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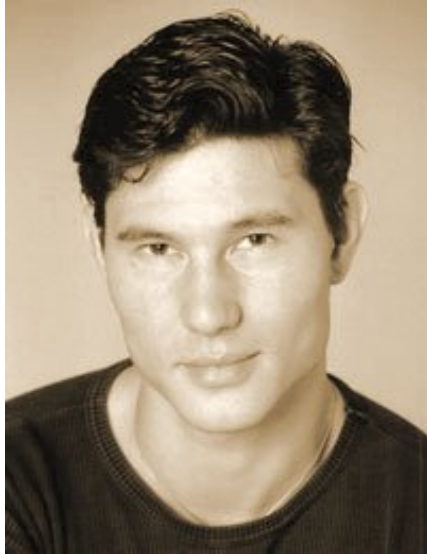


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David No



David No (center)



David No (right)

## INTERVIEW: Aussie David No in action From "Mr. Nice Guy" to the "Matrix" sequels

by Walter Gjergja

01.22.2003 - From a Hong Kong-style short film to a role in **Mr. Nice Guy**, and now the **Matrix** sequels, Australian stuntman and actor David No has come a long way in the past ten years. Today he is working in a variety of projects as actor, stuntman, choreographer and action director, while also planning to produce his own material.

**WG:** Can you tell the readers about your beginnings in the action film industry?

**DN:** I was studying physiotherapy when a friend in occupational therapy told me of a neighbor who was making a student film. Her friend was looking for a martial arts choreographer to help train the actor. After I met the director, we clicked and he suggested that I play the main role. The year was 1993, the student was Brent Houghton and the film was **The Huntsman**. It was a huge amount of fun and the film was the first ever martial arts flick made at a film school. It went on to some local and international success and I fell in love with the film industry.

**WG:** What projects have you recently worked on?

**DN:** I just finished almost four months of stunt work on **The Great Raid**. It's a Miramax war epic starring Benjamin Bratt and Joseph Fiennes. It was actually nice to not be in an acting role, but being the only Asian (actually only half Asian) stunt-actor in the country, meant that I (and five "stunties" from Japan ) really worked hard. Also, the entire duration were night shoots except for a few days - I'm still living at the wrong end of the clock!

**WG:** Can you tell us anything about working on the **Matrix** sequels? I understand there is total non-disclosure on the production, so perhaps some behind the scenes anecdotes on the training or the cast?

**DN:** How it came about...

It was a small role on a huge film. I flew up to Sydney for a stunt audition and felt pretty confident (not too many guys do the Hong Kong stuff in Australia ). Then nothing. Then my acting agent calls with an audition for the role of Cain. They flew me up for the audition, I walk in and The Wachowski's are taking the audition. We chatted for ages. I was so keyed up that I was the one to get the audition into motion. We did a few scenes, changed them around a bit, then I left. It was one of the best auditions I'd done and felt supremely confident. Then nothing. Normally when you do an audition you put it out of your mind, but everything went so well, I couldn't. It was agonizing. Then maybe two weeks later I received word that I got the part. Then nothing. This went on the whole

production - partly due to secrecy and partly due to the production being so big. The left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing.

Lesson's learnt...

The world's best - from the US and from HK - were working on this production, and the Australian's were equal to the task. There is one sequence that the Australian stunt guys worked out that blew the Americans and Chinese away. I've been trying to convince the Australian Film Industry that there is a place for Australian Genre Films - and this was just the ammunition I needed. I was very proud to be an Australian that day.

Disappointment...

Obviously this was when I blew my knee out. It was in one of the key fight sequences in **Reloaded**. I had to kick Keanu when he boots me across the room. I fly backward in a horizontal position about 20 feet and crash through a huge statue. The statue exploded and spun my body around so I was head down and facing away. As my right toe touched the ground, my right knee chose to lock out instead of flexing. With the force of a 20-foot jerk back I bounced off my locked out knee like a pogo stick. There was immediate swelling and I knew I had done something really bad. They needed one more shot of my land, so I strapped it and got a mini-tramp in (I knew there was no way I'd be returning the next day). I hopped on one leg and threw myself onto the ground a few more times before going back to the hotel. Sure enough, the next morning I could hardly move and an orthopedic doctor confirmed a torn lateral collateral ligament. I was lucky not to do my cruciates [a ligament in the knee joint].

**WG:** About your Jackie Chan projects, are you scheduled to do ongoing work with him?

**DN:** I was lucky to work on **Mr. Nice Guy**, and last year I was fortunate to be asked to line produce a Korean TVC starring Jackie. There are no real "stunt co-ords" in Thailand and the director of the TVC felt I had the best rapport with Jackie, so I ended up spending the a whole day directing Jackie Chan. I know his style so I just spoke Jackie-talk to him. I didn't think about it till later, but it was a rare opportunity indeed. I respect Jackie so much. He is so generous and so conscious about the environment, and he really looks after his Sing-Ga Ban [*Cantonese* - Jackie's personal crew]. He is a product of the 'family' way of making movies - HK style. I've worked with a lot of Americans and many of them are a product of the 'star-system' of making movies. It is an inspiration to see someone so famous be so human. There is no scheduled work with Jackie, but who knows what the future will bring.

**WG:** Can you talk a little about your company Furious Films, its aims, achievements and future projects?

**DN:** Brent and I started Furious Films in 1998, when we wrote **Huntsman 5.1** - a sci-fi action thriller. We shopped it around the Oz industry and basically were told that "Australian's can't do action and that it is too expensive. We then made a 4 minute pre-sale trailer (with a 22 minute making of) and the industry started to take us seriously. Since then we have moved from strength to strength, writing screenplays for various companies and even doing re-shoots on another feature film. But it has been difficult to convince Australian's to invest in something they've never done, and with an unknown actor and unknown director. Many guys are trying to do this stuff in Australia , but only at an indie level. We've avoided the no budget approach and have tried to create change in the mainstream perception of what Australian's can do. Like most Australian talent, we will probably have to make it internationally first.

**WG:** Finally, we have a lot of young aspiring screen fighters, choreographers and

movie makers which visit Kung Fu Cinema regularly. Could you outline your normal training regime and rehearsal practice needed to achieve the necessary skill?

**DN:** Both my parents are martial arts instructors, so I've trained my whole life. I never chose to do it, so to me it's just as natural as breathing. I do notice when I am too busy to train - it's like holding your breath - your body urges you to train. I grew up on Judo and taekwondo - not sport judo and taekwondo - but martial arts. I later started competing - this was more to test my own skills and less about trophies and medals. I also did gymnastics and demonstration taekwondo - this is an area where complex and dynamic kicks are developed. When I got into the film industry, my perspective on martial arts changed. Martial arts in film is based upon what looks beautiful or powerful. Martial arts in life is based upon what is efficient and effective. I've since picked up skills for film that covers techniques from many other martial arts. I train regularly to keep my skills up and develop new ones.

**WG:** Thank you for your time David, we look forward to seeing your stunt work in **The Great Ride**, the **Matrix** sequels, and in a starring role in the near future.

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