

Bobby Breen

Titles: 9 Sources: 3 Stills: 5

Born: Montreal, Canada; November 4th 1927

One of a small clutch of prepubescent boy singers – [Heintje](#) in Germany, [Danny de Munk](#) in Holland, [Joselito](#) in Spain – whose fleeting marketability was capitalised upon by the film industry in the shape of (predominantly sentimental) vehicles with off-the-shelf plots. Breen is the most notable example produced by Hollywood. Sadly for him, his contract was with RKO rather than one of the prestige studios, and his films are rarely seen today. His chosen instrument, the ukulele, did nothing to enhance his longevity, and was banned by international treaty after George Formby retired.



Hawaii Calls – a garlanded stowaway sings for his supper



Debutant meets old pro - Breen on set with Freddie Bartholomew in 1936

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"American boy singer of the thirties; later gave up films for night club work."

Caption to studio promotional still:

"Bobby Breen, the eight-year old singing sensation of the Eddie Cantor broadcasts, visits with his friend, Freddy Bartholomew, on the set where Bobby was making his screen debut in

"LET'S SING AGAIN", produced by Sol Lesser and released by RKO Radio."

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"Bobby's precocious [*sic*] singing talent, carefully nurtured, led to a 1931 debut in the Silver Slipper Night Club in Toronto. Soon afterwards, with the club's band, he sang on the radio. Then came a stream of vaudeville and restaurant engagements. After he had performed in Illinois and New York, he went to study at the Professional Children's School in

Hollywood. There he was seen by Eddie Cantor, who in 1936 gave him (like Terry Kilburn) a regular spot on his radio show.

Bobby, a dab hand with languages, could also sing in French, Italian and Spanish, and won wide popularity. RKO signed him up, and he starred and sang till the golden voice left him - a cheerful trooper without any particular charm or individuality.

His last acting assignment in the cinema was in **"JOHNNY DOUGHBOY"** ('42), along with other kid actors of the past like Spanky McFarland and Robert Coogan. But he continued as a singer in nightclubs and stage musicals, and in occasional films such as **"LONDON ENTERTAINS"** ('51) and **"CURSE OF THE VODOO"** ('65)."

Film unknown



Hawaii Calls Source: *A Pictorial
History of the Talkies*

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
deb 36	8	LET'S SING AGAIN	
36		RAINBOW ON THE RIVER / IT HAPPENED IN NEW ORLEANS with "Stymie" Beard, Billy Watson	
37	9	MAKE A WISH with Tommy Bupp, Billy Lee	
37		HAWAII CALLS with Pua Lani	in central role
38	10	BREAKING THE ICE	
39	11	ESCAPE TO PARADISE	
39		FISHERMAN'S WHARF with Tommy Bupp, Leonard Kibrick	
39		WAY DOWN SOUTH with "Stymie" Beard	
43	15	JOHNNY DOUGHBOY with Baby Sandy, Spanky McFarland, Kenneth "Buddy" Brown, Bill "Butch" Lenhart, Harry McKim, Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer	