



Episode 312 - Mr. Sherman Augustus | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Interview with Mr. Sherman Augustus

Jeremy Lesniak: Hey, everyone! Thanks for tuning in, whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, episode 312. Today, we're joined by someone you may know from a little show called *Into the Badlands*, Mr. Sherman Augustus.

My name is Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host for this show. I'm the founder of whistlekick, and we do all kinds of fun stuff. We have this show, we have a bunch of other websites, and you can check out everything that we do at whistlekick.com. You can find the show notes for this episode and for all the other episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com.

If you're a longtime listener to the show, you know that I have been a fan of *Into the Badlands* from the very beginning. In fact, I spent most of the beginning of season two live-Tweeting the episodes, hoping that AMC would notice and say, "Hey, would you like to host a *Talking Dead*-style show for *Into the Badlands*?" *Talking Badlands*, I wanted to call it. Well, they didn't, but I was lucky enough to get to speak with Daniel Wu and Emily Beecham, and that was a lot of fun. I had them on the show episodes 170 and 171. We'll link from the show notes.

Then, here we are in season three, and we were approached again to bring on the most dynamic new character added to the show, a man named Mr. Sherman Augustus. We had a great time. Well, I probably shouldn't speak for him. *I* had a great time. He is an entertaining man, really funny, told



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some great stories, and really gave a lot of insight into the way martial arts has impacted his career as an actor, and how his acting has impacted his martial arts. He gets kind of deep at times, and it was a wonderful conversation. I'm sure you're going to love it, so I'll step back now and let you listen.

Hello? Mr. Augustus?

Sherman Augustus: Yeah, this is me.

Jeremy Lesniak: Hi, this is Jeremy with Martial Arts Radio.

SA: Hey, how are you?

JL: I'm doing great. How are you?

SA: I'm good. If my neighbor's dog could stop barking, I'd be *very* good.

JL: Yeah, I can hear that.

SA: And that's been a whole year of that.

JL: Really?

SA: Oh yeah, we're like ... You know, called animal control and all those certain things because she lets her dog ... our neighbor lets her dog run around without a leash on.

JL: Oh, man. Is it a new home for you, or a new dog for them?

SA: That's their dog next door, I mean they ... and it's so funny that she cuts both the dogs' hair like they're a lion.

JL: It takes all kinds.

SA: It is ridiculous. It's so ridiculous, but I'm trying to be Zen. I'm trying to use all my training and not be nutty. This is really good.

JL: I get it.

SA: Awesome. Then, our mail lady, Alice, she stops over and she pets the dogs, which actually gets them going even more so it just...

JL: Of course.



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SA: And now here comes FedEx. Oh, really good. Hit the interview!

JL: It's authentic. It's real. This is behind the scenes on your life, something that we can bring the people that nobody else will have, you know?

SA: It's real! Exactly! Welcome to my day. I want to get back to Dublin right now. This is one of the reasons why I didn't want to come back to LA. Oh no, they're sweet people, but she just does not take care of her dog properly, and everybody stops so we have our FedEx guy, Gary, is over there petting the dog, and Alice is still there, so we have FedEx and the United States Postal Service that's adding to the confusion over there. Okay, anyway ... Funny.

JL: It's all good. I've always wondered if the different carriers look at each other with skepticism, kind of a parallel to martial arts. Sometimes we're like, "I'm a karate guy, and you're a kung fu guy, and you're a taekwondo guy," and then we're all eyeballing each other, you know? Does the FedEx guy look at the UPS guy funny when they pass on the street?

SA: Exactly, exactly. Your kung fu is no good here. Funny, that's a good way to look at it. So, how are you?

JL: I'm doing great. Living the dream.

SA: Excellent, absolutely.

JL: I was excited when Steve reached out.

SA: Yeah, absolutely. We had a little trouble last time, huh, when we tried to get together? When was that, a couple weeks ago? That was a couple of weeks ago?

JL: Yeah, I think it was early in the month we were trying to do this, but that's okay.

SA: Yeah, it's fine. Technology, man, oh my God. Can't live with it, can't live with it.

JL: It was my last career. I spent 15 years in IT.

SA: Oh, really?

JL: You know, there are moments when I am knee-deep trying to deal with something with one of our websites, or Skype, or whatever it is. It's insane. I don't know how people that don't have this background don't throw the thing through the window, because I get frustrated with a pretty deep foundation.



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SA: I know. I don't know. You always think that it's going to make life easier, this and that, the whole nine yards, and it just confuses everything because you have to go back and reeducate yourself on a lot of other things. It is crazy. You know what? It's here now, so it's okay. I'm just waiting for flying cars

JL: You know, I'm excited for flying cars coupled with Uber, coupled with the self-driving.

SA: Oh, my God. Oh, yeah. I don't know if I'm going to do that. I don't know if I'm going to let some car just take me to the market.

JL: Can you imagine? You talked about going back to Dublin for the next shooting that you guys do on the show.

SA: Yeah.

JL: Can you imagine, a car rolls up at 10 o'clock at night, and you just kind of roll in, and you pass out, you wake up, and you're there.

SA: I know. The only thing about that, you don't have conversation with the drivers, you know what I mean? That will be a bad thing. It's kind of cool to talk to your drivers, and you get to know them, and meet their families and everything, so that would be kind of crazy, to go to work every day and it's just an automaton taking you to work, like ... what was that? I can't think of the film now, but it was like a really crazy-looking mannequin sitting up front. It was the Matt Damon movie, when they were trying to get to the other satellite, the orbiting satellite that they can cure cancer and all that kind of stuff.

