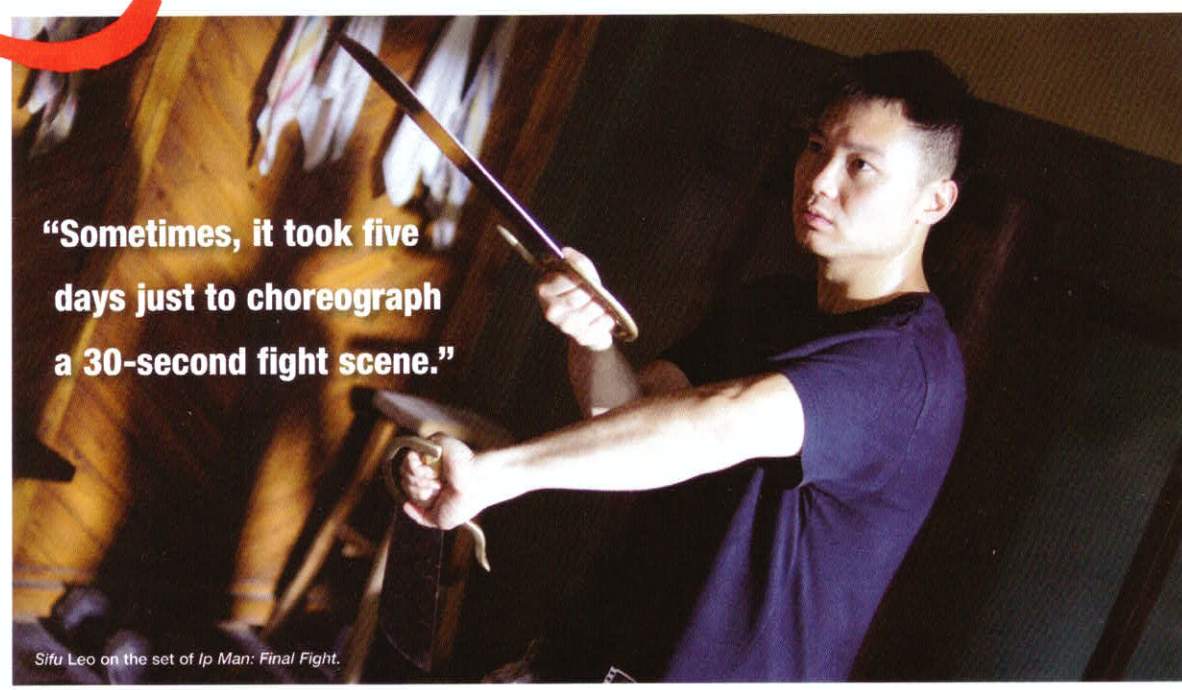
LEO AU YEUNG

MASTER OF REALITY

BY **JAMES WOODCOCK**



Sifu Leo on the set of *Ip Man: Final Fight*.

IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE SEEN A BOOM OF IP MAN FILMS STARTING WITH THE HUGELY SUCCESSFUL *IP MAN* (2008) AND *IP MAN 2* (2010), BOTH DIRECTED BY WILSON YIP AND STARRING DONNIE YEN AS GRANDMASTER IP MAN.

Then, also in 2010, came the unrelated tale (to the Donnie Yen films) of *The Legend Is Born: Ip Man*, directed by Herman Lau and starring Dennis To. Wong Kar-Wai's long-awaited *The Grandmasters* (also unrelated), starring Tony Leung as Ip Man, will be released in Chinese theatres, December 18.

Currently in the works is *Ip Man 3D*, which will reunite Wilson Yip and Donnie Yen for the third and final chapter of their Ip Man story. There is even an Ip Man TV series in the works, which will be directed and written by Fan Xiaotian.

A sixth Ip Man film was recently announced called *Ip Man: Final Fight* (aka *Ip Man: Final Battle* or *Ip Man: The Final Chapter*), to be directed by Herman Yau.

Anthony Wong (*Infernal Affairs*) is taking on the role as an older Ip Man. Anita Yuen (*Thunderbolt*) will star as Ip Man's wife. Famous action director Hung Yan Yan will be portraying Ip Man's main antagonist and Eric Tsang (*Gen-X Cops*) his best friend, Ng Chung.

The film's *Wing Chun* consultant/assistant fight choreographer is London-based *Sifu* Leo Au Yeung, who also acted as the fight choreographer on the first Ip Man film, as well as *The Legend is Born: Ip Man*. Born in Hong Kong, *Sifu* Leo has been learning *Wing Chun* for over twenty years directly from the eldest son of Grandmaster Ip Man, *Sifu* Ip Chun.

So, is this new film a continuation of *Ip Man: The Legend is Born*, or a separate tale? And will a certain Bruce Lee appear in the film? To find out, I sat down with *Sifu* Leo to get the low down on *Ip Man: Final Fight*.

