

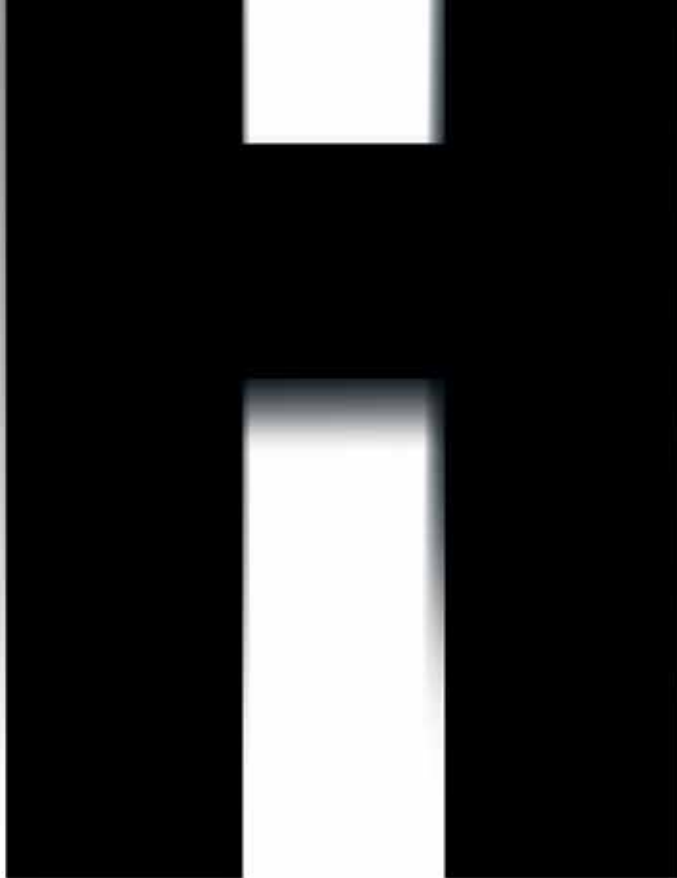
MAN OF STEEL

YOU CAN'T CREATE **SUPERMAN** IN A COMPUTER, NOR CAN YOU DO IT WITH A FLATTERING COSTUME. TO BRING THE TITLE ROLE OF *MAN OF STEEL* TO LIFE, FILMMAKERS SENT HENRY CAVILL TO THE GYM—TO TRAIN SO HARD HE WOULD ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT HE WAS THE CHARACTER.

BY MATT TUTHILL



COURTESY WARNER BROS. PICTURES



HENRY CAVILL WAS SCREWED.

IT WAS ANOTHER COLD WINTER'S DAY ON THE VANCOUVER SET OF *MAN OF STEEL*—THE KIND THAT MAKES IT HARD TO GET OUT OF BED, HARDER STILL TO GET MOTIVATED TO TRAIN, AND FOR CAVILL, NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE THAT DAMN BARBELL. HE WAS ON HIS FINAL REP OF HIS FINAL SET OF FRONT SQUATS WHEN HIS LEG MUSCLES FROZE UNDER THE STRESS OF THE 305 POUNDS SITTING ACROSS HIS SHOULDERS. HE HAD DUTIFULLY POUNDED OUT THREE SETS OF FOUR WITH THE WEIGHT ALREADY, BUT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FOURTH REP OF HIS FOURTH SET, CAVILL'S MUSCLES FLAT OUT QUIT ON HIM. HIS ASS WAS PINNED TO THE GROUND AND HIS KNEES STARTED TO BUCKLE INWARD. HIS TRAINER, GYM JONES FOUNDER MARK TWIGHT, WHO CLOSELY MONITORED CAVILL THROUGHOUT HIS *MAN OF STEEL* TRAINING, WAITED FOR HIS CLIENT TO LEAN FORWARD AND DUMP THE BAR TO THE GROUND.



