

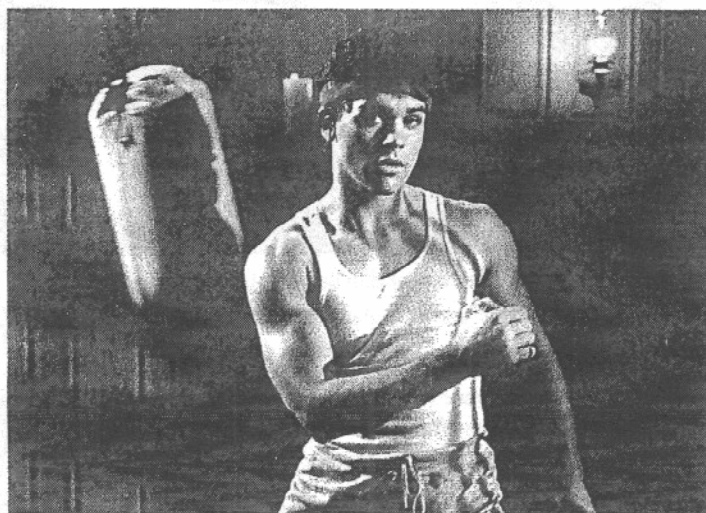
**Bey Logan enters the ring with the movie mastermind behind *No Retreat, No Surrender*, *Raging Thunder*, *Blood Brothers*, *King Of The Kickboxers*, *American Shaolin* and *Super Fights*.**

It's hard to believe that someone as amiable as Keith Strandberg could have unleashed quite so many fists and feet of fury on the world. The soft spoken Toledo, Ohio-native, a martial arts practitioner since the age of fourteen, first became enamoured of the martial arts movies genre courtesy of the late, great Bruce Lee. Years later, having earned a degree in Chinese language and philosophy, used his linguistic skills to win him the chance to write and line produce the definitive low-budget American martial arts actioner, *No Retreat, No Surrender*. Its success meant that Keith, working with his mentor, legendary Chinese producer Ng See Yuen got to produce a string of chop sockies that have become best-selling video fare worldwide. In this

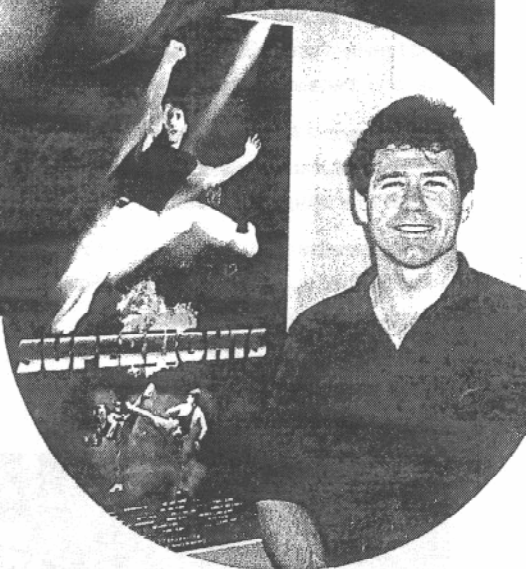
Damme's debut in *No Retreat*.

**Bey Logan: Keith, how did you first get the idea of working in martial arts movies?**

Keith Strandberg: I lived in Taiwan for a year in the early 1980s. At that point, I wanted to get into martial arts movies, amusingly enough, as an actor! I had some photos taken and sent them out to different people, and nothing ever happened. I went back to the U.S. and started taking tours to China, as



a tour director. In between, I'd stop-over in Hong Kong and try to make contact with some producers as a screenwriter. I had written to a number of companies, like Shaw



door slammed in my face. I had read an article about Seasonal Films, and I knew that (its owner) Ng See Yuen spoke mandarin. I got on the 'phone to him and talked to him in English and he didn't seem to be too

interested. Then I switched to Mandarin and he said "Why don't you come over?" and we met and talked for about two hours, looking at and talking about movies. He told me they were thinking about an American movie, and asked if I knew anything about screenplays. I said "Oh, screen plays! I know all about them..", never having seen one in my life! I went home and then, a year later, I get a call. "We're doing an American movie and you're the guy we want to write it." I flew in, met

with NG and he gave me a couple of scripts to look at, saying "This is the format". I came back to the U.S. and wrote my first draft of *No Retreat, No Surrender*, which is

probably the best experience I could have had though. I worked on *No Retreat, No Surrender* as an assistant director, and I saw what worked and didn't work and what we would or wouldn't cut out of the script. I was re-writing every night for five hours before the next day's shoot.

