



SAMSON VOL. 2

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THE HARD MAN

## What sort of man could list all of the following accomplishments on their CV?

- Undefeated Karate World Champion
- Film star who has worked alongside Hollywood legends Al Pacino and Pat Morita
- Writer, Executive Producer and star of the 2016 action film 'DARC'
- Trainer of the United States 'Special Weapons And Tactics' (S.W.A.T) as well as various special forces groups around the world.
- Lieutenant on ICAC federal task force against human trafficking and an advocate against this crime for over a decade.

*Answer : Action man, humanitarian, actor and writer Tony Schiena*

**SAMSON** spoke with Tony about his spectacular Karate career, his unique transition to Movie acting and his work with Special Force operators, where he tackles serious ongoing issues around the globe.

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**MATT:**

**Thank you so much Tony for this inside look into your life and career. I would like to start with asking you about your early memories in Karate. At what age did you start Karate training and how much did actually train as a youngster?**

*TONY:*

*I started at the age of 6. My father, brother and sister all did Karate so I guess I was born into it. Karate became my everything, I would do what was required of me sports wise at school, but when I got home I would train on my own and then again at night at the dojo. I had a heavy bag that I trained on, my dad erected it between two palm trees in our backyard, as well as a Makiwara attached to one of the adjacent trees that I would do focused punching on. I would also wear ankle and wrist weights when striking - I attribute my level of speed to that "weighted" training in my formative years and would recommend this technique.*

**MATT:**

**From your own experiences and what you've witnessed, what would you say are the most important physical and mental attributes a person must have to perform well in Karate?**

TONY:

*A person definitely needs dedication! At the risk of sounding cliché, it has to become a way of life. My training was extremely tough, it was traditional budo and warrior training and there would be blood on the dojo floor daily. Never quit!*

**MATT:**

**Did you focus on one particular style of Karate?**

TONY:

*I originally trained in a different style (Tenshinkan) of Karate to my family, due to a feud with the local Shotokan Karate master. Later on though when my father came round on the whole situation, he allowed me to go to the same dojo that my family had gone to. However, the condition was that I start from white belt again in Shotokan (I had been a brown belt in Tenshinkan Karate at the time).*

**MATT:**

**How would you describe Shotokan Karate?**

TONY:

*Back then it was the most powerful form of Karate. I have never been interested in belts though so starting at white belt again was not an issue for me.*



**MATT:**

**Martial Arts can shape peoples character and affect how they conduct themselves in everyday life, how has Karate changed or influenced you as a person over the years?**

*TONY:*

*Karate fosters many great values in young people. The 5 maxims are 'Character, Effort, Etiquette, Sincerity and Self Control'. I believe when these maxims are instilled in children it creates good, strong adults.*

**MATT:**

**No doubt you have many to choose from, but what you describe as being your most proudest moments of your career so far?**

*TONY:*

*I would say making the adult national karate team when I was 18 years old. Back then you could only be a first degree black belt from the age of 18 and the JKA World Karate championships was scheduled before my grading so I put on a black belt for the championships - you needed to be black belt to enter, and I was just a brown belt at the time.*

**MATT:**

**That must have been an incredible experience for you at the tender age of 18?**

**TONY:**

*Well a week before the championships I was struck in the mouth during sparring in the black belt class and suffered 8 stitches in my mouth. I still competed but I wasn't successful in terms of the outcome. However it was South Africa's first integrated national team, so for that fact I am especially proud to have been part of it.*

**MATT:**

**What other memorable moments have you had in Karate?**

**TONY:**

*Of course I would have to say winning the world open division Black Belt Kumite (fighting) title. Shihan Keigo Abe, head of the Japan Shotokan Karate Association presented me with the championship trophy. He was the founder of the shobu-ippou (one strike kill) rules of competition so it made the victory even sweeter!*

**MATT:**

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**Out of interest, did you play any other sports when you were younger and do you take part in any now?**

TONY:

