



The Cynthia Rothrock Pages



Cynthia Rothrock

Trained in several arts, although mostly known as a Kung Fu stylist -- she is a five-time World Karate champion in forms & weapons. She has appeared in over 30 films as well as on television.

All right, yes, I think she's awfully cute. But speaking as a martial artist myself, I also like her moves & her technique. And although I will be the first to admit that her acting skills need a lot of work, she is at least as good a performer as Chuck Norris. I've always felt that she deserved a better break and a bigger budget (or at least a decent script).

Films listed in chronological order

YES, MADAM

(1985 - Hong Kong - aka *Huang gu shi jie*; *In the Line of Duty*; *Super Cops*; *Police Assassins*) dir: Yuen Kwei (aka Corey Yuen); w/ John Sham, Michelle Kheng (aka Michelle Yeoh), Mang Hoi, Cynthia Rothrock, (cameos for Sammo Hung and Tsui Hark). No skin; no gore; lots o' furniture wreckin'.

Three dipstick thieves stumble onto an incriminating microfilm, and soon they're on the run from the mob and being squeezed by a no-nonsense police inspector (Yeoh) and her enthusiastically violent British partner (Rothrock). This has a reasonably large budget and high production values. The plot, such as it is, boils down to a half-assed action/comedy buddy-cop thing, but it does score some laughs and has a European-style nontraditional ending that seems out of place in a lightweight flick. However, it really just serves as a backdrop for a terrific lot of ass-kicking that does serious collateral damage to the architecture. Both Yeoh and Rothrock get to kick it up in style with some highly acrobatic battles which are very nicely staged & photographed. And watching those two leave footprints in people's faces is a heck of a lot better than trying to make sense of the moronic subtitles.



the MAGIC CRYSTAL

(1986 - Hong Kong - aka *Jade Crystal*, *Mo Fei Cui*) dir: Jing Wong; w/ Andy Lau, Bin Bin, Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton. No skin; no gore.

A Hong Kong archeologist unearths a sentient, telepathic rock in Greece, so his pal, the super Kung Fu hero Andy, must team up with Kung Fu cop Cynthia to protect the rock (and the precocious munchkin who befriends it) from the evil Kung Fu KGB guy Richard. (whew) The plot, as you might guess, is childish nonsense full of grade-school humor, but the action never lets up. And what action it is... this thing features some fight sequences so elaborate, they amount to insanely complex gymnastics routines. It's a weird combination of kid-movie silliness and



over-the-top acrobatic skull-splitting. It's very well done and quite enthusiastically performed -- fun for the whole (violent) family.

NO RETREAT, NO SURRENDER 2

(1987 - filmed in Thailand - aka *Karate Tiger 2*; *Raging Thunder*) dir: Corey Yuen; w/ Loren Avedon, Max Thayer, Cynthia Rothrock, Matthias Hues. No skin, no gore.

Our young hero claws his way through the backwoods of Southeast Asia -- he battles thugs, revolutionaries, the Vietnamese Army, and a Soviet Advisor who must be King Kong's clean-shaven cousin -- all to rescue his kidnapped cutie. Yes, the whole thing is absurd, but it's also action-packed and a heck of a lot of fun. Hues nearly drowns in his role as the ultimate sadistic commie, and there's a bazillion explosions, each of which kills about a hundred people (except the good guys, who can run through an artillery barrage and only get a scratch, and a dozen machine guns can't do more than make them duck). The two most memorable points of this film are an overload of bad acting you could measure with a seismograph, and a bunch of outrageously fanciful and imaginative fight scenes. Rothrock fans should know that her role is only minor, with but two brief fights. When you're in the mood for a dumb action flick -- stick in tape, switch off brain.



the BLONDE FURY

(1989 - Hong Kong - aka *Lady Reporter*; *Above the Law 2*; *Righting Wrongs 2*; *Born to Fight*) dir: Hoi Mang & Corey Yuen; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Roy Chiao, Siu-hou Chin. No skin; no gore.

Cynthia is an undercover FBI agent who joins up with an insurance investigator and a hard-luck reporter to take down a Hong Kong counterfeiter -- or something close to that idea anyway. Really,



you can forget the plot entirely; the script is just a flimsy framework upon which to hang the usual Hong Kong slapstick, risqué jokes, and elaborate fight scenes. The humor on this entry is actually okay, if rather silly, and the fights are brutal, creative, and a lot of fun to watch. As a bonus, there's a lot of unintentional humor in the inane subtitles, which are so alarmingly inept that I seriously doubt that the translator understood English *or* Chinese.

