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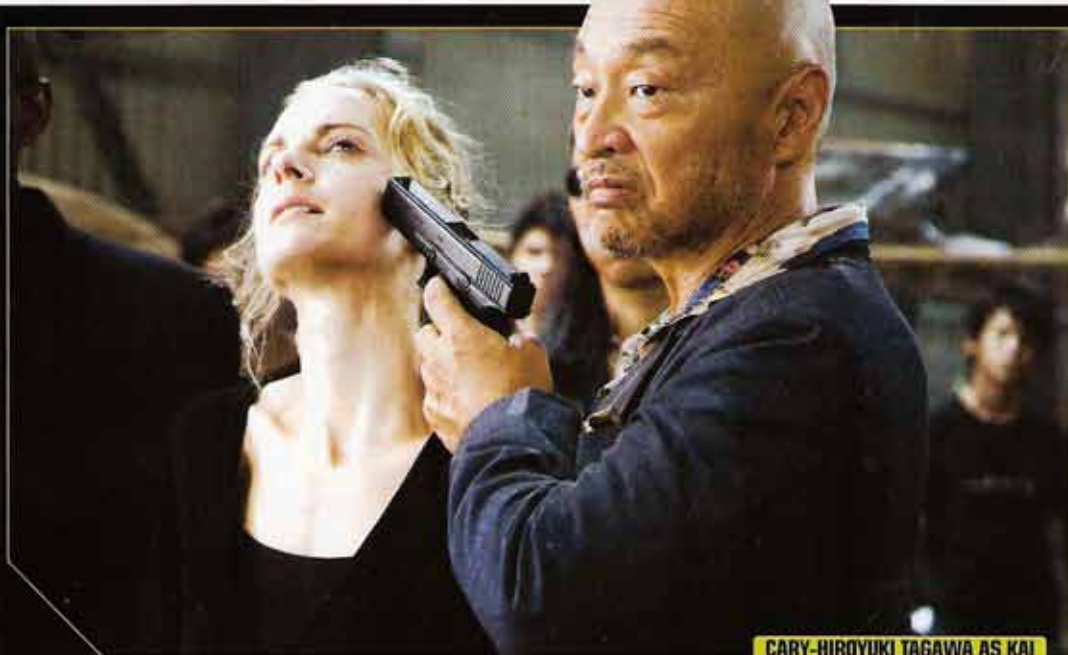
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EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW INSIDE
THE NEW
BODYGUARD

UK & EASTERN ACTION DREAM TEAM UNITE FOR THE
ULTIMATE HK HOMETOWN FIGHT MOVIE...

PLUS: JOHNNY YONG BOSCH INTERVIEWED / WITCHBLADE
REVIEWED / LEEDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL & MORE



CARY-HIROYUKI TAGAWA AS KAI

The UK Independent action movie takes a giant leap forward with the upcoming release of the *Bodyguard: A New Beginning*, shot on locations in both the UK and Hong Kong, with an international leading cast that reads like a *Who's Who* of action entertainment. Mike Leeder takes a first look at the eagerly awaited production...

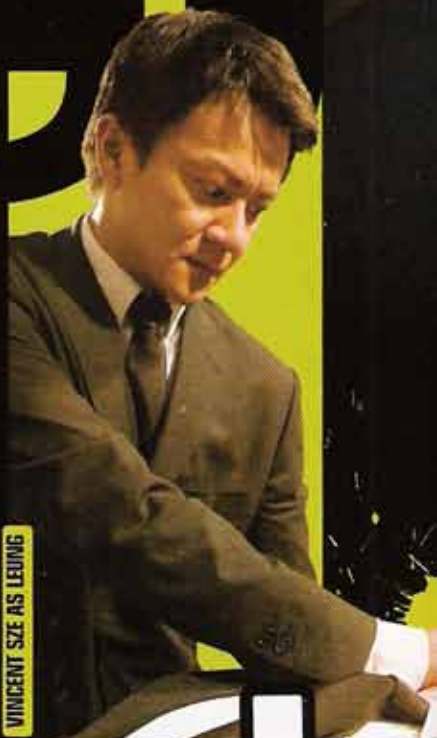
Bodyguard: *A New Beginning* tells the tale of Leung, the loyal bodyguard of Wong - a well respected Triad boss in Hong Kong. Leung has defended Wong for many years, earning a great deal of respect from his boss, and an equal amount of disrespect from Wong's errant son Yuen, who feels his father should be more forceful in the underworld in order to prove his standing once and for all.

