

CATCHING UP WITH JACKIE

Round table interview: July 23, 1996, New York City. Ric Meyers from Inside, Kung-Fu magazine, along with freelance writers Rende Witterstaetter, Alex Jay, and other members of the New York press.

Press: Jackie, what is your next movie?

Jackie: Because I hurt my neck [making Nice Guy], I thought about a new story. A good story — Police Story V. As soon as I hurt my neck I went to the hospital for X rays. It takes two hours. Suddenly I got an idea. At the beginning of Police Story V, I'll go to buy a ring. This time Maggie's family says, "You sure you want to marry Jackie?" I have some mission to do — a big case. Couple of police get injured. I get injured. Go to hospital. I get hurt on the head — unconscious. Flashback to Police Story. See! Good, hah! I have a big stunt, then flashback to Police Story II, III, IV. When finished with all these, I look for my girlfriend. Call home, nobody is there. Suddenly I learn that Maggie is paralyzed. But maybe that's too sad. Maybe a broken leg. But she cannot walk, cannot talk. Day before yesterday I called up Stanley Tong. I told him the story. He almost cried, because I have a very good drama in the middle. Flash to Maggie learning how to walk. How to say things. At the end, I won't tell you what happens. This will be the first movie without outtakes. No more outtakes. Outtakes we'll put in The Making of Police Story V. Really exciting! I always try to think of new stories because they interest me... now because I hurt my neck.

Renee: Will you film in Hong Kong?

Jackie: No, no more Hong Kong. Hong Kong cannot make a Jackie Chan movie anymore. Too small.

Renee: China?

Jackie: Yeah, China's okay. China's big. Hong Kong is such a small town. All the noise. All these years, I've been filming everywhere in Hong Kong. Everybody knows [the locations]! And also it's very difficult to shoot. Hong Kong people don't cooperate with the film people. "Go away!" They won't go away. They just stand there. When we film some other place — even in China — we're glad when we shoot there because people don't bother us. You were there!

Renee: Except the army guys. They wouldn't leave.

Jackie: The army guys! Every day I go out, I have my bodyguard with me — weighs 220 or something. But on the set there are a hundred [soldiers].

Renee: I thought they were going to kill us that one day when they pressed against the van.

Jackie: You know how many people were on that mountain? They weren't going to eat! They were just going to stand there all day and watch me!

Ric: So, are you finished filming Nice Guy?

Jackie: Seven more days. I know American market is very important, so I stopped Nice Guy and came here to promote Supercop. I still think I need more time to let the American audience know. So, I stop. My boss, Raymond [Chow] is very angry. Because we stopped — seven days — is three and a half million Hong Kong dollars. If I didn't come here, we'd be finished by now. I don't care — I just bought the ticket and came. It's most important, for us, for future. It was a very good beginning Rumble in the Bronx in February. Seems everybody liked it. So, I hope to do the promotion now and then go back [to Australia to finish film]. If it [Supercop] doesn't do any good, I'm satisfied, because I've come already. I came — did the promotion — still not good, okay. That means I did my best, American audiences didn't like it coming out. If I'm not here and the movie does badly, then I blame myself. This is why I have to come.

Press: Have you committed to any films in Hollywood?

Jackie: No.

Press: Nothing?

Jackie: Too many projects. Just too many projects. I've been talking here, talking there. Some company, they just want me, 'Ah, you're new boy!' "Now you're hot — I want you. I say, "You want me — twenty-two million." "What!" "Stallone gets twenty million." "Yeah." "Your movie, give me twenty-two million." Or I work for Steven Spielberg for free. Or give me a good project, good script, good director, good leading actress, leading actor, then you have a good movie. Okay! One half million, I'll do it. So, I'm very careful coming into America — either I make my own movies or I have to know the director, I have to know the script. I have many scripts in my mind.

Alex: What about John Woo? You worked with him years ago?

Jackie: Yeah, his first movie.

Alex: Would you like to work with him again?

Jackie: I think... yes. Yes. I guess, yes. I think... I'd be better off to find some other director first. Because I already know John Woo. I know his style. For me... maybe for America audience, me with John Woo, 'Ah, work with John Woo, ah, good!' For me, it's nothing exciting. I would rather work with somebody else.

Press: Who? Which director?

Jackie: Oh, there are too many.

Press: Name one.

Jackie: First choice — like Steven. Also I think James Cameron. Because I want to learn blue screens. So this way if I can use half blue screen and half computer, I don't have to jump from ten stories to the helicopter. But I'll still jump maybe twenty feet. Then with the blue screen, there's more safety. No good, we can do it again.

Alex: Do you think you were crazy for doing the jump in Supercop?

Jackie: No, I'm so happy I did it! That was four years ago. If we did it right now, I wouldn't jump.

Alex: No?

