



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

How's it going? This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 497. Today, I'm joined again by Mr. Josh Blum and we are unpacking the famous ladder fight scene in Jackie Chan's first strike. Hang on, it's a ton of fun. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, show host and whistlekick founder. Everything we do in whistlekick is in support of the traditional martial arts. Karate, Taekwondo, Kung Fu, anything that you define as a traditional martial art, you'll probably find something about it in something that we do, and if you want to see everything that we do, go to whistlekick.com, that's the place to learn about all our projects and our products, it's also the easiest way to make a purchase one of the things that we make and if you use the code `podcast15`, that'll save you 15% off anything whether that be a uniform or sparring equipment, or maybe a shirt, there's a lot of great stuff over there. Everything for this show, martial arts radio gets its own website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We release two brand new episodes every single week and the purpose of the show, well it's to connect, educate, and entertain the traditional martial artists that we love so dearly throughout the world. If you want to help the show and the work that we do, there are a number of ways you can help. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media, tell a friend, pick up a book on Amazon, buy our strength and conditioning program, leave a review or support us on Patreon. Patreon.com/whistlekick, that's the place to go. Now, Patreon is a place where we post



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

exclusive content. Sometimes multiple times per week and if you contribute as little as \$5 a month, you're going to get access to that, that content includes text, photo, video, new episodes that only show up there, sometimes we release drafts of books, when we launched the strength and conditioning program, we gave it away to everybody in the \$25 and up tier. We really try to make sure that if you're contributing via the Patreon, we're going to give you more than you expect, that's the whole business model over here. If you've been following the show for a while, you know we've done a few of these fight scene analyses. Josh Blum is the host of the Thirteenth Hour podcast and we have a lot of fun working together. Now he's doing some medically related things as we recorded this. He is not quite on the front lines but he's involved. There's stuff going on right now and we don't usually talk about what's happening in the wider world but we are in the midst of COVID-19 right now and I want to thank Josh for spending some time for talking with me for recording. I was looking forward to our conversations and even though we don't usually put any kind of time context on the episodes that we do, I thought it was important to acknowledge his making time to do this recording because it meant a lot to me. Now, again, if you've checked out these episodes in the past, you know the drill over at the show notes or you can even find the link in the show notes on your podcast player, you can find the video that we're working from. We're starting at a certain point in time and we'll mention that when we get there but go ahead load up that video and let's break down Jackie Chan's first strike and that famous ladder fight scene; one of my favorites of all time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody. So I'm back with Josh, we're going to do another one of these fight scene analyses. Is that what we've been calling it, "Fight scene analyses"?

Josh Blum:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's I think that's what we call the last one. And first off, thanks for coming back. Thanks for doing this with me, this is a lot of fun.

Josh Blum:

Oh yeah. My pleasure. Thanks for [00:03:38]



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm enjoying this. Maybe, maybe in the future, we will end up with a side gig as fight choreographers.

Josh Blum:

Well, the way things are going like, you know, it's, you know, with, with everybody kind of quarantined, I mean, you know, that's ... sports are going virtual, I wouldn't see ... I can ... I would imagine like, you know, I can imagine that happening.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Or at the very least we could be the Statler and Waldorf of fight scene choreography, I don't know if you get that reference to the Muppets. For anybody listening, those were the, the, crotchety old man in the balcony and one of my dreams is to be paid just to heckle like they did. If somebody could pay me to just sit there and heckle something, I just think that would, that would be the best. And so, heckling a fight scene on set as they're, they're laying it out, "That would never work." You know, I just, I think, I think that would be a really good time.

Josh Blum:

Yeah, of course. That's what we do anyway. Right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It really is. I mean, that's kind of what we're here doing today. And I'm really excited about the one that we've, we've chosen here today because it is one of my favorite fight scenes of all time from one of my favorite films of all time with one of my favorite actors of all time and that is Jackie Chan's First strike and I'm going to guess that anybody that knows that movie knows exactly the fight scene we're talking about.

Josh Blum:

I, well, so I've seen this movie a long time ago, I don't actually remember the premise of it. Like, well, I, you know, like obviously the plot is not, you know, a lot of these movies probably not necessarily like key, but just as a refresher for folks like me or folks who are listening to this that haven't seen First Strike, can you do me a favor? Do us a favor and just like, give us a one liner on it. Besides Jackie Chan, like, you know, like lots of people.



