

The tough world of two Hollywood stunt women

Being a stunt double is a risky job for both men and women. Jumping through glass, crashing into cars, and falling down stairs is no easy day's work, but for stuntwomen it is even more dangerous – they often have to do these stunts wearing high heels and a mini skirt. Men and women usually earn the same money, but in New Zealand stuntwomen earn more than stuntmen – they recognize that women can't wear as much protective clothing.

Fact File Amanda Foster

From: Essex, England

Years in the business: 25

Family: three children (single mum)

Credits include:

James Bond 007: Die Another Day (Halle Berry)

A Knight in Camelot (Whoopi Goldberg)

World War Z (with Brad Pitt)

The Harry Potter series

Ninja Assassin (Naomie Harris)



How did she become a stuntwoman?

Amanda had a difficult childhood, but she was always sporty. For a while she worked as a PE teacher and a film extra. Then, in her late 20s, while working as an extra on the film Patriot Games with Harrison Ford, she heard someone say that there were no British black stunt actresses. She thought, 'Great! I'll be the first!'



Which celebrities has she worked with?

She has doubled for some of the world's greatest stars. Her first major role was 20 years ago, doubling for Whoopi Goldberg in *A Knight in Camelot*. 'I was sword-fighting, jumping over tables,' she remembers. 'It was good fun.' Then she worked with Halle Berry in the Bond film *Die Another Day* – one of her favourites. She won an award for it. More recently she did *The Edge of Tomorrow* with Tom Cruise and *World War Z* with Brad Pitt. She loved that – she had to jump on top of Brad and bite his face!

How do stunt doubles prepare for a film?

Obviously, most stunts are dangerous one way or another, so they have to do a lot of preparation – both mental and physical – but they also have to learn special skills. Amanda's skills include: gymnastics, trampolining, motorcycle racing and martial arts. Also, you have to develop a good relationship with the star. Amanda says: 'I watch to see how they move. The viewer has to believe that you are the star.'

Has she been injured much?

'Many times! We don't talk about that stuff,' says Amanda. 'It's a seriously risky job to do.' She doesn't like to talk about her worst injury. 'All I can say is that as long as I leave a day's work in my own car, and I don't have to leave in an ambulance, it's been a good day!'

Final word

Amanda is doing very well for someone who spent their childhood in children's homes and had three children by the age of 21. They are grown up now and very proud of their mother.

She says about the job, 'I'll keep going until my body won't allow me to.'



Fact File Dayna Grant

From: Auckland, New Zealand

Years in the business: 22

Family: Husband, Dane Grant (stuntman)
One son

Credits include:

Mad Max: Fury Road (Charlize Theron)

The Chronicles of Narnia (Tilda Swinton)

Xena: Warrior Princess (Lucy Lawless)



How did she become a stuntwoman?

Dayna grew up in New Zealand and was always a keen gymnast and horse rider. She was 18 when two friends, who were working as stuntmen, asked her to audition to be a stuntwoman on a TV show called, Xena: Warrior Princess. She didn't know anything about the profession and didn't expect to get the job. But they liked her, and she started the next day!

Which celebrities has she worked with?

She has doubled for many famous stars, including Charlize Theron, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Tilda Swinton. For the action film Mad Max: Fury Road, as Theron's double, she had to shave her head and spend nine months in the Namibian desert. 'I lived and breathed that film,' she says. She had to run alongside a moving truck and fall under its wheels – all in a day's work. She met her stuntman husband, Dane, on that film.

How do stunt doubles prepare for a film?

Obviously, they have to keep fit. They often train in martial arts, such as judo and karate, but as Dayna says, you have to learn different skills for different films. For the adventure film Hercules, she had to learn archery and chariot driving! Another part of the preparation for the stunt double is to



train the actor. Sometimes they work together 12 hours a day. The preparation for a role can be difficult if there's not a lot of time, and they have to 'crash' diet!

Has she been injured much?

Dayna did once have a very serious accident – this was because of the shoes she was wearing: 'They were very slippery, feminine shoes.' She slipped and her head fell on a dagger. 'I was a bit of a mess,' she says bravely.

Final word

Dayna knows it's an unusual career, but she loves it. Her son came back from school one day and said: 'I've just realized you're not a normal mum. Most mums drink tea and sit on the couch. You jump off buildings and set yourself on fire!'