



Episode 514 — Mr. John Hurwitz | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

What's going on? Everybody, welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio also known as WMAR episode 514 with today's guest Mr. Jon Hurwitz. Who am I? I'm Jeremy Lesniak. I'm the whistlekick founder, I'm the show host. I'm the guy who loves to train. I love traditional martial arts and that's why everything that we're doing here is in support of the traditional martial arts. That's why I started the company. Makes sense, doesn't it? Hope so. If you want to learn more about what we're doing over here to that end, go to whistlekick.com. That's where you'll find everything we're doing. We're involved in a bunch of stuff and one of the things we're involved in is making stuff. We make a whole bunch of different things and if you check out the store, whistlekick.com, make sure you use the code PODCAST15 to save 15%. Whistlekick martial arts radio gets its own website, nice and easy, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. The show comes out twice a week with the goal of connecting, education and entertaining traditional martial artists worldwide. If you want to support the work we do, you got some options. Make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media, tell a friend, pick up a book, leave a review or support us on Patreon, Patreon.com/whistlekick. That's the place to go. It's the place where we post exclusive content only for the supporters and, for as little as \$2 a month, you get access to stuff. Most people contribute \$5 or \$10 and they get access to exclusive podcast episodes. If you like this show, you'll probably like what we do with that. If you know this show, you know a bit about me and if you know a bit about me, you know how important I think the Karate Kid film was, not only for me but for the martial arts overall. Today, we have someone who is involved in that. I'm not



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going to tell you anymore, you might recognize the name. Maybe you press pause and you go to IMDB and you figure out who this person is, that's fine, but if you want to let it unfold a little more organically, just keep listening and you'll understand why I have Mr. Jon Hurwitz on the show and why it was so important and just, regardless, what a great conversation it was. Had a good time so here we go. So, how are you? What's going on?

Jon Hurwitz:

I'm ok. About the same as pretty much everyone else in the world.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a weird time to live in, isn't it?

Jon Hurwitz:

Yeah, definitely. A lot of frustrations but a lot of getting some quality family time which I'm enjoying because I'm usually at work or out of town for work so I'm enjoying that element of it but otherwise, it'd be nice to have everything full speed ahead for everybody.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, no doubt. What's family look like for you?

Jon Hurwitz:

I have a wife and 2 daughters, an almost 10-year old and a 7 year old and we live out here in Los Angeles so doing a lot of homeschool thing at this point.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Has that been a big shift for you? Seems some parents, it seems pretty split down the middle from people I've spoken with. It's either they're embracing it and enjoying being more involved in their child's education or they're saying man, I can't wait until I can give this back.

Jon Hurwitz:

It's a combination. I would just say my daughters are in a school that we really like a lot and there's a lot of interactive learning there and teamwork and that kind of stuff and it's a lot harder to do that kind of stuff on Zoom so I definitely, for their sake, I would love for them to be back at school and getting the full experience socializing and all that but at the same time, it's nice to kind of be in the mix that they're learning a little more so than we are.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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It's funny. Your words almost mimic what most people are saying about martial arts training via Zoom right now.

Jon Hurwitz:

I would imagine. It's not exactly the same.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's not. It's not but what would this look like 10 years ago, even 5 years ago would have been a challenge.

Jon Hurwitz:

You're right. even 5 years ago, it could be much, much, more challenging but it's interesting to see the way people adapt as challenges are thrown at them and I feel like many are rising to the occasion and learning a different way of life for a period of time and I'm sure there would be elements of this that would be ingrained with us after we're behind this whole pandemic.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, sure. I mean, if you're ok, let's just keep rolling.

Jon Hurwitz:

Yeah, let's get into it. That's great!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sometimes we'll do a more formal intro but we certainly have no trouble conversing and the tech side of it seems like it's good so let's just keep going. We invited you because of a pretty specific reason and typically, we'll hold off on getting into these reasons but I kind of want to bring this up early because I've got a feeling that it opens up a lot of doors for the different things that we can talk about and that is Cobra Kai.