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Josh Blum:

Right. Yeah. This is one of those films that got released in different places under different titles and according to IMDB, this is, this is their one-liner, it's this installment of chance Police Story, film franchise so ... I think it's Police Story 2 or 3? Has our hero trying to locate a missing nuclear warhead?

Josh Blum:

Of course. Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I mean, those are some pretty high stakes, and if you're, if you're missing a nuclear warhead, you obviously send one person after it.

Josh Blum:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Just pick your best person.

Josh Blum:

You're right. He's not armed either, although he is in the scene, but you know, unconventionally and we'll talk about that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's right. That's right. Now, if you've participated in the last couple fight scene analyses that we've done, you know, that we are fond of slowing the video down so we can say more about it. Well, today, instead of going to half speed, we're going to go to quarter speed because there are so much going on in this one and I want to, I want to thank you Josh, for encouraging us to do that because I probably would have defaulted to have speed and just felt frustrated.

Josh Blum:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah. There's a little gear on the lower right-hand side of YouTube. I will have a link in the show notes to where we're queuing the video up and then you can pick the playback speed from there, so this is for all you math majors, 0.25 on the little drop, drop up menu, content, whatever it's called.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Yeah. So, I've got it. Are you, are you ready to go?

Josh Blum:

I am ready to go whenever you are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

All right.

Josh Blum:

We're starting it 3 ...

Jeremy Lesniak:

3:17 is what I have.

Josh Blum:

Okay.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Does that work for you?

Josh Blum:

That works for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

All right. How about a countdown from 5 for the people getting ready?



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Josh Blum:

Sure. 5 ...

Jeremy Lesniak:

And we'll go on 1. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Oh, I got to mute the audio.

Josh Blum:

Oh, here we see Jackie [00:07:28] a ... I don't know. He's using a ladder to defend himself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. It's a good size. It's an aluminum ladder. I mean, pretty, pretty standard but the way that he uses this and he's here, he's rolling it over his back, he's picking it up, he's using it against these guys that have staffs.

Josh Blum:

And then, you know, right there, he goes, he uses the advantage of the ladder like he goes low, uses the ... I don't know what you'd call it, the steps of the ladder as almost like to catch, the staff in there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Josh Blum:

And then this part right here, I wonder how many times it took him to hit that right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

The vault through the ladder is just utterly phenomenal. Anybody who's ever worked with a ladder like this knows that they're, in certain angles they're very flimsy. You know, it's an aluminum ladder, it's got to be lightweight and that's why he's able to spin it around overhead here.

Josh Blum:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

And here finally, he's using it kind of in a collapsed form which you would think would be the easier way to do it cause he starts out with it when it's a part in like the A-frame thing which must ... must have been incredibly awkward and here he's using it like put the sweep and everything like that, so more like a traditional [00:08:42]

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love that part where he puts it over his head.

Josh Blum:

Yeah and that part right there when he swings it out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yup. Bob's the guy with it. And what I, what I really love about this scene, is the reason that I think this is the most, Oh, and then the strike through and –

Josh Blum:

Right in the cage? right there ...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Boom! Brings it down on him. I mean, can you imagine being in a fight and having someone bring a ladder down on top of you and then punching you in the face and –

Josh Blum:

So disorienting.

Jeremy Lesniak:

In the belly. I mean, it's kind of like a, like a miniature game of whack-a-mole.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. There's another one. So the diving right through that, just the two rungs, it must've been what, like, what does that look like, a foot maybe in between the two rungs?



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. There's not a lot of space. You can see he barely fits through there. And this is one of those, those aspects of this scene. It showcases the creativity but also Jackie's confidence in doing what he does and this is why I think it's the most, it's the best example of his choreography that I've ever seen because it's creative, it's funny, I mean, there he is shaking his hands, we talked about that in the last couple of, you know, his sense of humor.

Josh Blum:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And yet there's, there's some legitimacy, there's some credibility to the way he's using this.

Josh Blum:

Like when you get out of the way, if someone who swing it around like –

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would absolutely get out of the way when someone swung a ladder with me.

