

Dandy Dick

UK : 1935 : dir. William Beaudine : B.I.P / ABPC : 72 min
 prod: Walter Mycroft : scr: William Beaudine, Frank Miller, Clifford Grey & Will Hay
 : dir.ph.: Jack Parker

Johnny Singer; Eric Pavitt
 Will Hay; Nancy Burne; Esmond Knight; Davy Burnaby; Mignon O'Doherty

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Eric performs a feat of prestidigitation for Will Hay

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A country vicar becomes innocently involved with racehorse doping. Flatly-handled farce which helped to introduce Will Hay to the screen, though not in his accustomed role. Scr: William Beaudine, Frank Miller, Clifford Grey & Will Hay, from the play by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"The Pinero farce in a rather mouldy version but redeemed by Will Hay, perfectly cast as the vicar who surreptitiously has to bet on the steed of his horsey sister (Mignon O'Doherty). The juveniles are Esmond Knight and Nancy Burne. * "

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Pavitt:

“Eric was a dark, handsome boy who came from a theatrical family, both his parents and two sisters treading the boards. In **"STRIP, STRIP, HOORAY!"** he was with Freddie Bartholomew (nearly two years his junior) before the latter crossed the Atlantic to become Hollywood's little Englishman.

Probably his best part came in **"MY FRIEND THE KING"**, one of Michael Powell's very earliest films, which Powell also scripted. Eric played a sailor-suited boy king, befriended by a taxi driver (Jerry Verno). He also had leads in **"THE BELLS OF ST MARY'S"**, **"STAMBOUL"** and **"CHILDREN OF THE FOG"**, and scenes with Will Hay in **"DANDY DICK"**. More humbly, he was a member of the Buggins family in **"RADIO PARADE"**.

Until the war caught him up, Pavitt continued to appear in films such as **"THE LION HAS WINGS"** (39) and **"GESTAPO"** (40). He didn't persevere as an actor when it was over, but kept links with show business and ended his career as a location manager for Thames Television."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Singer:

“Johnny Singer's was a ubiquitous face in British films of the Thirties: often the cheeky office junior or bossy little page-boy who would get quick laughs when the plot was flagging. In **"TUDOR ROSE"** he has a split-second appearance on the edge of a crowd. He does nothing but throw his cap in the air and shout "Long live the Queen!" – but nearly every 1936 filmgoer in Britain would have recognised him with affection.

Sometimes, though – as in **"MY OLD DUTCH"**, **"SOMETHING ALWAYS HAPPENS"** or **"THIS GREEN HELL"** – he had a real leading role and grabbed it.

Johnny's first recorded public appearance was in miniature white tie and tails, winning a fancy dress competition and then conducting a brass band near Northampton. Two years later, he was billed at a Gala Novelty Dance in London as "Little John Singer of Kine-Variety and Talking Picture Fame, direct from the Criterion Restaurant... the World's Youngest Cabaret Star". He danced, he sang, he did impressions. He was also a famously quick learner of lines.

By the mid-Thirties he was regularly described as "the British Mickey Rooney", and in January 1940 he and Celia Lipton re-enacted the Rooney and Garland roles in a radio version of **"BABES IN ARMS"**. They also sang with the Henry Hall Band. By this time Johnny had appeared in about 100 films.

He continued to act, sometimes with the little Mancunian film company – taking the romantic lead in 1942 in **"SOMEWHERE IN CAMP"**. He was a sailor in **"IN WHICH WE SERVE"** (42) and in **"THE CRUEL SEA"** (53). But five years of war had intervened, in which – as a soldier – John Singer had taken part in the Allied invasion of Europe, done duty in Palestine, and been demobbed in 1947 with the rank of Captain.

It wasn't easy to build an acting career again, and in due course he turned to script-writing, notably (in partnership with John Warren) for the TV comedian Dick Emery, who also starred in the spin-off film **"OOH – YOU ARE AWFUL"** (72). After Warren's death, Singer's son Steven became his co-writer."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film 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. Hastings-born Johnny Singer was 11. Most of his hundred-plus titles are obscure now and some – **“JACK’S THE BOY”** (32), **“THE BERMONDSEY KID”** (33) – no doubt misleading. In 1935 he appeared in a British cover version of **“EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES”** after the successful 1931 German film, and in 1936 had an amusing cameo in Tod Slaughter’s **“SWEENEY TODD, THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET”** as a quailing orphan sent to work in Sweeney Todd’s barber shop, and dispatched next door to buy himself a meat pie whenever Todd had throat-cutting work to do. At the film’s climax, the young heroine of the story switches clothes with Johnny, intending to masquerade as a boy and rescue her sailor boyfriend from the killer’s clutches. A disconsolate Johnny is left sulking in her frock while she marches off – a very ample-hipped and bosomy “boy” – to land herself in mortal jeopardy.

Eric Pavitt was 13, having begun his career with **“THE BELLS OF St MARY’S”** in 1928, thus clearly not the Bing Crosby film. He made just over two dozen silents and early British talkies, also seldom seen today. His role in this Will Hay vehicle is only slight, apparently.

See **“GOOD MORNING BOYS”** (37) for a more typical Hay, and subject index under **COMEDY, HORSES & PONIES** and **RELIGION**.