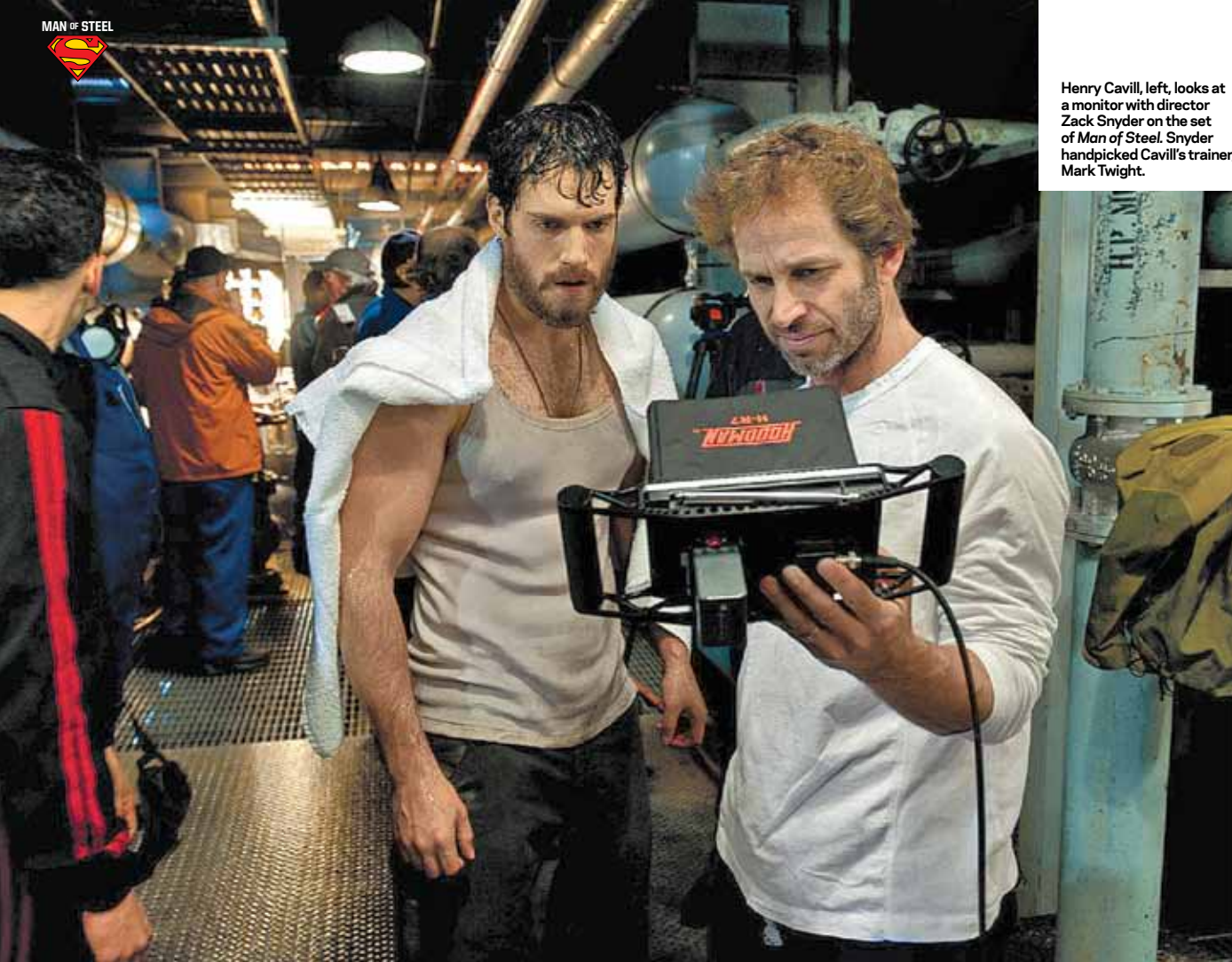
Instead, Cavill did something that Twight—a man not easily impressed—would remember forever. He drove his heels into the ground and pushed, his face twisting into an expression that can only come from an outlay of supreme effort, his body working harder than at any time during his entire year of training for the role. And slowly he began to rise out of the hole, grinding his way back up, until he completed the rep. He racked the bar, lifted his head, and opened his eyes... and everything seemed different. Suddenly there was confidence, and elation. But beyond that, there was puzzlement—the eyes of man trying to process a whole new world of possibility.

