

Kathy O'

US : 1958 : dir. Jack Sher : Universal : 99 min
 prod: Sy Gomberg : scr: Jack Sher & Sy Gomberg : dir.ph.:
[Patty McCormack](#); [Ricky Kelman](#); [Terry Kelman](#).....
 Dan Duryea; Jan Sterling; Mary Jane Croft; Mary Fickett; Sam Levine; Ainslie Pryor;
 Barney Phillips; Mel Leonard

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Kbytes	Ω	□	≠	Z	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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A sort of early Culkin in drag – Patty McCormack

Source: The Film Show Annual

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

“Sluggish frolic of temperamental child star McCormack and her desperate public relations agent Duryea. Shot in CinemaScope. **½ ”

Speelfilm Encyclopedie unwieldy trans-lation of the above:

“Slow, would-be funny film about unruly child star McCormack and her despairing PR agent Duryea. **½ ”

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

“A temperamental child star befriends a lonely columnist. Overlong Hollywood comedy drama with amusing moments. Lyrics: Charles Tobias & Ray Joseph ”

Movies on TV (1987) review:

“Publicity man is assigned to a brat of a child movie star, gets involved when she runs away. Plenty of fun in this Hollywood-behind-the-scenes comedy drama. Well played, highly enjoyable. ***½ ”

The Universal Story comment:

“Patty McCormack, who made such a strong impression in Warner Bros' "**THE BAD SEED**" (1956), gave another excellent account of herself in "**KATHY O**", playing Kathy O'Rourke, a famous child star "loved by millions, yet loved by no-one". For the truth is, the kid's a real pill. Her nemesis (and vice versa) is top-billed Dan Duryea, the studio publicist with whom she stubbornly refuses to co-operate, and who had almost to bribe her to be nice and sweet to columnist Jan Sterling (his ex-wife), when the lady comes to interview her.

Turns out in Jack Sher and Sy Gomberg's screenplay (from a Saturday Evening Post story by Sher), that the moppet [*sic*] and Miss Ster-ling get on well together; so much so that when little Miss McCormack decides to run away from her guardian aunt (Mary Jane Croft), she makes straight for the newspaper woman. Duryea intercepts, however, and takes the spoilt brat into his own home, with the result that he's accused of kidnapping her.



Patty McCormack as the quintessential "tomboy"
Source: *Film Show Annual*

But it all resolves itself satisfactorily, with the child star undergoing a complete change of personality and emerging as a human being after all. Mary Fickett played Duryea's second wife (still jealous of Miss Sterling); Rickey and Terry Kelman were their sons; with other roles under Jack Sher's competent direction going to Sam Levene, Ainsley Pryor, Barney Phillips and Mel Leonard. Several of the movie studio scenes were shot on the Universal City lot. Sy Gomberg produced.”



Source: *Film Show Annual*

Feature article by producer Sy Gomberg: "Kathy O' - the magnificent brat", from **The Film Show Annual** (1958?):

"A few minutes before the preview of **"KATHY O'"** was to start, a famous Hollywood columnist stopped me in the theatre lobby and asked me what Patty McCormack was really like. **"KATHY O'** will prove her to be one of our greatest acting talents" I answered. "And she is a wonderful child." "Stop talking like a producer," the columnist grinned. "I've never met her, but I saw her in **THE BAD SEED** and I want the truth. "

The truth? Well, the truth was that I, too, had felt the same way about Patty before I met her. In **"THE BAD SEED"** she had frightened me out of a year's growth by the horror of the crimes she committed while seeming as angelic as a Christmas-tree doll. She had lied, cheated and murdered with such naturalness, it was impossible not to believe that she enjoyed it. So, when Universal Pictures signed her to star in **"KATHY O'"** for me, I must admit I was more than a little perturbed.

