



De Longis lends snap to Indy's bullwhip

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Anthony De Longis is a veteran actor, stuntman and fight trainer to the stars. He also puts the crack behind the whip of Indiana Jones.

Indiana Jones, rusty?

Sure, he's creaking a bit. Who wouldn't be, after all he's been through. It's not the years, it's the mileage, right? Still, 20 years have passed since Harrison Ford, the man who inhabits Jones' fedora and bomber jacket with disheveled brio, last cracked a bullwhip.

Even the great ones can use a little coaching.

Enter Anthony De Longis — veteran actor, stuntman and fight trainer to the stars — who Ford enlisted for a refresher course prior to shooting 'Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.' Goal: to put a little extra snap in the picture, which opens nationwide today.

'The producers had forwarded my material to Harrison, who then saw my reel on the Web site Whipmaster and called to say, 'We better get you over here,' says De Longis, a man who has mastered a host of martial arts. 'I was offering him a more efficient and effective structure for the movie that was more visual. Some of these ideas haven't been seen before, because no one else has thought of them.

'Working with Ford was wonderfully satisfying. That was my contribution to the film, that and hand-dyeing and breaking in the whips he was to use. Harrison's intelligent, resourceful and appreciative. He saw what I was trying to offer. He did great. He was ready to go from the start.'

Jones also packs his trusty revolver for film No. 4, but there is no replacement for his

signature whip.

'Only a bullwhip is supersonic, which is unique in the flexible weapon category. What astounds you is the versatility and amazing effectiveness of this 5,000-year-old weapon,' says De Longis, who also boasts 35 years of swordplay experience. 'I think of the bullwhip as a telescoping blade, the perfect action accessory for the adventurous archaeologist.'

It was De Longis who helped Michelle Pfeiffer learn to lash and slash as Catwoman in 'Batman Returns,' and De Longis who most recently dueled on screen with martial-arts superstar Jet Li in 'Fearless,' for which he also contributed fight choreography. As action trainer,

horse master, whip master or sword master — just a few of the titles earned during 34 years in show business — De Longis has trained the likes of Jon Voight, Angelica Huston, Madeleine Stowe, Elijah Wood, Matthew Perry, Ellen Barkin and Bo Derek, among others. As a stunt actor, he has battled on screen with or against such worthies as Patrick Swayze, Tom Cruise, David Carradine, Dolph Lundgren and Sam Elliott.

As an actor, the University of California-Northridge graduate has performed in scores of plays, feature films and TV shows (not least in 'Highlander' and as the Kazon leader Maje Culluh in 'Star Trek: Voyager'). As is so often the case with good character actors, you will recognize the face, if not always the name.

An instructor for many years in the Theater Arts Department at UCLA, De Longis also holds 'action vacations' for enthusiasts at his 5-acre ranch,

offering lessons in whip, broadsword, katana, rapier, saber, archery, horseback riding, and pistol and shotgun for those wanting to train like their favorite action hero.

Imparting some sense of the art and science of swordsmanship may be his most called-for skill, as was the case for 'Fearless.'

'Swordplay requires more of a foundation. To learn to use a sword, you need a basic vocabulary. That way you can string dynamic 'sentences' together. The performer needs to understand what they are trying to do so that they can commit to it fully.'

A fit and formidable 58, De Longis never rests on his laurels as one of the select few specialists of his kind in constant demand in the business.

'I keep adding to my skills,' says De Longis, whose next acting gig is in the comedy 'Double Duty.' 'What separates my action sequences (as actor or trainer) from others is an insistence on the action driving the story and, with a great performance, maximizing character. Otherwise, it's just eye candy, exciting but not very evocative emotionally. I think actors should do as much of their own action as possible, and Harrison agrees. Stunts are a very different matter. Leave that to the professional stuntman.'

Like him, for instance.

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