

[New York Times review](#) by Mordaunt Hall, May 8, 1929

“...is heavily laden with that lachrymose quality to be anticipated from its title. It is dubious, however, whether there many wet eyes in the audience, for this yarn is a trifle too amateurish to be in the least effective, even with those who are susceptible to such a state of affairs.

### **The Gazette, Montreal, Monday, July 1, 1929**

Morton Downey Has Several Songs in “Mother’s Boy”

Still another song boy leaves the theatre on his big opening night to go to the bedside of his sick mother – an incident which has become something of an everyday occurrence since the audible cinema took it upon itself to chronicle the intimate details of these tender heroes of the stage. This time it happens in “Mother’s Boy,” which the Capitol Theatre is featuring on the occasion of its “All-Canadian Week.”

Morton Downey is the star in this latest revelation and is probably its excuse. An all-talkie, it is given over for a good part of its length to Downey’s singing, which, though good, cannot hold up the story in its weaker moments.

The story is slight and drips heavily with sentimentality of the most elementary sort. An Irish lad in the tenement district in New York works as a delivery boy for a delicatessen dealer. He sings his way into everybody’s heart and is regarded as the pet of the neighborhood. His brother steals some money from his father and the boy gets the blame, leaving home as a result.

Singing at one of these salvation hostels, he is picked up by a press agent, who books him for a political club dinner. Then follows an engagement in a night club, where a society girl makes eyes at him. From an overnight success here he gets his big chance in a musical comedy. But on the opening night there comes the inevitable news of the sick parent and the boy leaves the show that, The live awake press agent, however, turns the incident into a front page splash and the next day finds the boy with increased offers waiting him.

The first half manages to be a great deal more entertaining, than the last half. The scene in the mission house, where the several down-and-outers come and sing hymns to pay for the cup of coffee and piece of cake which follow the service, is an attractive bit.

Downey's singing is the picture's strongest asset. He also has a knack, as he proved in "Syncopation," of delivering flip statements with telling effect. Beryl Mercer plays the Irish mother with an especial stress of sentimentality, which at times becomes almost uncomfortable to the spectator. The case, quite adequate for a picture which makes no particularly heavy demands upon it, includes Barbara Bennett, Osgood Perkins, Lorin Raker and John T. Doyle.

### **The Pittsburgh Press, Tuesday, June 11, 1929**

"Mother's Boy" – Talkie.

Looks as if the Harris has again picked the proper time for changing, temporarily, at least, to an all-talkie screen entertainment if the packed house yesterday is any criterion...

... "Mother's Boy." With Morton Downey, was written by Gene Markey, and there is a strong love interest which has been finely developed by Director Bradley Barker. The cast includes several stage artists of reputation, among them being Helen Chandler, Osgood Perkins, Barbara Bennett, John T. Doyle, a prominent actor, and Beryl Mercer and English actress.

### **Photoplay, July 1929**

Another lad makes good in a night club and then comes becomes a great big star on Broadway. A. Jolson discovered this plot. Here Morton Downey is the singer who makes good triumphs. Exactly like all the other talkie plots except that Mort plays an Irish boy. Downey is a little hefty for screen popularity but, with a bit of reducing, a new plot and better recording, he has his chance.

### **Motion Picture News, May 11, 1929**

This is a perfect example of how not to make a talking picture. The story is weak, the direction and acting terrible, the lighting worse and the sound recording atrocious. Outside of that its a good picture, except when the operators in the booth at the Cohan Theatre got to talking it over in some of the scenes and over-shadowed the talk on the screen. How the executives of Pathe could have looked at this one and had the to put it in a Broadway house at a \$2.00 top scale will ever remain a mystery.

Morton Downey, a former vaudeville and night club tenor, is the star of the picture. Downey has a voice for the singing of those Irish melodies and the sentimental ballads, but one would never know it from this

picture, so bad is the recording of his various singing efforts. As for Downey's acting the less said the better, and before he again tries to appear before the camera he should go into training a take off a flock of weight. As little as Downey can act, his supporting cast in some instances is worse. This is true of the leading lady, Helen Chandler, who neither has the looks nor can troupe and also of Barbara Bennett. Brian Dunlevy, who plays the star's brother, gets by, while Beryl Mercer, as an Irish mother, displays a fine English accent. The only characterization in the entire picture that rang true was that contributed by John T. Doyle as the father.

The story is that of a young New York boy who is turned out of his home because the father believes he has tapped the sugar-bowl savings. The mother's heart breaks, but the boy goes forth and makes good in a night club, is taken up by society and is about to open as the star of a revue when he receives word his mother is dying and throws his chance of a career to the winds to rush her to bedside.

There are songs dragged in my main force every little while without reason or rhyme, until one becomes tired of them.

### **Film Daily, Wednesday, May 8, 1929**

Stickily sentimental, mawkish in treatment, badly acted and indifferently produced – these are several of the factors which anchor "Mother's Boy" fast as a very mediocre entertainment. To tell you that it is another obvious tale of a tenement lad – Irish this time – who passes through a barrage of situations patriarchal with age but who reaches some sort of night club success via his crooning tenor only to

pass it all up so that he might return to his mother's ailing arms is a sufficient idea of what the shooting is all about.

Last night's opening was not an inspiring affair. Morton Downey sings pleasantly enough, but the deck was stacked pretty heavily against him. Accurate reporting being an obsession with us, it is proper to state that "Mother's Boy" is just a picture and not a good one at that.

*If this review was any harsher it would be a political-attack-ad. C.S. Williams*