



The Time Machine brought Taylor into battle with the beastly Morlocks, actually stuntmen wearing rubber suits. They "had a hell of a time," notes the actor.



Stepping into *The Time Machine*, Rod Taylor tried to subtly indicate that the time traveler was actually H.G. Wells.

By STEVE SWIRES

## Rod Taylor Time-Traveling Hero

The Australian actor steps out of "The Time Machine" to remember a "Twilight Zone" tale and the terror of "The Birds."

Two decades before Mel (*Mad Max*) Gibson and Bryan (*F/X*) Brown made it fashionable to be Australian, Rod Taylor was the first Aussie actor to become a major Hollywood star since Errol Flynn. His rugged good looks and uncanny ability to perfect an authentic American accent quickly established Taylor as a popular leading man, with starring roles in such entertaining adventure sagas as *Seven Seas to Calais*, *The Liquidator*, *Chuka*, *Dark of the Sun* and *The High Commissioner*.

Usually cast as a fearless macho man, he demonstrated an impressive versatility in the light comedy *Sunday in New York* and the romantic drama *Hotel*, and even received a Best Actor Academy Award nomination as Irish playwright Sean O'Casey in John Ford's *Young Cassidy*. Equally adept at portraying pirates, spies, cowboys, mercenaries and detectives, Taylor earned a permanent place in the pantheon of science-fiction heroes for his thoughtful performances in two genuine genre classics, George Pal's wondrous *The Time Machine* and Alfred Hitchcock's chilling *The Birds*.

"I've been such a phony American for so many years, that most people have forgotten I'm really Australian," the outspoken 57-year-old actor acknowledges, relaxing in his Palm Springs home. "I must have a lucky imitative ear. It certainly has nothing to do with talent. I just fell in love with the States as soon as I stepped off the airplane, and set out to become a real American."

Born in Sydney, Australia on January 11, 1929, Taylor originally trained to become a painter, attending Sydney Technical and Fine Arts College, where he won several technical awards as a student engineer. Inspired by a

performance by Sir Laurence Olivier, who was touring Australia with his Old Vic repertory company, Taylor dabbled in amateur dramatics while working for a department store, creating and painting backdrops for fashion displays.

"There I was in a smock, surrounded by all the other window dressers," he remembers. "I used to listen to these awful Australian soap operas on the radio. I thought: 'I bet I

STEVE SWIRES, senior STARLOG correspondent, profiled Leonard Nimoy in issue #106.