

Meet Eric Jacobus - Actor, stunt double, Tekken fan, and the guy who broke the internet

by Zee the CEO July 4, 2016

There is no way you can be a true Tekken fan and have not heard of (or more than likely seen) Eric Jacobus. *Tekken* producer Katsuhiro Harada always retweets his tweets without fail (lucky guy!), and he has amassed quite a following. His name is Eric Jacobus. What does he do exactly? Well, in his free time he makes some pretty cool videos that just happen to go viral around the internet. In-real-life Tekken videos to be precise. We caught up with this mystery man to learn more about who guy behind these viral videos.

TekkenGamer: You seemed to have popped out of nowhere and into the Tekken scene. It appears you are a stuntman, actor, and could quite possibly be the guy who does all of the cool moves for the Tekken videos games. Tell us a bit about yourself. Who is Eric Jacobus?

Eric Jacobus: That's me. I'm a small town guy who started out as a coder and went into making indie martial art films for the internet in 2001 by creating a stunt team called The Stunt People. We just didn't care about getting a big break because the odds are so tough, we just went out and did it ourselves. We managed to get on some DVDs, I played some good roles like Stryker in *Mortal Kombat Legacy*, and recently the short films have been paying off. Having a tech background really helped out in this era.

How long have you been in the movie industry, and what made you decide to become a stuntman?

I suppose the first time I entered the "system" was when I released my first feature film *Contour* in 2007. Since then I've been at it full time. I think I caught the stuntman bug when I saw what Jackie Chan was doing, though I saw it far too late, since we just didn't have many of his films in my home town. Maybe that's why I just went at it on my own, sort of like how Jackie did it, rather than using Van Damme or Seagal as my templates.

How do you even become a stuntman? Is their training or a school you can go to?

These days, if you put a reel together of the insane stuff you're willing to do, you're a stuntman because someone will probably come knocking. The term is so loose now, so it probably annoys the veteran stunt guys who take very calculated risks in specific fields, like driving, horseback, high falls, burns, and all that stuff that requires some schooling. When you meet those guys you can also see the difference in quality of the

individual. They came up during a time when we didn't worship ourselves the way we do now through social media and all the modes of expression. They just got the job done, whether they were the star or not. That's the other side stunt performers should focus on.

Hollywood can be a difficult industry to break into. What was your experience like trying to get your foot into the door?

It's competitive for two reasons – people there can network better than you, and there's always someone more talented than you. If you're not doing auditions and meeting stunt coordinators, you're out of sight, out of mind. Set hustling alone is a full time job. What I recommend, for those who don't want to live there, is work the game from the outside. I found my calling (funny, tech guy who can fight and take serious falls), but it took almost 15 years of trying everything to find it, and I sought guidance! A great stuntman Clayton Barber started working with me and helped me figure all this out. I ended up getting calls for jobs in LA after that. So it can happen, but the game is very different for me. The stunt guys who have "made it" in Hollywood have similarly spent 15 years getting beaten to a pulp and now find themselves running crews. Sure there's luck and all that, but they put the time in, so you have to respect that.

What are some of the notable movies or TV shows that many of us may be familiar with that you have either acted in or have done stunts for?

I have some good roles in ABC's of Death 2 and Mortal Kombat Legacy Season 2. Our short film series Rope A Dope seems to be popular too, which is free on YouTube.

I see you were a stuntman in 'A Good Day to Die Hard' featuring Bruce Willis. What was that experience like, and did you get to meet Mr. Willis himself?

I was only involved in prepping the action, unfortunately. I did, however, get to pretend to be Mr. Willis. You can watch the fight we composed for Fox here, though they never used the choreography.

I believe your very first Tekken movelist video was of Hwoarang, am I right? It currently has over half a million views. Wow! What made you decide to do that video? What birthed the idea?

Maybe it's my tech background (I did PHP coding for a college for 3 years in high school), but I think I have the tinkerer gene. Tinkering can only be done alone, so I was looking for something I could produce when nobody else could shoot movies. I started out doing a Kicktionary of 200 kicks, which was a runaway success. When I was working in Beijing and had time between shoots I started making a second one, and I turned to Tekken to find more kicks and realized nobody had ever replicated Tekken movelists in real life. I did Hwoarang when I came back from Thailand and couldn't believe how popular it was.

I'm guessing that due to the overwhelming great response to that video you decided to do more? Were you shocked at the response?

