

Cinema Popular unveils muscular cast for "Bodyguards and Assassins"

HONG KONG – Monday, 23 March 2009 – Cinema Popular is proud to announce that it has assembled an astonishing, all-star cast for "Bodyguards and Assassins."

The film, to be directed by Teddy CHEN, will shoot from April at locations in Shanghai and be ready for theatrical release in December.

"Bodyguards and Assassins" is the first film to be green-lighted by Cinema Popular, a new Beijing-based film company committed to making ambitious movies for mainstream Chinese audiences.

The stellar cast includes Donnie YEN, Leon LAI, WANG Xueqi, Nicholas TSE, Tony LEUNG Kar-fai, HU Jun, Eric TSANG, Simon YAM, FAN Bingbing, WANG Po-chieh and ZHOU Yun.

Production is by Cinema Popular principals Peter Ho-sun CHAN and HUANG Jianxin.

The movie, previously introduced as "Dark October", is an action thriller focusing on a group of unsung heroes who, possessed of extraordinary martial arts skills, helped foil the 1905 assassination attempt in Hong Kong against revolutionary leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

The story takes as its backdrop the events of a single day when Dr. Sun arrives in Hong Kong, then known as Victoria City. Confronted with a bunch of counter-revolutionary assassins (headed by HU) that day might have been his last. But that would have been to ignore the heroism of half a dozen ordinary men and women (including Donnie YEN as The Gambler, Leon LAI as The Beggar, Nicholas TSE as The Rickshaw Man and WANG Po-Chieh as The Heir), who chose to act with their conscience.

"I wanted to create a film, which went beyond the conventions of the 'action hero/martial arts' genre," director, Teddy CHEN, says. "The action sequences take place within 24 hours where the bodyguards and the assassins chase and fight each other within the confined neighborhood of 1905 Central".

The script for "Bodyguards and Assassins" was penned by the screenwriting team previously responsible for "The Warlords."

Cinema Popular and CHEN have also assembled a world-class technical crew. These include action director TUNG Wai ("Painted Skin", "Battle of Wits"), director of photography Arthur WONG ("Painted Skin", "The Warlords", "Ultraviolet"), production designer Kenneth MAK ("Ip Man", "Accidental Spy") and costume designer Dora NG ("An Empress and the Warriors," "CJ7", "Perhaps Love").

More recently he directed and produced "The Warlords." The film grossed a record RMB 210 million in China (approx US\$30.5 million) and over US\$40 million across Asia, as well as winning eight Hong Kong Film Awards and three Golden Horse Awards — including Best Director and Best Feature Film.

Producer -- HUANG Jianxin

HUANG Jianxin is one of the most influential directors of China's Fifth Generation, has been recognized for his remarkable achievements in directing, scriptwriting, producing, and film theory and is the current chair of the Directors' Guild of China.

He captured the world's attention with his 1986 directorial debut "Black Cannon Incident" while "Back to Back, Face to Face" (1994) and "Gimme Kudos" (2004) cemented an international reputation at film festivals. HUANG's films have garnered over sixty major local and international awards, including top prizes at film festivals held in Tokyo, Fukuoka and Rotterdam.

As producer HUANG was involved with Hollywood blockbuster "Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor" (2008) and Peter Ho-sun CHAN's "The Warlords" (2007) and was a consultant to Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" (2002).

Cast:

Donnie YEN

After a successful early career as a martial arts star in Hong Kong in the 1990s, Donnie YEN made his Hollywood debut in "Highlander Endgame", while he provided a cameo and the action choreography for Guillermo del Toro's "Blade II" (2002). His captivating performance in ZHANG Yimou's "Hero" in 2002 earned him accolades as a fine actor beyond his martial arts skills. His recent starring roles include TSUI Hark's "Seven Swords" (2005), Wilson YIP's "S.P.L." (2005), CHING Siu-tung's "An Empress and the Warriors" (2008) and Gordon CHAN's "Painted Skin" (2008). He is currently nominated as Best Actor in the 2009 Hong Kong Film Awards for his remarkable performance in Wilson YIP's biopic "Ip Man" (2008).

Leon LAI

Cantopop superstar turned actor, Leon LAI is today one of Hong Kong's top talents. His recent acting credits include Andrew LAU's "Infernal Affairs III" (2003), TSUI Hark's "Seven Swords" (2005), CHING Siu-tung's "An Empress and The Warriors" (2008) and most recently as star of CHEN Kaige's "Forever Enthralled" (2008). He has twice collected best actor awards; at the Golden Horse Awards for his role in Peter Ho-sun CHAN's segment of "Three" (Going Home) (2002) and at the Changchun Film Festival with "Leaving me, Loving you" (2004).

WANG Xueqi

WANG Xueqi is a veteran actor in China. His film career started in the early 1980s when he had the chance to work with the fifth generation directors like CHEN Kaige, ZHANG Yimou and HE Qun. Having been admitted to the Air Force Drama Group, he started a stage career and followed that with moves into TV and film. Among his numerous credits are CHEN Kaige's TV production "Qiang Xing Qi Fei" (Forced to Fly) (1984), "Yellow Earth" (1984), "The Big Parade" (1986), "Codename Cougar" (1988), "In the

Heat of the Sun" (1994) and "Warriors of Heaven and Earth" (2003). His latest film role is in CHEN Kaige's "Forever Enthralled" (2008).

Nicholas TSE

An immensely popular teen idol, Nicholas TSE began his career as a singer/songwriter and aged 16 released his first album. His popularity and natural talent have landed him in numerous film roles.

