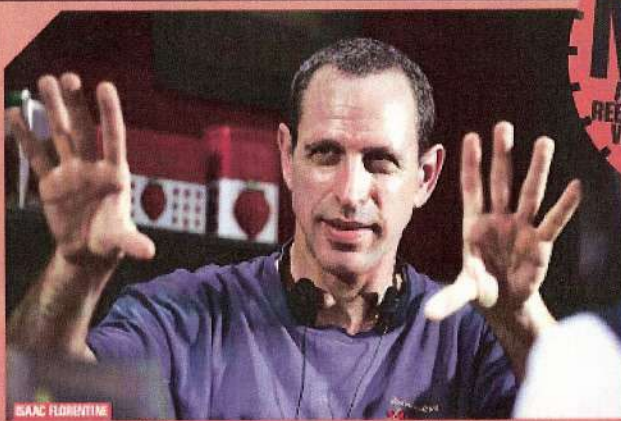


IMPACT PROFILES
ISAAC FLORENTINE'S
NINJA
AND CELEBRATES THE
REBIRTH OF THE 'SHINOBI'
WITH SCOTT ADKINS.



ISAAC FLORENTINE



HAWKING & CASBY LEE II

The Ninja returns! The shadow clad warrior was once the mainstay of the martial arts action movie genre across the globe from East to West, but, after an absence of several years, the Ninja returns courtesy of Nu Image's latest project directed by Isaac Florentine, which also gives the UK's own Scott Adkins his first leading role. Ninja not only reunites Isaac and Scott for their fourth project together, but also relearns them with Alpha Stunt's action maestro Akhiro 'Yui' Noguchi - the man responsible for classic action sequences in such projects as *Special Forces* and *Cold Harvest*. Impact's Feature editor Mike Leader - who himself, once donned a Ninja mask and tabi for Hong Kong's IPD film factory, brings us a first look at this highly anticipated project.

The film stars Adkins as Casey, a Westerner studying Ninjitsu in Japan when he is asked by his Sensei to travel to New York to safeguard the legendary 'Yon Bitsu', an armoured chest that contains the weapons of the last of the 'Koga Ninja'. Accompanying Casey is Namiko, the Sensei's daughter who also happens to be

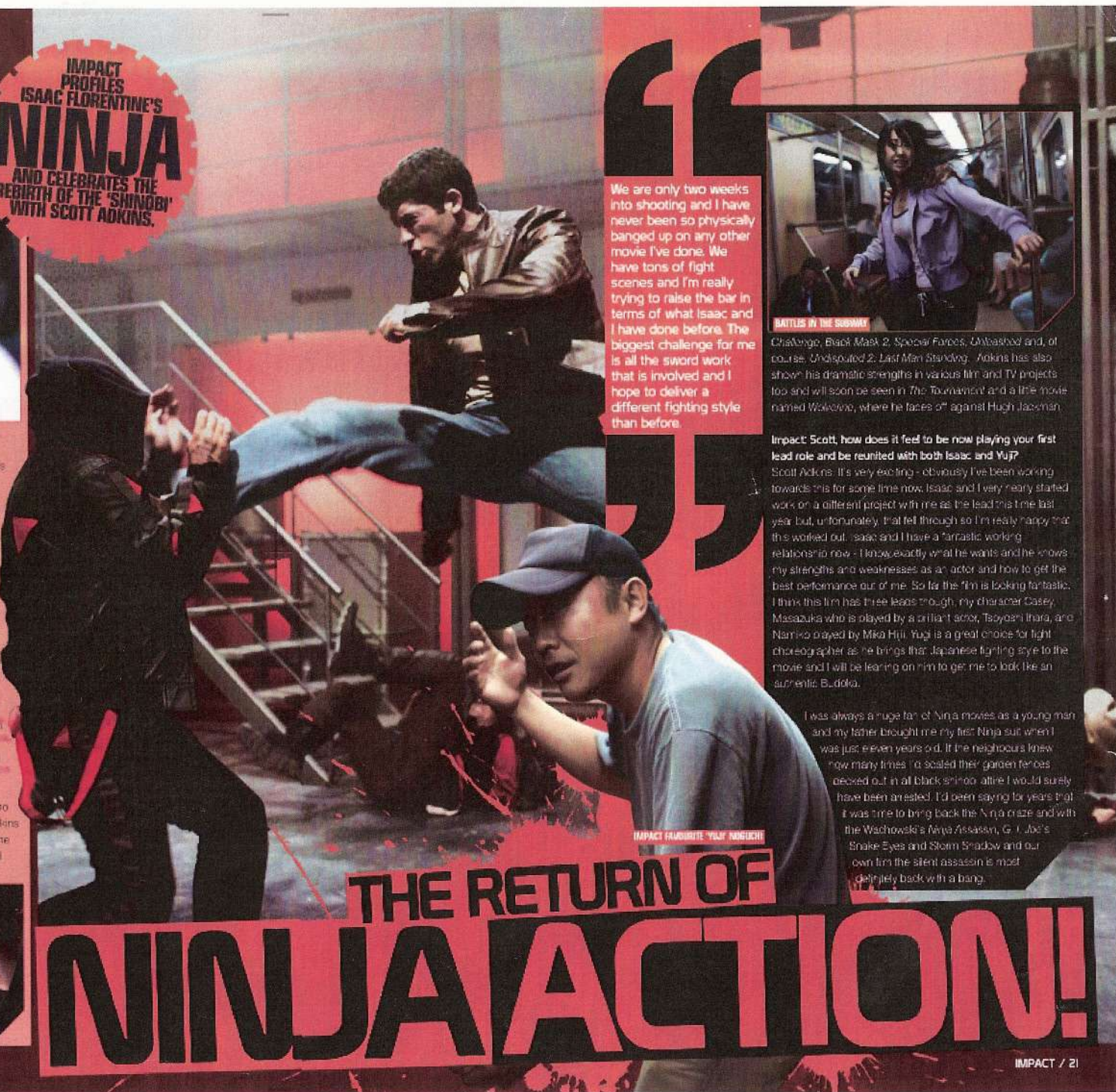
an impressive martial artist in her own right. They find themselves under attack by the villainous Masazuka - once he was Sensei's brightest student, but he has devoted his skills to the darker side of Ninjitsu, becoming a high paid assassin for hire, and he believes the armoured chest and its fabled Ninja weapons are destined to be his.

