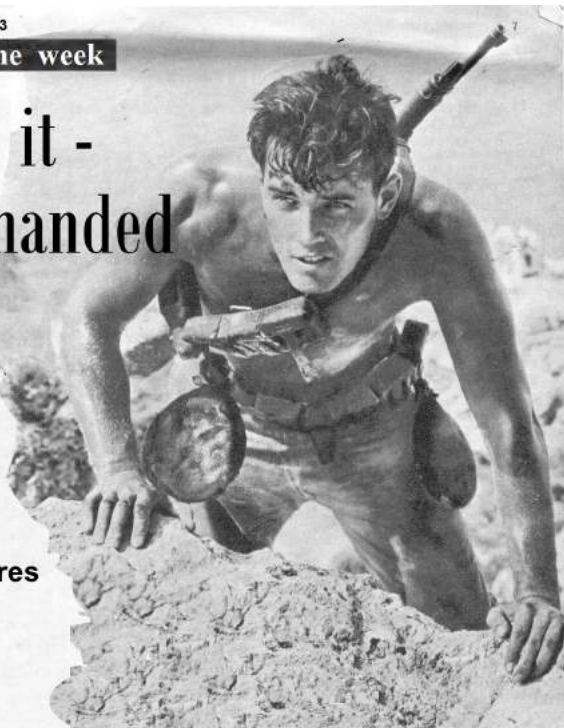


He made it - Single-handed

Jeffrey Hunter has made good over here, where so many of Hollywood's top stars have just made pictures

by
ELIZABETH
FORREST



In *Single-Handed*, Jeffrey Hunter plays the sort of character we all care about. He just had to make good.

OFF-HAND I can't think of a single star who has pulled it off before. But Jeffrey Hunter does it in *Single-Handed*. And maybe when you've seen the film, which will be in circulation starting next week, you'll agree with me.

For Hunter is the American who was sent to Britain to play a Commonwealth character in an Anglo-American war film, with the accent Blimpishly on the Anglo. And he comes out of the ordeal with his acting prestige twice as strong.

The result? On my reckoning, he gives one of the most exciting and moving performances I've ever seen in a war film.

But all this is just the bare skeleton of the story. It's a story that, in its early chapters, stirred up some of the fiercest show business controversy since Hollywood first started sending over players for its made-in-Britain pictures.

Remember how, ten months ago, Hunter (with Rock Hudson, over here for *Sea Devils*) became one of the bewildered pawns in a three-way tussle between British Equity—the actors' union—the Ministry of Labour and Hollywood? Why, Equity claimed, should an American player be brought over to play such a British role?

Could His Name Pull?

Who was this actor, anyway? He wasn't a star—although Twentieth Century-Fox insisted he was. You couldn't justify his casting on the grounds that he was a big name in the States and might sell the picture there—in the way that Gregory Peck or Tyrone Power would. So the arguments ran.

And, almost as if to weaken Hunter's already weakening case, his studio didn't even grant his latest film *Lure Of The Wilderness*—put out to coincide with his arrival in Britain—the courtesy of a West End pre-release showing.

That was almost a year ago.

And there was a certain amount of truth in what some of his critics said. He

wasn't a top star. He was a personable young man who had played romantic stooge to Jeanne Crain in *Take Care Of My Little Girl* and *Belles On Their Toes* and kept up a sagging end in one or two minor dramas.

Big Effort Needed

Throughout the rumpus, Hunter remained a model of uncontroversial tact — "I can understand their (Equity's) point of view, but all I know is that I'm thrilled to be making a film in England."

The Ministry of Labour eventually overruled the Equity protest. But clearly Jeffrey Hunter was in for a rugged time. He arrived in a storm. And it seemed as if it would take a superhuman effort to get him into the clear. I didn't think Hunter had that kind of effort in him. I was wrong.

Right from the beginning, *Single-Handed* was a subject of big interest around the studios and the cinemas. Many years before, under the title of *Forever England*—and based on C. S. Forester's book "Brown On Resolution"—it had made a star of John Mills.

The major role originally was that of a young British seaman who alone takes on a German cruiser from a vantage point on a rocky Pacific island, picking off the crew with his long-range rifle, while the ship is laying up for repairs. His action

delays its sailing so that a British ship can catch it up and sink it.

It's the kind of plot and character the British care about. We don't take the Royal Navy lightly, and that old gimmick of turning the British lad into a Canadian to explain away his transatlantic accent is getting a bit worn.

Right In The Spirit

So Hunter went into the fray handicapped right, left and centre. He *had* to make good. And rather like young Brown in the picture, the need for a really audacious effort seems to have spurred him on. Hunter makes good in England, where so many of the big stars—Gable, Ty Power, Robert Taylor—just made pictures.

Single-Handed isn't all first-rate—some of it is unutterably dreary and slow. But when it relies on Hunter it comes brilliantly to life. For in his performance, Hunter embodies the spirit that animated the young British seaman. The fact that he himself is not British matters to me not one scrap.

If we'd never noticed that Hunter was an actor to watch before, blame that on his previous parts.

Single-Handed gives him a character he can develop.

At twenty-six, with the busy past of radio and theatricals, common to most

