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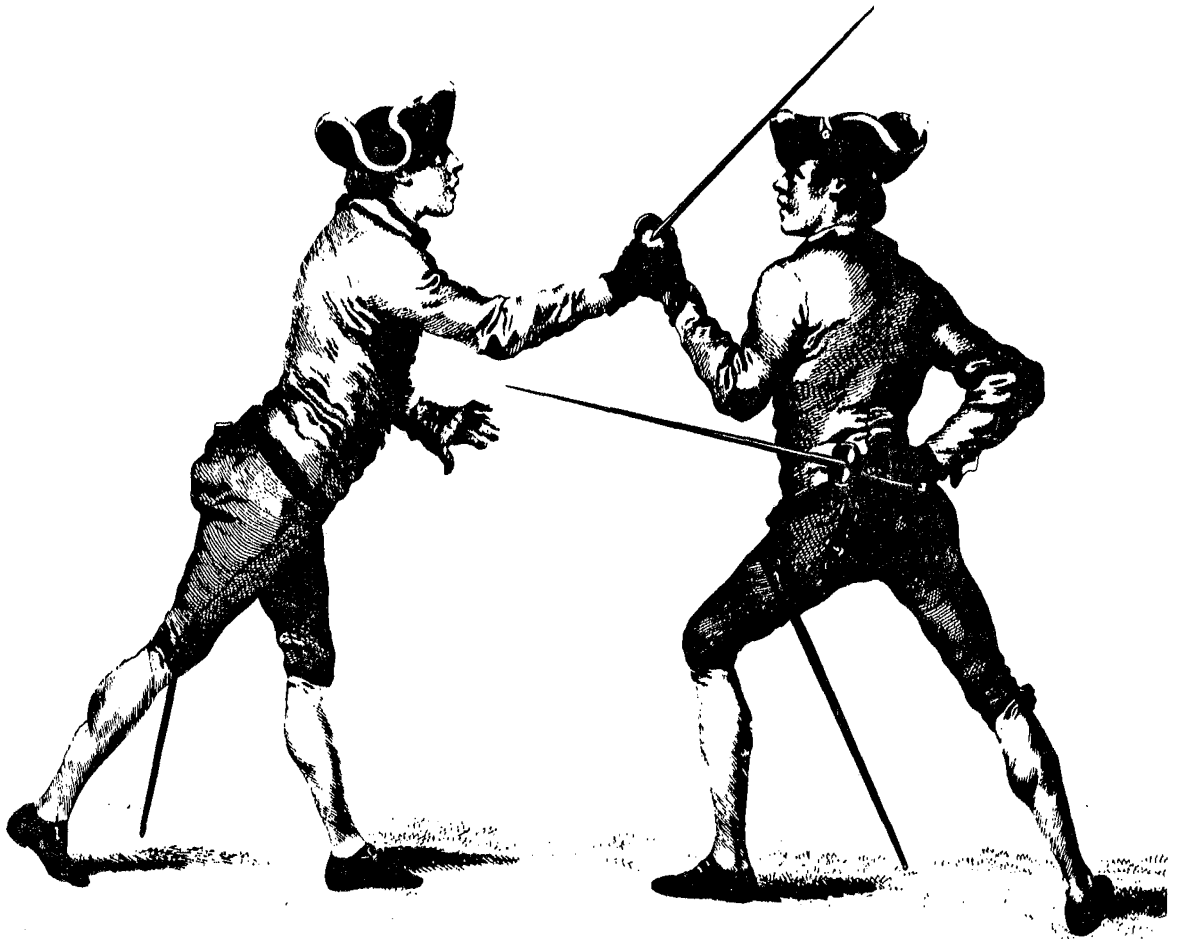
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# the fight master

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### THE FIGHT MASTER

The Magazine of the Society of American Fight Directors  
No. 1 April 1978  
Editor - Mike McGraw Lay-out - David L. Boushey

Typed and Duplicated by Mike McGraw

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The Society of American Fight Directors wishes to express its gratitude for the articles contributed by our colleagues of the Society of British Fight Directors. We especially wish to thank Mr. Henry Marshall - editor of The Fight Director for his concern and helpful hints in our formulation of the Society of American Fight Directors. We hope that we will be able to exchange various articles in the future and share many of our thoughts which affect all of us in the profession of fight choreography. As a young organization, we will look toward our colleagues in Great Britain for guidance and wisdom. This is the beginning of what should be a long friendship.

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#### Society of American Fight Directors

The second Society of Fight Directors in the world has been incorporated in Seattle, Washington. Its founder is David Boushey, Overseas Affiliate of the Society of British Fight Directors, after which it is patterned. Its organizations

consists of:

- 6 Full Members
- 23 Affiliate Members
- 3 Student Members

A DAY WITH PADDY CREAN

I recently spent a delightful day in Vancouver, British Columbia with one of the foremost Fight Masters in the English speaking world.

I had heard from a number of sources that Paddy Crean was a gentleman of the highest calibre and this commendation was more than reinforced when I had the pleasure to make his acquaintance. What impressed me most was a mixture of humility and absolute professionalism. He knows his craft and finds it quite unnecessary to be pretentious about it. He has paid his dues and his rewards are his many friends and admirers throughout North America and Great Britain.

One thing he told me that made a strong impact on my awareness as a professional fight choreographer was the firm belief that a good Fight Director is also a P.R. man. It is his job not only to set a fight and see that it is executed properly, but it is also his responsibility to bolster the actor's confidence in himself; to assure him that he is going to look smashing on opening night-that no one could perform that fight better.

Sometimes we forget that the actor needs more than technique - that he is often unsure of his physical prowess, however overwhelmingly confident he may appear. I recently worked with an actor who used every excuse under the sun to overshadow his uncertainty as a combatant. If it wasn't ill-balanced swords, or ill-fitting gloves, poor footwear, or the number of years on his back, it was poor choreography or a slave-driving Fight Master. I remained as patient as my character would allow, however, I must admit there were times when I wanted to tell him where to put that sword! As it turned out, he gained confidence as time progressed and amazingly enough the fight wasn't so bad after all. In fact, it was quite good! Sometimes it's difficult dealing with inflated egos, but as Paddy reminded me, the actor is unsure of himself and has to find someone or something other than himself to cast the blame upon.

To watch Paddy at the Vancouver Playhouse Acting School, putting his students through their paces, was a treat. The

respect he gives his professional actors is passed on to his students and they in turn respond to him. I personally got a lesson in point work, which I had let slide somewhat, and watching his detailed point work reminded me of many an Errol Flynn swashbuckler. Paddy quickly dispels any notions that there really isn't much to be learned from the "old timers". He is a wealth of information and more than willing to share that knowledge with a young "up-start" Fight Director.

I look forward with anticipation to our next meeting wherever it may be. With gentlemen like Paddy Crean as examples of professionalism in our Society of American Fight Directors, we will soon reach those goals set forth in the society's charter - "to promote the art of fight choreography in such a manner that the Fight Director will be an integral part of the theater and cinema".

D. Boushey

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NEXT ISSUE....

An interview with Albert Cavens of Hollywood fame. Al is the son of the late Fred Cavens, who did the majority of the fight choreography in Hollywood's golden years. Among those films were ROBIN HOOD, THE MARK OF ZORRO, THE SEA HAWK, and many others.

Al Cavens assisted his father in those films and has many stories about the men who starred in those epic films.

## \*THE STUNT PERFORMERS' REGISTER

We have achieved a considerable, though incomplete, success in our protracted struggle to secure recognition from Equity as Fight Directors. Equity now officially recognises the distinction between fight-arrangers and stunt-arrangers in films and television. There is to be a separate section of the newly-constituted Stunt Performers' Register for fight-arrangers only. This is entirely the result of the Society's efforts.

One of our best-known members is already on the Register as it now stands. Another has always been on it since he also arranges and performs stunts. Of the two other members who applied for registration last summer, one was told that he would be eligible for the new section because of his film and television experience. The other was told he was not eligible because of "lack of film and television experience". This member has directed numerous stage fights including one now running in the West End, but has only one television credit. It seems that, unlike actors, many Fight Directors are not allowed by Equity, except in special circumstances, to work in commercial television or films. (The restriction does not apply to B.B.C. work). So the situation remains, for many members, extremely unsatisfactory. There are also restrictions placed on the activities of Fight Directors, who are not also stunt-arrangers, among them that any doubles or fighting extras used for T.V. or films must be stuntmen on the Stunt Register, and not actors.

Thus, although the Society has won an important battle in this contest, it seems that the struggle will go on until Fight Directors, like actors, may move freely into other media when work is offered, and use whom they choose for any extra or doubling work that may be necessary.

It is interesting to note that the clause of the agreement between the Film Producers and Equity that required, in effect, that all actors performing their own fights must be temporarily registered on the Stunt Performers' Register, has never in fact been enforced. The Society of British Fight Directors organised a petition against this clause signed by a great many actors, some of them well-known. One wonders whether this fact, combined with the furore that such a provision would clearly create among actors who did not wish to be doubled, had some effect on the rendering of the clause inoperative.

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## \* WORKING WITH FLYNN

By Patrick Crean

When I joined the Northampton Repertory Company in 1934, I learned that my predecessor's contract hadn't been renewed because "although he is extremely popular in the town, his talent is minimal". The man whose job I got was Errol Flynn, whom I met for the first time in 1952. "The King of the Cutlass" was a fine and much underrated actor and, for me, a very gallant gentleman. Books have been written about him and he has published two himself so what can I add within the space of a few paragraphs? But here goes.

I spent three years with Flynn in England and Italy, and profited greatly. That, after decades with Cavens and Faulkner and other Hollywood 'greats' among fight-arrangers, he was willing to take direction from me was terrifically exciting. I learned at the start that he was a perfectionist. If you knew your job he would listen. If he suspected you didn't, a verbal comparison between Hollywood and Elstree would be made in the nicest possible way - and you'd be out the next day in short order. So I was naturally very pleased when he complimented me on my work.

Being a gentleman, Errol was quick to champion causes. On one occasion I was chatting with Bill Keighley, the "Master of Ballantrae" director. He said I was doing a swell job as Fight Director on the film and that he hoped I was making money. When I told him what I was getting, he nearly fell over and said, "I ought to have my head examined", and promptly relayed the information to Flynn. Errol wrote to the press and his remarks appeared in a London daily. The article was headed: "There's a bunch of stunt-men down at Elstree who think Flynn is quite a guy.." Then it quoted Flynn: "...the stunt-boys are getting such a raw deal that it's shameful... in particular Pat Crean (Flynn's double)...Crean worked like hell and didn't squawk about his remuneration which is peanuts...we can't go back to Hollywood and have those stunt-boys call us cheap skates". The article concluded with an appeal to Frank Mattison, the Warner "watch-dog" on

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the set: "Howsabout it, Mr. Mattison?" The result was that Bob Anderson, who was doubling for Jacques Berthier, the villain of the movie, and I, both got a bonus from Jack Warner.

Frank Mattison, production manager for Warner Bros., was a card. When Bob Anderson and I were rehearsing the big duel scene on the schooner's deck at sea, he used to sit in a high tower in Aranella, the Sicilian village representing Tortuga in the West Indies, and watch us through a telescope to see if we were working! Since the heat was equatorial, Bob and I could only do so much at a stretch, then we'd get behind a couple of the 32-pounders and have a kip. Frank Mattison remarked one day that we seemed to rest a lot. I replied that if he sat on the ship and watched us rehearsing rather than in the shade of Aranella Port, he'd find out why.

The first time I spoke to Flynn was when I called the Savoy to report that I was his new Fencing double and Fight Director for "Ballantrae". "That's fine, sport," he said, "but don't call me Mr. Flynn. Call me Old Dad." When we fenced he used the word "Assembly", which stumped me at first until I realised that it was his word for "Corps-a-Corps". He used his famous double molinello of cuts to cheek and thrust centre whenever possible, and it always looked terrific. His "cool" on the set was phenomenal and I only saw him lose it once. The occasion was a scene where the script called for him to fight the villain with Indian poles. The director wanted the other actor to do it himself, and in the course of the action the actor hit Errol a heavy blow on the side. Errol blew his top. "Where's Pat Crean? Why isn't he doubling for Christ's sake?" The director intervened, then Errol said courtrously to me: "Would you be so kind, Pat, as to get into costume and do this fight with me?" I did, and stood before him Indian pole in hand. "Now, Pat," Errol said. "Make it good. Don't pull the punches." I should have done, but somehow didn't, and caught Errol on the same side, in the same way as the actor had. Flynn's look was comical. "You, too, Pat, eh? What's the matter, don't you like me or something?"

Errol Flynn will always remain for me the classic

definitive film star of the Golden Years of Hollywood. If anyone had panache, he did, - and to spare. At Palermo, after Bob and I had been sweating it out with rapiers in long shot on the pirate schooner, a halt would be called. Ship to shore radio would alert Errol, then a few minutes later a white launch flying a pennant would set out from the quay about a mile away, a sailor at the wheel. As it drew near, Flynn in costume could be seen standing in the bow, gold cigarette-holder at a rakish angle in his mouth, girl friend in dark glasses posed alongside. When the launch tied up to the schooner, a ladder would be lowered, and up would go Flynn, followed by the sailor with his portable bar, and the girl friend bringing up the rear. Then Errol watched while Bob and I showed him the routine. When we'd finished he'd say crisply, "I'll do that bit by the rigging, this stuff on the cannon, and the Assembly against the mast. Let's go!" Then, handing his gin sling and his cigarette holder to the girl friend, he would take his rapier and make film history. He always whistled softly when he fenced, and was very quick on his feet. When 'Ballantrae' was over, he engraved a sword for me and wrote on a photograph of himself: "Hello, Pat! Thanks a helluva lot, pal, for making me look good. Errol Flynn."

I made two more films with him. The last time I saw him was in Rome, when he came to a projection studio to see four T.V. Films I had made, in which I had the lead role. When the lights went up, he turned to me and said, "You're a man of many parts, Pat". Perhaps the most moving tribute to Flynn is contained in a foreword to the book 'The Fifty Films of Errol Flynn'. It is written by Greer Garson and concludes with the following: "His life was one of highs and lows, and he burned himself out much too soon. In thinking of him, let us remember, above all, that to millions of people the world over he brought exhilarating and joyous entertainment, and lifted their imaginations and their spirits out of the doldrums and tension of day-to-day living with a glorious vision of adventure, chivalry and romance."

\*THE GOLDEN YEARS OF HOLLYWOOD

by

Jeff Palmer

Patrick Crean, in his report of the first Society Test held in the United States, referred to having done some routines with B.H. Barry's students as a "tribute to the golden years of Hollywood". Mr. Crean is the only Fight Director with first-hand knowledge of the styles in use in those days, and one wishes he would tell us about them. But in lieu of this I must attempt to fill the breach.

