

**70MM**

# Newsletter

no. 14. April 1991

**WINNER OF 4 ACADEMY AWARDS<sup>®</sup>  
PRESENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME UNCUT  
WITH NEVER BEFORE SEEN FOOTAGE**



**KIRK  
DOUGLAS**



**LAURENCE  
OLIVIER**



**JEAN  
SIMMONS**



**CHARLES  
LAUGHTON**



**PETER  
USTINOV**



**JOHN  
GAVIN**



**AND TONY  
CURTIS  
AS ANTONINUS**

A STANLEY KUBRICK FILM

# SPARTACUS

FILMED IN SUPER TECHNIRAMA<sup>®</sup>70

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A BRYNA PRODUCTION "SPARTACUS" MUSIC COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY ALEX NORTH  
EDITED BY ROBERT LAWRENCE EXCLUSIVE PRODUCER KIRK DOUGLAS SCREENPLAY BY DALTON TRUMBO PRODUCED BY EDWARD LEWIS  
DIRECTED BY STANLEY KUBRICK RESTORED BY ROBERT A. HARRIS AND JAMES C. KATZ A UNIVERSAL RELEASE  
PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13 © 1991 UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS, INC.

**SPECIAL EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT STARTS FRIDAY, APRIL 26TH**

PRESENTED IN

**70MM**

6 TRACK DOLBY STEREO

**CINEPLEX ODEON CENTURY PLAZA CINEMAS CENTURY CITY (213) 553-4291**  
DAILY - 2:00, 7:30 SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT - NO PASSES OR DISCOUNT COUPONS ACCEPTED

This Newsletter will be dedicated to the restored 70 mm "Spartacus", who had its premiere in Los Angeles on April 25.

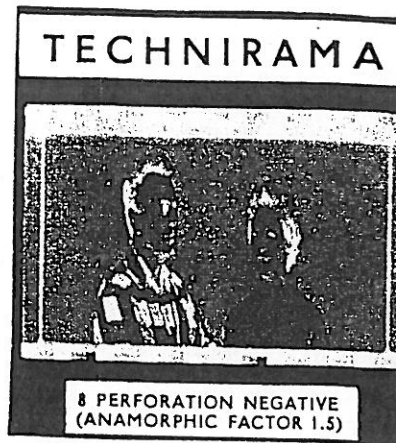
The publication about Wim Wenders, etc. will therefore appear in the next Newsletter no. 15.

Also in that issue an advance information about a "70 MM & Wide Screen Festival" in Marbella Spain, from 10-20 June 1992 (next year)!

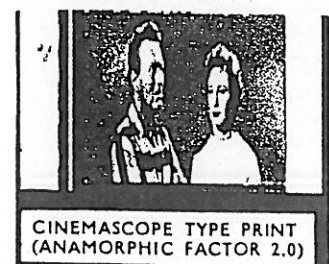
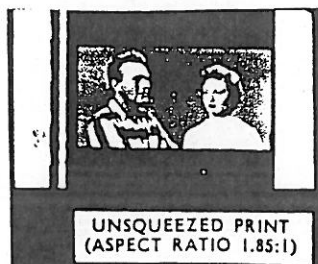
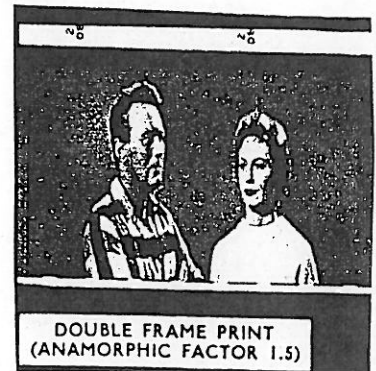
Meanwhile there are rumours about filming a 65 mm production in Ireland in June of this year, but no further information is available at this moment .

