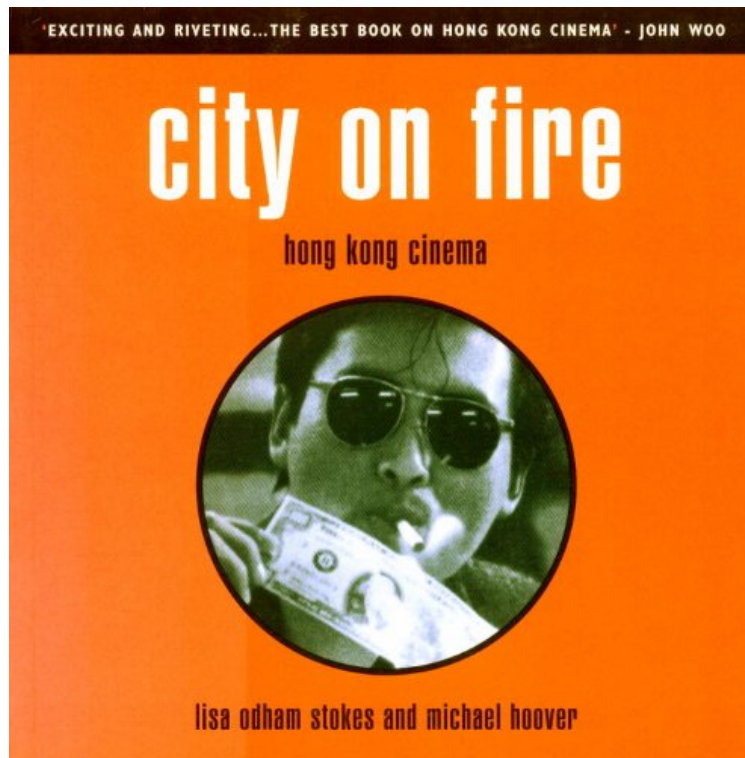


[Free read ebook] City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema

City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema

Michael Hoover, Lisa Odham Stokes
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Michael Hoover, Lisa Odham Stokes : City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "... epitomizes a 'city on fire,' a place of death, destruction, and uncertainty." By Shawn McKenna I have very mixed feelings about this book from Lisa Odham Stokes (author of Historical Dictionary of Hong Kong Cinema) and Michael Hoover. I like the amount of research that went into it and the amount of interviews that were specifically done for the book. The majority of the study is on films from the 1990s. I originally thought there was going to be more allusions to the 1997 handover (and there is a decent amount of them) but the amount of Marx and postmodernist quotes are what is overdone. I would not doubt that Marx is mentioned and/or quoted at least 100 times (I wish I had a pdf or other digital copy to check this.) It gives one the feeling that the authors did not project enough of their thoughts and leaned on certain social philosophers that often had nothing to do with Hong Kong cinema. It takes on an anti-capitalist stance throughout without being as hard on the PRC (Peoples Republic of China) though in the last chapter Meet the New Boss it equates the two as the same: Apparently, the interests of the capitalist class in Hong Kong and the rulers in Beijing are the same: keeping the workers down and minimizing popular politics. This book has a strange style for commenting and sometimes strains to connect social points and often spouts truisms or tautologies. For example on Long Arm of the Law: Britains much-hyped hands off approach to Hong Kong notwithstanding, as Chandra Mohanty remarks, colonization almost invariably implies a structure of domination and political suppression. First I am always wary of ellipses in quotations