JL: Oh, right.

SA: He had to report to his probation officer, which was just this thing that didn't talk. It will be something like that. Very badly painted, right? You know, with rosy cheeks. It would be funny.

JL: Yeah. It's a weird world, and I have this theory that eventually we'll reach a point where our ability to progress technologically exceeds our ability to handle the progress psychologically.

SA: Exactly, exactly, and then that's when the machines takes over because we won't be able ... the machines are saying, "You can't do anything yourself. I have to take over for you." Yeah. That will be a trip.

JL: Now, what do you think that looks like? Are you a Matrix kind of guy, or Terminator? What does the machine takeover look like in your mind?



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SA: I mean, I think both of those have been embedded into the zeitgeist of my mind. You don't know. It goes back to, I guess, grade school when our teacher first read *I Am Robot* back in the day. You're sitting there, and we're all sitting on the floor with our legs crossed, and the teacher is reading *I Am Robot*, because that was my very first children's story. I was like, "Oh wow, so machines can actually take over and do whatever they want to do?" It was that, it was *Demon Seed*. Remember *Demon Seed*, that old film?

JL: I don't.

SA: The woman installed ... She was pregnant and she installed this thing in her house that would take care of everything for her, cook for her, do this, this, that, bring the shades down, the blinds, all that kind of stuff. Then one day, it malfunctions and it just took over. It just took over the house and just terrorized this poor woman. It was the first time ... I didn't understand it, but it was the first time I'd seen a film that was based and surrounded on a claustrophobic feel, like *Alien*, because they had that claustrophobic feel. I was like, "Aw, man, that would be jacked up to be trapped in your house, and you can't get out." Yeah, it could be a multitude of things. I just don't want anything driving for me. That's just me. I've got to have some kind of control.

JL: Totally fair, I get it.

SA: When you go to the bathroom, you don't have to wipe yourself, you know what I mean?

JL: They kind of have that now, right? You know, the bidets and those fancy toilets in Japan.

SA: Exactly. Just ... Aw, man. That's crazy.

JL: Do you have one of those because I think the consensus ...

SA: No. I know somebody that has one!

JL: ... picture of every actor is that you have some kind of fancy toilet.

SA: No, I've seen one before, and I'm thinking I don't know how to ... It looks kind of medieval. I mean, you have that little thing that sticks out underneath, you know what I mean? You can just sit there ... Nah, that's okay. I'm good.

JL: Have you seen them?

SA: We went from martial arts to toilets!



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JL: Hey, we go all over the place on this show. One of my favorite sayings is, “The best stuff is on the edges.” I’ll bet you’ve probably not talked about toilets in an interview before.

SA: No, I have not talked about toilets. This is the first one.

JL: Hey, I’ll take it. First all around ... but let’s pull it back a little bit.

SA: Oh, that is wild. Okay.

JL: At some point prior to the listeners hearing this, they’ll have heard an intro. They’re going to know at least a little bit about who you are. Hopefully they’re watching the show, because I’ve been telling them from before the show came out, as martial artists, we need to support this show, because, hey, we’ve got martial arts on TV again, and we need to care.

SA: Right, and we do need to care. I mean, regardless of the wire work, whatever the case may be, if you’re a fan of the movies or not ... I think everybody’s a fan of the movies, but if you have a whole bunch of choices all the time, which we do as television consumers and all these things, basically what happens is you get ... I don’t know, you kind of get numb or ... what’s the word I’m looking for? It’s not like you don’t care, or no one cares about the situation on the show, or anything like that. It’s just that you can pull it up anytime. You know what I mean? It’s the authenticity, and it’s the work, it’s everything that comes that goes involved, that’s connected to that particular project, that piece.

I think that we’re way ahead of the game because we have Master Dee Dee, we have the Hong Kong crew, we have Andy Cheng, we have Steven Fung, we have Daniel Wu. We have people who have done these things almost all their lives in this form of entertainment, this form of media. We have great, great, great, great stunt performers. To be part of that, you always want to do that kind of thing. I mean, we would both walk out of a couple movies as kids and started just doing something. “Oh yeah, I’m the shaolin priest,” you know, that kind of stuff. Now that you get a chance to do it, and you see the hard work that goes involved and the things that you have to do, the condition you have to be in, you have to be able to move, when you start seeing that stuff and you have to partake in it, you appreciate it more, especially when you’re not doing it.

I remember when my mom called me - I say this quite often, and I always have to go back and reiterate this - when she watched the pilot for *Into the Badlands* and she called me. I saw the trailers and everything, and I was like, “Wait a minute, a martial arts television show and my people didn’t know anything about it?” I was like, “Okay, folks are going to get fired,” and actually those folks did. That was back then.

JL: For real? Seriously?



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SA: Oh, yeah. I did fire the manager and the agent that I had at that time, and the year that the pilot was released and the first six episodes. I was like, “Whoa, okay, this is great. This is a great concept.” They worked through their growing pain as far as being a new show and what they were doing, but all the other components were there we were just talking about, the Master Dee Dee and everybody who brought you the *Kill Bills* and *The Matrixes* and all those things, and I just knew the show is going to be a success. Like every show, this starts off, then you have to grow, and you have to get your audience, you have to pick your audience. You know, actually, your audience has to pick you nowadays. Just like an animal, an animal picks you, a cat picks you, a dog picks you when you want a puppy, or whatever, or a kitten.

