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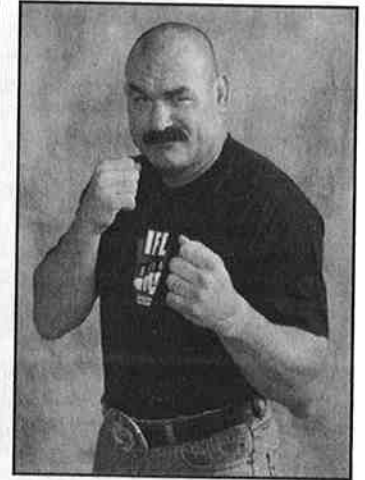
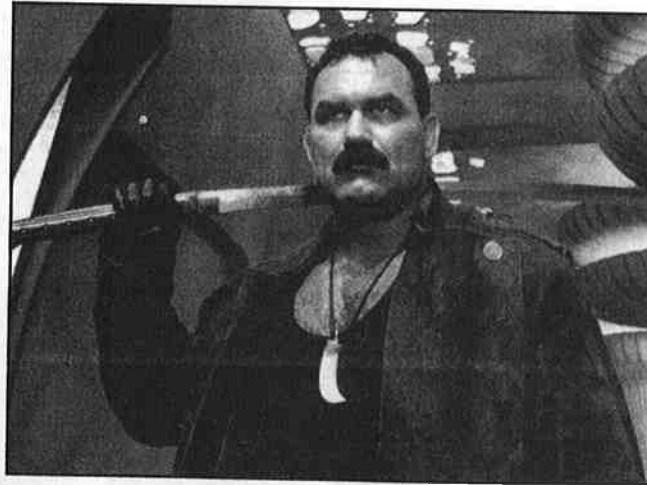
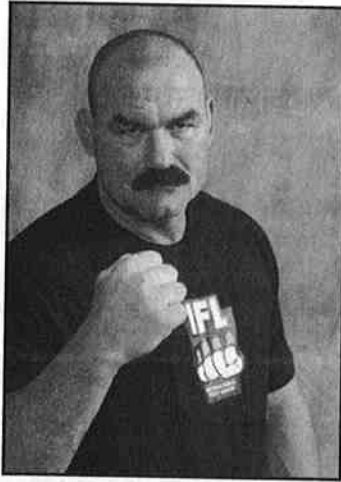
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(Left and right) Don Frye in recent publicity pictures, and (center) as he appeared in *Final Wars*.
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ULTIMATE GAIJIN

G-fAN interview with Don Frye

*Don Frye is an accomplished Ultimate Fighter and mixed martial artist who made the transition to movie star with *Godzilla: Final Wars*, the Big G's 50th anniversary film. Mr. Frye, as Captain Douglas Gordon, won praise even from *Final Wars*' harshest critics for his witty one-liners and his commanding screen presence. When it comes to the world of Ultimate Fighting, Mr. Frye won the UFC 8 tournament, was a runner-up in the UFC 10 tournament, and then went on to win Ultimate Ultimate 2. He also wrestled in New Japan Pro Wrestling as the top gaijin for a few years. In 2003, Yoshihiro Takayama and Mr. Frye battled in what came to be known as the Fight of the Year, and was even voted #1 this year in Fox Sports Net's Best Damn 50 Beatdowns. Mr. Frye spoke with Brett Homenick via telephone on his starring role in *Godzilla: Final Wars*.*

Brett Homenick: How'd you get involved with *Godzilla: Final Wars*?

Don Frye: Ryuhei Kitamura, a writer-director, wrote the part for me. He was a fan of mine from pro wrestling and fighting, and he just wrote that part for me, and then they spent a year or so trying to hunt me down.

BH: (laughs) Well, how did they eventually find you?

DF: They got a hold of K-1 'cause I was with Pride for a few years, and I had just left Pride right at that time. And Pride wouldn't tell 'em where I went. But I guess they saw me on TV and just snooped around long enough to find out.

BH: Do you have any memories of what happened in any of the preproduction meetings?

DF: Preproduction meetings... yeah, I went in there pretty much overconfident, and I was pretty much the weak link in the movie. I thought I could just go in there and be Don Frye without any kind of preparation, and it didn't work out that well. (laughs)

BH: (laughs) All right, well, you talked about

him a little bit, but just a few more words about Ryuhei Kitamura, what he was like as a director and what he was like off the set, just hanging out with him.

