



Greek Heroes in Popular Culture Through Time

Heracles

VOICEOVER:

Welcome to Greek heroes where we look at how the heroes of Greek literature have been represented in popular culture through time.

Tonight's special guest is world - Heracles.

HERACLES:

Heracles, who is this guy? No one calls me Heracles apart from the Ancient Greeks. It's been Hercules since Roman times. Any place you go throughout the ages, that name means something. They send me these 12 insane labours and I ace them all. I killed a lion with my bare hands, you know what I am saying?

But even the Greeks get a little confused, shall we say - Always asking am I a god? Am I a man? Am I something in the middle there? All cause I was born illegitimate. I ain't ashamed to say it, Ma was a mortal, pa's King of the Gods. And the Americans, woah they loved me to. But they can't make up their minds either.

This is the first movie they put me in and right off the bat I'm not a god, or even a demi-god - I'm a normal guy who looks a lot like Popeye. Popeye was like an average Joe American - "I am what I am!" His strength didn't come from the gods, it came from being a good boy and eating his five a day - and that's what this version teaches the kids, I guess.

OK, Hercules- The Beefcake years. By the late 50s, America's booming. People want more than honest life and green vegetables, they wanna rule the world.

This guy here is Steve Reeves, body builder who made his name and his millions playing me. OK they got pretty creative with my story. Forget 12 labours, not big enough. They go for the Argonauts mission to save a kingdom. And they make me the focus even though I was only there for like 5 minutes the first time. It ain't about being a god on high I guess for Steve heaven's a place on earth.

Here's another body builder you might recognise playing me. This time Arnie leaves Olympus and comes to the toughest place on Earth and he learns the opposite lesson that earth ain't no place for gods no more, more like the Underworld maybe. You gotta be down and dirty just to survive, but you know what? It's still pretty good fun for a vacation.

Yeh, I guess me and Arnie are a like you know, we stand for the American dream that wherever you come from if you work hard and work out hard any schmuck can be - well maybe not a demi-god - But Governor of California, or something?

The 90s they were my American dream! The big TV show - The Legendary Journeys - They tried to emphasize my moral strength over the physical strength. Instead of turning my back on the gods - this time they had me fighting them - mainly my wicked stepmother Hera. Oh, man what a ballbreaker.

Disney even cleaned that up - in their film Zeus and Hera are my folks - and happily married! Yeah right! The illegitimate stuff is out the window. Disney Herc gets kicked out of heaven and now the lesson seems like to be a god first you gotta be a hero among men and have a real good singing voice.

So that's it, my whole journey from lion-bashing, stable-cleaning tough guy to sissy kids role model. What am I gonna do? I'm just a man, right? Or am I? Now I'm confused. You wanna know, call me agent.