

JACKIE CHAN FILM CHECKLIST

Jackie Chan started his film career at the age of seven as a child actor, and appeared in over a hundred films, starting with his breaks in 'Big and Little Wong Tin-Bar' (1962) and a bit part in The World of Suzie Wong (1964), and including such forgettable movies as The Love Eternal (1963) as well as a few "blue" movies for Shaw Brothers Studio such as Golden Lotus, before moving on to Lo Wei Studios and Golden Harvest Studios.

"Our opera school was a popular place for directors and producers to come to pick a child actor if they needed one," Jackie said in a recent interview. He also has said, frankly, that he cannot tell you how many movies he did as a child or a bit player, but unfortunately, there was none that he was proud of.

Indeed, don't expect his early efforts to be slick Hollywood-style movies. They're not. Production values, even in recent Hong Kong films, have never been paramount. Often, the "heart" in these movies makes up for grainy film. Be open-minded, and look for the enjoyment inherent in discovering something new.

This checklist will hit upon all the movies that deserve mention, and go into various depth depending on how important that movie was to Jackie's overall career. For example, movies in which he was merely a stuntman will be mentioned briefly, while movies for which he was actor, writer, director, editor and basically god will, of course, merit more space.

Taking into account that each individual's enjoyment of a movie is a personal experience that is hard to measure, we'll still endeavor to categorize the movies using the following fists-in-the-face criteria:

Fists in the Face:

* — poor action

** — fair action

*** — good action

**** — very good action

***** — excellent action

BIG AND LITTLE WONG TIN-BAR (1962)

At age eight, Chan was chosen by Li Li Hwa, a Taiwanese actress, to play her son in this traditional family drama.

THE LOVE ETERNAL (1963)

Bit part.

THE STORY OF QUI XIANGLIN (1964)

Bit part.

A TOUCH OF ZEN (1968)

Stuntman.

ATTACK OF THE KUNG FU GIRLS (1968)

Bit part.

FISTS OF FURY (1971; called The Chinese Connection in America.)

Stuntman. Jackie works with the legendary Bruce Lee.

THE LITTLE TIGER OF GUANGDONG (1971; aka Little Tiger from Canton and Stranger in Hong Kong)

Directed by Chin Hsin. Martial arts directors Chan Yuen Long, Se Fu Yai. Starring Chen Yuan Long, Juan Hsao Ten, Shth Tien, Han Kuo Tsi, Yuen Bill, Chang Chin, Kuen Yung Man.

The premise: A murder occurs among a trio of gangsters, leaving a young orphaned boy (Chan) to be raised by the remaining criminal after the slayer runs away. When the culprit returns, it's up to Jackie, in his first leading role, to avenge his father's death.

Best action: Straight karate kicks and punches, popularized by action films in the 1970s, abound.

Absent are the fluid acrobatics of Jackie's opera school training.

Film fact: Wasn't considered releasable until after Chan attained stardom, when it was purchased by an unscrupulous producer who edited in fresh footage to create a "new" movie released under the aka titles above.

Jackie says: "To this point, I know fighting only. When it comes to film, I'm like a student," Chan told writer Neva Friedman.

Bottom line: It's a young Jackie Chan with bell-bottom jeans — all that's missing is a Clearasil moment in between fights. Strictly a novelty item.

Rating: *

HAPKIDO (1972)

Bit part.

NOT SCARED TO DIE (1973; aka Eagle's Shadow Fist)

Directed by Zhu Wu (aka Heng Tsu). Starring Wang Qing and Chen Yeun Long.

The premise: Based on the true story of a troupe of actors performing patriotic plays during the Japanese occupation of China during World War II. We never get to see a performance, as the actors are raided and forced to hide out in a small village. All's well until two Japanese karate masters start to oppress the town.

Film fact: After the huge success of Snake in the Eagle's Shadow "(1978), this film was rereleased as Eagle's Shadow Fist.

Bottom line: Shows the slightest hint of the great career to come... but probably only in hindsight. From the very beginning, when new photos of Jackie are splashed across the opening credits of this much older film, you know you are in trouble. The sight of a nineteen-year-old Jackie is almost worth the price of a video rental — he steals every scene he enters — jumping like a human Ping-Pong ball, sporting hair that is still growing out from his school days. Be warned, this is a particularly bloody and needlessly brutal movie.

Rating: *

THE HEROINE (1973)

Martial arts instructor. Second male lead.

ENTER THE DRAGON (1973)

Bit part, stuntman. Jackie has the distinction of having his neck broken by Bruce Lee.

THE YOUNG DRAGONS (1973)

Choreographer.

GOLDEN LOTUS (1974)

WWW.JACKIE-CHAN.RU, книга "Dying for action", часть 7

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Bit part.

THE HIMALAYAN (1975)

Bit part, stuntman.

ALL IN THE FAMILY (1975)

Supporting role. Jackie is chased by sex-starved girlfriend.

YOUNG TIGER/POLICE WOMAN (1975)

Supporting role.

THE DRAGON TAMERS (1975)

Choreographer.

HAND OF DEATH (1976; aka Countdown in Kung Fu)

Written and directed by John Woo. Starring Tan Tao Liang, Jackie Chan, Samo Hung, Yuen Biao and Dorian Tan.

The premise: A formula actioner about Shaolin disciples who smuggle a rebel leader through enemy lines. Typical period piece of the 1970s.

Film fact: This is the only film graced by the talents of John Woo, Jackie Chan, Samo Hung and Yuen Biao. Choreography by Samo Hung.

John Woo says: "I remember we had a good time working on that film. We were all young guys having fun. I certainly didn't imagine at the time that they would all become so famous!" Woo is quoted as saying in the book Hong Kong Action Movies.

Bottom line: While Tan Tiao Liang (aka Tan Dao Liang of Incredible Kung Fu Legs) is the star of the film, Chan gets all of the best fight scenes, and even a spectacular death. Do we see a trend here?

Rating: **

NEW FIST OF FURY (1976)

Directed by Lo Wei. Martial arts instructor Hang Ying Chieh, from Lo Wei company. Starring Jackie Chan, Nora Miao and Han Ying Chieh.

In 1976, Chan signed an eight-picture deal with Lo Wei, who had directed Bruce Lee in The Big Boss (aka Fists of Fury) and Fists of Fury (aka The Chinese Connection). The film packages were switched when the movies made their way to America, thus confusing people for years.

The premise: A sequel to Bruce Lee's Fists of Fury. Nora Miao, the sister of Lee's screen character, escapes from occupied China to Taiwan. While disembarking, a young thief (Chan), steals one of her bags, containing the nunchaku — two wooden sticks connected by a chain — of the dead Lee. Later, when a kung fu school that cooperates with the Japanese tries to force Chan to join, he pulls out the weapon, and is so unskilled he knocks himself out. Found near death in a ditch by Miao, Chan recovers and eventually learns the kung fu necessary to take on a fearsome Japanese martial artist.

Film fact: In his premiere Lo Wei film, Jackie's first job as "the new Bruce Lee" is to fight an extremely convoluted story line. Like other Lee imitations, this film did badly at the box office.

Jackie says: During production, since he was new, he took every suggestion from the director. If he said "Move that finger," Jackie moved the finger he wanted.

Best action: Lackluster fights are the norm until Chan does his stuff in the last fifteen minutes of the film. The same choreographer was used as on Fists of Fury, thus the fighting style bears a slight resemblance to Bruce Lee with some of Jackie's athletic ability thrown in.

Bottom line: Wei pours it on way too thick during the emotional scenes, especially when he flashes pictures of the late Lee in between Chan's heroic stances. There is a heavy anti-Japanese flavor found here, but no more so than a John Wayne World War II movie or even other Hong Kong movies of this period.

Rating: **

HARDWORKING WOO

John Woo, the king of "gun-fu," is one of the most famous directors to come out of Hong Kong. But ask the average film buff about Hand of Death (1976), and they may not even know that Woo once directed the young Jackie Chan — films like A Better Tomorrow (1986), Bullet in the Head (1990) and Hard Boiled (1992) have eclipsed those beginnings. Actually, Woo directed two movies before Hand of Death and has subsequently directed over twenty, with escalating degrees of inventiveness and gunplay — the most trend-setting being The Killer starring Chow Yun Fat. Devotees of midnight showings know it as a lush gangster film copied in everything from True Romance to The Crow.

"Now everyone is using two guns. Maybe in my next movie I'll only use one gun," joked Woo in Yolk magazine of the homage. "But I'm glad to see my movies at work." Currently Woo is dealing with the politics of working in Hollywood not normally open to Asian talent. Yet he's succeeded where others have failed, directing three promising movies — Hard Target (1993) with Jean-Claude Van Damme, and Broken Arrow (1996) and Face Off (1997), both starring John Travolta. Before those successes, Woo was paired consistently with Hong Kong actor Chow Yun Fat. Once this magical collaboration started, it never stopped. The two are currently planning to work together in America. Good news for action fans.

Despite the differences in creative control between Hollywood and Hong Kong, Woo says he is just happy to be doing what he loves.

"When the sun rises, I get in the car and go to work. After work, I go home and cook for the family," Woo told writer Martin Wong. "It's a very simple life. A fifty billion dollar movie or a fifty thousand dollar movie, it doesn't make a difference as long as I'm making a movie."

SHAOLIN WOODEN MEN (1976)

Directed by Chen Chi Hwa. Martial arts instructors Li Ming-wen and Chen Yuan Long. Starring Chen Yuan Long.

The premise: Chan is a mute student at the renowned Shaolin Temple, who needs someone — anyone — to show him kung fu. He discovers a prisoner chained in a cave who promises to teach him the best of all techniques if Jackie will bring him extra wine and food. After training with a Shaolin nun by day and the prisoner by night, Chan is finally prepared to face the Shaolin "final exam" — the Wooden Men that block the exit.

Film fact: Jackie considered this — a film in which he had some say — his first "dream" project with Lo Wei. Yuen Biao plays a Green Dragon henchman.

Jackie says: "The earlier films were suited to those earlier times. In those earlier films, kung fu sequences used to be very long," related Chan in his fan newsletter. "I still remember the objection of the Western distributors, who felt that if a guy is a good fighter, he should be able to knock down his opponent one, two, three! Anyway, I was much younger then and I could afford to make

monkey-fares [old-style martial arts movies based on legends and Peking Opera] all the time. I guess the roles I play must necessarily grow as I grow and gain more experience in life.”

Best action: Note the first occurrence of Jackie having a female instructor, who teaches him the power in gentleness. Bottom line: The Wooden Men featured in director Chang Cheh's Shaolin Temple (aka Death Chamber) are more convincing as machines than these obvious men in rubber suits, flailing around like the demented robot from Lost in Space. Alas, it can truly be said that every penny Lo Wei spent is on the screen. However, Shaolin Wooden Men does showcase Chan's charisma. A campy good night's rental.

Rating: **

A LEE TO REMEMBER

Members of the same company, Golden Harvest, Jackie Chan hours late was a beginning stuntman while Bruce Lee was a star. Chan appeared in two movies with Bruce Lee — in one, he has the honor of having his neck snapped. Despite that close contact, Chan told Karl Taro Greenfeld of Yolk magazine that they were not very good friends. However, one contact with Lee does stand out in Chan's mind.

"One day I was walking out of the studio and he [Lee] said, 'Hey, Jackie Chan, where are you going?' And I said, 'I'm going to a bowling alley.' So he said, 'I'll go with you.' So we go to the bowling alley, but he doesn't want to bowl. I bowl, and he just sits and watches. I don't know what he's doing. He just watches with this strange look in his eyes, like he's looking far away, like he's making some kind of plan. He's thinking of something, like what he's going to do. Six days later I hear he's died. I don't believe it. I went down to the studio, and they told me, then I believed he was dead."

Jackie says that one of Lee's main gifts in addition to being a good fighter was the gift of gab. "He could talk. Talking is a big part of fighting, of making the other person think you can beat them, of building a reputation. I know stuntguys who are stronger than me, but they think I can beat them because I know how to talk, how to scare them with reputation. Bruce Lee was like that. You would hear, 'Bruce Lee lifted two hundred pounds.' Then two hours later, people would say Lee lifted five hundred pounds. Then a thousand pounds.

There are numerous accounts of Lee taking on rival martial artists in chance encounters on the street to defend his reputation, just as gunslingers sought out the faster draw to boost their own careers, and today's ill-advised "gansta" rappers destroy each other. The only difference is that Lee and his peers didn't use guns, they used fists and feet, and whereas some may argue that can be just as lethal if they were Lee's, Bruce knew when to stop short of killing people. One account of such an encounter surrounds Jackie's older "brother" Sammo Hung. The story goes that Hung and Lee came face-to-face in a hallway at the Golden Harvest Studios. Without further ado, the two went man-a-man with such ferocity that after a few minutes Lee either showed mercy or they called it a draw, depending on which story you hear.

When asked during the course of the magazine interview, if he could beat Lee, Chan said, "No, at that time, I don't know. Maybe. He's dead anyway."

IRON FISTED MONK (1977)

Martial arts director. Movie directed by Sammo Hung.

KILLER METEOR (1977)

Directed by Jimmy Wang Yu. Starring Jimmy Wang Yu, Jackie Chan and Chu Feng.

WWW.JACKIE-CHAN.RU, книга "Dying for action", часть 7

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The premise: Jackie is a powerful landowner whose wife is slowly poisoning him. The only thing that saves him is an antidote that keeps the toxin at bay, and which his wife doles out sparingly. Needless to say, it's not a happy marriage and Chan hires the Killer Meteor (Wang Yu) to do away with his loving spouse.

Film fact: Based on work by Taiwanese writer Ku Lung. Jackie plays the villain, for what has been reported as the first time. In reality, he played a gang leader in one of his forgettable early movies.

Best action: Jackie's screen time is limited — two fights with Wang Yu. The second of these is an interesting balancing act on stakes over a pit of swords.

Jackie says: "I did not like playing the bad guy," Jackie told Hong Kong Film Comment. 'At that time, I have no rule. For everything, I have to sit down and listen. 'Play a bad guy.' 'Yes. I have a contract with that director. 'Good guy.' 'Yes.' 'You fight like hero.' 'Yes.' 'You fight like Bruce Lee.' 'Yes. I want to change, but at that time, I can't. I'm dead. I'm starving and I need to earn money.'"

Bottom line: Some film historians and critics have jumped on the Killer Meteor — bashing bandwagon. It's really not that horrible. Jackie's been in much worse movies — for example, Dragon Fist (1978). On the flip side, the videotape box text on Killer Meteor claims it's one of Jackie's ten best movies. That's not true either. With some funny parts, a semi-clever plot, and Jackie's villainous portrayal that oddly uses his charm to add to his menace, the truth about this movie lies somewhere in the middle.

Rating: **

TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE (1977)

Directed by Lo Wei. Starring Jackie Chan, George Wang and Chu Feng.

The premise: The revenge-seeking Killer Bee Gang — complete with deadly darts and fetching flower masks — led by Hong Kong actress Chu Feng (Hsu Feng from King Hu's A Touch of Zen) — kills everyone in Chan's household, leaving him alive to deal with the bitterness of losing his loved ones. In an odd twist of fate, Chu later saves Jackie's character, falls for him, and uses "hard love" tactics to prepare him for the battle of his life.

Film fact: Based on work by Taiwanese writer Ku Lung. Became fairly popular in Japan — a J.C. stronghold even today.

Jackie says: "Years ago, the movies were just fighting. People would say, 'Why are you looking at me?' and then fight. 'I don't like you.' Fight," Jackie said in New York magazine.

Best action: Swordplay fails to heat things up, perhaps because it was filmed in the freezing conditions of Korea. According to writer and film distributor Neva Friedman, "The trampoline wires froze. Later, the picture gets a box-office reaction to match the trampoline springs."

Bottom line: Jackie's character is somber and unlikable, but bad burn makeup and a burned esophagus do gain him some sympathy later on, poor chap. The love story is weepy and leaves you rooting for strong-willed Chu instead of Jackie's whiny girlfriend. After all, she is the one who agrees to wed another as soon as she hears Jackie is dead, while Chu searches for the herbs that save his life. Granted, Chu's also the one who burned his face with a poker, made him eat hot coal and had him drink poison, but you can't have everything.

Rating: *1/2*

SNAKE AND CRANE ARTS OF SHAOLIN (1978)

Directed by Chen Chi Hwa. Starring Jackie Chan.

The premise: Jackie is a devil-may-care traveler with a winning smile. His high cheekbones and heart-shaped mouth make you think that he must have been studying Elvis movies to get that sexy swagger down so well. Jackie happens to be in the possession of a book of secret martial arts forms

from the Shaolin Temple. Of course, everyone and their Uncle Yuen wants that book, but they have to best Jackie to get it.

Film fact: Chan's second "dream" project for Lo Wei failed to make him a big star, but it did earn him some respect in the Hong Kong film industry.

The action: With fifteen fights, this film qualifies as one big brawl with a little dialogue thrown in to string punches together. Jackie adds to his repertoire of "everyday objects as weapons" with benches, tables, signs, a can, teacups, chopsticks and something we like to call the "napkin of death." Bottom line: Jackie leaps and head rolls his way through this ballet of the human body.

Rating: **1/2*

HALF A LOAF OF KUNG FU (1978)

Directed by Chen Chi Hwa. Starring Jackie Chan.

Lo Wei had given up hope of any success with his "new Bruce Lee." At Jackie's insistence, Lo gave him creative control over his next movie. What did he have to lose? Frustrated with previous roles, Jackie knew it was time to change. In Half a Loaf of Kung Fu, he plays a character who wins by accident, and produces some enjoyable moments. Chan's real personality starts to show through.

The premise: Chan's country bumpkin character gets mixed up with a group escorting treasure coveted by every villain for miles around. First problem: His new friends all think Jackie is the famous fighter Whip Hero. Second problem: He's not. Adding to this comedy of errors is the fact that Jackie has been taught several useless styles by a practical jokester, only Jackie thinks they are for real.

Film fact: Lo Wei considered this film a waste of money and refused to have it released. Chan's subsequent success with Snake in the Eagle's Shadow (1978) changed Lo's mind. In the first two months of Hong Kong release, Half a Loaf grossed over one million Hong Kong dollars. The movie's secret for success — Jackie's humor — is evident from the opening credits, where Jackie lampoons the opening sequences of many martial arts films, including some of his own. He makes fun of editing, sound effects, camera angles, Zatoichi the blind swordsman, Tien Pang (the Roy Rogers of swordsmanship), and the teachings of the Shaolin Temple. Irreverent!

Jackie says: "When he [Lo Wei] directs, he wants me to be like a hero.... I knew at that time that was wrong. Nobody can imitate Bruce Lee. So I tell Lo Wei that I want to change, but he won't listen to me," Jackie said in Hong Kong Film Connection. "He just follows his style. At that time I think I was around twenty. He wants me to act forty. In the movie he wants every girl to love me. I'm not a handsome boy, I'm not James Dean. I'm just not this kind of person. It's totally wrong... none of them are a success."

The action: Chan's comic touches are obviously inspired by the silent comedians. Note the dream sequence where Jackie eats spinach and gains Herculean strength while the "Popeye the Sailor Man" theme song plays, only to be replaced by the tune "Fernandos Hideaway" from the Broadway show Pajama Game, while Jackie dances the tango. His penchant for using everyday objects as weapons continues with eggs, chickens, a lead pipe, a straw hat and spit. The most enjoyable fight occurs at the end when Jackie takes on the villains as he learns a new technique from a manual that: he must jostle around while avoiding punches.

Bottom line: There are priceless moments when Chan's character meets a vagabond who attempts to teach him nonexistent styles, and who personally uses farting as his main weapon of defense. You'll take this loaf and wish you had the other half for desert.

Rating: **1/2*

MAGNIFICENT BODYGUARD (1978)

Directed by Lo Wei. Starring Jackie Chan.

WWW.JACKIE-CHAN.RU, книга "Dying for action", часть 7

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Perhaps as punishment for making *Half a Loaf* so funny, Jackie was delegated to making another historical romance.

The premise: Jackie is one of three men hired by a wealthy girl to ensure her safety while trekking through bandit-infested mountains. The Kicker, the Knifer, and the Puncher (Chan), take the assignment, not realizing that the enclosed sedan chair does not contain the girl's sick brother as they had been told. By the end of the movie, the "bodies" the three guards are protecting are their own.

Film fact: Hong Kong's first 3-D movie.

The action: The use of weapons, snakes and flying limbs are abundant to exploit the 3-D potential. Jackie says: Chan summed up the action in this sword fighting film as "tang tang, ta-tung tung." The martial arts are played for shock value and speed. Bottom line: It's better than a blank screen... surprisingly fun.

Rating: **

SAY WHAT?

Subtitles scare people. There's no two ways about it. Put a subtitled movie on screens in Middle America, and people disappear from the theaters.

Luckily that's changing as subtitled and dubbed foreign movies make it into more art theaters, and even mainstream cineplexes. Of course, it doesn't help that the dialogue slapped on the pictures is soooooo bad.

"When Cantonese is translated, the nuances of the language are lost," said Jackie in a recent interview. "You hear 'Blah, blah, blah' in Cantonese and the subtitle only says 'Go!' or someone says a lot of things and it's translated to just 'Yes.' This is the problem. Also, after the Cantonese is translated into English, it's not that funny."

*Dubbing can work — take *Rumble in the Bronx* and *Supercop*, for example. Before New Line and Mimamax/Dimension, respectively, released these movies, massive dubbing took place, with Jackie doing his own voice. The end results are good. The only complaint is that the voices of some of the secondary characters border on hokey — throwbacks to kung fu flicks from the golden age of the Shaw Brothers Studios.*

Just for fun, here are a few "Say what?" gems:

"Why do you need guns when you have my fists?" — Not Scared to Die

"Young is she! I'll help her grow up and quickly too." — New Fist of Fury

"Bring me wine and lots of it! If you do, I'll teach you kung fu. If not, I'll tear your head off." — Shaolin Wooden Men

"Being your slave is really quite an honor. I really enjoy it." — Killer Meteor

"You stay here or else you get a taste of my whip." — Half a Loaf of Kung Fu

"They were pretty tough fighters, but none of them could survive my bells." — Magnificent Bodyguard

"You think you're a real man, but you're just a dog!" — Snake in the Eagle's Shadow

"You're ignorant — all gourmets love worms." — Spiritual Kung Fu

"If only we had some dog meat — it would taste better." — Spiritual Kung Fu

"I made a gold sign, chopped off my leg — that's the least I can do." — Dragon Fist

"You want to cut off my property!" — Drunken Master

"Do you think you can beat me with your Mickey Mouse kung fu?" — Young Master

"This is a telescope — good for peeping." — Dragon Lord

"Prostitution should be legalized. After all, you girls work hard." — Winners and Sinners

"I never go anywhere in South East Asia without an Uzi — The Protector

"Tell me what I am to you, Kevin — your dog or your girlfriend!" — Police Story II
"A live-in maid — now that's good for your health." — Island on Fire

Snake in the Eagle's Shadow (1978)

Directed by Yuen Woo Ping for Seasonal Films. Starring Jackie Chan, Wong Jang Lee, Yuen Siu Tin and Roy Horan.

It just wasn't working. No matter how Lo Wei tried to present Jackie, audiences weren't buying. But, as Inside Kung Fu columnist Ric Meyers points out, it probably never dawned on Lo that it was "the flicks, not Jackie, that stank worse than a thousand year old egg." So when producer Ng See Yuen of the Yuen moviemaking family dynasty asked to borrow Jackie for his next movie, Lo was more than happy to agree.

The premise: Jackie is an abused orphan doing the dirt jobs at a kung fu school, while serving as practice dummy for the bullying students. His life is pitiful, his only friend a cat. Jackie is distracted from his own problems when he saves an elderly gentleman from a gang of toughs. The old man turns out to be a master of Snake fist style fighting, which is being wiped out by Eagle-claw masters from Manchuria. Chan masters the Snake-fist style, and with the help of his trusty feline, he finds a way to vary the technique and fight for the old master's life and his own. Chan's mainstay of having the hero develop a new kung fu style in the last few minutes takes off.

Film fact: Jackie's first major hit. Ng claims that distributors in Asia all begged him not to use Chan for this movie, since Jackie had never had a hit. Ng stuck to his guns. The movie made Chan a star. Jackie says: 'At that time, for almost twenty years I've been fighting, I thought nobody was going to the theater to see me, but suddenly it's the right timing. I kid around, totally opposite to Bruce Lee. I do comedy. So this is why this movie totally changed the action film. This one made me confident," Jackie told reporter Barrie Pattison.

Best action: Humor is combined with action, creating some truly hilarious bits, fast-paced and exciting. Watch for the scene where Teacher Lee puts chalk on his shoes to foul Jackie's attempts at floor washing, as well as when Jackie learns a new technique by following dancelike foot patterns on the ground. Most of the fights are highly ritualized choreography, but Jackie adds realistic touches with actual sweat, blood, and body damage.

Rumor has It: Did Wong Jang Lee kick out one of Chan's teeth in this film? No, it was only a cap. Perhaps another more substantial rumor surrounds why Lo Wei would lend his actor to a rival producer. Simple. Lo Wei wasn't known for being magnanimous. Since Jackie had been box office poison for him, what better way to sabotage Yuen? It didn't work.

Worst injury: Roy Horan suffered a real dislocated shoulder, and fought all his sword forays with his right hand.

Bottom line: Snake in the Eagle's Shadow (aka Eagle's Shadow) shines because of Chan's endearing portrayal and the touching relationship between orphan and teacher... not to mention the extraordinary fights. Jackie's charmingly boyish persona is priceless. More importantly, when a comedy situation is set up, the movie pays off by resolving conflicts to the satisfaction of the audience. There is growth and closure, thus making this movie not only good, but fulfilling.

Rating: ***1/2*

Spiritual Kung Fu (1978)

Directed by Lo Wei. Starring Jackie Chan. Choreography by Jackie Chan.

The premise: A training manual for a forbidden kung fu style is stolen, and the only style that can defeat it is the Five Fists technique, the manual for which has been long lost. A lazy student, Chan, discovers the missing book in a burned-out scripture hall when a meteor — which oddly

resembles a sparkler on a string - crashed into it and unleashes the spirits of the masters of the five styles that are hiding there.

Film fact: Jackie did all of his Lo Wei films (except Fearless Hyena) before Snake in the Eagle's Shadow, but since they were released after that hit, the time line has confused many over the years. The training sequences are shot with a superimposing camera to achieve the necessary ghost effects.

Jackie says: As both actor and choreographer, Jackie described his job as "very difficult to do." He placed carefully timed kicks and punches into the area where the spirit would be on the processed film, achieving a curious fun look in the action sequences.

Best action: The Chan-choreographed fights are punctuated with bursts of energy that surely drove the foley artist — that poor guy in charge of special effects — mad! When the spirits get involved in the finale as invisible coaches for Jackie, it's even more fun.

Bottom line: The transformation of Jackie's character is well done as he goes from a rambunctious youth who fishes naked and puts frogs and eels in his shorts (you'd have to see it) to a disciplined master of the five styles. The spirits of those five styles are great fun, despite their odd fashion sense of red wigs and silver hula shirts. The plot is charming and well conceived, with an interesting array of characters.

Rating: **1/2*

DRAGON FIST (1978)

Directed by Lo Wei. Starring Jackie Chan, Nora Miao and James Tien.

The premise: Cast as a student who is dishonored by the murder of his master, Chan's character, along with the wife and daughter of the dead teacher, must seek revenge. However, when they find the man they think they hate so much, he is nearly powerless, having cut off a leg in an act of contrition for his crimes. Never fear, there is plenty of suffering to come before the end credits.

Film fact: Shot in Korea back to back with Spiritual Kung Fu (1978), a much more inspired movie. The action: Even though Chan choreographed the fights, only the ones he is personally involved with generate any excitement. Bottom line: Unless you want to count just how many times Jackie's character is looking at the ground in despair, you probably won't like this movie. There's not much to keep your attention, except for the crutch-wielding finale.

Rating: *

DRUNKEN MASTER (1978; aka Drunken Monkey in a Tiger's Eye)

Directed by Yuen Woo Ping. Starring Jackie Chan, Simon Yuen, Wang Jang Lee and Dean Shek.

Jackie joins Ng See Yuen to create another film gem. When Drunken Master hit Hong Kong theaters, it grossed eight million Hong Kong dollars. Kung fu comedy was the thing, and Jackie Chan was its champion.

The premise: Jackie, for the first time, is the legendary Wong Fei Hong (see sidebar "The Real Wong Fei Hong"). However, this is a young scamp of a Wong Fei Hong, long before he takes on the responsibilities of an honorable life. When the antics of Chan's Wong cause disgrace twice in one day, his father punishes him severely. Jackie's further martial arts training will be handled by an uncle — the title character — notorious for maiming students and turning them into cripples. Jackie runs away from his wino uncle many times, but it's only when he is humiliated by a master martial artist that he returns to begin his training in earnest, learning the Eight Drunken Fairies style. He'll need it before the movie is through, when he must come up with a last-second blending of the styles, including the humorous female fairy style, to defeat a deadly kung fu assassin.

Film fact: Simon Yuen, the director's father, became a star in his sixties, playing Jackie's elderly, crooked-toothed, wine-swilling uncle and teacher.

Ng See Yuen says: "Wong had always been so serious," he said about his new direction for a venerated character in Hong Kong Film magazine. "I wondered what he was like before he became this Chinese superhero. Maybe he was just another naughty boy!" Director Yuen says this film was a group effort between himself, Jackie and Ng See Yuen. Their main concern was to make the film exciting for an audience.

Jackie says: Jackie summoned up the chief benefit of this movie's success in one word — "Power" which translated into more creative control over all his movies.

Best action: Chan finds comedy in opposites, pitting himself against a muscle bound bodyguard named King Kong, a bucktoothed waiter, and a bald-headed brute. Some of the obligatory training segments at the hands of his drunken uncle make you hope that Chan considers pain a good friend, because it has a long visit, indeed. There is just no way to fake wrist stands and upside down sit-ups — even with movie magic. Someone had to do it on film, and that someone is unmistakably Chan. Jackie also uses food and drink as themes — from an eel to a whole table of fare — devoured in an orgy of eating as tiring to watch as any fight. Implements of destruction include teacups, wine bottles, clothing and something we like to call the towel of death, closely related to the "napkin of death" from Snake and Crane Arts (1978).

Bottom line: Although quaint by today's standards, Jackie mixes the grace of Gene Kelly, the antics of Charlie Chaplin, and the derring-do of Errol Flynn, showing terrific talent.

Rating: ****

FEARLESS HYENA (1979)

Director, screenwriter and martial arts instructor — Jackie Chan. Starring Jackie Chan, Yen Si Kuan and James Tien.

After leaving to work with Seasonal Film, Jackie had to return for one more film with Lo Wei to complete his contract.

The premise: Chan is a high-spirited youth who can't obey his grandfather's order not to fight. Our hero doesn't know it, but the reason for this prohibition is that the villainous General Yen is roaming the countryside killing all of the members of the grandfather's anti — Ching Clan. If their style of kung fu was recognized, both Chan and the grandfather would be in danger. But young Jackie is desperate to earn money, and after ruining a chance to sell secondhand coffins (as in pre-used), Chan takes a job as the resident fighter at a shady kung fu school, where he must dress as a beggar and as a woman to avoid detection. It doesn't work for long, and Jackie must fight the general, played by Yen Si Kuan, and create a new style called "emotional kung fu" so he can laugh and cry while doing so.

Film fact: Although a technically grainy film with tacky locales and poor cinematography, the humor and pathos in this movie makes it a bona fide hit. It emerges as the second-highest-grossing film in Hong Kong history.

Best action: Chan's favorite training sequence features, without a cut, fourteen consecutive upside down sit-ups, where, in typical masochistic fashion, he repeatedly slams his back against a tree. Ouch!

Jackie says: "With Fearless Hyena I almost know [what I'm doing]!" Chan told journalist Neva Friedman.

