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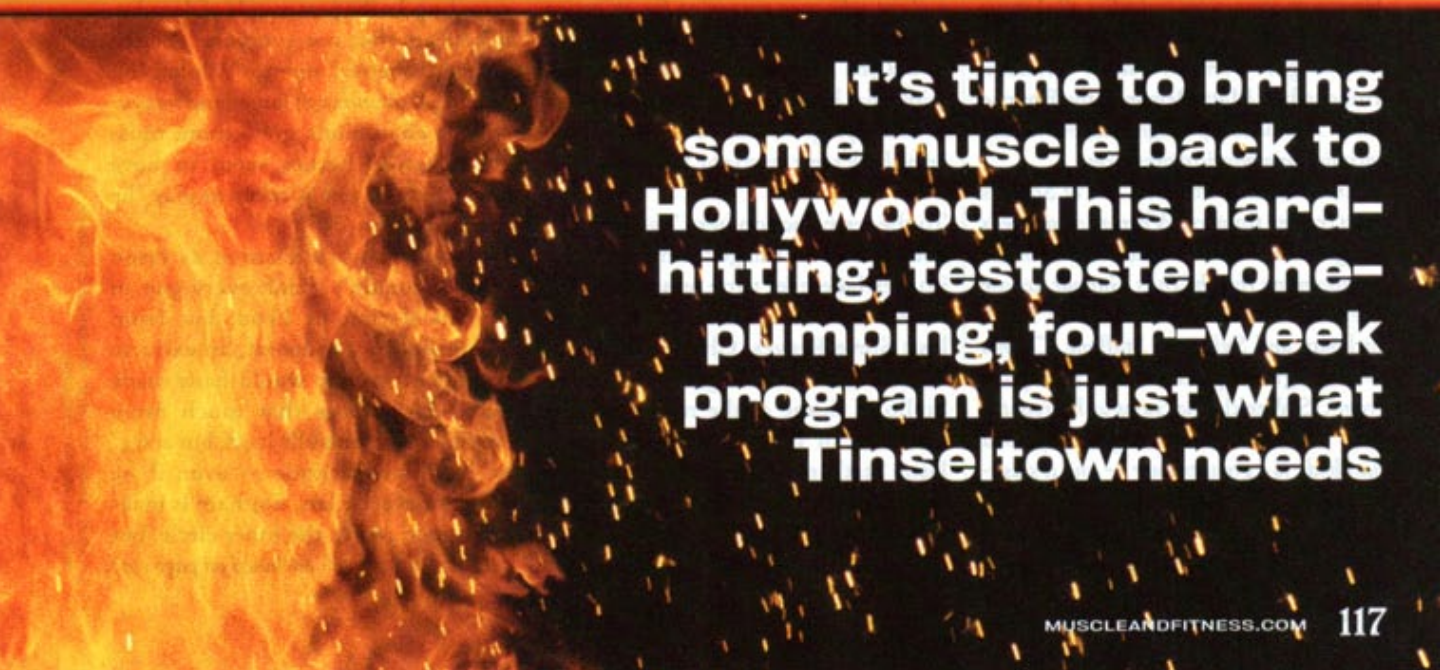






# THE NEXT ACTION HERO

By Gunnar Peterson, CSCS | Photos by Art Brewer



**It's time to bring some muscle back to Hollywood. This hard-hitting, testosterone-pumping, four-week program is just what Tinseltown needs**



# A LONG TIME AGO IN A HOLLYWOOD FAR, FAR AWAY,

Arnold Schwarzenegger starred in what was sure to be a blockbuster hit. The former world-champion bodybuilder from Austria had headlined numerous action films — *The Terminator*, *Predator*, *Total Recall* — and virtually all of them were smashing successes. But not this one. It failed at the box office and signaled the end of the era of larger-than-life onscreen personas. The year was 1993, and the film's title was as ominous as it was ironic: *Last Action Hero*. Arnold followed this disappointment with other well-received action flicks (*True Lies*, *Terminator 3*), but 16 years ago marked the beginning of the end of the well-muscled action hero.

