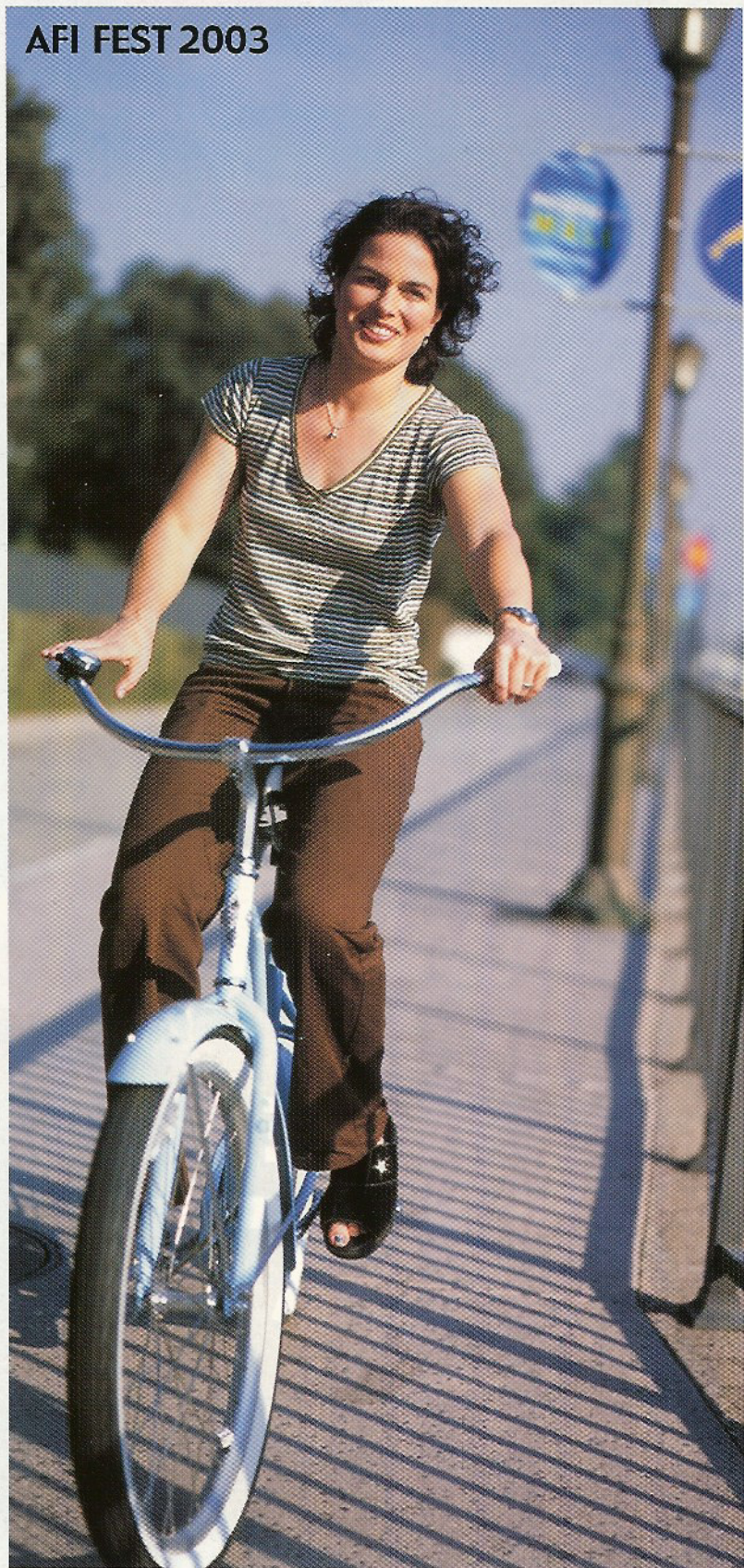


AMANDA MICHELI'S *DOUBLE DARE*

The filmmaker's new documentary makes known two of the best "unknown stuntwomen."

BY TERRY KEEFE PHOTOGRAPHY JESSE HILL HAIR/MAKEUP STEPHAN SALYERS FOR FRED SEGAL BEAUTY/KERASTASE MAKEUP BY MAC

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Filmmaker Amanda Micheli has directed two terrific documentaries to date and both examine the lives of women in somewhat unusual careers. Her first, the Academy Award-winning *Just for the Ride*, followed the lives of cowgirls on the Women's Pro Rodeo Circuit. Her second, *Double Dare*, examines the world of the Hollywood stuntwoman. Says Micheli, "I'm not afraid to say that I make feminist films and there is a purpose to them and that they're fun. It's not like I'm flag-waving and preachy. But I'm trying to make films about women who are in unconventional careers and are sort of facing challenges that are common to everyone."

In *Double Dare*, Micheli structures her film around two different stuntwomen. One, Jeannie Epper, was the stunt double for Lynda Carter's Wonder Woman a few decades ago. The other, Zoe Bell, was the stunt double for Lucy Lawless's Xena. In addition to the fact that they've helped create the action sequences of two Hollywood icons, the two stuntwomen have more than a few other things in common. Both have fallen off a few tall buildings; they've gotten hit by cars; and they've been set on fire once or twice. But in terms of their places in the industry, Jeannie and Zoe are worlds apart. When we meet Jeannie Epper, she's spent decades in the business already and has had a wildly successful career as a stuntwoman. She comes from a family who have been in the stunt business for four generations and are in fact legends in Tinseltown. Zoe Bell, on the other hand, is a very young woman who is literally fresh off the boat in Hollywood. Micheli introduces us to her on the set of "Xena: Warrior Princess," in Zoe's native New Zealand, where we discover that she started doing stunt work literally out of high school.

Over the course of *Double Dare*, Micheli follows both women, and we see firsthand some of the struggles inherent for women in the stunt field. Jeannie is an acknowledged master of stunt work, and yet she still has to make cold calls to stay employed. Meanwhile, Zoe travels to the United States for the first time, and although many who watch her think she is one of most talented young women to come along in some time, she too struggles to find work. Her story culminates with a successful audition to be Uma Thurman's double on *Kill Bill*. A triumph to be sure, but the film ends with a title card informing us that Zoe was injured at the end of the *Kill Bill* shoot and will need serious surgery. Fortunately, in the time since the documentary was shot, Zoe has recovered nicely from her *Kill Bill* injuries and she's been hired to double Sharon Stone on *Catwoman*.

The fit and beautiful Micheli is a graduate of Harvard who is also a member of the U.S. Women's Rugby Team, a sport one might imagine the fearless Zoe wouldn't mind trying. When asked if there were any parallels between her own daring life and those of her subjects, Micheli laughs, "In the middle of the film, I blew out my left knee playing rugby. I had reconstructive surgery, went back to playing, and blew out my right knee. So I had two reconstructive knee surgeries! I was on crutches when Zoe when in to audition for *Kill Bill*, so I think we could relate! Certain career hazards. We're definitely kindred spirits!" ▼

Double Dare screens Friday, November 14 at 10PM and Sunday, November 16 at 1PM, Arclight Theatre #10. For more information, please visit www.afi.com.