

# CRIME: HONG KONG STYLE

**The Boxer from Shantung (15) 馬永貞**

**WED 10 FEB, 20:00**

**Dir: Chang Cheh & Pao Hsueh-li/1972 HK/126 mins**

**Mandarin with Chinese and English subtitles/ Chan Koon-tai, John Chiang, Ching Li**

*The Boxer from Shantung* was co-directed by one of the major figures of the late 1960s and 1970s Hong Kong cinema, Chang Cheh. Chang had come to prominence in 1967 with the popular *One Armed Swordsman* starring Jimmy Wang Yu, and following that release he directed a number of ground-breaking martial arts films that would become widely seen as some of the best of the era. As audience tastes changed Chang would turn his hand to swordplay and kung fu films as well as contemporary action orientated dramas. However, whatever the style of film Chang would repeatedly focus his concerns on ideas of brotherhood, valour and loyalty. Typical examples of his work during this period include *The Heroic Ones* (1970), *Blood Brothers* (1973) *Shaolin Temple* (1976) and *The Five Deadly Venoms* (1978).

During the 1970s Chang was also involved in one of world cinema's oddest collaborations, the UK-Hong Kong co-production *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* (1974). This saw Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers and the UK's Hammer combine in an attempt to break international markets with a mixture of Shaw's kung fu action and Hammer's brand of horror. As anyone who has seen it knows, the combination didn't really work as well as hoped. However, as is so often the case with such oddities, it has now become something of a cult classic.

One of the stars of *The Boxer from Shantung* is David Chiang something of a protégé of Chang Cheh. Chiang had been working as a stuntman for Shaw Brothers when the director spotted him and took him under his wing. It was Chang who suggested he replace his English name John with David. In the 1970s Chang would cast Chiang alongside another up and coming actor Ti Lung in a number of his films and in so doing would create one of the most memorable partnerships in Hong Kong film history. As well as the aforementioned classic *Blood Brothers* (1973), during the 1970s the duo starred together in films such as *The Deadly Duo* (1971), *The Water Margin* (1972) and *The Pirate* (1973).

*The Boxer from Shantung* is a significant contribution to *CRIME: Hong Kong Style* as it represents a merging of the Shaw Brothers studio style action cinema that director Chang had been so central in developing with a classic crime film narrative that follows a poor migrant's rise through the ranks of an organised crime gang. The success of the film saw lead actor Chen Kuan-tai (Chan Koon-tai), an accomplished martial artist in real life, become a



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popular actor who would go on to make other notable contributions to the crime genre, and the *CRIME: Hong Kong Style* season, with *The Teahouse* (1974) and *The Killer Constable* (1980).

Andy Willis (Season Curator, *CRIME: Hong Kong Style*)

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