Will you like it?: Comedy again lies in comparisons of the extreme — putting a large, fat man beside a short, skinny one, or a person with a shag carpet of hair beside a bald one. Fearless Hyena stands the test of time with a satisfying mixture of comedy and action.

Rating: ***

THE REAL WONG FEI HONG

The story of Wong Fei Hong is the stuff legends are made of, and all the more fun when the legends are true.

Born in 1847 in the Guangdong province of southern China, Wong made his living performing martial arts in the streets with his father, Wong Qi Ying. In his youth, he taught martial arts at his father's school, the famous Po Chi Lum. But Wong attained his legendary respect by becoming the best lion dancer in Guangzhou. His expertise in this traditional martial arts dance utilizing large paper Chinese lions that conceal the athletic participants earned Fei Hong the nickname "King of the Lions." He was a master of diverse styles, including the Shaolin style of martial arts, the Iron Wire Fist, Five Forms Fist, Tiger Vanquishing Fist, the Shadowless kick and his favorite, the flying thallium. He died in 1924 at the age of seventy-seven with little else really being known about his life.

That didn't stop Hong Kong cinema from filling in the blanks. The man most associated as the face of Wong — Kwan Tak Hing — made over eighty films about the character starting in the 1950s, and even starred in a Wong Fei Hong television series that ran for thirteen episodes. Kwan Tak Hing died on June 27, 1996. He was ninety-one years old. He and Wong Fei Hong are synoniminds of many fans of Hong Kong film, and it's difficult to determine if recent renditions of Wong are based on the real man or Kwan's enduring portrayal.

A tough act to follow, yes, but director Yuen Woo Ping wanted to put a new twist on the character with Drunken Master (1978), starring Jackie Chan. This was a Wong never seen before, caught in the looking glass of his rambunctious youth. Crowds loved its irreverent nature, and the movie spawned many rip-offs trying to duplicate the Chan charm.

Then along came director Tsui Hark, who is best known in the United States for Double Team starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. He cleverly constructed yet another new image for Wong Fei Hong with his Once Upon a Time in China series starring the charismatic Jet Li, who portrays Wong as a noble, shy, but unfailingly powerful character. This is the Wong that many new Hong Kong filmgoers associate with the legend, and who can blame them? Every moment Jet Li is on the screen is pure charisma. When Tsui Hark was constructing this new image for Wong Fei Hong, he questioned whether it was an exaggeration to make him a national hero. He ultimately chose to put him inside a historical context. Perhaps Wong Fei Hong had a hard time being a folk hero. He had an enormous amount of baggage and responsibilities, with his own shortcomings, as presented by Hark. When Jet Li reportedly had a falling out with Tsui Hark and took his noble face to represent another Chinese hero, Fong Si Yuk, the series fizzled. However, Jet Li and Tsui Hark apparently made up, for they are working together again for Once Upon a Time in China VI.

Perhaps because of the initial success of the Tsui Hark films, and because of his aversion to the wire trickery used therein, Jackie Chan decided to revisit the role that made him a star with Drunken Master II (1994). It was a resounding success that builds in intensity to a climax that leaves audiences breathless. Jackie Chan had just turned forty-one and never looked better, as a shirtless, water-drenched fight in a tea house will surely attest.

"Drunken Master II — this film will be different," said Chan in Hong Kong Film Connection magazine while the film was in production. "More real kung fu. Before, I told Tsui Hark, when you do Wong Fei Hong, make it real. Instead he has everything on wires. It's like a fantasy. So, when I play Wong Fei Hong in Drunken Master II, I make it real. We only show what I can do. What my stuntmen can do." At this point, we can only ask, "Will the real Wong Fei Hong please do a flying thallium?"

THE 36 CRAZY FISTS (1979)

Choreographer. Note that a poor-quality "documentary" exists of a chain-smoking Jackie choreographing this movie. Not worth your time if there is money involved. If you can view it for free, go for it.

THE ODD COUPLE (1979; aka Dance of Death)

Choreographer.

OH, WHY, LO WEI

When Lo Wei followed Raymond Chow to the newly established Golden Harvest at the end of 1970, there is no way he could foresee that he would take part in launching the careers of the two most popular martial artists in the history of the genre — Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan.

Lo himself had worked as an actor during the Sino-Japanese War under the name Luo Jing. His desires turned to film when he joined the Central Motion Picture Theater Troupe in Shanghai, and moved to Hong Kong after the war, where he acted for the Yung Hwa, Hsin Hwa and MP & GI companies. In 1957 he founded his own company — Sze Wei — where he directed The Jade Green Lake (1958), the first Mandarin film to feature love scenes. While at Golden Harvest, he signed Bruce Lee for the movies that would make Bruce star — The Big Boss (1971) and Fists of Fury (1972).

A widely reported dispute ended their collaboration. Keen to establish that he alone was responsible for Lee's success, Lo claimed that Lee knew martial arts before joining with him, but that Lo had to teach him to fight for film. According to Hong Kong — based writer Bey Logan, this led to a violent confrontation between Lee and Lo Wei at the Golden Harvest Studio, which ended in Lee brandishing a knife. The police were called, and Lee signed a paper voluntarily with the understanding that the matter would end there. Linda Lee, Bruce's widow, was quick point out to Logan that Lee hardly needed a knife to dispatch Lo Wei.

Lo left Golden Harvest in 1975, founding the Lo Wei Company, where he signed a young Jackie Chan and starred him in a handful of movies, none of which made money. Not that he didn't try. In New Fist of Fury, he cast Jackie as a Bruce Lee replacement. In Shaolin Wooden Men, Lo tried to cash in on The Master Killer tradition. Snake and Crane Arts of Shaolin aped Liu Chia Liang's Executioners of Death, but met its own painful demise. Even a 3-D movie, Magnificent Bodyguards, didn't inspire audiences. Lo Wei did indeed try everything — everything, that is, except put Chan into a good movie. It wasn't until after Jackie's success in Snake in the Eagle's Shadow (1978) for Ng See Yuen's Seasonal Films that his Lo Wei films began to turn a profit.

Although Lo had "molded" Jackie only inasmuch that he talked him into getting eye surgery for that Western look and caps on his crooked teeth, the time working with Lo only prepared Jackie for greener pastures. The association between the two deteriorated, and after Jackie left for the competition, Golden Harvest, Wei finished off one movie— Fearless Hyena II (1980) with leftover footage from Fearless Hyena (1979) and other Chan films, cementing the bad feelings.

Word was that Lo Wei, a member of the Sun Yi On triad, felt so slighted by Chan that he had an order out that Jackie should be chopped to pieces if he came back to Hong Kong — thus, Jackie filmed Taiwan for a few years. Finally, Hong Kong actor and member of an opposing triad Jimmy Wang Yu offered to help solve matters by talking with Lo, but only found himself cornered by unfamiliar triad henchmen brandishing watermelon knives — a favored weapon because of their razorlike slicing abilities.

Wang Yu was lucky that policemen happened to be in the area and stopped the carving demonstration. The newspapers reported only that Lo Wei and Wang Yu were called in for questioning, nothing more. Raymond Chow at Golden Harvest eventually settled the matter by

buying out Chan's contract. Of course, only those involved know if this is the real story.

Despite career ups and downs, Lo Wei couldn't foresee that he would end his life in near poverty with few of his movies standing the test of time. Now the most enduring story from his directing days revolves around him listening to the horse race commentaries instead of directing. In later years, Lo Wei devoted his time to production and distribution, rarely directing. He died in Hong Kong in 1995, leaving us with one legacy — he really knew how to pick 'em. He just didn't know what to do after that.

FEARLESS HYENA II (1980)

Directed by Lo Wei. Starring (sort of) Jackie Chan.

Chan was long gone from the Lo camp when this movie was stitched together.

The premise: General Yen is back from the dead (at least it's the same actor) to practice, once again, his own unique brand of intolerance by eliminating anyone who prefers a different kung fu style than his own. Even the Unicorn is back from Fearless Hyena (at least it's the same actor), but those are the only similarities you'll find between this "movie" and its predecessor.

Film fact: A Chan double was used to flesh out scenes, and the film ends with a freeze frame of the final shot from Fearless Hyena's climactic battle.

Bottom line: Will you like it? Depends.... Do you like leftovers? Okay, let's rephrase that: Do you like leftovers that have been sitting in the fridge for a month and have green mold growing on them? You get the picture, so don't get this one.

Note: More care was taken with some dialogue in this effort (in that it's an effort to watch) than with editing, as Lo Wei added a few barb-filled lines pointed directly at his former star. In the obligatory teahouse scene, the owner says to Jackie, "Look at you! Small eyes, big nose and your hair is as long as a monkey!" Later the man asks, "What's your name?" "Shing Lung," replies Jackie, which is a name that Lo Wei gave Jackie, meaning "To become a Dragon." (Bruce Lee was known as the Dragon and, of course, Lo Wei hoped Jackie would be another Bruce Lee — as long as he had control over him.) With that in mind, the boss's reply is telling: "Why is everyone called Lung?" No hard feelings there.

Rating: [No fists]

YOUNG MASTER (1980)

Directed by Jackie Chan. Screenplay by Lau Tin Chee, Tung Lio and Tan Kin Sang. Starring Jackie Chan, Shek Kin, Yuen Biao, Lilly Lee and Wang In Shik.

Jackie and his manager Willie Chan set up their own production company and worked out a distribution deal with Golden Harvest.

The premise: In this first shackle-free movie away from the stifling Lo Wei company, Jackie plays a young martial arts student named Dragon. His friend Tiger, the champion leader of the lion dance for Master Kung's school, hurts his leg and Jackie must fill in for his "brother" at an upcoming competition. During the performance, Tiger is discovered deceitfully performing as the lion dance leader for a rival school, and he uses Jackie's good nature to beat him at the competition. Of course, Master Kung banishes Tiger, who leaves in disgrace, and the forgiving Jackie goes after him. He takes the school's white fan with him and runs into a sheriff tracking a murderer with just such a fan.

Film fact: Chan becomes Hong Kong's first bona fide movie star by taking home a million-dollar paycheck for this part.

Jackie says: "I think that after Young Master, I still didn't realize how big the world was," Jackie told one reporter. "I was still quite young and only knew the market around Asia — Taiwan and Hong Kong mostly. Even after people told me how famous I was in Japan, I really didn't realize

it.... We did some promotion in Japan. Then I knew — Wow! I'm famous there."

Best action: Jackie's use of innovative slapstick comes into its own, especially the use of props — any props — as weapons and implements of escape. In one scene, Jackie confounds his adversary by juggling a white fan from hand to hand to foot to floor. "It's so much easier to choreograph now," Jackie has said. "Then, every move had to be perfect." In the spectacular end fight, Jackie covers his body with powder so that when he is kicked, punched or body slammed, the powder flies, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind that he is absorbing the blows. Just how real is that final scene when he appears in a body cast? His scenes with Yuen Biao as the son of the sheriff remind us why we like these movies in the first place.

Bottom line: Young Master is two movies in one. The beginning is angst-filled, while the second half is overflowing with clever gags and inspired fights. Luckily, both movies work.

Rating: ***1/2*

BATTLE CREEK BRAWL (1980; aka The Big Brawl)

Directed by Robert Clouse. Starring Jackie Chan, Jose Ferrer, Kristine De Bell and Mako.

With Young Master setting Hong Kong box office records, Golden Harvest head Raymond Chow decided it was time to fashion Chan for his first American-made movie.

The premise: Rival 1930s gangsters hold a yearly competition called the Battle Creek Brawl to find the best street fighter in Texas. Gang leader Dominici notices the hard-fighting Chan, and goes after him as a sure-fire contestant for the bout. Chan's character declines because his father forbids his fighting, but Dominici has ways to make him change his mind.

Film fact: Battle Creek Brawl had an American fight coordinator. It did not gain Chan Lee-like status in the United States. "I always teach people the fighting, but when I come to Hollywood, someone teaches me," Chan has said in many interviews since. "I ask, 'How long have you been in action film?' 'Oh, six years.' Six years, teaching me how to punch!"

Robert Clouse says: "In many ways, Jackie was a better actor [than Bruce Lee]," Clouse told journalist Sherri Collins. "He was a very good acrobat and a good martial artist, plus, he could handle humor beautifully. His look on screen was very much a joke-a-minute existence. It was softer. It wasn't hard like Lee. Jackie didn't break through [with Battle Creek Brawl], but we absolutely thought he would."

Best action: Chan's version of a venerable kung fu bit — fighting while pretending not to fight — shines in this otherwise lackluster effort. In his version, Chan triumphs over the gangsters by artfully jostling, poking and flipping them while sweeping out the alley. The humor of the piece lies in his ease and self-control. Jackie says: "I'm glad I did Battle Creek Brawl, because I learned to roller skate. Then I learned how to skateboard. Then I learned how to barefoot ski. Now I know how to snow sport. I know everything!" he told Hong Kong Film Connection. Overall, the action in Battle Creek Brawl is nowhere near what it should be. Jackie knows why, as he told writer Ric Meyers. "One day it all came to a head," he said. "He [the director] said, 'Jackie you walk over and pick up the stick. I said, 'Okay, I somersault over and pick up the stick.' He said, 'No. Just walk over and pick up the stick. I said, 'Okay. I cartwheel over and pick up the stick. I can do that. You'll see.' 'No,' he said. 'Just walk over and pick up the stick. I yelled, 'Nobody pays money to see Jackie walk!' 'In this movie, they will,' he said. I said, 'Okay. You want to see Jackie walk? Fuck you!' Then I turned and walked to my trailer. But I had always been taught that you respect the director, so I went back to work and did what he said."

Bottom line: The story is uneven right down to the fact that a subplot involving the kidnapping of a mail-order bride is never resolved. Many questions are left unanswered, such as: "Couldn't they find a better vehicle for Chan?"

Rating: *

CHAN: SQUARED

One could successfully argue that if not for a man named Willie Chan, none of us would have heard of someone named Jackie Chan.

No, he's not Jackie's father – though he might as well be. They are not even related, as every writer loves to point out as if everyone named "Smith" is a blood brother. But Willie has been the most important man in Jackie's life for the past twenty years — his manager.

The two met when Jackie was just a young fresh kid trying to find his way at the legendary Shaw Brothers studio as an extra, fight choreographer and would-be actor. Frustrated with his lack of success, Jackie went off to join his parents, who were working at the American Embassy in Canberra, Australia, and had been since Jackie was seven. He spent his time laying bricks and working as a Chinese cook, and there he might have stayed — not even a footnote in Hong Kong movie history — if Willie Chan had not urged him to come back and give movies one more try. It probably didn't take too much urging, since Jackie, after nine months down under, missed his friends, the discos and snooker. Hong Kong was bubbling. Australia was boring.

With Willie's help, Jackie did get work in film again ("because I came cheap"). The two worked on films by day and critiqued the day's work at night at the coffee shop of the Sheraton Hotel in Kowloon. It wasn't long until they signed a contract with Lo Wei for an eight-picture deal. Chan has found his path, and Willie Chan was on that path with him.

Indeed, Willie dedicated himself to the Chan/Chan partnership, taking language classes so that he could better handle international business, taking care of matters for which the impatient Jackie wouldn't have time and producing many Chan movies through Golden Way. He built up a stable of actors that included Maggie Cheung, Jacky Cheung, Cherri Cheung and Joey Wong, among others. It's safe to say that many of his clients looked upon him as family, perhaps even a father figure, to be showered with Garfield the Cat memorabilia — for which he has an affinity — on special occasions. Sadly, for various reasons concerning the Hong Kong film industry and triads and the problems therein, Willie reluctantly gave up all his clients except Jackie. "Perhaps Jackie is enough," he lamented.

Today he continues to produce Chan's movies and handles most of Jackie's business concerns. When Willie joked recently that Jackie should change some aspect of his personality, Jackie quipped back, "You should be glad I don't change. I haven't changed my manager in twenty years!"

A touching footnote to the relationship of the two Chans happened at the 1992 Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan when Jackie finally won the award for Best Actor with Police Story III: Supercop. He publicly, for the first time, thanked Willie from the stage. "I look out at him in the audience," said Jackie. "And tears... running down" his face."