Watching the show, I knew that they were going to ... I knew it was going to be a good show. Slowly but surely, year after year, the content got stronger and stronger. The actors, great, and you have actors on the show that have martial arts experience, and some don't, and everybody that didn't worked hard at it, and you can tell by season two they were picking up more skill sets, and moving more, and able to do what they do in wushu, because that's basically what we're doing, that kind of movement.

I just feel right now that we are giving our audience - because we do have loyal fans – our audience exactly what they love, all the way going back, from being a child to adults, and I really appreciate that. I am super happy and glad that I got a chance, because it was at one point, I was thinking I'm never going to be able to use my martial arts skills in anything, because there's nothing out there, and then here comes *Into the Badlands*. Okay, cool. Now the next thing was [00:15:28.27] and I appreciate everything that our folks do for us. Just fantastic folks. Everybody is a professional.

I think what really makes us work hard is A) the conditions, that's one, but the crew, and I'm talking about everybody, all the way down to caterers, everybody works hard, and you don't want to go to work any day and not ... disappoint your fellow coworkers. That's what it's about. We're all coworkers. That's what it is, and I appreciate that. This is the first time in a long time - I've been doing this for 32 years now - first time in a long time, I mean, there's been moments, but this is the first time in a long time that every component works and everybody gets to tell their story, because we all collaborate.

I think one important component of the whole thing is there is not one person that works on the show, and I'm talking about office and the whole nine yards, there are no knuckleheads on the show. There's no people that you don't want to engage in a conversation, even if they work in the office or something like that. It's a really cool treat, and I'm really enjoying working on the show. It's not work. I mean, you go to work and you play a lot, and you're hanging out with your best friends. You're hanging out with your aunts and uncles, and your sisters and brothers. It's great. It's crazy.

JL: It's such a fascinating show.



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SA: It is.

JL: Like I said, I've been a fan conceptually since before it even air because I saw what they were trying to do and I was so excited, as a martial artist, as an advocate for the martial arts, that it was going to be there.

SA: Right.

JL: There have been some weird things that have happened. I don't think anybody in the martial arts community would've said, "Yeah, Nick Frost, let's get him on a martial arts show," but it works.

SA: It works, and Nick can move.

JL: Yeah, I've been surprised. Where is that ... creativity, I guess is the way to put it, coming from? Somebody's got their thumb on the pulse, not just of martial arts, but of martial artists.

SA: That's a good question for the producers and some of the writers, because they had to conceptually come up with all this, the whole thing. Daniel broke it down to me how this whole thing came to fruition. I think he said it was either Michael Shamberg or Stacey Sher. I'm not sure, but someone went to a screening of RZA's *The Man with the Iron Fists*. What was the film that he did?

JL: Oh, okay. I think that's what it was, yeah.

SA: Yeah, they went that screening or that premier, and they walked out, and they said, "It's a shame nobody's doing this on television." Next thing you know, there's a phone call to Daniel Wu, and so they got together, and basically our show is loosely based off of *The Monkey King*, and that's how they billed it. I was really blown away, because the next chapter of my professional career is director's seat/ producer. Thanks to show, we've been having a lot of ... Me and my two best friends, we have our company. We've been able to get into a lot of rooms, and there's a lot of things happening with that, but I don't want to digress too far.

What Daniel was telling me one day after work when they were introducing my character, when they did pitch, they had three pitch meetings in one day. I don't know if you ever heard this story, so you need to let me know if you have. They had a picture book, they had a look for the show, they had everything that you're supposed to do when you walk into a room to pitch a show. What he told me was AMC, HBO, and somebody else - maybe Starz or Showtime or somebody - but it was three meetings in one day. They went to AMC first. They went in, they pitched it, and walked outside, and they were just standing there chitchatting by their cars, putting money in the meter - I think he was saying that - and the phone rang, because they were getting ready to go to their next meeting, and AMC gave them an offer, and they had to call everybody and cancel their meeting.



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JL: No, I did not hear that story.

SA: So, you tell me how ... It's filled that void, so now, the next thing to do is keep it engaging and interesting for the audience. We're doing that, but the other component is the right night, the night that you're on, so people are watching. We're up against every television show that's on cable or pay cable, like the USAs, the TNTs, the AMCs, where the shows have to run ads and commercials, and then we're bumping up against the Hulus, the Netflixes, and the Amazons, which they don't do so. Plus, with those entities, you can just straight binge, right? With our show, we have to get by commercials. Any other show, you have to get by commercials, so it's important that we're delivering really, really good content to keep folks engaged, because I can't stand commercials at all.

My hat's off to the patience that our audience has because I get a lot of messages about, "Online, there was like 9,022 + 8 commercials, and I have to sit there and watch that, but I watch it because the show's good." I get it all the time I think we all do, especially after the episode 3-0- ... the new one, the first episode of the season. I think they'd show, after the first break, after the fight scene between The Widow and Moon, I think there was, like, seven ... five commercials? That's a lot. Maybe more, I don't know, but it was just wall-to-wall commercials. Then, I'm looking at Twitter, because we're still in Dublin. Everybody's going off about this. "Oh, here's another commercial. Here's another commercial! Ah, here's another commercial!" The people hate that. I'm sorry, they do, and then they would raise the level of the commercials. You notice that the volume goes higher, because they know we check out. I don't think buying tires and refrigerators are that important to me when I'm watching my favorite show, I'm sorry. Just don't want to see it.

JL: I understand. How would you do it? Would you prefer to see a show like this go to Netflix, where we don't have to have commercials, and you could binge it?

