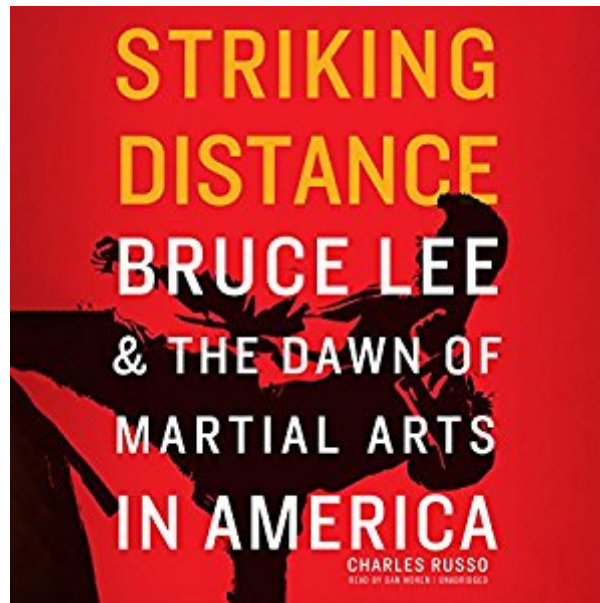




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# Striking Distance: Bruce Lee & The Dawn Of Martial Arts In America



## Synopsis

In the spring of 1959, 18-year-old Bruce Lee returned to San Francisco, the city of his birth, and quickly inserted himself into the West Coast's fledgling martial arts culture. Even though Asian fighting styles were widely unknown to mainstream America, Bruce encountered a robust fight culture in a San Francisco Bay Area that was populated with talented and trailblazing practitioners such as Lau Bun, Chinatown's aging kung fu patriarch; Wally Jay, the innovative Hawaiian jujitsu master; and James Lee, the no-nonsense Oakland street fighter. Regarded by some as a brash loudmouth and by others as a dynamic visionary, Bruce spent his first few years back in America advocating a more modern approach to the martial arts and showing little regard for the damaged egos left in his wake. In the Chinese calendar, 1964 was the Year of the Green Dragon. It would be a challenging and eventful year for Bruce. He would broadcast his dissenting view before the first great international martial arts gathering and then defend it by facing down Chinatown's young ace kung fu practitioner in a legendary behind-closed-doors, high-noon-style showdown. The Year of the Green Dragon saw the dawn of martial arts in America and the rise of an icon. Drawing on more than 100 original interviews and an eclectic array of sources, *Striking Distance* is an engrossing narrative chronicling San Francisco Bay's pioneering martial arts scene as it thrived in the early 1960s and offers an in-depth look at a widely unknown chapter of Bruce Lee's iconic life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are lots of reasons I like this book. I love martial arts and martial arts philosophy, I love the Bay Area, I love Bruce Lee. This book is really well done with a lot of detail and thoughtfulness. It's amazing how the author can take you back in time to specific places, instances, and conversations. It clears a lot of mess from what may have been told as fact in previous stories, documentaries, and bad Hollywood bio-pics. Like his supposed invincibility or infallibility, and especially the background on his famed duel with Wong Jack Man. Inside of a nicely paced journalistic style, we learn about the whole culture and environment that Bruce Lee emerged from, rather than more mystique and blanket praise of him as an individual atop a kind of mountain. All in all, great storytelling and local (both California and US) history!

This is a well written and intensively researched historical look at the martial arts culture in America. It is as comprehensive as it is detailed. This is a great book and will make an awesome film if it is done right. It is a great gift idea for anyone who is interested in the subject.

By its very existence this book has already become an important part of martial arts literature. Mr. Russo's writing is excellent and his colossal amount of research has allowed him to paint the most truthful and engaging account of Bruce and the Bay area/Hawaiian martial arts scenes I've ever read. Having known several of the people immortalized in the unique photo plates during my youth, I can definitely attest to the accuracy of this work. Those interested in the truth about Bruce Lee will find this book a most enlightening and enjoyable read!

This book offers a great narrative of Bruce Lee's early life, but that is just one of its many facets. It's a history of San Francisco, Oakland, and Hong Kong. It's about Asian immigration in America and the cultural infusion of ancient Chinese martial arts onto a new continent. It's a catalog of all the major players who began teaching these arts in San Francisco's Chinatown. As jiu jitsu enthusiast, I was inspired and thoroughly enjoyed this book and left with a burning desire to watch Enter the Dragon.

This book is not the "Hollywood" version of Bruce Lee but the true story from mouths of the key players who experienced his influence and magic first hand. I was mesmerized by the chapter entitled three moves or less. One can feel the domination that Lee had over those who tried to go up against this seemingly unattainable skill level that he brought to this art form. Few books read like you are watching a spellbinding movie. This one hits the mark.

I would have given more stars for the content and history of martial arts, but the story jumps around a lot. Sometimes I had to reread sections to grasp all of the information.

I grew up in SF's Chinatown during this period & have practiced kung fu for nearly 40 yrs. and this book really filled in a lot of blanks for me. Having grown up hearing about some of these local legends I really appreciated the insights that the author provided. Not a how-to book, but a must read for any martial arts buff who wants to know how we got to where we are today. Well researched & written!

Where so many biographies lose grasp of reality by building on hyperbolic myth, Russo's writing is a tense authentication of the underground scene through its sifus, students, and masters. We are taken through a series of fights, demonstrations, and a legendary showdown that prepare Bruce to reformulate his philosophy, changing the art of fighting forever. Meanwhile, America's evolution intensifies as the 1960's accelerate the breakdown of cultural barriers, racial lines, and the 'old guard'. In his short life Bruce Lee lived not one but several of the quintessential American stories. Striking Distance approaches its enigmatic hero through his interactions with peers, heritage, and country at a key period in his life. Bruce gained prominence first as a cha-cha dancer, then as a pioneer in the Bay Area martial arts underground. In many ways this is not a biography, but the memoir of a scene as it responded to and was awakened by its most legendary icon. This formidable first work by Charles Russo is refreshingly readable. I strongly recommend it to those interested in martial arts, the 1960's, Chinese/Chinese American culture, modernism, Bruce Lee, and the heart of the true self.

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