The 70 MM Newsletter is published bi-monthly and sent free to the members of "The International 70 MM Association".  
J.C.M. Wolthuis, Katwoudehof 36, 6843 BX Arnhem The Netherlands. Secretary :  
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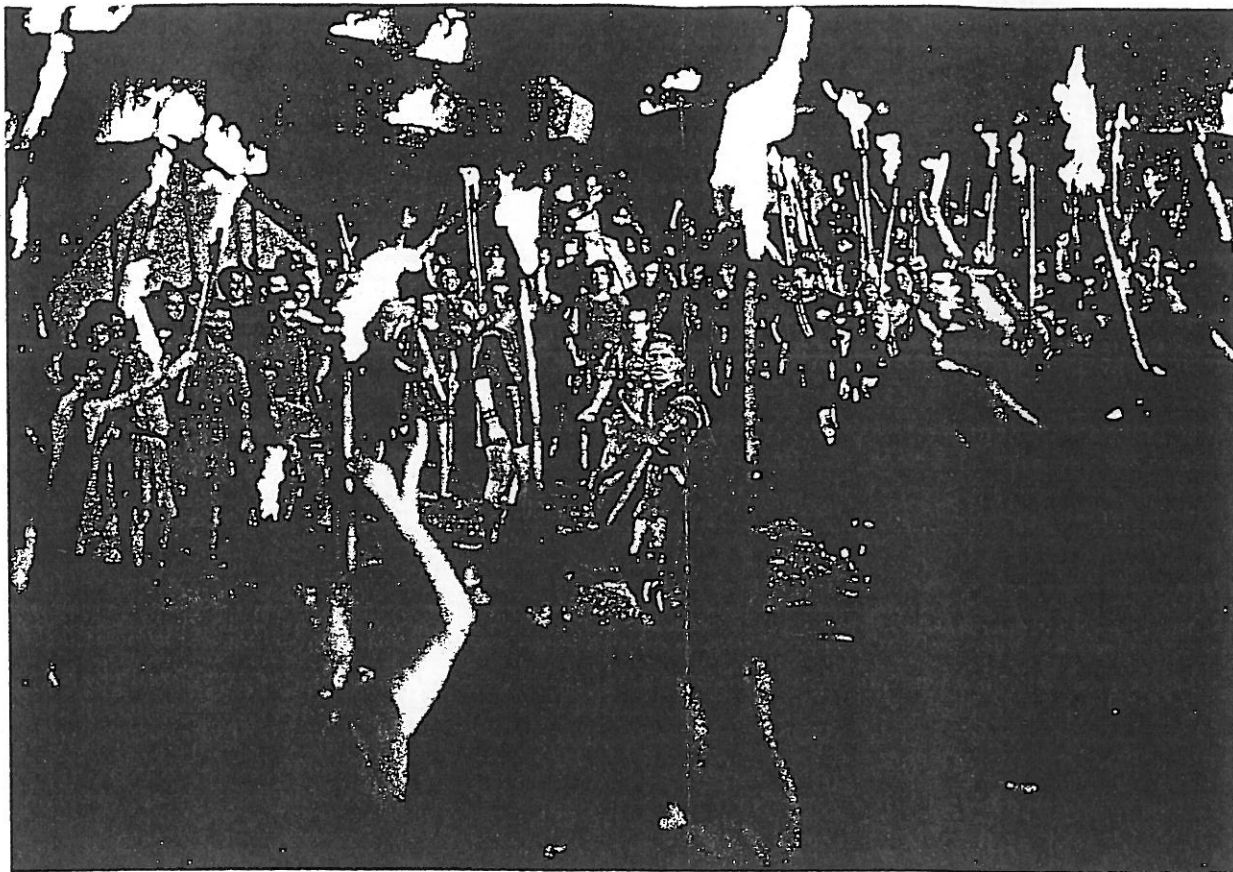


**SUPER TECHNIRAMA-70**



It is well-known by motion picture engineers that whilst it is desirable to have a larger negative frame than that which has been used for many years for ordinary motion pictures, there is a point at which an increase in the size of the frame produces diminishing returns in terms of definition of the image, visibility and depth.

**THE SUPER TECHNIRAMA-70 NEGATIVE FRAME HAS BEEN  
DESIGNED TO GIVE THE OPTIMUM RESULTS IN THIS RESPECT**



*Spartacus (Kirk Douglas, center), leads the revolt of the slaves.*

# *Spartacus:* A Spectacle Revisited

by Frank Thompson

In an era composed of one gargantuan, breathtaking movie spectacle after another, *Spartacus* (1960), directed by Stanley Kubrick and produced by and starring Kirk Douglas, was one of the biggest. The most expensive film ever produced in Hollywood to that time, with a budget exceeding \$12 million, *Spartacus* employed over 10,000 people and stayed in production 167 shooting days. Audiences who experienced the dazzling Super Technirama 70 images and brilliant six-track sound have never forgotten the film's impact.