SA: The show gets binged regardless. I think somebody has to have the wherewithal to just say bump what's normal and just keep it. I love AMC, so the longer we're on AMC and we're hanging in there, folks are digging the show and they know where to find it. That's fine with me. That's on us to make sure our audience is engaged, and that's part of the whole thing, going back, that's part of the whole thing about going to work every day because we have these loyal fans. My conversation to myself all the time was I certainly do not want to let our audience down, because if I wasn't on the show, I would be a ... that would be one of my favorite shows, and every Sunday night I would just binge, do like everybody else is doing. I would get my *Westworld* in, I would get my couple other shows on Showtime in, and I would definitely get *Into the Badlands* in on Sunday night all the time. Sunday night would be my night. It always has been, going back to [00:23:43], and so forth and so on with different shows Sunday nights seems to be a really good night to put a good show with good content on.

JL: It's always been a pivotal place for that kind of hour-long, quality, deeper story telling drama.



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SA: Yeah, absolutely.

JL: For sure. We spent some good time here talking about *Into the Badlands*, talking about your role in *Into the Badlands*, and were going to come back. We'll talk more about that, but we've got you on to talk about martial arts, so I want to know your martial arts story. How did you get started?

SA: Yeah, absolutely. Okay, earlier in my career, I did a couple of films that, especially being an ex-athlete, that I had to do some martial arts stuff, and I was always told, and this was back in my... right after I finished playing ball, late 20s, going into my early 30s. In 1996, I did a film called *Space Marines*, and there was this gentleman that, we used to have these conversations all the time. He was our stunt and fight coordinator. He took on ... It was just one guy, pretty modest budget, but it was just one gentleman that was doing all that. We had these conversations, and then I had a big fight scene in this film. The day that we shot that fight scene, we had one day of rehearsal and two days later we shot this fight scene, Blake Boyd and I, and it was intense. It was brutal. After we shot that, in between, we were doing our next set up. We were moving on because that scene almost took all day. That gentleman said, "You know what, listen to me." He was very serious. He said, "You need to get into martial arts. You would be really good at it," and I did.

I came back to LA, and I started training, and got my first dan and second dan, and I studied with two Masters, Master Jin and then Master Ken Park, and he bought Steven Seagal's old studio. It was actually ... Rodney on the ROQ. He was a DJ, older guy. It was called It was a disco then, and I can't think of the name. It was a disco from the 70s, with Steven Seagal opening a studio there, and then Master Park bought it and was there for years. That's where I started. I got my third dan, and I really didn't complete my test, so I'm still a second dan. I didn't complete it. Actually, it was a breaking technique that I didn't do, so one of these days I'll do that, but that particular gentleman that helped me out on the *Space Marines* was none other than, guess who? I'm going to let you try to guess. His son is on our show, *Into the Badlands*.

JL: I'm going to embarrass myself and say I'm not sure.

SA: It was Danny Tan, Lewis Tan's dad. Boom!

JL: It's funny how those dots connect, isn't it?

SA: It's funny, right? I worked with the father, and now I'm working with the son, and it's just really bizarre, but it's cool. It's really cool. This shows you, there's ... I had an acting coach who used to say there's only four living rooms in Hollywood, so you've got to watch what you say, and there's probably only four dojang in Hollywood, so you got to watch what you do.

JL: What a trip. Just listening to the names of the instructors, are we talking taekwondo?



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SA: Taekwondo, yup.

JL: Okay.

SA: Master Park taught taekwondo and kuk sool, and then our one-step sparring, all that was hapkido.

JL: You've had a diverse martial arts upbringing, I guess we can say.

SA: Yeah. Yeah.

JL: You weren't just having stuff crammed down your throat in the stunt team two weeks ahead of shooting. You've got some legit martial arts background.

SA: Yeah, absolutely. It's unfortunate, sometimes I want to stick to ... There are certain movements that are similar. Like I said, we're doing wushu style which is a little different. The movement's a little different, because I'm tall and lanky, so the movements are different a little bit, but you have to empty your vessel and you have to learn. When you're learning these things, it's kind of cool because I know different stuff now, over here and over there, and I dig it.

As you know, it can be a little mind-consuming to learn different movements on the fly. We do not get a chance to rehearse a day before, or two days before, or we have a week of rehearsals. We don't do that. What you read in the script, you're not going to do. The movements that you read, you're not going to do. You're going to show up, and Master Dee Dee or Andy Chang, whoever's choreographing the fight, will say, "Do this, do this, do this," especially Master Dee Dee, and you rehearse it, and everybody rehearses it, you rehearse that particular movement along with your fight double, and you come back in about 15 minutes, and you're shooting. If they shoot a big wide master shot, when the camera's off, they might use your fight double. As they come in on a medium shot or get tighter, it's all you, all you. You have to know your movement.

Again, that takes me back to ... I reiterate that it takes me back to the fact that you have a crew that is out there braving the elements and going through exactly what you're going through, so you can't be a little girl about it. Even the women on our show won't be a little girl about it. You just toughen up and you do what you've got to do, because everybody's pulling their weight, and you have a bunch of people out there who aren't moving and doing what you're doing to stay warm, and they're doing their job, so you just want to go and do your work, and I appreciate that. It makes you want to do great, want to do better, want to do more.

It's just like anything else, when you're in an acting class and you watch somebody go up before you that's really good, and you go, "Man, I can't wait to get up there because I want to shine. I want to do my work." Same thing with us. You see people doing their stuff, and you go, "Man, I want to do



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that, too. I'm going to do my work. I'm going to get my movement right. I'm going to do this," and it's quite gratifying in a way. Not in a way, but it is gratifying.

