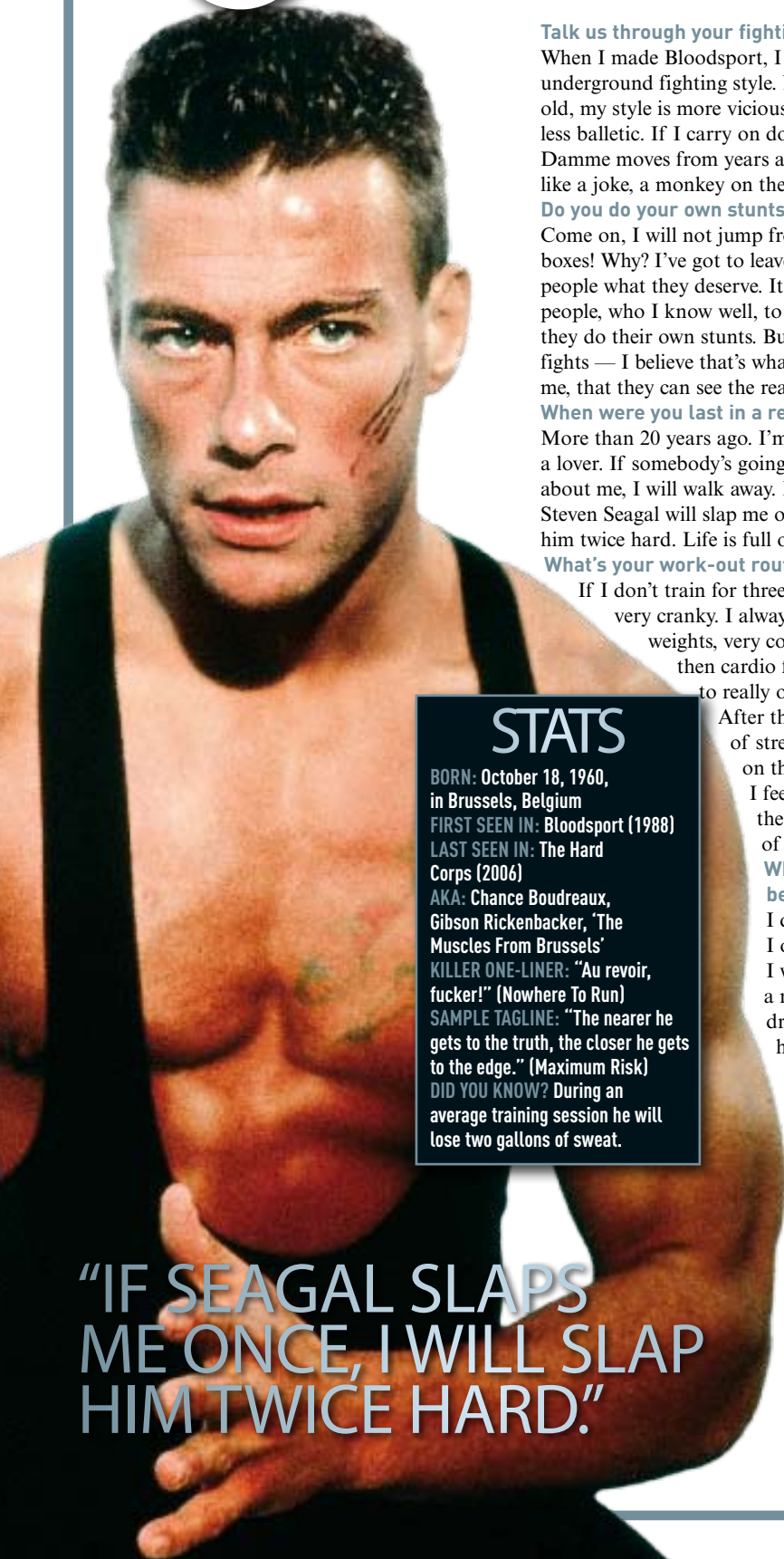


#3

VAN DAMME

INTERVIEW **NICK DE SEMLYEN**



Talk us through your fighting style.

