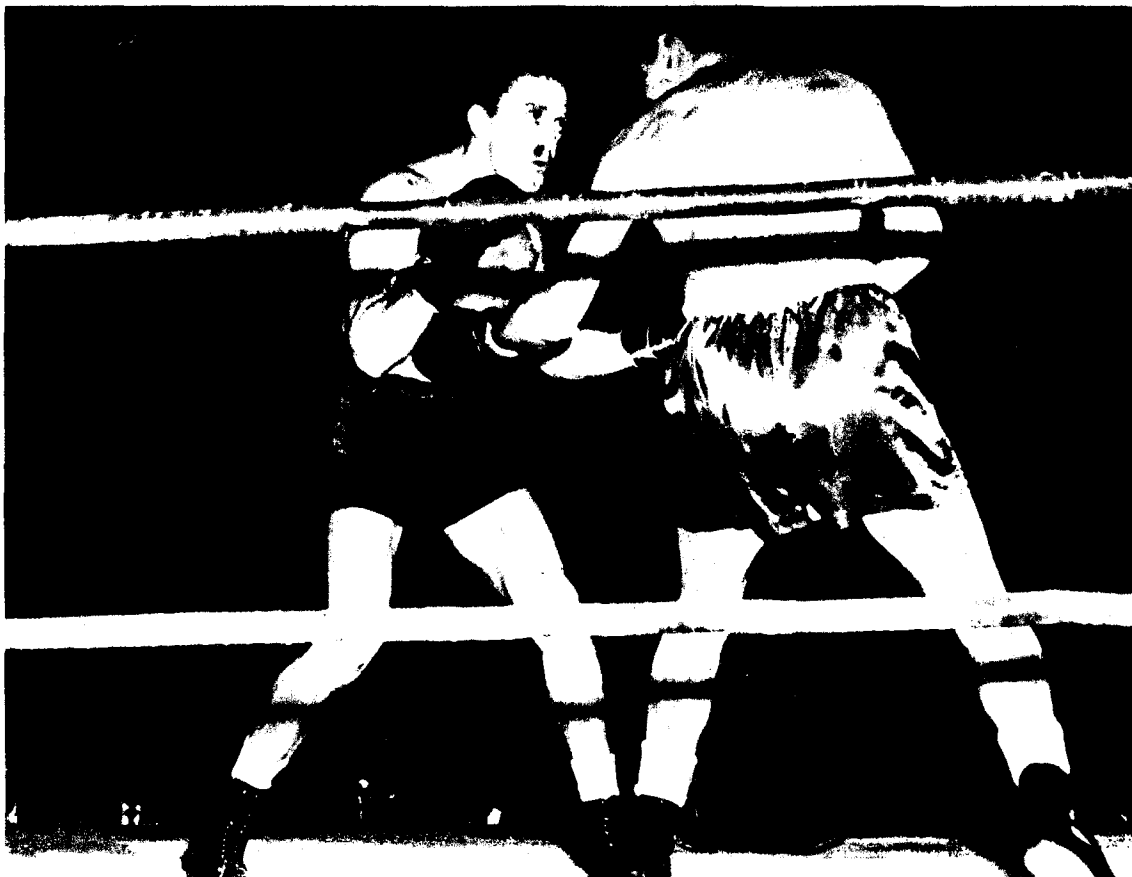


HOLLYWOOD'S "HEAVY"

Kirk Douglas made his name in films by playing a new kind of villain: you feel sorry



Douglas (left) rose from obscurity with portrayal of a bitter prize fighter in film *Champion*



In *Ace in the Hole*, with Jan Sterling, he plays newsman who capitalizes on another's mishap

A FEW years ago, a mild-mannered, relatively obscure young actor took his wife and mother-in-law to dinner at a tony Hollywood restaurant. Although he had made an advance reservation and there were tables vacant, he and his party were forced to wait a long time while one filmdom "name" after another came in and was ceremoniously seated. After 45 minutes of this, the young actor strolled over to the headwaiter, reached for his lapels, and lifted the astonished man off his feet in approved gangster fashion. "A table or else," he said in a steely voice. He got the table.

It was a good act; with variations, it has been working for Kirk Douglas ever since. If he is no longer obscure, it is largely because of his great success in portraying for the films a memorable series of antisocial characters.

But it is not the run-of-the-mill screen villain that Douglas does best. Movie badmen used to be either "dog-heavies" (so mean they kicked dogs) or conniving "brain-heavies"; and in recent years, there has also developed the psychopathic villain of the Richard Widmark school. Douglas has become Hollywood's leading specialist in a fourth version: the neurotic heavy, the man with a baneful obsession—essentially weak or unsavory, but with such understandable motivations as to evoke a degree of sympathy.

Back in 1946, he made his debut in the movies, in *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, as the drink-sodden and spineless husband of a wealthy woman industrialist. In his second picture, *I Walk Alone*, he was a graduate bootlegger who shamelessly double-crossed an underworld pal. Similarly, in *Out of the Past*, *The Walls of Jericho*, *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Young Man with a Horn*, he played characters who would be definitely out of place in any well-operated Sunday school.

