

= The Man with the Iron Fists =

The Man with the Iron Fists is a 2012 American martial arts film directed by RZA and written by RZA and Eli Roth . The film stars RZA , Russell Crowe , Cung Le , Lucy Liu , Byron Mann , Rick Yune , Dave Bautista , and Jamie Chung . Set in 19th century China , the story follows a series of lone warriors who are forced to unite to defeat a common foe and save their home of Jungle Village .

Development began in 2005 when RZA shared his idea for the film with Roth . After nearly two years of development , Roth and RZA secured financial backing in May 2010 . Filming began in December 2010 on a \$ 20 million budget and concluded by March 2011 . The film was shot in Shanghai and at other locations in China . RZA and Howard Drossin composed the film 's musical score , and RZA produced its soundtrack , which featured several new songs by various artists . A series of concerts featuring music from the soundtrack were held to promote the film .

The film was released in North America on November 2 , 2012 . Critics were divided over the film 's homage to martial arts films , considering it well @-@ choreographed and representative of the genre , but offering nothing original , and the direction was criticized for a lack of refinement . The performances of Crowe and Mann were well received . The film earned over \$ 20 million at the box office .

= = Plot = =

In nineteenth century China , Jungle Village is home to several warring clans . The village blacksmith creates deadly weapons for the clans , intending to use his payments to purchase the freedom of his lover Lady Silk , and leave the village . The region 's governor tasks the Lion Clan 's leader Gold Lion with protecting a large shipment of gold that must pass through the village . Gold is betrayed by his lieutenants Silver Lion and Bronze Lion , who plan to steal the gold . They use the chaos ensuing from a fight with the Hyena Clan to allow their co @-@ conspirator Poison Dagger ? the governor 's aide ? to assassinate Gold , after which Silver becomes the Lions ' leader . Gold 's son Zen @-@ Yi learns of his father 's murder and sets off to the village to seek revenge .

The Emperor 's undercover emissary Jack Knife arrives in the village to monitor the gold and takes up residence in the Pink Blossom , a brothel run by Madam Blossom , Lady Silk 's madame . Silver sends members of the Rodent clan to kill Zen @-@ Yi before he can reach the village , but Zen @-@ Yi kills them . The mercenary Brass Body arrives in the village and meets with Silver ; he is sent to kill Zen @-@ Yi . The blacksmith meets with Silk in the brothel and delivers the final payment needed to free her . After arriving in the village , Zen @-@ Yi and his men are confronted by Brass and find that they cannot physically harm him because his skin turns to metal on impact . Brass beats Zen @-@ Yi and destroys his blade @-@ laden armor . Zen @-@ Yi 's last surviving man sacrifices himself to pull a canopy support beam loose , burying Brass under heavy stone . The blacksmith is watching the fight ; he rescues Zen @-@ Yi and helps him recover as penance for crafting the weapon that killed Zen @-@ Yi 's father .

Meanwhile , the gold shipment arrives in the village , accompanied by two skilled warriors , the Geminis . The Lions soon confront the Geminis and their men , and in the ensuing fight , Poison Dagger assassinates the Geminis and the Lions capture the gold . Jack later arrives to investigate the incident and learns that the Geminis were poisoned with mercury @-@ tipped weapons , leading him to the blacksmith . The Lions ' theft prompts the governor to send his Jackal troops to recover the shipment or destroy the village . Zen @-@ Yi asks the blacksmith to craft him a new suit of weaponized armor . The Lions suspect that the blacksmith is helping Zen @-@ Yi and have him tortured for information . The blacksmith refuses to talk , and Brass cuts off his forearms . Jack , who had been following the blacksmith , saves him from bleeding to death . While the blacksmith recovers , he tells Jack of his past as an emancipated American slave who accidentally killed a white man who refused to let him go . He fled America by boat and went to China , where monks trained him to use his body 's energy to perform superhuman feats . Jack and the blacksmith craft his greatest weapon : a pair of iron forearms that he can animate using this energy .

