

Press on NEW movie about FMA!!

By marppio

Our friend Jay Ignacio a filmmaker that is based in the Philippines. His latest movie is about the FMA and includes, among others, Dr. Remy Presas Jr. and Rodel Dagooc in addition to Dan Inosanto and others. Please read about the movie with this latest bit of press.

Salamat!



The greatest Filipino cultural export is kicking ass

EMOTIONAL WEATHER REPORT By Jessica Zafra (The Philippine Star) Updated March 19, 2010 12:00 AM

From one perspective, our great cultural moment may have occurred 11 minutes and 15 seconds into the Matt Damon action movie *The Bourne Identity*. Like many great cultural moments it passed without our noticing.

The amnesiac Jason Bourne is trying to get some sleep on a park bench when he is accosted by two guards. One of them pokes him with a nightstick. Even before he's aware of what he's doing, Bourne swiftly, efficiently dispatches the two men. Matt Damon has just demonstrated a fighting technique that is sometimes called Kali, sometimes Arnis, but is indubitably one of the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA).

Filipino martial arts had appeared in Hollywood movies before, but this was by far their biggest exposure. Before Jason Bourne went on to destroy scores of opponents in three global blockbusters, Filipino martial arts practitioners had commanded the respect of fighters from Hollywood to Russia.

It's in the Philippines that they get little recognition. You did know that Bruce Lee's collaborator Dan Inosanto is Filipino, didn't you?

And that top Hollywood fight choreographer Jeff Imada, who trained Matt Damon in FMA, was a student of Inosanto? Or that the chief instructor of Spetsnaz, Russian special forces in Moscow, is a Filipino named Mumbakki Foronda?

You didn't? Then you really need to see a documentary called *The Bladed Hand*. When it's finished, that is. *The Bladed Hand* is a film by Jay Ignacio, whose former professions include guitarist of the band DaPulis, Music Production teacher at De La Salle-CSB, chef for a catering company, but never filmmaker, though he trained as a producer at Probe Productions in 1997.

“My background is in Okinawan Karate, but I’ve always been a fan of martial arts in general, thanks to the Bruce Lee movies that got me started,” Jay says. “I became aware that FMA had been in use in Hollywood action films, though they were not touted as FMA because they were mixed in with different styles like Karate, Kung Fu and Mande Muda. I also learned that the fight choreographers were Filipino or Asian-Americans who were trained by Dan Inosanto.”

Jay’s original plan was to do a documentary about his friend, Mumbakki Foronda. “I wanted to tell the story of a young Filipino Guro playing the role of ‘ambassador’ of Filipino culture to an elite group abroad.

“Then I realized that his story is just part of a much bigger story, and that is the global impact of Filipino martial arts. FMA is our country’s greatest cultural export, and we’re not even aware of it.”

If Jay is right, our ambassadors to the world are men like Dan Inosanto, who was Bruce Lee’s partner. “Guro Dan taught Bruce Lee the Filipino fighting system using sticks, knives and the empty hand techniques. On both the philosophical level as well as the practical, Jeet Kune Do and FMA have a lot in common: economy of movement, taking what is useful and discarding the rest, footwork, striking, locks, etc. One of the most memorable quotes in the movie is from Guro Ron Balicki: “Filipino Kali is more Jeet Kune Do than Jeet Kune Do is Jeet Kune Do.”

“Despite his status Guro Dan Inosanto is the most humble martial artist I have ever encountered; he will never say anything negative about anyone,” Jay marvels. “He sets that example for all his students. I met a number of the senior ones who now run their own martial arts schools in different cities across the US. They are very loyal to him; they make it a point to retrain with him once a month or assist in his classes even if they now live far away. And they are very protective of him as well.

“Jeff Imada started training under Guro Dan when he was 17, and he’s now in his mid-50s. He still goes to the Inosanto Academy when he’s not working on a movie, to train with his master and assist in his classes. He told me that he owes everything to Guro Dan.”

Also featured in *The Bladed Hand* are Christopher Ricketts in San Diego, California, proponent of the *Ilustrisimo* style. “He is incredible to watch because aside from his mastery of the late Antonio *Ilustrisimo*’s blade system, he also has a background in Kung Fu. His sons Bruce and Brandon are superb in their form and skill.”

In Cebu, which is pretty much the birthplace of FMA, Jay filmed Masters Diony Cañete and Cacoy Cañete, carriers of the *Doce Pares* organization. Though there has been a rift between the two, they are the very headstrong and brilliant leaders of their respective schools.

“Cacoy is 90 years old and still teaches. Diony, his nephew, is a master tactician and has an encyclopedic knowledge of multiple styles.”

Nick Elizar broke away from Balintawak, once the biggest rival organization to Doce Pares, to form his own system called World Nickelstick Eskrima. “He has the speed and grace of a professional boxer, and he is one of the most fluid fighters I’ve seen. He’s also an excellent teacher who makes his classes fun and very motivational.

“Master Jun Carin is another exceptional martial artist. In a way he is Jeet Kune Do exemplified in FMA; strong, fast and graceful.”

It is ironic but not surprising that Filipino fighting arts are more highly-regarded abroad than they are in their homeland. “Over the centuries we’ve been made to believe in

the superiority of the foreign,” Jay notes. “The North Asian fighting arts are always the first choice when Pinoys look for a martial art to take up. Also, the cinema is probably the most effective way of promoting anything, and there are more Kung Fu and Karate movies.

“But there is also the underlying fact that a lot of Filipino masters don’t get along, and FMA has suffered from the bitter rivalries that exist within,” Jay points out. “The Japanese, Chinese and Koreans made a conscious effort to codify their art and unite in order to promote their martial arts, but we can’t even put certain Filipino masters in the same room without a fight breaking out.”

Ironic and not at all surprising.

The Bladed Hand is in the final four weeks of filming. Jay’s research has taken him to Russia, where he shot the Russian Special Forces training in the Filipino fighting techniques. “I have no other word to describe the Russian Special Forces except ‘Astig!’ I met a number who’ve had combat experience in places like Afghanistan and Georgia, and you can see the fire in their eyes. They especially love the Filipino fighting art because of how effective and deadly it can be.

“To witness their reverence for the Filipino masters and the art itself is an incredible endorsement. You’ll see all that in The Bladed Hand.”

There is one missing element in the making of The Bladed Hand, and that is Matt Damon himself. Jay has contacted his agent for an interview, but nothing has been confirmed yet. “It would be fantastic to have the Jason Bourne talk about his FMA training, especially since Jeff Imada talks a lot about his work in choreographing the fights for the Bourne series.”

Matt Damon, please call back.

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Email your questions to emotionalweatherreport@gmail.com.