JL: As you're talking about, I guess, the challenge of moving from a taekwondo background into implementing wushu on the show, I had this thought, this wonder, because your character has one hand, and that extra hand is a prosthetic and it's used in some pretty creative ways within the show. Has that been a challenge?

SA: Yeah, it was a big challenge. It was quite funny, because I have to say this story all the time. I knew that I was going to get the prosthetic. I'm thinking, okay, you know, 300 years into the future, I'm pretty sure they're going to hook me up and give me something that articulates or rotates around, and I won't have to worry about it. I can use my right hand to hold my weapon, my sword. That whole summer, I am practicing and working with people, doing all this stuff with both hands, with my right hand [00:32:16] and stuff like that.

I'm downstairs in my carport. It's maybe 6:30, 7:30, something like that, because it was hot that day, so I waited until when it cooled off so I can go downstairs and work on some movement. I get this text ... Oh, not a text. I got an email from Daniel. I look at the email, and Daniel went, "Hey man, I'll see you in two weeks, and hope everything is great, and we're looking forward to everything, and it's going to be fun. Oh yeah, by the way, you are practicing with your left hand only, right?" I said, "Hell yeah, Daniel! I'm right here, man. Actually, I'm downstairs doing my left hand right now," and I was sweating bullets because I knew what was going to happen. I knew my balance was going to be off.

For two weeks, I'm working and trying to implement everything that I was learning on my right side to my left. By the time we finished fight camp, I was ... When we went into that fight scene, Emily and I, I was okay with it, but I got better and better. I was trying to figure out ... [Ruda 00:33:38], myself, Daniel, we were all trying to figure out what to do with that hand, because it's the other hand that you have to worry about, the loose hand.

I think of it as a shield, because I can use the gauntlet to block, this and that, then I can shift my weight certain ways to make sure my balance is great. That helps me, and it works out. Even with Cali, my fight double, I was teasing him one day. I was like, "Yeah, welcome to my pain, sucka." It was both of us, we were kind of off a little bit, but it got better. Plus, that sword is long and awkward. That broadsword is a two-handed sword, but I'm doing it with the left hand so it just works out. Again, I don't wanna look like ... I used to tell everybody in fight camp, I don't want to look like a goof. Don't want to look like a goof, alright?

By the time we got to the Moon Tower, we all had worked pretty hard to get myself ready. We started rehearsing certain movements because Master Dee Dee was going to come in late, couple weeks late. When we started the show, started shooting that particular sequence, we shot a day, and



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it took like nine days, ten days to do that scene. We shot a day, came back, and we shot a day on fight unit, then we shot a day on drama unit, because of the dialogue, we were shooting the dialogue and they had to match everything.

Then the third day, we were getting ready to do some stuff and Master Dee Dee was there, and a lot of the movement changed. Everything that we'd learned a week ago was out the window. It was like, "No." I'm like, "Yeah, told you." Everybody has to empty their cup and start all over again, suckers, and it was good. It was cool, because we were all happy to have him back. We were like, "When's he coming back?" When he got back, it just amped up everything, and again, I was satisfied with what I was doing what my left, and it's got better and better and better.

It was really cool, and especially when we got to the fight with myself and Aramis, because it was just ... I wasn't using a weapon. Now I can move and do what I want to do, I can use the hand, use the arm, use the gauntlet for blocking. It was cool. I love that fight scene. I really love that fight sequence with the Ally. Those guys, they bring it. They are no joke. They bring it. Those two will bring it. They will swing at you, trust me.

JL: I believe it.

SA: You should come over one day and let them swing a sword at you.

JL: I would love to, just tell me where and when. I'll be there. That would be awesome.

SA: I hear you. That is another factor. With my training, I've never taken anything ... any martial arts with swords or anything like that. Escrima sticks? Yeah. Knife fighting? Yeah, but with the sword? Never, so this is new to me, and I think I'm doing okay. I'm alright. I can hang there a little bit.

JL: I think you're doing little bit more than okay.

SA: Thank you, sir.

JL: That first fight scene, really where we're exposed to your character, the top of the tower with you and Emily, that was the first moment in the entire series that I said, "Yes, they've figured it all out."

SA: Yeah.

JL: To me, as a martial arts fan, as a martial artist, all the pieces are there now. *Crouching Tiger* is one of my favorite movies.



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SA: Right. Me, too.

JL: There was just so much of it ... I don't know if it was intentional, but it felt like a bit of an homage in that scene.

SA: It was. I think what they're trying to do is throw a little bit of everything that those guys worked on already, before, and that we want to see. I want to see it, regardless if I'm doing it or not. I think one of my favorite fight scenes is between Castor and Gaius, and the reason why I say that is because Dean had never taken martial arts in his life, but the key component to that, because I had a conversation with him about it, the key component to that is he's a dancer, so he figured it out, just like that. Just a dance move. I'm dancing with my partner. That's what he did, and that's the same thing Daniel said to me when we shot the Moon and Sunny. That's one of my favorite fights. I had ran into Daniel a couple of months ... when we had the season two premiere at Al's house and Daniel said that's his favorite fight scene since he's been doing the show. I think this still stands, because Moon is more ... because of that broadsword, he's more of a slash, more of a samurai style. Kind of cool. I really dig that. Now, with the one hand, his style had to change. That was the whole thing. I was preparing to go back and do that when they changed the dichotomy on me, and I had to relearn everything, which is cool.

JL: Do you enjoy that challenge?

SA: I do. I have to be challenged as an actor, period. I really do. If you're not being challenged, you're not growing, seriously. It's not about the failure. The success comes with all of the failure.