Jackie: Yeah! Oh, maybe when the time came, I'd jump. But when it looks like some other stunt — no. Like in Police Story, jump from the chandelier — I'm so happy I did it. Right now, I wouldn't do it. I'm not going to do it.

Press: So, you haven't done a stunt of that magnitude since then?

Jackie: Stunt for me — every movie I have to find a new stunt. So I think at a certain age, I'm thinking about certain stunts. Even at this age — now forty-two — I wouldn't think of jumping from the same chandelier. Right? I think of something else. Ten years ago, I said, "Yeah, chandelier!" "Jump helicopter!" You know, different time. It's different now.

Ric: Is fighting becoming old to Hong Kong audiences?

Jackie: I think I would bring back more. Asian audiences support me. That's why all Hong Kong movies are going down, except my movies are still at the top. One year — one movie. Always big production. Like Supercop — it may be a small production by American standards, like a B movie. Only cost fifteen million Hong Kong dollars. American TV show cost twenty million Hong Kong dollars. I think they're used to these budgets in Asia, and they still like it. But for America, this is new. Some of you guys know me. Okay, you know what I'm doing. But some young kids, young people, just out to see Rumble in the Bronx, say, 'Ah, new actor! Very good!' I'm not new. I'm antique! I'm the Asian antique. Everybody knows I've been doing these kind of things many, many years.

Press: Have you ever thought about doing a movie with your number one fan Quentin Tarantino?

Jackie: I just had dinner with him a couple of days ago. He had some good ideas, but I don't know if it works or not. I don't know. Then I said, "Okay, you go ahead. Write a script first." Then I see how the script comes out.

Press: Does he want you to star, or will it be an ensemble?

Jackie: Star. Yeah... he always thinking about some crazy things.

Press: Do you have a project with Ang Lee?

Jackie: We did talk. But I find out in America that when you talk, you wait five years.

Ric: Maybe seven years!

Jackie: Because Ang Lee, he's very... he has lots of pressure. Ang Lee — especially Ang Lee. I think, he's the kind of director that takes time. Slowly. Slowly. Not like me. I think about a script. Yes! Do it! Like Police Story V, I came to Hong Kong this month, I started it. I just start. I have a hospital scene — I started the hospital scene first. As soon as I started the hospital thing, I think, "What is the mission?" You know, I can do that. But the Americans, no, they have to have script first. I have another script in South Africa. Very good! Ah! That's a script! I want to direct myself now.

Ric: Oh, good!

Jackie: Yeah!

Ric: Do you want to direct more in the future? **Jackie:** You know what the problem is, when I direct myself, I have the full responsibility. I know everything to be done. Right now, I hire a certain director to direct me. But some other directors I have fired, as you know. Fire. Change. Fire. Change. Even someone like Stanley Tong, if I'm not on set I don't like it. Maybe he's satisfied. You're satisfied. But for my part, I'm not satisfied. I think it's too violent. But he thinks, 'Ah, I left violence out already.' But when I shoot, you can see a Jackie Chan movie. Even when I'm not directing, you will see a certain style. I'm more human. I have more comedy. I am more reasonable. Like in Rumble in the Bronx someone put a gun on me when acting, I'm scared. I'm this kind of person. Sometimes when I'm not on the set, I come back and see some directors, I look at what they are doing, and I'm not satisfied. They're not ready. I finish the scene.

Alex: You don't want graphic violence?

Jackie: I hate violence. I have a lot of comedy. Because all that fighting, machine guns, explosions when it continues for ten minutes, you'll find out it's too much. But if I drop something in the middle, something funny, it's better. You forget. You're still smiling. So, comedy is very important. Too many children see my movies. I hate violence.

Renee: Were you offered the lead in Farewell My Concubine?

Jackie: Yes. When they first came to me, I said yes. I wanted to change my... I don't want to always be fighting, fighting, fighting. Sometime, somehow, I want to change. When I wanted to do Crime Story, I wanted to change. Different kind of police. Then suddenly I wanted to do City Hunter. I wanted to do more comedy. I want to try a lot of different things.

Renee: Was the story in Farewell My Concubine very much like your own childhood?

Jackie: Yeah, yeah. The studio did not want me to do it.

Renee: Closer than Painted Faces?

Jackie: Hmm... yes. Painted Faces was not even twenty percent.

Ric: Is First Strike out next?

Jackie: Yes. First Strike, then Operation Condor. You know what? I'm very happy. I made New Line and Miramax become good friends. I make them sit together to talk. Because New Line has certain pictures and Miramax has certain pictures. If they released at the same time, I'd be finished. So this is why we have the deal now — every six months release a Jackie Chan movie. So now on

the Rumble in the Bronx tape, they have a Supercop trailer. On the Supercop tape they have a First Strike trailer. January — First Strike. August — Operation Condor. January — Nice Guy. August — Drunken Master II. Because I need time. Right now if you put out Drunken Master II — some of you who know me will go, "Yes, Jackie Chan." Some other new person after five minutes might walk away. If they know me, they will sit down. So this is why I let them have confidence as to what kind of movie I make, then I put out the period movie.

