





GET OUT OF HER WAY: The Legacy of *Lady Street Fighter*

by Annie Choi

My favorite Renee Harmon story comes from director and longtime collaborator James Bryan. They were filming *Lady Street Fighter* and needed a car to roll down a cliff, effectively destroying it. The only problem was that they didn't have a car to destroy. So, Harmon did what any tenacious, resourceful filmmaker would do:

She used her husband's car.

Without his permission.

His car barrelled down the cliff, rolling over several times. It crumpled like an empty can of Coors Lite caught between the wheels of a semi-truck. After the shoot, Harmon got into the car to drive off. Everyone was confused—what the hell was she doing? The car was a wreck, completely useless. She explained matter-of-factly that she needed to return the car to her husband.

But how did her husband feel about this, you ask? His feelings were irrelevant. She needed a car; his happened to be around, and she had the keys. That's it. A gently used sedan was nothing in the grand scheme of getting *Lady Street Fighter* in the can.

This story sums up Harmon in the most perfect way. She was an unstoppable force, an indefatigable filmmaker willing to do whatever necessary to see her vision come to life in front of the camera. And this is all more impressive when you consider that she's a woman who wrote, produced, and starred in her own films.

In no-budget genre movies of the '70s and '80s, women mostly freed their chests from trashy lingerie and got tortured, mutilated, and killed on-screen (not necessarily in that order). Women were exploitable playthings, ceremoniously picked off one by one until the Final Girl. But long before Hollywood even realized it had a man-centric problem, Harmon started her own production company, produced her own films, and wrote strong roles for women, especially herself. She never played a helpless victim or a disposable bombshell. Instead she played a hard-nosed journalist (*The Executioner, Part II; Jungle Trap*), a dogged sister out for retribution (*Run, Coyote, Run*), and an unshakable wife seeking the truth about the mysterious death of her husband (*Frozen Scream*). In *Lady Street Fighter*, she's a dynamo who takes down



Jim Bryan and Rena Harmon
agree to the following seven
points as a memorandum of intent.

Date: 4/12/77

JB James Bryan
RH Rena Harmon

STREETFIGHTER LADY

BY

RENA HARMON

I outright sale
for \$14,000
cost of first movie

II outright sale
\$12,000 cash

Former Title: Deadly Games.
Registered:
Writers Guild of America, West, I, c.
8965 Beverly Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90048
157977

III 10-20% Foreign Sales Commission

the mob with roundhouse kicks and fists of vengeance. Harmon wrote roles that reflected who she was—a strong-willed fireball that burns everything in her path to reach the goal.

Early on, director James Bryan learned to stay out of the fireball's way. When the Bleeding Skull! team sat with him in his home in Lufkin, Texas, Bryan explained, "it was just easier to let Renee be Renee. Why fight her?" His patience and equanimity is the perfect counterbalance to Harmon's unrestrained audacity. Together, they worked on six movies, each production triumphantly wilder than the last. Bryan understood that if you trusted Harmon's skills and resourcefulness and followed her lead, you'd not only get a car to destroy, but you'd also get funding, crew members, shooting locations (namely, her mother's house), and actors plucked straight from the acting classes she taught at a community college. You might even get the holy grail of low-budget filmmaking, distribution. Sure, you'd also get madcap plot holes and stilted dialogue and novice actors flubbing their lines. You'd also get reused footage from different movies, resulting in a surreal combination of both film and video. But at the end of it all, you'd have a feature-length movie and hundreds of stories. And you'd have a charismatic, larger-than-life performance from Harmon herself.

Harmon and Bryan managed to score a small theatrical release and distribution for *Lady Street Fighter*. In an effort to woo the masses, the poster and VHS cover art was emblazoned with the name of the film's leading man,

Trace Carradine. He is the long-lost Carradine brother, the one no one remembers. This is because he doesn't exist. If Harmon was willing to sacrifice her husband's car, why not bank on a Hollywood dynasty?

This is yet another detail that shows how Harmon and Bryan did whatever it took to put their work in front of people. Everything they did, by hook or by crook, was in service of their film. Nothing could stop them, certainly not a lawsuit from Trace Carradine. Watching *Lady Street Fighter* is like cheering for the underdog and watching her win. Challenges are overcome, doubts are ignored, and everything we know about film is given the middle finger. But above all, limitless ambition and joy propels every scene. We're lucky to experience its glory.

Harmon has been unfairly overlooked and dismissed, even in the small, amazing community of people who have the stomach for DIY films and genre trash. Maybe it's because of her disregard for plot, character development, and continuity. Maybe it's because her low-budget films are a bit too bargain basement. But as we all know, low budget doesn't mean bad. It's up to us to understand her films on their own terms—to see the passion and drive and her love of filmmaking. And it's all very easy to see in her work. Thankfully, the American Genre Film Archive has preserved one of the best and brightest films to come out of Harmon and Bryan's collaboration. *Lady Street Fighter* is now unleashed in front of a new audience, enabling Harmon's legacy to continue long



past her death. It's a chance for the rest of the world to catch up and see what Bryan had seen from the very beginning.

Now it's best to get out of her way.

