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WORKING HOLLYWOOD

De Longis helps Harrison Ford crack the whip -- literally

The bullwhip tutor teaches the actor how to get just the right snap for 'Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.'

By Cristy Lytal

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HE IS one of the rare gentlemen who can extinguish a candle flame with the flick of a bullwhip. But growing up in London in Ontario, Canada, Anthony De Longis always favored school plays over sports.

"I felt very awkward," recalls De Longis, who now divides his time between Canyon Country and Vancouver. "I was never particularly physically adept, and I realized as an actor, my physical instrument is a huge part of my storytelling vocabulary. So I set out to do something about it, and I found that I liked fencing very much. I was a fencing champion my senior year [in high school] in saber, which is the theatrical one, of course. It's very flamboyant!"

De Longis studied theater at Cal State Northridge, and after graduation, he began acting professionally -- alongside Richard Chamberlain in "Cyrano de Bergerac" and Charlton Heston in "Macbeth." But it wasn't until he saw 1981's "Zorro, the Gay Blade" that he first laid eyes on a bullwhip. "I went, 'Wow, that's the most theatrical thing I've ever seen. I've got to learn how to do this!'"

Since he couldn't afford lessons, he set about training himself and developed a signature style that he's since lent to Michelle Pfeiffer for "Batman Returns," Madeleine Stowe for "Bad Girls" and **Harrison Ford** for the very highly anticipated "**Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull**," which hit theaters Thursday.

Thunder from Down Under: Whips date to 3000 BC in the Chinese and Egyptian cultures. Australian cowboys still use them to herd cattle.

"I get pretty much all of my whips from Australia, because it is a tool that they go out and work with, and their demands for an exceptional product are very high," says De Longis. "There are two arts to a whip. One is the cutting of the hide and the other is the braid. The best whips are made from kangaroo hide. You're able to cut it the smallest, and the smaller you cut it, the tighter you can braid it.

"A good whip has an inner braided core and then an outer smoothing leather bolster that wraps that inner braid and then an outer braiding. A good functioning whip is 12 plait. You'll get anywhere from a 4-foot whip to a 20-foot whip. Indiana Jones favors a 10-foot, short-handled American bullwhip style, which has become known as the Indiana Jones whip. I ordered those whips, and then I dyed them, and then I broke them in so they'd be ready for Harrison."

Energy efficient: De Longis developed his signature style from the principles of martial arts. "Most people are of the 'yank-and-crank' school, I call it," he says. "It's nice, but they do all of their work in their arm and their shoulder, and the whip doesn't line up with itself until half of its length has been already used up. And I went, 'Well, when the whip is lined up with itself, that's when the science of it, the acceleration of kinetic energy, is most efficient.' So the whole martial arts idea of using the least amount of energy and generating the most power out of that minimal energy is the way you want to go. What I do is I train myself and I train my students to get the whip to travel horizontally at chest height. You see it lined up with itself. You see it rolling. It is a more efficient style of working with the whip, and it is a more visual style. It works better for film."

Attack formation: "There are certain principles of fundamentals that are common to all of the [martial] arts," says De Longis. "One of the things is referred to as the lines of attack. So if you were looking at a clock, and you had a sword in your hand, a forehand diagonal would run between one and seven, or between two and eight. Your forehand horizontal would be between three and nine. Your ascending forehand horizontal would be between four and 10, or five and 11. And your ascending would be six to 12, or 12 to six. I showed Harrison how to do the lines of attack in all directions as both individual throws and then as combination throws. With the particular whips that they're using, that requires a very high level of skill. He was a very apt pupil."

Court case: Since Ford is a tennis player, De Longis used that as a point of reference. In tennis, "you allow the racquet to do the work," says De Longis. "And one of my principles is everything contributes. My hand is where my finesse is, my

arm is my extension, my body and torso are what keep the whip sustained and floating in the air, and my legs and my hips are what provide the power. When everything does a little bit, nothing has to do it all. So tennis became a nice analogy. There were things that were similar that we drew on. And there were things that were like, 'Well, that's tennis, and this is the whip!' "
