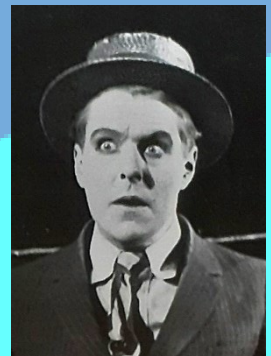


THE LOST LAUGH

#13



WANDA WILEY



WALTER FORDE



LUPINO LANE

SNUB POLLARD

& lots more!

silent comedy • slapstick • music hall & variety

WELCOME!

Wherever you are, I hope this finds you well and keeping safe. I've certainly been finding that funny old films are the perfect way to shut out the world outside... I hope this issue is able to provide a bit of entertainment to pass a few hours of winter, and hopefully help you discover some films and performers that are new to you. For the first time, I've launched a YouTube playlist showing selected films and clips mentioned in the articles so you can watch the films as well as reading about them (though probably not at the same time!) There's more info on the following page.

As always, please do get in touch with comments and constructive criticism, or just to say hello—it's always great to hear from you. Email: [movienightmag \[AT\] gmail.com](mailto:movienightmag@gmail.com), or [@The_LostLaugh](https://twitter.com/The_LostLaugh) on Twitter. Keep Smiling!

Matt

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The Lost Laugh comes to YouTube!

NEW!

I've just launched The Lost Laugh's YouTube channel. For each issue I'll create a video playlist collecting some of the films mentioned in the articles found on YouTube, as well as some of my own uploads of rare bits and pieces. The focus will largely be on films not available on DVD.

Here's the direct link to the Playlist: [The Lost Laugh Issue 13 - YouTube](#) . You can also subscribe to the channel for future uploads of rare bits and pieces.



First up, a few films featuring our cover star, Snub Pollard. Of course, his classic IT'S A GIFT (1923) has to be on there, but there are also some other wonderful moments from his golden period. 365 DAYS, FIFTEEN MINUTES and extracts from BLOW 'EM UP and SOLD AT AUCTION showcase some other ingenious Snub gags

The series of films Snub made with Marvin Loback as, um, homage to Laurel & Hardy are illustrated with THICK & THIN (1928) and the most blatant example, SOCK & RUN (1929).



Wanda Wiley's rare short A THRILLING ROMANCE is featured in an episode of The Silent Comedy Watch Party. The intro to Wanda begins at around the 39 minute mark, but why not enjoy the whole show while you're there?



A short video from Dave Glass' Lupino Lane Kickstarter campaign gives a bit of behind-the-scenes info on the new Lupino DVD and Blu-Ray release. On a related note is a rare Wallace Lupino short from my collection, HARD WORK. This 8mm print wasn't quite good enough quality to make it onto the Lane set. , but it has been scanned and uploaded to YouTube.

Walter Forde, in a great scene on the London underground from his feature WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT (1929). This particular clip is actually from the oddball British comedy HELTER SKELTER (1949) , where the excerpt is used to try and induce laughter to cure someone of hiccups! Let me know if it cures yours....



To go with the 'Clowns in Colour' photo feature in this issue, I've uploaded Buster Keaton's scenes from the 1935 MGM short LA FIESTA DE SANTA BARBARA. Look out for a quick glimpse of Harpo Marx too! There's also some colour footage of Charlie Chaplin filming THE GREAT DICTATOR, from Syd Chaplin's home movies.

Buster Keaton's THE SCRIBE rounds out the playlist. The King of Daredevil Comedy makes a health and safety film! In his own inimitable manner, of course.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO WRITE FOR THE LOST LAUGH?

Contributions of all kinds are very welcome, from short reviews of films, DVDs, events, books etc through to longer articles. If you're working on a project and I can help you share or plug your work (and hopefully see it reach a wider audience), please do get in touch, either by emailing [movienightmag \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:movienightmag@gmail.com), or by sending a direct message on Twitter [@The_LostLaugh](https://twitter.com/The_LostLaugh).



STREAMING SILENTS

Though physically going to a silent film screening has largely been taken off the table during the last year, online events and live streaming have really flourished. Looking on the positive side, adversity has created opportunity, and it's now possible to enjoy the programmes of many fine film events without leaving your home. Here's a round-up of some past and upcoming events...



NEDERLANDS SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

The Netherlands Silent Film Festival presented an excellent, comedy-heavy programme over the weekend of 7-9 January. Among the offerings were a great presentation of early Italian comedies by David Robinson, Lubitsch's *THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE*, and a selection of Laurel & Hardy shorts from Lobster films. These included the new

restorations of *THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY*, Laurel's *DETAINED*, and the pre-teaming short *DUCK SOUP*. Existing copies of *DUCK SOUP* have always suffered from being murky, run too fast and with poorly translated titles. The new version unites footage previously only present in different versions, includes the original British intertitles, and looks sparkling (see the screen grab on the right). Events were streamed live on YouTube with live musical accompaniment. A fantastic effort all round to liven up a dull and depressing January. Look out for more upcoming events from NSFF.

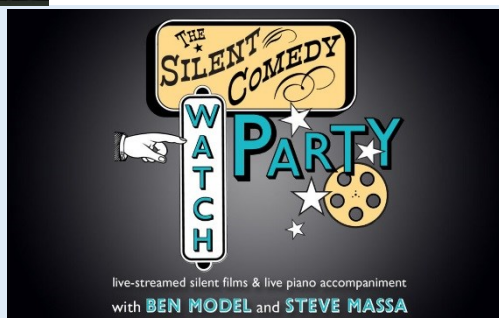


Bristol's SLAPSTICK festival has moved online too, and is taking place a little later this year: from 1-7 March. The full programme has just been announced, with a mixture of silent and more modern comedy. Among the silent films are W.C. Fields in his fantastic feature *RUNNING WILD*, Clara Bow in *IT* and Harold Lloyd's talkie *MOVIE CRAZY*. The granddaughters of both Fields and Lloyd are participating, which should hopefully give some fascinating insights. Also guesting are David Robinson, and Ben Model & Steve Massa of The Silent Comedy Watch Party. Among the rarities to be shown are some great shorts starring Lupino Lane and Roscoe Arbuckle.

Visit [Slapstick LIVE ONLINE 2021 | Slapstick LIVE ONLINE 2021 \(eventive.org\)](https://www.eventive.org) for the full programme and to buy a festival pass, or



The good folk at KENNINGTON BIOSCOPE offer some great live YouTube streams of silent films (of all genres), with live accompaniment and ably presented by Michelle Facey. [LISTINGS - kenbioscope for more details \(www.kenningtonbioscope.com\)](https://www.kenningtonbioscope.com)



Since we interviewed Ben Model about the Silent Comedy Watch party in the last issue, the regular streaming event has continued to go from strength to strength. Shows continue to be every Sunday, at 1500 EDT, 2000 GMT, streaming on YouTube.

Visit <http://www.silentcomedywatchparty.com> for details.

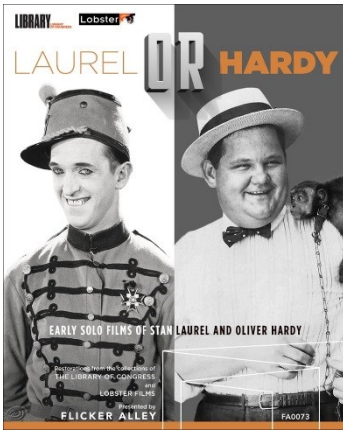
Finally, a shout-out to some of the generous YouTube channels sharing fantastic rare comedy content, all for free:

Dave Glass's Reel Comedies channel has been featuring a whole host of rare silent comedies, including some of Dave's own restorations piecing together rare, fragmented comedies. There's a particularly great selection of Snub Pollard and Billy Bevan shorts: [Dave Glass - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Andy Galaxy's channel also features many rare and otherwise unavailable silent comedies, including Clyde Cook, Larry Seamon and more Snub Pollard! [Andy Galaxy - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Into the sound era, and **Geno's House of Rare Films** focuses on sound two-reelers, including some rare Dane & Arthur shorts, and the best collection of Clark & McCullough films on the web.

DVD NEWS & REVIEWS



LAUREL OR HARDY—a new Blu-Ray collection of Stan and Babe solo films, most previously unseen or unavailable

[Flicker Alley](#), \$49.99

In the years since Kino last issued volumes of Laurel & Hardy solo films, there have been several more discoveries made. This great new Blu-Ray set collects these, along with some of the odds and ends that have remained obscure up to now. Produced with the participation of the Library of Congress, Lobster Films and L & H solo expert Rob Stone, this set is a must-have. It's not exactly a 'Best Of' the solo work, more like a 'best of the rest'. You won't find some of the best-known solo films like *MUD AND SAND*, *KILL OR CURE* or *ALONG CAME AUNTIE* here. Instead there's a big effort to avoid duplication of previously issued films, but there are upgraded versions of a few more well-known shorts.

Of Stan Laurel's solo catalogue, one of the biggest missing links has been his 1921-22 series for G.M. Anderson. Apart from *MUD & SAND*, these have only been available in scattered, poor quality versions, or not at all. Now, five of these shorts are presented. Though *THE EGG* has been issued before, the others are all rarely seen. *THE WEAK-END PARTY* is a fun comedy with some original sight gags (including one Stan later re-used in *BRATS*). This film and *THE HANDY MAN* feature Babe London in the cast. *THE PEST* has some really fun scenes of Stan disguised as a dog, but best of all is the surviving footage from his Robin Hood spoof, *WHEN KNIGHTS WERE COLD*. Stan remembered this as one of his favourites, and it doesn't disappoint. There's an endearing daftness to the material, especially the paper-maché horse Stan 'rides' (it almost seems like a forerunner for *MONTY PYTHON & THE HOLY GRAIL!*) Of Stan's work for Hal Roach, *BROTHERS UNDER THE CHIN*, *THE WHOLE TRUTH* and *WIDE OPEN SPACES* are highlights that have been lost or rarely seen until recently. His films for Joe Rock include the scarce *TWINS* and an upgraded version of *DETAINED*. The latter film now includes previously missing segments, including a slightly off-colour hanging scene where Stan's neck stretches and bounces him up and down from the gallows! Films like *DETAINED* and *WHEN KNIGHTS WERE COLD* remind you what a creative, but deeply odd-ball, comedian Stan could be. He's a bit of Chaplin, increasing parts Langdon, but is also oddly hyperactive and at times quite camp! More than Chaplin, some of his performances positively reek of English Music Hall. He may not have had a strongly defined character, but he was certainly unique among film clowns, even at this stage.

Highlights of Oliver Hardy's early career included are *AN EXPENSIVE VISIT*, and *MOTHER'S BABY BOY*, an early starring role for an incredibly young Babe—its easy to see how he earned his nickname! The nature of Hardy's career as supporting comic means that you get films starring lots of other forgotten comedians too, including Charley Chase (*MARRIED TO ORDER*), Clyde Cook (*WANDERING PAPAS*) and Larry Semon. (*THE RENT COLLECTOR*, *THE BAKERY*, *THE SHOW*). Hardy's work with Billy West is seen in both the Chaplin-aping *HE'S IN AGAIN* and the later *RIVALS*, which drops the Chaplin shtick altogether. The Glenn Tryon short *SAY IT WITH BABIES* is a bit of prime Roach farce from the golden era of this mini-genre.

Picture quality is great for the age and rarity of these films, and there is fine musical accompaniment from a range of musicians, including Neil Brand, Serge Bromberg and Ben Model. The set also comes with an information-stuffed booklet written by Rob Stone. This collection is a really fabulous assortment of rare films. They are fascinating to watch and throw new light on the boys' careers.

Here are the full contents of the set...

Stan Laurel Films:

Bears and Bad Men (1918); *The Egg* (1922); *A Weak-End Party* (1922); *The Pest* (1922); *When Knights Were Cold* (1923); *The Handy Man* (1923); *Pick and Shovel* (1923); *Collars and Cuffs* (1923); *Gas and Air* (1923); *A Man About Town* (1923); *The Whole Truth* (1923); *Brothers Under the Chin* (1924); *Zeb Vs. Paprika* (1924); *Wide Open Spaces* (1924); *Detained* (1924); *Twins* (1925); *Pie-Eyed* (1925)

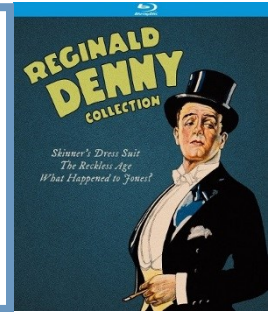
Oliver Hardy Films:

Mother's Baby Boy (1914); *The Servant Girl's Legacy* (1914); *An Expensive Visit* (1915); *A Lucky Strike* (1915); *The New Adventures of J. Rufus Wallingford: The Lilac Splash* (1915); *The Serenade* (1916); *Hungry Hearts* (1916); *The Candy Trail* (1916); *The Chief Cook* (1917); *Hello Trouble* (1918); *Married to Order* (1918); *He's In Again* (1918); *The Rent Collector* (1921); *The Bakery* (1921); *The Show* (1922); *Rivals* (1925); *Wandering Papas* (1926); *Say It With Babies* (1926)

THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT COMEDIANS TO DVD & BLU-RAY!

KINO RELEASES 'THE REGINALD DENNY COLLECTION'

Reginald Denny is now best remembered for his sound era character roles, in films as varied as REBECCA, MR BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE and BATMAN. Long before this, he was a star of 'light' comedies in the silent era. Kino-Lorber has released new 4k restorations of three of these: SKINNER'S DRESS SUIT, THE RECKLESS AGE and WHAT HAPPENED TO JONES? All three are enjoyable films, with Denny showing a flair for balancing humour with his leading man role. He may well be the best of the light comedians, and it's great to have some of his films available. Another fun Denny feature, FAST & FURIOUS, is currently available to stream on the Cineteca Milano website.



Another forgotten light comedian brought back into the spotlight is Douglas Maclean. Maclean started out as a leading man, but was developed into a light comedian in a string of films made by Thomas Hince, before turning independent in the mid-20s. His films were popular but are rarely seen today. This DVD, from Ben Model's Undercrank Productions, issues two of his feature films: ONE A MINUTE (1921) and BELL BOY 13.

As always for an Undercrank release, this is a very high quality set. The films look absolutely sparkling, and have terrific organ scores by Model. Both films are gently amusing, not offering the big gags of Keaton or Lloyd, but definitely enjoyable; their release helps broaden our appreciation of the spectrum of silent comedy.

Also from Undercrank productions, Ben Model's latest Kickstarter has been successfully funded. This DVD collects all 8 of a series of films made by character actor Edward Everett Horton in 1927-28. Horton is beloved for his supporting roles in films like TOP HAT, but his own starring silents remain obscure. For silent comedy fans, the shorts gain additional interest for being produced by Harold Lloyd, and made by his production team. The project currently has an estimated completion date of April.



BUSTER ON BLU-RAY

There have been a recent slew of Keaton releases on BluRay and DVD, with parallel releases in both the UK and US. The Criterion collection has put out THE CAMERAMAN, which includes the underrated SPITE MARRIAGE as an extra feature.

Eureka's Masters of Cinema series continue to offer triple packs of the classic Keaton features, packed with extra features. These are released as limited deluxe editions, before being released in a standard version. The main difference seems to be the packaging, with extras included on both deluxe and standard versions. The latest set features THE NAVIGATOR, SEVEN CHANCES and BATTLING BUTLER, with extras including a whole host of Keaton audio interviews. Also included is the Harry Sweet short WHAT, NO SPINACH (1926), a riff on SEVEN CHANCES. Meanwhile, the Cohen Film Collection offer their restorations of the feature, two at a time. The latest to be released are GO WEST and COLLEGE. Both have new music scores.

CLASSIC BRITISH COMEDIES REISSUED ON DVD & BLURAY

After a while with no new releases of note, Network's series 'The British Film' has resumed putting out some great comedies from the 1930s.

Upgraded to new versions on DVD & Blu-ray are George Formby's TROUBLE BREWING and IT'S IN THE AIR, Gracie Fields' THE SHOW GOES ON and SING AS WE GO and the Tommy Trinder vehicle SAILORS THREE (directed by Walter Forde, and featuring one of my favourite supporting comics, Claude Hulbert). Also coming soon is A RUN FOR YOUR MONEY, one of the earliest Ealing Comedies. See

www.networkonair.com for the full catalogue.





MORE RARE HAM!

Lloyd Hamilton films from his glory period in the mid-1920s are sadly rare things. Good news, though! David Wyatt has discovered a few minutes of one otherwise lost film, GOING EAST. Dave kindly shared details with us of this great discovery...

GOING EAST was one of Lloyd Hamilton's 2 reel starring comedies distributed by Educational in May 1924. What I've discovered is part of it, amounting to less than half a reel, as released on 9.5mm, Pathe's home movie gauge, in its early days in France.

Anthony Balducci, in his excellent book 'Lloyd Hamilton, Poor Boy comedian of Silent Comedy', details a plot where Hamilton leaves his father's farm and joins an eastbound train, riding in the company of a sheriff who is escorting two convicts to Sing-Sing, and left momentarily in charge of them: "a commotion ensues!". The 9.5mm extract comes from reel 2 where "Lloyd Hamilton must adjust to his first night in a Pullman sleeper". If all this sounds very like Harry Langdon's LUCK OF THE FOOLISH made for Mack Sennett the same year, the gags in the 9.5mm Lloyd Hamilton reel at least, are completely different. GOING EAST incidentally was released four months before the Langdon short.



The 9.5mm reel I have is all gags with none of this plot in sight. It's actually missing a minute or so at the beginning, so starts with Hamilton's dog getting covered in feathers, then joining him in his train berth, much to his disapproval. This jumps to a lengthy scene with Ham and dog sitting beside each other, sneezing alternately. Nothing else happens and I can't explain why this is funny, but if you're a Lloyd Hamilton fan, believe me it is. Next he's trying to sleep, disrupted by a group of kids who seem to keep appearing from in, on or around his bed. Having been dragged away by their mother (a Sunshine Hart type, although it's not her.) he's disturbed again, this time by a midget with toothache, pacing up and down in the berth above. Lloyd swaps berths with him. Incidentally, I can't identify any of the visible supporting players; Anthony Balducci quotes regular series cast members Ruth Hiatt and Dick Sutherland as appearing, but neither are seen here. Lastly Lloyd's dog changes carriages (presumably he can't get any sleep either), gets tangled in a sheet and so scares a black porter (surprise!) whose bed the dog has commandeered. Cue frantic dog and porter chase through the train corridors. The porter seeks refuge by climbing onto the train roof and ends up on top of the locomotive; the driver gives a blast on the whistle and the porter is propelled off onto the ground below. The end.

'GOING EAST'

Educational 2 reels

This is one of Lloyd Hamilton's best short comedies and that is saying something. It shows as much care in preparation and directing as the average feature. A sleeping car is the scene of the greatest action and many of the stunts are side-splitting.

Lloyd decides to leave home and travel east. As he is about to get into his berth, a woman in the next berth asks him to permit several of her children to sleep with him. Five youngsters crawl into the berth and start eating crackers. Lloyd's expressions during the party are good. At last the children go to sleep and a detective boards the train with two convicts on their way to Sing-Sing. Lloyd is deputized to help guard them and more action ensues. Finally he finds a skunk along the track and brings it into the car, under the impression that it is a silver fox. The trainmen cut his car from the train and leave him on a siding in sole possession of the sleeper.

You can book this picture and give it good advertising.

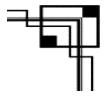
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All good stuff, this abridged version plays rather like a Robert Youngson sampler and has the same effect, making you long to see the complete comedy. Sometimes Pathé would issue several extracts from the same film on 9.5mm, and these could be pieced together to make up a more complete version (Harold Lloyd's AMONG THOSE PRESENT and Chaplin's PAY DAY are examples.) It doesn't seem to have happened in this case - but as quite a few of these 9.5mm releases are still to be identified, you never know. ..

Thanks for sharing, Dave! It may only be a few minutes of footage, but when so much of Hamilton's work is missing, this still constitutes a worthy find. Here's hoping more of the short turns up one day. If the Exhibitor's Trade Herald review at left is to be believed, it's a lot of fun!

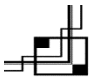
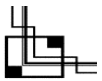


A TRIP TO JOYLAND



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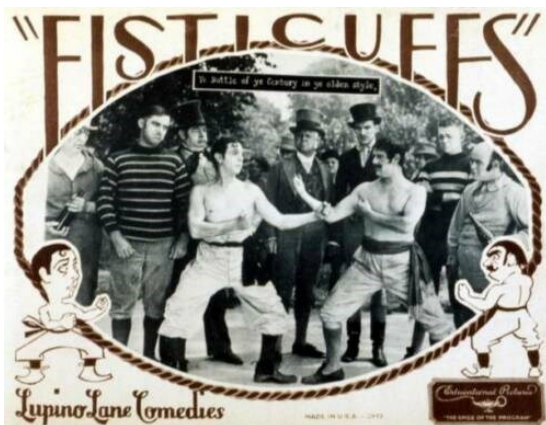
LUPINO LANE



The recent release of a new Lupino Lane DVD & Blu-Ray set has put the 'Half Pint Hero' back in the spotlight. To celebrate, the next few pages contain a review of the new collection, a chat with its architect Dave Glass, and some other features on the little comic everyone knew as 'Nip'.

Last issue included details of a successful Lupino Lane Kickstarter run by Dave Glass and Dave Wyatt. Despite the pandemic, the project has seen completion, and it's a fantastic release! Included on the Blu Ray/DVD are 8 of Lane's classic short films, including some incredibly rare ones that I've longed to see for years. The project has been a remarkable work of coordination and restoration, involving a slew of archives, musicians and film collectors, not to mention Lane's granddaughter Sara Lupino Lane, who shared memories of her granddad 'Nip'. I've been honoured to contribute to the project in my own little way, conducting an interview with Sara and writing notes for the accompanying booklet.

Some of these films haven't been widely seen for many years. The rarest of these films are FISTICUFFS, JOY LAND and FIRE PROOF. FISTICUFFS is a comedy set in the 1830s, "when people could still remember how bad the good old days were", and is based around a village blacksmith where Nip is the apprentice, and his brother Wallace an amateur boxer. There is some funny slapstick business with hot horseshoes and a great little scene of Nip in drag, wearing a hoop skirt that he can't quite control. Wallace is kidnapped before the fight and so Nip takes his place, resulting in a string of original boxing gags. As with many of Lane's best scenes, the boxing sequence is as much choreographed as directed - the laughs all come from intricately timed falls and funny body movements. It's also a surprise to see Chaplin's ally Albert Austin turn up as one of the boxing seconds (his only appearance in a Lane film, to my knowledge). A really fun little film that it's great to have after many years in obscurity.