Zen @-@ Yi recovers and joins Jack and the blacksmith . Meanwhile , Blossom offers to let Silver hide the gold in a secret tomb beneath the brothel in return for payment . The gold is stored in a coffin which is raised up to the rafters . That night , Blossom has her girls serve the Lions , and Silk serves Brass . At Blossom 's signal , the girls use weapons hidden in their mouths to poison many of the Lions , and they join with Blossom as the Black Widows . When Silk tries to poison Brass , his skin protects him , and he beats and almost kills her . Zen @-@ Yi , Jack , and the blacksmith arrive and join with the Black Widows to fight the remaining Lions while Blossom and Bronze fight and kill each other . While fighting Jack , Poison Dagger is crushed between large moving gears . Silver and Zen @-@ Yi fight in the tomb ; Zen @-@ Yi cuts the coffin free , and it crushes Silver . The blacksmith finds Silk , who dies in his arms . He confronts Brass , and his iron fists prove capable of inflicting damage on Brass ' seemingly invincible body . While Brass is in metal form , a powerful punch from the blacksmith shatters him to pieces . Jack runs outside in time to stop the Jackals from decimating the building with a Gatling gun .

Ultimately , Jack leaves the village to accompany the gold , and Zen @-@ Yi tells the blacksmith that he has gained a brother . With the clans destroyed and the village safe , the blacksmith vows to keep it that way and destroys the sign pointing to his weapon shop . During the credits , Zen @-@ Yi 's pregnant fiancée is kidnapped by a bird clan , prompting Zen @-@ Yi to seek the blacksmith 's aid .

= = Cast = =

RZA as Blacksmith / The Man with the Iron Fists :

An emancipated slave from America who becomes the blacksmith of Jungle Village . He channels an ancient energy to turn himself into a living weapon . His name is Thaddeus Henry Smith . RZA wrote the role specifically for himself , and trained in Hung Ga for 1 ? 2 hours a day over 2 months in preparation .

Rick Yune as Zen @-@ Yi , The X @-@ Blade :

The son of the murdered Lion Clan leader who goes to Jungle Village to avenge his father 's death . RZA said that he had Yune in mind for the role before the script had been completed .

Russell Crowe as Jack Knife :

An opium @-@ addicted British soldier named after his signature weapon . The character was partly inspired by RZA 's late cousin Ol ' Dirty Bastard . Crowe based his performance on Clint Eastwood in Dirty Harry (1971) and The Outlaw Josey Wales (1976) . Crowe agreed to join the cast because of his previous working relationship with RZA . Crowe was only able to spend 10 days filming his scenes .

Lucy Liu as Madam Blossom :

The owner of the Pink Blossom brothel , whom Liu described as the queen of the village . Liu wanted to emphasize Blossom 's strength against all the male fighters and convinced RZA to give the character a fight sequence with Cung Le 's Bronze Lion .

David Bautista as Brass Body :

A mercenary capable of turning his body to metal , making him invulnerable . Bautista described the character as a " good guy " who " made a lot of bad choices in his life . He doesn ' t really understand the difference between right and wrong . " RZA auditioned Bautista for the role after seeing him " moving as fast as lightning " during a stick @-@ fighting training video .

Jamie Chung as Lady Silk :

A prostitute in the Pink Blossom and the blacksmith 's girlfriend .

Cung Le as Bronze Lion :

A member of the Lion Clan . Le came to RZA 's attention following his 2008 mixed martial arts fight against Frank Shamrock . Bronze Lion 's fighting style incorporates elements of Tiger Kung @-@ Fu and Le 's own training in kicks and scissor kicks .

Byron Mann as Silver Lion :

The leader of the Lion Clan after he kills the previous leader . Mann was initially cast for a smaller role but after his successful audition , he was given the bigger role of Silver Lion .

The cast also includes Pam Grier as the blacksmith's mother Jane , Osric Chau as Blacksmith's assistant , MC Jin as Zen @-@ Yi's ally Chan , Daniel Wu as Poison Dagger , and Andrew Lin and Grace Huang as The Geminis . Co @-@ writer Eli Roth appears in a cameo . Several veteran martial arts actors ? including Chen Kuan @-@ tai as Golden Lion , Bryan Leung as Hyena Chief , Telly Liu as Iron Lion , Xue Jing Yao as Copper Lion , Zhu Zhu as Zen @-@ Yi's fiancée Chi Chi , Terence Yin as the Governor , and Gordon Liu as The Abbot ? appeared in the film . Liu's role was written for RZA's Shaolin teacher Shi Yan Ming , but Ming could not obtain permission to return to China for filming .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Development of the film began in 2003 when RZA produced the soundtrack for Quentin Tarantino's film Kill Bill . RZA set himself a \$ 50 @,@ 000 budget and flew to the Kill Bill set in Beijing , where he spent approximately thirty days taking notes on the way Tarantino directed the film . In 2005 , RZA met Eli Roth in Iceland , and they traveled together to LA . During the journey , RZA told Roth of his idea for a kung fu genre film , which attracted Roth's interest , but no further progress was made . RZA completed the story for the film , but Roth convinced him that he would need a completed screenplay for the project to gain any support . In 2007 , after Roth's Hostel : Part II was released , Roth and RZA agreed to seriously pursue the project . The pair took the project to several studios and met with their preferred producer , Edward R. Pressman . One of the studios suggested setting the film in a post @-@ apocalyptic situation , which RZA considered . They took the project to Strike Entertainment , which considered that it needed more development and assigned several writers to rewrite the script , which began to depart from RZA's initial idea .