Jon Hurwitz:

It's certainly not for my karate prowess because there is absolutely none but yes, Cobra Kai and the love of the Karate Kid.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm sure you've answered the same sort of answers from a lot of people over the course of your interviews and one of the things I take a lot of pride is trying to be a different style and different type of interviewer so rather than how did you get the inspiration to do Cobra Kai yada yada and the stuff the audience could go and research and find the answers to, I'd kind of like to ask you some different stuff



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and the first thing I want to ask you about is what did the Karate Kid represent to you and you've probably answered this but let's start here. What did the Karate Kid represent to you prior to anything with Cobra Kai?

Jon Hurwitz:

Several things. I would say, from a personal experience, it was one of the first movies I ever saw in a movie theater and it showed in a lot of ways how impactful entertainment can be. For me as a viewer, it was that underdog story. I was from New Jersey, Daniel LaRusso was from New Jersey so like that kid going to a new school in a foreign land all the way across the country in California and feeling the struggles and overcoming the bullies and all that, the stories a lot of people have from it and entertainment standpoint from an eventual desire to be in this business standpoint, I think often about that moment in Karate Kid when you realize that Mr. Miyagi was teaching Daniel karate this whole time that all those chores had a reason and that being one of those mind-blowing moments in a movie. I was 6 or 7 years old seeing this and I didn't see that coming in any sort of way that you can be watching something and be surprised like that and that was a big moment for me just in terms from an entertainment standpoint and just sort of the themes of the movie, the father/son stuff, the bullying story, the underdog stories. In my career, I've often done underdog stories and I've always been a fan of the underdog and Karate Kid definitely started that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did you identify as an underdog as a kid?

Jon Hurwitz:

I think so, yeah. I definitely did. When I was about 7 years old, I moved from New Jersey to Pittsburgh and lived there for 7 years so I was a new kid in a new town.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a tough town.

Jon Hurwitz:

I was in the city. I was in a nice suburb outside of the city but it was a town that, it's weird. We always joke around in the Cobra Kai's writers' room were Daniel is this Italian kid in New Jersey was kind of like a minority character moving to California where everyone was blond and it was sort of like Daniel was the underdog because he wasn't the California boy in a certain way and in a weird, similar way, for me, moving to the particular town that I live in Pittsburgh, feeling a little bit like an outsider and feeling like I was different than the other kids from there because most of them were all from there, I think that instills a little bit of an underdog nature. I had parents who were the underdogs so they brought the underdog experience. Both my parents grew up in the Bronx in New York, my mom grew up in the



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projects, grew up in one of the worst in the projects and they were kind of their own success story so a lot of those spirit was present in my life and in my childhood so I think I always connected with those kinds of characters.

Jeremy Lesniak:

This is the point in the conversation where we usually say and that's when I found martial arts and that's when my parents put me in martial arts but if I understood what you said earlier correctly, that's not what happened for you.

Jon Hurwitz:

My parents would never put me in martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Never? That's strong. Why?

Jon Hurwitz:

Because there was a lot of focus strictly on academics in my house and sports were not in the forefront, I think it became clear, in my household. It was all about sort of doing well in school, getting into a good college and I think martial arts is something that can be very helpful in many ways in life and I wish that I had learned martial arts but there was a singular focus sort of in my household about ok, you're a really smart kid, lets lean into that and make sure that you're doing all kinds of things that will lead you to get into a good college which will get you into being able to take care of yourself as an adult so I think there was always that pressure just from a very simple, being able to get a job standpoint. As I've gotten older, I've learned the value of being a member of a sports team or with martial arts, the mental side of it, beyond learning to defend yourself. Those are all things that are very valuable for people of all ages. It just was the physical activity, I wasn't signed up into a lot of sports as a kid until I sought them out as I've gotten older. My dad played basketball so we did have a basketball hoop. I would hit the ball in the backyard, stuff like that, but I wasn't signed up for organized sports very much. It wasn't such a big thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was it all academics then or did you have something? Did you have some place that you could use as an outlet?

