

THE **ULTIMATE** MARTIAL ARTIST™



by Steven S. Long



THE ULTIMATE MARTIAL ARTIST™

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Note: Some of the text in this book originally appeared in *Ninja Hero* by Aaron Allston. This text has been revised and expanded. Most of the material in *Ninja Hero* does not appear in this volume.

Special Thanks To: To Bruce, Steve, George, and Ray, for giving me this book to work on; to Aaron, for his gracious assistance and willingness to answer questions; and to all the *HERO System* players and GMs whose interest in gaming martial arts made this book not only desirable, but necessary.

Dedication: I would like to dedicate this book to Andy “Ghost Eye” Mathews, master of gaming martial arts, creator of Couch Potato Kung Fu, selector of really bad martial arts movies, and true friend.

Additional Contributions: I owe a great deal of thanks to the following people, who answered my questions about martial arts styles, provided me with information or research material, gave me ideas for things that needed to go in this book, debated with me about the best way to do various things in the HERO System, allowed me to create my own versions of something they first thought up, or helped with play testing: Aaron Allston, Chris Avellone, Scott Bennie, Tim Binford, Garrett Charnaw, Cliff Christiansen, the commentators from the Red October BBS and America Online, Earl Cooley III, Storn Cook, John Cooper, Kim Cooper, Amy Crittenden, Mike Dean, Sean Fannon, Morgan Flo, Thom Foster, John Grigni, Scott “Classic Animes” Jamison, Greg Kerner, Eric Livengood, John Losey, Andy Mathews, Dave Mattingly, Riley McLaughlin, Rob “Underworld Animes” Miles, Greg Morero, Bryce Nakagawa, James Pinkerton, Marcus Pritchett, Bob Quinlan, Scott Sigler, Greg Smith, Geoff Speare, Steve Stone, David West, Eric Wylie, Doug Young, and, most especially, Greg “Devil’s Advocate” Lloyd and Jeff “I have a license from Japan” Mueller.

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Introduction

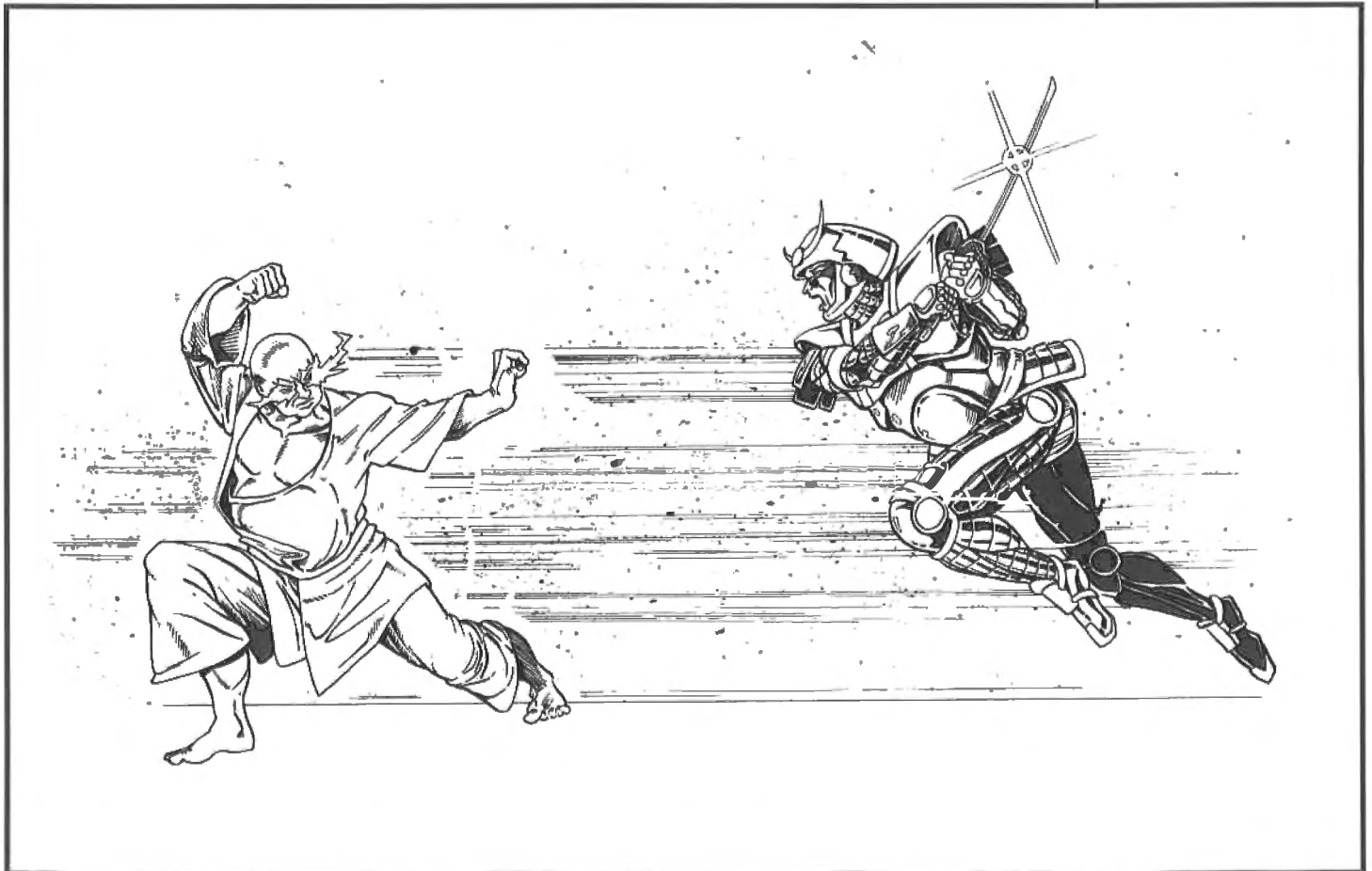
Welcome to *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, or *UMA* for short, the first book in Hero Games's "Ultimate" line of books exploring different comic-book archetypes.