The arrival in Hong Kong of a wild card in the shape of Kai, a Yakuza leader intent on making his name in the Hong Kong underworld, throws the city into turmoil. As betrayal, ambition and greed draw various factions into conflict Leung is given what may well be his most important assignment to date when Wong asks him to travel to the UK and protect a young British woman, Chloe. Her true identity is known only to Wong, with even his son being kept in the dark, leading to a betrayal that threatens to not only destroy the family but tear the Hong Kong underworld apart.

For his second feature as a director, Chee Keong Cheung didn't try to take the easy way out. After the huge positive response to his martial arts feature debut *Underground*, Chee called me up with an idea for a bodyguard movie to shoot in Hong Kong and the UK and make use of some of the huge talent-pool of actors and fighters that is often underused. I came onboard as a producer and began to put together a cast and crew from Hong Kong, while Chee and actor/producer Mark Strange did the same in the UK.

The film's two major players are of course Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa and Richard Ng. Tagawa is internationally known for his roles in such films as *The Last Emperor*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Rising Sun*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Showdown In Little Tokyo* etc... This time he plays the villain with style - his character Kai, is a Yakuza leader who has swapped the mean streets of Tokyo, for those of Hong Kong. He knows the rules and etiquette of the underworld, but pays little heed to them, he has his own plans and that's all that matters to him, and he's prepared to do more than ruffle a

Playing the 'Bodyguard' and making his starring debut is Vincent Sze. The Hong Kong based Karateka and actor has been building a name for himself with solid supporting roles in such high profile projects as Wilson Yip's *SPL* and *Dragon Tiger Gate* and Benny Chan's high octane *Invisible Target*.



VINCENT SZE AS LEUNG

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Vincent Sze portrait © 2007 KOFFEL

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RICHARD NG (LEFT)



RICHARD & CARL NG (STANDING)



few feathers to make his mark on Hong Kong. Tagawa really rolled with the Hong Kong way of shooting, he proved his professionalism on set as a performer, and didn't mind some of the less than comfortable locations or lack of facilities and luxuries compared to that of a Hollywood production. We'll be doing a career interview with Tagawa for an upcoming issue.

Playing opposite him is Richard Ng as Wong - the Triad boss who has earned the respect of those around him. Ng is best known for his work in projects such as the *Lucky Stars* series with Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung and his own *Pom Pom* series with John Sham, but his career stretches across Hong Kong cinema's golden age with appearances in *The Private Eyes*, *Magnificent Warriors*, *The Lost Empire*, *Tomb Raider 2* and, most recently, the pilot for the BBC action comedy *Phoo Action*, where he plays the martial arts mentor to the hero Buddhist Kung Fu Cop Terry Phoo! *Bodyguard: A New Beginning* gives Ng a chance to showcase his more dramatic side, as his character is forced to come to terms with the effects a life of crime has upon those around him... He must also come to terms with the changing of the guard, as Kai and his men represent the new face of crime, disrespectful and unwilling to compromise.

Playing the 'Bodyguard' and making his starring debut is 'Le Dragon Francaise' - Vincent Sze. The Hong Kong based Karateka and actor has been building a name for himself with solid supporting roles in such high profile projects as Wilson Yip's *SPL* and *Dragon Tiger Gate*, as the ill-fated undercover cop and Chen Kuan-tai's treacherous number two respectively. Prior to *The Bodyguard*, Sze was kicking butts and taking names as the Explosives expert member of

The Bodyguard: A New Beginning is currently in post production and scheduled for release in 2008....