Very shocked, but people seem to be fascinated with human potential, which is why I'm optimistic that robots will never fully replace humans in entertainment. We're just too interesting and unpredictable. I'll try to do all the characters, but whether that's realistic remains to be seen. The viewcount has plateaued around 60k per video, which is good, but I might kickstart the rest of them.

Out of all of the character movelists you've done to date, which one has been the most difficult? I would imagine it's Raven. I never would've imagined you could pull that one off, but you did and very well.

Raven was definitely the hardest. I have to learn new things each time, so some moves look pretty rough, because it's the first time I've done them!

Generally how long does it take to put a video together – from previewing the moves, to actually practicing the movies, and then shooting them? Because I see that you're in different locations sometimes in the same video. Does it take place over a period of days?

I can do some in a single day, like Bryan Fury, who was pretty easy. Raven took 6 days. These moves were motion captured (mocapped as we call it) by real performers wearing sensor suits, so someone did the moves for these games, but they didn't always do them the way the game portrays it. Combos are usually just single moves animated together in a computer, often with some assistance to add speed, flexibility, etc. And here I am reverse-engineering them! After I released Baek, Harada told me that his movements were barely mocapped at all. But it's a lot of fun, and it's how I get my workout now. I cancelled my 24 Hour Fitness membership. I was too worn out to go!

How do you decide which character you'll do next? Do you try to hear what the community requests, or do you pretty much know who you're going to do next? There are plenty characters to choose from, especially in Tekken Tag Tournament 2. So, we'll be seeing your for a few years (laugh). But yeah, how do you decide?

I ranked all the movelists by difficulty, demand, and the amount of video fx needed. And if I don't have a costume, I can't do it. I'm now at the point where I'm running low on costumes, so I have to get some more from my sponsors or let the fans sponsor me. That'll be the next step.

Are there any you've seen and said "nope, not this time around, and probably not at all!"? Who looks to be the most difficult to pull off?

Lili, Yoshimitsu, Lucky Chloe, and Eddy are all going to be major endeavors. I'll do them, but fortunately the fans aren't so demanding, so I can take my time releasing them. Maybe I'll do some easy ones in the meantime. Miguel is very popular and he might have the easiest movelist of them all.

Do you shoot, edit and add all of the special effects to the videos yourself?

I do everything except the composite images, which are done by [Helton Carvalho](#). Trust me, if I could find someone to do the editing quickly and well, I'd have a lot

more free time on my hands. IGN is taking on some of this burden, but I'm a small fish there, for now.

Do you play any Tekken, or have you played it in the past? Do you play video games at all? Don't worry if you're an O.G. player, because many of us (like myself) got our first taste of Tekken in the 90's. If so, for how long, and who are your favorite Tekken characters to play with?

I remember when Tekken came to our arcade in the 90s, and it blew Virtua Fighter out of the water. Apparently it was a VF animator who left Sega that created the Tekken fighting engine. Tekken was the first time us nerds saw real martial arts in a video game. I think that's why it was an obvious choice for me as a stuntman to do these movelists.

Think you'll ever decide to tackle any other games? Or is Tekken probably the easiest because the moves have a semblance of realism to them?

I've released one Street Fighter movelist for Ken and I have 2 shot and ready to be edited. If I dabble in other games, it'll be some VF and Dead or Alive characters, which are common requests.

Would there be any quirky or unique things we wouldn't know about the videos, or things you've learned about the game just by reenacting the moves?

While I was doing movelists for Lee and Law it became pretty clear that the two of them had used the same motion capture performer. Also, there was something strange about Steve's moves. He was pretty lazy for a boxer, and I talked to Kento Kojima, who directed earlier Tekkens, and he said that the mocap performer was someone in the Namco offices who happened to know boxing. There's also a ton of overlap with other characters too, especially their kicks, which are almost all Taekwondo, so you can start getting behind the myth of the characters. It's fascinating.

Has Bandai Namco reached out to you? Or have any of the actual stuntmen who performed the original moves contacted you and said "Hey, great job man"?

Bandi Namco has not, but Harada himself has. I'm happy with that. He's very supportive.

Lastly, what are your thoughts on the Tekken community, and do you plan to attend any fighting game tournaments? EVO may be a great time to make an appearance. I can promise you that people would probably line up to take selfies and get autographs. You could even do a cosplay.

The Tekken community is great and very enthusiastic. They can't wait for their favorite character to become real. I'll likely attend EVO this summer. Maybe I'll bring some kicking targets and train people in Tekken IRL moves. Could be fun, if I could get in touch with the organizers.

Thank you again, Eric!

Thanks, that was fun.