



SCREEN. » Up Close & Personal | By Anya Kussler

# sprinter

Having prepped James McAvoy for his grunty role in the action thriller *Wanted*, Glenn Chapman is quickly gaining a reputation as trainer to the stars. The hunky PT tells Anya Kussler about his own thespian pursuits – and shares some tips for shaping up fast

His clients and friends describe Glenn Chapman as passionate, enthusiastic... and the enforcer of gruelling, yet highly effective exercise sessions. My first impression of the Stockton-bred, London-based personal trainer is of a down-to-earth, approachable chap, who's not afraid of a challenge. Especially when that challenge involves preparing actors for physically tough film roles in a nearly impossible short space of time.

To date, the 36-year-old's biggest claim to fame is training James McAvoy for his part as Wesley Gibson in the fast-paced, nail-you-to-your-seat action thriller *Wanted*. In the movie, which also stars Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman, James plays a dweebish slacker who turns into a super-hero assassin on a mission to avenge his dad's death.

For the role, Glenn literally had to transform the 62kg, slight actor into 73kg of pure, ripped muscle in a matter of eight weeks.

"James wanted to be defined, but not 'too massive', so we worked at him gaining lean muscle mass and losing body fat," Glenn says.

Besides that, Wes also had to have the power and fitness to perform a number of serious stunts that involved a lot of jumping and sprinting. So, to whip James into shape, Glenn put him onto a rigorous regime of four to five training sessions a week. He mixed up weights sessions, intense interval training and power training, and later threw plyometrics into the mix, where you use your body weight to strengthen the muscles.

In the weights sessions, they focused on exercises that used a lot of muscles and joints at once, in order to

strengthen the whole body. Preferred props included free weights, bars and stability balls.

"We didn't use resistance machines, because they isolate muscles at the expense of the core and other muscle activity, which creates weak areas."

Fortunately for James, these hardcore sessions were accompanied by compulsory rest periods ("which is when the changes happen"), and an organic diet rich in protein and good-quality fats.

"We also never trained for more than one hour at a time, otherwise the

your size, so I got him to do them immediately before the scene."

To prepare James for his stunts, Glenn incorporated a lot of exercises that mimicked actions he would be doing on set. To get his body up to speed for the running scenes, for example, he prescribed sprint intervals. These involved walking fast on the treadmill at an incline for about half a minute, then running flat out at the highest speed for 20 to 30 seconds, before returning back to a fast walk.

"They really take your breath away," Glenn laughs.



body starts to cannibalise itself and use muscle tissue."

One essential component of James' physique-moulding routine was press-up intervals – 30 seconds on; 30 seconds off. This exercise works wonders for the chest, arms, triceps and shoulders – particularly handy for the time when the actor had to bare his delicious upper body in the bathroom scene.

"Press-up intervals instantly increase

Another Glenn specialty is the 'Power & Guns' exercise, which was aimed at preparing James for the sprinting and shooting stunts. From a semi-squat position, you jump up onto a bench with both legs at once, armed with two 3kg dumbbells (aka imitation revolvers), then rotate them from side to side.

And transforming James did come with its own set of challenges. One was fitting the actor's PT sessions in

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around shooting times, especially the lengthy fight training and kickboxing sessions. After those, Glenn explains, James often didn't have any time (or energy) left for his fitness training and so began losing the muscle needed to look the part. To help him maintain the desired bulk, the ever-resourceful Glenn mixed up different types of training – sometimes weights, sometimes interval training.

"Lack of training time is just the reality of the movie world," he says.

Speaking of the movie world, while Glenn has a dedicated client following from all walks of life, it is not surprising that he has a penchant for working with actors. After all, he has spent a large portion of his career as a thespian, working on various theatre and TV productions around the UK, including with the Royal Shakespeare Company and on London's West End. Coincidentally, one of the drama schools he attended happens to be the same one James McAvoy frequented: the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

Exercise only took centre stage in Glenn's life about three years ago, when he decided to diversify his career. And diversify he did! He now has an impressive array of fitness qualifications under his belt, ranging from boxing and resistance training, right through to postural correction, group fitness, nutrition and being a CHEK holistic

lifestyle practitioner. However, he says that before he became a PT, he used to struggle with exercise.

"I'd take it and leave it; lose weight then put it on again. Basically, I didn't understand what I was doing!"

Judging by his physique today, yo-yoing fitness is certainly no longer a problem for him.

When I ask Glenn for his secret recipe to a healthy, fit body, he doesn't mince his words.

"Get back to basics and remind the body what it was designed to do: eat well and move well. That'll help switch its workings back to the time before society turned humans into sedated, medicated, dehydrated and diseased people."

Glenn believes that an organic, fluid-rich, metabolic diet – where you eat foods based on your ancestral heritage – constitutes as much as 70 percent of a healthy body.

"Food is medicine," he says.

So is exercise.

"Just get out there and do the primal stuff. Get into walking or go and climb up a tree."

What Glenn does not advocate is activities that humans weren't designed to do, like lengthy bouts of running or stationary biking.

"All this kind of exercise does is give you a bad posture."

Glenn's advice for getting into great athletic shape – and also having good

posture – is an intensive circuit training routine that includes speed, strength and agility work. Typical exercises he tends to incorporate into his circuits include shuttle runs, running with weights, press-ups and squats.

"The key is to vary your speed while you're training, so you have short periods of intensive activity, followed by more gentle exercise."

He is convinced it was fate that prompted him to combine his thespian and personal training talents. Things fell into place just after he'd started working at a North London gym and James McAvoy walked in wanting to get fit for *Wanted*.

"I looked on the computer and saw the appointment he'd booked was for another day – had he come on that day, we wouldn't have met. So it was meant to be!"

As for the previously gym-shy James, when he met Glenn that day, he made a life-long commitment to fitness.

"He's incredibly consistent – a PT's dream client, really."

And when Glenn's not whipping human bodies into shape, he can often be found at the cinema, indulging in a bit of celluloid action. At the time of our interview, *Pan's Labyrinth* was his widescreen object of desire.

"And *Wanted*, of course!" ◀◀

## GIVEAWAY

If you're keen to see how Glenn has helped transform James McAvoy for *Wanted*, we have five copies of the DVD to give away. To go into the draw, send your name and contact details to Fitness Life/*Wanted* Giveaway, PO Box 56 709, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446, by Friday, February 6, 2009.

