

= Hard Boiled =

Hard Boiled (Chinese : 硬漢) is a 1992 Hong Kong action film written and directed by John Woo , and starring Chow Yun Fat as Inspector " Tequila " Yuen , Tony Leung Chiu Wai as Alan an undercover cop , and Anthony Wong as Johnny Wong , a leader of the criminal triads . The film features Tequila , whose partner (Bowie Lam) is killed in a tea house gunfight with a small army of gangsters . One of the mob 's high ranking assassins is the undercover cop Alan , who must team up with Tequila for their common pursuit of taking down Wong 's crime syndicate . The film leads up to a climax in a hospital , where the two must rescue innocent civilians and newborn babies from the maternity ward while fighting off dozens of mob hitmen .

Hard Boiled was John Woo 's last Hong Kong film before his transition to Hollywood . After making films that glamorized gangsters (and receiving criticism for doing so) , Woo wanted to make a Dirty Harry styled film to glamorize the police . After the death of screenwriter Barry Wong , the film 's screenplay underwent constant changes during filming . New characters such as Mad Dog and Mr. Woo were introduced , while the original plotline of a baby poisoning psychopath was cut .

The film was released in Hong Kong in 1992 to generally positive audience reception , but it was not as commercially successful as Woo 's previous action films , such as A Better Tomorrow and The Killer . Reception from western critics was much more positive ; many critics and film scholars have come to proclaim its action scenes as among the best ever filmed . In 2007 , a video game sequel titled Stranglehold was released , which is in the process of being made into a film .

= = Plot = =

In a tea house in Hong Kong , Officer " Tequila " Yuen (Chow Yun Fat) and his partner Benny (Bowie Lam) , attempt to arrest a group of gun smugglers while they are making a deal . After an ambush from another gang member , a fierce gun battle breaks out . The gangsters are defeated but with several police officers badly wounded , and Benny is killed . Tequila , seeking revenge , decides to kill the gangster who ambushed them , rather than arrest him . This angers his boss , Officer Superintendent Pang (Philip Chan) , who wanted the gangster alive to testify . Tequila is ordered off the case .

Elsewhere , a high ranking assassin , Alan (Tony Leung Chiu Wai) , works for Triad boss " Uncle " Hoi (Kwan Hoi Shan) . Alan murders a fellow member of Hoi 's gang , who had been working for Johnny Wong 's (Anthony Wong) rival syndicate . Wong is impressed by Alan 's skill and attempts to recruit him . Alan reluctantly turns against Hoi when Wong conducts a raid on Hoi 's arsenal at a warehouse . At the warehouse , Wong 's men kill Hoi 's workers and destroy his stock . When Hoi arrives , Wong demands Alan kill Hoi , which he does , along with the rest of Hoi 's men . Just then , smoke grenades explode and Tequila attacks . Alan covers Wong 's escape as Tequila battles and kills most of the gangsters . In the end , Tequila finds himself confronting Alan face to face in the smoke , with guns to each other 's heads . Tequila tries to shoot Alan , but his .357 Ruger GP100 revolver is out of ammo . Although he is free to kill Tequila , Alan slowly lowers his gun and walks away , after which Tequila opens his revolver , and dumps all the shells , revealing them to apparently be blanks , although it is unclear if this is intentional or a mistake .

At the police station , Pang confirms that Alan is actually an undercover cop . Tequila tracks Alan down to his sailboat to try to make sense of the situation , but the two are ambushed by the remnants of Hoi 's gang . Tequila and Alan manage to kill their attackers just before Wong arrives , which allows Alan to keep his cover . Wong realizes that one of his gangsters named Foxy (Tung Wei) , is an informant for the police . Foxy is beaten at the docks by Wong 's henchman Mad Dog (Philip Kwok) in front of Alan and Wong . In front of Wong and Mad Dog , Alan then shoots Foxy in the chest , although he has secretly placed a cigarette lighter in Foxy 's breast pocket earlier to prevent the shot from being fatal . Foxy finds Tequila at a jazz bar and informs him that Wong 's armory is in the nearby Maple Group Hospital . As Tequila takes Foxy to the hospital , Wong finds out Foxy is alive and sends Alan to kill Foxy , as well as sending Mad Dog separately to cover Alan . At the hospital , Alan confronts Tequila , demanding to know the whereabouts of Wong 's arsenal .