Unlike the other books in the "Ultimate" series, *UMA* has a prior history (of sorts) upon which to build: Aaron Allston's genre book *Ninja Hero*, the *HERO System* book on martial arts-oriented campaigns. While the two books have much in common, as the reader shall soon see, their focus is slightly different: *Ninja Hero* concentrated primarily on straight martial arts campaigns, whereas *UMA* looks mainly at creating martial arts in genres other than just "martial arts."

How To Use This Book

The *Ultimate Martial Artist* is a complete guide to creating and using martial artists in any genre of roleplaying campaign, using the *HERO System* rules. You'll find over 100 different martial arts styles and variations, new rules for martial arts combat, rules for creating martial arts styles, over 100 martial arts weapons and much more.

Players should use this book as a reference for creating martial arts characters. Reading through the entire book is recommended, because you'll find lots of great ideas for characters in here. Any "real-world" style of martial arts you have heard of is probably listed in this book somewhere.



Gamemasters should also read all the way through this book, particularly to look at all of the new combat rules. It's important for the GM to decide which rules options will be used in his campaign, and (even more important) to tell the players about those choices. The section on Designing Martial Arts is highly recommended for creating new martial arts designed to fit your campaign.

The astute reader will quickly note that much of the most important material from *Ninja Hero* has been reprinted in this book. In some cases that material has been altered or supplemented, but in many cases it has not been. Thus, GMs and players need to decide for themselves what they wish to use from this book and what they would rather ignore. You may prefer the *Ninja Hero* way of doing something that is done differently in *UMA*; if so, go right ahead using whatever you like best—or even make up your own rules.

As you read this book, remember that some of the rules alterations, suggestions for “GMs’ options,” and similar material is made with superheroic characters in mind. Such material may not be appropriate for other types of campaigns; GMs are urged to examine the rules in this book carefully before allowing them to be used in their campaigns.

Author's Note

When this project was first announced, it was greeted in some circles with cries of trepidation and even outrage. *Ninja Hero* is widely acknowledged as one of the best, if not *the* best, supplement that Hero Games has ever published, and rightly so. Many *HERO System* gamers were disturbed by the thought of it being redone or altered in any way.

