

# BLOWING

# UP

# THE MOVIES



GAME THE ACTION  
MOVIE CLASSICS

ROBIN D. LAWS





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# **BLOWING UP THE INTRODUCTION**

When we play and design roleplaying games we often seek inspiration in cinema. Whether we're sending our player characters on an epic quest, toward the stars, or into costumed hero battle, movies act as a shared reference point as we assemble our storylines. With a game like *Feng Shui*, which has action movie roleplaying right in the subtitle, a look at the way directors and their action choreographers assemble thrilling scenes seems a no-brainer. Yet with so many elements vying for inclusion in a roleplaying core book, the game itself can make only a quick sideview shot at the topic, while keeping the main fire trained on that passel of eunuch sorcerers up ahead. Thanks to the Kickstarter backers for *Feng Shui 2*, I get the opportunity, as bullets ping the catwalk railing beside us and blade-wielding kung fu masters toss energy bolts overhead, to rifle key titles of the action flick canon for gaming inspiration.

Each of the twenty-four essays in this compact, easily-concealable volume examines the film itself, then seeks ways to translate one of its central virtues to your gaming table. The balance between analysis and play advice varies between essays. Sometimes an exploration of a film's hallmark technique carries us through the entire entry. In other cases I've yielded into the temptation to digress a bit.

The essays serve as bite-sized treatments of each title, meant to spark thought and action. Much more could be said about most of these films. The intensive beat-by-beat breakdown I give to *Dr. No* (1982) in another of my books, *Hamlet's Hit Points*, lies outside the remit of *Blowing Up the Movies*. In keeping with the explodey spirit of the titles at hand, this book adopts a looser, more casual, more directly play-oriented approach.

In seeking a particular angle in each piece I am leaving out a host of other observations that might be made about it. Both *The Matrix* and *Star*

# LIGHTS! CAMERA! DICE ROLLS!

Robin D. Laws, game designer by day, cinema super-enthusiast by night, sets his analytic laser sights on action and thrills in a collection of essays sure to supercharge your tabletop roleplaying experience.

As the countdown ticks and the bullets fly, Robin takes you inside the workings of 24 action movies, from the stone cold classic to the unjustifiably obscure. Each essay shows you how the film delivers, and the lessons you can extract from it to enhance your own efforts as GM or player. Explore:

- *Star Wars* as a model of storytelling economy.
- *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* to see how fights can express inner drama.
- *Seven Samurai* as a master class in theme.
- *Die Hard* as textbook cat-and-mouse.
- *The Killer*, to learn the blood-soaked vocabulary of blood-soaked hyper-romanticism.
- *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame*, because deer fu.

Though honed as a companion volume to the exciting new reboot of his classic RPG *Feng Shui*, you can easily apply this book's insights to any game with swords or explosions in it.

With a special focus on high water marks of the Hong Kong action golden age, alongside the flicks that inspired it and were inspired by it, the book also serves up a crash course in that essential action canon.

So dig in, fire up one of these flicks for the first or five millionth time, and be ready to be blown up. Er, away. Blown away.



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