

Bobby Blake



Titles: 71 Sources: 4 Stills: 7

Born: Michael James Vijencio Gubitosi; Nutley, New Jersey; September 18th 1933
aka: Mickey Gubitosi; later Robert Blake

Stocky Hispanic boy who did prolific work in his early teens, chiefly in "B" Westerns. Having played Red Ryder's injun sidekick Little Beaver in a matinee series of 26 titles, and the boy selling lottery tickets who has coffee thrown over him by Bogart in "**THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE**", Blake came to more serious notice as an adult with his subtle portrayal of an impulse killer in Truman Capote's "**IN COLD BLOOD**". He later starred in an unusual but short-lived TV cop series "**Baretta**" (74) as an unorthodox streetwise detective with a parrot, rather in similar vein to "**SERPICO**". The series won him an Emmy award. In these later roles he showed himself an actor of wit and charisma. Robert Blake's home website, from which many of the stills below are taken, can be found at



*"You wanna buy a teeket Señor?" – Blake displays poor timing in "**The Treasure of the Sierra Madre**"*

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"American child actor who later attracted some unusual adult roles."

Motion Picture Almanac 1994 entry:

“Actor. Started as a child actor in **OUR GANG** comedies as Mickey Gubitosi, also

the least lousy part of it. With two alcoholic parents to support, he felt less like a child star



*“Jeepers! I think there’s a National Enquirer photographer in the closet” hisses **MOKEY**.*

appeared as Little Beaver in the **RED RYDER** series. Later was a Hollywood stuntman in **"RUMBLE ON THE DOCKS"** and **"THE TIJUANA STORY"**. His first adult acting job was at the Gallery Theatre in **"Hatful of Rain"**.

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

“That tough little nut Robert Blake - as he now is - was bom Michael James Vijencio Gubitosi, and until 1942 acted as Mickey Gubitosi. His parents were a song-and-dance duo known as **"The Hillbillies"**, and when he was only two he and his sister replaced their mother and made it a trio.

Three years later Michael joined **"Our Gang"**, almost by an act of will: like the Switzers, he simply turned up and started performing, and they took him on. He got landed with a rather whiney character (which can’t have delighted him, although it was called **"Mickey"**) and remained with the increasingly charmless Gang till its demise in 1944. He later said that his whole childhood was lousy, and the acting not

than a child labourer.

Young Gubitosi had always had a few film jobs outside **"Our Gang"**, and at the age of eight he got a starring one in a film called **"MOKEY"**: difficult child redeemed by dog, etcetera. For the occasion he (or his agent) decided to ditch his Italian name. He re-christened himself Bobby Blake; and from mid-1942 it was Bobby Blake, too, not Mickey Gubitosi, who played **"Mickey"** in **"Our Gang"**.

When the Gang broke up, he found a niche almost at once in the **"Red Ryder"** Western series, in which he played a Red Indian boy called **"Little Beaver"**, junior sidekick at first to **"Wild Bill"** Elliott (in films like **"TUCSON RAIDERS"** and **"WAGON WHEELS WESTWARD"**) and then, during 1946-47, to Allan Lane (**"CONQUEST OF CHEYENNE"** and so on).

With his Mexican kid in Huston’s 1948 classic **"THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE"**, Blake was back to ethnic roles, and for a time such small parts (with the emphasis on *small*) were his lot, in films like **"THE BLACK ROSE"** (50), **"THE BLACK HAND"** (50), **"APACHE WAR SMOKE"** (52) and **"THE VEILS OF BAGDAD"** (53).

When he finally got a leading role, in **"THE PURPLE GANG"** (60), it was as a pint-sized, power-crazed delinquent. It looked as if Robert Blake, a notably embittered character who made no bones about his past unhappiness, was to have a depressing adult career playing nasty little men, a trend confirmed, though more sympathetically, by his young murderer in **"IN COLD BLOOD"** (67). The turning-point came with his role in **"TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE"** (69), as the formidably noble Indian of the title, ruefully pursued by Robert Redford; and Blake's screen rehabilitation was completed in 1973 by his brilliant - and lovable - performance as John Wintergreen, the traffic cop with detective aspirations, in **"ELECTRA GLIDE IN BLUE"**.

