

COMBAT FILM/OPINION



By Phil Hobden

<http://combatfilm.blogspot.com>

Slamming into

With 12 ROUNDS, the latest Wrestler starring action film, hitting DVD this month I thought it might be a prudent time to take a look at back at the rather chequered past of pro-wrestler/action film combos that have (mostly) blighted cinema over the past twenty plus years since the sport broke bit in the mid-late 80's.

To start of? The biggest star of them all, multiple champion and wrestling legend Hulk Hogan who for sure was the trend setter for the wrestler movie cross over. Although maybe not in a good way. SUBURBAN COM-MANDO, NO HOLDS BARRED and MR NANNY were all pretty dire with his only notable performance coming from a brief showing in ROCKY 3. If we're honest Terry 'Hulk Hogan' Bolea was never a great actor and his films were , for the most part, pretty bad. But then again the majority of Wrestler-movie combinations have been pretty bad.

Edge in HIGHLANDER: END GAME, Big Show Paul Wright in JINGLE ALL THE WAY, Rob Van Dam in BLOOD MASK 2, Jeep Swenson in BATMAN & ROBIN and The Warrior in FIRE POWER (no me either) are just a few of the crimes against cinema that wrestlers have featured in.

If you want really bad however then look no further than WCW themed movie READY TO RUMBLE which featured numerous wrestlers but forgot story and direction. Diamond Dallas Page, Goldberg, Bam Bam Bigelow and others all took part in this abomination.

Better served was Andre The Giant in the classic THE PRINCESS BRIDE. But for my money probably the best wrestler-movie combo comes in the much underrated THEY LIVE, the 80's sci-fi film starring Rowdy Roddy Piper which, along side the wrestler-less The Thing, is probably one of John Carpenters best films.

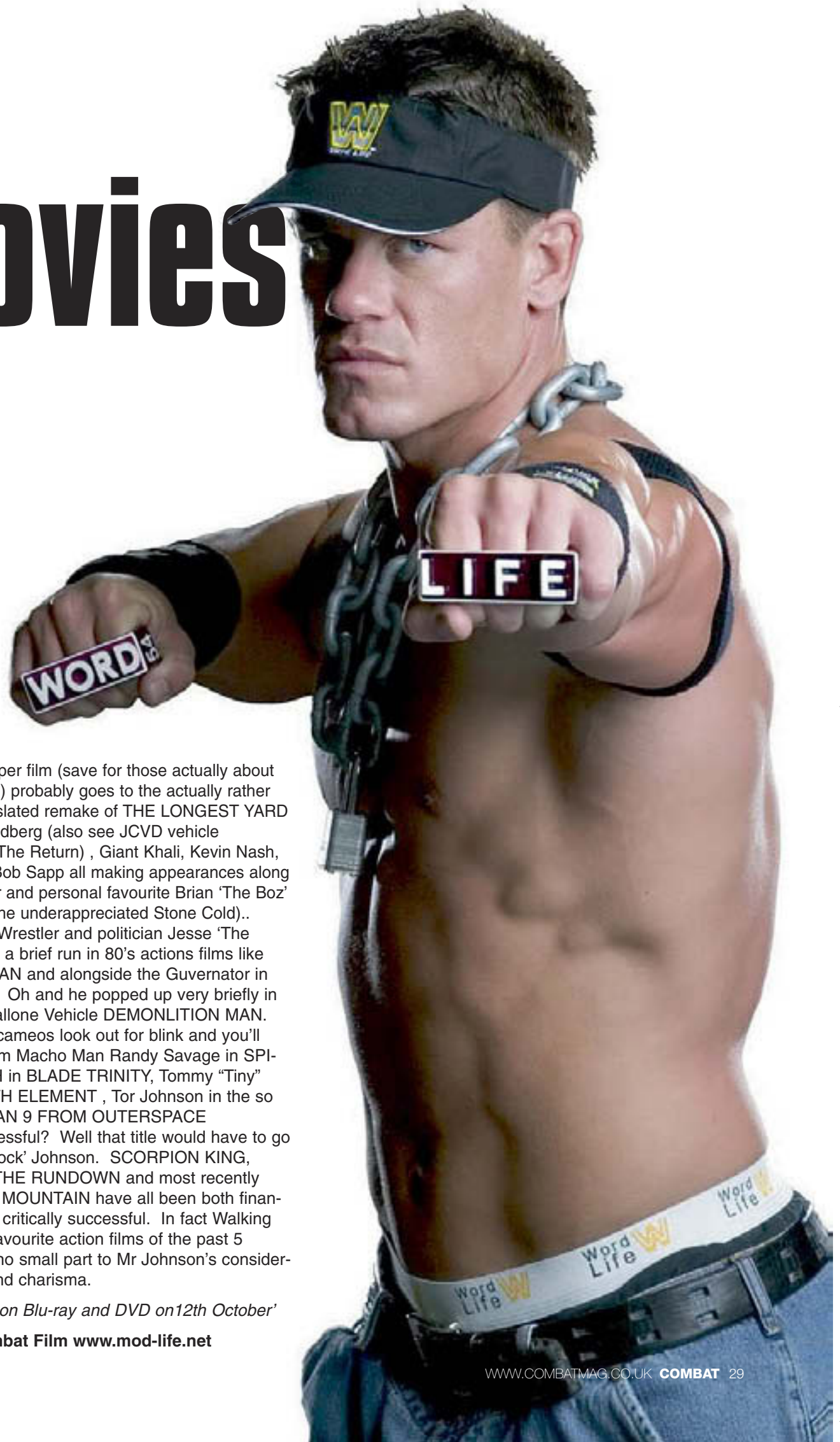
Blurring the line between fact and fiction was THE WRESTLER. Necro Butcher, Ron Killings, Ernest 'The Cat' Miller and numerous other small time Ring Of Honour and Combat Zone Wrestling performers.

