

## Bob Hope: Entertaining the Troops

★★1/2

Music Video Distributors, 90 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$19.99

If John Wayne was America's cowboy, Bob Hope was America's comedian. From

vaudeville to Broadway, radio, TV, movies, and even comic books, Hope was the original king of all media. But his tireless service entertaining the troops is one of his most lasting legacies. This compilation collects three Bob Hope Christmas specials. The earliest, a black-and-white kinescope, dates back to 1951 and the Korean War. Filmed live aboard the USS *Boxer*, the program features tap-dancing prodigies the Nicholas Brothers, and singer Connie Moore. "Around the World with the USO," from 1970, follows Hope and company from a dress rehearsal before President Nixon through a 16-day itinerary that includes Italy, Germany, Guam, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. Guests include Neil Armstrong and Connie Stevens. The third show, "Around the Globe with the USO," broadcast the following year, joins Hope, Lola Falana, Ursula Andress, and Hall of Famer Johnny Bench visiting Alaska, England, Germany, Thailand, and Vietnam. The humor throughout is topical and has not aged well, although Hope's impeccable timing and delivery elevates some groan-worthy double-entendres, as when screen goddess Andress asks Hope which of her films he's seen and he responds, "There isn't a thing of yours I haven't seen." Viewers who grew up watching the then-top-rated specials may get a nostalgic kick from these stirring celebrations of American servicemen. A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)

