

Martial Arts
MOVIES

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Arnold
Schwarzenegger
in **Conan
the Barbarian**

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Conan the Barbarian: The Heroic Spirit and the Sword

By Daniel M. Furuya

"The film *Conan the Barbarian* is about the essence of the blade. To become a sword, the steel is pounded, forged, and tortured by fire. This is how the movie begins. Man must live this way to understand the riddle of steel. The answer to the riddle is man himself," says John Milius, the director and scriptwriter of this cinematic epic.

Although *Conan* falls within the American sword-and-sorcery genre, Milius is attempting to take the film beyond daring adventures and reckless battles. He wants nothing less than to express the essence of heroism, which is also the essence of martial arts. In *Conan*, the forging of the sword becomes a metaphor for the forging of a hero; the film traces this process in Conan, as he overcomes repeated challenges and obstacles.

Milius is famous, or rather infamous, for the high level of violence in his films (which he dubs "realism"). His films, which center around offbeat heroes and social outcasts, include *Dillinger*, *The Wind and The Lion*, and *Big Wednesday*. Milius has also scripted Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* and *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, starring Paul Newman. However, Milius is not simply involved with hacking out monuments to death and mass slaughter, but is deeply concerned with expressing his personal view of reality through the medium of film. To Milius' mind, violence or the depiction of violence is what holds us to reality. It is through violence that we touch our own mortality.

I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all.

Nietzsche

Milius' philosophy, expressed in *Conan*, is a warrior's philosophy, one that has been influenced by both the *Hagakure*—the samurai's code of *bushido* (the "way of the warrior")—and by Nietzsche's concept of the *Urbemensch* (superman). "The essence of the film lies in the *Hagakure*," Milius explains. Having studied judo and kendo for many years, Milius thinks of himself as a "reincarnated samurai," and claims Akira Kurosawa as his mentor and primary

Conan the Barbarian

John Milius, director. John Milius and Oliver Stone, screenplay. Robert E. Howard, original story. Dino de Laurentiis and Edward R. Pressman, producers. Duke Callaghan, cinematography. Ron Cobb, production designer. Nick Alder, special effects supervisor. Terry Leonard, second unit director/stunt coordinator. Kiyoshi Yamazaki, swordfight advisor. Cast includes Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sandahl Bergman, James Earl Jones, Gerry Lopez, Max Von Sydow, Valerie Quennessen, Ben Davidson, Mako, Franco Columbu, William Smith. A Universal Studios release, 1982.

inspiration. "Bushido hones the character, and shows the way to inner strength. In the film, we see how Conan develops himself and overcomes himself. That is how Conan relates to the samurai."

That is also how Conan relates to the *Urbemensch*, the man whose "will to power" becomes the unceasing will to overcome his own limitations. Milius continues, "Nietzsche says that man must reach a certain freedom and cannot be confined. It is not his purpose to pursue a nameless good, but to seek power. In *Conan*, Arnold Schwarzenegger is my *Urbemensch*. He embodies the concept of creating or forging oneself by confronting resistance."

Conan the Barbarian is based on a series of over two dozen novels written by Robert E. Howard. To find a theme which would touch the highlights of this long epic, Milius read every novel and wrote four drafts of his screenplay before he was finally satisfied with its potential. (In this he follows in the tradition of Kurosawa, who also writes his own screenplays.) In Milius' hands, *Conan* becomes the chronicles of a hero overcoming all obstacles and hardships to seek his quest; it tells of magic laced with dark evil and unspeakable horrors; it envisions a time long past in man's unrecorded history, before the coming of religion and morals; and it recalls an age when men walked the earth as giants and were driven by their instincts to fight evil and defy the gods.

