

JEFFREY HUNTER

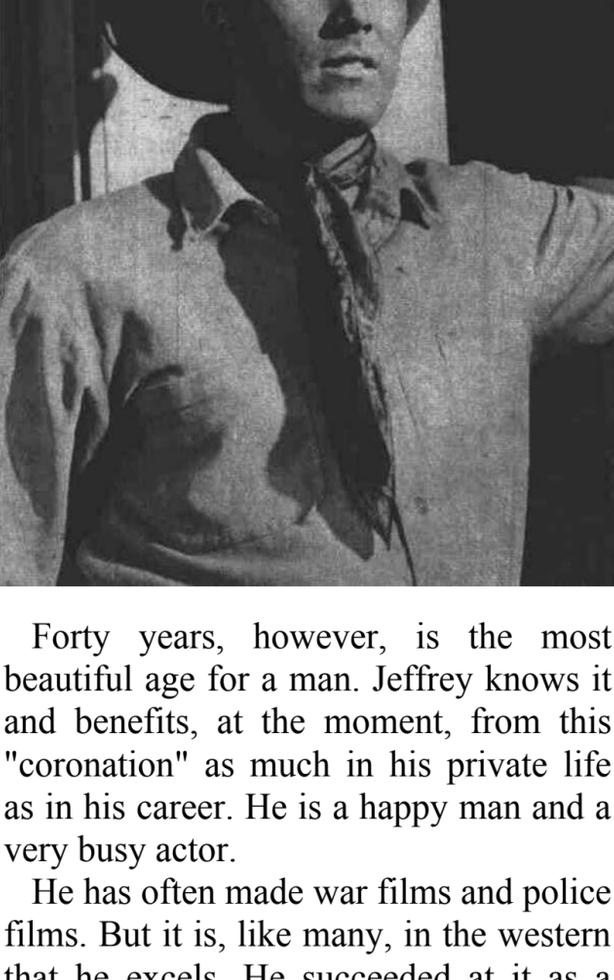
Westerns All Over the World

Although his gaze, so blue and so beautiful, earned him the honor of incarnating, in the spotlight, CHRIST in "KING OF KINGS", Jeffrey HUNTER is again just a man like the others and, as an ordinary mortal and a great actor, he has returned to the western.

If we had to choose one of the most beautiful cowboys on the screen, it is to him that we would award the title. Because his clear face gives him an eternal youth, and at 40 he seems to be just thirty. Even younger.



The most beautiful of the cowboys on the screen: JEFFREY HUNTER, whom John Ford directed in "The Searchers" and "Sergeant Rutledge," and who was also in "The Proud Ones" and played the hero of "Murieta"



Forty years, however, is the most beautiful age for a man. Jeffrey knows it and benefits, at the moment, from this "coronation" as much in his private life as in his career. He is a happy man and a very busy actor.

He has often made war films and police films. But it is, like many, in the western that he excels. He succeeded at it as a young actor, and he still succeeds at it today, more than ever, and all over the world.

This is true because it is in SPAIN that the most recent one was made: CUSTER OF THE WEST, of which Robert SIODMAK is the director — a Super Technirama film in which Robert SHAW, Mary Ure, Robert Ryan and Ty Hardin star opposite Jeffrey.

Jeffrey belongs in the western pantheon. Like John Wayne, whose footsteps he follows, like Henry Fonda, whom he is very much like, he is one of the actors most sought after by Western filmmakers.

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Born Henry H. McKinnies, in New Orleans, November 25, 1927, with blue eyes and brown hair, this charming athlete measures 1 m 85 cm in height (translator's note: almost 6' 1").

His love life was rough. It was said of him that he was Tyrone Power's professional heir, and that's true. Also like him, in his early days Jeffrey both enjoyed many female conquests and made an unhappy marriage.

Most especially like Tyrone, Jeffrey inherited the role of Jesse James, or rather his brother. In the first version, Henry Fonda and Tyrone Power were the two brothers; in the second, Robert Wagner and Jeffrey HUNTER, their worthy heirs, assumed the same roles of the beloved brigands.

Jeffrey Hunter was the husband of Barbara Rush, a redheadⁱ and a fine actress, whom he met while making a screen test for Paramount, even before his debut on the screen. He married her just as he was starting his career, soon after being discovered and signing a contract... at 20TH Century Fox, to become the young leading man that all the filmmakers sought.