JL: Have you always been like that?

SA: Yeah, you know as a martial artist, you've seen people not pass their test because they couldn't break something, or they had to clean up their forms or their poomsaes, you know what I mean? They have to do something after class down the week in order to do this, and do that, in order to get their higher rank. That's what it is, yes. Yeah, truly.

Yesterday, I had a pretty, pretty busy day, and since I'm back now, agents and managers want to get you, just make sure that you are working. Had a couple of meetings yesterday, and then I get this phone call ... not a phone call, email, "Hey, could you put yourself on tape for this?" It was at the end of the day, I'm tired from driving in the LA traffic, by the way, so I'm like, "Cool. I'll go by my friend's house, who's a director, and we'll knock this out."

I always pride myself by knowing the dialogue. I have to know my dialogue. It's just my process. it was eight pages of dialogue, and there was some serious dialogue in there. Sometimes you just ... I don't do it, but I always do it free hand. I never had any size of paper in my hand, but it was a scene where these guys were having this conversation. Sat down, knew everything except for I needed to



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know when I had to jump in and cut this conversation off. That's the only time I look down at the paper, and came back... and it was stressful, because they needed to ... right now, needed it right now. "Okay, cool, I'll take the challenge. I'll take it." I'm back in LA, and I'll take the challenge. That keeps you sharp, that keeps you honest, that makes you work on your craft, and it makes you work on yourself.

Yeah, if I'm not being challenged, then I'm bored. I don't like the stress, because as martial artists, we learn how to breathe and take the stress and let everything flow. That's cool, but at the end of the day, as an artist, as a martial artist, I have to be challenged. I really do. If it's a big crazy book or something that I'm probably not going to comprehend, bump it. I'm going to read it. I don't know anything about molecular science or stardust, but I'm going to read this book. Bump it. I might learn something, you know what I mean?

JL: I do, yeah. One my favorite questions I ask our guests is around the challenges that we all go through in life. Martial artists have a different skill set a different toolbox to pull from when we deal with obstacles in life. Could you tell us about a time in your life when stuff went off the rails, and how were you able to pull it back with stuff you learned in martial arts?

SA: I read a book called *The Tao of Martial Arts* a couple of years ago. I gave that book to a friend of mine who's in the ... she's in the finance business. The author of the book, it escapes me right now was talking about ... I mean, there's always challenges. There are things that you have to deal with, and he was talking about how he was in Switzerland, or Reykjavik, Iceland, or something like that, and he had a health condition that really scared him. He almost died. What he did was he used this breathing technique to calm his body down and slow his heart rate down, and his wife was able to get him to the hospital and save his life. It's those things.

I injured myself a couple of months ago pretty bad, and I was in pain. I over trained too much and just pulled my oblique muscle from my lower back around, and I was in Rome. I had a couple of days off so I went to Rome, and I just woke up in excruciating pain. I'm like, "Dude, don't tell me I'm going to have to go to the hospital in Rome, dude. Stop. Are you kidding me? Really?" "Actor Sherman Augustus gets rushed to the hospital in Rome, on break from *Into the Badlands*, and he's hospitalized." Oh, I could hear it now, my mom, "What the hell were you thinking, working out that hard before you got on the plane? Scooby Doo, and all that stuff." I knew I was just going to hear it.

I'm thinking that, and I just thought about that book. I just controlled my breathing, and the pain subsided. I didn't take any medicine or anything, any pain pills or nothing, because I didn't want to do it. I woke up the next morning, it was maybe two hours of just, "I can't believe this! Oh, I'm in pain. Aaahh!" Right? I just said, "Work on your breathing, dude," and just picture, as you exhale, just picture your breath that's leaving as really icy and cold and just work on that, and it worked. I got up the next morning, and actually, I went downstairs in the gym and worked out, and then went sightseeing, and ate some great food.



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I use that all the time. Anytime I really get upset, or challenges coming along, I remember that book, I remember about breathing. There's all sorts of quotes that Bruce Lee ... that's out there, that you can find, that he said, and recommend. That's what I worked on. I use that all the time, especially ... I have this mantra here that I'm not going to let Hollywood give me a heart attack, just the hustle and bustle and the whole thing. You just revert back to your training, what you learned. You put on some nice music, you sit on the floor, you meditate, and you go to another place, and then you continue with your day.

Martial arts did that for me. It really centered me, especially being an ex-athlete. I was a defensive back, so it was all about pound-and-ground, and hitting people at 20 miles an hour plus, knocking the soup out of somebody, and knocking the soup out of yourself. That used to ... It's not relaxing, but at least you're doing something, you're thinking, you're engaged, and that's what martial arts does to me. It keeps me engaged. It keeps me balanced, especially when you're doing things like working on your balance and your breathing.

I tell you, I don't know if you spoke with anybody else from the show, but there's this gentlemen that Daniel Wu brought on named Matt Lucas who basically knows every form of martial arts there is. His dad used to teach Navy SEALs, and he does, too. He teaches Navy SEALs, and sometimes he teaches these classes just to kill. There's not a way that Matt does not know how to really jack you up, but he is such a gentleman, such a sweet soul, and what I'm talking about is, everything that I said, that's him. He's great musician, great guitarist, vocalist, and the sweetest guy in the world. Every time we're around him, you feel a calm and at ease. I would ask him all the time, "How do you do it?" He just would, "Well, for one thing, man, I'm in the business of service. I like to teach what I know," and he does. He's got a very popular studio in the Bay Area. He actually got Daniel ready for the first season, because Daniel did not want to play Sunny. They saw over 200 actors, because he felt his body was so beat up, but Matt knows everything. Matt is crazy. Matt worked on him, work on his body, and got Daniel in great shape, and a lot of his injuries were corrected, and there we are. We have Daniel Wu as Sunny.

