

Tab Hunter, 86, 1950s Hollywood Heartthrob, Is Dead

By [Aljean Harmetz](#)

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Tab Hunter, the tall, blond, blue-eyed movie star who as a teenage idol in the 1950s was one of the last products of the Hollywood studio system — and who made an unlikely comeback in a very un-Hollywood film when he was almost 50 — died on Sunday in Santa Barbara, Calif. He was 86.

His death was confirmed by his spouse, Allan Glaser, who said the cause was cardiac arrest after a blood clot moved from Mr. Hunter’s leg to his lung.

Arthur Gelien was 17 when the agent Henry Willson gave him a new name and added him to a roster of clients that included Rock Hudson, Robert Wagner and Rory Calhoun. “Acting skill,” Mr. Hunter said in his 2005 autobiography, “Tab Hunter Confidential” (written with Eddie Muller), “was secondary to chiseled features and a fine physique.”

He might not have had the skill, at least not yet, but he had the look; he was the epitome of the sunny all-American boy enshrined in decades of Hollywood films. His first audition for “Island of Desire” (1952) consisted of taking off his shirt. The screen test came later. On the basis of that movie, in which he played a brash Marine corporal marooned with Linda Darnell on a South Seas island, the readers of Photoplay magazine voted him the year’s No. 1 new male star.

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