*I played what was required of me at school but was always focused on Karate. Now I have very little time, I don't even have much time for Karate as I need to keep training for whatever's coming up next. If I'm asked to train a foreign military for example I need to make sure my skills are sharp for whatever I have to instruct. There's a time and place for everything though. As a child when you have time to train all day, then just train if that's what you love doing! Free time starts to dissipate as you grow older and more successful.*

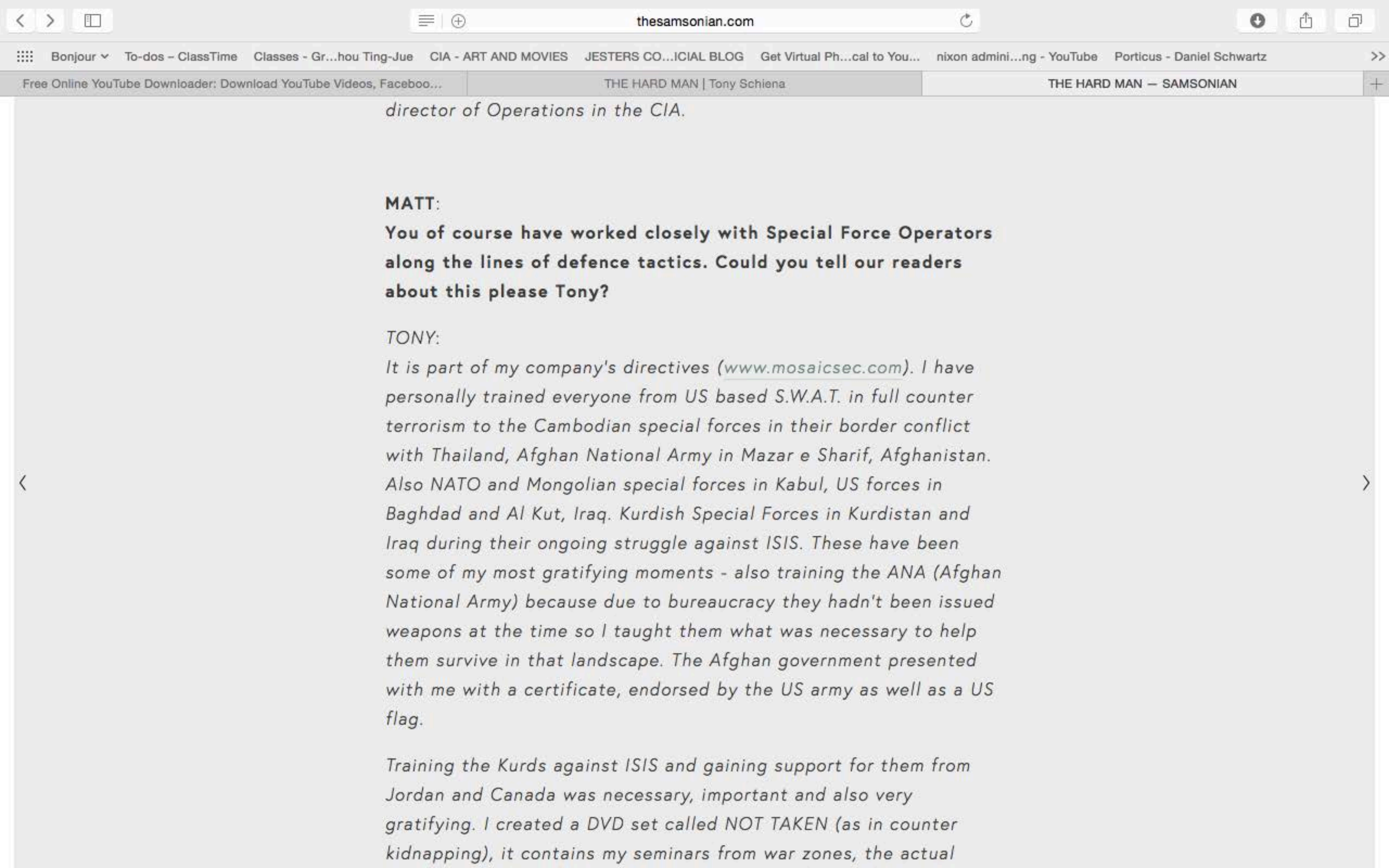
**MATT:**

**Who would you say has influenced you most throughout your life?**

TONY:

