

Blind Fury

US : 1990 : dir. Phillip Noyce : Columbia Tri-Star : 86 min
 prod: Daniel Grodnik & Tim Matheson : scr: Charles Robert Karner & Ryoza Kashahara
 : dir.ph.: Don Burgess

Brandon Call [d]

Rutger Hauer; Terrance (Terry) O'Quinn; Lisa Blount; Randall "Tex" Cobb; Noble Willingham;
 Nick Cassavetes; Rick Overton; Charles Cooper; Meg Foster; Sho Kosugi; Alex Morris;
 Paul James Vasquez; Julia Gonzalez; Woody Watson; Mark Fickert; Weasel Forshaw

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2162b	7½	13	11	2,433	3 7 7 3 7	Yes	May 2001

**“Master of the Sword. Avenger of the Truth.
 ...And Blind as a Bat!”**



Parting is such sweet sorrow...

Source: original front-of-house still



It's a post-Vietnam Big buddy-Little buddy Kung Fu action-comedy road movie – just the ticket really

Source: original front of house still

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

"Smiling, sword-wielding, blind Vietnam war vet Hauer carves up bad guys, saves a kid, and even duels with his mentor in this brash, lively (but failed) attempt to Americanise Japanese "Zato-ichi" movies. Hauer is perfectly cast, and the film is amusingly tongue-in-cheek, but it doesn't altogether work. **½ "

Halliwel's Film Guide review:

"A blind martial arts expert takes on a drug dealer and his gang. Violent American variation on a Japanese samurai series of the 1960s featuring Zatoichi the blind swordsman, which gains nothing from being transferred from the 1800s to present-day Los Angeles. Wr: Charles Robert Carner, from a screenplay by Ryoza Kashahara "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"This is a chop-their-limbs-off action film but, to its credit, it's one that tries hard, and often successfully, to keep a sense of humour running through its mayhem. Rutger Hauer is the blind Vietnam vet with quite impossible prowess with a sword, handed an equally impossible

assignment in escorting a nine-year old boy to his father. The boy's also wanted by Nevada gangsters who have just killed his mother and need the boy to force his chemist father (Terrance O'Quinn) into the drugs business. Director Phillip Noyce keeps the action-packed journey as lively as you could wish and sword firmly in cheek. Two of the villains are called Lyle and Tector (after the brothers in "THE WILD BUNCH") and the gangsters' secret weapon at the end turns out to be master screen swordsman Sho Kosugi. "I'm gonna put that blind man in a wheelchair," grinds Tector. No chance! *** "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

" **"BLIND FURY"** is an action film with an amusing gimmick, toplining Rutger Hauer, as an apparently invincible blind Vietnam vet who wields a samurai sword with consummate skill. Nick Parker (Hauer) is actually based on Zatoichi, the heroic blind samurai who starred in a couple of dozen popular action films for Japanese company Daiei in the 1960s and early 1970s.

First problem for writer Charles Robert Karner (adapting a screenplay by Ryoza Kasahara) is to find a way to Americanise such a character.



This is solved by having Parker blinded and lost

in action in Vietnam and then

"Mos Eisley space station" Obiwan informs Luke, "You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy. We must be careful!"

Source: original front of house still

trained by friendly Vietnamese to use his other senses to survive.

Twenty years later, Parker is back in Miami to look up an old army buddy, Frank Deveraux (Terrance O'Quinn) who's in trouble with the mob in Reno. Parker's in time to prevent the kidnapping of Billy (Brandon Call), Frank's son, but not to stop the murder of Frank's ex-wife, Lynn (Meg Foster, in for only one scene) by the vicious Slag, played by Randall "Tex" Cobb. The rest of the film is simply a series of fights and chases as Parker heads for Reno to reunite Billy with his father."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"In this outrageously violent, tongue-in-cheek martial arts movie, Rutger Hauer stars as a blind swordsman who comes to the aid of an army buddy (Terry O'Quinn) when the latter is kidnapped by gangsters and forced to make designer drugs. Directed in a completely over-the-top fashion by Phillip Noyce, **"BLIND FURY"** is a real hoot. Rated "R" for violence and profanity [sic]. *** "

The Film Yearbook vol.9 review:

"Before the credits are over, G.I. Rutger Hauer has been blinded in an explosion in Vietnam, rescued from a swamp by some villagers, nursed back to health, grown a beard, mastered the art of swinging a samurai sword, shaved off the beard, returned to America, wandered around for 20 years without getting any older, and decided to look up his old buddy (O'Quinn), who is now a chemist under threat from a Las Vegas hood who wants him to manufacture designer drugs.