Wu Jing's 'Ronin' gang in Benny Chan's high octane *Invisible Target*. The role of Leung gives Sze a chance to stretch his dramatic muscles, showing the different sides of the character from no nonsense bodyguard to a more sensitive fellow as his relationship with the girl grows... As do his action skills, under the guidance of longtime Jackie Chan Stunt-Teamers Anthony Carpio and Chan Man-ching who handled the film's action choreography.

Richard Ng's real life son, Carl Ng most recently seen in *Boarding Gate*, with Michael Madsen and Asia Argento, plays Yuen, the spoilt and immature son of the former crown colony's most respected crime boss. It's an interesting role for Ng, as his character undergoes one hell of a journey over the course of the film, starting off as the pampered spoilt wanna-be trying to prove himself to his father, but his behaviour causes more trouble and widens the gap between father and son, until his allegiance with Kai nearly destroys their relationship. Chloe, is played by British actress Stephanie Langton (most recently seen in *Jekyll*). Langton has been making a name for herself in the UK with appearances in such stage productions as *A Few Good Men*, and brings a fragile beauty to the role as a woman whose life is turned upside down when she finds herself unwittingly involved in a war between the Triads and the Yakuza which starts in the UK and brings her to Hong Kong.

For Kai's veritable 'Dogs of War', I assembled a cast of familiar faces from many a high profile project. The infamous Digger Mesch, founder of Art Asylum and CEO of Dig Deep Entertainment, whose credits include *The Medallion*, *Twins Effect*, *The Counting House*, and a memorable appearance in *Ultraviolet*. Mesch just wrapped a supporting role on the French production *Largo Winch*, as well as helming his first projects as a director in his own right, including the music video for *Dead Air Space*. Here he cuts a memorable figure as Mendez, one of Kai's most trusted enforcers, and gets a couple of memorable scenes, letting loose on innocent bystanders. Backing him up is Wing Tsun stylist Yuri Tim (The Counting House) as Ramirez, former metallurgist to King Phillip of Spain. Beijing based actor and stuntman Ian Powers (*Contract Lover*), was drafted to serve double duty as Henchman Cole and help with the action choreography and double for Carl Ng's character when he's tossed from a moving van by yours truly. (Yes, I also turn up in the film as Henchman Kurtz - due to my resemblance to a certain character from *Apocalypse Now*, where's that diet book when I need it?)

Making a cameo appearance as a drunken German businessman is Brandon Rhea who memorably battled Jet Li in *Fearless*. He makes his appearance in the Buddha Lounge bar, where his character falls foul of Carl Ng's character Yuen, who challenges him to



