



*Steve Reeves was the world's biggest box office star in 1959, outranking Doris Day, Rock Hudson and even John Wayne.*

**Tony..** In one of your interviews you said that your ambition was to be the healthiest man in the world.

**Steve..** Well, I want to live to be 100 because if I don't make it it might be bad for my reputation. (Laughing) I am as healthy as I want to be. I haven't had any troubles. I am always very healthy and vigorous. Lots of energy when I wake up in the morning. Sometimes when I wake up in the morning I have so much energy I want to turn over a car. I don't ever do it! (Laughing).

**Tony..** How many films did you make altogether?

**Steve..** Seventeen, fifteen of which I starred in.

**Tony..** Were you under contract to Cecil B. de Mille?

**Steve..** Yes, I was under contract for three or four months to Cecil B. de Mille to play the part of Samson in *Samson and Delilah*. He had asked me to lose some weight. I had lost about 10 lbs. and didn't get the contract because they wanted to use Victor Mature as he had been in films for a long time.

**Tony..** Was *Jailbait* your first film? Incidentally it was shown on T.V. two days ago.

**Steve..** Yes, it was originally called *The Hidden Face*. That is where I got my Screen Actors Guild union card, with that part. *Athena* was my second and then *Hercules*. After *Hercules* I didn't know how I was going to do in the box office so I came back and took a regular job again for a while in public relations for the health studio. Then six months later they said, 'Come on over, it is doing real well. Let's make another movie'. When I got to the middle of the second one I had signed up for the third and fourth. When I got to the third one I signed for the fifth and sixth. I always had two to go from then on after the public had seen it. My first film *Hercules* was not only the biggest box office in the world but it was the biggest box office in the States also.

I outgrossed John Wayne and Rock Hudson who were the biggest stars at that time. For someone starring in their first film for it to be the biggest box office in the world was quite an achievement.

**Tony..** Was it true that you were offered the films that Clint Eastwood did - *A Fistful of Dollars* etc.?

**Steve..** Yes, I was. I thought to myself 'How can an Italian director shoot a Western film?' I am a man of the West. I was born in Montana, all my uncles are cowboys, have big ranches and things like that. I am a Western cowboy type of person. I wanted to see that the way it should be. So I thought to myself, 'How can an Italian director do something like that based on a Japanese film?' That was based on the Samurai picture with a Japanese director. I thought 'How could that be?' and I turned it down.

**Tony..** Were you sorry afterwards?

**Steve..** It would have been nice but I wouldn't have been the character who would go around smoking a cigarette. I don't believe in advertising unhealthy things like that. I wouldn't have done it that way anyway so it might not have had the same impact. I think that some people are made for certain roles. Clint Eastwood is perfect for that, Stallone is perfect for Rocky, I was perfect for Hercules. Each person is perfect for a certain part and will always be remembered for that no matter what they do.

**Tony..** Why do you think that you would make such an impression that would last so long? You know the way there have been so many other bodybuilders and everyone said at the time that they were wonderful but they are virtually unknown today.

**Steve..** I don't really know. Maybe it was because I had a very symmetrical physique accompanied by a noble face. Maybe that is a good combination.

**Tony..** You think that is what it was?

**Steve..** It may have been. I have no idea. Maybe it is a certain aura that you give off, a look that you have in the eye. We don't know what those things are. Sometimes a camera will pick up something and sometimes it won't. You can see a person that you talk to on the street and you see a lot of potential. Put them in front of a camera and there is a screen there. It doesn't catch it. Others may look like they haven't much personality but the screen picks up something.

**Tony..** What would you think about the look that the bodybuilders have today?

**Steve..** I think it is overdone. I believe in proportion. Every man is born with a certain size head and certain size hands. When you get your biceps looking bigger than your head it is no longer proportion.

**Tony..** Was it true that you based your measurements on Michelangelo's statue of David?

**Steve..** His assumption that the person should have the same size neck, calves and arms. That was it. It seemed to work out. I have seen other bodybuilders who achieved that and they looked great.

**Tony..** What were your measurements?

**Steve..** I had 18 1/2 inch arms, calves and neck, 52 inch chest, 29 inch waist. That was it. I wanted to achieve a 24 inch difference between chest and waist. I got a 23 inch difference. Then I went in the movies. I also wanted to have a 24 inch width shoulder to shoulder outside callipers. I got 23 1/2 inches.

I remember Armand Tanny measuring me once. If I had had another six months' bodybuilding I could have got another inch on my chest and another half inch on my shoulders and I would have achieved everything I ever wanted in life. They were the only two things I didn't achieve that I really wanted to achieve.

**Tony..** What weight were you at the time?

**Steve..** I was 217lbs. I think I won Mr. Universe at 217 and Mr. America at 213.

**Tony..** When you were seriously training to build your body how long would you train?

**Steve..** Two and a half hours, three days a week - but I mean really intense, almost hypnotic. At the beginning in three months I actually gained 30 lbs. of solid muscle. I didn't have any limitations. I didn't know that it was difficult to gain that much muscle in a short time. I looked at pictures of guys who looked like that and I thought, 'Why not?' I didn't know that it was difficult. Nobody told me that it was difficult so it wasn't.

magazine they could for years and years. I didn't want to have a picture taken of me until I was where I thought I should be. So nobody had ever seen my pictures in the magazines when the contest was on. I would be walking along the beach and they would say, 'Who are you?' and I would say, 'Mr. X.' I would be walking along the street and the other bodybuilders would be saying, 'Who is this guy that everyone is talking about? We haven't seen the guy. They call him Mr. X or something'. I did cause a big car crash there. I was walking along the street and this person in a car was looking at me. It didn't take the corner right and smashed into another car and there was an accident. It wasn't my fault, I was just walking along the street.

**Tony..** He was so busy looking at you?

**Steve..** Right.

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*Hercules Unchained with Steve Reeves in the starring role launched his film career and created a whole new genre in the world of film*

**Tony..** Was it true around the time of your Mr. America win that when you were going down the beach people used to get up and follow you?

**Steve..** Yes they did. All of my competitors had been bodybuilding for years and they had their picture in every