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# Stunt School

## How to sell and receive a full-contact kick and fall.

with Ray Anthony

*In part two of our new series by Australian Film Fighting Academy founder, Ray Anthony, we give you the low-down on how to look good and stay safe while kicking and getting kicked for the movie camera.*

**W**elcome to stunt school. Continuing on from last issue, in which we showed you how to 'sell' a kick without contact, here we show you how it's done when a little more force is required...

### SELLING A FULL-CONTACT KICK

Again, for any contact film-fighting, I put a mark on the floor next to my foot for myself and another one for my partner. You can use a bit of tape or chalk or even a small stick, depending on the surface you're fighting on. This ensures that the correct distance is maintained for every take, which should be monitored after every scene has been shot.

Then you measure the impact position of the foot on the actor's back so he knows where the impact will occur (photo 1), which will help him react accordingly. You can do this by giving the actor a little tap on the back.

Next comes the protective gear. In photo two I'm wearing what we call an armadillo or back-protector. There are other protectors for different parts of the body that can be used in film-fighting. The armadillo is probably the most regularly used equipment in our safety bag, as it allows the actor to take the impact to the back without being hurt. In film-fighting, we only create the illusion that the fight is real. Whether it is a punch or a kick to the face or body, it's the same.

In photo three Suzanna delivers the kick, initially at only 25 per cent of full power. She does this by controlling the foot and pulling the kick as required, so the actor can get used to the impact. She then works up to 50 per cent and then about 75 per cent of her full power. It depends on the actor or actress; you should adjust the impact accordingly. At no stage should you kick at full power. It's unnecessary and could be dangerous to the actor and yourself. Instead, the cameraman can adjust the frames on the camera to speed up or slow down the action. When the director calls for more power he doesn't mean more speed, as by changing the speed you change the timing and reaction for the impact. Be careful as this could alter the fight process.

The kick is delivered at the right position and angle which allows the performer to react perfectly and fall while staying in character for the fight scene (photo four). It's important for

actors to be able to manage their reactions when filming a fight scene such that they stay in character.

On one movie set I worked on we used a martial artist for a fight scene with the lead actor. His skill level was excellent, but every now and then during the scene he would come out of character and put his guard down or look around at the cameraman before the director called cut. As you could imagine, the director wasn't too impressed with his on-set etiquette, and what should have taken one or two takes instead took 10.

The great thing about filming contact fighting is that you don't have to worry about the impact line or changing camera angles (as discussed in the last issue). The actor needs only to create the right reaction for the action...and not get hurt.

### RECEIVING A FULL-CONTACT KICK

The performer receiving the full-contact kick has just as many aspects to consider as the kicker. These include:



The armadillo protector.



1. Ray 'goes limp' to make the lesser impact look like a hard blow and allow him to roll with it...
2. ...letting himself fall in the right direction...
3. ...and making the reaction as natural as possible while spreading the impact of the fall.



impact; the camera will always pick up the mistake. Practise is required, as while you think you have the correct timing it may appear differently through the camera lens. The camera picks up every move you make and sees what you don't see.

### REACTION

As mentioned last issue, there must be an equal reaction for every action, just as the laws of physics state. Therefore your reaction must be appropriate for the level of force used by the actor. Don't overreact. With a roundhouse-kick to the back as in photo four, the reaction can vary quite a bit depending on what the script and the director demand, and who is kicking you. If your reaction isn't right, the director will surely tell you.

### FALLING

I've always believed that a good film fighter must know how to fall and fall safely every time. If you don't know how to fall properly and look right doing it, it's likely you won't get the job, or they will bring in a stunt double to do the falls for you. The best way to learn is to go and do some basic gymnastic classes or judo classes. The most important thing about falls is to 'spot', which means to look at where you're going to fall, rather than falling blindly and hoping for the best. You do this by turning your head before your body and spotting the area where you are going to land. Falling will be demonstrated in an upcoming issue.

**Ray Anthony has 18 years experience in martial arts, dance and gymnastics. He has worked on over 60 productions, including feature films Star Wars II, Crocodile Dundee, Mission Impossible 2 and the Matrix trilogy.**

**For all martial artists wanting to pursue a career in the film industry, Ray will be holding film-fighting workshops in NSW on March 28 and April 4 between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm. For more info on Ray or the Australian Film Fighting Academy, email [stuntman@netspace.net.au](mailto:stuntman@netspace.net.au). ATKD**

### DISTANCE

After marking your spot on the floor, you must measure the distance from where the kick will begin to position your body so as to create the right impact. Take the time to feel the foot on your back during this stage so you know where you are going to fall.

### ARMADILLO PADDING

It's a mistake to think you won't need protective gear or that the director will think you're a softy. After shooting 35 takes for one scene, which happened to me when filming "The Matrix Reloaded", I was thankful that I put on my armadillo. It protected my back and made it possible to keep filming the next day without injuries or soreness, which in turn saved the production company money by not having to postpone the fight scenes for another day.

### TIMING

If your timing is out even a small amount, it will create the illusion that the strike has missed. The only way to achieve this for a full-contact kick is to wait for the impact of the kick. Don't premeditate your reaction and move before the