With few exceptions, the current crop of big-screen conquerors embodies all-American good looks at well under 200 pounds of bodyweight: Tom Cruise in *Mission Impossible*, Matt Damon in the *Bourne* films. Formidable protagonists, but hardly intimidating physical presences.

Enter Gunnar Peterson, one of SoCal's most trusted trainers. When an actor needs to tighten up his abs or pack on muscle for an upcoming role, he calls Gunnar, whose client list has included headliners Hugh Jackman and Sylvester Stallone. On his website, [gunnarpeterson.com](http://gunnarpeterson.com), is a quote from *US Weekly* that sums up his reputation: "Behind almost every Hollywood hardbody is a great trainer — and it's usually Gunnar Peterson."

In the wake of this crisis of skinny dudes playing action heroes, we approached Gun-

nar with one simple question: If you had a client who was preparing for an action role and wanted to add some muscle, how would you train him? Gunnar responded with what he thinks an action hero should be and a program that can and will help bring back some muscle to Tinseltown.

To the term "action hero," you invariably attach an image. Some of these images fade over time or are replaced with newer ones, but a few are timeless: Steve Reeves, Charles Bronson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone. Some of the newer images are those of Liam Neeson in *Taken*, Jason Statham in *The Transporter* series and Dwayne Johnson in anything with a co-star taller than 4'.

