

The Seven Little Foys

US : 1955 : dir. Melville Shavelson : Hope Enterprises / Paramount : 95 min
 prod: Jack Rose : scr: Melville Shavelson & Jack Rose : dir.ph.: John F Warren
*Billy Gray; Lee Erickson; Paul De Rolf; Lydia Reed; Linda Bennett; Jimmy Baird;
 Tommy Duran; Jerry Mathers*
 Bob Hope; Milly Vitale; George Tobias; James Cagney; Angela Clarke; Herbert Heyes;
 Richard Shannon

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	≠	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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A hackneyed pun once in a while won't hurt you, so – Bob Hope gets to the bottom of Lee Erickson for drinking off-duty. Billy Gray watches the ceremony and reflects on the sins of parenthood. Source: indeterminate website

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Pleasant biography of vaudevillean Eddie Foy and his performing family. Hope lively in lead role. Cagney guests as George M Cohan: their table-top dance duet is the movie's high point. Shot in Vista-Vision. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review

"The story of a family vaudeville act. Routine showbiz biopic, a little heavy on the syrup. Academy Award nomination: Best Script. * "

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"This attempt by Bob Hope to play a more challenging role lands him in real trouble. He plays the vaudeville comic Eddie Foy, whose treatment of his children (and others) shows him to have been a nasty lot: but since Hope would not or could not play that, the family conflicts come out laundered as the usual sentimental showbiz tale. Milly Vitale is his wife and George Tobias his agent; James Cagney does a cameo as George M Cohan. **"

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Hope is a bit more reserved in this story about the real-life vaudeville family known as the Singing and Dancing Foyes. Good production numbers and a guest appearance by James Cagney as George M Cohan. *** "

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

"Hope stars in this spirited musical biography of vaudevillean Eddie Foy and his family of performers. Hope is well suited to his role; he began his career as a song-and-dance man in vaudeville. He's aided by above-average production numbers and James Cagney's guest appearance as George M Cohan. Herbert Heyes and Angela Clark also star. Academy Award nomination - Shavelson and Jack Rose, story and screenplay. *** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Bob Hope v. James Cagney dance sequence (Hope wins tap, Cagney soft-shoe shuffle) is best thing in Mel Shavelson-directed showbiz biography of comedian with large family. 3 "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"Based on a true story, this musical-whimsical-sentimental look at the life of renowned vaudeville performer Eddie Foy cramps Bob Hope's style by casting him in an unsympathetic and uncomic role. It's left to James Cagney, recreating his Oscar-winning role from "YANKEE DOODLE DANDY" of song-and-dance man George M Cohan, to steal the show. Together he and Hope hoof their way through "Mary's a Grand Old Dame" and "Yankee

Doodle Dandy" and momentarily the screen lights up. *** "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Bob Hope abandons the buffoon to go straight actor in biopicturing Eddie Foy, song-and-dance man of the vaudeville age. From the opening when Foy vows he will always remain a single, professionally and maritally, even an audience unfamiliar with his life will know it won't be long. It isn't, and Milly Vitale, Italian film actress who does a fine job of portraying the Italian ballerina who marries Foy, is reason enough for him to change his mind. Their hit-and-miss life together is told with heart in the performances of Hope and Vitale. A standout sequence is the appearance of James Cagney as George M Cohan, a characterisation he created with 1942 Academy Award-winning success in "YANKEE DOODLE DANDY". He and Hope, in a Friars Club scene, toss the Shavelson-Rose lines back and forth for sock results and then turn in some mighty slick hoofing."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Deftly tailored to Bob Hope, this biography of famed vaudevillean Eddie Foy and his performing offspring is gag-filled entertainment until death makes him a widower at odds with his talented brood. A classic scene with James Cagney as George M Cohan has Hope dancing on a tabletop. All's well that ends well - in church! *** "

The Virgin Film Guide review:

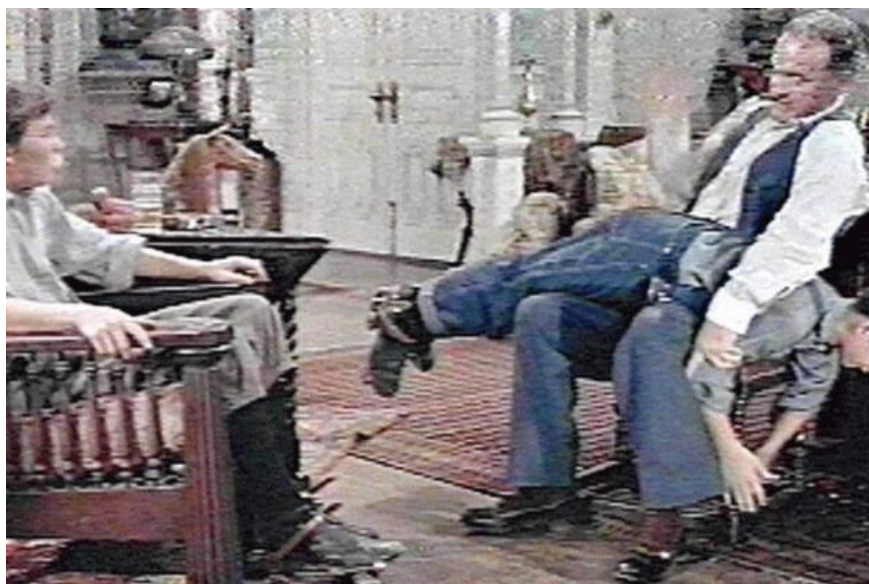
"Funny and heartwarming, though a little on the cute side, this engaging musical biography of vaudevillean Eddie Foy Sr features a socko cameo by multitalented James Cagney, reprising his Oscar-winning role as George M Cohan. Bob Hope plays Foy, who declares that he'll always do a "single", both onstage and in life, but who, in short order, is married and has seven kids. When his wife (Milly Vitale) dies, Foy has problems adjusting to single parenthood, but before long the kids are not only in the act, but stealing the show."