With the launch of WWE films a whole new batch of wrestler starring movies hit the screens. 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin featured alongside fellow sports exile Vinnie Jones in the Hard Target/Big Brother mash up THE CONDEMED whilst Kane starred in the critically slammed horror SEE NO EVIL (aka Ice Scream Man, which was a far better title). The latest wrestler to get the big movie push care of WWE films is John Cena whose Commando-esk action film THE MARINE was surprisingly good, even if the recent follow up 12 ROUNDS fell short.



The Wrestler

Movies



Most wrestlers per film (save for those actually about wrestling of course) probably goes to the actually rather good but critically slated remake of THE LONGEST YARD which featured Goldberg (also see JCVD vehicle Universal Solider: The Return) , Giant Khali, Kevin Nash, Steve Austin and Bob Sapp all making appearances along side Adam Sandler and personal favourite Brian 'The Boz' Bosworth (star of the underappreciated Stone Cold)..

Commentator, Wrestler and politician Jesse 'The Body' Ventura had a brief run in 80's actions films like THE RUNNING MAN and alongside the Guvernator in THE PREDATOR. Oh and he popped up very briefly in Wesley Snipes/Stallone Vehicle DEMONLITION MAN. On the subject of cameos look out for blink and you'll miss them app from Macho Man Randy Savage in SPIDERMAN, Triple H in BLADE TRINITY, Tommy "Tiny" Lister in THE FIFTH ELEMENT , Tor Johnson in the so bad its terrible PLAN 9 FROM OUTERSPACE

The most successful? Well that title would have to go to Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. SCORPION KING, WALKING TALL, THE RUNDOWN and most recently RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN have all been both financially and (mostly) critically successful. In fact Walking Tall is one of my favourite action films of the past 5 years... thanks in no small part to Mr Johnson's considerable personality and charisma.

'12 Rounds is out on Blu-ray and DVD on 12th October'

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Chanbara Beauty (18) *Review by Rich Badley*

This bikini fetishist's dream/zombie slash-fest is based on the cult Japanese videogame Onechanbara, and if you've played that then you know what expect - hot chicks hacking their way through hordes of the undead. It's low-budget and low on originality. The very loose plot follows Aya - a sword-wielding cowgirl - fight through a post-apocalyptic wasteland to find her evil sister. She teams up with a leather-clad babe and a fat guy, who also have rather tired backstories.

The action is plentiful but mildly annoying thanks to cheap special effects and computerized spurts of blood. It doesn't help that star Eri Otaguro looks the part but has the same dead expression of her videogame counterpart. Only occasionally does cinematographer turned director Yôhei Fukuda show some skill - the final showdown is sharp but descends into nonsensical power-ups that are meaningless to non-fans. The rest looks like a Cosplay fanclub scuffling in a pub car park.

