

Chan Rumbles in the Bronx

BY JOEL POTRYKUS
STAFF WRITER

Hong Kong's biggest action-comedy hero, Jackie Chan, has hit the United States for the first time with "Rumble in the Bronx," another installment in over 40 of Chan's high-impact kung fu vehicles since 1976.

Chan has reigned as China's most beloved son and is now claimed as America's favorite new import since Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Chan plays Keung, an Asian coming to New York to stay with his uncle. Keung falls into the position of defending a supermarket in the middle of the Bronx, while doing battle with a gang of motorcycling thieves.

Perhaps Chan's explosive burst into the United States can be explained with the receiving of his Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1995 MTV Movie Awards. Quentin Tarantino, the master-mind behind some of Hollywood's most off-beat films, presented Chan with the award. He also introduced a clip of Chan's fight scenes, and heralded him as being influential to his filmmaking. Tarantino has brought other 70's and 80's pop-culture icons out of the limbo of sitcom cameos and back into the public's heart. John Travolta, through "Pulp Fiction," and Richard Roundtree, a.k.a. Shaft, by means of "From Dusk 'Till Dawn," have benefited from Tarantino's touch. Now, once again, it seems, through a small dedication at an awards show, he has sparked the revival of another actor, Jackie Chan, by bringing him into American theatres.

Chan, an obvious disciple of Bruce Lee, creates fast-paced action that wanders from the typical punch-kick-pull-a-gun scenario. He duals with refrigerator doors, swats with a pair of skies, and defeats his opponents with his own shirt.

What has gained Chan his popularity in

America and his reign as a king in China, is the breathtaking stunts featured in his films. More importantly, is the fact that he performs *all* of his own stunts. This charismatic actor will place himself in extreme risk, and he demands the cameras to capture the danger in each scene. Chan was recently quoted as saying, "I don't care if I break a leg, just make sure you get the shot!"

This dedicated attitude allows Chan to continue to raise the element of danger in each stunt. Chan has broken his nose three times, his jaw, his shoulder, and nearly every other bone from head to toe. Close observers can notice, during a scene in "Rumble," Chan's right ankle buckles as he bounds onto a moving hovercraft. He broke his ankle in this shot, but returned to filming after receiving a cast.

The story is simple, perhaps too simple. Keung must retrieve stolen diamonds while in competition with a gang and a group of organized crime lords, who are also in pursuit of the diamonds. After the smoke clears from on-going chases and heroism, Keung ends up grabbing the bad guys and winning the girl.

This is one aspect of Chan's films that lacks imagination and interest. An hour and a half of his fist-flying, building-leaping performance would be much more exhilarating than his attempt to form a plot that is seen as a cinematic cliché.

Nevertheless, "Rumble in the Bronx" brings out Chan's tremendous athletic skill and charm. His innovative karate techniques and brilliant stunt sequences should amaze any viewer. Although critics have called his effort to act more daring than being dashed with shards of broken glass, this film is sure to capture the imaginations of Chan's new American audience.