Like I said, they saw over 200 actors, so again, it is applying our science and martial arts to our daily life. There's not a day that goes by that I'm doing something that I have to apply, technique, mental, physical, yes. I'm going to stretch. I'm going to do all those things I do every day, but the mental aspect of this business, you have to add that other business, and it helps it so much. It just makes everything so much better for you. If it wasn't for martial arts, I don't know. We probably wouldn't be having this conversation. I'd probably be running down the street right now going, "Hey, I'm a butterfly! Yeah! How are you, guys? Hey, guys! What's going on? Yeah! Look, I'm a butterfly!"

JL: I love it.

SA: Seriously, because this business will make you do that. This business will make you go nuts, seriously.



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JL: Well, not to put too fine a point on it, but unfortunately the percentage of people who take their life out of Hollywood is quite a bit above the overall average.

SA: It is, and I encourage all my friends, all the time, or any actor, to find themselves a good martial arts class. Don't go in it thinking like you're going to come out and you're going to start whopping everybody's butt. Go in there, you'll learn something about yourself. When you know how to hold your balance for a sidekick, or roundhouse, even a front kick, even on a simple front kick, you're going to have to rotate that supporting foot to do this, to do that. Once they start learning that, they come back, "Yo, you're right," and it changes your body, and it's a great form of cross-training. It is.

It's a great form of cross-training. It's just about mind, body, and spirit, and you focus yourself, and it's all about the focus. Just one working on themselves, and being true to themselves, and that's why I love martial arts, because being in this business, you have to be true to yourself. You have to stick to your guns. You have to. I can say that there's not been a project ... I've been fortunate, thank God, in my career to do really good stuff and to work with really good people, because I do have my box of deplorables. There's certain things that I won't do.

What helps me with those decisions is the simple fact of martial arts, and I love it. It's been a game changer for me, and a lifesaver, from going off the deep end and mad because I didn't get this job, or upset because that person got the job, or whatever the case may be. For instance, I was watching something yesterday, a popular film, and there's a rapper in it, and nice guy - not going to name any names - nice guy, but when it came to his fight scenes, I'm like, "Oh, boy." Okay, I know why he got the gig. It's because they thought he was going to put butts in movie theater seats. I get it. It's the business, but it wasn't about me or anything else, or anything like that. It's just the fact when you watch something ... I mean, how did you feel about the first season of *Iron Fist*?

JL: I was a bit of a contrarian on that, everybody coming out and trashing it. My ... No, the fight scenes weren't great. I think everyone agreed with that.

SA: Okay, that's all, that's it.

JL: Okay.

SA: That's it. I'm rooting ... I was rooting for the show, but I saw what I saw, and then I heard that the actor, he was like, "I'm here. I'm doing this. I don't really need to train," and I'm like, "Okay, that's his prerogative." If he doesn't want to apply it ... You're not going to get a blackbelt before you start shooting, but it might have been good, it might have been good to go there, as an actor. It might've been good to go there. Look at Keanu Reeves. Boom. That's all I have to say. Trains, trains, trains, trains. Why? "Because I'm going to apply this to my character." Not only that. You know what? It's going to help me focus, because that's what it's about. That is what it's about.



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JL: There's no downside.

SA: No. There is no downside to it. You're absolutely right.

JL: You asked the question ... Actually, both Daniel and Emily came on the show just ahead of season two. We were lucky enough to have them on, and Daniel told that story that you mentioned, about him not wanting to be the star, and very reluctantly stepping into that role. It was pretty interesting to hear that from him, because he was aware of not just the role that he wanted to have on the show, but his age, his body, and saying, "You know, guys, what does this show look like 10 years from now? What do I look like physically 10 years from now?"

SA: Yes. Well, that's okay. Look, I'm 138 years old, okay? When I graduated from college, it was me, Moses and ... No, Moses graduated the year before. It was me and Jesus that graduated together. You know what I mean? Way back in the day, yeah, I remember when he was building the ark. He was like, "Yo man, help me." I'm like, "Aaahh ... got to go to football practice."

JL: You talk about that that incident in Rome where things weren't working so hot.

SA: Yes.

JL: How do you keep yourself in shape for all those ... From what I understand, from what we heard from Daniel in episode 170, having the two teams, having the fight team and the drama team shooting, it's a lot. It's a lot of physical activity all at once, was my understanding.

SA: Yes.

JL: How do you recover? How do you know that you're going to be able to get up the next day and hit it hard again?

SA: Like Keanu Reeves said when he was doing the first Matrix, ice is your friend, so is a lot of deep heating rubs and stretching. I think one of main things is diet. It's not that I don't ... I just watch what I eat, but I eat. I'm not going, "I can't have that because I've got to watch my figure." It's not that, it's just certain foods ... You know how it is. Certain foods are bad for your joints. Of course, being an ex-football player, I've broke almost every toe and every finger. My right wrist was severely broken in college, which is a trip because every now and then I will get a little tingle in there, especially if I'm in a fight scene or something. Of course, the knees, right knee in particular had two arthros on it, and they left me just a little cartilage, just enough to maybe put my shoe on. With those things, you just find what works.

