

Christine Kaufmann: 17-Year-Old Bombshell



Christine and Tony Curtis in a scene from "Taras Bulba."

Many men, including Tony Curtis, have been captivated by her beauty—and confused by her complexity

By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

AT 17, Christine Kaufmann already possesses the mysterious aura of a star.

The copper-haired continental beauty has been compared with Brigitte Bardot; she has been called the most important German actress since Marlene Dietrich—and she has been accused of wrecking one of Hollywood's happiest marriages, that of Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh.

Because of all this, I anticipated difficulties when I flew to Berlin to interview her while she was on location for her latest movie, "Tunnel 28." But to my surprise, she neither withdrew into a shell nor put up a front.

In a way, our first lunch together—just the two of us—taught me more about Christine than many lengthy sessions I've had with other stars.

Her choice of a restaurant was significant; it was a vegetarian place named *Der Saft* (The Juice). "When I was eight," she told me, "my parents and I lived in a village near Munich. Every day I went to the butcher's to watch him slaughter little animals. I hated it, but I couldn't tear myself away. As a result, I can no longer eat meat."

From the menu, Christine chose an easy-to-digest rice dish because, despite her youth, she suffers from tensions that cause migraine headaches and upset her stomach. How long has she suffered from these tensions? "Almost as long as I've worked," answered Christine, who has been a professional actress since she was seven.

I hesitated to bring up the subject of Tony Curtis, her costar in "Taras Bulba" and the man most often linked with her in the gossip columns. But Christine promptly put me at ease by saying: "I don't mind telling you I'm not in love with Tony." Then, without emotion, she gave



She is appearing next in "Constantine and the Cross."

me two reasons. Her first was a 26-year-old architectural student in Munich. "He is the kind of man I could marry," she insisted. Her second reason was that she and Tony don't have much in common. "Why, he had never even listened to Beethoven until I met him," she said.

There also is a third reason why Christine might relish keeping her independence for a while. Her French mother, Genevieve Kaufmann, is a well-meaning but domineering woman who keeps a tight rein on her. Christine has been trying to break away for some time, but her age prevents her from doing so legally.

Mrs. Kaufmann got her daughter her first movie role 10 years ago. Since then, the blue-eyed beauty has appeared in 26 German and Italian films and in one movie that has had general American distribution, "Town Without Pity."

CHIRSTINE and her mother live in Rome although Christine's father cannot join them because of his duties with the German Air Force. But Mrs. Kaufmann believes Rome is advantageous for her daughter's career—and to her, nothing is more important.

Professionally, there can be little doubt what the future holds for Christine. As Kirk Douglas says: "In a couple of years they'll be comparing Brigitte and the rest of them with her."

Privately, however, Christine faces great problems. She must come to terms with her mother—and herself. And she must make decisions about her relationship with Tony Curtis, a man who doesn't let a "no" stop him, on the screen or in real-life situations.

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