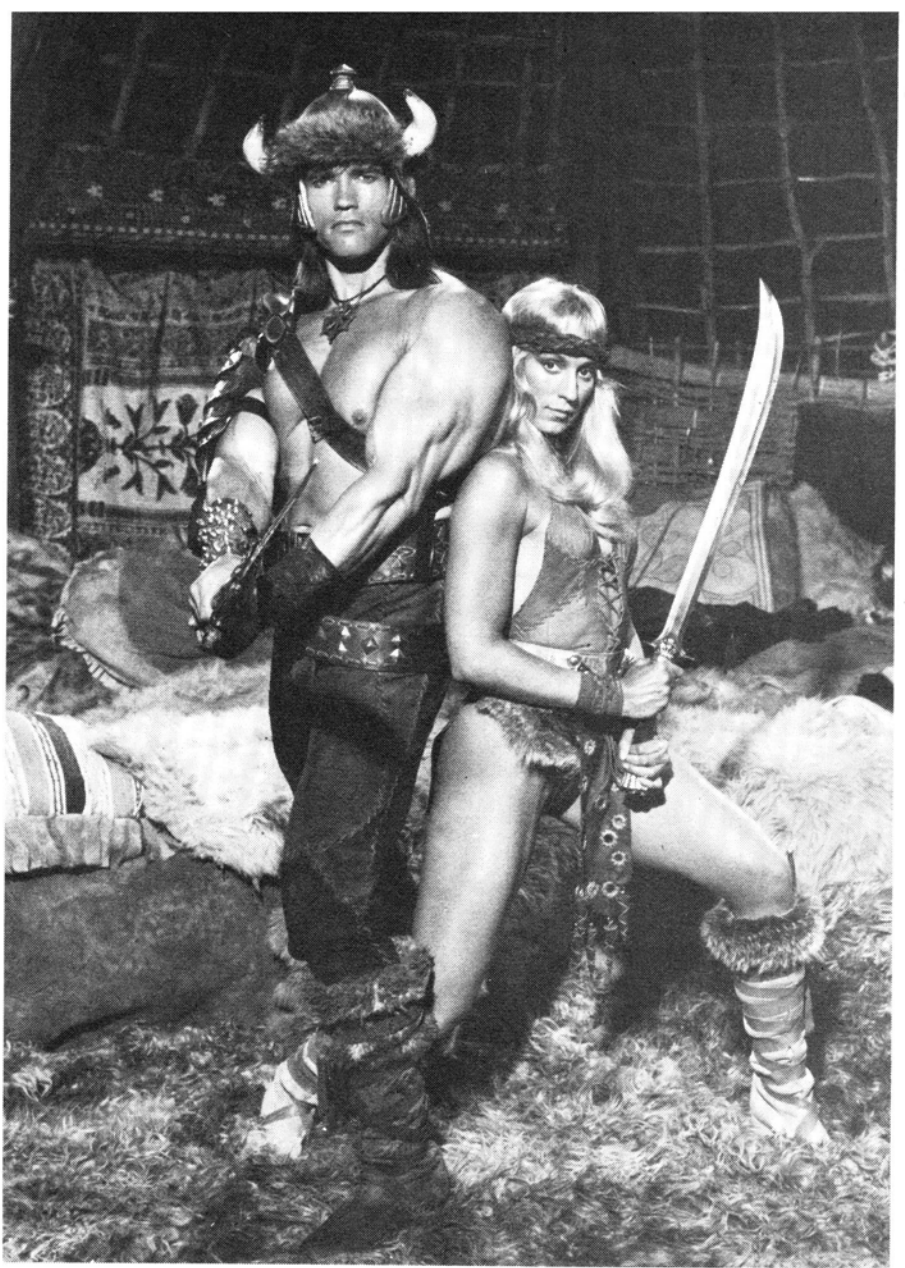
The movie begins when Conan's father is forging a mighty sword which will be a



Conan

legacy for his son. As the film develops, Milius shows how Conan acquires his great strength and skill as a fighter. He is challenged with the “riddle of steel” and the quest for revenge. He has an ally in Subotai (Gerry Lopez) and a love interest in Valeria (Sandahl Bergman). Thulsa Doom (James Earl Jones) is the arch-villain, whose enmity is essential in forging Conan’s heroic character. Rexor (Ben Davidson) is Conan’s nemesis. And the Old Wizard (Mako), representing wisdom, narrates the story.

To express his heroic concepts, Milius chose two men who embodied the samurai (and Nietzschean) code of self-discipline in their own lives. For the part of Conan, Milius selected Arnold Schwarzenegger, a man whose triumph in bodybuilding was accomplished only through the intense rigor of weight training. To teach Schwarzenegger the art of swordplay—and the soul of the swordsman—Milius enlisted the aid of Kiyoshi Yamazaki, an expert martial artist and a modern-day samurai.



(Clockwise, from above) Director John Milius (front) positions Schwarzenegger (left) and a stuntman/warrior for one of the major battle sequences; Sandahl Bergman, a dancer who has appeared on television variety shows and Broadway plays, appears as Conan’s lover, Valeria; Mako, well known to martial arts movie fans for his appearances in *An Eye for An Eye* and *The Big Brawl*, is the wise Wizard of the Mounds; Gerry Lopez, a champion surfer who played himself in Milius’ surfing film, *Big Wednesday*, appears as Subotai, the Mongol-like warrior who fights loyally at Conan’s side.