When I made *Bloodsport*, I had a unique, underground fighting style. Now I am 46 years old, my style is more vicious, more efficient, less balletic. If I carry on doing the Van Damme moves from years ago, I will look like a joke, a monkey on the screen.

Do you do your own stunts?

Come on, I will not jump from a building onto boxes! Why? I've got to leave to the stunt people what they deserve. It's wrong for some people, who I know well, to pretend on TV they do their own stunts. But I do my own fights — I believe that's what people like about me, that they can see the real technique.

When were you last in a real fight?

More than 20 years ago. I'm not a fighter, I'm a lover. If somebody's going to speak bad about me, I will walk away. But if a guy like Steven Seagal will slap me once, I will slap him twice hard. Life is full of violence.

What's your work-out routine?

If I don't train for three days, I will become very cranky. I always start with weights, very correct body position, then cardio for 55 to 60 minutes to really oxygen my brain.

After that, 40 minutes of stretching, and yoga on the floor. Then I feel great. That's the training session of JCVD.

What did you do before movies?

I did everything. I owned a gym, I was a pizza boy, a masseur, a taxi driver, I cleaned houses. I was always saving money for America. I knew I was gonna make it.

How did you break into Hollywood?

I worked on *Predator*, wearing the first design of the alien. My feet were above the ankles and my head was in the neck. The knees faced backwards; it was very scary. But it did not work well and was very dangerous, so they redid the outfit with a new stunt guy in it.

What do you think is your best film?

Bloodsport was a cult and *Timecop* was great. But my new movie, *Til Death*, is by far the best. Every page of that script became like a skin. I don't like many of my movies, but this will be a big change for me.

Any regrets?

Street Fighter was corny to me. But there were nice things. I met the land of Australia and had a mini-affair with Kylie Minogue. If you interview her, say hello from me to Kylie, yeah?

What's the best fight or stunt you've done?

Some of my old movies have cool action, but when I've got two guns in my hands and I'm shooting and shooting, it's hard for me to believe in that anymore. Now it has to be real. I do not blink or scream like the old times: "WAAAAH!" The face must be like a snake and the body like a panther.

What movies do you enjoy?

Oh my God, I've got a list. I love *The Deerhunter*, I love *Blade Runner*, I love *Scarface*. *The Aviator* I like a lot.

What do you think of other action stars?

Dolph [Lundgren] was a great opponent. A big boy, strong bones — when he hit me on [Universal] *Soldier* it felt like a mule. I've never fought Steven Seagal, but we've met. I don't know if he changed since he became a so-called Buddhist, but he did talk bad about me with no good reason. He should not do that. I've got great respect for Steven for his charismatic face, but now he is cranking out movies and people make fun of him for his weight. I advise him to take a break and take less salary.

What do you like to do outside of movies?

I like to walk around, sniff around like a dog on the street late at night, because I came from the street. I sleep two, three hours a day, it's just the way I am. I like to go places I don't know.

Is there a Van Damme life philosophy?

My philosophy is to enjoy even sadness. If you can find a certain happiness in the sadness, then you are close to God.

What ambitions do you have left?

What I would like to do now is take my movies very seriously. I have to be more honest in a movie than in real life. You're not acting then, you're telling the truth.

STATS

BORN: October 18, 1960, in Brussels, Belgium
FIRST SEEN IN: *Bloodsport* (1988)
LAST SEEN IN: *The Hard Corps* (2006)
AKA: Chance Boudreaux, Gibson Rickenbacker, 'The Muscles From Brussels'
KILLER ONE-LINER: "Au revoir, fucker!" (*Nowhere To Run*)
SAMPLE TAGLINE: "The nearer he gets to the truth, the closer he gets to the edge." (*Maximum Risk*)
DID YOU KNOW? During an average training session he will lose two gallons of sweat.

"IF SEAGAL SLAPS ME ONCE, I WILL SLAP HIM TWICE HARD."

» JCVD's new movie, *The Hard Corps*, is out now on DVD.