Annie Choi is the author of Shut Up, You're Welcome and Happy Birthday or Whatever. Her writing has appeared in White Zinfandel, Pidgin Magazine, Publisher's Weekly, among others, and she has been a featured storyteller on The Moth. She is a contributing writer and editor at Bleeding Skull, a website that explores ultra-obscure, low-budget genre films, and she is a musician in the band Taken By Savages. Born and raised in the greater Los Angeles area (read: The Valley), she now lives in New York City. She likes wombats.

**SHE MAKES THE
BAD GUYS BLEED**

**LADY
STREET
FIGHTER**



Ronny Harmon

Leel D. McCrea Jr.



THUNDERBOLT & LIGHTFOOT
BROADWAY 8th & Broadway • 232-4600
 Downtown San Diego
 BARGAIN HR. \$2.00 BEFORE 5:00
 'DRAGON EXECUTIONER'
 'THE REAL DRAGON'
 'THE SAVAGE'

CABRILLO Horton Plaza • 239-8719
 Downtown San Diego
 OPEN NOON CONTINUOUS ALL NIGHT
 'THE LADY STREET FIGHTER'
 'WOMEN IN CELL BLOCK 7'
 'MEAN FRANK, CRAZY TONY'

CASINO 643 5th • 232-8878
 Downtown San Diego
 OPEN NOON CONTINUOUS ALL NIGHT
 'NORTH DALLAS FORTY'
 'ESCAPE TO ALCATRAZ'
 'T.N.T. JACKSON'

CENTURY 1 54th & El Cajon Blvd.
 582-7690
 'STARTING OVER'
 1:45-3:45-5:45-7:45-9:45



ABOUT THE TRANSFERS

Lady Street Fighter is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1. This new digital transfer was created in 4K resolution on a Lasergraphics film scanner from the only 35mm theatrical print in existence. The print was made from the original 35mm camera negative, which is now lost.

Revenge Of Lady Street Fighter is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1. This new digital transfer was created in 2K resolution on a Lasergraphics film scanner from the original 35mm camera negative. Recycled scenes from *Lady Street Fighter* were taken from the same scan above.

Color grading was performed with DaVinci Resolve. Every effort has been made to retain the original theatrical experience of the films. The monaural soundtracks were remastered using Pro Tools HD. The digital transfers were performed by the American Genre Film Archive in Austin, TX.

Transfer Supervisor and Colorist: Sebastian del Castillo
Audio Supervisor: Joseph A. Ziemba
Blu-ray Mastering: Jim Kunz

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Sebastian del Castillo

Head Archivist of AGFA, Producer, Transfer Supervisor, Colorist, Editor

Joseph A. Ziemba

Director of AGFA, Producer, Designer, Audio Supervisor

Tim League

Founder of AGFA, Producer

SPECIAL THANKS

Bret Berg, Chris Bilheimer, Joshua Brown, James Bryan, Cristina Cacioppo, Annie Choi, Sharon Cho, Alicia Coombs, Alton Faltysek, Susan Fox, Zane Gordon-Bouvard, Maury Jacks, Laird Jimenez, Mike Keegan, Jim Kunz, Austin Miller, Luke Mullen, Binh Nguyen, Tiernan O'Rourke, Ivan Psycheff, Sarah Pitre, Mo Shafeek, Jay Shaw, Mike Sherrill, Brandon Smith, Jessica Tong, and Tim Wiesch.

© 2018 American Genre Film Archive. All rights reserved.



BRAVO-KILO PRESENTS

LA CAN BE
TOUGH
ON
A
WOMAN
ALONE

REVENGE OF LADY STREET FIGHTER

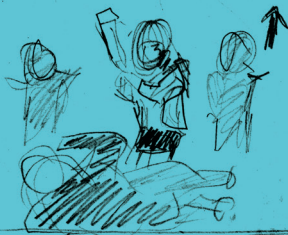


SHE
~~DIDN'T~~
ASKED
TO BE
A KILLER

~~BUT IT~~
~~WAS~~
~~EASY~~
~~AND~~

SHE JUST
CAN'T
STOP

FEATURING
ALDO
RAY



BRAVO-KILO PRESENTS

A KENNA PRODUCTION OF A R.P. FILM

RUTH PEEBLES AS WAUDA • BRIAN MATHENS AS TED • RENE HARMON
PRODUCED BY GERRY KLEIN • EXECUTIVE PRODUCER • RUTH PEEBLES

DIRECTED BY TIM BUIYAN



ABOUT AGFA

The American Genre Film Archive (AGFA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit located in Austin, Texas. AGFA exists to preserve the legacy of genre movies through collection, conservation, and distribution.

Formed in 2009, AGFA focuses on outlaw exploitation movies that were produced from the 1960s through the 2000s. From manic hicksploitation epics to bloodthirsty shoestring goreblasts, each title in AGFA's collection is a celebration of culture that should never be forgotten. Housing over six thousand 35mm film prints and trailers, our non-profit archive counts among its board members and advisors Alamo Drafthouse founders Tim and Karrie League, filmmakers Paul Thomas Anderson, Anna Biller, Frank Henenlotter, and Nicolas Winding Refn, musician RZA, exploitation film savior Lisa Petrucci, and genre film superheroes Zack Carlson, Kier-La Janisse, and Lars Nilsen.

To donate to AGFA or book *Lady Street Fighter* for a screening at your theater, visit:

AMERICANGENREFILM.COM