It is a great pity that no one has written in depth about swordplay - Hollywood style - yet what an influence it has had on us all! I would guess that three quarters of the appeal of Fairbanks Senior and Errol Flynn was their cinematic epics, still luckily on view on television and at the N.F.T., is their exciting dueling. Anyone who seriously studies the fights in those films must be conscious of the difference between the style and conventions of those days and that of the film fights of today.

The first thing to remember is that Hollywood swordplay did not just arrive on the scene. It evolved between the early twenties when the first fight-arranger was hired by Fairbanks, and the early sixties when film producers stopped making the kind of film that required this type of romantic dueling. Before fight-arrangers came to Hollywood, sword fights consisted purely of "knife-sharpening" - the clashing of blades usually high in the air without any attack on the 'seconde'. This kind of swordplay continued even after the arrival of a fight-arranger, and one can only assume that Fairbanks, the first star to hire an expert, ignored professional advice for many sequences and stuck to what he already knew, and what was much easier to perform. A good example of this was the climactic duel in THE MARK OF ZORRO (1921) in which the great fight consisted entirely of high clashes with alternate advances and retreats by both duelists, plus the odd thrust at the body and the occasional fall over

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a chair. This fight was admirably parodied in the Morcombe and Wise Christmas Show on T.V.

This kind of blade-clashing fight was not taught by fencing masters, but passed on from father to son, or actor to actor, in theatres of that period. As with so many other theatrical techniques, it was transferred wholesale into the early films. Knife-sharpening looked better on the screen than in the theatre because it could appear to be done very much faster than any actor could do it on the stage. Seen today these fights look, even to the unsophisticated, slightly silly. But the films in which they were featured were often silly, too, or, at any rate, naive. It is important to remember that, with rare exceptions, film fights reflect both the period in which the film containing them was made, and the quality of the film itself. Few silent films could approach the technical elegance of the 'talkies', and those that did were not usually of the kind that featured swordplay.

The first fight-arranger to work in Hollywood was a Belgian fencing master, Henry J. Uyttenhove, who had already been teaching fencing for some years at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. The curious thing about Uyttenhove was how small an effect he had on the swordplay in some of the films he worked on. In THE MARK OF ZORRO (as mentioned above) his influence was negligible. And Fairbanks' ROBIN HOOD consisted entirely of 'knife-sharpening' except for one quite effective quarterstaff sequence. In THREE MUSKETEERS, however, Fairbanks and others were seen to be actually fencing, and quite efficiently, too.

The trouble with viewing these early fights today is the tremendous speed at which they seem to be fought. Whether this is the result of projecting silent films through modern projectors at the wrong speed, or of the original camera-man hand-cranking his camera faster, either in unconscious excitement, or to give the illusion of added vitality to the combat, it is not within my technical competence to suggest. But certainly all silent film fights suffer from a kind of delirium tremens of the sword that make them not only hard to take seriously but also difficult to analyse.

Whether Fairbanks was dissatisfied with Uyttenhove, or Uyttenhove with film work, we do not know. But in 1923 he was replaced by another Belgian - Fred Cavens - whose career spans a good deal of the golden years of Hollywood, and to whom the credit for establishing the tradition of Hollywood swordplay must undoubtedly be given. His work ranged from THE BLACK PIRATE (Fairbanks silent), THE IRON MASK (Fairbanks silent with added sound) through most of Flynn's epics including CAPTAIN BLOOD, ROBIN HOOD, THE SEA HAWK and THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN. He also worked on CYRANO de BERGERAC, THE CORSICAN BROTHERS, ROMEO AND JULIET (1936), THE MARK OF ZORRO (Tyrone Power) and SONS OF THE MUSKETEERS. Cavens never received a screen credit for any of his film fights, and since he was the founding father of a whole tradition of screen dueling, and a magnificent exponent of his own theories, it is only common, if belated, justice to analyse his work in some detail.

Cavens was made for film work and film work for the kind of fight he eventually evolved. And it was a slow evolution if one studies his early fights compared to the later ones. Since direction, editing and film techniques play so large a part in assembling a good fight sequence, it is no surprise that his best fights were in good films (with one exception to mentioned later) and his less good duels in less good, or early and comparatively crude, film vehicles.

It seems fairly clear that any kind of period authenticity was foreign to him. When he had to use period weapons, such as quarterstaff or rapier and dagger, he invented and invented well, but his work with broadsword and cup-hilt rapier was many light years removed from the actual use of such weapons, and firmly rooted in the fencing techniques of his own time.

The footwork is modern fencing footwork, the advance, retreat, lunge, and recover, even the baleatra. It was not the pass or sideways traverse with the blades out of engagement of the ancients. The bladework itself was of Cavens' own time - Italian foil and Italian sabre. The blades are usually engaged. As a concession to period

style, the left hand is not up behind the left shoulder, but Cavens never used it for a parry. In THE SEA HAWK the left hands are on the hips in the big fight, a position unheard of in rapier but always used in Italian sabre. The cuts are cheek, chest, flank and head as in sabre, rarely below the waist, all with the turn of the wrist in preparation, which was called the molinello - characteristic of sabre at that time. In ROBIN HOOD there are lightning feints, impossible with a real broadsword, and the rapier style included counterparries and doubles, never or rarely used at the time. The combatants move up and down and not sideways as they would have done.

Cavens invented a number of spectacular moves that have now become cliches, but which were dazzling in their time. One was the clinch (or Corps-a-corps) in which the duelists come to close quarters, their blades locked, the fight apparently coming to a stop while the protagonists hiss dialogue such as "You have come to Nottingham once too often" across locked blades. No one used their feet for a swift kick to crutch, or dashed the pommel or elbow into their opponent's body as they would do in a modern fight. But occasionally the villain might stealthily snatch a dagger from his belt to give him additional and 'unfair advantage'. It is essential when watching this type of fight to be conscious of the romantic convention within the context of the romantic films on which Cavens was working.

Another Cavens invention was the ingenious solution to the three-against-one combat. Instead of circling the hero to attack from all sides, as would be natural, the villains bunch together and lunge simultaneously for the stomach, their three points all conveniently deflected by one parry of 'Seconde'. When the hero drives them back they move back on bloc, with identical modern footwork, all three retreating with impeccable synchronisation, alternately parrying the cuts and thrusts made at them.

Other good moves included the parry of one opposing



blade and the foot in the stomach of another advancing adversary. But perhaps the moves he will be best remembered for were those he devised for Errol Flynn. One was the triple molinello and cut to head, and the other was the cut cheek, chest and thrust, which almost became Flynn's fighting trademark.

Flynn had a good athletic body and Cavens gave him a very wide 'en guard' stance, which made him look even better. When fighting on the stairs (another Cavens specialty) Flynn was given a particularly heroic appearance by spanning several steps with his long legs during a static sequence.

One of the advantages of screen over stage fighting is the use of doubles for the principals during sequences in long shot. Cavens himself doubled in some scenes, so did his son Albert. Fairbanks usually refused to be doubled even for spectacular stunts, and Flynn did nearly all his own fighting in his early days. But, as time went by, for actual stunts such as falls, doubles became essential, since one dared not risk injury to the star which could hold up filming for weeks and cost thousands of dollars. The use of specifically 'fencing doubles' could well have been another of Cavens' inspirations. Cornel Wilde gives as one of his reasons for not being doubled in fencing scenes that none of the fencing doubles available was the same build as himself. Fencing footwork particularly, as well as neat bladework is very much a speciality and takes years to learn, especially for the comparatively modern fencing techniques used by Cavens. So ex-fencing champions began to congregate in Hollywood as doubles. Ralph Faulkner, later a fight-arranger himself, started as a double, most notably for Henry Daniell, the lethal, but apparently unathletic, villain in THE SEA HAWK.

