

Kung Fu Kid

“Work pressures cause a single mother to move to China with her young son; in his new home, the boy embraces karate, taught to him by a master of the self-defence form.”

Sound familiar? It should. 80's classic The karate kid is coming back. And this time with added Jackie Chan in the role as Mr Miyagi. I have to say that to start with the idea of this remake left me cold. I'd heard rumours but surely they couldn't be true. Will Smith producing a version of the karate Kid for his son? Has to be a Harry Knowles BS rumour for sure? No. It appears not.

Believe it or not The Karate Kid holds a special place in my heart. Maybe it was because it was this film that encouraged my initial interest in martial arts. I don't know... like Top Gun, Cannonball Run and other 'guilty pleasure' films on my shelves I just know that in my hour of need I can always turn to the 80's movie that could. Personal thoughts aside about the original, I have a few different thoughts on this film that I want to share.

Firstly a general rant about the state of Hollywood and remakes. Most of them turn out to be hollow carbon copies of their original counterparts, without the charm or talent that made the original so endearing. This means that only a very few of these 're-imaginings' or 'remakes' actually work. Dawn Of The Dead. Halloween. Ocean's Eleven. These all came good because they took the original and added something different or new. There was also scope to tell a story that was similar to the original but different enough to be unique. But The Karate Kid? As a film it's already Rocky light and it's a story that we've seen in pretty much every sport since. What's left? Bowls? (I can just imagine the voice over man in his deep husky Americana voice... "A man from the wrong side of the

tracks. He just wants to bowl. But there's a bigger fight he must take on first")

This remake craze HAS TO STOP. Now. With films like Total Recall, They Live, Short Circuit and pretty much every horror film since 1976 in production, Hollywood seems happy to rob the grave of any title with a fan base. What next? Paul WS Anderson directs Zack Effron in... The Godfather.

My Second point is Jackie Chan and his career. Before I start I just want to prefix this by saying I am a massive fan of Chan. Police Story 2 changed my perception of action films forever. Armour of God, Project A, Police Story and even some of his really early films all sit pride of place in my DVD collection. But let's face it, Chan has been on a dramatic career slide since the mid-nineties. About the same period he moved to Hollywood with highlights being pretty much just Rush Hour (yes that's about as good a highlight as you can find). Gorgeous. New Police Story. The Accidental Spy. Who Am I? None can hold a candle to his early work. Chan once said he'd retire at 40. And I kinda wish he had, because, a few okayish films of late aside, he's in danger of doing an Elvis and finishing his career as a washed up shadow of his former self. And no true Chan fan wants to see that, surely?

Third and finally as a film. I still think that Mr Miyagi is a role that is more than just a character. Pat Morita was Mr Miyagi. Like Brando was The Godfather, and Eastwood Dirty Harry. He's an iconic character played in an iconic way. Okay so Morita couldn't do martial arts but hey you believed him. But Morita aside, oddly this could work but it will depend on the tone the filmmakers take. If it is jokey and more like Chan's other Hollywood films, this could end up as a train wreck of a project. But if they take it seriously, much like the producers of the original did, then maybe, just maybe it could open up a much maligned 'classic' to a whole new audience. And it may just do the same for the movie also...

I guess only time will tell. At the moment the film is going under the title of 'Kung Fu Kid' and is being produced by Will Smith (with his son Jaden starring) and written by the writer of 'In the Pursuit of Happiness'. Which is odd. Anyway I guess we'll find out when the film arrives in 2010.