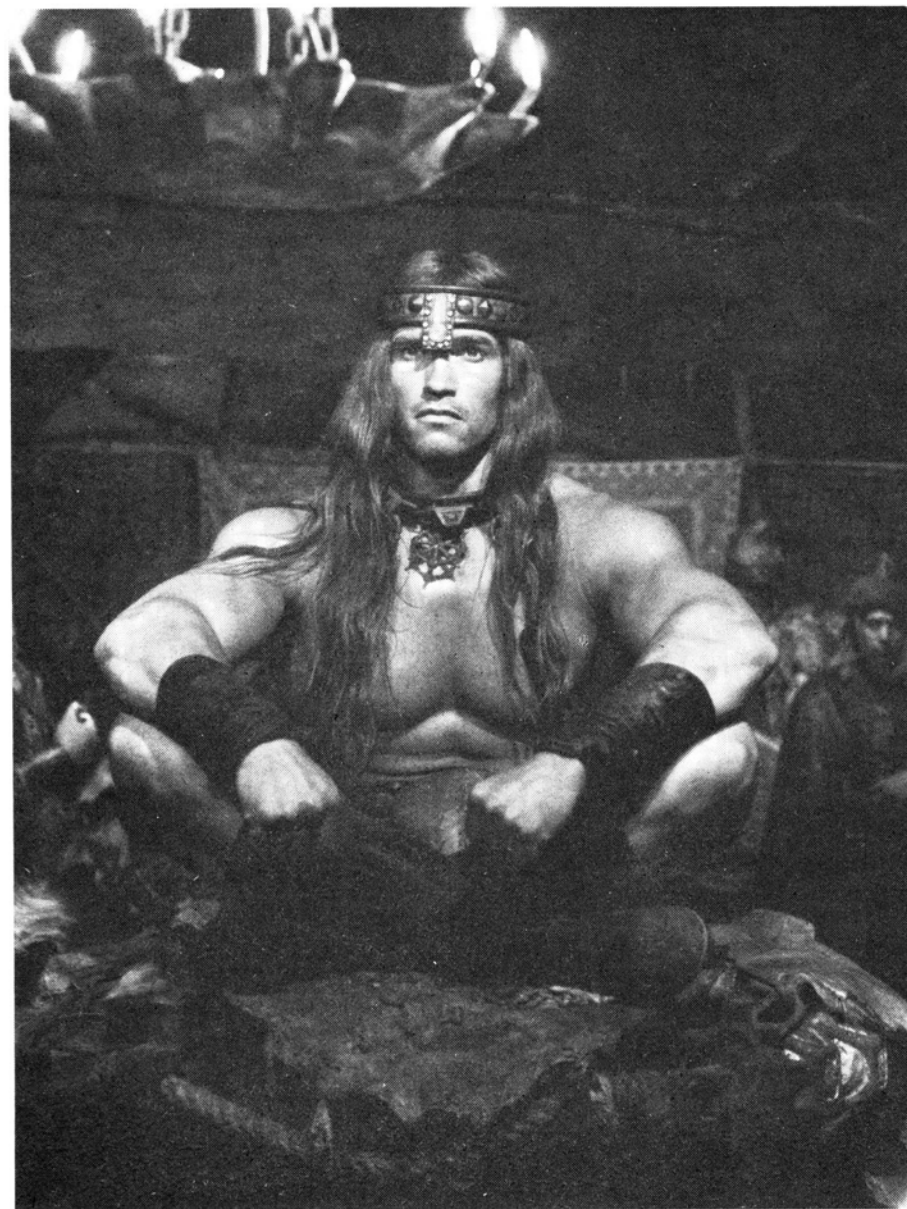
(Opposite) After years spent chained to the Wheel of Pain, Conan is sold as a pit fighter. Learning martial skills becomes a matter of survival in the gladiatorial arena.



Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan: Two Heroes

Conan is the classic hero of the fantasy/science fiction genre: a hulking mass of brawn and muscle wielding his sword with brutal fury and savagery in every exploit. With no use for complicated intrigue or intelligence, Conan relies solely on a well-honed instinct for survival and the razor edge of tempered steel. Monsters, demons, and gods cower in his presence. Those who stand in his way are hacked to bits and slaughtered in a torrent of muscle and steel. Living in an age before the advent of religion and ethics, his virtue lies in the purity of his emotions and the simplicity of his drives. He is uncomplicated. He only wants food, women, and booty... in that order. He lives for nothing else and overcomes all obstacles to get them. There are no ideals or conventions here. His adventures are what modern man only dreams of or aspires to. That is what makes him a hero. Conan rises above all hardships and grows stronger by his ordeals. Whereas modern man sinks into muddy despair in the face of hardship, Conan, the hero, always rises above himself.

This ideal of barbaric heroism may have existed in an age long past; certainly no examples walk the earth today. However, in this fallen age of modern man, Arnold Schwarzenegger may be the closest to an embodiment of Conan's larger-than-life virtues. Schwarzenegger began weight training when he was fifteen years old; when he retired thirteen years later in 1975, he was one of the most honored—and certainly the most widely known—champion bodybuilders in the world, winning the Mr. Universe title five times and the Mr. Olympia title seven times. In 1977, Schwarzenegger was approached by Edward Pressman to star in *Conan*. In the following interview, Schwarzenegger discusses his affinity for the character of Conan, and his understanding of the film's philosophy.



For believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is—to live dangerously.

Nietzsche

MAM: What was your first reaction to the role of Conan?

Schwarzenegger: I liked the role of Conan from the beginning: I want to be bigger than life like a hero. I want to be something children can look up to. Conan reminded me of the heroes I had often heard about as a child in my home country, Austria. Conan is like Sigurd and Bodo (heroes of the *Nibelungenlied*). These heroes had no morals or religion. They just killed. Their needs were simple too. It was a particular kind of attitude they cultivated that appealed to me.

MAM: How did you go about preparing for the role?

Schwarzenegger: According to the novels, Conan had enormous athletic ability as well as skill in swordsmanship and horse riding. I had the build and strength, but I still had to trim down a little by altering my weight training program with gymnastics and slimnastics. Besides that, I took voice and speech lessons in addition to polishing my acting skills. I studied every day for hours.

MAM: Tell us about your training with weaponry.

Schwarzenegger: The weapons were especially designed for the movie, and are nothing like you have ever seen before. They do resemble the broadsword, but they have a special edge guard near the hilt on the blade so that it can be used like a Japanese samurai sword.