Helping the film is one of Impact's favourite directors, Isaac Florentine, whose past credits include such classic actioners as *Savato*, *Bridge of Dragons*, *Cold Harvest*, *US Seals 2*, *Special Forces* and *Undisputed 2: Last Man Standing*. When we asked Isaac for a quick insight as to what we can expect from the shoot project and how it feels to be reunited with Scott in his first leading role with Yui as action director, he gave us a very straight forward answer: "Wonderful!"

So we turned to Britkicker Scott Adkins, who makes his starring debut in the project. Adkins has already carved a name for himself in the action genre, delivering spectacular martial arts action in such projects as *Extreme*



MASAZUKA & NAMIKO



We are only two weeks into shooting and I have never been so physically banged up on any other movie I've done. We have tons of fight scenes and I'm really trying to raise the bar in terms of what Isaac and I have done before. The biggest challenge for me is all the sword work that is involved and I hope to deliver a different fighting style than before.



BATTLES IN THE SUBWAY

Chalange, *Black Mask 2*, *Special Forces*, *Unbashed* and, of course, *Undisputed 2: Last Man Standing*. Adkins has also shown his dramatic strengths in various film and TV projects too and will soon be seen in *The Tournament* and a little movie named *Wokovic*, where he faces off against Hugh Jassman.

Impact: Scott, how does it feel to be now playing your first lead role and be reunited with both Isaac and Yui?

Scott Adkins: It's very exciting - obviously I've been working towards this for some time now. Isaac and I very rarely started work on a different project with me as the lead this time last year, but, unfortunately, that fell through so I'm really happy that this worked out. Isaac and I have a fantastic working relationship now - I know exactly what he wants and he knows my strengths and weaknesses as an actor and how to get the best performance out of me. So far the film is looking fantastic. I think this film has three leads though, my character Casey, Masazuka who is played by a brilliant actor, Tsuboshi Ibara, and Namiko played by Mika Hiji. Yui is a great choice for fight choreographer as he brings that Japanese fighting style to the movie and I will be learning on him to get me to look like an authentic Buddha.

I was always a huge fan of Ninja movies as a young man and my father brought me my first Ninja suit when I was just eleven years old. If the neighbours knew how many times I'd scaled their garden fences, decked out in all black shi-noo attire I would surely have been arrested. I'd been saying for years that it was time to bring back the Ninja craze and with the Wachowski's *Ninja Assassin*, G.I. Joe's *Snake Eyes* and *Storm Shadow* and our own film the silent assassin is most definitely back with a bang.

