

How Cape Town made Bruce Lee's dream come true with *Warrior*

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- *Shot in Cape Town with Moonlighting*
- *100% critics rating for S2, Rotten Tomatoes*
- *Nominated for Best Action Series at 2021 Critics Choice Super Awards*
- *"The most underrated action series of the century." Inverse*
- *"Warrior feels like if Peaky Blinders starred Bruce Lee and was set in 1870s Chinatown. It's great." Vox*
- *Recently renewed for Season 3*

Cape Town doubles for a lawless 1870s San Francisco in the kick-ass martial arts action series *Warrior*, which now has two seasons available to binge on Showmax.

Warrior is based on a concept that Bruce Lee pitched to Hollywood in 1971. His pitch was unsuccessful – the studio execs didn't think they could sell an Asian leading man! – and the legendary martial arts icon died two years later, his vision unfulfilled.

Bruce's daughter, Shannon Lee, finally brought it to life in 2019, executive producing *Warrior* alongside the likes of *The Fast and The Furious* director Justin Lin and series creator Jonathan Tropper, who brought us the Emmy-winning action drama *Banshee*.

Set during the Californian Tong Wars of the 1800s, the story centres on Chinese immigrant and martial arts prodigy Ah Sahn, who comes to San Francisco to search for his sister, only to find himself sold to one of the most powerful tongs (gangs) in Chinatown.

Season 2 has a 100% critics' score on *Rotten Tomatoes* and was up for Best Action Series and Best Actor at the 2021

Critics Choice Super Awards, as well as for a 2021 Visual Effects Society Award. *Inverse* hailed *Warrior* as “the most underrated action series of the century” while *Vox* proclaimed, “*Warrior* feels like if *Peaky Blinders* starred Bruce Lee and was set in 1870s Chinatown. It’s great.”

Andrew Koji (*Fast & Furious 6*) leads the ensemble cast as Ah Sahm, the role Bruce Lee envisioned for himself. Olivia Cheng (*The Stand*, *Deadly Class*), Jason Tobin (*The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, and the upcoming *Fast & Furious 9*), Dianne Doan (*Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Good Trouble*, *Vikings*) and Hoon Lee (*Banshee*, *Bosch*, *Mulan*) also star, along with South Africa’s own Langley Kirkwood (*Inconceivable*, *The Mauritanian*), whose role as the Machiavellian deputy mayor, Buckley, was highlighted as one of the show’s standout characters by *The Ringer*.

The South African cast also includes SAFTA nominees Robert Hobbs (*The Girl From St Agnes*, *District 9*) and Jacques Bessenger (*Dwaalster*, *Krotoa*, *Kanarie*), Fleur du Cap winners Nicholas Pauling (*Troy: Fall of a City*, *The Dark Tower*) and Emily Child (*Tali’s Baby Diary*, *The Pervert Laura*), and familiar faces like David Butler (*Serenity*, *Black Sails*, *Wild at Heart*) and Kenneth Fok (*Rogue*, *Five Fingers for Marseilles*).

Shot at Cape Town Film Studios with Moonlighting, both seasons of *Warrior* relied on South Africa’s world-class crews, like two-time Emmy-nominated costume designer Diana Cilliers (*Roots*, *The Girl*, *District 9*), who worked with Moira Anne Meyer (*The Hurt Locker*); SAFTA-nominated makeup supervisor Marli Kruger (*The Watch*); and special effects supervisor Mickey Kirsten (*Tenet*, *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, *Unknown*). The new season was filmed entirely by three South African cinematographers: Emmy nominee Michael Snyman (*The Night Manager*, *Gettysburg*), Trevor Brown (*The Watch*, *Strike Back*) and SAFTA winner Giulio Biccari (*Noughts + Crosses*, *Da Vinci’s Demons*).

HBO’s corporate reshuffle last year – and the news that subsidiary network Cinemax will no longer produce original content – had fans worried for *Warrior*’s future, with good reason in the current climate. Happily, last month HBO Max renewed the hit show for a third season. Lee welcomed the news, saying, “I just know that my father is grinning right now to see this show he dreamed of so long ago continuing to beat the odds.”

And it’s especially good news for South Africa’s pandemic-ravaged film industry, because Tropper has hinted they’ll be coming back to shoot here. “Our Chinatown backlot is still standing in Cape Town,” Tropper said in a recent interview with *Inverse*. “It will need significant refurbishment, but it’s there.”

And the best news yet? Tropper says *Warrior* has plans for stories beyond Season 3, saying it would be “way too much work to pull this all back together for one season.”

Watch *Warrior* on Showmax: <https://www.showmax.com/eng/tvseries/bnb6ah2d-warrior>

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