Jon Hurwitz:

I did get into basketball so I did have that in the sports side of things. I had creative outlets. As a kid, I loved Garbage Pail kids so I have my own version of Garbage Pail kids so I always had little creative endeavors and that kind of thing and then, when I was in high school, I joined the debate team but I was



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somebody that liked sports so I was a competitive person but I wasn't somebody who, at that stage, when you're in high school and you want to join sports team, people have been doing it for many, many years during childhood so I was a little late to the game but debate was something and that was actually where Hayden Schlossberg and I became good friends. We both joined the debate team the same year and that's how our friendship came and I was in student council. I was the president of my high school so I was involved in, I was involved in the math team. I was a mathlete so I did plenty of extracurriculars but they were, with the exception of basketball which was indirectly, I wasn't even on the school team. It was mostly things that you're using your mind as opposed to your body.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can relate to this resume you're putting out there. debate, math team, I had martial arts and I was on the soccer team but not in any kind of pivotal way. Nobody was ever saying oh man, I wish Jeremy was in that tournament this weekend, we can really use him on the soccer field but we've got two examples now, if anyone's done debate, they might even agree with me in putting a third here, it sounds like this creative approach of putting your own stamp on something, it's already out there. Is that a common theme for you? Making your own version of Garbage Pail kids and anybody who's probably under 37 might not know what we're talking about here and I'll let you explain Garbage Pail kids for the benefit of the audience.

Jon Hurwitz:

Yeah, garbage pail kids were, you know baseball cards, garbage pail kids were sort of like a comedic set of cards which had, it was kind of a play on cabbage patch kids where there's these stalls back in the day. I think they still have them now but it's like the messed up version of the cabbage patch kids so each card had something kind of gross about the character or a horror standard. There was always like a little comedic bend to these characters and you'd collect them and you would call them gag gang kids and they were the same exact kind of thing that was sort of the same version of it but yeah, I would say it's definitely, maybe there is some theme to that. in my career, I'm a fan of something and I kind of find my own part as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What were your thoughts on the subsequent Karate Kid films because I'm just trusting my gut here that there's something there that led to Cobra Kai.

Jon Hurwitz:

The first one, absolutely loved it, the second one, I absolutely loved as well but in the very beginning of the second movie, you see kind of what happened after the tournament. You see Johnny Lawrence getting strangled by Sensei Kreese and the dysfunction that you're seeing kind of going on there did have a big impact on sort of making Cobra Kai eventually. It was a moment which made you think a little



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bit more about what's going on in that side of the thing? What's going on in Johnny's life and it was sort of like the combination of that combined with just sort of life in general being somebody who, when I was in high school, I had, I definitely had friends of all kinds but you have your bullies. I think everyone has their own bullies in life. I remember being, graduating college, living in LA with Hayden and we were already writing out here and Josh Heald who was one of my best friends from college. He moved out so we could hang out all the time and you had some years since high school and you start to look back and you talk about the bullies in high school and you recognize, wow, that kid had a rough time at his home life or what was going on there? Why was that kid that way and you start thinking of those things and it led to thinking about the character, Johnny Lawrence, right away. It was not just Karate Kid. Billy Zabka was a bully character in like 4 or 5 movies in the 80s and I was a huge fan of the movie, Just One of the Guys. Hayden and I, back when we were in high school, we talked about it all the time and Billy's a hilarious bully in that. I always had a fascination with Zabka as a result of those movies and back then we nicknamed him [00:17:54] all the time and we'd talk about Zabka a lot and this was dating back to high school and it was viewing him as a bully in this sort of comedic way and now, years later, now reflecting on it as ok, this is somebody who, there's more there to that character so yeah, it's been almost 20 years that the guys and I would talk about wouldn't it be cool to do a movie called Cobra Kai where you're like seeing Johnny inside of things and what happens to that bully in high school and it had a big impact but looking at Karate Kid 2, Daniel's story of going to Okinawa, all that stuff we connected with then, even Karate Kid 3, there's some ridiculousness in that movie but you get to see deeper into that Cobra Kai side of the world where Daniel LaRusso was brought into Cobra Kai and he learned more about Kreese's backstory and Terry Silver and all that stuff. These were all things that, when we were thinking about the idea of not doing Karate Kid or Cobra Kai as a movie but pursuing it as a TV show that would hopefully have many seasons, we just thought that there's so much there and there's so much fun to kind of play around with what was there, fill in the gaps and then, even for things, parts of that franchise that maybe were a little ridiculous or that weren't as respected, we loved leaning into the stuff that isn't respected and find a way to make it respected, find a way to ground characters or ground situations that just seem unrealistic or bizarre. In our minds, those things happen in this world. Those are real things so when we're approaching it through our lens, it's trying to make sense of why did that character behave that way?

