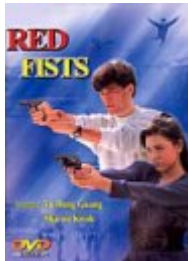


Kung Fu CINEMA

Red Fists (1991)



Distributor: World Video

Format: Region 0 DVD, NTSC

Length: 83 min

Aspect Ratio: Widescreen (1.85:1)

Audio Tracks: English (Dolby Digital)

Subtitles: None

Extras: Trailers for **Red Fists**, **Dead Target**, **Men Behind the Sun**, & **Romance of Book and Sword**; filmographies for Yu Rong-guang & Sharon Kwok that auto-scroll too quickly.

Notes: The print is faded and contains moderate degradation, but is otherwise acceptable. The English dubbing is adequate. The audio track is mastered in Dolby Digital, but still sounds very flat.

Picture:



Sound:



Extras:



Genre(s): Action, Martial Arts

Origin: Hong Kong

Length: 83 min

Studio(s): Sil-Metropole Organization LTD.

Director(s): Gwok Bo-cheong

Producer(s): Cheung Yam-yim

Action Director(s): Yu Rong-guang

Writer(s): Wong Mak Chuen (script), Ng Kai-tai (script)

Cinematographer(s): Hou Yong

Music: Ding Jia-lin, Si Tu-kang

Rated: n/a

Cast:: Sharon Kwok Sau-wan

Yu Rong-guang

Cheung Yim-lai

Gai Chun-wa

Chiang Han

Hung Yue-chow

Gwok Yiu-wa

Premise: An undercover police officer from mainland China travels to Hong Kong and reluctantly joins forces with a local detective in order to infiltrate and break a counterfeit money operation.

Review: Before Yu Rong-guang settled into villainous and supporting roles, he made several bids to be the next big action star. Hailing from mainland China, he certainly had the looks and martial arts skills necessary to make it in Hong Kong action cinema. At the height of the "girls with guns" era Yu was cast opposite

Sharon Kwok, one of the lesser stars in that genre. The film was **Red Fists** and it was just a routine **Police Story** knockoff filled with all of the usual stunts, martial arts fights, and gunplay.

The film begins with several disjointed scenes that initially have no meaning including depictions of a child discovering a corpse in the water surrounded by money, several men fighting to the death to lay claim to a briefcase, and a taxi driver (played by Yu) showing up out of nowhere to steal the briefcase which turns out to be empty. We're also introduced to Sharon's character in her karate class in a scene showing horrible acting. Eventually, the pieces fall together as it's learned that counterfeit printing plates have been sent to Hong Kong and Yu is an undercover cop trying to get them and put a stop to the criminals responsible. Only the plates have gone missing. Yu's cover is blown by Sharon and the two reluctantly team up through a series of battles that leads them back to mainland China where the criminals' base of operations are. A twist is thrown in when the crime boss's son attempts to recover the plates from under his father's nose and use Yu against him which causes tension within the family. The story comes to a climax along a river as our heroes and the mainland police converge on the spot where the criminals have uncovered the plates.

Red Fists tries really hard to offer up a great action movie, but it's just too generic and poorly constructed throughout. The location shoots where the action takes place from bustling cities & dockyards to rural bayous are a big bonus. Yu's action choreography is surprisingly good with a few quality set piece fights that are fast and offer big impact. The highlight is his fierce duel with fellow mainland action star Gai Chun-wa. They would both appear together again in **Deadend of Beseigers**. On the other hand, the stunt work gets to be pretty mundane. Some inventive use of a car to battle thugs is later replaced by a standard care chase, lots of bodies flying through sugar glass (used to replace real glass to minimize injury), bland gunplay, and the obligatory explosions. They go the extra mile in a few scenes such as lighting up a bystander with flame, blowing up a helicopter (it's only a model), and noticeably having Yu perform his own stunts. One fall over a railing and onto a car is clearly Yu and looks pretty painful. Unfortunately, we've all seen it before and the delivery is just bad. The direction is clunky and confusing. The script is horrible (blame some of it on the translation), as is the acting. Sharon has nothing to offer as the female lead and any of her peers such as Cynthia Khan or Moon Lee would have been a better choice. As villain, Gai Chun-wa is excellent as usual, but doesn't get enough scenes and only a couple allow him to show off his great screen fighting.

Once again, Yu Rong-guang is thrust into a film below his abilities, although admittedly **Red Fists** is one of his first Hong Kong features. Yet it does show that he is capable of orchestrating some decent action, in addition to playing the lead and doing his own stunt work. Therefore, the film is worth seeing by Yu's fans, but can be otherwise overlooked without missing anything.



- Mark Pollard