Cavens worked with good directors and in well-made and expensive pictures and he developed his style over the years with the coming of sound and color, and advancing film techniques. But one of these techniques has become a positive drawback to those who view his work in our own day. This is called under-cranking, and means, as I understand it, running the camera slowly while filming and speeding up the

film in the projector so that the swordplay seems very much faster than it was when filmed. The advantages of this device are obvious, but its effects vary enormously; presumably according to the degree of skill used, and the degree of speeding up employed. If well done the speed-up is almost unnoticeable, but if badly or overdone it can ruin a fight. THE SEA HAWK final duel has been accelerated so much that the result is slightly ludicrous, (a disappointing fight in an otherwise very good film). In ROBIN HOOD, on the other hand, the under-cranked fights are still splendidly effective.

Fred Cavens is the unsung hero of Hollywood swordplay, but before leaving him, it is worth commenting on some of the actors he coached. In cinematic terms, Fairbanks could fence well, if he could be restrained from knife-sharpening. Flynn could also fence well - he did exactly as he was told and knew only, so he claimed, "How to make it look good". Basil Rathbone, the perennial villain, whom many still consider the finest swordsman of his time in Hollywood, was, unlike the others, sufficiently interested in swordplay to take private lessons - one a day, so rumor has it. According to Cavens himself, Rathbone was "better than the best fencer in the world" for film purposes. But, says Cavens, neither he nor Flynn, nor Fairbanks would have made a competition fencer.

Cavens died in 1962. Meanwhile, other fight-arrangers had appeared on the scene. Ralph Faulkner, a German by birth, had been an American Olympic sabre and epee champion, and began, as we have seen, as a fencing double. His work as an arranger included the Ronald Colman PRISONER OF ZENDA, ANTHONY ADVERSE, THE BANDIT OF SHERWOOD FOREST, and THE COURT JESTER. His 'ZENDA' fight, viewed nowadays, is a disappointing feature of an otherwise very good film. Colman was not an athletic actor, and there is a good deal of swordplay in shadows, which was another trademark of fights of that era. It is said that both Colman and Fairbanks Junior were doubled extensively, and certainly some of the stunt falls required of the actors must, of necessity, have been doubled.

Faulkner's COURT JESTER fight, on the other hand, still looks very good. It was certainly ingeniously scripted in the story. Danny Kaye was a beautiful mover - the first requirement of a theatrical duelist, and his opponent was the incomparable Rathbone. Faulkner, incidently, is still alive and well and teaching competitive fencing in California.

The last of the great Hollywood fight-arrangers was Jean Heremans, yet another Belgian, who had succeeded Uyttenhove at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Stylistically he seems to have followed Cavens, with, perhaps, some refinement of technique. He certainly bettered the previous 'ZENDA' fight in the Stewart Granger version, as well as working on KING'S THIEF, PRINCE VALIANT, and EL CID. But his most notable achievements were two epic duels - the first d'Artagnan/Jussac encounter in Gene Kelly's THREE MUSKETEERS and the Mel Ferrer/Stewart Granger duel in SCARAMOUCHE. Heremans' MUSKETEER fight (one of many in the film) lasted a full five minutes, at that time a record. All the actors who had to fence in the film were given a month's basic training in a gymnasium before starting on their routines. Gene Kelly fought his opponent up steps, across flower beds, through trees, in a magnificent garden, with an acrobatic splendor and choreographic invention unseen for years, if ever before. This duel was notable in ending with the lowering of Jussac's breeches by d'Artagnan instead of the usual wounding or death. This ultimate humiliation gave added drama to their return match on the clifftops later on in the picture.

SCARAMOUCHE is considered by many, not all of them admirers of Hollywood swordplay, to be the best fencing film ever made. The story concerns a villainous nobleman who challenges members of the Parliamentary opposition, one by one, to a duel, which he invariably wins. There is a very well-choreographed fight between the villain and an opponent who can hardly fence at all, ending in the latter's inevitable demise. The hero, determined to avenge this political mayhem, sneaks into the villain's chateau for secret nightly fencing lessons from the villain's fencing master. The

sequences showing the hero's gradual development from a clumsy beginner into a sordsman is admirably invented, combining the gradual acquiring of skill in real fencing techniques such as the reprise (repeated lunge) with ingenious swash-buckling moves with sword and candle.

The lessons are, however, interrupted before the course is complete by the master of the chateau himself, who takes sword in hand and speaks one of the classic lines of all films of this genre: "Now for your last fencing lesson". The fight that follows is unique in that the villain names some of the moves as he makes them such as "Double! Un, deux, trois!" The only weapon used in the films is the small sword. Heremans magnificently manages to confine virtually all his routines, apart from the odd slash and some spectacular exaggerations of the coupe, to the techniques of the purely thrusting weapon. How many other fight-arrangers would have cheated and used cuts as well?

The first hero/villain encounter ends in a draw, and the script, by a master stroke, has the hero going to the fencing master's own fencing master to finish his training. This old master is so ancient and distinguished that he merely leans on his stick and barks out commands, never apparently needing or deigning to handle a weapon himself to instruct his sweating pupil. The final duel, fought in a theatre, from box to circle rail, to foyer to stage, lasts six and a half miraculous minutes - a record even today, and entirely without music. Except for the odd fall and jump, it would seem to have been shot without doubles - Mel Ferrer and Stewart Granger doing all their own work. If one wishes to see the apotheosis of the golden years of Hollywood swordplay, there is not better example than this master work of the last of the great masters - Jean Heremans.

The world has changed, and films with it, since the 'Golden Years'. The four great masters - Uyttenhove, Cavens, Faulkner and Heremans - three Belgians and a German/American - went uncredited through all the flashing bladework of the spectacular epics they helped to create. No doubt there were other fight-arrangers too, whose names we shall never

know, as well as the skillful fencing doubles who did so much to make principal's heroic reputations. Few knew or cared, in those days, that the film editor often cut from a close-up of the hero and villain snarling at each other in a clinch, or from one of the principals warding off an attack delivered by an unseen hand, out of camera shot, to a long shot of two doubles of the same build as the stars and in identical costumes battling it out across the polished floors in some expertly designed routine.

Nowadays realism is the thing, and when the old clinches and conventions are invoked, they are invariably "sent up". These moves can also be seen usually poorly performed in some stage shows, choreographed by people who have barely glimpsed, and certainly never seriously studied, the brilliant originals. Every modern fight-arranger has his own theories and his own style. Many are rooted in today's fencing which has changed a good deal since Hollywood days. The Fight Masters of those days were, inevitably, men of their own time, and their time has long since slipped by. Everything changes and no doubt it is all for the best. And yet....And yet.... I, for one, will always come to Nottingham once too often. And I would not dream of missing my last fencing lesson.



PROFILE-

## \* PATRICK CREAN



To begin at the beginning, Patrick Crean directed his first fight at the London Coliseum in 1932. To-day he is Fight Director at Stratford, Ontario, where he has worked since 1962. The forty odd years in between have been packed with fight credits for stage, screen and television in Britain, Canada, Italy and the States. He must have directed more fights than anyone else in the world.