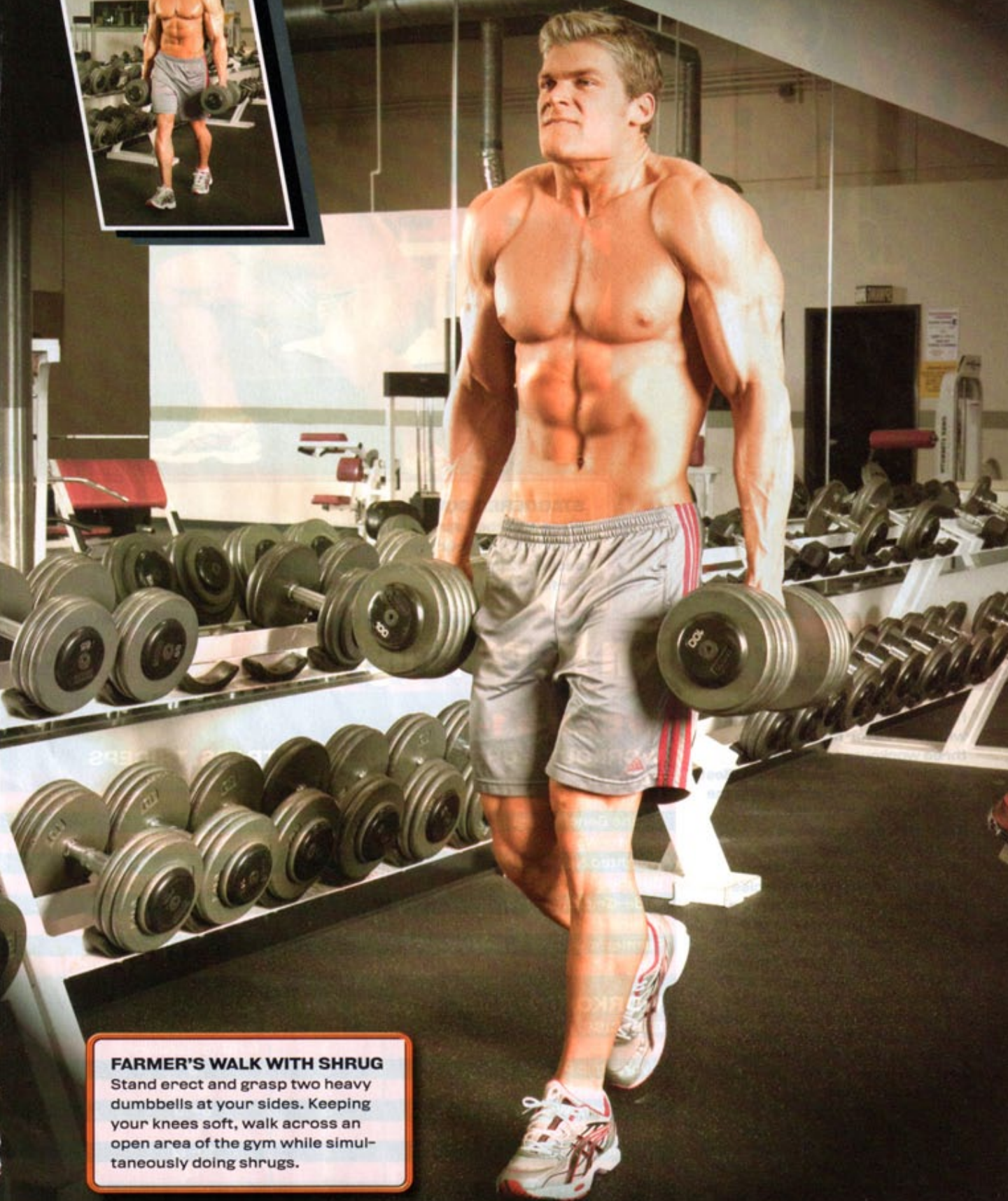
Just like the U.S. car manufacturers,

today's American action hero needs retooling. In the past couple of decades, it appears that not everyone got the "bigger is better" memo. While NFL and MLB players got larger and heavy-weight champions grew more muscular, action heroes seem to have neglected the size it takes to play the part of a hero.

Not to say that Damon as Jason Bourne couldn't spank every guy in a train station in Lyon, but from a plausibility standpoint, an extra 20 pounds of muscle would have made his badass status that much more credible. Neeson pulls it off, but at 6'4" he has more latitude — even if he doesn't have the lats. Statham is making a good run at the inner circle, but

(Continued on page 130)





**FARMER'S WALK WITH SHRUG**

Stand erect and grasp two heavy dumbbells at your sides. Keeping your knees soft, walk across an open area of the gym while simultaneously doing shrugs.





#### STAGGERED SQUAT

Place a barbell across your traps and stand erect with your chest out and your feet shoulder-width apart. Move one foot back 6–12 inches, then out to the side another 6–12 inches, and perform squats for reps. Alternate foot position every set.

## The Next Action Hero Program

I devised this program based on what works for my clients. Do three workouts each week in addition to your usual cardio. Rest at least 24 hours before doing the next workout. You'll see athletically oriented exercises as well as bodybuilding mainstays here; the variety will demand adaptation from your muscles regardless of your gym tenure.

Each week you'll perform 8–15 sets per muscle group, and your rep scheme should stay between eight and 12. (You can go up to 15 reps on occasion, but only if your form is dead-on.) Rest time should be 30 seconds between sets, unless it's part of a superset. Focus on form and feel the reps before you count them.

Stick with this program, consume quality calories and get plenty of sleep, and you'll be ready for your close-up wearing nothing but an M60 and an ammo belt.

### WEEKS 1-2

#### WORKOUT 1: CHEST, SHOULDERS, TRAPS, TRICEPS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS/TIME
Incline Plyometric Push-Up	3	8
Incline Bench Press	4–5	8–10
Wall-to-Wall Dip	3	6–8
Weighted Negative Dip	3	8–10
Dumbbell Overhead Press	3	8–10
Wide-Grip Upright Row	3	10–12
Behind-the-Back Shrug <sup>1</sup>	3	12
Farmer's Walk With Shrug	3	30 seconds
3-Point Dumbbell Kickback	3	12 (per side)

#### WORKOUT 2: BACK, BICEPS, FOREARMS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Alternating Angled Pull-Up	3	8–10 (or to failure)
Plyometric Pull-Up	3	8
Uneven Lat Pulldown	3	10–12
Narrow-to-Wide Barbell Curl	3	8–10
Wax-Off Dumbbell Curl	3	10
Fat-Bar Curl <sup>2</sup>	2	10–12
Reverse Wrist Curl	3	12
Barbell Wrist Curl	3	15 >>