

Walt and the New Zealand Masport Commercial

“Over the years I have been involved, in various capacities, with television commercials. It is not something that I actively chase but even to this day I regularly get calls for assistance – some I do, some I don’t. Of all the commercials I have been involved in two stand out as my favourites.

The first was the New Zealand Masport Commercial. As is often the case you get a call to help out and it needs to be done ‘yesterday’. Liz Mullinar (Liz Mullinar Casting) called me about a commercial being shot in New Zealand the part called for a ‘Samurai Warrior’ who had to cut through straw targets emulating the practice of Tameshigiri. The New Zealand producer had been caught short as he had assumed he would have been able to get a local NZ martial artist/swordsman to do the cut but after an exhaustive test of dozens of locals from the north and south island none could do it. So panic call to Liz followed by panic call to Walt. That weekend I had already been booked to do seminars in Melbourne on the Saturday and Hobart on the Sunday so I flew straight to Wellington from Hobart.

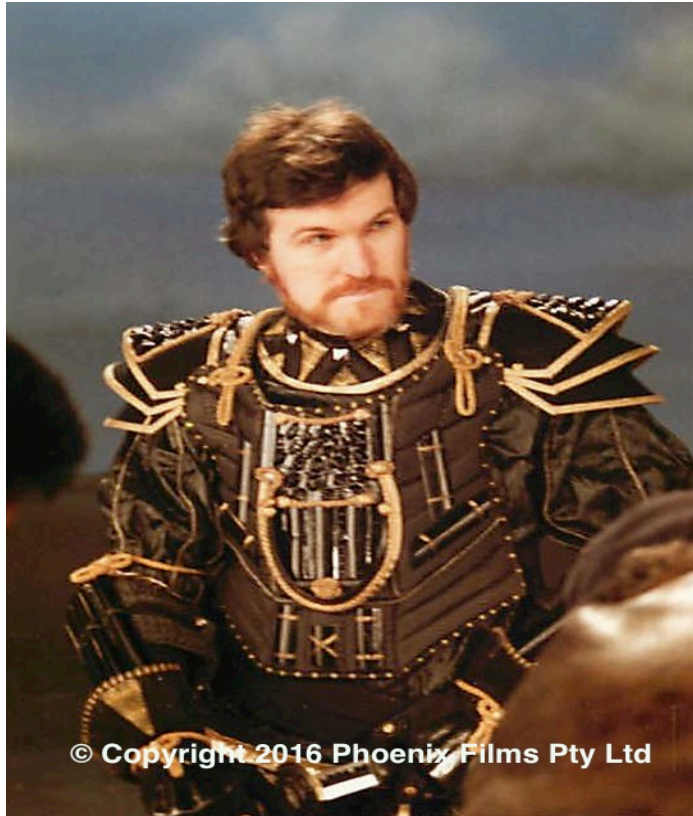


I arrived quite late but despite this I was taken straight to the set. To my surprise there was quite a reasonable crowd there comprising the usual technical film people you would expect but also a large contingent of local martial arts people and a Japanese man in a suit who stood over in the corner of the set. The Producer explained to me that the Japanese man was from the Japanese Consulate and that he had provided the opinion that only a Japanese swordsman

could perform such a cut and to that end one was on standby in Tokyo waiting to be flown out to Wellington. Accordingly the Producer said they had to be sure that I could do it.

So I guess you see where this is heading. I unpacked the very excellent Spanish Katana (supplied by Mike Yates at Martial Arts World Gladsville) and cut through the straw target with a single movement. I then explained I was a little tired and that I would cut through two straw targets with a single movement the next day. The Japanese man left the set less than happy.

The next day we shot the commercial and I did cut two targets in half with a single movement.



Commercials need to tell a story in a very compressed time so they do this in a very different way to a television program or feature film. We started at 7am and were still going at 10pm that night but we got it done. At the end of the shoot a local radio personality was used for the shot where the helmet is taken off but the rest is me. As the shoot was concluding some of the local sword club members were anxious to quiz me about what Japanese master I had studied under. When I told them that I had not studied under a Japanese teacher they lost interest in spite of the fact they I could do what they could not – the self limiting nature of the classically bound mind has always and will always amaze me!

This commercial can be viewed here:

<http://maia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Masport-Commercial.mp4>

The second commercial I will talk about another time.”

Walt Missingham