayed the group's whereabouts to Shintarō by leaving a trail of shuriken stuck in tree trunks in the belief that by thus stopping her brother's quest, she would save the family and group from ruin. Later, believing her brother dead when all the Fūma were destroyed, she became a nun at a Buddhist convent in Odawara. However, in a later story, she was able to rescue him and nurse him back to health after he had been shot by another ninja while in a boat on a lake. That Kotarō, despite the dread and awe which he inspired in his enemies and some of his followers, genuinely cared for her was evident in that he was willing to trade a valuable hostage to get her back from Shintarō and Tonbei when she was captured by them.

He respected Shintarō as an enemy and on one occasion, he invited him to join with him, treating him with due respect for his rank, offering him drink and being hospitable, and showing the esteem in which he held him, yet without being in any way servile, as one exceptional man to another. Kotarō was a haughty, lordly person who was usually rather preremptory with samurai.

After the destruction or scattering of his band of Fūma ninja, he was apparently killed by Shintarō, blowing himself up with the Hōjō treasure. But somewhat later,

due to popular demand, he was brought back in story 8 with the title 'Kongō of Kōga' by which designation he was known for the rest of the series. 'Kongō', though it can be translated as 'champion', is a Buddhist term meaning the vajra or thunderbolt, a symbol of power. According to *The Samurai*, this was a title conferred on the ninja voted the most skilled by other ninja (I am not sure of the historicity of this, though). This was no doubt to underline his status as 'super-ninja'.

In this story, he used a group of seven Phantom Ninja to carry out a series of assassinations in Edo for the mysterious 'Lord of Night' ('Kurayami no gotairō'). After the seven were killed or had disappeared, he continued to operate as a lone wolf after Shintarō's blood. After sending various schools of ninja to kill Shintarō, he resolved to go alone with him to a final duel. He rowed the boat with Shintarō as the sole passenger into the centre of a lake, leaving their respective nearest and dearest lamenting on shore (Shūsaku and Tonbei farewelling Shintarō and Oboro watching after Kongō).

As Kongō he looked rather younger (do high-level Kōga 'ninja regenerate or was Kotarō really from Gallifrey?). His face was less mask-like and more a fine-boned, pale oval capable of a wide range of expression and dominated by those piercing long, dark eyes and a thin, well-shaped mouth which he had a habit of twisting down at the corners in a way that was most distinctive, particularly when speaking of Shintarō, whose name he would spit out venomously. He usually wore a totally black ninja costume, even the undershirt, while his hair was dressed in a topknot.

As mentioned above, he was a skilled swordsman with a distinctive style which Shintarō was able to recognise when Kongō was in disguise on one occasion. Many of the special tricks perfected individually by other ninja he could perform. One of the most effective was his skill with disguise and mimicry. Several times he fooled Shintarō into thinking he was someone else. At one time, it seemed that half the population of Tokugawa Japan was Kongō in disguise. He was a great one for leaping into (or out of) trees or ceilings.

He was cunning and devious, fearless, intelligent, with lots of style and class which set him apart from most of the other ninja. He had a marvellous, slightly condescending manner which he employed even when speaking to his employer, the Lord of Night. One felt that the lord may have bought Kongō's services but he had not bought Kongō himself. Kongō did not take a rebuke from the lord totally in the best feudal tradition. He was too proud for that. He was good and he knew it. Instead, he managed to be slightly sarcastic in his response.

He was persuasive - he knew how to use the ninja he had and to get others to do what he wanted. He was respected by others of his profession and feared by some, particularly among the shōgun's Iga ninja. He could be ruthless in attaining his ends. He did not hesitate to kill a few innocent bystanders simply so he would be arrested and put in jail so he could arrange a breakout of all the criminals within its walls. This was all part of a plan to discredit Matsudaira Sadanobu. Even disguised as he was, as a scruffy rōnin, wearing a shabby kimono, hakama and haori and barefoot with it, some of his natural class and superiority came through when he was taken inside the jail. His height, haughty, regal bearing and the somewhat supercilious manner he had when attempting to bribe a guard into giving him a cup of water in return for one of his stolen gold coins were quite in keeping with the manner of a declassé samurai but they were typical of Kongō himself.

He could be patient in waiting to strike and could pursue a goal with typical ninja single-mindedness - the difference was that, with one exception, he was working for himself and his own ends.

There seemed to be a complexity in his character. He was seen to be intelligent and did not make the usual stupid mistakes villains do in serials. He had more than the usual quota of ninja skills. He pursued Shintarō over a good portion of the country to take revenge on him for causing him considerable trouble, not to mention grievous bodily harm, in 5 different stories, totalling 75 episodes, yet somehow he never degenerated into a stock villain of the Lt. Gerard variety. Sometimes he almost seemed to be watching over Shintarō, once rescuing him from some other ninja - with a view to killing him off later himself. The slightly ambiguous ending made one friend think that 'Kongō had gone off with Shintarō in lieu of Tonbei, "At last Shintarō has got himself a decent ninja," he declared.

