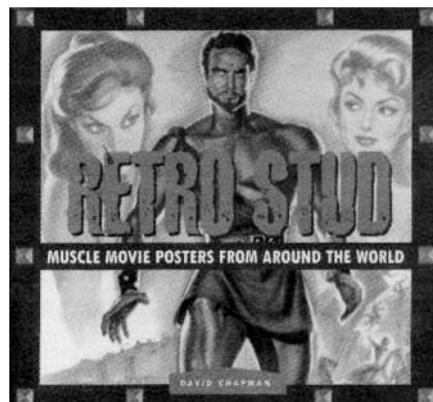


# ***Retro Stud: Muscle Movie Posters From Around the World***

***by David Chapman***

***(Portland: Collector's Press, 2003)***

***Reviewed by David P. Webster***



*Retro Stud* is the strange title of a fine new book by David Chapman of Seattle. The book is about muscle movie posters from around the world and its 128 pages are quite a revelation. It is a subject that has interested me since the 1950s yet I had no idea there was such a rich variety of material. In my ignorance, I had imagined that the exciting artwork I had seen would be used internationally. This is certainly not the case and David Chapman has made an excellent job of collecting and selecting posters from many countries.

Known widely as "sword and sandal" or "gladiator" movies, these were popularized by Steve Reeves' Hercules films made in Italy. These were by no means the first of their kind, indeed very many years ago in Los Angeles, David invited me to see *Calabria*, a silent Italian film made before World War I and featuring Bartolomeo Pagano (1878-1947) as Maciste.

In the late 1950s and during the 1960s there were many box office successes, mainly from Italy, although others jumped on the bandwagon with less spectacular results. The marketing of the films played a

major part in filling cinemas, which were fighting a losing battle against television. Graphic artists, driven by shrewd publicity agents, produced captivating posters that depicted action-packed, physical drama with virile, muscular men and sexy women. Good titles, titillating sub-titles, and, of course, the visual impact of beefcake and cheesecake helped to fill cinemas. The numerous posters and photographs in Chapman's book vividly illustrate this approach. "The Invincible Gladiator—2000 Years Back To The Age of Orgy" read one title, with every word capitalized. "The Trojan Horse—Surg-ing Spectacle of Savagery and Sex," read another.

The posters are worthy of much more than a glance. Readers will find names of well-known bodybuilding champions like Steve Reeves, Reg Park, Sammy Bergand and Paul Winter to name but a few. There are also others whose identities are obscured by professional names. Mark Forest of the films is actually Lou Degni. Ed Fury was Ed Holochik. Cameron Mitchell was really Chuck Pendleton, one of Joe Gold's best-known gym instructors. Pendleton made so much money on these films that he bought his own film lot and wrote into the contracts he used to rent his facilities that he was guaranteed a part in any film made on his lot. Mickey Hargitay and his beautiful wife, Jayne Mansfield, are both well known to readers of *Iron Game History*, and *Retro Stud* also shows posters for several films they made together.

This book has awakened many memories for me. It has especially reminded me that this genre of films brought bodybuilders into the mainstream entertainment world and that there were many spin-offs from this connection for the field of physical culture. David Chapman is to be congratulated for his research and knowledge. This is a fine book of which he can be proud. Presented as a well-bound hardback and printed through-out in vibrant colors, it is a very good value at \$16.95.



This French *Hercules* poster was literally larger than life.