Then the story starts - together with the film's problems. Hauer is given a rôle in which he can lop off limbs, be snidely amusing and do loony stunts like driving a car without the use of his eyes, but all the script asks him to do is have a "relationship" with O'Quinn's bratty son as they travel across country, with about 800 bad guys on their tail. You still get to see people chopped in half, but it's a shame that such a decent premise, so well cast, and with such a promising director (Phillip Noyce, fresh

from "DEAD CALM") should wind up such a half-hearted movie. US release: Tri-Star, April 13 1989; UK release: Columbia / Tri-Star, July

13 1989."



The hand is quicker than the eye – blind Hauer learns the art of trimming mosquito wings in flight.
Source: indeterminate TV guide

Videocassette - COLUMBIA TRI-STAR VHS
CVR 21874 - sleeve notes:

"Vietnam Vet, Nick Parker (Rutger Hauer) is a hero like you've never seen before. He's warm, funny, sharp, and deadly with a broadsword... not to mention blind as a bat! Back in Miami, Parker discovers his old army buddy, Frank, owes money to the Mob and now it's after compensation - his nine year old son, Billy (Brandon Call). Parker, however, has other ideas and a lot of surprises in store... A unique blend of action, adventure and comedy "BLIND FURY" has to be seen to be believed! "

"Hauer's a pure genius on the Samurai trail"
- Mail on Sunday

"Enough thrills to put James Bond in the shade"
- Film Review

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide",
"Rating the Movies (1990)" or "The Virgin
Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

"Two years after the fabulous "DEAD CALM", Australian director Phillip Noyce made this nifty martial arts saga, in which blind Vietnam veteran Rutger Hauer rescues his buddies' son [sic] from evil gangsters and then hits the road, bonding with the boy while fending off the bad guys at every available opportunity. It's a gimmicky, but above average, action adventure (based on the hugely popular Japanese ZATOICHI film series), and Hauer does his

best to cover up the lack of substance with some split-second samurai stunts. May be edited [sic] for language and violence. *** "

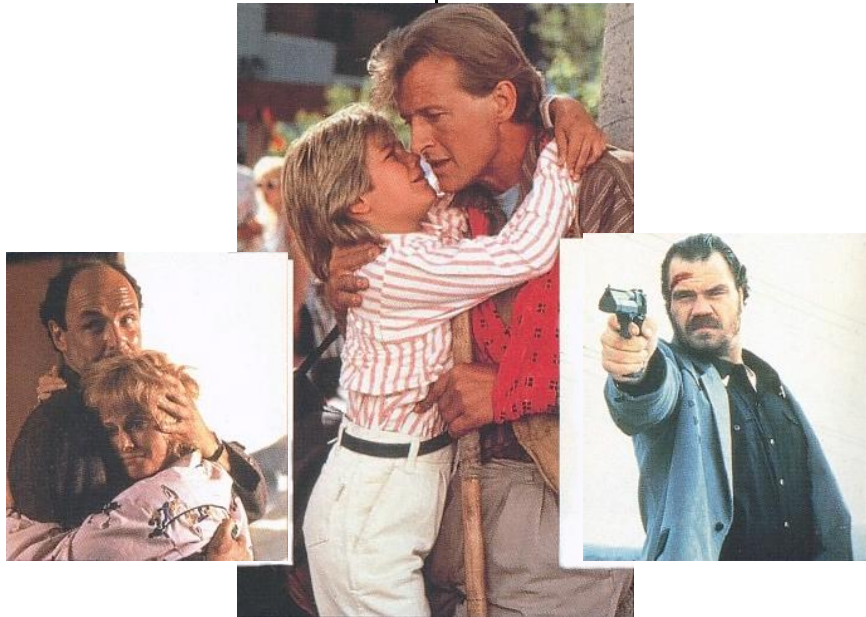
"Action thriller starring Rutger Hauer. A bomb robs Nick Parker of his sight during combat in Vietnam. The local villagers who rescue him teach him the art of blind swordsmanship, a skill that will serve him well 20 years later, when he helps save the son of an old army buddy¹.
*** "



