

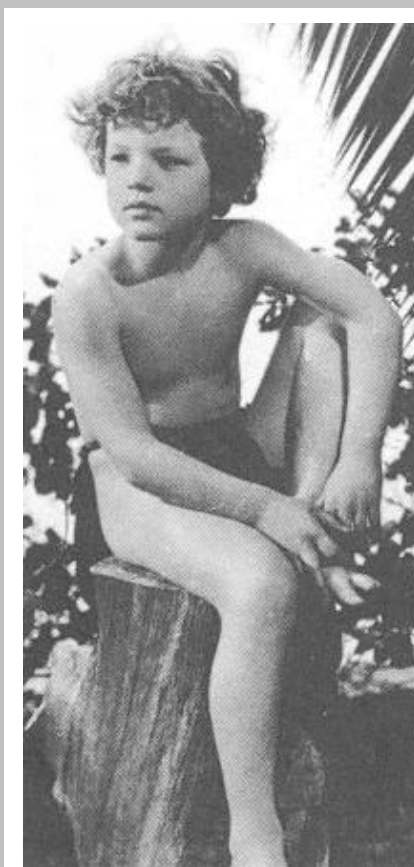
Johnny Sheffield

Titles: 19 Sources: 4 Stills: 58

Born: Pasadena, California, April 11th 1931 [or 1932 - sources conflict]
Son of actor Reginald Sheffield. Older brother of Bill Sheffield (qv)
Educated: U.C.L.A

The **Bomba** titles are, perhaps mercifully, never seen today, much less his earlier non-**TARZAN** titles for RKO, so a modern audience is left to judge Sheffield's talent solely on the strength of his performances as Boy. Boy was the immaculate conception, literally dropped from the skies into the laps of Tarzan and Jane who, not being properly married, could not be shown to have copulated in their treehouse-of-sin. In all but one or two of the films - "**TARZAN'S SECRET TREASURE**" for example - Boy was given scant function in the proceedings beyond compelling Tarzan to rescue him from the clutches of evil white men, evil natives, or evil giant spiders. Like Jane (the little woman of the apes) he was scarcely more than an onlooker from the sidelines of the action, rather than a partner in derring-do such as Batman's Robin. He was a family values credit for the jungle man, and a focus for boys in the matinee audiences to identify with.

Sheffield was a bonny boy if little else, a rambunctious tyke whose giggle was as overworked as Cheetah's. For the most part the scripts offered scant distinction between the two: Boy and chimpanzee would be seen gambolling together in the opening and closing scenes of domestic jungle bliss. He was however a first rate swimmer (Weissmuller himself was an Olympic class swimmer, which is why those protracted underwater sequences were written in) and he had the kind of robust figure that looked well in a tiny serviette. As Boy grew older, his serviette grew larger, and the lack of any meaningful role made him seem more and more superfluous, so the character of Boy was never resuscitated in post-Weissmuller **Tarzans**.



Still source: A Pictorial History of the Talkies

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"American boy actor of the thirties, especially in the **TARZAN** and later the **BOMBA** series."

Those Endearing Young Charms entry:

"Blue eyes, tawny blond hair. Johnny was the son of the English-born actor Reginald Sheffield, who starred in the 1923 silent version of the classic film "**DAVID COPPERFIELD**". His mother, Louise Sheffield, was a lecturer, book reviewer and playwright. He was a direct descendent of



Sheffield avec togs in **Little Orvie** (40)

Source: *Those Endearing Young Charms* the

Benjamin Franklin on his mother's side and was the great-great-grandson of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham and the builder of Buckingham palace.

In 1938 Johnny received his first professional role. It came in the original road company version of "On Borrowed Time", and he had the distinction of acting in the most prolonged child's script ever written into a play until then. With this role under his belt, Johnny easily won the attention of Hollywood scouts who signed him for the role of Boy in the **Tarzan** films. After his initial performance in "**TARZAN FINDS A SON**", RKO enlisted Johnny to a five-year contract starring him first in "**LITTLE ORVIE**".

When Johnny won the right to play Boy, Tarzan's son, it marked a tremendous personal achievement. He weighed only four pounds at birth and was confined to an incubator for weeks. For the first three years of his life he was a sickly child, but through constant exercising and good nourishment he grew up to be as hearty and robust as any eight-year old boy.

Johnny left the movies in his mid-20s after playing Bomba, the Jungle Boy for a few years. He enrolled as a full-time student at U.C.L.A immediately upon his retirement from films. These days Johnny is content in spending his time swimming with his two sons near their Malibu home. He has a tidy sum invested in real estate and is kept busy looking after his

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

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Bogus "from his own lips" account in **Hollywood-London Film Parade 1939**:

"Many people didn't give me much of a chance when I was born. That was April 11 1932 in Pasadena, California. I weighed only four pounds and they had to put me in an incubator to keep me alive! When I was finally released from the incubator, my Dad had a rugged outdoor programme of exercise and special diet planned for me. This programme soon brought me sound health and endurance. I can never repay my parents for all they have done for me. If it hadn't been for them I wouldn't be in pictures today or running around with hopes of making the UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) water polo and football teams.