CHINA O'BRIEN

(1990) a Weintraub/Chow production; dir: Robert Clouse; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton, Keith Cooke. No skin, good music, very good fight scenes (and a lot of them).

A typical Golden Harvest melodrama -- Kung Fu copette returns home to a small town & ends up cleaning out the slime who've taken it over. It is fun, although the script doesn't worry too much about logic -- or even plausibility, for that matter. The plot provides only vague excuses to get us from one fight scene to another.

MARTIAL LAW

(1990) dir: S. E. Cohen; w/ Chad McQueen, Cynthia Rothrock, David Carradine, Phillip Tan. No skin, no gore, only okay fight scenes.

Kung Fu cops take on Mr. Big. This seems to have been intended as a vehicle to promote McQueen as the next big low-budget action star. Without much success, apparently. His karate moves are good, but he can be upstaged by a glass of milk. This flick's got some good scenes and some very good supporting characters, but it develops so slowly, it may have you singing the praises of the fast-forward button.

MARTIAL LAW 2: Undercover

(1991) dir: Kurt Anderson; w/ Jeff Wincott, Cynthia Rothrock, Paul Johansson, Evan Lurie, Billy Drago. One little flash of skin, decent fight scenes.

Okay, forget Chad McQueen, let's try Jeff Wincott this time. Although Wincott has more screen presence than McQueen, the characters are still cardboard cutouts. The script is better than *Martial Law 1* and there's lots of action, but it's really just another ho-hum formula piece. And although Rothrock gets in a couple good fights, her sole purpose in this flick is to provide her name on the poster. Her scenes could be snipped out completely without changing the film one bit.

CHINA O'BRIEN 2

(1991) a Weintraub/Chow production; dir: Robert Clouse; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton, Keith Cooke. No skin, good fight scenes.

A better story than the first, but still silly & disjointed in spots. A druglord goes after a witness in O'Brien's custody -- they come in with ten zillion guns, but always seem to be bare-fisted when they meet Sheriff O'Brien.

LADY DRAGON

(1992) photog & dir: David Worth; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton, Robert Ginty, Bella Esperance. One bit of skin (Norton's butt); flashy but mediocre fight scenes.

The hard-hitting little lady pursues self-destructive vengeance on the man that murdered her husband. She gets a little help from the kindly old Kung Fu master & all the other clichés -- the script is a mixed-up hash without much to recommend it, and Worth's attempt at artsy filmmaking just falls on its face and the viewers end up tripping over it. There are only two big fight scenes for Rothrock and they both follow very similar scripts and are mostly spoiled by the director's use of close camera angles, muddled backgrounds, busy foregrounds, and rapidly repeating the same footage over & over again to give the impression of rapid-fire fighting. Bleh.

LADY DRAGON 2

(1992 - aka *Angel of Fury*) Photog & dir: David Worth; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Billy Drago, Sam Jones. No skin, poor fight scenes.

The Karate champ's husband is killed when he gets mistakenly involved in an underworld jewel heist, so she goes on a rampage of revenge. The plot is lopsided & slow, and the characters behave in random ways -- so it's very difficult to believe in or care about any of it. The fight scenes, with but one exception, are stiff & unimaginative. Umm, there's some nice location shots in Jakarta, though.



ANGEL OF FURY

(1993 - Indonesia - aka *Triple Cross*) dir: Ackyl Anwary; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Chris Barnes, Peter O'Brian. No skin; no gore; no sense.

Cynthia is a tough courier delivering some computer bits to Jakarta and then everyone is out to shoot & stab & kick her and stuff. There certainly is a lot of action, I'll give it that, and the plot takes second place. Which is a saving grace in this case, for all they have is a twitching, flip-flopping, bizarre approximation of a plot. Sort of like they spliced the



scenes together in random order and then made up a story to explain it all. The fight scenes are fairly good -- unfortunately, they're just as inane photographed & edited as the rest of the flick. They do some truly insane things with car stunts as well -- my favorite was the little coupe that was impervious to a hail of assault rifle bullets but when Cynthia shoots it with a pistol it goes up like a bomb. And then there's the chief bad guy, who was played by a fellow who was either overacting a lot, or he had a pineapple rammed up his butt the whole time. And there's more fun to be had with the crappy dialogue that makes a lame attempt at portraying personality. I can just imagine that halfway through filming, Cynthia was thinking to herself, "Dear Lord, please just let this be over with, and please don't let too many of my fans see it."