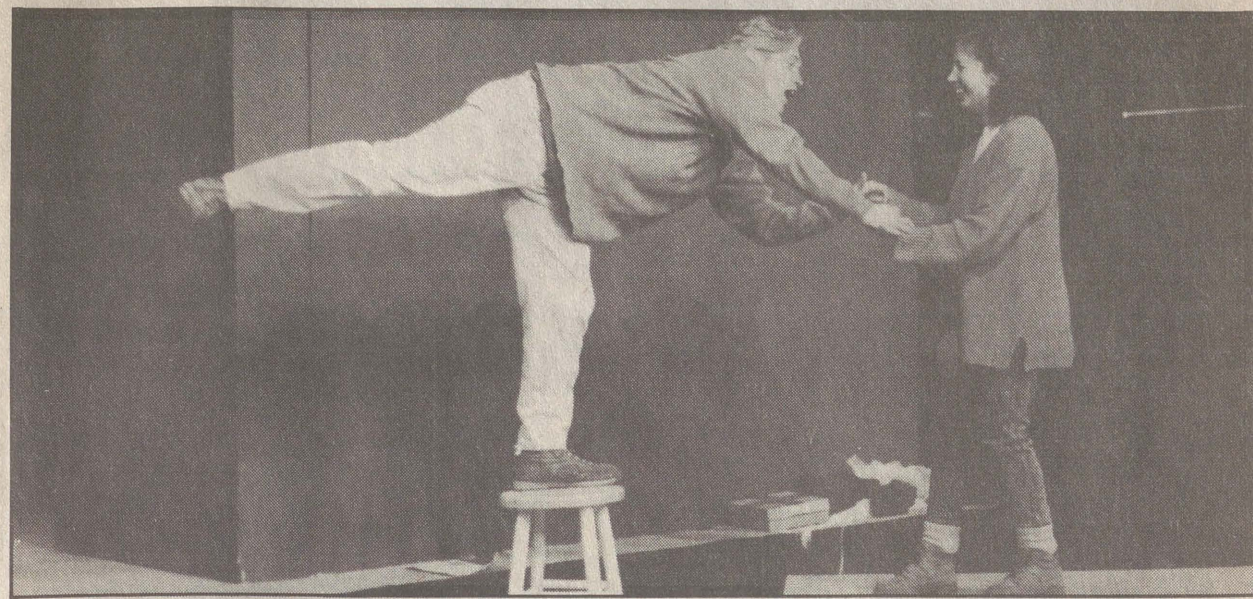


PHOTO BY DEBBIE PARKS

Chuck Walczak and Merri Domer practice tree climbing for "Children of a Lesser God".

"Children" is a lesson for all

BY LYNLY
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Thunder Bay Theatre presented *Children of A Lesser God* on March 7-9. This play was a three day production, but its impact was long lasting.

Sarah Norman is a deaf student played by newcomer Merri Domer, and was the focal point behind the play. Ms. Domer is a substitute interpreter in the Alpena Public Schools working with the hearing impaired.

Ms. Domer is not hearing impaired, but speaks sign language fluently. She devoted many extra hours to her fellow cast mates to teach them to sign.

"I have always loved sign language," Domer said "So much of talking with sign is body language, that this was a liberal, rewarding experience."

Also new to the theatre was the young and talented Leigh Dorr, who played Lydia, a student of the Hearing Institute. Miss Dorr is a student at Thunder Bay Junior High.

New to TBT was Ben Gougeon, last seen at the Civic Theatre in *The Lion In Winter* playing Prince John. In *Children*, Ben plays Orin Dennis, who is a partial hearing student at the Institute.

"Learning to sign for the part was the most challenging for me," Gougeon said. "Both Merri and Leigh helped me prepare for the part."

Most impressive was Chuck Walczak, who spent three months learning sign language to play James Leeds, the teacher who falls in love with Sarah Norman.

This reporter has seen Mr. Walczak in many plays, but never have I seen this actor's talents in better light. The energy and excitement that Walczak portrayed in learning this complicated part conveys the true spirit behind acting.

To undertake the challenge of hearing people speaking with sign language was a marvel to see. There was never a dull moment in the play because there were no real scene changes.

It was imagination at its best when the actors changed scenes. The audience saw James in the tree outside of

Sarah's dorm room window, even though the stage was barren of everything but a couple of chairs and stools.

Nan Hall and Jennifer Andre were co-directors of the play, as well as having small but important parts. Ms. Hall played Mrs. Norman Sarah's mother, and Ms. Andre played Edna Klein, the lawyer, who was a real crack-up to watch.

Jerry Post played Mr. Franklin, the uptight wise cracking director of the institute. It was interesting to note that even though Mr. Franklin was the director, he never once used sign language, but spoke only to those who could hear.

For those who have seen the movie or read the book, and there were a number in the audience, the intensity blew the audience away, even though they knew what was coming.

Congratulations TBT. This one was a winner!

TBT's losing two Actor's

BY LYNLY
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Thunder Bay Theatre will soon be losing two of their best actors. Chuck Walczak and Jennifer Andre are moving on to greener pastures.

The two will depart from Alpena sometime in April. Chuck and Jennifer will head out to California to seek their fame and fortune.

We are all going to miss these troopers because they helped to make TBT the great show place it is. Good Luck, and God Bless. We'll be looking for you both in the movies.

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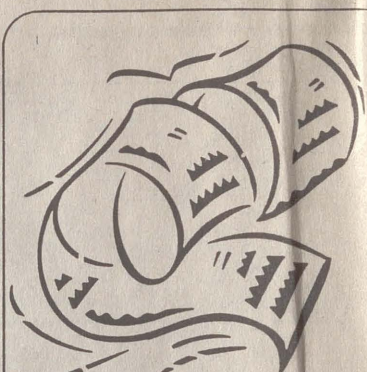


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