



Jimmy Stewart on Frank Capra!

# FILM FAX

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See page 40

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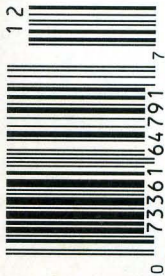
The Magazine of Film & Television

Yipe! It's "Santa Claus  
Conquers the Martians!"

**CHARLTON  
HESTON**

On Working with  
Legendary  
Director

**CECIL B.  
DeMILLE**



12



From Moses to Monkey Men

# Charlton Heston

As one of Hollywood's most respected figures, this actor led a multitude of fans thru the pages of history

Article and Interview by  
GREGORY J. M. CATSÓS

After more than 50 starring roles in films, theater, and television, Charlton Heston is still "bemused" at getting a salary for doing what he'd rather do, "more than anything else." Over the years, Heston has proved himself in a variety of roles, covering 5,000 years of past and future history, and a dozen different nationalities. As Moses he parted the Red Sea in *The Ten Commandments* (1956). As Ben Hur, he won a fierce chariot race in ancient Rome (also winning an Oscar for his role in the \$15 million epic). As Michelangelo, he painted the Sistine Chapel in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965), and played John the Baptist in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965). Heston played El Cid, the legendary Spanish hero, and, over the years, has portrayed Presidents Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, and the "voice" of Franklin Roosevelt for a TV special.

A native of Evanston, Illinois, Heston was born on October 4, 1924. When his family moved to Wilmette, Illinois, he attended New Trier High School and it was there that Heston began his long-standing devotion to the dramatic arts, participating in the school's drama training program, and playing leads in various plays. He obviously attracted attention even on that level and after graduating from high school Heston enrolled at Northwestern University on an acting scholarship taking full advantage of the school's famed drama department.

A brief hiatus from acting occurred during World War II. Heston served three years in the Air Force, mostly as a radio operator on B-52's, with the rank of staff sergeant. After his discharge, however, Heston and his wife, Lydia (a Northwestern classmate whom he married in 1944) moved to New York City, heeding the call of the Great White Way. Between trips to the theatrical casting offices, the couple supported themselves by modeling. Heston finally got his big break in 1948, making his Broadway debut as a member of Katharine Cornell's, *Antony & Cleopatra* company.

During the play's long run, Heston became one of the first Broadway actors to achieve success in television. He played leads in *Studio One* productions and other live dramatic shows. But it wasn't until 1949, when Heston played Mark Antony

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Above, Charlton Heston, veteran Hollywood hero with over half a hundred starring roles to his credit, relaxes for the camera, while behind him, a younger, albeit bearded Heston appears in one of his most memorable roles, as Moses, leading the Jews out of Egypt in DeMille's Biblical epic *The Ten Commandments*.

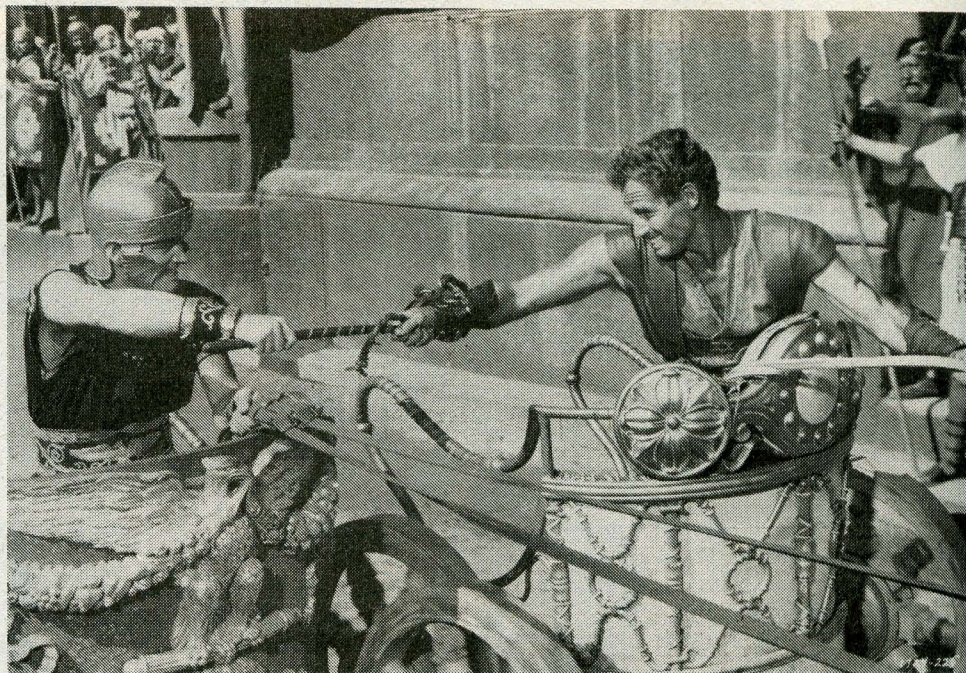


in a 16mm version of *Julius Caesar*, that he gained serious attention from Hollywood.