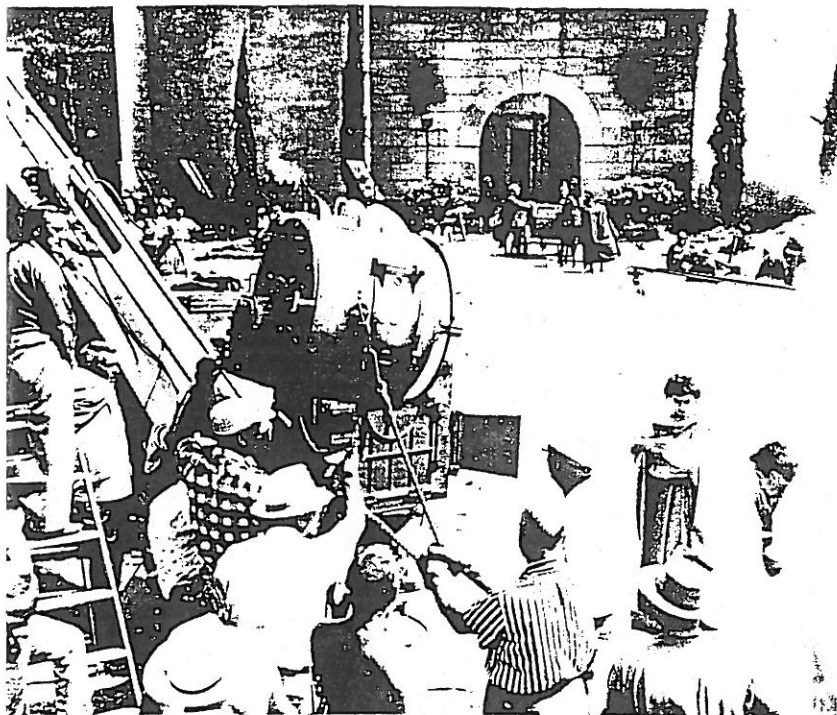
Unfortunately *Spartacus* has been little more than a memory ever since. Except for a 1967 reissue, in which the film—and the camera negative itself—was drastically reedited and cut by a half hour, *Spartacus* has been unseen except within the unfriendly confines of the television screen for the past thirty years. For a while it looked as though video would be the film's final resting place. The original

negative, in addition to its missing footage, had faded irrevocably; no new prints could be struck.

Happily, thanks to MCA/Universal's desire to get its only real modern epic back into fighting shape, one more chance has emerged to witness the screen-filling, eye-popping spectacle of the kind that audiences of 1960 took for granted. Robert A. Harris, the man behind the 1988 restoration of *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), has, along with James Katz, brought *Spartacus* back to life, creating a new negative from the black and white protection masters, rebuilding the intricate soundtrack, and reinserting scenes which were snipped by order of the censors in 1960. The restored *Spartacus* is receiving limited theatrical release this Spring and will later be released on videocassette and laserdisc.

"I think it's an important film," says Harris in his Mamaroneck, New York headquarters. "Spartacus





Above: Producer Kirk Douglas climbs above camera level to give Jean Simmons her off-stage cues. Right: Douglas and director Stanley Kubrick talk over the action in a gladiator school scene.



is a large format film, the work of one of our great directors, and the acting is incredible. It's much more accessible than Lawrence of Arabia, a big, beautiful, sprawling epic of the kind that really can't be made anymore. Is it one of the two or three greatest films ever made? Absolutely not. But it's a damn good film and it's a film that needed to be restored, needed to be saved."

The real Spartacus, a remarkable man about whom relatively little is known today, was a Roman

slave who led an insurrection against his captors in the years 73-71 B.C. Spartacus and his followers, over 90,000 Celtic, German, and Italian slaves, routed five Roman armies before he was defeated and crucified by Marcus Licinius Crassus, a Roman politician and general.

Over the passing centuries Spartacus became a legend. A symbol of the eternal fight against oppression, he inspired countless folk songs and stories. In 1831 playwright Robert M. Bird transformed these stories into a wildly popular stage spectacular called *The Gladiator* which ran for decades with Edwin Forrest in the title role. In 1914 a mammoth feature film called *Spartacus or The Revolt of the Gladiators* was produced in Italy with Amleto Novelli in the title role.

*Spartacus* emerged again in 1951 as the subject of a novel by blacklisted writer Howard Fast. Kirk Douglas read the book in 1957 and recognized its potential for himself and his company, Bryna Productions, Inc. In the late Fifties widescreen epics were the rage in Hollywood but Douglas saw something more in *Spartacus*. "My concept of *Spartacus* was to make it as if it were a little picture, so that every character would become more dominant than the background," says Douglas. "The trouble with epics is usually the characters are flat; they aren't three dimensional, they aren't real. We never let the size of *Spartacus* drown out the characters."

Fast wrote a screenplay based on his book, but Douglas found it lacking dramatically and brought Dalton Trumbo in to rewrite it. Trumbo, like Fast, had been a victim of the blacklist because of his refusal to testify before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. From 1949 on he wrote under a variety of pseudonyms. One of them, Robert Rich, won an Academy Award in 1956 for the screenplay for *The Brave One*.

Douglas used Trumbo's script to attract a powerhouse cast, including Laurence Olivier, Peter Ustinov, Charles Laughton, Woody Strode, Tony Curtis, John Ireland, John Dall, John Gavin, Herbert Lom, Charles McGraw, and virtually every stuntman in Hollywood. Sabina Bethmann, a German actress, was awarded the role of Spartacus' lover, Varinia.

After trying to interest David Lean in directing the film, Douglas reluctantly accepted studio pressure to hire Anthony Mann. "I never wanted Anthony Mann to be the director," says Douglas. "He was a nice guy and made a lot of successful movies but I didn't think he was right for *Spartacus*."

