

The Great Lover

US : 1949 : dir. Alexander Hall : Paramount / Hope Enterprises : 80 min
 prod: Edmund Beloin : scr: Edmund Beloin, Melville Shavelson & Jack Rose
 dir.ph.: Charles Lang

Richard Lyon; Gary Gray; Orley Lindgren
 Bob Hope; Rhonda Fleming; Roland Young; Roland Culver; George Reeves; Jim Backus

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Vintage Hope; Bob's a Boy Scout leader on ship filled with his troop, luscious Fleming, and murderer Young. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"On a transatlantic liner, a timid scoutmaster catches a strangler. Amusing suspense comedy, a good star vehicle. * "

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"Would you believe, Bob Hope? The great lover? He fancies himself as such, while a mass murderer (Roland Young) fancies him as his next victim. Hope is chaperoning some boy scouts on an ocean voyage, and they at least are "on" to our hero. Many are the complications (and very funny they are), which involve an impoverished grand duke (Roland Culver) and his daughter (Rhonda Fleming), not to mention a guest appearance by Jack Benny. *** "

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"Another of Hope's smooth comic performances in this typical funny Hope film filled with intrigue, beautiful women, and enough plot twists to make you dizzy. *** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Bob Hope on a ship with a bunch of boy scouts and Roland Young, murderer; Rhonda Fleming's the girl, Alexander Hall's the director. 3 "

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"This is top-notch Bob Hope. The story, as usual, is simple. While on a transatlantic steam ship, a timid Boy Scout leader romances lovely Rhonda Fleming and tracks down a strangler. Comedic suspense is well played. *** "

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Richard Lyon:

"As a four-year old London orphan, Richard was adopted by the American stars Ben Lyon and Bebe Daniels, who had made their home in Britain. (Ben, famous flier of "HELL'S ANGELS" in 1930, served with the Royal air Force during World War Two, and was later awarded the Order of the British Empire.) As soon as Richard was old enough, the Lyons began to involve him and his sister Barbara in their screen and radio work, and when he was sent to the USA during the war, the fine-boned boy got offers on his own merit.

His biggest role was in "THE TENDER YEARS", but his best-known one was as Irene Dunne's son in "ANNA AND THE KING OF SIAM". He was the homeless boy from the poster who gave moral courage to Dean Stockwell in "THE BOY WITH GREEN

HAIR", and the odious patrol-leader of Bob Hope's Boy Foresters in "**THE GREAT LOVER**"."

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** entry on Gary Gray:

"Anagrammatic Gary Gray's father, a businessman, let him do a little acting as a tot. He got picked as an extra for a Joan Crawford weepie, but everyone liked him so much he was given a few lines. He hardly stopped working in movies for the next dozen years, besides playing in several "little theater" stage productions. Gary was fair and blue-eyed, with an earnest, doggy expression. (In his early teens he frequently co-starred with dogs – Pal, Shep, Lassie, etc – when not playing a junior member of Raymond Walburn's family in the **HENRY** and **FATHER** comedies. But he managed to avoid most of the **RUSTY** series.) Though occasionally stropky and mischievous, as in "**RACHEL AND THE STRANGER**", he was almost invariably the Good Guy – brave, honest and loyal to the end..."

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** entry on Orley Lindgren:

"A child with an unforgettable face," 20th Century Fox called him in the pre-publicity for "**UNDER MY SKIN**". It was indeed the face, rather than vast temperament, that was his fortune. It was wide and thoughtful, with a short Scandinavian nose (he had Swedish parents) and some rather

chipped teeth; he had a passion for football. The expressiveness of the level grey eyes was striking; his voice was soft, gentle and low, a rare blessing in boy actors; and he moved with the grace of a wild pony.

He often appeared in the first reel of a film as the hero-as-a-boy. He was Bix Beiderbecke (alias Rick Martin) as a kid, discovering music; he was young John Ridd, scaling the great cliff to the high kingdom of the Doones; he was transmuted, variously, into Kirk Douglas, Richard Greene, Charlton Heston and Ben Johnson – the last being the only remotely suitable match. Because he was an "outdoor" boy with a certain air of stoicism, and good with horses, he fitted naturally into a Western context...

Orley's only other starring role was with Guy Madison and Andy Devine in "**Behind Southern Lines**", directed and produced (respectively) by former child stars Thomas Carr and Wesley Barry for the United Artists' TV series "**The Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok**"... "

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. As you see, only one or two established film guides are really dependable as reference works, the others have a fairly arbitrary selection policy. Scouting, from the 1940s on, seems only ever to have featured for comedy purposes in the cinema. This, and "**FOLLOW ME BOYS**", are typical representations of the scoutmaster and his (generally unlovely) brood. And I can count on the fingers of one kneecap the number of children's films depicting scouting as an exciting or absorbing hobby. America's summer camps, which by any objective standards are at least as naff and matronly, have received a far more favourable image from the movies – though again, almost invariably for comedy.

Bob Hope, at his best with rapid-patter self-deprecating humour, liberally sprinkled with topical in-jokes, does not seem the kind of comic who would work with kids very comfortably, and in fact he rarely did so. "**CRITIC'S CHOICE**" (63), for example, was one of his worst films, while "**THE SEVEN LITTLE FOYS**" (55) was as close as he ever came to a straight role.

Richard Lyon was 14, Gary Gray 13, and Orley Lindgren 10.

See subject index under **COMEDY, SCOUTS & SCOUTING** and **SEAFARING**.