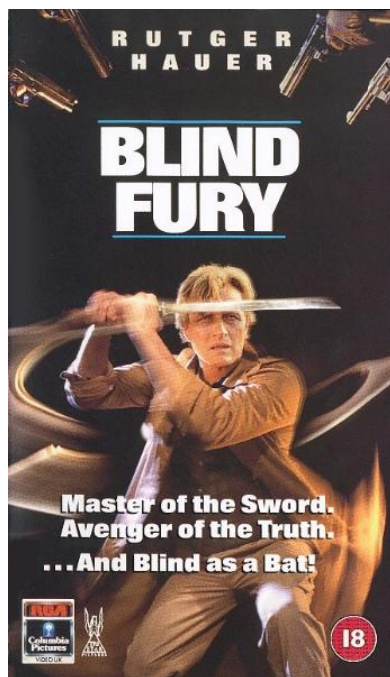
"Comedy thriller with a blind ninja warrior hero."

¹ who deserted him at the critical moment in Vietnam, by the way

If they'd taught us these skills at boot camp, we'd never have lost the goddamn war, he muses...



Source for all stills on this page – Columbia Tri-Star VHS CVR 21874



TV Times note:

"Comedy-drama starring Rutger Hauer as a blind Vietnam veteran who returns home as a highly trained ninja warrior. *** "

TV Quick note:

"Action drama. A ninja warrior is determined not to let his blindness stop him from taking on a gang of ruthless criminals."

What's On TV notes:

"Comedy adventure. Blinded Vietnam veteran Rutger Hauer, the man of few words, is taught how to use a razor sharp cane² to deadly effect - after a pint of course. Inspired by the exploits of Japanese hero Zatoichi."

"Guinness man Rutger Hauer plays a blind Vietnam vet-turned-Samurai swordsman protecting a young boy from the bad guys, in this entertaining comedy action film."

"Guinness man Rutger Hauer³ stars as a blind swordsman protecting a young boy from mobsters in this oddball action comedy."

"Comedy adventure starring Rutger Hauer as an action hero who is blind."

² or metal sword, for those who've taken the trouble to actually see the film

³ It doesn't say a great deal for this magazine's estimation of its readership that they would only recognise Rutger Hauer from the TV Guinness ads...

"Comedy adventure starring Rutger Hauer as a blind samurai."

Sunday Times note:

"Adventure about a blind Vietnam veteran and ninja warrior."

Film Review 1991-92 review:

"Vietnam, 1969; Miami/Reno, the present. Multi-genre vehicle for Rutger Hauer as a blind Samurai sword-wielding Vietnam vet acting as babysitter for a spoiled brat. The kid's father, a chemist, is persuaded by gangsters to manufacture a dangerous new drug, with his son to be held as collateral should his morals intervene. But the Mob hadn't reckoned on Hauer's arbitration. Plenty of action, some nice comic touches and the odd witticism speed this action-comedy-adventure martial arts B-movie along its merry way but, quite frankly, it's a waste of director Phillip Noyce's exceptional talents. Based on a popular Japanese potboiler in the "Zatoichi" series."



Nick (Hauer) "reads" his companion's face...

Source: original front of house still

Disregard the word "ninja" where it appears above. The hero is neither ninja nor samurai, nor is the swordstick he carries, so far as we know, Japanese. He's not American either, if it comes to that. Rutger Hauer has an indefinably European look and demeanour. It isn't essential to know that he's Dutch. He has a sardonic air about him (even before the

flamboyantly expensive Guinness ad campaign) which few Americans can project. Hauer has undeniable screen presence (best so far as the replicant Roy Batty in "**BLADE RUNNER**"), but his lead roles - in "**FLESH + BLOOD**", "**LADYHAWKE**", "**THE HITCHER**" - have rather boxed him into a second-rank macho man type, not quite suitable for Clint Eastwood or Harrison Ford style vehicles, but on a par with Jean-Claude Van Damme or Chuck Norris. He can do better. His career is sorely in need of a major hit that will bring him box office clout and the space to recast his image. "**BLIND FURY**" does not help him out of that quandary.