RZA continued to work with Strike Entertainment's writers , but Roth , who returned from filming Inglourious Basterds , was disappointed with the rewritten screenplay and he and RZA spent a year developing and finalizing it . In total , they spent between 18 months and 2 years developing the screenplay in between other projects , and turned RZA's 90 @-@ page story into a 130 @-@ page screenplay . Citing the specificity of the fictional universe in the Star Wars series , Roth said that the pair tried to fully define the aspects of The Man with the Iron Fists to make it interesting without fight scenes . Roth said that RZA had " imagined every tribe , every fighting style , every costume " . The original script focused on several animal @-@ themed clans fighting over territory , in particular Jungle Village , which acted as a center for shipments . As the script developed , several of the clans were removed , and the focus shifted to commerce and the transportation of government gold , which also introduced the government as a higher power over the clans . RZA and Roth approached fights in the script by introducing a new character , fighting style or weapon to avoid monotony ; if a fight did not advance the story , they removed it .

RZA then financed and directed a short martial arts film called Wu @-@ Tang vs. the Golden Phoenix featuring Hong Kong @-@ based , kung @-@ fu @-@ trained actors . When he and Roth pitched The Man with the Iron Fists to producers , RZA used the short film to prove that he could handle the martial arts action and be trusted to take on his first directing role . On May 7 , 2010 , Universal Pictures announced it had agreed to finance and distribute the film , which Roth and Strike Entertainment's Marc Abraham and Eric Newman would produce . The producers gave RZA a \$ 20 million budget .

During the development process , Tarantino agreed to lend his name to the film with a " presented by " credit . In October 2012 , RZA said that he and Tarantino had intended to cross over The Man with the Iron Fists with Tarantino's 2012 Western Django Unchained . The crossover would have included a younger version of RZA's blacksmith character in a slave auction , but scheduling conflicts prevented RZA's participation . The Man with the Iron Fists spent 14 weeks in pre @-@ production including four to six weeks on location scouting . RZA insisted that six weeks of pre @-@ production would be sufficient , but Marc Abraham told him to take 14 weeks , for which RZA was

later thankful after he reached week 13 and still needed more time . During filming , RZA and Roth discussed the potential for a sequel if the film was successful .

= = = Filming = = =

Principal photography took place over approximately 10 weeks on a \$ 20 million budget . Filming began in China in December 2010 in locations including the city of Shanghai and Hengdian World Studios , and continued until March 2011 . Corey Yuen was the film 's action choreographer . To compensate for time lost to filming issues , some scenes were filmed in a single take . Approximately 6 weeks into filming , RZA began pushing the crew to work faster to remain on schedule . His assistant director eventually informed RZA that because of the push , some stunt workers were injured and being sent to hospital . After this , RZA abandoned some of his intended shots and replaced them with Computer Generated Images (CGI) . Roth also directed some shots for RZA . Crowe and Le were originally scripted to fight each other , but because of Crowe 's limited shooting schedule , he did not have the time to rehearse the fight , and instead Le was scripted to fight Liu .

The first cut of the film was four hours long and RZA suggested splitting it into two films , but Roth disagreed . It was edited to 96 minutes to meet the studio 's requirements and to excise graphic content that would cause it to receive a restrictive rating , limiting its audience . RZA abandoned the editing process for two weeks , feeling disgust at having to cut the film . In October 2012 , he said that he intended to release a " director 's cut " of the film for home viewing , and would reinsert at least 13 minutes of the cut footage . RZA described the film as an homage to the martial art films of the Hong Kong @-@ based Shaw Brothers .