In 1950, Heston made his professional film debut in *Dark City*, and soon after, Cecil B. DeMille signed him for the circus epic, *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). The film won an Oscar for Best Picture of the Year, and Charlton Heston was on his way to stardom.

Heston, however, is not the kind of man to remain isolated within the acting profession. In 1978 he received the Jean Her-sholt Award for "continually putting his talent and energy at the disposal of projects and causes benefiting our Industry, the City of Los Angeles and the Nation." Under the State Department Cultural Presentation Programs, Heston has made numerous overseas tours visiting U.S. troops in Vietnam and Beirut, serving as co-Chairman of the Board for Center Theatre Group, and was a member of the National Council of the Arts. Within the theatrical community, he has served six times as President of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG), longer than anyone else has held that office. After relinquishing that title, Heston was elected as Chairman of the American Film Institute (1971).

Heston is a non-smoker, a teetotaler, and an exercise enthusiast. He plays tennis, jogs, is an expert horseman and he firmly believes, "an actor's primary tool is his body!" Considering the roles that Heston has undertaken over the years, it's a good thing he stays in shape. That chariot race was difficult for even the audience to endure...



Heston as Ben Hur and Stephen Boyd as Messala battle it out during the chariot race in *Ben Hur*.

**FAX:** Did you and Stephen Boyd prepare a long time for the chariot race sequence in *Ben Hur*?

**HESTON:** Steve didn't have as much time as I did. He was hired for *Ben Hur* about three weeks before we started shooting. And I, by that time, had already been working about five weeks with the chariot. So Steve had some problems with that.

It's a brilliant action sequence, but a fixed race, mind you! [laughs] Yakima Canutt [second unit director] who directed that sequence, shot all the driving stuff. But William Wyler cut the sequence. It lasted eleven minutes on screen. Wyler made it not just a spectacular race, but a conflict between two men, Messala and Judah Ben-Hur. The huge set that they built was one of the most amazing I've ever seen.

**FAX:** A widely circulated rumor is that a stunt man actually died during the filming of the chariot race.

**HESTON:** That's widely circulated, but not true! I suppose the sequence looked so horrendous that people can't believe somebody wouldn't be injured or worse.

**FAX:** There are differing views on the significance of the Oscar. What was your reaction when you won the Academy Award for, *Ben Hur*?

**HESTON:** Obvious delight. But anyway of that kind is a *subjective* award. It represents the judgment of the people who do the voting in the Academy and it's a judgment based of their own opinions. The only reason why the Academy Award is so important is that that opinion is rendered by the people who do the same works as you. In other words, actors are nominated by other actors, cameramen by other cameramen, and so forth.

**FAX:** William Wyler, the director of *Ben Hur*, also directed you in *The Big Country* (1958).

**HESTON:** I think he was the best director of performance, in film, I've seen, certainly the best I've ever worked with. Willy was rather skeptical of the creative process involved in acting; particularly skeptical of the theory of acting. He didn't put much faith in acting as an art, or actors as artists. William Wyler was also not prone to praise. In fact, he almost never said anything that you could interpret as praise. He also did more takes per setup than any other director I've worked for. But when he finally quit shooting, when he printed a take, it was as good as you could get. He only stopped when he was positive that neither he or the actor could do the shot any better. Willy was an extraordinary director. He had an unusual ability to elicit a good performance.

**FAX:** You are obviously an actor who is comfortable in his roles, at least now. But, what was your reaction when you saw yourself on screen for the first time in *Dark City*?

**HESTON:** Interest, you could say I had a sharp interest! The picture was okay, it had good people in it, and a good director [William Dieterle]. But I don't think I was very good.

**FAX:** Do you often watch your old movies with such a critical eye?

**HESTON:** Of course, that's part of the work process; the learning experience. The advantage of film is it's the only medium where an actor gets to see what he does. You get to look at what you did. I've been studying myself, on screen, ever since my first film. I am *never* content with what I see. I don't think any artist is satisfied, including painters and writers, composers and actors, with what they've done. But that's one of the advantages of being able to watch a film. You see what you've done wrong, what you could do better. I never look at film—my film, or anybody's



Heston in costume as the heroic Judah Ben Hur.