Ric: I read an interview that said you would retire in three or four years. You don't sound like a man who is retiring.

Jackie: Yes, I just love movies.

Renee: How will 1997 affect you?

Jackie: Nothing, really. A lot of directors and actors immigrated already. America. Canada. They are gone already. Except me. I still hold a Hong Kong passport. I have full confidence. They won't do anything to me. First there is the image. If Jackie Chan goes away... ahhh... a lot of people go away. And also I'm not political. Even if the Chinese government interviews me, I'll say I don't like Communists. But I know I'm Chinese. I love China. But I don't like politics. I'm just a filmmaker. I just make my films. But in my films there are no politics. It's okay.

Alex: Was Supercop the first you filmed in China?

Jackie: First time. Second time Drunken Master II.

Renee: Was it difficult to film in China?

Jackie: For me, I think so because it's me, no. Wherever I go, there are bodyguards. It's very safe for me. Whatever I want: "I want that." "Yes." "I want that." "Yes."

Press: Did you use the people in China on the movie?

Jackie: No. Jackie Chan people. Everywhere I go I bring my own people. That's very important. In the U.S. I will bring my own team to sit beside me, to learn, to watch. Really. But definitely I will bring my own stuntmen because it's different. I need the people who can fight with me. I really hope to learn new things like blue screens and special effects.

Renee: On an American film, will you have control?

Jackie: Ah, it's a dilemma. If I want total control I cannot make any movies in America. I will have to go back to Asia. But, on the other hand, if I continue to do this kind of Jackie Chan movie, I will never learn American movies. So this is why I want to come, at least do one or two. To learn. It depends on if it's the right time or not.

Press: How was your experience on The Protector?

Jackie: Because I have this kind of experience, it makes me go back to Asia to make my own films. Because of The Protector. The director never listened to me. That made me very angry. Then I made Police Story for you. In Hollywood, they have bad directors and good directors. Like John Woo, when he came, it's not a John Woo movie anymore, it's a special effect movie — Broken Arrow.

Renee: Hard Target was cut a lot, later.

Jackie: Yeah, Jean-Claude cut it. Now I also have that script in South Africa.

Renee: And the next Police Story movie?

Jackie: That one I'm still thinking about, because I don't have the middle. What mission I'll be doing. What big stunt I'll be doing. I need to think of something to match the good story.

Renee: And the South Africa movie?

Jackie: The South Africa movie is also good. South Africa is more dramatic. The first shot, when I open my eyes, I'm in the middle of nowhere. Around me are the natives. They save me. What I'm wearing is very modern. I've been hurt, but I recover. You know what the title is? Who Am I? I don't know who I am. No memory. How did I come to be in the middle of nowhere? And when I talk to

the natives, they don't know. I get very angry. "Who am I?" Then all the natives call me "Who Am I." Somehow I get back to the city and find my hotel and my room. All my clothes and a passport — I find out who I am. Who am I? Then I find a British passport, Japanese passport, Spanish passport. There's too many passports. All my pictures! Different names. I still don't know who I am. Then I find out I have no fingerprints. Very dramatic. People chase after me. At the end, very funny. I keep the secret. I always think of my own script.

Press: Which of your films is your favorite?

Jackie: Right now, none. I think the next one.

Press: Oh, come on.

Jackie: Okay, if you are talking about really liking it, I think Police Story

Press: Was the American version of Supercop cut down?

Jackie: Yes, I cut it down a little bit because I didn't like it.

Renee: And the music was changed?

Jackie: Oh, ten times better than the Asian version.

Ric: You think so?

Jackie: Yes, yes.

Ric: How about the dubbing?

Jackie: All the things in English I don't like, but the music brings color. Dolby system. Ah!

Press: Will movies still be made in Hong Kong?

Jackie: They're still there. But right now, seven days — one movie. They make just very local movies. Whenever the news comes out — "Man Rapes 11 Girls" — somebody, Wong Jing, already releases a movie: Man Rapes 11 Girls. Gets fast money in seven days, cheating the public. In Hong Kong, all movies are going down. Top Ten are all American movies never happened before. Now everything is American movies.

Renee: Is there a lot of crime in the Hong Kong movie business?

Jackie: NO MORE! They're all gone.

Press: Which American actress or actor would you like to work with?

Jackie: Oh, I like them... it doesn't mean I want to work with them. I like Jodie Foster, Barbra Streisand. Good talents. They know how to act. They know how to direct. I like people that know how to direct. Being a director, you must have talent. Like Jodie Foster — she does everything. But I don't want to work with some actresses. I want to find new talent. If I work with Jodie Foster, I think there would be a lot of trouble.

Renee: Robert De Niro?

Jackie: Oh, my all-time hero. Like Muhammad Ali. Oh, I cried when I saw him at the Olympics.