With Eddie Jr., Foy's real-life son, doing the narrating, we are taken through the various

episodes of the family's life. The highlight of the film comes at a Friars Club dinner for Foy, when he and his great pal Cohan get on stage,

throw some fast and furious jokes back and forth, and wind up in a splendid dance routine. Cagney reportedly did the role for no pay,





even though he and Hope rehearsed their dancing for 10 days. Melville Shavelson (making his directorial debut) and Jack Rose were Oscar-nominated for the script. A must see for Hope and Cagney fans. ***½ ”

Cast

Eddie Foy.....Bob Hope
Madeleine Morando.....Milly Vitale
Barney Green.....George Tobias
Clara..... Angela Clarke
Judge.....Herbert Heyes
Stage Manager.....Richard Shannon
Brynie.....Billy Gray
Charley.....Lee Erickson
Richard Foy.....Paul De Rolf
Mary Foy.....Lydia Reed
? ? ? Jerry Mathers

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide" or "The Time Out Film Guide"]

Radio Times note:

“Heartwarming biopic about the vaudevillean actor Eddie Foy’s family. Bob Hope, Milly Vitale.”

What’s On TV review:

“Bob Hope encourages his wife and seven kids to follow him on to the stage in this showbiz biopic. Easily the best reason for watching this is the table-top dance sequence with Hope and James Cagney. 33”

“The true story of one of America’s most famous showbusiness families – vaudevillean Eddie Foy and his seven children.”

Daily Mirror note:

“Sugary showbiz biopic with Bob Hope as vaudeville comic Eddie Foy. ** ”

No further information currently available. Thirteen sources quoted and not one of them mentions any of the titular “**SEVEN LITTLE FOYS**” by name. “..Before long the kids are not only in the act, but stealing the show” says the *Virgin* critic, but you’d hardly think it, to read these reviews. An old warhorse like Hope was not about to let himself be upstaged too easily, and perhaps that’s why I remember so little of the film. His occasional films with kids (“**THE GREAT LOVER**” for instance) were not his best work.

The colour frame grabs overleaf are from *The Movie & TV Spanking Page*, which understandably is not very concerned with Hope’s table-top duet with Jimmy Cagney. The spanking in question was well-deserved, and certainly not intended to show Cohan as a hard father. As to why Hope might have chosen to tone down any distasteful elements of his lead character, one can well imagine Foy was someone he admired professionally and certain of Hope’s own celebrity confreres were known to be rather harsh on their children, away from the public gaze, so that might have been a factor in the calculation too. People with friends in glass houses also do not throw stones.

Director Shavelson later made the romantic comedy “**HOUSEBOAT**” (58), with Cary Grant and Sophia Loren rather more content to share the screen with cutesy brood Paul Petersen, Charles Herbert and Mimi Gibson. Of the boys identified in this film, Billy Gray (“**THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**”, “**ON MOONLIGHT BAY**”) was 17 now and past the prime of his career, while Jerry Mathers, 6, had yet to become a household name in the US as TV’s “**Leave it to Beaver**” (1957 onwards). None of the four other boys are listed in *The Moving Picture Boy*. Nothing else is known of them, or of Lydia Reed and Linda Bennett.

See also "**YANKEE DOODLE DANDY**" (with Douglas Croft doing a nice but all-too-brief turn as the boyhood Cohan, and gosh yes, *more spanking!*) and see subject index under **CHILD PERFORMERS, LARGE BROODS, MUSICALS** and **THEATRE / VAUDEVILLE**. Bio-pics have not been added as a separate category in the subject index, since CHILDHOODS OF THE FAMOUS will cover most relevant titles, and TV "bio-pics" seem to be made these days of anyone who has their names in the tabloids for two days running. "**SPARTACUS**" and "**BEN-HUR**" are bio-pics, if one wants to be pedantic about it, so the label has become too loose to be meaningful.