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's a pop culture occurrence in the TV show, How I Met Your Mother, and I'm assuming that you know where I'm going and some of the audience may know where I'm going because I brought this up before, this idea that one of the main characters in that sitcom played by Neil Patrick Harris decided and even brought up one day on an episode that the Karate Kid, the story is really it's about Johnny and he created this polarization that they actually carried through and it ends up in the final season, I believe in the final episode and Billy Zabka makes some appearances in the show which was just an absolute riot and it led to, from what I can see at that point, more and more people becoming Cobra Kai fans and this



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idea that maybe Daniel was the villain and it created this external conflict that I don't know if that catalyzed anything in creating the show or if you just embraced it, maybe it's just the planets aligned?

Jon Hurwitz:

It's really funny because, like I said, we've been talking about this since before *How I Met Your Mother* even existed, since before I ever made a movie, since before we made *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* which we had Neil Patrick Harris kind of come back in that movie which kind of had led to his casting in *How I Met Your Mother* and then his character is now like talking about Johnny Lawrence and the *Karate Kid* in this way that we've been talking about it for a decade so it was bizarre but the way I look at it with that because there's that and there's also a really great YouTube video of where Daniel LaRusso is the real villain kind of or the real bully, I just think it's one of those things that the *Karate Kid* is such a huge touchstone in the lives of many people all over the world and when there's that many people who love something and that many people analyzing something, back then, there was less entertainment. A movie like that, you're watching over and over again over the years, it's ingrained in your life a major way and when you think about it in all sorts of different ways so it's not surprising that many people across the world and many people in entertainment would have examined that movie and thought about it in a different kind of way. Like I said, for us, even back in high school, there was something hilarious about this teenage karate gang like it's characterizing a high school. Most high schools have oh, there's the football team, there's the sort of stereotypical jocks in your school but in the world of the *Karate Kid*, there's this karate gang that is bullying people. That just felt like such a specific thing that's going on and with a character like Barney who has a certain way of life and a mentality, it made sense that he would look at the *Karate Kid* in that particular way where Johnny is the true *Karate Kid* and it definitely had a big impact out in the world. I'll be honest, I watched *How I Met Your Mother* for many seasons and by the time we got to that stuff, I had stopped watching the show. I was busy with other stuff. It was no knock on the show. It's not like I stopped liking it. I never saw those episodes until after we had even pitched *Cobra Kai*. I knew about it because we were planning the show but I had never seen that stuff but it's funny the way things kind of go full circle because it's, for me and my career, when I made the *Harold and Kumar* movies, we had *Karate Kid* references like all the movies that we did and we actually tried to get Billy Zabka in *Harold and Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay* which we shot in 2007. We had written a scene where Billy would play basically, he'd play Johnny Lawrence and Harold had this nightmare sequence where he's trying to get his love interest Maria and we have this thing where Billy Zabka as Johnny Lawrence basically steal his girl from him and it was sort of playing upon he's the bully in the mind of those characters and Billy, at that time, we didn't know him. We reached out to reps and we got a nice thanks but no thanks. I appreciate you thinking of me but I'm not looking to sort of put on the gi and do kind of anything that sort of *Karate Kid* related at this time in my career and then, few years pass, 3 or 4 years that Josh Heald makes *Hot Tub Time Machine* and casts Billy and Matt and we end up going to set and we meet Billy there and Billy's like the reason I'm here right now is because I regretted *Harold and Kumar* so we got to know Billy, the 3 of us all got to know Billy through Josh's experience working with him in *Hot Tub*. Just knowing him and knowing kind