JOY LAND contains an iconic sequence of Lane diving in and out of trapdoors; this has been excerpted, but the rest of the film has seldom been seen. Would the rest of the film live up to its reputation based on the trapdoor scene? Absolutely! The first scene of Nip at work in a toy shop is full of some excellent material, particularly another classic pantomime routine where he and Wallace find themselves sharing two pairs of trousers, creating confusion as they try to work out who the third leg belongs to! There are also some good gags with bratty child Jackie Levine and his mother. In the second reel, Lane dreams himself into the Toy Land setting - what is really nice about the sequence is the way details from the first reel like toys, dolls, masks and characters reoccur in Nip's fantasy. The marvellous trapdoor sequence is much longer than the excerpts we've seen, with pursuit by Bonzo the Dog adding extra complications! (In our interview, Sara Lupino Lane revealed the detail that this was actually George Atterbury, a live-in companion of the Lanes who Nip had trained to work in an animal skin). JOY LAND absolutely exceeded my expectations and might be my favourite Lane film of all.



Also much better than expected was FIRE PROOF, one of only four talkie shorts Lane made. The others that I've seen are a little clunky and dialogue-heavy, but this one was really good for a 1929 sound short. There's dialogue humour added, but Lane's acrobatics are present, including a brilliant moment where he does a step-and-somersault from off a fire engine. The tumbles are presented smoothly, and don't sound clompy, as in many early sound films - Lane's light-footed gymnastic training obviously paid off in this respect. Fired from the force, Nip sets out to start his own fire brigade. The firefighting theme and antique fire engine he uses were both seen earlier in the silent A HALF-PINT HERO, but this is definitely not a remake, with an entirely different set of gags! Among them is a very Laurel & Hardy-like sequence where Nip and Wallace indulge in

some clothes ripping tit-for-tat. Lots of fun, and made me wish that Lane had stuck around for another season or two of talkie shorts.

The other films were more familiar to me, although several of them like SUMMER SAPS contain extra footage usually missing. Dave Glass has used multiple sources to make the most complete versions possible, a real labour of love. HELLO SAILOR and SWORD POINTS were already among my favourite Lane shorts, but now are even more enjoyable.

All the films look astonishingly good, especially GOOD NIGHT NURSE, which has elements of a 35mm nitrate print saved from destruction just in time and looks gorgeous. The detail is so great that you can read posters on the wall, see the dimple in Nip's chin and spot Muriel Evans smiling in the background as he does a gag. Particularly for obscure, hitherto unrestored films like the Lane comedies, most of my viewing experience has previously consisted of blurry images running too fast accompanied by indifferent ragtime piano on a maddening loop. While Lane's astonishing stunts and acrobats can survive even this, the intricacies of the individual gags and his smaller-scale charms can be lost unless seen in good quality prints. Although I was already a Lupino Lane devotee, I came away with a whole new appreciation for his pantomime talents and skill at facial expression.

GOOD NIGHT NURSE and BATTLING SISTERS are two cases in point; I always thought of these as two comparatively weaker shorts. Actually, I'd just seen dreadful copies of them. Now, in these beautiful versions I appreciated all sort of gags and nuances in a new way. The pantomime business between Nip and Wallace in GOOD NIGHT NURSE, especially, is really great. The first reel has some intricately timed prop business involving a cane chair, a bowler hat, a watch and a stethoscope. How wonderful it must have been to see them do this kind of thing live on stage! Seeing it in this quality is the next best thing though.

The exemplary musical accompaniment from Meg Morley, Neil Brand and Donald Mackenzie further enhances enjoyment of the films. Their scores are just perfect, and it's great to have a choice of organ or piano for each title.

Lastly, there are extra features, including some candid footage of Lane and our interview with Sara Lupino Lane. Sara was very kind and generous in sharing both her time and memories of her Grandad and family; we had a wonderful visit and came away with some terrific stories and facts that I don't believe were previously known. Dave Glass has done a great job of intercutting the interview with some film clips and shots of Sara's memorabilia and family scrapbooks.

As a huge fan of Lupino Lane who had a bit of involvement in the project, I'm obviously a bit biased but I think this is a simply wonderful collection that shows off this wonderful performer in the quality he deserves. An amazing effort from Messrs Glass and Wyatt. I hope you've all ordered a copy!



ONE THAT GOT AWAY!

One film that didn't quite make it onto the Lupino Lane set was HARD WORK, starring his brother Wallace. I lucked into an 8mm print of this very rare short a few years back. It was hoped to include it on the DVD set as an extra, but this print isn't the best quality, and we weren't able to find a 16mm copy in time. Now you can enjoy it for free on Dave Glass' YouTube channel; I've also included that video in this issue's YouTube Playlist.



Wallace was a capable comic and made quite a few starring films, but only two or three survive. I believe HARD WORK was the only one to be issued on 8mm (possibly derived from Mogull Films' 16mm print, the sole Lupino title they carried). I certainly wasn't expecting to see it turn up on eBay. The print was anonymously labelled as 'Wallace Lupino/Charlie Chase'; I took a punt and it turned out to contain both HARD WORK and Chase's STOLEN GOODS on the same reel. A bargain for £5.00 GBP! The print isn't the best quality ever, but it's a nice little rarity that helps add to our appreciation of this very underrated performer.

BRINGING BACK LUPINO: A Q & A WITH DAVE GLASS

Silent comedy collector, expert, and the man behind the newly restored Lupino Lane films: Dave Glass kindly filled us in with some details on the process of producing this fabulous release.



Hi Dave. Thanks for agreeing to answer some questions! Firstly, how did your passion for silent comedy come about? Were there particular films or performers that hooked you in?

My earliest memories are getting up super early on Christmas Day morning... not to open my presents though, but to watch the Robert Youngson films the BBC were showing. (I suppose this must have been around the mid-60s?). I fondly remember the MAD MOVIES series with Bob Monkhouse. For some reason the comedian that stuck in my brain from that series was Lloyd Hamilton, although since watching a number of the MAD MOVIE shows since, he hardly seems to appear much at all!

Later, I fondly recall Michael Bentine and the GOLDEN SILENTS programme, although I remember thinking at the time "Why does he feature Keaton SO much!". I must have already been wanting to discover the lesser known comedians!

Why did you pick Lupino Lane for this project?

After doing the Lloyd Hamilton DVD, David Wyatt and I discussed a few options for our second release but we kept coming back to Lupino Lane. Mainly because 1) he was British 2) he was often remembered for ME AND MY GIRL and not for his incredible comedies of the 20s and, 3) his films have only been available in poor quality prints, so we wanted to do him justice and help people to fully appreciate his skills.

There are a great set of films on the set from archives all over the world. How did you go about getting access to the films?

We started by looking at what films we had ourselves. DW had a few on 16mm but we thought we could do better. I made a spreadsheet list of his films and then researched which of those were already available on the home "video" market and what films of his existed in the film archives of the world. It was also around this time that we both visited the Mostly Lost event at the Library of Congress in June 2019 and met up with Eric Grayson, who was thinking of doing a similar Kickstarter himself, so we agreed he should do his first. In the meantime, we casually contacted Serge Bromberg and told him of our plans and then met up with him at Pordenone later that year, where we also chatted with Patrick Stanbury and Elif from the Eye Filmmuseum about their possible involvement too, as well as Rob Stone (Library of Congress). The negotiation seeds were being sown! After returning, Eric Grayson then told me he'd had a few problems with the prints he'd been working on and said we should go ahead with our project first. So we did!

Can you talk us through the restoration work you had to do with the shorts? Were there any particularly tricky films to work with?

All of the films needed a fair amount of restoration work and, in some cases, reconstruction. Although the two 35mm scans from the EYE Filmmuseum (HELLO SAILOR & GOOD NIGHT NURSE) looked great, there were jumbled scenes in one and missing footage in both. The four prints from Serge had their own special needs too. Three of them were French prints and therefore needed their inter-titles translated. One of these – JOYLAND – also needed a lot of restoration work and had missing footage. This film was a particular treasure in my eyes, as it contained so much of the trap door work that Lupino was renowned for. Thankfully, we knew that the Library of Congress had another almost complete print, albeit a battered old 16mm. (We'd managed to view it whilst visiting the LoC in 2019), so this helped to fill in the gaps of the French print. So, in terms of man hours, that films restoration required the most amount of time.

Do you have a favourite among the films on the set?

I love all the films very much, especially JOYLAND which I'd almost given up on being able to see complete. However, the film that still makes me chuckle and I admire the most is actually SUMMER SAPS. Again, this was a film we only thought existed in a 1 reel cut-down, so to discover that Serge had a complete



print was a thrill. The way the film is structured, the frustrations LL suffers (that we identify with!) and the appropriately amusing piano accompaniment from Meg Morley all contribute to make it an hilarious comedy in my eyes (and ears!)

Did you make any new discoveries about LL through working on the project, or find something new to appreciate about his films? What are you most pleased with about the project?

One of the unexpected bonuses from working on this project, was when Lupino's only grandchild, Sara, reached out to us after hearing about (and pledging!) toward the Kickstarter appeal. This then developed into an opportunity to meet up with her at her home (along with David Wyatt and Matthew Ross) and film an interview to be included as an "extra" on the disc. This was a real honour and a thrill and became the "icing on the cake" for the project as a whole.

Have you got any plans to do any more DVDs/Blu-Rays like this in the future?

Having spent so much time on this during 2020 (thanks, COVID!), in many ways it became more than a labour of love, so it was particularly gratifying when the first messages of feedback began to arrive. Both David Wyatt and I have been thrilled with the response and we only hope we can match the success with any other projects we end up producing. On that subject.... "watch this space"!

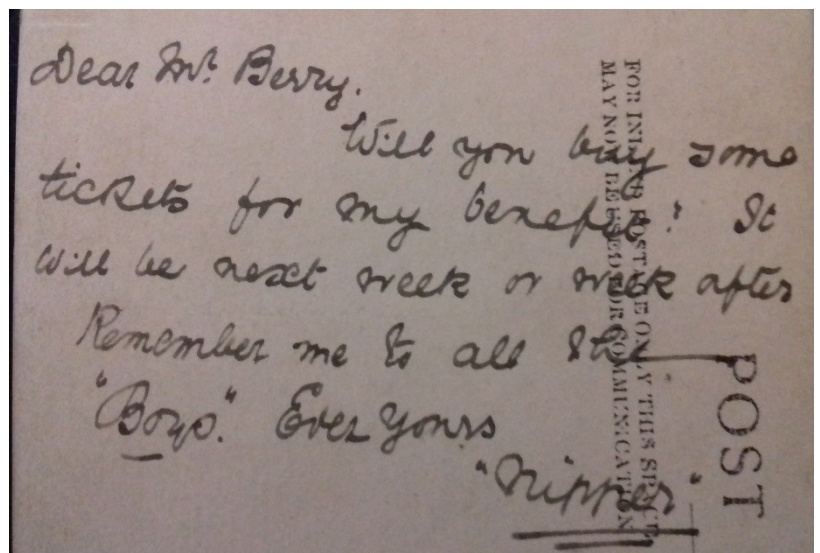
Thanks to Dave for the great insights into the restoration process. Don't forget to check out Dave's YouTube channel for lots of rare silent comedy gems! www.youtube.com/daveglass

5 things we learned from our chat with Sara Lupino Lane...

1. During their time in America, the Lane family frequently spent weekends on Catalina Island. Sara's dad Lauri remembered a fishing trip with Stan Laurel, where Stan helped remove a fish hook from his hand.
2. Lane was a keen hobbyist, and applied himself to his interests with the same gusto as his career. At one point, he tried growing mushrooms in his disused air raid shelter!
3. There was another member of the Lane household! George Atterbury was a dwarf hired by Lane to play in a dog costume; he formed such a bond with the family that he lived with them for the rest of his life. He can be seen in two films on this set: JOY LAND and FIRE PROOF.
4. On retiring from acting, Wallace Lupino and his wife took over an Essex pub, The Wooden Fender. It's still open today.
5. Among her grandfather's most treasured possessions were a snuffbox and cane originally owned by the great pantomime clown Grimaldi.



Here's one more bit of Lupino Lane memorabilia from my collection. This postcard, dating from around the turn of the century, has been hand signed by young "Nipper", and includes a note imploring the recipient to buy tickets for his show.





NIP'S TOP TIPS

When we look back on silent comedy, music hall and vaudeville, many of the performers and their methods now seem vague and penumbral. Though film has preserved the memory of some performances, their working methods and 'trade secrets' have been largely lost to us. Few performers were interviewed in depth, and these interviews seldom went into detail about the mechanics of their comedy.

This general lack of information makes Lupino Lane's instructional book HOW TO BECOME A COMEDIAN all the more remarkable. There are few examples of a silent comic quite so openly sharing and explaining their bag of tricks. Lane lived for comedy, and dreamed of opening a school for young comedians. He never achieved that goal, but the book, published in 1945, was the next best thing. The writing style now seems quaint and dated, but charmingly so, as Lane goes through some of his comic methods, interspersed with anecdotes and memories from his career. Straight from the horse's mouth, here are Lupino Lane's top tips for comedic success!



TIMING IS THE KEY TO COMEDY

"In all branches of comedy, Timing is the most important factor. With comedy, I feel the laughs should be tackled, like a surf-bather. You should catch the crest of the wave at the right time or you will never get home successfully. It's also like riding a bike up a hill and finding another hill in front, as you go over the top of the first one you give yourself enough impetus to free-wheel over the top of the second one".

Be warned that "a man or woman who talks too much is the perfect example of bad timing. So work on the lines that "Brevity is the soul of wit".

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

One of the main things that Lane is remembered for today are his remarkable falls and acrobatics. Given his phenomenal skill, the chapter entitled 'Funny Falls' is a bit like Rembrandt giving tips to someone using a paint-by-numbers kit. I especially love the diagrams which show the stages of each pratfall, so that you can try them yourself! It's probably just as well that Lane includes the disclaimer that "you must not hold me responsible if you get a basin-full"!

While I won't be attempting a 108 fall or a Twist Round The Neck anytime soon, it is absolutely fascinating to read Lane's tips for avoiding injury, and for how to make a fall look convincing: "it must be through apparent carelessness, mishap, absentmindedness or misadventure. Remember that the business that makes the fall funny also makes it dangerous, for the fall must give the appearance of hurting the performer.

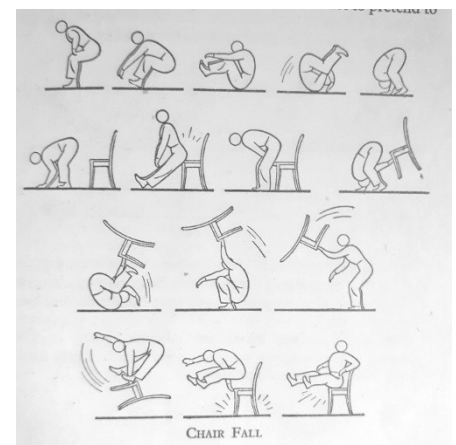
You must learn to avoid the jar that affects the nervous system and organs which are in line and through which the jar is transmitted [...] a drunken man seldom hurts himself because his body relaxes at the moment he touches the floor."

The master of acrobatic comedy's closing words on the subject? "Remember to LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP!"

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

With falls and acrobatics, as well as juggling, and comic tricks, a large amount of practice is key to perfecting them. However, Lane's advice to the student is "not to practice a trick too often. You are liable to get disheartened, get sick of it, and give up. A little practice and often is the best method and when you have finally achieved the proper result, stop; give yourself a rest. This will intrigue you to start again later.

He also points out that "You must be the master of a trick before taking liberties with it".



When IKEA instructions go wrong!
The illustrations of how to take a pratfall included in the book make it look so simple!

STUDY CHARACTERS CLOSELY

Throughout his stage and film career, Lane burlesqued lots of different characters, reaching an apotheosis in the 1929 short *ONLY ME*, where he played twenty four different roles! His brother Wallace frequently essayed multiple and varying parts too, from heavy, to old man, to matron. To help them achieve their skill in burlesquing different characters, they found that *“character and dialect comedy relies on close study of mannerisms. The lighting of a pipe or cigarette can mean so much to a character whilst ruminating. Patience and care of detail is essential.”*

He particularly recommends studying the characteristic walk of a character. In female impersonation, he reminds us that *“the stance of the female is totally different from the male, the stride and walk much smaller and the legs closer together”*.

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CHOOSE A PARTNER WISELY

“To perform a double act successfully, each performer has to study the other and know exactly how to reply and behave. This is only possible with close association, and it means that there must be a close bond of comradeship and affection.”

Lane was lucky in having such a partner in his films: his brother Wallace. The pair had an uncanny, almost telepathic timing that could only have come from their close relationship. They also share a special Lupino body language that was obviously part of the family training. Both have a certain way of reacting - a flickering glance here, a brief surprised opening of the mouth there - that is unique to them and very amusing.

Lane’s final word on the subject of double acts was *“before picking a partner, remember it’s like picking a wife – for better or worse!”*

DON’T BE SCARED TO USE AN OLD GAG.

“Like the old soldier, old gags never die,” says Lane, *“they fade away into a new version.”* He illustrates with examples of how traditional pantomime routines have been adapted and become staples of stage and film comedy – a key aspect of his own silent comedies. He also deals with verbal humour, including unexpected punchlines for familiar gags, and how different performers use comebacks and retorts to squeeze laughs out of “old friends”. Interestingly, he shares a theory that Charley Chase also told one interviewer: a new generation every seven years creates a new audience for old material. Lane: *“Some of the older generation may sneer, but they more often enjoy hearing the youngsters laughing at gags that they once got a kick out of.”*

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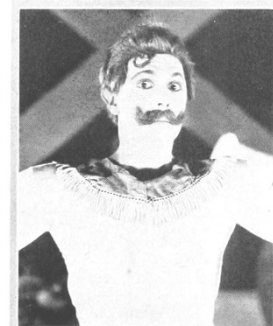


Whether the reader has comic aspirations or not, this little book is a highly entertaining read! The illustrations by Cecil Orr add extra appeal, and include some charming little caricatures of Lane. My only wish is that the book was even longer, but perhaps the author was sticking to his own personal code: *“It’s better to have your audience sorry you stopped than sorry you carried on”*.

There are many more delights to be had in HOW TO BECOME A COMEDIAN. It’s long out of print, but does surface on eBay, and I was lucky enough to find mine in a second hand bookshop several years ago, so copies are out there. Good hunting!



COYNESS—The Damsel.



BRAWN—The Acrobat



Photographs by Educational.
INNOCENCE—The Old Fashioned Girl.

SCENES FROM A ONE-MAN SHOW
Lupino Lane in a Few of the Twenty-four Parts
He Plays in *Only Me*, Which Suggests a Clever
Idea for Amateur Adaption.

Lane’s character studies reached apotheosis in ONLY ME, where he played 24 parts! Here are three of them.

QUEEN OF ACES!

THE STORY OF



Of the precious few female comedians given a chance to star in their own films, Wanda Wiley is one of the most obscure. Sadly, 99% of her short comedies are now missing, but those that remain reveal a very likeable performer who gets stuck into some wonderful physical and visual comedy.

Most of the previous female comics were eccentric, rural types – eternal spinsters like gangly Gale Henry, gingham-clad Louise Fazenda, or the manic Kewpie-doll Alice Howell. These women were wonderful performers, but their comedies were becoming outdated in the more sophisticated 1920s. As tastes changed, their opportunities were to be found by scrubbing up to appear in light comedy features (Fazenda) or in supporting roles (Henry, Howell).

In the field of shorts, they were replaced by more believable characters who reflected urban life of the Jazz-age. Wanda Wiley was very much one of these 1920s women. She was attractive and fashionable, but not just a leading lady; she was a motivator of her plots and always at the centre of the action. Her comic equipment included long limbs that sprawled in different directions as she ran, and a wide-eyed, startled look as action swirled around her. Something about Wanda seems to leap off the screen. Game for anything, she engaged in dangerous stunts and slapstick with vigour, usually without a double.

Her talent at physical comedy is particularly remarkable considering that she did not come from a stage background and had only been in films a year or so before being starred. Wanda was born Roberta Prestina Wiley in 1902, and was originally from San Antonio, Texas. She actually planned on becoming a dentist, and it was apparently while at Dental College that a film crew at work on the campus spotted her. Allegedly, Wanda was asked to give the director a tour of the campus, and wound up with a part in his Western.¹

Wiley's next appearances seem to have been in Universal's 'Leatherpushers' series, a boxing serial. This tallies with a 1925 interview she did for *Movie Monthly*:

She was telling me the other day about her stunts. When she broke into the game, barely a year and a half ago, she was given a boxing scene in which she had to suffer a prompt and inglorious knockout. Wanda took her tap on the chin, but in falling added some funny business which set everyone to laughing.

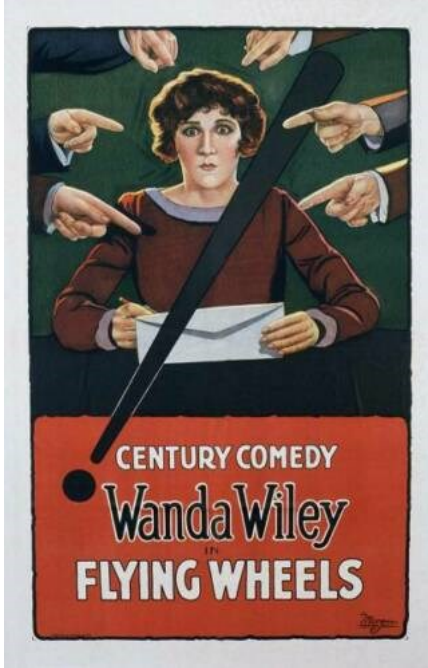
This talent led her to Universal's Century Comedies, made by Abe and Julius Stern. Wanda made her first appearance among the Century Follies Girls and as leading lady to Harry McCoy. Her parts then became increasingly prominent; her first featured role was in *HER FORTUNATE FACE*, and after several more shorts she was launched in her own dedicated series.