The film used mostly practical special effects in preference to CGI . An effect in which Yune 's character kills six opponents whose airborne blood spray spells out " revenge " in Chinese , was specifically written to use CGI . RZA declined to subtitle the message for English audiences . The action scenes resulted in several injuries , and Bautista suffered raw and bleeding arms from RZA 's sandpaper @-@ like prop iron fists during their fight scene .

= = = Marketing = = =

RZA launched an 11 @-@ date music concert called " The Iron Fists Tour " to promote the film in association with Rock the Bells and Guerilla Union . It featured performances by members of Wu @-@ Tang Clan and other artists . The tour began on October 3 , 2012 , and visited several North American cities including New York City , Baltimore , Chicago , Los Angeles , and Las Vegas . An animated short film about the blacksmith 's journey to China and his first meeting with Brass Body , which RZA narrated , was released on October 20 , 2012 , as a prequel to the film . 16 heavily stylized posters , each by a different artist , were placed in outdoor locations in several North American cities and were designed to allow pedestrians to remove and keep them .

The marketing campaign sponsored the 2012 BET Hip Hop Awards , star Bautista 's debut mixed martial arts debut fight at Classic Entertainment and Sports : Real Pain in October 2012 , and the release of the video game Assassin 's Creed III . The film premiered in Los Angeles and New York City , and directly targeted minority demographics . RZA promoted the film at the Hispanic @-@ owned Martial Arts History Museum in Burbank , California and an original Spanish @-@ dub viral video was also released . RZA targeted African @-@ American audiences by promoting the film on rapper Snoop Dogg 's YouTube channel . An online awareness campaign included partnerships with Machinima Inc . , hip @-@ hop news site Global Grind , Ultimate Fighting Championship , IGN and Spotify .

= = Music = =

The film features music from The Black Keys , Kanye West , Wiz Khalifa , My Chemical Romance , John Frusciante and Chinese singer Sally Yeh . RZA also developed new tracks based on excerpts

from Wu @-@ Tang Clan master tracks provided by Sony Music , and songs performed by William Bell , Isaac Hayes and Mable John , which Stax Records provided . Composer Howard Drossin wrote the original musical cues for the film .

RZA had not initially set out to score the film ; he inserted temporary tracks of songs he wanted to use . After watching the temporary @-@ track cut of the film , the music was found to be unsuitable , and it was suggested that RZA provide the music . RZA sought Tarantino 's help with the score after he helped Tarantino with the score for Kill Bill . Tarantino also suggested RZA entirely produce the score . RZA and Drossin developed and finalized the score . They then developed the film 's soundtrack , which was scheduled for release on October 23 , 2012 and features 15 songs from the film including original songs by Kanye West , the Wu @-@ Tang Clan , Talib Kweli , Ghostface Killah , Pusha T , Raekwon , and collaborations by RZA with The Black Keys and Flatbush Zombies . The character Jack Knife , who was influenced by rapper Ol ' Dirty Bastard , has a theme tune featuring a jaw harp cue reminiscent of the artist 's song " Shimmy Shimmy Ya . " The blacksmith is represented by cues from Isaac Hayes ' music .

= = Release = =

The Man with the Iron Fists premiered on October 25 , 2012 , at Mann 's Chinese 6 theater in Hollywood . David Bautista attended in a yellow spandex suit , which he wore as a tribute to Bruce Lee , who wore a similar outfit in Game of Death (1972) . The film was released in North America on November 2 , 2012 .

= = = Box office = = =

The Man with the Iron Fists grossed \$ 15 @,@ 634 @,@ 090 from North America and \$ 4 @,@ 621 @,@ 223 from markets elsewhere , for a worldwide total of approximately \$ 20 @,@ 255 @,@ 313 . Pre @-@ release tracking in North America for the week before release estimated that the film would attract a mostly male audience and would earn between \$ 7 million and \$ 10 million during its opening weekend . The Man with the Iron Fists earned \$ 3 million during its opening day , and during its opening weekend the film earned \$ 7 @.@ 9 million from 1 @,@ 868 theaters ? an average of \$ 4 @,@ 235 per theater ? finishing fourth behind holdover Argo (\$ 10 @.@ 2 million) , and fellow new releases Flight (\$ 25 million) and Wreck @-@ It Ralph (\$ 49 @.@ 1 million) . The largest demographic of the opening weekend audience was under 30 (53 %) and male (64 %) .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The film received mixed reviews from critics . It has garnered a 49 % approval rating from 84 critics ? an average rating of 5 @.@ 1 out of 10 ? on the review @-@ aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes , which said , " Messy kung @-@ fu homage The Man with the Iron Fists demonstrates a slavish affection for the genre it mimics , for better or worse . " Metacritic provides a score of 51 out of 100 from 18 critics , which indicates " mixed or average " reviews . CinemaScore polls reported that the average grade moviegoers gave the film was " C + " on an A + to F scale .

