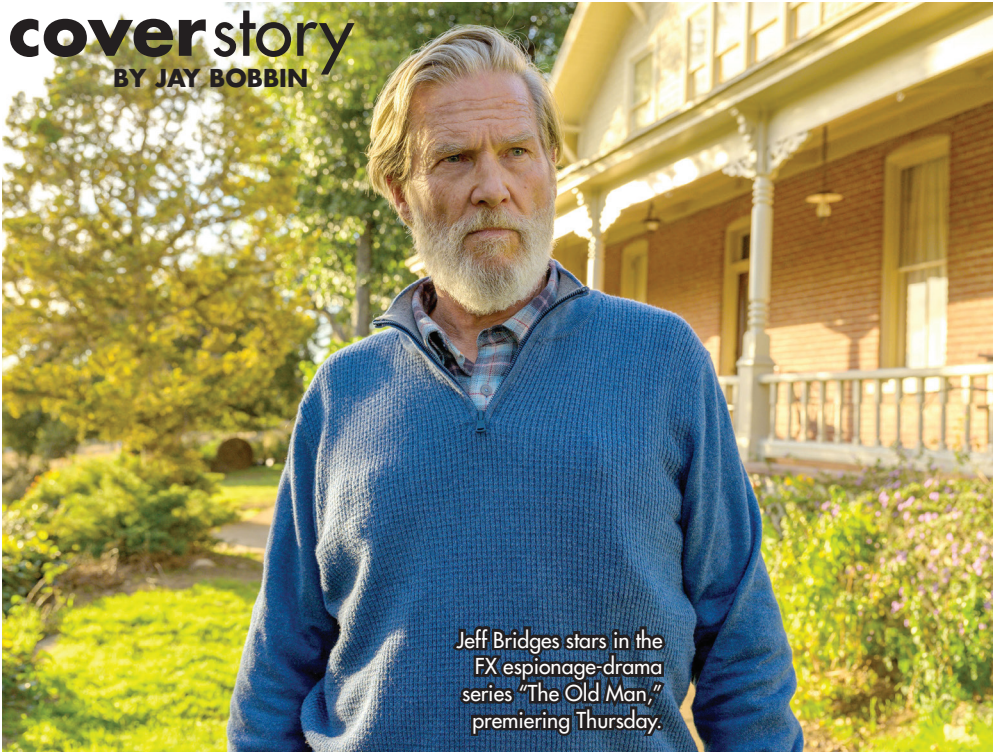


coverstory
BY JAY BOBBIN



Jeff Bridges stars in the FX espionage-drama series "The Old Man," premiering Thursday.

Jeff Bridges is 'The Old Man' in FX espionage thriller

A cancer battle and the coronavirus couldn't keep Jeff Bridges from completing his first television series, even with a break of almost two years while he recovered.

Though he appeared on his father Lloyd's classic "Sea Hunt" (as did his brother Beau), the "Crazy Heart" Oscar winner hasn't had his own show ... until now. Premiering Thursday, June 16, on FX (and then on Hulu), "The Old Man" casts Bridges as a CIA veteran targeted for elimination; he proves quite adept at outwitting his pursuers, showing he still knows the tricks of the trade.

Based on a bestseller by Thomas Perry, the suspense-drama also stars John Lithgow as the federal agent in charge of the hunt, with Alia Shawkat ("Arrested Development") and E.J. Bonilla as operatives working with him. Gbenga Akinnagbe plays an assassin also on the trail, with Amy Brenneman as a woman who becomes involved with the fugitive when she rents him a room.

"If you ever watched 'Sea Hunt' and saw an eight-year-old kid, that was probably me," the good-humored Bridges muses. "My dad set this whole thing in motion. I remember him sitting me on his bed and teaching me all the basics of acting. The big thing I learned from him was the joy in which he approached his work ... or his play.

"I got to work with him twice as an adult, in 'Tucker: The Man and His Dream' and 'Blown Away,' and it was so great to see him come on the set and everybody was like, 'Oh, this is kind of fun. We can relax and have fun and play.' When you relax like that, the good stuff – the story that you're telling – can come out, and you're not tense, wondering if you're not doing it in a loving place."

Six-time Primetime Emmy winner Lithgow considers himself a beneficiary of that approach. Though it takes a while for him and Bridges to cross paths in "The Old Man," he reports one scene "took us six days and it was entirely played inside an automobile. We never stopped talking, telling stories, telling jokes, talking about our families, talking about philosophy. And the whole time, we had our microphones on and the whole crew was listening to that, and they were hearing the birth of a great lifetime friendship."

Noting he feels "terrific" following his bouts with lymphoma and COVID-19, Bridges says that in doing TV, "One of my concerns was about how different it would be than making a movie, and it is absolutely no different. You have enough time to do your work. (This show) is an exceptionally good one, with the artists that have been assembled."

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