CANNONBALL RUN (1980)

Directed by Hal Needham. Starring Burt Reynolds, Roger Moore, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Jackie Chan and Michael Hui.

Part Two of Golden Harvest's attempt to introduce Jackie Chan to the U.S. market was an odd rehash of an earlier Shaw Brothers effort to crack the American market. Writer Bill Connolly of Martial Arts Movies Associated wrote that Shaws backed director Paul Bartel's follow-up to his successful Death Race 2000, called Cannonball, which in turn had been a rip-off of Gumball Rally. The Shaw film flopped. Golden Harvest grabbed the red-hot Hal Needham and Burt Reynolds, fresh from the success of Smokey and the Bandit, to put together a much larger budgeted version, with more recognizable guest stars.

The premise: A bunch of wacky drivers in wacky cars get into all kinds of wacky trouble while trying to win a race that is... yes... wacky.

Film fact: Cannonball Run was a big hit, but Chan's part was so small that it garnered him little attention.

Jackie says: Chan related the frustration of seeking elusive American stardom, to journalist Barrie Pattison. "At that time, we decided whether we do a TV series first or a movie. I cannot decide. Somebody says you must do the TV series first so everybody knows you, then you do the movie. Somebody says no, if you do the TV series then you becoming a TV star. When I sit down I just hear everybody arguing about me. You do that, do that. I said no. Don't do that. I go back to Asia; there's no question, I don't have to do anything."

Rumor has it: Jackie was flown cross-country to appear on the Today show, only to be told that his English wasn't good enough for an interview, and that he should demonstrate kung fu instead. No wonder he thought there was no place for him in America.

Bottom line: Chan's scenes are limited. His comic camaraderie with Michael Hui (Hong Kong comedy actor) is nicely timed but equally annoying as they are cast as Japanese characters, not Chinese. Jackie spends most of the picture sitting in a car — effectively putting a metal body cast on his agile talent. Cannonball Run has not aged well.

Rating: *

DRAGON LORD (1982)

Director and martial arts choreographer Jackie Chan. Screenwriters Jackie Chan, Barry Wong and Tang King-Sang. Stunt coordinators: Fung Ke-An and Yuen Kuai. Starring Jackie Chan, Mars, Wang In Shik and Chan Wai Man.

The premise: Attaching a love letter to a kite, Chan attempts to sail the message into the yard of his prospective girlfriend. The wind picks up the kite and takes it far off course. Afraid that an ugly woman in the next town might get the letter, Chan scampers after it, only to see it land on the roof of a mysterious warehouse surrounded by a high wall. Scaling the wall and traversing the roof, Chan finds himself under attack by spear-wielding criminals who are stealing national treasures from China. This is a theme that Jackie will pick up again later in his career.

Film fact: Originally called Young Master in Love as a sequel to Young Master, Dragon Lord failed at the Hong Kong box office, possibly in part because audiences were not ready for Jackie's new approach to action — sporting events (inspired by his roller-skating in Battle Creek) instead of fights.

Jackie says: "I still think it is a good film," Jackie told Combat magazine. "Now, a lot of people do different kinds of Chinese films, but at that time I was the first one to try to make a new kind of action picture. I got rid of the kung fu and tried to put in sports, but I found that the audience didn't want that."

Rumor has it: Jackie set the record for the most takes for one scene with the "bun pyramid," still holding the Guinness record. The actual number of shots has been rumored to be anywhere from 190 to 2900. This is the unmistakable free-for-all that opens the film when a hundred martial artists scramble over each other to climb a bamboo scaffolding, retrieve the prize bun at the apex and return it to their team's home base. With the kicking, scratching, clawing and pyramid collapsing that takes place in this one, we'd love to know the injury scorecard for this stunt, but ain't nobody talkin'.

The action: Jackie created three new sporting events. The "pyramid" sequence described was the first, followed by "Dragon Kick" and "Body Ball," reminiscent of football and soccer. Luckily Jackie realized there needed to be some fights, so he goes up against Wang In Sik inside a barn for the big finish, and while Jackie's character is outclassed, he screeches, claws and flails his way to victory. The finest example of "street" kung fu fighting ever filmed.

Worst injury: In the outtakes, Chan and others are shown falling to the ground headfirst from

bamboo towers and balconies, using no safety equipment, wires, or harnesses.

Bottom line: Although a little uneven, you will find plenty to enjoy.

Rating: **1/2*

FANTASY MISSION FORCE (1982)

Directed by Chu Yen Ping. Featuring Jackie Chan. Starring Jimmy Wang Yu.

The premise: It is World War II — but in a fictitious world where James Bond and Snake Plisken are real, but not available for the crisis at hand. The Japanese forces have captured major generals from the American, British, French and African armies, and the Chinese Allied Command must decide who should lead a force to rescue them. The only man for the job is Satan's Lieutenant Dwan Hwin (played by Wang Yu, of One Armed Swordsman fame) and his wacky rescue team inspired by The Magnificent Seven. If this sounds... well... unusual, it is. This movie is part of what has been termed the Hellzapoppin' subgenre of Hong Kong cinema where anything goes. The cast of characters always seems to include a mustached hero, a sexy heroine, a bald comedy relief general and a drunk, all of whom fight everything from Nazis to aliens from outer space. Be warned, this subgenre, despite its tongue-in-cheek mood, also is capable of sudden and violent endings.

Film fact: This film is memorable for its reenactment of the horrifying helicopter accident from John Landis's *Twilight Zone: The Movie*.

Rumor has it: According to writer Bey Logan in *Hong Kong Action Movies*, this film was the second done by Jackie as payback to reputed triad member, and fading actor, Jimmy Wang Yu. By helping out the producer/director, Jackie was able to proceed with his own film plans unencumbered, and with all limbs intact.

Jackie says: "He [Wang Yu]... if I wanted to do something, he would say, 'No, go and do that.' It's because he couldn't do it. If I did something better than him, it would make him look bad. I don't want to say it's bad [the movie]. Somebody out there may like it," Chan told writer Bey Logan.

Best action: Jackie's role is a cameo, but he utilizes his brief moments on screen by flinging himself over jungle huts and climbing poles, trellises and balconies. The comic wrestling bout that introduces his character and the final fight with Wang Yu are highlights.

Bottom line: As an example of the Hellzapoppin' subgenre, it's one of the best.

Rating: * as an action movie

**** as lunatic theater

CHAN'S BEST BEAT'EM UPS

There are two types of Jackie Chan fights: those that he directs himself and those that others direct. The difference is simple. Although Jackie's self-directed fights are exciting, he seemingly doesn't want to hurt anyone. When Samo Hung or Yuen Biao direct Chan, he suddenly turns into a juggernaut that wins at all costs — a powerful fighting machine. There are good fights in both categories. Enjoy.

1. *Police Story II: Jackie crosses a dangerous highway, only to face a bloodthirsty gang waiting in the restaurant on the other side. Jackie uses all the tables, chair, partitions and waiters' stations as weapons and venues for destruction.*

2. *Police Story II: In the playground fight scene, nearly two dozen thugs armed with metal pipes are ordered not to kill Jackie, just break every bone in his body. Jackie goes from street to park to playground to alley as he methodically takes out every assailant.*

3. *Police Story: How many ways can you trash a shopping mall? Jackie doesn't care as long as he can break things. There's a reason why the stuntmen called this one "Glass Story."*

4. *Wheels on Meals: Jackie Chan and Benny "The Jet" Urquidez face off for an unsurpassed, no-holds-barred fight. One of the most realistic fights on screen.*

5. *Heart of the Dragon: Two fights were taken out of this movie before its release because Golden Harvest wanted to focus more on the dramatic aspects of Chan's and Sammo Hung's performances. 'Tis a shame, especially since the single remaining fight is one of the most powerful Chan beat 'em ups yet filmed. The two fights that were surgically removed can be found on some Chan compilation fight tapes. They are equally as cool as the included fight, because choreographer Yuen Biao packs Chan with power.*

6. *Project A: The fast and furious stairwell fight shows stuntmen thrown wildly, hitting unpadded ground. You can almost hear the bones cracking. Gold dust on the bodies adds to the dramatics.*

7. *Drunken Master: The duel with Wong Jang Lee at the end matches the rubbery Chan with the formidable kicker of Hong Kong cinema. Exhilarating.*

8. *Drunken Master II: Jackie versus Ken Lo in an intense finale complete with a firebreathing Chan. You'll particularly be impressed by Ken's standing split. Jackie also fights Ken in Police Story III: Supercop (1992), Crime Story (1993) and Thunderbolt (1995)!*

9. *Armour of God: Battle with the monks in their mountain lair. This is the fight in which Jackie perfects his hit-and-spin technique, the whole fight taking on a circular pattern.*

10. *Dragon Lord: Jackie's final frantic fight with Wang In Sik is the finest scene of "street" kung fu fighting ever filmed.*

WINNERS AND SINNERS (1983)

Directed by Sammo Hung. Screenplay by Sammo Hung and Wong Pin Yiu. Stunt coordinators Yuen Biao, Lam Ching Ying and Chan Wui Ngai. Featuring Jackie Chan.

Chan focused most of his attention on directing his new baby — Project A (1984) — consuming a year. Being over schedule pushed back the Christmas 1982 start date for his next U.S. film, The Protector (1985), originally to be produced by Fred Weintraub (producer of Bruce Lee's Enter the Dragon) had it happened when planned. Chan took small roles in other directors' films, including this modern-day comedy, to have at least some screen time during the year.

The premise: Four men are arrested by the police: Tea Pot (Sammo Hung), a cat burglar; Exhaust Pipe (Richard Ng), an auto parts thief; Vaseline (Charlie Chin, aka Charlie Chin), a slick con man; and Curly (John Shum), a unionist attempting to organize street hookers. When released, the five ex-cons set up a cleaning company to go straight, but unwittingly become involved with crime boss Jack Tar and all his dirty laundry.

Film fact: A huge, oft-copied success. This marks the first time that Jackie works with his opera school "big brother," Sammo Hung in a high-budget movie, beginning a fruitful collaboration.

Jackie says: Jackie lamented his schedule in his fan club newsletter: "They [Western actors] do one role at a time and as such, they can really study the part well. On the other hand, an Asian actor has to work on several films simultaneously. For instance, I was working on The Protector during the day and a sequence in Winners and Sinners at night — both fighting scenes! Not an hour of sleep in a stretch of three days! And this situation is not just unique to me. Many other Asian actors are subject to this same pace. Under such circumstance, how can an Asian actor possibly compete with our Western counterparts?"

Best action: Chan shines in this cameo sequence — a roller-skating chase along a superhighway, over a Volkswagen Bug and under a thundering eighteen-wheeler.

Worst injury: A stuntman was badly hurt when kicked through a glass window. When Chan went on to finish The Protector, he used sugar glass for a similar scene, and Jackie subsequently incorporated this "safer" technique into Police Story (1985).

Bottom line: Having the three brothers — Hung, Yuen Biao and Jackie — in the same movie is a

prelude of magic to come in future collaborations.

Note: Some versions are missing a lengthy sequence in which Richard Ng works on mentally making himself invisible so that he can watch a girl taking a bath.

Rating: *** for comedy

CANNONBALL RUN II (1983)

Directed by Hal Needham. Featuring Jackie Chan.

The premise: Not much, really.

Film fact: The Cannonball Run movies are the only successful American movies Jackie had appeared in at this time.

Jackie says: "I would rather be a king in Asia. American directors do not understand me too well. They try to make me into another person, a character that is not me at all," Jackie told one reporter. "I thought if I make Cannonball Run II with Burt Reynolds I'll become successful in the United States. Didn't work."

Willie Chan says: "The part was really too small for Jackie," said Manager Willie Chan on England's Incredibly Strange Film Show, a Jackie Chan documentary. Fans agreed.

Rumor has it: Jackie was a maniac when it came to driving. Even ex-stuntman and director Hal Needham exited Jackie's one-of-a-kind auto as white as a sheet after what Jackie considered a normal velocity ride.

Bottom line: Minus Michael Hui as his codriver, Jackie Chan has almost nothing to do in this lackluster sequel. Not better than a blank screen.

Rating: [No fists]

PROJECT A (1984; aka Pirate Patrol)

Written and directed by Jackie Chan. Starring Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, Yuen Biao, Mars and Dick Wai.

The Premise: Project A is a rip-roaring yarn pitting a Marine Corps sergeant (Chan), a policeman (Yuen) and a crook (Hung) against the most notorious pirate of the South China Seas. Displays Chan's penchant for deliriously escalating set pieces, including a rather devilish homage to silent comedians.

Film fact: Project A made fourteen million Hong Kong dollars in its first week of release.

Best action: A spectacular barroom brawl and a rowdy romp in a pirate's lair. The showstopper announces itself loudly when Jackie does his variation on Harold Lloyd's hanging-from-the-clock-face routine from Safety Last. Whereas Lloyd used optical effects to give the impression of dangling above city streets, Jackie does the stunt from a fearsome height. Jackie also advanced the art of screen fighting once again by showing bouts with flying stuntmen hitting the floor, banisters, or anything else that gets in their way of a crash landing. The epicenter of each punch is highlighted in a halo effect with dust and sand put on the fighter's shoes and hair. Take particular note of the sustained action-chase-comedy sequence that prequels this fight.

Worst injury: The dock tower stunt went horribly wrong. Jackie's fall was supposed to be cushioned by the two canopies, but instead of tearing through the second awning, he bounced off and flipped upside down, hitting the ground and dampening the impact with his skull. The crew had pretested the stunt by tossing a sack of topsoil off the ledge. Jackie could not be certain that he would survive. "I just don't want to go down," Jackie recalled. "Scared." Production came to a halt for more than a week while Jackie stood on the ledge every day and steeled himself. He finally jumped. After he was treated at the hospital, Jackie came back and tried the stunt again... and again. All attempts are in the final film, the most lasting image being the one of Jackie staggering away in pain.

Jackie says: "One day when I was making Project A, people told me, 'We just saw the new Steven Spielberg movie and it had a bicycle scene.' That scared the shit out of me! I went and saw the movie. It was E.T., so I went on and did my bicycle scene and it was totally different than Spielberg. Actually, in his last Indiana Jones film, he [Spielberg] learned from me [motorcycle stunt in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade]. That made me very happy," Jackie told reported Jay Lin.

Bottom line: A revolutionary film on many levels. First, it takes place in 1903, an unexplored era of Hong Kong history. Second, this is Jackie's attempt to make his verbal skills as fluent as his physical skills. He succeeds by throwing in rapid-fire dialogue poking fun at the traditions of Peking Opera (most notably in a rifle-buying scene with Hung). Full of stunts, comedy, great set pieces, intelligible dubbing and a great score, Project A is a winner. The kung fu movie even for those who hate kung fu movies.

Rating: *****

WHEELS ON MEALS (1984; aka Spartan X)

Directed by Samo Hung. Written by Edward Tang and Johnny Lee. Production manager Jose Antonio De La Lorna, Jr. Starring Jackie Chan, Samo Hung, Yuen Biao, Miss Spain — Lola Forner, Benny "The Jet" Urquidez and Keith Vitali.

The premise: A modern-day Three Musketeers, complete with castle storming, sword fighting, and a damsel in distress, filmed entirely in Spain. Jackie and Yuen run a successful lunch van when they befriend Gloria (Forner) — a pickpocket with a heart of gold, who is being sought by Samo, a bumbling private eye. Together they discover a villainous plan to keep Gloria from receiving an inheritance.

Film fact: This film was originally titled Meals on Wheels. However, two Golden Harvest films that began with the letter "M" — Megaforce (1982) and Menage a Trois (1982) — had flopped, so they reversed the name.

Best action: The hand-to-hand combat between Jackie and Benny Urquidez — an unbeaten kickboxing champion and folk hero in Japan. A must-see! And Yuen Biao, the "little brother," is no slouch against Keith Hernandez either.

Jackie says: "When we fought in the movie, Benny wasn't used to not hitting! Finally I told him: 'Hit me again and you'll never work in Hong Kong films!' Jackie is quoted as saying in the book Hong Kong Action Movies.

