

Stunt Women's Association

By Aleta Walther

With the proliferation and popularity of such programs as the World's Greatest Stunts and Stunt Masters, a multitude of aspiring stunt performers have flocked to Hollywood. While some truly talented and tenacious individuals will become bonafide stunt performers, most how-



ever, will find the lure of bright lights lead to disappointment. The harsh reality is, there are more "wannabees" than there are opportunities. "It is very difficult to break into stunt performing," says Linda Fetters-Howard, President of the Stuntwomen's Association of Motion Pictures Inc. "There are so few jobs and so

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The Process of Film

*filmmaking from
A to Z...*

By Bendan Cahill

Originally the complex system of film making baffled even the most experienced scholars. What comes first? The chicken or the egg. As the the industry and technology advanced the mystery was easier to understand and today we can outline it in a very easy matter of fact way.

Before you can start any production, before you can budget, secure a director, actor, distributor, or financing, you must have a script!

Next comes the producer, even if he or she happens to be a director, once he/she starts to "shop" the script he or she is taking on the duties of the producer. The producer is responsible for generating the interest in the project, the script is normally sent out for coverage to a "reader". The script will be analyzed, explained and a rating system will be given by the reader. What do they look for? Literary sense is upper most, a sense of purpose, character detail and story continuity. This all seems very simple but don't kid yourself the toughest part of the script being

accepted is getting it through the reader. Usually in the major studios, the story department has a stable of readers. The independent production companies will have a series of free lance readers, who know the criteria of that particular company as it pertains to the type of films it likes to make.

With the script under their arm and a high "reader" rating, the producer now goes on the trail of making a budget, securing a director, key talent, distribution, financing, completion bond and

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Productionline

Product Placement

Bottomline

**New Product
E=mc2**



Jobline

The Mercury Report

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many people interested in being stunt performers."

Trying to break into stunt work presents a "catch 22" for many hopefuls. Directors, producers and stunt coordinators prefer to use experienced performers because of the high risk of accident and injury, and there is no shortage of experienced stunt men or women

in Hollywood. So, how does a rookie stunt performer with with no "connections" break into the ranks of working and respected stunt performers?

According to Howard, the best place to start is as a production assistant or a set extra. Working on a production adds credibility and offers a front row seat for witnessing the design and execution of stunts. "A lot of stunt performers start out as extras and /or PA's, Howard explained. "There they learn set etiquette, how a production works and the different roles people play. They also get a chance to network with stunt coordinators and performers...to really see what stunt work is all about and who

the players are."

Howard admits that in her end of the business, who you know is just as important as what you know, and in many cases more important. "Individuals interested in stunt work should become friendly with stunt coordinators and over a period of time express their interest in stunt performing," said Howard. "If they indeed appear to have potential, the coordinator may give him or her

Piper Laurie. Her skills include precision and stunt driving, fights, high falls, stair falls, and full burns.

In addition to schmoozing skills, Howard recommends rookie stunt performers have a strong foundation in athletics and be "very" physically fit. Gymnastics, dance, karate and kick boxing are Howard's foundations.

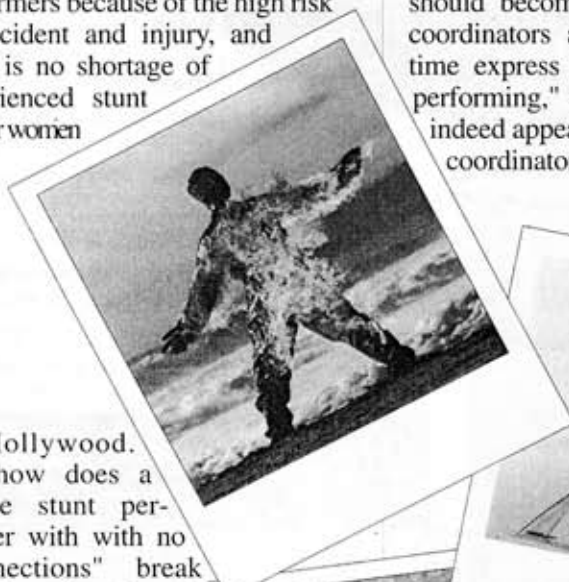
"Gymnastics is one of the best backgrounds you can bring into this industry," said Howard, who works out daily in her home gym.

"Gymnastics gives a person an awareness of where their body is in the air in relation to the ground, and when and how they are going to hit the ground. An athletic stunt performer is always in control although he or she may appear to be out of control."

