

Document Citation

Title	Armour of God: Chan as an adventurer for hire
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Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1994 Mar 12
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	F2
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Longxiong hudi (Armour of God), Chan, Jackie, 1986

LA Times 3/12/94 p. F2

MOVIE REVIEW

'Armour of God': Chan as an Adventurer for Hire

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

There's so much energy and ingenuity in the best of the Hong Kong martial arts movies that a routine production like "Armour of God" is bound to suffer in comparison—even if it stars Jackie Chan, who also directed.

Chan is his usual impish, infectious self, but his film rambles far too much and is vague to the point of incoherence, even taking into account that at times there are limits as to how much subtitles can translate.

Chan plays the Asian Hawk, apparently an adventurer for hire. His current gig, which takes him to Europe, is to gather for a rich collector the five pieces of the so-called "Armour of God," which seems to be a suit of armor plus a sword and is considered a sacred relic by a pre-Christian cult. The cult lives on in a remote mountain monastery, where its black-robed and hooded "monks" engage in the international drug trade and regularly import prostitutes for their orgies.

The cult is eager to retrieve the entire "Armour of God" suite, which is its most sacred ritual

treasure. To that end it has kidnapped in Paris the Asian Hawk's former girlfriend, Laura (Rosamund Kwan), and is holding her in ransom for the three pieces of the armor in the possession of a wealthy count (Boris Gregoric). Joining forces in the Hawk's attempt to rescue Laura are her current boyfriend, Alan (Alan Tam), a Hong Kong rock star, and Gregoric's elegant sharpshooting daughter, May (Lola Forner).

Filmed—in 1986—largely in an unidentified Yugoslavia, "Armour of God" is one of those films in which you're never quite sure what's happening or why and are given little reason to care, for its

characters are as ill-defined as everything else. With so little that's involving, the obligatory spectacular action sequences don't count for much. "Armour of God," which is mediocre in virtually all aspects, is likely to please only Chan's most uncritical fans.

Playing with "Armour of God" is "Police Story," the first in the Jackie Chan series that shows off his martial arts wizardry and in which he plays a fearless, devil-may-care Hong Kong cop who in this first outing is tracking down a drug lord.

'Armour of God'

Jackie Chan.....	The Asian Hawk, Chen Kuang-Sheng
Alan Tam.....	Alan
Lola Forner.....	May
Rosamund Kwan.....	Laura

A Rim Film Distributors release of a Golden Harvest production. Director Jackie Chan. Producer Leonard K.C. Ho. Screenplay by Edward Pang; from a story by Barry Wong. Cinematographers Peter Ngor, Robert Thompson, Arthur Wong, Cheung Yau-Jo. Martial arts choreographers JC Stuntmen's Club, Lau Kar-Wing, Brandy Yuen. Motorcycle stunts design Blackie Ko. Editor Cheung Yiu-Chung. Costumes Shirley Chan. Music Michael Lai. Production design William Cheung. In Cantonese, with English and Chinese subtitles. Running time: 1 hour, 37 minutes.

MPAA rating: unrated. Times guidelines: It includes considerable martial arts violence, combined with a convoluted plot that children would find hard to follow.

■ *Playing Sunday and Monday only at the New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd., (213) 938-4038.*