But he reached his peak—if peak is the word—as the despicable pugilist in the motion picture *Champion*, based on a Ring Lardner story. Among other things, it was in this film that Douglas most forcibly demonstrated his ability to portray a character whom people would feel sorry for at the same time they were hating him.

Before the picture's release, its makers were convinced that in Midge Kelly—a fighter so ruthlessly ambitious that he capped the betrayal of all his friends, male and female, by slugging his crippled brother—they had created just about the most heartless man in history. There was even some apprehension that because of this, the public might not take to the film.

But the box office response to *Champion*—which was barely nosed out for the 1949 Academy Award by *All the King's Men*—indicated that, along with radiating ruthlessness, Douglas had established an element called audience-identification, or the there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I feeling. He successfully conveyed the idea that, rather than a creature of perverse impulses, Midge Kelly was simply a victim of the same urges that affect everybody, but which he carried to tragic lengths.

Although Douglas' career in Hollywood has not been one of unmitigated villainy (he has played occasional benign roles—the bemused author in *My Dear Secretary*, the earnest schoolteacher in *A Letter to Three Wives*, the agreeable "gentleman caller" in *The Glass Menagerie*) in his three latest screen efforts, he unlimbers new embodiments of the man-you-love-to-hate.

In Warner Brothers' *Along the Great Divide* he plays a frontier marshal who, although on the right side of the law, is so obsessed with law enforcement that he carries it almost to the point of injustice.

In the film version of the Broadway hit, *Detective Story*, recently completed at Paramount, he plays a New York detective whose neurotic antipathy to illegality leads to his own doom.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPH FOR COLLIER'S BY JOHN FLOREA

HEARTTHROB

By GLADWIN HILL

for him while you despise him

Douglas' third current vehicle, *Ace in the Hole*, has the distinction of having been custom-tailored to his personal forte.

Fascinated by the callous commercialism that marked the accidental entombment of Floyd Collins in a Kentucky cave in 1925, producer-director-writer Billy Wilder of Paramount had long wanted to use the situation as the basis of a story centered on a fictitious newspaper reporter who heartlessly exploits such a tragedy, to his own undoing. But he was dubious about making such a characterization come off. Douglas' performance in *Champion* convinced Wilder that it could be done, and he prepared the production with the proviso it should be made only if Douglas could be obtained for the lead.

So, in *Ace in the Hole*, released this month, movie-goers are being regaled with a Douglas calculated to give their hackles their heaviest workout since *Champion*.

Kirk's portrayal of Midge Kelly in the latter film was so convincing that he has had some difficulty disentangling himself in people's minds from the characterization. This situation is emphasized by his physical appearance, which bears some resemblance to that of a cool, calculating prize fighter; he has high cheekbones, a long jaw, piercing green eyes and an impressive physique. As he strolled through the Warner Brothers restaurant not long ago, a dry-witted scenarist, alluding to Midge Kelly's spectacular demise in the film, wise-cracked: "Gee, that Douglas would have been a great fighter, if he'd lived."

Douglas, standing six feet tall, and weighing 175 pounds, is admittedly physique-conscious. When the independent producer Stanley Kramer was casting *Champion*, he intimated that Douglas might not be rugged enough to play a prize fighter; Kirk promptly ripped off his shirt and bared his chest right in Kramer's office.

Too Many Pictures of Muscle Men

It was this same awareness of his own muscularity that prompted actress Laraine Day, during the making of *My Dear Secretary*, to needle Douglas by decorating the sound stage with photographs of professional strong men on whom she had superimposed Kirk's head. (He retaliated one day by reaching around during a romantic clinch with Miss Day, grabbing a seltzer bottle and spraying her with it.)

During most of *Champion*, he appeared unclad above the waist; it has been suggested that this, plus the fact that he cuffed attractive women around, caused him to be enthroned by many fans as the apotheosis of sex appeal, an attitude which crops up in many of the 500 letters he gets every week. Douglas himself simply points out that he had made seven previous pictures without anyone's even mentioning sex appeal.

Regardless of whether sex appeal had anything to do with it, *Champion* was a great success, and so was its star. This caused considerable discussion in Hollywood. Amid all the perfunctory acting in the film capital, there is perpetual suspicion that when someone plays a part exceedingly well, some sinister factor must be involved. Some members of the community's ever-ready anvil chorus have tried to explain away his portrayal of Midge Kelly by suggesting that Douglas was just playing himself.

Seeking parallels in the (Continued on page 67)

In real life, Kirk is a mild, pleasant, hard-working actor who takes his job seriously and rarely gets into trouble



The MASTER'S TOUCH

By HERBERT WARREN WIND

You had to get up pretty early in the morning to put one over on C. C. Shepard.
He knew everything there was to know about baseball. And outfielders. And love

CALVIN COWLEY SHEPARD was methodically going through the mail stacked on his desk. He owned the largest desk in organized baseball—a foot longer and nine inches wider than Branch Rickey's by actual measurement. It was a fine July morning, the air exceptionally cool and dry for the Atlantic seaboard in summer, Shepard was thinking as he savored a testimonial from the local Elks Club to the effect that C. C. Shepard was the smartest man in the major leagues.

