

Jeffrey Hunter Interview - July 4, 1965

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Happy In Hollywood
by J.D. Spiro

Milwaukee's Jeffrey Hunter has had his fill of making pictures in foreign lands. In the last five years nearly all of the movies he has done have been shot in Europe or elsewhere overseas. But now it will take some high powered persuasion, he says, to coax him away from Hollywood.

"I'm not saying I'll not go abroad again someday," he said. "If an especially attractive role comes along -- you know how actors are. The chance at a great part and maybe I'll not be able to say 'no.' But it will have to be extra special and superlative to make me change my mind. When it comes to turning out movies, I'm for Hollywood.

Since 1961, Hunter has done "King of Kings" and "Joaquin Murietta" in Spain, "No Man Is an Island" in the Philippines, "The Longest Day" in France and "Gold for the Caesars" in Italy. Now back on the Hollywood sound stages, he has just completed "Brainstorm" at Warner Brothers.

"The idea of making pictures abroad is exciting when you're in Hollywood and have never worked in foreign countries," he said. "Naturally, you think you'll get to see the sights and have all the fun that goes with traveling in interesting places you've never visited before. Actually, however, I found you spend so much time on the job, working six days a week, that you don't do much else. Paris, Rome, Madrid -- they're great for the tourist but as an actor in a picture I might as well have been in Oshkosh."

Other Hollywood stars who have done pictures in Europe have come back complaining of the lack of efficiency and other drawbacks to

production in foreign studios. Hunter, however, would not join them in such criticism.

"I don't want to knock people," he said. "In all fairness, they're mostly competent and they're hard workers."

Hunter, however, explained that for an actor with a family, trips abroad to do films can create various problems.

"Dusty (Mrs. Hunter)," he continued, "usually accompanied me, though she did not go to Spain with me last summer when I did 'Joaquin Murietta' there. Neither of us like living weeks or months in hotel rooms and yearned to be back here in our own home. Then, too, it was hard on our young sons. If we took them with us, it made necessary, for one thing, changing schools. If we didn't, then we had to be parents by long distance, which is far from satisfactory."

Recently, Hunter appeared with Tippi Hedren on a "Kraft Suspense Theater" play "Trains of Silence," and made a "pilot" film for a possible new television series.

In "Brainstorm," Hunter said, he had one of his most challenging roles.

"The character I play, an industrial research analyst, kills his ruthless boss while making a studied effort to appear insane," he said.

"Actually, he is insane."

Other stars in the cast include Anne Francis, Dana Andrews and Viveca Lindfors.

The TV pilot film bears the title "Star Trek" and it is an hour science fiction fantasy in color. Produced by Gene Roddenberry in association with NBC at Desilu, it was aimed at the 1965-66 market, but did not make the fall schedule. An unusually costly pilot with a budget of approximately \$500,000, it is now being held for the 1966-67 season, and another segment for the projected series is soon to be filmed. The cast of this will not, however, include Hunter, who says he has bowed

out of the venture.

"I was asked to do it," he said, "but had I accepted, I would have been tied up much longer than I care to be. I have several things brewing now and they should be coming to a head in the next few weeks. I love doing motion pictures and expect to be as busy as I want to be in them."

Regarding his TV series last season, "Temple Houston," Hunter said it was a disappointing experience.

"In the first place, we had no time to prepare for it. I was notified on July 17 to be ready to start August 7 for an October air date. When we reached the screen we did not have a single segment ready. It was done so fast the writers never got a chance to know what it was all about. We all wanted to follow the line indicated by the pilot film, which we thought would make a charming series. NBC, however, favored making it serious. Then after 13 episodes, the ratings were rather low and Warners switched to tongue in cheek comedy, somewhat on the order of 'Maverick.' We wound it up after 26 episodes."

Recently, Hunter was sued by a former, personal manager, Jack B. Genung, in Los Angeles superior court, for \$157,000 damages. Genung claimed that he was hired by Hunter in January, 1963, and was to have received 10% of all Hunter's income from his professional work. The agreement, according to Genung's suit, was terminated by Hunter in February of this year and at that time, so the ex-manager says, \$57,000 was due him and had not been paid. In addition, Genung asked \$100,000 punitive damages. Hunter's lawyers have the case under consideration at present, but as yet no countermeasures have been taken.

Another reason why Hunter is reluctant to go overseas to make pictures is a new home at Huntington Palisades in the Santa Monica area that he and his family moved into last summer. It's a two story, five bedroom stucco house of Mediterranean design surrounded by an acre of ground and many oak trees.

He now lives there with his wife, the former Joan Hamilton Killian Bartlett, and four sons ranging in age from 2 years to 13. The oldest, Christopher was born to him and his first wife, actress Barbara Rush. They were divorced in 1955 after five years of marriage. Next is Steele, 11, a son of Mrs. Hunter by a previous marriage. The other two boys are Herman Henry McKinnies III, age 6, named after Hunter's father and Scott, 2.

Hunter attended Whitefish Bay high school, where he was president of the student body in his senior year and co-captain of the school's first suburban championship football team. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry H. McKinnies, live at 7450 Skyline Lane, River Hills, Milwaukee.