as they can dramatically alter the meaning. Second I am not sure who Chandra Mohanty is or why we should care because there is no introduction to who she is. You have to go to the notes page to find out she is an author of *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*. Third the quotation comes off as a truism. Did that statement need to be there? There are hundreds of these type of quotations which are sometimes appropriate, sometimes appear out of the blue and often feel too didactic.*The book has a foreword from John A. Lent (who is editor of the 2014 book *Southeast Asian Cartoon Art: History, Trends and Problems*), twelve chapters, an epilogue *Hong Kong Calling* and quite a bit of end notes that are worth reviewing. The first chapter *Mapping the Territory* literally maps a historical account of Hong Kong. The second *Reeling in the Years* is a too short account for the history of its cinema. Chapters three through twelve take a variety of movie topics from John Woo, Triad/cops, *Seven Little Fortunes* (including Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung), New Wave filmmakers (including Ann Hui, Tsui Hark), to comedy and drama. Those chapters describe plots and often put it in a social-political bent with a Marxist and postmodern influence as well as include many allegorical usages of the 1997 handover. Chapter twelve *Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss* specifically discusses post-handover Hong Kong and some of its cinema leading up to 1999 (the publish date of the book.) The epilogue has several pages of interview quotations from a plethora of people including Tsui Hark, John Woo, Donnie Yen, Ronny Yu, Chris Doyle and Chow Yun-fat that is mostly on Hollywood, but is worth reading. It is not a book I would recommend for starting into HK cinema. Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema* (which needs a new release) and David Bordwell's second edition of *Planet Hong Kong* are easily more complete reads on Hong Kong movies. If you are looking for a social critique with postmodernistic and Marxist fervor on mainly the more well-known 1990s Hong Kong films then this is your book. Since there is a lot of interviews done specifically for the book interspersed throughout as well as a good amount of research was put into the making of this (with some usual canards like *The Killer* did not do well in Hong Kong and stating Kwan Tak-hing making ninety-nine Wong Fei-hung films), scholars of Hong Kong cinema will want this for their library. Others might be put off by its approach or the fact that there is a wealth of new material on Hong Kong cinema after the publication of this book including the release of the Shaw Brothers library of films and lots of books.* Another example [on *Chungking Express*]: he says *Do you think Ive change? Getting optimistic all of a sudden and things just turn beautiful. You look a lot cuter than before now. You were sort of neat and that was alright. But this goldfish look? With patches all over? Have you been fighting?* Marx notes that Commodities as such are indifferent to all religious, political, national and linguistic barriers. Doesnt this read awkwardly? It seems like a forced attempt to thrown in a Marx quote. Postmodern rhetoric example: Lefebvre suggests that the privatization of consumption means a replacement of signs by signals and of symbols by images. This condition strips individuals of their ability to connect; people cannot totalize their experiences. Commodified objects contribute to a condition in which alienation has become social practice, creating what he calls the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Necessary for any Hong Kong film fan...By Customer Honestly, I didn't think it was quite as good as the industry reviews above made it out to be. However, it must be said that there simply aren't many significant works on this topic, and as far as I can tell, this is THE benchmark work on the subject. The research was thorough enough, covering all major genres of Hong Kong cinema, and not just the actioners which made their way Stateside. If you are a Hong Kong film fan looking for a resource to guide your next purchase or rental, this is worth the investment. One complaint though: the authors tie EVERYthing to the 1997 return of Hong Kong from Great Britain back to China; I realize that the impending handover contributed strongly to the atmosphere of HK filmmaking (the point of the title), but some of the connections they made seem to stretch credulity. 9 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Avoid this book like the plague By A Customer This book's chapter titles are the best thing about it and everything the rest of this pretentious "trying too hard to be seriously academic and completely missing the point" work is not: I.e., clever, cute and a(n apparent) homage to Hong Kong movies and those who make them). I sincerely doubt that "City on Fire" (the book; not the movie or the web site) will make new Hong Kong movie fans out of anyone, predict that genuine enthusiasts will be disappointed (if not appalled), and serious scholars will laugh at this bid for academic respectability by two community college professors. As for those individuals (e.g., Donnie Yen) who endorsed this absolutely horrendous work...Shame on them, be it for seeking free publicity or not really reading the book before doing so, or both. On a more laudatory note: Those who would like to learn more about and be well guided through the world of Hong Kong movies would be well advised to check out, instead, Stefan Hammond and Mike Wilkins' ""Sex and Zen" "A Bullet in the Head: The Essential Guide to Hong Kong's Mind-Bending Films".

