

**NEW
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**"IMAGINE A FILM IN WHICH JACKIE CHAN
AND BUSTER KEATON MEET QUENTIN
TARANTINO AND BUGS BUNNY!"**

-ROGER EBERT



**"MOVIEMAKING
DOESN'T
GET MUCH
SMARTER,
FUNNIER,
BETTER
THAN THIS!"**

**-RICHARD CORLISS,
TIME**



STEPHEN CHOW

KUNG FU HUSTLE

FROM THE FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER OF "THE MATRIX" AND "CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON."

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Critics have called **Kung Fu Hustle** not only an endearing homage to a genre's history, but an astonishing piece of cinema in its own right. Set amid the chaos of pre-Revolutionary China, small time thief Sing (Stephen Chow) aspires to be one of the sophisticated and ruthless Axe Gang whose underworld activities overshadow the city. Innovative and hilarious.

CHINA/HONG KING • 2004 • 95 mins • Color • In Cantonese/Mandarin with English subtitles

It's Quite a Kick To Do the 'Hustle'

DESSON THOMSON



It isn't every day you meet a landlady like, well, her name is Landlady. A chain-smoking harridan (played by Yuen Qiu) in nightie and curlers, she can crack glasses with her screeching harangues and can knock guys out cold with her aerial kicks. At one point, frustrated with her shiftless husband (Yuen Wah), she cold-cocks him – sending him bouncing off a canopy below and face first on to the ground. Before Landlord can recover, she tosses a clay flower pot onto his head. It breaks, and the solitary white rose tumbles out.

Ow.

Landlady's one of several exclamation-point characters in Stephen Chow's kinetic, rousing master show "Kung Fu Hustle." A martial arts comedy, which seems to have been injected with Buster Keaton's gymnastic inventiveness, Sergio Leone's tough-guy posturing and the Three Stooges' antic madness, "Kung Fu Hustle" snaps and crackles like nuclear popcorn on a scorching griddle. Filmmaker Chow, who made the hyper-cartoonish comedy "Shaolin Soccer," has out-brillianted himself.

Set in 1940s (pre-revolutionary) China, the story (such as it is) is about a small slummers' community (Landlady's tenants), who are under the thumb of the Axe Gang – ruthless individuals who wield (and use) some nasty weapons. Into this world comes Sing (played by Chow), an impoverished opportunist who wants to join the gang so he can shake down the poor, too. But he's a catalyst for catastrophe, managing to antagonize just about everyone.

Sing, directly and indirectly, incites an escalation of fights, involving superhuman feats and, thanks to computer-generated imagery, some jaw-dropping visual effects. Characters defy gravity in the manner of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." They withstand amazing physical punishment, as if they're the fleshy residents of a Hong Kong-style Warner Bros. cartoon. And their protracted, balletic fights – in this rundown compound known as

Pig Sty Alley – are amazing as kung fu spectacle and for their comic genius.

Sing's ultimate move, for instance, is the Palm Move That Falls From Heaven. It involves him skyrocketing above the clouds, alighting serenely on a bird, then making a slow but deadly descent to earth for the big assault. And then there are the two sinister men of the apocalypse whose stringed harps project darts of powerful energy that can break buildings, not to mention unfortunate opponents.

No sooner has Chow produced something awesome, he reverts back to Stooges sensibility. There's the time Sing hurls a knife, which bounces off a wall and sinks into his shoulder, for instance. Or the scene in which Sing's tubby friend (Lam Tze Chung) picks up a cage full of snakes to hurl at Landlady and accidentally opens it, engulfing Sing with writhing serpents.

There are dozens more of these stunts and gags to savor. And after watching this rich choreography of pugilistic mayhem, you may feel as though you need to get some down time immediately afterward. But it won't be long before you feel the compulsion to watch again. There is too much to appreciate in one sitting. And this is one gift to yourself that will keep on giving.

KUNG FU HUSTLE

Directed by Stephen Chow; written (in Mandarin and Cantonese, with English subtitles) by Mr. Chow, Tsang Kan Cheong, Lola Huo and Chan Man Keung; director of photography, Poon Hang Sang; edited by Angie Lam; music by Raymond Wong; action choreography by Yuen Wo Ping and Sammo Hung; production designer, Oliver Wong; produced by Mr. Chow, Chui Po Chu and Jeff Lau. Running time: 95 minutes. This film is rated R. WITH: Stephen Chow (Sing), Yuen Wah (Landlord), Leung Siu Lung (the Beast), Chiu Chi Ling (Tailor), Xing Yu (Coolie), Lam Tze Chung (Sidekick), Huang Sheng Yi (Fong) and Yuen Qiu (Landlady).

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85 Fifth Avenue, 11th floor, New York, NY 10003 • Tel: (212) 645-4600 • Fax: (212) 645-3232 • nontheatrical@newyorkerfilms.com