

NO-NUKES NEWMAN PUTS UP HIS DUKES

made their marks before Newman

well on their way to creating a

Newman's distrust for Hollywood

encouraged by Brando and Dean)

was not without justification. Jack

a surprising number of clunkers.

"It's me," says Paul Newman, flashing a sardonic smirk as he strolls onto a soundstage at Universal Studios. "One of the duped and manipulated!" Wearing a white tee-shirt emblazoned with "Team Newman," his newly-formed racing team scheduled to debut at the 1983 Indy 500 race, Newman is here to tape a commercial for the Nuclear Freeze movement. These days only two subjects can compel Newman to meet the press - anti-nukes and his up-

coming movie, The Verdict. Universal Studios, a debt-free company rolling in money (much of it courtesy of E.T.), is an incongruous choice to tape an anti-nuke commercial. The studio is headed by Lew Wasserman, a powerful supporter of | the trade-off Reagan and the status quo. But the | - the same studio is also the home base of Em- | trade-off every what less powerful but nevertheless formidable producer, Norman Lear, an avid supporter of liberal causes. It's Lear who has put together the talent for this commercial, and it's Lear who is calling the shots. Besides, as one executive put it, money's money; the studio will rent

to anyone. When Newman comes onto the soundstage, General William Fairborne, retired, is talking into a camera, telling us all that nuclear escalation is "madness." He's not an expert actor, and he's called upon to repeat his lines so many times the General finally jokes in embarrassment, "This is just like training recruits — 'Hey, you knucklehead." He is referring

to himself. Newman confers briefly with Lear. He wants it made perfectly clear that General William Fairborne, retired, is a former military man.

For close to thirty years Paul Newman has proved himself to be not only an indispensible actor and bonafide movie star, but an outspoken and thoughtful supporter of causes - all liberal. Newman, who was born in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a one-time Ouaker community, says he was raised to use his mind. (That training took him to Kenyon College in Ohio and to Yale University for his Newman has followed his convic-

tions away from Hollywood. Last year | 'Enough, I want to be safe.'" he served as a delegate to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament | of political activism have taught him and this year he is devoting much of | that nothing is final. "The freeze inhis free time to that same cause. He | itiative," he says in response to a knows people listen to him because of his name, his movies. He knows that while he talks arms, treaties and Butch Cassidy and Hud, or they're looking at his slightly thinning close-cropped gray hair and thinking how well he's held up, or they're trying not to stare into those famous

didn't cross Warner. deciding to go public on Mayer and Zanuck, not about politics and not about lifestyles. It

Newman is not a brilliant talker; he does not have the gift of gab to took Newman's generation to change all that. A couple of his compatriots seduce the unwilling, and he's the first to admit it. Even those who from the Actors Studio in New York think he's doing a pretty good job did — Marlon Brando and James on the anti-nuke issue have been tripped up by his insistence that Dean. By the mid-Fifties they were the United States and the Soviet screen image we now take for Union are about equal in terms of granted — the anti-hero with a heart. treaty violations. The public reaction included charges that Newman was 'duped and manipulated."

"Civil defense in this country is an

Warner was not good to Newman. absurdity," he starts off, munching an The actor's first film was a laughable apple, the only food he says he's Biblical drama called The Silver eaten in almost eight hours. "I've Chalice. It sent Newman fleeing back been up since 6:30," he adds, digresto New York and live television. sing from the issue, "and I'm Eventually he returned to Holstarved." His voice trails off as if he'd ywood and the roles got better. He rather think about something other did a fine job as the original Rocky than what he's talking about. When - Rocky Graziano in Somebody Up he picks up the conversation again, There Likes Me — and scored even he speaks slowly, deliberately, more strongly in The Long Hot choosing his words with care. "For one thing, civil defense requires a Summer, loosely based on short stories by William Faulkner. Summer very cooperative enemy. To evacuate earned Newman his first Oscar a city takes at least seven days - is nomination and brought him recogthe enemy going to announce seven nition as a sex symbol. As Pauline days in advance what they're going Kael put it, Paul Newman did more to do? Also," he adds, "let's say you for removing a shirt than any actor start to evacuate a city and the bus since Clark Gable (she would later drivers who get out with the first load of people refuse to go back for point out that the same could not be another, or the subway shuttle consaid of Robert Redford). Along the way, Newman became

Newman is not naive. Thirty years question about small steps and great issues, "is not the answer. But it is a beginning. Salt II took seven years. alternatives, they're thinking about | Do you know how many weapons both sides will build in another seven years? We have to create a climate where cooperation is possible."

ductors take one run and then say

Newman, who will be 58 in January, grew up in a time when movie plue eyes. He knows this and heroes played by the rules. Tracy, He excelled at creating a certain type

about guts from Piner Laurie and George C. Scott; in Hud, where his cvnical, amoral cattleman who believed in nothing still stands as a landmark performance; and in Cool Hand Luke, which introduced "what we have here is a failure to communicate" to the American language.