When he played a real cop, though, in the lead of the TV series **"Baretta"**, Blake (who knew all about real cops, from his own chequered history) made him a pretty bleak figure. Having got this out of his system, he then produced and starred in three TV movies as the more benign, off-beat investigator Joe Dancer."

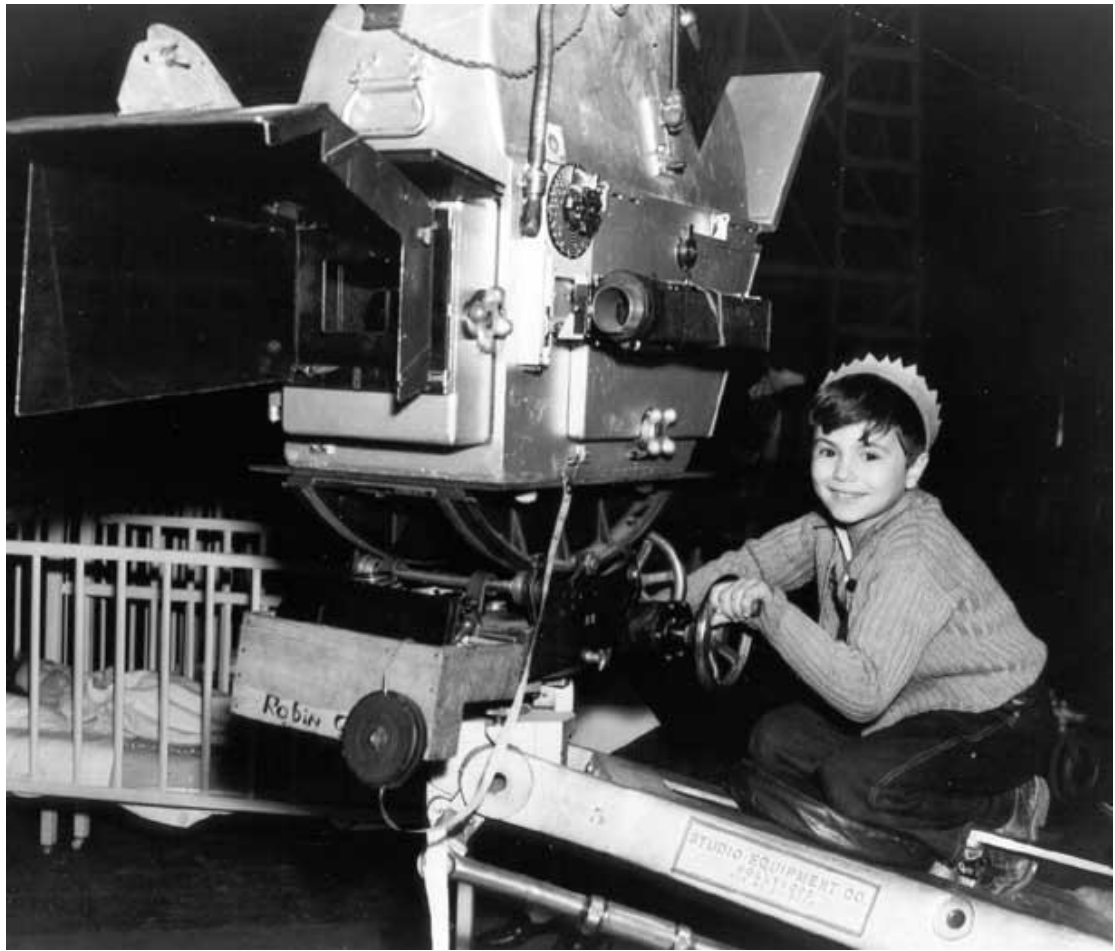
Excerpt from **Speelfilm Encyclopedie** survey of the Red Ryder films:

"...Republic was convinced it could do good business with the comic book character, and so in 1944 began an ordinary series of Westerns. For the title role Bill Elliott was sought... The films were very popular and Elliott played in no fewer than 16 Red Ryder Westerns, with Bobby Blake as Little Beaver and Alice Fleming as "The Duchess". Blake would later build an adult career as Robert Blake, both in films (**"TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE"**) and on TV (**"Baretta"**).

