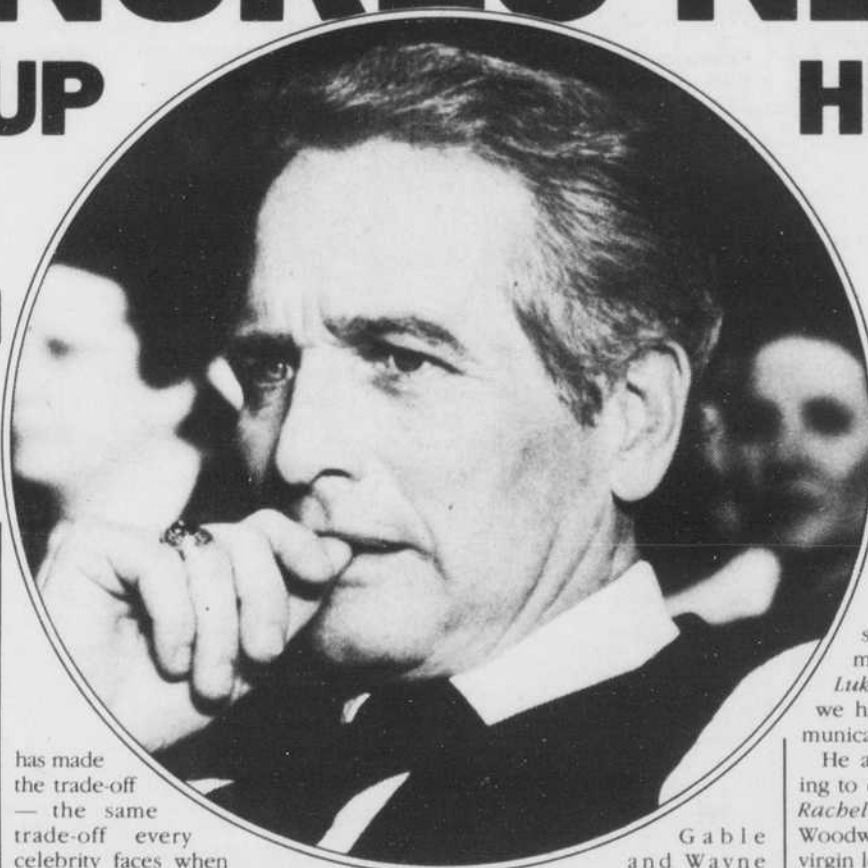


NO-NUKES NEWMAN PUTS UP HIS DUKES



"It's me," says Paul Newman, flashing a sardonic smirk as he strolls onto a soundstage at Universal Studios. "One of the duped and manipulated!" Wearing a white tee-shirt emblazoned with "Team Newman," his newly-formed racing team scheduled to debut at the 1983 Indy 500 race, Newman is here to tape a commercial for the Nuclear Freeze movement. These days only two subjects can compel Newman to meet the press — anti-nukes and his upcoming movie, *The Verdict*.

Universal Studios, a debt-free company rolling in money (much of it courtesy of *E.T.*), is an incongruous choice to tape an anti-nuke commercial. The studio is headed by Lew Wasserman, a powerful supporter of Reagan and the status quo. But the studio is also the home base of Embassy Pictures, headed by a somewhat less powerful but nevertheless formidable producer, Norman Lear, an avid supporter of liberal causes. It's Lear who has put together the talent for this commercial, and it's Lear who is calling the shots. Besides, as one executive put it, money's money; the studio will rent to anyone.

When Newman comes onto the soundstage, General William Fairborne, retired, is talking into a camera, telling us all that nuclear escalation is "madness." He's not an expert actor, and he's called upon to repeat his lines so many times the General finally jokes in embarrassment, "This is just like training recruits — 'Hey, you knucklehead.'" He is referring to himself.

Newman confers briefly with Lear. He wants it made perfectly clear that General William Fairborne, retired, is a former *military* man.

For close to thirty years Paul Newman has proved himself to be not only an indispensable actor and bonafide movie star, but an outspoken and thoughtful supporter of causes — all liberal. Newman, who was born in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a one-time Quaker community, says he was raised to use his mind. (That training took him to Kenyon College in Ohio and to Yale University for his MA.)

Newman has followed his convictions away from Hollywood. Last year he served as a delegate to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and this year he is devoting much of his free time to that same cause. He knows people listen to him because of his name, his movies. He knows that while he talks arms, treaties and alternatives, they're thinking about Butch Cassidy and Hud, or they're looking at his slightly thinning close-cropped gray hair and thinking how well he's held up, or they're trying not to stare into those famous blue eyes. He knows this and

has made the trade-off — the same trade-off every celebrity faces when deciding to go public on issues.

Newman is not a brilliant talker; he does not have the gift of gab to seduce the unwilling, and he's the first to admit it. Even those who think he's doing a pretty good job on the anti-nuke issue have been tripped up by his insistence that the United States and the Soviet Union are about equal in terms of treaty violations. The public reaction included charges that Newman was "duped and manipulated."

"Civil defense in this country is an absurdity," he starts off, munching an apple, the only food he says he's eaten in almost eight hours. "I've been up since 6:30," he adds, digressing from the issue, "and I'm starved." His voice trails off as if he'd rather think about something other than what he's talking about. When he picks up the conversation again, he speaks slowly, deliberately, choosing his words with care. "For one thing, civil defense requires a very cooperative enemy. To evacuate a city takes at least seven days — is the enemy going to announce seven days in advance what they're going to do? Also," he adds, "let's say you start to evacuate a city and the bus drivers who get out with the first load of people refuse to go back for another, or the subway shuttle conductors take one run and then say 'Enough, I want to be safe.'"