Phil Hobden
Editor - Combat Film



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COMBAT FILM/OPINION





Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon *Review by Mike Parkin*

Taken from the same source material as John Woo's Red Cliff, Resurrection of the Dragon focuses on the military career of Zhou Zilong, rather than one pivotal battle. Played by Andy Lau, Zilong is a staunch idealist and skilful warrior who joined the army to help win the war once and for all. However in his later years as an aging - but still powerful- general, he questions whether he's achieved anything despite his many victories. Sammo Hung plays a dramatic role for once, although he did take on the fight choreography duties. The acting is excellent throughout - exactly what you'd expect from such a stellar cast. Maggie Q is a particular standout as the scheming leader of the invading army. Her tactics echo the ruthlessness of Edward Longshanks

in Braveheart, but she even goes one better than he managed. Resurrection of the Dragon is certainly Daniel Lee's most accomplished film to date but it is unfortunately marred by some dreadful editing of the fight sequences. If the credits hadn't made a point of telling me that Sammo had been involved, I would never have known because none of the intricate, flowing action he's famous for survives the hyperspeed cutting. Admittedly it improves for the final battle scenes, but it is very jarring during some of the early action scenes especially.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this, try: *Red Cliff, Warlords, Musa: The Warrior, Battle of Wits*



Underground (15) *Review by Richard Hawes*

Directed in 2007, but only now making its UK appearance on DVD, Chee Keong Cheung's movie is a full-blooded and unconventionally plotted martial arts film that's essentially just an extended showreel for some of Britain's most skilled fighters. The budget must have been extremely limited but the passion of producer and star Mark Strange and Cheung raises this well above its limitations. Featuring appearances by Glenn Salvage, Zara Phythian and Joey Ansah, among many others, Underground is ultimately Strange's show. With his first film, Displaced, still unreleased in the UK, this release finally gives him the opportunity to show a British audience what an impressive fighter he is.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 5/5

If you liked this try *Bodyguard: A New Beginning, Ten Dead Men, Sucker Punch*



Driven to Kill *Review by Mike Parkin*

The Big Mumbling One (Seagal) plays Ruslan Drachev, once a hard-hitting Russian gangster, now a crime-fiction writer living in LA. When his ex-wife is murdered and his daughter severely injured on her wedding day, Ruslan takes her husband-to-be under his wing as they hunt down those responsible. I'm happy to report that Seagal's current run of good form (*Against the Dark* aside) is continuing with this action-thriller, which has very good production values and a decent story. There is plenty of action throughout: a visit to a local arms supplier manages to provide some tension, and there is a quite brutal knife-fight in a topless bar, before an excellent siege/shootout in a hospital for the finale. Seagal remains as emotionless and impassive as ever but if you're a fan of the good old days, consider this a solid return to form.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 4/5

If you enjoyed this, watch: *Out For Justice, Marked for Death, Urban Justice*



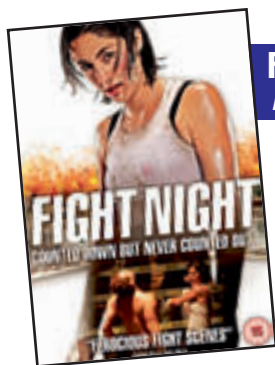
Franklyn *Review by Andrew Skeats*

A unique but unfortunately not a wholly successful modern day drama/fantasy, Franklyn is not a bad debut for writer/director Gerald McMorrow but is hampered by unsympathetic characters. Fantasy merges with everyday life as a group of lost souls attempt to find themselves and reconnect with those around them in present day London. Elsewhere in a place called Meanwhile City (a fantasy styled alternate London) a masked vigilante hunts the killer of a small girl. How do the present day and the fantasy world connect? Well that is part of the uniqueness of Franklyn. The fantasy world is beautifully rendered and arguably provides the film with its best scenes and most engaging plot thread. However, the present day scenes let

things down, often dragging, and populated with rather shallow, naval gazing and not very interesting characters. Despite its flaws, Franklyn is still an interesting gamble and certainly worthy of a viewing or two.