Douglas was easier to convince when it came to the cinematographer: Russell Metty, ASC. Behind the camera since 1935, Metty had provided magnificent images to films as diverse as William A. Wellman's *The Story of G. I. Joe* (1945) and Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958). Perhaps Metty's finest and most representative work can be found in his intricate and powerful crane shots for Douglas Sirk's florid melodramas *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and *Written on the Wind* (1956).

*Spartacus* was filmed in Super Technirama 70, a recent enhancement of Technirama, which had been around since 1957 and was itself an anamorphic variation on VistaVision. Super Technirama 70 release prints were on 65mm stock but the negative utilized 35mm film on which the exposed image was printed horizontally, eight sprockets wide. The projected aspect ratio would measure 2.05 X 1. The enhanced clarity of the huge image was one advantage of Super Technirama 70; another was the spectacular six-track stereophonic sound. *Spartacus* was only the third feature shot in the process, following King Vidor's *Solomon and Sheba* (1959) and Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).

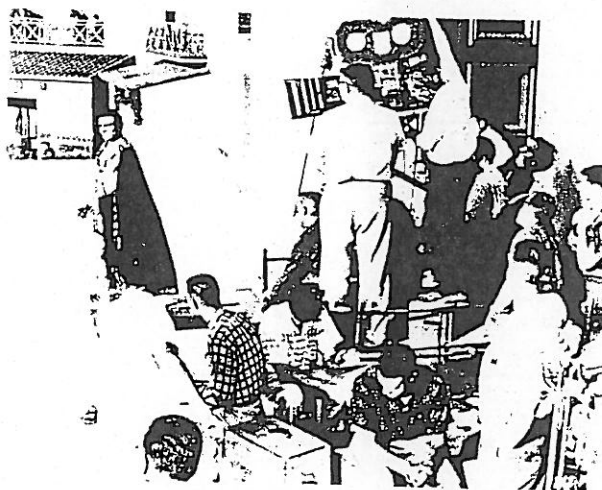
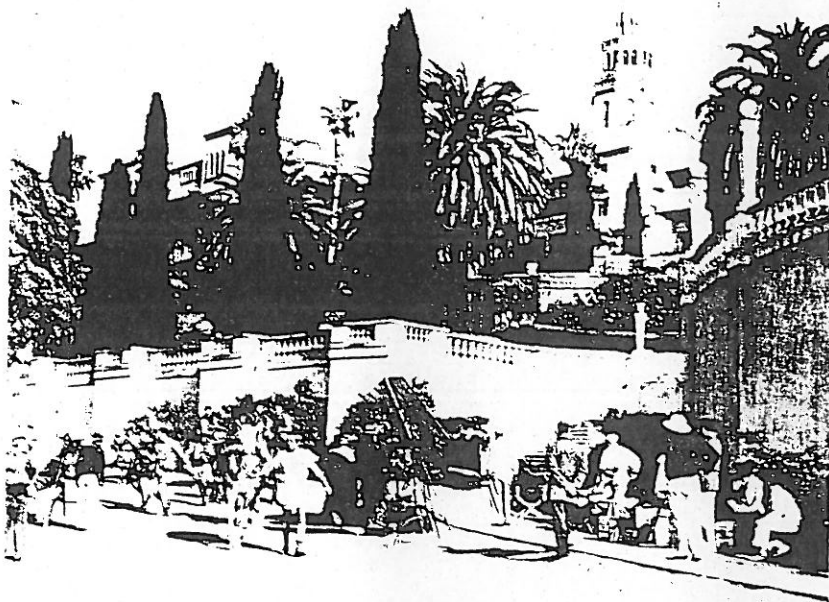
Unlike most location-happy epics of the period, *Spartacus* was filmed almost entirely on the Universal back lot. Virtually every standing set was refurbished or razed, including the Ma and Pa Kettle house, the Phantom Stage, site of the famous Paris Opera House, and the European street. The transformation took about six months of planning and another six months of construction, under the direction of art director Alex Golitzen. Locations in the San Fernando Valley and Thousand Oaks, with a few strategically placed backdrops to mask the freeway traffic in the distance, stood in for the Italian countryside. "You've got to rebuild Rome to shoot Roman history," Douglas said at the time. "Why cross a continent and an ocean to do that when the finest pool of technicians and talent in the world is in your own back yard?"

The *Spartacus* company only went beyond an easy drive from Universal for a few scenes: Laurence Olivier's lavish villa was actually Hearst's Castle at San Simeon; the climactic battle between *Spartacus*' slave army and the massed forces of Rome were shot on a plain near Madrid, Spain; and the opening scenes were filmed in Death Valley.

Production began on January 27, 1959. After two weeks, Universal told Douglas to drop Mann. "Then I fought!" says Douglas. "I don't like to change. Once you're married you try and make the marriage work." In his heart, however, Douglas believed that Mann should be removed. Friday, February 13, was Mann's unlucky day. Douglas fired him and paid him his full \$75,000 fee. The quarry scenes which Mann shot still open the film. Ironically, Mann would go on to direct two of the biggest and best—and most intelligent—of epics: *El Cid* (1961) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).