Fūma Kotarō aka Kongō of Kōga is also well remembered by Australian fans, usually the one ninja they do recall.

Gensai the Wolf: The head of the Wolf Ninja, he was also the sidekick of Momochi Genkurō, the rebellious Iga ninja. Gensai came from Yamaguchi. He was the only survivor of Genkurō's group after they were killed by Shintarō and Tonbei. He lost part of one of his arms in a duel with Shintarō and thereafter wore an artificial hand which he would use to close over an opponent's sword blade and then yank it out of his hands. Other than that, the hand was not very flexible so he was forced to use his own sword one-handedly. Prior to this loss, he used to wear a steel claw over his hand in duels. He returned after Genkurō's death, in the fourth story, at the head of the Black Ninja, seeking vengeance on Shintarō and was eventually killed. Physically, he resembled Kongō except his hairstyle was scruffier and was worn in a long untidy ponytail.

Katsuki Toshiyuki ("Kiba Jinjūrō"; "Momochi Genkurō"): Not much is known about this actor beyond his appearance as the hero of the series, *Kaiketsu Harimao* in 1960, directed for Senkōsha Productions by Funatoko Sadao, and his appearance as two major villains in *The Samurai*. He seems to have vanished into obscurity shortly after.

"Kiba Jinjūrō". A retainer of the Matsumae fief in Ezo (Hokkaido) who found Shintarō was cramping his style in investigating certain troubles in the fief. The two eventually confronted each other in a duel, though Shintarō asked him: "Why? I have no quarrel with you?" Kiba lost. He was proud, peppery and fanatical.

"Momochi Genkurō": The head of 10 Iga ninja, he was described as the best swordsman in Japan and one of the best ninja. He and his group came from a certain valley where the ninja were particularly good. He was another ninja who was aware of his own worth. He was arrogant, cocky, quick-tempered but with the skill and the intelligence to back it up.

His trouble was he was too good and he was born too late. He belonged to the 16th century's civil wars when ninja were in their heyday, able to use their skills to the fullest. One as good as he was would have been in great demand. Moreover, he was descended of the famous Momochi Sandayū mentioned earlier. Genkurō complained bitterly about ninja not being able to use their full potential in his day and age, pouring scorn in his mocking way, on a young ninja who used his skills to dive for fish.

So he decided to remedy this state of affairs by discrediting the Tokugawa shogunate through Councillor Matsudaira Sadanobu whom he intended to kill on orders from the Lord of Owari for whom he was working. However, his plans went further. He intended to plunge the country back into civil war. He was as close to an idealist as any ninja ever came, since he wanted to restore ninja to their former glory, purpose and usefulness by turning back the clock. The other ninja were either working for the immediate goals of their lords or else had their minds on buried treasures.

His personal code of honour/ethics was also a little warped. Having sent a formal challenge to a duel to Shintarō, he was not above putting poison on his swordblade so that even a slight wound would be fatal. In this duel, Genkurō used one of his repertoire of ninja tricks involving flaming torches which apparently moved by themselves. He was wounded in this encounter and Shintarō, some days later, politely enquired after his health when talking to one of Genkurō's ninja, "And how is your master?" And Genkurō asked after his. All very chummy.

On another occasion, Genkurō burst in on Dōgan, an old master ninja, probably Genkurō's own teacher, and had him dismiss his pupils. Then he demanded that Dōgan help him. When Dōgan refused, Genkurō threatened to kill him. Then followed an extraordinary sequence where Dōgan remained exactly where he was, staring straight ahead, motionless, quite unarmed and sitting on the mat while Genkurō stood to one side of him, sword raised. Although Dōgan did not move, Genkurō seemed to find it impossible to strike - he was as if paralysed and a cold sweat broke out on his forehead and his eyes blazed. Then he suddenly broke free and dashed out of the house, claiming to his followers, "He tried to kill me!" No doubt to save face.

Yet at the end, when he captured Sadanobu, he took him to a small boat and offered him a dagger, the implication the councillor would be allowed to die with the dignity of a samurai by committing harakiri. Genkurō generously offered to be his kaishaku - that is, the one who cuts off the suicide's head when the deed has been done. So he understood the concept of military honour for all his duplicity, even if he did not always practise it. It may also have been that he had no particular quarrel with

Sadanobu, that he was merely a pawn in Genkurō's overall game-plan and so the ninja saw no reason why he should not be treated with all due respect.