Jess Robbins was hired to direct the films, alternating with William Watson and Edward Luddy. The titles of the shorts leave no doubt about their comedic style: *A THRILLING ROMANCE*, *A SPEEDY MARRIAGE*, *FLYING WHEELS*, *JUST IN TIME*... these were fast-paced comedies, often featured Wanda in a race to meet some kind of deadline. As one exhibitor put it, "When Wanda plays, you can always expect some speedy entertainment!"²

A SPEEDY MARRIAGE is a good example. It turned up several years ago at the Danish Film Institute and was available to view

¹. One alternate story in *Universal Weekly* is that Rudolph Valentino himself picked her out of a Texas beauty competition, but that has the distinct whiff of PR puffery to me.

². According to the theatre owner of the Royal Theatre in Kimball, South Dakota, anyway. Quoted in *The Exhibitor's Herald*, April 28th, 1928.



Scenes from Wanda's peak period: lobby cards for *SWEET DREAMS* and *FLYING WHEELS*, and two attractive posters.

for a short time on their website. The action begins immediately, as Wanda is thrown out of bed by an electrical device, and then struck by lightning! Her lawyer (Hugh Sax-on) phones to tell her that she must be married by 5 o'clock to collect an inheritance. She makes a date with her fiancé, and drives madly to meet him, pursued by traffic cops. After dodging them in and out of manholes and a toy shop, Wanda meets her man and speeds off, but they collide with another car. Fortunately, the other occupant is a minister so the speedy marriage takes place and all ends happily!

Only the climactic second reel of *FLYING WHEELS* exists, but it again involves a car chase. This time, Wanda dashes across town in a miniature racing car in a fine and thrilling slapstick sequence.

A THRILLING ROMANCE is a clever little short, with Wanda as a budding novelist; we open on her typing away in a room filled with her rejected manuscripts and scrunched up drafts. When an open window sends the paper flying to litter the entire boarding house, she is evicted. Slipping on her way out, Wanda rolls down the stairs wrapped in the carpet and right out on to the street – narrowly missing being run over by Earl McArthur's taxi. Helping her up, Earl is so busy gazing into her eyes that he fails to notice his cab rolling away. Wanda has her own troubles, as a dog climbs into her grip and runs away inside it. Wanda's pursuit leads her across town, and along the way she accidentally comes into possession of a crook's bankroll. With the crooks in pursuit, she summons Earl's help, leading to a car chase that ends up on a cliff top. Just as Wanda and Earl are hurled off the edge, the scene dissolves back into Wanda's flat; the action has all been the latest story she is typing.

QUEEN OF ACES is rather different, mainly substituting farce for thrills. This time, we open with Wanda engaging in a bout of fencing (apparently a real-life hobby). She is considered too much of a tomboy by her boyfriend Al's father, and he bans her from attending a party he is throwing. Undeterred, she dresses up as a man, and makes such a hit at the party that Dad invites her to a wild night at a gambling den. When the police raid, the pair hide in a pair of barrels that ultimately tumble from the roof! When they make it home, the father insists that (s)he spend the night in his son's room: Wanda and Al are reunited.

Sadly, the handful of films discussed above are almost all we have to judge her on for now. Century/Universal silent comedies are scarce, and Wanda Wiley's films are no exception. However, Kodascope catalogues of the 1940s confirm that several other of her shorts, including *PAINLESS PAIN*, *YEARNING FOR LOVE* and *GOING GOOD*, were available in 16mm rental prints, so there is hope yet that one or two of these may turn up.

Certainly, synopses and stills of her other films show that the pattern of the shorts was continued. *LOOKING DOWN* sounds like a fun little comedy, featuring Wanda's attempts to ride an out-of-control bicycle (With a policeman on the handlebars!) before indulging in some Lloyd-type stunting on a half-built skyscraper. It wasn't just Lloyd's work that was revisited in the Wiley comedies; several of them reused plots of male comedian's films. To name a couple of examples, Keaton's *THE GOAT* provided the rough plotline of *THERE SHE GOES*, Langdon's *THE SEA SQUAWK* became *HER LUCKY LEAP*, and *PLAYING THE SWELL* reworked Harold Lloyd's crumbling tuxedo from *THE FRESHMAN*. Charley Chase once posited that a comedian could come up with a fresh approach by basing stories or personality on a comic with a very different appearance. Presumably, Robbins and the Century crew had a similar idea, figuring that reworking these proven stories to a female perspective would provide something new and fresh. It would certainly be interesting to see these shorts for comparison.

Whatever the plot, action and stunting were the chief features of the Wiley comedies, and she did the majority of her stunts herself. According to *Movie Monthly's* interviewer, Wanda "balances her body by instinct, and that's all there is to it, she says"!

There were times when her instinct let her down, though. She was once thrown off a

motorbike, but luckily escaped serious injuries. Her worst accident came during the filming of PRESENT ARMS. Universal Weekly reported that “Miss Wiley was riding her mount [...] when it became frightened by the noise of a big wind machine on a nearby set, and bolted, throwing the young star to the ground and injuring her so painfully that it was found necessary to take her the hospital. The doctors found that she had sustained a severely sprained ankle and a fracture of the right arm”.

The experience didn't seem to dampen her spirit, and she was soon back at work. Wiley's game nature continued to doing stunts off the set, too! Photos and press reports exist from a publicity stunt staged in New York in 1925, as she engaged in stunts with moving cars and lorries along Broadway, Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street to promote a Free Milk Fund event at Yankee Stadium.

Despite mainly positive reviews, Wanda's star began to slip after two series of films. For 1926 -27, her films were not billed as star comedies in the same way. Instead, they came under the rather bland umbrella title of the “What Happened to Jane?” comedies.



The move to the rebrand the series was the first step downwards in Wiley's career. It made her less of a focus not only in billing, but also in material; as the 'Jane' series went on, more and more of the comedy was devoted to her male co-stars. Motion Picture News noted that THANKS FOR THE BOAT RIDE was “more about what happened to Al than what happened to Jane”, a comment echoed by exhibitors in the trades. One noted that, “The other performers do the work to get the laughs. If it was up to her there wouldn't be any”, while another lamented that she was now dolled up in pretty dresses instead of doing stunts. It seems curious that, after establishing Wanda as a star, Century would seek to anonymise her in this way. Wiley's gags and stunts were her unique selling point, after all. At the very least, it would have made much more sense (and sounded better) to call the series “What Happened to Wanda?”. However, if you look at the Stern Brothers' other comedies of the time, a pattern becomes apparent: the focus was on making series, not stars. ‘The Newlyweds and Their Baby’ and ‘Let George Do It’ focused on characters and brands rather than star personalities. The advantage for the Sterns was that these characters could be played by different actors. It offered them a way to control stars' demands, and to easily replace them if they got out of hand.³ ‘Jane’ could be played by any actress.

It seems probable that Wanda was unsatisfied with this treatment; she left Century in Autumn of 1926. It's also possible that a hiatus in production caused by a fire at the Stern Bros studios caused her to seek opportunities elsewhere. Thelma Daniels, who had worked at Sennett, was called in to replace her in the 'Jane' films.

Now at Bray Comedies, Wanda appeared in several episodes of the ‘Fistical Culture’ series, which burlesqued “our modern fad for so-called physical improvement of every kind; the effort of the fat to become thin, the thin to get fat, of the weak to become strong, the tall to become short, etc”. Sadly, she soon found that her appearances at Bray were equally subordinate to male stars like Lew Sargent, and before long she gave up on the series. Her disappearance from the screen may also have been hastened by narrowly escaping a house fire in June of 1927. Meanwhile, the 'Jane' series limped on, but Thelma Daniels didn't last long, and an assortment of other minor comediennes like Ethelyn Clare and Marjory Marcel replacing her for JANE'S SLEUTH and other entries.

By early 1928, Wanda was reported to be hitting vaudeville, so often the agonal breath of a film comic's career. This was no exception; she quickly faded from the limelight, and the coming of sound extinguished her career for good.

The big shame is that Wanda Wiley never got a chance to work for Hal Roach. Her flair for physical comedy grounded in a realistic personality would have slotted right in to the studio. In fact, around the time she was cast loose from films, Roach was just experimenting with the female comedy team of Anita Garvin & Marion Byron. Wanda's colleague from Century, Edna Marian, had some good chances at Roach before budget cuts let her go – in a parallel universe, perhaps Wiley & Marian could have been teamed. With their combined skill at comedy and contrasting appearances, they could have had excellent potential.

Such a team was doomed to exist only in my head. Despite some vague reports of Wanda planning a screen comeback in 1933, she never made another film. However, she did marry a noted physician, Dr Atkinson, and lived on until the 1980s, so at least her story has a happy ending. We can only hope that more of her wonderful little shorts resurface one day. Those that do exist are genuinely funny comedies, and an all-too-rare breath of fresh air from the male-dominated world of silent comedy.

3. A notable example of this trick was seen in the HALL ROOM BOYS series, which featured a revolving door policy on comedy leads – Al Alt, Jimmie Adams, Harry McCoy, Sid Smith, George Williams and Zip Monberg all featured at various times and in various combinations.

A WANDA WILEY FILMOGRAPHY.

The following list is of the short films Wanda Wiley starred in. Prior to appearing in these, she appeared at least one film of 'The Leather Pushers' series, probably **BIG BOY BLUE**, filmed in January 1924. Dates in brackets are release dates according to various trade magazines. Nearly all the films are lost; only those denoted with * survive.

Nb. In at least her first four or five appearances, she was billed as 'Waunda Wiley'

1924

SAILOR MAIDS (June 11th)

D: Al Herman. With Joe Bonner, William Irving Jr.

Wanda is one of the 'Century Follies Girls' in this short. The girls are trapped in a packing case and loaded onto a ship, where they disguise themselves as sailors... it could happen.

Nb. Motion Picture News and Universal Weekly makes a couple of references to Wanda appearing in this film – her first in a Century comedy - but all other studio publicity refers to the following film being her first. Perhaps the role was so small in this that they later forgot about/discounted it. The working title for this short was WATER WAVES.

HER FORTUNATE FACE (Jul 12th or Aug 6th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Harry McCoy, Hilliard Karr.

Harry hires thief Wanda as a maid to prove that the proper environment will reform a criminal. *Nb. though release dates vary, all studio reports call this Wanda's first starring film, so the earlier date is probably correct.*

STARVING BEAUTIES (Jul 19th)

D: Edward Luddy. With Joe Bonner & the Century Follies Girls

Wanda and her troupe of chorus girls are locked in their boarding house for non-payment of rent. They fake a house fire to escape, and are pursued by the adlady and cops.

HER CITY SPORT (Jul 23rd)

D: Charles Lamont. With Harry McCoy & Hilliard Karr

Wanda's relationship with Hilliard is threatened when her big-screen crush arrives on the scene.

NB. This was Charles Lamont's first film as director. Working title: THE FARMYARD FLAPPER

THE TROUBLE FIXER (Sept 24th)

D: Al Herman. With Al Alt, Harry McCoy.

Wanda helps her neighbour out by posing as his wife when the boss comes to dinner. Trouble is, she can't cook a meal to save her life...

Working title: MISS FIXIT

SNAPPY EYES (Oct 11th)

D: Al Herman. With Harry McCoy, Al Alt.

Wanda is caught between two suitors: one in the country and one in the city.

SOME TOMBOY (Oct 22nd)

D: Edward I Luddy. With Harry McCoy, Al Alt.

Wanda is an ace on the baseball field!

SWEET DREAMS (Nov 5th).

D: Edward I Luddy. With Harry McCoy, Spec O' Donnell.

Artist's model Wanda falls in love with Harry McCoy. When he is forced to marry another, she races to stop the wedding.

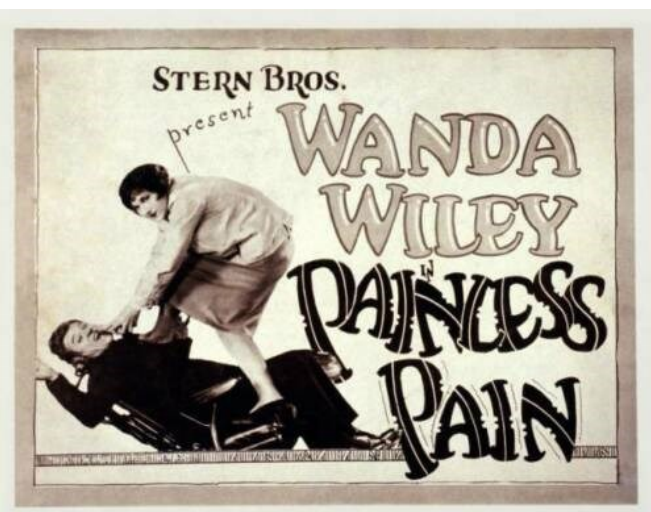
Nb. Working title: HER BRIDEGROOM. Production of this film was interrupted due to the death of Harry McCoy's mother.

PRESENT ARMS (Dec 17th)

D: Edward Luddy. With Al Alt, Hilliard Karr.

Wanda takes her soldier boyfriend's place so that he can be with his ill mother.

Nb. Production was interrupted when Wanda was involved in an accident while riding her horse. The Working title was ON DUTY.



Above left: Former dental student Wanda metes out some treatment in PAINLESS PAIN. Well, they do say that making people laugh can be like pulling teeth... Above right: a scene from LOOKING DOWN. Alas, both films are missing, presumed lost.

1925

The new year brought the official start of Wanda's own starring series. She was top billed in all the following:

LOOKING DOWN (Jan 7th)

D: Jess Robbins. With Al Alt, Joe Moore & Dorothy Vernon.

Wanda has troubles with her bicycle and a skyscraper, and repeatedly falls foul of a vamp and a policeman.

Working title: UP IN THE AIR

NOBODY'S SWEETHEART (Feb 6th)

D: William Watson. Story by Georges Fouret. With Harry McCoy.

Hungry Wanda sweet-talks a cop into helping her get a free meal... but all does not go to plan!

Working title: NOBODY'S GIRL

DON'T WORRY (March 4th)

D: William Watson. With Hilliard Karr, Max Asher.

Wanda helps her uncle protect his cough drop recipe from the hands of rival company the Smythe Brothers!

GETTING TRIMMED (April 15th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. Story by Georges Fouret

Wanda is a barber's assistant; having lathered a policeman's face in cement, she seeks refuge in various disguises.

QUEEN OF ACES* (May 13th)

D: William Watson. Story: Georges Fouret.

With Al Alt, George Williams. Wanda poses as a man to see her sweetheart Al.

This film exists at the Library of Congress. Working titles: YOU CUTE LITTLE DEVIL, QUEEN OF HEARTS

GRIDIRON GERTIE (June 17th)

D: Edward I. Luddy

Wanda's boyfriend is a football player. When he is kidnapped, she takes his place in a big match.

JUST IN TIME (July 15th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Joe Bonner.

Newspaper reporter Wanda tracks down the editor's son, who has been kidnapped by an oriental gang.

WON BY LAW (Aug 19th)

D: Edward I Luddy. With Bob Reeves, Lillian Worth and Frank Whitson

Wanda is a bored rich girl, so lazy that she sits down to play tennis. She is roused from her apathy when she is sent to the backwoods, and learns to love the outdoor life.

CUPID'S VICTORY (September 30th)

D: Charles Lamont. With Earl McCarthy.

Wanda has difficulties catching a frog that has found its way into the office. She tries to vamp the man she loves and attempts suicide after she fails, but all ends happily.



A scene from QUEEN OF ACES, with frequent co-star Al Alt in a jam.

A WINNING PAIR (October 21st)

D: Charles Lamont

Wanda tries to learn horseback riding to impress a man

GOING GOOD (November 18th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Jack Singleton.

Wanda's boyfriend has made a formula to mix oil and water. The pair have trouble keeping the formula from those who want to steal it, leading to encounters with "bombs, bearded giants, gorillas and ghosts"! Just another day at the office, then...

THE SPEEDY MARRIAGE* (December 30th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Charles King, Hugh Saxon.

With Wanda must be married by 5 o'clock to secure an inheritance. She races across the city, pursued by traffic cops.

This film exists at the Danish Film Institute.

1926

HER LUCKY LEAP (Jan 20th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Joe Bonner.

Wanda is seasick and doesn't notice when thieves hide stolen jewels down the back her dress. On dry land, she foils the thieves after a motorcycle chase. (A reworking of Harry Langdon's THE SEA SQUAWK).

FLYING WHEELS* (March 3rd)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Alfred Hewston, Joe Barnes.

After an unsuccessful morning golfing, Wanda enters and wins a miniature car race.

The second reel of this film exists in private hands, and has been issued on film by Looser Than Loose Publishing.

YEARNING FOR LOVE (March 24th)

D: Edward I. Luddy. With Jack Singleton.

Wanda's Aunt is trying to set her up with a suitor – but Wanda has other ideas: an elopement with the man of her choice!

PAINLESS PAIN (April 21st)

D: Edward I Luddy. With Jack Singleton

Wanda has some novel ideas to help drum up business for her boyfriend's dental surgery.

PLAYING THE SWELL (May 13th)

D: Francis Corby. With Earl McCarthy, Virginia Bushman.

Penniless Wanda poses as a millionaire to impress a man. Invited to a party, she makes herself a dress out of lace curtains - but soon finds it falling apart piece by piece!

TWIN SISTERS (June 7th)

D: Jess Robbins. With Charles King

Country girl Marian and haughty dancer Mollie are twin sisters, both played by Wanda. Confusion between them leads their lovers to a duel.

THERE SHE GOES (June 30th)

D: Jess Robbins

Wannabe dancer Wanda has her photograph mixed up with that of the crooked Chicago Sal. The Law are soon in pursuit...

A THRILLING ROMANCE* (July 24th)

D: Jess Robbins. Story by T Page Wright. With Earl McCarthy, Joe Bonner, Al Hallett.

Would-be-author Wanda spins a tale of stolen jewels, bank-rolls and car chases.

MIXED BRIDES (August 16th)

D: Jess Robbins. With Al Ford.

Bride-to-be Wanda is mistaken for the bride in an arranged marriage; she escapes and marries her proper fiancé in a wedding on a runaway motorcycle and sidecar.

'WHAT HAPPENED TO JANE' SERIES

JANE'S INHERITANCE (September 12th)

D: Sam Newfield. With Al Alt.

Jane's inheritance sees her targeted by a villain who wants to marry her for her money. Her sweetheart Al disguises himself as her to act as a decoy.

JANE'S TROUBLES* (Oct 17th)

D: Sam Newfield.

Jane wants to marry her sweetheart, but her mum and dad both have their own matrimonial candidates in mind...

Exists at the Library of Congress.

JANE'S ENGAGEMENT PARTY (Nov

17th)

D: Sam Newfield. With Tony Hayes.

Tony wants to marry Jane but she is already engaged to a bigamist. Can he stop the wedding in time?

JANE'S PREDICAMENT Dec 15th

D: Sam Newfield. With Earl McCarthy.

Jane and her new husband have their furniture repossessed while they are hosting relatives

1927

JANE'S FLIRTATION Jan 19th 1927

D: Sam Newfield.

Out for a joy-ride, Jane and her chap have trouble with their motor.

THANKS FOR THE BOAT RIDE Feb 16th 1927

D: Sam Newfield.

Misadventures on the San Francisco – Oakland ferry

JANE'S HONEYMOON is sometimes listed as starring Wiley, but actually features Thelma Daniels

'FISTICAL CULTURE' Comedies.

—Made by Bray Comedies, released on States Rights basis.

Wanda appeared as leading lady in the following films. All were directed by Albert Herman, from stories by William Henry Cook, adapted by Joseph Basil. Lewis Sargent was the leading man, with Henry Rocquemore providing support.

THE FIGHTING FOOL (Sept 1926)

PUNCHES & PERFUME ((Oct 1926)

LOOK OUT BELOW (Nov 1926)

BLUE BLACK (Dec 1926)

EVEN UP (Jan 1927)

TRY & DO IT (Feb 1927)

A POLO BEAR (Mar 1927)

THE SPEED HOUND (April 1927)

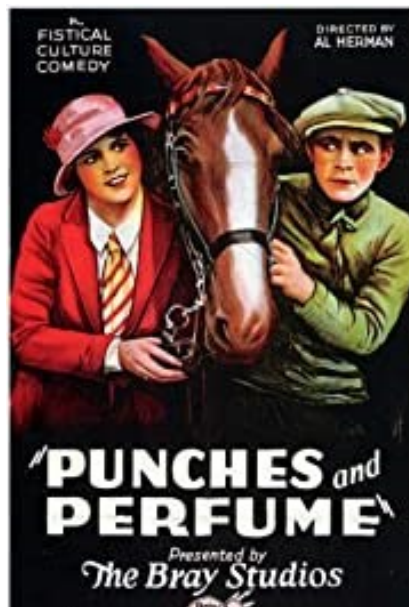
HOT TIRES (May 1927)

I don't believe that Wanda appeared in the following entries:

WEAK KNEES,

LOST IN A PULLMAN,

CUSTARD'S LAST STAND.



Issues of Universal weekly, available at The Media History Digital Library, promoted Wanda heavily as a new discovery. The cover below is from August 1924, and the next two pages reproduce an article about her from the following month.

UNIVERSAL WEEKLY

VOL. 19 NO. 25

AUGUST 2 1924



Introducing *Wanda Wiley*
the new *Century Star* who will be
seen in ~"HER FORTUNATE FACE"
"SNAPPY EYES," "MISS FIX IT," "SWEET DREAMS,"
"A REGULAR GIRL" and "SOME TOMBOY"





Wonderful
Wanda

WANDA WILEY COMES TO SC

Latest Sensational Screen "Find" Intended to Follow Family Calling But Abandoned the Idea for Screen

WANDA WILEY, pictured above, stands as proof that all talent is not hereditary.

Wanda's family has left a notable record in the annals of medical history, and she, quite naturally, decided to add to that record with her own work. Her mother studied dentistry, but gave it up for the nobler work of making a home and raising a family. Her grandfather is a noted surgeon of West Virginia, and her uncle is likewise noted in Texas.

However, Wanda changed her mind about devoting her ability and talent to the medical profession and decided instead to make a strenuous bid for fame on the screen. And it looks now as though she were going to be unusually successful.

After studying at the Texas Women's College she entered the Texas Dental College and was well on her way to a diploma and eventually a "shingle," when it was discovered that she had considerable ability in a histrionic way. It all happened quite unexpectedly as Wanda hadn't even an inkling that she could act and had never given the idea the slightest consideration.

