



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

Robert Mitchum

August 6, 1917 - July 1, 1997



Born in Bridgeport, Conn., Mitchum was of Scotch-Irish, Blackfoot Indian and Norwegian ancestry, he was left fatherless at 18 months. His mother married a newspaperman, and he lived in Delaware, Connecticut and Manhattan before running away from home. Mitchum knocked around during the Depression, working as a prizefighter, a coal miner, a nightclub bouncer, a jazz saxophonist and a ditch-digger

Mitchum arrived in Long Beach, California, in 1936, staying with his sister Julie. Soon, the rest of the Mitchum family joined them in Long Beach. During this time, he worked as a ghostwriter for astrologer Carroll Righter. His sister Julie convinced him to join the local theater guild with her. In his years with the Players Guild of Long Beach, he made a living as a stagehand and occasional bit-player in company productions. He also wrote several short pieces which were performed by the guild. According to Lee Server's biography *Robert Mitchum: Baby, I Don't Care*, Mitchum put his talent for poetry to work writing song lyrics and monologues for Julie's nightclub performances. In 1940, he returned east to marry Dorothy Spence, taking her back to California. He remained a footloose character until the birth of their first child, James, nicknamed Josh (two more children followed, Chris and Petrine). Mitchum then got a steady job as a machine operator with the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation.

Mitchum was in over 110 films and TV series over the course of his career. He is ranked as #23 on the American Film Institute's list of the 50 greatest American screen legends of all time. His first credited named role was as Quinn in the 1943 film *Border Patrol*. He appeared in several Hopalong Cassidy films including *Colt Comrades*, *Bar 20*, *False Colors*, and *Riders of the Deadline*. In 1944, he starred in the western film *Nevada* as Jim Lacy aka Nevada and a year later in the film, *West of the Pecos* as Pecos Smith.

Long before James Dean showed up, Robert Mitchum was Hollywood's original existential rebel. He played alienated, restless men, specializing in intelligent losers, apathetic thugs and taciturn, two-fisted anti-heroes. With his half-closed eyes and suave sangfroid, in his most iconic screen roles Robert Mitchum embodied the somnambulant doom of outcasts and psychotics. He worked almost constantly during his 54-year film career making his mark in Westerns and war movies. Billed in 1943 as Bob Mitchum, one of his first rolls was in William Boyd Hoppy film, *Hoppy Serves a Writ* as character, as "Rigney." (Note: the Film was shot in Lone Pine.) Mitchum made 31 Westerns among his most notable *Nevada* and *West of the Pecos* based on Zane Grey novels. In 2011 Mitchum's work was the subject of a 10-film UCLA Film &

"He was a wonderful actor to work with. He never made a mistake, he was always on time, very patient, and just a damn good actor," said Jane Russell, who some say was his best co-star. At his death in 1997 Mitchum was survived by his wife of 57 years, the former Dorothy Spence; two sons, Jim and Christopher, both actors, and a daughter, Petrine. Mitchum's ashes were scattered at sea.

Museum of Western Film History
PO Box 111 Lone Pine, California 93545
760-876-9909

Website: www.museumofwesternfilmhistory.org

References:

<http://www.imdb.com/list/ls009199570/>

<https://www.b-westerns.com/mitchum.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Mitchum

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000053/>

