

Cheyenne Wildcat

US : 1944 : dir. Lesley Selander : Republic : 56 min
 prod: Sidney Picker : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Bobby Blake](#)
 Wild Bill Elliott; Alice Fleming; Peggy Stewart; Francis McDonald; Roy Bancroft; Tom London;
 Tom Chatterton; Kenne Duncan; Bud Geary; Rex Lease; Franklyn Farnum

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Republic poster art – curiously, the hero is the least well-defined of the four characters depicted. Elliott was the screen's second incarnation of the comic-strip character, and this the fourth of sixteen Red Ryder's he made

Source: *The Thrill of it All*

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"A knife-thrower is killing his victims in an unpleasant fashion. When Red Ryder comes to blows with him, he falls on his own weapon. This is an excellent episode from the series with Elliott as the Red Ryder. **½ "

Excerpt from a comprehensive survey of the Red Ryder films in **The Thrill of it All** ("A pictorial history of the B-Western from THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and other silent classics to the colour films of the genre's last days of glory in the 50s"):

"...William "Wild Bill" Elliott... had had a successful career for several years at Columbia where he made Westerns and serials that pleased most fans. Republic acquired his services and starred him with George "Gabby" Hayes in a series of eight exciting Western features in 1943 and 1944. Elliott was strictly playing himself, with all the gimmicks he had used at Columbia still very much in evidence, including his favourite tag line, "I'm a peaceable man, but..." which usually prefaced a slam-bang fight sequence. Republic decided that Elliott would do the Red Ryder character justice and immediately had him do eight features which were released between May 1944 and May 1945.

There are those who argue, and quite justifiably, that Elliott was not really playing Fred Harman's character but only himself, and that he completely changed the comic-strip image to reflect his own image (the reversible guns, the stylised shirt, etc.). The charge is quite true, but so what? As fans who looked only for action we really didn't care about the character's name or source as long as he delivered the necessary thrills and excitement, and Elliott did supply just what we wanted. So while the purists cried "fraud" and grumbled, many millions just enjoyed.

The series began with two films in which George "Gabby" Hayes was still Elliott's partner, **"TUCSON RAIDERS"** and **"MARSHALL OF RENO"**... **"THE SAN ANTONIO KID"**, a routine effort to be sure, followed but then came **"CHEYENNE WILDCAT"**, my favourite of the sixteen Elliott Ryders. In this film Red opposed the supreme villainy of Roy Barcroft, who went around murdering his victims with thrown knives. The film had four great fight sequences, and Barcroft was dispatched in

memorable fashion. During the finale, Red and Roy stage a massive brawl during which the latter throws a knife that misses Red and goes through a door panel, leaving the blade exposed. Naturally, at the end of the fight Roy is knocked against the door and killed by his own weapon. I can still see Barcroft standing silently against the door as Red wonders why his opponent has suddenly stopped throwing punches and is just staring open-eyed.

Another crowd-pleaser followed immediately with the title **"VIGILANTES OF DODGE CITY"**, in which Red did battle with LeRoy Mason and Hal Taliaferro, who were out to try and gain the Duchess's freight line. The Duchess was played by that fine character actress Alice Fleming in all sixteen of the Elliott films, and Ryder's constant sidekick, "Little Beaver", was played in all twenty-three features by Bobby Blake, who matured into an excellent actor in later years in such films as **"THE PURPLE GANG"**, **"IN COLD BLOOD"** and **"TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE"...**

Speelfilm Encyclopedie general note on the RED RYDER series:

"Fred Harmon cannot have suspected, when he began drawing his comic strip series, that his characters would one day be true idols with a public of millions. The comic was certainly popular and world famous. In our country the strip was published in *Robbedoes* weekly. Publishers Dupuis released seven comic book annuals on the market in the Netherlands.

Towards the end of the Thirties it was very "in" to convert popular comic strips into serials – a film in episodes, in other words. Comic strips like **"Flash Gordon"** and **"Buck Rogers"** were highly popular as serials. Republic saw a good thing in Red Ryder. In 1940 the studio produced the serial **"THE ADVENTURES OF RED RYDER"** in 12 episodes. Writers were William Witney and John English. For the role of Red Ryder actor Donald Barry was chosen, who initially resisted but subsequently established his name with the serial. Young Tommy Cook was "Little Beaver", Red Ryder's faithful indian comrade. Barry would thereafter always be credited as Don "Red" Barry, until he committed suicide in 1980.

Republic was convinced it could do good business with the comic book character, and so in 1944 began an ordinary series of Westerns.



*Yippee-ki-yay! It's rawhide time for the redskin boy again – **Little Beaver** gets a bad taste of white man's medicine from **Red Ryder**. The other boy, looking on with symptoms of schadenfreude, is not identified.*

Source: indeterminate

For the title role Bill Elliott was sought, who had moved to Republic from Columbia the year before. Elliott was the successor to William S Hart as regards acting style, and so decidedly not the Red Ryder of the comic strips. But the fans weren't interested in that. 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. Lane had played in many films since the end of the Thirties. He played the leads in various Western serials and had just made six Westerns for Republic. He was the perfect 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.

After seven episodes Lane moved to another, very good, Western series which would last

until 1953. He was known as "Rock" Lane. In 1949 four more Red Ryder films were made, this time by Eagle Lion, with Lewis Collins as director and Jerry Thomas as producer. Jim Bannon was Red Ryder, but he didn't go down well with Western fans. Don Kay "Little Brown Jug" Reynolds was Little Beaver. He was not an unappealing successor to Bobby Blake, but in most of the four films had nothing to do. The series died ignominiously in 1950.

The series was still to be heard on the radio, and TV took the comic book character under its wing in 1956. A 25-minute pilot film was made with Alan Lane in the title role and Louis Lettieri as Little Beaver. The pilot did not make a hit, and no series came of it. But for Western fans Red Ryder will always be a by-word."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Bobby Blake (earlier billed under his natural name of Mickey Gubitosi) was now 11, having started out in **Our Gang** shorts in 1936. He made 27 features between the ages of 11 and 14, most of them Westerns for this series, but also "**THE BIG NOISE**" (44), "**MEET THE PEOPLE**" (44), "**THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW**" (44), "**THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT**" (45), and in 1948 he had a brief but telling appearance (getting coffee thrown over him by Humphrey Bogart – and how many other boy actors could claim that?) in "**THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE**".

See **RED RYDER – GENERAL NOTE** for further comment and a list of the other titles, and subject index under **BOY SIDEKICKS** and **WESTERNS** .