MAFFAPA JULY 1992

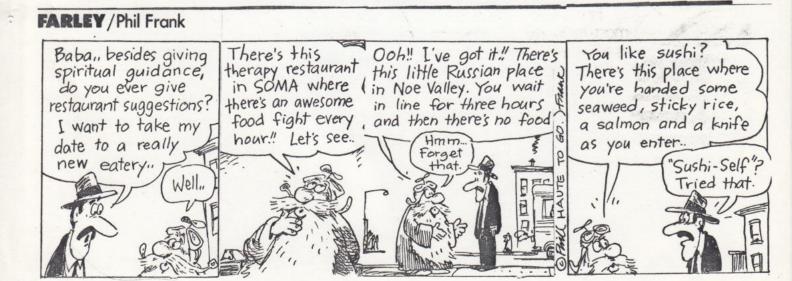


Welcome to the 40th issue of MAFFAPA, Martial Arts Film Fan (and Asian Culture) APA, for July 1992. Contributions were sent by the following people:

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The deadline for Maffapa 41 is October 31, 1992. If your name is not listed above as a contributor, you must contribute to the next issue to receive it. Your contribution, at least one page, preferably readable, must reach Laurine White by the end of October. Minimum contribution is 1 page per issue or 2 pages every other issue. The Copy Count is 18. Please send 18 copies of each page plus \$1.25 to cover return postage. If you don't send 18 copies, send your original pages plus \$1 per page to cover copy costs. I prefer checks or stamps instead of cash, which is dangerous to trust to the mail. And don't forget a 9 x 12" self-addressed envelope, so I can send Maffapa 41 to you.

A few people seem to have dropped aout this time; at least I haven't heard from them. If you know anyone who might be interested, or who once was a member and may want to rejoin, recruit them!



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

Hello, everyone, hello:

Well, as you can see, I have joined the computer age. My old tripewriter -- excuse me typewriter -- has been on life support so I've put it out to pasture and have turned to a new word processor (actually, it's used but it's new to me. If you want to be technical it's a computer, but who's counting. It's been sitting here a year and it's all Greek to me anyway.)

Today, I shall review a British suspense/comedy series called THE PIGLET FILES. I have just started watching the show and I am working out all the details of the series premise but, roughly, it goes like this. A computer expert is given the code name "Piglet" when he recruited to join MI5 (The British version of the CIA). His wife knows he works for "The Government" but has no further conception of her husband's occupation. Since the show was produced before the dissolving of the Soviet Union, her lack of knowledge concerning his line of work can lead to interesting complications — especially when a female KGB agent makes a pass at Piglet and MI5 wanats him to "string her along." Piglet's support team has to follow him while avoiding the KGB support team which leads to a comedy of errors spiced by the untimely arrival of Piglet's wife.

While the show is only thirty minutes long, the producers devote every minute to the development and resolution of the plot. Here in the US, an episode of a TV series will customarily wrap up the plot before the final commercial and return for some minutes of "comic relief" which lead to the end credits. The viewer of THE PIGLET FILES, has to follow every minute from fade in to fade out. The comedy and suspense are expertly balanced and well worth your full attention (The Public Broadcasting station in Miami carries THE PIGLET FILES so you may have to search ALL your local listings to find it).

My VCR became terminal so I had to find a new recorder. I've been trying to learn the peculiarities of that animal, as well as the idiosyncracies of the machine I am facing now (Eventually, I'll figure out the SPELL CHECK but please bear with me if I make a mistake now and then). I have been unable to adequately follow this new martial arts show RAVEN but, from what I can gather, he is a former Ninja pursued by members of his clan while he searches for his missing son.

Give me a break.

I wish dramas involving Ninjas would shake off this inane self-conciousness about Ninja and, instead of focusing on guys running around in black suits, have the protagonist pursue a regular job, say bartending, with Ninjutsu in the background. In addition, why do TV shows feel this compulsion to clutter a series with nonsense about a "search for a missing son?" I don't know if it's supposed to add depth to the character but I find it a useless distraction. The basis for a show like RAVEN is action and I have to say that it does deliver in that department. The fight scenes I have seen (unintentional rhyme) have been excellently choreographed and, whether he faces multiple opponents or is fighting

one-on-one, Raven's martial expertise is depicted at a believable level and his movements seem to be a flow of natural ability.

While they apparantly do a bang-up job on the fight scenes (no pun intended), the storyline leading to the action is not as developed as it should be. As I said earlier, I wish we could see a regular guy with regular difficulties who relies primarily on the strategy aspect of Ninjutsu to resolve any problems with physical confrontation the last resort. If I may revert to the formula for the old paperback thrillers of the Fifties, "One hundred and fifty pages of exposition leading to ten pages of a shoot-out in a swamp."

Speaking of paperback thrillers, I may write an article on that subject for a nostalgia magazine. I may also have a story entitled "Bruce -- The Tenth Man" published in Inside Kung Fu. I shall keep you posted.

After writing two letters, this is my first effort on the computer and it has been easier to work with the word processor than the conventional typewriter. Usually, writing a MAFFAPA contribution is a laborious process requiring a matter of days. I have written this effort on a continual basis for the past hour-and-a-half (from 12:00 to 1:30 PM, August 4). However long it takes, whatever medium is employed, MAFFAPA is always a labor of love. Good luck to all!

HOU MANY NINJAS DOES 17

TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHT

BULB?

NONE, NINJAS AREN'T

AFRAID OF THE A

Howard Walsdorff, P.O. Box 247, Greenbrier, TN 37073-0247

WATCHING JAPANESE T.V. - A Simple Report by Howard Walsdorff

In this essay, I wish to discuss contemporary Japanese T.V. I will try to give the reader what T.V. is like today in Japan and my opinion of programs I have seen that are popular & some maybe not so popular.

There are five commercial networks, one public broadcasting station (educational) and one general channel. There are also cable T.V. & satellite channels but they are viewed only by a minority since they are new. In general the Japanese are workaholics but they are regular T.V. viewers too. I've met Japanese students who rarely watch T.V. but they must be the exceptions. I exchange video cassette tapes with Japanese friends that do like T.V. and want to see American programs.

Sports are popular on T.V. and at the top of the list is Sumo and Pro Baseball. Pro Wrestling programs are aired too.

Cartoon programs are popular and at the top of the list you will find SAZAE SAN and CHIBI MARUKO CHAN.

Quiz and game type shows are popular. Perhaps NORUHODO THE WORLD may still be at the top. Aikawa Kinya is the host and Kusuda Eriko the hostess. There are 4 teams of 2 players each made up of guest stars. You wouldn't believe the complex questions asked!ASK 100 PEOPLE, SONG & QUIZ; WAI WAI SPORTS; STAR'S PARLOR TRICK, etc. are some shows I've seen.

There seems to be a new trend toward "trendy drama". These shows are light-comic love stories about young adults living in the cities. Tahara Toshihiko, Takeda Tetsuya, Tamura Masakazu, Konno Misako, Oda Yuji, are among the stars that have appeared in these dramas. Even Shibata Kyohei made the switch from detective hero to trendy drama lover. Tokyo Love Story, New York Love Story, News Women, The Nicest Man in Japan, The Company, Aishiatteru Kai, Papa! Kakko Tsukanai Ze are among these shows.

Unfortuantely musical programs have decreased in number since I have been watching the last few years.Night Hit Studio left the air after a long run except for specials. Music Fair with lovely hostess Kotegawa Yuko is my favorite musical with good guests. The Music Station program is still on the air but I don't see Best Ten anymore. Ah! So and Go Horomi Shows are sometimes on the air.

The top funnyman is Shimura Ken and the best funny woman is Yamada Kuniko-san. Their comedy range goes from slapstick to Saturday Night Live type of comedy.

The only Japanese friend of mine living in Japan who likes jidai geki is Yukimasa-san. However, according to what I've read samurai shows are very popular on T.V. with NHK Taiga dramas at the top. There was a recent Yagyu Special with Tokito Saburo as Yagyu Jubei; Sanada Hiroyuki as Sakamoto; Tamura Masakazu as Kyoshiro Nemuri & a Hissatsu Special. Regular samurai series are popular too such as

MITO KOMON, ABAREMBO SHOGUN, OOKA ECHIZEN, TOYAMA NO KNSAN, etc.

Regular drama shows besides the trendy drama are aired including the ever popular TOSHIBA THEATER, the long-running series. I am very impressed with HOTEL.

There are many detective dramas with both private detectives

and police detectives.

The Takashima Brothers are very popular these days.
Masahiro's latest series is THE COMPANY and Masanobu's most famous role is in HOTEL. The actors that have impressed me the most in recent programs are the following: Shibata Kyohei who proved he can play comedy as well as detective/action shows & retain his popularity at the top; Jinnai Takanori who is a character actor with a wide-range that impresses me; Sanada Hiroyuki who has proved to me that his acting talents are better than ever after viewing TAIHEIKI; Tokito Saburo, the new "macho" actor that should get more attention (at least that's my opinion); Natori Yuko as pretty and talented as ever; and Swaguchi Yasuko whose so beautiful!