*I've always had older, experienced and obviously wiser mentors. I strongly believe in that. They advise you without any hidden agenda or the jealousy you may experience from your peers. I've had many mentors over the years in the various disciplines of my life. I would advise to find the best in the field that you are working in and get them to advise and help you. As a child it was my Karate instructors and today, in the security sector I have a mentor who is a former*





*director of Operations in the CIA.*

**MATT:**

**You of course have worked closely with Special Force Operators along the lines of defence tactics. Could you tell our readers about this please Tony?**

*TONY:*

*It is part of my company's directives ([www.mosaicsec.com](http://www.mosaicsec.com)). I have personally trained everyone from US based S.W.A.T. in full counter terrorism to the Cambodian special forces in their border conflict with Thailand, Afghan National Army in Mazar e Sharif, Afghanistan. Also NATO and Mongolian special forces in Kabul, US forces in Baghdad and Al Kut, Iraq. Kurdish Special Forces in Kurdistan and Iraq during their ongoing struggle against ISIS. These have been some of my most gratifying moments - also training the ANA (Afghan National Army) because due to bureaucracy they hadn't been issued weapons at the time so I taught them what was necessary to help them survive in that landscape. The Afghan government presented with me with a certificate, endorsed by the US army as well as a US flag.*

*Training the Kurds against ISIS and gaining support for them from Jordan and Canada was necessary, important and also very gratifying. I created a DVD set called NOT TAKEN (as in counter kidnapping), it contains my seminars from war zones, the actual*

*footage of me teaching special forces from Iraq and Afghanistan to ISIS front lines to the conflict between Cambodia and Thailand. I made it about 2 years ago and haven't released the DVD, perhaps I will soon though ([www.not-taken.com](http://www.not-taken.com)).*



**MATT:**

**So in relation to Martial Arts, would you say you have any people that you look up to?**

*TONY:*

*The old traditional Karate masters are my 'idols', like Masahiko Tanaka.*

**MATT:**

**What words of advice would you give to somebody who wants to pursue a career in Karate?**

*TONY:*

*Karate is not really a career. Sure you can open a school and teach and earn a modest living or you can adjust your style, learn a ground game and compete for money in the cage or in the ring. But Karate should be used as a way of life and penetrate and enhance all aspects of your life including your chosen career outside of Karate.*

**MATT:**

**That is fascinating to hear. If we could talk a bit about your Film career now, how did you make the transition from World Champion in Karate to the big screen; was it something you've always wanted to do?**

TONY:

*Yes I was obsessed with just about any martial arts movie that was released back then. The Karate Kid film became an obsession with me. So did Bloodsport. Its amazing how life becomes full circle, because Pat Morita who played the iconic character of Mr. Miyagi, was a dear friend of mine and I ended up buying his favorite car, his Bronco, from his wife after he passed away. Just a few weeks ago at a Super Bowl party in Bel Air, I ran into actor Martin Kove, the bad sensei from Cobra Kai who played the character of John Kreese. He is also an old friend. The first action movie I ever made was with Jean Claude Van Damme called 'Wake of Death'. I was his co-star in this film. It is a beautiful thing when life comes full circle, but as a child funnily enough I never wanted to be the actor, although I did want to be the character in the movie, this was my escapism as a child. I guess that's why my core industry is still intelligence and para-military operations.*

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**MATT:**

**You have also worked alongside the legendary Al Pacino. What was it like working with greats such as Pacino and Morita and what did you learn from them?**

*TONY:*

*Yes Al Pacino is a legend but more importantly he's a gentleman. The first movie as an actor on my credit list is 'Merchant of Venice'. I played a small role as Leonardo and Al Pacino played Shylock; I was also executive producer for 'Wilde Salome' which Pacino directed and starred in. We spent time together in London (there's a clip of him and I walking the streets of London in the movie). Pat Morita was a wonderful and gracious person and also he was very funny - in fact he was a stand-up comedian! When we first met, I was stunned that he knew very little about Martial Arts even though his character in Karate Kid encompassed everything that is Karate. This was a great testament to his acting ability.*