"Somehow he got his sh—t together," Twight says later, still astonished. "To see him do that, then walk around like he's on air, to believe in himself enough to try that hard, that was one of the more impressive things that happened during the whole course of this process."

The 30-year-old British actor says the importance of that day in the gym cannot be understated. If he could pin the process of "becoming Superman" to a single moment, this was probably it.

"It was a fantastic moment, and certainly made me feel pretty darn good," Cavill says. "It wasn't because of the number that I felt good. It's because I pushed past what I thought was possible...I felt like I earned the right to try and represent Superman."

Since Superman first appeared in *Action Comics* No. 1 in 1938, the



Henry Cavill, left, looks at a monitor with director Zack Snyder on the set of *Man of Steel*. Snyder handpicked Cavill's trainer, Mark Twight.

"THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SUPERHERO THAT DIDN'T HAVE BROAD SHOULDERS AND A SMALL WAIST," TWIGHT SAYS. "HENRY'S FRAME IS IDEAL...BUT WE HAD TO ADD SOME MEAT."

character has gone on to become arguably the most recognizable superhero of all time. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's tiny 15-page story about a man with superhuman abilities in a red cape and blue tights has transcended comic books and launched Superman into the zeitgeist in a way that few pieces of popular culture ever have. Superman is part of the common vernacular even for people who have never read a comic book. He is as much an idea at this point as he is a character. When a man works so hard he burns out, or exhausts himself in a fruitless attempt to keep everyone happy, common sense dictates that you gently remind him, "You're not Superman."

So if Superman is so iconic he's become a metaphor for trying to bear the weight of the world on one's shoulders, the pressure on Cavill to quite literally become Superman was beyond huge. It was the kind of rock-and-a-hard-place scenario that does one of two things: destroys

the man in the center, or spits out a diamond.

"I felt enormous pressure," Cavill admits. "Mostly from myself to get it right. This isn't something that you get wrong. The pressure mostly manifested when I started negotiating

with myself during a workout. My head would be telling me to quit or to not push so hard and save energy for later sets by doing fewer reps, but then I'd remind myself that I had to get this right and I'd start blasting."

The need to "kill it" in the gym would certainly apply to the situation. It's only fitting, then, that director Zack Snyder chose Twight as the man for the job. Twight founded Gym Jones—a play on words of cult leader Jim Jones, who led his followers to suicide—under the overarching principle that "the mind is primary" and he preaches to prospective clients that if they want to change their bodies, training the "muscle in the skull" is what needs to happen first.

Training actors for intensely physical roles isn't new for Twight, either. Snyder first teamed up with the trainer in 2006 when he needed Gerard Butler and about 40 Spartan warriors to get ripped to the bone for *300*, a movie in which the actors battle shirtless in nearly every

ESSENTIAL READING

Get ready for *Man of Steel* by reading some of Superman's greatest comic book adventures. We recommend:



ACTION COMICS
(1938/2011)

Go back to where it all began with Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's original Superman comic (collected in *Superman Chronicles Vol. 1*). Superman's power set is portrayed as being much more limited than what it became over the years; he originally possessed superspeed and superstrength, but he couldn't quite fly yet, and instead leaped an eighth of a mile at a time. Then check out Grant Morrison's 2011 reimagining of *Action Comics No. 1* as part of DC's *The New 52*, where the revelation that Superman is an alien causes a public panic, followed by protests to demand that he return to his home planet.

frame. The result was one that made the number 300 synonymous with six-pack abs, as well as Twilight's style of high-intensity circuits. The experience, however, was draining enough that it "cured" Twilight of any desire to work on big-budget Hollywood projects for the next five years—until Snyder came knocking again.