Josh Blum:

He's like, "I don't know what you're doing but I'm just going to get out of the way. I don't want to get hit into that or anywhere" feeling. He's shaken out his hands. And so like that, that segment we just watched, that was like about 30 seconds, a little bit more than 30 seconds. I just, we were talking a little offline about how long it must've taken him for them to put that whole thing together, you know, 30 seconds or so of footage, like how long do you think that took them to do that?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, I'm going to guess that every cut, every time we see a cut in the scene, you know, that's probably an hour of setup making sure everybody's on their marks because there's a lot of risk when you're swinging a ladder around.

Josh Blum:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, this isn't an empty hand scene where they can intentionally just, you know, punch off to the side of the head and catch it at the right angle and make it look good.

Josh Blum:

Right. Yeah. And I love it when he –

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's a lot of consequences.

Josh Blum:

... down on the ladder.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I just live his coveralls. I would, I really want a pair of those, I think they look great. I would definitely do work around my house in those.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. I don't know what those are and why he was ... I don't remember why he was wanting to look like a pair of snow pants.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Snow or, or, or fishermen.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. Is this this movie ... Is this the movie --

Jeremy Lesniak:

They have some kind of water repelling properties.



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Josh Blum:

It's been a while since I've seen, is this the movie where he jumps out of the helicopter and goes like skiing or skateboarding down the—

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think so. I that's this one. Honestly, as much as I love Jackie Chan and I love Jackie Chan movies, the plot and the actual movies blur together for me.

Josh Blum:

Oh yeah. I mean it's still ...

Jeremy Lesniak:

So I love Jackie Chan movies, but I don't always, you know, I can't always tell you which ones I've seen.

Josh Blum:

You know, we were originally going to do the full, like the full it's, like about a four-minute clip here when he's fighting all these guys in this house but because there was so much within it, just this ladder seems like even watching it at quarter speed, I feel like there wasn't enough time to talk about all the different aspects of like, I have like a page and a half of notes here about the different things and you know, don't really have time, like it's going too quick, even at a quarter speed to really discuss things kind of in detail.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did you have anything in your notes that we missed that you want to point out?

Josh Blum:

Well, there was this one ... I don't know. It just, again, it's like one of these things that it's, it's not a ... it's certainly not a ... it didn't add anything I think, to the I guess, combat, but it was like an interesting thing that I think probably took a long time to get right and it was like a typical Jackie Chan thing where he has the ladder and he kind of like flips it, I think he like rolls it down so it's flipping like sideways several times and then rolls it back up and he gets it over his head. So that, I don't know how long it took, how many tries it took for him to do that. It was a very stylish, a stylist? Stylist thing, no. Stylish? But whatever.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I know, I know what you're trying to say. Yeah.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. He did that, I'm sure like took multiple different times for him to get the thing rolling and just the what right way. I guess there was the other thing too, was that obviously the weight or the balance point of a ladder is going to be just really much different from anything else because it's so wide and it's also so awkward and the balance point with when you're using it in the, like the A-frame form is going to be much different than the one where it's compacted and so, I imagine he must've had to figure that out beforehand, you know, you have to try to just see how we can move with it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm going to guess that they said, you know, "Let's do something with a ladder." Somebody had the idea and he said, "Okay, give me some time to play with it." and he probably swung that ladder around it and what I find interesting about this fight scene is there are, there are movements and you can really see it at the end when he has that ladder slung across his back, very, you know, almost Wushu looking pose.

Josh Blum:

Yeah, yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The influence of his traditional martial arts training and, and Chinese weapons training absolutely came through.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think it's a great point for like you know, obviously this is stylized and everything like that, you know as these movies always part, but I mean, it, it's a good point because, I mean, you know, when you think about the different weapons that people train with, these were things that were, you know, obviously kind of used because they were just lying around at the time. You know the side [inaudible] staffs, whatever they, they had another use then, and so people are like, "Why should we learn how to use those things now cause we don't have those things lying around." but I mean, you know, things start to become more generalizable long ... you have long things, you have like short clubby kind of things, you have blades, that kind of thing so if we kind of learned something about one, you have some idea



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

how to use something else that kind of would fall into that same category. So I don't know, ladder, I don't know. What would that be? I mean, that's kind of like a staff, I guess.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a staff but there's a, there's another element to it because it opens.

