



## Magic Kid II

US : 1994 : dir. Stephen Furst : PM Entertainment : c80 min  
 prod: : scr: Stephen Furst : dir.ph.:  
 Ted Jan Roberts .....  
 Stephen Furst

| Ref: | Pages | Sources | Stills | Words | Ω 8 € M ☼ | Copy on VHS | Last Viewed |
|------|-------|---------|--------|-------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 5661 | 2     | 1       | 0      | 1,082 | 3 7 7 7 7 | No          | May 2002    |

### Radio Times review:

“ **"MAGIC KID"** star Stephen Furst directed and co-scripted this disappointing sequel, in which he gives himself some of the best lines as the Hollywood agent whose film-star nephew seeks to quit and start living like a normal teenager. Contains violence. \*\* ”

“Children’s martial arts action sequel starring Ted Jan Roberts. \*\* ”

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Film Review 1994-95" or "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995"]

Channel 5 are privy to some secret intelligence. They habitually broadcast films like this one – clearly aimed at the under-12s – between 2 and 4 a.m. And in the midway commercial break there was a long public service message from Childline about school bullying. But there may be method in their madness after all: any 11-year old misguided enough to wait up till 3.10 am to watch this would have been put to sleep by it in no time. It is, like so much of Channel 5’s output, unadulterated junk.

How’s this for “children’s film” repartee? Stephen Furst is driving the L.A. streets at night searching for his nephew, who has gone AWOL from the studio. He’s accosted by a pair of kerbside whores:

Hooker: “Hi darling! Ya looking for a good time?”

Furst: “Actually, I’m looking for a young boy..”

Hooker: “Ooh, young GIRLS are much more fun!”

Furst: “All I want is my nephew!”

Hooker: “You’re SICK!”

It’s just the sort of snappy dialogue Disney have always been groping for. Of course, the Americans don’t make *children’s* films (actually they do, the Learning Corporation of America is one source – but their films are never sold to the UK), they make *family* films for the summer market, and there’s a world of difference between the two.

Not having seen the original, I was a little at sea as to the “magic” sense of the title. Kevin Ryan, 14, is a martial arts whiz starring in a new Hollywood vehicle called “Ninja Boy”. He lives with his agent uncle and a joke dog. He also has a grotesquely sanctimonious studio tutor called Suzanne, who takes him to task for neglecting his studies. She takes the studio to task also, and is promptly sacked for it. But the seeds of discontent have been well sown, and Kevin trails off to stare longingly at the “normal” kids enjoying the cultural richness and social rewards of *going to school*. Geez! can anybody feel a message in there?

Kevin's film star life begins to pall seriously when the dastardly studio boss (with a crap English accent) sets him up for a publicity date with some pop nympho of the moment. She leads the boy by the nose to a disco and precipitates him into a fight with an older jock with more explicit designs on her loins. Kevin makes short work of half the testosterone cases in the place. The next day he absconds from the studio and heads for Suzanne's house where – but who could have guessed! – he finds she has a daughter just exactly his age.

The remaining third of the film alternates shy Kevin on a long romantic day out with his new girlfriend Maggie (I didn't catch the actress' name on the end credits) and comic chase scenes of his uncle trying to find him, hotly pursued by joke studio goons. When Kevin refuses to shoot the sequel film back to back and skip his first term at high school, the dastardly studio boss decides to kill off the hero character in the first film – "If *I* can't have Ninja Boy, nobody will!" He is, needless to say, thwarted, and "**MAGIC BOY II**" closes with Kevin heading ecstatically for his first day at school. Arm in arm needless to say with the woman of his dreams.

Yah. Right. "**KARATE KID**" it ain't. That film itself was a highly formulaic teen martial arts quickie, but it did exceptionally well at the box office. Aside from an engaging young lead in Ralph Macchio (many years older than he looked) the key to that success was the warmth of his relationship with the Okinawan janitor Mr. Miyagi, who teaches him more than just Karate.

Ted Jan Roberts is a pretty young boy (Hollywood still favours those) with no particular martial arts abilities so far as one can see, and he has such little dialogue here that his acting qualities are anyone's guess also. The film fails completely as an exciting kick-about for kids (of which there have been plenty ahead of this one) and is so cheaply done that none of the glitz and glamour of film-making are conveyed. Finally it falls back on the old standby of the chase mit the dummie bad guys.

While I reach for the bolt-gun, a last kind word. The chief studio goon actually **is** quite a funny character, and there's at least one line worthy of Woody Allen when he's pursuing uncle Bob on a Harley Davidson, and more and more greasers on bikes join the chase behind him. Uncle Bob, staring frantically in the rear-view mirror, gasps "They're multiplying! I'm going to be killed by things that reproduce asexually!"

But no more Mr Nice Guy! The film's *school is a blessing we should be grateful for* anthem is totally incongruous in a martial arts comedy, and will only strike its target audience as phooey (they actually **go** to school every day). The obligatory heterosexual programming is annoying (kid hero – must find a *girlfriend* for him at once!) and puts slightly bashful 14-year olds through their 16-year old courtship paces because, well, *every other film* does. It tells kids nothing interesting about film-making, nothing at all about ninjas, and the adults hog most of the best scenes. Topical paedophilia gags will jar on most parental ears, and are a bit rich coming from Hollywood, which still cherry-picks only the prettiest boys for its kid stars.  
**To be avoided.**

See the "**3 NINJAS**" series for more in the same vein, and subject index under **BOY MEETS GIRL, CHILD PERFORMERS / CHILD STARS, CIRCUS / FAIRGROUNDS / THEME PARKS, COMEDY** and **MARTIAL ARTS / BOXING**.