# ESSAY BY HOWARD WALSOURFF.

The

educational channel NHK is very informative. There are no commercials. IT is operated by the funds collected from citizens & residents of Japan. There are lessons in cooking, languages, playing games, various crafts, etc. Magazines are published to accompany the T.V. shows. There are also shows to fit the events of the day and the seasons. Also there are programs for children.

### JAPANESE VISITORS AT MY SCHOOL

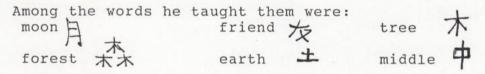
by Robert Walsdorff

For the last few years I have been teaching an extensive six-week unit to my third grade classes each year on Japan. I have been lucky to be able to get Japanese visitors to come to my class each year, which always added a nice touch to the unit. My classes have always enjoyed their visits.

This past term one of my Japanese friends visited my class in February. His name is Tomohiro Yoshida. I met him two years ago when he was going to college in Nashville, He later went to Indiana, but we stayed in touch. After being in the U.S. for about a year, he went back to Japan. He came back to the U.S. in February to visit before graduating from college in March and having to get a job.

Nashville was one of the places he came back to see. He stayed about a week, and my brother and I became reacquainted with him. I asked him to visit my class and he did.

To demonstrate to my class how language can be written in other forms than just letters, I asked Tomohiro to teach them some simple Japanese words using kanji. He demonstrated some using a paint brush, Different students got a chance to copy what he did with paint brushes, and everyone did the words with large magic markers at their seats.



Then they got a chance to ask him some questions. Among the questions they asked were: "What American foods do you like?", "Are the laws different in Japan?", "What other countries have you visited?", "Do you know karate?", "What do you like best about the U.S.?", and others.

He them showed them how to make an origami crane and water balloon. He made some for everyone in the class.

My class wrote about him in our school newspaper. Each also wrote a letter to him after he went back to Japan.

Tomohiro really seemed to enjoy this. To my surprise when another Japanese student i knew, Yukimasa, came back to visit the next month, he wanted to come to my school. One of my Japanese friends who had been in Nashville for over a year, Noriyuki, also wanted to. Tomohiro told them about his visit.

Since I do my Japanese unit with all the third grade classes, Yukimasa did a similar lesson to Tomohiro's with another class. He came back a second time, this time with Noriyuki. Noriyuki showed my class a little bit about karate. They both also helped all the students, in small groups, to do origami.

In previous terms I was lucky to have other Japanese visitors. My friend, Yuji Miyazaki, who I met in Japan when I visited there, came to my class during two different terms during times he was in the U.S.

Since he was there all day, everything we did on those days was related to Japan in all subject areas. He did many of the same things that Tomohiro did.

At another time I had a young Caucasian woman who was brought up in Japan (her father was in the military) visit my class. The parents of one of my students knew a Japanese couple who visited my class at another time.

One term one of my students had grandparents who visited Japan. When they knew we were studying about Japan, they wanted to visit my class and share some things with them.

So my classes have had the advantage of having Japanese visitors each year to add something extra and memorable for them. All these visits were spontaneous. I have no idea if I will have anyone this upcoming year or not. I can't be sure, but I've been so fortunate every term so far since I started this to have one or more visitors, I like to think we'll have someone this upcoming term, too.



MAFFAPA contribution by Jeffrey C.F. Wong, somewhere in Hawaii

(letter excerpt) I have the SWORDSMAN, both Cantonese and Mandarin. Strangely, I feel the Mandarin one sounds a bit better. I guess it has to do with the historical setting and the incredible music score. Unfortunately, that one is subtitled in Korean (the Korean version), and 2 important fights have missing scenes due to lousy editing. This was yet another Tsui Hark and Ching Xiao Dong work (FAMOUS SWORD, CHINESE GHOST STORY) based on Jin Yu's novel. Naturally "Swordsman" is not anything close to a transliteration of the Chinese title, but it's a case of impossibility even if attempts consider much better in the comedy and singing department than action department), previously known for the ACES GO PLACES series and that lousy version of CRYING FREEMAN titled DRAGON FROM RUSSIA. But it was worth an unintentional laugh.

Speaking of ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 1 and 2, all I can say is WOW!!! I watched the first one on tape about 42 times within the first 3 weeks and twice watched the sequel at the local theater when it was playing. I was really blown away. I love Jet Lee's first two Shaolin Temple works. The 3rd one is okay but some of the fights were getting old and the music sucks the old grandmother egg. I do love the second one though, truly my favorite of the Shaolin trilogy. But of every movie I saw him in afterwards, although his natural athletic skill still shines through, in plain words, just plain sucks. I was bored even a couple of times. That is, until ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 1 and 2. Depending on how I feel at the time of day, I think I like #2 better. The only thing is, the first one took place either in 1884 or 1885. That's the year when the Chinese went to fight the French in Annam (Vietnam). In #2, the student protestors are rallying against the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which took place in 1896; that plus the actual events of Lu-ho-dong's martyrdom and the failed attempted uprising in Canton of Sun-yat-sen (also in 1896), kind of give the movie a strange flavor: a gap of 12 years between the first and second? But that's being bone picking on my part. I understand they are trying to give it a bit of historical flavor by incorporating real events into the background and real personalities for drama, since Wong Fei Hung is an actual figure to begin with, but I wish it would have been a bit more consistent.

The thing I found humorous is, in the first one, the Chinese dropped like flies under the foreigners' guns; in the second, the foreigners dropped like flies under the White Lotus' knives. It made a strange contrast. Also, in the first one, they were using early 1800 ball-loading pistols, which, I guess from an antique point of view, people might still be using them. But in the second one, which is more accurate, they were using English Enfield revolvers a big jump in technology.

This is an expansion of something Mark Jackson mentioned in the last issue, namely, the books about weapons and warriors published by Palladium and Osprey. Even though I haven't played D&D or any other wargames since the 1970s, I've been buying the book regularly for the information in them. If these books are still available, your local hobby shop, wargame supply store, or comicbook store that carries gaming supplies may be able to order them for you.

Palladium published two comicbook-sized books, which Mark referred to. THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF WEAPONS AND CASTLES OF THE ORIENT, compiled by Matthew Balent, catalog #407, has 50 pages with pictures of various Asian weapons (mostly Japanese), Japanese and Chinese armor, and Japanese and Chinese fortifications. For a more comprehensive description of more Asian weapons, the reader is

referred to THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF WEAPONS & ARMOUR.

THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF WEAPONS AND ASSASSINS by Erick Wujcik, catalog #406, has sections on the Order of Assassins of the Middle East, the Thugs of India, and (of course) the ninja. There are maps, pictures of weapons and apparel, and brief histories of the groups. This book also has 50 pages, with the ninja section taking up more than half. I paid \$5 each for these several years ago.

Palladium Books is in Detroit (oh no, not Detroit!)

An associated book from Palladium, also by Erick Wujcik, is TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES & OTHER STRANGENESS, catalog #502, 110 pages, with scenarios, weapons, characters and tables for role-playing games. For the martial arts fan, the info starts on page 60, the chapter on Combat, with pictures and descriptions of Ancient Weapons (mostly Japanese), Modern Weapons (guns), the Leg and Foot Ninja (fictional), the Turtles themselves, and other characters from the comic. Did you know that Casey Jones was kicked out of martial arts class for being too brutal?

More RPG-related books: ORIENTAL ADVENTURES by Gary Gygax is an Official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons book from TSR, Inc. Lots of info is crammed into 144 pages, most of it related to role-playing. This is set in a fantasy Asia, called Kara-Tur. The customs and spells are of this fictional place. The currency is Chinese (tael); weapons and armor are mostly Japanese. Monsters include the giant carp, bakemono, buso (from Indonesia?), various dragons, gargantua (unmistakably King Kong, Mothra and Godzilla), ikiryo (there's one in the classic, TALE OF GENJI), kuei (Chinese demon-ghost), kappa, oni, and others. No hopping vampires. Among the treasures and magical items are: the Biwa of Discord (used in the animated CHINESE GODS), 8 Diagram Coins, Exerproducing Rice Mortar, Noisome Spirit Chasers (strings of firecrackers), Paper of Forms, origami paper that can be turned into a life-sized version of the object the paper is folded into. The bibliography includes about 70 books, including MONKEY, Sun Tzu's THE ART OF WAR, THE NOBILITY OF FAILURE, THE CHINESE KNIGHT ERRANT, and Turnbull's SAMURAI ARMIES 1550-1615 (see below).

GURPS JAPAN, Roleplaying in the World of the Shogunate by Lee Gold is from Steve Jackson Games. This is not set in a fictional parallel world. The descriptions of the people, culture, history, etc., are real. Flipping through the book, I find on page 77: sumptuary laws and Banzuin no Chobei. Banzuin no Chobei?? I was just watching a couple episodes of a 1989 samurai series about this guy. One involved a conspiracy dealing with a ghost haunting a well. Of course there are sections on combat, with weapons and ninja. If you want a fantasy game instead of a historical one, there are chapters

on spells and monsters (including shapeshifters, tanuki, kitsune, long-necks (I just have to mention the long-neck that participated in the Raid on Takeshi Castle Special that Horacio sent; other participants included the supernatural hero group from GeGeGe no Kitaro, a bunch of Ultraman monsters, a family of hopping vampires, the 3 Musketeers, AstroBoy, Frankenstein...), the snow maiden from KWAIDAN.