Mann was replaced by Stanley Kubrick, who had just left Marlon Brando's eccentric Western, *One Eyed Jacks* (1961) in the directorial hands of Brando himself. Kubrick and Douglas' previous collaboration, *Paths of Glory* (1957), had been successful, although the two men did not always see eye to eye. "The kid has a healthy ego," said Douglas at the time. "He infuriates you at first, then you settle down and admire him."

Today, Douglas calls Kubrick a "brilliant director. In my book I called him a shit, which I think he is. But he's a very, very talented guy. I divorce one from



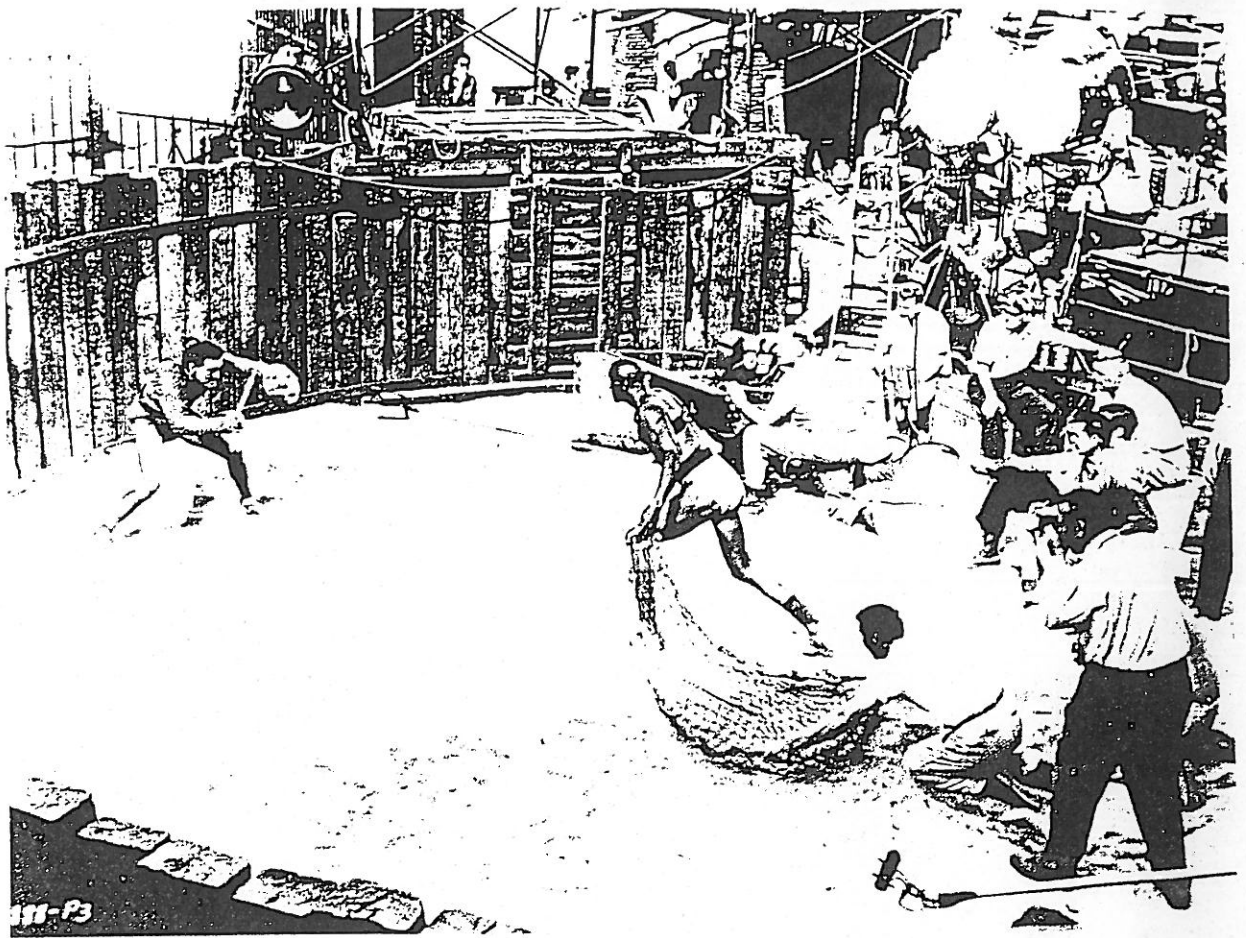
Left: Laurence Olivier takes charge of the Roman armies. Camera operator at right of the Super Technirama 70 camera is Harry Wolf, ASC. Above: Hearst Castle at San Simeon became a Roman palace in *Spartacus*.

the other. You don't have to be a nice guy to be a talented guy."

