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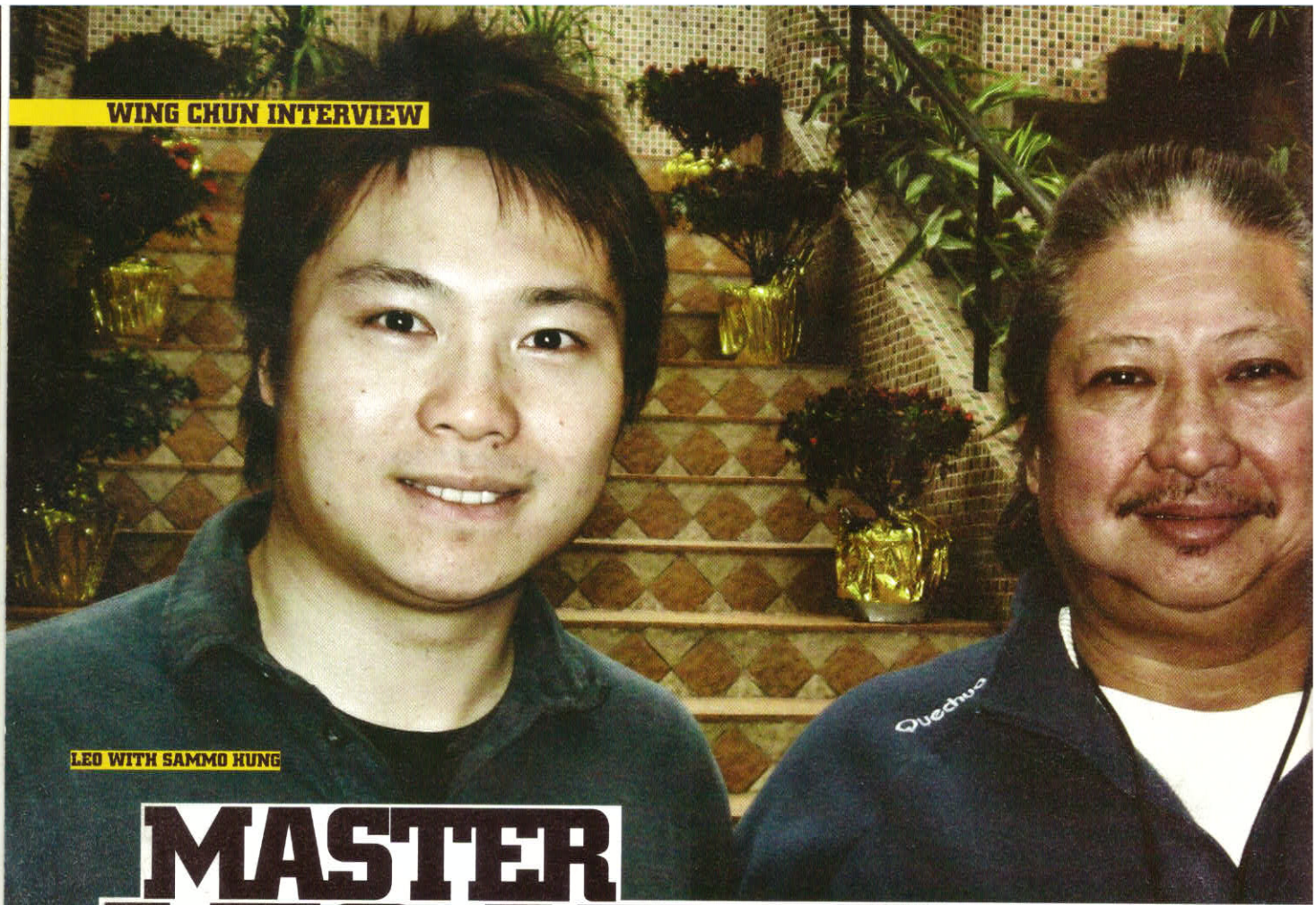
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LEO WITH SAMMO HUNG

# MASTER LEO AU YEUNG

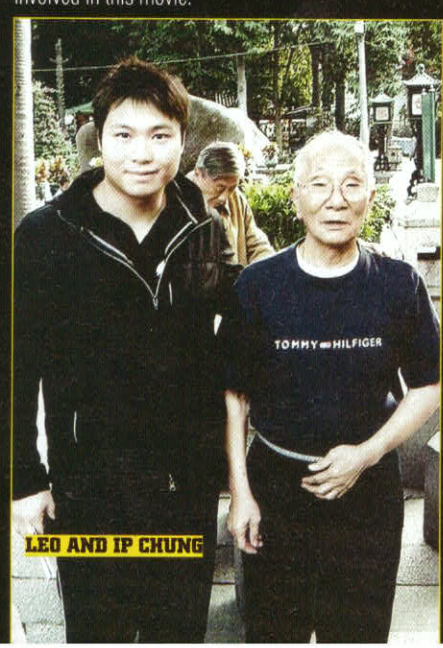
## THE WING CHUN MASTER BEHIND THE IP MAN MOVIE

**ANDREW STATON MEETS WITH MASTER LEO AU YEUNG, THE WING CHUN TEACHER WHO ADVISED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BEHIND THE SCENES WITH SAMMO HUNG ON LAST YEAR'S SEMINAL WING CHUN MOVIE, 'IP MAN'.**

Leo Au Yeung is a Hong Kong native whose first Wing Chun training began in 1995 under Grandmaster Ip Chun. In 1997 Leo came to the UK to study and pursue a new life, but he returns to Hong Kong every year to train under Ip Chun.