Twilight met Cavill in February 2011, kicking off a partnership that would last a full year—roughly five months of prep time and seven months of shooting. No stranger to weights himself, Snyder knew enough about training to not just ask Twilight to make Cavill look a particular way, but to also identify the pitfalls of the shooting schedule right off the bat. Snyder warned that Cavill had a shirtless scene in early October, then another just three weeks later, meaning he'd have to hit a peak and stay there for much longer than is usually required in filming.

"Peaking a guy for a few days is one thing," Twilight says. "What Snyder was asking for was 'an entirely different problem.'"

The challenge, though, hooked Twilight immediately. After an initial assessment of Cavill—or the "raw material" as he likes to call new clients—the prep period began. At the time, Cavill had recently finished

shooting *Immortals*, a role for which the 6'1" actor leaned out to 170 pounds, meaning he needed to gain a considerable amount of muscle mass to get into the role of Superman.

But before the design of a training and nutrition program could even begin, Twilight laid down the central rule of the prep period, the specifics of which he refused to negotiate: Cavill needed to get nine to 10 hours of sleep every night for the next five months, no exceptions. Few men, especially Hollywood leading men, appreciate being told to forget their nightlife and get to bed early, but Twilight couldn't have been more clear.

"It's like, 'Hey, guy, you want to be f—king Superman? Then do this one other thing, which might be the most important piece of it,'" Twilight says. "If you don't get the sleep, if you can't recover, then we can't continue with this training and we won't achieve the objective. The predatory effect that a lack of sleep has on the rest of the work you do is shockingly powerful. The HGH and testosterone secretion that happens during these deep-sleep cycles is super-important."

The first two months of training were a slow ramp-up for a far more intense period down the road. The dietary tweaks came slowly, including a simple supplement regimen of multi-vitamins, essential fatty acids (in the form of Udo's Oil), probiotics, and magnesium. By the two-month mark, Cavill was training twice a day and shoveling 5,000 to 6,000 calories into his mouth, with no regard for the macronutri-

"BY DOING PHYSICALLY DIFFICULT THINGS, HENRY CHANGED HIS ATTITUDE AND HIS BEARING," TWIGHT SAYS. "HE LOOKED HUGE. HE WALKED HUGE. HIS ATTITUDE BROADCAST HIS PHYSICAL ABILITY."



"Our model for the new Superman was Steve Reeves in *Hercules*," Twilight says. "I think that's a reasonable and aesthetic look." See our Steve Reeves feature on page 151.

COURTESY WARNER BROS PICTURES; COURTESY DC COMICS (2)



**ALL-STAR
 SUPERMAN
 (2005)**

This Grant Morrison story, which is told outside of series continuity but still manages to embrace more than 60 years of Superman history, sees Lex Luthor expose Superman to an overdose of the sun's radiation in the very first issue. With only one year to live, Superman goes on to accomplish his mightiest feats ever.



**SUPERMAN:
 SECRET ORIGIN
 (2009)**

Writer Geoff Johns imagines a teenage Clark Kent stumbling upon his powers at school—breaking another football player's arm and nearly burning down his school with heat vision—then realizing he wants to use those powers to help people. The new film is rumored to have borrowed considerably from this six-issue story arc.

ent profile. Cavill gained 20 pounds during this time, then saw his carbs limited and calorie count cut in half as the start date approached.

Actors typically dive headlong into intense training and a complete dietary overhaul, having only six to eight weeks of prep to hit their peak. While it might produce results, those results are unstable, according to Twilight, and wouldn't have worked for a project with a shooting schedule like the one used for *Man of Steel*.

"Stable fitness requires a wide, solid foundation," Twilight says. "The deeper that foundation, the more stable that condition will be, and the easier it is to maintain."

Ease of maintenance was absolutely essential; Twilight might have been able to demand two-a-day training sessions and 10 hours of sleep from his client during the prep period, but the moment filming actually began, there was no choice but to back off. Hotel living, 12- to 14-hour shoots, and dismal winter weather—none of it was conducive to keeping Cavill in superhuman shape. Five days of training became two or three; on a rare off-week, Twilight could bump it back up to five days. The detrimental effect of fewer workouts, however, was minimized thanks to the base built earlier in the year. Depending on pre-workout interviews, Twilight could step on the gas or hit the brakes accordingly.

