

Billy Chapin

Titles: 17 Sources: 3 Stills: 7

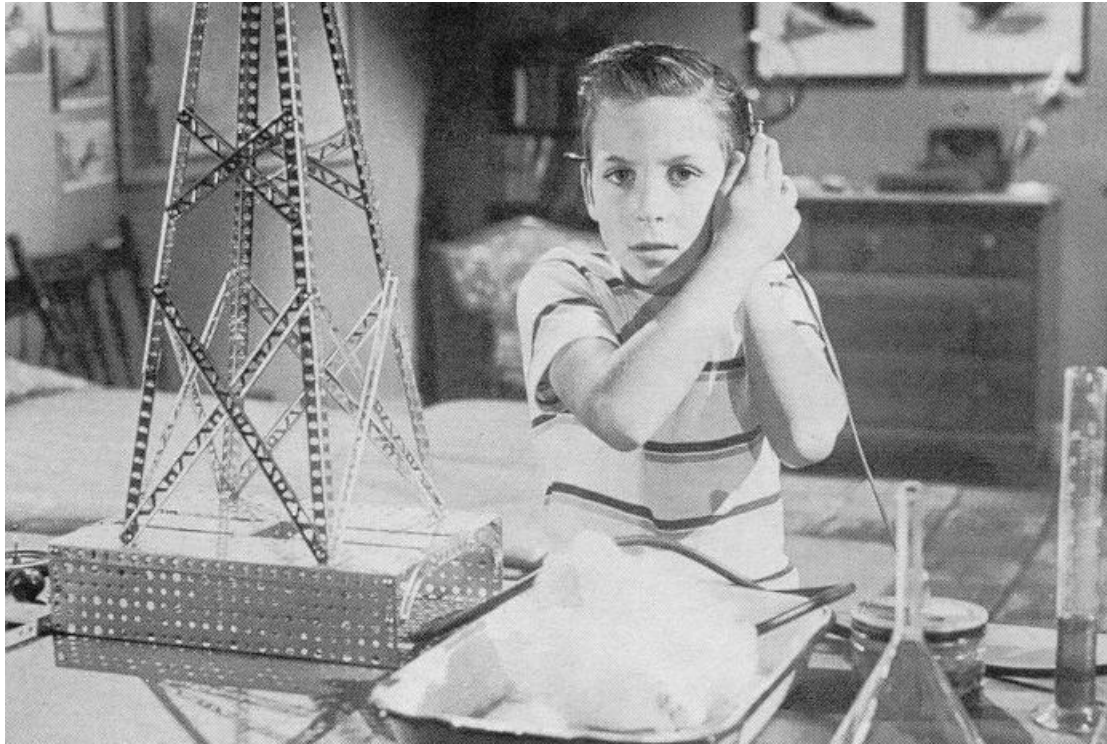
Born: Los Angeles; December 28th 1943

Younger brother of Michael Chapin [\[qv\]](#); related to producer Doug Chapin?

A straight-arrow American boy with a hint of nervous insecurity in the eyes. His roles – even his most famous one in “**NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**” - had nothing of the hero about them. Billy was a plainclothes Boy Scout, polite, obedient and trusting, and was usually cast as very much a man’s boy, idolising gunfighter Richard Egan in the “**SHANE**”-lookalike “**TENSION AT TABLE ROCK**” or his father Victor Mature in “**VIOLENT SATURDAY**”. He worked mostly for Fox, but also Republic, RKO and United Artists.



Source: *Those Endearing Young Charms*



In *"TOBOR THE GREAT"*, as son of a robot inventor

Source: *Those Endearing Young Charms*

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"American child actor of the fifties."

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"Not many boy actors began their film careers by playing Gary Cooper's baby daughter, but this honour went in 1944 to the 22-day old Billy Chapin in **"CASANOVA BROWN"**. Drunk with self-importance, he then played Lana Turner's baby in **"MARRIAGE IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR"**.

Handsome Billy rested on his laurels for most of the next decade. In 1952 he at last got a plum part in a stage musical called *"Three Wishes For Jamie"*, which won him the New York Critics' Award as the year's most promising actor. The he did some TV work, and at nine returned to the cinema, with a good role as Dan Dailey's baseball-crazy son in **"THE KID FROM LEFT FIELD"**.

He had an attractively dreamy expression, and sometimes needed galvanising into action. This happened to him forcefully enough when Charles Laughton directed him in **"THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER"**. Laughton praised him afterwards as an "acting technician", but the effect is sometimes as if Billy were acting by numbers, responding to

instructions from the director: strange, abrupt, startled-fawn reactions which are undoubtedly beautiful yet not quite real."

It hardly matters, though, in the nightmarish atmosphere of his escape and flight (with his bizarre, rag-doll-like little sister) from the richly evil Robert Mitchum. At the end, his three mounting cries of "Don't!" when he sees the hated Mitchum struck down by the police, just like his father at the beginning of the story, are almost operatic in effect, and curiously shaking."

Those Endearing Young Charms entry:

"Blond hair and blue eyes. At the age of 11, Billy Chapin was called an "acting technician" by veteran actor Charles Laughton, on the strength of Billy's innate ability to understand the construction of a scene, its impact, and importance. The statement was made after Billy had performed with wide acclaim in Laughton's film **"THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER"**.

When Billy was only 22 days old he appeared in his first movie, playing the "daughter" of Gary Cooper in **"CASANOVA BROWN"**. He was chosen over a field of 200 infants because of his predominant dimples. Five months later, he appeared as Lana Turner's

baby in "**MARRIAGE IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR**".

Billy then went into "retirement" until the age of eight when he won a role in a highly praised stage musical entitled "*Three Wishes For Jamie*". For this role he won the New York Drama Critics' Award as the most promising young actor of the year. After his stage debut performance, Billy had a part in "**On Borrowed Time**" for the "**Celanese Theatre**" television show and he made an appearance on "**Family Theater**".

Billy enjoyed playing football in his spare time but switched to baseball after he performed in "**THE KID FROM LEFT FIELD**". His hobby was dogs."

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
deb 44	0	CASANOVA BROWN with <i>Larry Joe Olsen</i>	as daughter of Gary Cooper
44		MARRIAGE IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR	
46	2	THE COCKEYED MIRACLE	
48	4	CLUNY BROWN †	
48		NO MINOR VICES with <i>Beau Bridges, Bobby Hyatt</i>	
- -		Celanese Theatre: "On Borrowed Time"	US TV play
- -		Family Theater -	US TV play
53	9	AFFAIR WITH A STRANGER	
53		THE KID FROM LEFT FIELD	in title role – as baseball batboy
53		TOBOR THE GREAT	as "Gadge"
54	10	THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS with <i>Bobby Clark II</i>	
54		NAKED ALIBI	
55	11	VIOLENT SATURDAY with <i>Kevin Corcoran</i>	
55		A MAN CALLED PETER with <i>Christopher Cook, Ricky Kelman, John Pike, Winston Severn</i>	
55		NIGHT OF THE HUNTER ✗ with brother Michael Chapin, <i>Sally Jane Bruce</i>	as John
56	12	JULESBURG	
56		TENSION AT TABLE ROCK	as Jody Barrows

† Halliwell is the only source to cite him in this film
but may have confused him with Billy Gray [\[qv\]](#)