OAN. At the end is a section for suggested reading.
GURPS CHINA, Magic and Adventure in the Empire of the Dragon by Thomas M. Kane is also from Steve Jackson Games, published in 1991. The history covers from prehistoric China to the events in Chienanmen Square. What else can you say about a book that recommends A CHINESE GHOST STORY and ZU: WARRIORS OF THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN, and the bibliography includes Van Gulik's Judge Dee mysteries, ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS, ROMANCE OF THREE KINGDOMS, and RED STAR No hopping vampires, but there are ear centipedes, fox spirits and white monkeys (hey, I saw that movie!).

On to the Men-at-Arms Series published by Osprey Publishing Ltd in London. Mark described them in his contribution. The first one of interest is SAMURAI ARMIES 1550-1615, text by S.R. Turnbull, #86. Illos come from old scrolls, prints, and samurai movies. there are the lovely color plates, paintings by Richard Hook.

THE BOXER REBELLION by Lynn E. Bodin, plates by Chris Warner, #95, with lots of photos, some maps, a diagram of the Legation Quarter.

THE MONGOLS, text by S.R. Turnbull, color plates by Angus McBride, #105, with maps, a battle maneuver, Genghis Khan's family tree, and paintings of Mongols in Russia, China and Japan and elsewhere, plus illos from contemporary paintings and prints.

ANCIENT CHINESE ARMIES 1500-200BC, text by C.J. Peers, color plates by Angus McBride, #218, with maps, ancient weapons from tombs and terracotta warriors, plus a section on 10 decisive battles during the historic period, and a bibliography.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S ENEMIES (4): ASIA, AUSTRALASIA AND THE AMERICAS, text by Ian Knight, color plates by RIchard Scollins, #224, includes the Opium Wars, campaigns in Bhutan and Tibet, Burma, Borneo, New Zealand (a fascinating culture - see the movie UTU!).

Osprey is also publishing an Elite Series, with more color plates, more pages, and more expensive. THE SAMURAI, Warriors of Medieval Japan 940-1600, text by Anthony J. Bryant, and color plates by Angus McBride, # 23, with more pictures of historic armor, a photo of the Golden Pavilion (I thought it looked tacky), a color plate with Minamoto Yoshitsune and Musashibo Benkei, a panorama of the Mongol invasion of 1281, Nobunaga with drawn sword, and various characters at the battle of Sekigahara (including Masamune with eyepatch).

ATTILA AND THE NOMAD HORDES with text by David Nicolle PhD, color platest by Angus McBride, Elite Series #30, with chronology from 200 to 1200 AD (Genghis Khan), and a small bibliography. Photos are of clay tomb figures, ancient scroll and wall paintings, drawings of arrowheads, development of the saddle, fortification diagrams, paintings of Huns, Turks, Uighurs, Khirgiz, Bulgars, a fighting Finn princess.

EARLY SAMURAI 200-1500 AD by Anthony J. Bryant, color plates by Angus McBride, Elite Series #35, from Himiko to Ashikaga Takauji,

armor, armor and morearmor.

In passing, I mention a booklet I picked up in England in 1979, MEN IN ARMOUR, in the Wolfe Historical Dress-a-Doll Series, only 60 pence, with paper doll soldiers and their armor, from Greek to a cuirassier, including a 12th century samurai.

Two former Maffapans and I went to S.F. Chinatown to see a Chinese movie, in a theater, for the first time in YEARS! Only 3 theaters are left. The World was running a movie with guns. The Pagoda had a movie with guns. Posters were up for ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 2 and THE STORY OF RICKY (based on a Japanese sadistic prison comicbook called Riki-oh. The Kenshiro-type hero, in jail for most of the story, punches a hole in the prison wall at the end (of the animated version) and walks out. GHOST PUNTING was playing at the Great Star, so we entered, in time for prevues. COME FROM CHINA has some fast martial arts and gun fights, but we also had to sit through the Xrated prevues for DEMON WETNURSE. (Bleah) GHOST PUNTING starts with a drug dealer being murdered by his girlfriend, her husband and his The original Winners and Sinners team are again jobless and trying to feel up any attractive women around. "Mr Magic", who thought he was invisible, this time thinks he can summon spirits to possess people. His roommates play along, for awhile. Following a pretty girl into a record shop, he possesses himself with the spirit of a great lover and tries to possess the girl next to him. But by mistake he touches a guy, who coyly looks at him then drags him out for coffee. Of course he knows the most about ghost hunting. Hearing a ghost moan in an empty house, the 5 get some lovely lady cops to investigate. Their ploy to dope the ladies with sleeping pills in their congee backfires. (You're supposed to take the pills out of the bottle first, dummy!) They all go to the house late at In the anteroom is a guardian spirit. And the place is haunted, by a dominant lusting female spirit and a wimpy male. Valenis forced to kiss the female spirit and, with Mr. Magic's help, drains her life force. The male ghost temporarily possesses one of the ladies, to get past the guardian spirit to the world outside. So now the guys are stuck with a ghost only they can see and hear. offers a quid pro quo, he'll help them with their schemes if they'll help him get even with his girlfriend and her gang. (Yes, it's the drug dealer.) He tries to help with their plans to win money, gambling a mah jong, poker, dice, but something always goes wrong. ghost finds his girlfriend, and the guys set up a sting. They and the ghost, followed by one of the lady cops, wind up at a warehouse in a fight with the thugs. But only Chubby (Samo Hung) can fight. Faced with a fighter, Dummy says, "Possess me!", then gets beat up by the thug. Sorry, the ghost doesn't know how to fight. "OK, possess him!" says Dummy, pointing to the thug, who then is able to knock him out. "Possess him," says Dummy, pointing to another one. By now there are only 2 thugs and 2 heroes on their feet. Except for the girlfriend and the lady cop, in a vicious fight with each other. The ghost won't possess one thug (he stinks), and theother (the boss) has a powerful "samadhi" (spiritual aura?), too powerful for the ghost. Psychic flames shoot from the boss's head and shoulders. The stinker knocks out Dummy, and Chubby must deal with the remaining villains, both mean fighters. He has some difficulty but is able to defeat them. The ghost is happy that his murder is avenged, as the police arrive and haul the thugs away. Except for the ghosts, GHOST PUNTING is another Winners and Sinners (Lucky Stars) rehash. Sure it's funny, with some good fights, but there's nothing original in it. ghost usually can't affect material objects (his hands pass through a phone), yet he is able to untie one of the guys, trapped and bound in the warehouse. At least when he's out during the day, he wears a weird pyramid hat to protect himself against the sunlight.

DRAGON FATTY TIGER. SCHOOL FOR VAMPIRES is the Police Academy movie formula. The movie starts with several kyonshi (hopping vampires) stalking and surrounding a young man. Is he in danger? No, it's just the final exam at the kyonshi school run by a Taoist and his student (and a cute little girl). Why the living are teaching the dead how to act, I don't know. Why the dead would want to be kyonshi, instead of resting in their graves, I don't know. It didn't have sub-There's a fight between the kyonshi and students at a rival school, one for living Taoist magicians. The magician students lose (but still are alive). The kyonshi graduates hop away (to where?), and the new recruits are --, well, their bodies are lying on mats They're revived and (I assume) asked if they want to in the shed. become kyonshi. "Me!" "Me!" ("wa" "wa" "wa") The problem is that they don't look, or even act, dead. They're dressed in regular clothes and don't hop. Nora and I wonder if they're really dead. Their voices echo a bit, and that's all. Their training at the school?? The same as in Police Academy! They're out running around, climbing over barricades, swinging on ropes, in broad daylight. (Whoa! What's going on here?) The recruits are several men and women and a little boy who has a problem with the barricades. They run, they walk, they trip and stumble. They feel pain and exhaustion. (Huh?) But they learn to work as a team, become friends and cooperate. The rival teacher tries spying and sabotage several times, but it's always discovered, and he's beaten up or bonked, and tossed out. The little girl teaches the boy her style of kung fu and how to use a slingshot. One kyonshi dislikes kyonshi food and pesters the girl for her food during meals. A normal kyonshi no longer needs a restroom. food pervert does. The students hope and act like kyonshi only when they're wearing the black robes and silly feathered hats. One student is terrified of sticking his head in a tub of water. Flashback - murdered by his wife and her lover, by drowning in a tub of water. students have a wonderful night terrifying the wife and lover, for revenge. The inferior Taoist teacher gets an evil Taoist to aid in his revenge against the kyonshi school. (This new Taoist in his robes looks too much like the kyonshi teacher.) The Taoist magic students trap the kyonshi with magic torches and scrolls. The little girl gets some grapes for the food pervert kyonshi. He gobbles them down then extinguishes the torches with his water. (Why couldn't one of the humans snuff the torch?) The kyonshi knock down the scrolls with slingshots. The Taoists fight, with the kyonshi teacher losing, until his students come to his rescue, and force the evil Taoist to surrender. The kyonshi "police academy" was a cute idea, a dumb movie.

