



Jimmy Stewart: A Biography

Marc Eliot

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Jimmy Stewart's all-American good looks, boyish charm, and deceptively easygoing style of acting made him one of Hollywood's greatest and most enduring stars. Despite the indelible image he projected of innocence and quiet self-assurance, Stewart's life was more complex and sophisticated than most of the characters he played. With fresh insight and unprecedented access, bestselling biographer Marc Eliot finally tells the previously untold story of one of our greatest screen and real-life heroes.

Born into a family of high military honor and economic success dominated by a powerful father, Stewart developed an interest in theater while attending Princeton University. Upon graduation, he roomed with the then-unknown Henry Fonda, and the two began a friendship that lasted a lifetime. While he harbored a secret unrequited love for Margaret Sullavan, Stewart was paired with many of Hollywood's most famous, most beautiful, and most alluring leading ladies during his extended bachelorhood, among them Ginger Rogers, Olivia de Havilland, Loretta Young, and the notorious Marlene Dietrich.

After becoming a star playing a hero in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in 1939 and winning an Academy Award the following year for his performance in George Cukor's *The Philadelphia Story*, Stewart was drafted into the Armed Forces and became a hero in real life. When he returned to Hollywood, he discovered that not only the town had changed, but so had he. Stewart's combat experiences left him emotionally scarred, and his deepening darkness perfectly positioned him for the '50s, in which he made his greatest films, for Anthony Mann (*Winchester '73* and *Bend of the River*) and, most spectacularly, Alfred Hitchcock, in his triple meditation on marriage, *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *Vertigo*, which many film critics regard as the best American movie ever made.

While Stewart's career thrived, so did his personal life. A marriage in his forties, the adoption of his wife's two sons from a previous marriage, and the birth of his twin daughters laid the foundation for a happy life, until an unexpected tragedy had a shocking effect on his final years.

Intimate and richly detailed, Jimmy Stewart is a fascinating portrait of a multi-faceted and much-admired actor as well as an extraordinary slice of Hollywood history.

"Probably the best actor who's ever hit the screen." —Frank Capra

"He taught me that it was possible to remain who you are and not be tainted by your environment. He was not an actor . . . he was the real thing." —Kim Novak

"He was uniquely talented and a good friend." —Frank Sinatra

"He was a shy, modest man who belonged to cinema nobility." —Jack Valenti

"There is nobody like him today." —June Allyson

"He was one of the nicest, most unassuming persons I have known in my life. His career speaks for itself." —Johnny Carson

From the Hardcover edition.

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