Hong Kongs film industry gained global attention in the 1980s, at the time of negotiations over Great Britains return of the colony to China. Uncertainty about the post-handover era accelerated Hong Kongs race for economic growth, and found expression in cinemas depictions of a city on fire. In this accessible introduction to the extraordinary cinematic output of the colony, Michael Hoover and Lisa Stokes review the directors and films that have established Hong Kong cinema internationally: John Woos martial arts flicks, Tsui Harks wire-worked fantasies, Ann Huis exile melodramas, Stanley Kwans limp romances, and Wong Kar-wais stylish art films.

.com The world first took notice of Hong Kong cinema in the 1970s, when Bruce Lee's *Fists of Fury* and *Enter the Dragon* brought a new level of psychological realism to the "chop socky" movies being made up until that point. But it wasn't until the 1980s that a new generation of directors and stars--a moviemaking system, in fact--reached its boiling point, and American audiences began to hear about John Woo's "heroic bloodshed" films and Jackie Chan's Chaplinesque martial arts action movies. *City on Fire* is the authoritative account of that system, and authors Stokes and Hoover--a pair of community college teachers from central Florida--have traced the industry back to the early decades of the century when Shanghai-financed films first gave way to local productions like *Rouge*, Li Minwei's story of courtesans. The remaining bulk of the book is given over to the go-go '80s when record attendance at local movie houses fueled the industry and gave large-as-life careers to the likes of Chow Yun-Fat, Jackie Chan, Michelle Yeoh, and Maggie Cheung, and to directors like Woo, Ann Hui, Stanley Tong, and (Quentin Tarantino's favorite) Kar-Wei Wong. As the authors tell it, it was in the '80s when Hong Kong moviemaking most resembled the early days of Hollywood, when money flowed and movies rolled out from sketchy scripts and a few rat-a-tat weeks in the editing room (complete with a "dark underbelly" of exploitation too). The final, encyclopedic chapters detail American productions like *Rumble in the Bronx* and *Face/Off*, and international successes like Peter Chan's *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*. But it's really the years from 1978 to 1995 that the authors are sweet on, and anyone interested in--or in love with--Hong Kong cinema will find themselves feeling the same way, paging through this fascinating title. --Lyall Bush
From Publishers Weekly
The Hong Kong film industry of the '80s and early '90s produced a treasure trove of films. It made matinee idols of (among others) Chow Yun-Fat, Jackie Chan and Maggie Cheung, reinvented genres with style and generally beat the Hollywood dream factory at its own game with an "anything goes" attitude. Despite tiny budgets and brief production schedules, Hoover and Stokes rightly consider the anxiety produced by the ticking clock to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China as the key to this period of frenetic creativity. In the most serious study to date of Hong Kong cinema, the authors dutifully ground their account with social, political, economic and historical analysis. Sometimes they get a bit carried away, however: comparing a Harold Lloyd stunt to a Jackie Chan variant, the Lloyd version becomes emblematic of the ideal of upward mobility in the American 1920s, and Chan's tumble reflects how "Hong Kong's dollar fell during a run on the colony's currency in 1983." The abundance of quotes from Marx and Engels at times makes a cinema noted for its pure entertainment value sound dull and allegorical. Still, the book's extensive interviews with major HK players and detailed coverage of the comedies and romances that have enjoyed less international exposure than the now famous action films of Chan and John Woo are of outstanding interest. So tantalizing is the treatment of many of these obscure films that readers will scurry to the neighborhood video store in search of such charmingly translated titles as *Tom, Dick, and Hairy* and *Shogun and Little Kitchen*. Illustrations not seen by PW. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
This excellent introduction to the "Hollywood of the East" outguns rivals like Frederic Dannen's *Hong Kong Babylon* (LJ 11/1/97) and Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (British Film Inst., 1998). Stokes and Hoover (humanities and political science, respectively, at Seminole Community Coll.) employ a political economy approach in offering context for a film industry that ranks first in the world in per capita production and second in film export. They subsequently review the high-octane product of action directors like John Woo and Tsui Hark, not losing sight of Ann Hui's meditations on exile or international stars such as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. In examining this "crisis cinema," the authors refer to both poststructuralist theory and fanzines like *Asian Trash Cinema*. The enticing result is a volatile mix that resembles its subject. Recommended for both academic and large public libraries. A Neal Baker, Earlham Coll., Richmond, IN Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.