I saw ACES: IRON EAGLE III, starring Lou Gossett, and with Shinichi Chiba and Horst Buchholz (from the Western remake of 7 SAMURAI) as fighter pilot veterans from WW II (looking a tad too young, eh?), in a war against a druglord in Peru. Chiba dies in a mid-air crash, to take out an escaping evil accomplice, a U.S. Air Force general. (Chiba must have enjoyed this scene. They aren't making many WWII fighter films in Japan these days.) Gossett gets the rebuilt American fighter plane and decides to call it "Shadow Warrior" (yes!!), in honor of his fallen Japanese comrade.

Michael Crichton's Japan-bashing novel, RISING SUN, is being made into a film, with FX ("morphing") done by ILM. In the plot, a videotape of a murder (committed in a Japanese corporate building in L.A.) cannot be turned over to any film lab in L.A., due to all

the labs' ties to Japanese electronics firms. "Morphing" is the computer-enhanced effect used to turn the Terminator 2 killer android into anything, or Michael Jackson into a black cat.

THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN by "Annalise Sun", Pocket Books, December 1990, is a bodice ripper set during the Yukon gold rush of the 1890s. I kept wanting to sing "North to Alaska" while reading this drippy melodrama. The heroine is a blonde-tressed beauty stepping out of a Rogers and Hammerstein musical. She even sheds "golden tears". Cass Thornton is the daughter of an itinerant photographer, who slips on a rock and dies while photographing Chinese miners in the California Sierras. She inherits his photography wagon and business. She sets up in Seattle and is contacted by Lilac, the concubine/prostitute of a powerful West Coast tong leader. Lilac wants to free Tea Rose (the offspring of her brief love affair with Cass' father) from the clutches of the tong leader. She is aided by 2 brothers, King and Jared Duran, one a gold prospector, the other a merchant and shipper. Will the sisters find true love and/or passion with the 2 brothers? Will King find his mountain of gold "where the river is winding"? Can the reader survive such dialog as: "Ah, the honorable turtle stirs," Tea Rose said. "He is thirsty, great lord. Let him drink from me. "But you have no water for him," Tan said. "Where there are clouds, there is surely

STALKING THE ANGEL by Robert Crais, Bantam Books, April 1992, #2 in a series about hardboiled L.A. private eye, Elvis Cole. He and his partner, an ex-cop, are both martial artists, and he needs his skill in this case. A businessman eager to impress Japanese clients, borrows a rare old copy of the Hagakure (a manuscript written in the 18th century, outlining a code of behavior for samurai), which is then stolen. He hires Cole to find it, but things are never as simple as they appear. The businessman has been molesting his daughter; she occasionally escapes the house, to get involved with a tattooed yakuza (with the unlikely name Eddie Tang) and join a dwindling cult led by a Japanese guru. Naturally, there's a trail of bodies to follow, and a gang of imported yakuza to take on, since they have supposedly kidnaped the businessman's daughter and taken the Hagakure. All these L.A. private eye novels seem so similar. Isn't there always a dysfunctional family and a lost (physically or otherwise) relative? This one's OK, but nothing special.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER is a martial arts movie. It has the old guy (Donald Southerland) whose mission (through a hundred life times) is to train the girl, the Chosen One, to slay vampires. In this life time she practices flips and spinkicks, and throwing stakes into hearts like knives. Her opponent, the leader of the vampires (played by Rutger Hauer), uses a samurai sword at one point. It entertained me, but others might consider it too silly or frivolous.



KUNG FU II: Jet Li in director Tsui Hark's "Once Upon a Time in China 2," part of the Asian-American International Film Festival being screened at the French Institute.

By JAMI BERNARD

EARLIER this week, the exhila-rating Tsul Hark film "Once Upon a Time in China" was playing at Film Forum 1. So speedy are things in the Hong Kong action-picture market that the sequel, "Once Upon a Time in China 2," is upon us already, playing as part of the 15th annual Asian-American International Film Festival, opening tomorrow night with a tribute to Mira Nair ("Salaam Bombay!").
"China 2" shows all the signs of

having nearly eclipsed its predecessor, except that a funny thing happened on the way to wrapping.

An Asian friend explained that the film's star, Jet Li, was in-volved in a contract dispute shortly before the film finished off its big fight scenes, which explains why they are not the breathtakingly funny and dare-devil set pieces they usually are in a Tsui Hark movie. Cross-cutting and use of stunt doubles dilutes the Hark effect, which is usually as strong as a psychedelic drug.

On the other hand, this time the story line is easier to follow, as

are the main characters, Wong Fey Hong (Jet Li), his sidekick Fu, and his westernized "Aunt Yee" (Rosemund Kwan), who tries to introduce the guys to such Western conventions as forks and knives. They grapple with their unfamiliar food on a moving train

in a riotous Chaplinesque scene.
As in "China 1," there is an ongoing struggle in late Imperial China between hard-liners who treasure the old ways — in this case, the members of the nationalistic White Lotus sect, whose leader is apparently immune to everything modern, including bullets — and mod-ern thinkers, best exemplified by thoroughly modern Aunt Yee in her turn-of-the-century duds, and worst exemplified by the gruff-talking soldiers at the British consulate.

The White Lotus sect burns everything even moderately west-ernized — including, in a funny touch, a Dalmatian dog that can call to mind nothing more Western than a Disney movie. "It's got spots; it must be evil!" Meanwhile, at a medical conven-

tion, those silly Westerners with their theories about the nervous system are put in their place by a simple acupunture demonstration.

When riots break out, and both the "telegraph house" and the consulate — the only metaphoric links with the outside world — are under attack, it is time for those flying fists of fury, accompanied by explanations in the way that circus performers announce the trick they are going to do next. Among the inventive action scenes is one in which a wet rag is tamed as a lethal weapon ("Killer cloth!"), another in which even Aunt Yee makes mincemeat of an attacker ("Grappling hand!").

"Once Upon a Time in China 2" is only one film in a balanced program of 40, ranging from a classic Bruce Lee and a look at how Hollywood has portrayed Asians (not very well, and not very often) to Nagisa Oshima's quietly measured look at his mother and his roots in "Kyoto: My Mother's Place."

"I was very strangely influenced by Kyoto," Oshima admitted to the audience after his film was shown at last year's Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, adding that he hated his hometown "very much."

Oshima left his own two children for his mother to raise. "I was tricked into being a nurse-maid all my life," she remarks, remarkably. To which Oshima adds, "The Japanese family and the face of Japan is very strange."

For information about the twoweekend program, representing films by and about Asians from all over the world, call the hard-work-

FOR MATTAPA # 40 I'VE PREPARED ALL ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA I' MATERIAL. I LOVED HE TILM ALMOST AS MUCH AS PART I. IT'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IS DESCRIBED IN THE REVIEW ON THIS PAGE ONE OF THE MANY PLUSSES WAS AUNTE YEE SHOWN AS A STRONUER CHARACTER WITH ALOT MERE

DEPTH THAM IN PART ONE.

TIVE FAD ONE GOVELY, B. SAUTIFUL PERFORMAN(S

SO FAR THIS WHOLE SUMMER — AS BLEAK AS IT'S

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皓專 UPON A TIME IN CHINA II. Further

· 掲 the Martial Arts Master of the Ten Tigers Sect 黃飛 master Wong Fey Hong, the film is a nonstop of Kwangtung, arrives in Canton to attend a adventure set in Imperial China. Wong, who is chronicling the heroics of 19th century kung fu

进图 convention on comparative Chinese and 天白 Sun Yat Sen (the founder of the Republic of on a daring mission to defeat Kung's army, with named Kung, who is rumoured to have his flying fists and feet as his only weapons! supernatural powers. Undaunted, Wong sets out The leader of the sect is a mysterious man terrorized by the fanatical White Lotus Sect.

# (Hong Kong, 1992) Once Upon A Time in China II

個中 Produced by Tsui Hark and Ng See Yuen. Written by Tsui Source: Golden Harvest Films. Starring Jet Li, Xiong Xin Hark, Hanson Chan, Cheung Tan. Directed by Tsui Hark

赴廣州·因線

用「神佛之說

自强成爲每一

下滿白蓮教殘

**旱革命義士陸** 

smash with this super-action sequel, ONCE L Tsui Hark outdoes his original box-office

Western medicine. Upon his arrival, he meets China), who informs him that the city has been

bloody climatic fight between Wong and Commander Lan (Yen Chi Tan) in the market, surround the Temple before they have time to do so. The film concludes with a bitter and before it falls into the hands of the authorities, but unfortunately the Chinese troops

displaying one of the most exciting action sequences on screen.

and exiting under the nose of the enemy. When they all arrive at White Lotus Temple, decides to help them escape: he does this by disguising them as White Lotus Sect members

Wong now needs to take back the blue-print of the battle plan for the rebellion

At this point, Wong discovers who and what Sun Yat Sen and Luke really are and

Wong challenges Kung to a fight and beats him.

to arrest them as well.

