



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 11, 2010

New Karate Kid Is a Cinematic Adventure

The 2010 remake of the *Karate Kid* is a definite improvement upon the 1984 version. It expands upon the coming-of-age element found in the original film, but with impressive choreography and cinematography. In doing so, the *Karate Kid* becomes not only a film about a child's acquisition of life lessons, but an adventure in itself.



Twelve-year old Dre Parker (Jaden Smith) moves from Detroit to China with his mother Sherry (Taraji Henson), who is relocating to the strange and exotic country for work, though little background information is provided to explain such a drastic move. Almost immediately, Dre falls in love with the beautiful Mei Ying (Wenwen Han), who reciprocates the affections. This draws the ire of local bully Cheng (Zhenwei Wang), and as a result, Dre finds himself fending for his own safety.

Dre's lack of friends leads him to find an unlikely ally and mentor in a local maintenance man, Mr. Han (Jackie Chan). Han introduces Dre to the world of kung fu, emphasizing that kung fu embodies more than kicking and punching, but discipline and control. As Dre becomes acquainted with the disciplines of kung fu, he must learn to embrace it in every aspect of his life.

Karate Kid's strength is its poignant dealing with the contemporary issue of school violence, focusing on what has become commonplace for American youth: bullies in and out of school.

Another highlight of *Karate Kid* is the heartwarming relationship between Mr. Han and Dre. Han, who is a secret kung fu instructor that takes on many roles for Dre. Not only does he teach Dre the disciplines of kung fu, thereby building his weakened confidence, he becomes a father-like figure for the young, fatherless boy. This aspect of the relationship is particularly important since Dre's mother seems to play a minor role in his life as well, indicating little concern or interest in her son's life. Whether this was done intentionally in order to strengthen the foundation of Han's and Dre's relationship, or if Dre's mother became a forgotten character in the writing of the screenplay along the way is unknown, however.

Jackie Chan artfully masters the role of Mr. Han, a man who appears to have bottled a great deal of pain in his life. His convincing limp is endearing, but his ability to morph from a charming and sympathetic maintenance man to a kung fu hero is what gives Chan his legendary appeal.

Jaden Smith's performance continues to impress audiences, this time, in his first starring role. Sporting real tears when he takes blows to both his body and his vanity, Smith appears quite comfortable in front



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of the camera, no doubt a result of his stringent training in martial arts prior to the production of the film. Smith's increased athleticism is evident throughout the film. Audiences everywhere were enthralled by the young Smith's performance in *The Pursuit of Happiness* and will not be disappointed by *Karate Kid*.

Despite its strengths, *Karate Kid* borders on lengthy, running over two hours, which may prove to hurt its image as a kid's movie (children have enough trouble sitting through a 50-minute class). It seemed as though there were several opportunities for the movie to conclude, though it did not. The movie would have been served better had several seemingly unnecessary scenes been removed, including an overextended introduction to the bullies.

Overall, audiences will find themselves rooting for the underdog against the bully Cheng. Likewise the aesthetic elements of the film, from shots of the Great Wall to the Forbidden City to a mountain retreat, will help assure audience attentiveness. And if that does not work, the amazing and awe-inspiring fight scenes will do the trick.

Rated PG for the presence of bullying, martial arts fighting, and mild language, parents should have little qualms about making this weekend a *Karate Kid* weekend.

Photo: From left, Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith, producers of a re-make of "The Karate Kid," and the Smiths' son Jaden and Jackie Chan, co-stars of the new film, at the premiere in Los Angeles, June 7, 2010: AP Images



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