

Shaolin Soccer

Call it "Kick Fu"... This latest hit from China is nothing like the mostly discerning, thoughtful pictures we have seen from that country over the last several years. This is a knockdown, drag out farce which takes off somewhat from the from the Hong Kong/Taiwan chop-socky movies of the 1970's but also exhibits its own brand of rambunctiousness.

Young Sing (played by Stephen Chow, who also produced,wrote, directed, edited...and, I assume, catered the tea and dumplings) is a martial arts adept who practices the "Shaolin" way and possesses a right foot of iron. A broken-down soccer coach, Fong, discovers the kid's kick and recruits him, along with his motley brothers, to front a soccer team that will try for the national title (worth a million bucks). Needless to say, these clowns--who know nothing of soccer--turn into a Hong Kong Dirty Dozen and take on the best.

Shaolin Soccer is an amazingly--what can I say?--*silly* movie. It demonstrates little knowledge of how soccer is really played, and probably is no better at representing the martial arts. It is absolutely littered with digital effects, mostly having to do with kicking a soccer ball, and might be fun for soccer kids 10 and under (no problem, it's "PG"-rated, even with mentions of "sweet, steamy buns") who can laugh out loud at the goofy antics.

It will be fascinating to see if this movie--which recalls nothing so much as the clumsily-dubbed kung fu movies of 30 years past--finds any kind of audience in this country. (Note: for a far better and more heartening soccer movie, try *Bend It Like Beckham*, still showing locally).

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