Josh Blum:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, and, and honestly, I think the other traditional martial arts weapon that his movements remind me of are nunchaku, nunchucks.

Josh Blum:

Yeah --

Jeremy Lesniak:

In a way that he keeps it close to his body, moves through it. You know, that's something that you see with, with nunchaku practitioners versus, you know, bladed weapons.

Josh Blum:

Sure. Yeah, because it, it is flexible in a way, right, because the arm opens and closes so the thing, well, there's one part of it. I think it was where is it? Yeah, about 39 ... 3 minutes 39 seconds or so, where he uses the, the unfolds, the the ladder and then it springs back again but it uses it in kind of like the way you might flick out a, you know, a flexible weapon like that and kind of like a, like one of those, like you've ever taken a towel, roll it up and snapped it, he kind of use it in that very same way so there's like a, you know, like the, what you would do with a flexible, like a chain or something like that kind of comes into play. So it's really interesting that you kind of explored all those different things. The other thing that I thought was kind of interesting is because of the reach of it, he did ... you know, he wasn't just hitting people like in the ... in one particular part of the body, he wasn't just attacking one thing, he was going from multiple different levels so like sometimes he was attacking their legs, sometimes you could tack two at once because of the, like if you held the ladder the other way and it was kind of like



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the ends of it were facing outward, you have almost like two staves that are turning out so you have a high and a low and so that, that's a kind of a nice, a nice thing that that he did there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. And I think the last thing, I want to kind of say about it is, is that as I'm watching this, you know, the circular movements, that's not where I would go. You know, and not to say that, that, that there's no practical element, but again, what I find fascinating about this fight scene is you've got, you've got an unconventional weapon being used in a ... to a certain degree traditional way that exemplifies his training. You know, my training is much more linear, you know, Okinawan ... my, what my weapons training is all Okinawan so I would have been striking people with the ends of that and using it in a very, you know, kind of square way.

Josh Blum:

Right. I mean, like more of like a thrust.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. I was just about to ask, like, so if this were you, maybe it was an interesting question for all the audience folks, if this were you and that's what you had at your disposal to save yourself from getting clubbed by all these guys, how would you use it? You know, would you, would you use it like, you know, what Jeremy was saying, thrusting it, would you swing it around, would you throw it, would you, you know, use it as a distraction, would you use the cage kind of aspect of what Jackie Chan did, which is very creative. I, I don't know how, how many people would be able to pull it off but –

Jeremy Lesniak:

One. Jackie Chan.

Josh Blum:

Yeah, right. Yeah. Well, was this, this is one of those films, I think where ... the Outtakes, right? I, I do remember watching the Outtakes where you get stuck in the ladder.



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah.

Josh Blum:

Trying to dive through it but I think it's, you know, it's an interesting exercise. I, I think I was trying to think while watching this, how ... what I would do with this, I honestly don't ... I think I probably would've kept it relatively compact, like I probably wouldn't have, I probably wouldn't have thought to open it just because it's so unwieldy that I figured it, it might come open, like when you're swinging it around but I think I probably would have kept it kind of close to my body, maybe some thrusting, maybe I would imagine probably attacking, like, I probably would've gone low, like ankles and shins and stuff like that, just because you have the element or there, you know. And then there --

Jeremy Lesniak:

If it ever slipped off a ladder and bang your shin on one of those lower rungs, you know, how, how badly that can hurt.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. Yeah. And then they're falling on top of the ladder.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right.

Josh Blum:

So, you know, I don't know if that's a good thing or not because then you would kind of lose the ladder but he does use it as like the sweeping kind of thing I might have thought to do that but the other, other sorts of things like that I ... opening it and flipping it around you know. He does this one thing where he's like pulling it around like a staff and then it work to keep people away and then certainly I think people would stay away from anything like that unless someone was, I don't know, high on PCP or something like that, that didn't care. Just actually, you know, I don't know, maybe just that, the fact that you're using it as a cover, you know, holding it there and kind of moving it around so that when people try to reach you, they can't, because there's this big piece of aluminum stuff between you and them, I mean, that might be another thing



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and you could probably generalize that to lots of other things in day to day life, you know, things in the environment, like the –

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure.