ACTION 2.5/5 FILM 1/5

If you liked this, try: *Dark City, V for Vendetta, Twelve Monkeys*



Fight Night (18) *Review By Richard Hawes*

While it's not going to win any awards for originality, *Fight Night* (aka *Rigged*) certainly scores high as an independent genre movie. Yet another

prize fighting flick about an unscrupulous, parasitic manager/promoter and his star fighter, it's a story we've seen a million times before. But one thing makes this different from all those that have come before Former taekwondo champion Rebecca Neuenswander; who has good looks and a fierce screen presence. She's totally convincing as an angry, bare-knuckle boxer taking on dozens of tough men. Unlike other similarly low-budget films like *Girls Fight Tonight* and the quasi-documentary *Ring Girls*, *Fight Night* has a sense of realism despite its by-the-numbers plot. Emulating Hollywood convention, complete with a Tom Cruise-alike in the lead and a cheesy ending, rather than striving for arthouse realism, Jonathan Dillon's directorial debut has been an award-winning success. Picking up honors at the Los Angeles' *Dances With Films* Festival, Hamburg's *Radar Film Festival* and the *Action On Film International Film Festival*. It's not action packed and in truth is more than a little melodramatic, but it's a great movie with some brutal fight scenes that's well worth seeking out.

ACTION 4/5 FILM 5/5

**If you liked this try *Girlfight*,
Million Dollar Baby, *Fighter***

COMPETITION

To coincide with the DVD release of *FIGHT NIGHT* we have TEN copies of the film to give away, courtesy of our friends at E1 Entertainment. Which of these is NOT an Mixed Martial Arts fighting company?

- a) UFC
- b) WWE
- c) WEC

Email your name, address and answer to
fightnightcomp@martialartsinprint.com

As the gravelly voiceover proclaims, "this isn't a competition you win, it's an experience you survive." Compared to other reality shows, Unbreakables has little time for preening, fame-hungry wannabes and throws its 8 contestants into extreme challenges that make I'm a Celebrity look like a weekend at Butlins. Dumped into some of the most inhospitable locations on Earth, each contestant sets out to prove their physical and mental toughness in the face of vicious tribal initiations and unforgiving military training. They keep going until they admit defeat or are simply too sick or injured to continue. Annoyingly, the series still has the constant post-ad-break recap from when it was first broadcast on Channel Five but this shouldn't detract too much from what's a fascinating, and often squeamish, 'Rough Guide' to human endurance. **ACTION 3/5**



Direct Contact (18) Review by Richard Hawes

Surely there can't be anymore derelict buildings for Nu Image to blow up in Eastern Europe! Perhaps that's why you get a sense of déjà vu when you watch this latest formula vehicle for Dolph Lundgren. He's worked with these prolific cheapskates for over 10 years, most notably on the curious Bridge of Dragons, and Direct Contact (not a sequel to his 2004 film Direct Action) gives us nothing we haven't seen before. Unlike Seagal or Van Damme, Lundgren never appears depressed to be a part of an exploitation film of this type and his charisma largely compensates for the over familiar plotting and action beats. Benefiting greatly from a villainous turn from the reliable Michael Pare, Direct Contact is a fun and unpretentious timewaster.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this try Direct Action, Agent Red, Out for a Kill



Love & Honour (Bushu no Ichibun) Review by Richard Badley

While blind samurai movies like Zatōichi go for the comic book approach, Japanese director Yōji Yamada is much more austere and presents another masterly study of day-to-day life in feudal Japan. The film follows samurai Shinnojo (Takuya Kimura) who works dutifully for the Emperor until he loses his sight. His doting wife convinces him against seppuku but must find a way for them to survive and seeks out an admirer who asks for certain favours in return. Yamada's realism is tremendously involving and his conflicting themes - the love and honour of the title - are beautifully juxtaposed and fought for within the confines of a strict hierarchical society. The single, climatic duel feels incredibly poignant thanks to Yamada's careful exploration of his characters' lives and motivations.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 4/5