If *Spartacus* is less a "Stanley Kubrick Film" than *Paths of Glory* or later masterworks like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, it is because all the aspects of the production were set before he entered the scene. Peter Ustinov says of Kubrick, "One knew there was considerable talent there, and perhaps more than that, but he wasn't allowed to display the creative qualities on a big scale that he showed with much smaller films like *The Killing* (1955). He was still an employed man." Kubrick did, however, leave his mark on *Spartacus*. His first action was to discharge actress Sabina Bethmann, saying she "lacked experience." He offered the role of Varinia to Jean Simmons, who readily accepted. "Making a film with Kubrick was very exciting," Simmons says. "This kind of Biblical thing didn't seem to be quite his cup of tea, but I think it turned out



The famous battle between Douglas and Woody Strode. Director of photography Russell Metty, ASC, is seated at right and George Dye operates the camera.



cellent scenes. But that material was destroyed in the mid-Seventies. We're going back as close as possible to the pre-censorship version, the last approved version from Kubrick and Douglas: 197 minutes. The picture will be slightly grainier than in 1960 because we're two generations farther away, but the original material, since it was Super Technirama, was so sharp to begin with that it's going to be gorgeous."

The reissue of *Spartacus*, coming hard on the heels of Kirk Douglas' Life Achievement Award from the American Film Institute, will be a cinematic event of great importance, especially in these days of tiny movies shown on tinier screens. "There aren't many more out there like this," says Harris. "Not of this size and of this intelligence."

Kirk Douglas says, "It's great to see this thing done in the way it was meant to be done. Sometimes a film you loved years ago doesn't hold up when you see it again. But *Spartacus* is really something special."

Peter Ustinov, on the other hand, remains a bit more blasé about the prospect of seeing himself, thirty years younger and magnified to epic proportions. "I'm going to have the same reaction as Dorian Gray. One of absolute horror." He laughs. "I shall recoil from the screen." ▲

The author would like to thank the following for their generous assistance during the writing of this article: Kirk

Douglas, Robert A. Harris, Shawn Levy, Julie Polk, Jeff Sakson, Wolf Schneider, Jean Simmons, Lee Tsiantis, Peter Ustinov.

A Universal-International picture; a Bryna Pictures production; executive producer, Kirk Douglas; producer, Edward Lewis; directed by Stanley Kubrick; screenplay, Dalton Trumbo, from the novel by Howard Fast; music composed and conducted by Alex North; director of photography, Russell Metty, ASC; additional photography, Clifford Stine, ASC; art directors, Alexander Golitzen, Eric Orbom; set decorations, Russell Gausman, Julia Heron; costumes, Valles, Bill Lawrence; film editor, Robert Lawrence; titles and design consultant, Saul Bass; sound, Waldon O. Watson, Joe Lapis, Murray Spivack, Ronald Pierce; production manager, Norman Deming; makeup, Bud Westmore; music associates, Joseph Gershenson, Milton Schwartzwald; operators, Harry Wolf, George Dye. Running time, 198 minutes. Released October 7, 1960.

Players: Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons, Tony Curtis, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, John Gavin, Nina Foch, Herbert Lom, John Ireland, John Dall, Charles McGraw, Joanna Barnes, Woody Strode, Harold J. Stone, Paul Lambert, Robert J. Wilke, John Hoyt, Nicholas Dennis, Frederick Worlock.

Reconstructed and restored by Robert A. Harris; produced by James C. Katz; editorial consultant, Robert Lawrence; 65mm preservation composite negative produced by RGB Optical, Inc.; manager of optical operations, Paul Rutan Jr.; camera operations, John Rupkalvis, Robert Fortenberry Jr.; negative cutting, Brian Ralph; production assistant, Mike Hyatt; timer, David Orr; sound editing, Sound Choice; sound effects editors, Gibb Jaffe, Mark Gordon; re-recording, Rick Alexander (supervisor), Joel Fein, James Bolt; Foley, Karin Roulo, Diane Marshall; Dolby consultant, David Gray.

had only one leg, one man had only one arm. We manufactured an arm and a leg for them and in the battle I slashed off one arm—we had it arranged with blood vessels and everything—and slashed off the leg. That scene scared the hell out of me 'cause I had to be very careful—I didn't want to slash into the stump!"

Back in Hollywood editor Robert Lawrence soon was doing cutting of another sort. While Alex North composed a powerful musical score, Lawrence worked the footage into 197 minutes of pageantry, violence, and drama. This version was shown to a few critics who received it favorably but the censors were not so impressed. They ordered the excision of several scenes of carnage in the battle—including Douglas' limb chops—as well as a scene in which Olivier attempts to seduce his servant played by Tony Curtis. The total cuts amounted to some five minutes.

Those who had seen those few minutes, however, missed them when they were gone. Columnist Archer Winston wrote in the *New York Post*, "Such cuts...tend to reduce a work of character to a least common denominator. When this is done without public notification a few objectors are served at the expense of a majority who are not getting genuine product as made, praised, and originally presented. If this were done with a packaged, labelled drug the company could be prosecuted."