I, frankly, was one of those people. I was both flattered and honored when Hero Games offered this project to me, but the enormity of the undertaking was a little daunting. At times during the writing of the book, I felt a little like St. Jerome, as I tried to ensure that everything that I wanted to preserve came into this book intact and that every change that needed to be made or new rule that I needed to create was still within the spirit not only of the *HERO System* but of *Ninja Hero* as well.

As you will soon see, most of the changes I worked upon the material taken from *Ninja Hero* are rather

slight. Many of the martial arts styles have been altered or added to; some new martial arts design elements have been created; and a few maneuvers, such as Grab and Throw, have undergone major changes, but that's about it. I hope that the doomsayers will now be saying that their worst fears have *not* come to pass; if yours have, just keep on doing things the way you have been and ignore what I've written here.

Many of the changes herein are the result of the book's focus on creating martial arts-using characters for any genre. Based on my experience and the stories I've heard from gamers all over the country, *Ninja Hero* is primarily used as a supplement for *Champions* and other *HERO System* genres, not as a stand-alone campaign book. This is not to say that there aren't gamers out there running martial arts campaigns—there are plenty of them, and it's a good thing—but with many people interested in martial arts for superheroes and other genres, it was important to provide source material and ideas for them to use, even if it meant making a few changes to what is otherwise “sacred text.”

The Ultimate Martial Artist is by no means a repudiation or rejection of *Ninja Hero*—far from it. Instead, I think you will agree with me that it is in fact a tribute to a great roleplaying supplement that has provided so many of us with so many hours of gaming fun. After all, how many other Hero Games books have inspired this sort of extension and revision?

On that note, let me echo something that I said earlier—I owe Aaron Allston a great deal of thanks for his assistance with this project, which mainly consisted of stepping aside and letting me do the work as I preferred. I doubt I could have been as sanguine had our positions been reversed. His gracious assistance, clever ideas freely expressed and willingness to answer my seemingly endless stream of questions is deeply appreciated. Thanks, Aaron! I hope I wasn't *too* much of a “Consarned Whippersnapper.”

I also owe a debt of thanks to the many “consultants” who helped me with this project; their names are listed in the “Additional Contributions” section on the dedication page. Their input on how different martial arts styles and maneuvers work and on what rules needed to be changed or added to the game system was invaluable. All mistakes are, however, entirely my own.



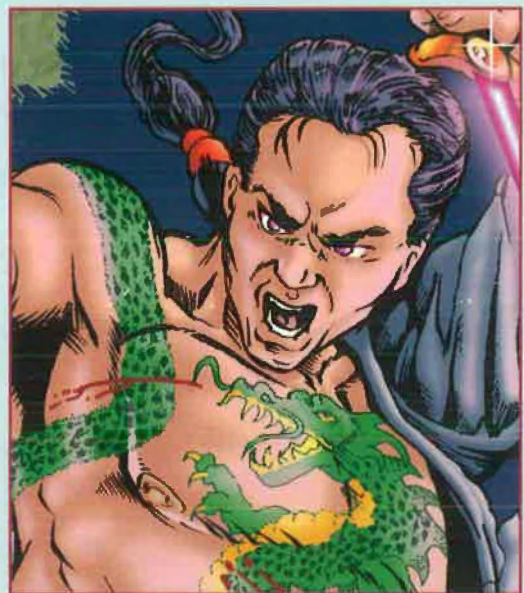
The Secrets Of Martial Arts Revealed

The Ultimate Martial Artist™ is a comprehensive martial arts sourcebook that compares and contrasts martial arts styles from around the world. More than just a reference book, *The Ultimate Martial Artist* gives you everything needed to create and play a master of fighting arts.

Designed for any genre, *The Ultimate Martial Artist* presents descriptions, illustrations and game mechanics for over a hundred martial arts styles. Complete rules for creating martial arts maneuvers and styles are included. The extensive lists of weapons, equipment and special abilities combine to help you create detailed and unique martial artists. When your martial artist enters battle, the detailed combat rules handle any type of martial arts situation.

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- New combat rules
- Detailed rules for designing martial arts maneuvers and styles
- Secrets of the ninja clans
- Secret martial arts societies
- Guidelines for using martial arts in different genres
- Notes for use with *Champions*®, *Fantasy Hero*® and all *Hero System*® games
- Conversion notes for using martial arts in popular game systems
- And more!



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