If you liked this try: The Hidden Blade, The Twilight Samurai, Zatōichi



Meatball Machine (18) Review by Richard Hawes

Directed by Jun'ichi Yamamoto and Yūdai Yamaguchi (Battlefield Baseball), Meatball Machine is yet another example of deranged Japanese splatter. As is usually the case, there isn't a lot that makes sense at first. However, it soon becomes apparent that things are actually fairly straightforward. It's actually nothing we haven't seen before. A bloody but fairly typical love story. Boy meets girl, girl is taken over by an alien parasite, guy gets partially taken over by a similar parasite and tries to save the girl. Surprisingly predictable and not nearly as imaginative as it initially seems, this low budget 2005 production is a fun shocker, but it also demonstrates just how formulaic the over-the-top Japanese movie genre has become. The concept at its heart, involving humans being worn as biomechanical suits by glove puppet aliens to fight each other, is a great one. While a modest amount of lumbering action will keep Combat readers interested.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this try The Machine Girl, Tetsuo: The Iron Man, Ichi The Killer

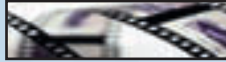
MUST SEE ACTION FILM

Each Month Richard Hawes suggests a must see action film for your viewing pleasure. This month:

Under Siege 2 (1995)

Long before Steven Seagal put on weight and went straight to video, Casey Ryback battled a mad genius and his mercenary force in railroad actioner Under Siege 2. The year was 1995 and Warner Bros. were keen to put Seagal's indulgent flop On Deadly Ground behind them. The Aikidoka returned to screens impeccably dressed and on a firm leash. Devoid of any eccentricities, this sequel may not be one of Seagal's most unique movies, but it is one of his best. Eric Bogosian makes for a witty villain, while Everett McGill (missing from screens since the late 90s) makes an excellent nemesis.

Under Siege 2 is available from all good DVD shops.



Reviews in Brief

Phil Hobden takes a look at this months other DVD releases.

Street Fighter (2/5) is released on BluRay disk this month. Whether this is of interest depend on your love for rather ropey 90's action game adaptations.

Watchmen (2.5/5) arrives on DVD this month. Bold, brash and unfortunately rather dull, Watchman is a long film which looks great but little else.

Knowing (3/5) is a clever, well made film that even Nicolas Cage can't spoil. Which is a plus.

The International (3/5) with Clive Own also hits BluRay & DVD this month. A grim but well made action thriller that breaks no boundaries but is worth watching.

MMA: This months releases from Fight DVD include **Pride Bushido 10-13 Box Set (£16.99 /4 Disks)** featuring action Ryo Chonan, Dennis Kang, Dan Henderson, Shogan Rua, Phil Baroni and Mark Weir. This month's other big release also features Dan Henderson, with **UFC 93: Franklin V Henderson (£10.99/ 2 Disks)** with other action coming from Shogan Rua v Mark Coleman and Alan Belcher vs Dennis Kang.



The Good, the Bad and the Weird *Review by Mike Fury*

The Old East meets the Wild West in this nostalgic, incendiary homage to the 'Spaghetti Western' genre, as three strangers in 1930s Manchuria fiercely pursue a mysterious map, said to reveal the location of buried treasure. Already in competition with one another, the men soon find themselves at odds with the Japanese army and a gang of ruthless bandits, and as they find themselves moving closer to their prize, the map becomes a dangerous obsession that will consume the greed of anyone caught on its course. In this chaotic and highly entertaining action adventure, the traditional western genre is turned on its head, with a quirky blend of genres culminating in a way only Korean cinema can achieve. Director Kim Ji-woon, the creative mind behind 'A Bittersweet Life' and 'A Tale of Two Sisters', fashions a pulse-pounding, guns-blazing adventure from the very same mould that broke the now legendary 'heroic bloodshed' movies from Hong Kong. With slick heroes, loathsome villains, and a heavy dose of stylised gunplay, fans of action cinema will have plenty to enjoy in this loud and colourful celebration of the Spaghetti Western.