He also took some chances, turning to directing with a movie called Rachel, Rachel, starring Joanne Woodward as a thirty-five-year-old virgin looking for love. That certainly one thought fitted Newman's onscreen personality.

to perfection in The Hus-

tler, a taut, crackling

drama where he traded

pool shots with Min-

nesota Fats (lackie

Gleason) and learned

He also made money with pictures like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Sting and The Towering Inferno. He spent a lot of time on the racing circuit and waited. By 1979, Newman was at that awkward age, no longer quite able to get away with playing the young hero, but still too juicy to play the voice of wisdom. He had gone beyond being Richard Gere but he wasn't vet ready to be Melvyn Douglas. In the last three years he's made

three controversial films that have made money and earned him personal honors. The first was Fort Apache, the Bronx, about cops in the South Bronx trying to do what's right in a very wrong place — a kind of big-screen Hill Street Blues. The film was uneven and damned by residents of the South Bronx as racist, but Newman emerged unscathed, creating a very sympathetic character, an over-the-hill cop still trying to do the right thing. Next came Absence of Malice in which Newman, the son of a Mafioso, was tarred by an overzealous reporter, Sally Field. The film was a slap in the face to journalists and women, but as critic Andrew Sarris pointed out, women accepted from Newman lines they'd never accept from, say, Clint Eastwood. Newman earned his fifth rich and famous. He divorced his

Oscar nomination for Malice. first wife and mother of his three Newman is almost certain to ge oldest children and married actress another Oscar nomination for The Joanne Woodward, Together they Verdict. Directed by Sidney Lumet, had three other children - all girls who has made films such as Dog -and together they made some ter-Day Afternoon and Prince of the rible movies, such as Rally Round City, The Verdict deals with issues the Flag, Boys and A New Kind of and morality, right and wrong. It was Love (in which Newman actually misoriginally developed for Robert Redtakes Woodward for a man). For an ford, but he pulled out of the project acclaimed movie star, Newman made due to "creative differences." For a while, the role was actively sought by But when Newman was good and the material fit him, he had no rival. just about every actor between the

of character - laconic, stoic, | ter is the sort actors dream of play ing: showy, multi-dimensional and cynical. He played that role

> In The Verdict, Newman is Frank Galvin, a washed-up, alcoholic attorney who takes on a malpractice suit that pits him against the finest law firm in Boston, a reputable hospital run by the Catholic Church, public opinion, and even his own sense of

"It's a story about the redemption of a human being," says Newman of The Verdict. "It's not an attack on the legal system or the Catholic Church or hospitals. Those institutions are springboards for the development of his character. They're metaphors for what seem to be insurmountable ob

stacles all around him." The Verdict is a different sort of role for Newman, "It's a very interesting character for me because he's not cool or collected. He's tright ened. He's living on the edge and he's panicked. There are people who really do find their lives in a shambles, and they decide they don't like it. Some just continue to degenerate and some, like Galvin, can pick themselves up.

"Every person is vulnerable in cerain ways, at certain times in their

There are many ways in which Newman is not now vulnerable. He s not vulnerable when it comes to his career or his financial security. In other areas his defense is shakier. Two years ago his only son, Scott, died from an overdose of drugs. Newman is still coming to terms with that tragedy. He was teaching an acting and directing seminar at Kenyon College when he got the news his son had died. He does not talk publicly about what happened, but he has poured money, time and influence into the Scott Newman Foundation, which funds projects directed at drug rehabilitation.

In the early Seventies Newman told a reporter, "Kids, it's a fantastic time to be young. In some ways they have less imposed upon them than my generation did - they're less acquisitive, property no longer has such importance and they're less inhibited.

"Yet they have other things imposed on them that are harsher than anything we had to face. Things are no longer clearly defined in black and white, good and bad. There's this acceleration of change, things are moving too fast, it's enough to

drive them all crazy. Madness of one sort or another seems to be a recurring Newman concern, one he shares with his public on political issues. Not personal

BY JACOBA ATLAS