

JENNY PACEY

‘How I got
FIGHTING FIT
FOR
WONDER
WOMAN’

From GB Olympian and TV Gladiator to Amazonian warrior in the new Hollywood film, Jenny Pacey tells us how she got into shape for her action-movie debut

WORDS: Jo Ebsworth

This summer sees the world's best-known female superhero finally make the transition from comic-book character to eponymous heroine in Warner Bros' highly-anticipated blockbuster film, *Wonder Woman* – 75 years after she was first created.

Telling the tale of Diana, princess of the Amazons, who's raised on the sheltered mystical island of Themyscira and trained to be an unconquerable warrior, the film (out on June 2) has already made history for being the only female-directed live-action movie to have a \$100 million budget, with director Patty Jenkins also being the first woman to direct a superhero film with a female protagonist, as portrayed by Israeli actress Gal Gadot.

In another first, the film uses an awe-inspiring all-female army of Amazonian warriors, clad in full armour as they engage in an epic battle against Nazis (the movie is set in the era of WW1) to save mankind.

But while there may be many talented women across the globe possessing superhero-worthy athletic ability, the process of casting a forty-strong female force who could convincingly wield swords, bows, shields and staves while leaping into the air or riding a horse was no easy task.

Just ask Jenny Pacey, 34, who went through months of auditions against thousands of women from all over the world (without even knowing what she was auditioning for), before being selected to embark on a gruelling six-month fitness and fight-training schedule to get in peak physical condition for a month on location in Italy filming fight scenes.

★ AN AGENT CALLS

As a former international pentathlete and Olympic bobsleigher turned TV Gladiator, personal trainer, co-owner of global fitness brand Pace & Go (paceandgo.co.uk), and model for brands including Asics, Adidas, Reebok and Nike, it's hardly surprising that Jenny caught the eye of casting directors when they began looking for women with a background in competitive sport to fill the



Jenny training hard at the gym

roles of Amazonian warriors. She was pretty surprised when Hollywood came calling, though!

'In June 2015, I got a strange message on Twitter from an agent asking if I'd like to audition for a blockbuster movie and ignored it. But I got other messages via Instagram and email and started wondering if the offer was serious,' she says. 'My first audition was at Warner Bros Studios in Leavesden, where I was surrounded by hundreds of athletic-looking women. The code name of the project was "Nightingale", so we had no idea why we were there, but we were all taught a fight sequence using a sword and shield by a stunt coordinator, then we had to fight him one-on-one while being filmed.'

Soon after, Jenny was called back for a second audition with 99 others, where each woman was asked to perform a one-minute showcase in front of the senior production team. 'There were all sorts of women there,' says Jenny. 'I did high-intensity, explosive moves such as burpees with tuck jumps, using my long-jump and high-jump experience and showing how I can move my body in a functional way.'

★ THE TRAINING

Over the summer, Jenny was called back again, along with just 39 other women, for a two-week bootcamp at Warner Bros. It involved four hours of training a day led by Gym Jones (gymjones.com), the team of trainers responsible for building the bodies of the actors in the action movie *300*.

'For two hours, we did very intense, high-intensity training with weight lifting and sprints on the Concept 2 SkiErg and StairMaster AirFit cardio equipment, to shock our bodies into building muscle and stripping fat, while allowing the trainers to assess our strengths and weaknesses. The other two hours were spent doing stunt and fighting training and movement patterns. We also learnt a choreographed



fight scene, which we were filmed doing at the end of the two weeks,' recalls Jenny. 'I really went for it and, that evening, I was told I had a role in the film (I still didn't know what I was working on) – and that there was a final two-week bootcamp.'

★ HONING SKILLS

During the next phase, Jenny continued to work on her fitness and fighting skills with

hypertrophy training (building muscle as fast as possible).

The last month of training involved using lighter weights but doing more reps. 'I also dropped my carbs below 100g a day but raised my protein to above 200g, and kept my good fats really high, eating about 2,000 calories a day on the back of five hours of training. By the time I arrived in Italy for filming in March 2016, I'd packed on four kilos of muscle, and my cardio and

'THE CAST WAS BROUGHT TOGETHER TO TRAIN FOR SIX MONTHS'

19 other women while stunt coordinators worked out their roles. Then she finally found out what it was all for. 'One of the trainers was telling us about Wonder Woman's super arm cuffs which act as a defence. We all looked at each other excitedly, like, "now we know!". I was so glad I'd taken a risk, putting my life on hold to train. This film will make monumental feminist history, and being a part of a blockbuster is amazing.'

★ THE FINAL PUSH

After a short break, the final international cast of Amazonian warriors (including a Hungarian break dancer, a Victoria's Secret model, an American cross-fit champion and a world champion boxer, and several American sportswomen) were brought together to train continuously for six months in a purpose-built gym in an old hanger at Warner Bros, featuring a sprint track, sledges, ropes, hoops and kettlebells. The focus was now on

strength fitness through the roof. I felt like a superhero!