ACTION 4/5 FILM 4/5

If you liked this try: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, Peace Hotel, A Better Tomorrow*





Thirty years of pain - History of The World's Strongest Man *Review by Richard Badley*

For those wanting a quick introduction to the world's ultimate strong man contest then look no further than this slickly made documentary. At a slender 45 minutes it's not terribly in-depth but charts the rising popularity of the competition from backwater American oddity to today's global event.

All the big names - original champ Bill Kazmaier, British man-mountain Geoff Capes - talk about the jovial rivalries that went on between contestants as well as the tragic death of Iceland's Viking Jón Páll Sigmarsson. There's also plenty of footage demonstrating the evolution of the events to test agility as well as brute strength.

Perhaps more informative is the DVD's bonus doc which covers the qualifying for the 2006 competition in China and gives more of an insight into the day-to-day life of what it takes to be the World's Strongest Man. **RATING 3/5**

IMPORT CORNER

KillShot Review by Mike Parkin

Mickey Rourke stars as Blackbird, a half-breed Indian hitman, out of favour with his mob boss thanks to his coda of always killing witnesses - even when they are his accomplices. Crossing paths with small-time criminal Richie Nix (Joseph Gordon-Levitt, from Brick and The Lookout), Blackbird joins him on his latest venture, the extortion of a local real estate firm. In the meantime, Wayne and Carmen Colson (Thomas Jane and Diane Lane) are having marital difficulties. Wayne, an out-of-work ironworker, tries for a job at the real estate office that his wife works for - just as Blackbird and Nix arrive to demand their money, and mistake Wayne for the manager...

And so begins a pretty decent, if low-key thriller, adapted from an Elmore Leonard novel. Mickey Rourke is very believable as a cold-hearted killer and Gordon Levitt makes a suitably scuzzy, trailer trash crook who begins to idolise his new partner in crime. However the more interesting characters (for once) are the good-guys: Wayne and Carmen find themselves in the witness protection scheme as a result of their early encounter with Blackbird. Whilst Carmen frets about being discovered, Wayne sees an opportunity to start over with their lives. Overall the movie is a bit pedestrian and unlikely to get the pulse racing, but Director John Madden (Shakespeare in Love) creates a decent atmosphere utilising the bleak wintry landscapes of Missouri and Montana, and handles the few action scenes very well.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3/5

If you Liked this, try: *No Country for Old Men, History of Violence, Cohen and tate*

KillShot is available from Amazon.com priced from \$14.99

NEWS AND RUMOURS

Despite dying at the end of the first film Angelina Jolie will return for **WANTED 2...**

Kirsten Dunst will return to the Sam Rami directed **Spiderman 4**. Let's hope this time it's good. You can see for yourself in May 2011...

New Jackie Chan film **Looking For Jackie** takes a leaf from JCVD (the film, not the man)...

Sorry to hear about David Carradine passing away. He was a true legend...

For those of you that care, rumour is that GI Joe director Stephen Sommers has been fired as the studio deals with a real turkey...

Tom Cruise & JJ Abrams signs on for **Mission Impossible 4...**

The Expendables is still getting some great press from the set. Just a shame the rumour is it could come down as a PG-13/12 rating...

This months pointless sequels/remakes - Teen Wolf, Red Dawn, Wall Street 2, Indiana Jones 5, Piranha 3-D, Will Smith's Oldboy... I could cry!

COMPETITION

To coincide with the BluRay release of CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON we have five copies of the film to give away, courtesy of our friends at Sony. To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:

Which one of these actors starred in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon?

- a) Chow Yun Fat
- b) Jet Li
- c) Fat Chow Mein

Email your name, address and answer to crouchingtiger@martialartsinprint.com



TOP FIVE...

Action star and genre legend LOREN AVEDON picks his top 5 action movies

- Police Story
- King of the Kickboxers :)
- Drunken Master
- Ong Bak
- Enter the Dragon