GUARDIAN ANGEL

(1993) dir: Richard W. Munchkin; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Daniel McVivar, Lydie Denier, Marshall Teague, Ken McLeod. No skin, decent fight scenes.

A burnt-out ex-cop gets a chance at revenge on the psycho bitch who murdered her fiancé. A confused, unrealistic, & amateurish script, but it is a lot of fun. Better acting & filmwork than in most of Rothrock's movies (which, sadly, isn't saying much).

HONOR & GLORY

(1993) dir: Godfrey Hall; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Donna Jason, John Miller, Chuck Jeffreys. No skin, okay HK style fight scenes.

Um, it's sort of like a Kung Fu FBI agent & her Kung Fu reporter sister get mixed up with a wacko rich guy who's trying to market nuclear material, but then there's an honorable bodyguard & the CIA father, and, um -- well, don't bother as most of the script just sort of meanders and babbles and there's plenty of soap opera scenes to break up the real action in which nothing much of anything happens anyway. <whew> Rothrock is only in this movie for about ten minutes, the first part is about Jason, and there's a chunk in the middle where Jeffreys seems to be the central character -- and exactly what was going on I really can't tell you (I periodically shouted at the set, "And just what the f__k is this movie about?").



Bad Guy says, "Do you know a nuclear trigger from a Bulgarian dildo? Because I don't."

IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

(1993 - Australia) dir: Kevin Hooks; w/ Stacy Keach, Cynthia Rothrock, Christopher Neame, Paul Winfield. No skin.

This is an obvious attempt to follow the *Lethal Weapon* formula. Keach is the aging cop who thinks taking on a female partner will keep him out of some shooting situations. Except his new partner almost failed the academy because she was too violent. So they immediately get in trouble with the chief (uh-huh) and end up stumbling into a gang of white supremacists who are holding all the city's bigwigs hostage in a fortified shopping mall & they're about to use nerve gas! No, it's not a great flick, but it succeeds better than I expected. It's got good music, good characters, some nice action scenes, and a few good sluggin' matches for Cynthia. If you don't set your sights too high, this is a fun little action flick.

(Apparently this was originally a pilot for a failed TV series project.)



RAGE and HONOR

(1993) writ & dir: Terence H. Winkless; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton, Terri Treas, Bryan Thompson, Catherine Bach. No skin.

A karate instructor with old scores to settle joins with an Australian Kung Fu cop to battle Mr. Big & the crooked cops. The story is deeper than expected, but the heroes lack personality. The fight scenes are decent, & there are some very good supporting characters, but the film (& the heroes) fail to excite.

RAGE and HONOR 2: Hostile Takeover

(1993) dir: Guy Norris; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton, Patrick Muldoon, Frans Tumbuan. No skin; no gore.

While on assignment in Jakarta, agent Cynthia runs into her old friend on the lam -- together they pound the snot out of gang bosses and crooked business men. This is in no way a sequel to the first flick; although the characters are theoretically the same, the plot is an unrelated and fairly typical simple-minded B-action adventure featuring the good guys, the bad guys, the sneering, and the pummeling.

Cynthia here fronts for what is actually a Richard Norton flick; she is given short shrift, but even Norton comes off a little weak in this one. Although the fights are well choreographed, they are not well photographed and the whole thing is a lot duller than it needs to be considering the talent involved.



UNDEFEATABLE

(1993 an ITC production) prod & dir: Godfrey Hall; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Don Niam, John Miller, Emilie Davazac. No skin, only mediocre fight scenes.

A streetfighter hunts down the psycho serial killer who murdered her sister. Rothrock is a (barely) passable actor, but she really can't pass herself off as a dead-end street punk. This flick features bad acting, slow pacing, dumb plotting, and dialog that consists of an irritating stream of stiffly delivered clichés. (As a footnote, this is perhaps the stupidest Rothrock movie I've seen, but the fight scenes do by far the best job of highlighting her particular talents.)



FAST GETAWAY 2

(1994) dir: Oley Sassone; w/ Corey Haim, Cynthia Rothrock, Leo Rossi, Ken Lerner. No skin.

This is a fun but amateurish attempt at an action-comedy. An ex-bankrobber goes into the security business and ends up the patsy for some real bankrobbers, as well as the target for a totally psycho FBI agent. Rothrock, and her great character, are almost wasted -- I would've liked to have seen more of 'em. This flick is almost there, but falls just short.

SWORN TO JUSTICE

(1996) dir: Paul Maslak; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Tony Lo Bianco, Kurt McKinney, (Brad Dourif, Mako, & Walter Koenig in cameos). Just a teeny peek at Cynthia's skin; no gore.

