

kung-fu fighting

Maybe you've been there: early 20s, post-college and for some reason, you find yourself living at your

Grandma's house in your hometown while you wait tables, save money and try to figure out what to do with your life. Luckily, your best friend still lives in the same town, and his wife works the graveyard shift. Add frothy cold drinks, an endless supply of old karate films, and you have a recipe for good times and better kicks.

Nothing beats watching the cat-like reflexes of experts in kung-fu, tae kwan do, Shaolin, or any other of the magical, mystical martial arts. So let the pretentious folks wax rhapsodic about the latest "important" Oscar-nominated films, for these movies can simply kick those movies' butts.

10. "China O'Brien" — While none of Cynthia Rothrock's movies have gripping stories, they do feature this five-time karate world champion showing us that kung-fu isn't just a man's game.

9. "Ghost Dog" — While not as much action as many on this list, this story of a modern-day hitman who lives by the code of a samurai (Forest Whitaker) is absorbing and features a phenomenal soundtrack.

8. "Seven Samurai" — Legendary director Akira Kurosawa's epic about

MOVIES THAT MIGHT COMPEL YOU TO BREAK OUT YOUR BO STAFF

AND OVERDUB YOUR HOME MOVIES **BY MARK LUCE**



vagabond swordsmen hired to protect a town. A wonderful final battle.

7. "Return of the Dragon" — Bruce Lee helps save a friend's restaurant from the clutches of local heavies. The crime boss doesn't take "no" for an answer and sends Chuck Norris to take on Bruce.

6. "The Legend of Drunken Master" — Jackie Chan is consistently one of the most entertaining martial artists, and he does his own stunts. The finale here is something to behold: fighting a bevy of badguys while ducking carts full of hot coals.

5. "Kill Bill Vol. I" — Though genre purists will say it's not really a martial arts movie, this over-the-top, blood-soaked Quentin Tarantino revenge story features some wicked fighting in kitchens and the infamous House of Blue Leaves.

4. "Ong-Bak: Thai Warrior" — I have a dear friend who has a Ph.D. in English and without question is the smartest person I have ever met. This is his favorite movie. A whirlwind of Tony Jaa doing things that gravity shouldn't allow. Don't pay attention to the story, just try to follow Jaa's fists.

3. "Fist of Legend" — While you may know Jet Li from "Hero" or "Kiss of the Dragon," this remake of Bruce Lee's "Fist of Fury" ranks as one of the best martial arts movies ever. Li is blinding fast and wicked smooth.

2. "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" — Unbelievably beautiful film where the fights feel more like ballet. Unlike many martial arts films, this one actually has a good plot.

1. "Fists of Fury" — Bruce Lee stars in the film that changed the landscape of martial arts films, and you will see no wires or camera tricks. It's merely Bruce being Bruce, and bad dudes get played all over the place.

Happy roundhouse kicks.

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