I think I was just plain lucky when I was chosen from hundreds of boys to be Tarzan's son in the famous outdoor series. I wasn't more than seven at the time, but I still remember my first meeting with husky Johnny "**Tarzan**" Weissmuller. We became great pals and he taught me lots of swimming tricks. I still swim at least a mile a day in the college pool. I love sports, and I've been fortunate in getting tennis instructions from champs like Bill Tilden and golf pointers from Willie Hunter.

All these outdoor sports, plenty of wholesome food, lots of milk and plenty of sleep are responsible for my 185 pounds at a height of 5ft 11ins. In the Monogram adventure film of Roy Rockwood's book **"BOMBA, THE JUNGLE BOY"**, I'm running through the film jungles again, meet my old animal friends, and have a swell co-star: Peggy Ann Garner."

Excerpt from **NAMBLA Bulletin** (vol.5/4) résumé of "The Boys of Tarzan":

"...Johnny Sheffield, the most famous Boy, was chosen at age 5 by Johnny Weissmuller, who taught him to swim. The Boy character was reintroduced in 1939 to retain the family audience in view of criticism for savagery, and add something heartwarming. Johnny looked like a junior Weissmuller, with curly hair, a good build, a flair for athletics, and a loincloth cut high on the sides. After **"TARZAN FINDS A SON"**, he played in **"TARZAN'S SECRET TREASURE"** (where he was kidnapped by gold hunters), **"TARZAN'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE"** (kidnapped by a circus owner), **"TARZAN TRIUMPHS"** (kidnapped by Nazis), and several others until he outgrew the part."

What the Critics Said

...of **"TARZAN FINDS A SON!"**:

"...Tarzan's boy, little Johnnie Sheffield, does nicely and performs his athletic chores satisfactorily."
- **Variety**

"...Other studios produced lesser **Tarzans** in the interim; the big crowds were waiting for the big one and, as before, MGM gave it to 'em: more lions, elephants, monkeys, crocodiles and hokum than presented by any competitor, folks! Plus Johnny Sheffield as a jungle foundling (Tarzan and his mate somehow failed to reproduce) following his adopted Dad through every swimming and vine-swinging stunt."

- **The MGM Story**

"..."Boy" was played by tousle-haired Johnny Sheffield, who hardly left the jungle thereafter - when he grew older he started in a movie series

of his own, starting in 1949 with **"BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY"**."

- **Radio Times**

...of **"BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY"**:

"...This second feature series was devised in 1949, from a comic strip, to use the talents of Johnny Sheffield, who had played Johnny Weissmuller's son in some **TARZAN** films. It never amounted to much, but twelve films were made until in 1955, after **"LORD OF THE JUNGLE"**, Sheffield became too old and too fat for the role."

- **Halliwel's Filmgoer's Companion**

"The role of Tarzan's son was originally created for him. Now he's **"Bomba, the Jungle Boy"**. Blond hair, blue eyes. Address: Monogram studios, Hollywood Cal."

[source unknown]



Avec God (film uncertain) ...

Source: Those Endearing Young Charms



*...and avec cowboys in **Lucky Cisco Kid** (40)*

Source: Those Endearing Young Charms



FILMOGRAPHY

	Year	Age	Title	Role
deb	39	8	TARZAN FINDS A SON!	as Boy
	39		BABES IN ARMS	
	40	9	LITTLE ORVIE	in title role
	40		KNUTE ROCKNE – ALL AMERICAN aka: KNOCKOUT / A MODERN HERO	
	40		LUCKY CISCO KID	as Tommy
	41	10	MILLION DOLLAR BABY	
	41		TARZAN'S SECRET TREASURE	as Boy
	42	11	TARZAN'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE	as Boy
	43	12	TARZAN'S DESERT MYSTERY	as Boy
	43		TONIGHT WE RAID CALAIS	
	43		TARZAN TRIUMPHS	as Boy
	44	13	THE GREAT MOMENT	
	44		THE MAN IN HALF MOON STREET	
	44		OUR HEARTS WERE YOUNG AND GAY	
	44		WILSON	
	45	14	ROUGHLY SPEAKING	
	45		TARZAN AND THE AMAZONS	as Boy
	46	15	TARZAN AND THE LEOPARD WOMAN	as Boy
	47	16	TARZAN AND THE HUNTRESS	as Boy
	49	18	BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY	in title role
	49		THE SUN COMES UP	
	49		BOMBA ON PANTHER ISLAND	in title role
	49		THAT FORSYTE WOMAN	
	49		BOMBA AND THE LOST VOLCANO	in title role
	49		BOMBA AND THE HIDDEN CITY	in title role
	50	19	BOMBA AND THE ELEPHANT STAMPEDE	
				in title role
	51	20	BOMBA AND THE AFRICAN TREASURE	in title role
	51		BOMBA AND THE JUNGLE GIRL	in title role
	51		BOMBA AND THE LION HUNTERS	in title role
	52	21	SCARAMOUCHE	
	53	22	SAFARI DRUMS	as Bomba
	53		YOUNG BESS	
	54	23	THE GOLDEN IDOL	as Bomba
	54		KILLER LEOPARD	
	55	24	LORD OF THE JUNGLE	as Bomba



Tarzan Finds a Son! Source: *The MGM Story*

Johnny Sheffield

The stills on these pages constitute only a small sample of the total held.

The images section of the archive contains over 250 frame grabs from his various **Tarzan** films, alongside scans from filmbooks, periodicals and other sources.