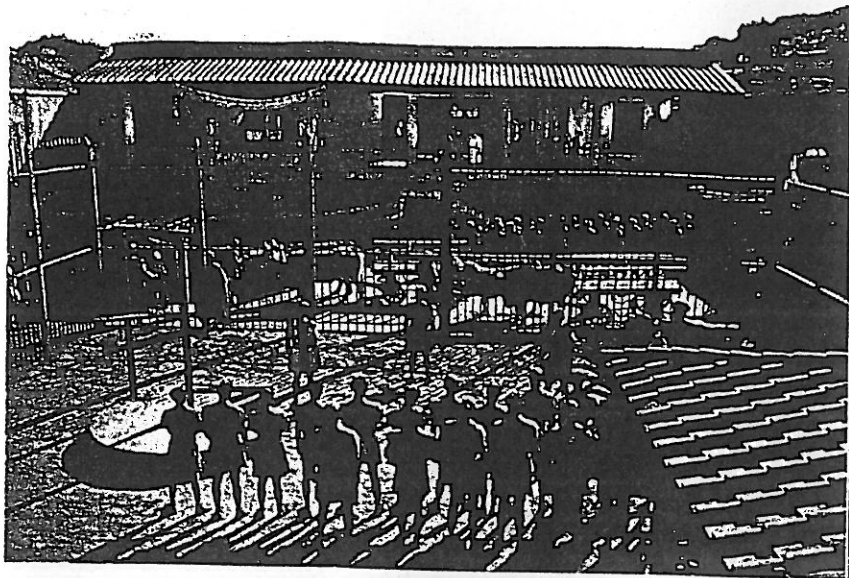
Nevertheless, *Spartacus* was enormously successful at the box office upon its release on October 7, 1960. Within a year the film had grossed over \$13 million, outgrossing even the popular *West Side Story* (1961). *Spartacus* won Academy Awards for best supporting actor (Peter Ustinov), color cinematography, art direction, and color costume design and received nominations for editing and musical score. *Spartacus* also won a Golden Globe as best picture and was named as one of Time Magazine's ten best films of the year.

When Universal re-released the film in 1967 (in 35mm prints only), numerous more cuts were made and the film was substantially reedited; that version ran at 161 minutes. It looked as though *Spartacus* would never again be seen in its original form.

Over 20 years later, the successful restoration of *Lawrence of Arabia* under his belt, film archivist Robert A. Harris began to wonder if *Spartacus* could be similarly brought back to life. He approached Universal and found that MCA Motion Picture Group chairman Thomas Pollack had been thinking along the same lines.

"There are a few films that I remember from my teens that really showed me the power of film," says Harris. "And when I feel one of these films is disappearing I have to do something about it."

Harris, working with James Katz, found that the original negative had deteriorated beyond repair. He says, "Universal took very, very good care of it, but it was thirty years old. The yellow layer was gone; we made some tests off the camera negative and ended up with blue shadows and yellow facial highlights."



Above: A scene at the gladiator school. Left: Leaders of the Roman legions.

