



Episode 285 –Chow Yun Fat | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello thanks for tuning in this is a whistlekick martial arts radio episode 285. today to tell you all about Chow Yun Fat. one of the most beloved martial arts actors still working. here at whistlekick we make the world's best sparring gear and here on martial arts radio, we bring you the best of the martial arts twice every week on Mondays we bring you an interview with a prominent or every day martial artist. someone is willing to share their stories of their martial arts path and then on Thursdays, we bring you some kind of topic show sometimes it's a rant, sometimes it's history, sometimes it's a profile of a martial artist or martial arts actor like today. if you want to check on the show notes maybe you look at some of the other episodes we've done, you can do that over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). and if you want to check out the products maybe some of the other projects we're involved in, you can do that at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com).

on today's episode, we talk about an actor who is regarded as one of the most successful in Hong Kong today. Chow Yun fat is best known for his roles in movies better tomorrow where he started to rise to fame and of course, Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon where he got his first international box office hit. let's dig into story to learn more about this awesome action star.

now if you're like me you assumed that Chow is a lifetime accomplished martial artist. well, he isn't. he had no formal training nor participated in any martial arts competition when he started his acting. however, he became very good at fight choreography, sort of choreography that left us in awe especially



## Episode 285 –Chow Yun Fat | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

in crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon and curse of the Golden flower. in most of his action movies he actually uses guns and swords instead of hand-to-hand combat. you can look at films like a better tomorrow or the replacement killers or hard-boiled for examples. he's most famous for his heroic bloody movies where he also showcases his kung fu skills. chow has been in the movie industry for more than four decades and in that time, he starred over 100 films and 24 television series. no wonder, he was the second highest paid actor in Hong Kong in 2014 with a net worth estimated at \$21.9 million. Chow may be successful today, but he had humble beginnings. he was born in Lamma Island, Hong Kong on May 18, 1955. his family led a simple life and they live in a house without electricity. at an early age, he helped his parents out to earn money, then left school at 17 to find jobs so he could support his family. he became a taxi driver, a postman, a camera salesman and even a bellboy. then in 1973 he responded to a newspaper ad from a local station called TVB and luckily enough they accepted his job application as an actor trainee, that's when his life started to change. his acting talent was noticed as well as his good looks and he was offered a three-year contract with the studio. he first appeared in several TV series and they were successful pretty quickly, one of those was Shanghai beach a.k.a. the Bund, where he played the main character. now despite his success in TV he still dreamed of becoming a big screen actor so he starred a few low-budget films but unfortunately those were not successful. in 1983, he married Candace Yu but sadly the relationship only lasted a few months and they eventually divorced. but these problems, they didn't stop Chow from working on his career from becoming a movie actor. in 1985, he received two best actor awards from Taiwan and from the Asian-Pacific Film Festival for his role in Hong Kong 1941 which was released in the year 84. just two years later he had another major break he teamed up with John Woo the director who made Chow one of the main characters of a better tomorrow. the film was produced with a tight budget but became a hit not only Hong Kong, but also in other Asian countries. the movie became widely successful and is rank today among the best hundred Chinese motion pictures in the number two slot. It was around this time the child married the Singaporean, Jasmine Tan and they're still married today. Chow's acting is so versatile that he's known for being a bit of a goofball even through his serious roles. you look at his action films like God of gamblers and bulletproof Monk, you can see that he incorporates a lighter side with some of his characters despite being serious and at times fearsome. he also appeared in several romantic dramas such as in autumn's tale which earned him an award for best actor in the 24th golden horse awards.

his career didn't stop in the East. he moved to Hollywood in the mid-90s but his success wasn't immediate. his first three movies the replacement killers and 98, the corrupter 99, and Anna and the king also 99 role considered box office failures. however, it was the next one that became an international success and put him on the map for not only martial artists but many others. he took the main role in Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon in 2000 is Li Mu Bai where he starred with Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh. the Wuxia movie was based on the fourth novel of the crane iron series written by Chinese novelists Wang Dulu and honestly when I think of Chow Yun fat, I think of him as Li Mu Bai, I bet I'm not the only one. the movie was an unexpected international success because the dialogue was in Mandarin the budget was only \$17 million but it earned \$213 million at the box office, that's 13 times



## Episode 285 –Chow Yun Fat | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

return which is unheard of in movies. this was the movie were Chow rose to fame though some folks feel he was overlooked for a number of awards with that film his next Hollywood movie was Bulletproof Monk but it was a failure. some reviews say the only Chow save the movie that without him the movie would've been a total disaster. the budget was around 53 million but it only earned back 37.

his next successful movie was another wuxia film entitled curse of the Golden flower in 2006 where he starts with Chinese actress Gong Li. He was nominated as best actor for the film but didn't win. other notable movies from his career that you might've heard of, Pirates of the Caribbean at worlds end in 2007 Capt. Sal fang, which as an aside, I thought that he was underutilized in that movie, I was expecting a lot more from him. let the bullets fly in 2010 and Cold War 2 recently in 2016 is Oswald Khan. Chow has received many nominations and awards from Hong Kong with a total of 13 best actor nominations, 2 best supporting actor nominations and 2 best original film song nominations.

now, aside from being an accomplished actor Chow is also an avid photographer. he loves to shoot using his old-school film cameras. of course, it's uncommon today to use film set of digital but he loves the entire film processing he even as his own darkroom to develop the film itself. he's been quoted as saying if you're taking a picture using 8 x 10 film, each picture is going to cost around 10 pounds. so, as you're about to take the picture you've really got to think about whether it's worth that 10 pounds or not. His first accomplishment as a photographer was in 97 when one of his three photographs won third prize in a contest. the picture? tomatoes that his wife for lunch. he put them in the freezer for a short while, took them come out and took some photos with that moisture effect as the tomatoes started to freeze. Chow also released a book of photos in 2008 that was published by Louis Vuitton, it was sold in Hong Kong and in Paris. the proceeds were donated to the victims of the Sichuan earthquake that happened that same year which has the unfortunate distinction of being the 20th most deadly earthquake of all time. Chow's net worth is now estimated at around \$80 million and he's gone on record to say that she would donate 99% of his wealth to charity by establishing a foundation of his own. that is some serious philanthropy. Chow is still acting of course with several big-budget movies scheduled over the next few years and hopefully you will check him out.

how do you feel about Chow Yun Fat? did you love him and crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon? if you didn't I don't want to hear from you. I'm kidding. I would love to hear any feedback that you have be on this or any other episode. you can find us on social media we are @whistlekick you can find the show notes [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio) you can email me directly [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com). who would you like to hear us profile in an upcoming episode? or maybe just want us to dig in some historical topic? we're always up to hear what you want in the show after all the show is your show, it is our show. I'm just the messenger until next time train hard, smile, and have great day.