

January 15, 2010

Denzel

Washington

THE BOOK OF ELI



Directed by

Albert Hughes (as The Hughes Brothers)
Allen Hughes (as The Hughes Brothers)

http://thebookofeli.warnerbros.com



In the not-too-distant future, some 30 years after the final war, a solitary man walks across the wasteland that was once America. Empty cities, broken highways, seared earth—all around him, the marks of catastrophic destruction. There is no civilization here, no law. The roads belong to gangs that would murder a man for his shoes, an ounce of water...or for nothing at all.

But they're no match for this traveler.

A warrior not by choice but necessity, Eli (Denzel Washington) seeks only peace but, if challenged, will cut his attackers down before they realize their fatal mistake. It's not his life he guards so fiercely but his hope for the future; a hope he has carried and protected for 30 years and is determined to realize. Driven by this commitment and guided by his belief in something greater than himself, Eli does what he must to survive—and continue.

Only one other man in this ruined world understands the power Eli holds, and is determined to make it his own: Carnegie (Gary Oldman), the self-appointed despot of a makeshift town of thieves and gunmen. Meanwhile, Carnegie's adopted daughter Solara (Mila Kunis) is fascinated by Eli for another reason: the glimpse he offers of what may exist beyond her stepfather's domain.

But neither will find it easy to deter him. Nothing—and no one—can stand in his way.

Eli must keep moving to fulfill his destiny and bring help to a ravaged humanity.



Directed by:

Albert Hughes,
Allen Hughes

Written by:

Gary Whitta

Starring:

Denzel Washington,
Gary Oldman,
Mila Kunis,
Ray Stevenson,
Jennifer Beal



Jeff Imada Stunt Coordinator
Dan Inosanto Martial Arts Tainer

Veteran stunt coordinator Jeff Imada ("The Bourne Ultimatum," "Fight Club") orchestrated the film's explosive confrontations to reveal the breadth of Eli's hard-won survival skills. "In 'The Book of Eli' we're going to see some street-oriented fighting. There will be a lot of weaponry, some knife fighting, sword and stick fighting; you'll see Eli using his environment to defend himself, facing multiple opponents coming at him like a pack of wolves, and some one-on-ones. Anything goes," he says.

Preparation for these brutal sequences attest to Denzel Washington's dedication. He put in months of hard work with some of the industry's best trainers to credibly achieve the fluid action the filmmakers wanted, which meant fight scenes captured in a single take and without the support of a stunt double.

"Denzel really stepped up to the plate," says Allen Hughes. "There were a lot of physically demanding scenes and we weren't cutting around it and making him look good. He really had to do it straight through and he pulled it off. It was amazing."

Working with renowned martial arts practitioner and teacher Dan Inosanto, a protégé of Bruce Lee, Imada subjected Washington to what he calls "total immersion." It was a discipline not unfamiliar to the actor, who famously worked out for a year with boxing pro Terry Claybon for his Oscar-nominated role as middleweight champion Rubin "Hurricane" Carter in "The Hurricane" and has continued to use the sport to keep in shape. "We put Denzel through a crash course in all different aspects and techniques of fighting and pulled it all together for the final result, which is a combination of various different styles of marital arts and hand-to-hand combat skills," says Imada.

From Washington's perspective, it represented an opportunity. "I was fortunate to work with experts like Jeff and with Danny, one of the great masters of martial arts. It was challenging and a lot of fun to train with these guys in the dojo and I have the utmost respect for what they do. Together, we worked on a fighting style for Eli that was an amalgamation of skills he would have developed the hard way, on the road."

"Denzel also learned to expertly handle a blade as if it was an extension of his arm," says Albert Hughes. Eli's weapon of choice was originally conceived as a Samurai-style sword but Washington and the Hughes brothers opted for a shorter, machete-hybrid design, a less formal design that better suited the lone traveler's circumstances, something he could easily conceal under his backpack and grasp quickly when needed.

Both the look and function of Eli's eclectic arsenal and fighting style are part of his character. Forced to travel light, he must use everything he has learned and everything he has collected along the way to maximum affect—whether to get him through the day or to serve his greater purpose. This pragmatic approach extended from the performances to production design, from wardrobe to props. In Eli's hands, a knife is not only for self-defense but for hunting and cleaning.

Eli's response to the highwaymen, Carnegie's hit-men and others who confront him is likewise instinctive and visceral and calls into play all of this accumulated knowledge. "He had to be able to face down his adversaries with proficiency but not appear to be trained in any specific system," says Imada, who strove to organize each scene as if unchoreographed, "where people are grabbing and pulling at him, punching and kicking him all at the same time." Says screenwriter Whitta, "It's essential that Eli wasn't a combat veteran or some supersoldier who would already have remarkable skills. We wanted him to be a nobody, an Everyman. Through him and what he's able to do, you see how people would have to adapt to stay alive. Denzel understood that audiences would have to buy these fight scenes to buy into his character and the story."



Jeff Imada, Denzel Washington, Dan Inosanto



Denzel Washington, Dan Inosanto



For All Sifu/Guro Dan Inosanto students, see if you can spot IIMAIA and IAMA Students and Instrucors, Tsuyohi Abe, Rich Cetrone and Keith Davis in The Book Of Eli coming to a theatre near you January 15, 2010.