Yat Sen and Luke are seen as enemies of the Emperor and so the Military receive orders Consulate, threatening to storm it, which causes the Chinese Military to intercede. Sun

This whole process does not please The White Lotus Sect, who surround the

in to rescue the students from this brutal attack and takes them to the British Consulate for

In the melee, he discovers Sun Yat Sen and Luke among the crowd and

The following day, Wong sees them attack a Foreign Language School and he steps

together they help treat the wounded.

protection.

of The White Lotus Sect, led by Kung (Xiong Xin Xin) who is reputed to have supernatural by the inn-keeper that this has been a regular occurrence for the last month and is the work and shared opinion as to how to help China's development in the world.

Wong Fey Hong (Jet Li), Martial Arts Masters of the Ten Tigers Sect of

The year is 1895, the place is Imperial China....

ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA II ( A Synopsis )

powers, including being impervious to firearms. His Sect is rioting about the influx of

foreigners and their bad influence on China and is out to destroy everything western.

【助孫文等人 **预护的一个** I下的一片青 **划主九官** 通人

# ON THE ANIME FRONT AND OTHER STUFF

BY PATRICIA GONZALEZ

# Ohayo everyone!

Congratulations on another fine issue of Maffapa.

Laurine - Sorry to hear of you getting sick. I hope you're felling better.

- I look forward to seeing you in that music video you performed in.
I'm happy to see you get another opportunity to perform. Hopefully,
there will be more to follow.

Jackie - I'm sorry I took so long to write you back. By the time this issue of Maffapa comes out, you will have gotten my reply.

# AND NOW FOR THE GOOD STUFF.

In this issue, I have enclosed the following:

Info on upcoming Japenese Animation Videos
 Synopsis on The Love <u>Suicides of Sonezaki</u> as performed by The National Puppet Theater of Japan ENJOY!



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Lady Battlecop
Special Rescue Command Solbrain Episodes 1 - 4

If anyone is interested, please write to me at the address below I don't mind trading these original tapes, since most of these tapes were either given to me or traded previously. Lately, it has been very difficult for me to find the titles mentioned above. You guys are my last hope.



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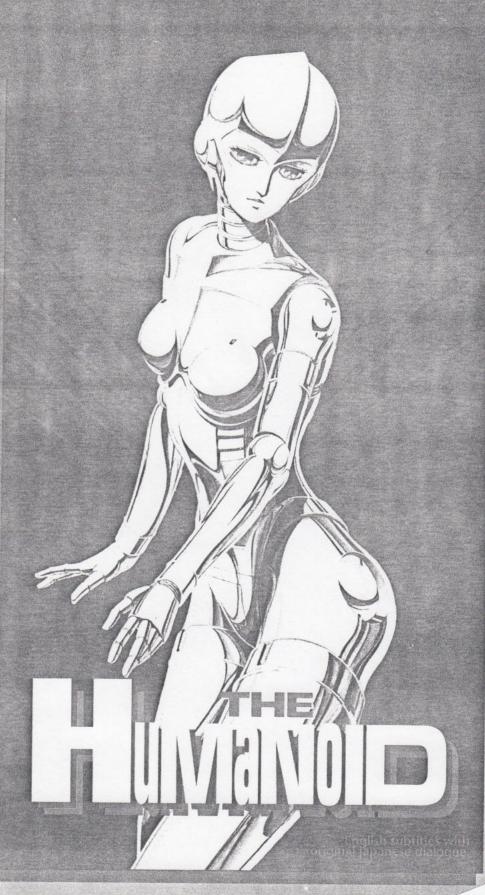
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Shamisen Musicians

Tsuruzawa Seiji

Takezawa Yasaburo • Nozawa Kin'ya Tsuruzawa Enjiro • Tsuruzawa Seijiro

Puppeteers

Yoshida Minosuke III • Kiritake Itcho

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Yoshida Seigoro • Yoshida Minoichiro • Yoshida Kan'ichi

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Hayashi Music

Producers

Mochizuki Tamekichi

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Hitoshi Hamatani Kanai Scene Shop

Mark Stanley

The New York presentation of BUNRAKU is with the cooperation of the Bunraku Association of Japan and the National Bunraku Theater, and is made possible in part by the financial support of The Japan Foundation. This engagement is also made possible in part by City Center 55th Street Foundation, Inc. and with the public funds it receives through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

25

# THE LOVE SUICIDES AT SONEZAKI (Sonezaki Shinju)

A Domestic Tragedy in Three Acts with Prologue

CHIKAMATSU MONZAEMON (1653-1725)

Text and Music Arranged by Nozawa Matsunosuke

The Love Suicides at Sonezaki was first performed at the Takemoto-za Theater in Osaka on June 20, 1703. The suicides depicted in the play had actually taken place only a month earlier, on May 22, and Chikamatsu Monzaemon was stirred by them to compose his first domestic tragedy. The play has sometimes been criticized for the excessive simplicity of its plot, but it remains one of his finest works, distinguished particularly by the beauty of the poetry of the michiyuki or love-journey that begins the final scene. The play was an immediate success, spawning a series of imitations. Chikamatsu returned to this theme repeatedly in later plays, using it as the framework for depicting the tragic conflict between social obligation and personal happiness that he saw in the daily life of contemporary urban society in Osaka and Kyoto.

Chikamatsu's domestic plays have been called "living newspapers." They vividly and realistically portrayed the events of contemporary life. In them, art seemed to imitate life. Or was it the other way round? In his day, love-suicides became so prevalent that the authorities in Osaka tried repeatedly to ban such plays from the stage, fearing that they might incite other unhappy lovers to die together. Chikamatsu neither praises nor condemns his heroes and heroines for their hopeless amorous involvements, but in these plays he often deplores the rigid social structure that set one class against another and the power of money over the fate of people in the merchant society. Most tragic of all, in his view, was the fate of young lovers doomed by their own emotions: the romantic, and deeply human, yearnings of individuals in conflict with the demands of society.

# PROLOGUE

## VISITING THE KANNON TEMPLES (Kannon-meguri)

...... Takemoto Mojihisadayu, Toyotake Rosetayu Shamisen Musicians . . . . . . . . . . . . Tsuruzawa Enjiro, Tsuruzawa Seijiro

OHATSU, A Courtesan . . . . . . . . . . . . . Yoshida Minosuke



In this brief—rarely performed—opening scene, Ohatsu, the beautiful young courtesan who is the heroine of the play, journeys in a pilgrimage to 33 Osaka temples dedicated to Kannon, the deity of compassion. She is employed by the Temmaya Tea House, but has fallen in love with Tokubei, an impulsive young clerk in a soy-sauce shop. He is 25, she 19. Since he has no money to redeem her contract, and since his employer-uncle is insisting that Tokubei marry his own daughter in order to inherit the shop, Ohatsu fears that their love is doomed. Alone, she visits the Kannon temples, praying for mercy and guidance.

In this production, puppeteer Minosuke performs the role of Ohatsu using a beautiful but archaic form of puppet. Unlike the complex, highly articulated three-man puppets of the Bunraku theatre that we know today, this small simple puppet is operated by Minosuke alone. This scene offers an extremely rare glimpse into the puppet theatre of Chikamatsu's own time and earlier. It was only later that the more complicated puppets were developed in order to portray the complex emotions Chika-

matsu and other playwrights were beginning to write for them.

The text of the prologue consists of an extended series of puns on the names of the temples Ohatsu visits. It combines pious prayers with snatches from popular songs of the pleasure quarter, quotations from classical poetry with local folk songs. The musical accompaniment to Ohatsu's mournful pilgrimage is a new composition by Tsuruzawa Seiji; the original music for this passage has been long lost.

# ACT I THE QUARREL AT IKUTAMA SHRINE (Ikutama Shazen no Dan)

Shamisen Musician Takezawa Yasaburo
* * *
TOKUBEI, A Soy-Sauce Merchant
OHATSU Yoshida Minosuke KUHEIJI, An Oil Merchant Yoshida Minotaro
A RUSTIC Yoshida Seigoro
TOWNSMEN
Toshida Semosuke, Toshida Tamaka, Toshida Kan ichi

The young soy-sauce merchant Tokubei meets his lover Ohatsu at a tea stall near the entrance of the Ikutama Shrine. When she gently accuses him of neglecting her, he tells her that he has been traveling in order to try to raise money. His uncle, owner of the soy-sauce shop where he works, wants to marry him to his own daughter, and

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had already arranged their engagement by giving Tokubei's adoptive mother a dowry. When Tokubei refused, saying that he loves only Ohatsu, his employer angrily demanded that the dowry be returned by April 7. Tokubei says that he rushed to his home village, and forcibly took back the dowry money, intending to return it to his employer. However, on the last day of March, he lent the money to his friend Kuheiji, an oil merchant, who needed cash for only one day. Kuheiji had promised to return the money by April 3rd, and even insisted on writing a promissory note even though Tokubei did not request one. It is now the 6th and Tokubei has been unable to find Kuheiji to collect the debt.

