



Stunts such as this which feature in *Mad Max* are said to be the most spectacular ever filmed

LIFESTYLE

Dicing with death no gamble

By CAMILLA BEACH

IF *MAD MAX* had been made in Hollywood, Grant Page would be in clover.

He's the man who co-ordinated and, in some cases, performed the stunts, reckoned by many to be the most spectacular ever filmed. As it happened, *Mad Max* was made on a small budget in Australia. And Page ended up out of pocket.

Driving to the location one morning, he crashed his motor-bike and broke a leg. Employing additional stuntmen cost him \$2000 in excess of the \$10,000 he was being paid.

His next mistake was more costly. The film ran over budget and he was offered the choice between more cash, a percentage of the profits and the cost of fixing his Mercedes. He opted for the repair work. The film will make a mint, largely due to his stunts for which Page refuses singular credit. "I was just a link in a strong chain." Yes, he'd had faith in the film. But no, he's not a gambler.

That statement might ring hollow coming from Australia's top stuntman whose derring-do includes crashing cars, hang-gliding round skyscrapers, setting himself alight and jumping off the tops of multi-storey buildings. But Page doesn't rate his a high-risk occupation.

In fact, he insists, there's no gamble involved. He makes

darn sure of that. Not everyone, however, is convinced. Surely he takes some calculated risks? Uh, uh. He keeps one step ahead of the law of averages. He's been doing about 100 stunts a year for 18 years. Just suppose he were running even a 1 percent risk. He'd be dead, right? He isn't.

He often dies for other people, mind you, and it has to look convincing. So

scratches, bruises and sprains are par for the course, even broken noses. "I don't rate a broken nose as an injury. I've broken mine 20, maybe 30 times." He can't afford to contemplate more serious injury. "If I worried about coming out of stunts alive, I'd have a gut full of ulcers," he says.

Stunts are well-considered in advance, and all the necessary precautions taken. Other people, less fit and alert, can and do take chances. Sometimes they're lucky, sometimes they're dead.

His one serious accident happened some years ago rope-sliding down Sydney's North Head. The rope broke and he fell nearly 20 metres landing on his head. The wounds needed

Grant Page with a broken nose received driving to the set: he doesn't rate it an "injury" — he's broken it more than 20 times



118 stitches. Unconscious for five days, he also ruptured his spleen and dislocated a shoulder. Another mishap has left him with "10 feet of scars".

Page once went to South Africa to stage a fight with an 18-foot crocodile for a film sequence. The crocodile, however, had other ideas and went into winter hibernation. The animal trainer suggested using a leopard instead and Page agreed, breaking his golden rule. Never get involved with anything that frightens you. "With a cat, you can't ensure that danger doesn't exist." He was scared, and the leopard sensed it.

The intended 10-minute playtime became a three-hour fight for survival. He'll never forget the leopard's stinking breath, its snarling teeth just inches from his jugular vein, its claws dug deep into his flesh. He can laugh now — "it ruined m'suit" — but it wasn't funny at the time. Eventually, the leopard got bored.