

Skippy

US : 1931 : dir. Norman Taurog : Paramount : 88 min
 prod: : scr: Joseph L Mankiewicz, Norman Z McLeod, Don Marquis,
 Percy Crosby & Sam Minz : dir.ph.: Karl Struss
Jackie Cooper; Robert Coogan; Mitzi Green; Jackie Searl; Douglas Haig; Donald Haines
 Willard Robertson; Enid Bennett; Helen Jerome Eddy; Jack Clifford; Guy Oliver

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	¢	M	Ⓜ	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Three seasoned troupers in a gurning match – Cooper, Mitzi Green, Jackie Searl. (You don't know what "gurning" is? Well goodness me...)
 Source: *Those Endearing Young Charms*

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 1996 review:

"Classic children's film from Percy Crosby's comic strip, following the misadventures of Cooper, the local health inspector's son, and Coogan, the poor ragamuffin from Shantytown,

as they try to scrape up three dollars for a dog license. Simple and dated, but with timeless innocent charm. Taurog (Cooper's uncle) won the Best Director Oscar. Followed by a sequel: "SOOKY". *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Jackie Cooper plays an important rôle for the first time here as a character from Perry Crosby's comic strip, namely Skippy. ** "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"The young son of a local health inspector makes friends in the slums. Standard, blameless family entertainment. Scr: Joseph L Mankiewicz & Norman McLeod, from the comic strip by Percy Crosby. Academy Award: Norman Taurog; nominations: Best Picture; Best Script; Jackie Cooper * "

"A great kid talker, but not for kids only... if there is such a thing as being 100% inhuman, only then is it impossible for anyone to dislike "SKIPPY" as entertainment" - *Variety*

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"Appealing nine-year old imp Cooper played his first major role in this film about Percy Crosby's comic strip character, the mischievous Skippy. **1/2 "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"All credit to the kid players, director Norman Taurog, and the adaptors for taking Percy Crosby's newspaper comic strip (co-written with Sam Mintz) and making it readable and moving in scenario form. When Skippy (Jackie Cooper) is so sorely depressed over the death of his poor kid-pal's dog, he turns down supper and goes up to his bed to cry. The two kids had tried so hard to dig up the coin for his release from the moronic dogcatcher's pound.

To get the \$3 for the license they tried everything from staging a show and running out on the musicians after promoting a buck from Mitzi Green to let her play the lead, to selling lemonade for a cent a drink. When Skippy's father gives him the promised bike to ease his sorrow, Skippy trades it for Mitzi's dog. Sooky (Robert Coogan) already had gotten a new mutt meanwhile, making it a bad deal for Skippy, but Skippy's father makes the ending happy.

Cooper's playing could not be improved upon. He does everything well, never camera conscious and never suggesting it's only a picture. The small and young Coogan boy is cute in every sense. His voice jibes with his looks and manner so well it makes him doubly cute. In contributing some valuable "heavy" aid to this talker, Jackie Searl plays his boyish assignment as well as John Barrymore ever played a lover. Oscar 1930/31: Best Director;



nomination: Best Picture."

Jackie, where did you get that HAT?

Source: indeterminate website

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"A charming children's picture that doesn't neglect adults, "SKIPPY" was good enough to merit Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Story, and for Jackie Cooper as Best Actor. Based on a comic strip by Percy Crosby, it's a simple, adorable tale of boys and girls and their dogs. When a dog belonging to Sooky Wayne (Robert Coogan, younger brother of Jackie Coogan) is captured by the local dogcatcher, Sooky and his friend Skippy Skinner (Jackie Cooper) try to raise money to buy a license for the pooch. In order to get the necessary \$3, they try everything. One of their plans is to stage a show, for which they sell tickets, lemonade, etc. They also try smashing



Skippy's unbreakable bank by putting it under the wheels of a truck. There are many

wonderful moments in the picture, and watching Cooper cry is worth the price of

"...watching Cooper cry is worth the price of admission"

Source: A Pictorial History of the Talkies

admission. There have been few child actors who have been as convincing as he could be. The sequel was "SOOKY". Scr: Joseph L Mankiewicz, Norman Z McLeod, Don Marquis,

Percy Crosby & Sam Mintz, based on the comic strip by Crosby. ***1/2 "

A Pictorial Guide to the Talkies note:

"1931: The popularity of the talkies continued to increase. Eighty-three percent of the theatres in the United States were equipped for sound. England was not far behind with 75 percent. **"CIMARRON"**, directed by Wesley Ruggles, was voted an Academy Award as the best picture of the year. Other award winners were... Wallace Beery for his acting in [**"THE CHAMP"**]; and Norman Taurog for his direction of **"SKIPPY"**, which made a star of Jackie Cooper."

Those Endearing Young Charms caption:

"Jackie had the title role in this screen adaptation that told of the hero's fund-raising drive to help retrieve his best friend's dog from the pound. Based on Percy Crosby's newspaper cartoon strip."

Excerpt from **Those Endearing Young Charms** entry on Cooper:

"...In 1929 Jackie took part in **"THE FOX MOVIE TONE FOLLIES"** when his mother, who was a secretary at the Fox Film Company, added his name to the list of children who were to be called for the shorts. After his appearances in a few more **OUR GANG** comedies, he landed his first big role in the movie **"SKIPPY"**, which reunited him with his uncle and, more importantly, won him an Academy Award nomination..."

