

The Happy Time

US : 1952 : dir. Richard Fleischer : Columbia : 94 min
 prod: : scr: Earl Felton : dir.ph.:
Bobby Driscoll
 Charles Boyer; Louis Jourdan; Marsha Hunt; Linda Christian; Kurt Kaszner; Marcel Dalio;
 Jeanette Nolan; Jack Raine; Richard Erdman

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	Ⓜ	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2612a	2.5	5	2	1,166	3	-	3	-	-	No	Unseen



Strange table manners in French Canada. Pictured L to R: Kurt Kaszner, Charles Boyer, Driscoll, Marsha Hunt and Louis Jourdan.
 Source: A Pictorial History of the Talkies

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Pleasant nostalgia dealing with everyday events in the life of a typical family, set in 1920s Canada. ****1/2**"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review - identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Domestic misadventures of a family of French Canadians during the twenties. Basically concerned with adolescent sexual stirrings, this very agreeable film has a light touch and is most deftly directed and acted. Writer: Earl Felton, from a play by Samuel A Taylor. *******"

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"A fine comedy about the ups and downs in the daily lives of an eccentric family headed by Charles Boyer. There's a French maid (Linda Christian) and a roué uncle (Louis

Jourdan) and many others to make you laugh.
***1/2 ”

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

“A pleasant situation comedy concerning the day-to-day lives of a French Canadian family in the 1920s. Boyer is appealing as the father of this oddball group, who are involved in various comic interpersonal relationships. Jourdan plays an uncle. It’s smartly directed by Richard Fleischer, with effective performances all around. Others in the cast include Bobby Driscoll, Linda Christian and Marsha Hunt. *** ”

Arild’s Movie Spanking List comment:

“Poor little Bobby Driscoll was spanked in nearly all his movies¹. In this one, his mother wants him to continue wearing short pants, even though he is reaching puberty. Later in the film, at his mother’s insistence, his father, played by Charles Boyer, bends him over his knees and spanks him with his open hand...”

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "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"]

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Driscoll:

“Bobby Driscoll, finally one of the most tragic of screen children, seemed to have everything going for him. He was pleasant-looking, alert, plucky, intelligent, with a sense of humour and great acting talent. He had all the chances a kid actor could have wished, and took them beautifully. And his was a face the camera loved, alive with fleeting shadows and nuances.

His mother, born Isabella Kretz, was a school-teacher. His father, Cletus Driscoll, was a roofing contractor whose sinus trouble caused him to move from Iowa to California in search of warmth and sunshine. A friend in Pasadena, where they came to live in 1942, arranged for Bobby to attend a studio audition,

and he was given a tiny part in "**LOST ANGEL**". Even this was enough for people to notice something fresh and special about him, and he was signed up by 20th-Century Fox.



Boyer with Linda Christian

Source: *Rating the Movies*

His early films included "**IDENTITY UNKNOWN**", a title that was to prove ominous. He went on to win Critics' Awards for his performances in "**SONG OF THE SOUTH**" (a semi-animated Disney, based on the "Uncle Remus" stories), "**SO DEAR TO MY HEART**" (boy and black lamb) and "**THE WINDOW**" (cry-wolf tale of a child who witnesses a murder but is not believed) - all these made before he was twelve. He was equally endearing in grubby denims or in velvet and lace.

He went on to play Jim Hawkins to the legendary, eye-rolling Long John Silver of Robert Newton, though this was one of his less interesting efforts, perhaps cowed by the magnificent ham of his companion. And, at 15, he was the voice of Disney's "**PETER PAN**".

In his mid teens, Driscoll was still a handsome fellow, but the ground was crumbling under his feet. Suddenly Walt Disney had no further plans for him, nor did anyone else. For the next five years the only job he got was in a Colonial-period piece called "**THE SCARLET COAT**" (55). In 1956 he got married - and was arrested on a narcotics charge, which was to be the first of many. In 1958 came his last movie, a teenage gang melodrama called "**THE PARTY CRASHERS**". His lead in this mediocre affair wasn't among his happiest.

The year after, Bobby was jailed as a heroin addict. Then came a curious incident with a handgun, a robbery charge, and a six-month jail sentence for drugs and forgery. In his

¹ A ridiculous overstatement.

statement to the court he said he had been experimenting with drugs since he was 17, and at the time had the money to pay for it. Now he was hooked and broke.

The last five years of Bobby Driscoll's life are a sad blur of addiction, mostly spent in hippie circles of New York's Lower East Side. His family and friends lost sight of him for ever. In March 1968 a young man's body was found by some children playing in an empty tenement. There was no identification, but there were needle marks and there were "certain sub-stances" in what was left of the bloodstream. The body went into a pauper's grave.

When, a year or so later, Bobby's mother renewed her appeals to the FBI to find her missing son, the unidentified man's fingerprints were among those compared with Bobby's. They were a perfect match, and so the mystery was solved - just after his father's death."

[Bobby Driscoll](#) was 15 now, with as many features under his belt, but as Holmstrom's account makes plain, the happy times were behind him already. Director Lloyd Bacon, who had coached him for his role, aged 6, in "**THE SULLIVANS**" called him "the greatest child find since Jackie Cooper played '**SKIPPY**' ". Zenyth of his career was "**THE WINDOW**" (49), for which he was awarded a special Oscar. The giddy plummet from child stardom, via the courts and prison, to a squalid anonymous death at the age of 30, was a trajectory mirrored, if never quite so tragically, by other child stars before and since. It's hard not to conclude that what Bobby lacked was solid adult companionship and guidance during the critical twilight years of his career, a steadying influence that might have cushioned his fall from fame. As for the claim that he was spanked practically every time he set foot before a camera, it's true he had his britches dusted the year before in "**WHEN I GROW UP**", but I'm not aware of a single other instance.

See subject index under **COMEDY**.