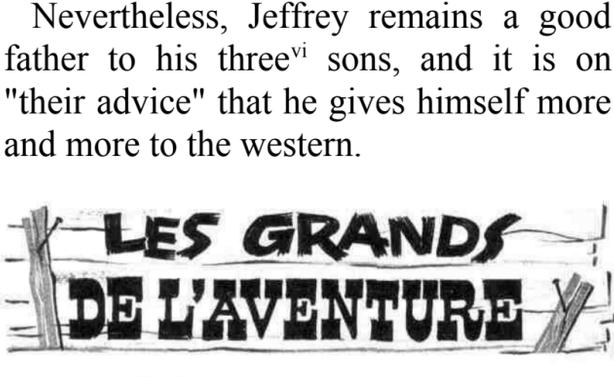
But after acting together in "No Down Payment," they divorced,ⁱⁱ despite the birth of their son CHRISTOPHER. They were married in 1951,ⁱⁱⁱ and they divorced in 1955. Their son was born on August 29, 1952. It was Jeffrey Hunter who kept custody of this child.^{iv}

He then remarried, to DUSTY BARTLETT, on July 7, 1957, ten years ago. He adopted the son she had had from a previous marriage, even as she helped raise the son he had had from his union with Barbara.

Two more sons were born of their marriage: Henry HERMAN (born April 24, 1959), and SCOTT HAMILTON (two years later).

In spite of this, the incorrigible Jeffrey divorced a second time, because he had made a career in Europe; and, like his friend Stuart Whitman, who divorced at the same time as he, Jeffrey found, under other skies, another love. Reports came of an idyll with Mylène Demongeot, when he worked with her in Italy on "Gold for the Caesars." Still, let us return to Caesar what belongs to him — this publicized romance did not continue after filming ended.^v

Nevertheless, Jeffrey remains a good father to his three^{vi} sons, and it is on "their advice" that he gives himself more and more to the western.



From the start of his career, he played in westerns all the time, although from time to time he lent his talent to a detective film or a war movie. And now at forty, he still looks like a young man, and the western emphasizes all his charm

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It was Darryl ZANUCK who discovered Jeffrey and renamed him HUNTER. Jeff was only four when his parents moved to MILWAUKEE.

He studied, but starting in his adolescence he became involved in theatrical performances at his schools and colleges, looking for character roles that were fun to play and, at the age of twelve, playing a sexagenarian.

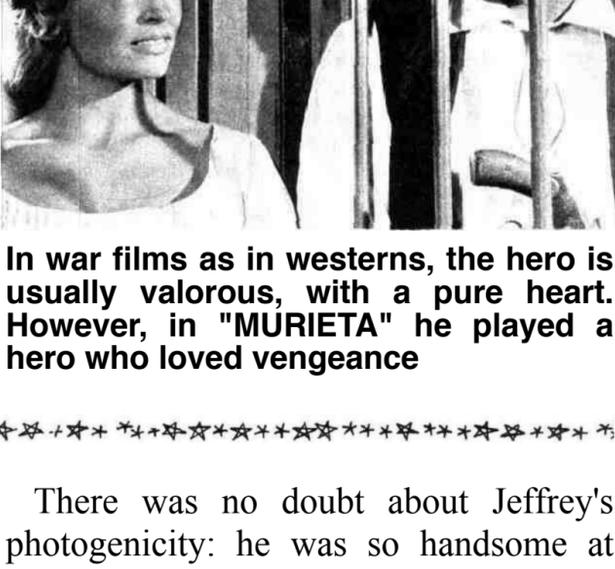
At the age of eighteen, he joined the Navy, but not to work as an actor.



He is an actor with a serious, clear-eyed look, reminiscent of Tyrone Power and Henry Fonda, who have, on the screen, played the greatest roles. After portraying Christ in "King of Kings," he has emerged from this exceptional character to return, even more intently, to the western

Discharged two years later, he "enlisted" in radio and theater and began a career quickly crowned with success.

This is where two talent scouts, from Paramount and 20TH CENTURY FOX, found him. Paramount made him do a screen test. 20TH CENTURY FOX, without a screen test, signed Jeff to a long-term contract, to keep him at the studio.



