

Shaolin Ex-Monk

Reviewed by DVDCULT.COM

Score: *** (of 5)

Synopsis:

Chow Li Chin, a reckless young man in love with Tin Shun is caught by her disapproving father, who orders him to be hung. A stranger named Lin Chu Fei intercedes on Chow's behalf. Lin turns out to be a marshal tracking down a ruthless ex-monk who is hiding in the town. Chow agrees to look for the former monk in exchange for kung fu lessons from Lin. The discovery of the ex-monk's identity forces Chow into a difficult decision with Lin's life at stake.

Review:

Leg fighter John Liu stars in this solid chop-socky mystery that features moderately entertaining fight scenes, along with shots of the wires that made them possible. The film starts off with a rousing chase through village streets as actor Wang Xing Hsiu climbs up walls and flips over carts while trying to evade capture. While no Jackie Chan, Wang manages to play the affable fool reasonable well with at least a smidgeon of athletic ability. The film gets a handy jolt from John Liu's charming smile and his incredibly dexterous kicking. But neither can stop the story from faltering shortly after. The training exercises are a yawn thanks to bad camera work and over-used clichés. Wires shoe up everywhere in this film but no where more disappointing then in a training exercise where Liu stands with each foot on a sliding pillar. To demonstrate the technique to his new student, he slides the pillars apart with his feet until he completely does the splits. Looks great but for that wire holding up. Much of the training simply involves various leg stretches. Finally, the breaking of dishware on sticks routine is simply too overused. Fans of kung fu training which is almost a genre in itself should look for The Prodigal Son or The 36th Chamber of Shaolin (The Master Killer). In addition, some of the fight choreography is too slow and methodical, looking more like a square dance at time. But still... Shaolin Ex-Monk does contain some memorable fights towards the end. A pair of mercenaries engage John Liu, wearing what looks like a pair of golden cones on each hand. Somewhat useless - if interesting nevertheless, is the ex-monk's horizontal tree-climbing technique which Liu develops a counter move for. For solid old school martial arts fun, you could do worse than to watch this title. It's not particularly action-packed, funny, or awe-inspiring but Shaolin Ex-Monk is entertaining as a whole. It certainly scores in the "unintentionally funny" category for goofy choreography and Liu's slurred dubbing.

Brian Cleary - DVD Cult.com