One day, a little less than two years ago, a movie company, making Westerns, came to San Antonio, where the dental college is located, to make some scenes. While there, the director visited one of his friends who is a professor at the college and was invited to visit the institution. Now it so happens that this same director was searching for a particular type of girl to play one of the important roles in the picture he was making, and had been unable to find her. During his visit to the college, Wanda Wiley was asked to show him certain points of interest about which she was familiar, and consequently the director had ample opportunity of getting acquainted with her.

When he was leaving the college he asked Miss Wiley if she would like to play a part

in a motion picture. He had found the type he was looking for in Wanda. Miss Wiley hesitated at first, but as she was about to take a short vacation, she considered the offer and, thinking it would be interesting and diverting, decided to accept.

When the picture was screened her work was found to be so exceptional she was strongly advised to go to Los Angeles and take up the work seriously. This she did on the promise of several roles.

Julius Stern, who is the head of the Century Film Cor-



Scenes from "Some Tomboy," starring Wanda Wiley. Supported by Harry McCoy and Hilliard Karr.



Century's
New Star

REEN FROM DENTAL COLLEGE

Century's Newest Star Has Youth Beauty and Lots of Talent
As Comedienne—Pictures a Big Hit Everywhere

poration, producers of Century Comedies, and who is noted for his keen insight regarding possible starring ability in screen players, saw in her a winning personality and in her work a decidedly new type of comedienne. He wanted her for his own productions, and after considerable negotiations he succeeded in getting her to sign a long term contract with his firm.

For several months she was given minor parts in order that she could become familiar with the comedy school of production. Finally she was given the leading role in a

production and her work was found to be so good and so well adapted to comedy she was made a star. Since the release of this picture, known as "Her Fortunate Face," she has become tremendously popular with the fans wherever the picture has been shown and as a result a series of six two-reel comedies have been made with Wanda Wiley as the star.

The photographs reproduced on these pages, show the unusual versatility of this newest of sensational film finds. In addition to being unusually talented as a comedienne, she has considerable ability as an emotional actress. She can also dance and sing and is able to perform many athletic stunts. Wanda rides a horse with expert horsemanship and has many prizes won at various swimming tournaments. She likes nothing better than to spend her leisure hours with a good book or out in the open country hiking or playing golf.

Miss Wiley has accepted the sudden change from a dental school to a movie lot with her characteristic adaptability and has set about the business of becoming a successful motion picture star in a most business like manner. She studies long and earnestly and is acquiring considerable information necessary to the achievement of her ambition.

On the return to New York of Mr. Stern, now in Europe, it is expected that a series of special two-reelers will be made from short stories written by a well known humorist.

And so we find one screen star who does not spring from a long line of thespians. One star who may be the start of a long line from which some future star may spring, but who can point with pride to the fact that no one but herself is responsible for her histrionic ability. Certainly proficiency in the medical profession cannot be held responsible for proficiency as a comedienne.



Scenes from "Snappy Eyes," starring Wanda Wiley. Supported by Hilliard Karr and Al Alt.

THE WRIGHT IDEA (1928)



A C.C.Burr. Production.

Starring JOHNNY HINES, with Edmund Breese, Louise Lorraine, Fred Kelsey, Walter James, Henry Barrows, Richard Maitland, Henry Hebert, George Irving, Charles Gybling, Bynusky Hyman.

Directed by Charles Hines. Assistant director: Paul Wilkins.

Story by Jack Townley, with 'Comedy Collaborators' Johnny Grey & Rollie Asher.

Photographed by William J Miller & Al Wilson. Edited by George Amy.

Released by First National, 5th August 1928.

Johnny Hines isn't one of your regularly revived silent film comedians, but he made a string of popular independent comedies in the 1920s. A few of these have been released to DVD, but Hines remains obscure. Christopher Bird has recently uncovered a print of a Hines comedy feature not known to exist elsewhere, *THE WRIGHT IDEA*. I was lucky enough to get a peek at this rare comedy, which is perhaps Hines' funniest.

Hines plays inventor Johnny Wright, "who stood behind his luminous, blotter-less ink – but that was all the backing it had". Hearing a commotion outside his house, Johnny intervenes in a fight, knocking out a man who is after Edmund Breese. What he doesn't know is that Edmund is actually an escaped lunatic, and the man he has knocked out was from the asylum.

In silent comedy, an escaped lunatic is always good for some plot contrivances, and this is no exception. Edmund tells Johnny to drive him home in "his" car, where he will reward him. Actually, he's picked an unattended police car, and Johnny can't understand why everyone is saluting him as he drives along! Edmund tells Johnny he is giving him his yacht, *The Sultana* (actually, just a picture he's torn from a magazine). Elated, Johnny drives off and has a collision with Helen (Louise Lorraine). He offers to drive her back to work while her car is repaired. Helen works at the Eureka Chemical company and is in charge of the office while her boss is away. She doesn't know it yet, but she's had some valuable bonds stolen from her handbag. When she discovers the loss, she thinks Johnny must be responsible, and hires Detective Flatt (Fred Kelsey) to get the dirt on him. Kelsey is always good for laughs, and provides many of the film's comic highlights, including a scene where he tries to take Johnny's thumbprint, but actually ends up taking his own.

Flatt convinces Helen to keep in with Johnny and do as he asks, so that they can easily monitor his movements. Meanwhile, Johnny is busy trying to persuade a paper company to invest in his ink. When the manager Mr Smoot tells him that they'll agree terms at *his* office later, he thinks fast and persuades Helen to let him use her office while the boss is gone. He rigs up various ingenious methods to make him seem busy and important, including having the office boy make a big show of writing phoney invitations for a party aboard the *Sultana*. Not intending to send them, Johnny instructs him to address the invitations to random names from the phonebook. Unable to come to terms without his backer present, Smoot tells Johnny they'll meet him aboard his yacht the next day.

The Sultana's owner is conveniently away, so when Johnny rings the docks to tell them he is the new owner and plans to visit with a few friends, no-one challenges him. The crew aren't too happy about having a new owner, as they are crooks using the unattended yacht for rum-running. In yet another handy plot coincidence, the leader of the bootleggers and self-appointed captain of the *Sultana* (Walter James) is the crook who stole Helen's bonds. ..

When Johnny and Helen arrive at the boat, they find it rammed full of people— predictably, the office boy posted all Johnny's invitations. Making the best of it, Johnny settles down to negotiate with the businessmen. Things are complicated by Helen's bright idea to send an actor in to help



Some scenes from *THE WRIGHT IDEA*, featuring Johnny with Edmund Breese, Louise Lorraine, Fred Kelsey and, in the bottom picture, a Bynusky Hyman cameo.

raise the price, and by a real ink tycoon who overhears and tries to get in on the deal. In the ensuing chaos, all are convinced that the ink is a scam and nobody backs it. Things get worse for Johnny when the Captain overhears Detective Flatt talking about the bonds, and plants them on Johnny to avoid being caught with them. Helen is distraught when she finds out, believing that Johnny has been a thief all along.

It's not long before the Captain reveals his true colours, coming back to claim the bonds and holding Johnny, Helen and Flatt at gunpoint when he is caught.. Johnny manages to outwit him, with the aid of a dog concealed in an atrociously fake octopus skin. (Yes, you read that correctly!) By now, the coastguard and revenueurs are after the stolen boat, and Johnny uses his luminous ink to paint a message on the side of the boat, alerting them to the location. After order has been restored, Johnny explains the situation to the real owner of the boat, who forgives him and, impressed by the luminous ink, offers to be his backer. Johnny and Helen embrace, and in a risqué final gag, are silhouetted by a lighthouse that makes their clothes quite see-through!



Louise Lorraine, Johnny, Edmund Breese & Fred Kelsey in a posed still; they're never all on-screen at once.

As you can tell from the synopsis above, the plot of THE WRIGHT IDEA is full of ridiculous contrivances. However, if you turn a blind eye to the improbabilities in the plot, it's really a lot of fun. Of the Johnny Hines films I've seen, it's certainly the funniest, and has the most gags peppered throughout., rather than having the semi-dramatic flavour of some of his others.

Hines is a likeable character, even more of a go-getter than Harold Lloyd. He's also a bit of an opportunist, with much of the plot and some good gags hinging on this aspect of his character. The supporting cast are decent. Louise Lorraine plays a sparky leading lady, and Edmund Breese's lunatic character is good for a few silly gags. Fred Kelsey is excellent as always, blustering and confident in his ability despite all evidence pointing to his incompetence. A great example occurs when he attempts to handcuff Johnny . Johnny switches the lights off and there is a tussle in the blackout.. "I got 'im! Flatt always gets his man!" announces a title, but when the lights go up, Kelsey has only managed to handcuff himself to a diving suit hanging on the wall.

This was Johnny Hine's final silent, and his final starring feature film. Though it's not a five-star classic, it's a funny little film, and feels like it would be a good crowd pleaser. Hopefully, soon it will be able to be seen by a wider audience.

The International Buster Keaton Society recently shared these great images on Twitter. They are Swedish posters for SEVEN CHANCES and THE PASSIONATE PLUMBER. Keaton's angular physique was always a gift to art deco artists.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



THE FEATURE FILMS OF **WALTER FORDE**

Last issue, we explored the early career of trailblazing British film comic Walter Forde. This time, we look at the next stage of his work, moving into feature-length comedies and thrillers...

Those who worked with Walter Forde often spoke of how calm and patient he was. Given how slowly the British film industry moved in the 1920s, it was just as well. Three years had passed before he was able to secure funding for his second series of short comedies. Now, with the six films complete in early 1926, he had to wait almost another year for them to be released.

In Hollywood, a comic in such a position might hop between dedicated comedy studios like Hal Roach, Mack Sennett or Educational Pictures to find work. In Britain, such a specialised industry simply did not exist. So, with the success of the films yet unproven, Forde again found himself in an enforced career hiatus. He did manage to find some work in the industry, albeit not before the cameras. His leading lady Pauline Peters was married to film producer G A Smith, who gave Walter the job of re-editing foreign films for the British market. (Among the films he later recalled working on was *THE CRUISE OF THE JASPER B*).

Happily, the eventual release of the short films was successful. Forde was approached by W.A. Lott, on behalf of Nettlefold Pictures, for overseas distribution rights. Archibald Nettlefold (yes, that was his real name!) had inherited a stake in the engineering firm Guest, Keen and Nettlefold. Passionate about theatre and film, he put his money into London's Comedy Theatre and also purchased Cecil Hepworth's old studio in Walton-on-Thames. His Anglia Films production company distributed their product through Butcher's film service.

Walter: "Nettlefold was trying to start theatres abroad and [his studio manager] Lott came to see me about getting the pictures I had done for George Smith. I primed him with the idea that Nettlefold would be just the man to make the first six-reel English Comedy. I said "I've got a story all ready, which I hadn't of course. So that weekend my wife and I sat down to write a story, which mainly consisted of "After many funny adventures..."! Anyway, the old man liked it, and that was how I got to make *WAIT & SEE*." ¹

The *Bioscope* of August 11th, 1927 announced that Forde had agreed terms with Nettlefold to make his first feature-length comedy. There was much excitement in the press about a full-length British film comedy. Although there had been comic features made, such as the *SQUIBS* films with Betty Balfour, Forde's effort was to be the first more in the mould of the great Hollywood star comedians.

1. I've often wondered if the vague title was a sly joke from Walter. When he'd falsely told Nettlefold that he already had a story planned, did he fob him off by saying "What is the story? Wait and see!"?

The *Yorkshire Evening Post* of the 20th August was not alone in welcoming the news:

“Walter Forde, who is well known on the halls, tells me that he believes there is room for really good British “slap stick” farce. There is room for British comedies and farces, because American humour, on the screen, is often deplorable. One would welcome success from Forde...”

The anti-Hollywood tone, verging on jingoistic, is repeatedly seen in the English press of the time, and ensured that the trades would follow the progress of Forde’s British feature comedy. Forde & Nettlefold capitalised on this with some PR stunts, including a casting call for “*the fattest men in London!*” There was a real appetite for *WAIT & SEE* at its trade show in February 1928. But would Walter Forde’s first feature film live up to the hype...?

WAIT & SEE

Filmed Aug – September 1927. Trade show 16th Feb 1928. General release April 1928

Directed by Walter Forde. Written by Walter Forde & Patrick L. Mannoek. Starring Walter Forde, with Pauline Johnson, Charles Dormer, Frank Stanmore, Sam Livesey and “London’s Thirty Fat Men!”

For his first feature, Forde picked up where his second series of shorts left off, in situational comedy. His character of the headstrong but usually embarrassed young man in boater, blazer and Oxford Bags remained the same. In *WAIT & SEE*, he plays a bookworm by the name of Montague Merton. As a title tells us, “Ever since an encyclopaedia had dropped on his head, he’d had reading on the brain”.

For dreamer Monty, books are an escape from the drudgery of his day job at the Quickthin anti-fat factory; we first meet him going about his duties while totally engrossed in his reading. Daydreaming that he is the rags-to-riches character in his book, Monty finds himself in a moment of involuntary pantomime, polishing his monocle and strutting about to the amusement of his fellow workers. Retorting that one day he will be rich and won’t be stuck in the factory, Monty is ordered back to work by the foreman.

The factory owner’s daughter Jocelyn (Pauline Johnson) is on a tour of the factory with her stuffed shirt of a suitor, Eustace Mottletoe (Charles Dormer). Monty is smitten, and when he realises that she has dropped her glove, sets off to return it to her. In his absence, his colleagues set up a prank, printing a fake letter from lawyers ‘Brown & Co’ claiming he has inherited £50,000 from a rich uncle in Australia. Jubilant, Monty runs riot through the factory, scattering piles of boxes, giving away his wages and telling the foreman “I’ve finished with this factory, unless I decide to buy it as a souvenir!”

Heading off in search of Brown & Co, he finds himself in a building where nearly every business is a variation on the name of Brown! This sets up a great little gag sequence as Forde makes his enquiries. The first lady he asks listens carefully to his request, then responds in sign language. The next two gentlemen he asks turn out to be French; their response is shown through some wonderful directorial touches from Forde. First the words in the intertitles are animated to explode and jump around, then we cut to a racing speedometer, and finally the background behind the two men seems to spin in and out of focus. Monty weakly replies “Oui”; he decides against asking the next man he sees, who is Chinese.

Instead, he searches the building himself, which is a good excuse for a series of blackout gags as he accidentally wanders into a lingerie modelling firm, and opens another door to find a gun dealer, with a man aiming a rifle at him. Eventually, he learns from the doorman that there is no such firm, and realises he has been made a fool of when he finds a note explaining the prank inside the envelope. Dejected, Monty returns to the factory to beg for his job back. Unbeknownst to him, there are financial difficulties, as the firm’s board (here’s where those thirty fat men come in!) threaten to pull their support if owner Gregory Winton (Sam Livesey) doesn’t raise £50,000 capital. Winton has heard of Monty’s fortune, and invites him to dinner, secretly hoping to persuade him to invest. Monty is uneasy, but the chance to get close to Jocelyn persuades him.

Meanwhile, news has travelled fast. When Monty gets home to the digs he shares with Frankie (Frank Stanmore), there are reporters waiting for him, and tradesmen’s free samples arriving by the dozen. Monty has misgivings and wants to tell the truth, but Frankie persuades him to make the most of it and go to the dinner. At the house, Monty and Eustace engage in a



Filming WAIT & SEE. Pretending to crank the camera is Archibald Nettlefold.

game of one-upmanship to talk to Pauline, which continues on to the golf course. Here, Forde indulges in a golf routine which borrows rather heavily from W.C. Fields, right down the vacant stare of the gum-chewing caddy. (Fields had filmed his version the previous year in *SO'S YOUR OLD MAN*).

On the golf course, Monty tells Jocelyn the truth. She admires his honesty, but asks him not to tell her father to avoid being forced into marriage with Eustace. Meanwhile, Winton is given an offer of a loan from his American friend Goldsmith, but turns it down, preferring "to keep his shares in the family".

A few days later, Monty and Jocelyn are engaged, but the groom is having difficulty getting to the church on time. After his car breaks down, he is forced to jump on a succession of vehicles including an ancient Ford, an open top bus and a bicycle. This sequence is lots of fun, with a great running gag as he keeps losing parts of his wedding suit, sending him constantly running back to the same tailor shop.

Unfortunately, Frankie has accidentally let the truth about the fake fortune slip, and Monty meets a frosty reception from Winton at the church. Eustace is dispatched to stop Goldsmith before he can return to America; Jocelyn tips off Monty, and he races to reach the boat train first. Now the film's pace really picks up in an exciting chase sequence, intercutting between trains, cars and planes. After just missing Goldsmith at a couple of stations, Monty drives right on to the platform at the next stop² and picks him off the train. Just as he approaches the house where Winton and Jocelyn are, Monty swerves and crashes right through the wall and into the living room of the house. The firm is saved and Monty and Jocelyn embrace.

Though the storyline may have been hastily constructed, Forde tells it with gusto. Indeed, *WAIT AND SEE* is astonishingly assured for a first feature film as director and builds steadily to a fine frenzy. Forde's work editing other films must have been educational for learning the art of storytelling, and he brings everything he has to the table. There is wide use of tracking and overhead shots, and several gags that depend on visual camera effects.

As a comedy, the film can't compete with the great silent features of the American clowns, but it is certainly entertaining. Perhaps the best comparison lies somewhere between the lighter end of Harold Lloyd and the films of Reginald Denny. Notably, the final chase doesn't feature many gags as a Keaton or Lloyd feature might (contrast with the end of *GIRL SHY* or *SEVEN CHANCES*, for instances), being more of a dramatic climax. To that end, it's a success, genuinely exciting and skilfully made. In fact, it seems that Forde's preference was for straight "thrill" climaxes to his films; he later remarked that his favourite type of picture was a thriller with comic elements. So, rather than a swing and a miss, the climax to *WAIT AND SEE* probably turned out exactly as he planned it.

However, the chase is topped off with maybe the funniest moment in the film. Crashing through the wall of the house, Forde screeches the car to a halt beside an astonished lady holding a tea tray. Without missing a beat, Walter nonchalantly helps himself to a cup of tea from the tray. This little moment brought the house down when I saw the film screened to an audience.

The comedy sequence that has had the most attention in the film is the golf routine "borrowed" from W.C. Fields, but this has distracted attention away from the other more original gags. Both Forde's attempts to find the offices of Brown & Co, and his dash to the church are wonderful gag sequences entirely of his own making.

Walter and Nettlefold knew that they had a winner. Before the film had even been screened, *The Bioscope* of 15 December 1927 reported: "Archibald Nettlefold tells me that after seeing Walter Forde's first British comedy, "Wait and See," it has been definitely decided that Walter will make at least one more comedy film for Nettlefold. At the moment the story is not chosen, nor are any contracts signed, but production will start on February 1st."

Forde's patience had finally been rewarded. This time, there would be no hiatus or shopping his talents around, scraping for opportunities. At last, the quality of his work was enough for him to be trusted to continue. While it is perhaps inevitable that the pro-British trades would be sympathetic to the film, reviewers were genuinely impressed far beyond mere patriotism. *WAIT AND SEE* deserved the praise. It's certainly a solid effort for a debut feature, with some original gags, a good pace and lots of charm. Buoyed by the success, Forde turned to his new project, which he had again given a knowingly appropriate title: *NEXT, PLEASE!*



TOP: A scene from *WAIT & SEE* either deleted or not available in current prints.

ABOVE: a golf scene that owes a debt to W.C.Fields.

2. Examining the film carefully reveals the scenes were filmed at Tattenham Corner station, near to Epsom Downs.

nb. *WAIT AND SEE* is held by the BFI in a 35mm copy, but this is missing almost an entire reel before the chase climax. However, like Walter's short films, the feature was issued on the 9.5mm gauge, and happily this version preserves the missing scene. The two were combined for a complete screening at Kennington Bioscope's Silent Laughter Weekend in 2017.



WHAT NEXT?

Working title: NEXT, PLEASE. Shooting began March 1928 – April 27th. Previewed June 14th 1928, first run at the Marble Arch Theatre in July. General release April 1929

Produced by Archibald Nettlefold. Directed by Walter Forde. Written by Walter Forde and Harry Fowler Mear.

Starring Walter Forde, with Pauline Johnson, Frank Stanmore, Douglas Payne, Tom Seymour.

WHAT NEXT? was for many years one of the missing pieces in Walter Forde's career. After being listed as one of the BFI's 75 'Most Wanted' missing films, a copy eventually surfaced a few years ago. Unfortunately, it is a condensed 16mm version that seems to be lacking 10-15 minutes of the film's original content. The result is a slightly underwhelming film, albeit one with some excellent moments.

Like his short comedy WALTER'S WINNING WAYS, WHAT NEXT? draws on Forde's real-life experience of antiques (he was once apprenticed as an auctioneer). There's also a healthy dose of the 1920s vogue for Egyptology, and particularly the curse of Tutankhamun.

Walter plays a vacuum cleaner salesman at the 'Idle Homes' exhibition. As you might expect, he has some trouble operating the vacuum cleaner, setting up a predictable routine of accidental suction... Also at the exhibition are antique dealer Cedric Chapelle (Frank Stanmore) and his daughter Violet (Pauline Johnson). Walter and Violet meet when he tosses a match away and accidentally sets fire to her hat. Smitten by her, Walter heads to her antique stall and buys a candlestick as an excuse to make conversation with her.

Unbeknownst to Walter, the candlestick is actually a highly sought after relic, the seventh and final of the Pharos Candlesticks. The millionaire collector Cornelius Vandergilt has spent many years searching for the complete set; the search has driven him mad. Vandergilt pursues Walter for the candlestick, leading to chases around streets and across rooftops. Cedric and Violet, now realising its value, set on Walter's tracks as well. Also in pursuit are hapless detective Nick Winterbottom (Charles Dormer) and his assistant (Ian Wilson). Walter hides the candlestick in a bag, which becomes switched with one containing a live monkey (naturally!). The candlestick is retrieved by the authorities and restored to the British Museum, but Chapelle suffers the curse of the candlestick and in a moment of madness steals it. When Violet finds out, she persuades Walter to return the contraband to the museum after closing time. He is not alone, as the crazed Vandergilt is stalking the darkened exhibitions hoping to steal the candlestick, and the detectives also show up in the climactic chase around the exhibits. Eventually the candlestick, and Vandergilt's sanity, are restored. Walter and Violet embrace, with Walter promising to stick to electric lights instead of candles!