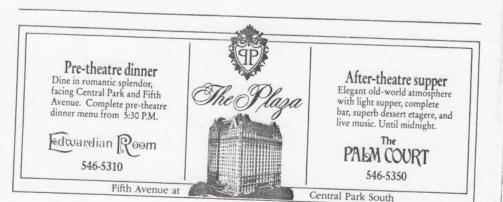
Just then Kuheiji enters, tipsy, accompanied by a band of revelers. He greets Tokubei warmly, but when Tokubei asks for his money back Kuheiji grows angry, claiming that he has never borrowed a penny in all the years they've been friends. When Tokubei produces the IOU, Kuheiji angrily denounces it as a counterfeit and loudly accuses Tokubei of both forgery and extortion. The seal on the note is his, but it is one he had lost a day or two before the date on the note. Clearly, he insists, Tokubei must have found his seal and forged the IOU. Tokubei has no evidence to defend himself, and attacks Kuheiji with his fists. Ohatsu and the townspeople break up the fight. Kuheiji stalks off, threatening to have Tokubei arrested, and Tokubei is left alone in frustrated helplessness.

### INTERMISSION

### ACT II

# THE DEATH PACT AT THE TEMMAYA TEA HOUSE (Temmaya no Dan)

Shamisen Musician
Shamisen Musician
Suruzawa Sejii
COURTESANS OF THE TEMMAYA Yoshida Minojiro, Yoshida Minoichiro OHATSU Yoshida Minosuke
TOKUBEI Yoshida Minosuke
HOST OF THE TEMMANA Kiritake Itcho
KUHEIJI Yoshida Tamaki
KUHEIJI
OTAMA, a maid
befallen Tokubei. Ohatsu enters moure fall gossiping about the troubles that have
chatter. She sees Tokubei outside and ones them to stop their malicious
anger and by his conviction that only by killing himself will he be able to clear his



name. When the host of the Temmaya calls Ohatsu in, she hides Tokubei under her robe and counsels him under the floor of the house. Soon Kuheiji arrives, intoxicated and boisterous. He regales the gathering with his story of Tokubei's crime, and warns them to be on their guard. Weeping, Ohatsu exclaims that Kuheiji should not speak ill of his old friend and should give Tokubei a chance to prove his innocence.

An emotional three-way conversation ensues between Ohatsu, Kuheiji and Tokubei, who silently mimes his responses from beneath the floor. When Ohatsu says that Tokubei must have resolved to kill himself, he confirms it by taking her ankle in his hands and passing it across his throat. When she exclaims that she too is ready to die, and wonders if Tokubei would die with her, he signals his willingness by pressing her foot to his forehead. Without a word spoken between them, they fully understand each other's intent.

Complaining that Ohatsu is too morbid for his taste, Kuheiji sweeps out with the other courtesans in search of merrier drinking spots. After the Temmaya's host locks the door and retires for the night, the house falls silent. Ohatsu creeps from her room and extinguishes the light. Tokubei emerges from under the floor, and they try to depart. The door makes a racket as they try to open it. Timing the sound of the door opening to the rasping sound of the flint the maid strikes to light the lamp, they finally manage to escape into the night.

### ACT III

# THE JOURNEY TO THE TENJIN WOODS AT SONEZAKI (Michiyuki: Tenjin-mori no Dan)

Choreography by Sawamura Tatsunosuke

	Takemoto Tsukomadayu, Takemoto Mojihisadayu, Toyotake Rosetayu
Shamisen Musicians	Nozawa Kin'ya, Tsuruzawa Enjiro, Tsuruzawa Seijiro

	Kiritake Itcho
TOKUBEI .	
OHATSU	
OII/IIIO	

The joruri lyrics that open this scene comprise one of the most famo the Bunraku repertory, and contain some of the most beautiful poetry in Japanese theatrical literature:

"Farewell to this world, and to the night farewell.

We who walk the road to death, to what should we be likened?

To the frost by the road that leads to the graveyard,

Vanishing with each step we take ahead.

How sad is this dream of a dream!"



# THE RUSSIAN TEA ROOM

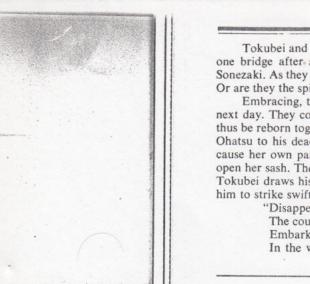
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Tokubei and Ohatsu stumble through the dark streets of the sleeping city, crossing one bridge after another, until they finally arrive in the misty Tenjin Woods, near Sonezaki. As they walk, they are haunted by visions of dead spirits. Are they their own? Or are they the spirits of other lovers who had preceded them on this road to death?

Embracing, they speak of the scandal that their deaths will certainly provoke the next day. They console themselves that they are lucky to be able to die together, and thus be reborn together in the next world. Tokubei's joy at soon being able to introduce Ohatsu to his dead parents causes her to think regretfully of the grief her death will cause her own parents, who are still alive. They pray together, and then Ohatsu cuts open her sash. The two lovers use it to bind themselves together as they prepare to die. Tokubei draws his sword but is unable to use it on his beloved Ohatsu until she urges him to strike swiftly. Whispering their final prayers, the young lovers die together.

"Disappering like drops of dew, The couple departs from this world of sorrow, Embarking on a long journey, like a dream, In the woods of Sonezaki."



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# JACQUELINE D. SIMS 309 16TH AVENUE NORTH BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA 35204-2163

After reading issue no. 38 of MAFFAPPA (which I received March 05, 1992) I decided to write to Amy Harlib to take her up on her offer for a fellow Maffappan to come up and see her performance and be a guest in her home.

I couldn't come up to see her April 05,1992 performance so I offered to come up and see her April 25, 1992 performance in Pennsylvania and offer moral support since in my own job as a state government employee I very rarely hear anyone tell me I did a good job. It would be nice to hear those words at least once in a while.

Anyway Amy agreed with my offer so I began training someone to take my place while I was off on vaction the last two weeks in April 1992. I also went to the Greyhound bus station to buy a round trip ticket to New York City on their supersaver plan. The ticket agent asked me if I was sure I wanted to buy that ticket because once I purchased that ticket I wouldn't be able to get my money back. (needless to say the ticket was non-refundable).

Then I received a letter from Amy saying it wouldn't be possible for me to stay with her after all; so I was forced to make alternate plans.

I managed to get the addresses of some hotels through the Travel and Convention Center of New York City. The hotel I stayed in was clean but somewhat less that spectacular. The first thing I said to myself when I got to New York City was "It has got to get better than this."

I must thank fellow Maffappa contributor Patricia Gonzalez again for making my trip to New York City bearable.

I was like a kid in a candy store in the shops Patricia showed me. We just don't have stuff like that here in Birmingham Alabama.

She showed me both Books Nippon shops and Forbidden Planet shops where I found a lot of books and magazines that I otherwise would have had to special order. I even found a Jademan book I have seen in Victor Lim's contributions.

Patricia Gonzalez also treated me to a meal at a Japanese restaurant named "Dosanko". The pork dumplings were great as were the Marinated Fried Chicken and Yarisoba (which I was also able to get in a doggie bag to be eaten later).

I had a wonderful time with Patricia. I don't think I could ever live in the City of New York though because the pace there is too fast for me; even the subways are fast; small wonder why

New Yorkers always look like they are in a hurry in movies and on television. (smile)

I spent Friday April 24th travelling to New York City. I spent Saturday April 25th and part of Sunday April 26th, 1992 (which was also my 29th birthday) in a strange city.

Amy and I couldn't meet because of her performing schedule and because I was more than ready to go home by Sunday evening.

I am glad I got to see the City that was the setting of my favorite television show "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST".

I doubt I ever make it back up to New York at this point but if I ever do I hope things turn out better than they did this time.

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It seemed that once my amateur kung-fu film HOT DOGS ON THE RUN (4 years in the making!) was completed, I'd be able to devote more time to my neglected fanzine O.C. But ironically, the current issue of this unique publication is due for completion next month, just four months after the completion of the film. So now, with both projects finished, it's time to move on.

In the fanzine department, I'm disillusioned. There may never be another issue of O.C. after this. My readership is growing, but only about 5% offer any comments or feedback. The fact that so many people buy it is nice, but commercial success is not what matters to me. I'd rather fade back into obscurity; cutting my readership down to 25%, if they'd all communicate with me and keep it a social scene for the benefit of fans. O.C. has never completely sold-out to the masses though, it's still entirely non-profit. But I have so many readers and I can't possibly afford to continue making enough O.C.s for everybody. It's too much work for one person. I have two options:

1. Leave the mass copying and distributing to a major publisher, and thus tolerate their conservative, corporate standards. No doubt O.C. would lose its uniqueness, guts, brilliance, and

underground appeal.



2. Keep O.C. a secret! Only sell it to the most persistent readers; those who take the time out to write and give me a pat on the back for my valiant efforts. As far as freedom of expression goes, obscurity is where it's at!