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of his perspective on that character played a big role in Cobra Kai. I said this story before that when we were 23, 24 years old, we bought the new Karate Kid special edition DVD and the 3 of us, like I said, in our early 20s living in LA and we watched all the special features on that and that was the first time that I saw an interview with Billy Zabka where he was saying in his mind, he didn't view himself as a villain in that movie. He viewed himself as another kid in high school who had his own desires and his own dreams and he maybe was degenerate in the past but he was saying at the beginning of the movie, I'm an ex-degenerate. I'm turning over a new leaf. He was going to try to mend fences with his girlfriend Aly and get back together with her, this girl that he loved and then this new kid came to town and got in the way of all that and in his mind, this kid sort of ruined his plans. They just had conflict. It wasn't like one was the bully and one was the good kid. In his mind, they were just 2 kids that had their own stories and hearing Billy talk about that, all those years ago added another layer in the minds of Hayden, Josh and I when we thought about Karate Kid and eventually, Cobra Kai.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Anyone who's seen Cobra Kai knows that you didn't just flop to the other direction. Instead of saying Daniel had his moment in the sun, his time to be a hero, let's make Johnny the hero. It's much more balanced and I'm curious what led to that?

Jon Hurwitz:

Our thought was we always loved Daniel LaRusso also and we thought that there's something interesting in story telling especially in television where you are with characters, ideally for seasons at a time, where the world isn't black and white. It's funny because people, at first when we were selling the show, because Hayden, Josh and I, we all come from the world of comedy, well, is this a comedy-related show? Yes and no. it's a comedy but it's also a drama and it's also an action piece and it's all different sorts of things in very much the way these televisions these days can be excellent in the sense that you don't have to be pigeon-holed as one thing because life isn't one thing. Sometimes in life, there's tragedy and sometimes in life, there's comedy. You have a wide range of emotions and the same thing can be said for characters and when you look at Johnny Lawrence and Daniel LaRusso, we already know that there's reasons to root for Daniel LaRusso. We shouldn't make it aware like suddenly he's not the guy that we knew. Well, he's the guy that we know who's worth rooting for. The guy that we knew of, Johnny, was less obvious to root for so our agenda in that first episode of the series is give people a reason to root for Johnny too and the effect of that is Daniel LaRusso, in his eyes, is the villain so there's certain people who watch the show who will just like I'm team Johnny, screw Daniel and have that kind of mentality but when writing the show, we view them both as protagonists. Both of them are people, frankly, many people in our show are the protagonist now but that doesn't mean that they're not the antagonist to another character on the show or that they do things that are wrong or they make mistakes but that's the way people are and I think we wanted to make sure that you see the good in both and the bad in both.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course, this is a martial arts show so we tend to talk about martial arts with martial artists so I want to talk about the martial arts in the show. One of the things that struck me is the choreography is very simple but very spot on. I've trained at a lot of different martial arts schools and people are, they're not very good at doing these techniques and they're finding their way through it and I'm sure, I'm not the only one that watches as an instructor and feels both the frustration of watching people try to find how to do these movements with their body but also some acknowledgement, some familiarity and I'm guessing that, too, was something that was important for you.

Jon Hurwitz:

It was, it was. Even though Hayden, Josh and I were not martial artists, we knew we're doing a show about martial arts and you want people like you to watch the show and see an authenticity and enjoy it on those levels as well and it all comes down to our fight choreographer and stunt choreographers. First we started off with Hiro Koda who is a legend in the business, done tons of film and television over the years. He was trained by his father and Karate Kid was a hugely important film in his childhood so for him to come on the show, it was a dream come true to be able to choreograph fight scenes from the perspective of Miyagi-do karate and Cobra Kai karate and what makes them different and giving each character their own unique flourishes that makes sense given their personalities and all that and starting season 2, it was Hiro and his wife, Jahnel Curfman, who is also a fantastic stunt performer and now, stunt coordinator. The two of them, we have so much martial arts on the show and there's so much going on at all times and the schedules are tight so both of them are leading the charge and they have just an amazing team of martial artists who are well trained and they know everybody in the field and they put a lot of thought and energy into making sure that these fights are authentic and that everything looks really good. Hayden, Josh and I, we write the stories. We're telling the stories sometimes through martial arts and we'll write in the script sort of the kind of shape of a fight scene but it's really Hiro and Jahnel that make each one unique and cool and work with these actors. The thing that's amazing on our show, very few people actually knew martial arts coming in. Billy did but it had been a while since he'd been in the dojo but pretty much everybody else is learning from scratch and most of what you see on camera are the actors. We have an amazing stunt team and we'll cut to shots of some performers when we have to but it's a testament to the hard work that the actors put in and Hiro and Jahnel and that team put in to make it look as strong as it does.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Within the world of martial arts, there are a handful of movies, I would say really three, that martial arts instructors can point out and say this movie had a significant impact on enrollment and thus, generationally responsible for martial arts growth, if not growth, maintenance depending on how you look at it and Karate Kid, of course, is one of those films. Anyone who had a school in the early 80s knows that Karate Kid led to students if, assuming, you taught students. There's a responsibility there