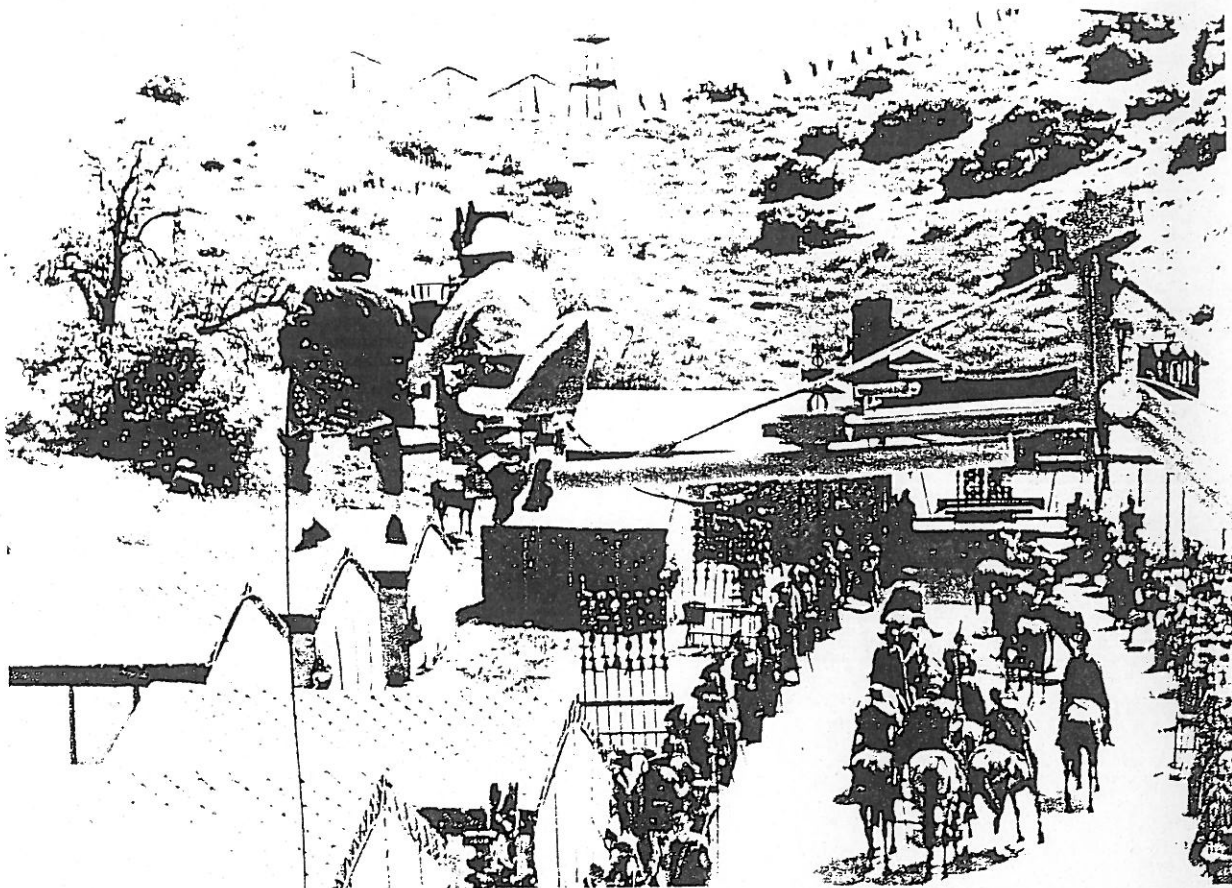
The black and white protection masters did exist in good shape, however, and gave Harris and Katz a basis toward rebuilding *Spartacus* step by step. "However, the protection masters are in Technirama," says Katz, "which means they're on 35mm film, horizontal formatting, eight perfs wide with a 150% squeeze. And there's no equipment around that will conveniently convert it to 65mm. We've been trying to come up with a process which will give us a sharp image across the screen and keep it in registration, and that's been a major problem."

Some of the scenes existed as picture only and a few minutes of sound had to be rerecorded. Tony Curtis rerecorded about a minute of dialogue in Los Angeles and Anthony Hopkins stood in for Laurence Olivier for some looping in London.

Harris says, "If it were up to me I'd restore it back to the last preview because there were some ex-



Kubrick rides a crane with an operator during a spectacular camera move.



to be one of the best films of its kind."

Kubrick's major contribution to the *Spartacus* script was in pruning away some of Dalton Trumbo's excess verbiage, changing it to, he said, "a more visual conception, and removing all but two lines of Kirk Douglas' dialogue during the first half hour of the film's three-hour-plus running time. We fought about that one, but I won."

"I didn't always agree with him," says Douglas, "but Kubrick did some brilliant things. He's the one who conceived the whole idea of the love relationship between Jean Simmons and me. He took out all the dialogue, when she goes around feeding everybody, and the camera keeps coming closer and closer. That was all Stanley."

"Sometimes you don't need dialogue," adds Jean Simmons. "Kubrick was writing with film."

Kubrick seemed unfazed by the logistics of this mammoth feature, and by the size and shape of the Technirama picture. "I must confess that I never thought very much about the proportions of the wide screen after the first day or two. I think that too much emphasis is put on it. It is really just another shape to compose to."

Although planned carefully, the production was plagued with mishaps. Jean Simmons dropped out of filming for over a month when she needed emergency surgery. Tony Curtis split his Achilles tendon while playing tennis and was placed in a

high cast for a month. No sooner did he return to the set than Douglas was downed with a virus and bedridden for ten days. *Spartacus* was soon months over schedule and had seen its budget doubled. Peter Ustinov says, "It went on for an awfully long time. My daughter was born right before the beginning of it and by the time the film was still doing retakes she was old enough, in kindergarten, that when asked what her father did with his life, she answered, 'Spartacus.' I did the final retake four days before the film opened."

After production was completed in California, Kubrick, Douglas, and the crew flew to Spain to begin plotting and filming the huge battle scene climax. Eight thousand infantrymen from the Spanish Army were recruited to play the Roman legions. They learned to form hollow squares of ten cohorts of 360 men each, not including officers and standard bearers. Kubrick and Metty filmed the sweep of action from three 110-foot towers.

Between shots, Kubrick assigned each "dead" man in the field a piece of cardboard with a number, making it possible for him to compose his scene more quickly by shouting, "Number sixteen, a little further to the left!" The battle and aftermath scenes, which take only a few impressive minutes onscreen, took six weeks to rehearse and six weeks to film.

The violence in *Spartacus* represented the early stages of the more explicit mayhem of the Sixties. Douglas says, "In the battle I had two men: one man