

Alister Thomson, Gold Coast Bulletin
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It may have started as a part time gig but Nerang's Stunt Park has given former actor Colin Handley a new career. Picture: JERAD WILLIAMS

Nerang-based Stunt Park on Gold Coast led by Colin Handley marks 25 years and still going strong

NOT many Gold Coast businesses get to celebrate 25 years' operating let alone one as niche as Nerang-based Stunt Park.

The business was founded by ex-soap actor and taekwondo champion Colin Handley in the 1990s after returning from a successful career in Hollywood where he got to work with stars including [Jean-Claude van Damme](#) and Chuck Norris.

He had acting or stunt parts on popular 1980s shows Dynasty, Dallas, and Love Boat.

Back in Australia he decided to open his own business to fill in the time between acting gigs.

Appearances on *Neighbours* and the ill-fated *Paradise Beach* and *Pacific Drive* soaps had convinced him there was a future in acting. However, that business, like stunt work can be feast or famine.



Colin Handley with Chuck Norris.

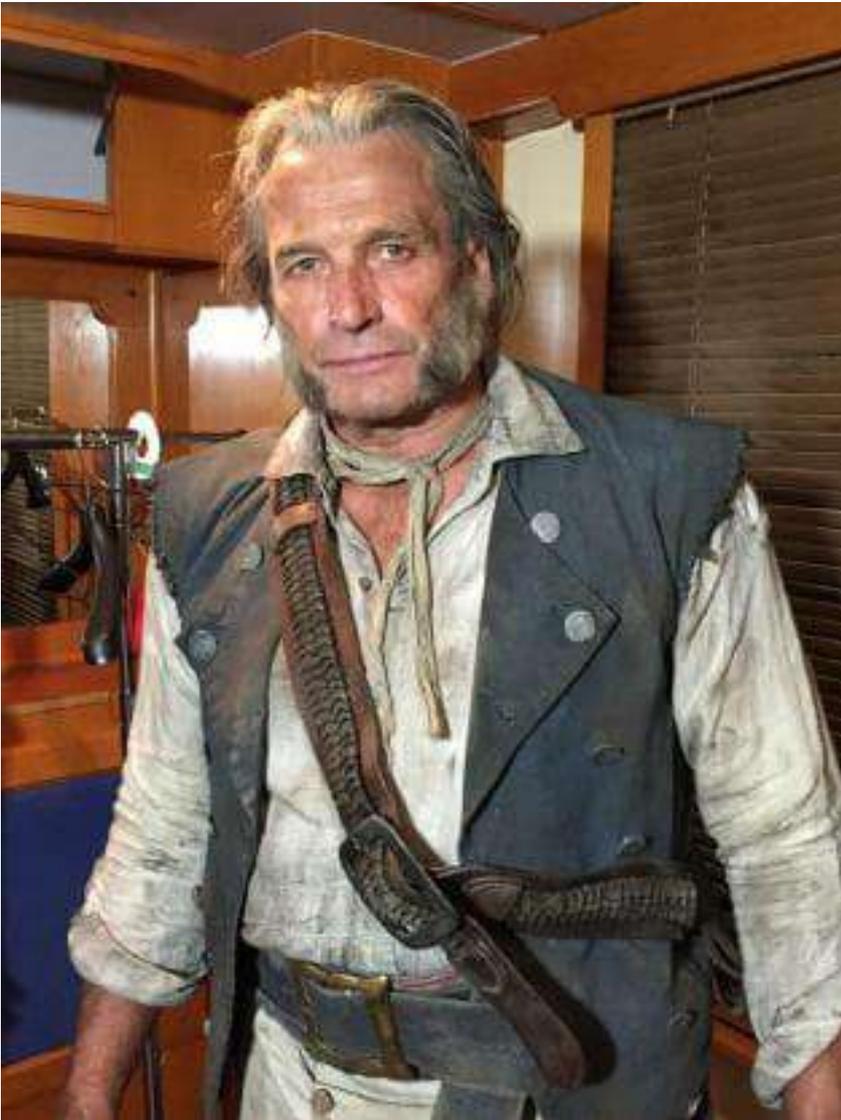
“I realised the Stunt Academy could be a business I could do as a hobby while I was waiting for my acting career to take off,” he said.

The business took off, slowly at first, with students coming from all over the world to Stunt Academy, which in its early days was based at Carrara.

“It took over basically. I could not leave the courses to go act so I put my acting career on hold. I started to get some stunt work. My most prestigious show was *Pirates of the Caribbean* where I doubled for a character called Joshamee Gibbs.”

Mr Handley said it was a struggle in the early days to gain the respect of the industry.

“I was never a stunt co-ordinator and I never pursued that path. So, I guess in the beginning I was always struggling to get their respect,” he said.



Colin Handley dressed up as Joshamee Gibbs from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series.

“I stuck with it and started producing some incredible stunt performers who have now moved up the ranks to stunt co-ordinators.”

Mr Handley said positive word-of-mouth from stunt performers ensured the business grew steadily.

“It is such a niche business, there are not many people that want to be stunt performers,” he said.

“However we were one of the few schools around the world with a decent reputation. So we were getting the lion’s share of the market even though it was small.”



Colin pictured with Cheya Handley for the ‘Spy School’ themed course.

Eight years ago he decided to broaden the appeal of the business and open it up to the public.

The first event open to the public was the half-day Stunt Academy experience.

“We pushed it as ‘Stunt Man for a Day’ and we started getting a lot of people saying their family members would love to do it,” he said.

“We still run that to this day, every other month we will do a half and full-day stunt experience.”

That grew into offering corporate team-building exercises.



Krue Henderson and Cadence Henderson tackle the commando crawl at Stunt Park.

“We would run themed events such as ‘Top Gun’ or ‘Commandos’ or ‘Corporate Stunt School’ and offer a variety of activities with challenges. It revolved around doing things they would not normally do like jumping off a tower into an airbag. That seems to be a favourite for empowering people and challenging them.”

Mr Handley said five years ago they dropped the ‘Academy’ from their name and replaced it with ‘Park’.

He said the business offers people a way to confront their fears and become empowered as a result.

“When you face fear you have to control your emotions and that control breeds courage,” he said.



Colin Handley runs successful Gold Coast business Stunt Park.

“It takes courage to jump off a perfectly good building into an airbag because it goes against all survival instincts. People go through an emotional challenge.”

He said it was similar for the obstacle course, which tests people on strength, agility and body control.

The latest experience offered is called the ‘*Warrior Within Experience*’.

Mr Handley said it was not just about physical challenges, such as abseiling and archery, but also “accomplishment, confidence and purpose”.



Chuck Norris with Colin Handley.

To that end a psychologist comes to talk to participants about building self confidence.

Mr Handley said it was targeted at women but is open to both sexes.

“It seems like women’s empowerment is necessary.”