The frames of the movie say it all. Cavill weighs between 186–190 pounds with an average of 5–7% body fat for most of it, but got down to around 3–4% for his shirtless scenes. An easy criticism of most superhero flicks is that the costumes are designed in such a way to accentuate perfect abs and pecs. Sometimes, the actors beneath these costumes might not even train very much. Cavill's shirtless scenes, though, put any such suspicions to bed. His is a tight, hard-won musculature that reflects the actions of a man wholly dedicated to his program.

And perhaps most surprisingly for a superhero movie, life imitated art: Cavill's fitness journey was one that mirrored his character's. Just as the young Clark Kent gradually discovers his special abilities, Cavill needed to shatter his own mental barriers of what he thought he could do. His starting deadlift was less than 300 pounds, but under Twilight's coaching, he hit a personal record of 435. Other PRs of note included a 245-pound push press, a 365-pound back squat, and completion of 10 sets of 10 in the front squat with 225 pounds.

"I learned my limits go far beyond what my head thinks they are," Cavill says. "Superman isn't just about his strength or his abilities. It's more about determination in the face of a seemingly insurmountable problem, which is exactly how 305 pounds felt when I was stuck at the bottom of that front squat."

No part of the journey happened by accident. The filmmakers knew Cavill's confidence was central to the suspension of disbelief, then went about making him earn every bit of it. As much as we expect Superman to look a certain way, he needed to walk and talk a certain way, with charisma and confidence to match the massiveness of the icon he represents. For a film with such a huge budget, it's ironic then that the most important expenditure wasn't what was spent on CGI battles. It was the sweat that poured out of Cavill with a barbell in hand.

"Fitness is strength and conditioning, but also strength of character," Twilight says. "Cheating and shortcuts produce visible insecurity. Genuine accomplishment looks and feels different. It cannot be faked. By doing physically difficult things, by changing his body of his own will, Henry changed his attitude and his bearing. He looked huge. He walked huge. His attitude broadcast his physical capability."

And he looked as if he were capable of absolutely anything.



**SUPERMAN:
SECRET IDENTITY
(2004)**

In an alternate "real world" with no superheroes, a young Clark Kent (so named for the character in the popular *Superman* comics) suddenly discovers he has powers like Superman. This four-issue collection by Kurt Busiek answers the question of how such a man would really live and fight to keep his identity a secret.



TRAIN LIKE THE MAN OF STEEL

There is no single training template that Mark Twilight provides to his clients. As with all training programs at Gym Jones, the **Man of Steel** workout was constantly varied, and no two workouts were ever exactly the same. The workout you see below is one of the more intense sessions Cavill performed five months into his training. Most of his sessions were performed with either Twilight or his assistant, Michael Blevins, providing guidance—and sometimes working in. On a few occasions, the film plot crept over into the gym and Cavill was thrown into a competitive workout against his on-screen nemesis, Michael Shannon, who plays General Zod.

Go to gymjones.com to learn about online memberships.

THE WORKOUT

1 WARMUP

Row for 5 minutes at light intensity

FOLLOWED BY:

Row for 5 minutes at intervals: 10-second sprint, 50 seconds slow

2 SIX-EXERCISE BARBELL COMPLEX*

Deadlift // Bentover Row // Hang Clean // Front Squat // Push Press // Back Squat x 6, 6, 4, 3

*Perform four total complexes, never putting the bar down during the set. Start with a deadlift, then perform a bentover row, and so on. Put the bar down and rest 2–3 minutes between complexes. Cavill did the following:

A) Six reps at 75 pounds // **B)** Six reps at 95 pounds // **C)** Four reps at 115 pounds // **D)** Three reps at 135 pounds

3 SUPERSET x 10

Back Squat: 3 reps using 225 pounds

SUPERSET WITH

100-meter row at a sprint pace

4 FINISHER

5 sets of pushups to failure, resting 30 seconds between sets

(On this particular day, Cavill's reps were 25, 21, 10, 7, 10)