Nick waxes messianic with a crooked roulette table in Las Vegas (and you can very plainly see – that's no Samurai sword he's wielding)
Source: Film Review 1991-92

It may have its origins in Japanese Zatoichi films, but the storyline is a close cousin of "**SHANE**". Mysterious loner drifts in from nowhere, sorts out the bad guys, and wins the heart (like it or not) of a young boy in the process. Indeed, "**BLIND FURY**" makes more of that relationship than "**SHANE**" did, since the boy's mother is despatched quick time and he does not see his dad until the end of the picture. Billy, after a fractious beginning where he mocks Nick's blindness, becomes his co-opted boy sidekick, playing a more involved role in the action sequences than children earmarked as kidnap victims generally do. Untypically for these paranoid times, the affection that develops between the two, as Nick cleaves his way through hordes of inept goons, is expressed quite closely and physically, although the script saddles them with some very predictable big buddy/little buddy dialogues. The flood of emotion which attends their final parting is way too over-the-top and manipulative to be touching, and in any case the film's quirky air of levity nullifies any genuine display of emotion.

I found the levity, so much admired by some critics, merely annoying. Hauer hacks and slashes at the bad guys in best Kurosawa tradition, but never a drop of blood is spilled in the whole film, even when he bisects Randall "Tex" Cobb for the climax. One would think he was wielding a Jedi light sabre. It's a strange morality which allows carnage to be separated from bloodshed in the interests of a light-hearted tone. A Zorroesque swashbuckler does not sit very well with designer drugs, Uzi-packing hit men and casino locations in Reno.

That objection is tempered a little by Nick's prowess with the sword approaching superhuman dimensions (totally blind, he can slash the handle clean off a hotel door, to prevent pursuit, without even first ascertaining the door has a handle; he can slice the supporting strut from under a wooden shack in a cornfield without pausing in his stride to discover the existence of the hut). Handled this way, the action sequences are exciting without being gripping, in the style of a comic book, but I'm not too sanguine about razor-edged swords being treated so playfully. The film got an "18" certificate all the same.

Brandon Call, small, blond and fetchingly pigeon-toed, like a fleshed-out Mark Lester from some angles, emotes on cue for the script - bratty, distraught, vulnerable, exhilarated, possessive - but the character is essentially two-dimensional, and any competent boy actor could have handled it. The director might have made more space (perhaps he did?) in what is a short film by modern standards, to consolidate the Hauer/Call "bonding scenes" with less trite dialogue and more quiet mutual compassion. More is conveyed in less time, for example, between Harrison Ford and Lucas Haas in "**WITNESS**", because there are spaces for expression between the words. A stronger central relationship might have anchored the film better, and made it look less the straight-to-video nonsense it does now.

It's such a pity that many of the strongest friendships between men and boys are developed in these addle-brained macho man films dating as far back as Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper in "**THE BOWERY**". "**TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY**" (91) made such movies a bankable proposition again, but "**LAST ACTION HERO**" (93) bombed so seriously at the box office it discouraged further touchy-feely action man tales. Or monster budget ones, at least. So then, it's a post-Vietnam kung fu big buddy-little buddy action-comedy road movie, with just a dash of "**BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK**". But at least it wasn't a TV series pilot.

Born in '76, Brandon Call was 14 on the film's release, which suggests it was shelved for a year or two. He was seen previously in "**JAGGED EDGE**" (85) and "**THE ADVENTURES OF FORD FAIRLANE**" ('90), yet the film titles clearly "introduce" him. Methinks there's a mystery in it.

See subject index under **DISABLED / HANDICAPPED, KIDNAPPING, ROAD MOVIES** and **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS**.