

Film Archive premieres opening film of "Of Fists and Swords – Kaleidoscope of Hong Kong Martial Arts Films" tonight (with photos)

The Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) presented the premiere of the 4K digitally restored version of "Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain" (1983) at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) tonight (March 27), marking the opening of the screening programme "Of Fists and Swords – Kaleidoscope of Hong Kong Martial Arts Films". The screening programme is one of the programmes of the Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival 2024.

To tie in with the theme of the Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival 2024 "Arts & Action" and complement the premiere of the opening film, the Pop Culture Programmes Office of the LCSD organised a wushu performance and demonstration by Hong Kong martial arts athletes Lydia Sham, Lau Chi-lung and Samuei Hui, while wushu coach Wong Chi-kwong conducted an interactive session with the audience at the Foyer of the HKCC before the premiere.

Directed by Tsui Hark, the opening film "Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain" is an adaptation of the martial arts novel "Legend of the Swordsmen of the Mountains of Shu". Tsui used numerous practical and special optical effects, and hired Hollywood special effects experts who had worked on "Star Wars" (1977) to build an oriental fantasy world combining Chinese myths, wuxia and history.

In addition to the opening and closing films, the HKFA has selected 21 martial arts films for screening at the Cinema of the HKFA from April 6 to June 16 that are divided into six sections. The first section "Tales of Chivalry" consists of five period wuxia films including "The Valiant Ones" (1975) (4K Digitally Restored Version); "The Enigmatic Case" (1980), the film debut of director Johnnie To; "The Butterfly Murders" (1979) (Digitally Restored Version) and "Seven Swords" (2005) (4K Digitally Restored Version), which are directed by Tsui Hark; as well as "The Sword" (1980).

The four kung fu films from the second section "Fists of Fury" are "The Way of the Dragon" (1972) (4K Digitally Restored Version), the only film scripted, directed and acted by Bruce Lee, "Shaolin Martial Arts" (1974), "Martial Club" (1981) and "The Shaolin Temple" (1982) (4K Digitally Restored Version), in which internationally acclaimed martial arts star Jet Li made his screen debut.

The third section "Yin Over Yang" will feature two classics acted by two iconic kung fu film actresses. They are Kara Wai's "My Young Auntie" (1981) and Michelle Yeoh's "Yes, Madam!" (1985) (Digitally Restored Version).

The four genre-crossing action films featured in the fourth section "Entertaining Remixes" are action hero Jackie Chan's comedy kung fu classic "Drunken Master" (1978) and his police drama "Police Story" (1985) (4K Digitally Restored Version); "The Prodigal Son" (1981), for which Sammo Hung was the director, a scriptwriter, a martial arts instructor and an actor; and "Black Mask" (1996) (Digitally Restored Version), a fantasy action film in comic style.

The fifth section "Legends Reimagined" will present four films revolving around real-life martial arts grandmasters, including "Once Upon a Time in China" (1991), "Ip Man" (2008), "Tai Chi Zero" (2012) and "Tai Chi Hero" (2012), which are two action fantasy films based on the legend of the founder of Yang-style Tai Chi Yang Lu-chan.

The two films under the sixth section "Behind-the-Scenes Stories" are "Painted Faces" (1988) (Digitally Restored Version) and "Ah Kam" (1996), which focus on the careers of martial arts actors, stunt performers and martial arts choreographers that are rarely portrayed in films, paying tribute to the contribution of lesser-known people in martial arts filmmaking.

The closing film, "The Grandmaster" (2013), will be screened at the Grand Theatre of the HKCC on June 22. Directed by Wong Kar-wai, the film is about the stories between Ip Man and his fellow martial artists in the competitive world of martial arts. An epitome of wenyi films wrapped in martial arts, the film won 12 awards including the Best Film Award and Best Director Award at the 33rd Hong Kong Film Awards.

Various screenings will be accompanied by post-screening talks. For programme details, please call 2739 2139 or visit the website of the HKFA: www.filmarchive.gov.hk/en/web/hkfa/2024/martial/pe-event-2024-martial.html. Tickets priced at \$45 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288.

The LCSD presented the first Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival last year to great acclaim. This year, the second edition features "Arts & Action" as its theme, taking audiences on a journey through time to explore the charm of Hong Kong's pop culture. It encompasses both "Arts" (creative works) and "Action" (martial arts), in an attempt to show the dynamic inheritance, diffusion, integration and breakthroughs within Hong Kong's pop culture.

The event lineup offers a diverse range of formats including thematic exhibitions, film screenings, stage performances and outreach activities, and its rich content spans across literature, various art forms and martial arts, clearly showcasing how Hong Kong's vibrant and diverse pop culture stands out from the rest. For more information, please visit www.pcf.gov.hk/en.

