



by Guru Scott McQuaid

This demonstration film was always a part of my initial intention to spread the word of harimau silat and secure its legacy. I first wanted to document the historical aspects of our art with the '*Dark Gift*'

documentary and then start production on '*Silek Harimau: The Minangkabau Art Of War*'

as a follow-up film. The

Dark Gift

took seven years to produce and as I was coming to a final cut on that feature I immediately started to shoot this demo film.

I wanted to make the film as honest as I could and not sell out by having some tacky backdrop of Indonesia in a studio and shoot the entire project within a weekend. I decided to shoot it outside in a clearing of the woods because that's the natural environment where this art came from. All the demonstration scenes were filmed outside in South East Asia; most of the shoot was shot on location in Malaysia but there were sections that I shot in Indonesia such as the *ke mbangan*

and

kuda

scenes as well as some of the

langkah

footage.

However due to the extreme heat and humidity in Indonesia and Malaysia we would have to shoot our scenes early in the morning before sunrise. Now anybody who practices the art of silek harimau will surely vouch for me when I say that your body really doesn't want to be doing

harimau first thing in the morning, so that was a challenge. I would usually film one section per shoot, meaning I would shoot maybe ground attacks and that would be all we would film for the day. Then for the next shooting schedule we would film maybe elbow attacks and so on. This was because of the heat and the demanding toll that harimau takes on your body. For the most part I would rarely plan any technique, I would just let my student attack and counter, but sometimes there were certain movements that I wanted to show and break down. I felt if I kept the attacks random and unplanned as we generally do in the classroom, the reality of the action will look that bit more authentic on film. Just as I documented the historical factors in the *Dark Gift*, I was trying to document the unique movement within the art without it looking superficial. I believe the film captures this.



Although this is a demonstration film, I still wanted it to be entertaining to somebody who perhaps has never seen any pencak silat or martial arts in general. So I added more theatrics to this film compared to the *Dark Gift* documentary. I wanted to engage the audience from the very beginning, so that's why we shot this slow motion jungle gladiatorial scene. But once again I still wanted to maintain a real combative look so although the opening scene is all window dressed with slow motion and blood splatters, the actual content of movements are grounded in reality.

Generally the pesilat attacks and I take them out with one to two moves that are extremely brutal and to the point. In fact, that was the only choreographed scene throughout the production and still I made contact with the silat players which is why it looks authentic, because the poor *randai* performers were getting hit. I tried hard to pull my punches like they do in the movies, but I guess I'm not cut out to be an action star, as all my years of training has been about connecting on your opponent and following through to take them out. Both my students and I were always limping back from a day's shoot covered in bruises and carrying sprains.



