

A hidden identity as 'the Silent Avenger'

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Carlos Baon, a humane animal services officer with the Vacaville Police Department, played the Silent Avenger in the 2003 independent movie 'Lumpia'. Photo by Brad Zweerink

VACAVILLE - Now he's a Humane Animal Services officer but Carlos Baon once delivered justice one deep-fried lumpia at a time.

Baon gives a chuckle when asked about his adventures playing the Silent Avenger in the 2003 independent action/comedy film 'Lumpia.'

'I thought it would be fun getting to play a superhero-type guy,' Baon said of the character whose weapon of choice was lumpia, the Filipino treat similar to an egg roll.

Baon went to high school in Daly City with 'Lumpia' director Patricio Ginsela Jr. and had already been part of a previous home movie Ginsela shot called 'Kid Heroes' when he was asked to portray the Silent Avenger.

Armed with an 8mm camcorder and accompanied by a cast and crew made up of friends, Ginsela started shooting his action comedy around Daly City.

Jefferson High School became Fogtown High and the film's party scene was shot in the Baon family's home much to the dubious amusement of his parents, Baon said.

'My character becomes the Barong-wearing Silent Avenger when he sees his older brother get beaten up,' Baon said. 'He goes silent and makes a vow to stop the attacks and protect the neighborhood kids.'

It involved a combination of martial arts and deftly thrown lumpias into villains' mouths to defeat them.

'I thought it was a great idea. It was fun,' Baon said of his character's lumpia-wielding ability. 'Occasionally I would miss and hit the guy in the face.'

'We had no money at all. We ran out of lumpia all the time and we would buy the lumpia from a corner store for each shot,' Baon said.

Any money the film crew did make went to buy tape stock and lots of lumpia.

Filming lasted seven years partly because Ginsela was going to film school in Southern California.

'Every time he would come up for summer or winter breaks, we would shoot a few scenes,' Baon said.

'Lumpia' premiered at San Francisco State University in December 2003. It has been screened at several film festivals such as the Hawaii International Film Festival and has gone on to achieve a cult status among independent movies.

Baon is still surprised at its success and called watching it on the big screen 'euphoric.'

Ginsela has gone on to making music, which includes work for the Black Eyed Peas. Baon became an animal control officer with Humane Animal Services.

Baon never takes lumpia out on a service call to pacify an animal and kept his Silent Avenger role 'hush-hush' at work until he made the mistake of mentioning he had a bit part in a Black Eyed Peas video.

His co-workers went on the Internet to check out the video, discovered Baon's role in 'Lumpia' and have since occasionally kidded him about it.

As for reprising his role as the Silent Avenger?

'I am hoping there is a number two,' Baon said. 'He (Ginsela) has talked about doing a sequel and if he asks me to do the role, I'd go in a heartbeat.'

Reach Ian Thompson at 427-6976 or at ithompson@dailyrepublic.net.

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