In 2001, Leo joined the *Ip Man Martial Arts Association* and became a lifetime registered instructor of the *Ip Man Martial Art Association Hong Kong* which was graded by Grandmaster Ip Chun. In 2002, Leo was introduced to Samuel Kwok by Ip Chun and, since then, he has trained under his supervision. He is also an honorary member and approved instructor, certified by Master Samuel Kwok, founder of the *Traditional Wing Chun Association, UK*. In 2008, Leo was invited by the Hong Kong film producer to help choreograph the new *Ip Man* movie. He worked closely with the famous Hong Kong actor/director Sammo Hung, with Leo coaching the action crew in Wing Chun and providing advice on designing the action scenes.

We were able to catch up with the man who made the Wing Chun action look authentic, Master Leo Au Yeung, who was planning a follow up trip to Hong Kong and China to work on the choreography for *Ip Man 3* the second sequel to the original blockbuster. He talked to us exclusively about how he became involved in this movie.




LEO AND IP CHUNG

**Andrew Staton: When did you decide you wanted to learn martial arts?**

**Master Leo Au Yeung:** Well, basically, I always wanted to practise martial arts... I was born in Hong Kong... I had home work every night but I kept telling my parents that I wanted to learn martial arts. It was not until I was fifteen or sixteen years of age that I got a chance to learn martial arts because my parents decided to send me to England to study. My uncle was training in Wing Chun and my father told him that he was sending me to England in one or two years time and asked him to recommend any Wing Chun teachers in Hong Kong around my area. He told my father that there was a guy called Ip Chun who had a good reputation in teaching the art. I asked my parents to take me there and start my Wing Chun training...

**Where did you learn Wing Chun?**

It was at a place in Hong Kong called Shar Tin and I trained every Sunday.

**How long did it take you to learn Wing Chun?**

Well, I spent two years with Ip Chun before I came to England to study in a boarding school. I continued practising Wing Chun and, in the summer holidays, I would go back to Hong Kong to see my parents and spend time at the Wing Chun school learning the system from Ip Chun. At that time, he had a school in the Prince Edward district of Hong Kong and I



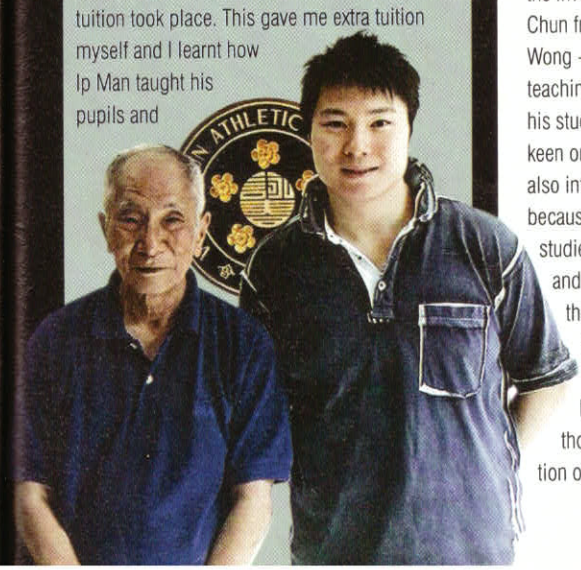
was there every single day through the school holidays, for five to six hours a day training and learning the art.

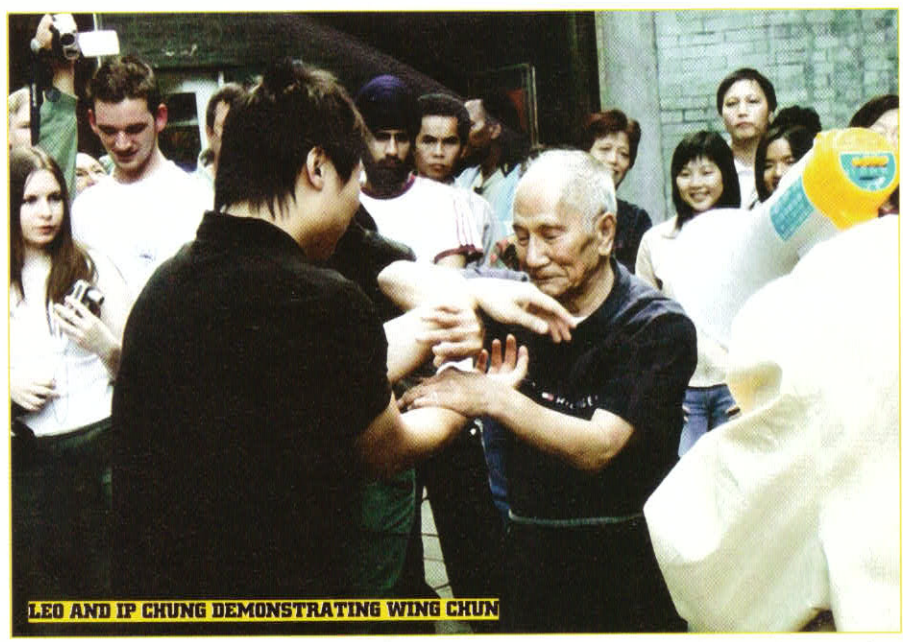
**What do you personally think of the Wing Chun system as a fighting system - you know several Kung Fu systems - what makes it stand out and what does it have to offer the student?**

