

Boys, dogs generate both joy & tears

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Dear Ken: My family and I are big fans of the movie “My Dog Skip.” We were wondering what other good boy-and-his-dog movies are out there.

There are several classic films on this theme, and “My Dog Skip” is near the top of the list. I’m most partial to “Good-bye, My Lady,” a 1956 release starring Walter Brennan, Phil Harris, Sidney Poitier and Brandon de Wilde. De Wilde, who co-starred as the boy in the western “Shane,” portrays an orphan coming of age who lives in a Georgia swamp with his uncle. He finds a strange breed of dog who laughs, a Basenji, that becomes his pride and joy. Just know that when a boy becomes a man, it’s a sad, glad thing. Warner Home Video has recently released “Good-bye, My Lady” on DVD. Other excellent movies about boys and dogs include: “Old Yeller” (1957), “The Biscuit Eater” (1940), “Lassie Come Home” (1943), “Skippy” (1931), “Where the Red Fern Grows” (1974) and “Dog of Flanders” (1960).

Dear Ken: Where was Natalie Portman, who played Queen Amidala in “Star Wars: Episode I-The Phantom Menace,” born? How old is she?

The 29-year-old actress was born Natalie Hershlag in Jerusalem, Israel, but grew up in New York. She was discovered in a pizza parlor at the age of 11 by an agent and made her movie debut in 1994’s “The Professional.” Among her best films are “Closer,” “Where the Heart Is” and “Anywhere but Here.”

Dear Ken: I saw the movie “The Devil and Daniel Webster” recently and one of the stars was a good-looking actor named James Craig. He reminded me a little of Clark Gable. What else was Craig in?

Nashville-born Craig hit Hollywood in the late 1930s. Among his other credits are “Kitty Foyle,” “Lost Angel,” “Kismet,” “The Heavenly Body,” “Our Vines Have Tender Grapes” and “Drums in the Deep South,” but he may have been at his best with Mickey Rooney and Frank Morgan in 1943’s marvelous “The Human Comedy.” After making movies, Craig became a successful real estate salesman. He died of lung cancer in 1985 at the age of 73.

Dear Ken: What is Bobby McFerrin, the voice behind the song “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,”

up to these days?

The 10-time Grammy Award winner continues to make great music as a vocal innovator and improviser and a classical conductor. McFerrin, 60, possesses a four-octave range with which he has explored the worlds of classical, jazz and a cappella music. He has conducted such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic. His latest album is VOCABuLarieS, and the happy guy begins concert tours in Europe and the U.S. in March.

If you have a trivia question about actors, singers, movies, TV shows or pop culture, e-mail your query to Ken Beck at