CARL NG & BRANDON RHEA FACE-OFF



STEPHANIE LANGTON AS ZOE

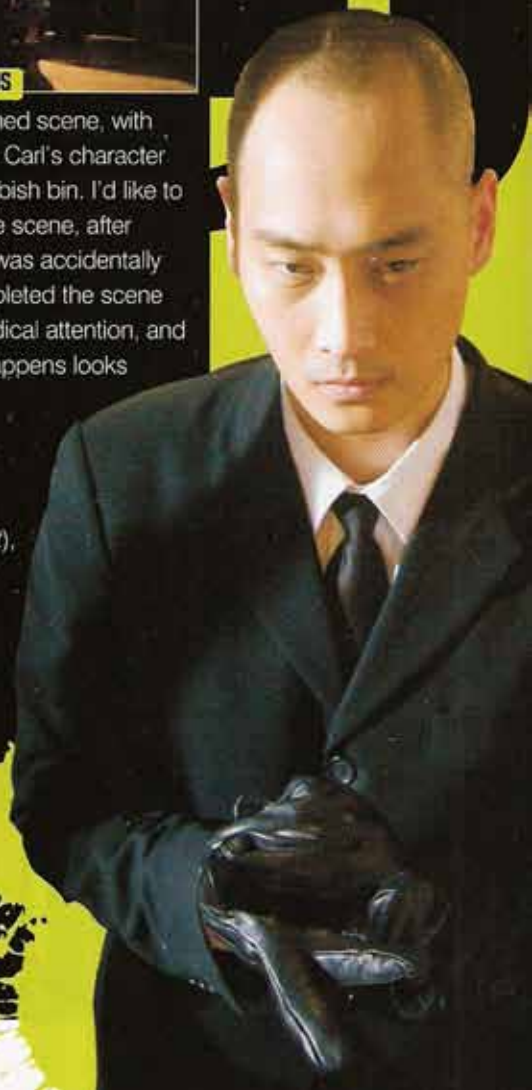


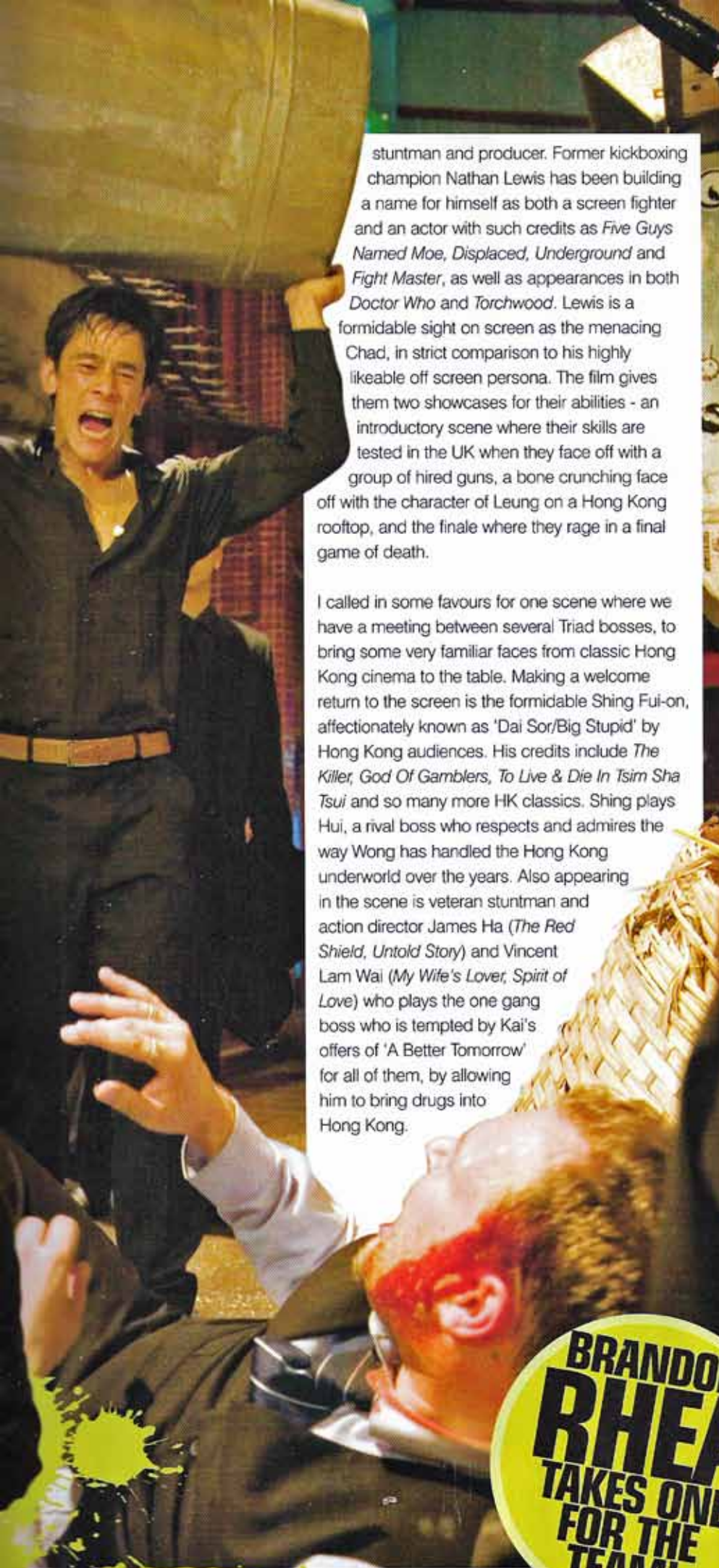
MARK STRANGE & NATHAN LEWIS

a street fight. It's a nicely choreographed scene, with Rhea taking some major knocks from Carl's character before being beaten with a handy rubbish bin. I'd like to commend Brandon for completing the scene, after suffering an injury when his shoulder was accidentally dislocated in the fight. But Rhea completed the scene without complaint before seeking medical attention, and I do have to say the moment that it happens looks fantastic on camera!