WHAT NEXT? has an interesting and original story, with the continual passing of the candlestick between the different parties handled adroitly. However, the film does seem less well-constructed than its predecessor. The principal problem is that the chase takes up a big chunk of the footage, and at times things get a bit frenetic. It might have been better for the pursuit to start slower, perhaps with Walter blissfully unaware of Vandergilt's attempts to get the candlestick from him. As it is, WHAT NEXT? feels a bit like a padded two or three-reeler. To be fair, it's more than likely that the missing footage is to blame for this; an abridged version would probably cut to "all the exciting stuff", eliminating some of the smoother storytelling. Some of the transitions in the film certainly seem a little abrupt, and the detective characters not quite as well developed for comic potential as they might be. Also among the missing footage is presumably Walter's encounter with Tiny the Python, mentioned in publicity and promotional stills for the film, but nowhere to be seen in the existing copy.



Establishing himself a director, Forde first fully indulged his passion for thrillers in THE SILENT HOUSE,. The lavish sets featured temples and a pit of snakes!

With these caveats, the remaining footage does have plenty to enjoy. While Walter's vacuum antics are a bit 'slapstick-by-numbers', there are some much more original gags throughout the film. An early highlight is a moment where Walter is reading about the escaped madman Vandergilt, the article describing his outfit and nervous mannerisms. The man at the table next to Walter is also reading the article, and each starts to think that the other fits the description. The more they do so, the more nervous they both look, only heightening each other's suspicion.

Also good are Walter's encounters with a monkey that steals the candlestick, and a trick gag where he drops the candlestick off a roof, but dashes down the stairs and catches it before it hits the floor. This anticipates the famous stairs scene in Keaton's yet-to-be-released THE CAMERAMAN, although Forde's version is much faster-paced and less elegant.

The closing "scare" scenes in the museum are reminiscent of Lupino Lane's short WHO'S AFRAID, with an array of bizarre props on hand to provide gags. Forde manages to put his own imprint on the scenes though, creating the sinister atmosphere that characterised his later thriller work. His use of shadows is impressive, and a scene with Walter's head trapped in a guillotine is genuinely suspenseful.

WHAT NEXT? is well-directed with an unusual story and a handful of original gags, but is probably the least of Forde's four starring features. Still, it was a decent effort, and reviewers were pleased:

The Bioscope, June 20: *"This is light, irresponsible farce in which the plot is nothing and everything depends on the ingenuity and novelty of the situations, the slick smartness with which they are reeled off from start to finish. The whole thing goes with a swing, and if there is no outstanding feature, there is also no lack of entertainment, and if the reception at the trade show be taken as a criterion, there can be no doubt as to the popularity of the film with any class of audience. [...] Hectic chases and much rush-about comedy acts are very cleverly put over, and the quality is excellent."*

THE STAGE, JUNE 28TH: *"Made by Walter Forde, who also plays the leading part and has written the story, this film contains six reels of always amusing rough comedy. The production and setting are good. Walter Forde has admirable support from an excellent company, including Frank Stanmore and Pauline Johnson. This picture is every bit as good as the majority of the comedies from America, and there is considerably more wholesome fun in it."*

Another success for Walter meant that his association with Nettlefold was guaranteed to continue. However, his next project would not be as comic, or even as actor, but in the director's chair. The conclusion to WHAT NEXT? had proved Forde's skill at making dark, atmospheric and suspenseful sequences, and his interest in these areas was indulged fully in THE SILENT HOUSE. This oriental tale of a stolen jewel and a revenge pact was based on a play by John G Brandon and George Pickett, which Nettlefold had successfully staged at his Comedy Theatre. Heading the cast were Gibb MacLaughlin, Arthur Pusey and Mabel Poulton.

THE SILENT HOUSE exists today, and may be currently viewed on the BFIplayer website (frustratingly, it's the only one of Forde's silents to be available there, while his comedies languish in the vaults!). It is certainly a step up in storytelling from WHAT NEXT?, and Forde's direction is ebullient. He again relishes in the use of shadows, moving cameras and overhead shots, showing off the lavish house set full of trapdoors, secret panels and even a pit of pythons!

The Bioscope of 6 Feb 1929 reported, with accurate foresight, *"Critics have never been more unanimous in their praise, and Walter Forde [...] promises to be even better known as a director than as a screen comedian."* It seems that this thought must have occurred to Forde, too. As his first non-comedy, non-starring directorial feature, THE SILENT HOUSE can be seen as something of a turning point for him. Having proved that he could succeed in a different milieu, he would begin to move away from his focus on being a star comic. His own comedies would continue to be interspersed with dramatic projects over the next couple of years until he decided to solely focus on films starring others. However, he wasn't through with the Walter character just yet. Only a week after its review of THE SILENT HOUSE, the next issue of the Bioscope carried a story of goings-on at Nettlefold:

"A new tube station has been built at Walton, but we must still wait for the tube, for this station is merely incidental to Archibald Nettlefold's third comedy " Would You Believe It" in which Walter Forde is both Star and director."

The new film promised to be Forde's most elaborate yet, and would be the peak of his career as starring comedian.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Filmed Feb-March 1929, and previewed May 22, 1929. General release January 1930.

Produced by Archibald Nettlefold. Directed by Walter Forde. Written by Walter Forde & Harry Fowler Mear.

Starring Walter Forde, with Pauline Johnson, Pauline Johnson, Arthur Stratton, Albert Brouett, Ian Wilson.

Released with a Vocalion soundtrack of music and effects, with a score by Paul Mulder.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? continued both Forde's interest in mixing thrills with comedy and his tradition of oblique titles. He plays an aspiring inventor who is developing a remote-controlled tank. Turfed out of the family home after his latest contraption causes an explosion, he moves to London and makes a living working in a toy shop while he waits for a breakthrough.

The toy shop scenes contain some marvellously inventive gags. In a Chaplinesque moment of altering the identity of objects, Walter absentmindedly packages up harmonicas and toy soldiers as though they were fish and chips. Following this, he deals with a difficult customer who demands that their helium balloons are wrapped up in brown paper, a great comedy scene of frustration. While at work, Walter meets Pauline Johnson, who is a secretary to the war minister and listens with interest to his invention. After accidentally causing a chain reaction that sets off all the clockwork toys³ in the shop, Walter is discharged.

Walter returns to his lodgings, shared with a dopey but goodhearted waiter named Cuthbert (Arthur Stratton), who keeps them both fed with food ingeniously smuggled from the restaurant where he works. Walter can't make his invention work, but finally in a moment of frustrated rage bashes it with a hammer, providing the magic touch to make it functional! Elated, he dashes out, and bumps into Pauline again outside the flat. Inviting her in, he pretends that the disgruntled Cuthbert is his manservant. Pauline promises to tell the War Minister of the invention and to fix up an appointment for Walter to show it off.

We cut to a sinister, shadowy room, the headquarters of some enemy spies. The head agent (Albert Brouett, playing the part as an amusing spoof of Fritz Lang's SPIONES) informs a gang of thugs of Walter's invention, and tell them that he must be stopped. They set off on Walter's trail, and find him at the Underground station. The comic centrepiece of the film follows as the agents chase Walter up and down spiral stairs, in and out of tube trains and lifts, the suitcase containing the invention forever changing hands. The whole proceedings are punctuated with a laconic ticket inspector constantly asking to check tickets in the middle of the chase.

Adroitly filmed and edited, the sequence is a marvel of silent comedy, and something uniquely Forde's own.⁴ Given the praise his films received for their 'Britishness', it was a brainwave to include a comedy sequence based around something so intrinsically British as the London Underground. Mention must also be given to the very authentic sets. According to the Bioscope, they were designed "to be an exact replica of any single station on the Bakerloo, Piccadilly and South London tubes. The train which draws up, opens its 5'3" doors, discharges and takes on passengers, then disappears into a tunnel at the other end of the studio floor. Forde tells me that his idea in building a tube station of his own is to allow more illumination than is possible in the actual setting."

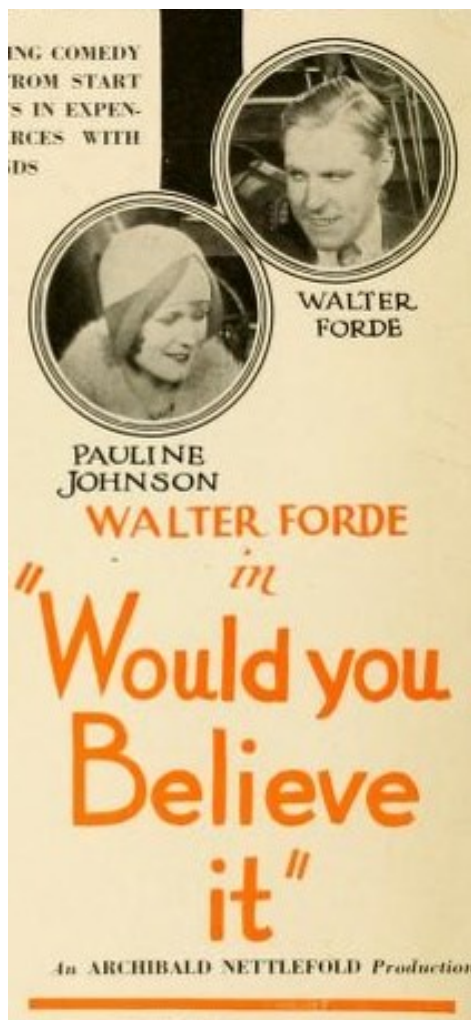
Finally giving the spies the slip, Walter eventually has a date set for a test of his invention. However, the agents return again, kidnapping the War Minister and Pauline, and taking their place. At the demonstration, Walter makes a successful initial test of the wireless controlled tank, but one too many high-handed comments cause Cuthbert to sabotage the equipment as revenge. The tank runs amok, and Walter heads off in pursuit. Cuthbert tries to fix the equipment, but is knocked unconscious by the agents before he can.

The tank rampages through the countryside, eviscerating everything in its path. Buildings and cars are destroyed, punctuated by some amusing gags as a mortified Walter follows. (A favourite moment: the family sitting down to their meal and saying grace. "For what we are about to receive..." reads the title, before the tank crashes through the wall of their house)...

These scenes are not just funny but also exciting, making use of point-of-view shots and cameras dug in the ground so that the caterpillar tracks pass right over them. Incidentally, the tank was a real one, loaned by the war office for use in the film.

3. Including a clockwork Chaplin toy—perhaps a nod to Forde's own past as a Chaplin impersonator?

4. The stairs sequence from WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? was later excerpted in the oddball British comedy HELTER SKELTER (1949) – doctor Jimmy Edwards uses the clip to try and induce laughter in a patient with incurable hiccups. Is it too much of a stretch to consider that the dizzying spiral stairs could have lodged in someone's mind to influence Alec Guinness and Stanley Holloway's descent of the Eiffel Tower in THE LAVENDER HILL MOB, made soon after HELTER SKELTER?



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? was Forde's biggest success as star comic. It even received a limited release in the US, as per this ad from *Film Daily*.

As the scene reaches its climax, the tank bears down on the barn where Pauline & the war minister are tied up. Luckily, Cuthbert has come to. He realises what has happened, knocks out the spies and fixes the wireless just in time to stop the tank. Relieved, Walter unties Pauline and the war minister. After order has been restored, and the tank is demonstrated successfully, Walter tells Pauline they'll "head straight for the church". As they kiss on the back of the tank, he accidentally starts the engine running again, and it does exactly this, demolishing a small wooden church. Walter & Pauline kiss on, blissfully unaware.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? is without question the best of Forde's four features. From simple sight gags in the toy shop (the scene with the balloons is a pantomime highlight) to the tube sequence and the elaborate finale of a runaway tank, Forde brought his A-game as actor, filmmaker and gagman. The pace of the gags is constant, but all are integrated satisfyingly into the film. The best moments, such as the toy shop sequence and the chase on the Underground, can stand proudly beside the classic silent comedy moments. If there is a flaw in the film, it is in the Walter character, and particularly his treatment of Cuthbert. Though it makes sense for him to have a swelled head and inflated attitude, Walter is constantly unpleasant to the loyal Cuthbert, and it works against our sympathy for him. At the least, showing some intermittent warmth between the two, or having them make up at the end would have resolved this. As it is, it makes the characters just a bit more one-dimensional. This is a minor quibble though, and *WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?* remains a very enjoyable comedy by any standards.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? was trade shown in May 1929, and went on general release in early 1930, accompanied by a Vocalion music and sound effect track. Again the film won great praise from reviewers in the UK, feted as a comedy to finally rival the American stars. Despite his usual modest opinion of his work, Forde would later admit that it was "*the one that put me on the map*". The film smashed box office records, being held over at the London Pavilion for 22 weeks, and playing for five months straight in Australia.

However, even with its accompanying soundtrack, the film was obsolete as it was released. A contemporary advert, from March 1930, for the Preston Palladium cinema tells all. Though encouraging patrons to "See this laugh riot and then you will believe it!", it adds an ominous footnote: "*After this week we go definitely over to talkies, regretting that we can no longer accede to our patrons' requests for silents.*"

Forde's next vehicle would make particular concessions to the sound revolution, but before beginning his next comedy, he made another oriental mystery picture for Nettlefold. *THE RED PEARLS* featured not just a similar theme but also many of the same cast as *THE SILENT HOUSE*. On completion of this feature, Forde began shooting what turned out to be his last starring comedy.

YOU'D BE SURPRISED!

Filmed August—September, 1929. Released by Butcher's Film Service, April 1930.

Produced by Archibald Nettlefold. Directed by Walter Forde. Written by Walter Forde, Harry Fowler Mear & Sydney Gilliat. Cinematography: Geoffrey Faithfull. Edited by Adeline Culley. Originally released with a musical score (and sound effects) by Paul Mulder, and including talking sequences. Title song, 'Too Long', written and performed by Walter Forde.

YOU'D BE SURPRISED began shooting in August 1929. Though it would not be a full talkie, it would again include a synchronised soundtrack, and at least two sound sequences. Not only this, but the plot and many of the gags depended on sound. The main part of the film centres around Walter's attempts to sell a song he has written. (Forde really wrote the title song, 'Too Late', and sang it in the film's sound sequences - sadly the soundtrack no longer exists).

Walter, as in real life, has been passionate about music since birth. The opening scenes gently mock his early career as "Boy Prodigy", as Baby Walter is seen playing trumpet and trying to reach up to an enormous piano. (There's some funny business here with Walter struggling to control his lolling tongue as he concentrates on his music, but it's fair to say that the prologue goes on a bit too long. Still, I suppose they had to get their money's worth after paying for that enormous piano...)

Moving forward to the present day, Walter is an aspiring songwriter, seen playing his latest song at a piano. However, he hasn't quite made it yet, and in a great camera 'reveal' gag, we see he is actually playing the piano in the back of a moving van. Writing songs might be Walter's dream, but moving pianos pays the bills! Installing the instrument at actress Joy Windsor's home, he can't resist tickling the ivories, and sings his song, while gazing at a picture of Joy. She returns home mid-song, much to Walter's embarrassment, but is charmed enough to give a tip-off about his song to the theatre impresario she works for.

Now, all Walter has to do is get the song heard, and the next two reels of the film deal with his attempts. First, he tries to sing the song at a piano in the theatre office. Gradually, various noises and interruptions overcome his efforts: a typist chewing gum,



legions of typewriters, doors slamming, telephones, a clock being wound. As the sequence goes on these become more comically improbable - a tap dancer, for instance - culminating in the typist's chewing gum becoming stuck all over the keyboard and Walter's hands. "The only instrument he'll listen to is a telephone," concludes Walter glumly. This gives him an idea, and off he goes to make a call from a public phone box... Unfortunately, the box is disconnected with Walter still inside it, and he is carried away on the back of a lorry, right across the town, before he notices! It's back to the old drawing board.

Walter's next plan is to sing the song beneath the impresario's window. Unfortunately, at this moment, legions of buskers playing all kinds of improbable instruments arrive on the scene! Walter makes the best of it, and corrals them into joining in with his song. It's going quite well... until a bagpiper shows up! Walter gets into an argument with the piper, who is knocked unconscious in the ensuing chaos. In a panic, Walter thinks he has killed the man and flees into the theatre. Finding a set of costumes, he puts on a convict's outfit but is knocked unconscious by a sandbag and falls into laundry hamper. The plot now takes a left turn as the hamper is loaded onto train. Naturally, Walter disembarks from the train just outside a prison camp and ends up mixed up with real convicts.



Scenes from YOU'D BE SURPRISED; Frank Stanmore is Walter's accomplice.

After accidentally causing an explosion in the prison quarry, Walter is marked as a trouble-maker and handcuffed to the burly convict Knife Mullins (Douglas Payne). Mullins is planning an escape, and isn't about to be stopped by the presence of a second body, so Walter is dragged through mud and mire, and eventually into a getaway plane, where he dangles off the wing and is struck by lightning. Ultimately he ends up parachuting out of the plane, falling through the roof of Joy's house and landing at the piano. He resumes singing his song as the film fades out.

YOU'D BE SURPRISED is maybe Forde's most personal film. Centred around his real-life love of music, it encompasses the visual comedy he had been known for, but in the second half moves more towards the thriller genre. The shift from musical, to comedy, to thriller is really a microcosm of Forde's own career. He was increasingly less interested in gags, and more in suspense. The sequences of Mullins handcuffed to Walter have a real darkness to them, particularly so when Walter witnesses Mullins murder a blacksmith.

As a comedy, YOU'D BE SURPRISED isn't up to the standard of WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?, but it has some very good gags. The highlights are undoubtedly Walter's ride in the phonebox, and the impromptu orchestra he creates. It's a shame that the film's soundtrack is missing, as it surely added to this scene. When the feature was screened for the first time in many years at Kennington Bioscope's 2015 Silent Laughter Day, the loss of the soundtrack was covered by live music, sound effects (and singing!) which gave some idea of how it would have originally been seen. There's no question that this accompaniment gave the film a boost, and it was the hit of the programme. Apparently, Walter's theme song was issued on a gramophone record, so perhaps we may yet hear his voice...

WALTER IN THE SOUND ERA...

Forde's confidence to sing in YOU'D BE SURPRISED, and his experiences on stage, suggest that he could have continued in sound films, but he never did make a starring talkie. Perhaps his shyness was making him recede from the spotlight, or maybe he was tired of shouldering the weight of director *and* star, but he now turned purely to directing others.

1930 was a very busy year for Walter, as project after project came his way. Some were out-and-out comedies, like the farces BED AND BREAKFAST and LORD RICHARD IN THE PANTRY. Given the direction his films had been taking, it's no surprise that he also directed some thrillers, like the following year's THE RINGER.

Forde later stated that his favourite films to direct were those which mixed both genres, and his first big hit in this style came the following year with THE GHOST TRAIN⁴, starring Jack Hulbert. After a frosty start, Hulbert and Forde developed a strong friendship, working together on another three films: JACK'S THE BOY, JACK AHOY and BULLDOG JACK. The last-named is the best, another comedy thriller that revisits the London Underground setting from WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?. The climax, on a runaway tube train, is both funny and thrilling in Forde's best style.

Walter was considered one of the top British directors throughout the 1930s. However, it should be noted that, though the films only bore his name, he was really a team with his wife, Culley. She was effectively his co-director, and those who worked on Forde's films recalled that he would always consult with her and ask her advice. By the time of SALOON BAR, she was officially recognised by becoming the first female assistant producer in British films. Working together, the couple continued turning out a stream of comedies, mysteries and comedy-thrillers, including the popular INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH series.

4. I've seen it mentioned that Forde played a passenger in THE GHOST TRAIN, but I've not found proof of this. Certainly, he's not mentioned in cast lists or reviews, and doesn't appear in the existing footage.

Walter Forde

PLAYING
TO
CROWDED
HOUSES



**YOU'D
BE
SURPRISED!**

*Sound Comedy with Theme
Songs.*

*An Archibald Nairn & Co.
Production*

A ROAR OF LAUGHTER
running round the Provinces.

**WALTER
FORDE**
Frank Stanmore
Joy Windsor
Douglas Payne
Frank Perlit
E.C.L. Recording

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SHEFFIELD	Thursday	May 1st	10.45 a.m.	Claremont House
MANCHESTER	Wednesday	May 7th	11 a.m.	Market St. P.H.
CARDIFF	Wednesday	May 7th	11 a.m.	Park Hall
BIRMINGHAM	Thursday	May 8th	11 a.m.	St. John's Theatre
GLASGOW	Thursday	May 8th	11 a.m.	Le Scala
LIVERPOOL	Monday	May 12th	11 a.m.	Faberia
LEEDS	Monday	May 12th	10.45 a.m.	Riviera
NEWCASTLE	Thursday	May 15th	11 a.m.	Pavilion

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Clowning around with Jimmy Durante, and making his last screen cameo, in CHEER BOYS, CHEER

Breaking his normal pattern of genres were the lavish musicals *CHU CHIN CHOW* and *LAND WITHOUT MUSIC*. Forde also helmed a film considered to be a prototype for the Ealing Comedy genre, 1939's *CHEER BOYS, CHEER*. In the film, Walter made his last onscreen appearance. The brief cameo as a drunk piano player harked back to his earliest stage appearances as the boy piano prodigy, Walter had come full circle.

He remained busy as a director until the late 1940s, but was discouraged by the flop of Sid Field's *CARDBOARD CAVALIER* and drifted into inactivity. At just over 50 years old, he was far too early for retirement, and it's a shame that nobody could find a use for such a highly adaptable and capable director. Walter's long retirement was spent in the USA; he moved there in 1954 to care for his elderly parents, and spent the rest of his life there. After Culley died in 1967, he became increasingly reclusive, whiling away his hours playing his beloved piano. He lived on until 1984 in relative anonymity.

In the wake of his directorial success, Forde's early films have been neglected. It's a shame, as he developed his own style, and his features, particularly *WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?*, are as good as those by any of the second echelon American comics, like Monty Banks or Reginald Denny. Hopefully one day they will be released to DVD for new audiences to discover.

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KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

During the course of his career, two members of Walter's close family were instrumental in his success. His father Tom Seymour and wife Culley both had a lot to do with his filmmaking. Here's a little more info on these collaborators...