Rumor has it: Keith Vitali told writer Bey Logan that rather than lose face in front of the crew, Jackie challenged Urquidez to fight him in a charity match in Hong Kong. "Benny said, 'Fine, but you'd better train for it or you're gonna get hurt! I think Samo showed Jackie some tapes of Benny in the ring and that was the last we heard of it!' Regardless, Benny returned to fight Jackie yet another day in Dragons Forever (1987).

Bottom line: Action-packed — a true delight. Contains the most realistic, savage kung fu fight since Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris went mano-a-mano in Return of the Dragon.

Note: The Japanese home video version has one scene cut out of most prints, in which Samo seeks out informant "Fatty" in a restaurant in which the round-but-packed Samo is the skinniest person there.

Rating: ****

CHAN AND ABEL

He was Jackie Chan's older - and bigger — "brother" at the Peking Opera school where the two toiled from ages seven to seventeen. But that's not Samo Hung's claim to fame. When not working with his old school chum, he has produced top sellers in the Hong Kong market, including such hits as Encounters of the Spooky Kind and The Dead and the Deadly, emerging as one of the

preeminent filmmakers of the region. Like Chan, many of Hung's creations spawned legions of copycats trying to recreate his style and lightning choreography.

Samo is also one of the most unlikely stars you'll ever see. He is not the picture of conventional beauty, sporting several facial scars, the most obvious being a gash on his lip. He's also rather overweight. He makes fun of his girth in movies by giving his character nicknames such as Tuba, Teapot and Moby. Yet this weight masks a fast and powerful martial artist's body. His characters are the charming rogues whom everyone underestimates... usually to their regret.

Although he was on top for many years, Samo's career began to nose-dive when he began churning out films such as *Lucky Stars Co Places* — a sloppily executed combination of two of Hong Kong's best-loved comedy films, *Lucky Stars* and *Aces Co Places*. The audience felt deceived. His subsequent films, like *Don't Give a Damn* and *Pantyhose Killer*, further alienated his former viewers by being racist, sexist and full of gay stereotypes.

In 1994, after a divorce and giving up a gambling habit, Hung married his love of many years, a Eurasian Hong Kong actress. His friendship with Chan, which had taken its share of knocks over the years, also seemed to be on the mend. Samo reported that Jackie won him back by giving him a set of S-Yard golf clubs that are all the rage in Hong Kong and impossibly rare. It did the trick, and Hung became one of Chan's favorite directors again, working with Jackie in *Thunderbolt* (1995) and *Nice Guy* (1997).

"Samo viewed things too seriously and was therefore under a lot of pressure. But he is fine now, more light-hearted than before," said Jackie in *TV Daily*. "He will still be the best martial arts choreographer around. Samo is Number One and I am only Number Two!"

Then it seemed that whatever squabbles existed between these two "brothers" in the past had been put aside.

"We fight alot," said Samo to writer Bey Logan, "but actually we are closer than family."

A nice note on which to leave things, but unfortunately, the sibling rivalry continues, supposedly now due to an interesting move by Hung. Jackie had often talked of making a movie about a martial artist who goes to the Western frontier called *The Lion Goes West*. In 1996, it was reported that Hung was on location in Texas shooting a movie by the same name. That would have been super, but the star of the movie was not the man who had come up with the title and the concept, but Jackie's box office rival, Jet Li, reprising the Wong Fei Hong character that both he and Jackie exemplified. To add insult to injury, two years before, Jackie and Li had talked of making a movie together, until Li came out with a film called *High Risk* in which he parodied many of the important people in Chan's private life to the point of being downright insulting and cruel.

Now it seems a comment Jackie made to *Martial Arts Illustrated* in the late eighties is more apt. "Very hard to explain this relationship. Of course, we [Jackie and Samo] grew up together, so we're like brothers. He's like my big brother. No matter how much success, he still looks at me as his little brother. I think maybe there is some jealousy there. 'You have success. You are my little brother. Why not me?' It's like we still respect each other, we can still talk together, but we can't work together."

And so the dynamics of the Jackie Chan/Samo Hung relationship continue... hopefully with enjoyable output still to come from both — either together or solo.

POM POM (1984)

Jackie Chan and Yuen Biao make a cameo appearance wearing their same costumes from *Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Stars*.

MY LUCKY STAR (1985)

Directed by Samo Hung. Starring Jackie Chan, Hung, Yuen Biao, Charlie Chin, Eric Tsang,

Sibeete Hu and Dick Wei.

While Golden Harvest began preproduction on Jackie's next international film, *The Protector* (1985), Chan took a costarring role in this new variation on the *Winners and Sinners* (1983) formula.

The premise: Muscles (Jackie) and Rickey (Yuen Biao) are Hong Kong officers undercover in Tokyo. Following a car chase through the city, the two cops battle ninjas in an amusement park in the shadow of Mount Fuji, and Rickey is captured. Needing help, Muscles radios his Hong Kong chief to enlist the aide of his five orphanage "brother", played by Samo Hung, Charlie Chin, Richard Ng, Fung Shui Fan and Eric Tsang.

Film fact: Did great business, making ten million Hong Kong dollars in its first week. It ended up with a box office record-breacking thirty million Hong Kong dollars.

Rumor has it: Jackie reported that a "beaming" Raymond Chow (head of Golden Harvest) hosted a gala dinner for the cast and crew, with the highlight being the "smashing" of a symbolic thirty-million-dollar ice carving by all the stars.

Jackie says: "This is Samo's film — he got into trouble with one of his stars — and I had to help! Urgent help, in fact, because we had to finish it for Chinese New Year release in Hong Kong and Taiwan! Did we make it? We sure did! We rushed like mad! Samo, a guy named Eric Tsang and myself, we three all helped in the direction, directing different parts of the film nonstop day and night!" related Chan in his fan publication. "Those were exhausting days but we managed to get the first copy out two weeks before the New Year!"

Best action: The final fight in an upside down room of a funhouse has Jackie fighting samurai-sword-swinging ghosts, followed by a snowy room filled with white-clad ninjas.

Bottom line: The decision to make the other brothers contemptuous of Muscles (Chan) sours the buddy element. A detour for Jackie until he gets on with the business of creating one of his most memorable movies, *Police Story*. But first had to come...

Rating: ***

THE PROTECTOR (1985)

Screenwriter and director James Glickenhaus. Starring Jackie Chan and Danny Aiello. Additional footage directed by Jackie Chan.

Chan's second starring role in an American-made film.

The premise: After a New York police officer (Chan) avenges his partner's brutal murder, he's put on probationary assignment and just happens to be on guard duty when a rich socialite is kidnapped. The trail leads Jackie and partner Danny Aiello to the massage parlors of Hong Kong and to the junks of Aberdeen Harbor. It also eventually takes them to the druglord they seek.

Film fact: Even though it achieved some success in European theaters and on U.S. home video, *The Protector* is counted as Chan's only flop since he signed with Golden Harvest.

Rumor has it: Chan complained to the *New York Daily News* that the director, James Glickenhaus, didn't understand him, telling him to be a "New York policeman, be Clint Eastwood." Jackie, remembering the comment, says, "I'm New York police? What about my English? Every day on the set I just practice, 'New Yawk, I come from New Yawk, New Yawk.'" One source remembers Chan and his close associates near tears at times during the frustratingly stilted filming. Memories of this movie still bring out strong emotions, as Jackie told journalist Diana D. Bowman about one time he lost his temper. "I told him 'FUCK YOU!' 'Jackie, you're fighting. I said, 'Okay the fighting will be like...' 'You fight from here to there. I said, 'No I cannot. I said, 'Fuck you! Do you know how to make an action movie?' Then he said, 'No, listen to me. I'm the director, you do your own job. I do the whole scene his way. It's not so good."

Glickenhaus says: Right from the beginning Glickenhaus said he told Jackie that this was his

film, that he was going to direct the martial arts sequences and was going to do them completely different than Jackie.

Jackie says: "He told me I'm just an actor. For me, it's just say my lines and back to the motor home. After *The Protector* I decided it's back to Asia. I told Glickenhau, 'You do *The Protector* and I'll do *Police Story* (1985), and I'll show you what the action movie is all about,'" Jackie told reporter Patrick Z. McGavin.

Best action: When Chan squares off against Bill "Superfoot" Wallace, it fails to please. Jackie does leap from a pallet swinging precariously from a giant dockyard crane to the cabin of another crane. As one writer put it, "Had he made the slightest error of timing or judgment he would have had about two seconds to regret it before reaching the ground over a hundred feet below."

Worst injury: Mars, longtime member of Jackie's stunt team, dislocated his shoulder jumping ship-to-ship off Aberdeen Harbor in Hong Kong. Mars stayed in the hospital for more than four weeks. Fortunately, he was covered by insurance, since *The Protector* was an American production. (Jackie and crew are considered uninsurable.)

Bottom line: Gratuitous Nudity. More like a low-budget James Bond film with bits lifted from *Dr. No* and *Goldfinger*. Catch it on TV if you must, but don't waste your money on a rental. Note, however, that the Chinese version in which Chan reshot many fight scenes with Wallace and added a subplot with Hong Kong singer Sally Yeh is much, much better.

Rating: *1/2*

Chan's Version: **1/2*

HEART OF THE DRAGON (1985; aka First Mission)

Directed by Sammo Hung. Screenplay by Barry Wong. Starring Jackie Chan and Hung.

The premise: Chan once again is a police officer, this time torn between wanting an unencumbered life as a merchant seaman and his responsibility for a mentally retarded older brother (Hung). The plot thickens when Hung innocently becomes involved in a jewel heist, leading to a violent confrontation.

Film fact: Yuen Biao choreographed, and although it's not the most successful collaboration for the three brothers, it was the most daring, as both Sammo and Jackie try roles that allow them to stretch.

Jackie says: "I'm trying lots of different kinds of film, because I'm not fifteen or sixteen anymore. I can't rely on making funny faces, sticking out my tongue, crossing my eyes... That's young man's humor and I'm growing up," Chan told *Combat* magazine. "I should change my image as I mature." The movie did not do as well as had been expected. "One thing I learned from that was that in an action film people know what's happening without dialogue. However, *Heart of the Dragon* was a dialogue film, so, even though there were subtitles or dubbing, I don't think people in non-Chinese-speaking territories appreciated it as much as they did in Hong Kong. I want to change, but the box office tells me not to. *Heart of the Dragon* nets one million dollars at the box office and *Police Story* (1985) nets ten million dollars. Which kind of film are you going to make next time? Very simple — I go for the ten-million-dollar type."

Best action: Two fights were cut from the international print — one in a drug rehabilitation center, the other in a restaurant parking lot. Both are great battles that were never seen by a world-wide audience. "There was a feeling that the film stood on its own merits as a dramatic piece," said Golden Harvest Vice-President David Sheppard to the reporter, "and that the extra fights would dilute that." The finale of *Heart of the Dragon* shows one powerful Chan fight, choreographed by Yuen, in which Chan faces a half dozen gunsels and a mob of pickaxe-wielding construction workers. This is often called the best-edited and -filmed kung fu battle in movie history. 'A film class in camera movement and editing choreography could run a semester on this ten minute

sequence alone," wrote Inside Kung Fu columnist Ric Meyers.

Bottom line: Fast paced with much crying, and some of Hung's best action directing.

Rating: ***

TWINKLE TWINKLE LUCKY STARS (1985)

Directed by Samo Hung. Screenplay by Barry Wong. Starring Jackie Chan, Yuen Biao, Samo Hung, Lau Tak Wah, Rosamond Kwan, Richard Norton, Yasuaki Shoji Kurato, Andy Lau and Melvin Wong.

The premise: Four of the brothers from My Lucky Stars (1985) are back. While on summer vacation with the brothers in Thailand, Police-woman Ba Wah must cut the holiday short when three assassins (two of whom are Richard Norton and Yasuaki Shoji Kurato) kill one of her informants.

Film fact: After this movie, Samo lost Jackie's participation in the series, and he slapped together the inferior Lucky Stars Go Places.

Jackie says: Jackie wasn't happy from the beginning. He had just finished The Protector (1985), but was still working on Police Story (1985). "Now this," he said in his fan newsletter. "Samo decided to start on a new film-him directing and me starring! So, once again, I am back to square one — with two films on my hands!"

Rumor has it: Gratis celebrity appearances by Hong Kong movie stars abound. Kao Fei, Michelle Kahn (Yes, Madam), and Hui Ying Hung (Rosa) all have roles to play, while David Chiang (Where's Officer Tuba?), Liang Chia-jen (The Victim), and Philip Chan (Winners and Sinners and Pom Pom) just pop in briefly.

Best action: Jackie has several fights, including a bout with Dick Wei. However, in his fight with Shoji, Jackie is backed into a corner and is wounded for the final fight. Samo takes out Norton and Kurata, while Yuen gets the third assassin.

Bottom line: Not as good as its prequel, My Lucky Stars (1985). Much of the humor in Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Stars is in the same vein as Dumb and Dumber. Five grown men spend half the movie trying to come up with different ways to have a woman brush up against them or expose flesh. Most of the action scenes are worthwhile.

Rating: **

POLICE STORY (1985; aka Police Force)

Directed by Jackie Chan. Production coordinator Willie Chan. Supervisor Edward Tang. Starring Jackie Chan, Chua Yuen, Brigitte Lin Ching Hsia, Bill Tung, Kenneth Tong and Maggie Cheung.

The premise: Jackie is a detective assigned to a team created to bust a highly organized drug ring headed by businessman Chu Tao (played by Chua Yuen). The sting goes horribly wrong, and Jackie sets out to convince Chu's secretary, Selina, to turn in evidence, making her believe that Chu plans to have her killed. Meanwhile, Chu has decided that Selina and Jackie should be eliminated and captures Selina, holding her as bait. By the climax of the movie, Jackie is framed for murder and is on the run not only from the criminals, but his former buddies.

Film fact: Jackie was back scripting, starring and directing his own movie. 'And boy, let me tell you, it's great to be directing again!' he said, thoughts of Glickenhau behind him.

Rumor has it: How many ways can you wreak havoc in a shopping mall? Jackie Chan answers this question with a ten-minute brawl, spectacular stunt work, and so much broken glass that Police Story was nicknamed "Glass Story" by the stuntmen who were on the receiving end.

Worst injury: While trying to stop a hijacked bus, Jackie parks a car in the path of the oncoming vehicle. The highjacker panics and the driver slams on the brakes sending the criminals crashing through the front window of the bus and onto the hard pavement just short of the car — which in reality was specially cushioned to break their fall. Because the bus stopped short, the poor guys ate

some pavement and, ended up in the hospital. Jackie also had a close call when he slid down a thirty-foot pole that was wrapped in a myriad of electric lights. Before the stunt, Jackie wrote in his fan newsletter: "All I have to do is leap from the 6th floor balcony of a shopping arcade onto a giant 30-foot chandelier then slide down on it all the way to the ground. And if glass breaks and sparks fly during the process (and I pray they will because that is the effect I want!), you please pray that I'll still be in one piece when I land on the ground!" Perhaps someone was praying instead of doing their Job — the electricity was supposed to be half voltage. It wasn't. When I'm coming down, all my skin coming off my hands," Jackie told reporter Mark Caro of the stunt he called his scariest to date. But wait, there's more. Near the beginning of the movie a spectacular car chase was filmed through a hillside shantytown — a construction that cost five hundred thousand Hong Kong dollars. "Four of my boys got badly injured! One had his earlobe cut, another his foot slashed, yet another with a twisted ankle, and, worst of all, the fourth with two broken ribs," Jackie continued. Injuries on Police Story were so extensive that many martial artists vowed never to work with Jackie again. "If you saw some of the NG's [mistakes] we didn't use at the end of Police Story, I think you'd cry. Lot's of people got hurt, were bleeding, got carried off to the hospital, etc," said Jackie in his newsletter. "I wanted to show all of this, but my boss said it was too much, so we cut it out."

Best action: Police Story was an action groundbreaker. Jackie had set out to show Glickenhau what The Protector (1985) should have been, and he succeeded. Proof? Take into account that no one has paid homage to anything from The Protector. Not so Police Story. Andrei Konchalovsky took several scenes for Tango and Cash (1989), while Brandon Lee lifted the shopping mall motorcycle segment frame by frame for Rapid Fire. Don't miss Mars's shining moment as the "assailant" after the damsel in distress.