**MATT:**

**You have recently written the script for a new Film that is due out this year called 'DARC'. Can you give us a preview of what audiences can expect from this film?**

TONY:

*Its a dark, edgy, action thriller set in the the world of the Japanese Yakuza. There are lots of great action sequences directed by Nick Powell, the man responsible for the action scenes in The Bourne Identity, Last Samurai and Gladiator.*



**MATT:**

**It sounds great. Where did you film 'DARC' and how long did it take to produce?**

*TONY:*

*DARC was developed over many years, it's my passion project and a lot of hard, but pleasurable work went into making it. We filmed in Tokyo and Vancouver.*

**MATT:**

**What is the release date for the film?**

*TONY:*

*Currently we are looking at a summer 2016 release date.*

**MATT:**

**Did the discipline and dedication you have achieved through your Karate help you with writing the script for 'DARC'?**

*TONY:*

*The movie is not actually about Karate. However it does have a lot of action and fight scenes in it. Traditional Karate definitely disciplined me as a child and it's that discipline that kept me persevering to make a movie that I would want to go and see in the cinema.*

**MATT:**

**So if we look at your career as a whole, what would you say are your goals for the next five to ten years? Do you even look that far ahead or do you prefer to focus yourself on short-term goals?**

**TONY:**

*The security business has been very good to me and the landscape is constantly changing, We are phasing out of Iraq involvement, which is a politically dangerous environment for us and moving back towards South America and North Africa. I will continue to develop my company and be involved in missions that can help those who need it most. I have had an NGO ([www.ic3o.org](http://www.ic3o.org)) that fights human trafficking for over a decade. My fellow trustee is the current Commander of intelligence for Scotland Yard. I'd like to put more energy into projects that impact the ability of the criminal syndicates dealing in human trafficking that prey on the weak. Movie wise, I'm blessed to have been able to make DARC, my passion project. If my company (that is partnered with legendary action producer Julius R Nasso) can continue to make movies like DARC and movies of this quality and originality, I would be very happy. I'm aware that my core industry, defence contracting and making movies are two very big extremes, but it balances me out*





**MATT:**

**You are obviously extremely busy but what do you like to do in your spare time - if you get any spare time that is!**

**TONY:**

*I'm constantly traveling. Last year I had over 40 international flights, the year before that was the same as was the year before that! I'm not complaining though, I'm blessed to be able to travel the globe. Sometimes it does get a little jarring on the system - at one point last year, I went straight from the ISIS front lines to Andrea Bocelli's house in Italy, where he sang for guests in his backyard. One day you're in a war zone and the next you're in opulence. I was interviewed recently on ISIS using chemical weapons on the Kurds, but the interview was done from a beautiful hotel room in Italy and the prime time news network placed my location "Tuscany" on the screen... which must have seemed very strange to viewers! If I do ever get chance to get away I either surf as I did in Morocco last year, go diving as I did in Fiji before that or escape to my sanctuary, that I created in a small town in Italy.*

**MATT:**

**If we can just finish by jumping back to Karate Tony, what benefits can taking part in Karate give people of all ages and abilities and how would you advise someone to get involved?**

TONY:

*Besides the health benefits and the ability to defend oneself, it's challenging oneself to work to attaining perfection, persevere through tough training and defeat, to never give up, to finish and ultimately to accomplish. The ultimate aim of the art of Karate lies not in victory or defeat but the perfection of the character of its participants.*

MATT:

**And finally Tony, do you think Karate is in good shape going forward?**

TONY:

*MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) may have stolen the limelight but I think there's beauty in purity and dedication to an art that's hundreds of years old, dating back to times when there were no guns and all that fighters had were their empty hands.*

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TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TONY SCHIENA AND  
HIS PROJECTS VISIT [TONYSCHIENA.COM](http://TONYSCHIENA.COM) |  
[@TONYSCHIENA](https://twitter.com/TONYSCHIENA)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE TURNER |