



Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star

By Tab Hunter

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Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star By Tab Hunter

Welcome to Hollywood, circa 1950, the end of the Golden Age. A remarkably handsome young boy, still a teenager, gets "discovered by a big-time movie agent. Because when he takes his shirt off young hearts beat faster, because he is the picture of innocence and trust and need, he will become a star. It seems almost preordained. The open smile says, "You will love me," and soon the whole world does.

The young boy's name was Tab Hunter?a made-up name, of course, a Hollywood name?and it was his time. Stardom didn't come overnight, although it seemed that way. In fact, the fame came first, when his face adorned hundreds of magazine covers; the movies, the studio contract, the name in lights?all that came later. For Tab Hunter was a true product of Hollywood, a movie star created from a stable boy, a shy kid made even more so by the way his schoolmates?both girls and boys?reacted to his beauty, by a mother who provided for him in every way except emotionally, and by a secret that both tormented him and propelled him forward.

In *Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star*, Hunter speaks out for the first time about what it was like to be a movie star at the end of the big studio era, to be treated like a commodity, to be told what to do, how to behave, whom to be seen with, what to wear. He speaks also about what it was like to be gay, at first confused by his own fears and misgivings, then as an actor trapped by an image of boy-next-door innocence. And when he dared to be difficult, to complain to the studio about the string of mostly mediocre movies that were assigned to him, he learned that just like any manufactured product, he was disposable?*disposable and replaceable*.

Hunter's career as a bona fide movie star lasted a decade. But he persevered as an actor, working continuously at a profession he had come to love, seeking?and earning?the respect of his peers, and of the Hollywood community.

And so, *Tab Hunter Confidential* is at heart a story of survival?of the giddy highs of stardom, and the soul-destroying lows when phone calls begin to go unreturned; of the need to be loved, and the fear of being consumed; of the hope of an innocent boy, and the rueful summation of a man who did it all, and who lived to tell it all.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

With very little hedging, great good humor, and no pretentiousness, *Tab Hunter Confidential* delivers the straight story on how a young, gorgeous kid named Art Gelien, child of an absent father and a repressed, platitude-spouting mother, suddenly became a teen heartthrob, known as "The Sigh Guy." Tab Hunter was, in the 1950s, one of the reigning hunks, every teenage girl's dreamboat. He dated Debbie Reynolds and other starlets, did countless interviews about the kind of girl he would marry and, through it all, kept his private life *very* private. Tab Hunter was gay before gay meant anything other than joyful exuberance.

Henry Willson, famous and infamous agent and creator of stars, named Tab Hunter. He also tagged Rock Hudson, Rory Calhoun, and other young sex symbols. Not all of them were gay, but they came to be known as Harry Willson's boys. (Another book about this time and subject is *The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson: The Pretty Boys and Dirty Deals of Henry Willson* by Robert Hofler.) Tab Hunter was completely manufactured. He even speaks of himself in the third person in the book.

Before he was 26, Hunter had hit the trifecta: he was a movie star, had a hit single in "Young Love," and was on the first live production of *Playhouse 90* on television. His future success looked assured, but such was not the case. It was either feast or famine for the next few years. He was never a solid A-list leading man, but had his share of famous co-stars and leading ladies nevertheless.

While he was struggling with his true identity and trying to stay afloat financially, his mother had a complete breakdown and he was forced to hospitalize her in less than ideal conditions. This also had to be a secret from the fans. His friendships, both intimate and platonic, kept him going, as well as his deep faith in Catholicism. Yes, Catholicism. Tab Hunter has his own unique pact with God.

The book is filled with many pictures of Tab and his friends and with anecdotes about the stars: Tallulah Bankhead on her last legs, fuzzy and outrageous; Linda Darnell's kindness; John Wayne's macho strutting; Fred Astaire's humility; Van Heflin's professionalism, and on and on. This is sheer heaven for any movie fan. His relationship with Tony Perkins is noted, as is his liaison with Olympic figure skater Ronnie Robertson. (Tab, in addition to being an actor, singer and horseman was also an accomplished figure skater.) When the good parts disappeared after he left Warner Brothers, he went on tour with the Everly Brothers. Much later, now fully "out" he joined Divine in two John Waters movies: *Polyester* and *Lust in the Dust*, both cult classics. After suffering a stroke and a heart attack, he is now enjoying life in Santa Barbara with his longtime companion, Allan Glaser. As Tab succinctly puts it regarding his story: "Better to get it from the horse's mouth, I decided, and not from some horse's ass." --Valerie Ryan

From Publishers Weekly

The 1950s heartthrob has penned a brave, surprising and sad memoir about depression (his mother's), repression (his homosexuality) and redemption (a career revival and meeting his partner of 20-plus years). Hunter (b. 1931) was a good-looking 19-year-old with no acting experience when he was molded into a movie star, later stumbling into a hit record (1957's *Young Love*) and a two-year affair with Anthony Perkins. Although his acting improved over a decade of mediocre films, by the early 1960s he was scrambling for parts in movies starring Soupy Sales and going overseas to film spaghetti westerns. His career was reborn when he co-starred with Divine in John Water's *Polyester* (1981) and again in *Lust in the Dust* (1985), which introduced Hunter to a new generation and turned him into a gay icon. Hunter, who is virtually alone among

actors of his era and stature to write about living a closeted gay life in Hollywood's spotlight, is honest about his shortcomings and missteps. He's made an admirable choice to chart his life through friendships and hardships (emotional and financial), rather than just his career trajectory. This is an illuminating, emotionally charged and important piece of Hollywood's hidden history. Photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

One has to be of a certain age to remember Tab Hunter, now 74 but a teen heartthrob in the 1950s. Fortunately, Hunter and coauthor Muller paint the scenes well enough and have a strong enough cast--and leading man--to make this tell-all Hollywood bio an entertaining read, familiarity with Hunter (or the book's supporting cast, including such luminaries as Tallulah Bankhead) notwithstanding. Hunter describes firsthand an era when movie stars were minted by studio publicists, when homosexuality was kept under covers, and when magazines such as *Confidential* could tear away those covers and ruin lives. Hunter writes freely, yet discreetly, about his many affairs of the heart--some, as with Harry Cohn's widow, Joan, of the heart only; others, as in the case of Tony Perkins, physical as well as emotional. This is also a story of picking oneself up and keeping going through a not always A-list career. (Hunter landed the lead in *Damn Yankees* not long after playing *West Side Story* in dinner theaters.) For another take on the era, see Robert Hofler's *The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson*, also out in October. *Ilene Cooper*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jimmy Putnam:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children until adult are different content. As you may know that book is very important usually. The book Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star has been making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The publication Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star is not only giving you far more new information but also to get your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with all the book Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star. You never really feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

Ricky Dotson:

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David Swanson:

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Antonio Batts:

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