Ah, yes, freedom of expression. Back when O.C. was underground and



virtually unknown, I could get away with saying whatever the hell I wanted. But in the last year or two, due to excess readers, I've had to begin printing way more copies than I can handle! Now that I'm printing nearly 200 copies of each issue, more and more people are becoming aware of me, and I must now watch what I say! Being an honest person, I've always told the truth, after all, I've got nothing to hide, why should anyone?! Well, numerous individuals have recently accused me of slander because of things I've said in O.C. Personally, I feel I've never done anything wrong, and I've always felt that professionals are money-grubbing slimeballs, and these last couple of years have proved it.

So because of corporate pressure, O.C. may die or change. If it changes, it will be either a subdued, toned-down newsletter, or a commercialized, ass-kissing magazine. Either way, the corrupt, conservative oppressors win again.

Things are slightly better in the amateur film department. HOT DOGS ON THE RUN has been praised by everyone who's viewed this feature-length satire. The flick was a bitch to produce, and I swore my movie-making days were long gone. Yet once it was completed, I felt it would be a shame to quit now! Me and my fellow



actors have gotten good at this crap, so plans are underway for our next independently produced movie! This one will be more diverse, more accessible, and will have much more exposure to fans of various genres: horror, comedy, fantasy, kung-fu, superheroes, and sci-fi. Because of my involvement in magazines like FILM THREAT and INDEPENDENT VIDEO, it shouldn't be hard to reach a large audience, as both mags cater to underground films.

Anyway, as you can see, my energy is more channeled to movie-making than fanzines. If you're an O.C. reader who wishes to threaten me about something I've written, give it a rest. I don't need any more abuse like that. However, if you're a fan of amateur films, I'd be glad to hear from you. Anyway, for now, here's my article for this edition of MAFAPPA:

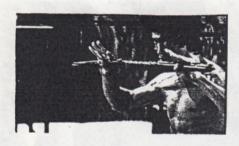
GROWING UP ON FAR EASTERN FILMS

This here original writing is being done on my break at work. Tonight, work is slower than a handicapped snail on downers, so it's hard to say exactly what is considered a true lunch break and what is considered waiting around. But on incredibly boring nights like this, my

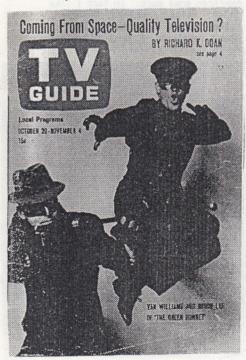




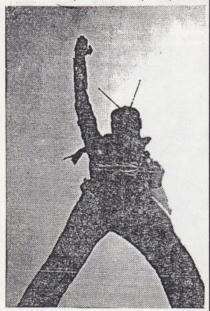
mind wanders. Once it wandered to a restaurant and ordered a meal I couldn't pay for. So for once in my painfully long, often pointless life, I actually had time to kill. Usually, time flies quickly, like the time I threw my watch off a cliff. This would be the perfect opportunity for me to write my current report on whatever for MAFAPPA. You see, normally I wait until the very last minute and often miss the deadline. Somehow, because of my various projects like my pretentious publication ORIENTAL CINEMA AND VIDEO, my film and video making hobbies, working heavy hours at a pre-press 4-color/lay-out and graphics facility, almost daily car repairs, complex social life, various addictions, suicide attempts, saving up for a much needed hair transplant, and acrobatic exercises, I sometimes find it very difficult to find time for this regular column in MAFAPPA. On occasion, I write for other magazines like FILM THREAT. ZETRAMAN, and MARKALITE. My first exposure



to Asian stuff was in the 1960s, shortly after my first exposure to existence. I was born in 1964, but was too young at the time to remember the fateful event. Some time afterwards, I observed oriental action in the form of TV heroes. ASTROBOY, ULTRAMAN, GIGANTOR and Bruce Lee as Kato in



GREEN HORNET turned me into an addict, hopelessly addicted to Far Eastern films, TV, culture, and good, honest, kick-me-in-the-headtil-I-bleed-from-the-ears violence. By the late 1960s, I was a hyperactive brat who always got into fights. Many Local neighborhood twerps became weary of my nasty temper and equally nasty I remember one kid fists. showering me with a constant flood of punches I so valiantly blocked with my face. My rebellious beatnik phase of the 1960s became my rebellious hippie phase of the 1970s. Although David Carrotdick's (whatever his name is) KUNG FU TV show was okay, I had gotten more into the science fiction swing of things brought on by more of Asia's most under-rated exports: Japan's Godzilla, Korea's Yongary and a dozen other monster movies. I made Super-8mm movies which were not only amateur, but immature, and with all the entertainment value of watching Claude Akins do a striptease. My childish films of the 1970s were partially animated (models & claymation) and partially live-action, and heavily inspired



by the Godzillian adventures from Toho. Also at about this time (roughly 1971), I made a series of hand-made comic books with art-work so awful it makes me wanna' disown my hands. Like the films, these unimaginative stories were blatant rip-offs of the Japanese monster movies, but with an occasional karate chop thrown in for bad measure. The turning point for me came about in around 1975 when I decided I'd rather critique the

professionals rather than imitate them. JAPANESE MONSTERS was a staggeringly bad, xeroxed newsletter which (thankfully) never made it past a small circle of friends of relatives. It covered



everything I was into at the time; theatrical big-shots like Godzilla and Gamera, to obscure superheroes like Kamen Rider and Raideen. In 1977, I discovered Greg Shoemaker's generalissimo of Asian fanzines, that ground-breaking bible JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL. Though overly technical, serious, and on occasion dull as Lawrence Welk, it paved the way for dozens of imitations by other fanzines across the country. JFFJ's influence on an 11 year old me, plus my then recent discovery of new Japanese superheros like IRON KING and KIKAIDER obsessed me to drop JAPANESE MONSTERS like a hot rattlesnake carrying the HIV virus. Its follow-ups were a number of slightly better fanzines like JAPANESE MONSTERS AND SUPERHEROS and JAPANESE MOVIE SCI-FI. Somehow, in between these fanzines, the continuation of the hand-made comic books, and amateur films I'd started years earlier, ORIENTAL CINEMA arose. O.C.'s debut was in either 1977 or 1978, and started looking even worse (!) than JAPANESE MOVIE SCI-FI!





The whole reason O.C. showed it's ugly head was because of my growing love of martial arts which I had some interest in ever since I saw Kato (Bruce Lee) on TV in the 1960s. In the mid-1970s, my general interest in foreign TV from all parts of the world increased. Not only had I expanded my horizons on different Asian genres, but had discovered an instant love for British comedy, too. Having seen MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS and FAWLTY TOWERS at such an impressionable age, it helps to explain my silly outlook on things. In the late 1970s, my love of mock violence returned, thanks to foreign programming (due to the Bay Area's large Asian population) on UHF. Sonny Chiba's crime drama GUERRILLAS SEVEN, Toshiro Mifune's HAWK OF JUSTICE, and the Toei superhero program GORANGERS were TV shows that revived my interest in two-fisted action. I took to these programs the way Joan Collins takes to sperm. Unique adventures like these were part of what drove me to crank out O.C. I also misinterpreted this obsession with films and media to be a love the martial arts themselves. I took lessons in a number of styles including Bok Fu, Tang Su Do, Kempo, and of course, Tae Kwon Do, and although I never got a really high rank, I became confident I could kick ass if I was in a bad enough mood. Regardless, after a few years of this and gymnastics, I came to realize I was

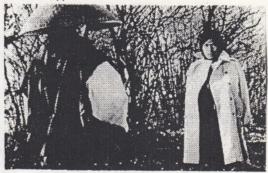


only into the art-of-kicking-the-groin-500-different-ways from a theatrical, fictional standpoint and not an athletic one. I had begun using public transportation to get me to two local heavens: Japan Center (a Japanese shopping center) and Chinatown. Both had book stores, both had theatres. I saw tons of samurai and kung fu thrillers I could never see anywhere else because they'd be rated 'R' in American theatres. Lousy bastards.



My long-haired, scraggly hippie look of the 1970s died along with the 1970s, to make way for a cleaner, though equally rebellious techno-punk look. But on the inside, I was the same old cynical. Asian film fan generally outcasted for not being with the conservative 'in' crowd. O.C. continued, and improved considerably. I had ceased making amateur films once that electric upstart, video, kicked in. I started experimenting with my then new video camera, the result of which being some vaguely entertaining stories. The VHS

revolution affected me significantly, as I could now get all the kung fu, samurai, giant monster and superhero movies I wanted. My room attracted videotapes like fat flocks to a motherin-law. I bought more videotapes than there are patriotic American flags in Alabama. Home entertainment system aside, O.C. benefitted too, thanks to the bookstores mentioned earlier. Photos to illegally copy and rare info abound! In more recent years, my knowledge of oriental films has increased. I now like damn near everything. My only major dislike is Japanese cartoons because of their massive acceptance in this country. Otherwise, I'm into superheroes, monsters, Sci Fi, fantasy, horror, old chop socky romps, historic dramas, cultural historicals, H.K.'s modern action thrillers, the gonsis of China, and the Mananangals (vampire heads!) of the Philippines.



