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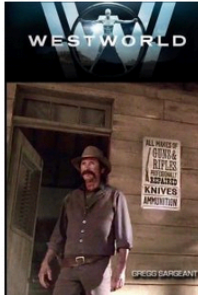
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LOCAL STORIES SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

Hidden Gems: Meet Gregg Sargeant of Stunt University



LOCAL STORIES



Today we'd like to introduce you to Gregg Sargeant.

Hi Gregg, we're thrilled to have a chance to learn your story today. So, before we get into specifics, maybe you can briefly walk us through how you got to where you are today?

I started out in the movie and TV business in the early '90s when Hollywood was a very different place. After climbing the ladder to work with legendary directors such as Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, and sharing the screen with stars like Tom Cruise and Johnny Depp, it's a bit surreal to look back at how I started. It had the feeling that everything was possible. My first exposure to the movie and TV-making process was on sets as an extra. Like many people, this was a way in and also a way to get up close and

around stunt action on real sets and locations and have the opportunity to meet some professional stunt performers.

The stunt profession was evolving in many ways and stunts for blockbuster movies to TV series and even commercials were getting bigger and much more spectacular than ever. The introduction of never before seen computer effects that were being very quickly developed and adapted opened up a large opportunity for directors to increase what they could do by leaps and bounds.

My process back then was to get on as many movie or TV projects I could as an extra, and then I would immediately seek out the stunt performers and did my best to pick their brains to figure out how I could get access to this secret society of the stunt world. Stunt work is a physical art and a true craft, just like acting. I soon found out that this is a closed society and if you're not already on the inside it wasn't going to be easy to get in.

Time and time again I would get on set and find the stunt performers and say that I want to become a stuntman. No one wanted to tell me much of anything. After a year of doing this finally one day on set, I found the stunt people but something was different this time.

I had been doing this for so long that one of the stunt performers recognized me and knew my name. I was shocked, finally some kind of progress. He told the others, this guy is never going to go away. He had a film project coming up and he would be having a stunt rehearsal with some other stunt performers and invited me to come to his home and try out. That day went pretty well and after flying through the air a couple of times and then being beat up and thrown to the ground many times, he said, okay kid I can use you on my movie. That was the beginning of my journey to becoming a professional stuntman.

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Once I was allowed into this very special circle of professional stuntmen and stunt women, I quickly began to see why it was so hard to get the opportunity I got. Stunt performers are in the only segment of the movie-making process that unfortunately people sometimes die doing what we do. The learning process involves many very dangerous things and massive safety procedures are learned and put into effect to keep people as safe as possible.

We all face challenges, but looking back would you describe it as a relatively smooth road?

It was definitely not a smooth road. Stunt performers don't have agents for movies and TV so you can't really get an audition like an actor. The only representation for stunt performers was for commercials. At that time you would have to either know someone that was a stunt person who could take you under their wing, otherwise keep struggling as I did to convince someone to give you a chance. I was fortunate that persistence paid off.

Don't assume you can just casually learn stunts. A highly specialized set of skills must be learned.

Thanks for sharing that. So, maybe next you can tell us a bit more about your business?

I made a promise to myself once I finally entered the ranks of the professional stunt performers that I would one day start a training program for beginners so that aspiring young people like me would not have to go through what I did to learn the stunt craft. I established Stunt University in the 2000 and we have been training and educating young men and women for the stunt world as well as other aspects of film and TV production at the beginner level.

We have had people come from all over the world to train in our course, as well as many many young people from all over the United States. I never know who is going to enroll next and it is always very interesting to see the broad range of people from all types of other professions that come. We have had people from Cirque De Soleil, Navy Seals, doctors, lawyers and of course actors as well as people who do everyday jobs. Some people have come to take the beginner course just because it was thrilling to do. We have had many corporate events for companies that want their employees to enjoy a one-day stunt experience as well. The beginner's course takes place over 8 days which are action-packed. The minimum is 8 hours a day and will sometimes go longer. Everyone who is an instructor at Stunt University is a professional working stunt person, so you are learning from the real people.

Wherever you train, do your research and make sure the people training you or exposing you to the stunt action world are people who are actually working stunt performers.

Needless to say, I am very proud of all of our graduates.

We have had many of our students that have gone on to great stunt careers.

What does success mean to you?

No matter what you decide to do in life, success to me is about doing something that you love to do and makes you feel great whenever you're doing it. If you're just doing something for money it doesn't mean it's going to make you happy.
