

David No, More Than an Action Guy

By Cathy Rose A. Garcia
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Korean-Australian actor David No has already made a name for himself working with Jackie Chan in "Mr. Nice Guy" and with the Wachowski Brothers on "The Matrix Reloaded."

But No is not just another hunky actor. He's also a filmmaker, producer, stuntman, stunt choreographer and a martial arts expert.

No met with The Korea Times last week to talk about growing up in a martial arts family, how he got his start in action films and his work in the Korean film industry.

Born in Melbourne, No was exposed to martial arts at a young age. His father No Ke-hyung is responsible for establishing taekwondo in Australia in 1965, while his mother Robin Marchment was the first-ever female black belt in Australia.

His family's business involved teaching martial arts. By age 15 he was teaching adult classes, and at 19 he opened his own club.

As a member of the Australian national judo and taekwondo teams, No was no doubt good at martial arts, but it didn't mean that he enjoyed it much as a child.

"Well, I hated it," No admitted with a smile. "There was a lot of pressure and a lot of expectations. In hindsight, I'm grateful for it. When I grew up, I trained at my own family's club. I did that for a lot of my life: training or teaching. But when I started training overseas, I realized that the standard that we taught was very high. So I began to value what I had more. I became proud of who I am and where I came from."

While most kids learning martial arts dreamt of becoming the next Jackie Chan, No never thought about it because he didn't really like any martial arts films.

His first foray into acting came almost by accident. In 1993, he was a student majoring in physiotherapy when a filmmaker asked him to train actors for an action film, but ended up being cast in it.

"I thought: 'wow, this is so much fun.' Once you start working on films and TV, you see more dimensions to it. It allowed me to enjoy films on a different level," he said.

More opportunities came through, and No soon found himself working with Jackie



Korean-Australian actor David No talked to The Korea Times about growing up in a martial arts family and working in the Korean film industry. Courtesy of David No

Chan, which he described as a great experience. He also began working with Korean companies as a line producer for commercials, films and dramas shot in Australia and New Zealand. They include films such as "Fly High," "Temptation of Wolves," and dramas "I'm Sorry I Love You" and "Worlds Within."

"Being involved in the Korean film industry for over 10 years now, I feel like I'm part of the industry. I have been influenced by some great Korean films and I want to give something back to the industry," he said.

But No does not want to be pigeonholed as merely a martial arts actor. He started a company called Furious Films to kick-start the action film industry in Australia.

He also directed, wrote and starred in "Forged," a film about a death duel between a sword master and his son. It won Best Film (Action & Suspense) at the 2007 Dragon Con Independent Film Festival, and Best Short Film at the 2007 Melbourne Underground Film Festival.

"I was a bit concerned about being known as an action guy. I made 'Forged' a couple of years ago to address that. The movie is

very strong in drama and characters. One reason I made the movie was so people can see I can also direct," he said.

Juggling different jobs might seem difficult, but No seems to handle it pretty well. Asked to choose just one job to concentrate on, he says he can't choose.

"Why do I have to make a decision? Why do I have to choose? I don't think I have to. I enjoy doing it all. It makes it harder for me to take projects because people don't necessarily believe I can do everything... I see filmmaking as a holistic process. That's why I like doing it all. Turning an idea into a script, developing and making it into a film, acting in it, editing it and finishing it," he said.

No, who has been living in Seoul for a year, is currently working on his next film project, which is set in Korea. And he's also brushing up on his Korean language skills.

"Some people tell me now that I'm more Korean than some Koreans, maybe in my way of acting or thinking. It's ironic because I struggle with the language," he laughed.

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