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** entry on Cooper:

"...In 1929 he graduated to feature films (not his uncle's) and also became a leading member of **OUR GANG**, with whom he remained till 1931 and his break into the big time with **"SKIPPY"** and its sequel, **"SOOKY"**. Both were directed by Taurog, and both also featured Jackie Coogan's kid brother Robert. Between them came **"THE CHAMP"**, directed by King Vidor. **"SKIPPY"**, which won Cooper an Academy Award nomination, was a huge popular hit, and until the mid-Thirties he was big box-office - in fact he and Shirley Temple were to be the screen's last child superstars. No later child has approached their universal acclaim.

Unlike Temple, Cooper had neither beauty of face nor of voice. He achieved what he did solely through personality and talent. His tough, vehement ten-year-old manner was endearingly comic, and when he jerked the tears (as he was doing even, now and then, with **OUR GANG**) he did so with genuine pathos and a certain tact - not the maudlin barnstorming which Rooney would sometimes lay on. With an "Aw, gee..." the defiant face would begin to melt, the lower lip stick out still further, and he would weep like a man. The world wept with him..."

They Had Faces Then - Superstars, Stars and Starlets of the 1930's entry on Mitzi Green:

" "I got a secret!" chortled Mitzi Green in **"HONEY"**, as a demonic youngster, forever snooping and selling. Young Miss Green - or Little Mitzi, as she was originally billed - was a Dutch-bobbed dumpling with a brattish manner. She was also adept at imitations - George Arliss, Maurice Chevalier and Helen Kane being among the staples of her repertoire. She romped through pictures like **"FORBIDDEN ADVENTURE"** and **"FINN AND HATTIE"**, playing to the hilt her role of enfant terrible.

She was more conventionally cast in **"SKIPPY"** and **"SOOKY"** and as Becky Thatcher in **"TOM SAWYER"** and **"HUCKLEBERRY FINN"**, but she helped things along there, too. She was also **"LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE"** - the picture was even worse than the comic strip, but Mitzi played it with as much glee as possible. Then she began to grow up and, except for her impersonations in **"TRANSATLANTIC MERRY-GO-ROUND"** (her scenes were cut before general release), she was finished on the screen. But before the Thirties were over she came back strong as the former kid movie star in Broadway's **"Babes in Arms"**. Too bad she didn't have a chance to repeat in the movie version."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Coogan:

"More than a decade after Jackie Coogan's first screen triumphs, his kid brother Robert Anthony, in a **"KID"**-style cloth cap, was given the role of a cute little pest in Jackie Cooper's **"SKIPPY"**, and again in **"SOOKY"**. Everyone - that is to say the rasher critics - prophesied that

he would be greater than his brother. In spite of two more films the following year, he definitely wasn't. Eventually Robert Coogan reappeared, with some other ex-kid stars like Spanky McFarland, in **"JOHNNY DOUGHBOY"** (42), and later in some of the **BOWERY BOYS** and **JOE PALOOKA** films. After **"THIRD OF A MAN"** (63) he did little more screen work."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995" or "Video Movie Guide 1993"]

Several reviewers describe this as a children's film, but I doubt that it fits the archive's criteria of that category, ie: it was not made specifically for a child audience, but rather for a family one. *Variety* says one would have to be inhuman not to be entertained by it (a bold claim). How come then it has never been seen – so far as I'm aware – on British television? Dated musicals, comedies, romances and Westerns are televised frequently enough. Why not this, which was evidently more highly regarded in its own day?

"SKIPPY" is a unique instance of a child (Cooper was 10 at the time) being nominated for the Best Actor Oscar, although Justin Henry was nominated as Best Supporting Actor for **"KRAMER vs KRAMER"** (79). Anna Paquin's receipt of Best Supporting Actress for **"THE PIANO"** (93) was something that Jodie Foster never enjoyed with all her powerful child roles. More usually, as with Claude Jarman Jr for **"THE YEARLING"** (46), or Bobby Driscoll for **"THE WINDOW"** (49), a "special" midget Oscar was handed out, while Shirley Temple (preposterously) received what amounted to a "lifetime achievement" award at the age of 6. Most of the genuine tours de force by child actors have received scant acknowledgement from the Academy Awards, which are as much of a glitter-bag lottery today as they ever were.

Jackie Searl and Mitzi Green were 11, and both of these, like Cooper, appear elsewhere in dozens of archive entries, so let us spare a word here for Robert Coogan, whose parents seemed resolved to exploit him as callously as they had done his elder brother, living high off the hog on the earnings of their children. Robert of course had the thankless task of following an unfollowable act – Jackie at his peak had been a major world star, rapturously received on his tour of Europe as much as in the States, but the advent of sound had made the cinema more parochial, and talent or no, he had little prospect of emulating his brother's fame. Here just 7, his only other films of note (discounting the sequel, **"SOOKY"**, in which he played the lead) were **"THE MIRACLE MAN"** and **"SKY BRIDE"**, both in '32. He died in 1978.

Donald Haines, another **OUR GANG** alumnus, was 13. In the '20s he had his own series of short comedies as **"SMITTY"**, and was seen later in **"WHEN A FELLER NEEDS A FRIEND"** (32, again with Cooper), **"LITTLE MAN, WHAT NOW?"** (34) and **"NO GREATER GLORY"** (34). Douglas Haig, evidently an ambitious little tyke, embarked single-mindedly on his career at the age of 2. Now 11, his films included **"DYNAMITE'S DAUGHTER"** (25), **"SINS OF THE FATHERS"** (28) and **"THAT'S MY BOY"** (33).

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