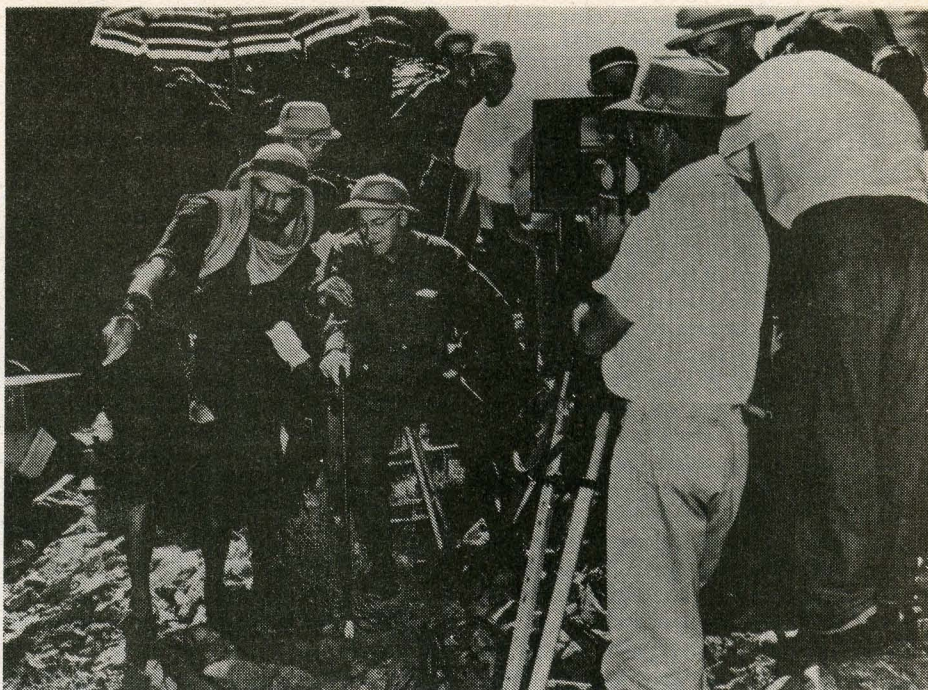
film, where I don't see something that could have been done better.

I want to see the things I do badly. If I see a scene that's good, *that* doesn't teach me anything. You must learn from the things you do wrong, and correct them! An actor shouldn't be satisfied with a performance of even a single scene. If I ever have the feeling that I couldn't better a performance, it'll be time for me to quit! [laughs] FAX: Which of your films do you consider to be your least favorites?

HESTON: I've got a lot of films that I wish I hadn't made. An awful lot that I wish I had made better. I suppose the worst is undeniably *The Call of the Wild* (1972). I'm sorry about that because there is really no excuse. Sometimes an actor can say, "You know, that was really a terrible script!" But this film was based on one of Jack London's most cinematic stories, *The Call of the Wild*. So, you can't say, "It was a terrible story!" because it *wasn't*. It's a *great* story. Who else is to blame? The guys that made it. It's a shame the picture didn't come out the way we expected it to. The dog [Buck] was quite good, though! [laughs]

FAX: *The Greatest Show on Earth* was your first major film role.

HESTON: *The Greatest Show on Earth* was also only my second performance in motion pictures. I was not really known at that time. After the picture was released, a lady wrote a letter to Cecil B. DeMille which said, "I thought the circus manager fitted in very well with the other actors!" I had played the circus manager. This lady, somehow became persuaded that I really *was* a circus manager. You can't do better



Heston confers with legendary director Cecil B. DeMille on location for *The Ten Commandments*.

than that! [laughs] I've always said this was the best review I've ever had!

FAX: Cecil B. DeMille directed you in *The Greatest Show on Earth* and *The Ten Commandments*. Was he as tough as they say?

HESTON: DeMille was firm, but not an authoritarian as one would imagine. He was obviously a man of firm opinions, but by no means inflexible. DeMille could be rough on prop men, and assistant directors, and the crew, but elaborately polite to actors. I found him to be very suppor-

tive. He was very good with actors, a very courteous man, and extremely nice to extras at a time when it was not fashionable to do that. If DeMille had big scenes, as most of his pictures did, with a lot of extras in them, he'd try to schedule those scenes between Thanksgiving and Christmas so they could get a lot of work in during the holidays.

FAX: How many extras did DeMille use in *The Ten Commandments*?