In retrospect, I've been labeled radical, cynical, and unpatriotic by paranoid readers because I always compare Asian films to American ones, and always seem to say the American ones suck. In fact I like all films; Asian, American, European, etc. They're all equal but because of the way I evolved, I tend to relate better to the Far Eastern stuff.



Greetings, all. Only two Japanese films on TV since last time, and only one I'd not seen.

One Wonderful Sunday (1947) was a somewhat un-Kurosawa-like film, to say the least. It was a light contemporary story (with no corporate corruption, kidnappings or other heavy stuff) about an impoverished pair of lovers trying to enjoy their Sunday off in the overpriced, black-market ridden, partially ruined Tokyo of the immediate postwar period. He is rather glum and depressed because they seem unlikely to get enough money to marry and rent an apartment and while he has an honest job, the real money seems to go to those in the black market. She also has a lowly-paid job but tries to be cheerful about it and it is her imagination, humour and optimism that jollies him out of his despondency at various points in the film.

Music plays a big part in the film, either as a humorous accompaniment to certain action (after joining in a boys' baseball game and hitting a home run, Yuzo struts off to retrieve the ball from a cakeshop to the strains of the Toreadors March from <u>Carmen</u>; another time they are inspecting a new, cheaply built house for sale to the ironic strains of "My Blue Heaven"); or as actual music in the background such as in a nightclub or in a record-shop. Both types come together at the end when they are in an open-air concert-hall and Yuzo pretends to be conducting the Unfinished Symphony while Masako pretends to hear it.

You can tell it's a Kurosawa film, nonetheless. Apart from the fact there's the obligatory heavy rainstorm, it isn't as fluffy as a similar Hollywood film would be. It isn't all whimsey. There are darker moments - Yuzo's depression which Masako tries to lighten by going to the exhibition house and pretending it's their home (he accuses her of being too romantic), his humiliating experience at the nightclub where he goes to see an old war friend who runs it and is taken for yet another beggar, their encounter with a dirty street kid who offers to pay them for their rice-cake which they give to him for nothing but his cynical hardness way beyond his years depresses Masako most. Here it is Yuzo's turn to bring her out of it. They go to a zoo and are just like kids remembering their excitement and run from cage to cage while Yuzo makes humorous comments on the animals. A sudden thunderstorm cuts this short and they decide to go to a concert to hear the Unfinished Symphony but scalpers who buy up all the cheap seats thwart that idea. After getting ina fight, Yuzo takes Masako back home but they quarrel, then reconcile over a cup of coffee for which they are overcharged and Yuzo has to leave his coat as payment of the difference. This inspires Yuzo to rekindle their dream of owning their own coffee-shop, Hyacinth, and the two plan the decor until some rough trade arrive and scare them off. They end up at the empy concert-hall where Yuzo pretends to conduct the Unfinished. This leads to the film's one cringe-making sequence. Yuzo falters and loses heart so Masako starts to encourage him to continue "conducting" culminating in a direct appeal to the cinema audience to applaud him and all impoverished lovers like them. This was rather naff in my view as it reminded me of a Peter Pan pantomime where the audience is told to applaud so Tinkerbell can come back to life. And like Tinkerbell, Yuzo revives to continue conducting and Masako rushes into his arms, the first time they had real close physical contact in the film as prior to that there was a physical distance between them as if they didn't know how to touch one another. The film ends with them happily waiting for a tram and making plans for next Sunday.

The two leads were very fresh and natural and it was a very pleasant film. Despite that one lapse into oversentimentality, the reality of the lovers' world and their awareness of it kept it evenly balanced between whimsey, humour and life-as-it-is. One aspect which could not have been intended at the time is that it shows a very different 'contemporary' Japan from even that of the 1950s films of Ozu, etc., one where there is a lot of poverty, black marketeering is a normal part of life, things are tough and prices inflated. In that, it is as much a period film as Rashomon or Yojimbo. I recall a review of Rashomon that said something to the effect that although the film depicted a country in chaos and a city in ruins, the audience knew that shortly after that, Kyoto entered one of its most splendid phases (the reviewer was under the misapprehension that the film was set in the 7th century rather than the time of the Onin War). Something similar is true of this film, though it would not have been so at the time of its making, as we know of Japan's "economic miracle" of the 60s onwards. One would like to think that Yuzo got a job with Sony, Matsushita or Toyota and ended up a senior executive.

### Judge Dee Mysteries

For a long time I'd assumed that the five novels by Robert Van Gulik (The Chinese Bell Murders, The Chinese Lake Murders, The Chinese Maze Murders, The Chinese Gold Murders and The Chinese Nail Murders) which are readily available here in Sphere paperback were all he wrote on the good Judge.

However, recently I came across three novellas in a recent reprint by a Singapore company in the local Collins bookshop. These are *The Emperor's Pearl*, *The Lacquer Screen* and *Tiger and Snake*. From these I discovered a whole lot more, most of which appear not to have been reprinted here since the early to mid-60s when they were first published. Fortunately most of them are held, in their 60s editions, by the local public library system.

So after reading the above three, I borrowed and read, The Phantom of the Temple. The others the library system has are: The Haunted Monastery, Judge Dee At Work, Murder in Canton, Necklace and Calabash, Poets and Murder, The Red Pavilion and The Willow Pattern.

These are done in much the same way as the longer works with a historical note and illustrations by the author. They often tie in with one of the novels, being set in the same as one or other of them, in the same district or city. Unlike the novels, there are usually not three major cases but one with a couple of side incidents to make up the three. An ex eption, so far, has been The Phantom of the Temple where all three cases were connected and actually one whole case. It was one of the most convoluted I've read. Also the Judge is not accompanied by all his henchmen. Two or more of the 4 are missing on business or left behind or something. In the second story in Tiger and Snake, the Judge is alone, returning to the capital to take up a high position. Another feature is that the erotic element seems stronger with various of his lieutenants getting involved with nubile ladies, and pictures of naked or half-naked maidens and not-so maidens. On the other hand (so far) the sometimes supernatural element to be found in the novels is not found. They are just as enjoyable as as the longer works and I'm glad I found them, that there are more adventures of Judge Dee to be enjoyed for a little while yet.

The Island of Ogres by Lensey Namioka, Harper & Row, 1989. This is another one out of the public library as they are hard to get here. I have in my collection only two in the series, The Samurai and the Long-nosed Devils and The Village of the Vampire Cat. I agree with Laurine about the naff cover (assuming it's the same one). The young samurai looks like Standard-Teen-Idol-in-Chambara-TV-series, especially the anachronistic hairdo.

I enjoyed this as much as the other two I've read. I particularly liked Yuri and her cat (who seemed a sort of feudal Japanese Garfield). The latter's behaviour was oh-so typical of one of the feline persuasion (to err might be human but to really stuff things up you need a cat, not a computer). I have three Siamese so I know whereof I speak. The young ronin, Kajiro, was appealing, too, as he regained his self-confidence and conditioning. Also interesting was Lady Sada, the strong-willed wife of the garrison commander.

The story basically concerns a ronin, Kajiro, who comes to an island under orders to spy on the garrison commander there. Instead, he is mistaken for Zenta, the hero of this series, a master swordsman, and finds himself embroiled in a plot to overthrow the local daimyo, missing chickens and dogs, and sightings of ogres. There is one genuinely creepy scene where he is poking around at midnight in a hostile farmers' village and hears in one of the sheds - slobbering. The only thing I found a bit annoying was the persistent references to the 'guest' when his identity was obvious (about halfway through the book).

Since I've got about half a page left (result of going overboard in trying to squeeze everything and using micron 15 pitch at the start), I'll mention another book I read recently which has a martial arts content, though not Asian. This was a novel by Richard Ben Sapir, The Far Arena(Pan,1979). Basically, it concerns a Roman gladiator, Eugenianus, who is found frozen in the Arctic sea by oil prospectors and 'thawed' out (shades of Swordkill but at least no one mistakes him for Mifune Toshiro!) There's a lot on gladiators and their fighting techniques - he even is pitted against an Olympic fencing champion at one point. It is well written and thoughtful as we see things not only from the group of people who are involved in his rescue (a Norwegian nun, a Russian cryogenicist and a Texan company geologist) but also from Eugenianus's point of view, particularly his memories. The ending is somewhat different from Swordkill though and does leave the way open for a sequel if the author wanted to do one. Obviously a lot of thought and research must have gone into the questione of how gladiators fought, the style of swordsmanship as this is examined.

Actually, a number of historical novels set in Ancient Rome have 'chambara' scenes in them, apart from those old favourites from childhood involving legions and Gauls by people like Geoffrey Treece, Naomi Mitchison, Rosemary Sutcliff, etc. John Maddox Roberts' and Lindsay Davis's two series of detective novels set respectively in the late Republic and the reign of Vespasian make use of such scenes and discuss things like daggers and swordplay.

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