CULLEY FORDE



It would be remiss not to acknowledge the huge contribution that Walter's wife Culley made to his career, something that Forde himself spoke of often. As well as supporting him through his bumpy path to becoming a star, she functioned as his editor, and by the time of *YOU'D BE SURPRISED*, was directing some scenes in which he appeared. Through the 1930s, she was pretty much Walter's co-director. A journalist in 1934 found her on set, noting the chair marked MRS FORDE kept next to Walter's at all times:

"Yes, I suppose you could call me my husband's director," said Mrs Forde with a laugh, "but I must add that he is not henpecked, and we are first and foremost, colleagues".

"I am always with him, and we enjoy finding out together the best means to getting full benefit from any scene in pictures. [...] We have worked like this for eleven or twelve years now and are not tired yet."



Walter and Culley's working and personal relationship seems to have been a genuinely happy one, and the love and happiness they put into their films together come through in the finished products.

Culley (in the middle) & Walter with the cast of SALOON BAR.

TOM SEYMOUR

Like Stan Laurel's father, Seymour was an established comic and producer of sketches at the turn of the century. He was responsible for giving Walter his early comedic training, directed his early films, and played supporting parts in them. Today, he isn't remembered outside his involvement in Walter's career, but a quote from an interview with Forde had me intrigued. Walter claimed that "Dad worked as a gagman on the Laurel & Hardy films. He came up with the idea of them ripping cars to pieces". Forde wasn't a man given to name-dropping or idle boasting, so there's no reason to doubt his claim that Seymour worked for L & H. Certainly, Stan was fond of employing old music hall gagmen like Frank Terry and Fred Karno. However, at the time the car-wrecking *TWO TARS* was being made, Seymour was appearing in *WHAT NEXT?* with his son. Perhaps it was faulty memory at work, or it's possible that Seymour suggested the idea before returning home to Britain. He definitely did work for L & H, confirmed by a footnote in *Kine Weekly* of Nov 27th, 1930:

I KNEW Walter Forde inherited his comedy flair from his father, but I did not know that Forde, senior, was in Hollywood until this week, when it transpires that he is now chief gag-man to Laurel and Hardy at M.-G.-M. I suppose Walter can always cable over if he is short of a wheeze!

A while after reading this, I was watching *THE LIVE GHOST*, and I'm pretty sure I spotted Seymour as one of the sailors (below, with a frame from *WALTER MAKES A MOVIE* for comparison), so he must have stuck around for a while.





Self-Profile

Walter Forde

by

Walter Forde

IT is "more than somewhat," as Damon Runyon says, to ask a shy man to write his own portrait. Am I shy? I shouldn't be, I know. But I am. A lifetime in the show business should have cured me, but it hasn't.

The "lifetime" isn't an exaggeration. I entered the theatrical business at the comparatively early age of two months when, once nightly, I was thrown by my father through a back window during one of the more exciting moments of a drama called (I think) *When Lights Are Low*.

People who saw it say I put up a good show. The audience never failed to rise at the spectacle of my manly figure, complete in shawl, bib and tucker, going head-first through the window. As for myself, I always saw that I landed squarely in the clothes basket full of cushions that awaited me on the off-stage side of the window. You can't learn the art of self-preservation too early in the hurly-burly of show business.

I AM versatile. At least, I ought to be. My father had me trained in tumbling, eccentric dancing, singing, the piano, the violin, the concertina (one tune only), juggling, and what in those days we called cartooning but which might better be described as caricaturing. This last accomplishment, I should mention, was considered a very useful stand-by in those days of non-specialisation. I used it on the boards later—drawing larger-than-life caricatures of topical personalities and, as I finished the sketches, giving impersonations. The act was quite a hit.

To all this I must add office work. You would think that my father, going to all the trouble of such a training, had at least half an idea that I might follow him on the boards. But no. Like many an old-timer of those days, he was quite determined that no son of his should follow him in the profession. As soon as I was old enough, he found a most upright and respectable position for me, with the Abstainers and General Insurance Company. I think the Abstaining part of it particularly attracted him.

Of course, my early training was of no help. I often wonder why my father gave it to me. I suppose it was just in case. He could not forget my magnificent performance in *When Lights Are Low*—despite my extreme youth—and wished to take precautions. He overdid it, that was all. The manager of the Abstainers and General Insurance Company came unexpectedly into the office to find Master Walter Forde putting in a really big juggling act with the ink-pots. Sorrowfully he came to the conclusion that while such an act in the proper place would no doubt bring down the house, it was quite out of place for Abstainers. He sacked me on the spot.

WHICH brings me to my next love—one of my greatest—that of playing the piano. My father happened to be away when the sacking from the Abstainers took place. By the time he returned I had set myself up as the Boy Prodigy Pianist, complete in starched shirt, white tie and tails, playing the

"Moonlight Sonata" and Liszt's "Rhapsody No. 2" on the provincial halls at £6 a week all in.

I suppose the comparative respectability of a Boy Pianist reconciled my father to seeing his hopes so rudely dashed. He let me have my head. But respectability has never been my strong suit. A sense of fun always pokes its nose at it. I began fooling about in my act. I found the audience liked it. The more I fooled the more they laughed, and the more they laughed the more I fooled. In the end it became a comedy act pure and simple. The shameful result of this boyish vandalism was to double my salary.

It was my sense of fun that led me to take up making pictures. Films were grand fun in those days—especially the one-reel comedies I took to specialising in. None of your gag men, your elaborate scripts and elaborate sets. You set out in the morning in a taxi-cab, with a camera, a few ideas and a lot of hope. You didn't waste much money on extras. If you wanted a policeman in a chase, for example, you used a real one. You picked a likely-looking one: one of your confederates crept up behind him, tipped his helmet over his eyes and made off. The camera in the taxi-cab did the rest, carefully filming the enraged bobby as he made off after his assailant. Oh, yes, filmmaking was a job in those days for a man with a sense of fun.

I AM a lucky man, in some ways. Everyone has to have his slice of luck. Consider mine. I set out to storm the Hollywood citadel on the strength of an introduction to a film man who was living in Chicago. When I got to Chicago and the man's house, he took one look at me and slammed the door in my face! That doesn't sound so fortunate, and at first it wasn't. Hollywood without an introduction was a cold place indeed.

I was reduced to painting houses for a living. I might have been painting them yet but for finding a five-dollar bill lying on the sidewalk. I might have done all sorts of things with it—notably, paying up some of my debts. Instead I went "on the bust," only to bump into a man who had been searching all America for me! The door-slamming in Chicago was all a mistake, it seemed. I had been mistaken for another man. To soothe my wounded feelings, I was given a 500-dollar-a-week contract with "Uncle" Carl Laemmle, writing, acting and directing my own comedies.

I am a philosopher. Anybody who has been in the show business long enough either becomes a philosopher or finishes in a strait-jacket. Coming back from America, the best thing I could land was 35s. a week playing the piano in picture houses. If you really want to appreciate what 35s. a week means, may

I recommend coming straight to it from 500 dollars?

I LIKE success; who doesn't? It is gratifying to see the things you have worked for being appreciated by those you made them for. I especially appreciate the success of so many of my comedies. People can always appreciate the good work in a straight film. Walter Forde directing *Rome Express*, *Saloon Bar*, *Forever England*, *Flying Fortress*. Very good. But what of those films that made the audiences split their sides? *Jack's the Boy*, *The Ghost Train*, *Bulldog Jack*, *Sailors Three*, and a host of others. They are just a laugh! Let me tell the world that a good comedy film is the most difficult piece of applied art imaginable; any man who sees his audiences laughing their heads off is entitled to a justifiable pride in a difficult task well done.

What I like best to make now is melodrama with a comedy slant. The only trouble is that you cannot find such stories every month of the year, and even if you could the public would probably not accept them. So I switch to my second-best choice—straight drama with a romantic interest.

In this category comes the recently-completed *The Master of Bankdam*, my forty-ninth full-length feature. This is the story of a Yorkshire wool manufacturing family during the latter half of the last century; a flourishing business built up by a shrewd and thrifty man, but endangered by the social aspirations of his eldest son's wife. I had the good fortune to have with me a cast including such gifted artists as Anne Crawford, Dennis Price, Tom Walls, Stephen Murray, Linden Travers, Jimmy Hanley, David Tomlinson and Nancy Price. You will be seeing it soon. I think you will like it. Next summer I shall start my fiftieth, *The Girl With Red Hair*.



Hollywood, 1921

Walter Forde becomes a house-painter during a crisis in his early career

WHAT else can I say about myself? I like talking—provided other people do it, and do it well. I like stories, any sort of film story, grave or gay, to be moulded for showing on the screen. I am fond of snooker (I once—shades of my father's training!—earned a precarious living at it). I am, and always will be, an inveterate gambler. I like good cheer and good company. I like to think that I have a name for uprightness and honesty in all my dealings.

I am happily married. Very early in my career I had the good fortune to fall in love with my continuity girl and the wisdom to marry her. It was the beginning of a lifelong partnership not only at home but in my work as well, and I venture to think there are few "double acts" better known in the show world than Walter and Calley Forde.

And with it all I am still a shy man. I shouldn't be, I know. But I am.

Clowns in COLOUR

There's currently a slew of coloured silent films appearing on YouTube and other video sites, but here are some authentic colour images of the silent clowns. It's striking to see the black and white worlds we know so well in vivid colour.



Photographer Charles C Zoller visited the Chaplin studios in 1918, and took some remarkable colour photos of Charlie in costume. Some of Syd Chaplin's colour home movies also exist, capturing his brother in costume for *THE GREAT DICTATOR*, as in this screenshot with Reginald Gardiner (right).



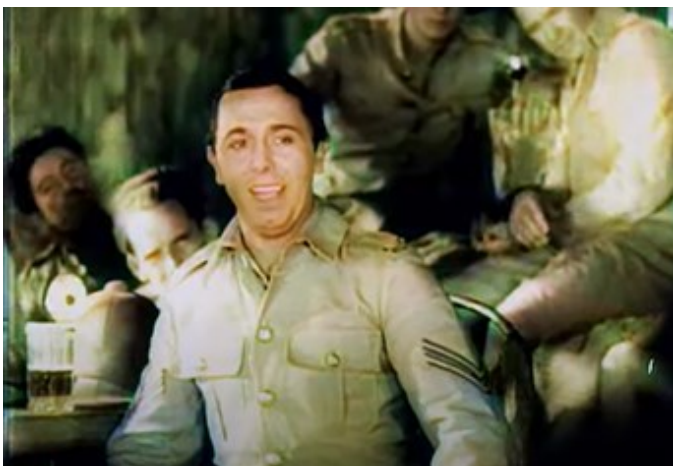
Buster Keaton's career saw him carry on long enough to make many colour films in his old age, but there are fewer colour photos and films of him in his heyday. The prologue to *SEVEN CHANCES* exists in early Technicolor, but the colour is now faded almost to sepia. More vibrant are his appearances in the *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* number in *HOLLYWOOD REVUE OF 1929*, and the 1935 short *LA FIESTA DA SANTA BARBARA*. Best of all is his appearance in *HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE* (1939) with Alice Faye (above) ; the colour is beautiful and he wears his classic costume.



Laurel & Hardy's colour appearance in *THE TREE IN THE TEST TUBE* is well known, and there are a couple of poor quality fragments of their appearance in the Technicolor *THE ROGUE SONG* left, too. However, Murphy's law guarantees that the existing footage mainly takes place in a darkened cave, so we can't actually see them!

These beautiful colour photographs of the team were taken for a colour supplement in 1938, with the boys obligingly horsing around on the Hal Roach lot for the photographer.

Finally, it wasn't just the major clowns who appeared in colour films. At the bottom of the page are images of Lupino Lane in the Technicolor musical *GOLDEN DAWN* (1930), and Charley Chase in the MGM novelty *HOLLYWOOD PARTY*, from 1937.





Snub Pollard

The Man Behind the Moustache

In 1922, Pathé ran an advert for Snub Pollard's comedies in the trade papers. Pollard's face was a greyed-out silhouette, but still instantly recognisable thanks to the large, drooping moustache emphasised in the picture. That upside-down Kaiser Wilhelm 'tache was instantly recognisable to cinema-goers of the 1920s; like Ben Turpin and Billy Bevan, Snub Pollard remains one of the totemic faces of silent comedy. The drooping moustache, accompanied by angular eyebrows raised to the ceiling, created an unforgettable image, securing his place in the collective memory as an emblem of visual humour.

Though the character underneath the image may have been rather shallow, there was something compelling and very watchable about Pollard. Along with Bevan, Turpin and the others, he worked hard for his laughs, and if these clowns didn't create their own world the way that Chaplin or Keaton did, they still had a skill at delivering wild visual gags with flair and precision timing. And what gags! The best of the Snub Pollard comedies are sublimely ridiculous, wonderful whirlwinds of visual humour made with the help of some very talented comedy craftsmen.

IT'S A GIFT is the most famous of them all, of course. The image of inventor Snub riding in his little bullet shaped, magnet-powered car remains his footnote to the iconic comedy scenes of the collective consciousness. However, there were many other Snub films with gags just as wild and creative. In this article, I want to move a bit beyond the Wikipedia summary of Snub, and look a little deeper into his life and career.

The man behind that walrus moustache remains something of an enigma. He apparently left no descendants to tell his story, and we don't even know how he got the nickname 'Snub'. Some biographical details are available, though. Pollard's birth name was Harold Hopetown Fraser, and he was born in Melbourne, Australia on 9th November, 1889. His father, George Gunn Fraser, worked with racehorses and later became a Hansom cabman in the city. Young Harry seems to have had an interest in the stage from early on and claimed to have been talent-spotted while singing in a church choir. As a result, he joined the children's theatrical troupe 'Pollard's Lilliputians' as a teenager, along with his younger sister May. Charles Pollard's juvenile companies were a well-established theatrical attraction in the Antipodes, with companies based in Australia and New Zealand touring the Far East, Canada and the USA. They specialised in presenting miniature versions of popular adult plays. The tours were arduous and extensive, sometimes lasting over two years at once. It was a long time for the young performers to be away from home.¹

Luckily, Harry was able to form good bonds with some of his fellow performers. He became particularly friendly with another erstwhile Lilliputian, Alf Goulding. At the conclusion of Harry's second tour in 1910, Charles Pollard announced his retirement, but Alf and Harry decided to stick together. Along with a few other members of the company, they formed a young adult version of the troupe known as 'The Pollards' and toured around North America. It was common for graduates of the company to keep the surname Pollard after their time there; both Alf and Harry did this. Alf would soon revert to his real name, but Harry Fraser would forever after be Harry Pollard.²



1. *The website 'Forgotten Australian Actors' is really helpful for filling in details on Snub's early life: [Snub Pollard – Forgotten Australian Actors \(forgottenaustralianactresses.com\)](http://forgottenaustralianactresses.com)*

2. *Another notable member of the company did the same: the one-time Daphne Trott would hereafter be known as Daphne Pollard, the comedienne remembered for playing Mrs Oliver Hardy in OUR RELATIONS. She was not, contrary to some reports, Snub's sister).*

The exact circumstances of Harry's entry to films is lost to time, but it seems to have occurred in 1915 at Essanay. Asked about it by an Australian newspaper in 1923, he couldn't even remember himself:

"I just naturally drifted into them...I don't exactly know how."

Some filmographies have quoted him in features as early as 1912, but these credits actually belong to Harry A. Pollard, who was a leading man for the Imperial and Beauty companies, later turning to directing. It was this namesake that probably led to our Harry Pollard adopting 'Snub' for his billing.

The earliest appearance I've seen Pollard in is the Ben Turpin short A COAT TALE, a knockabout tale of two coats mixed up between the pair's wives. Surely his most notable Essanay moment was as the ice cream man in Chaplin's BY THE SEA. It was at the studio that Pollard met a man who would soon be instrumental to his career: Hal Roach. By June of 1915, he was working in Roach's company, as *Motion Picture News* reported:

The second Essanay company working under Hal Roach has completed three one-reel comedies, MUSTACHES AND BOMBS, THE TALE OF A TIRE, and STREET FAKERS. The company composed of Bud Jamison, Margy Reaper, Jack & Harry Pollard³ and James Keller.

When Roach came into some money, he left Essanay to set up independently, bringing along another friend, Harold Lloyd. The Rolin film company was born. Pollard played second comic to Harold in his 'Lonesome Luke' comedies, usually as the villain or his love rival for Bebe Daniels, Lloyd calculated an unusual appearance, designed to contrast with Chaplin's, for his Lonesome Luke character. Snub devised his own unique appearance, too, remembering that *"I just found a Kaiser moustache and turned it upside down"*.

It was an inspired choice, an instantly memorable visual trademark. On America's entry into WWI, this subversive gesture probably attracted him even more attention. Snub himself had his call to draft in September 1917, though he managed to dodge it somehow. The same year, he was married to his first wife, but the marriage only lasted a few months.

By 1919, Harold Lloyd's popularity with his 'glass character' had led him to two-reel films. With more one-reel product needed, Snub was promoted to his own series, and *Camera!* announced his starring contract on November 15th of that year. Beginning appropriately with START SOMETHING, Snub cranked out one film a week for the next couple of years. (One film a week! That equates to almost 9 hours of film a year. It really is astonishing how hard the silent clowns worked.)

As you'd expect with a work schedule like this, the films could be a bit hit and miss. Some, like LOOKING FOR TROUBLE & THE DIPPY DENTIST, were fairly standard knockabout, but there were gems too, like the tremendous prohibition comedy DRINK HEARTY.

To keep the weekly films fresh, the Roach crew tried some variations on the formula. Snub was teamed with the talented child star Sunshine Sammy Morrison in several charming shorts like RUSH ORDERS and ALL LIT UP. Less successfully, they tried to emulate Harold Lloyd's transition from Chaplinesque eccentric to boy next door, by presenting Snub sans moustache and in a smart suit. The problem was that Snub didn't have enough of a distinctive face or personality underneath his usual guise. Even Lloyd used his pair of glasses to add some character to his more natural face, but Snub's simply becomes a blank space without his moustache. There were a few of these films made, like INSULTING THE SULTAN and WHIRL O' THE WEST, but the



Snub Pollard

Left: Snub with Harold Lloyd on the set of *SOMEWHERE IN TURKEY*. Walter Lundin is the cameraman, Snub's friend Alf Goulding next to him, and assistant director Billy Fay on the right.

Above: Headshot from Rolin publicity, 1917. Someone give that man an eyebrow tutorial!

3. This 'Jack Pollard' seems to have been comic Jack Cherry, who also appeared in Essanay comedies. In 1931, *Film Daily* notes that Alf Goulding and Cherry have been reunited, 20 years after touring together in *'The Pollards'*.



Hal Roach presents
"Snub" Pollard Comedies
Two parts

A moustache to put upon your screen
 During the past two or three years "Snub" Pollard has probably appeared in *more* comedies than any other comedian.
 And these comedies have been shown in *more* theatres than any other comedy release.
 That means that he is *there*.
 Put his famous moustache on *your* screen.

Newly Rich: "Good comedy."—H. C. Reinhardt, Victory, Bay City, Mich.	365 Days: "A good comedy and somewhat different."—Clare Martin, Family, Mt. Morris, N. Y. (Ex. Herald)
Hook, Line and Sinker: "A good two reel comedy that pleased here."—Albion Ketch, Postum, Granville, N. Y. (Ex. Herald)	A Rough Winter: "Snub makes heads with the bees in this highly entertaining and laughable comedy. The fun is fast and furious."—Ex. Herald
An Old Sen Dog: "We consider this a knockout. It's the kind my crowd like on a Saturday night."—A. N. Marks, Louisville, Ky.	365 Days: "Funny indeed."—M. P. News.

Pathécomedy
 TRADE MARK

The Evolution of Snub: From Pollard's classic costume (top), the Roach studio attempted to make him a more realistic character; he made several films with a clean shaven appearance, often playing against 'Sunshine' Sammy Morrison (middle). But, by 1922, they'd recognised that the moustache was here to stay, as evidenced by this advert from Film Daily

limitations were soon recognised. Before long, Snub reverted to his more clownish persona for good.

The most effective change to the Pollard series was the addition of a new director. Charles Parrott, the future Charley Chase, had a wild imagination. His particular talent was for thinking up as many variations as he could on a gag theme, taking it from a logical beginning to ridiculous extremes. FIFTEEN MINUTES is a perfect example, showing the impact that Parrott had on the series. Snub waits outside for a shop for his wife, and in the space of a few minutes manages to end up losing his clothes, is chased by police and pursued by a bear!

Parrott delighted in making Snub the poor sap who is a pawn of fate, pushed from pillar to post and winding up in more and more extreme circumstances. In some ways, these shorts are a bit like a cartoonish version of Chase's own later films.

1921-23 were Pollard's golden years. The good shorts continued in rapid succession, like BLOW 'EM UP, a wild melée of bomb-throwing anarchy and WHAT A WHOPPER, a cautionary tale of lying husbands. (I've detailed the best of these films in a separate feature at the end of this article). Special mention must also be given to leading lady Marie Mosquini, who kept pace with the wild action and inserted a huge dose of charm into the shorts.

The series was moved into two reels in 1922. The longer format allowed Chase and Pollard to really develop the gag situations and create more and more elaborate set-ups. CALIFORNIA OR BUST is a wonderful little road comedy featuring Snub and Marie's attempts to move out west. BEFORE THE PUBLIC gives a hilarious debunking of movie star mystique, while THE COURTSHIP OF MILES SANDWICH burlesques the Thanksgiving story, with Pollard as a decidedly irreverent Pilgrim.

SOLD AT AUCTION is probably the best of his two-reel comedies, a terrifically daffy tale of auctioneer Snub auctioning off the contents of the wrong house, and then being sent on a wild dash around town to reclaim them.

Nevertheless, all was not well. Richard M Roberts, in his authoritative book on the Hal Roach studios⁴, reveals that there were problems with the two-reel Snubs. One film, THE INVENTOR, posed particular problems, and was eventually cut down to a single reel, released under a new name. The new title was IT'S A GIFT. It's funny to think that this beautiful little comedy was originally considered something of a failure, but perhaps part of the reason for it's enduring success was that it distilled the best moments (and higher budget!) of the two-reeler into a concise and perfect single reel.

Despite the excellence of the gag material, Snub's films and appearance were starting to look a little dated alongside the more sophisticated fare Roach was producing starring Charley Chase, Glenn Tryon and his all-stars. The house style at Roach had moved away from impossible clown gags towards character comedy farce. Along with Roach's other clownish star, Paul Parrott, Snub was phased out. The two were even put together in a few films before their final fade-out. Of these, DEAR OLD PAL is maybe the best, a fun little short featuring their constant battle of one-upmanship to win Marie Mosquini's hand.