HESTON: For the "Exodus" sequence, which we shot in Egypt, he had 8,000 human beings and 5,000 animals, at various times. As far as I know, that's the most people used in a film sequence. No crowd sequence, in motion pictures, has used anywhere near that many. It's too expensive.

FAX: Your son, Fraser Heston, wrote the screenplay for your film, *The Mountain Men* [1980]. Didn't he also make his acting debut in *The Ten Commandments*?

HESTON: Yes, he played the infant Moses floating down the Nile in the basket. My wife, Lydia, was pregnant in the months we began shooting, on location, in the fall of 1954. That Egyptian location was *very* tough so, Lydia didn't come there because of her condition. Before she left, however, DeMille said to her, "Your child will be born approximately at the time we're going to shoot the scene of the infant Moses, in the bull rushes. If your child is a boy, I think he would be very good in the part!" Gender and age was about all that was required, obviously. I suspect that DeMille must have had his people planted in the hospital, because my son Fraser was born at three o'clock in the morning, February 12, 1955. And at about five o'clock, the first communication that we got from outside was a telegram from DeMille saying, "Congratulations! He's got the part!" [laughs]



Heston receives medical attention after a spectacular train wreck in *The Greatest Show on Earth*.

Continued on next page



FAX: Who was the voice of God in the film?

HESTON: I was the voice of God in the "Burning Bush" sequence, and when I got the tablets, the Ten Commandments. I used my lowest voice and tried to make it different from Moses. Later, the studio tried to take some of the "high" out. One supposes that God is an authoritative figure when He chooses to speak to you. There's also a narration over a lot of the picture that Cecil B. DeMille did. It was not supposed to be God, but there was some confusion on that! [laughs]

FAX: You've been quoted as saying, "If you can't make a career out of two DeMilles, you'll never do it!"

HESTON: I think that's reasonable. But what I *actually* said was, "If you can't make a career out of two DeMille pictures, you'd better turn in your suit!"

FAX: One of the most memorable scenes in *The Ten Commandments* was when Moses parted the Red Sea. How did you do that?

HESTON: You've got to have the right stick and a lot of luck! [laughs] I lifted up the stick and said, "The Lord of Hosts will do battle for us. Behold His mighty hand!" And if you've done that just right, then the waters part. It took several takes, but it worked out quite well...I still have the

stick! [smiles]

FAX: Are you kidding?

HESTON: Oh, no! I've got it! I can still part the pool with it, too! [laughs]

FAX: Have you kept any other wardrobe items besides your famous "stick?"

HESTON: [laughs] Well, I don't have any togas. But I have kept a lot of stuff, leather goods, like boots because you can't get those things new and have them look right on screen. I still have the cavalry boots I wore in *Major Dundee* (1965), and I may use them again. I've worn the same cowboy hat through several other Westerns like *The Big Country* (1958) and *The Last Hard Men* (1976). Again, you can't get a new hat to be broken in properly. I've also got a marvelous black and silver mantel that I wore in *El Cid* (1961). I kept it just in case I ever do, *Othello*. And I've got a lot of swords. But no—I don't think I have any sandals!

FAX: You've played many legendary characters, like Moses, Ben Hur, El Cid, John the Baptist, Michelangelo, and Andrew Jackson. Why do you feel that you have been cast in so many epic films?

HESTON: I suppose, in part, the fact that I'm 6'3" has something to do with it. I have a broken nose, and I've already parted the Red Sea, and I won that fixed chariot race. Those things tend to be self-generating. I've played a lot of authoritarian figures. I've also worn more beards, moustaches, and long hair that any other living actor. Producers feel that I can fit in most centuries. By now, I've gradually worked my way, not only into the 20th, but also the 21st century. The part I played on television, that of Jason Colby in *The Colbys*, is a similar figure; just that he wears modern clothes. It's an interesting change to play in a three piece suit for a change, and have handmade shoes instead of a toga and sandals.

FAX: What was the most physically demanding film you ever made?

HESTON: I suppose *The Planet of the Apes* [1968], because the apes kept beating on me all the way through it! I didn't realize that until we were almost three quarters of the way through the picture. In almost every major scene of that film, I was being chased, or choked, or whipped, or gagged, having rocks thrown at me, fire hoses turned on me, horses riding at me, nets being thrown over me. I was constantly being tied up, or dragged around by the feet, and generally mistreated! [laughs] That's pretty painful! It was a physically uncomfortable film. On top of that, I was half naked most of the time.

FAX: Were you ever seriously injured while being abused by all those apes?