Milius hired an expert in the broadsword to teach me the basics. I was then introduced to Kiyoshi Yamazaki, a noted martial arts expert. Milius demanded that I train at least one year with the sword and that, coupled with my voice, speech, and acting lessons, averaged out to four to five hours every single day.

Yamazaki has a natural skill, and really understood our needs. The fighting had to be wild and primitive, yet have some style. Yamazaki kept screaming at me, 'Keep your chest out and look proud!'

MAM: Did you find any unusual differences between your own style of training and martial arts training?

Schwarzenegger: It is difficult to learn the way of the sword. The brain must be trained. That is important. In weights, we use a full, continuous motion. The samurai sword is all



Schwarzenegger trained with Yamazaki for two hours a day, three days a week, beginning a year before shooting on *Conan* commenced. Below, Conan's specially-made Atlantean sword sports a death's head pommel, twin gargoyles, and is engraved with the motto, "Suffer no guilt yee who wield this in the name of Crom."

"stop motion." All the movements and techniques stop on the button. That is the big difference. I had to retrain myself to make the muscles stop the action. That, in itself, took one year.

Footwork is also important in learning how to use the sword. That, too, must become second nature. In practicing, you learn how to use the length of the sword and distancing between yourself and your opponent. That all involved muscle control.

MAM: What similarities did you find?

Schwarzenegger: Repetition is important. That is the main similarity between weights and the martial arts. Everything must become second nature. Milius watched every lesson on video tape. He told me that if 100,000 times makes you good, do it 100,000 more times and become better. I loved the *suburi* training (making repeated cuts with the sword). Yamazaki really trained me hard and I loved that. He's a great teacher.

MAM: Can you tell us a little about yourself, and how you related to the role of Conan?

Schwarzenegger: When I was young I too, like Conan, had the quest for power. I wanted to become a hero and do things that no one else could do. I chose sports but it was difficult to find out which sport suited me best. I first went into soccer, but when I took up weight lifting, I noticed how quickly my body responded to the training. I knew this was my sport. The enormous joy that I got through weight training

gave me the drive to become a world champion.

In the drive to become a champion, there are a lot of sacrifices that have to be made. Here, there are a lot of parallels between Conan and myself. Modern man has learned courtesy now. We have morals and the Ten Commandments. But there were no rules in Conan's time. And there can be no rules when you want to become a champion. In our civilized world, we create many obstacles. But to accomplish anything, we have to break through those obstacles or those obstacles will break us. When I was eighteen years old, I had to bench press 400 pounds. In order to do it, I had to wipe out everything from my mind. I had to overcome all obstacles. This is what it means to become a hero like Conan.

In 1975, I quit and retired from competition. But there always has to be a goal. There always has to be something out there in front of you that you strive for. But when you are there, you always have a feeling of sadness. You get there, and now what? That is what you ask yourself.

It is just like Conan when he finally kills Thulsa Doom, his enemy, at the end of the movie. Conan is sad. Now what? I wanted to start something new, so I got into films. In the film world, I am not the greatest anymore. I started at the bottom again. It becomes a new challenge, and that is what keeps me going.

MAM: How are you going to accomplish this?

Schwarzenegger: I made *Stay Hungry* and *Pumping Iron* and I played a villain in *The Streets of San Francisco*. I trimmed down. I

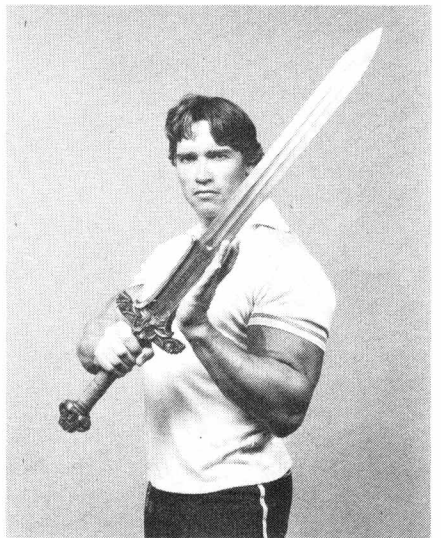
took voice, speech, and acting lessons. Now I am on my way again. I have the title billing in *Conan the Barbarian*, and I think my new career is gaining momentum.

The higher up you go, the more challenges you can undertake. This is what kept Conan going until he killed Thulsa Doom. When you reach the top, there are still new horizons to conquer. It is important for a hero to see this and strive for them. This is the difference between a hero and a normal person. The hero not only accomplishes his goals, but he sees them. Heroes, after all, must have *vision* as their primary virtue. As you take on more things, it becomes fun. There is adventure. When you start something new, there is always danger and risk.

I know this will be a good film. The action is important, but I want to emphasize the quality of my own acting, which is important to me. Someone mentioned that if there was no Arnold, Conan would have to be built from scratch.

The theme of the movie is also very important. That is where the movie and my life share the same common denominator. As Milius often said, the theme of *Conan* is confronting resistance. You know, when everyone was utterly exhausted during the last stages of the film, I was still full of energy. Sometimes it was really difficult. The food was late. It was too cold and we were half-naked in our costumes. Sometimes we wore body paint which we couldn't wash off between takes. It got real uncomfortable at times. But I never complained. Milius never complained.

