

When I was 12 years old I wrote in my Intermediate school yearbook that my future goal was to become a “professional parkour guy”. At this point in my life, I had probably spent more time jumping, running, and doing flips than walking. Thanks to Flow Academy of Motion opening close to my home in Auckland I was able to do all this with an appropriate level of skill, precision, and, of course, safety.

It was at Flow where I first met Min Windle. Dion Dautre (Managing Director of Flow) had made contact with me because Min was looking for someone “small and pale who could do parkour”, and I happened to fit that criteria. My audition with Min involved me running around, up over blocks, jumping and flipping off them. I showed off my variety of flips as Min filmed me. I was excited to hear that she would be showing these to the film producers. I got the job.

Being Christian Convey’s Stunt Double on the Pilot of ‘Sweet Tooth’ changed my entire world. On top of school, or instead of many times, I would be out at the Film Studios for costume fittings, training with Min at various places around Auckland, or heading out to Bethells Beach to trial some locations for stunts. Fourteen-year-old me loved being on set and training with the team of ‘Stunties’. I loved the conversations about the industry and their stories about different films they had been involved in. I was a sponge for all the information and tried to memorise all the film lingo used on set.

My first actual days of filming were spent in Queenstown where I was flown down, put up in a hotel and looked after. It wasn’t all glamorous though, the days of filming were very long and the costume I had to wear was uncomfortable at the best of times, and straight-up painful at the worst, but I felt completely at home on set and loved being part of Min’s stunt team. On top of that, I was earning an income. It was so cool to be getting paid for something I would have happily done anyway. I was on my way to becoming a ‘professional parkour guy’.

The pilot of ‘Sweet Tooth’ was the focal point of my life for more than three months, from audition to wrap. It was not always an easy job. The days were long and I learnt quickly that the term “hurry up and wait”, is good literal advice. I realised you needed to be patient, a team player and follow directions to the letter. Some people assume stunt performers are daredevils, and that has been said to me, but a film set is definitely not a place for daredevils. Nobody wants a loose canon on set.

Working with Min was incredible and it made me determined to pursue a career in Stunts. It was also really important to me to be a member of the Stunt Guild of New Zealand. I had a lot of work to do to get there. Firstly, I was too young, at 14 I was four years away from being eligible. There were also several other things I needed to do and I used the time after the ‘Sweet Tooth’ pilot to get qualified. At the wrap party, Min advised me to train in the things I enjoyed doing. So I became qualified to ride a horse, jump from a height, be set on fire, scuba dive, use weapons and many more. I also took any opportunities that came along which included extra work, stunt work and crew work. As soon as I turned 18 I sent in my application to the Stunt Guild and was accepted as a probationary member.

All of this wouldn’t have been possible without Min’s support and guidance. Even though we have spent most of the time since ‘Sweet Tooth’ on different islands she has only ever been just an email or message away, and always ready with advice and support. I am so proud to be a member of the Stunt Guild.

Finlay Cryns