



Douglas in horse opera, "Day of the Gun."

KIRK DOUGLAS tells: "Why I'm Hollywood's

Family Weekly's recent filmland poll is right, he says;

NOT LONG AGO on the Mexico City location of "Day of the Gun," Kirk Douglas was studying a recent issue of FAMILY WEEKLY. It contained a survey of approximately 100 movie personalities who named Kirk "Hollywood's Most Uncooperative Male Star."

Commented Kirk: "They're right—to a point. I believe they really meant to say that I'm the most disliked actor in Hollywood, and with that I agree 100 percent!"

Frankness like this is rare among stars. With Kirk it was only the beginning.

"You probably expect me to say I am disliked because I'm a perfectionist and want everything to be just right. That's a lot of hogwash. I'm disliked because I'm me."

Kirk is convinced that this dislike cost him an Academy Award at least once. He was nominated three times—for "Champion" in 1949, "The Bad and the Beautiful" in 1952, and "Lust for Life" in 1956. He believes he should have won an Oscar for his 1956 portrayal of Van Gogh.

The most obvious reason for Kirk's lack of popularity—which has increased since he has worked almost exclusively for his own company, Bryna Productions—is his insistence on being director, producer, and actor at the same time, although nominally he has a producer and director working for him. "Of course, I have a proprietary interest in everything connected with the production," concedes Kirk, who often irked his costars by rewriting the script to build up his own scenes.

Battled Allies in "Spartacus"

For instance, when he worked with Charles Laughton and Laurence Olivier in his production of "Spartacus," Laughton got so upset that he walked off the set twice, and Olivier threatened to sue Kirk, although Kirk insists, "I still don't know why. If I felt a scene should be shot differently from the script, and it took longer, he had nothing to complain about. He got paid overtime." Then he added, "Anyhow it's unimportant how we got along. What counts is that we made a good picture."

A publicist who used to work for Kirk recalls the time he brought an English writer to the Brittany location of "The Vikings." After an hour's flight and a three-hour train ride, the reporter showed up at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, too late to continue to the actual location site. So the publicist and the correspondent waited for Kirk in the hotel bar. When Kirk showed up at 5:30, he shook hands with the reporter, stood on his head, did a couple of push-ups, and turned to leave. The dismayed cor-



This time a Roman, Douglas rides again in "Spartacus."

respondent told Kirk he had to get back to London the next evening, and could he please talk to him that night. Kirk curtly replied that he planned to have dinner with his family.

"I'll meet you any time—midnight, 6 in the morning . . ." the reporter pleaded.

"I'll think about it," Kirk said vaguely and left without committing himself to an interview.

Immediately Kirk rushed to a phone, put in a call to the publicist, and ordered him to report to his room on the double.

When he did, Kirk cussed him out for having made the arrangements.

"But I told you he was coming," the man defended himself. "It's going to look terrible if you don't get together . . ."

Threateningly, Kirk shook his fist in front of the publicist's eyes, as he had done many times before. "That's your business. You have to get along with everybody. You're a publicist. I'm the star. I can be the rudest guy in the world if I want!"

"If that's your ambition, you'll be happy to know

you've already realized it!" the publicist angrily snapped back.

The unpredictable Kirk burst into laughter, held out his hand to apologize for his actions, and agreed to see the reporter later that evening.

When he wants to, Kirk can turn on the charm like a professional politician and make any antagonist forgive and forget.

This is possible because, while Kirk is disliked, he is also respected for his talent, his punctuality, his enthusiasm, and his willingness to tackle any scene no matter how rough physically.

Kirk's character is complicated and contradictory. He can frighten a man half to death with his outbursts. He has the physical strength to crush a man with his bare hands. He was once a professional wrestler; yet he hates physical violence.

Outbursts Are an Old Story

While success, and particularly the formation of his own company, has brought Kirk's unpopularity to a peak, he claims he hasn't changed. "I'm the same moody guy I've always been. Only before I became successful no one cared. Now everybody is conscious that I get angry often and easily, and that I swear furiously when there are no ladies around. But so do a lot of other men. My friend Burt Lancaster swears louder and interferes more with scripts and direction than I do. But no one hates him the way they hate me. That's the part I don't get. And it has nothing to do with Hollywood and success. It has always been like this."

Kirk's facility for making people dislike him dates back to his college days, when his drive and ambition made him student-body president—only to be attacked regularly and angrily by editorials in the campus newspaper. "I constantly felt the resentment of my fellow students," he recalls, "even when I vindicated myself at student meetings. They listened to me—but they kept on hating me."

While Kirk seems conscious of his shortcomings, he has been unable to do anything about them. Lengthy sessions with a psychiatrist have not helped, although the main purpose of the consultations was to probe his inability to get along with the former Diana Dill, his first wife and the mother of his sons Michael, 15, and Joel, 13. Apparently the sessions were of some value, however, because his second marriage, to Belgian publicist Anne Buydens, mother of his two youngest children, Peter, 5, and Eric, 1, has worked out very well.

His early environment had a decided influence on Kirk, who has had to struggle all the way. The son of Russian immigrants, Kirk—whose real name is Issur Danielovitch—grew up in intimate association with hunger, the memory of which still haunts him to the point where he insists that his refrigera-

Most Unpopular Actor" By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

what's more, he doesn't blame people for not liking him, and here's why

tor must always be fully stocked with food.

Kirk, his six sisters, and his mother could seldom count on his father to provide the family with food, although he sometimes found employment as a fruit peddler or junk collector. Early in life Kirk worked at odd jobs to help keep himself and his family alive.

Kirk's mother convinced her son that he needed an education to get anywhere. By constant work—from selling soda pop to working as a junior bookkeeper whenever he wasn't in school—Kirk saved enough to get into St. Lawrence University in Canton, N. Y. Although he hadn't applied for admission, he talked his way into the university, just as he talked himself into the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City after graduation.

Life taught Kirk to be tough and to the point. Never a hypocrite, he kept getting himself into constant hot water and still does by his straightforwardness, which is not reserved for underlings. It lashes out regardless of who's around or the possible consequences.

Ironically, his often-pompous, backslapping, strutting-about-like-he-owned-the-world attitude that made Kirk so disliked in Hollywood has made him a great deal more appreciated in Mexico—indeed in all countries where people are more outgoing. These people prefer him to the quiet, mind-my-own-business type like fellow-actor Rock Hudson, who, incidentally, was chosen the most popular actor among his Hollywood coworkers in the recent FAMILY WEEKLY poll!

"That's the Way I Am"

There seems little chance that Kirk's attitude and thus his popularity will change in the near future, because as he himself admitted, "That's the way I am." And that's the way he is in his private life, too, as shown by a recent run-in with his oldest boy.

Not long ago, Michael was sulking after a good tongue-lashing from Kirk. "Just because I'm your father doesn't mean you have to like me," Kirk finally burst out.

Convinced that all kids hate their parents because they're in authority, Kirk hopes that "someday my children will like me that much more when they realize that what I did I did in their best interest."

The one change which someday might help Kirk's popularity with his coworkers is for him to take over officially the chores he already handles for all practical purposes: produce and direct.

Kirk was agreeable to the idea. "I wouldn't mind getting started on a small-budget, black and white picture right now."

"Would you like to star in the picture yourself?" I asked him.

A grin formed on his rugged face. "I should say not. I don't think I could put up with myself!"



Douglas gathers with clan, Michael and Joel, sons of first marriage, and young Eric and Peter, born of second.