Milius explained to me that the character of Conan is like a muscle. The muscle can only grow and develop through resistance. 'This,' he said, 'is the essence of the film.' To me, this represents the hard way of life. It is the life that challenges. That is what is important to me. Sometimes, life can get too comfortable and that is always a danger. Through great hardships, we see the other side of life. This is the heroic side of life. That is Conan's life. That is my life.



Conan's Heroic Stunts



Although *Conan* had an unusually high number of violent stunts, much of the stuntwork was done by the actors themselves, rather than by stunt doubles. Terry Leonard, the film's stunt coordinator, found stunts involving horses to be especially dangerous, as they introduced an unpredictable element into sequences involving split-second timing.

By Daniel M. Furuya

It is during those barbaric ages of constant warfare, in which a sudden violent attack can occur at any time, that men of heroic stature are most likely to emerge. As *Conan* has taken one such barbaric age as its setting, the film abounds in bloody fight scenes and dangerous stunts. Terry Leonard, the stunt coordinator, and Kiyoshi Yamazaki, the fight

choreographer, worked together under the direction of John Milius to create the film's exciting action.

Creating the Fight Scenes

The development of the fight scenes required the coordinated efforts of Leonard, Yamazaki, and Milius. Milius would first visualize what he wanted on the screen: he might want

the action to move across the set with a certain number of turns, falls, slashes, and "kills." Milius even specified the amount of blood to be spilled. Yamazaki would then coordinate each move and technique to Milius' instructions. Working together, Leonard and Yamazaki would experiment to discover which techniques worked well on



Blood bags attached to a stuntman's chest exploded when pierced by the actor's weapon. During the battle scenes, the horses often had less poise than the stuntmen and actors: In one sequence, a horse ran straight into a camera. His rider, who was hanging "dead" from the saddle after being "killed" by a battle axe to the chest, narrowly avoided a serious real-life injury.

camera and which angles best portrayed the action. Each action sequence had to have the proper effect and the proper theme relating it to the story and plot.

According to Schwarzenegger, Milius demanded realism whenever and wherever possible in all the fight sequences. In most scenes, hard contact was made at least 50 percent of the time. Schwarzenegger recalls that he took many, many hard blows to his body during the fight scenes. Only in a few cases would Milius allow the punches to be pulled.

In one scene, Schwarzenegger blocked the onslaught of Rexor (Ben Davidson) and the impact was so great that the axe splintered. One fragment grazed Arnold's throat. In another fight sequence, Sandahl Bergman made an improper block; her finger was cut and required five stitches. But in the pervading atmosphere of creating and recreating the realism of this fantasy, Bergman didn't become frightened and refuse to continue; instead, she tried to improve her sword technique.

Death-Defying Stunts

Yamazaki was the undisputed expert in fight techniques and martial arts for *Conan*, but Terry Leonard's expertise extended beyond that field into the realm of reproducing realism. Leonard knew the abilities and skills of his stuntmen. He knew who took the best falls, who "died" the best and who were the best horsemen. He knew who could fall off a horse or be run over by a horse without injury. He knew how to attach blood bags and the proper amount of blood for the proper type of "kill." Every move and maneuver was reduced to a science.

In one scene, Conan steps out from behind a rock and cuts down a horseman with an axe as he rides by. First, it was important to find the right stuntman who was an expert at taking a fall off a running horse. That stuntman also had to have confidence in Schwarzenegger's ability to swing the axe properly. The impact of the axe had to knock the stuntman off the horse as he rode by to produce the effect of being cut down. None of the local stuntmen (the film was shot on location in Spain) dared to attempt this move, so Leonard used one of his own stuntmen from the U.S.

A metal plate is strapped to the chest of the stuntman to protect him from the blow of the axe. A blood bag is attached to the plate and then hidden by the costumed jacket. As the stuntman rides by, Schwarzenegger (as Conan) steps out and lashes out with the axe, striking him in the chest. (A couple of inches too high and the axe will go right into the unprotected throat area. No wonder the locals wouldn't do it!) As Leonard's expert rides by, he lowers his arms and holds out his chest, giving Schwarzenegger a clear target. When Schwarzenegger swings the axe into his chest, the blood bag explodes and the villain goes

flying off his horse. A perfect “kill” has been executed.

There is another problem in successfully creating this sequence: keeping the horse calm throughout the stunt. The horse would naturally become frightened when Schwarzenegger steps out with the axe, and rear up, endangering both the rider and Schwarzenegger. Leonard has the horse ride by the rock about ten times while Schwarzenegger is out of sight. On the final round, when the horse is quite accustomed to the routine, Schwarzenegger steps out and swings the axe for the kill. The horse, which is wearing a blinder over one eye, never sees what happens.

In another sequence, Conan must cut the legs off a horse as it is charging him. To achieve this effect, Schwarzenegger swings his axe at the horse’s legs before it even comes close to him. At that moment, the stuntman causes the horse to fall by pulling the reins and jerking the horse to the side. The cameraman shoots the action from behind Schwarzenegger’s back. From this angle, it appears that Schwarzenegger is actually cutting the horse’s legs. There are about four other cameras simultaneously shooting Schwarzenegger’s face, the horse, a master shot, etc. The final editing brings the action together.