But then came the first shock. It was a week before production, and I had not yet met Patty. That day I was busy casting the other roles, when she suddenly appeared without any warning. She simply walked in behind a troop

of little boys who were being brought into the office to read for minor parts. More surprising was the fact that she was barefooted, wearing faded blue jeans and that her famous yellow pigtails were soaking wet. I stared at her in surprise, and she giggled. When I was finally able to ask her why she had come in a week early, she pointed to a freckle-faced, red-haired boy, and explained that she wanted to help him read for the part. It seems that they were friends and had been swimming in a neighbourhood pool when the studio sent for him.

This was not the attitude of a "little monster". But even when she stayed the rest of the day to help read with all the other little boys, whom she did not know, I was still suspicious. I could not forget that I had seen her play games with her dolls after burning a man to death. During the next week, her costumes were designed and fitted, and shooting tests were made - since the picture was to be photographed in Technicolor and Cinemascope - but nothing happened. She was most co-operative, uncomplaining and sweet to everyone she met. But the very day we were to start shooting, she lost a tooth!

When the average child loses a baby tooth, it is hardly news. When that child happens to be a movie star, it is a crisis. I rushed her to a dentist myself, paced the waiting room while he fashioned a temporary tooth, then rushed her back to the studio for the first scene. The fact that I was in a panic did not seem to ruffle her - and now I was positive that she was diabolic, and that this was merely the beginning.



Source: *Film Show Annual*



Source: *Film Show Annual*

The next day confirmed it. I was on the set, watching. The director, Jack Sher, had rehearsed Patty and her co-stars - Dan Duryea and Jan Sterling - in a gruelling scene. But just as the cameras were to start, Patty's hand flew to her mouth, and came away with another tooth! A front one, this time, leaving a dark gap that almost made the cameraman faint! But before any of us could recover from the shock, she began rocking with laughter and held out the tooth - it was fake one, and the gap was merely make-up gum! Everyone else seemed to think it a fine joke but me. I could not forget that she had laughed while describing how she had murdered an old lady.

For two more weeks nothing happened, except that her performance in the picture was absolutely brilliant, and I was beginning to doubt my own estimation of her. In fact, I was beginning to relax, when we set out for the coast of California and a tremendous fishing sequence for the picture. While the cameras were being prepared, Patty slipped away and dropped a hook and line over the side of the camera barge. A moment later she almost went over the side - for she had hooked into a six-foot shark! As we pulled her back to safety, she casually told me that she couldn't swim! I went back on the stomach pills.

But, a week later, Patty read the last line in "**KATHY O**". As the director called "Cut!" and the cameras stilled, there was a spontaneous burst of applause from the entire cast and crew - for she had done a truly magnificent job in a terribly difficult part. As for me, I applauded, too. For I had learned that Patty McCormack can make any part seem absolutely real, that she adores having fun, and that I wish she were my own daughter. After the preview, the same Hollywood columnist predicted an Academy Award for Patty McCormack's performance - the first for a child in many a year. See "**KATHY O**" for yourselves. I think you will agree."

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



Those Endearing Young Charms caption to still (above):

“This film, adapted from a short story entitled "Memo on Kathy O'Rourke", stars Patty as a temperamental child movie actress who runs away from her studio, involving a publicity man (Dan Duryea) in a kidnapping charge. Patty is seen here with Mary Fickett who appears as Duryea's wife.”

Those Endearing Young Charms entry on McCormack:

“ Born: August 21, 1945. Brooklyn, New York.
Blond hair, blue eyes.

The pig-tailed lass with the sapphire blue eyes started out in life as a model when she was only four years old and continued at it for three years, up until the moment she received a television role in a Kraft Theatre episode.

Patty's first real professional break came when her elocution teacher recommended her to an agent friend. The agent, in turn, recommended Patty to Miss Elaine Perry, who was busy arranging a new Broadway hit called "Touchstone". Patty was given a dramatic test, and after passing it brilliantly she was awarded a role in the production. In addition to her elocution lessons, Patty was also occupied with dancing lessons, which she had to relinquish upon acquiring a movie contract at the age of ten.

Patty was an honest-to-goodness tomboy who could often be seen playing baseball with the little leaguers in the lots around her home town of Long Island. When she wasn't playing baseball, Patty enjoyed swimming or just relaxing indoors with her favourite hobby: sketching.

