

## **NO RETREAT NO SURRENDER (1986):**

Producer: Ng See Yuen

Director: Corey Yuen

Writer: Keith W. Strandberg (Second Assistant Director as well)

Cast: Kurt McKinney, Jean-Claude Van Damme

Locations: Seattle, WA; LA

Original Title: Ring of Truth

Review courtesy of [www.kungfucinema.com](http://www.kungfucinema.com)

"This is without a doubt one of the most underrated martial arts films of the 1980's."

In 1985, ROCKY IV was a big hit at the box office. A year earlier, THE KARATE KID was the monster hit that launched Ralph Macchio. Hong Kong director Corey Yuen and producer Ng See-Yuen melded ideas from both blockbusters and have come up with the underrated cult classic that launched the man who would be known as "Van Damage", Jean-Claude Van Damme.

Future soap opera actor Kurt McKinney plays Jason Stillwell, a karate student who is a Bruce Lee fanatic. He likes to emulate Lee in the dojo, making a fool of himself. When his father, who is also his karate teacher, is forced against his will to fight a crime syndicate, he is annihilated by Soviet powerhouse Ivan, played by Van Damme. Van Damme is impressive in his first action film role as a villain, showcasing his impressive kicking skills against shotokan karate champion Timothy Baker, who plays Jason's father.

As a result of the attack, the family moves from Los Angeles to Seattle, Washington. Jason makes a new friend in local dancer R.J., played by dancer/actor J.W. Fails (LAMBADA). However, he also makes enemies in the form of local karate champs Dean and Frank, played by Dale Jacoby (RING OF FIRE 1 & 2, BLOODMATCH), and kickboxing champion Peter "Sugarfoot" Cunningham. Cunningham proved to be so impressive in his fight scenes that Corey Yuen would use him a year later in the Hong Kong film ABOVE THE LAW (aka RIGHTING WRONGS) as a hitman who takes on Yuen Biao in a memorable fight.

Jason seeking for help, relies on help from Bruce Lee, who is buried in Seattle. To bring the supernatural twist, Bruce Lee comes back from the grave and is played by Bruce-alike Kim Tai-Jung, best known for playing Bruce Lee in two films, GAME OF DEATH and its sequel TOWER OF DEATH. An interesting thing to notice is the fact that McKinney speaks English while Kim speaks in Korean but is dubbed over in English. In fact, during production, Kim and McKinney have no idea what they were saying.

Of course, being predictable, Jason gets his training complete and in the end, he is forced to fight Ivan in the ring. Despite his limited screen time, Van Damme explodes on the screen as the Soviet powerhouse, who takes on Jacoby, then Cunningham (actually knocking him out as seen on screen), and then Chuck Norris protege Ron Pohnel. The Van Damme-Pohnel fight is actually one of the highlight fight sequences aside from the McKinney-Van Damme climatic fight scene.

When the film was distributed in 1986 by New World Pictures in the U.S.A., parts of the film were cut out, including the finale, where the intercuts between the Ivan-Jason fight with Jason's training showed more of an impact in the film. Despite all the clichés and predictability, the action is sweet in the film. Corey Yuen and Mang Hoi, using the English name "Harrison Mang", did an impressive job with the fight choreography, showcasing the skills of McKinney, Van Damme, Jacoby, and even in a highlight fight, tang soo do black belt Ron Pohnel and Van Damme.

Van Damme, notably, would follow up this Hong Kong-U.S. crossover with the film that made him one of the top action stars of the 80's and early 90's, BLOODSPORT. After working on lesser films and a plague of personal problems, Van Damme has recently made a huge comeback in the direct-to-DVD circuit. On the other hand, Kurt McKinney would go on to become a very well-known soap opera star with major roles on GENERAL HOSPITAL and GUIDING LIGHT. McKinney did strut his martial arts skills again when he teamed up with Cynthia Rothrock in the 1996 B-film SWORN TO JUSTICE.

The film spawned two official sequels, NO RETREAT, NO SURRENDER 2: RAGING THUNDER (1987) and NO RETREAT, NO SURRENDER 3: BLOOD BROTHERS (1989), both starring tae kwon do black belt Loren Avedon. Despite many harsh criticism as an uninspired cross of The Karate Kid and Rocky IV, this is without a doubt one of the most underrated martial arts films of the 1980's.

### **Audience Reviews:**

After a bad review: Sivakumar says:

[June 16, 2008 at 5:18 am](#)

This review is completely wrong. This movie is one of the best movies ever made with the inspirational soundtrack and the music. The title track "Hold On To The Vision" by Kevin Chalfant is the best inspirational music ever. Period.

A Classic Movie for the Ages, February 13, 2008

By [donb51 "Dad"](#) (Virginia) - [See all my reviews](#)

We got this movie in 1980-somehting when I was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. We had five kids who were raised watching this movie as Okinawa had no US TV and we had to get Videotapes for our entertainment. As the kids grew, they remade this movie several times using their own equipment. They had the lines and acting down pat - just like the original - it was so easy to imitate. Anyway,

as I get older, I wouldn't trade my original copy of this movie with my kids remakes for anything in the world. To this day, we take this stuff out and watch it every Christmas. Ah the memories it brings back is so sweet and all the grown kids still get the biggest "kick" out of it. What fun! Try and start your own memories with this and your own small kids.

A Masterpiece....., March 15, 2001

By [James Murray](#) (Stoke on Trent, England) - [See all my reviews](#)

This movie is without a shadow of a doubt the single greatest piece of cinematography that I have ever seen. My friend bought this for £6.99 about 3 years ago, and at a conservative estimate I would say we have watched it 50 times.

This film works on so many levels I can't list them all. NRNS tackles issues such as father-son conflicts, long distance relationships, the effects of moving on a teenagers life, the role of martial arts in society. Every time you watch this movie I guarantee that you will find a comedy editing error, a hilarious facial expression, a continuity mistake...the possibilities are endless. So lets examine the movie...where to start?? Possibly with Van Damme who dispays some of the finest acting of his illustrious career in this film. Jean Claude is so fast in the last fight scene he actually appears to teleport. Or possibly with the real star Kurt McKinney who has the greatest array of sleeveless tops in the business. Then there's a host of others RJ the comedy black side kick, who can transform into a white guy whenever he has to do a break dancing routine, or Kim Tai Chong who puts in a brave performance as Bruce Lee, overcoming the handicap that he looks nothing like Bruce.

In short this is a work of genius that we will likely never see again in our generation, although my friends and I are looking.

The most memorable Karate movie., June 20, 1999

By A Customer

This is quite possibly the movie that I have watched the most in my life. my friends and I always use quotes from it: What? Are you sick, man? Her brothers my SENSEI! Don't fight it it's bigger than the both of us. A martial arts fan must-have.