These have included explosive performances in action films such as Benny CHAN's Gen-X Cops (1999) and Jackie CHAN films ("The Medallion", "New Police Story", "Rob-B-Hood") as well as more studied pieces including YIP Kam-hung's "Metade Fumaca" (1999), TSUI Hark's "Time and Tide" (2000), Ann HUI's "Goddess of Mercy" (2003), Jeffrey LAU's "A Chinese Tall Story" (2005), CHEN Kaige's "The Promise" (2005) and Dante LAM's "The Beast Stalker" (2008). Tse's latest work is PANG brothers' "Storm Warriors" (2009; in post-production).

Tony Ka-Fai LEUNG

Hong-Kong-based Tony Ka-Fai LEUNG is one of the most bankable and popular leading men of his generation. Renowned for his versatility, he has appeared in close to a hundred films and collected four Best Actor awards.

He also starred in Fruit CHAN's "Dumplings" (2004), Sylvia CHANG's "20,30,40" (2004), CHEN Kuo-fu's "Double Vision" (2002), SUN Zhou's "Zhou Yu's train" (2002), WONG Kar-Wai's "Ashes of Time" (1994), Jean-Jacques Annaud's "L'Amant" (1992) and TSUI Hark's "New Dragon Inn" (1992). LEUNG's recent works include "Lost in Beijing" (2007), "The Drummer" (2007) and TSUI Hark's "The Missing" (2008).

HU Jun

Widely recognized as one of the finest actors in China today, HU Jun was a major force in the theatre in the 1990s notably cited for his groundbreaking performance in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." Since focusing more on film he has appeared in "East Palace West Palace" (1996), "Lan Yu" (2001), "Golden Chicken" (2002), "Infernal Affairs II" (2003), "Curiosity Kills the Cat" (2005), "Everlasting Regret" (2005), "Assembly" (2007) and his most recent work in John WOO's "Red Cliff" (2008). Awards include the Golden Bauhinia in Stanley KWAN's "Lan Yu" (2001) and from the Taormina Festival for ZHANG Yuan's controversial "East Palace West Palace" (1996), which was the screen adaptation of a theatre work HU also played in 1992.

Eric TSANG

Eric TSANG is a prolific actor, film director, producer, TV host and philanthropist. He began his career as a stuntman and eventually rose through the ranks to become a successful director and a popular comedian in the 1980s. A two-time Hong Kong Film Award winner and a Golden Horse Award winner, Tsang's career highlights as an actor include Peter Ho-sun CHAN's "Alan and Eric Between Hello and Goodbye" (1991), Stanley KWAN's "Hold you Tight" (1997) and Andrew LAU's "Infernal Affairs" (2002).

Aside from co-founding United Filmmakers Organization Film Production Company, TSANG is also known for promoting new directing talents such as PANG Ho-Cheung ("Men Suddenly in Black") WONG Ching-Po ("Jiang Hu") and KWOK Chi-kin

("The Pye-Dog"). His production credits have brought critical acclaim with titles including "After This Our Exile" (2006) and "Winds of September" (2008).

Simon YAM

Simon YAM has appeared in over 100 movies, has been nominated three times for the Hong Kong Film Award Best Actor prize since 2004 and won the Best Actor Award in the Golden Bauhinia Awards for his role in Johnnie TO's "PTU". YAM has played opposite Angelina Jolie in "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life" (2003) and with Jean-Claude Van Damme in "Wake of Death" (2004).

In recent years, YAM impressed with roles in Johnnie TO's crime thrillers "PTU" (2003), "Election" (2005), "Exiled" (2006), "Eye in the Sky" (2007) and "Sparrow" (2008). Most recently YAM delivered another mesmerizing performance in Ann's HUI's "Night and Fog" (the opening film for Hong Kong International Film festival 2009).

FAN Bingbing

FAN Bingbing is one of the most popular actresses in China, having starred in over 30 TV series and about 20 films since her graduation from XIE Jin's Star School and Shanghai Theatre Academy in the late 1990s. Highlights of FAN's film works include "Cellphone" (2003), "Twins Effect II" (2004), "A Chinese Tall Story" (2005), "A Battle of Wits" (2006), "The Matrimony" (2006), "Lost in Beijing" (2007) and "Flash Point" (2007). Her role in "The Matrimony" won her the Best Supporting Actress award in the 44th Golden Horse Awards while "Lost in Beijing" scored her the Best Actress award in the 2007 International Eurasia Film Festival. Her latest work is Derek YEE's "Shinjuku Incident" (2009) (the other opening film of the 2009 Hong Kong International Film Festival).

WANG Po-chieh

Hailed as one of the most promising new actors in Taiwan, WANG Po-chieh's outstanding performance in the acclaimed film "Winds of September", produced by Eric TSANG and directed by Tom LIN earned him the Best New Talent Award in the Taipei Film Festival 2008. His previous works include short film "Cupid's Girl" (2008) and TV work "Shao Nin Zhi Jia" (The Youth's Home) (2006).

ZHOU Yun

ZHOU Yun's most notable work to date is her stunning performance as the crazy mother in JIANG Wen's "The Sun Also Rises" (2007). A graduate of the Central Academy of Dramatic Arts, ZHOU's debut film role was HE Ping's "Warriors of Heaven and Earth" (2003) where she had the chance to work with JIANG Wen for the first time. Other credits include TV series "My Brothers and Sisters" (2003) and "Zou Gou Xing Fu" (The Road to Happiness) (2004).