



Episode 39 – Talking Bruce Lee | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody what's going on its episode 39 of whistlekickMartialArtsRadio and today we're going to talk about Bruce Lee. I'm your host Jeremy Lesniak and I'm also whistlekick's founder. And here at whistlekick we make the world's best sparring gear and some great apparel and accessories all for traditional martial artists. Thanks to everyone tuning in again and thank you to any of the new folks checking us out for the first time. Don't forget you can find all of our past podcast episodes show notes for this one and a lot more at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and while you're on our website, why don't you go ahead sign up for the newsletter, we offer exclusive content to subscribers and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guests on the show. Just a few days ago we recorded the episode that we've talked about a few times with the man that goes by the name Rabbi G, he's the founder the black belt founder of the organization Kids kicking cancer that we've been talking about on social media and I think actually on a couple podcast episodes let me just say that's a really powerful episode I'm super excited to see it come out and right now that's scheduled for December 14 so watch for that.

Today's episode like I said is all about Bruce Lee, the man that I would say has had more of an impact on the martial arts than any other person but hang on a second and we'll get into that discussion shortly. So, like I said you know we make stuff here at whistlekick and that includes some awesome sweatshirts comfortable they come in five colors like the cozy red one I've got on right now, pocket in the front, big hood, logo on the front and our great really popular slogan on the back never settle, so why don't you head up whistlekick.com check em out we've got free shipping on everything over there and help support the show. So, let's talk about Bruce Lee and let's skip all the standard bio stuff you know where he was born and all that cause that's really easy to find out what I wanna talk about today is more who Bruce Lee was and how he got there and rally as a result of all that how he had the impact on the martial arts that he has. So let's imagine it's the mid till late 1950s Bruce Lee's living in Hong Kong and Hong Kong is not like it is today at least as far as everything I've read it was kind of a rough place you know the British occupation and everything and there was a lot of gang activity and Bruce Lee kept getting into fights so he was losing these fights and at 16 he started training in Wing Chun under Yip Man the great Yip man and of course we've talked about him on the show and the movies Ip man movies based on his life and somewhat loosely but then the other students started to find out that Bruce Lee's mom wasn't fully Asian she was part German if I remember it correctly and because of that there was a lot of prejudice, they don't wanna work with him to the point where Bruce Lee really didn't have much of a chance to train and so Yip man realizes what's going on, sees Bruce Lee's dedication and takes him on personally and starts training with him sparrred with Bruce Lee and just to give you an idea of that I mean this is something I don't think there's anyone in America today that would be regarded as highly in martial arts as Yip man was at that time in Hong Kong so this was incredibly influential on Bruce Lee and so much so that I would argue with that if this hadn't happened he would not have had the quality of education



Episode 39 – Talking Bruce Lee | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

that he did and may not have risen to the skill level that he did so early so quickly so despite all of that, Bruce keeps getting into fights and it gets to a point where he actually beats up the son of a gang leader and there's all this drama that's about to unfold and one of the police officers comes to his dad and says you know I'm gonna have to put him in jail if we don't do something so his dad says forget this Bruce you're going to America and this was all right around the time not only was Bruce Lee training in martial arts in Wing Chun but he was dancing and it was quite common at that time in Hong Kong for young man and young woman to learn to dance as a way to meet people and to date things like that and in 1958 Bruce Lee was a Cha cha champion in Hongkong so I thought that was kinda neat we talked about that on episode 38 with Master Panizzo which was in part what kicked off me doing some research and what brought about this episode.

So Bruce Lee's in America does the thing goes to college drops out teaches some martial arts but then in 1964 Ed Parker invites him to come out to the Long Beach Karate international Karate championships I'd probably add the word karate in there twice but you know what I mean and this was where he first demonstrated that one inch punch in a major public venue and the poor guy to take the punch was this guy named Bob Baker who said later on he has Bruce Lee he said please don't ever demonstrate that on someone again it was just the pain was unbearable I had to miss work it was really, really rough. Few years later 1967 at the same event this was the time that Bruce Lee and now GM Victor Moore met up and you can listen to GM Moore's side of all of these exchange back on episode 20 we interviewed him and it's a great episode he goes into quite a bit of detail about this moment and this was the point where Bruce Lee had just started in the movies and they're trying to portray him as this amazing martial artist with tremendous speed and so GM Moore was the one that was picked to work with Bruce Lee and supposedly not be able to block anything that Bruce would throw and of course from the martial artists that I've spoken with that were there or there were accounts most of them are saying that Bruce Lee was not as fast as he was represented to be that GM Moore was able to block anything that came anywhere near him and then of course the Bruce Lee camp represented it very differently so there's some video out there it's a little vague you can check it out probably throw it up on the show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com but whatever it was it was a pretty important exchange because here we are 50 years later right almost 50 years later and we're still talking about it. So it was that same year 1967 Bruce Lee got into this really famous fight with the guy in San Francisco named Wong Jack Man and Bruce felt that the fight took too long and he really started looking at his Wing Chun and saying you know this maybe there's some stuff here that needs to be adjusted it's too rigid it's too traditional and that's where the roots of Jeet Kune Do came out so beyond that he also started training physically very differently he started approaching cardiovascular fitness you know running a lot and weight training and things of that nature and he felt that martial artists needed to spend time training physical fitness that as a discipline we were too in-trenched in training the art and not so much training the body or the mind of course Bruce Lee wrote a fair amount on philosophy and went to school for philosophy but one of the things I found



