

Captain January

US : 1936 : dir. David Butler : 20th Century Fox : 75 min
 prod: Darryl F Zanuck : scr: Sam Hellman, Gladys Lehman & Harry Tugend
 : dir.ph.: John F Seitz

Shirley Temple; Jerry Tucker
 Guy Kibbee; Slim Summerville; Buddy Ebsen; June Lang; Sara Haden; Jane Darwell;
 Nella Walker; George Irving; James Farley; Si Jenks; John Carradine; Mary McLaren

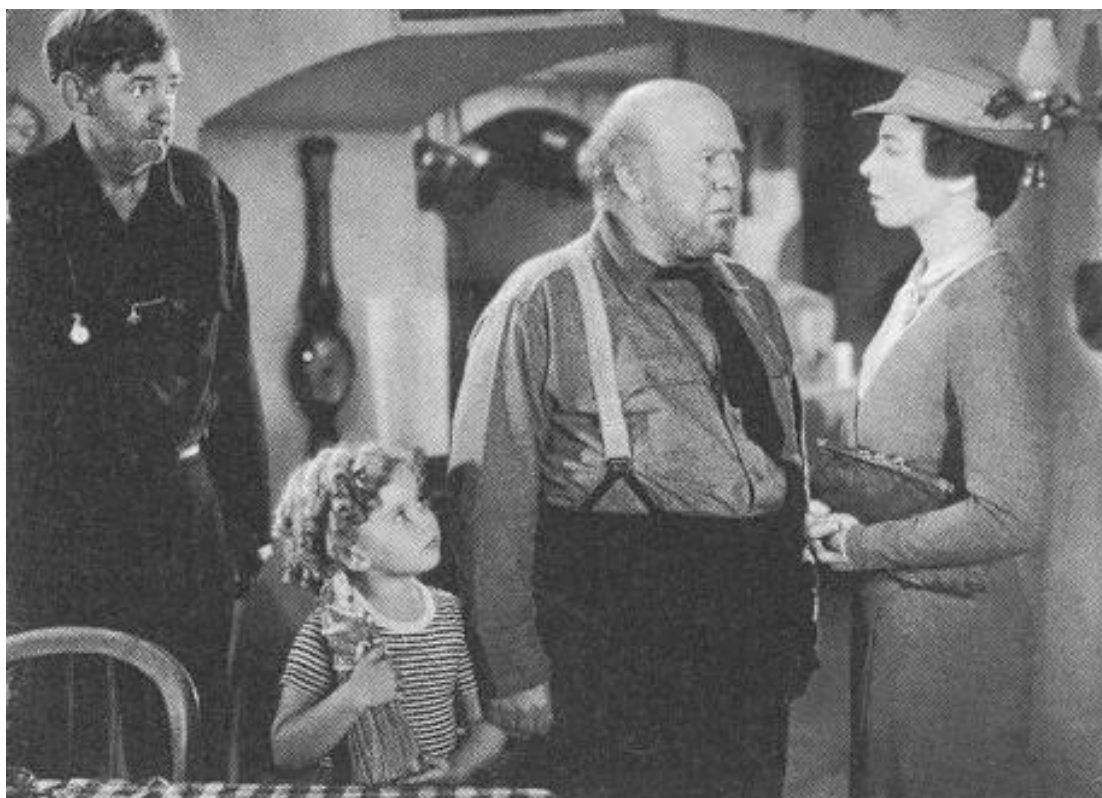
Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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SHIRLEY TEMPLE in CAPTAIN JANUARY with Guy Kibbee, Slim Summerville, June Lang, Buddy Ebsen, Sara Haden, Jane Darwell. A Fox Picture. Darryl F. Zanuck in Charge of Production. Made in U. S. A.

Yo ho ho and a bottle of baby oil

Source – indeterminate website



Salvage rights – Buddy Ebsen, Guy Kibbee and Sara Haden discuss what's to be done with little Flotsam
Source: A Pictorial History of the Talkies

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
2001 review:

"Straightforward, sentimental tale of orphaned Shirley, and the new truant officer who tries to separate her from her adoptive father, lighthouse keeper Kibbee. Short and sweet. Shirley and Ebsen sing and dance "At the Codfish Ball". **½ "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Sentimental family film with Shirley at her best; in this film she becomes attached to lighthouse keeper Kibbee. **½ "

Halliwell's Film Guide review

"A little girl is rescued from a shipwreck by a lighthouse keeper. Standard Shirley Temple vehicle with pleasing dialogue and numbers. From a novel by Laura E Richards. * "

The Films of 20th Century Fox review:

"Among the best of the Temple films, "CAPTAIN JANUARY" has her living with a

lighthouse keeper (Guy Kibbee), who rescued her when her parents drowned. All goes well until a truant officer (Sara Haden) decides the little girl is not being properly brought up and should be sent to a boarding school. Shirley is hauled away but rescued by kind relatives, who give the lighthouse keeper and his friends jobs as the crew of their boat. Young Buddy Ebsen plays one of the friends and his song-and-dance with Shirley, "At the Codfish Ball", is impressively staged on a dock set."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"Shirley Temple in her usual role at this time – a child beset by bereavement and deprivation. Guy Kibbee is her beloved guardian, a lighthouse keeper, and Sara Haden is the busybody trying to separate them. The tot has an enjoyable dance with Buddy Ebsen. * "

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Shirley is an orphan again and the mean old law is trying to take her away from her wonderful guardian. ** "

That Was Hollywood – the 1930s review:

"Shirley Temple was the little girl rescued from a shipwreck that drowns her parents and adopted by Guy Kibbee's kind-hearted lighthouse keeper until officialdom decrees that she would be better off at a boarding school. Buddy Ebsen made a strong impression dancing the "At the Codfish Ball" number with Temple (choreographed by Jack Donahue). Drawn from a Laura E Richards novel (screenplay by Sam Hellman, Gladys Lehman and Harry Tugend), the 20th Century-Fox picture was directed by David Butler."