HESTON: No, and I have never missed a day's shooting or a day's rehearsal, or a performance on stage, a fact which I happen to be very proud of. It's also been useful to me because my reliability has given me the lowest insurance rate of any major actor in the business. I cracked a couple of my ribs in *Number One* (1969), where I played the quarterback. And I had a horse fall on my knee in *Major Dundee*



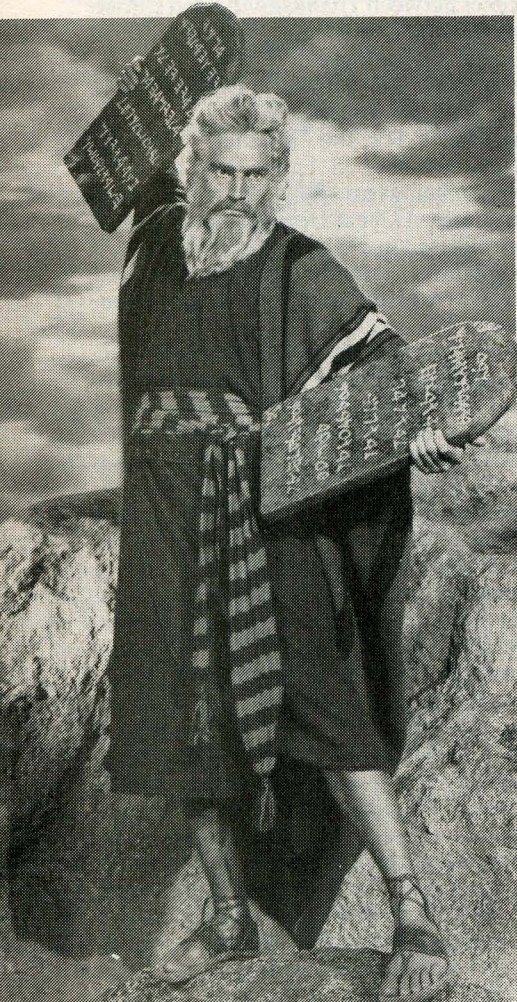
Charlton Heston as Moses parts the Red Sea (one of the

(1965). But none of those accidents made it impossible to shoot the rest of the picture with me. I've been very lucky.

FAX: The makeup for the apes in *Planet of the Apes* was extremely believable.

HESTON: The whole film depended on the success of that makeup. It originally took us two years to sell that film to Fox. Finally, when we took it back the third time, Dick Zanuck was running the Studio. Franklin Shaffner [the director] and I brought some marvelous paintings of scenes to show how *Planet of the Apes* was going to look. And Dick Zanuck asked some of the most intelligent questions I've ever heard a studio head ask. He said, "You're not going to use real monkeys, right?" We said, "Of course, not! They will be actors!" Zanuck asked, "With makeup? What if the makeup looks funny? What if audiences laugh at the makeup? You've got no picture then, right?" We agreed. And he said, "I'll spend whatever it takes to test the makeups. My makeup people will work it out. Then, we'll do full-scale screen tests!" Franklin Shaffner offered to direct the tests and Zanuck said, "I'll look at the tests and then show them to the board of directors. If they like the results, we'll do the picture!" That's precisely what happened.

The trick was that we couldn't use masks. They had to be articulated makeups, so that the actors could move their faces. I think Kim Hunter, Roddy McDowall, and Maurice Evans did that with great suc-

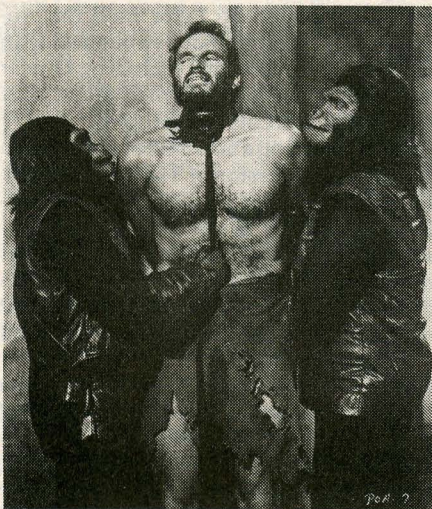


Heston poses as Moses with the title tablets in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*.





most famous special effects scenes in cinema history) in Cecil B. DeMille's epic, *The Ten Commandments*.



Heston is held captive in *Planet of the Apes*.

cess. You could actually read emotion through those animal faces.