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then to the martial arts community and though you're not immersed in it yourself, it really sounds to me that you're much more sensitive to it than most people would be not being a martial arts practitioner. How often do the 3 of you talk about martial arts outside of the show and how, I guess, martial arts maybe has changed or, I think you know where I'm going with this, I might not be using the right words to pose the question.

Jon Hurwitz:

We talk about it mostly in the writers' room. I think we're drawn to the philosophies and we talk a lot about there's a Miyagi-do sort of philosophies and the Cobra Kai philosophies on our show and I think that we'll talk a lot about is that there's value in both sides in terms of the mentality. There are people who need to be more aggressive in life to get where they need to be so some of the Cobra Kai philosophies are valuable and there's people who need a little bit more peace and thought and balance in their lives that could really use the Miyagi-do philosophy so we'll talk about those elements in terms of just approach to life and how there's a lot of value in all that. In terms of the specifics in martial arts, we'll talk about how it's used in entertainment from it being real to different film techniques that take it to levels that are not realistic and all that kind of stuff but our whole thing is really starting with the mental side of all of it and working with Hiro and Jahnel on the physical side.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Martial arts on TV is kind of a tough industry. Into the Badlands did it's best, unfortunately got canned. Depending on how you view Iron First, the rest of the Defenders shows were pulled from Netflix and that kind of leaves you guys until , at least, the Walker Texas Ranger reboot. Does that pressure within the industry? Do you feel that or do you consider Cobra Kai to be different enough that it's forging its own path?

Jon Hurwitz:

I think we view it forging its own path. I think that we have a show that is a lot of things at one and martial arts are a component of it but what's so great about the Karate Kid is you don't have to be a martial artist to love Karate Kid to get emotionally what that movie is throwing down and to be invested in this whole world component of that final tournament. We view it's a sports TV show, it's a coming of age TV show and in an honest and unique way that only people who existed in, had the Karate Kid film in their experiences specific but there's universal themes for those characters of those ages and we have the teenage characters and all the kinds of challenges that just young people go through in our modern time so we're using these dojos as a way to take a look at other issues that people have in their lives and like I said before, a lot of it is thinking about their philosophies of life and the actual fighting is just a portion of it. In terms of feeling a responsibility or pressure, we only feel responsibility of telling an honest story that people are going to connect with and when it comes to things like the authenticity of



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martial arts, those are things that are important to us so we make sure to surround ourselves with the people who are going to make sure that we're doing justice for that segment of the audience.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As beloved as the Karate Kid is among martial artists, there's a person that was involved in Karate Kid who may be even more beloved and that's Fumio Demura and I'm wondering if there's been any conversation that you're able to talk about any attempted involvement. I'm sure I would catch a lot of flak if I didn't pose this question so...

Jon Hurwitz:

To be honest, no. When reaching back to people involved in the franchise, it's Robert Mark Kamen who is the initial writer of the Karate Kid and the Karate Kid is his story. He was a kid in New York city, bullied young guy who learned martial arts and had a close relationship with his sensei so when we're leaning on the past, we're speaking with him. There's Pat E. Johnson who's obviously a legend in the martial arts community who was the stunt coordinator in the original film and he was actually the referee in the big match in that final fight. I've never actually spoken with him but I know that Martin Kove and Billy Zabka are still in touch with him but no, in terms of people from the past Karate Kid, those are the people that we've leaned on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so what's coming? This is the point in the conversation where I usually ask the guest, here we've talked about what was and what is and what's coming. Now, of course, that conversation is a little bit different with you as we're talking about Cobra Kai but I'd like to talk about not just Cobra Kai but about you because you're spearheading this. Who you are contributes to what the show is and without you, the show doesn't exist and even if we can make an argument for shoehorning somebody else into your role, the show becomes different so if you're willing to give us an insight into you and not Cobra Kai, maybe that satisfies some of the listeners for what we might be able to expect.