His consistent specialisation in this field, the quality of his work, and what has been passed on to pupils, admirers and friends, make him the first Fight Director in the modern sense of the word. Now he is a youthful sixty something. Let his ex-pupil and friend B.H. Barry describe his particular quality as a Director.

"Paddy is the Mr. Panache of all the panaches. What he does is put on the stage what you see in the cinema. Everything he does is for the effect. He is an actor who understands actors. What he did for me was to link acting with fighting".

Perhaps the fact that Paddy Crean is a very good actor has had something to do with his success. One remembers the young Crean, tweedy and pipe-smoking, as the excellent juvenile in "Quiet Week-End". He has always kept the acting part of his career going—playing plenty of non-fighting roles, doing dubbing work abroad, directing in the theatre, writing T.V. scripts, and currently has a triumphant one-man show called "The Sun Never Sets" (about Rudyard Kipling) with which he tours Canada and the States.

Although Crean was known for his theatre fights before 1959, it was the first "Treasure Island" at the Mermaid in that year that heralded the arrival of the Fight Director on the theatrical scene. The old fight-arrangers had been straight fencing masters or actors hired for one show. Some of their fights had been excellent, but the real specialisation began with Crean. He was engaged for the "Treasure Island" fights and to play O'Brien, for seven years running. No one who ever saw them will forget those fights. The swinging cutlass strokes of the old cutting target in the battles, and the athletic Flynnery of the fight in the rigging in which Crean and his opponent leapt like Tarzans in their sky-high combat.

The reference to Flynn is not co-incidental. Crean was Fight Director and "double" for Flynn

in the film "The Master of Ballantrae" on which, it is alleged, every fencing master in England was engaged in a fighting part. There is a story that Crean broke a leg demonstrating a fight on the stairs, and was back working next day on crutches with his leg in plaster. The tale is probably true, as is the fact that his list of theatrical pupils ranges from Flynn, through Olivier, Wolfitt, Schofield, Guinness, Gielgud, Richardson, Fairbanks Junior to Diana Dors. But his own fencing background is surprisingly orthodox.

He learned foil at school, sabre in the regular army, studied sabre and épée with various masters in London, and foil again with Madame Bertrand. He worked at fencing in Dublin, and was doing intensive foil work with an Italian Olympic coach as late as the fifties. He still fences competitively when he can, and teaches. He makes a clear distinction between straight fencing and stage fighting. "They learn a specific routine" he says, talking of actors, "and it's like any other stage business. If they are good actors they do it well. If they aren't, they won't. That's my experience. And if they know the routine is basically safe they will love to make it look dangerous."

Safety is a Crean watchword. "Is that safe, Gary?" he says to a pupil, about to jump off a piano at a University workshop. "Where are you going to land? Care. Use Care". He sees an actor, seven foot wooden rod in hand, hurling himself towards a wall with a high window. "Watch that window! The pole was close to your legs. You could trip. Try it again, but watch that window".

"Part of my work", he tells a press interviewer "is to give these gentlemen a do-it-yourself fight kit, so if they get out in the sticks in a rep company where there is no Fight Director. . ." Watching his five actors in a three minute duel, of which he has given them the highspots, his face mirrors every move. Then he spots an actor falling to one knee "Oh be careful. That's bad on this floor". The linking with acting is constant.

"Jeff, you're acting?"

"Yeah, Paddy".

"Good. Good."

Crean mirrors ideally the twin faces of the archetypal Fight Director. The flamboyance, so

vividly instanced in his finished work, and Barry's phrase for him 'Mr. Panache', plus his obsession with safety. "Care. Use care".

Now in his mellow years, he says "I think a lot of my ideas have passed into usage in stage fights, and this I am very pleased about. My main interest now is to help in any way I can anyone who wants to enter on the work we all love". He is generous in his praise of colleagues. "I have heard glowing praise of Bill Hobbs' work on 'Musketeers'" he writes, "and am longing to see it. I have a great admiration for his work, which is excellent, highly professional, inventive and terrifically exciting". He met Hobbs for the first time at a special evening, convened by the Society to greet one of Paddy Crean's fleeting visits to England.

His own work is probably untouched by the second revolution in stage fighting, led by Hobbs, which came after Crean's time at the Mermaid. Hobbs gave us the enormous lunges, working out of distance, great speed of movement and a quite different flamboyance. But they share some common attitudes. "I think if one faithfully reproduced a period fight, it wouldn't really do" Crean writes, "since the audiences expect excitement and entertainment. So one mixes—so much authenticity and a whole hunk of dramatic excitement".

He has no overall "method" for stage fighting. "My feeling is that each fight poses its own problems and timing, and one can't really standardise. I am constantly seeking new moves, thrusts and cuts and timing, depending on production requirements, the characters the actors are portraying, and what the director wants to see".

These are the thoughts of an essentially youthful veteran, off to Stratford, Connecticut, for "Twelfth Night" and "Romeo", to Charlottetown for a rock musical of "Hamlet", more workshops, a season at his home base in Ontario, and a fall tour of his one-man show.

But unlike younger colleagues, he remains wedded imaginatively to the romantic conception of the dramatic fight. "As regards methods and styles changing" he says "I don't know. The

feeling I get from my students in the Universities is that they long to see stage revivals of "The Prisoner of Zenda", "The Count of Monte Cristo" and so on. The Flynn films are terrifically popular among them, and the washbuckling film has taken on a new lease of life".

Clark Gable was the reputed King of Hollywood, and the charisma of Paddy's sex appeal is only one of the legends he has created in his own lifetime. Unrolling his career like a great tapestry, one is left with the inescapable conclusion that if one awards a crown for the art of the stage fight, it must go to him.

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#### A few of the many Facts about Patrick Crean's Career

Had his own fencing school in London.  
Taught at the London Opera Centre, the National School of Opera, Corona Stage School and the New College of Speech and Drama.  
"Hamlet" Stratford on Avon.  
"Hamlet" Haymarket Theatre (John Gielgud).  
"Hamlet" New Theatre (Alec Guinness).  
1952-1957 in Italy, acting, fight-directing, dubbing, speaking commentaries in films, acting and directing (not fights) in Italian theatre.  
Films "Master of Ballantrae" )  
"Crossed Swords" ) with  
"Adventures of William Tell" ) Errol Flynn  
"Sword of Sherwood Forest")

#### Television

Episodes in B.B.C.'s "Robin Hood"  
"Three Musketeers" (serial, Canada)  
"Cyrano" (Musical) Broadway 1973.  
Numerous workshops and stage fights at Canadian and American universities.  
Has done twelve productions of "Hamlet".  
Ten productions of "Treasure Island".  
Resident now at Festival, Stratford, Ontario.

## STAGE BLOOD!

## -----A RECIPE

The latest recipe to hit the theater scene is a concoction of Karo syrup, red food coloring, corn starch, and peanut butter! Karo syrup is the principle substance, food coloring gives the syrup the desired hue, the corn starch dilutes the opaqueness and peanut butter gives it a tacky base, thus eliminating the problem of running (which often gives costumers the fits). This recipe was given to the society by Dana Nye, the son of famed Hollywood Make-up Man, Ben Nye. He added that if you wanted clotted blood, you used crunchy peanut butter. Now - the proportions are the tricky things. You should try this:

- 1 pint of Karo syrup
- 1 smidgen of food coloring (as desired)
- 2 tablespoons of corn starch
- 1 heaping table spoon of peanut butter

NOTE: Be sure, when adding the peanut butter, that you stir it into the batch, thus allowing it to dissolve. Otherwise, if you just plop it into the mixture, your actor may end up with an unsightly carbuncle on the side of his neck or wherever applied. Dissolve the peanut butter into the batch and thoroughly stir all ingredients. I have seen the result. Not only is it visually effective, but the leftovers are rather tasty!

