

Bryunner, Yul (1915-1985) Encyclopedia Article

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In 1951 Yul Brynner, a Russian-born Mongolian, made a multi-award-winning Broadway debut in *The King and I*, and in 1956 he won the Best Actor Oscar for the screen version. He shaved his head for the role, and it is to this image of baldness as a badge of virile exoticism that he owed his subsequent prolific and highly paid film career during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as his continuing status as a twentieth-century icon. Seemingly ageless, he continued to star in revivals of the show until shortly before his much-publicized death from lung cancer. Much of his early life is shrouded in self-created myth, but he arrived in the United States in 1941, having worked as a trapeze artist with the Cirque d'Hiver in Paris until injury intervened. A largely mediocre actor, who appeared in increasingly mediocre films, relying on his mysterious, brooding personality, he is also remembered for his roles as the pharaoh in *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and the black-clad leader of *The Magnificent Seven* (1960).

Further Reading:

Katz, Ephraim. *The International Film Encyclopedia*. New York, Harper Collins, 1994.

Thomson, David. *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.