

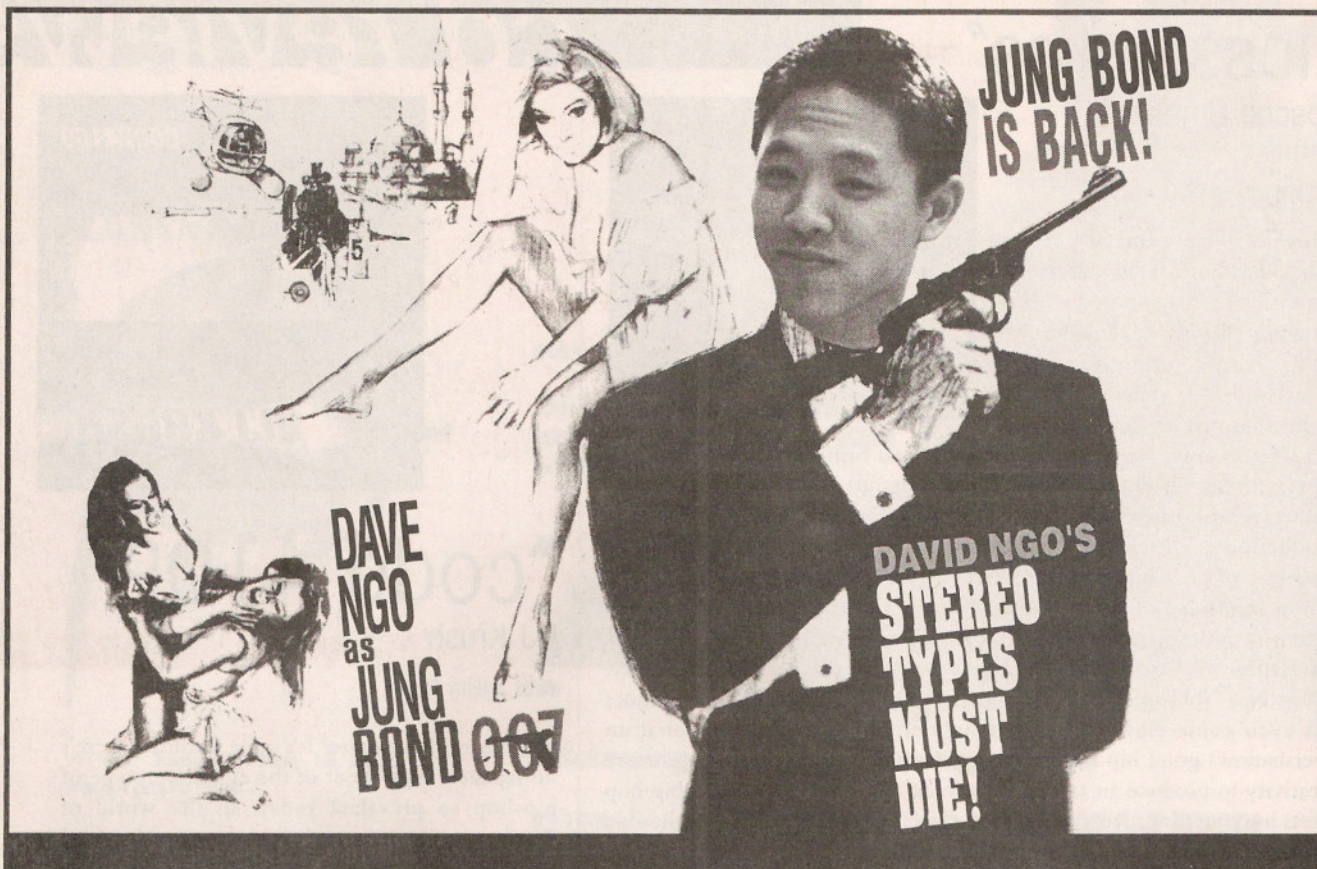
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Romeo Must Die would have been better if Jet Li and Aaliyah had got it on.

Don't get me wrong, *Romeo Must Die* is an entertaining film. This movie has phenomenal action scenes, funny dialogue and remarkable cinematography. There are also excellent performances by a cast that includes Jet Li, Aaliyah, Russell Wong and Isaiah Washington. However, although this film is promoted as a modern-day "Romeo and Juliet," there is one thing that is noticeably missing – Han Sing (Jet Li) gets no love from Trish O'Day (Aaliyah).

Throughout *Romeo Must Die*, the audience is led to believe that a romance is developing between Trish and Han. The sexual tension between the couple builds up to the final scene of the film. After preventing an all-out war between an Asian mafia and an African American mafia, saving the life of Trish's dad and defeating Kai Sing (Russell Wong) in an epic fight, Han is ready for his handsome reward from Trish. This reward, anticlimactically, is merely a hug and a pat on the shoulder.

C'mon now. Han should have gotten at least

a kiss from Trish for saving the day. As I recall, "Romeo and Juliet" is a story about two lovers, not two platonic friends. Han's situation, unfortunately, is typical of many Asian male heroes in American films. Essentially, Asian male heroes never get any play. Why is that?

Asian male heroes are never seen in American films as objects of desire. Instead, they are commonly characterized as humble, polite, asexual beings that are out to avenge the tragic death of their brothers.

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This one-dimensional reduction has affected the careers of many notable Asian American lead actors.

For example, Chow Yun Fat's heroics are rewarded with a phat handshake from Mira Sorvino in *The Replacement Killers*. Jackie Chan, in his films, always ends up as just a father figure. These actors often find their characters as simple men on quests to restore family honor. This prevailing depiction of the Asian male hero has become a stereotype that must be challenged.

A new type of Asian male hero is needed in American films. We need an Asian American male hero whose heroics are rewarded with an invitation into the freak zone, not the friendship zone. We need an Asian male hero that is debonair, confident and romantic. We need an Asian male hero who is adored by women. What we need to see in American films is an Asian American James Bond.

Just picture it – an Asian James Bond. His name might even be Jung Bond. This new Asian male hero can get the girl at the end and even get girls along the way. Jung Bond can be a complex and multi-faceted character whose motives extend beyond preserving the honor of his family's name. Stereotypes can be challenged further when audiences learn that Jung Bond has no martial arts expertise whatsoever.

In reality, Asian American males are complex individuals just like any other person in American society. Unfortunately, this complexity is not portrayed in American films because Asian males are routinely characterized by stereotypes. These stereotypes must be challenged and innovative portrayals of Asian males are needed. Let's all hope that in Jet Li's next action film, he actually gets some "action" at the end.