Variety 's Andrew Barker called the film endearing and engagingly enthusiastic , and said it is " more fun than it ought to be " . Barker considered RZA 's on @-@ screen role to be too withdrawn to carry the central character role , but praised the supporting performances , especially those of Le 's crime lord and Crowe , who Barker said " smirkingly goes for broke to an extent that viewers haven 't seen from him since , well ... ever . " Barker also praised the film 's score , but was critical of the script 's uneven tone . The New York Times 's Manohla Dargis called it an erratically enjoyable product of a deep cinephile passion for the martial arts genre . Dargis praised Crowe 's performance and Byron Mann 's " gaudy baddie with heavy @-@ metal hair and a psycho grin " , but considered RZA 's central role a mistake , saying " with his sleepy eyes and an affect so laid @-@ back ... [he] is too recessive a screen presence to make the character pop , much less hold your interest " . The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin credited RZA 's conceptualization of the " rich , bloody , dense universe

he created down to the most insignificant details " , and praised RZA 's " powerful inner calm " and Crowe 's " defiantly theatrical turn " .

The Los Angeles Times ' Betsy Sharkey called it a martial @-@ arts spectacle that " may just be one of the best bad movies ever . " Sharkey said that some uneven performances and lack of refinement were the result of RZA 's lack of directing experience , but appreciated the choreography of the " extreme action " and the film 's visual aesthetic , which she described as " a blend of French Baroque and ancient China " . Sharkey said that the plot " goes seriously off @-@ course " when expanding on the Blacksmith 's history . The Hollywood Reporter 's Todd McCarthy said that the film is " sufficiently well done and amusing enough to satisfy the appetites of fans who mainline this sort of thing , " but considered that in directly acting as an homage to the genre , it lacked any stylistic inspiration or imaginative flair to reinvent it . McCarthy however praised the imaginative weapon designs , and the performances of Lucy Liu and Crowe . The Village Voice 's Nick Pinkerton said " the action scenes are often too cluttered for legibility , and , curious to say of a movie made by a musician , the film has broad swaths without tempo " , and added that it has a homemade charm that he found " curiously touching " .

USA Today 's Scott Bowles was critical of the film , awarding it 1 @.@ 5 stars out of 4 . He said that the film is " heavy on bloody kung fu action ... and light on just about everything else " , that it " doesn 't have enough tension to be taken seriously , or enough laughs to be taken lightly " , and called it " slick and hip " . Bowles wrote that the film has " beautifully choreographed moments , and the action sequences won 't disappoint any fans of slow @-@ motion fistfights and arteries that gush like fire hydrants " . Independent film critic Emanuel Levy wrote that Crowe 's " commanding performance " and his chemistry with Liu lift the film slightly above the routine . Levy said that the film is an " ultra @-@ violent movie that blends thrilling martial arts sequences , orchestrated and executed by some of the masters of this specific milieu , with a semi @-@ involving tale " that would be appreciated by a young , indiscriminating audience . Leonard Maltin of IndieWire said that " RZA 's understated performance isn 't bad , but his staging of action leaves something to be desired " , and that the film imitates earlier kung @-@ fu films , which it fails to improve upon .

= = = Home media = = =

The Man with the Iron Fists was released on DVD , Blu @-@ ray and digital download on February 12 , 2013 in North America . The DVD and Blu @-@ ray editions contain the theatrical release version of the film , an unrated cut containing approximately twelve minutes of additional footage , deleted scenes and three featurettes : " A Look Inside The Man with the Iron Fists " , " A Path to the East " , and " On the Set with RZA " .

= = Sequel = =

A sequel was announced by RZA in an interview with the title The Man with the Iron Fists : Sting of the Scorpion but revealed that he 's not directing the sequel , instead Roel Reine will direct the film as RZA , Rick Yune , Zhu Zhu , Andrew Lin and Grace Huang will reprise their roles as the Blacksmith , X @-@ Blade , Chi Chi and The Gemini Twins , joining the cast are Dustin Nguyen , Cary Tagawa , Carl Ng and Simon Yin . The sequel was released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray on April 14 , 2015 .