Yet despite all the training, nothing could prepare Jenny for the long, arduous days of filming, which involved getting up at 4.30am to sit in hair and make-up for three hours, before spending up to 12 hours filming gruelling fight scenes on the beaches of the Italian coast, then taking an hour to 'de-rig' at the end of the day.

'The toughest thing was trying to maintain the physique I'd built up because you couldn't work up a sweat once you'd had your hair and make-up done – all I could do was 50 triceps dips here or 50 push-ups there. I loved the experience, though, and I'll be keeping my fingers crossed for *Wonder Woman 2!*'



JENNY IN FULL COSTUME, READY FOR BATTLE!



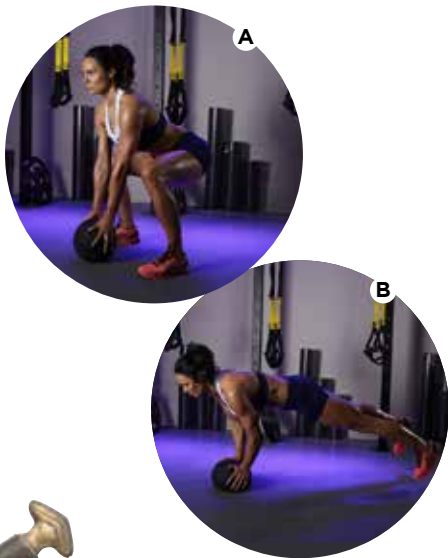
JENNY'S WONDER WOMAN WORKOUT

Try Jenny's multi-muscle moves to transform your body from head to toe

MEDICINE-BALL SQUAT AND THRUST

Why? 'This explosive cardio-based move blasts fat and challenges your shoulder, arm, core and postural muscles as you stabilise yourself on the ball.'

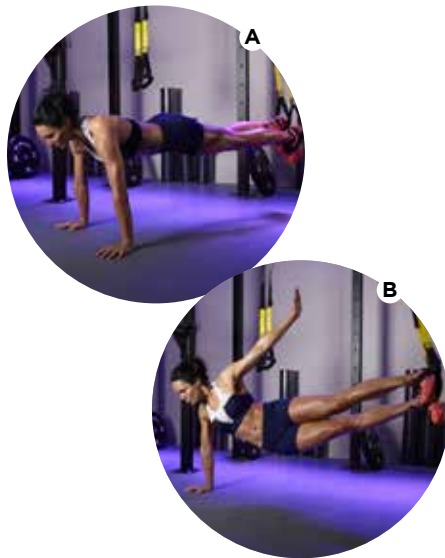
How: Start in a deep-squat position to activate your glutes and legs. Hold a medicine ball on the ground with your upper body slightly forward (A). Engage your core as you kick your heels back in a reverse thrust to a plank (B). Immediately rebound back into the deep-squat position, keeping your chest up.



OBLIQUE TRX SWING

Why? 'This really challenging move provides an amazing ab and core workout, and works the shoulders and postural muscles too.'

How: Starting in a high plank position with your feet suspended in the TRX (A), swing your legs to the left like a pendulum, almost towards your shoulders, then control the swing back to centre and round to the right – the movement should be a fluid, continuous swinging action from side to side. To make it harder, raise your right arm as you swing right and vice versa (B).



LUNGE ROW

Why? 'This exercise will activate every muscle due to the loaded static position, helping tone your entire body and burning mega calories.'

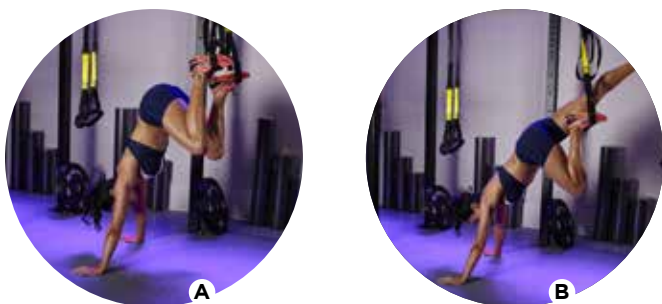
How: Begin in a static lunge position, holding a kettlebell in each hand (A). Hinge your upper body forward from the hip, pulling in your core. Then use an alternate arm-rowing technique to raise and lower the kettlebells in opposite directions from one side to the other (B). Keep your core engaged throughout as you slightly rotate through your waist to work your obliques.



TRX INVERTED KNEE DRIVE

Why? 'This is a full-body move, and is anti-ageing because you increase blood flow to the face while in an inverted position.'

How: Start in a plank position with your feet in the TRX. Walk your hands in while you raise your legs until you achieve an inverted handstand position (A). Bring one knee into your chest, then drive it back to fully straighten the leg (B). Alternate the leg drive on the other side to complete one rep. To make it more difficult, do it with both legs at the same time.



MEDICINE-BALL WOOD CHOP

Why? 'I love this move because it sculpts your arms and waist as you rotate through all three planes of movement.'

How: Stand in a loaded, semi-squat position with the medicine ball between your hands out to the side of one hip (A). Use a chopping or semi-circular upward motion to raise the ball up and over the opposite shoulder while slightly rotating your heel (B). Use your core to brace the end of the movement, then return the ball to your hip. ■