While Alan and Tequila are distracted , Foxy is killed by Mad Dog .

Alan and Tequila discover a hidden passage in the hospital leading to Wong 's arsenal . They are confronted by Mad Dog , who engages them . Wong arrives at the hospital and has all the patients , police officers and staff taken hostage . After fighting their way to the main lobby , Alan and Tequila liberate the kidnapped patients and police officers . Pang evacuates the lobby while police detective Teresa Chang (Teresa Mo) goes to the maternity ward to organize evacuating the babies . Alan and Tequila continue fighting gangsters until finding Mad Dog . While Tequila goes to assist Chang with the babies , Alan and Mad Dog find themselves in a standoff with a group of patients caught in the middle . They slowly put their guns down and offer the patients safe passage , until Wong appears and shoots them all . An enraged Mad Dog shoots Wong in the torso , but then runs out of ammo . Wong shoots and kills Mad Dog while Alan escapes .

Tequila finds the last baby in the maternity unit , and carries it to safety while fighting off the last of the gangsters . Alan and Tequila meet up again and are confronted by Wong , who has programmed bombs to blow up the building . Alan pursues Wong as Tequila escapes the hospital with the last baby , the hospital exploding around him . Outside , Wong suddenly appears holding Alan at gunpoint . After watching Wong humiliate Tequila , Alan grabs Wong 's 9mm Heckler & Koch P7 pistol . In a struggle , Alan shoots himself through the stomach giving Tequila enough time to shoot Wong dead with a .38 Taurus Model 85 revolver . Later at the police station , Pang and Tequila burn Alan 's police file . Alan sails away from Hong Kong in his boat .

= = Cast = =

Chow Yun @-@ fat as Inspector " Tequila " Yuen : A clarinet @-@ playing police officer whose partner is killed in a restaurant gunfight with a small army of gangsters . Chow had previously worked with director John Woo on several of his films , including A Better Tomorrow , The Killer and Once a Thief .

Tony Leung Chiu @-@ Wai as Alan : An undercover cop posing as a high @-@ ranking Triad assassin . He makes an origami crane every time he kills someone , a trait which was influenced by Woo 's daughter when he saw her making them . Tony 's character is shown as living alone and detached from others . Woo stated that this was influenced by Alain Delon 's character in the French crime film Le Samourai . Leung had previously worked with Woo on his film Bullet in the Head .

Teresa Mo as Teresa Chang : A fellow police officer who is the girlfriend of Inspector " Tequila " Yuen . Chang helps decode the secret code songs that are sent to the police office by Alan .

Philip Chan as Supt. Pang : Prior to the film , Philip Chan was a police officer for about fifteen years . Philip Chan felt that certain scenes in the film were very familiar as they were similar to things had to do with real police work .

Philip Kwok as Mad Dog : A skilled gunfighter working for Johnny Wong .

Anthony Wong as Johnny Wong : Wong is the head of a Triad who encourages Alan to kill Uncle Hoi . Wong 's triad has a large amount of guns hidden in the basement of a hospital .

Bowie Lam as Benny : An undercover officer who is killed in the tea house shoot @-@ out .

Anjo Leung as Benny 's son .

Bobby Au @-@ Yeung as Lionheart : An assistant to Inspector " Tequila " Yuen .

Kwan Hoi @-@ Shan as Mr. Hoi : A triad boss who is the head of the gang Tony is investigating . Mr. Hoi is killed in a warehouse shoot @-@ out .

Tung Wei as Foxy : An undercover cop beaten up by Mad Dog . Foxy is spared by Alan , and lives to deliver information to Tequila from Alan . Foxy is later killed by Mad Dog at the hospital in which the final shoot @-@ out takes place .

John Woo as a Bartender : A bartender at the Jazz club who gives advice to Inspector " Tequila " Yuen .

= = Production = =

== Development ==

The film was originally developed in 1990 . After creating films which focused on the lives of gangsters , director John Woo wanted to make a film that glorified the police instead . Woo admired Clint Eastwood 's and Steve McQueen 's characters from their films Dirty Harry and Bullitt respectively , and wanted to make his own Hong Kong @-@ style Dirty Harry police detective film . While creating this character , Woo was inspired by a police officer who was a strong @-@ willed and tough member of the police force , as well as being an avid drummer . This led to Woo having Tequila 's character be a musician as well as a cop .