## \*FIGHT SCRIPT

## 'THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE'

(Warner Bros.)

Fight Director.....Patrick Crean

Arnaud (small sword).....Jacques Berthier

Jamie (cup-hilt rapier)...Errol Flynn

Note: Cuts with small sword  
made only when Arnaud gets wild,

The big ship duel between Flynn and Berthier in 'Ballantrae' took over two weeks, with all its ramifications, to shoot, and in the original film had ninety separate cuts, a record for the times and it may still stand. The original fight script is written in longhand which I have tried as far as possible to reproduce on the typewriter.

Patrick Crean

Props: Swords, cannon-practical, cutlasses, pistol, knives, rum barrels with drink, rope, dippers and cups, smoke pots, fire, spy glass. Look-out in crow's nest.

- Arnaud Sword up and down on advance, then engage sixte. Advances, disengages carte to sixte, drops into seconde advance.
- Jamie Retreats, follows engagement sixte, and disengagement. Holds tierce on Arnaud's drop to seconde.
- Arnaud Advances with beat, feints high right cheek, when full lunge centre.
- Jamie Takes beat, is deceived in tierce, parries seconde, thrusts centre.
- Arnaud Recovers from lunge, parries sixte, thrusts sixte, returns to sixte guard.
- Jamie Parries tierce short, forward guard in tierce.
- Arnaud Advances with seconde, tierce, seconde engagement (Octave for him)
- Jamie Seconde, tierce, cuts right cheek and right flank.

Arnaud Parries short sixte and octave, 1 - 2 on advance with feint on outside.

Jamie Parries carte, riposte with cut at centre head.

Arnaud Parries 5th, lunges centre.

Jamie Parries wide seconde.

Arnaud Points at right arm.

Jamie Parries tierce, cuts right flank.

Arnaud Parries octave, makes full lunge centre. Taking sword back first (piston).

Jamie Parries counter-tierce with bind.

Arnaud "Following through" with his lunge makes corps-a-corps. Throws off - makes 4 quick upright changes into another corps-a-corps. (Before 4, Jamie presses him back, moving his right foot forward, and Arnaud takes back his left) Short pause.

Jamie Takes 4 changes in retreat. Makes full (piston) lunge which takes him past Arnaud.

Arnaud Sidesteps (with Left foot advance, and Right to 'rear' - knees bent) and parries low seconde in half turn, then vicious thrust at right cheek.

Jamie Has turned in time to parry short-line tierce with bind away.

Arnaud Follows with lunge centre.

Jamie Parries carte in retreat. Lunges C head (cut)

Arnaud Parries 5th, makes 1-2-3 (after bind away to 1) (1st feint inside after bind)

Jamie (Backing towards ship's side with cannon on his right) Is deceived twice, parries carte in retreat, cuts away to seconde as - ROPE IS THROWN: - (BULL throws it in Jamie's path).

## DIALOGUE

Arnaud "Let us be fair, Bull. (A grin) Besides, there is no need."

Jamie Off guard, stumbles over rope backwards, until the ship's side stops him.

Arnaud Wounds in right shoulder with quick point. Make play with wound hurting. Arnaud is deceived and thinks he has now lost heart, and so from now on becomes less cautious.

Jamie (Stung to fresh effort by the wound) Advances away from 'wall' with cut at right cheek.

Arnaud Parries high sixte cuts at right flank.

Jamie Parries seconde advancing and ripostes at cheek.

Arnaud Parries high sixte again and binds away to Prime.

Jamie On bind, turns and leaps on cannon to right.

Arnaud Cuts at head as Jamie is leaping.

Jamie "Arrives" on cannon facing Arnaud in time to parry 5th. He stands on cannon and cuts right head, left head, and leaps off to other side still facing Arnaud.

Arnaud Parries 5th and 6th slices off and lunges C.

Jamie Jumps and, as he is in act of jumping, parries seconde almost as he lands. Cuts right head.

Arnaud Parries short, high tierce (1st tierce) and lunges again centre across cannon, exposing himself recklessly.

Jamie Parries seconde again, cuts through Arnaud's right shoulder, if there are no epaulets, and in cut across chest from Arnaud's right to left, takes off half his cravat as well. (Short pause???)

Arnaud Ducks, leaps over gun parrying 5th to cut from Jamie.

Jamie Cuts at head as Arnaud comes over gun.  
Arnaud Full lunge centre.  
Jamie Parries Prime. Slices off in point at Right Cheek.  
Arnaud Parries tierce, short, goes forward to tierce engagement.  
Jamie Tierce.  
Arnaud Feint cut-over, with full lunge in inside line.  
Jamie Deceived in tierce, parries counter-tierce, lunges centre. Corps-a-corps high, both on lunge.  
Arnaud Parries counter-carte, binds up into Corps-a-corps with lunge centre (Jamie "lifts")  
Bull throws cask. Jamie breaks as it comes towards him retreating.  
Arnaud Lunge centre.  
Jamie Parries tierce.  
Arnaud Doubles tierce, making full lunge in tierce line.  
Jamie Parries tierce, after doubles deception. Now has his back to bulkhead (?)  
Arnaud Breaks off. Withdrawing "piston" but not lunging.  
Jamie Lunges centre.  
Arnaud Parries carte, binds to seconde, and lunges.  
Jamie Yields to seconde parry short, and cuts centre head.  
Arnaud Parries 5th, makes full lunge centre.  
Jamie Parry seconde low, cuts at right head.  
Arnaud Parry short tierce 3rd and bind away.  
Jamie Leaps up companion way.  
Arnaud Full lunge centre.

Jamie Faces Arnaud after turn in time to parry seconde pinning sword against right side of companionway. He spins swivel gun to distract Arnaud and slashes at head (swipe)(right to left). Leaps rest of stairs in turn to 'quarter-deck'.  
Arnaud Makes wild slash and goes up after him. Cuts right flank, right cheek, right flank.  
Jamie Parries in retreat, seconde, tierce, seconde, attacks with cuts at right cheek, right flank, left head (points at left head instead of cut!!!)  
Arnaud Binds away to seconde.  
Jamie Yields on bind, and makes drawing central cut inside cutting tunic, sash in two, and button.  
Arnaud Goes to parry drawing cut in carte but is deceived.  
Jamie Deceives carte and makes another slash on tunic on sword arm sleeve.

#### DIALOGUE

Arnaud "You seem to have been studying my style, Monsieur."  
Jamie "Only my health, Capitaine. I have my own style, thank you."  
Jamie Lunges fully centre (with advance).  
Arnaud Was in sixte after slashing. Parries a wild seconde in retreat.  
Jamie Deceives parry and goes on with another lunge centre. (Remise of left foot)  
Arnaud In retreat, finds blade on a seconde parry - Jamie's point grazing his cheek as he parries. Makes desperate effort in thrusts in tierce and carte advancing, slices over and cuts at right flank fully.  
Jamie Parries with the left hand (with volte?). Seizes rope with his right hand and swings out to right over deck to drop over his sword.

Arnaud Makes wild slash at Jamie, as he sails away, missing him (from Jamie's left to right). He then seizes another rope with left hand and does same.

Jamie Has picked up his sword, sees Arnaud coming, and slashes the rope.

Arnaud Falls to deck, loses his sword.