Reluctantly, he went on to the next letter, a routine report from the secretary of the Redlands farm team. The weather suddenly changed. The severe granite contours of his face became sharper and deeper as Shepard impatiently jabbed at a buzzer on his desk.

By the time his secretary, Ray Bell, came hurrying in, Shepard looked like the Old Man of the Mountain after a rough storm.

"You're not ready to see the press yet, are you?" Ray asked. He was a slim young man in his early thirties, who spoke, as did Shepard, with slight traces of a Vermont twang.

"No, my boy, I'm not ready to see the press," Shepard said with what was supposed to be elegant sarcasm. "I see them at ten o'clock. I know that. I don't need any coaching." He paused for a moment. "I've just been reading the report from Redlands. Do you know what Walter Eamons is batting?"

"It was .274 on last month's report," Ray answered. "Probably up around .280, .285 by now. I wouldn't worry about Eamons."

"Well, for your information," Shepard said slowly, "our Mr. Eamons is now pounding the ball at a robust .221. That boy ever hit below .340 for us?"

Ray fingered his brow. "No. He was over .370 those two years in the Kitty League. Last year at Redlands, let's see—" He broke off. "Think it was .362."

Shepard leaned over and pushed one button in a battery of sixteen attached to his desk. A glass panel at the far end of the office was jerkily lighted by fluorescent tubing. At the top of the panel, *Redlands* was printed in red; beneath the name of the club, in black, the roster of players. Fifteen similar panels, each devoted to a different farm team, formed unbroken murals along the two windowless walls of the office. The installation of this equipment had been one of Shepard's first moves after he'd bought his major-league franchise, and he derived a sense of power from pressing his buttons and watching the panels light up like a pinball machine in the hands of a true artist.

"I've won three pennants in the five years I've been in baseball," Shepard resumed, slightly appeased by the panel's obedience to his wishes. "How did I do it? By building up the best organization in the game. Not a single personal relation of mine is on the payroll. How come, then, I'm only now getting word that the best prospect we own is miles off the beam?"

"You saw that note about Eamons, didn't you—the one in last month's report from Redlands?" Ray asked him. "That line about possible woman trouble."

"Woman trouble!" Shepard cut in scornfully. "How can you live and not have woman trouble! That doesn't tell me a thing. It seems that any time I want the dope on anything, I've got to get it myself. Add Redlands to the itinerary on tomorrow's

trip. Tell McCrillis to get packed. I'll want both of you. And now you may show the gentlemen of the press in." . . .

Late Friday afternoon, Shepard and his aides deplaned at San Bernardino and proceeded directly to the Arrowhead Springs Hotel, a plush oasis perched on the foothills of the mountains above the arid valley. Shepard had been pushing himself hard for three days but his labors had paid off in results. In Topeka, Shepard and McCrillis, his chief scout, had watched Whitey Kravchek pitch a four-hit shutout. Sid Sandler, the young left-hander with Portland, had also impressed them as having the stuff to make the big jump to the majors.

As McCrillis put it, both youngsters had a little more to learn before they were finished pitchers, but just as they were, they would probably help the club a lot more than those two base-on-balls philanthropists, Al Marineau and Blitz Baker.

With his pitching problem nicely under control, Shepard took things easy during dinner and limited himself to two long-distance calls. In addition, he made one local call, instructing Emil Hochstetter, the old Cincinnati outfielder who managed Redlands, to meet him at nine o'clock sharp on the hotel's outdoor terrace. After lighting his old cherrywood pipe, Shepard felt so pleasantly in tune with his private universe that the thought of calling a conference of the local sports writers never entered his mind.

Somewhat under the spell of the palms and a few planter's punches, Shepard and his entourage, supplemented by Hochstetter, relaxed contentedly on the terrace. They did not stop talking baseball, however, until their attention was arrested by the entrance of a tall, handsome girl whom the headwaiter guided to a table directly across the dance floor from theirs. She wore a white dress over her tan, and had whatever it is that makes people rest their drinks on the table and stare. The four baseball men looked her over as closely as they would a promising left-hander.

"Now there's the sort of girl I like!" Shepard exclaimed.

"That's very big of you," Ray said. "I thought you were an antiglamor man, boss. That girl's loaded with it."

"Honest glamor," Shepard said, correcting him. "That tan, for example. That isn't one of those beauty-parlor jobs. None of that grapefruit-colored hair, either. There're a lot of other tips if you know what to look for. I can tell you all about that girl."

"Like what?"

"Well, first, she's in the movies."

"That's like saying that a guy who's just fanned Kiner, Musial and Robinson is in baseball."

Shepard refused to be thrown off stride. "She's obviously an outdoor girl," he continued calmly. "Plays good tennis, rides horseback well. She's an intelligent girl, levelheaded. Probably from a solid middle-class family. I'd (Continued on page 52)



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