

Innovation IN ACTION

—By Mekado Murphy

With DVDs multiplying in the action, urban and martial arts genres, suppliers are trying new approaches to programming and pricing to stand out in the marketplace. The result is greater choice for the consumer.

Ventura Distribution is offering volume, quality and low prices for martial arts fans with its titles under the Video Asia label.

“We’ve been pretty successful putting out titles with stars like Bruce Lee and Jet Li,” says Cliff MacMillan, VP of Ventura Select, the company’s indie film arm.

“Now we want to create more interesting packages and groups of films that martial arts fans are looking for and offer them at a great value.”

Ventura looks to score big with the *Wu Tang: Soldiers of Darkness* box set, which brings together both urban and martial arts genres. The set, which streets April 12, will include 20 movies for \$34.95. The titles are introduced by members of the hip-hop group Wu Tang Clan and will include a tribute to Ol’ Dirty Bastard.

“We also recently started a line of \$4.99 titles,” MacMillan adds. Under the Fortune 5 label, the line “is not public domain product, which is a lot of what you find at that price point. It is licensed product from an extensive library.”

Specialty video stores such as Dallas’ Premiere Video are reaping the benefits of a renewed interest in Hong Kong action by promoting the genre through directors such as Quentin Tarantino and Yimou Zhang (*Hero*).

“*Hero* is a title that has been huge in our store,” says Sam Wade, Premiere’s owner. “Miramax smartly put Quentin Tarantino’s name on the box cover, and that has had an impact on rentals.”

Geneon Entertainment has been getting anime titles that appeal to urban and martial arts fans into different types of retailers, including record stores and grocery stores, having recently run a promotion of its value line in a grocery chain, says Chad Kime, marketing manager.

Ground-Zero Entertainment, distributed by Music Video Distributors,



■ Music is a big part of Ventura’s Wu Tang and MVD’s *The Magic Sun*.



■ Attaching Quentin Tarantino’s name to *Hero* has helped the title

is looking to build loyalty with consumers by offering them fresh stories.

“We have created a whole new brand within the urban genre called *Shades of Soul*,” Ground-Zero president Anthony Perez says. “We know people are looking for urban titles that are enlightening and mature.” The company plans to release 24 titles under the *Shades of Soul* umbrella within the next 12-16 months. The current release is *Beyond Borders*.

Another unique title on the way from MVD is the Atavistic label’s *The Magic Sun*, a piece of underground filmmaking from the mid-’60s featuring the jazz world’s Sun Ra and his Arkestra. It streets Feb. 15 priced at \$14.95 in a new print with philosophical proclamations from Ra. **vb**

HERE'S A LOOK AT UPCOMING RELEASES IN THE ACTION, URBAN AND MARTIAL ARTS GENRES.

—Compiled by Barbara Wexler

ACTION

ARTIST VIEW/MTI

The Vault PG-13 film in which a legendary thief seeks to reestablish a relationship with his daughter and comes across a dangerous gang of thieves. Street Feb. 22, prebook Feb. 2; DVD \$24.95, VHS rental



FIRST LOOK

Alien Lockdown In a secret government lab, a scientist conducts experiments to turn a violent alien into a fighting machine in this R-rated film. Street March 1, prebook Feb. 1; DVD \$24.98

MGM

Action Promotion Titles include *Electra Glide in Blue*, *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, *Firewalker*, *Crossplot*, *Crack House*, *Eye of the Tiger* and *Krakatoa, East of Java*. All street March 22, prebook Feb. 22; DVD \$14.95

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