

AKSYON

The **aksyon** (action) film, called **bakbakan** (fighting) in Filipino, focuses mainly on physical conflict. This genre is of two types: those based on true-to-life stories or stories about real persons and actual events; and those based on completely fictional stories.

True-to-life stories may be based on the lives of real persons, such as *Asedillo*, 1971, which focused on a schoolteacher-turned-rebel who led discontented elements against landlords and bureaucrats during the American colonial period, and *Nardong Putik*, 1972, which depicted Cavite's "Robin Hood" character who protected helpless peasants from powerful carabao rustlers. Those based on actual events would include *Maliwalu Massacre*, 1964, which described the brutal massacre of peasants suspected of being Huk sympathizers in Central Luzon in the early 1960s, and *Hostage: Hanapin si Batuigas* (Hostage: Get Batuigas), 1977, which chronicled the exploits of a well-known police reporter, Ruther Batuigas, who negotiated the release of a family held hostage by goons.

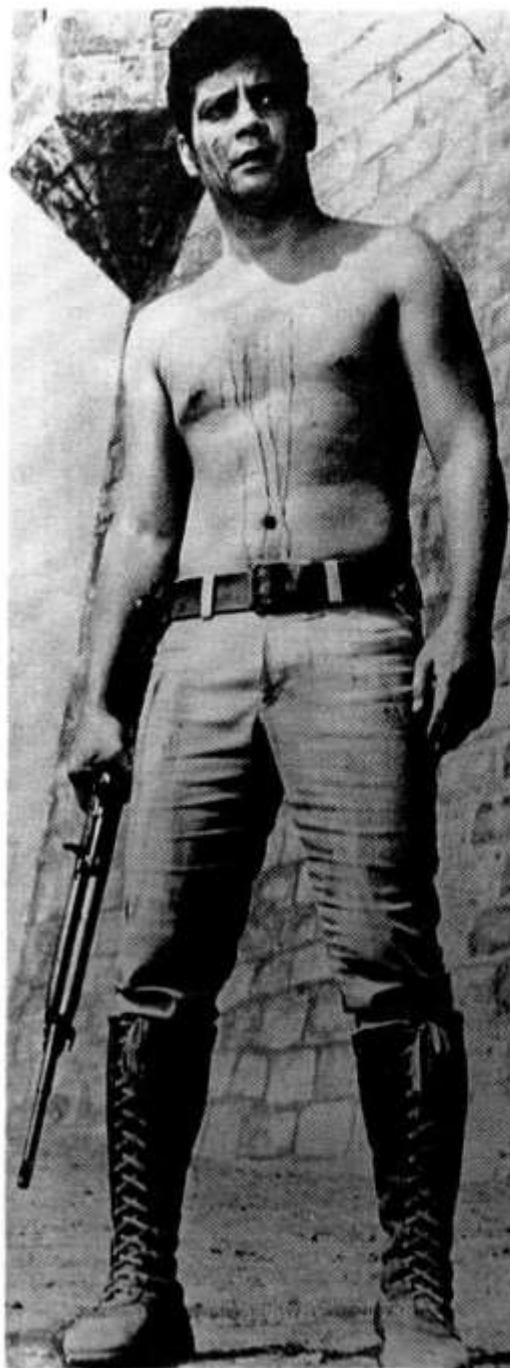
The second type of action film or those based on fictional stories may derive from the tradition of the **awit** and **korido**, such as *Siete Infantes de Lara* (Seven Devils), 1950, or of the **komedya**, such as *Moro Pirates*, 1931. In the latter film, a Muslim princess (Mary Walter) is wooed and won by a Christian admirer (Gregorio Fernandez). Fictional stories may also deal with contemporary or familiar issues, such as *Ang Pumatay Nang Dahil Sa Iyo* (To Kill for You), 1989, which examined the evils of the American military presence in the Philippines; and *Bagong Hari* (New King), 1986, which focused on small-town politics and the vicious battle for supremacy between rival groups vying for the governor's office.

Many prewar action films exploited the peace-and-order campaigns of the Philippine Constabulary under American rule. *Pugad ng Aguila* (Eagle's Nest), 1938, focused on the pursuit of the fugitive Teodoro Asedillo in the Sierra Madre mountains, while *Datu Talim*, 1940, told of the PC expedition to quell a Muslim revolt in Mindanao. In *Punit na Bandila* (Torn Flag), 1939, Fernando Poe heads a PC contingent to Davao to place the notorious Muslim leader, Ali Mudin, under government control after he tore up the Philippine flag and burned a village.

After 1945 most Filipino action films depicted the ex-soldier or "guerrilla" fighter come home from the war, as personified by Fernando Poe in *Dugo ng Bayan* (I Remember Bataan), 1946; Leopoldo Salcedo in *Kawayan ng Bayan* (Public Enemy), 1947; Jose Padilla Jr in

Halik Sa Bandila (Kiss the Flag), 1948; Efren Reyes in *Kumander Sundang* (Commander Sundang), 1949; and Fred Montilla in *Takas Sa Bataan* (Escape from Bataan), 1950.

In the 1960s and 1970s Filipino action films were heavily influenced by foreign models like *Rebel Without a Cause* with James Dean, which gave rise to the Low Waist Gang movies; the John Wayne cowboy films, as well as the Django series also known as "spaghetti" westerns, which were copied by Jess Lapid movies such as *Ito Ang Lalaki* (This Is a Man), 1966; the James Bond movies, as seen in Tony Ferrer films like *Sabotage*, 1966; gangster films like *The*



ACTION STAR. Fernando Poe Jr, King of Filipino action movies, is a legend in his time. His films depict him as a soft-spoken but relentless fighter who champions the cause of the underprivileged and oppressed. (Mowelfund Film Institute Collection)

Godfather, which inspired movies like *D'Godson*, 1983; and martial arts or Kung Fu movies from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which launched the Ramon Zamora movies like *Dalmacio Armas*, 1983.

From the 1960s to the 1970s, Fernando Poe Jr dominated the action genre films that depicted him as champion of the oppressed. Ramon Revilla, who started out as a boy-next-door type at Sampaguita, acquired a new image as an action star when he went free-lance in *Nardong Putik*, 1972, while Rudy Fernandez, also a Sampaguita "pretty boy" contract star, turned from lover boy to convict roles in *Bitayin si Baby Ama* (Execute Baby Ama), 1976. Former dancer Jun Aristorenas, stuntman Lito Lapid, Eddie Garcia, and Anthony Alonzo also rose from the ranks to gain prominence in films that were mostly based on true-to-life stories.

In the 1980s, the important action stars were Phillip Salvador, Bong Revilla, Ace Vergel, Ronnie Ricketts, Jestoni Alarcon, and others who depicted both establishment and antiestablishment heroes. ●
J. David and L. Pareja. With notes from P. de Castro III, B. Lumbera, N. G. Tiongson