Episode 39 – Talking Bruce Lee | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

interesting as I was doing my research and really trying to bring in some stuff that hopefully you all don't know about Bruce Lee was his emphasis on nutrition and that he was eating a low carb high protein diet even in the mid till late 60s and this was the same time that Dr. Atkins the guy who promoted the Atkins diet wrote his first book so he's way ahead of the curve there and I think that that speaks a lot to his whole attitude Bruce Lee was a obviously I never met him he passed before I was born but from everything I've read and understood about him there was some there's a common thread in that he never accepted the status quo and that's kind of an interesting dynamic for us as traditional martial artists that we're handed down these tools these martial arts forms techniques and we value the traditionalism of them but that's a catch 22 because how do things evolve without changing and I'm not gonna get into that here but clearly for Bruce Lee it was important not to accept things simply as they were simply for the traditionalism of them and that's how he founded Jeet Kune Do and that's his approach his view of a lot of other things.

1969 he did some choreography for a film called the wrecking crew which if you dig in is actually Chuck Norris' movie role and it's uncredited on the movie but if you look at IMDB it's listed there pretty plainly and I found some other supporting evidence so that's pretty cool even though Bruce Lee had less than 15 years of real impact on the martial arts world he's probably had and I would say he's had the most influence of any individual in modern times on martial arts if you go back if you listen to the episodes or martial arts radio he's the most given answer for who people would wanna train with and if you look at the t shirts that people wear that feature martial artists yeah some of them have Chuck Norris on them some of those people wear them ironically you know with his memes and you know the all the jokes that are made of Chuck Norris but the other person on those shirts is Bruce Lee and his movies transcend martial arts, there are a ton of people large percentage of people that never train in martial arts that watch Bruce Lee movies, Enter the Dragon is a movie that I would say most people over the age of 40 have seen whether or not they've trained in martial arts so why and that's really the question here why did he have such an impact and I think there are several factors going on here first off he was good at what he did whether or not he was the best whether he was the best fighter the best anything I don't think that really matters, I think that he was good enough that he was impressive to people even martial artists would watch him and say he was good, people that didn't do martial arts would watch him and say he's good and I think that's an important distinction he was the first martial artist that I think most of America was exposed to, he was the first one that's really was all over TV and movies and made a career of being a martial artist in front of the camera and then third he died at a really young age and here in America we really tend to lift up and idolize celebrities that have passed an age that I would say is too early John Belushi, Elvis you know I'm sure you can think of a whole bunch more but and since Bruce Lee we haven't had him but it come along that his take in martial arts at least it's public image and moved it forward in the way that Bruce Lee did. At the time he came in the general population in America didn't really know martial artist, they might have had some minor exposure to it they might have heard about it but it went from 0 to 100 because of



Episode 39 – Talking Bruce Lee | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Bruce Lee everyone knew what martial arts was at least in their own eyes and we've had plenty of stars since then Jackie Chan Chuck Norris but when people talk about them they don't talk about what they've done in the martial arts they don't talk about the 1 inch punch they don't talk about these amazing kicks, they talk about them as celebrities as martial arts actors the acting part being first and foremost you know unfortunately anyone that does have their martial arts discussed tends to have it discussed in a critical way because that's where we are we tend to tear down our celebrities these days Steven Seagull being the best I think example of that. And I don't think there's gonna be another Bruce Lee at any point because martial arts is really mature now everybody's trained in martial arts or they know a dozen people that have trained in martial arts and that mystique that was there when Bruce Lee first came to television and movies is gone and of course his death is sad, we don't know what other amazing things he might have done had he lived longer but it's also part of the reason that we hold him in the regard that we do, we as martial artists have Bruce Lee as a legend in part because of his early death so those are my thoughts, really welcome yours and of course it wouldn't be right it's the Bruce Lee episode and of course movie pick every week this week's an obvious choice Enter the Dragon. Some of you may not know Bruce Lee helped write Enter the Dragon and the film takes place in Hong Kong and really was instrumental in launching the careers for both Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan who made an appearance in the film and it was so significant not just for them but for American culture and worldwide culture that in 2004 it was included in the National film registry at the library of congress so I'm gonna guess most of you have seen Enter the Dragon, a big bunch of you probably have it on VHS you might still be carrying around a VCR so you can watch movies like that or you know some DVD maybe there's even a Blu-ray release I don't know but go watch it remember how great it was the first time you saw it and take some of these new information about Bruce Lee and maybe it gives you some new context.

so thanks for tuning in to this Bruce Lee episode, head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for the show notes links to the things that I talked about here today, sign up for the newsletter remember this is episode 39 so head on over there and give us some comments on what you thought about this episode obviously this is a different format than the last few Thursday episodes tell me what you thought. So, and if there's some great Bruce Lee factor reference that I missed in the show definitely let us know and we'll put that out there too. So, if you haven't already go ahead and leave us a review on iTunes or wherever you're downloading the show, that's really important to help our growth and don't forget the free apps on google play and the app store just search for whistlekick head on over to whistlekick.com check out the sweat shirts those were even on sale right now and that's it. So, until next time train hard smile and have a great day.