Every martial art is a form of fighting - there is no good or bad martial art - only the student makes it good or bad... Wing Chun, for me, is a short distance martial art... it encourages the practitioner to get close to their opponent - kill the distance and finish the job in close... Also, the Wing Chun system does not encourage use of force against force, it always redirects energy, using less energy to beat more energy. Two things in Wing Chun are really important - one is that you have to close the distance, the other is that you have to be soft - you cannot be hard - you have to be like a machine that wants to conserve energy to your benefit in order to counter the attack or defence or whatever...

**What was it like training with Ip Chun?**

As you may know, when you go training at the Wing Chun school, Grandmaster Ip Chun is not always there and he's not always teaching because he is quite old. However, every summer holiday a foreign or Western student would come to learn from Ip Chun and they would pay for private tuition, one-on-one... As you know, Ip Chun does not speak English so I was always the translator in the school while this private tuition took place. This gave me extra tuition myself and I learnt how Ip Man taught his pupils and how he approached teaching this system. From this experience I could see that, although Ip Chun is a short guy, he really knows how to use his energy - he emphasises the soft side of Wing Chun. Also, on the other hand, he is very good at explaining things - he always gives examples to the student so as to make them understand what he is trying to teach them. He teaches in an organised manner too... step 1,2,3,4, etc... breaking it down to make it easier for the student to understand... I really respect him for his Wing Chun and his teaching skill too.





LEO AND IP CHUNG DEMONSTRATING WING CHUN

**How did the opportunity to work on the *Ip Man* movie come about?**

I have known Ip Chun since I was sixteen or seventeen and I am thirty-two now, so he knows me pretty well. When I left Hong Kong, I asked Ip Chun who I could learn with because I wanted to progress my Wing Chun in the UK. He pointed me to Sifu Samuel Kwok - his best student in the UK so, after finishing my studies, I went to train with Samuel for quite a few years...

Then, three or four years ago, Sim Kwok Lamn [one of the investors on the *Ip Man* movie] was learning Wing Chun from another of Ip Man's students, Fan Say Wong - he was not teaching the public, he was only teaching private students and Sim Kwok Lamn was his student... So this guy, I call him Sifu Sim, he was keen on making a movie about *Ip Man* and he was also interested in promoting Wing Chun worldwide because he practised Wing Chun and loves it. He had studied with Ip Ching and he had been to Ip Chun and all the top Wing Chun teachers... He had seen the different ways the system was been taught from Sifu to Sifu, even though they all followed the teachings of Ip Man... From this analysis, he decided to go with Ip Chun because he though that his system was the best representation of the Wing Chun system. Then he got the chance to study in England for two to three years, he wanted a career break and Ip Chun recommended Samuel Kwok to him as he wanted to practise. So he phoned up Samuel and told him he had trained with Ip Chun in Hong Kong and asked to meet up for some training. Because I am one of his best students, Samuel asked me to accompany him... We met Sifu Sim and I found out that his Wing Chun was very good - he knew things I didn't know as he had been training in Wing Chun for ten years. I thought this was a golden opportunity for me to progress my Wing Chun training to another level, so we did some Chi-Sao and, after this, I became one of his students, and I learned from him every week.

Then, after he finished his studies in England he went back to Hong Kong and he decided to use the medium of movies to promote the Chinese martial arts - not just promote Wing Chun, but also Hung Gar, Tai chi and other Chinese styles so as to say thank you to all his teachers and to help give the systems longevity. He told me he was going invest in a movie called *Ip Man* and that he wanted someone who knew the system to show the true Wing Chun, so he appointed me to go back to China to train up the people there and be the choreographer in Wing Chun for the movie.

**When you went to China, was it difficult to train the extras in Wing Chun to make it look authentic?**

I did not find one single problem because they were all very professional people. We are talking about Sammo Hung and his crew! He has a team of professional stuntmen who have been working with him for at least ten years. I arrived there in a van that had picked me up from the hotel and they had already given me some idea of what they needed me to do - train up a group of people and also create some fight scenes and choreograph them with Sammo. I