In some scenes, however, Milius preferred

shooting the action without any cuts. Milius believes that cuts will often detract from the action because they signal to the viewer that adjustments are being made. In one scene, Schwarzenegger is required to jump off a 40-foot tower. In most cases, a shot of the action would be taken at the moment of the jump. Then the cameraman would fade back, showing a stunt double executing the actual fall. Milius demanded that Schwarzenegger make the jump himself to give greater realism to the scene. Schwarzenegger now comments, “I think Milius made me do the jump because he once did it himself as a kid to prove himself. But he just jumped off a garage roof.”



In the film, Conan reclaimed his Atlantean sword from the Thing in the Crypt without mishap. In Howard’s novel, however, the Thing is an ancient mummy which comes alive to fight Conan for possession of the weapon.

Kiyoshi Yamazaki: Twentieth Century Samurai

The blade of the sword is the central image in *Conan the Barbarian*, both as a weapon wielded by the heroes to reach their goals, and as a metaphor for the film as a whole. For this reason, Milius felt it was vital to find an instructor who could teach not only the technical aspects of swordplay, but also convey some part of the spirit of the swordsman. Milius found his instructor in a modern embodiment of the samurai spirit, Kiyoshi Yamazaki.

Yamazaki is a small man, but not diminutive; he might be mistaken for a corporation executive from Japan. But there is an unmistakable sense of strength and speed about him. In Japanese martial arts, this is called *shisei*, which roughly translates as "posture." Yamazaki has trained in the martial arts for 27 years, studying karate, judo, kendo, and aikido. He has taught his style of karate (*ryobu*), a mixture of shotokan and judo, in the U.S. for 14 years. In response to Yamazaki's attitude, that is, the body language of a highly skilled martial artist, one feels compelled to address him as *sensei* (teacher).



The swordsman must develop a good sense of *zanshin*, the mental state of concentrated pinpoint action. Here Yamazaki focuses on executing the *coup de grace* to his imagined opponent.

Don't draw this sword of finely tempered steel, until you have forged your own heart with courage and strength.

Aritoshi,
Nineteenth century samurai

MAM: Yamazaki sensei, can you tell us a little about how you got involved in the movie, *Conan*?

Yamazaki: I did some stunt choreography for the *Bad News Bears*. My agent contacted Milius about some work and arranged an appointment for me.

MAM: What was your first meeting like?

Yamazaki: Milius knows judo and kendo. He was testing me. I was surprised and really quite impressed when he started to ask me about bushido (the code of the samurai) and about the *Hagakure*. I didn't think this would have anything to do with the movie. I thought he would ask me about a lot of phoney stuff.

Actually, I had come to test Milius. I wanted to see how sincere he was before I was going to work for him. I am a karate teacher, I don't need this kind of work. I only want to do it if it will show the people the true spirit of the warrior. That means "budo" (Japanese martial arts).

MAM: What kind of questions did Milius ask you?

Yamazaki: He asked how I teach bushido to Americans. I was surprised at this question. I told him that it doesn't make a difference between East and West, life means discipline. That is the essence of budo. We must polish ourselves constantly and become like a samurai sword.

MAM: How did Milius react to your answer?

Yamazaki: He hired me on the spot. He is a sincere man. I liked him very much. I taught him about the sword and he taught me about the shotgun. It was great fun.

MAM: Your first responsibility was teaching swordsmanship to Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sandahl Bergman and Gerry Lopez. Can you tell us a little about your experiences and how you taught them?

Yamazaki: We met three times a week at Arnold's gym in Santa Monica. I taught them plus a couple of others. I emphasized the basics of traditional Japanese fencing. I taught them four main points: *kamae* (stance or posture); *drawing* and returning the sword to the sheath; *manner* (proper method of handling the sword); *techniques* (actual usage).

It is very easy to tell if someone is an expert or not. It is not important if the marksman hits the target. It's how he handles the weapon. That's important.

MAM: Did you have any problems teaching swordsmanship. I know *iai-do* (Japanese art of the fast draw) takes many years to master.

Yamazaki: Each person has his special strengths and weaknesses. I had to adapt my teaching to fit each personality, skill and strength. Arnold, for instance, has a lot of power and strength. But the sword does not depend on strength. It is timing. To give Arnold a greater sense of timing, I made him do *suburi* (repeated cuts with the sword) an extra ten minutes before class. Arnold had to coordinate his muscle action with the movement of the sword. That was hard for him. But Arnold has a terrific sense of concentration which helped him to master the sword. Arnold's great sense of concentration enabled him to overcome his strength in using the samurai sword.

Sandahl Bergman is a dancer so I emphasized more form which is closer to her skill in dancing. She doesn't have the strength like Arnold, of course. Because she is a dancer, her movement and sense of action is very sharp. She has a good sense of *zanshin* (the mental state of pinpoint action). She could catch the techniques very, very quickly and she was very fast in her movements.

Gerry Lopez is a surfing champion. He always keeps his body low and his knees bent just like he is on a surfboard. This is not typical for Japanese sword training but he has strength in this posture. This is what he knows best. I adopted a more ninja type of movement to utilize his body shape and movement to best advantage.

