

FUNNY FISTS OF FURY

Jackie Chan is the undisputed sensei — master — of kung fu comedies. He practically invented the genre back in 1978 and has been kicking butt ever since. Chan's "The Forbidden Kingdom" (co-starring Jet Li) comes out this month and he lends a voice to Jack Black's animated "Kung Fu Panda," opening June 6. Another kung fu comedy, "The Foot Fist Way," about a tae kwon do instructor who goes on a pilgrimage to meet his martial arts hero, is also out this summer.

Here's the best of the comedies that kick, punch and scream out "hi-yaaaah!" in between one-liners. *Michael Giltz*

■ KUNG FU HUSTLE (2004)

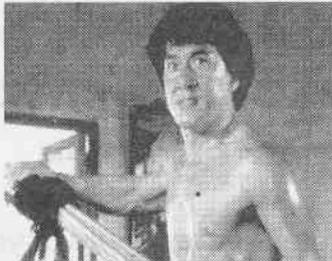
Kick: Sing (played by co-writer and director Stephen Chow) desperately wants to be a gangster, but stumbles onto a housing complex where the obnoxious landlady and mild-seeming residents are in fact kung fu masters in disguise.

Punch (line): Chow proved himself the heir-apparent to Chan with this visually stunning, over-the-top comic tour de force filled with hilarious sight gags, unlikely combatants and exciting action.

► DRUNKEN MASTER (1978)

Kick: Jackie Chan's breakthrough featured him as an unruly student who is taught "The Eight Drunken Immortals" fighting styles, but only practices seven because he thinks the "Drunken Miss Ho" is too unmanly. Big mistake.

Punch (line): The movie was a roaring success that made Chan a star and rescued kung fu movies from self-importance.



■ SHAOLIN SOCCER (2001)

Kick: A ragtag group of shaolin kung fu experts — with names like Iron Head, Hooking Leg and Empty Hand — join forces on a soccer team to defeat Team Evil and promote the practice of shaolin far and wide.

Punch (line): The joke was on this Stephen Chow movie, which was a huge success everywhere else but was chopped up

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■ THEY CALL ME BRUCE? (1982)

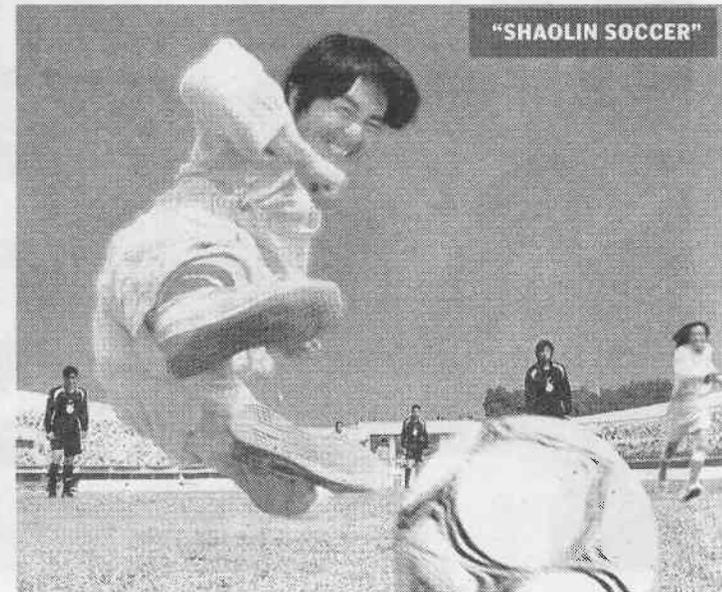
Kick: Everyone loves Bruce Lee, but you wouldn't want to be confused with actually being Bruce Lee. Getting beat up constantly so other people can boast they kicked Lee's butt is no fun.

Punch (line): It proved that musician Rick Springfield was way off base for complaining that people confused him with Springsteen. What's the worst that could happen? They'd demand you sing "Born to Run"?

■ RUSH HOUR (1998)

Kick: Jackie Chan is a fish out of water as a strait-laced Hong Kong detective coming to America to rescue a diplomat's daughter, defeat the evil mastermind and endure the rule-bending lunacy of Chris Tucker.

Punch (line): Low on action stunts but high on comedy and charm, this was the perfect vehicle to make Chan a star in the West once and for all. ♦



"SHAOLIN SOCCER"