Newman is not naive. Thirty years of political activism have taught him that nothing is final. "The freeze initiative," he says in response to a question about small steps and great issues, "is not the answer. But it is a beginning. Salt II took seven years. Do you know how many weapons both sides will build in another seven years? We have to create a climate where cooperation is possible."

Newman, who will be 58 in January, grew up in a time when movie heroes played by the rules. Tracy,

Gable and Wayne didn't cross Warner, Mayer and Zanuck, not about

politics and not about lifestyles. It took Newman's generation to change all that. A couple of his compatriots from the Actors Studio in New York made their marks before Newman did — Marlon Brando and James Dean. By the mid-Fifties they were well on their way to creating a screen image we now take for granted — the anti-hero with a heart.

Newman's distrust for Hollywood (encouraged by Brando and Dean) was not without justification. Jack Warner was not good to Newman. The actor's first film was a laughable Biblical drama called *The Silver Chalice*. It sent Newman fleeing back to New York and live television.

Eventually he returned to Hollywood and the roles got better. He did a fine job as the original Rocky — Rocky Graziano in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* — and scored even more strongly in *The Long Hot Summer*, loosely based on short stories by William Faulkner. *Summer* earned Newman his first Oscar nomination and brought him recognition as a sex symbol. As Pauline Kael put it, Paul Newman did more for removing a shirt than any actor since Clark Gable (she would later point out that the same could not be said of Robert Redford).

Along the way, Newman became rich and famous. He divorced his first wife and mother of his three oldest children and married actress Joanne Woodward. Together they had three other children — all girls — and together they made some terrible movies, such as *Rally Round the Flag, Boys* and *A New Kind of Love* (in which Newman actually mistakes Woodward for a man). For an acclaimed movie star, Newman made a surprising number of clunkers.

But when Newman was good and the material fit him, he had no rival. He excelled at creating a certain type

of character — laconic, stoic, cynical. He played that role to perfection in *The Hustler*, a taut, crackling drama where he traded pool shots with Minnesota. Fats (Jackie Gleason) and learned about guts from Piper Laurie and George C. Scott; in *Hud*, where his cynical, amoral cattleman who believed in nothing still stands as a landmark performance; and in *Cool Hand Luke*, which introduced "what we have here is a failure to communicate" to the American language.

He also took some chances, turning to directing with a movie called *Rachel, Rachel*, starring Joanne Woodward as a thirty-five-year-old virgin looking for love. That certainly wasn't the sort of subject matter anyone thought fitted Newman's on-screen personality.

He also made money with pictures like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Sting* and *The Towering Inferno*. He spent a lot of time on the racing circuit and waited. By 1979, Newman was at that awkward age, no longer quite able to get away with playing the young hero, but still too juicy to play the voice of wisdom. He had gone beyond being Richard Gere but he wasn't yet ready to be Melvyn Douglas.

In the last three years he's made three controversial films that have made money and earned him personal honors. The first was *Fort Apache, the Bronx*, about cops in the South Bronx trying to do what's right in a very wrong place — a kind of big-screen *Hill Street Blues*. The film was uneven and damned by residents of the South Bronx as racist, but Newman emerged unscathed, creating a very sympathetic character, an over-the-hill cop still trying to do the right thing. Next came *Absence of Malice* in which Newman, the son of a Mafioso, was tarred by an overzealous reporter, Sally Field. The film was a slap in the face to journalists and women, but as critic Andrew Sarris pointed out, women accepted from Newman lines they'd never accept from, say, Clint Eastwood. Newman earned his fifth Oscar nomination for *Malice*.

Newman is almost certain to get another Oscar nomination for *The Verdict*. Directed by Sidney Lumet, who has made films such as *Dog Day Afternoon* and *Prince of the City*, *The Verdict* deals with issues and morality, right and wrong. It was originally developed for Robert Redford, but he pulled out of the project due to "creative differences." For a while, the role was actively sought by just about every actor between the ages of 30 and 50. The main charac-

ter is the sort actors dream of playing: showy, multi-dimensional and ultimately heroic.

In *The Verdict*, Newman is Frank Galvin, a washed-up, alcoholic attorney who takes on a malpractice suit that pits him against the finest law firm in Boston, a reputable hospital run by the Catholic Church, public opinion, and even his own sense of himself.

"It's a story about the redemption of a human being," says Newman of *The Verdict*. "It's not an attack on the legal system or the Catholic Church or hospitals. Those institutions are springboards for the development of his character. They're metaphors for what seem to be insurmountable obstacles all around him."

The Verdict is a different sort of role for Newman. "It's a very interesting character for me because he's not cool or collected. He's frightened. He's living on the edge and he's panicked. There are people who really do find their lives in a shambles, and they decide they don't like it. Some just continue to degenerate and some, like Galvin, can pick themselves up.

"Every person is vulnerable in certain ways, at certain times in their lives."

There are many ways in which Newman is not now vulnerable. He is not vulnerable when it comes to his career or his financial security. In other areas his defense is shakier. Two years ago his only son, Scott, died from an overdose of drugs. Newman is still coming to terms with that tragedy. He was teaching an acting and directing seminar at Kenyon College when he got the news his son had died. He does not talk publicly about what happened, but he has poured money, time and influence into the Scott Newman Foundation, which funds projects directed at drug rehabilitation.

In the early Seventies Newman told a reporter, "Kids, it's a fantastic time to be young. In some ways they have less imposed upon them than my generation did — they're less acquisitive, property no longer has such importance and they're less inhibited.

"Yet they have other things imposed on them that are harsher than anything we had to face. Things are no longer clearly defined in black and white, good and bad. There's this acceleration of change, things are moving too fast, it's enough to drive them all crazy."

Madness of one sort or another seems to be a recurring Newman concern, one he shares with his public on political issues. Not personal ones.

BY JACOB ATLAS