

I Am Jackie Chan: My Life in Action

By Jackie Chan

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"I am standing in the sky on the roof of a glass and steel office tower in Rotterdam, Holland. There are twenty-one floors of air between me and the concrete pavement below. I am about to do what I do best. I am about to jump."

If you're a fan of action-adventure movies--with the accent on action--then you no doubt love watching Jackie Chan risk his life to create sensational cinema. As one of the biggest stars to burst into U.S. theaters, Jackie has put America's hottest heroes to shame, wowing audiences with the breathless, death-defying stunts that are the highlight of such movies as Rumble in the Bronx, Supercop, Operation: Condor, and his newest blockbuster Rush Hour. But who really is this boyishly handsome, lightning-fast Charlie Chaplin of martial arts movie-making? And what possessed him to make a career out of putting his life on the line to keep us on the edge of our seats?

"I remember a frightened seven-year-old walking into the dim and musty halls of the China Drama Academy, clutching his father's hand. Inside, he sees paradise--young boys and girls leaping and tumbling and flashing the steel of ancient weapons. 'How long do you want to stay here, Jackie?' 'Forever!' answered the boy, his eyes bright and wide. And he let go of his father's hand to clutch at the Master's hem. . . ."

In I Am Jackie Chan, Chan tells the fascinating, harrowing, ultimately triumphant story of his life: How the rebellious son of refugees in tumultuous 1950s Hong Kong became the disciplined disciple of a Chinese Opera Master. How the "paradise" that young Jackie so eagerly embraced proved to be, in reality, a ruthlessly competitive place whose fierce master wielded the legal authority to train his students even to death. How the dying art of Chinese opera led Jackie to the movie business--and how he made the leap from stuntman to superstar. How he broke into the Hollywood big time by breaking almost every bone in his body.

Finally, after years of plunging off skyscrapers and living to tell the tale, Jackie Chan proves--with this witty, poignant, and often astonishing memoir--that it's always been a tale well worth telling.

Jackie has written this book with Jeff Yang, the founder of A Magazine and the author of Eastern Standard: A Guide To Asian Influence in American Culture.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Since his first role in 1962 at the age of 8, Jackie Chan has appeared in more than 70 movies. For more than 20 years, he has been the biggest star in Asia, but in the West he remained a secret, his movies passed around on tape and his fame growing by word of mouth alone. In the '90s, with the success of crossover movies like *Rush Hour* and the support of a new generation of filmmakers who grew up watching Jackie Chan videotapes, his star finally rose in the West. But where did he come from, and how did he achieve so much?

His autobiography, *I Am Jackie Chan*, answers those questions in an engaging, almost novelistic style. When his father moves to Australia to take up a new job, the young Jackie is placed in Hong Kong's China Drama Academy under the tutelage of Master Yu Jim-yuen. For the next 10 years he is trained in martial arts, dance, acrobatics, singing, and comedy, while suffering extraordinary hardships, including regular beatings and near-starvation. Yet he can look back on this period of his life with considerable affection, not least because it taught him the skills, and provided him with the network of friends, that would sustain his film career for decades. Chan has always earned the respect of his fans by committing himself wholeheartedly to creating the most death-defying stunts possible. His achievements seem even more remarkable when set against the struggles described in this book. In the Drama School, as a young stuntman, in his first troubled attempts to make movies in America--Chan's personality shines through, and *I Am Jackie Chan* can only enhance his reputation as one of the most likable and admirable movie stars in the world. The book also includes Jackie's comments on all of his movies, lists of his favorite stunts and fights, and an astonishing catalog of all his major injuries. Can you imagine what it must feel like to dislocate your cheekbone? --*Simon Leake*

From Publishers Weekly
One of Asia's most popular film stars, Chan has helped reinvent the Hong Kong action genre by blending hyperkinetic stunts with a self-deprecating humor and a freewheeling flamboyance reminiscent of Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire. His autobiography, unfortunately, contains few of these elements. In minute detail, he chronicles his punishing childhood in the Chinese Opera Research Institute and his rise to superstardom. From age seven to 17, under the severe discipline?some might even call it child abuse?of his Opera Master, Chan was trained for theater and film work. After the death of Bruce Lee (Chan was a stuntman in Lee's Fists of Fury and Enter the Dragon), his studio, Golden Harvest, attempted to turn him into a Lee clone. But Chan's film persona finally gelled when he began to emulate his silent-movie heroes and to punctuate his films with what he calls "the superstunt"?high-risk feats of derring-do that he performs himself. Chan takes himself to task for neglecting his family (indeed, his wife and 14-year-old son are only briefly mentioned), and offers a candid look at the gangs, called Triads, that retain a powerful grip on the Hong Kong film industry. But despite such glimpses behind the actor's Teflon veneer, and his punchy anecdotes, this surprisingly tame, sometimes plodding memoir fails to deliver the heady thrills one has come to expect of a Jackie Chan production. FYI: I Am Jackie Chan is published to coincide with the release of his first American film in 13 years, Rush Hour.
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From Library Journal
Fans of action cinema will be thrilled with this autobiography. The star of films like Drunken Master (1978), Police Story (1985), and Supercop (1992) recounts his life in short, machine-gun-burst chapters. Beginning with his formative days as the acolyte of an opera master at the Chinese Drama Academy, Chan dives into his Hong Kong stuntman apprenticeship and career as a worldwide kung fu, shoot-'em-up idol. The staccato narrative ends with his U.S. breakthrough, Rumble in the Bronx (1994). Chan afterward divulges his "top ten

stunts," "top ten fights," and his accrued bodily "aches and pains" in separate appendixes. A section called "Jackie's Films" affords a whirlwind survey of Chan's oeuvre. Written with noted Asian American journalist Yang, this volume makes for thorough, two-fisted coverage and should be read in tandem with Jeff Rovin's The Essential Jackie Chan Sourcebook (Pocket, 1997). Recommended for public libraries.?Neal Baker, Earlham Coll., Richmond, IN
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandi Anderson:

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