DF: He was great. He was a great director. He knows exactly what he's gonna do, and he doesn't waste a lot of film, doing extra takes and all that stuff. Kind of like a Japanese John Ford. He's got in his mind the way he wants it, and he gets everything set up, and we rehearse a few times, and then we shoot. Most of the time it'd be done in one or two takes.

BH: In this film, you also worked with several legendary actors, particularly Kumi Mizuno and Akira Takarada. Do you have any memories of working with them on the production?

DF: Yeah, it was real nice working with them. Talk about me being a fish out of water around those guys! They're real pros! (laughs) And I'm stumbling around, like a giraffe on roller skates on an ice pond!

(laughs)

BH: (laughs) Well, what about some of the, I guess you could say, the newer blood that was featured in the film, such as Kane Kosugi, Masahiro Matsuoka, and Kazuki Kitamura? What was it like to work with them?

DF: Kane was a blast. He's a good guy. I'm a fan of his father's (Sho Kosugi) work. Kazuki, he's a blast. The guy's a riot. He's a great actor. You just sit there and watch him work, and you go, "How the hell does he do it?" (laughs) It was just amazing watching him and the other real actors act! (laughs)

BH: Well, a lot of the movie features fights, and were you involved in any of the fight choreography at all?

DF: No, no, they pretty much had it already done. Not to badmouth them or anything, but it's the Japanese way to have their idea and have it done that way, and they're not gonna accept any opinion or advice from a gaijin. (laughs) You just gotta understand that's the way it is.

BH: Were there any accidents that happened

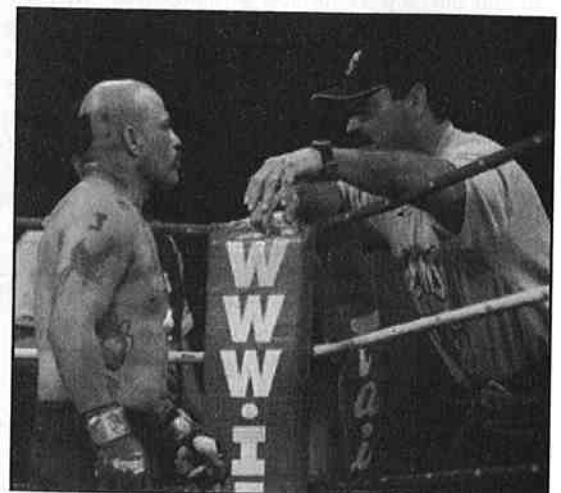


PHOTO COURTESY JERRY MILANI

Don advises a fighter at ringside during an IFL match.

when it came to the fights? Did anyone actually get hurt during any of the fight scenes?

DF: Heck, I hurt that poor little girl that beat me up, and then I punched her, kicked her neck. That was where she kicks me in the back of the head, and I go down, and then I spin around; I caught her with my foot and my boot while I spun around and almost broke her ankle off.

BH: Oh, wow! Was that on the UFO, during the end of the movie?

DF: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Okay, now another one of your featured weapons in the movie is the sword. Was that your idea, or was that already written into the film, to have that?

DF: No, that was Ryuhei's idea. Ryuhei's a big fan of the sword, the katana there. I mean, mostly all his movies have spectacular sword fight scenes. So I was real excited to have my own katana! (laughs)

BH: (laughs) Were you given any special training or instruction about how to use the sword, or were you just handed it, and you just worked with it?

DF: Oh, no, we spent some time rehearsing on that. They didn't leave it up to me to screw up any more of the movie! (laughs)

BH: (laughs) Now I think you've kind of already answered this question, but just to make sure, did you have any freedom whatsoever with your character or any of your lines?

DF: Yeah. Ryuhei, he's great. I mean, he's not like some of these American directors (who aren't gonna listen to your input. He understood that this was not gonna be just a Japanese movie; this was gonna be a worldwide movie. So I would offer my advice as to (the) American end, and he would take 'em, and he put 'em in the movie.

BH: Do you remember any specific examples of what were your ideas that were put into the movie?

DF: You know what, that was so damn long ago, partner, I don't! (laughs) It was probably about only three or four.

