

arts. It wasn't set up that way. The martial arts were always taught from a loving family point of view in the Asian countries. It was always a nurturing process that went on. The student and the teacher became father and son. There are a couple of my students who actually call me "father." They call me for advice and I take care of them. They're my kids, right?

I charge movie companies for the work I do, but I charge nothing for my lessons. All the students I teach, like Arnold and those guys, they don't pay a cent.

Now I don't mind sports competition in the martial arts, like kickboxing and shootboxing. I went to Thailand after hearing for years and years how great the Thai boxers were...that they had beaten kung-fu masters..that they'd fight anybody and kill them.

Well, I went to Thailand to do a film with Michael Landan. I was teaching Michael at the time. I went to the biggest promoter in Thailand and said, "Find me a fight. I'd like to fight your best Thai boxer with no rules. No gloves, no nothing, let's just do it."

I was there for three months and I couldn't get a fight. They wanted to play their game. I admitted that they'd kill me in Thai boxing, because I'm not a Thai boxer. You put the gloves on me, you take away ten of my weapons. You tell me that I can't throw you and you take away another weapon. Each thing you take away from me, you're limiting my art.

And the age-old controversy about a boxer fighting a martial artist is completely ridiculous. We've got locks, throws and everything else. I've fought boxers before, even with gloves on. I used my feet and throws. But it all gets down to one thing. Sport versus reality.

The same with movie fighting. I try to keep it as realistic as possible. They tell me that the [film] fights have to last longer. But in reality, most of my fights have lasted three or four seconds. Any longer than that and it's a brawl.

So we walk that fine line of reality in fiction on the show. But I think what's different on this show from the first one is that Kwai Chang isn't traveling; he's staying in one place.

IKFP: So you feel the martial arts have lost the family orientation?

Vendrell: I would say yes. There's too much competition in the arts and not enough cooperation. Like the business of secret teachings. I'll never support anything that cuts knowledge off from people.

For instance, the Gracie brothers saying they are the greatest fighters and they would take on all challengers. This is complete nonsense because I, in front of fifteen guys, have said, "You and me...let's go do it right now in the parking lot." And the guy wouldn't do it.

There's nothing wrong with promoting things. I understand that's where magazines make money. But this is one reason why I refuse to do magazine interviews most of the time. I really feel that love, peace and harmony is what we should try to promote through magazines. But to say that someone is the deadliest man in

the world... Well, on any given day, there's a man picking corn in Iowa that could kick every martial artist's ass, you know. On any day, anyone can get whipped. We've seen it with boxers, with wrestlers, and with martial artists.

That's why if we promote the arts with love, peace and harmony, I believe that we'd move ahead. But right now, that's not happening.

We have an awesome responsibility as martial artists. We're in a new age of martial arts right now. Martial arts are being taught right now more than at any other time in the history of mankind. Yet, the direction that they're going is toward sport competition — like in kickboxing and tae kwon do — which is not truly the art.

IKFP: When David started on the first *Kung Fu* show, he had no knowledge of kung-fu?

Vendrell: None whatsoever. Since then, he's studied with Kam Yuen, Rob Moses and myself. He's had a lot of teachers. One thing great about David is that he's truly an artist. He's always free. He learns one thing from one teacher, and something from another. He doesn't lock himself into one style.

That's what I try to bring out in the show. One week you'll see him do a double jump kick and the next week he'll use pressure points. We go to bring out all the systems that David has studied.

IKFP: How do you explain that love, peace and harmony is the proper way now when, as you came up, you were street fighting?

Vendrell: Because I was taught love, peace and harmony in the beginning, but I didn't understand what my teacher was teaching me. It was like giving a neutral country a nuclear weapon and saying, "Don't test it." I wanted to test myself. And at sixteen years old, I didn't have a clue.

When I started tasting blood, I knew what fighting was all about. It wasn't so much me against my opponent. It was me against myself.

The guys that I was fighting were men and I was just a kid. That's why I didn't do interviews for a long time, because I thought people would find me out. The only guys that knew what I was doing was Gene LeBell and [pro wrestler "Rowdy"] Roddy Piper, who did the same thing.

You go undercover. You don't want people to know who you are. They are angry about the things you did.

IKFP: Was it like in the Van Damme movie, *Lionheart*?

Vendrell: Not like the movie, but like the character he played. That happens, still. It has been happening for hundreds of years.

IKFP: It's a well-hidden secret if it still goes on.

Vendrell: Well, it's for big money. And whenever there's money... Just like pitbull fights, cock fights — how many of those have you been to. They're out there.

Usually, when I was fighting I was one of the final fighters. There'd be a pitbull fight or a cockfight the fight before [mine].

I did it, one, for the money. And I did it because I enjoyed hurting people at the time. I was frustrated and I didn't know what I was gonna do for a living. At the time, I was illiterate; I couldn't read. I didn't learn to read until I was eighteen.

It was just a release. And once I realized that I was really hurting people, I made a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn and said, "This is completely wrong."

I learned through my mistakes. That's where I evolved.

IKFP: Are you glad you went through that stage in your life?

Vendrell: Absolutely. I never regretted a single thing I've done in my life. I believe you go on the trail, see what you have to see, and you either learn from it or you die from it. Fortunately, I learned that love is more important than violence.