In 1946 Elliott wanted to do something different for a change. Republic gave him the lead in another series of Westerns. But the studio wanted to continue with the Red Ryder series. Alan Lane was Elliott's successor... Far more so than Elliott, Lane was the true Red Ryder. The quality of the films with Lane was also maintained at a high level. Blake remained Little Beaver, and Martha Wentworth was The Duchess. Sidney Picker remained the producer, and that must certainly have been important in maintaining the quality."



*It's the slammer for Bobby in **MOKEY***



FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
39	6	-- Our Gang shorts -- †	as Mickey
39		BRIDAL SUITE	
40	7	I LOVE YOU AGAIN	
		with <i>Harry McKim, Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer</i>	
40		SPOTS BEFORE YOUR EYES	
		with <i>Leon Tyler</i>	
41	8	WEDDING WORRIES ⚡	as Mickey
		Our Gang – with <i>Spanky McFarland, Billy "Buckwheat" Thomas, Darla Hood, Billy "Froggy" Laughlin</i>	
42	9	ANDY HARDY'S DOUBLE LIFE	
42		CHINA GIRL	
42		KID GLOVE KILLER	
42		MOKEY	
		with <i>Cordell Hickman, Billy "Buckwheat" Thomas</i>	
43	10	SALUTE TO THE MARINES	
43		SLIGHTLY DANGEROUS	
43		LOST ANGEL	
		with <i>Margaret O'Brien, Bobby Driscoll</i>	
44	11	THE BIG NOISE	with Laurel & Hardy
44		CHEYENNE WILDCAT ⚡	as Little Beaver
44		MARSHALL OF RENO	
44		SAN ANTONIO KID	as Little Beaver
44		SHERIFF OF LAS VEGAS	as Little Beaver
44		MEET THE PEOPLE	
44		SEVENTH CROSS	
		with <i>Larry Joe Olsen, Leon Tyler</i>	
44		TUCSON RAIDERS	
44		VIGILANTES OF DODGE CITY	
44		THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW	
		with <i>Spanky McFarland</i>	
45	12	COLORADO PIONEERS	
		with <i>Billy Cummings, Billy "Buckwheat" Thomas</i>	
45		DAKOTA	
45		THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT	
		with <i>Douglas Madore</i>	
45		PHANTOM OF THE PLAINS	as Little Beaver
45		WAGON WHEELS WESTWARD	as Little Beaver
45		PILLOW TO POST	
45		THE GREAT STAGECOACH ROBBERY	
		with <i>Leon Tyler</i>	
46	13	CONQUEST OF CHEYENNE	as Little Beaver
46		A GUY COULD CHANGE	
46		HOME ON THE RANGE	
46		HUMORESQUE	John Garfield's violinist role as a boy
		with <i>Tommy Cook</i>	
46		IN OLD SACRAMENTO	
46		OUT CALIFORNIA WAY	
46		SANTA FE UPRISING	as Little Beaver
47	14	MARSHALL OF CRIPPLE CREEK	as Little Beaver – the last of 23 " Red Ryder " films by Republic
47		THE LAST ROUND-UP	
47		THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE	as lottery ticket seller
50	17	THE BLACK ROSE	
50		BLACKOUT	also co-producer
52	19	APACHE WAR SMOKE	
53	20	TREASURE OF THE GOLDEN CONDOR	
53		VEILS OF BAGDAD	

† billed as Mickey Gubitosi

According to Holmstrom, he made 4 **Our Gang** shorts in 1939, 9 in 1940, 8 in 1941, 3 in 1942, 7 in 1943 and 3 in 1944. The titles will come to light in due course, no doubt.



Little Beaver gets his britches dusted by Red Ryder in "CHEYENNE WILDCAT"
Source: indeterminate