

Dark of the Sun pressbook items

ROD TAYLOR CAN TAKE PUNISHMENT IN TOUGH ACTION

If ever there were an heroic exponent of the actor's credo, "The Show Must Go On," it is Rod Taylor, who proved himself during filming of a violent action sequence of MGM's adventure-drama, "Dark of the Sun," on location on the island of Jamaica.

The story concerns the exploits of a band of mercenary soldiers in the Belgian Congo at the time of the recent revolution, who are sent on a hazardous mission of mercy to rescue a party of civilians threatened by rebel guerillas. Taylor portrays the leader of the mission, with Jim Brown as the co-leader and Yvette Mimieux as one of the terrorized refugees.

Taylor, who is a natural athlete and a former Australian boxer, has always insisted on doing the difficult action sequences of his movies without the help of stuntmen. So when the script of "Dark of the Sun" called for him to leap twelve feet from a second storey balcony into a waiting jeep, he made the jump himself. Through no one's fault, the jeep moved off before he landed.

"As soon as my feet hit the jeep, which moved just a fraction too soon, I knew I was in trouble," the star recalled. "I took the full weight of my body on the knee and felt the tendons on the outside tear. The pain was excruciating."

Taylor shrugged his broad shoulders and rubbed his chin reflectively. "It was just one of those unfortunate things that happen now and again in this extraordinary business."

After the accident, Taylor was taken to a hospital in Kingston, where an orthopaedic surgeon diagnosed badly torn ligaments and tendons and prescribed complete rest for at least six weeks.

When the film's producer, George Englund, and director Jack Cardiff heard of this, they anticipated financial disaster. For without Taylor, "Dark of the Sun" could not proceed. But they reckoned without Rod's powers of recuperation. Within two days he was up and about, and just three days after the accident he returned to work. His left knee, which had turned into an angry mass of puffed and inflamed tissue, was still heavily bandaged, of course, but the company was able to pick up its threads without delay.

What Taylor managed to keep a well-guarded secret was the fact that, at his insistence, he had been given a daily pain-killing injection which enabled him to continue acting in front of the cameras.

ROD TAYLOR AND JIM BROWN TEAR AT EACH OTHER IN "DARK OF THE SUN" BUT YVETTE MIMIEUX GETS SOME BRUISES, TOO

It required five "takes" of the tensely realistic fight sequence between Rod Taylor and Jim Brown in MGM's "Dark of the Sun," filmed on locations on the island of Jamaica, before director Jack Cardiff was satisfied with the sequence.

Groaned Taylor, picking himself up out of the dirt after a particularly violent shoulder charge from Brown, former N.F.L. gridiron great, "And a lot of people think actors are overpaid. They should try this!"

Admittedly, Taylor has had an easier time of it on the screen prior to playing his role of the hard-hewn Captain Bruce Curry, the mercenary soldier in the new George Englund production. Based on Wilbur Smith's novel, "Train From Katanga," the story is set in the African Congo, early in the '60's, and concerns an explosively adventurous mission by a band of mercenaries to rescue a party of terrorized civilians from rebel "Simba" hands.

THESE BULLETS WERE DANGEROUS

Director Jack Cardiff recently made what must rank as the most dangerous movie shot (literally) ever filmed inside a studio for MGM's "Dark of the Sun."

With stars Rod Taylor, Yvette Mimieux and Jim Brown protected by a bullet-proof screen, two firearms experts from Britain's Territorial Army opened fire with 9mm Sterling sub-machine guns on an interior stage at MGM's British Studios.

The setting was the interior of a hotel bar in the Belgian Congo, shot up by mercenary soldiers for the movie, which tells the dramatic story of a mission by the soldiers against rebel guerillas during the Congolese civil strife.

The sequence was one of the few in "Dark of the Sun" filmed on a sound stage, the major part of the picture having been filmed on locations in Jamaica.

Commented Rod Taylor after surveying the shattered debris: "The trouble is that audiences have become so used to accepting 'fake' bullet effects in pictures that the real thing could end up looking phoney. But take it from me, there was nothing phoney about this little exercise!"

In the past he has enjoyed romantic movie romps with such glamour girls as Doris Day in "The Glass Bottom Boat," Julie Christie in "Young Cassidy" and Jane Fonda in "Sunday in New York," together with straight dramatic but non-violent roles in such pictures as "The V.I.P.s" with Elizabeth Taylor and "36 Hours" with Eva Marie Saint.

"You have to take the tough parts along with the less arduous ones," he says philosophically. "That's what puts the spice into an acting career."

Actually, "Dark in the Sun" wasn't all shooting and fighting. There was also room for some love scenes with the picture's feminine star, Yvette Mimieux, who portrays one of the civilians whom Captain Curry rescues.

It wasn't necessary for director Cardiff to introduce Taylor and Miss Mimieux when they first reported for work on the picture. Yvette had appeared opposite Rod in her very first movie, MGM's "The Time Machine,"

and the friendship they formed then has continued through the years.

"When I consider what Yvette went through before this film was finished, I really shouldn't gripe," declared Taylor. "At various intervals, she sported a gunshot wound in her forearm when she got in the way of a blank rifle shell; received a three-inch gash in her leg when she slipped on a rock in mid-stream; and suffered a sprained wrist in another sequence in which she tries to ward off the advances of Peter Carsten. Yvette's a girl who can really take it."

Although Taylor has made pictures abroad — "Young Cassidy" was filmed in Ireland, "The V.I.P.s" in England, and "The Liquidator" on the French Riviera — he prefers working in Hollywood and has reservations about the current trend of glamorizing foreign-made product.

"I think many of the so-called 'art films' are over-praised," he says. "There's no question but that some of them are vital — beautifully photographed, beautifully directed and acted. But these are the exceptions. By and large, their appeal is limited to audiences who consider themselves to be ultra-sophisticated. For simple, unadorned entertainment there is nothing anywhere in the world to come near the well-tried Hollywood formula. Give the audience something to laugh at, to cry over, to be thrilled and excited by and you've got it going for you. The moment the person who has paid for his ticket has to wonder what the movie is all about, you have lost him. That's one reason why I took this role in 'Dark of the Sun.' Nobody is going to be puzzled at what this picture is about."

Taylor has backed his convictions by establishing his own Hollywood-based production company, Rodlor, Inc., which produced the successful television series, "Hong Kong," as well as his recent film, "Chukka."

"Put your money where your mouth is" used to be a favorite phrase of mine," he laughs. "Now I'm doing just that."

Jim Brown Hates The Make-Up Powder Puff

During filming of MGM's "Dark of the Sun" on location on the island of Jamaica, one of the most fascinating sights on the set was to watch Jim Brown, former Cleveland All-American and All-Pro fullback great, squirm under the attentions of the unit make-up man, Ernie Gasser.

Fellow stars Rod Taylor and Yvette Mimieux and most of the crew would gather around a highly embarrassed Brown each morning to watch him suffer the indignity of the powder-puff and sable-bristle make-up brushes.

"What would I do if Johnny Wooten and Frank Ryan were to see me now?" wailed the gridiron star-turned movie star.