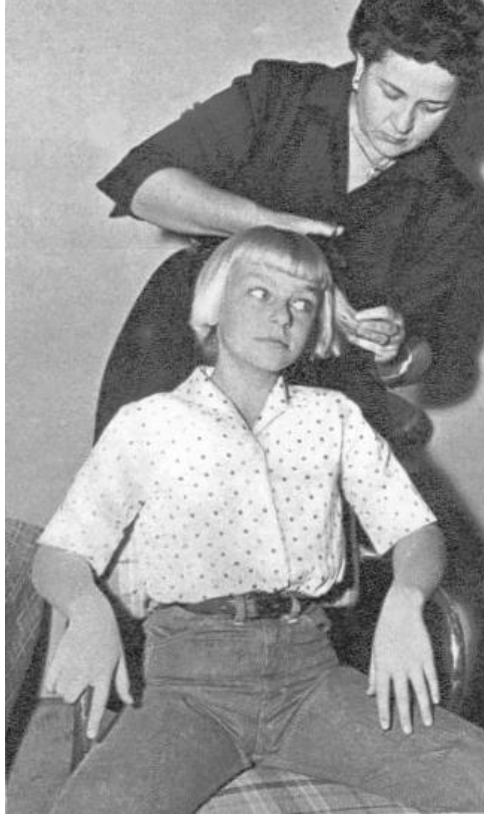
She was educated at the Willard Mace School for Professional Children in Queens, New York, the St. Victor Parochial School in San Fernando, and the Walter Reed Jr. High in Studio City, California.

Her screen roles were "**THE BAD SEED**" (10), "**ALL MINE TO GIVE**" (12), "**KATHY O' "** (12). Her stage credits were "Touchstone" (7), "The Bad Seed" (9). On television she was seen in an episode of "**Sparrows**" (10), a Chrysler special.

While acting in the three media, Patty was recognized many times. Among her awards were the Critics Award for top juvenile performances in "**THE BAD SEED**" he Bad Seed and "**KATHY O' "**, an Academy Award nomination for "**THE BAD SEED**", and the Milky Way Gold Star Award as the nation's outstanding juvenile performer of 1956.

Currently, Miss McCormack is carrying on her acting career. She has appeared on television in "**Route 66**" and "**The Wild Wild West**". On the screen she was seen in "**THE BOLD GENERATION**" and "**THE RUNAWAY YEARS**". Just recently she toured the country in the stage version of "Barefoot in the Park".

No further information currently available. McCormack's other films included **"THE DAY THEY GAVE BABIES AWAY"** (57), **"THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN"** (60 – the Eddie Hodges version) and, more in keeping with the screen persona she'd created, her own TV series: **"Peck's Bad Girl"** ('59).



Ricky Kelman, for his part, was 8. He'd made **"A MAN CALLED PETER"** three years previously, and followed up **"KATHY O"** with **"LAST TRAIN FROM GUN HILL"** (58), **"STEP DOWN TO TERROR"** (59) and the dismal Bob Hope/Lucille Ball "comedy" **"CRITIC'S CHOICE"** (62). He also appeared on the sitcom **"The Dennis O'Keefe Show"** (59).

"THURSDAY'S CHILD" (42) also dealt with the hubris of a young girl intoxicated by fame, though the accent in that case was on domestic melodrama rather than comedy. Jackie Earle Haley played the nightmare Hollywood child Angel Loomis in **"DAY OF THE LOCUST"** ('75), while in **"THIS IS THE LIFE"** (35) Jane Withers was a child star of vaudeville who runs off with a wanted man.

For a neat inversion of the *bratty child star* theme, see **"SLIM CARTER"** (57), in which Tim Hovey plays the adoring fan (an orphan, natch) of Western hero Jock Mahoney. He wins a stay with his idol in a competition. The idol is in reality a jerk, and a studio publicity rep is set the task of rescuing the situation.

See subject index under **BRATS / SPOILT KIDS, CHILD PERFORMERS / CHILD STARS, COMEDY** and **RUNAWAYS/ STOWAWAYS.**

