

# Screen Star Stephen Boyd, Since That Chariot Race

BY BRUCE VILANCH  
Free Press Staff Writer

For a man who made his name getting dragged through the mud, Stephen Boyd is surprisingly clean.

His teeth really sparkle, his eyes shine bright, he appears to have full power in all four limbs—he's in great shape.

This will assure the thousands who became concerned when Boyd spent the better part of 15 minutes under the hoofs of eight galloping stallions pulling his chariot to oblivion in "Ben-Hur."

A sizeable portion of skin and bone was sliced off the Boyd body during that scene, all so Charlton Heston could go on to victory in Rome and an Oscar in California.

Undaunted, Boyd picked up his pieces and headed for Hollywood, an Irish hearthrob-in-a-toga, to star in such treasures as "The Fall of the Roman Empire," "The Capers of the Golden Bulls" and America's trash classic, "The Oscar."

He married (a whirlwind union of 23 days), divorced, and was quoted as proclaiming "the only difference between Doris Day, Sophia Loren and Brigitte Bardot is their hair styles."

He walked out of "Cleopatra" and into "Jumbo" (in which he shared billing with an elephant) and "Fantastic Voyage" (in which he plunged the lymph gland rapids with Raquel Welch).

He even played the heavy in "Genghis Khan."

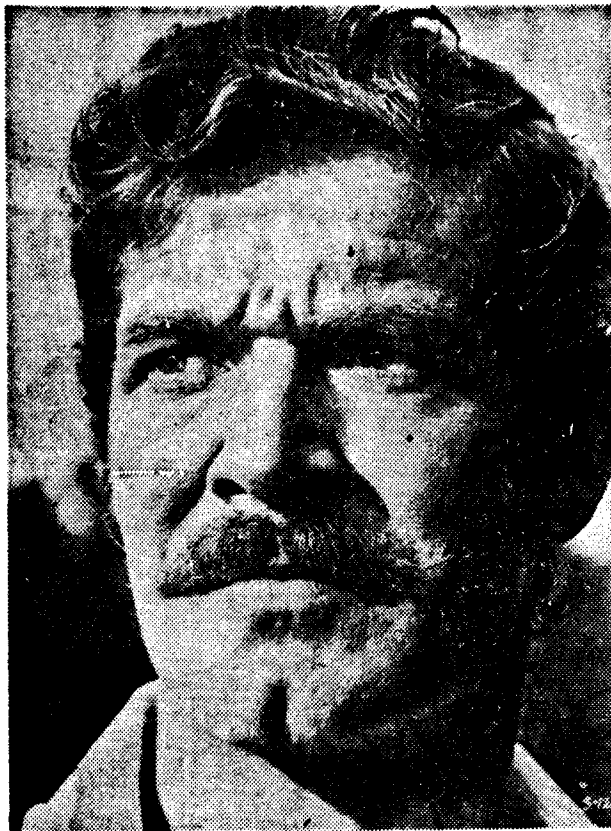
It has not been a dull life for Stephen Boyd.

**THE NEW BOYD**, minus the blue eyes (they were contact lenses) and the massive shoulders (that was padding), stands over six feet tall and is dashing handsome, but in a decidedly un-Hollywood, non-glamour-boy way. He is finished with Biblical pictures, gladiator spectacles and other trappings of imperial majesty and, in his latest film, plays an enigmatic, yet evil plantation owner in Mississippi circa 1850.

The picture, "Slaves" and was shot on what in movies they call "a shoestring" (small fortune.) Boyd says no one would back "Slaves" until he signed on as its star. "That helped them raise at least some of the money," he says.

"No one would back 'Slaves' because it is about an explosive situation which is explosive only because no one understands it."

The picture tries to make a statement all about Now and how voices in the black community clamor alternately for wood and quiet. Stephen Boyd thinks this is the value of "Slaves."



*"The whole idea of moral obligation and responsibility for one's fellow man, as well as responsibility to oneself fills up a great deal of Boyd's conversation."*

"Civil rights 100 years from now should not be discussed." "Civil rights of today is what is important. I joined the civil rights movement years ago," the former British subject, now American citizen says, "I gave my word years ago to help. Now I want to find out if their programs are getting to the people they're supposed to be getting to."

"I feel a picture like 'Slaves,' which addresses itself to some of America's current problems, is something of a moral obligation for me. As soon as I have fulfilled some of my moral obligations, I can begin making money doing other things so I can have time to fulfill some more."

**THE WHOLE** idea of moral obligation and responsibility for one's fellow man, as well as responsibility to oneself, fills up a great deal of Boyd's conversation. He speaks of co-workers as if they were close relatives, not just contractual partners.

"I was a guest on one of those New York radio panel shows and they were talking about Judy Garland," he says, "one fellow, I won't mention his name it's so sickening, was carrying on about how she was a no-talent, a faggot hero. It's disgusting what some people will say in public."

thing big for Stephen Boyd's career. This he knows and accepts, as he has accepted everything since he walked away from the most expensive movie of all time.

"It was in the original version of 'Cleopatra,' the one to be shot in London. I was to play Marc Antony opposite Elizabeth Taylor, with Rouben Mamoulian directing, but Elizabeth got sick and everything stopped.

"I WAS outside the hospital door that day with Eddie (Miss Taylor's fourth husband, singer Eddie Fisher) when the doctors came out and told us she had one hour to live. It was one of the saddest, most pathetic moments I can recall. But somehow she pulled through—nothing ever stops her when she wants something.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't wait around until they decided to shoot. The script was being rewritten, there was a new director, the whole Shaw and Shakespeare concept of a personal drama was being thrown out in favor of spectacle. So I left. They gave my part to a fellow named Richard Burton. They even gave him my costume, and to this day, every time he sees me, he says 'Jesus, you've got big feet!'"

"He doesn't even mention my chest," Stephen Boyd says, with that serene scientist's smile.

In an attempt to find his own mind amidst such goings-on, Boyd has turned to scientology, a voguish new faith whose speakers turn up regularly on college campuses to lecture for \$2.50 a throw.

"I don't think anything should be suspect because it costs money," he says. He calls scientology "a process used to make you capable of learning."

"Scientology is nothing. It means only what you want it to. It is not a church that you go to to pray, but a church that you go to to learn. It is no good unless you apply it. It is the application."

Basically, scientologists meditate, usually in the presence of a spiritual supervisor, teaching themselves to be open in order to learn. One who has truly opened himself can be elevated to the position of Clear. Stephen Boyd has elevated himself to OC 6, a position beneath that of Clear. It took him nine months.

"Slaves" did not take him quite so long to accomplish, and, hopefully, it will give him equal peace-of-mind. What it certainly will not do is any-