MAM: What did you consider most important in teaching them martial arts?

Yamazaki: *Zanshin* is important. They have to keep eye-contact with their opponents all the time. They did not understand this at first. Posture is important. I had to tell them to keep their bodies straight. I also taught them karate along with running and stretching exercises.

MAM: What are the important points in the sword action on the film?

Yamazaki: It is very important to think how the sword is moving (*sabaki*) and all the movements must be done with the *tanden* (vital center). When you cut, you must be centered and balanced. All cuts must look realistic, so it is important to teach balance which gives strength to the movements. Arnold has strong concentration but was a little weak in balance. Sandahl didn't have the strength but her balance is excellent because she is a dancer. Feeling and spirit is very important in swordsmanship. Although *Conan* and *chambara* (samurai action) movies are quite different, the feeling is the same. One thing I like about *Conan* is that there are no phoney techniques.

MAM: Can you tell us a little of your experiences creating the fight sequences while you were shooting the film?

Yamazaki: I worked with Mr. Terry Leonard who was the stunt coordinator. He is an expert with the camera angles. It is important to catch the right angles for the action. Camera angles were very difficult for me. The scenes were shot many times and I had to constantly think of the best techniques to utilize.

Terry is into hitting and the forward exten-



Above, Yamazaki shows Schwarzenegger the *chudan no kamae* (middle stance), one of the basic stances of traditional Japanese swordsmanship. The swordman's mental concentration and focus must follow the line of the sword. Left, Yamazaki's power, timing, and balance join in a single direct thrust of the sword.

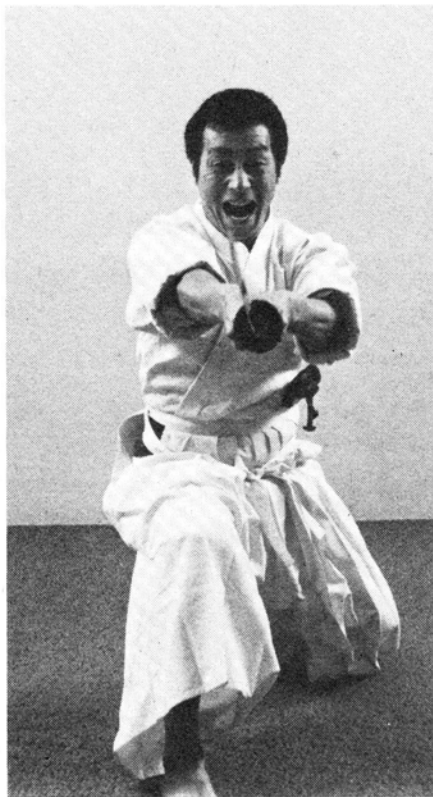
camera. That was hard. I think we learned a lot from each other.

MAM: How was working with Milius during the shooting?

Yamazaki: Milius is a very serious person, just like Arnold. When I taught Arnold and the others, Milius took video tapes of every single class and we all had to watch and talk about them. Nobody goes to that much trouble for a movie, I think.

MAM: What is your impression of martial arts movies in general?

Yamazaki: Most people, when they make a movie, just think about action. They don't care for the art. These people need to study more. If kids watch these movies and get the wrong impression, they will have serious accidents and hurt themselves. It is very important to bring across the correct image to our young people. We must be careful to show the true principle of swordfighting. *Iai-do* means the way of the sword. It means practice and discipline. If you have confidence, you do not need to draw the sword. If you are attacked, you must fight. *Conan* balances the idea and the action. There is a good balance in Arnold—strength; Sandahl—grace; and Gerry—action. The movie will be very good.



sion of movement. The sword movement is all a pulling action. This makes the movement too concise and small to be seen on the camera. We had to compromise the techniques for the

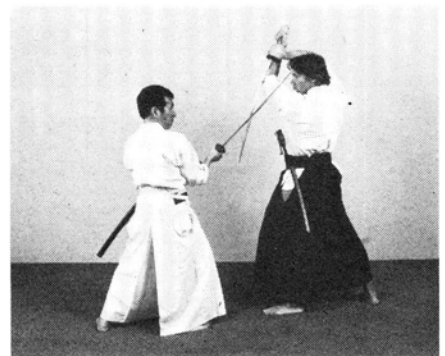
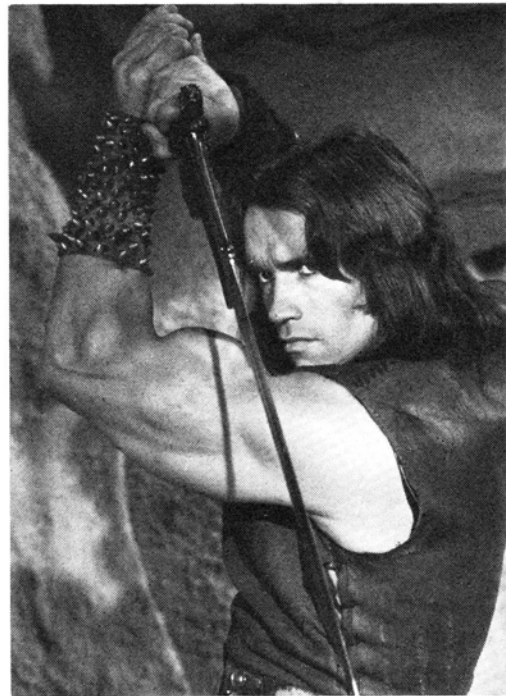
Conan's Swordplay: From Tradition to the Screen