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Miss Curly Top, here named Star (yuk!), is orphaned in a shipwreck, brought up by an old lighthouse keeper, hounded by the education authorities, and dazzling in her scholastic prowess. Oh yes, she sings and dances too. Sticky going."

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"This Shirley Temple film finds the most famous child star looked after by a lighthouse keeper. Authorities, of course, break into their idyll, giving rise to one of Shirley's best-remembered lines: "Cap! Cap! Cap! I don't want to go!" It's not all tears though. Shirley finds time to dance a step or two, and sing "Early Bird", "At the Codfish Ball" and "The Right Somebody to Love". *** "

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Swept overboard, orphan Shirley Temple is taken in by a lonely lighthouse keeper (Guy Kibbee). The incredible dance number featuring Shirley and a local fisherman (Buddy Ebsen) is worth the price of the rental. *** "

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

What's On TV notes:

"Little Shirley Temple refuses to be separated from her father, the keeper of a lighthouse."

[wrong!]

"Cute Shirley Temple is extra adorable as she resists separation from her lighthouse-keeper dad."

[wrong!]

"Shirley Temple fights separation from her father."

[wrong!]

"Weepie. Shirley Temple huffs and puffs and wriggles her ringlets as she fights to stay with daddy in his lighthouse."

[wrong!]



And here, in microdot form, for your viewing pleasure, is that famous dance with Buddy Ebsen.

Source: What's On TV

Those Endearing Young Charms entry on Temple:

"Shirley Temple had an innate sense of rhythm, a quality that enabled her to become the finest young dancer of her day. She started dancing at the age of two, when her mother enrolled her in a fancy dancing school in Los Angeles. Shirley had completed no less than three lessons when a film scout approached the family. He wanted to sign Shirley for a series of comedies entitled "BABY BURLESKS", which were to be spoofs of famous pictures such as "WHAT PRICE GLORY".

A number of agents who attended a preview of one of Shirley's performances urged Mrs Temple to take her daughter to Fox Films in order to win her a role in the studio's

upcoming film, **"STAND UP AND CHEER"**. Of 150 children tested for the part, Shirley was victorious, earning herself a contract and a starting salary of \$150 a week.

Shirley's curly hair and dimples gave her a doll-like prettiness and because of this she was always cast in the role of the model child – ever bright and obedient. In addition to her natural acting talent and photogenic memory [sic], Shirley was well gifted in song and dance, demonstrating this perfectly in such films as **"REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM"**, **"BRIGHT EYES"** and **"STOWAWAY"**.

So proficient was Shirley at winning over an audience that she was found to be one of the top ten money making stars from 1934 to 1939.

Shirley now resides in Woodside, California, with her husband and three children. She has not acted in films since her appearance in **"A KISS FOR CORLISS"** in 1950. However, she appeared on television as late as 1958 when she hosted the one hour series, **"Shirley Temple Storybook"**. Recently, Shirley has been involved in the political picture. She ran in the Republican national primaries in 1967 and was chosen as one of the five American delegates to the 24th session of the U.N. General Assembly in late 1969."

I doubt the studios did anything very sophisticated in the way of market analysis in 1936, but it's probably a safe bet that Shirley Temple's primary constituency lay among middle-aged and older women. It's hard to picture queues of men or young couples paying to see **"CURLY TOP"**, **"DIMPLES"** or **"BRIGHT EYES"**. And yet, in her starring vehicles she was principally buddied up with men. Women were often, as here, the villain of the piece. Perhaps it was that she worked a softening, "humanising" influence on rough masculinity, and as such was a useful ambassador for her sex. She brought out the "nurturing" instincts in the male.

Beneath all the candyfloss, about which there's little of substance one can say, lies an interesting subtext which can be traced back at least as far as Chaplin's **"THE KID"**. It is a clear critique of insensitive "child welfare" authorities interfering to the misery of the child in an unorthodox "family" set-up – almost invariably a single man who takes a foundling (of either sex) under his wing. Note how compulsory schooling laws are invoked, not in the child's interests, but as a means of breaking up the "unsuitable" *modus vivendi*. Consistently through the 1920s and 30s, these agents of the state (very often female) were characterised as callous and indifferent to the feelings of the child, while their "institutions" – children's homes and orphanages – were only a short step away from the Victorian workhouse.

What is interesting, from a deconstructionist point of view, is not whether there was any substance to this caricature (although doubtless there was), but that it struck such a receptive chord with, as I've suggested, predominantly female audiences, who warmed to these saccharine pleas for more flexible policies on child-rearing. Seen in the light of our present culture, with its paranoid fixation on the phenomenon of paedophilia, something looks decidedly out of kilter in the plotting of all these weepy-cuddly kiddie vehicles, which is to say in other words that our culture has completed inverted its base assumptions (base in every sense). Surely, we can't have our eight-year olds raised by bachelor lighthouse keepers – who knows what might go on! Sara Haden, as the truant officer (the term "social worker" had not been coined yet), is the much-maligned heroine of the piece, surely? Such a reading of **"CAPTAIN JANUARY"** reveals much about the changing tides of social prejudices.

Temple was 8 in her seventeenth film, and getting orphaned on a regular basis. 1936 also saw her in **"POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL"**, **"DIMPLES"** and **"STOWAWAY"**. Jerry Tucker, an **OUR GANG** regular, was 9.

See the original 1924 Baby Peggy version, and subject index under **MUSIC / YOUNG MUSICIANS, ORPHANS / ADOPTION, SEAFARING** and **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS**.