Before production started , Woo told his actors that he was not going to make the film as stylish as his previous films , but to have it be more of an " edgy thriller " . The role of Teresa Chang was originally made for actress Michelle Yeoh who had a long relationship with producer Terence Chang . After casting Teresa Mo , the character of Teresa Chang was greatly re @-@ written . The film 's initial story was about Tony Leung 's character being a psychopath who would poison baby food . When Terence Chang was making connections to have Woo make films in the United States , Chang found people uninterested and disgusted with the theme of babies being poisoned . This halted production for a month to develop a new story . Screenwriter Barry Wong was brought in to write a new story about Tony Leung 's character being an undercover police officer . After writing the first part of the script , Wong went on a vacation outside Hong Kong , where he died leaving the script unfinished .

== Filming ==

Hard Boiled took 123 days to shoot . Although Woo told his cast that the film would be more gritty and not as stylish as his previous films , Hard Boiled became more stylish as the filming began . The tea house sequence in the film was shot before the script was written . The crew found that the tea house was going to be torn down and decided to film a scene there . Woo saw the staircase in the tea house , and thought about a scene where a character would come shooting down gun smugglers while sliding down the banister . The tea house sequence was shot in around a week 's time and was choreographed by Woo and Philip Kwok . It was shot with interruptions from many local triads in the area asking for protection money , and residents complaining about the noise .

The script of the film went through several changes during filming . Due to the length of the film , scenes from a side @-@ story involving the relationship between the character Tequila and Teresa Chang were cut . Another cut scene included Tequila playing clarinet over Benny 's grave . With these cuts , Chow Yun @-@ Fat felt his character was not very deep in comparison to Leung 's character of Alan . To develop his character more , Chow asked John Woo to insert a mentor character in the film , which Woo himself would play . Chow felt that having Woo in this role would make Woo not cut out these scenes . Philip Kwok 's role of Mad Dog was not in the script and was created on the set . Kwok first worked with Woo on his film Once a Thief and was asked to return to work on Hard Boiled . After reading the script , Woo felt that the character of Johnny Wong was not a strong enough physical threat . After seeing Kwok do several of the stunts while filming , Woo created the character of Mad Dog for him .

The scenes shot at the Hospital maternity ward and the warehouse were shot at a new studio called " The Coca @-@ Cola Factory " which was formerly a Coke bottling plant . The hospital scenes took 40 days to shoot . The hospital segment 's location was chosen since they wanted to have an atypical location where gangs would hide their weapons . While filming in the hospital , the windows were covered with blast shields to give the appearance of night time , which allowed the crew to film at any time during the day . Members of the cast and crew stayed in the hospital for days often losing track of the time of day . After long hours of filming in the hospital , the crew became exhausted . This led to having the last scene be one long five @-@ minute scene of action to shorten the time needed to film . To complete this , during the scene when two characters go into an elevator to talk for twenty seconds , the crew changes the scene entirely and sets up the explosions for the scene to continue seamlessly . An accident occurred while filming the hospital

sequence . Real glass was used and pieces of it flew toward Tony Leung and got into his eyes . Leung was sent to the hospital and after a week 's rest , he returned to the set . Woo changed the ending of Hard Boiled after many members of the crew of the film felt that Leung 's character should survive at the film 's end .

== Post @-@ production ==

Woo is a fan of jazz music and wanted this style for the soundtrack of Hard Boiled . Woo had also previously wanted a singer to perform a jazz song and have Chow Yun Fat 's character play saxophone in his previous film The Killer . The producer for The Killer , Tsui Hark , rejected this idea for The Killer , feeling that Hong Kong audiences didn 't enjoy and understand jazz music . The score heard in Hard Boiled was created by jazz musician Michael Gibbs . During promotional screenings , the score for the film was different and was described as " very haunting music " by film scholar Bey Logan . This score could not be used as the production crew could not get the rights to the music . Other songs featured in the film , include " Hello " by Lionel Richie and the traditional song " Mona Lisa " . Woo chose these songs specifically for their lyrics to suggest that Tony was a sort of pen pal to Teresa . All the characters in Hard Boiled had their voices dubbed by their own actors in order to save money . Woo stated this was convenient as he did not have to worry about setting up boom mics and other sound elements .