As *Conan* is set in the barbarous Hyborian age, the characters must fight with the strength and wildness appropriate for that period. However, they must still show the expertise in slashing and cutting that an experienced swordsman would have. Through rigorous, repetitive drilling, Kiyoshi Yamazaki taught Schwarzenegger, Bergman, and Lopez the underlying movements of the Japanese swordsman, so that the actors' action swordplay in the film would show discipline as well as violent energy.

One of the fundamental positions in Japanese swordsmanship is the *chudan no kamae*, or middle stance. Right, Yamazaki corrects Schwarzenegger's posture in this stance: he must lower his shoulders and bring the center of power into his lower abdominal region. Above, Schwarzenegger shows his corrected stance in this scene from *Conan*.





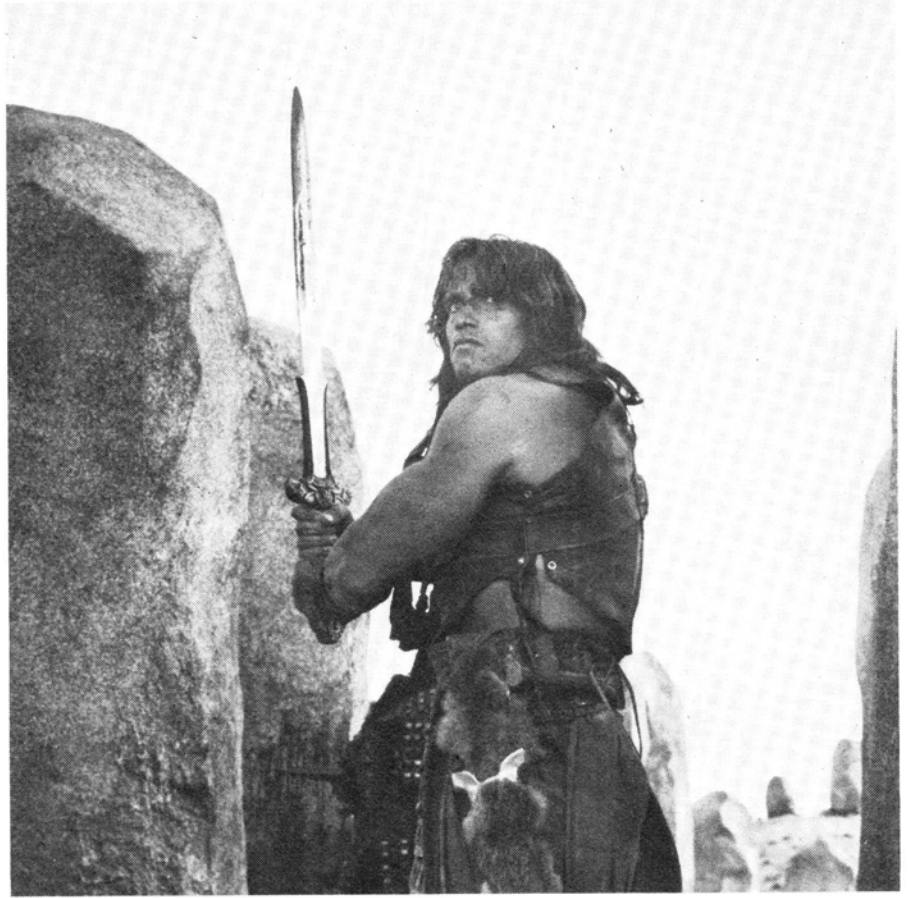
Above, Schwarzenegger uses a traditional parry—*uke nagashi* (receiving and flowing) technique—to deflect Yamazaki's sword. In using this technique, Schwarzenegger would follow through by bringing his sword around to cut Yamazaki. Top, Schwarzenegger applies this same technique to his Conan role.



Hours of practicing simple techniques not only taught the actors the correct stance, but also communicated the essential—yet elusive—harmony of strength, balance, timing, and concentration. Left, Yamazaki provides Schwarzenegger with a model of concentrated energy in this defensive position, *seigan no kamae*. Above, the actors' efforts to learn these techniques paid off in their appearance on the screen: here Bergman convincingly assumes the same *seigan no kamae* stance during the climactic battle of the Mounds.



Above, Yamazaki assumes a traditional *hasso* (eight mutual) stance, with the sword held vertically close to the head. This stance, made famous by Miyamoto Musashi, was used against multiple opponents, as the swordsman would be able to cut in any direction (eight directions) from this position. Right, Schwarzenegger executes the same *hasso* stance during the battle of the Mounds.



Above, Yamazaki practices a variation of *chudan no kamae* using a reverse hand grip technique, *gyakutewaza*. Left, Bergman uses the same stance and grip during the raid of Thulsa Doom's Mountain of Power, when she and Schwarzenegger are totally covered in camouflage body paint.

