

Predictable 'Knights' scores at box office

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Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson move from the Wild, Wild West to Victorian London to retrieve the imperial seal of China in the 1880s in the No. 2 movie at the box office this weekend, "Shanghai Knights."

In the sequel to the 2000 flick "Shanghai Noon," the daring duo team up against multiple bad guys armed with little more than Chan's stunt work and Wilson's quick tongue. "Knights" pulled in \$19.8 million at the box office in its opening weekend.

The movie begins with the murder of Chon Wang's (Chan) father, as a British Lord Rathbone (Aidan Gillen) steals the imperial seal to use in a treacherous plot to become king of England and make China a British colony. Chan's sister Chon Linn (Fann Wong) follows Rathbone to London to avenge her father's death.

Chan leaves his post as sheriff of Carson City, Nev., to aid his sister in killing Rathbone. He recruits his tall-tale-telling friend Roy O'Bannon (Wilson) to accompany him to London, where Linn is sitting in jail, having been arrested for attempted murder.

What follows is a string of Chan stunts that lead to a predictable ending. O'Bannon falls in love with Linn, much to the disappointment of Wong, affectionately nicknamed John Wayne by O'Bannon.

Two action sequences will stand out to audiences. The first is 10 minutes into the movie, when Chan fights five police officers in a revolving door. The second comes during the climax, where Chan and Wilson take on Gillen inside Big Ben.

Of course, no Chan movie is complete without a reel of outtakes before the credits roll, and "Knights" is no different.

While "Shanghai Noon" was the right combination of comedy and action,



Touchstone Pictures / KRT Campus

Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson pair up in "Shanghai Knights," where they try to stop an evil British lord from making China a British colony. The action takes place in London, and the film is the sequel to 2000's "Shanghai Noon."

"Knights" falls comedically short. The opening murder scene of Chan's father sheds a depressing light on the film, and many of the jokes and Wilson's one-liners are lost on audiences still recovering from witnessing the grisly murder.

The saving comedic grace of "Knights" is the play on characters in film and literature that, during the time period of the movie, do not exist.

For example, Wilson's nickname for Chan is John Wayne. A kid (Aaron Johnson) that helps the pair on their escapades is Charlie Chaplin, and inspector

Arthur Conan Doyle (Tom Fisher) believes he is more of a writer than a sleuth, and sets out to write tales about Sherlock Holmes.

Chan's performance is on par with any other action-comedy duet he has starred in, with the exception of "The Tuxedo."

Wilson resumes his role as the lying sidekick with the same wit as in "Noon."

The most refreshing performance is by Fann Wong. While the movie takes place in 1887 when women are not equals, Wong's character is just as good of a martial artist as Chan.

Gillen, who has not been seen in many

mainstream films, is just the right blend of cunning and evil to make the villain slightly flawed.

Director David Dobkin gave "Knights" a novel turned movie appearance, as the sets look contrived on a studio back lot. The camera work manages to capture the fight sequences so the viewer doesn't get lost in the action.

Rating: "Shanghai Knights" makes a better rental than theater experience.

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'Chicago' leads in Academy Award nominations with 13 bids

The nominees for the 75th Academy Awards were announced Tuesday morning, and the anticipation to the broadcast on March 23 mounts.

"Chicago" received 13 nominations, including best picture. Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" received 10 nominations, followed by "The Hours" which received nine nods.

Renee Zellweger was nominated for best actress in the musical, and Catherine Zeta-Jones and Queen Latifah both received supporting actress nominations

for their roles in "Chicago." John C. Reilly received a nomination for best supporting actor. Left off the list was "Chicago" star Richard Gere, who learned to tap dance for the role as lawyer Billy Flynn.

Another major contender in most Oscar categories was "The Hours," an adaptation of Michael Cunningham's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Nicole Kidman was nominated for best actress and Julianne Moore was nominated for best supporting actress.

"The Hours" and "Chicago" were both nominated for best adapted screenplay.

Best Picture

Chicago
Gangs of New York
The Hours
Lord of the Rings: Two Towers
The Pianist

Actor

Adrien Brody
Nicolas Cage
Michael Caine
Daniel Day-Lewis
Jack Nicholson

Actress

Salma Hayek
Nicole Kidman
Diane Lane
Julianne Moore
Renee Zellweger

Supporting Actor

Chris Cooper
Ed Harris
Paul Newman
John C. Reilly
Christopher Walken

Supporting Actress

Kathy Bates
Julianne Moore
Queen Latifah
Meryl Streep
Catherine Zeta-Jones

Director

Ron Marshall
Martin Scorsese
Stephen Daldry
Roman Polanski
Pedro Almodovar