== Release ==

== Theatrical run ==

Hard Boiled 's was released on 16 April 1992 in Hong Kong . The film grossed HK \$ 19 @, @ 711 @, @ 048 which was not as strong of a box office reception as Woo 's previous action films A Better Tomorrow or The Killer . On the film 's initial release in Hong Kong it debuted at number 3 in the box office where it was beaten by Tsui Hark 's Once Upon a Time in China 2 and the Stephen Chow film Fight Back to School II .

The North American premiere of Hard Boiled was in September 1992 at the Toronto International Film Festival . At the premiere the audience response was very positive with people stomping their feet and yelling at the screen . This reception surprised producer Terence Chang who did not expect such a positive reaction . Hard Boiled received wide release in the United Kingdom on 8 October 1993 .

== Home media ==

A Region Free DVD of Hard Boiled was released by The Criterion Collection on 10 July 1998 . A second Region 1 DVD of the film was released by Fox Lorber . Fox Lorber released the film as a stand @-@ alone release and as a double feature with The Killer on 3 October 2000 . The most recent Region 1 release of Hard Boiled was from Dragon Dynasty , who released a two disc DVD of the film on 24 July 2007 . A Blu @-@ Ray version of the film was included as part of the Stranglehold Limited Edition for the Playstation 3 , and was later released as a standalone title by Dragon Dynasty .

== Reception ==

== Critical response ==

Hard Boiled was received well by English @-@ language critics on its original release . The film ranking website Rotten Tomatoes reported that 94 % of critics had given the film positive reviews ,

based upon a sample of 31 . Initial reception was positive . Vincent Canby of The New York Times found it difficult to follow both the action scenes and the subtitles at the same time , but stated that " Mr. Woo does , in fact , seem to be a very brisk , talented director with a gift for the flashy effect and the bizarre confrontation . " A review in The Los Angeles Times stated that " With Hard Boiled , John Woo shows himself to be the best director of contemporary action films anywhere . " The Philadelphia Inquirer spoke positively about the action scenes , noting the " epic shootouts that bookend Hard @-@ Boiled , John Woo 's blood @-@ soaked Hong Kong gangster extravaganza , are wondrously staged , brilliantly photographed tableaux . " The Boston Herald proclaimed the film as " arguably Woo 's masterpiece , it is an action film to end all action films , an experience so deliriously cinematic it makes " True Romance , " a film that clearly aspires to it , look like a cheap copy " A review in Newsday gave the film three and a half stars , stating that " Mayhem has never looked better than in John Woo 's latest high @-@ caliber cops @-@ and @-@ robbers thriller , even if the plot is a bit slippery " and that John Woo " has blasted the action genre onto a whole new level . His shootouts are a ballet ; his firebombings are poetry . And while he lets the body count get away from him , he constantly fascinates , through a combination of chaos and an excruciating control over what we 're allowed to see . "

After the film 's initial release , critical reception continues to be positive . Film scholar Andy Klein wrote that the film is " almost a distillation of [Woo 's] post @-@ 1986 work . Even if the plot is full of holes , and the emotional tug isn 't quite as strong as in The Killer , the action sequences (nearly the whole movie) are among the greatest ever filmed " . Mark Salisbury of Empire Magazine gave the film four stars out of five , calling it " Infinitely more exciting than a dozen Die Hards , action cinema doesn 't come any better than this . " Salisbury compared Hard Boiled to Woo 's American films , stating that his Hong Kong films are " not as slick as his later films , [Hard Boiled is] more inventive and stylised and [has] great early performances from Fat and Leung " . Empire placed the film at number 70 in their list of " The 100 Best Films Of World Cinema " in 2010 . Ed Gonzalez of Slant Magazine gave the film the highest rating of four stars , proclaiming it to be one of Woo 's best films . The British film magazine Empire ranked the character of Tequila as 33rd in their " The 100 Greatest Movie Characters " poll .

= = = Accolades = = =

At the 12th Hong Kong Film Awards , David Wu and John Woo won the award for " Best Film Editing " . Tony Leung was nominated for " Best Supporting Male Actor " , but lost the award to Liu Kai @-@ Chi in Cageman .

= = Video game = =

In 2007 , Midway Games released the game Stranglehold . The game 's story and storyboards were made in collaboration with John Woo . The game features the character Tequila from Hard Boiled , who is travelling the globe in search of his kidnapped daughter . John Woo 's production company Lion Rock Entertainment is developing a film version of the game which will be written by Jeremy Passmore and Andre Fabrizio .