He's open to suggestions, but he's pretty much got it all figured out ahead of time.

BH: Okay, no problem. Do you have any memories of the Gotengo set and just anything in particular that sticks out in your mind about

it?

DF: Ah, Gotengo set, that was fun. Toho Studios brought my family over for a week, and they got to come in there. My daughters, I think they were four and five at the time, and one of the guys from the studio took 'em over to the monster set where they had all the monsters lined up. And he was like, "Now be careful, don't get excited. They're only rubber. They're make-believe; they're not real." Next thing you know, my daughters are poking 'em and pulling on their tails! (laughs) He's like, "No, no, no! They're expensive!" Yeah, they're about \$250,000 apiece, for the monster suits.

And then they had a real good close-up on me, one scene, and my daughter goes, "Oooo!" (laughs) And then Ryuhei just laughed! He's a pro.

BH: (laughs) Absolutely. Do you have any other interesting stories from the set?

DF: I was probably in over my head. I mean, Ryuhei is a great guy and gave me a bigger part than what I was ready for. I think I drug the movie down with my performance or lack thereof, but hell, how often do you get to do that? (laughs)

BH: What was a typical day of shooting like on the set?

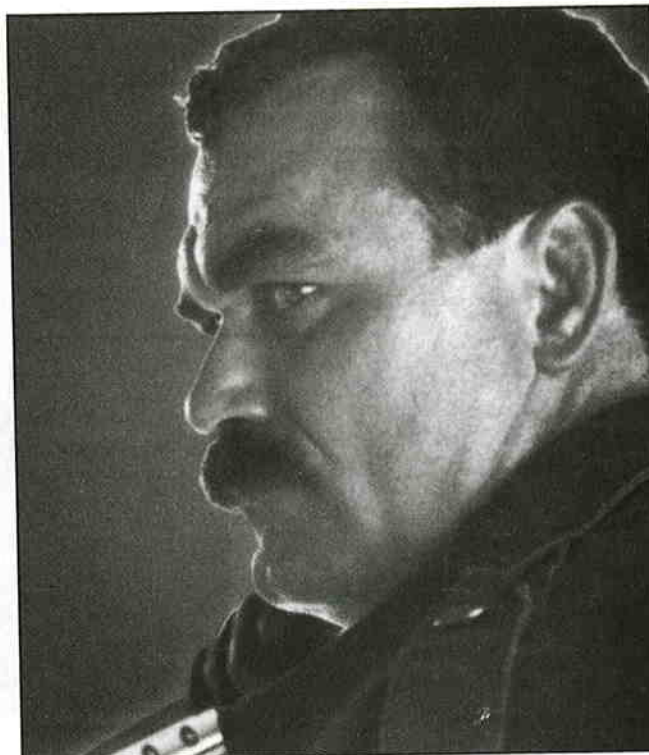
DF: Oh, hell, we were there for 12 or 16 hours every day. One day we pulled a 24-hour shoot.

BH: Oh, really?

DF: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, when they decide to work - Japanese decide to work - they work, buddy! No half-assin' it.

BH: Was there any particular reason that that day of shooting had to be done 24 hours straight?

DF: Ah, hell, I have no idea. I don't know if we were behind, (or) because of the set needs,



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Don as Captain Douglas Gordon who, together with Godzilla, saves the world in *Godzilla:Final Wars*.

or what it was. Being a gaijin, and being new to this, you're not gonna try to overly offend people by asking too many questions! (laughs)

BH: (laughs) All right, well, one of my last questions is about the premiere in Hollywood. You were there. What did you think about it?

DF: I loved it, man. I thought it was great. I mean, how often do you get to be in a movie and do the premiere in Grauman's Chinese Theatre? That was an exciting time for myself and my wife. I thought the studio set it up perfectly.

BH: Overall, what did you think of the film?

DF: I loved it. You're kind of exhausted when you come out of it from a theater because it's, what, (over two hours) long, and then it's such a gigantic... I mean, come on, it's Godzilla. (He has a) gigantic screen presence and then the loud music, we just came out of there exhausted.

Special thanks to Jerry Milani. To find out how to see more of Don Frye, please visit the International Fight League's official Web site, www.ifl.tv. **G**

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