

Men's Fitness



Living Out The Dream

by Clay Cane

A day in the action-packed life of **Mike Gunther** overflows with explosions, car crashes, blow-by-blow fights, protecting the lives of our favorite celebrities, and getting paid for it! What more can an Evil Knievel like Gunther ask for? Gunther is a 15-year veteran in the stunt business and one of the industry's premier Stunt/Fight Coordinators and Directors. He has brought his daredevil talents to high energy projects such as *Spiderman 2*, *Elektra*, *Catwoman* (the stunts were better than the movie!) and is currently the stunt coordinator on the ABC hit television series *Alias*. Gunther recently sold his script *Killed In Action*, earning him his WGA card (The Writers Guild of America). Gunther is fearlessly living out his childhood dream and looking to expand his role of stuntman beyond the screen, to the art of writing action design.

MFOnline: You've had an amazing career! What inspired you to get involved in the stunt industry?

Gunther: As a kid I always had an athletic part of me. Cartoons like Speedracer and shows like Fall Guy, Six Million Dollar Man and Starsky & Hutch inspired me. Also, I didn't want to grow up and I didn't want to do a 9 to 5! I've been in the industry for a long time, but now I want to design action for movies as opposed to just performing -- I'm a writer and a member of WGA so being an action designer is my goal. I'm trying to create a new niche, to be known as a filmmaker for action design. My partner, Marcus Young, is an action director - I write, he shoots. I want to come up with innovative ways to write action. No one in the industry that writes action has done action.

MFOnline: What's your most favorite stunt?

Gunther: Ones that fulfill me creatively and the ones that challenge me the most like explosions, car sequences or waterworks.

MFOnline: What's your most dangerous stunt?

Gunther: Ones that don't have time to prep and they are cutting cost to hurry up and get it done. Huge stunts and big explosions are well prepared. It's the little ones that you get snagged - little ones you don't count on, and you break your ankle or worse. Luckily, I've had no major injuries and I've never been hospitalized.

MFOnline: How do you maintain your health and stamina being that you have such a physical job?

Gunther: I eat as clean as possible, almost like a zone diet. I always cross train - a lot of martial arts, tons of kickboxing, swimming and bouncing on a trampoline. You have to be able cross train because it's not just how you look - although that plays a little into it, but you have to be diversified.

MFOnline: How is it working on *Alias*?

Gunther: Terrific! Jennifer Garner is a treat. Her work ethic is amazing and she leads by example. She's not one of those actresses whose double does all of the work. She does 95% of everything and raises the bar for everyone else. Jennifer's double, Shauna Duggins, and my partner, Marcus Young, elevate everyone's game. The key is to have the same team every time. You know each other and you know how to keep each other safe.

MFOnline: What's your take on actors who do their own stunts?

Gunther: Jennifer is a prime example. It's terrific and that's what the audience paid to watch - people do their own stunts. Actors that are game to do it are fantastic and they push the envelope. A lot of people say it takes work away, but I don't agree because there are always stunts actors can't do for insurance purposes. I believe in using actors as much as you can because that's what the audience came to see.

MFOnline: What's your advice to someone who wants to be break into the stunt industry?

Gunther: Work on your craft and wake up every day knowing your industry. The more diversified you are the better you work so be well-rounded. Work the fundamentals to death! You will get hurt. You can't avoid it - it's a serious game. Eventually you'll break something. Consider that before entering this arena. I've been blessed and worked hard - the stars lined up for me, and I'm fortunate to make a living out of what I love.