**Bey Logan:** *It was shot on the roof, then?*

Keith Strandberg: The story was basically the same, but we had to cut a lot of what I wrote, and I really thank NG sticking with me after that one, because it was so bad.

**Bey Logan:** *A lot of people will want to know what Jean-Claude Van Damme was like at this stage of his career.*

Keith Strandberg: Oh, he was great to work with. He had appeared in (*Monaco Forever*), but this was basically his first real film. We picked him out of the line. It was between him and this other guy, a musclebound guy, whose name I forget, who couldn't really



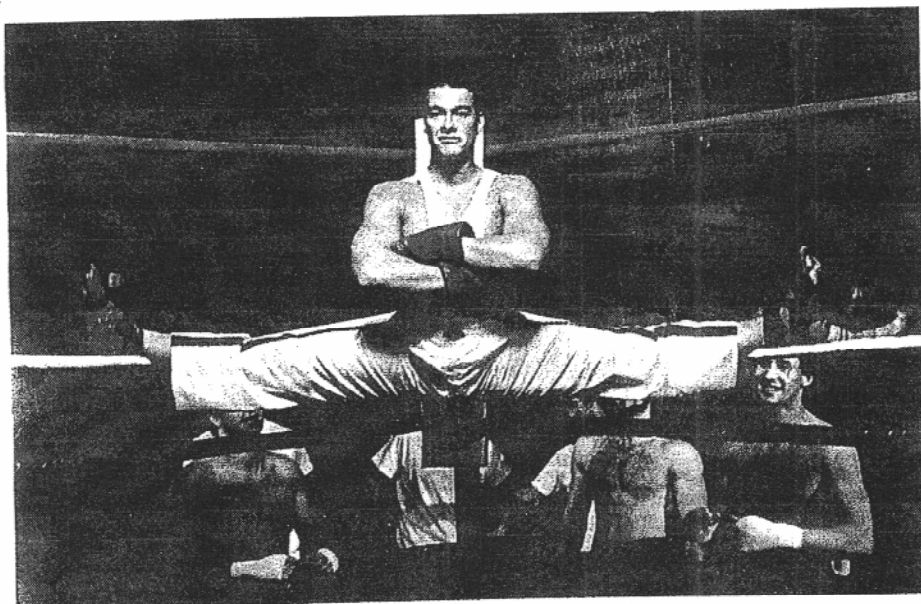
Master and student: Ng See Yuen and Keith Strandberg at Seasonal's Hong Kong office.

Keith Strandberg: No. Everything's in there. He knocked a couple of guys out. He has some control problems, and, from what I understand, he still does! One funny thing happened was

that he had to do a jump spinning crescent kick to Peter Cunningham, Sugarfoot, a real-life world kickboxing champion, who had never been knocked out, and Van Damme knocked him out on the first take. Just knocked him cold! The thing was, Van Damme 'broke' character after he knocked him out. He was concerned about Pete, so he stopped and goes "Are you all right?". Yuen Kuei, who was the director, just started screaming at Van Damme, going "No! No! Never Stop!" Because that meant we had to do it again, and Van Damme knocked Pete out the second time, too!

**Bey Logan:** *Full respect to Peter for taking it on the chin.*

Keith Strandberg: Otherwise, Van Damme was great. I haven't seen him since. We had



move, so we went with Van Damme, who was really quite a good martial artist. He was willing to do anything. He wanted to learn about the business, because he'd never really done anything before. His English wasn't very good. His acting wasn't very good, but he spent a lot of time with (actor) Joe Verruca (who played the evil mafia promotor in the film) working on his lines.

**Bey Logan:** *Were there any scenes of him cut from the finished film?*

a two picture deal with him and he broke that contract. I tried contacting his company once, and got nowhere, so that was that.

**Bey Logan:** *Do you know why he and Kurt McKinney, the star of NRNS, didn't go to Thailand to make Raging Thunder?*

Keith Strandberg: I think there had been some political upsets in Thailand and they were worried. I don't think the assurances were there that they'd be taken care of. I wasn't involved on the production side of *No*