**FAX:** The actors were also able to speak through their makeup.

**HESTON:** Not only speak, but you could see their expressions change around their forehead and around their eyes, and around their mouths. It was hard for the actors, but it worked! I asked them about it and they told me they had to, in effect, overact with their faces to get the makeup to register a little bit, so it was plausible. But it was also very time consuming and very onerous to wear. There was a lot of pressure on them. I've had by own per-

sonal experiences with long makeups, but those ape makeups, which were done by John Chambers, took about two and a half hours to put on.

**FAX:** How did you react on seeing and working with actors and actresses made-up as apes? Did it bother you?

**HESTON:** It was very strange! But it became quite routine after awhile. When we were on location in Utah, the company had to eat lunch out in the desert somewhere. I noticed that while they were eating there was kind of a natural segregation. Not only between the humans and the apes, but even among the different species of apes. The chimpanzees ate at one table, the gorillas at another, and the orangutans ate at another. [laughs] This was an instinctive natural segregation. And I never saw any of the actors in the film out of makeup while we were shooting. I'd known Roddy McDowall before, but I never actually met Kim Hunter while we were doing the film. Later on, I went to a screening of the film. And this nice-looking lady came up to me afterwards and said, "Oh, how nice to see you again, Charlton!" I said politely, "Hi!" but I had no idea who it was. She said, "It's Kim! Kim Hunter." And I had just been working with her for about three months. [laughs] I had never met her out of makeup until then!

**FAX:** Your role of Taylor, the astronaut, in *Planet of the Apes* was quite memorable.

**HESTON:** Commander Taylor was a good

acting role. Nowadays, these types of films—space operas—are still marvelous to watch, but the robots have all the good parts.

**FAX:** Wasn't there a controversy with the studio over your saying, "God damn you all to hell!" at the end of the film?

**HESTON:** Profanity was much rarer in films then. The studio was extremely dubious about me using that line while I was looking at the ruined Statue of Liberty. But I pointed out to them that my character, Taylor, was not swearing. It wasn't profanity. It was acceptable in the context of his speech. Taylor was literally calling on God to damn the people who had destroyed the Earth.

**FAX:** You did the first sequel, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), but you didn't do the others. Why?

**HESTON:** I appeared briefly in *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. I told Dick Zanuck, who was then head of 20th Century-Fox, "I know you can't make this movie if I'm not in it. But I really don't want to do it. We've already told the story in the first one. The rest of them are just going to be 'Adventures Among the Monkeys.' I'll do it, but in this one kill me off. And give whatever money you want to pay me to a charity!" That's what happened.

**FAX:** Did you have any idea that *Planet of the Apes* would be so successful?

**HESTON:** At the time, we didn't realize what we were doing—the impact those films would have. We didn't realize this picture would spawn a whole genre of space operas. [laughs] And *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* was done before it became fashionable to do sequels. Fox later made three more sequels, plus a TV series. Now, studios do sequels and make more money than they did on the first one. It could go on indefinitely.

**FAX:** Wasn't Edward G. Robinson, your co-star in *Soylent Green*, originally scheduled to be in *Planet of the Apes*?

**HESTON:** Yes! Eddie Robinson did the test for the part that Maurice Evans later played, that of Dr. Saius. Eddie did the test very well, and we would have been delighted to have him. But he had had a

*Continued on next page*



Heston and friend escape in *Planet of the Apes*.



recent heart attack and told me, "I just can't stand the pressure of that makeup! Not just putting it on and taking it off, but keeping it on, all day. I just have to turn the picture down!" And I could understand that.

**FAX:** *Soylent Green* (1973) had a powerful ending: the future food of mankind turned out to be people. What is your opinion of that ending?

**HESTON:** I think overpopulation is the most serious problem facing the world today. That's the main reason why I did the film. That's what *Soylent Green* is really about, the danger of overpopulation. I guess it's my only film with a strong social comment.

**FAX:** *Soylent Green* was Edward G. Robinson's last movie. Ironically, he had an extremely moving death scene in the film.

**HESTON:** Eddie Robinson was, in fact, terminally ill when he started the picture. We didn't know it while we were shooting, but he did. And his death scene, which was terribly moving, was the very last

scene he did in the movie. When he did that scene, he knew he'd never act again. He was dead three weeks later!

**FAX:** What was the longest time you've ever spent working on a motion picture?

**HESTON:** *Ben Hur*. We shot it for nearly nine months. We started in May and finished in January. I spent two months just learning how to drive the chariot. In Italy we worked six days a week, for almost eight months. So that was certainly the longest. For some films like, *Number One*, I spent a long time preparing to play a pro football quarterback. Learning to make moves like a quarterback took months. There was also *Counterpoint* [1968], where I was a symphony conductor. Learning to conduct, or *seem* to conduct a symphony took about two months. But those preparations were done at home.

