



South Shaolin Master Part II, Madam City Hunter, Kid From Tibet, Sword Stained With Royal Blood, Casino.

A quintet of CAV Hong Kong classics, mostly from the '80s "New Wave" period, give fans plenty from which to choose -- period martial arts, martial arts action, drama, comedy, suspense and a host of name stars.

"Madam City Hunter" is one of the most appealing of the lot, though it has next to nothing to do with the Jackie Chan film "City Hunter" nor the popular video game on which that film was based. It does, however, boast the name of Yuen Woo Ping as producer, a credential that filters down into the look and style of the film as well. Yuen didn't direct it, but he may as well have. High-kicking female action star Cynthia Khan stars alongside the always-entertaining Anthony Wong as rival detectives involved in an investigation of Khan's impending stepmother. It's typically complicated Hong Kong domestic-action-comedy-drama, so it doesn't make that much sense. But it's all in the interest of keeping viewers entertained and on the edge, goals which it accomplishes rather handily.

"A Kid From Tibet" is another bona-fide classic, the best solo effort from the third of the famous childhood "Three Brothers" that included Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao. Yuen produced, choreographed, directed and starred in this vastly enjoyable action farce that has everyone hot to seize a precious urn. Yuen plays a Tibetan Lama (naturally) endowed with all the same skills that have made the effortlessly acrobatic Yuen always a pleasure to watch. The sad part of the film is that Yuen has not gone on to a directing career as prestigious as that of Jackie or Sammo. And after watching "A Kid from Tibet," it's impossible to guess why.

"The Sword Stained With Royal Blood" is an older classic and isn't likely to appeal to any but die-hard fans of the genre. A standard "quest for the sacred sword" myth, it's not unique relative to the hundreds of other "Wuxia" swordplay films, but it is better than most thanks to another fine performance from Yuen Biao and the always fetching Anita Yuen. Danny Lee, best known for the crime films of John Woo and Ringo Lam, appears as well, though he seems a bit out of period.

"The South Shaolin Master Part II" is slightly more accessible as such period martial arts films go. Based on real-life hero Lam Hoi Nam, it follows the same pattern as other films about real-life Chinese heroes like Fong Sai Yuk and Wong Fei Hong. It's not quite in the same league as the Jet Li and Jackie Chan films centering on those other heroes, but fans of those films will find plenty to enjoy in this one as well.

"Casino" is definitely not to be confused with the Martin Scorsese film of the same name, though there are similarities, notably the intersection of the casino business

and organized crime. The setting here is Macau, which serves as a glorious backdrop for some gritty violence. Simon Yam, best remembered by many for his part in Ringo Lam's "Full Contact," stars alongside the likes of Alex Fong and "Crime Story's Kent Cheng. This is tough stuff, not quite up to snuff with the best of Woo and Lam, but solid on its own merits, nonetheless.

By Wade Major

COLLECTOR RATING: WORTH FULL PRICE