Jamie Flips sword towards Arnaud with his point (and says: "Pick it up.")

Arnaud Catches sword in flip. Picks it up in line. Tierce cut at head.

Jamie Parries 5th. Cuts right flank.

Arnaud Parries seconde.

Jamie Cuts right cheek and left cheek.

Arnaud Parries 5th and 6th, slices off to cut wildly at right flank.

Jamie Parries seconde, cuts head high, and comes over point left to make 3 slashes across tunic - left, right - right, left - left, right. (Arnaud's left and right)

Arnaud Goes to parry 3rd slash, but is deceived (Seconde parry).

Jamie Deceived seconde, comes over and makes central drawing cut as before, wounding and cutting coat still more.

Slight pause

Arnaud Wild lunge centre.

Jamie Parries "blocking" seconde. "Permit me to thank you for your help, mon Capitaine."

They have now fought their way to the stern of the ship, high on the poop. Arnaud's back is now to the gunwale.

Arnaud Withdraws for full lunge upper line.

Jamie Ducks and leans to left. "And Bon Voyage."  
Arnaud's point goes over Jamie's right shoulder and Jamie runs him through.  
(Trick sword used here)  
Arnaud balances on bulwark for a short 'freeze', then topples over into the sea, the sword sticking in him.

#### GLOSSARY

Sixte: Tierce with the thumb turned to the right.  
Seconde: Actors Parry.  
Right Cheek: } Right and Left, here and elsewhere in the  
Right Flank: } script, are almost certainly described from the point of view of the receiver of the stroke, not the giver.  
Centre Head: A direct downward cut at head.  
Octave: Low sixte with point downwards, parrying low right side of body with thumb to the right.  
Fifth: Head parry.  
Counter Tierce: Twiddle parry.  
Bind: Taking the opponent's blade away from its attacking position.  
Corps-a-corps: Clinch with bodies of fighters close.  
Prime: Watch parry.  
Right Head: } Probably diagonal cuts downwards at head.  
Left Head: }  
Parries 5th: 5th is the usual head parry. 6th here probably means the other head parry with the hand to the left of the head. Called "Sesta" by some Fight Directors.  
Cut-over: Liftover of your blade over your opponent's to make a thrust attack. Also called coupe.  
Counter-carte: The other twiddle parry, made from carte as opposed to tierce.  
Right Head: Again, probably a right diagonal cut downwards at head.  
Volte: Sometimes called "bum in face".  
Deceive: To feint successfully.

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\* BOOK REVIEW

## SWORDSMEN OF THE SCREEN

By Jeffrey Richards

(Routledge Pub.)

Reviewed by Derek Evered

After a brief introduction to the development of the swashbuckling genre, the author embarks on his historical review of individual films. Beginning with Douglas Fairbanks Senior (King of Swash), we come to Michael York (Three and Four Musketeers).

The films are grouped as swashbuckling (literally, to clash one's sword against a bristle, i.e., shield), swordsmen, musketeers, knights, cavaliers, period costume movies, masked avengers, jolly men in Lincoln Green, highwaymen, pirates, and the oriental swashbuckler. This division leads perhaps to some curious omissions, for example, Jose Ferrer in 'Cyrano de Bergerac'. Or the classical duel in long shot under dripping trees in 'Duel At Dawn' arranged by our very own Leon Paul. Only his son Raymond Paul is mentioned, doubling for Errol Flynn.

A laconic synopsis of each film is followed by the casting of main characters. Frustrating that, after looking at the illustrations as many minor parts are not identified. The author was clearly dependent on promotion stills for his illustrations and some older photographs don't really illustrate his theme. Thus, Ronald Colman lounging nonchalantly against a baroque staircase doesn't look like a swordsman. That isn't compensated for by a posed wooden still of his duel with Douglas Fairbanks Junior in 'The Prisoner of Zenda' (1937). Amusing, however, to see a still of Rudolph Valentino wielding a sword left-handed in 'Monsieur Beaucaire' (1924), presumably to exhibit the famous face more fully.

Omitted from the potted biographies of the swordsmen of the screen is that of Stewart Granger. He was one of the few screen swordsmen with a notable background as a fencer

(in the Army) before making his mark in films. Basil Rathbone, doyen of the fencing villains, and Cornel Wilde were other examples. Granger's contribution of the longest screen duel (six and a half minutes) in 'Scaramouche' (1952) is well recorded by Jeffrey Richards.

The whole book is orientated (occidented?) towards Hollywood epics, which is perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, most of the noteworthy British are included. I looked in vain for 'Moonfleet' with its splendid fight of halberd against (Broken) rapier and net.

Throughout, even the legendary Hollywood fight-arrangers Henry Uyttenhove, Fred Cavens, Ralph Faulkner, and Jean Heremans remain shadowy figures. Only Fred Cavens is pictured, once appropriately as a fencing master in 'The Count of Monte Cristo', (1934). His son, Albert, doubled for Tyrone Power in 'The Mark of Zorro', (1940). Again the British contingent gains scant attention with reference only to William Hobbs, Patrick Crean, and Bob Anderson as fight arrangers.

All in all it is an interesting book as a history. The pattern of scenario and brief cast list does become rather repetitive but such details will be useful since the demise long ago of the weekly 'Picturegoer'. Sometimes the two contrasting literary styles adopted by the author do clash together (and not with the evocative clash of steel on steel). Thus, in the chapter titled 'When Knighthood Was In Flower', he indulges himself in obviously his specialist interest - the medieval. In the middle of his scholarly academic treatise on Byzantine history we read that a courtier had to be a snappy dresser!

There is a general index of names but no indication to what the page numbers refer, namely, a photo-still, merely the name, or a potted biography, etc. There is also a list of film titles but their dates are buried in the text.

If armed with 'Tripp's Guide', Richards' 'SWORDSMEN', and Wise and Ware's 'Stuntmen In The Cinema', your readers would be ready for almost any affray.

## \* WHO WAS ERROL FLYNN?

Flynn was a teller of tall stories, and a great many tall stories were told about him. But, hewing one's way through the mass of publicity material and imaginative journalism on the subject, certain facts do emerge. To begin with, Flynn was a very much more interesting person than his critics and his reputation gave him credit for. He was an Australian by birth and his father was a scientist. Flynn spent his youth in Tasmania and New Guinea, and his early life seems to have been as colourful as many of his films. If his acting was limited, he certainly cut a dashing figure and rode a horse superbly. And in later years he gave at least two extremely good performances in character parts. His tragedy was success that came too soon and too easily, and, from then on, type-casting in films that became successively worse. This was allied with the progressive destruction of his magnificent and athletic body by drink and a variety of drugs.

He wrote two books, both largely 'ghosted', but some of the statements have the ring of truth. He claimed, for instance, to have done all his own stunts and fighting in his early days, until the insurance companies stepped in because of the risk to the film's budget if he were injured. There is no doubt that he did perform a good deal of his own athletics to start with, since he had the necessary physical equipment and was a born show-off. But if it was sword-fighting for which he became filmically famous, it was sword-fighting with which he became increasingly bored because of the stereo-typed roles that went with it.