Jackie says: "Every time I make an American film, you can tell!" Jackie has prophetically related in many interviews. "The Protector and Police Story are totally different, and I think Police Story is a better movie!"

Note: August 17, 1985, was Jackie's victory day. That's the day he successfully completed three movies: Twinkle, Twinkle, Lucky Stars (1985), Dragon's Forever (1987), and Police Story (1985).

Bottom line: The first great modern-day martial arts action picture.

Rating: *****

ARMOUR OF GOD (1986; aka Thunderarm)

Directed by Jackie Chan. Original story by Edward Tang, Szeto Chock Hoin, Ken Lo and John Sheppard. Stunt coordinators Lau Kar Wing and Yuen Chung Heung. Starring Jackie Chan, Alan Tam, Lola Forner and Rosamund Kwan.

The premise: Jackie plays the Asian Hawk, an Indiana Jones-style adventurer, who has recovered an ancient sword. It's bought at auction by Lola Forner (Wheels on Meals) after Jackie plants an overzealous bidder in the crowd to jack up the price. Meanwhile, we learn an evil sect, which already has two pieces of a mythical suit of armor of which the sword is part, wants the rest and will stop at nothing to reach their overzealous goal. When they kidnap Jackie's ex-girlfriend — who is now dating his former best friend from the singing group that the three started — it's up to Jackie to infiltrate the cult's mountain lair and fight leather-encased Amazons and habit-clad kickers.

Worst Injury: Chan miscalculated a leap from a castle wall to a tree branch and plummeted headfirst to the ground, hitting a rock and cracking his skull. Today he suffers from permanent partial deafness in one ear and has a thimble-sized hole on the right side of his head. If you ask nicely, he'll let you touch it... it vibrates when he hums.

Jackie says: "I didn't concentrate enough. Before that jump I had jumped a long way in Police

Story (1985), so this seemed to be very easy. The original director Eric Tsang said 'Have you looked at the tree you're jumping to?' and I said, "Ahh, it doesn't matter." He told reporter Bey Logan, "It changed me in that now I'm even more careful. I look on every small stunt as if it's a big stunt. I don't think 'Oh, it's a piece of cake' anymore." Hearing the story of how the Yugoslavian cameraman moved to save the camera instead of saving Chan, interviewer Jonathan Ross from The Incredibly Strange Film Show in England asked him, "I wonder where that cameraman is today?" Jackie just smiled.

Rumor has it: Originally, Jackie had a very short haircut for *Armour of God*. After his operation, he let his hair grow back to its usual length for the completion of the film. "I didn't like that hairstyle. Also, the boss at Golden Harvest (Raymond Chow), will never let me touch my hairstyle again. He thinks that when I cut it I lost my power," Jackie said in *Combat* magazine.

Best action: A wonderful fight with four femme guards (played half the time by stuntmen and half the time by women — who complained that the suits fit the stuntmen better than they... uhm... fit them) and the main battle scene inside the cult's mountainlair dining room. Chan advances the art of kung fu cinema once again. In addition to the clever running joke in which Jackie must break away from the fighting to protect his two friends who just can't seem to find any way out of the place, Jackie invents a new form of fighting that writer Ric Meyers terms "hit and spin." He uses circular attacks and retreats to check his surroundings and the location of the enemy. "It was a brilliant way to explain the sort of ESP kung fu fighters have when surrounded," wrote Meyers. "It also elevated the fight sequence to an amazing dance. This is the scene I will always consider a classic."

Bottom line: A keeper.

Rating: ****

NAUGHTY BOYS (1986)

Chan produced for Golden Way. Jackie has a cameo appearance in a jail scene as the Big Brother of the inmates. He also appears in the outtakes.

PROJECT A II (1987)

Jackie Chan.

After his near fatal accident, Jackie seemed to realize his own mortality as he went about completing a series of sequels to his successful movies, including this obvious homage to Buster Keaton.

The premise: An epic turn-of-the-century action comedy. Jackie plays Dragon Ma, the only honest cop in the frontierlike town of Hong Kong on the eve of the 1911 revolution — facing pirates, a corrupt police department, the colonial powers, a desperate imperial government, overzealous young revolutionaries and the pirates he didn't kill in the first movie. The film offers a perfect synthesis of comedy, drama, motion and a subtle pacifist message.

Best action: Balletlike fights move at warp speed through a nightclub, a soy-milk-making factory, a fish hatchery and a chicken-plucking establishment. The stunts are also spectacular — especially the tip of the hat to Keaton. In *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, Buster does a remarkable stunt during a hurricane when a facade falls toward him and he passes safely through a window opening. One inch either way and he would have been nailed into the ground. In *Project A II*, the facade of a ceremonial wall collapses on Chan, who passes safely through a bamboo and paper panel.

Jackie says: "I spent a lot of money so they [the sets] would not look like sets. All the costumes were imported from England. We had to do extensive research, but I deliberately didn't make the

society of nineteenth century Hong Kong as bad as it really was. I gave it a healthy look! Supposedly, there was a lot of opium and robberies in the street every day during that period, but I let the audience see mostly nice things," Chan said in his fan publication. "As for the 'pacifist speech' in Project A II, in each of my movies I do try to bring a message. Unfortunately, this message is often lost, especially to the Asian audience, who are really only there to see my action."

Rumor has it: In the film, Jackie fills his mouth with chili peppers, spits on his fists and slaps juice into his opponent's eyes. Guess what? They were real chili peppers. "At the time we shot that scene, I was in a big hurry to finish the movie," Jackie continued. "We had deadlines everywhere from foreign distributors, because you have to send the film to the government one month prior to release. I was working day and night, even doing stunts without rehearsals. We just thought about how the stunts were going to be and did them. Because of the hurry, we didn't have time to make artificial peppers — they had to be the real thing. I tell you, the whole afternoon and night it hurt!"

Bottom line: With desperate chase scenes, spectacular stunts, humor, suspense, pain and invention, you need more than one viewing to truly appreciate this movie.

Rating: *****

A MOTHER'S LOVE

When he left the China Drama Academy for Australia to join his parents, who were working at the American Embassy, Jackie discovered two things: His parents had been saving for years to buy him a house, and he had an older sister who had since traveled from China to join them.

Although he didn't grow up with his family, Chan has since forged a relationship with them. His father — a distinguished gentleman, usually wearing a Greek sailor's hat and smoking a pipe — can often be seen around Jackie's sets. His mother, however, is a different story.

"For thirty years, my mom is so proud of herself because she has her picture with every American president. She knows every ambassador. Every time I go back, the ambassador says, 'Jackie, don't let your mom go, she takes good care of me.' I say, 'Mom, retire.' She says, 'No, no everybody likes me. I stay here.'"

"After that, I became more famous. In all that time, my mom has not seen one of my movies beginning to end. When the fighting starts, she turns around to make coffee or do anything. She just listens. After fighting, she comes back for the comedy things. Then, 'Ha, ha, ha, ha.'"

Fighting again, she turns around again. For all those years none of my movies has she seen completely. I remember while doing a stunt on the set once — first time she ever visited me on the set. Bad day. As soon as she arrived we had a fighting scene.

My mom had never seen my fighting. She was sitting about twenty feet away. BOOM! I get hit in the nose, blood comes out. You know when blood comes out, all my stunt guys, everybody is nervous, 'Quick, quick, get the medicine box. Jackie!' My mom collapsed. Fell down right away. You know what? Next day she goes back to Australia. So all those years, the only worry of my mom is that I get hurt on my head.

"I'll never forget. After I get hurt in Yugoslavia [filming *Armour of God*], seven days later we get the news in Asia — nobody knows. But suddenly one day, Associated Press takes a photo. I think, 'Oh, my God.' I know the news will go to Australia in three days. I call my mom right away. 'Hi mom, how are you?' 'Where are you?' 'Paris.' 'Why are you in Paris?' 'My friend got hurt. Come to see my friends and have a holiday.' 'Okay, see you. I hang up. Three days later, my mom calls. 'I saw the news, what happened! 'Ah, company just wanted to do some promotion. It's okay.' Mom says, 'Oh, scared me.' "Of course, later on my mom knows. Two years later, I let the hair grow over the wound, everything looks perfect. I'm going back to see my mom for five days. My mom is always looking at me. The last day, I leave for Hong Kong, my mom cried. 'Jackie, before you go, I want to see your scar. How big is the scar? Where's the hole? The newspapers say you have a hole

in your skull.' I said, 'They're all liars. Very good operation. Very small.' She looks a whole hour, cannot find the hole (pointing to left side of head). I say, 'See, nothing. Good, good doctor.'

"My mom says, 'Ah, now I'm not worried.'" She goes away.

"It was the other side, not that side."

DRAGONS FOREVER (1987)

Directed by Samo Hung. Starring Jackie Chan, Hung, Yuen Biao, Deanie Yip, Kao Fei, Yuen Wah, Pauline Yeung, Benny "The Jet" Urquidez and Lo Lich.

Jackie, Yuen Biao and Samo Hung realized they weren't getting any younger, so they came together to do this fight extravaganza advertised as their "farewell" film. Jackie was only thirty-three.

The premise: A widow threatens to take a mobster to court because the chemicals from his illegal drug factory are polluting her fish hatchery. The mobster orders his womanizing lawyer (Chan) to get her to drop her suit, and Chan hires his two buddies — Hung, a good-hearted arms seller, and Biao, a paranoiac technical wizard and sneak-thief — to help out.

Film fact: Bombed horribly at the box office in Japan, a country usually hungry for anything Jackie.

Rumor has it: Some feel that perhaps a backlash from Samo's declining career at that time caused this movie not to do so well in theaters.

Action: A rousing fight at the chemical factory featuring an evil-looking Yuen Wah is particularly adrenaline-pumping. Jackie, Samo and Yuen Biao show they still have what it takes, especially Jackie as he once again takes on Benny "The Jet" Urquidez, the bad guys main coke taster. Look for the kung fu fight stars, such as Dick Wei and the Yuen brothers, guesting throughout.

Bottom line: Characterization is top-notch. Despite poor showing when released, the film is a pure delight.

Rating: ***1/2*

THE KEATON SCORECARD

Buster Keaton's motto was "Think slow. Act Fast." Jackie Chan's motto is: "When I do a stunt, I am Buster Keaton." Nothing proves that better than looking at a few of the scenes, props and obstacles that the two have in common on our unofficial scorecard.

BUSTER:

Buster fights swordfish underwater. — The Navigator (1924)

Buster walks against the force of a hurricane. — Steamboat Bill, jr. (1928)

Buster escapes being crushed by fitting into the window frame of a falling facade. — Steamboat Bill, jr.

Buster jumps down the decks of a steamboat. — Steamboat Bill, jr.

Buster is chased while tied to a man — Convict 13 (1920)

Buster hangs from the back of a cab — The Cameraman (1928)

More than one Buster appears on screen at one time. — The Playhouse (1921)

Buster uses a ladder to escape by vaulting over a fence. — Cops (1922)

Buster is injured by a steam train watering spout. — The General (1927)

Buster has a fight atop a moving train. — The General

JACKIE:

Jackie fights sharks underwater. — First Strike (1996)

Jackie walks against the force of a wind tunnel. — Operation Condor (1990)

Jackie escapes being crushed by fitting into the window frame of a falling ceremonial facade. — Project A II (1987)
Jackie jumps down the decks of a cruise ship. — City Hunter (1993)
Jackie is chased while handcuffed to a criminal. — Project A II (1987)
Jackie hangs from the back of a bus. — Police Story (1985)
More than one Jackie appears on screen at one time. — Twin Dragons (1991)
Jackie use a ladder to escape by vaulting over a fence. — Project A II (1987)
Jackie is injured while hanging from a train spout. — Supercop (1992)
Jackie has a fight atop a moving train. — Supercop

POLICE STORY II (1988)

Directed by Jackie Chan. Starring Jackie Chan, Maggie Cheung and Bill Tung.

The premise: Two movies in one, with Jackie back as his intrepid Hong Kong cop character. Plotline number one involves the villain from the first movie, who is diagnosed with only a few months to live. He vows to break every bone in Jackie's body during his remaining time on earth, which leads to two great fights — one in a restaurant and one on a playground. Plotline number two involves a team of arsonists terrorizing a major corporation. What do they want? Loads of cash. If the company does not comply, their large holdings — shopping centers, hotels — will be bombed. Only Jackie can save the day, not to mention his kidnapped girlfriend.

Film fact: Police Story II won the award for best fight choreography at the Hong Kong Film Awards.

Rumor has it: This was more or less Chan's Lethal Weapon, with him in the Mel Gibson role.

Best action: Normal people wait for a green light to cross a street. Not Jackie. In Police Story II Jackie stands on a balcony, then jumps onto a truck going one way, then a double-decker bus going the other way, dodges two outcropping signs, only to go through a billboard on the second floor of the villain's headquarters. In another fight Chan goes from park to playground, methodically taking out a dozen attackers.

Worst injury: Jackie had a rather close call while filming Police Story II, which he related in his fan club newsletter. "I almost got killed," he said. In one scene, he had to rush into a restaurant for a fight [most people just have lunch] after first crossing the busy highway. "We didn't get permission to film this. We just went out at four in the morning with all our cars and drivers. I didn't know which cars were ours and which were people going to work," Jackie said, as reported in M.A.M.A. magazine. The one that ran over him was one of his own, pushing him ten feet down the street. If Jackie had slipped or lost his balance, he would have gone under the vehicle Indiana Jones-style without the benefit of special effects. "He kept stopping too soon," Jackie said. "I told him, 'Reach me, then hit your brakes! Finally, he did.'" When Jackie was asked what he said to the driver after the shot, he replied, "Good job!" Jackie suffered a head injury while crashing through a billboard and a glass window. Maggie Cheung sustained a horseshoe-shaped gash just above her hairline. Shooting was delayed while she was stitched together.

Bottom line: "Good job" could also be said to Jackie for this sequel. It achieves heights of delirium with realistic action and some interesting sets, topped off by a fantastic exploding factory with Jackie clearly running from the precariously close airborne molten rubble.

Rating: ****

INSPECTOR WEARS SKIRTS (1989)

Producer and fight choreographer. (A lunatic Police Academy featuring women.)

BRINGING BACK BIAO

Not enough has been written about Yuen Biao. That's a shame, because his talent is just as impressive as his two opera school "brothers" from the China Drama Academy — Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung.

*Yuen is the youngest of the three, and started his career with the persona of a perky, slightly smarmy teen idol type that he has traces of even today. He appeared with his two old friends in a string of movies such as *Wheels on Meals* (1984), *Project A* (1984) and *Dragons Forever* (1987), all of which were hits in varying degrees and all of which show a Yuen Biao that is possibly even more acrobatic than Jackie himself. Look how they complement each other in *Young Master*.*

*Though not as adventuresome in the outrageous stunt department as Chan, Biao is frighteningly flexible and seemingly able to defy gravity. According to *Film Threat Video Guide*, "Biao's high kick is so amazing he can kick a man standing behind him in the face without even so much as turning around."*

*Perhaps not wanting to constantly be in the shadow of his towering brothers, Biao moved on to star in some formidable hits of his own, including *Once Upon a Time in China*, *Peacock King* and *Prodigal Son*. These days, he prefers to keep a low profile and spend time with his family, usually only accepting minor roles in other people's films.*

"Yuen was a success, but when he left Golden Harvest he followed the wrong road," explains Jackie to one reporter. "When they [Sammo Hung and Biao] have success at Golden Harvest, all the production buyers came out, gave them a blank check. They think they are success... not just you... not just me, but all of us and Golden Harvest [think that]. Then Sammo and Yuen Biao go out and make their own company. So now they (distributors) just buy one Yuen Biao movie, and they don't promote it. Then when Yuen Biao goes down, they say, 'Ah, he's finished.' It's back to Golden Harvest for them.

"So, as soon as they were down, Golden Harvest would not let me make a movie with Yuen Biao anymore," Jackie said in one interview.

"We have a tradition, when people's luck is going down — you never go to them. You wait it out. I hate these kinds of traditions. This is why I say, 'Okay, Sammo is back.' And then later, I bring Yuen Biao back. Then all three brothers will be together again."