Pollard was maybe the first example of Roach's upcoming tradition of severing links with long associates. (He could be brutal in this respect, as Charley Chase and Stan Laurel would learn, but it was his occasionally cavalier attitude that kept him in business so long in an ever-changing industry).

On being let go, Snub didn't exactly have offers flooding in; Roach had his finger on the pulse of changing tastes, and his move away from more clownish films was a microcosm of the film industry as a whole. It was back to the stage for Pollard as he mounted a vaudeville tour. Meanwhile, his last few films dribbled out through Pathé, mostly mediocre efforts like THE BIG IDEA cobbled together from outtakes and unfinished films.

4. SMILEAGE GUARANTEED: PAST HUMOR, PRESENT LAUGHTER. MUSINGS ON THE FILM COMEDY INDUSTRY 1910-1945, VOLUME 1: HAL ROACH.

In November 1924, an advert appeared in *Variety*:

WARNING!
All Theater Managers and Agents are Hereby Warned Not to Play, Book or Handle Impostors or Impersonators of
SNUB POLLARD,
Famous Screen Comedian and Vaudeville Headliner, as the Only and Original
SNUB POLLARD
Is Now Playing Keith and Orpheum Circuits.

NOTICE
Any person claiming to be **SNUB POLLARD** or using the name to obtain stage or screen work faces legal action.
Signed, **SNUB POLLARD**

Though the ad seems like an almost comical example of self-promotion and/or ego, there was at least one team in Vaudeville, Berg & English, who made an act of impersonating Snub and Harold Lloyd. Snub's act was a skit called SAY, UNCLE, and featured him with a couple of stooges. After seeing the show at the Los Angeles Orpheum, *Variety's* reviewer of Feb 2, 1925 was unimpressed:

Both title and skit meant nothing, nor did the performer as far as the audience was concerned. It was nothing but puns and gags which, years ago, were the primary entertainment for the small vaudeville houses. Those who assist Pollard are incapable for the speaking stage and instead of bolstering him, classed as an impediment.

Ouch. That review notwithstanding, Pollard got good bookings for the act, no doubt helped by the curiosity of patrons to see a cinema star in the flesh. He kept busy with the sketch for the next year and a half, but in June 1926 finally got an offer to return to the screen.

The offer was from Weiss Brothers, who operated a small, low-budget independent company. Initially starting in Westerns, they branched out into comedies with the Winnie Winkle and Hairbreadth Harry series, and added Pollard to their lineup "as a major addition to the imposing array of short subjects planned for 1926-27". This sort of grand language was fairly typical of the company, who used the pretentious and inaccurate branding of 'Artclass Pictures'. This extended to having 'end' titles printed 'Finis', like a cheap restaurant printing its menu in French in a desperate attempt to appear classy.

This Emperor's New Clothes approach hasn't helped the reputation of the Weiss Brothers' comedies, which have had a bad rap down the years, but it's not entirely fair to write them off. Let's be clear: this wasn't art, it was product, made cheaply and quickly for small houses. However, the company turned out some decent little comedies within their limitations, and provided work for comics like Snub, Ben Turpin and Jimmy Aubrey at a time when they needed it. There was plenty of location work, giving the films a pleasant, sunny feel and they often recycled gags from other classic comedies, resulting in a sort of silent comedy grab-bag sampler. They may not be classics, but there are certainly worse ways to spend twenty minutes than watching a Weiss Brothers short!

Snub's first series for the Brothers Weiss were actually made by his own independent company, filmed in rented space at the Stern Brothers studios. These shorts, like *THE DOUGHBOY*, *THE YOKEL*, *FIRE!* and *THE BUM'S RUSH* are OK. There's plenty of action, but they are definitely a step down from his Roach work, with no budget for the wild gags that characterised his classic period. There was also a lack of Roach-calibre gagmen; Pollard doesn't seem to have been much of a gagman himself, and really needed a comic creator like Charley Chase to bring out the best in him. Unfortunately, the director he chose was James Davis. As Richard M Roberts recounts on his *Weiss-o-Rama* DVD commentaries, Davis was an alcoholic, and not the inspired comedy creator that Pollard needed; at some point, Les Goodwins was brought in to assist. The series hit extra trouble when the Stern Bros studios burnt down; the remainder of the series was apparently produced at Mack Sennett. Pollard's self-producing venture would not survive the first series, and it was back to vaudeville for 1927.

While Snub was treading the boards, two new comedy stars were on the rise. Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy's huge popularity gave someone at Weiss Brothers a brainwave: why not jump on the Fat & Skinny bandwagon and create a new comedy team, with Snub as the thin half? Pollard was called back to the studios in early 1928, and teamed with large comic



*A publicity shot from 1926, and as Laurel to Marvin Loback's Hardy in **DOUBLE TROUBLE**.*

Marvin Loback. Loback was a veteran of Sennett and Roach, and had even appeared with Snub a few times in small parts.

The films that resulted might charitably be called homages to Laurel & Hardy; less kindly, they could be called blatant rip-offs. To be fair, there was always a certain amount of shared ground and gag-borrowing in silent comedy, and some of the films were more original than others. However, the way that some of the Pollard-Lobacks like SOCK & RUN re-enact whole chunks of L & H films is pretty shameless.

What particularly attracted attention to these films in later years is the one-time belief that the shorts were made *before* the Laurel & Hardy films they ape. We now know this to be untrue. However, there *do* seem to be some examples where the Pollard films did a gag or routine simultaneously or before the Roach crews⁵.

There were ten of the ersatz-L & H shorts made, the last released into the early months of 1930 (extremely late for silent comedies, but the small houses catered to by Weiss Bros were often the last to wire for sound). Weiss Bros initially planned to continue with their shorts in sound, and Pollard made a test film (without Loback, and without his moustache), HERE WE ARE, in the East. This was followed by another, PIPE DOWN, before the plans were quietly dropped.

1930 was rough sledding for Snub. There would be no more films for Weiss Brothers, and few other offers of work. He had suffered badly in the Wall Street Crash, and to compound his woes, his mother passed away in September. He did manage a supporting role as a valet in the low budget Monogram feature EX-FLAME, but the film quickly sank without trace.

In November 1930, under the heading "Snub is back!", *Film Daily* announced that Pollard would appear in some Educational shorts. He went on to appear in three: DON'T LEAVE HOME with Johnny Hines, COME TO PAPA with Ford Sterling and GIRLS WILL BE BOYS with Charlotte Greenwood. However, these were far from comeback appearances, being little more than bit parts. In GIRLS WILL BE BOYS, Snub (looking just like his silent era self) appears only for a brief gag appearance as a confused janitor.

Even this small part seems like a decent role compared with his next appearance, in Laurel & Hardy's ONE GOOD TURN. The keen eyed may spot Snub among the community players led by James Finlayson. Wearing glasses, and without his moustache, he is little more than just another extra. It was certainly a comedown for somebody who was once one of Roach's top comedians.⁶

1931 was a low ebb for Snub's career, but there were a couple of interesting parts in 1932. He apparently starred in a Technicolor musical short for Vitaphone, NORTHERN EXPOSURE, with Jon Sheehan and Sheila Terry, and had a notable bit playing himself in the feature film THE MIDNIGHT PATROL:

"Snub Pollard is introduced as a comedian. Being out of character, when someone remarks he is not wearing the expected moustache, the head is turned and presto – the old familiar muff is in its place." (*The International Photographer*, April 1932)

He would don the 'tache again for a return to Vaudeville, appearing in a 'Hollywood Comedians' stage tour for Fanchon & Marco in 1932. Appearing alongside Ben Turpin and Walter Hiers, it was proof that Snub was now part of nostalgia for the



silent era. Also alongside other silent comedians, he appeared in some 'Race Night' comedies, sort of a precursor of WACKY RACES. In these obscure shorts, comics like Snub, Jack Duffy and Max Davidson took part in quirky challenges, while the audience placed bets on who would win.

In the 1920s, Snub's anonymous appearance without his moustache had been a hindrance. A decade later, it helped him branch out into some more realistic character parts. The mid-30s were his zenith in this regard. In 1934, he appeared in COCKEYED CAVALIERS with Wheeler & Woolsey, and

5. More on this in a separate piece on p46.

6. It's interesting that Snub never seemed to work again for Roach. Others, like Finlayson and James Parrott, would be content to work in supporting roles or behind the scenes after their own starring careers had stalled. Perhaps it hurt Pollard's pride too much to take such a cut; interestingly, despite his wide array of bit parts, he never shows up in bits for former co-star Harold Lloyd, either.

Some of Snub's supporting roles: Screen grabs from BARS OF FATE and GIRLS WILL BE BOYS, and a lobby card for one of his features as sidekick to Tex Ritter.





Meet Snub Pollard in the new International Paper Company film "Designed to Go Places"

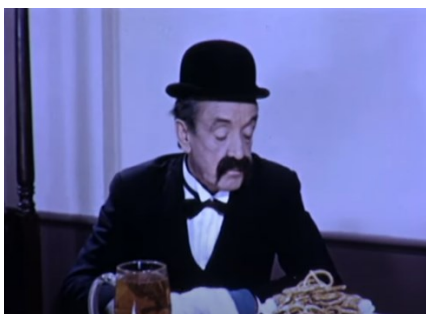
Slapstick Fun of Snub Pollard Revived in Ray Wolff Picture

★ The wonderfully wacky character created by Snub Pollard as one of Mack Sennett's original Keystone Kops at the dawn of theatrical movies, will come out of decades of hibernation for International Paper Company's new sponsored motion picture, *Designed To Go Places*, being introduced by Raphael G. Wolff Studios, Inc., of Hollywood.

Pollard makes his appearance in a black-and-white prologue to the color film, to establish, with his inimitable comedy technique, the ludicrously difficult and inefficient methods of packaging large objects before the introduction of modern paper containers. Once again he sports the Gargantuan, drooping, black mustache; the flapping, white cotton gloves; the dispirited white spats; the atrocious, much-too-small black derby, and the huge, tinny watch, with its clanking steel chain, which more than a generation ago helped make him one of the great comedians of the silent screen, and which will evoke heart-warming nostalgia to many a viewer of *Designed To Go Places*.

To completely maintain the mood of early-day "flickers" Pollard's scenes are undercranked by 60 per cent, the sound track beats out a din of nickleodeon-inspired piano music, and "dialogue" is handled through titles.

Working with Pollard in the prologue are two other old-time comedians, Budd Buster and Richard Cramer.



Above Some of Snub's final work was in industrial short films. The clipping is from *Business Screen*, detailing a film for the International Paper Company, *DESIGNED TO GO PLACES*. That's Dick Cramer with Snub in the top photo. The second image is a screenshot from *THIS IS AUTOMATION*.

STINGAREE with Richard Dix. The following year, he won two especially prominent roles in minor features. One was a nicely Stan Laurel-ish part in *JUST MY LUCK*, a comedy starring Charles Ray. Snub and Charles have a particularly good scene in a restaurant where they find themselves unable to pay the bill, revisiting both Chaplin's *THE IMMIGRANT* and Laurel & Hardy's *BELOW ZERO*. (Incidentally, the irascible waiter is another silent comedy veteran, Jerry Mandy.)

BARS OF FATE was a typical low budget 30s crime drama, full of men in trilbies growling at one another, but Snub enlivened proceedings with a plum comic sidekick role. He was also now eligible for a place on that famous Ex-Silent Comic Work Creation Programme™, the role of Western Sidekick. Like Andy Clyde, Syd Saylor and Al St John, his slightly outdated comic makeup slotted in to the role with ease, and he appeared with Tex Ritter in a number of features, beginning with *HEADIN' FOR THE RIO GRANDE*. Snub also appeared with Ritter on his personal appearance tours, and even experimented with a new nickname in some of the films: Peewee Pollard! It didn't catch on.

As the 1930s became the 1940s, the supporting roles grew smaller, but Snub remained busy. Towards the end of the decade, he had joined that other haven for former silent comics, Columbia Pictures, and may be seen in several appearances with the Three Stooges and Andy Clyde.

Pollard must have had good connections, or a good agent; he remained occupied in Hollywood bit-parts and westerns for the next 20 years, right up until his death. Most of these were minor appearances, though often in some pretty prestigious films. The man who Gene Kelly hands his umbrella to at the end of the *SINGING IN THE RAIN* musical number, for instance? Snub. (Now *there's* a pub quiz question for you!)

A small appearance in Chaplin's *LIMELIGHT* brought Pollard's film career full circle from his early days at Essanay, and as the nostalgia boom for silent comedy grew in the 1940s and 50s, he was able to haul his moustache out of cold storage and flex his slapstick muscles again. He often appeared (erroneously) as a former Keystone Cop, including a pie-throwing scene alongside Hank Mann and James Finlayson in *THE PERILS OF PAULINE*, and as a comedy waiter in *MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES*. With Hank Mann again, he was on the receiving end of a pie-throwing demonstration by Buster Keaton on The Ed Wynn Show.

Like Keaton, Pollard even made some little-known industrial films. *DESIGNED TO GO PLACES* (1955) was a short film for the paper industry, and *THIS IS AUTOMATION* featured Snub in two brief silent bits, showing the inefficiency of pre-automated manufacture.

As well as the silent comedy pastiches, his more anonymous bit parts continued in films like *HOMICIDAL*. Jerry Lewis, then at his zenith, was apparently a big fan of Pollard's work, and contrived to get him some bit parts. In *THE ERRAND BOY*, he even briefly addresses Snub by name.

And so, Snub Pollard's life settled into a routine of small film roles, occasionally harking back to his past glories. He lived alone but comfortably in his modest San Fernando Valley home, and was stoic about his career. Principally, he was just glad to remain busy. In an article syndicated in Australian newspapers in 1951, he claimed that "*The fact that I am not on top now does not bother me. Most people never get there at all*".

His passing in 1962 was with little fanfare, but he had left many good memories behind. Snub is never going to be remembered as one of the great pantomimists or gag creators of the silent era. However, he was certainly more than just a silly moustache! A very capable performer, and certainly one of the icons for the slapstick style of comedy, his hard work helped produce many terrific shorts that are still enjoyable today.

BEYOND 'IT'S A GIFT': THE BEST OF SNUB

Though IT'S A GIFT is rightly remembered today as a wonderful little silent comedy and may well be Snub's best film, it is far from the only classic he made. Though a good chunk of his films are lost or fragmented, there are still plenty of wonderful comedies left to enjoy. Here's a run-down of some of Snub's wildest and funniest comedies:



STRICTLY MODERN (1922)

IT'S A GIFT wasn't the first Snub comedy to explore the possibilities of Rube Goldberg-type gadgetry. STRICTLY MODERN is a great little short based around Snub's attempts to mechanise The Hotel Rundowne. Highlights include bathtubs that pull out of the walls, wall lights that turn into showers, and Snub's economic version of a lift: when someone presses the 'Call Lift' button, a fierce dog emerges to chase them up the stairs!

Currently available to watch on Vimeo, and also on Alpha Video's HAL ROACH COMEDY CLASSICS disc.



FIFTEEN MINUTES (1921)

A classic Charley Chase premise of a simple beginning escalating to absurd heights. Snub's wife leaves him sitting on a bench for fifteen minutes while she goes shopping. What could go wrong in such a short space of time? Quite a lot in Snub's world! After he has a washerwoman's tub of water tipped over him his protests lead her husband Noah Young to come after him. Soon, Snub has lost his trousers, is being shot at, has half the L.A police department on his trail, and ends up stuck in a tree pursued by a bear! A wonderfully silly little film.

Currently available to watch on Dave Glass's YouTube channel.



DRINK HEARTY (1921)

An early Snub classic, featuring his ingenious attempts to run a rural speak easy. Fun gags of alcohol hidden in unsuspected places, culminating in a chase from the revenuers, with Snub hidden inside a moving haystack!

CALIFORNIA OR BUST (1922)

'CALIFORNIA OR BUST' is a tale of Snub and Marie Mosquini driving west with a wagonful of all their possessions. You can guess that they don't make it, but the inevitable destruction of their belongings takes place in some wonderfully original ways. A favourite grace note is Snub struggling to play a game of Pool in the back of the wagon; only when the wagon has been smashed to smithereens is he able to steady the balls to pot them!

An abbreviated version is currently available to watch on YouTube.

365 DAYS (1922)

Another wonderfully kooky premise, this time Snub's Uncle has promised to divide his fortune among the family – but only if they can all live together for a whole year without fighting! The result is the entire family packed together in a sort of commune on one lot, with the houses piled on top of one another. Snub's solution is to build a house held aloft by a gas-filled balloon (powered with coins in a meter!). When Uncle comes to visit, the meter is accidentally overfilled with coins; the balloon overfills and the house takes off, flying across the country before coming to land on a railway line...

This film was originally two reels, but sadly seems to only exist today in a 9.5mm cut-down (available on YouTube). Several rare Snubs only exist thanks to this format; the French seem to have been keen on Snub, with many Pathé home releases of his films, under the moniker 'Beaucitron'. It roughly translates to 'Yellowboy'!

SHAKE 'EM UP (1922)

A comedy that makes creative use of camerawork, SHAKE 'EM UP sees Snub on a mission to rescue a kidnapped girl in a tough Latin American country. The area is prone to earthquakes, and the action is continually interrupted by a violent shaking of the camera, sending all the participants flying! *Available on Lobster Films' KINGS OF COMEDY' DVD set.*

YEARS TO COME (1922)

A hilarious gender-bending comedy set in a future where male and female roles are reversed. Snub plays a put-upon housewife in this sublimely ridiculous film, but the real comic highlight is the sight of burly Noah Young in drag!

THE MYSTERY MAN (1923)

Another film directed by Charley Chase. Here, Snub is a wonderfully hapless detective, on the trail of crooks Jimmy Finlayson and Noah Young with a motley pack of bloodhounds. There are some hilariously savage cartoon gags that dovetail beautifully into one another. For instance: Fin waits for Snub to be thrown out of a house, and sets fire to a mattress waiting to break his fall! Snub lands as predicted, sets on fire but then and seeks relief in a bucket of water. It's actually gasoline and he is blown sky high. We see him atop a telegraph pole dressed in just his vest and shorts; sighting a running race below, he joins in and accidentally wins first prize. Lots of fun.

Available on DVD from *Looser Than Loose*.

SOLD AT AUCTION (1923)

The best I've seen of Snub's two-reel films so far, *SOLD AT AUCTION* is a gag-packed tour-de-force. Snub is an auctioneer's assistant hired to demonstrate items for sale – as the items include first aid kits and blackjacks, each demo leads him to receive some physical punishment from Noah Young! In one really creative moment, Snub's unconsciousness is shown by the emulsion on the film melting away, and then reassembling as he comes round! Next, Snub is sent to run a house clearance auction. Trouble is, he's gone to the wrong house! Cop James Finlayson is none-too-pleased to find his house empty and demands that Snub recovers every single item, including a runaway grand piano and a pair of false teeth being worn by an airplane pilot! Like the best of Snub's films, it's wonderfully absurd, but remains full of little human gags.

Available on *American Slapstick DVD*, and from *Looser Than Loose*.

There aren't too many shots of Snub and Harold Lloyd out of costume together. Here they are in Photoplay, from 1918.

It's a Hard Life, But Not a Dull One, at the Home of Pathé-Rolin Comedies

A Few Slants at Harold Lloyd, Bebe Daniels, and Other Birds, at the Gloom-Chasing Their Famous One-Reel Bomb Out While You Wait

Daniels, "Snub" Pollard, and the Joint in Los Angeles Where shells of Joy Are Turned



BEBE DANIELS IS A "SHINING" STAR
She's shining the loving-cups which she and Harold Lloyd copped tripping the light fantastic. They're bears, they are, and have nailed fifteen trophies.

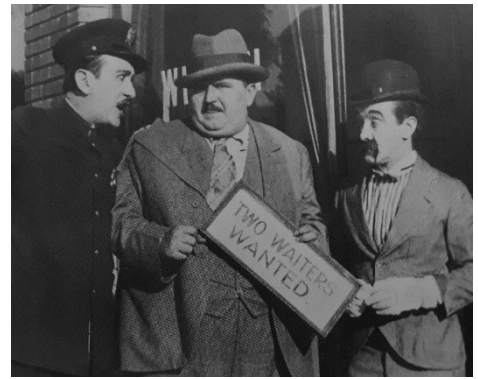
AS A PAINTER "SNUB" POLLARD IS A FIRST-CLASS TENOR SINGER
But as he's the "goat" in most of the Lloyd screams, he gets even, between pictures, by smearing it on Rameses.

TWO LIVE ONES AND A DEAD ONE. OFFICER, THE GAS-MASKS—QUICK!
Lloyd and Pollard bought a chicken. Then they waited for the

DOUBLE TROUBLE

THE SNUB POLLARD & MARVIN LOBACK FILMS

The two series of films that Pollard made with Marvin Loback are an interesting sidelight in his career. The Laurel & Hardy influence is obvious from the outset, but is painted broadly: the amount of nuance may be gauged from the fact that Loback's character is called 'Fat'. There's none of Oliver Hardy's quiet dignity in that! To be fair, Loback does a decent job throughout the series of replicating Hardy's impatience, if not his charm. It's his presence that really brings the L & H comparison. As for Snub, he hasn't changed his appearance from his standard costume of bowler, moustache, striped shirts and spats. As far as his performance goes, he's definitely gone a bit more passive, but his trademark moustache is a handicap in reproducing Stan's blank innocence. He rarely does a complete rip-off of Laurel mannerisms (although he does a crude version of the cry in one film), but the intention is clear.



Snub and Marvin with cop Harry Martell in ONCE OVER (1928)

Though the first few films of the series didn't copy L & H explicitly beyond the comics' appearance, soon more similarities began to creep in. Perhaps it was lack of inspiration for new material, but the intentional effort to piggyback on the team's success soon becomes a bit more blatant by –ahem– borrowing their material. Sometimes the likenesses are vague – Snub and Marvin as two sailors in *HERE COMES A SAILOR*, or a hint of *DOUBLE WHOOPEE* in *MITT THE PRNCE*, for instance. At other times, the similarities constitute plagiarism pure and simple, as entire gags and plots are ripped from L & H films like *FROM SOUP TO NUTS*, *PUTTING PANTS ON PHILLIP* and *SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME!*

The L & H connection has brought the Pollard-Loback films into focus now and again, particularly when one theory suggested the films actually pre-dated the Laurel & Hardy films! In the pre-Internet days, and before the onset of trade paper archives like the Media History Digital Library, States-Rights films made by companies like The Weiss Brothers were obscure and hard to trace. As a result, the films seem to have been confused with Pollard's first (solo) Artclass series, which were made in 1926-27. We now know that the Pollard – Lobacks were released in two batches, six films in 1928-29, and a further four in 1929-30, disproving the claim that Laurel & Hardy were the ones doing the borrowing.

