

America's Little Girl

Shirley Temple



She was America's Little Girl- with Bright Eyes, Curly Top and Dimples. Shirley Temple is the greatest child star in history. She is a Hollywood legend, and at age 6 is the youngest person ever to receive an Academy Award and put their hand and footprints into the pavement at Graumans Chinese Theatre. More than 65 years after she began making films they are still immensely popular.

Shirley Jane Temple was born on the 23rd of April 1928, the third child of George and Gertrude. Gertrude had always dream of having a girl and wanted her to be given the opportunities she never had when she was younger. Gertrude played records for Shirley and danced around with a tambourine to instill a sense of rhythm and music in her. From an early age Shirley had been involved in music, art appreciation and dance.



Shirley attended the Meglin Dance Studio, which included singing dancing and acting. At the time it was seen as an entryway into stardom. At three Shirley was chosen do nine short films, titled 'Baby Burlesques' with ten boys and one other girl all from the dance studio. This entailed acting out adult drama in nappies and over sized safety pins. These were shown before the main feature at the movie theaters. This gave her great exposure, more than she had ever had before.

'War Babies' one of Shirley's Baby Burlesque films

Shortly after the Baby Burlesque short films Shirley had the lead in other short films including 'Frolics of Youth' which was a series of four films as well as small parts in eight feature films. Shirley was then signed up with FOX studios for a sum of \$150 a week. Her "breakthrough" movie Stand Up and Cheer, showed her to be an immensely talented youngster who lit up the screen in the small role she had. Her first leading role was in Little Miss Marker, on loan to Paramount Pictures. This film was highly profitable for the studio and earned Shirley rave reviews. Since Shirley's profitability had been proven, Fox then went ahead to prepare many more films especially for her.

The depression had hit hard and 20th Century FOX was no exception, they were almost bankrupt. Will Rodges and Shirley Temple were their highest moneymakers and after Rodges death in 1934, Shirley became their focus.



Shirley's films made lots of money and saved FOX from bankruptcy. "Shirley could make people believe, if only for ninety minuets that there were no problems in the world. This kid put more heart back into people and got the people thinking in a more positive way and gave this country a lift when we needed it." (Dick "Dickie" Moore, former child actor).

Shirley playing with Dickie

All of Temple's co-stars were impressed with her amazing talent and professionalism in her acting, singing and dancing, and the maturity she had at such a young age. "She didn't know how to read yet so every night after work, I guess while her mother was giving her a bath, she would read her the scenes that were going to be shot the following day. So as a result, when Shirley showed up on the set the next morning, she knew everybody's lines. Now if anyone of us made a mistake in all sweetness nothing precocious she would say 'Oh no you're suppose to say...' and then she'd tell us what we were supposed to say. And you know she was never wrong." (Frank 'Jr' Coughlin Shirley's co-star in Frolics of Youth). "None of us could get over this little thing that could remember over 10 pages of dialogue and that's nothing and here we are struggling along."(Alice Faye) "Sometimes it was very embarrassing, I couldn't remember a



line and Shirley would be standing there with a sweet face looking at you, 'I love you, you're an idiot but I love you.'" (Gloria Stuart) "She could dance up a storm with Bill Robertson, she could sing with Jimmy Dunn, she could do anything. She was just unbelievable." (Alice Faye) On the Military Dance in Poor Little Rich Girl "It wasn't easy. Jack managed to go along with it but she sailed through it. There she goes again, that Shirley." (Alice Faye) "We used to sneak over and watch them rehearse, and I remember Bill (Robertson) saying to someone 'You show Shirley a step twice and she's got it'"

Shirley Dancing with Bill Robertson in 'The Little Colonel'

Talking about Bright Eyes "In the script it read, 'this is the kind of child every mother would dream of having, she has blonde curls and dimples.' I was sitting with my in the office and about that time the door opened and without a doubt through that door walked the most adorable, the most beautiful, the most precious little girl I'd ever seen in my whole life. Well even though my heart sank to my toes I said "Well Lord, I guess it's not my turn yet because I knew she's it she was exactly what the script calls for because she is really precious." (Jane Withers former child actor)



Product endorsement with Shirley's name and picture on them began to abound, but Shirley did not share in any of the profit and still only got \$150 a week. Finally in mid 1934 Gertrude convinced the studio for a pay rise. Shirley, from then on, received \$1000 a week and Gertrude was paid \$250 as tutor and personal adviser.

Shirley with Jane Withers playing on the set of 'Bright Eyes'

Shirley Temple had been the Number 1 Box Office Star for 4 years in a row from 1935-1939. Rival studios had tried to emulate the success of Shirley but to no avail. There was no other child like her. Her achievements for one so young are remarkable. 65 years later Shirley Temple books, films, dolls and collectibles are still very much in demand. Many of her films are timeless and have become classics in a way that no other child stars movies have ever been. She is in the elite club of Hollywood Superstars that also includes such stars as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. Shirley is a very happy and gracious person who has no regrets of her childhood. She has gone on to have more success in television, politics and as a mother.



“Santa Baby, hurry down the chimney tonight”

Filmography

Baby Burlesque's

The Runt Page (1932)
War Babies (1932)
The Pie Covered Wagon (1932)
Glad Rags to Riches (1932)
The Kid's Last Fight (1933)
Kid in Hollywood (1933)
Pollytix in Washington (1933)
Kid in Africa (1933)

Short Film

Dora's Dunking Doughnuts (1933)



Robert Winkler Collection ©1978

"Bright Eyes" with Jimmy Dunn

Small Parts in Feature Films

The Red-Haired Alibi (1932)
Out All Night (1933).
To the Last Man (1933).
As the Earth Turns (1933).
Carolina (1934).
Mandalay (1934).
New Deal Rhythm (1934).
Now I'll Tell (1934).

Frolics of Youth

Merrily Yours (1933).
What to Do? (1933).
Pardon My Pups (1934).
Managed Money (1934).

Feature Films

Stand Up and Cheer (1934).
Change of Heart (1934).
Little Miss Marker (1934).
Baby Take a Bow (1934).
Now and Forever (1934).
Bright Eyes (1934).
The Little Colonel (1935).
Our Little Girl (1935).
Curly Top (1935).
The Littlest Rebel (1935).
Captain January (1936).

Poor Little Rich Girl (1936).
Dimples (1936).
Stowaway (1936).
Wee Willie Winkie (1937).
Heidi (1937).
Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1938).
Little Miss Broadway (1938).
Just Around the Corner (1938).
The Little Princess (1939).
Susannah of the Mounties (1939).
The Blue Bird (1940).
Young People (1940).

Post FOX Years

Kathleen (1941).
Miss Annie Rooney (1942).
Since You Went Away (1944).
I'll Be Seeing You (1944).
Kiss and Tell (1945).
Honeymoon (1947).
The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer (1947).
That Hagen Girl (1947).
Fort Apache (1948).
Adventure in Baltimore (1949).
Mr Belvedere Goes to College (1949).
A Kiss for Corliss (1949).
The Story of Seabiscuit (1949).

Shirley from 'Little Miss Marker' This is Shirley's personal favorite



Bibliography

Books

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Temple Black, S (1988) Child Star An Autobiography Great Britain, Headline Book Publishing PLC

CD-ROM

Temple, Shirley [cd-rom] (1996) Cinemanía 97

Video

Shirley Temple- America's Little Darling [video] Australian Screen

World Wide Web

www.shirleytemplesfans.com

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