I always like to push myself. I do a lot of walking. I do a lot, a lot of walking, a lot of hiking, and jump rope, and I just watch what I eat. I think Daniel did the same thing this season. I kind of let



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the weights go. The only thing I do with the weights is very light stuff, and I love doing pull ups, push-ups, and dips. It's about your body, being able to move your body. You know this as a martial artist, being able to pull your own body weight, because that's what we're doing on the show. We have to pull our own body weight. We have to do these things. It helps, especially when you're doing wire work, which is really cool. I think just watching certain foods that I eat that, again, affect your joints. There's a lot of things that can swell your joints and all that kind of stuff, just make you feel kind of crappy, so that's one key component that I do.

JL: What are your goals? You talked about looking at directing, I think I heard you say producing as well.

SA: Yeah.

JL: If we look at it from the lens of martial arts ... I'm not saying just your martial arts goals, but what does your life as a martial artist look like as you look out into the future?

SA: I'm a war history buff. There a couple of things ... There's the story about the 66th tank regiment that was comprised of African American gentlemen who were doctors, just like the Tuskegee Airmen. In World War II, they were under Patton's command. They were instrumental in getting the 101st Airborne out of the pursuit that they were in, in the Ardennes Forest in the Battle of the Bulge. They did not lose a tank. It takes a certain mindset, because of the whole racial thing that was going on, and stuff that Patton was saying at the time, and they did not lose a tank. It's the same thing with martial arts. You have to put yourself in a mindset that you're going to learn this movement. You're going learn how to do a cut, all certain things. You're going to get that spinning wheel kick a certain way, that whole thing. That's one of my goals. I would like to see that story told.

I apply all these things. Everything I want to do equals martial arts for me. That's the goal. You have to go get that warrior spirit again, and tell yourself you're not going to take no for an answer. You're going to approach everything very calm and very centered. You're going to be able to pitch this idea to a room full of people, very calm and very centered, and they're going to see every ... You read things about people seeing the light within you. Well, people can look at you and go, "He's an athlete, football player, he's this, he's that," regardless of how you look, or whatever. I try to walk into every room and let everyone know that it is authentic. The skill that I have is authentic. It's not like I'll come in here and just start side kicking holes in your wall if you don't see my point of view. It's not that, but it keeps you centered. It helps you ... It helps me ...

Again, in everything I do there's not a day goes by that I don't remember something in my training, and that works for everything. I equate that to certain things that I want to do. It's always about that challenge. Growing up, there was two things. I knew I was going to be a football player. I didn't know how far I was going to go. I knew I was always going to be an actor. I knew these things, so I had to apply those things. I knew I was going to get a black belt in a form of martial arts. It takes a



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certain mindset, and I was not going to take no for an answer, and that's what martial arts does, too. When I lock down on something, I'm like that little terrier. I'm not going to let go until I achieve my goal.

There's a bunch of goals I want to do. There's certain projects I want to see to fruition, and I like to see other people's stories. It doesn't just matter about African America. If there's something about a Martian, I want to see it made if it's a good story. Again, all that ... go back to my training, go back to my training. There's not a day that goes by that I'm not thinking about my training, and I'm not applying that into something, all the time. It's just that mindset, and I'm pretty sure you do the same thing.

JL: I do. I think we all do whether we realize it or not.

SA: Yeah.

JL: I think martial arts kind of weaves its way into your DNA in a sense, so it's hard to escape it.

SA: It does. When I first started, Master Jin asked me, "So, do you think about martial arts every day?" He goes, "Every day, every day. You always remember your training." You slip and fall, you're going to use your fall technique. I've done it. I remember pulling into the dojang. I was in the parking lot and I walked in, and Master Park was on the ladder, and the ladder slipped out from under him and he fell, and he fell perfectly. Bah! Popped right up. I'm like, "Oh!" He goes, "See? I'm telling you, Sherman, always remember your training." Boom. There it is.

JL: I love it. It's been a lot of fun today. We always ask our guest to send us out with some parting words of wisdom. What would you say everybody listening?

SA: Oh, man. Be true to yourself, and let no one define who you are. Whatever you want to, if you can dream it, you can achieve it. That little thing right there, it means a lot. It's vitally important to believe and trust in yourself, in no matter what you want to do, and no matter what age you are, and no matter what condition that you're in. You can achieve anything you want to do, and don't take no for an answer. Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter. Trust in yourself, and find that certain spirit within you to drive you. It's okay if it takes X amount of months or X amount of years. Just set your goal and achieve it, and let no one or nothing hinder you from being the person that you see in your Embed it into the zeitgeist of your mind. "This is what I'm going to do, and I'm going to do it." Period, and that's it. That's it.

JL: Whenever I have the opportunity to talk to actors or musicians, people who are paid for a role to present themselves in a certain way, I always wonder how much of what I'm getting from them is authentic. Well, I can tell you from the brief time that I spent talking to Mr. Augustus on the show, but more so the time after we closed the episode, what you heard is who he is. This is every bit as



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authentic as I could imagine having a conversation with anyone, be they someone who is on television or not, and I want to thank him for that openness. Thanks for coming on the show, Mr. Augustus. I had a ton of fun. You're welcome back anytime.

Of course, you can find the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We've got some photos and some other great stuff over there, links to other episodes. You can find the conversations I had with Coach Daniel Wu and Miss Emily Beecham from their episodes prior to season two of *Into the Badlands*. If you enjoyed this episode, hopefully you'll not only check out other episodes, but share it with your friends. Help us grow, help us gain more reach, and we can get more people on to the show. You can email me directly: jeremy@whistlekick.com. You can find us on social media. We are @whistlekick. All of our products, all of our other projects, are available at whistlekick.com, and that's all I got for today. Thanks for joining me. Until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.