A Kung Fu criminal psychologist discovers she has psychic powers and uses them to hunt down the scum



who killed her sister. And about fifteen minutes in, you mutter to yourself, “Boy, this is gonna suck.” She beats up the bad guys, but then spends a lot of time on a lost subplot about smarmy lawyers, and then the script tries to go all steamy on us by having her get boinked by her New-Agey boyfriend. This is definitely gonna suck. The director thinks he can direct artsy fight scenes -- he also thinks he can direct comic fight scenes. Tragically wrong on both counts. This *really* sucks. And in the end, Cynthia has to be rescued by her boyfriend. I think I’m gonna puke. Even the promise of some good fight scenes is spoiled; there are glimmers here & there, but most of the action is so tightly shot and “artistically” edited that it’s hard to tell if something is indeed going on, or if it’s just the sound effects that give the illusion that a fight is happening. Unless you really need to see Cynthia do a Kung Fu form in a black nightie, skip this dog.

TIGER CLAWS 2

(1996) writ & dir: J. Stephen Maunder; w/ Jalal Merhi, Cynthia Rothrock, Bolo Yeung, Evan Lurie. No skin; no gore.

The big, bad Kung Fu Killer escapes and detectives Jalal & Cynthia track him down in San Francisco’s Chinatown, where the killer seems to be not such a bad guy after all and everyone ends up in some oddball, mystical Kung Fu tournament where the winners get to travel through time. At which point any semblance of plot collapses and we get a series of random fight scenes and then the bad guys just sort of disappear (due mostly to the fact that the principal villain was unavailable for shooting (or re-shooting) the final scenes, so they used a stand-in in a hooded robe). The script is dull, Cynthia is merely an accessory (she gets one good fight scene but her presence is once again only to provide her name on the video box), Bolo’s talents are almost entirely wasted, and although Jalal has some pretty good Karate moves, he has less screen personality than mud. It’s not a complete waste, however -- the music is good and there are several well-choreographed fight scenes. In particular, the contestants at the tournament are all solid martial artists with an entertaining variety of styles. Just don’t expect a whole movie to go along with it.



NIGHT VISION (1997)

(1997) dir: Gil Bettman; w/ Fred Williamson, Cynthia Rothrock, Robert Forster. A tibit o’ skin; no gore.

The movie’s main purpose seems to be to portray Williamson’s character as a down & out but still struggling street hero for the common man, complete



with sappy theme song and witty retorts. Grab an off-the-shelf “zany serial killer plays cat & mouse with burnt-out alcoholic cop” boilerplate, toss in Cynthia Rothrock (with padded bra) in an essentially decorative role that actually seems to embarrass her, and slather everything over with an extraordinarily bad soundtrack. If that’s not enough, we’ve got a dead slow, sadly juvenile script filled with moronic bits that try vainly to masquerade as character drama. This isn’t exactly incompetent filmmaking, it’s just depressingly untalented. Williamson produced this one, and I appreciate that he must really enjoy making movies -- but it’s hard to imagine why he would pay to be treated so poorly by a film. This isn’t a comeback vehicle, it’s a career coffin.

TIGER CLAWS 3: The Final Conflict

(1999 - Canada) writ & dir: J. Stephen Maunder; w/ Jalal Merhi, Cynthia Rothrock (not really), Loren Avedon, Carter Wong. No skin, no gore.

Three ancient Kung Fu Bad Guys are reborn, and they terrorize the city by shooting lightning bolts from their hands! It’s up to detectives Cynthia & Jalal to stop them! Well, Cynthia has the bloomin’ good sense to die in the first ten minutes of this dog, while Jalal -- who has nice moves but the acting capacity of a cigar-store Indian -- gets some training from the mysterious Kung Fu Good Guy so he can become a Tiger Claw Kung Fu wizard, too. But it’s all okay, because it was just a dream. The script is juvenile, the photography stinks, and the fight scenes are just unimaginative hand-waving & grunting. The only thing that keeps this flick from being truly awful is that it is just too damn dull to be actually painful.



OUTSIDE THE LAW

(2001 - aka *Never Say Die*) dir: Jorge Montesi; w/ Cynthia Rothrock, Jeff Wincott, Seamus Dever, Jessica Stier. No skin; no gore.