He had made some pithy comments on the subject in one book. "I am a Thespian, not a fencer," he stated and added that if he had to fight a fellow-actor in a film, both were in trouble since they did not know how to look after themselves. But he had picked up a few basic tips. "Hold the sword out straight before you and keep your head back, and you look brave. Dip the point of the sword and you look dangerous." He preferred fighting stuntmen to actors because stuntmen could be relied on to remember routines and not to injure him. He found some actors extremely dangerous and unreliable

To quote the immortal Fred Cavens: "All movements, instead of being as small as possible, as in competitive fencing, must be large, but nevertheless correct. Magnified is the word. The routine should contain the most spectacular attacks and parries it is possible to execute while remaining logical to the situation. In other words, the duel should be a fight and not a fencing exhibition, and should disregard at times classically correct guards and lunges. The attitudes arising naturally out of fighting instinct should predominate. When this occurs the whole performance will leave an impression of strength, skill, and manly grace."

## \* SWORDSMEN OF THE SCREEN

Review by Henry Marshall

This is a fascinating book if you are a film fan, and it is at this market the book is clearly aimed. It is lavishly illustrated with 'still's', but there is more here than fan material. The author has made a detailed analysis of the swashbuckling genre and its ideology, in all its various manifestations. And the progress of the swash-buckler is neatly related to the history of the cinema and the factors in the outside world affecting the film industry throughout the years.

The author is clearly not an expert on fighting techniques or weapons, and much of the information he provides is collated from other sources, but there is a section on Hollywood fight-arrangers, rare pictures of Fred Cavens and all the old arrangers and, later Fight Directors like William Hobbs get due credit, when the producing company or other source provided their name. An invaluable and entertaining reference book that fills gaps in one's knowledge and memory of old fighting films.

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when the cameras started to roll. He admitted that the swords' points were blunted (the book actually says buttoned) but Flynn also states that the edges were sharp and cut his hands. This presumably means blades not actually sharp, but rough from use. (It is interesting to note here that one Society member believes that, whatever the blades shown in close-up may have been, the actual cup-hilts of romantic Flynnery always had modern epee blades.)

Flynn was clearly not interested in swordplay for its own sake, apart from his job. In this he is echoed by Fairbanks Junior who had actually once fenced for sport, which Flynn had not. Therefore Flynn would not have made a good competition fencer. According to Hollywood fight-arranger, Ralph Faulkner, even Basil Rathbone, who was interested in fencing and took regular lessons, was not a good fencer.

What nearly everyone overlooks in these eternal arguments about actors and fencing is that actors deal in illusion and fencers in modern sporting reality. The dramatic portrayal of lethal swordplay is quite different to the actual scoring of hits when wearing a mask and jacket. A good actor usually cuts as poor a figure to the eye of the informed observer on the fencing piste as a Fencer would in film - except perhaps appearing in long shots as a fencing 'double'.

Flynn was a handsome dashing athletic film star until he destroyed himself. He was also a very fallible human being. David Niven's recent book 'Bring On The Empty Horses' has a chapter on Flynn, whom Niven found consistently unreliable, tight with his money, and nail-bitingly insecure for all his bravura. But he was also, says Niven, extremely courageous and ready to trade real-life punches with anyone any time. But whether he was still Australian, or had become an American, Flynn did not fight in the Second World War. The explanation given in his publicity and his book about "athletes heart" or other ailments takes a bit of swallowing. He certainly earned a great deal of hostility by appearing as a British War Hero on the screen while his critics accused him of dodging military service. But the choice of film

vehicles was not his but the studio's and, in view of his regular punch-ups, it is doubtful if it was cowardice that kept him away from the war.

Of his immense personal charm there can be no doubt whatever. Probably everyone liked him, except discarded wives and mistresses with their attendant lawyers, and those he had recently fallen out with, or knocked down.

There was a sad strain in him, too. In the last page of his autobiography he writes of his "search" for his father. Looking forward to more enjoyment of life and unknowing of the death that was to come so soon, he wrote as his final sentence: "I do not feel the dark coming on." Now, like Fairbanks, he belongs to screen history.

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Captain Blood: With Errol Flynn.  
and Basil Rathbone, (1935).

## MASTER OF ARMS

Mark Havey has been designated by the Society of American Fight Directors as the society's official Master of Arms. Mr. Havey is technical director for California State University at Sacramento. Among his many talents is his ability to make a serviceable broadsword which will endure the stress inflicted upon it in stage fighting. Mr. Havey was Master Carpenter and Master Swordsmith for the Ashland Shakespeare Festival for nine years. As resident Fight Master for the Ashland Festival and having used his weapons on many occasions, I can vouch for the craftsmanship that goes into the weapons he makes.

Mark has recently built a shop to build and repair all sorts of stage weapons. He has all the necessary equipment (at no little expense) to produce a durable broadsword. As you know, one of the problems that plagues the Fight Director is the procurement of durable, medieval fighting equipment which will not break half way through a given production. The Armoury (S.F.) and Santelli's Fencing Equipment (N.Y.) sell excellent rapiers and standard fencing equipment and the society highly recommends those establishments.

The practical broadsword has always been a problem for both suppliers and Fight Directors. Having someone who is available and has the necessary equipment to build durable, authentic medieval fighting weapons relieves a tremendous burden from the shoulders of those of us who desperately need such quality equipment.

Mark has agreed to give the society 15% of his total fees for any weapons he might contract through society members. Thus it behooves the society to contact Mark Havey when looking for serviceable medieval weapons. The money received from Mr. Havey will go into the society's general fund.

It is a pleasure to have Mark with us filling a much needed position. The society will be available to expedite any orders that members may wish to place. Please write to: Society of American Fight Directors - 4720 38th N.E. - Seattle, Wa. - 98105. Or call - (206) 522 - 7001.

SOCIETY NEWS

ERIC BOOTH (affiliate) will be playing Hamlet and assisting in the fights in that production for the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival.

DAVID BOUSHEY has just choreographed the fights in Henry IV 1 for the Seattle A.C.T. He will be doing Richard III at the Ashland Shakespeare Festival and Othello at the Utah Shakespeare Festival this summer.

PADDY CREAM (Honorary) is doing his usual fine fight work for yet another season with Stratford Ontario Shakespeare Festival. He recently did Twelfth Night for the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse in Vancouver, Canada.

STACY EDDY (student) has recently directed the fight in The Royal Family and will be directing the fights for the Vagabond King at the University of Utah.

ERIK FREDRICKSEN is choreographing the fights and playing the role of Ross in the Long Wharf Theatre's production of Macbeth.

BYRON JENNINGS recently choreographed the fights in Romeo and Juliet for Marin College and is now playing the lead character, Leontes, in The Winter's Tale at the Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts in California.

RON MARTELL is acting in a production of Jesse and The Bandit Queen at the Attic Theatre in Michigan.

PETER MOORE (affiliate) has been teaching fencing at the University of Minnesota and will be acting at the Utah Shakespeare Festival this summer.

CHRIS VILLA (affiliate) has recently written and directed a play involving a generous dose of swordplay for his acting company, The Crystal Egg.

### ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded in May 1977. Its aims are to promote the art of fight choreography in such a manner that the Fight Director will be accepted as an integral part of the theater and cinema industry. Promoting the aesthetics of well-conceived fight choreography as an integral part of the total production is another aim of the society.

Full members are professional Fight Directors.

Affiliate members are fencing masters in drama schools, overseas members, or Fight Directors of limited experience.

Friends are people interested in stage fighting but who are not necessarily connected with professional fight directing.

Student members are drama students who aspire to become Fight Directors.

### Society Rules

Members are reminded that only full members may use the Society's name to secure employment, however; affiliate and student members may use their status in any capacity other than securing employment.

Inquiries about membership and editorial articles should be mailed to the Society's permanent address:

The Society of American Fight Directors  
4720 38th N.E.  
Seattle, Wa. 98105



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