



Furious fights and verdant forests This green patch has seen it all...

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Scout the film locations of Sai Kung

Famous for its magical beaches and scenic parks, Sai Kung is known as an enticing stress-releasing haven for city-dwellers. But perhaps less well known is the district's cinematic history. For instance, after work rapped on *Enter the Dragon*, Bruce Lee shot his final filmed fight sequence on the Pak Tam Chung natural trail at the Fuk Hing Bridge that crosses the tidal river. The sequence can be glimpsed during the opening and closing credits of the largely forgotten 1973 film *Unicorn Fist*.

Hark back a further decade and you learn that Sai Kung was a beautiful backdrop to a 'junk fight' sequence in the Hollywood epic *The Sand Pebbles*, starring Steve McQueen and Richard Attenborough. The scene in question saw the USS San Pablo gunboat attempt to break a boom of junks across the Chien River. Director Robert Wise spent three months preparing the sequence, which took a further month to film when the first hurricane of the season wiped out the entire set.

Sai Kung even cameoed in a Bond movie. In 1974's *The Man with the Golden Gun* the marina area of Hebe Haven appeared during 007's pursuit of Andrea Anders, Scaramanga's ill-fated girlfriend, in Roger Moore's second outing as the superspy. More recently the remote fishing village of Po Toi O provided the backdrop for a scene with Angelina Jolie and Gerald Butler in *Lara Croft: The Cradle of Life*. During the same year, a quirky tribute was also made in the form of Tommy Law Wai Tak's *Sai Kung Story* – a portmanteau rom-com that used many recognisable locales including the rural development of Tui Min Hoi and Tin Hau Temple, and the famous dessert restaurant Moon Kei.

Commonly referred to as Hong Kong's 'last back garden', Sai Kung has a rich aesthetic appeal. "Sai Kung and Clearwater Bay have been used extensively as backgrounds for many classics of Hong Kong cinema, especially by venerated studios as Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers,"



▲ The Killer

says Lloyd Chao, a producer and director of the new Shaw Studios in Tseung Kwan O.

Renowned actor, writer and filmmaker Alfred Cheung, who shot the first of his popular *Her Fatal Ways* quadrilogy in Sai Kung, considers the area 'a scriptwriter's heaven'. "It's very pretty – being less than 45 minutes from the city, it's also very accessible [and] has retained a traditional local lifestyle."

In the action comedy *Dragons Forever*, (the last of which to feature the famous 'Three brothers' trio of Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung and Yuen Bie), Hebe Haven was used as an exotic backdrop for several fight scenes. Hiram's Highway, which connects Sai Kung to the Clear Water Bay Road, features in Eric Tsang's Bond parody *Aces Go Places*, while in Vincent Kok's *Gorgeous*, Sai Kung doubled for Taiwan and then appeared the same year in Stephen Chow's *King of Comedy*. The slightly less glamorous Pik Uk Prison has even made a couple of



▲ Dragons Forever



▲ Her Fatal Ways

appearances, first in Patrick Tam's 1987 *Final Victory* and then in Ivy Ho's second directorial effort, the oddball rom-com *Crossing Hennessy*.

Sai Kung also turns up in many a crime movie. John Woo's *The Killer* took in Sai Kung Promenade, Johnnie To's *Vengeance* was filmed on Sai Kung Seafood Street in Hoi Pong Square and used the restaurant Tung Kee Seafood, as did James Yuen's *Heavenly Mission* and Andrew Lau's classic *Young & Dangerous* series. In 2009 Ray Chau's thriller *Murderer* used Sai Kung's Po Pin Chau East Dom High island reservoir for the residence of Ling, the detective protagonist played by Aaron Kwok.

Smaller, more intimate projects have benefitted too. Jessey Tsang Tsui-shan, who makes short documentaries and feature films about Sai Kung, has a particularly special connection with the district of Ho Chung. "I grew up in Sai Kung and it means home to me," she says. After making her first full length film, the romantic drama *Lovers on the Road in Beijing*, Tsang decided to return home to realise her next feature. "My last film *Big Blue Lake* was set in Hong Kong and shot in Ho Chung," says Tsang. "*Big Blue Lake* is a homecoming film. It has romance; it's about family and reconciliation."

Even though the developers have discovered the district's unique quality, Sai Kung still offers plenty of hidden gems. "The more remote beaches and forested areas still offer fairly diversified natural settings and can double quite well for tropical beaches or jungles," says Chao. One such Sai Kung locale was a remote island used for a scene in Ang Lee's award-winning *Lust, Caution*. Indeed, there are about 70 islands dotted around Sai Kung which lend a mysterious quality to filmmaking.

Still, with no immediate Sai Kung filming plans confirmed by either Shaw Studios or Golden Harvest, is the district's heyday in the past? Neither Tsang nor Cheung think so. "I'm making a TV series about Mainland students," says Cheung. "I'm seriously considering Sai Kung as a location."

"I'm going to make my first documentary soon and it will be broader geographically and encapsulate more of Sai Kung," confirms Tsang. **Oliver Pfeiffer**