ACTION 2/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this try: *Casshern, Resident Evil, Dead or Alive*



50 Dead Men Walking (15) *Review by Dion Winton-Polack*

Anyone who grew up in England in the 80s, as I did, will have been aware of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, yet most likely have nothing but the broadest notion about what was happening or why. This excellent film drags us right back to those days and shows us in unflinching detail the 'true' story of Martin McGartland, a fundamentally decent man trying to survive in a nightmare situation. Approached by both British police and the IRA he becomes a reluctant spy in an effort to prevent the atrocities.

The casting is impeccable. Jim Sturgess gives an outstanding performance as Martin - sparky, cheeky and brave. He is definitely a performer to watch for in the future.

Likewise Ben Kingsley is spookily good as police handler Fergus: a man making difficult compromises for the greater good; hardened but very human. The filmmaker does a solid job of examining the complexities of occupation and resistance, with heroes and villains to be found on both sides. Shifting from Martin's personal journey to the wider conflict, via newscasts and chilling montages; anchored by Kingsley's simple dry-toned narrative, we gain a real sense of plain truth told about a muddled conflict. If you're looking for a mindless action flick, look elsewhere. There are fights and guns and bombs and all sorts of brutality but this film, more than anything, is an exploration of conscience. What it costs to be a man. As Fergus puts it 'this is about lives, and saving them.'

ACTION 5/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this try: *Patriot Games, The Boxer, In the Name Of The Father*



Splinter (18) *Review by Andrew Skeats*

An urban thriller starring Tom Sizemore, Splinter goes for authenticity and grit and arguably succeeds at both but can't quite keep the momentum and tension going. Sizemore is the typical alcoholic cop assigned to a shooting that may reignite the war between two rival LA gangs. Nothing is as it seems as both cops and gangsters walk the line between good and evil in their quest to find the shooter. Not a bad flick, which achieves a certain level of gritty realism but is marred by too slow a pace and the typical drunk, takes no orders, clichéd cop character. Still, the supporting cast is solid, especially Enrique Almeida as a gang member caught up in the investigation and Resmine Antis as Sizemore's new partner.

The film is also punctuated by scenes of hard hitting violence and action that add to the dark urban setting and feeling of the film.

ACTION 2/5 FILM 2.5/5

If you liked this, try: *Street Kings, Training Day, Urban Justice*



Fight Girls *Review by Richard Badley*

Film24's latest reality series sees seven all-American female fighters prove their mettle and take on the best Muay Thai competitors that Thailand has to offer. Only ex-Gladiator Gina Carano, who also helps with their training, has shown that the Thai fighters can be beaten and, of course, America is out to prove it wasn't a fluke.

The blurb promotes it as America's Next Top Model meets Rocky, and if you're thinking of Rocky IV then it's an apt comparison - the seven train in glitzy Las Vegas surrounded by the star-spangled banner while their opposition are shown as machines, repeatedly beating punch bags in some distant grey village.

Picking three women to go to Thailand to fight is Master Toddy - a Mr. Miyagi figure crossed with Mr. T - who pushes them to their limits. Unfortunately, the nuances of their personal journeys are lost amongst predictable montages and repetitive music.

FILM 2/5

MUST SEE ACTION FILM

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

No Retreat, No Surrender 3: Blood Brothers (1990)

Many barely knew how bland the martial arts scenes in American movies were until Jackie Chan and Jet Li came along. But long before that, Seasonal Films had dipped their toes into international waters. Their Hollywood-style releases were hard to distinguish from other B-movies of the era, except in the action scenes where it really counts. Following a typical action formula, Blood Brothers is not a great film by any stretch of the imagination. But if you've never seen one of Seasonal's seven notable productions, this one comes highly recommended. Especially if you're unfamiliar with stars Loren Avedon and Keith Vitali.

No Retreat, No Surrender 3: Blood Brothers is available online from Amazon.co.uk and all leading retailers.

IMPORT CORNER

SHINJUKU INCIDENT *Review by Mike Parkin*

Jackie Chan stars as Steelhead, a Chinese tractor driver who's now an illegal immigrant in Japan, looking for his girlfriend Xiu Xiu. He soon meets up with Jie (Daniel Wu), who shows him the life of an illegal worker - always cheated out of money, always in fear of the police. Soon however Steelhead is organising the immigrants into a formidable gang, which riles the more traditional yakuza in the area. Steelhead also saves the life of a police detective and the yakuza husband of his erstwhile girlfriend.

