

Mickey Rooney

Titles: 0 Sources: 0 Stills: 10+

aka: Mickey McGuire
Born: Joe Yule



The leprechaun ancestry all too evident. A publicity shot, age 5 *Source: The Silents Majority website*
Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

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The Moving Picture Boy entry:

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50 Years of the Movies profile:

“...In 1939 [Shirley Temple] had switched from 20th Century-Fox to MGM, who announced that one of her forthcoming films would be **"BABES ON BROADWAY"**, sharing star billing with two of Metro's brightest young talents – Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney. It never happened but it would have been fascinating to see Temple and Rooney trying to charm each other off the screen.

In many respects Rooney was the male equivalent of Shirley Temple. He too started young in films – he made his first, a silent, at the age of six in 1926, but his rise to stardom was not as meteoric. Until 1933 he was known as Mickey McGuire, the name of a character in a series of shorts in which he featured. When the McGuire series ended, he had to find a new handle. Rejecting his own – Joe Yule – he settled on Rooney and into a steady career as juvenile support in numerous movies, although his interpretation of Puck in **"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"** (35) was well received.

In 1937 he played opposite another child star, Freddie Bartholomew, in **"LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY"**, and the teaming was so successful that they were put together again that year in **"CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS"**, for which the star, Spencer Tracy, won a deserved Oscar. (It seems Rooney brought Tracy luck: in 1938 they appeared together again, in **"BOYS' TOWN"**, for which Tracy got his second Academy Award.) In the meantime, Rooney had appeared in a gentle small-town story, **"A FAMILY AFFAIR"** (37), as the son of Judge Hardy. This was a prototype "family" film that idealised the virtues of Mom, Pop and apple pie. It was not a huge success but Louis Mayer decided that it was the sort of film MGM ought to make and the sort the great American public **ought** to flock to see. (Eventually Hollywood agreed and presented the **Hardy Family** series with a Special Oscar for "furthering the American way of life".)

"YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG ONCE" appeared in 1938 with Lewis Stone taking over the part of lovable, understanding Judge Hardy from

Lionel Barrymore. The series was established and continued with **"JUDGE HARDY'S CHILDREN"**, **"LOVE FINDS ANDY HARDY"** (both 38, the love interest being Judy Garland) and then on and on. Altogether 15 were made and the Hardys became the best-loved family in the States.

The series only showed one side of Rooney. He could sing, he could dance, he could play musical instruments, and he could do impressions. He did all with a bouncing, rather aggressive, self-confidence which probably found its best expression in **"BABES IN ARMS"** (39), in which he and Judy Garland played a couple of kids who decide to put on a show. It was a rather hackneyed theme but they put it across with such verve and dazzle that they knocked the cobwebs clean off it. You don't break up a winning formula and MGM poured all its expertise into three more vehicles to showcase their youngsters - **"STRIKE UP THE BAND"** (40), **"BABES ON BROADWAY"** (41) and **"GIRL CRAZY"** (43). By the mid-Forties there were few more popular or highly-paid stars than this pair, both of whom were old pros and barely into their twenties!

And both were faced with the problem encountered by other child stars - growing into adult actors. Rooney's lack of stature and cherubic features made this doubly difficult. There were few parts that could match both his talents and his seemingly endless adolescence. In later years he also developed a weight problem which made casting even more difficult. Apart from good roles in **"THE BOLD AND THE BRAVE"** (56) and **"BABY FACE NELSON"** (57), he was mostly relegated to guest shots and character cameos in other people's films."

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
19		DADDY LONG LEGS	
19		THE UNPARDONABLE SIN with <i>Bobby Connelly</i>	"George Washington Sticker"
20-22		RAGS TO RICHES	(first film for Warner Bros)
20-22		SCHOOL DAYS	
21		BOB HAMPTON OF PLACER	
22		PENROD with <i>Gordon Griffith, Clara Horton, Sunshine Sammy Morrison, Florence Morrison</i>	title role
23		THE COUNTRY KID with <i>"Spec" O'Donnell, Bruce Guerin</i>	
23		THE PRINTER'S DEVIL	
23		HEROES OF THE STREET with <i>Joe Butterworth</i>	
24		GEORGE WASHINGTON, Jr	