

Enter the Dragon, exit Lee

Enter the Dragon. Exit Bruce Lee.

This newest film in the Kung Fu craze is Bruce Lee's last. Lee, master of oriental martial arts and the leading figure of many of the recent films dealing with the subject, died last month.

It would have been interesting to see what path his career might have followed once the current Kung Fu fad has died. (Its end certainly seems near after seeing *Enter the Dragon*.) Lee does have screen charisma, even if his acting is a bit stilted.

One immediately thinks of him in terms of a Clint Eastwood type—quiet, reserved, stone-faced. Yet when the action begins, all hell breaks loose.

One easily could have seen him making movies in non-oriental settings as, for instance, a tough New York narcotics agent or even as a Western hero. For money-minded producers, he certainly would have been a sought-after commodity in future years.

But there is nothing new on the horizon in *Enter the Dragon*. Lee is invited to participate in a martial arts tournament on a small island near Hong Kong, sponsored by an oriental criminal big-shot named Han. Lee also does a little on-the-stage undercover work for the British government, trying to investigate Han's suspected drug involvement.

The film is nothing more than an excuse for filling the screen with a fight scene in every conceivable spot. The film's three leading protagonists at the tournament, Lee, an American playboy (John Saxon) and a hip, overconfident black (Jim Kelly), even have flashback dreams so the movie can provide three more fight scenes.

There are no developed subplots and Han's sinister activities are never made clear. They are something Lee can be caught investigating, thus resulting in a fight with Han's personal army.

Enter the Dragon is one of the first Kung Fu films produced and made by a large American company (Warner Bros.). But technically the

film is as bad in some areas as the earlier oriental imports. The dubbing of the dialogue of some of the oriental characters is still atrocious, and the photography is grainy and hazy.

Then there's that cute little trick the sound effects people came up with of inserting what sounds like the loud crack of a bull whip every time a hand or foot lands in somebody's face or groin. It's crunchingly effective but so fakey that it soon becomes laughable.

But so do the magical works of the film editors, as they turn Lee into a Douglas Fairbanks acrobat who jumps, chops and kicks his way through dozens of attackers.

Like Clint Eastwood in the Italian spaghetti Westerns, where an effective use of film cutting would enable him to gun down five men before any of them could get a shot off, the miracles of editing enable Lee to leap into mid-air, flail his arms and legs and land with a half dozen attackers strewn about him.

Despite all the trickery surrounding him, Lee was still a master of his art, and the choreography of his dynamic skills is one of the few bright points of the film.

greg lukow key grip

Nothing else can be said for a poorly made film that exists only for the violence it portrays, other than the fact that it is enigmatically (but perhaps not) the kind of movie people will flock to see.

A short note on the brighter side. The Alfred Hitchcock double feature of *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and *The 39 Steps* (1935), now playing at the Douglas 3, should not be missed. Made before Hitchcock came to Hollywood in 1939, they are excellent examples of his finest British works.

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