Jon Hurwitz:

With Cobra Kai, we're eager for people to see season 3. Season 3 is ready to go. It's in the can and it takes things to a whole new level. Anyone who's watched the first 2 seasons of the show knows that a lot of big stuff happened in the Season 2 finale and a lot of characters are at low points but season 3, we talk about sort of looking to your past to find your future is sort of a big theme in the season so without giving too much away, that's a big theme and you'll see Daniel LaRusso does return to Okinawa in season 3 and I think that's something a lot of fans are looking forward to but we will, I'm not sure when this is airing exactly, but we're few weeks away probably from the world kind of learning more about the release plan for season 3 so eager on that. As for me, Hayden, Josh and I, Hayden and I worked on our careers together since the beginning. We were friends in high school, we both went to college for



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separate things and in the middle of college decided to write a screenplay together and try to sell that and try to pursue a Hollywood career as opposed to the other things we were pursuing in life and we're lucky enough to have that happen and Josh, I've said this, is a close friend of mine in college. He moved out afterwards to pursue the same things and we've worked separately through our careers, Hayden and I and Josh were separate but Karate Kid, our passion for the Karate Kid and Cobra Kai brought the 3 of us together and now the 3 of us have a company together called Counterbalance Entertainment and Counterbalance is actually the name of the 5th episode of season 1 of Cobra Kai and now, the 3 of us have a company together where we're developing other TV shows about some that we're the main writers on and others that are projects that we can be helping other writers along with their own passion projects but, as I go forward I think, the goal is to just be productive and have several TV shows on the air and movies going at the same time and before this whole pandemic thing came down, we were on the verge of being on a movie set for a movie we're producing and we're working on a writers' room for another TV show called Obliterated and everything's been on hold like everyone else's life out there. Things are on hold but we're using this time to continue being productive and we can't wait to get back on set and get back out there and find more entertainment for everyone to watch.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you think you'll ever explore that idea again? Was the movie, was the Karate Kid movie, the Cobra Kai movie, I guess, you set aside? You think you'll pick that back up?

Jon Hurwitz:

The Cobra Kai movie became this TV show and we're better off for this version of it. I think the thing, that's why Hayden and I made the movie American Reunion which was the American Pie reunion movie so that was another example that Hayden and I were fans of the movie, American Pie, we were in college when that came out. It was up our alley and we got the opportunity to do their reunion movie and what we found when making a 90-minute movie, especially a movie like that that had such a large cast, there was always a desire to have that next generation of characters on that movie and be able to sort of dig deep with them. There's no real estate for that in a 90-minute story and if we were doing Cobra Kai as a movie, I fear that we would have to do a more black and white version where Johnny is the hero and Daniel is the villain without being able to kind of explore both sides. I'm not sure and certainly wouldn't have the room to explore a wide array of different kinds of kids in that kind of a movie. Maybe you'd have a Miguel character but you wouldn't have all the rest of the kids so with making the Cobra Kai TV show, we've been able to do the things that we wanted to do in that movie but do so much more.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. It's utterly magic. I remember watching the first season and telling everyone I could. It's perfect and granted, I'm as close to the ideal demographic as you get. I'm 40, I grew up with the movie,



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started martial arts when I was young, definitely bullied and I can identify with so much in that show and it really struck a chord for me so personally, I want to thank you and my thank yous to the rest of your team because it's something really special that you've put together and we've talked about it on this show quite a bit because it's so special.