He met his own end shortly, after this in a duel with Shintarō on that same boat which finished when Genkurō, mortally wounded but still somehow managing to stay upright and on his feet, his long black hair falling in disarray over his shoulders and down his back from its customary topknot which gave his appearance a certain pathos, pitched forward into the water and sank beneath the surface.

Genkurō was small with a doll-like face dominated by big, piercing black eyes under thick winged eyebrows with a sword scar between, which rather belied his delicate features and which gave his expression a certain intensity. He wore his hair in the usual mop and top-knot, and dressed in a black, rather than grey ninja suit, unlike the shōgun's Iga ninja.

The above were the chief villains for seven out of the ten stories. The chief villain of the second story about the 13 Kōga ninja did not particularly impress me, apart from his tendency to hang about (literally) in great kits, spying out the land. Story 7 about the Kishū and Negoro ninja had a number of rather striking villains. First there was Garyūdōshi (romanised here as "Garidoshi") the chief Negoro ninja played by Yoshida Yoshio. He was a lithe, middle-aged ninja with a more than passing resemblance (in my eyes) to William Hartnell's Doctor Who except that his hair (worn in the same style) was black not silver. Those who thought Doctor #1 was cranky would have found him an angel in comparison with Garyūdōshi who was a fiend - cruel, cunning and utterly ruthless. He had no redeeming qualities that I recall at all yet he did have a tremendous presence which makes him memorable even now. That, and the fact he had probably the longest death scene of anyone in the series! He was cut down in a duel by a stream with Shintarō and spent an unconscionable amount of time writhing around on the ground. When not in black ninja gear, he disguised himself as a yamabushi (mountain ascetic) and went around terrorising people. His sidekick, Onime the Bat (actor unknown) was another one would not forget in a hurry. Bald, with only one eye, the missing one covered by a shuriken, he had a gargoyle face (the Negoro, generally speaking, were not an attractive bunch of ninja unlike the Kōga, Iga and Fūma) and an interesting trick of suddenly materialising from heaps of leaves and disappearing by drilling his body into the road.

The same story's Shinigami (actor unknown) was another memorable Negoro ninja. He was yet another ninja who knew he was good. He was insolent and didn't give a damn about anyone not even his boss, Onime the Bat. He featured in two episodes as a ninja who could not be killed in the conventional way by the stroke of a sword or by shuriken being thrown into him, hence his nickname "The Deathless One" or "The Death Ninja". His arrogance plus Tonbei's sharp observation led to his downfall as Tonbei was able to tell Shintarō to strike with the back of his sword, not the blade and this finished Shinigami. Apart from this trick, he was also a master of disguise. He was a young man with a curved nose and somewhat protuberant eyes and a mane of shaggy black hair (he, too, looked like a hero of British SF - Zaphod Beeblebrox, but with one head).

Genshin (actor unknown) was the head of the Puppet Ninja. He was an old, white-haired man with a wispy beard. In fact, he was the oldest of the master ninja - and the strangest, muttering in a reedy voice, "The Puppets, the Puppets..." But he was still spry enough to present a threat to Shintarō - and Kongō.

A word must be said about master ninja - you don't have to be strange but it helps. One was left with the impression that after graduating with honours in ninjutsu, they then had to do a postgraduate diploma in weirdness. Fuma Kotarō was given to sitting in trees and cackling at passing samurai, or hiding in rocks and cackling at passing samurai, or materialising suddenly, looking baleful and only partly of this earth; Genshin, as mentioned above, muttered to himself, and looked and behaved like a demented Druid or King Lear on a bad day; both Garyūdōshi and Onime were odd... the list goes on.

TO BE CONTINUED.... Unless you are all heartily sick of the subject, next time will feature part one of the episode guide (there were 128 episodes of the original, folks, plus 39 of THE NEW SAMURAI and 26 of the remake, after all.)



**A NINJA SWORN TO KILL! BY NINJA
LAW HE MUST WIN OR DIE.**

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6

**DESPERATELY, THE NINJA MUST
FIGHT ON TO THE DEATH.**

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**ANOTHER SURPRISE ATTACK
BY THE BLACK NINJA.**

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**SHINTARO IN SINGLE COMBAT
WITH A SECRET SAMURAI.**

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**SHINTARO PARALYSES HIS ENEMY
WITH HIS SPECIAL BODY BLOW.**

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**GENYO, A KISHU NINJA, FIGHTS HIS
ENEMY, GARIDOSHI, A NEGISHI NINJA.**

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**KONGO OF KOGO, WITH NINJA SKILL,
SPRINGS TO THE CEILING.**

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12

**AGAIN, SHINTARO BATTLES TO VICTORY
WITH THE BLACK NINJA.**

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**SHUSAKU IS CAUGHT BY GENSHIN,
HEAD OF THE PUPPET NINJA.**

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