**FAX:** On the opposite end of the scale, what was the *shortest* time you've ever spent on a film?

**HESTON:** I worked ten days on what turned out to be two movies: *The Three Musketeers* [1973], and *The Four Musketeers* [1974]. I played Cardinal Richelieu. The studio did all my scenes for both

movies in ten days. I never worked a shorter amount of time on any other movie. **FAX:** In addition to your epics, You've also done some big budget disaster-type movies, like *Earthquake* [1974], *Airport 1975* [1974] and *Midway* [1976]. What attracted you to these stories?

**HESTON:** I've been lucky throughout my career and I've gotten to the point where I can, more or less, choose to do what I want to do and who I do it with. I've made a lot of little films like *Will Penny* [1968], and *Touch of Evil* [1958]. But you have to balance that off with doing films now and then that you are pretty certain are going to be successful. And that was true of those films. I've been more fortunate than some of my colleagues in getting a wider range of parts.

**FAX:** How would you describe your career?

**HESTON:** I'd say, "I'm a professional actor who got very lucky!" There isn't an actor who has had any success who wouldn't say that luck was a big part of it. You also have to have talent, training. But, I've been very lucky. I've worked for a wide variety of directors: Cecil B. DeMille, King Vidor, George Stevens, Sam Peckinpah, Orson Welles. That's quite a formidable bunch.

**FAX:** In 1971, you directed and starred in Shakespeare's *Antony & Cleopatra*. Why did you want to direct?

**HESTON:** Few Shakespearean directors have done films. And few film directors have done Shakespeare. The ones who did both, Larry Olivier and Orson Welles, weren't available. So, Peter Snell, the producer, and I figured that I've worked with so many great directors including Olivier and Welles, that some of their talent *must* have rubbed off on me! [laughs]

**FAX:** In 1986, you also directed and starred in a theatrical version of *The Caine Mutiny*.

**HESTON:** It was very exciting; very challenging. Theater is the medium where I started my career. It's the medium I was trained for. Fortunately, when I came into movies, I came in with an independent contract that let me do what I wanted. And I've always done that.

**FAX:** You mentioned Orson Welles, who directed you, and also acted in, *Touch of Evil*. What kind of person was he?

**HESTON:** Orson Welles was certainly the most gifted man I ever knew. Whatever we mean when we talk about talent, Orson had it more than anyone else I've ever seen. That doesn't mean, however, that that made him the best director, or the best actor in films. But he was an extraordinarily gifted and exciting man. He was the only director I've ever worked for who could make filmmaking fun. People always assume it's fun, but filmmaking is hard work. You're always trying to bring off something you don't always quite bring off. The hours are very long and the locations can be difficult. It's very frustrating, pressure-filled work; both physical and emotional. And it's *not* usually fun. But Orson Welles made it fun, and exciting! Orson could also somehow persuade you

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Although now a spokesman for the Cancer Foundation, Heston once posed for this cigarette ad.





As artist Michaelangelo, Heston painted the Sistine Chapel in *The Agony and the Ecstasy*.

that every set-up you did was the most important set-up in the picture.

*Touch of Evil* turned out to be a minor classic. Not only was I in it, but I also had some influence in seeing that *he* directed it. It was a choice that didn't seem to occur to the studio [Universal]. When I first saw the script, Orson wasn't attached to it, and it was an ineffectively written police story. This type of film has been made many times, and its success depends on the director. So, I said, "Who do you have to direct?" They said, "We haven't decided on a director, yet. But we have Orson Welles to play the 'heavy'!" "Why don't you let him direct? He's a pretty good director!" And you'd think that I had suggested my mother to direct it. [laughs] Fortunately, they finally gave it to him. I learned more from Orson about acting and filmmaking than I did from any other director.

FAX: In 1959 you had the opportunity to work with another fine actor, Gary Cooper, in *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*.

HESTON: Working with Gary Cooper was a very exciting experience for me because I had been a fan of his ever since I saw *The Lives of the Bengal Lancers* [1935]. I had always admired him. Actually, I was very fortunate early in my career to work in front of the camera with men like Gary Cooper and Jimmy Stewart, and directors like Cecil B. DeMille and King Vidor. A young actor can learn a great deal about how to be a professional from working with people like that.

FAX: Sam Peckinpah, a somewhat controversial director, directed you in *Major Dundee*.