Playing the memorable roles of the 'Assassin Brothers' Chad and Alex (named in reference to *Double Impact*), are British martial arts actors Mark Strange and Nathan 'The Megatron' Lewis. Strange has earned his action stripes in such projects as *The Medallion* and *Twins Effect* (in both films he got to take on Jackie Chan), while also working in the UK on such projects as *Batman Begins* and the *Independents Tough Justice*, *Fist of Justice*, *Underground* and *Displaced*, which saw him wearing multiple hats as an actor,

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stuntman and producer. Former kickboxing champion Nathan Lewis has been building a name for himself as both a screen fighter and an actor with such credits as *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Displaced*, *Underground* and *Fight Master*, as well as appearances in both *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood*. Lewis is a formidable sight on screen as the menacing Chad, in strict comparison to his highly likeable off screen persona. The film gives them two showcases for their abilities - an introductory scene where their skills are tested in the UK when they face off with a group of hired guns, a bone crunching face off with the character of Leung on a Hong Kong rooftop, and the finale where they rage in a final game of death.

I called in some favours for one scene where we have a meeting between several Triad bosses, to bring some very familiar faces from classic Hong Kong cinema to the table. Making a welcome return to the screen is the formidable Shing Fui-on, affectionately known as 'Dai Sor/Big Stupid' by Hong Kong audiences. His credits include *The Killer*, *God Of Gamblers*, *To Live & Die In Tsim Sha Tsui* and so many more HK classics. Shing plays Hui, a rival boss who respects and admires the way Wong has handled the Hong Kong underworld over the years. Also appearing in the scene is veteran stuntman and action director James Ha (*The Red Shield*, *Untold Story*) and Vincent Lam Wai (*My Wife's Lover*, *Spirit of Love*) who plays the one gang boss who is tempted by Kai's offers of 'A Better Tomorrow' for all of them, by allowing him to bring drugs into Hong Kong.

BRANDON RHEA TAKES ONE FOR THE TEAM!

BLESSING THE PRODUCTION



BATTLE ROYALE!



To handle the extensive action choreography, we called upon the services of two longtime members of the Jackie Chan Stuntman Team, Anthony Carpio and Chan Man-ching. Carpio's credits include *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*, *Bulletproof Monk*, *Police Story 2*, *New Police Story* and *Extreme Challenge*, while Man-ching is best remembered for his role as the American Indian in *Rumble In the Bronx*, with other credits for him including *Dragons Forever*, *Downtown Torpedoes* and *Fatal Contact*. With Anthony heading up the choreography, ably assisted by both Man-ching and Ian Powers, they bring a real East meets West to the flavour of the action making use of locations and fighters in both Hong Kong and the UK, where Chris Jones, Andy Prior, Shane Steyn, Dean Williams and others get their chance to make trouble for Leung and Chloe.

Shot on HD, the cinematography is by another old friend, Henry Chung who previously handled the look of such films as *Bishonen*, *Peony Pavilion* and *A Small Miracle*. While Ean Tang from *Fearless*, *Rush Hour 3*, *Knock Off* and beyond came in as producer on the film and helped with the day to day battles of film production. Special thanks go out to Park Entertainment, Ada, Rachel, Kirsty, Elsie, Yip Ka-ho, Shelly, Mark Towns, Oliver Morran, Why Yeung, Oasis Airlines and everybody else involved in the production for their help and great work.

The Bodyguard: A New Beginning is currently in post production. An early trailer for the film was screened at the 2007 American Film Market in Los Angeles, to very good feedback. The film is scheduled for release in 2008, and we'll be reviewing it upon completion.

MIKE LEEDER