



Getting hit by a car can be dangerous, but stuntman Kevin Briand knows how to take such a hit.



Eric Bryson winces with "pain" after being hit in the head with a bottle, swung by Mark Lefebvre, one of Silver Screen Stunts "dirty dozen."

'And if they say "I'm crazy enough to be a stuntman," I say "Bye."'

— Eric Bryson

# 'It's just another day . . .'

By Pat Schutte  
special writer

Tell someone to "go jump off a bridge." You'll probably hear, "Yeah, same to you, pal" in return.

Now, if Ed Lamb tells someone to jump off a bridge he's most likely to hear "Sure, Ed, how much?"

"How much?" What kind of answer is that? "No way" or "Yeah, right, Ed" seem to be more appropriate answers.

But for Lamb, "how much" is the answer he always hears. Lamb is co-founder of Silver Screen Stunts, the only production company in the metropolitan area that offers the service of professional stuntmen. Lamb is producer/director of Silver Screen Stunts.

The other half of Silver Screen Stunts is Eric Bryson, a former martial arts instructor and award-winning black belt fighter. Bryson, who founded the Action Stunt Academy in Windsor, a school for potential stuntmen, is the "action" that goes with Lamb's "lights . . . camera."

Silver Screen Stunts came about when Lamb noticed a picture in a local newspaper of a guy setting another guy on fire. The Detroit skyline was the backdrop. The two guys in the photograph were Bryson and his stunt partner Kevin Briand, both Windsor residents.

Lamb convinced Bryson to take him on as a student/director and Silver Screen Stunts was born.

LAMB, WHO HAS been working professionally behind the camera in the Detroit area for some 20 years, believes the key to Silver Screen Stunts at present is to raise the awareness of the importance of stunts to non-broadcasting advertising.

"Our goal is to show that stunts can add action and hold the attention of people viewing marketing and training films . . . industrial type films," said Lamb, who served in the U.S. Army infantry airborne and has an extensive background in theater. "I share what I've learned about stunts with potential customers."

One of Silver Screen's recent customers was the League of Women Voters and a piece on quality drinking water. Lamb directed the re-enactment of environmental-related accidents that can occur with the help of his stuntmen.

The application of stunts to industrial-type films is unlimited, Lamb said.

"Like in a safety film, a guy involved in a graphic accident involves the audience to a point, where they're asking themselves 'How would I feel in this situation?'" he said. "Stunts grasp people's attention and get it on to participate."

ANOTHER FIRM, Roxy Teleproductions Inc. in Dearborn, is using Silver Screen to liven up a Conrail training program.

Roxane Firmin of Roxy Teleproductions said Silver Screen is "going to incorporate stunts with fantasy to show the consequences of improper procedure." The stunts include some spectacular falls and a dummy (dressed like an actor) getting his foot smashed between two trains.

"People say 'Yeah, another training tape,'" Firmin said. "For a little extra money, you can maximize your effort and the interest of the viewer by using some sort of stunt. This adds an element of suspense to an otherwise boring film."

Stuntmen, or stuntwomen, can make some pretty good money these days. The average daily pay for a stuntman is around \$500. Fees go from a minimum of \$100 to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the stunt. And if the stuntman yells, "I



One of the most dangerous stunts for a stunt man is being on fire, but Eric Bryson makes it look easy.

drink Coke," before he gets nailed by a car, "he gets a pay bump," Lamb said with a laugh.

In spite of the jokes, becoming a stuntman is serious business, according to Lamb and Bryson.

"When I put ads in some local newspapers, I got more than 1,000 phone calls, interviewed 500 plus people who wanted to get into the school and accepted only 40 people," said Bryson.

"Through a half hour interview, I find out about everything from their athletic background to medical problems. And if they say 'I'm crazy enough to be a stuntman,' I say 'Bye.'"

BRYSON'S EXPERIENCE in stunts has landed him jobs on the "Super Dave Osborne Show," the CBC series "Street Legal" and the mini series "Amerika". It's easy to take a drink of beer and tell friends you can do that stunt, but when it comes down to jumping out of a five-story high window, only a few can produce, he said.

One of those few, and perhaps the most successful student to graduate from the Action Stunt Academy, is Kevin Briand, a former Canadian semi-pro football player and Silver Screen employee. Briand's specialty is falls.

"After my (football) career came to an end, I was stuck in a factory," he said. "I got a new lease on life as a stuntman, this is the closest thing to football I could find."

All stuntmen have one main thing in common. And it's not a couple of crossed brain wires. A strong athletic background provides the foundation for all stuntmen.

"Like any sport, stunts require agility and good conditioning," said Bryson. "The biggest part of the stunt is the athletics involved in it. So stuntman really isn't a word, athlete is."

ONE SILVER student, a self-confessed "adrenaline junkie," is 35-year-old Roberta Urbani of Huntington Woods. Urbani, who works as a technical writer for Detroit Edison, was impressed with Bryson and his school.

"The realistic action of the school was challenging and a lot

of fun," Urbani said. "I wish I had found this 10-15 years ago."

While Urbani hasn't had any professional work involving stunts, she is working on a play for Detroit Edison, called "Changing Channels." She plans on using some kind of stunt in the play.

Silver Screen Stunts offers a promotional tape that they call "A Dirty Dozen Stunts," 12 stunts ranging from falls and fights to car stunts and a human inferno.

Exciting? Yes. A useful tool for local advertisers and filmmakers? Sure. Dangerous? You bet.

Lamb and Bryson are the first to admit that what they do is dangerous.

"People can get hurt and it's due to stupidity," Lamb said. "Another reason is because of the massive desire to please the director. That leads to people exceeding their limits."

Bryson agreed with Lamb, but downplayed the injury aspect of being a stuntman.

"THE INJURIES that occur are usually minor cuts, bumps and bruises," he said. "We work as a team with everybody involved looking out for and making sure everything's safe for the person performing the stunt."

Bryson has never had a broken bone in his career as a stuntman.

Good money, thrills, team camaraderie, your name on the big screen and work that you'd do for fun anyway. But what do stuntmen do for excitement after a shoot?

"When we're through, we talk stunt, stunt, good looking girls, stunt, stunt," Bryson said. "I guess the most exciting thing involved with stunts is the creativity that goes into pulling one off."

Persons interested in Silver Screen Stunts and its promotional tape, "A Dirty Dozen Stunts," can call Ed Lamb at 656-9659.