

Bobby Henrey

Titles: 2 Sources: 4 Stills: 3

Born: Villers-sur-Mer, Calvados, France; June 26th 1939

Son of author Robert Henrey, who wrote a book on the shooting of "THE FALLEN IDOL" - "A Film Star in Belgrave Square", with on-set stills of cast and crew [pub: Peter Davies 1948; 186pp]



*Pucker blond cherub avec snake in **The Fallen Idol***

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"British child actor, notable in "**THE FALLEN IDOL**". He retired after "**THE WONDER KID**"."

Hollywood-London Film Parade 1949 article:

"Bobby Henrey is a short, round little boy with a mop of fair hair falling over one eye. He is nine years old and already he is a film star. A star on the strength of one picture- "**THE FALLEN IDOL**". I met Bobby when he was

making that film and for hours I watched him as he threw paper darts around the set; played hop-scotch on the squared floor and then dashed out into the fresh air to have some more games with his toy train. Filming for Bobby was just one long game. It was a game which, because of the skill of Carol Reed who directed the picture, ended in fame and a £30,000 contract for four more pictures.

Bobby was born just before the war on his mother's farm at Villers-sur-Mer in the Calvados district of France. He was born



Kidnapped musical prodigy in **The Wonder Kid**
Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

during a thunderstorm, and somehow that has been symbolic of his life. When the Germans advanced during the war, the family fled to the coast. German planes tried to bomb the ship which brought them across the channel.

After the war he returned to France, but in England he had left a photograph. That picture of the little Bobby - still with hair falling over one eye - was used in a book. The men who were casting the parts for "**THE FALLEN IDOL**" saw the picture, sent for the boy. When they told him he was famous and a star after one film, Bobby Henrey was quite unimpressed. Then he got down to his stamp collection again and his manufacture of paper boats. He is an expert at that.¹

Picturegoer Film Annual 1949 comment:

"During 1948 two major child discoveries were made. One was John Howard Davies, the Oliver of "**OLIVER TWIST**", the other Bobby Henrey of "**THE FALLEN IDOL**". Both these boys are sensitive actors inasmuch as they accept direction readily and can produce just that little more expression than the director has dared to hope for... Henrey, half French, is more highly strung and is not quite so easily handled as young Davies². But his very sensitive, wistful performance makes

one hope to see more of his work as soon as possible... The success of these two boys - as actors and not simply as child stars - is proof of the fact that there is ample juvenile talent in Britain... A relaxing of the official attitude to children in film studios - and that is liable to happen in the near future - would enable Britain to produce films with a strong child interest that would rival anything that Hollywood can present."

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"Bobby, son of the novelist Mrs Robert Henrey, was spotted by an acute studio scout in a photo on the dust-jacket of one of his mother's books. They were looking for a posh but innocent child to play the French diplomat's son in Graham Greene's story "**THE FALLEN IDOL**", and this lordly hamster of a boy proved, on interview, to be ideal.

With a bleary but obstinate air, civil manners and a trace of French accent, little Henrey was great in Carol Reed's near-perfect comedy thriller - whether communing with his grass snake McGregor or (after the latter's regrettable demise) ganging up against its executioner, Mrs Baines. He forms a rewarding alliance with her forgivably adulterous husband (Ralph Richardson, wonderfully and uncharacteristically subdued), and his increasingly frantic, counter-productive attempts to shield Baines, suspected by the police of killing his wife, are magnificent.

The pompous little voice calling "Baines! Baines!" in the marbled caverns of the embassy is one of the cinema's most memorable child sounds. And no one could have delivered with more exquisite boredom the line (on seeing Michele Morgan, as Richardson's girl friend): "Oh look, there's your niece again."

That it was, however, a one-off performance was cruelly demonstrated two or three years later when Bobby was cast as a musical prodigy in *Mittel-Europa*. Plumper than before, burdened with Tyrolean-style dress, an atrocious hair-do, and script and direction as far beneath Greene and Reed as could be imagined, the poor little chap looked terrible and acted likewise."

¹ *patronising twaddle!*

² *equating boys with horses...*



Source: *Film Illustrated Monthly* 4/11

FILMOGRAPHY				
	Year	Age	Title	Role
deb	48	9	THE FALLEN IDOL	in central role, Felipe
	50	11	THE WONDER KID	in title role