Shinjuku Incident is a definite departure from Jackie's usual roles: he hasn't attempted high drama since Crime Story. The tone is very noir, and the action for the most part very gritty, brutal and realistic. This is more likely to appeal to fans of the Young and Dangerous series than Jackie's own fanbase.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this, try: Election 1&2, Bodyguard: A New Beginning, Young and Dangerous

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

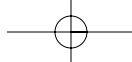
Phil Hobden takes a look at this months other DVD releases.

ROCKY THE UNDISPUTED COLLECTION (12) arrives on BluRay on October 26th prices at £69.99. Rocky 1 & 2 are classics, 3 & 4 are fun, 5 is terrible and the last film, Rocky Balboa made me cry... in a good way. Well worth the purchase...

Not Combat but bloody good none the less are **MONSTERS vs ALEINS (PG)** a top notch animated kids flick with enough jokes for the grown ups, **DRAG ME TO HELL (15)** a return to form for Sam Rami and Michael Mann crime flick **PUBLIC ENEMIES (15)**.

DIDN'T GET TO WATCH IT CORNER: IMPACT, a mini series from ABC, is now out on DVD. Meteors, moon orbits, giant rockets (probably). Whilst it arrived too late to view it, the IMBD rates it at 5.8/10. Another one that we didn't get around to watching was **CYBORG SHE (18)** for 4Digital Asia. Cyborg. Love. Sounds good no (IMDB 7/10). Finally also from the fringes of Combat comes indie horror film **I SELL THE DEAD (18)** which has won numerous awards and good praise. See for yourself on October 19th.

MMA CORNER: Just one release this month **UFC 96 Rampage Vs Jardine (E)** which, unsurprisingly, features a headlining event between champion Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson and perennial contender Keith Jardine as well as an undercard that saw just one of four matches last longer than one round.



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COMBAT FILM/REVIEWS

COMPETITIONS

To coincide with the DVD release of British action film **UNARMED BUT DANGEROUS** we have 5 copies of the film to give away care of Anchor Bay.

To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:
Which of these ISNT a British action film?

- a) Ten Dead Men
- (b) The Purifiers
- (c) Last Boy Scout

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



To coincide with the DVD release of British thriller **AWAY DAYS** we have 5 copies of the film to give away care of Optimum Releasing.

To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:
Which Hobbit starred in Green Street?

- a) Elijah Wood
- (b) Dominic Monahan
- (c) Ian Holm

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



To coincide with the DVD release of **STREETFIGHTER: The Legend of Chun Li** we have 5 copies of the film to give away care of Optimum Releasing.

To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:
Which is these ISNT a character from the Street Fighter game?

- 1) Ryu
- (b) Roger Honda
- (c) Blanka

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



The new Palisades Tartan label has given three sets of their latest releases (including **Blood Rain**, **The Uninvited** and **A World Without Thieves**) to give away this month.

To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:
Which of these actors stars in A World without Thieves?

- a) Andy Lau
- (b) Andy Chow
- (c) Chow Mien

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



Finally care of Sony to celebrate the release of UK movie **DOG HOUSE** we have 5 copies of the film plus a portable DVD player to give away.

To win this great prize all you have to do is answer the following question:
Which of these films did Danny Dyer NOT feature in?

- a) Human Traffic
- (b) Rise Of The Footsoler
- (c) Mean Machine

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



NEWS AND RUMOURS

Sequel alert! **BAD BOYS 3** and **RAMBO 5** both look likely to be green light over the coming months according to Aintitcool.com. One excites me greatly, the other is Bad Boys...

...**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 4** gets a name, **ON STRANGER TIDES** but may have lost star Johnny Depp due to studio changes at Disney...

... **FANTASTIC FOUR** is heading for a reboot...

... **NINJA ASSASIN** will arrive in the UK in November. Look out for an exclusive interview with **SAMMO HUNG** next month...

..Rumour has it that **TONY JAA** and **DONNIE YEN** may be set for a team up in 2010. That excites me..

... **THE HOBBIT** may well be jumping on the 3-D band wagon...

TOP FIVE...

This month: Director UWE BOLL picks his TOP 5 action movies...

1. French connection
2. Heat
3. Matrix
4. Rambo
5. Dirty dozen