Cynthia & her fiancé are drug-busting government agents, but then her beau is killed in an ambush set up by an inside traitor. So does she go kick butt? No, she conceals her identity and goes on the run in Florida. Whilst the government is hunting her down, she stops in a small town to help out some folks by smashing a little drug ring there. It’s sort of a Then Came Bronson twist on her usual plot -- in fact, it looks a lot like an attempt to start a similar series. We’ve all seen it a million times -- each week the butt-kickin’ drifter stops in town just long enough to punch the



bad guys and make the locals real happy, then she leaves just as those mysterious men are about to catch up to her. Lord preserve us. Fortunately, this thing is unlikely to start a franchise. Although the older Cynthia actually looks quite good in the Fugitive/Equalizer role and shows much improved acting skills, the plot is dead slow and extraordinarily dimwitted. Worse, the action scenes are shot so tight that you can't see the action. There is one decent (if formulaic) fight scene, but that's the limit of what this flick has to offer.

X-TREME FIGHTER

2005 - aka *Sci-Fighter*) dir: Art Camacho; w/ Don "the Dragon" Wilson, Cynthia Rothrock, Lorenzo Lamas, Dan Mayid. No skin; no gore; no hope for future careers.

Okay, so the kid gets his mind trapped in the high-tech video game and his pop (Wilson) has to go in and cyber-Fu all the cyber-villains.

< sigh > Anyway, the flick does feature quite a lot of genuine martial arts sports stars in quite a lot of good, if unimaginative, fight scenes. But they wrap all that up inside of vapid characters, braindead dialogue, cheap-ass fx, bad acting, and a script on a lower literary level than a bad episode of Gilligan's Island. Lamas, despite his billing, is dropped into a painfully superfluous appearance that amounts to a cameo, and Cynthia's supporting role is actually rather embarrassing, as she does next to no fighting and her only real function is to appear in a ridiculous costume as the Kung Fu Angel of All Things Syrupy. Even if we grant that the flick may have been aimed at the kindergarten crowd, it still falls well below its mark.



A chronological filmography, with some alternate titles;

Fight to Win (1978 - Dangerous Passages, Eyes of the Dragon)

24 Hours to Midnight (1982)

Wealthy Train (1986 - Millionaire's Express)

In the Line of Duty (1985 - Yes, Madam)

The Magic Crystal (1986)

Above the Law (1987 - Righting Wrongs)

In the Line of Duty 2 (1987 - In the Line of Duty 5, Key Witness, Yes, Madam 5)

Tyrant Flower (1988 - Inspector Wears a Skirt, Lady Enforcers, Top Squad)

Above the Law 2 (1989 - Blonde Fury, Righting Wrongs 2, Born to Fight)

No Retreat, No Surrender 2 (1989 - Raging Thunder)

Prince of the Sun (1990)

Free Fighter (1990)

(after success in Hong Kong, I believe this was her first big stateside release:)

China O'Brien (1990)

Fast Getaway (1991)

China O'Brien 2 (1991)

Tiger Claws (1992)

Rage & Honor (1992)

Martial Law (1992)

Martial Law 2: Undercover (1992)

Lady Dragon (1992)

City Cops (1992)

Rage & Honor 2 (1993)

Lady Dragon 2 (1993 - Angel of Fury)

Irresistible Force (1993)

Angel of Fury (1993)

Honor & Glory (1993)

Undefeatable (1994)

Guardian Angel (1994)

Fast Getaway 2 (1994)

Fatal Passion (1995)

Sworn to Justice (1996 - Blonde Justice)

Deep Cover (1996)

Eye for an Eye (1996)

Tiger Claws 2 (1996)

Fatal Passion (aka Portrait in Red; a throwaway bit part) (1995)

Night Vision (1997)

Tiger Claws 3 (1999)

Outside the Law (2001)

X-Treme Fighter (2005)



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Icon Glossary:



Good Stinker -- These are the films where a good deal of the entertainment comes from filmmaking incompetence; fun to watch in spite of themselves.



Goopy Gore -- These films exhibit distinctly above-normal quantities of unpleasantly abused body parts.



Naughty Nudie -- Films with this flag feature frequent and/or explicit nudity (almost always female) beyond that normally found in your average T&A flick.



Butt Stompin' -- These films feature at least one superior violent fight or shootout scene that will get the testosterone pumping.



Gold Star -- These are the flicks that I felt reached above their expectations or at least pleasantly surprised me; they may not always be actually good flicks, but I did find something in them worthwhile.



Blue Max Medal of Really Goodness -- These are flicks that I not only enjoyed, but I think are actually quite good films (not always the same thing).



Lethal Cinema -- These wretched viewing experiences go beyond being merely bad to become genuine sources of pain and regret; they should be avoided by all but the most masochistic trash cinema veterans. Don't say I didn't warn you.