

ROBBIE DIERLINE JACKIE CHAN REVIEW

A couple of Jackie Chan's less known Hong Kong flicks



Police Story

BY NATHAN MAUGER
The Daily Evergreen

As American audiences finally begin to "discover" Hong Kong's incredible film industry, more of these films are being released on video at super-cheap prices. Companies like Simitar, BEST, and EPI (Entertainment Programs International) all have put double cassette sets on the market for less than ten bucks.

The films of Bruce Lee imitator Bruce Le (that's right, Le; after Lee died, Bruce-Leelikes, all named Bruce Le, Li, Leung, Liang, and so on, created an interesting sub-genre with the countless productions they churned out) are getting a wide distribution, but not on the scale of Jackie Chan's films.

As Chan's American following enlarges with films like Rumble In the Bronx (1995) and Police Story 3: Supercop (1992, titled only Supercop in the States) are getting theatrical releases by New Line Cinema, video distributors are rushing as many old Jackie Chan films onto the market as they can.

Sadly, this will not help Chan's

latest bid to gain popularity in the U.S. Most of these films are from his days with has-been director Lo Weih, and while some are good (EPI's double-feature of Snake and Crane: Arts of Shaolin and Dragon Fist, both 1978, is indispensable), this will only flood the market and give the impression that Chan is merely a "Kung Fu actor."

Perhaps Chan's best film ever, POLICE STORY (1986), is included in one of these 2-for-\$10 sets. Parade Video has a "Jackie Chan Rumble Pack," with "Jackie Chan's Police Force" (it's really Police Story) and Fists of Chan (1996). The latter barely deserves mention, it's merely a choppy, poorly produced collection of mostly boring fights from Chan's late-seventies films, but the original Police Story is a must see.

Jackie Chan's personal favorite of his films (he also directed it), Police Story is still innovative a decade later.

The plot has Chan playing Kevin Chan, a police officer in Hong Kong. He has to protect Selena Fung (Bridgette Lin Tsang Ha) from goons sent by her ex-boss, Ku (Cho Yuen), to make sure she doesn't live long enough to testify against Ku. The story is basically a setup for hilarious comedy sketches and lots of hyper-

martial artistry.

While Police Story's middle is superb, it's the beginning and ending that are most memorable. The finale is set in a large shopping mall, and has Chan going hand-to-hand with Ku's men. Nearly everyone involved in the end fights at one one point gets thrown, pushed, kicked, or flipped through glass windows, glass tables, glass walls, and mirrors. So much glass is broken that the crew dubbed the film "Glass Story."

For Western audiences unfamiliar with the stunt-heavy style of Hong Kong action movies, Police Story is a great introduction. The fight scenes are incredibly inventive, as with most Hong Kong action movies, and Chan the director knows how to make them exciting without being too brutal.

Police Story is a truly great film, and the "Rumble Pack" makes it more easily accessible in the U.S. But the "Rumble Pack" does have its drawbacks. As with all the other two-tape sets, the tapes are recorded in EP mode, insuring occasional tracking problems and bad picture. The "Rumble Pack" is definitely worth the \$10

Spiritual Kung Fu

BY NATHAN MAUGER
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When Jackie Chan was just beginning to forge a career for himself in the Hong Kong movie industry, he made a number of low-budget Kung Fu period films in Taiwan. Most were directed by Lo Wei, who had earlier directed Bruce Lee in his first two movies, The Big Boss (1971, retitled Fists of Fury for the U.S.) and Fist Of Fury (1972, retitled The Chinese Connection), before the two had a much publicized falling out.

Lo tried again and again to push Chan as a "new Bruce Lee" with a string of flops from 1976-78, beginning with New Fist Of Fury (1976).

One of the oddball entries in this genre is SPIRITUAL KUNG FU (probably made in 1977 or '78, the box doesn't say). It's more or less a standard 70's Kung Fu flick, but stands out because of its absurdity.

The plot is pure formula. The book of the Seven Fist Kung Fu style is stolen from the Shaolin Temple. This style is so deadly that no one at the temple has been taught it. Soon after, Luk Shin (James Tien, a regular costar in Chan and Bruce Lee films) begins killing the heads of all the major clans using the Seven Fist style, in an attempt to become leader of all the clans.

Chan plays a student of the Shaolin Temple. Somehow, five ghosts are released inside the temple, and he befriends them. As it turns out, the ghosts are each masters of a different animal style (snake, crane, tiger, etc.).

They teach Chan the five styles, along with the Five Fist style (the only style that can defeat the Seven Fist), which sets the stage for the finale, where Chan and Tien duke it out.

The awful special effects and even worse sound effects are what makes Spiritual Kung Fu different from

Chan's other films of the same period.

The ghosts are truly pathetic; they wear small rubber animals (probably also made in Taiwan) on their heads to signify their Kung Fu style. The extended comedy scenes with Chan and the ghosts are for the most part terrible, and the performances are especially hammy.

Fortunately, the fight scenes in Spiritual Kung Fu, choreographed by Chan himself. The end duel between Chan and Tien is fast and furious, and Chan gets to show off his formidable weapons skills in a great scene where he's tested by the Shaolin fighting monks.

It was only after he put his time in doing traditional Cantonese Kung Fu films for Wei that Chan became a star. Films like Fearless Hyena (1979) and Snake In The Eagle's Shadow (1978) enabled Chan to move on to bigger and better things after the '70s Kung Fu boom.

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