Can you tell me where *Ip Man: Final Battle* fits in with the other Ip Man films?

I'd say it fits nicely as an extension of *Ip Man 2*

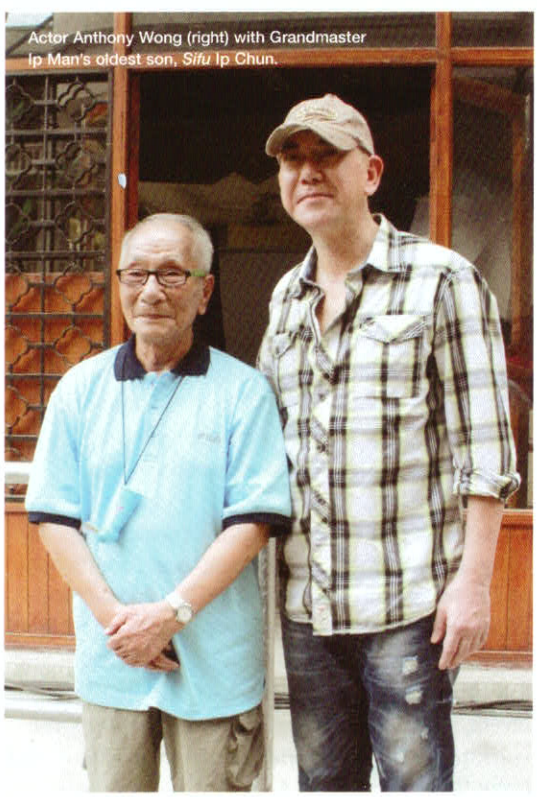
For more information about *Sifu* Leo Au Yeung, please visit his website at: *www.chinesekungfu.co.uk*.

as it is the final chapter of Ip Man's life—from age 40 to his passing in 1972. The story focuses on Ip Man's life in this period of time and the relationship between his first few students. However, the movie also focuses on Hong Kong society and how people lived at that time.

How closely does the film stick to the historical facts of Ip Man's later life?
It's got a good mixture of both historical facts and made up story. For example, the film talks about how Ip Man met his first student Leung Sheung in Hong Kong, plus the story about how Ip Man made his 8mm video before he died, which is pretty close to the historical facts.

Is it true that a Bruce Lee character will be in this new film?
Yes, but it's a very small part.

It's my understanding that by taking on the role of the fight choreographer, you wanted to bring a more realistic version of *Wing Chun* to the big screen. Clearly, there's a fine line between realism and entertainment, so how do you make sure the scenes are exciting, but still look realistic?
When we are doing the choreography, we always look into two aspects. Firstly, we have to pick the best movements and angles to show the fight scene in front of the camera. Secondly, we have to make sure those movements follow *Wing Chun* principles and look realistic. If the movements look good in front of the camera, but too far out of the *Wing Chun* principles, then we have to start over again. Sometimes, it took five days just to choreograph a 30-second fight scene!


Actor Anthony Wong (right) with Grandmaster Ip Man's oldest son, *Sifu* Ip Chun.

With such a boom of Ip Man related film projects coming up, how do you keep the films looking fresh and not going over the same things? Why should people go see *Ip Man: Final Fight*?
Firstly, we are going to use a different actor (Antony Wong), who is a very experienced and well-known actor in Asia. He will be able to deliver a different and more mature version of Ip Man. Secondly, the film will not just focus on Ip Man's life—the audience will get a chance to know more about Ip Man's students such as Bruce Lee and Leung Sheung, and how their lives changed when they met. Finally, Ip Man will use his *Wing Chun* to fight against new styles of martial arts, which, I believe, will give the audience a fresh feeling. More importantly, if you are doing *Wing Chun*, you'll able to learn some new techniques!

It seems that the Ip Man phenomenon has brought *Wing Chun* back to the forefront of the martial arts scene. Is that a good thing?
I think it's a very good thing. Because of the first Ip Man movie, more people wanted to study *Wing Chun*. This is the best way to keep the martial arts alive. And if Ip Man movies can make people more interested in martial arts films, it will encourage more investment to produce more decent martial arts films. This will have a good impact on the movie and martial arts industry.

The philosophy behind *WCI* is "One Voice, All Lineages". In your opinion, is it wise to explore all lineages and styles of *Wing Chun*, or stick to your chosen lineage?
I asked my teacher the same question a long time ago. He told me, "It's no problem to explore all other lineages of *Wing Chun*, but you have to be knowledgeable enough to justify what's good and what's bad." The *Wing Chun* practitioner, who is interested in learning different approaches, but not able to filter what is right or wrong, will only confuse himself and lose his path.

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Visit our *YouTube* channel for an exclusive video interview with *Sifu* Leo, published in the Apple App Store Issue #1 of *WCI*. *www.youtube.com/wingchunillustrated*