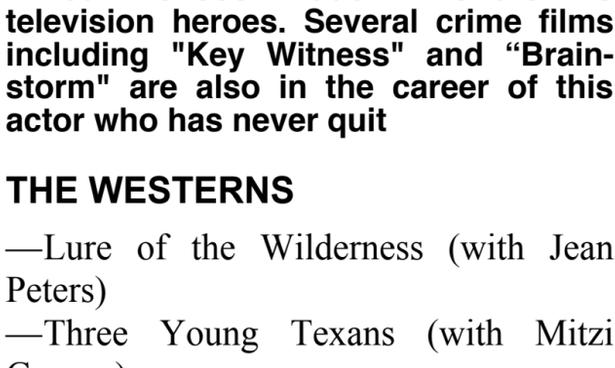
In war films as in westerns, the hero is usually valorous, with a pure heart. However, in "MURIETA" he played a hero who loved vengeance

◆✱+✱* ✱**✱*✱**✱*✱**✱*✱**✱*✱**✱*✱**✱

There was no doubt about Jeffrey's photogenicity: he was so handsome at twenty, as he still is at forty, that all the girls would turn as he passed by, even before he became famous.



With Virginia Mayo in "The Proud Ones" — one of his best western performances



Alfred Hitchcock made him one of his television heroes. Several crime films including "Key Witness" and "Brainstorm" are also in the career of this actor who has never quit

THE WESTERNS

- Lure of the Wilderness (with Jean Peters)
- Three Young Texans (with Mitzi Gaynor)
- Princess of the Nile (with Debra Paget)
- White Feather (with Debra Paget)
- THE SEARCHERS (with Natalie Wood)
- The Great Locomotive Chase (with Fess Parker)
- THE PROUD ONES (with Virginia Mayo)
- Gun for a Coward (with Janice Rule)
- The True Story of Jesse James (with Hope Lange)
- The Way to the Gold (with Sheree North)
- The Last Hurrah (with Spencer Tracy)
- SERGEANT RUTLEDGE (with Constance Towers)
- No Man is an Island (with Barbara Pérez)^{vii}
- MURIETA (with Diana Lorys)
- CUSTER OF THE WEST (with Mary Ure)

Besides these westerns, past and present, he shot a number of other interesting films, including war movies such as:

- The Frogmen (with Dana Andrews)
 - Call Me Mister (with Betty Grable)
 - Sailor of the King (with Wendy Hiller)
 - Count Five and Die (with A. M. Durringer)
 - In Love and War (with Hope Lange)
 - HELL TO ETERNITY (with Patricia Owens)
 - The Longest Day (with John Wayne)
- and also a lot of police suspense films, an episode of an Alfred Hitchcock series for television and other quality films, including:
- A Kiss Before Dying (with Virginia Leith)
 - No Down Payment (with Patricia Owens)
 - Key Witness (with Pat Crowley)
 - Man-trap (with Stella Stevens)
 - Brainstorm (with Anne Francis)

But of course, the most important role in his career remains that of CHRIST in "KING OF KINGS," in which his eyes appeared so wonderful that it was, for all, a film from the time of Jesus. It is moreover for his eyes, as well as for his calm, restrained, and pleasant screen presence, that Jeffrey was chosen for the role.

He could not stay defined by this character, and it is through the western — another way to continue to play great heroes — that he returned.

John Ford, who directed him in "The Searchers" and in "Sergeant Rutledge," said of him, "He is a righteous man with a pure heart."

Indeed, Jeffrey has a smile so brilliant and so pleasing that it is incompatible with "bad" character roles. There is a good reason why his smile always comes from the heart.

C. Antony

Translator's notes and comments

- i Actually, Barbara was a brunette. Jeff was quoted as saying, "I've always gone for brunettes."
- ii Jeff and Barbara divorced *before* they filmed "No Down Payment" together, not after.
- iii Jeff and Barbara married in December, 1950.
- iv Jeff did not have custody of his son, Christopher; Barbara had primary custody.
- v This article is the only source that jeffreyhunter.net has encountered that attributes Jeff and Dusty's divorce to his affair with Miss Demongeot. (Dusty filed for divorce several years later.)
- vi Actually, Jeff had four sons, including Dusty's son, whom he adopted.
- vii "Lure of the Wilderness" takes place in the US South; "Princess of the Nile" is set in ancient Egypt; "The Great Locomotive Chase" also unfolds in the US South; "The Last Hurrah" is set in New England; and "No Man is an Island" is a war film set on the island of Guam. None of these films are westerns!