IMPACT FAVORITE 'YUI NOGUCHI'

THE RETURN OF
NINJA ACTION!



SCOTT VS NINJAS

The film's action sequences are being choreographed by Alpha Stunts maestro Akihiro 'Yuji' Naguchi, whose extensive credits as an action director and stunt performer include *Power Rangers*, *Wicked Game*, *Shadow Fury*, *Guyver: Dark Hero*, *WMAF Masters*, *Savate*, *Bridge of Dragons*, *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, *Cold Harvest*, *Special Forces* and *Drive*. So with Isaac and Yuji handling the drama and the action, what can we expect from *Ninja* in terms of action and character?

Okay... we're not trying to make a dumb Ninja movie which is something that has been done many times before us. We're approaching it from a very realistic perspective. We are dealing with the art of assassination and all the action and excitement that comes with that, but it's more a story about a family torn apart by greed and jealousy and two people desperately trying to protect something from a formidable opponent who used to be someone they loved and respected. We have a very strong cast. My character is very different from what I've played in other action movies. He's not your typical action hero, he's a normal guy with extraordinary martial arts ability but he finds himself way over his head and I think our villain will probably steal the movie but I love that. I think Masazuka will be to this movie what Boyka was to *Undisputed II*.

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"I LOVE THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS"

before. The biggest challenge for me is all the sword work that is involved and I hope to deliver a different fighting style than before. In one scene I take on ten street thugs at once. The producers have been getting nervous because I've been doing lots of the stunts myself but I guess they're going to have to get used to it.

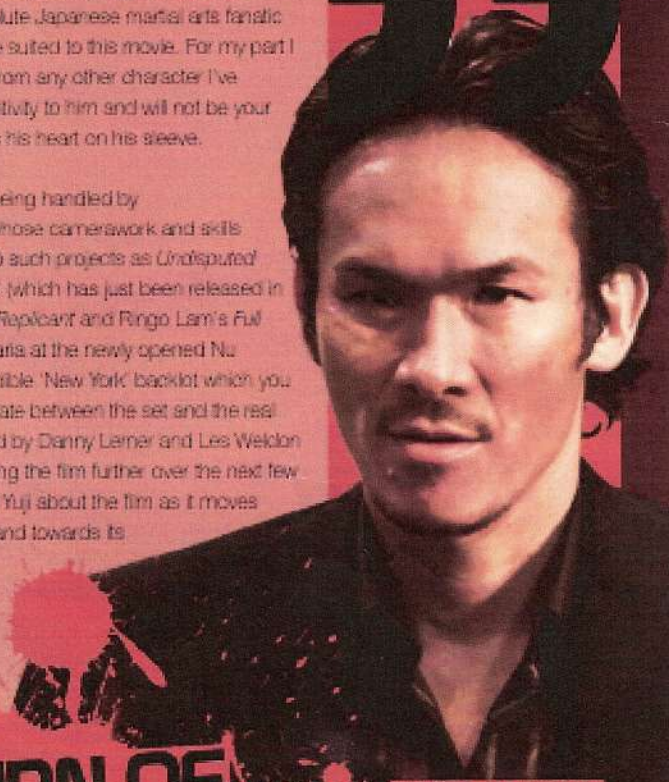
The production values of the film look fantastic and two weeks into a seven week shoot everyone is very happy with what we have so far. If it stays like this I think we may really have something special. Our director Isaac Florentine is an absolute Japanese martial arts fanatic and I couldn't think of anyone more suited to this movie. For my part I plan to make Casey very different from any other character I've played before, he has a great sensitivity to him and will not be your stereotypical action man. He wears his heart on his sleeve.

The film's cinematography is being handled by cinematographer Ross Clarkston, whose camerawork and skills have given a very expensive look to such projects as *Undisputed 2*, Dolph Lundgren's *The Mechanik* (which has just been released in the UK), *In Heat*, *Body of the Beast*, *Replicant* and Ringo Lam's *Ful Aot*. The film is being shot in Bulgaria at the newly opened Nu Boyana Film Studios on their incredible 'New York' backlot which you would be hard pressed to differentiate between the set and the real location. The film is being produced by Danny Lerner and Les Weldon for Nu Image. *Impact* will be covering the film further over the next few months, talking to Isaac, Scott and Yuji about the film as it moves through production and into post, and towards its release.

Thanks to Isaac, Scott and everyone at Nu Image for their help with images and information for the article.

MIKE LEEDER

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MASAZUKA - HE'S A BOSS.

THE RETURN OF NINJA ACTION!