Jon Hurwitz:

Very much appreciated. It's something that's special to all of us. It's funny. I was thinking about this the other day. We're blessed and lucky that we get to be the people who are continuing the Karate Kid story. That we get to work with the characters Daniel and Johnny and even Mr. Miyagi, Sensei Kreese, these characters that had such a big impact in our lives and the lives of people all over the world but we view ourselves just as a part of a larger community that loved the Karate Kid who carry the lessons of the movie or just the movie itself forward in their own unique way whether you're a martial artist, you're training other students because you were inspired by Karate Kid in that way to people who do fan art, not just for Cobra Kai but the Karate Kid and you see like a few weeks ago, I saw a beautiful painting of Mr. Miyagi. Cobra Kai is our contribution in this community of people who were impacted by that film 30-some odd years ago with people that continue to be impacted by that film to this day and so, for us, making Cobra Kai is making something that we know, if we would love it then we hope that others would love it as well and it's been amazing seeing reactions these last few years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One more thing before I let you go because here on martial arts radio, we're really story-driven and here is this story, we're talking about Cobra Kai and I'm wondering if you might have a behind the scene, something that the world doesn't really know about that you'd be willing to share with us. Could be funny, could be inspiring, whatever that might be.

Jon Hurwitz:

That's a tough question because there's so many things. Yeah, I'll talk a little bit about Marty Kove. It's so funny, these characters that you watch all these years. Sensei Kreese is basically Darth Vader. He's basically just pure evil and he's somebody that many of us as children were scared of and it's the opposite of who Marty Kove is as a man. He's so much fun. He loves to joke around. He's just got this great sense of humor and it's fun when there's somebody who has played with an iconic character and fully 100% embraces it. The first time I met Marty, Hayden, Josh and I had dinner with him at this restaurant in Los Angeles called Dan Tana's which is this classic restaurant that's been around for many, many years, '30s or '40s or something like that and the first time we're having dinner together, I wanted to have a steak and he wanted to have veal parm and I kind of wanted veal parm and he kind of wanted steak so the first time I met Marty Kove, we shared a meal. We ordered 2 dishes and I ordered the Dabney Coleman steak and he ordered the Jerry Weintraub which is the veal parm and Jerry Weintraub, of course, produced the Karate Kid so from that moment on, when I got to meet Sensei Kreese and go



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half-siblings like we're a couple and share 2 dishes with him, I think at that moment, my life had reached peak surrealness and it's been a blast ever since working with him and Ralph and Billy and these 3 guys who've lived with the Karate Kid all these years could not be more of a pleasure to work with. The chemistry between all of them and just the energy that they bring on set and the warmth that they bring to the new cast, it really does feel like family and I think that when we're on set, I think people feel that and it's a pleasure being part of this group where on set it's not just the cast on camera but the crew behind the scenes, people are wearing their Cobra Kai gear and their Miyagi-do gear. We're all in as a group making the show and I think it comes from, it wouldn't be that way if Ralph, Billy and Marty weren't the men that they are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a great story. Thanks for sharing that. As we wind up here, we often ask the guest how they want to send this out but I kind of want to corral this a little bit. There are a lot of lessons that you can take from any of the movies from the show, from that entire universe but within Cobra Kai, within the 2, if you want to look to season 3 where we haven't gone yet, that's fine but if you want to pull one lesson out of that and a moment that goes with it, that maybe you would want to leave the audience with as we fade out here, what would that be?

Jon Hurwitz:

I would just say and this is sort of the approach to the show from the beginning, I think you feel it in many scenes in the show is that concept that everyone has a bully in their life. You don't know where people are coming from. I think that, at times, especially these days where the world is polarized in a lot of ways and things are brought down to a tweet or a comment on the internet or people are living in extremes in their head a lot of times and don't look at what's going on in the lives of others or look at other people's perspectives and I think that's a big theme that you see in Cobra Kai is trying to see both sides of a character and having characters eventually start to understand one another. I think that going forward as a society, I think the more we can look to find commonality rather than have knee-jerk reactions of anger or hatred towards others and take that step back and try to understand one another, the better off we all are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like I promised, a good conversation about something that's pretty important and, if nothing else, something that I'm very passionate about. Mr. Hurwitz, thank you for your time. Thank you for the work that you have done and are doing and I hope we can talk again as I am blown away with everything going on with Cobra Kai. If you want to check out the show notes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We've got photos, we've got videos, we've got links, transcripts and newsletter sign ups and links to guests' social media, it's all over there. There's a ton of stuff. Go check it out and if you're willing to support everything that we're doing here, you've got some choice. Go to whistlekick.com, use the code



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