*Magic moments have been few and far between these past few years since Jackie, Yuen and Sammo made *Dragons Forever*. However, the audience at the 1994 Hong Kong Film Awards got to see a little of the old camaraderie — and the sibling relationship — between these men when they formed a boyish trio to present a Lifetime Achievement Award to Golden Harvest head Raymond Chow. That, coupled with Linda Lee's acceptance speech in Cantonese for her late husband Bruce's Lifetime Achievement Award, made it a shining night to remember.*

ROUGE (1988)

Produced by Chan's production company, Golden Way. Directed by Stanley Kwan and starring Anita Mui.

Film Fact: One of Hong Kong's most critically acclaimed films and moneymakers. It won three Golden Horse awards for best actress, cinematography and art direction—worthy of this beautiful film that tells a classic love story through fifty years. The "Madonna" of Hong Kong, Anita Mui, gives a stunning performance.

Jackie says: 'Actually, we decided to make this film because we wanted to prove that our company, Golden Way, apart from making action movies, can make other types of award-winning films as well, and this film has certainly been nominated and in some instances actually won awards in film festivals all over the world,' said Chan in his fan publication.

Rating: ***** for drama

PAINTED FACES (1988)

Coproduced by Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers Studios. Produced by Mona Fong and Leonard Ho. Written and directed by Alex Law. Starring Samo Hung.

The premise: The Dickensian telling of the China Drama Academy childhoods of Samo Hung, Yuen Biao and Jackie Chan, with Samo starring as their notoriously harsh headmaster, Sifu Yuen. The film starts with a young actor playing Chan entering the school at age seven. His mother can't handle him, and she signs a guardianship paper that is practically slavery, giving the teacher the right to even beat the boy to death. From here we watch the painful development of the young performers until the time their teacher leaves them to go to America.

Film fact: Though Jackie had nothing to do with the making of this movie, it is about his life.

Jackie says: "This film has won quite a lot of acclaim, but frankly, personally I don't like it much because I think that it has been glamorized for the screen," said Chan in his newsletter. "A lot of the story is not true. If it were, Samo, Yuen Biao and I would have been much happier kids."

Best action: This is not a film in which the camera swirls and swoops — it is intimate and quiet. Therefore, it is not motion that is memorable as much as individual images.

Bottom line: This is a heart-wrenching tale that gives some insight into what makes Chan tick. Painted Faces is a film that gets better the more it's thought about," wrote Inside Kung Fu columnist Ric Meyers. "The first half of the movie is reflected and refracted in the second half as Peking Opera traditions go out of style and Hong Kong becomes increasingly westernized. So, although the audience is treated to a condensed, abridged, encyclopedic taste of a decade, director Law crafts each scene so carefully that the overall effect is of excellence."

Rating: *** for drama**

MIRACLE (1989; aka The Chinese Godfather, aka Mr. Canton and Lady Rose)

Directed, written and choreographed by Jackie Chan. Starring Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Gloria Yip, Jacky Cheung and Billy Chow.

The premise: A musical/gangster/martial-arts/comic melodrama set in 1930s Hong Kong. Chan is an honest man mistakenly elevated to criminal kingpin status and riches after receiving a lucky rose from a flower vendor. He uses his newfound power to open a nightclub that becomes all the rage, as he battles with gangsters who oppose him. When the in laws of the flower vendor's child come for a visit, Jackie decides to convince them that she is a refined lady as payback for her kindness.

Film fact: A set was built for Miracle at the old Shaw Brothers Studios in Hong Kong, actually requiring that part of a mountain be knocked down for the right shot. "You see, I wanted this movie to look totally realistic. I wanted the audience to fantasize too. A movie is always a dream maker — let them go to the cinema, forget everything and just feel good," Jackie said.

Jackie says: "I remember seeing Pocketful of Miracles when my English wasn't so good. I understood the story line, that's all, so I had someone translate it for me. Wow! I loved it and always kept the idea of making my own version in the back of my mind," Jackie recalled in Hong Kong Connection. "I used to bring this idea up at meetings and show them the original movie, and the main point of criticism was this: What? No fighting?" Finally, we sat down and came up with new ideas to change the film's plot, add fighting and so forth. I added a lot of new things."

Best action: "I had to think of new stunts. For example, if rope had been used in another movie, it was my job to think of something fresh. We always had to think of funny things as well, not just punches, but fighting that was funny," Jackie continued. That attention to detail paid off in the stairwell scene — which is one of the greatest moments in all of Jackie's movies — as he dodges rickshaws and other obstacles. All four fights in the movie are well conceived and demonstrate Jackie's style of circular fighting, but not as much as the finale in the rope factory

when Jackie dances with wrapping hemp, rolling barrels and flying bodies.

Rumor has it: Miracle took nine months to shoot and cost sixty-four million Hong Kong dollars. Police Story II (1988) had been scheduled for an early release under Jackie's nose. He was determined to avoid this with Miracle, as he explained in his newsletter. "It was supposed to have been finished by Chinese New Year [February], but when I heard that, every day I took only one shot to let Golden Harvest know that it was impossible to get it done by then. Still Miracle was rush, rush, rush at the end too. I didn't want to push up the release date because I'd spent so much money already. Finally, the release date was postponed and I had lots of time — I thought. A typhoon came and destroyed my sets and we had to remake them."

Worst injuries: Jackie ended up with a piece of bamboo between his eye and eyebrow, and a gash on his brow from a misdirected ax handle (he was going backward over a rickshaw at the time). Nothing unusual. But real tragedy did strike — the death of a crew member. News reporters grabbed on like pit bulls, claiming a stuntman had died. In fact, a prop crew member fell off one of the set's buildings. The film's associate producer said that Jackie closed the production down and saw to the welfare of the man's family, which he is probably doing even today. Will you like it? With its subtle tracking shots, elegant montages and witty use of the wide screen, Miracle is a winner. Some may find the slapstick overdone, but no more so than scenes between dance routines in a Gene Kelly movie. Of all his films, Jackie probably had his most passionate love affair with Miracle. Chances are that you will like it too.

Rating: *****

CHAN'S BEET STUNTS

Jackie Chan's stunts might elicit this response: the viewers sit motionless, perhaps clutching their seats; simultaneously their eyes bulge and their bottom jaws drop; this is usually followed by sighs of disbelief accompanied by an almost inaudible "This guy is crazy" or "I can't believe he did that." That's just the reaction that Jackie wants. His stunts are thrilling because he's actually doing them. Here are his best examples.

1. Police Story: The stakeout sequence beginning Police Story is a wonderful ten minutes in action cinema. It begins with a car chase through a hillside shantytown and culminates with Jackie hanging from a bus by the handle of his umbrella.

2. Police Story: Jackie slides down a thirty-foot pole wrapped with a myriad of electric lights. He burns the skin off his hands.

3. Project A: Taking his inspiration from Harold Lloyd's Safety Last, Jackie re-creates the famous hanging-from-the-clock-face routine, only Jackie falls through several awnings and lands headfirst. He is injured on the first take. He does two more!

4. Police Story II: Chan somersaults from a moving bus and crashes through a billboard and a factory window. He suffers head injuries.

5. Police Story III: Supercop: Jackie jumps from a building onto a helicopter rope ladder, and then proceeds to swing around the heights of Kuala Lumpur, through a billboard and into a steeple, then landing on a moving train. Piece of cake — as long as you can hang on.

6. Operation Condor: Taking his inspiration from Buster Keaton's Steamboat Bill, jr., Chan sets a fight in a wind tunnel that is preceded by fisticuffs on moving metal bellows and a giant oil tank.

7. Project A II: Jackie's re-creation of classic Buster Keaton stunts adds charm to this already fun epic. Especially pay attention to the falling ceremonial wall.

8. Winners and Sinners: Jackie roller-skates over a Volkswagen bug and under a thundering eighteen-wheeler.

9. *Dragon Lord*: The bun pyramid sporting event can be called a stunt, as over a hundred stuntmen clamber over each other to climb a bamboo tower, until the tower topples and splinters, sending debris and bodies to the ground.

10. *Drunken Master II*: Jackie proves he's still hot by skimming across a bed of hot coals and shooting flames from his mouth.

ARMOUR OF GOD II: OPERATION CONDOR (1990; aka Project Eagle)

Directed by Jackie Chan. Starring Jackie Chan, Eva. Cobo, DoDo Cheng, Vincent Lyn, Ken Lo and Shoko Ikeda.

Jackie was no longer the new guy on the block. The pressure was on for a hit. After the success of Golden Harvest's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Team Chan decided the time was right for a movie to appeal to the American market. But producers told him that American cinemas would never screen an all Asian film, so Jackie decided to do this sequel to his most successful movie, *Armour of God*, with a mostly Caucasian cast.

The premise: Jackie, as the 'Asian Hawk,' leads a mission in search of a huge cache of gold hidden in the desert by German soldiers during World War II (an idea inspired by Italian actor Aldo Sambrell, seen in many Clint Eastwood movies). A Chinese historian, an accident-prone German heiress, and a Japanese ethnologist are in tow, as Jackie takes on an assortment of mercenaries with his lightning-fast moves and spy gadgets.

Film fact: Filmed in the Moroccan Sahara desert, Spain, the Philippines and Hong Kong with a ninety-million-Hong-Kong-dollar budget, this was Chan's most expensive feature to date. The most elaborate sets were a Moroccan-style hotel costing one and a half million Hong Kong dollars, and a huge sound stage and wind tunnel built on the old Shaw Brothers Studios lot in Hong Kong.

Rumor has it: Some "prop" money was taken off the set in Morocco and circulated outside as the real thing. Jackie was summoned to the police station for questioning. The authorities detained the film footage and it was only after involving lawyers from Britain, Hong Kong and Morocco that the footage was safely flown back to Jackie in Hong Kong. On a humorous — and touching — note, Jackie apparently forbade all the cast and crew to eat the fruit baskets in their hotel rooms. Why? He had been told on a previous trip that most of the kids in Morocco are so poor that they have never tasted fruit. Chan distributed the fruit to every child he saw that day.

Worst injuries: Jackie suffered a bleeding chest after he was kicked forty-three times in a series of retakes for one scene. However, the Jackie Chan Stuntmen's group took the biggest blow. After ten years, Jackie decided to disband his group after this movie, only using old regulars on a movie-by-movie basis. This was attributed to infighting among the group as to who was the leader. But it has also been rumored that some of the members were believed to have triad ties and were feeding information to their bosses. Disbanding was a convenient way to eliminate the infiltrator.

Jackie says: The Sahara led to major problems. "There were sandstorms during which it was impossible to work!" Jackie said in his fan publication. "Camels didn't want to obey! We didn't have enough water for the crew and the actors! And I was about to forget scorpions coming each night to visit us! A member of the crew was bitten by one of them, but he was saved because we were lucky enough to have a doctor with us. We didn't have time to get bored in the desert!" Vincent Lyn, hanging on a wire, was also hurt on the wind tunnel set when he was slammed against a wall so hard that he lost consciousness.

Best action: The comic bout between Jackie, Ken Lo and American martial artist Vincent Lyn in a wind tunnel inspired by a Mitsubishi auto testing facility and Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*

Bottom line: A story that seems to have gotten out of hand, the most insulting part being the three female stars sharing the same brain, who are there only to represent the three markets Golden

Harvest wanted to capture — Japanese, Chinese and Western. Often called a Chan latter-day low point, there are still comic moments to be had.

Rating: ***1/2*

ISLAND ON FIRE (1991)

Produced by Jimmy Wang Yu. Starring Jackie Chan, Tony Leung, Andy Lau and Sammo Hung.

The premise: In the Hong Kong of the future, Jackie plays a pool shark whose girlfriend is brutally stabbed by a vengeful rival. Apparently hospitals of the future won't operate without money up front, so in order to save his love's life, Jackie wins at cards but must kill the angry loser to get out of the club in one piece. He ends up in jail, where Sammo Hung, Tony Leung (The Lover) and pop singer/actor Andy Lau are also interred because of their own touching tales. The film enters La Femme Nikita territory when Chan, Hung, Leung and Lau are recruited for a dangerous mission outside the prison. Before ya know what's hit ya, the four man hit squad is taking on what appears to be the entire Filipino army.

Film fact: Cool Hand Luke meets The Wild Geese. Island on Fire was produced in record time possibly because everyone in the movie was in debt to Jimmy Wang Yu — and features a homage to almost every prison movie ever made. (This was despite the fact that an Iraqi war interrupted filming and the cast and crew had to stay in the Philippines for months.)

Rumor has it: This was Jackie's second film for triad boss Jimmy Wang Yu. When asked why by writer Bey Logan, Chan said, "Very hard to explain.... I have to make it because Wang Yu ask me... he helped me a great deal when I had problems with the Chinese Mafia. To play in the movie was good way to repay him because my name helped him to sell the movie in a lot of countries."

Jackie says: Jackie is vocal about his feelings on Island on Fire, calling it "rubbish." "All those years he [Wang Yu] was a very big star before," Chan also told Logan. "He was the biggest action star in Asia. After, he was not doing so good. He kind of watched me growing up. When I go to the set, I really want to do something for him," Jackie told Hong Kong Film Comment. "But when I look around beside me, all his friends are just fooling around. Even the director fooling around. Then, just by myself, I cannot do anything. I'm just standing there, just fooling around also."

Best action: An exhilarating fight against a druglord's militia ends the film and, you should be warned, Jackie's character. But the two Andy Lau fights — one in a casino and one in the jail precede this grimness and are worthwhile.

Bottom line: Jackie's face is prominent on the video sleeve of this movie, and although his part is sizable, he is not the star. It's amazing he found time to do as much as he did, since he was directing and starring in the problematic Operation Condor (1990) simultaneously. Just more proof of Wang Yu's influence. All considered, Island on Fire isn't that bad. It does have some surprisingly good moments and a haunting score.

Rating: **

TWIN DRAGONS (1991; aka Dragon Duo)

Directed by Tsui Hark and Ringo Lam. Starring Jackie Chan, Teddy Robin-kwan, Maggie Cheung, Nina Li-chi, Philip Chan, David Chiang, Anthony Chan, Alfred Cheung, Wang Lung Wei, Liu Chia Liang, Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, Wong Jing, Eric Tsang, Chu Yuen, Jacob Cheung, Ng See Yeun, Kirk Wong, John Woo and more.

The premise: Jackie Chan and... Jackie Chan are cast as identical twin brothers separated at birth. One baby, Wan Ming, is "adopted" by a loving town drunk and grows up to become an auto mechanic and illegal car racer. The other twin, Ma Yu, raised by his natural parents, immigrates to the United States and becomes a concert pianist and conductor. 'Aplenty-eight years later, Wan Ming and his buddy, Tarzan, are in trouble with crooks to the tune of \$300,000 when in steps Ma

Yu, performing his first-ever concert in Hong Kong (shades of Van Damme's Double Impact, only better). Adding to the fun is the fact that what one twin does affects the other. Throw in some confused girlfriends to complete the picture.

Film fact: Long passed are the days when Jean-Claude Van Damme was in Hong Kong begging Jackie Chan to let him be in one of his movies. He pretty much has his own leg to stand on — and kick with — now. And it seems that whatever controversy existed about the two megastars making similar movies — Van Damme's Double Impact and Jackie's Twin Dragons — has evaporated, especially since Jackie visited Tsui Hark, Dennis Rodman and Jean-Claude on the Italy-based set of Double Team in 1996. You have to wonder, with both Van Damme and Chan showing Dennis a few martial arts moves, if Rodman's pink boa kept getting in the way. Hmmm....

Rumor has it: Produced as a charity cash cow so the Hong Kong Directors Guild could build a new headquarters, more than eighty actors and directors appear in the film. Though the movie did well, at the time of this writing the new headquarters has yet to go up.

