



Transplanted Stunt Actors Show Albuquerque How It's Done

Reel N.M. DAN MAYFIELD Of the Journal

Explosions, jumping off buildings, getting shot with fake bullets. The life of a stunt actor sounds super glamorous.

Glamorous until you blow a knee out getting hit with 7,500 gallons of water for "Terminator Salvation" or get stepped on by a deranged mall security guard for "Observe and Report." But that's all in a day's work for Mike Long and Shelby Swatek.

The pair moved to Albuquerque — just like plenty of actors and crew folks — because there's a need for trained stunt people to do the stuff the rest of us would be nuts to do.

As the industry was heating up, the two realized the state could use a stunt performer school, and they opened L.A. Stunts Training Center in Albuquerque.

Swatek and Long moved here late last year and have already seen action in the films "Game," "Observe and Report" and, the biggest of them all, "Terminator Salvation."

"I was in 'Observe and Report' at the Winrock Mall. We destroyed everything," Long said.

"I got knocked down and stepped on by the perp," in "Observe and Report," Swatek said.

Think back to 1992 and the film "Passenger 57."

Remember the scene in the Wesley Snipes thriller where a woman is kicked down the airplane's metal stairs? Well, that was Swatek in her first stunt.

"I didn't know. They asked me if I wanted padding. I didn't know," she said. "Everywhere I didn't have a pad, I got bruised. That was the last time I got hurt during a stunt."

Long was a stunt driver in "The Italian Job," fight coordinator in "Baby Geniuses," a stunt man in the 1990s "Godzilla" remake and a stunt driver in "Die Hard: With a Vengeance." His career goes back to "E.T." and "Miami Vice."

"I'm what they call a general practitioner. I do everything," he said.

Swatek's also racked up some impressive credits, from "Die Hard: With a Vengeance" to "The Money Train" and "The Cowboy Way."

"I specialize in the near miss," she said.

Near miss? Yeah, when a car swerves really close to an actor then at the last second they jump out of the way.

L.A. Stunts Training Center will hold its first class Sept. 6. See www.lastuntstrainingcenter.com.

What to watch for

Long did stunts on "Game," but the film has been delayed and won't be released until sometime in 2009.

"Game" was filmed almost entirely in Albuquerque last fall — mostly Downtown at the corner of Third and Silver, where a giant set was constructed and then blown up.

SciFi.com reports producer Gary Lucchesi said visual effects work has pushed completion back from late 2008.

"Game" stars Gerard Butler in a futuristic world where regular people can control criminals in a video game.

"Terminator Salvation" is on its way out.

I was told the expected mega blockbuster wrapped up principal photography on Friday.

That means most big scenes are done and the actors should be heading out of the state.

The film "Baby Grand" is coming, but not for a while.

Director and writer Craig Weintraub said his new film is wrapping up financing now and should shooting in New Mexico in March. He recently finished a location-scouting trip to Albuquerque.

The low-budget — between \$3 million and \$4 million — film is about a family who seemingly has everything, only to have it all turned upside down.

"The story is about a guy in his late 20s. He's a real estate agent, he's engaged, his fiancée is pregnant. They have the typical everyday normal life," Weintraub said.

In planning the wedding he discovers he was adopted as an infant and everything in his file was false. It's a thriller and a mystery, he said.

Though Weintraub has made just a few low-budget films, his producing partner Barbara De Fina is a big name in Hollywood. As Martin Scorsese's producing partner she made some of the biggest films of the 1990s, including "Goodfellas," "Cape Fear" and "Casino." De Fina's career goes back to the 1970s when she worked on the original "The Gambler" film.

The film's Web site, [www. babygrandmovie.com](http://www.babygrandmovie.com), will be updated with more information as the film gets cast and locations are chosen. **Watch the video**

To see video of Mike Long and an instructor trading fake punches and falling off a 20-foot scaffolding at the training center, go to **ABQjournal.com** .



PAT VASQUEZ-CUNNINGHAM/JOURNAL LEFT: L.A. Stunts Training Center founder Michael Long, left, clocks stunt instructor Ronnie Jaynes in the face in a stunt. RIGHT: After he was "hit" by instructor Michael Long, Ronnie Jaynes falls over a 10-foot railing. These guys are pros and know how to do it without getting hurt, so don't get any ideas about doing this stuff at home.