Although stunt opportunities for rookies are far and few between, she

warns about accepting any and every opportunity that may present itself. If you want to keep from getting hurt, while establishing a credible reputation as a stunt performer, you must work under established and respected stunt coordinators and with talented stunt performers.

"I would never take it for granted that if someone has the title stunt coordinator behind their name that they are a true professional," Cont. Pg. 12



an opportunity." Howard has been a stunt performer for 15 years and has doubled, or doubles, for Delta Burke, Barbara Eden, Beth Maitland, Stella Stevens, Sammy Davis, Rebecca De Mornay, Audrey Landers, Amanda Peterson, and Oscar Winning Actress

"The Process of Film" *Continued from pg 7*

Post Production. The picture editor who has been hired prior to post production will already be busy starting to assemble a rough cut of the picture...the process is long and laborious, requiring a keen eye and a rhythm of movement. A common technique that is used when cutting is "Tell them a story, give them a cookie". This applies to the audience who during the film will live many lives, and experience many emotions...and who should by the end of the picture feel a little exhausted. The editors associates will be made up by a team of technical editors comprising of...dialogue, sound effects, music as well as foley editors, ADR or looping and any special "cutters" that may be generic to the film.

During post it is possible that the film may get stock footage cut in. This may be something as simple as a jet taking off at the airport to emphasize a story point, or be as extensive as crowd scenes, car chases, helicopter shots of ships on the ocean etc. As long as the stock shots don't cause a continuity embarrassment in the film, the use of stock footage can be very effective. A film that seemed to be doomed as it was being assembled in post, may with an addition of footage and sound that was not in the original plans, turn out to be just what was needed when it is released, to make the picture a hit at the box office. Of course the great thing about our business is there are never any guarantee's. Conversely, a film that has no problems and follows all the procedures to the "T" cannot be guaranteed box office success. Its all up to the audience. Rule number two... "never underestimate the viewing public".

Once the film reels have been "locked". The Dubbing process

begins. The dubbing stage, (which resembles a movie theatre) is where the dialogue, sound effects and music are all mixed onto one stereo sound track in sync with the picture on the screen. From there the film is sent to the lab to be negative cut and developed. One or two prints are "struck" for previews. Then the sales, marketing, advertising and publicity departments go to work, arranging the locations and preview dates for the film. This can range from out of town cities, on the lot, or at local movie theatres. The preview audience is made up of a wide demographic group of people, recruited to look at the film and give their written comments on preview cards which are handed out at the screening. The questions that are asked range from... what did you like?...who did you like?...would you recommend the film to a friend?...and a rating that asks if the film was... excellent... very good...good...fair...bad. All pretty simple stuff, however, the results when tabulated may influence the amount of screens the film will be released on, and how much money will be spent on advertising to launch the picture in the theatres. Sometimes based on the preview results, the picture may be sent back to the editor to be re-cut, this will necessitate a new dubbing session to fine tune the scenes that have been re-cut, so they balance with the rest of the film.

Finally the picture is complete, all that can be done from all the experts that have worked on it is finished.

Big films get big premiers, smaller films may not get a big send off, but none of this matters. The success is based on two factors, how much money the picture makes, or the critical acclaim it receives. Either way, to be a part of the film making industry is the most exciting experi-

ence in the world ...if anyone tells you they have worked in the movie business and don't want to do anymore...are either lying or dying!

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she cautioned. "Look for established coordinators. Look at their track records, the films they have worked on and who they have been associated with. Do they do union films? Low budget films?"

Howard stresses union films because the best professional stunt performers are members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and must follow the guild's policies and guidelines. In addition, union films must carry liability insurance and meet a minimum of safety guidelines to employ SAG members.

"A lot of people perceive stunt performers like they do actors and actresses - as celebrities," Howard said in conclusion. "The reality is, is not glamorous. Oh, it can be a lot of fun, but it is a lot of hard work."

**E=mc2** *Continued from pg 11*

picture camera that runs at 24 frames per second versus the television running at 30 frames per second creates a less than desirable final image. 24 frame video adjusts the normal 30 frame per second video to run at a 24 frame speed.

Burn Baby Burn...Not!

"Quality of service," says Bob, "that is the single most factor of our company. E=mc2 was designed to assist the film production companies, not hinder them. Our objective is to give our clients the sense or feeling of trusting us with every thing. That they can dump a project in our lap and it would be attended to smoothly and professionally. If the call time was at 5 am Tuesday