Jackie says: "Very hard. Every scene with the twins, we have to shoot twice. One time, I play one twin. Different hair. Different clothes. Then we keep the camera the same place, I go and change, then I play the other twin. Very confusing! I'm all the time thinking: 'Who am I now?' " he said in Martial Arts Illustrated. He also told Hong Kong Film Comment, "I want to try to understand what is the special effect. Right now I think in Asia, Tsui Hark is best known for special effects. So this is why I want to learn from him, to see what's going on. But I was very surprised and disappointed. Compared to Hollywood special effects, Twin Dragons is shit! After that, I'm totally disappointed about the whole Hong Kong special effects. This is why I'm not doing special effects anymore, except with people from Hollywood."

Best action: The finale at a Mitsubishi car testing facility is a real crowd pleaser, and one that will surely merit a rewind. At one point in the fight, Jackie falls to the ground, rolling underneath a car that is being held up by two hydraulic lifts. His adversaries release the car and it falls to the floor, barely missing Jackie as he rolls underneath. Just as he's getting to his feet, another car is released from a ramp. Jackie jumps on the moving car and runs over the top as it rolls beneath him. The slightest miscalculation could have meant disaster.

Bottom line: Twin Dragons, while not liked by many Chan fans, nor by Jackie himself, is charming.

Rating: ***1/2*

POLICE STORY III: SUPERCOP (1992)

Directed by Stanley Tong. Screenplay by Tang King-Sung, Ma Mei-Ping and Lee Wei-Yee. Starring Jackie Chan, Michelle Kahn, Maggie Cheung, Tsang Kong, Yuen Wah and Lo Lich.

The premise: Jackie Chan, the self-styled "supercop" 'from his first two installments of the Police Story series, goes to China to cooperate with the authorities in cracking an international drug ring. His partner for this mission is the no-nonsense, two-fisted Director Wang (played with aplomb by Michelle Kahn — aka Michelle Yeoh — of Yes, Madam, Wing Chun and Heroic Trio) of the grim People's Republic Army. Their undercover activities take them from a prison in Canton to the Thailand jungle to the main streets of Malaysia, as they try to pin down the elusive druglord Chaibat.

Film fact: For the first time in a Cantonese film, at the urging of director Stanley Tong, Jackie uses his own voice for sync sound instead of having a voice dubbed in later. This greatly adds to his overall performance, giving us an authentic tone that fits his character. Plus, Jackie's dream finally came true: He won the Best Actor Award for this film at the Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan — a first for an action film star.

Kahn says: Kahn, in her comeback film after a divorce from producer Dickerson Poon, was

giving Supercop her considerable all. Thus, Kahn, a former ballet dancer, wanted to do her own stunts — including riding a motorcycle onto a moving train. "When I see the movie now, I sit there and think I must have been mad," she says.

Rumor has it: Fred Dannen of the New Yorker wrote that Jackie sat glumly by the side of the train during filming of this stunt after trying to talk Michelle out of doing it. The inference was that Jackie didn't want to be bested. However, Michelle says that Jackie is like a big brother to her and was just concerned.

Best action: Chan himself, undoubled, dangles on a ladder from a careening helicopter as it swoops through the obstacle course that is downtown Kuala Lumpur. Film critic David Chute wrote that it's the sheer foolhardy intensity of Jackie Chan's eagerness to please that is breathtaking in this scene. Would Schwarzenegger go this far, literally risking life and limb to give his audience a better stunt thrill? Michelle Kahn is incredible in her action scenes, providing a refreshing change as a woman in a Jackie Chan movie who is more than window dressing.

Jackie says: "There were hundreds of spectators who came by foot, by car, by bicycle, all drawn by the novelty of seeing a film in progress," said Jackie in his monthly newsletter. "Now I know how an animal in a zoo feels!"

Worst injury: "It was a boat chasing scene and we were shooting beyond Clear Water Bay in very rough seas and I got properly seasick!" continued Jackie. "In fact, ever since I had my brain operation in Yugoslavia, I've had this severe seasick problem. I don't know the actual medical term, but it's got something to do with the fluid level in the ears."

Bottom line: Supercop has wonderful moments and spectacular stunts. It also has the closest thing Jackie has ever had to a political statement in one of his movies. Jackie's character jokes to Kahn's mainland Chinese inspector that it doesn't matter which government gets the bad guys' loot, since 1997 is just around the corner, when Hong Kong is no longer a British colony. That thought aside, this is one good movie.

Note: Supercop was the first film released in 1996 under Jackie's deal with Miramax, with passable dubbing (Jackie and Michelle did their own) and a better sound track than the original (although "Kung Fu Fighting" is a bit insulting). Legitimate laser discs are out there, courtesy of Miramax.

Rating: ****

MUST SEE MOVIES

New Chan fan? Don't know where to start? Here are the movies that can't be missed:

1. *Police Story*: Chan is out to capture a druglord, but his lead witness is kidnapped and Jackie is accused of murder. The show-stopper is the downhill crash through the shantytown.

2. *Project A: Dragon Ma* (Chan) must stop a notorious pirate in the South China Sea. Daring fights don't pull any punches.

3. *Drunken Master*: An oldie but goodie based loosely on the life of legendary martial artist Wong Fei Hung. Heinous training/torture rituals, and Jackie's ability to endure, never cease to please.

4. *Drunken Master II*: A sequel that stands on its own. See the finale to believe it.

5. *Armour of God*: Jackie a la Indiana Jones as the Asian Hawk. His ex-girlfriend is kidnapped by greedy religious fanatics, and it's up to Jackie to save both her and her new boyfriend, who happens to be his ex-best friend. Harrison Ford hasn't done that one yet.

6. *Project A II*: A Keatonesque sequel, complete with Jackie's lunch of red hot chili peppers.

7. *Police Story II*: Jackie has firecrackers flung at his torso, aptly proving that he who plays with fire gets burned. Once again, girlfriend gets kidnapped.

8. *Police Story III: Supercop*: Chan is out to trap the mother of all druglords — the elusive

Chaibat. And yes, you guessed it, the girlfriend gets kidnapped. Michelle Kahn does duty as the real woman.

9. Miracle: Jackie tries to pass off a flower vendor as a refined lady. Hong Kong songstress Anita Mui (Drunken Master II, Rouge, Heroic Trio) stands in for the love interest.

10. Wheels on Meals: A pickpocket with a heart of gold is kidnapped and Jackie, Yuen Biao and Samo Hung come to the rescue.

11. Armour of God: Operation Condor: The Asian Hawk must find a hidden cache of Nazi gold in the Sahara desert. Just co complicate matters, his three female partners get kidnapped.

12. Crime Story: Jackie takes on a dramatic role in this true story of a businessman who is kidnapped... twice.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA II (1992)

Jackie sings the theme song, which is a classically heroic tune with words about being the best man and fighter possible.

ACTRESS (1993; aka Center Stage)

Produced by Jackie Chan. Directed by Stanley Kwan. Starring Maggie Cheung.

The beautiful and tragic true story of a famous Hong Kong actress who is so beaten down by the attentions of the press that she commits suicide. Award winner.

Rating: ***** for drama

CITY HUNTER (1993)

Directed by Wang Jing. Starring Jackie Chan, Gary Daniels, Richard Norton, Chingmy Yau Shuk-ching, Joey Wang, Kumiko Goto, Leon Lai and Michael Wong.

The premise: Jackie is "City Hunter" Ryu Saeba, based on the popular Japanese manga (comic book) and anime (cartoon) character of the same name. In the movie, as in the comic, Ryu is a womanizing, perpetually hungry P.I. who, along with Kaori (Joey Wang), his dead partner's cousin, takes on a case to retrieve Kiuyoko (Kumiko Goto), the rebellious runaway daughter of a Japanese newspaper tycoon. Shades of Steven Seagal's Under Siege, as Jackie follows the runaway onto a cruise ship that has also been earmarked by a group of terrorists led by Richard Norton.

Film fact: City Hunter began filming before Jackie even had time to breathe after wrapping Supercop.

Rumor has it: When Golden Harvest announced that it had bought the rights and would be filming City Hunter with Jackie, everyone was stunned that he would be playing a pervert, as per the manga character. That wasn't, isn't and has never been Jackie's style. Serious character changes were made for the big screen, and perversions were toned down, leaving the action and comedy intact.

Jackie says: It's common knowledge that Jackie himself didn't like this movie, as he clearly showed in a Hong Kong Film Connection interview. "Wong Jing... ah, City Hunter... the director really has the responsibility. I hate when they [directors] cheat. From the beginning, they say, 'Jackie we'll do this, Jackie we'll do that.' But later on, when they are filming... they try to cut corners to get the next contract. I hate that. It is so easy to believe people."

Best action: In the surreal parody of the video game Street Fighter II, a heavily made-up Chan becomes several of the game's characters including the huge sumo wrestler "E. Honda" and the female "Chun Li," as he battles Gary Daniels as the blond muscleman "Ken" In another scene, Chan sends a hilarious tip of the hat to Bruce Lee in his takeoff on the fight between Lee and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar from Game of Death. Cornered by two giants in the ship's theater, Bruce himself is

on screen giving Jackie an idea or two on how to deal with the behemoths — of course, translated into the Chan style.

Worst injury: Jackie hurt his leg while performing a skateboarding stunt in which he was being chased down a hill by a group of skateboarding teens. Although the stunt seemed simple, he fell and spent time in a wheelchair and on crutches.

Bottom line: This is one of those movies that Chan fans either like or hate. Aside from an ill-advised musical number, it's a lark!

Rating: ***

PROJECT S (1993; aka Once a Cop: Supercop II)

Directed by Stanley Tong. Cameo by Jackie Chan (in drag) as an undercover cop tracking a transvestite jewelry thief. Starring Michelle Kahn.

Film Fact: A sequel to Supercop (1992), with Michelle playing her same character from her first teaming with Chan. Jackie is also playing his same character, but his path never crosses Michelle's, and his cameo has nothing to do with the main plot. Jackie says, "I had no choice but to do it. The studio asked me, and I owe them a lot." Project S is a good movie, with Michelle giving her high-octane all.

Rating: ***

CRIME STORY (1993)

Directed by Kirk Wong. Starring Jackie Chan, Kent Cheng, Poon Ling-ling, Ng Wing-mie, Blackie Ko Shou-liang, Stephen TK Chan, Lo Wai-kwong, Chung Fa and Mars.

The premise: Based on the true story about a businessman who was kidnapped twice and held for a ransom of \$6 million. Jackie plays the police detective in charge of the case, who is going through relationship problems and mood swings of his own, as he fails to keep those around him from harm. It's almost an autobiographical moment when the villain is trapped under rubble in a building that is about to explode. He tells Jackie that he thinks he is crazy, that he tries too hard, that he never gives up. Basically, that he should stop trying to dig him out. Jackie's only reply is to say that this is the way he is, and continue to desperately try to save the villain as well as a trapped child.

Film fact: The Walled City — a longtime criminal safe haven in Hong Kong — was being demolished as this film was in production. Chan utilized the planned explosions for this volatile movie.

Rumor has it: Jet Li had originally been cast as the lead in Crime Story, but the murder of his triad manager by other triads caused him to back out and retreat to China for a time. Chan picked up the reins. Director Wong expressed concern about the schedule, fearing that because of Jackie's busy schedule and filming three movies at once, this movie wouldn't hold up. It does, though certainly not Kirk's vision of it.

Jackie says: "Crime Story came about when I was making Twin Dragons (1991)," said Chan in his newsletter. "Kirk Wong was always talking about this project because he wanted to get my opinion. I thought the story was very good. Afterwards I found out the chosen actor didn't have time to make his movie. If he couldn't find another actor, the script would be postponed. I know the director needed a change and he also had to make a living. I told my boss that I wanted to make this movie to help the director, plus I was curious about this genre." Hating this movie passionately at first, Jackie's opinion has mellowed over time. "I try to stretch a little," he said recently to reporter Jawas Illavia. "I did cop films before, but always cop comedy, like Police Story (1985). This movie is based on real events, on real problems we have here in Hong Kong. It's very serious. Many of my older fans don't like it. It's good to always try new things, though. I like Crime Story."

I think, as time goes by, people will like it more."

Accident: While rushing to finish Crime Story, one of the sets on the Golden Harvest studio lot caught fire. Fortunately, Jackie and the cast were taking a break when the incident occurred. The fire was blamed on the cigarette butt of a negligent crew member, and the set took around two million Hong Kong dollars to rebuild. It's surprising that there weren't more serious accidents while trying to give birth to this overdue baby (two years). Crew and cast alike worked in thirty-six-hour nonstop stretches trying to wrap and meet deadline so Jackie could start on Drunken Master II (1994).

Best action: Watching the Walled City explode, with Jackie racing through the collapsing buildings, is a pyrotechnics dream and is undoubtedly the best action sequence.

Bottom line: There's a lot to like here. Check it out.

Rating: ***1/2*

DRUNKEN MASTER II (1994; aka Drunken Monkey II)

Directed by Liu Chia Liang (aka Liu Jialiang, aka Lau Ka-leung) and Jackie Chan. Screenplay by Edward Tang. Starring Jackie Chan, Ti Lung, Anita Mui, Andy Lau, Liu Chia Liang, Mark Houghton, Ken Lo, Louis Roth, Ho Sung Pak, Chin Kar-lok, Bill Tung, Felix Wong and Wong Yat-hwa.

Twenty years after the original blockbuster movie, Jackie once again took on the role of the venerable Wong Fei Hong, but with a few noticeable differences. In Drunken Master (1978), Chan's Wong Fei Hong was a rebellious youth. In DM II, he is now a young man faced with maturity and the chance to stand up for his country, while still getting into some hilarious situations with his stern father and fun-loving stepmother.

The premise: A European company is stealing national treasures from China to sell overseas (shades of Dragon Lord). A Chinese government agent, played by veteran actor and original director Liu Chia Liang, is sent to investigate the thefts and the trail leads him to Beijing. There he crosses paths with herbalist and kung fu master Wong Kei-Ying (Ti Lung) and his son Wong Fei Hong (Chan), who have come to the capital to buy herbs and medicines. When Liu's luggage is accidentally switched with Chan's, a chain of events begins that engulfs them both.

Film fact: Another "charity" project to help the Hong Kong Stuntman's Guild build a new headquarters. The film grossed over twenty-two million Hong Kong dollars, setting all-time records. No word on whether that headquarters was ever built.

Rumor has it: DM II was plagued by production delays — ten months! It was mostly scheduling problems among the actors, but there was also tension on the set between Jackie and Liu Chia Liang (director and star of such classics as Mad Monkey Kung Fu and Legendary Weapons of China). The latter lost the battle of wills and left the project, taking British bad-guy Mark Houghton (Liang's student) with him. Jackie then served double duty as both the film's director and leading actor while dealing with an ever-increasing budget and a looming 1994 Chinese New Year release date.

Worst injury: At the end, I am supposed to fight with a Korean guy [Ho Sung Pak, recognizable as "Liu Kang" in the video games Mortal Kombat and Mortal Kombat III. But this guy, he has no rhythm. After a few shots, he just wants to take a break because his leg cannot continue," Jackie related in Hong Kong Film Connection. "Then his leg twists, and he wants to take another two days holiday. I say, 'Just kick. What can you do? Let me know.' He tried very hard, but he just couldn't finish the movie. So — OUT! (Ken Lo was brought in for the energetic finale.) Jackie also broke the nose of a French martial artist, who started yelling at Chan for the accident, informing him he would never work with him again. By all accounts, Jackie's terse reply was, "No. You won't." Jackie also sustained burns from a bed of coals, and he and Ken Lo hurt their noses when they

butted heads.

Best action: There are several memorable fights, most notably when director Liu Chia Liang takes on Jackie with fists, spears and swords underneath a train, the station building and a barn. This is matched by the ax-wielding battle at the local teahouse, the climax in a steel foundry and a wonderful moment when Jackie is forced into a street fight. We haven't even mentioned the drunken boxing bout in the town square yet! Whew!

Jackie says: "This film is very difficult to make, you know! This is the sequel to the film that made me famous, so I have to make this film special — the very best film that I can make, so that people aren't disappointed. It truly gives me a lot of headaches." When asked about the deadline problems, Jackie joked to one reporter, "Fifteen years ago we finish part one... maybe in fifteen years time we finish part two!"

Bottom line: If you aren't a Jackie Chan convert, this movie may make you one. His best film of the nineties.

Rating: *****