HESTON: Sam Peckinpah was a director of remarkable ability; an enormously gifted man. But he had demons in him. It was an exercise working with him because you had to commit yourself all the way! That meant a lot of late nights sitting up with him, and him screaming and going around jumping up and down. It was awfully tough to work with him. But there was a very gifted writer and director in there.

FAX: George Stevens, who directed you in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, is also a highly respected director.

HESTON: I found George Stevens very exciting to work with, but I just did the one part for him, that of John the Baptist in *The*

*Greatest Story Ever Told*. It was a very good part, and I was proud to be in it. It was also uncomfortable. For several days I was waist-deep in the Colorado River baptizing Max Von Sydow [who played Christ]. It was November and the water was cold; very cold, forty degrees! I was standing up to my waist in the river all day long and George Stevens shot very slowly and meticulously. At the end of one day, George noticed I was uncomfortable, and asked me how I felt. "I'm OK, George," I said, "But I'll tell you something. If the River Jordan had been as cold as the Colorado River, Christianity never would have gotten off the ground!"

FAX: Hopefully, *Khartoum*, the 1966 picture you made with Sir Laurence Olivier, was a better experience.

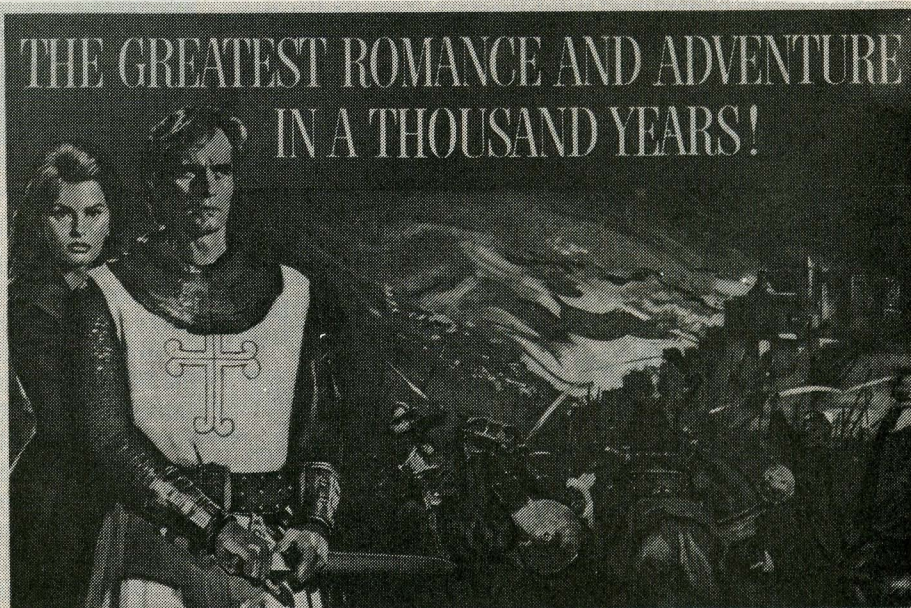
HESTON: I'm very proud of that film. It was beautifully directed [Basil Dearden] and beautifully written. It's also one of the few pictures that I've made where we made almost no changes in the script.

Laurence Olivier was one of the best actors who ever lived. He was an extraordinary person and the finest actor of the 20th century. I think you'd get the same

opinion from most actors. You know, the most valuable thing I ever heard about critics was from Laurence Olivier. We had done a play together, he directed me in it, and it was a terrible flop! It was clear, on opening night when they phoned in the reviews, that it was a disaster. Now, I was very young and green at the time. So I said, "Well, I suppose you learn to just dismiss the bad notices!" I was striving for philosophical detachment. [laughs] And Larry grabbed hold of my wrist and said, "Chuck, what's more important and harder is you have to learn to dismiss the good ones!" And that's very true. Because with a bad notice you may say, "Well, what does he know?" But with a good notice you say, "Now that's a remarkably perceptive observation, on that fellow's part!" And this distorts your whole understanding. [laughs]

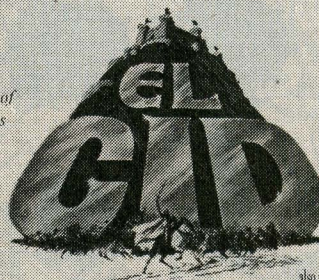
FAX: Over the years, there have been rumors you may someday run for the U.S. Senate. Is this true?

HESTON: No! I've played three Presidents, three saints, and two geniuses. I think that should be enough to satisfy any man. [laughs]



## CHARLTON HESTON and SOPHIA LOREN in SAMUEL BRONSTON'S

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This ad for *El Cid* featuring Heston and costar Sophia Loren appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*.