

KUNG FU CINEMA

SCREEN FIGHTING NEWS & REVIEW

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Genre(s): Short Film, Action, Comedy
Origin: USA
Length: 15 min
Studio(s): Russem Productions
Director(s): Russ EMANUEL
Producer(s): Russ EMANUEL, Emile HARIS, Lisa O'DELL
Action Director(s): Jeff SCOTT (stunts, wirework), Sebastien BETSCH (fights)
Writer(s): Emile HARIS
Cinematographer(s): Aasulv Wolf AUSTAD
Music: Neil ARGO
Rated: NR - moderate violence
Cast:
 Tracy O'CONNOR ... Gwen
 Michelle MARTIN ... Mitzi
 Erick HOLLOWAY ... Dan
 Michelle LEE ... Ninja Girl
 Matteo RIBAUDO ... Mr. Abrams
 David NEFF ... Mob Boss
 Dina KRIGER ... Lucy
 Scott St. BLAZE ... Kevin

Recommendations:

[Carmen's Virtue \(2003\)](#)

[Duel \(2004\)](#)

[Ping Shao Han: Ascension \(2004\)](#)

REVIEWS

Girl with Gun (2005)

AKA: GWG

★★★★★

by Mark Pollard
2006.01.06

"Do you have any classes on how to kick ninja butt?"

Balancing life as your average [single](#) white female with being a secret assassin isn't easy or so the action comedy short [film](#) **Girl with Gun** proposes.

Tracy O'Connor is Gwen, aka the Nightingale. When she isn't leaving a drug pusher to die with a painful bullet wound to the gut or kung fu sparring with the wall-climbing Ninja Girl (Michelle Lee), she's trying to maintain a relationship with her unsuspecting boyfriend Dan (Erick Holloway) and lifelong friend Mitzi (Michelle Martin).

In his second short film, director Russ Emanuel has put together a slick slice of life feature that doesn't blow the viewer away with any one element, but presents an even balance of character development, comic situations and action. Emanuel's two action scenes are different in tone, but this appears intentional. Short [films](#) can act as a portfolio for aspiring filmmakers and showing greater diversity in their work can be an asset, even if it doesn't make for the most cohesive short.

The film opens with the bloody aftereffects of some gunplay. Technically, it's not an action scene at all since we never see Gwen blasting away at the villain, but Emanuel manages to give the scene a stylish visual flair that suggests kinetic action with a smoking gun. It's a scene designed to grab your attention and it works.

The second action scene is all martial [arts](#) and ends well with a pun that ties directly back into Gwen's more ordinary life. While on a date with her boyfriend, she's forced to step outside to take out her latest target. But lying in wait is Ninja Girl. After taking an unexpected beating, she casually returns to her table in less than stellar condition.

The fight has the feel of a Hollywood scrap that draws inspiration from Hong Kong martial arts movies. In other words, it tries to ape Hong Kong action and fails. Both actresses are obviously not screen fighters and the scene relies on various unremarkable tricks to sell slightly stilted action. But this isn't a serious knock. Putting together a fast-paced fantasy fight with wirework and martial arts sparring is no easy task, even for the people who know it best and have the resources to do it right. The people behind this scene are wirework specialist Jeff Scott, an established stunt coordinator who hasn't really had a chance to do anything notable yet and the unknown Sebastien Betsch. For something that was probably put together in a day (hopefully), it's not too bad. However, fans of more serious short action film work, such as what The Stunt People have produced, won't miss anything by not seeing this.

Of potential interest to old school movie buffs is the second unit direction of Tong Yim-chan, a veteran of Hong Kong's kung fu movie genre. Tong was a recognizable supporting actor in roughly thirty classics ranging from Chang Cheh's [Vengeance!](#) (1970) to Jackie Chan's [Project A](#) (1983). Apparently he's now pursuing a career in Hollywood as a filmmaker.

If judged solely on the action, **GWG** would be a disappointing short. But it's the total package that sells it. This is helped along by great technical work from lighting and [camera](#) work to sound and a very complimentary techno and Fiona Apple-inspired soundtrack. It's also

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helped along by attractive newcomer Tracy O'Connor in a skin-tight leather cat suit. But I digress. Emanuel doesn't appear to be the next Michael Mann or John Woo, but he shows a lot of diversified potential in working with multiple genres and looks to be well on his way to fitting into the mainstream [mold](#) if given the chance.



Distributor: n/a
Format: n/a
Length: n/a
Aspect Ratio: n/a
Audio Tracks: n/a
Subtitles: n/a
Notes: n/a
Extras: n/a

Picture: Buy: Amazon.com
Sound: HKFlix.com
Extras: Yesasia.com

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