

A black and white portrait of Monique Ganderton, a woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark, short-sleeved top. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is plain white.

## In conversation with ... A Stuntwoman

Monique Ganderton has been working as a stuntwoman and actress for the past nine years and has already racked up a pretty impressive résumé. Performing stunts for films such as *I Robot* (2004), *Fantastic Four* (2005), *X-Men 3* (2006), *Watchmen* (2009) and *Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, coming out later this year. With an adventurous background in diving, martial arts, figure skating, snowboarding, gymnastics and equestrian show jumping, the path to an intrepid career was evident. Louise Forbes discovers it's no ordinary job.

**Flick:** What inspired you to become a stuntwoman?

Monique: I was modelling in Toronto and was on *La femme Nikita* television show doing background work. I saw her stuntwoman roll down some stairs and shoot a bunch of people. All I could think was 'Now that makes more sense!'

**Flick:** What kind of stunts can you do?

Monique: I have been called to do a variety of stunts. I am very good with a horse, and wire work. Most jobs are 'run then fall down' and sometimes those are the trickiest stunts to perform.

**Flick:** What's the hardest part of your job?

Monique: I have had the most amazing experiences on set but definitely if I am working with horses it's a new level of stress because you are caring for an animal and looking out for crew that don't have any animal experience, trying to keep everything smooth and safe.

**Flick:** What's the best part of your job/best moment?

Monique: One 'I-can't-believe-this-is-my-job' moment was getting picked up in a helicopter and dropped off on a mountain peak overlooking a glacier just outside of Whistler.

It was so beautiful. Then of course the moment after every successful gag is pretty sweet.

**Flick:** Is there a favourite film you've worked on?

Monique: I loved working on *I Robot*. That film meant a lot to me because it was my first big

so scary but so rewarding and I was hooked.

**Flick:** Have you had any life threatening moments?

Monique: I suppose anything can be life threatening so yes. But fortunately I have never hurt myself too bad. A few bruises and a small fracture. No big deal!

**Flick:** Do you find there is any gender prejudice in film making, stunt work in particular?

Monique: It's hard to prove yourself as a capable stuntwoman. It is a male dominated industry but if you do your job people will respect you. It's tough and requires the ability to take direction, use common sense and deal with criticism. A lot of people, men and woman find this difficult. That's why not everyone can work in film.

**Flick:** Have you got any tips for budding stuntwomen?

Monique: Go for it, hit the ground hard, fight low, be helpful and aware on set and learn everything that someone is willing to teach you! It's a hard business and takes a while to get 'IN', just like taking years of University. Plan on that before you are successful. It takes time but if you work at it, it will happen!

“One ‘I-can’t-believe-this-is-my-job’ moment was getting picked up in a helicopter and dropped off on a mountain peak overlooking a glacier just outside of Whistler”

movie and it really started my career.

**Flick:** How did you get into the business?

Monique: I don't know if you're ever really 'in'. It's always a fighting process to find work and keep it. It's one of those jobs where you love your work and want to work. But my first job was on a show called *The Recruit* with Bridget Moynihan and Al Pacino. It was