Josh Blum:

I don't know, a coat rack, an IV pole, whatever, you know, happens to put you between you and whatever's coming at you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Yeah. And I suspect when they were working out this choreography, it was important that the attackers have staffs because of the, the element of being able to go through, having them caught, you know, it kind of equalizes the range.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Well, you know, it's, yeah, it wouldn't, it wouldn't have seemed very fair if they were unarmed and if they had sword or something like that, they probably wouldn't have gone on as long if they had guns, I mean, obviously they just would've shot him, so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's not a very good fight scene.

Josh Blum:

Right. That'd be very –

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's not the matrix.

Josh Blum:

Right. It's like that scene in Indiana Jones, first one I think, you remember that where the guy –



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he does those, the fancy flashy and –

Josh Blum:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And they just shoot them. Yeah. I haven't seen that in ages.

Josh Blum:

So, any other thoughts on this?

Jeremy Lesniak:

No. No. I just, I hope people will kind of take it and look at it, draw their own conclusions but I like, you know, how we're talking about, how would you use this? How would you apply some of this thought process to your own environment, to the casual objects around you? And, you know, if you have the opportunity, maybe pick up a nontraditional weapon, quote, unquote, weapon and swing it around, you know, see what the advantages are, what are the disadvantages. You know, maybe the next time you go compete at a tournament, you're not bringing a ladder but maybe you are, I don't know.

Josh Blum:

I don't know. That'd be pretty cool, there's sometimes an open category or whatever.

Jeremy Lesniak:

To go reenact this scene, just with the ladder part? That would be great. Anybody, anybody that would get it, would love it.

Josh Blum:

Does that ... I don't know, I've never been to a tournament where that, where someone just brings like a random thing but that would be like a, I mean, everybody, you know, kind of does the same thing ultimately and that would be really unique. I'd have to say.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Never seen it done, but I keep threatening to some of the promoters in my area. I'm going to show up with a shovel and I'm going to do a form of the shovel.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. Well, I mean, think about it, like, you know, I mean, that's, ultimately, everybody always says like, Oh, but you could, you know, you could jury rig these kinds of things to defend yourself, you could, but like, you know, if you don't practice it, like a shovel is built differently than, you know, both staff or whatever.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right.

Josh Blum:

Well, one thing that Jeremy and I were talking about that if you like, you know, just let us know as we were talking about, you know, whether it'd be interesting to take a clip like this in positive or random time, and then just, it didn't work so well for this one cause like this whole thing is centered around improvised weapons, but see what's available in the environment and what, what sort of things in that scene that you can see at that particular pause moment could the, the hero or the villain used to defend themselves. So it's been –

Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe we'll do that next time.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. So let us know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right on. Cool. I think this is a good place for us to end.

Josh Blum:

Yeah. As always, thanks so much, Jeremy. Until next time.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 497 - Fight Scene Analysis - Jackie Chan's First Strike | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah. Thank you.

Once again. I want to thank Josh for working with me. I enjoy our, our collaborations and look forward to the next one. I hope you all enjoyed it too and if you do, make sure you're checking out his podcast, the Thirteenth Hour podcast to great show, Josh does some wonderful stuff, both related to and not related to martial arts so make sure you're following him and everything he's got going on. If you want to see more about our show and what we've got going on, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Remember every episode has its own page and that's where we post photos and links, transcripts. If there's a particular episode that you enjoy, maybe wanting to get more out of, check it out, now's a great time to find more information, more context for this show, for any specific episode, we really try to make sure we give you all we can on that front and if that makes you want to support what we're doing, you can help us out, we've got a lot of ways. You can visit the store at whistlekick.com and if you do, use the code `podcast15` to save 15% or you can leave a review buy a book, buy a program buy a shirt or contribute to the Patreon, patreon.com/whistlekick. If you see somebody out in the world has got some whistlekick swag on, make sure you introduce yourself, say hello, maybe you'll make a new friend or training partner. If you have suggestions for guests, email me, jeremy@whistlekick.com and I'd love to hear from you for any other reason too. Our social media is at whistlekick and we post stuff constantly. That's it. Until next time. Train hard, smile and have a great day.