



Episode 58 – Jackie Chan | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, there, everyone its episode 58 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, the only place to hear the best conversations about the martial arts, like today’s episode all about Jackie Chan.

I’m the founder here at whistlekick, but I’m better known as your host, Jeremy Lesniak. whistlekick, in case you don’t know, makes the world’s best sparring gear and some awesome apparel and accessories for you traditional martial artists. I’d like to welcome our new listeners and thank all of you returning fans.

If you’re not familiar with our products, you can learn more about our them at whistlekick.com. All of our past podcast episodes, show notes and a lot more are at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Today’s episode also has a full transcript with photos, videos and links on the website.

And while you’re over there, go ahead and sign up for our newsletter. We offer exclusive content to subscribers and it’s the only place to find out about upcoming guests.

Let’s talk about Jackie Chan. I was reading some news the other day and there was a story about a bus explosion that concerned people in London. Turns out, the explosion was part of a Jackie Chan movie, and that’s when I realized, we haven’t done a profile on Jackie Chan yet. So here it is!



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Jackie Chan was born in 1954 to a very poor family, which makes him 61 now. He was 12 pounds, so big that his mother had to give birth via C-section. His given name is Chan Kong-sang, but we'll talk about where the name Jackie came from later. As a kid he was very energetic and earned the nickname Cannonball. At age 6 his parents moved to Australia so he was enrolled in opera school, training in singing, acrobatics, acting and martial arts. He excelled at all of them and would later find ways to use these skills professionally. Interestingly, he says he was not taught to read or write.

He ended up in a performance group during his teen years where he met Sammo Hung and they became close friends. The two later trained in Hapkido and Jackie earned his black belt.

He's been acting since the 1960s and has over 150 movies to his credit, though you'll only find 127 of them on IMDb. When people think of Jackie Chan's movies, they generally think of his creative choreography and his sense of humor. He stars in the top four all-time martial arts movies, when you look at them as box-office successes. He does almost all of his own stunts, which has led to some interesting injuries, like the time he fell out of a tree and fractured his skull.

He appeared in a number of films before getting stunt work at 17, working on both *Fist of Fury* (aka *The Chinese Connection*) and *Enter the Dragon*. It was during *Enter the Dragon* that he says he sustained his most painful injury, when Bruce Lee accidentally hit him in the face with his nunchaku.

None of the films he starred in did well up until that point, forcing him to take some roles that we won't really get into here. This is, after all, a family show. If you really want to know... you can find out pretty easily.

In 1976 Jackie moved to Australia with his parents and became a construction worker. One of his coworkers, named Jack, looked after him and started calling him Little Jack. From there it became Jackie, and the name stuck. He hadn't given up on a film career, though.

He starred in a few more movies that did poorly, mostly because everyone was trying to turn him into the new Bruce Lee. There was even a film called *New Fist of Fury*, but Jackie Chan was not Bruce Lee, and the audience knew it. Those early attempts to turn Jackie Chan into Bruce Lee not only failed, they failed horribly. Jackie actually designed his on-screen fighting style to be the opposite of Lee. Where Bruce Lee would hold his arms wide and move fluidly, Chan keeps his arms tight and fights with choppy movements. The style he developed for his films is mostly based on Northern and traditional Kung fu. He does claim to have learned some Jeet Kune Do under Bruce Lee during the filming of their movies.

In 1978 he did a film called *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and the director, Yuen Woo-ping gave him complete freedom in doing his own stunt work. People ate it up and it was this movie that established the comedic Kung Fu genre in Hong Kong. It did well enough that Jackie Chan went on to star in *Drunken Master*, the earliest of his films that most of us know.



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His first Hollywood film was *The Big Brawl* in 1980, but he also played a small role in *The Cannonball Run*. It was the outtakes as part of the credits from *The Cannonball Run* that inspired Jackie to do this in his films. And any fan of his movies know how great the outtakes are!

By 1982 he was Hong Kong's top star, with movies outperforming even the records Bruce Lee set. It was the 1982 film *Dragon Lord* (*Dragon Strike*) where he started experimenting with stunt action sequences. During his attempts in the 1990s to get back into Hollywood, Sylvester Stallone offered Jackie the role of Simon Phoenix in *Demolition Man*, a role that he turned down. He said he didn't want to get typecast as a villain, so the role went to Wesley Snipes. Later he turned down the role of the King in Jet Li's 2002 film, *Hero*.

It was 1995's *Rumble in the Bronx* that finally got him the US audience he wanted. Ironically, the movie was filmed in Canada. Personally, this was my first Jackie Chan movie and it's still my favorite. I remember watching it and feeling like there was nothing else that compared – for a movie to have humor and credible fight scenes... what could be better for a teenage martial artist?

Rumble in the Bronx led to *Supercop* in 1996 with Michelle Yeoh, which led to 1998's *Rush Hour*, which exceeded all expectations and grossed \$130 million.

He was brought on board to star in a film called *Nosebleed* that involved a Window Washer at the World Trade Center stopping a terrorist plot. The 9/11 attacks happened before the film began production, and, of course, the movie was scrapped.

The 2010 remake of *The Karate Kid* (yes, I know, they weren't doing karate), was Chan's first dramatic role in an American film. This is one of my favorite roles for him, not only because he did it well, but he managed to make the character his own while still paying homage to Mr. Miyagi, Pat Morita's character in the original. There's a sequel that's been announced, but as of this episode, the script is still being written.

Starting in 1983 Jackie formed a stunt team, *The Jackie Chan Stunt Team*, that has choreographed the stunt work he's known for. The team has become so well-known and effective that they actually do a lot of the stunt work for his movies, including other characters.

He holds the Guinness World Record for Most Stunts by a Living Actor. Unfortunately, this distinction has meant that he basically cannot get insurance for American movies.

Most people don't know that Jackie Chan is an accomplished singer. He's a trained opera vocalist and a prominent pop star in China, having sung on a number of his own albums, 20, in fact, since 1984. He recorded the official countdown song for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

He often performs the theme songs for his movies, including *The Young Master* and *Police Story*. He's sung in Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Taiwanese and English.



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Jackie has multiple honorary degrees and academic titles, despite having received very little formal education. He is a faculty member at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where he teaches tourism management. Despite his achievements, he feels he never received enough education and has actually funded a number of educational facilities worldwide.

He's a prolific entrepreneur, owning a clothing line, chain of sushi restaurants, production companies, movie theaters. There are also plans for his own gyms, chocolates, cookies and more. He donates some of the profits from each venture to his charitable foundation, named very simply, Jackie Chan Charitable Foundation. The foundation was created in 1988 to give scholarships and other aid to the youth of Hong Kong as well as victims of natural disaster or illness.

What's your favorite Jackie Chan movie? Leave your answer over on the website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com in the comments section – this is episode 58. You can also find show notes including a transcript from today's episode as well as photos and videos of Jackie Chan that you probably haven't seen before. We've got a great video over there with some of his most dramatic injury outtakes... and the background music is even a song sung by Jackie.

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So, until next time, Train hard, smile and have a great day.