



Teaching Michael Douglas something about noodles: New York cop Nick Conklin gets a lesson in Japanese table manners from Ken Takakura

Kirk's son does good

For the most part, Michael Douglas earned his "bad" good guy image on the right side of the law, both in TV and movies. For four years he co-starred with Karl Malden as a cop in the '70s hit TV series *The Streets of San Francisco*, a role that earned him three Emmy nominations.

It was his acting on the big screen, however, that created Douglas' reputation as a major contemporary actor. Among his movie credits are *Coma*, *A Chorus Line* and *Wall Street*, for which he won an Academy Award.

But Douglas quickly proved he was as influential behind the scenes as he is on. In 1975, he co-produced *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the only film since *It Happened One Night* in 1934 to win the five major Oscars: Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director and Best Screenplay.

Since then, the shrewd businessman has produced and acted in such varied films as *The China Syndrome* (nominated for four academy awards), *Romancing the Stone*, *Jewel of the Nile* and his latest, *Black Rain*, which he made in association with producers Stanley R. Jaffe and Sherry Lansing. Their relationship began in 1987 when Douglas acted in Jaffe and Lansing's biggest hit, *Fatal Attraction*. It was he who approached them about producing *Black Rain*.

After all this success, it is ironic to consider how close Douglas came to not acting at all. His mother, actress Diana Douglas Darrid, said

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in an interview with *Life* magazine last year that "there was a certain awe of Kirk that made Michael avoid acting until he was 23." Douglas' father is movie actor Kirk Douglas and his brother Joel is a film producer.

Douglas is getting more recognition for his work now than ever before, but is modest enough not to attribute his success just to himself. He sees his most recent parts, Dan Gallagher in *Fatal Attraction* and Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street*, as plum roles, and claims the success of the films had much to do with their relevance to today's society.

"*Fatal Attraction* and *Wall Street* basically deal with the key moral issues of our time: lust and greed," he said in *Rolling Stone*.

Of *Black Rain*, Douglas has said, "The screenplay offered me an opportunity to make an exciting action film." His next film will reunite him with good friends Kathleen Turner and Danny DeVito in *The War of the Roses*, set for a Christmas release.

Unsurprisingly, Douglas is extremely happy with his resume, and in particular the praise of the last few years.

"You have to admit it's a pretty magical, wonderful career. That's why the confirmation I'm getting now as an actor makes this a pretty damned special time."

Blade running with the Yakuza

Black Rain

Michael Douglas, Ken Takakura, Kate Capshaw, Andy Garcia

directed by Ridley Scott

Varsity
call for times
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British director Ridley Scott is a former art student, so it makes sense that his films should be chiefly remembered for their look (*Blade Runner* and *Someone to Watch Over Me* being cases in point). *Black Rain* does little more than follow this rule.

Michael Douglas plays Nick Conklin, a discontented New York detective suspected by the Internal Affairs Division of pocketing seized cash. He's desperate for a successful case of his own that might clear his name. Nick's chance comes when he witnesses a brutal murder by a Japanese in a Manhattan restaurant.

Nick catches the killer, but his triumph is squashed by the Japanese embassy, which demands that the murderer be returned to Japan. Nick and his sidekick Charlie (Andy Garcia of *The Untouchables* fame) are assigned to deliver the captive.

On arrival in Osaka, Japan, the prisoner escapes, and Nick and Charlie quickly learn that they only know half the story. The man they have unknowingly set free is Sato, a vicious young terrorist who is waging war with the Japanese Mafia to fur-

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film

ther his own demonic ambitions. Unwilling to return to the States and face failure, Nick and Charlie attempt to team up with the Osaka police force to recapture Sato.

They are suddenly illiterate strangers in a different world. The Japanese code of honor, followed rigidly by the police, could not be more removed from the style of a New York homicide detective.

Nick, after all, is just a scuzzball with nothing to lose. He's used to playing by his own rules. This in itself is not the freshest of plotlines—even the film's poster is reminiscent of a Stallone movie ("I'm the solution to your problem," Douglas intones, *Cobra*-like)—but *Black Rain* is not about a comic-book one-man army, or at least tries not to be. The best part of the film, and its principle interest throughout, is how these men come to terms with their baffling environment.

It's a fascinating conflict of style. The Osakan officer assigned to look after the two Americans, Masahiro (Ken Takakura), is a particularly strict observer of regulations. He does not understand the American way. Certainly, Nick's head-butting approach is brutish. When Masahiro says, "America is only good for two things: music and movies," we are forced to agree with his perspective, if not his choice of praiseworthy artforms.

It's suitable material with which Scott can do his stuff. The Japan of *Black Rain* is not all paddy fields and sushi. Osaka is shown to be a sleek, modern city, a place where violence erupts at the drop of a hat (or in this case, a coat and the rev of a motorbike). With its gleaming black malls, this could be the Los Angeles of *Blade Runner*, or the interior of the *Alien* spacecraft. It's a perfect world in which the lithe, lethal Sato can perform. As bad guys go, he's wicked. What the kid can't do with a knife is not worth knowing. This is blade running of a different sort.

Unfortunately for Scott, whose reputation is somewhat at stake with this \$30 million movie, *Black Rain* does not have the stamina to stay on track. Its plot of counterfeiting and double-crossing gets silly as it runs its course. Co-stars Garcia and Kate Capshaw (who plays an expatriate waitress) are little more than plot devices. Douglas, who helped produce the film, is looking chubby (too many congratulatory lunches last year, one suspects) but puts on a good show, even when he has to do his Rambo bit. (He's no match for his Japanese partner, Takakura, who emerges as the undoubted star. You're convinced at story's close that the experience has changed his character.)

But even when the thrills run out and interest wanes, *Black Rain* dazzles with Scott's visual flair. If only someone would give him a stronger script, he'd be able to deliver a film of greater substance. For now, however, this will have to suffice. And I can live with that.