The trade magazines only gave light coverage to low-budget, indie two-reelers like these, but after sifting through, I've gathered a handful of more precise dates. British trades like *The Bioscope* and *Kinematograph Weekly* also came in handy – though the films generally hit the UK a little later, the release dates gives a rough indication of when they were made and registered for release. Below is the information I've been able to gather to pin down the dates and titles a bit more.

1928 -29

Variety reported that Snub was working for Artclass on May 2, 1929. By June 19, they note that both Pollard and Ben Turpin have finished filming their first shorts for the company (*THICK & THIN* and *SHE SAID NO*, respectively). By September 1st, 1928, *Film Daily* reports that an additional two films are ready: *ONCE OVER* & *THE BIG SHOT*. American mentions of the series are scant hereafter. However, the British Press picks up the slack. Louis Weiss visited London to trade-show the series in the Autumn and they were distributed by Gaumont from November 1928. The Films Act, article 6 required that all films must be registered for exhibition – these listings tells us that the other three films from the first series were *SOCK & RUN*, *MEN ABOUT TOWN* and *HERE COMES A SAILOR*, registered in that order.

1929-30

In May 1929 *Film Daily* reported that Snub listed four titles in production for 1929-30; however, the titles listed were actually ones from the previous season, presumably an error. Actually, the four films were *DOUBLE TROUBLE*, *NO KIDDING*, *SPRINGTIME SAPS* and *MITT THE PRINCE*. These were released with synchronised music tracks (but no dialogue) as a concession to the advancing sound revolution. Adverts exist for the reissue of these films, with soundtracks, in 1943.

All the films were filmed in the Spring of 1929, with Variety reporting that the series wrapped in the second week of May, 1929. *DOUBLE TROUBLE* was used to launch the second series, and was reviewed in *Film Daily* on August 18th, 1929. *SPRINGTIME SAPS* was reviewed on October 24th. In Britain at lease, *MITT THE PRINCE* was the last of the series to be released, in *February 1930*. With the above in mind, here's a run-down of these seldom-discussed films, in what I believe is the order of release.

THICK & THIN

THICK & THIN was definitely the first of the shorts to be released and sets the tone for the series, with Snub and Marvin as two penniless gents in a shabby boarding house, trying to cook a meal, and then sneaking their belongings out without paying the rent. Of all the series, this is the one that most harks back to Snub's Hal Roach films, the hidden devices that the pair use to cook their meal a bit like a less elaborate reminder of *IT'S A GIFT*, *STRICTLY MODERN* and other films featuring Snub gadgetry. Pollard attempts a crude version of Laurel's cry in the short, something sensibly dropped hereafter. There's also a bit of a Harry Langdon influence, both in Pollard's subdued persona, and in a gag lifted from Langdon's *FIDDLESTICKS*. *THICK & THIN* is undoubtedly derivative, but the gags flow nicely and it's an entertaining little two-reeler.

ONCE OVER

Snub and Marvin roll into town on a freight train, riding in a boxcar of cows. There's a funny scene featuring the atrociously fake cow heads they use as a disguise, confounding brakeman Tiny Lipson (even more so when one of the cows appears to smoke his cigar!). For a topper, they exit the boxcar under blankets that make them appear to be a strange, two-headed beast!

The bulk of the film centres around their attempts to filch some food, pursued by cop Harry Martell. Along the way, two Hal Roach gags are – *cough* - borrowed. The scene from *THE FINISHING TOUCH* with Stan Laurel on both ends of the same plank is used, and there's also a gag with a mailbag and a fence lifted shot-for-shot from Max Davidson's *DUMB DADDIES*. Then it's on to the park, where they fail to steal a family's picnic before Snub has a brainwave. Covering his hand with a long white sock, he hides in a bush and pretends to be a swan, stealing the sandwiches a lady is feeding to the birds. Unfortunately, he knocks her in the water, and the cop is on their trail again. To elude him they enter a restaurant and are put to work as waiters. A predictable level of competence ensues, and things wrap up with some pie-throwing. Though the finish is weak, *ONCE OVER* is maybe the best of the Pollard-Lobacks. The borrowing is less overt than in many of the other shorts, and the film rambles along happily from one gag situation to the next, with some nice original ones thrown into the mix.

THE BIG SHOT *(Released October 1929, belatedly reviewed in Film Daily, Feb 1929)*

THE BIG SHOT is another one of the better Pollard-Lobacks, having some semblance of following the same story from start to finish. Snub and Marvin are reporters tasked with getting a photo of a camera-shy Scottish inventor. This involves Snub being coerced into wearing a kilt, and we're into a semi re-run of *PUTTING PANTS ON PHILIP*. It doesn't work on the same level of the L & H film – the sexual ambiguity surrounding the innocent Laurel character in *PHILIP* just cannot translate to a character wearing a huge moustache! To be fair, the gags don't try to be a carbon copy and mainly just deal in the incongruity of Snub's appearance. There are a few nice original variations, including Snub trying to change a tyre, with the draught from every passing car sending his kilt flying up. Snub and Marvin wind up following the inventor onto a boat and eventually corner him for a photo, but Snub is too generous with the flash powder and after a huge explosion, he is left clinging to the mast.

MEN ABOUT TOWN

After three few films that borrowed from Laurel & Hardy but at least tried to have original plots, the Pollard unit pretty much gave up the pretence of trying to be original for the next few films. *MEN ABOUT TOWN* is largely a re-run of *SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME* set on the golf course, with added gags from *YOU'RE DARN TOOTIN'*. However, there are some occasional moments in the Weiss Bros films that seem to anticipate a later Laurel & Hardy moment. Here, Marvin's attempts to contact Snub and sneak him out of the house include trying to contact him by phone, anticipating L & H's *BLOTTO* of 1930. Whereas L & H knew how to milk the scene for all it was worth, whereas here it is just a quick throwaway gag. *MEN ABOUT TOWN* is definitely one of the weaker films in the series.

SOCK & RUN

Ok, now they're really taking the Mickey. Not content with pinching the kilt material from *PUTTING PANTS ON PHILIP*, they basically re-film the entire first reel of that film, throwing in some soup gags from *YOU'RE DARN TOOTIN'* and ending with a boxing match à la *BATTLE OF THE CENTURY!*

The *PHILIP* material is recreated gag for gag, from the laughter of the crowd as Snub arrives, to his medical examination, to Marvin's attempts to keep him walking a few paces behind. Oh, but wait, it's actually been changed – Snub is French, not Scottish, and people are laughing at his silly top hat instead of his kilt. *That* ought to avoid a copyright infringement lawsuit...

Of all the Pollard-Lobacks, *SOCK & RUN* is maybe the one that has most secured the reputation of the series as being mindless L & H rip-offs. In this sense, it's the worst of the bunch. On its own terms, it's not terrible, and if you'd never seen a Laurel & Hardy picture, you'd probably find it entertaining. But if you lived in a world without Laurel & Hardy, *SOCK & RUN* would be the least of your problems.

HERE COMES A SAILOR

HERE COMES A SAILOR starts out with the boys as sailors who hire a car, in the spirit of *TWO TARS*, but doesn't get down to mass car destruction (something Weiss Bros surely didn't have the budget for). Instead, it takes a left turn to become a clone of *FROM SOUP TO NUTS* as the pair get jobs at a dinner party, down to Snub serving the salad "undressed". There is one nice original gag, as Snub accidentally causes a cameraman's tripod camera to collapse on top of him; bumbling around on all fours with the cloth over his back and the lens dangling out in front, the man resembles some strange elephantine creature!



DOUBLE TROUBLE *(August 1929)*

Snub and Marvin unsuccessfully rehearse and audition their terrible vaudeville act, then are hired as process servers to repossess their landlord's piano. This second series of Pollard-Lobacks are where some of the confusion over their originality seems to have come from. While the first-series L & H rip-offs like *SOCK & RUN* are blatant steals, the second batch *do* actually contain some gags or situations used by Pollard & Loback *before* Laurel & Hardy. *DOUBLE TROUBLE* is a case in point; Snub and Marvin's attempts at repossession anticipate *BACON GRABBERS*, not just in story, but also down to individual gags.

Held back until after L & H's first few talkies, *BACON GRABBERS* wasn't released until October 1929, but *DOUBLE TROUBLE* was filmed before May, and had already been released and pre-

viewed by August of 1929. Therefore, it couldn't have been a simple case of Les Goodwins or other Weiss gagmen having been to see the latest L & H film at their local theatre and filling their notebooks with ideas.

However, while DOUBLE TROUBLE may have reached cinemas before BACON GRABBERS, the Laurel & Hardy film was almost certainly finished first. My theory is that a Roach gagman moved over to Weiss Brothers, probably during the time when the Roach studios were being fitted out for sound. Another possible 'mole' was Bert Ennis, Snub's gag and title writer. Ennis doubled as a publicist, and had his own regular column in *Motion Picture Classic*, so was probably quite well connected with other studios.

NO KIDDING (September 1929)

NO KIDDING is a fun little short, featuring Snub and Marvin accidentally in charge of a toddler, and then having to hide him from the landlord of their bachelor apartment. The toddler is actually played by midget Billy Barty (incidentally, he played a similar role in the Laurel-Hardy SAILORS BEWARE). There are some amusing scenes as they disguise the toddler as an adult in a suit, complete with cigar, but the deception is undermined as he proceeds to make various noises and arouse the landlord's suspicion.

Again, there's a parallel situation of the Snub film seeming to pre-empt the Laurel & Hardy film. The central situation of the team hiding an unwanted guest in their apartment was also the basis of ANGORA LOVE, and one particular gag appears in both films. As the landlord lectures Snub & Marvin/Stan & Ollie that "this is a respectable boarding house", a woman walks behind him towards her room, pursued by a sailor! NO KIDDING was filmed in April or May 1929, and released in the Autumn, but ANGORA LOVE wasn't released until December 1929 (though, again, it was filmed first). The Roach Mole seems to have been at work again...

SPRINGTIME SAPS (October 1929)

SPRINGTIME SAPS is a ragbag effort that changes situations as the team run out of gags for each one. The best scenes are set in the park, with Snub and Marvin attempting to get 40 winks on a bench before being woken by a cop, and then trying to steal a man's cigar. When that's milked for all the comedy they can manage, the pair get jobs as taxi drivers, mainly so that they can nab a gag from the Sennett film TAXI DOLLS. Then things peter out in some feeble haunted house comedy.

The most notable aspect of this film is a moment where a man blatantly gives Snub the middle finger! It's not a slip or even made to seem like one – it's just blatantly there, in full shot! It shows how low under the radar these states-rights films must have flown, particularly at the tail end of the silent era.

MITT THE PRINCE (Release dates variously quoted as Dec 1929 and Feb 1930).

Snub and Fat are two incompetent handy men. Sent to deliver some parcels to the social-climbing Mrs Woodby-Noble (geddit??), they write off the car on the way there with bit of L & H patent tit-for-tat. When the Prince who is supposed to attend fails to show, the hostess persuades Snub to take his place. There's a vague hint of DOUBLE WHOOPEE in this premise, but no direct stealing of material. The best thing about MITT THE PRINCE is a nice running gag of Snub accidentally getting his hand continually in others' pockets; other than that, it's a middling effort.

The series wrapped in May of 1929, and with it Snub's career in silents. However, there was still one last gasp for his starring career, and his association with Weiss Brothers. In July 1929, Film Daily reported that the company was planning some talkie shorts, with Snub heading east to film some. Two shorts resulted, and the Pollard-Loback faux L & H vibe was dropped:

HERE WE ARE (filmed July 1929, released August 1929)

Snub played a plumber's assistant, who ends up pretending to be the plumber's wife and is taken to a nightclub. Obviously, he didn't wear his moustache in this one, or the deception wouldn't have been very convincing!

PIPE DOWN (Trade shown September 1929)

Snub was teamed with Jack Kearney as a pair of sailors on shore leave who keep running afoul of tough guy Gunboat Smith, ending in a slapstick fight. After Kearney knocks Smith unconscious, the pair light cigarettes, but an open gas lamp next to them causes a huge explosion. At least Snub's starring career ended with a literal bang! Variety wasn't impressed, calling PIPE DOWN "third-rate Vaude stuff passed off as film comedy". The two Pollard talkies were released in the UK in February, 1930.

And with that, the Snub Pollard Weiss Brothers series was over. The films were hardly his most glorious moment, but they helped keep his starring career afloat a little longer. Viewed today, the films range from good fun, to middling, to outrageous rip-offs (sometimes within the space of the same film!), but they show an interesting sidelight to how silent comedians could try to meet changing tastes and demand for particular styles of comedy. They are also a reminder of how special, and how hard to replicate, the chemistry between Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy was.

AND FINALLY...

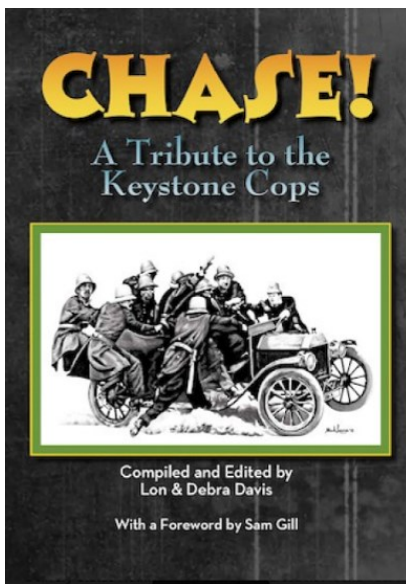
Definitely not the same Snub, but this newspaper article I came across sounds like it could be one of his comedies! From the Sheffield Star, February 1930:

"Owing to the fact that he tried to change his socks while roller skating at the Attercliffe skating rink, Sheffield. Mr "Snub" Pollard, a professional roller skater, was precluded from attempting to break the existing endurance record of 35 hours' continuous skating."



THE BUFF'S BOOKSHELF

ALL THE LATEST BOOK NEWS & REVIEWS



A Keystone Kompendium, written by a host of great silent comedy authors!

352 pp. Bear Manor Media, \$35.00, or \$11.03 Kindle

CHASE! A Tribute to the Keystone Cops is a compendium of writing about the Keystone Cops by a collection of great silent comedy writers, edited by Lon & Debra Davis. The book has over 300 seldom-seen photos, press book illustrations and lobby cards, as well as trade ads and bios of 56 performers who appeared as cops over the years.

Though the humour of the Keystone films may seem primitive today, the impact and influence of the Cops was enormous. Authority had never been shown to be so incompetent as a subject of comedy before this, in the stuffy Edwardian era of polite manners. Early film comedy was as rebellious, in its way, as rock and roll later was, with the Cops at the forefront of comic anarchy. They represent the alternative comedy movement of their day!

Even those who know little about silent comedy probably have some vague notion of the Keystone Cops. Yet, despite the fact that they are such icons, this is surprisingly the first book devoted solely to them. Over the years, false rumours have become taken as fact, misinformation has been perpetrated and films have been mislabelled. Who were the cops? How did they originate? What films did they appear in?

CHASE! answers these questions and many more. The book's contributors include silent-era historians of the first rank, including Joe Adamson, John Bengtson, Lon Davis, Rob Farr, Paul E. Gierucki, Sam Gill, Michael J. Hayde, Rob King, Chris Seguin, Randy Skretvedt, Lea Stans, Brent E. Walker, Marc Wanamaker, and Mark Pruett.

The individual chapters by these authors are wide ranging, tackling many different aspects of the Cops' story, from broad overviews to minutiae. In the former category, Rob King's 'Parody and the Rise of The Cops' sets the scene nicely for how Keystone Comedy came about, while Joe Adamson's contribution nicely sums up the Sennett comedy style. Silentology's Lea Stans contributes an excellent piece on the enduring myth of the Keystone Cops; on the flipside of this, Chris Seguin's myth-busting article, 'Keaton meets Keystone', tackles the untruth that Buster was a Cop, detailing some of the circumstances that caused this confusion. An interesting new perspective is provided by Mark Pruett's essay on ensemble acting in the Keystone films, and there are individual chapters on particular films like *A THIEF CATCHER* and *IN THE CLUTCHES OF A GANG*.

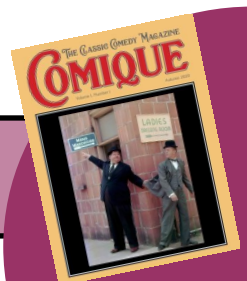
Sam Gill's foreword is a treat in itself, as he recalls meeting Sennett alumni in their old age. I always find these first-hand encounter stories absolutely fascinating—I think it would actually make a great book to collate some of these stories from people lucky enough to meet the silent clowns in the flesh!

Those who like reference books and easily accessible facts are also well-catered for, with Lon Davis and Brent E. Walker's biographical sketches of fifty-five 'top cops', Marc Wanamaker's illustrated Keystone Chronology and details on the reissue of the films on film and DVD (by Michael J Hayde and Rob Farr, respectively).

There isn't space to do justice to all the contributions here, but this is a really fantastic effort. I'd love to see more compendium books like this, as the range of different knowledge and perspectives from different authors produces a really diverse and thorough work. *CHASE!* manages to be an info-packed reference volume, and a coffee table book for browsing. It's a book to both dip in and out of, and fall into. All in all, a great project spearheaded by Lon and Debra Davis, and all profits go towards film preservation funds too, so you're helping out by making a purchase! Very much recommended.

<http://www.bearmanormedia.com/chase-tribute-keystone-cops-hardcover-edition-by-lon-and-debra-davis>

Many of the authors who contributed to *CHASE!* Have also contributed articles to a new classic comedy magazine, *COMIQUE*. Free to download from [The Internet Archive](http://www.TheInternetArchive.com), and also highly recommended.



ALDWYCH REVISITED

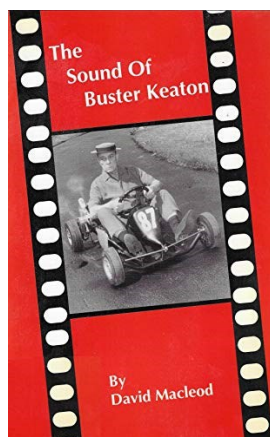
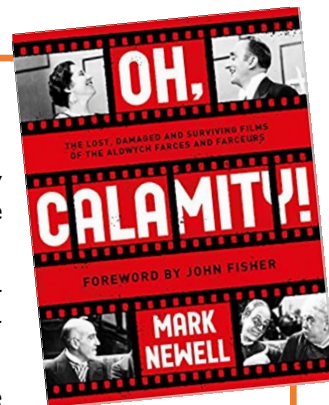
The Aldwych Farces were a beloved series of comedy films in 1930s Britain, but they've been sadly neglected in recent years. Now, Mark Newell has written the definitive book on the series. From the official press release:

Can missing films still be found? Mark Newell Certainly hopes so. He's written the first ever history of the Aldwych farces on both screen and stage with a special emphasis on those films that are lost or currently unavailable.

The thirteen Aldwych farces were phenomenally successful between 1922 and 1933. Tons of Money was The Charley's Aunt of its day. Lines from Rookery Nook – like “earlier than that I cannot be” – were known by everyone. Ralph Lynn, Tom Walls and Robertson Hare transferred their work equally successfully to the cinema in the early 1930s. They became top stars of the new ‘talkies’. Their influence is still felt today, passed on through their successors like Ian Carmichael and Richard Briers to the current crop of light comedians and farceurs.

Also covered in Oh, Calamity!, along with the farces and their film adaptations, are the screen originals by Ben Travers, the individual starring films of both Lynn and Walls in the 1930s and the stage and screen work of Hare with Alfred Drayton. Each of the 48 films covered is described in full and there are 90 short profiles of the personalities involved and 200 rare illustrations.

OH, CALAMITY! Is priced at £14.99, and is published by Book Guild: www.bookguild.co.uk



BUSTER BOOKS

David Macleod, head of the UK Buster Keaton society, The Blinking Buz-zards, has updated two of his previous books on Buster.

‘The Sound of Buster Keaton’ focuses on Buster’s neglected sound films, with lots of great stills and information not found elsewhere.

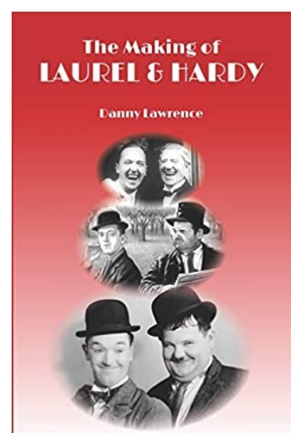
“Looking Back” has a narrower focus—it’s “a visual documentary of a little-known episode in the life of Buster Keaton – his tour of British music halls in the summer of 1951.

Both are revised and updated editions, and are available in Kindle format. Highly recommended!

ANOTHER HELPING OF DUCK SOUP

Danny Lawrence continues his foray into the formative years of Laurel & Hardy with a book centred around their appearance together in the short DUCK SOUP. As Mr Lawrence points out, the film was a pivotal one in their career. Not only did they appear as a recognisable duo for the first time, but the film had a long heritage as a sketch written by Stan’s father A.J. Jefferson, and was later remade as ANOTHER FINE MESS.

The differences between the stage and film versions are included, as well as extracts from the screenplay and information on the various versions of the film that have survived. The detail is forensic, and not for a casual fan, but there’s lots of good information here, and it’s a different slant on the familiar story of the duo. The team’s solo film careers leading up to their appearances together at Hal Roach are also covered, so if you don’t own Rob Stone & David Wyatt’s LAUREL OR HARDY, this will fill you in nicely.



CHAPLIN'S FINAL SCREENPLAY TO BE PUBLISHED.

Charlie Chaplin didn’t intend A COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG to be his last film. Even as he advanced into his 80s, he was busy planning a fantasy drama called THE FREAK. It was to star his daughter Victoria, and was the tale of a girl who has wings. Chaplin planned a small cameo for himself, as a drunk who double takes when he sees the girl flying overhead.

Costumes were made and test photographs taken, but advancing age caught up with Chaplin, and THE FREAK was never to progress further. Now, the Cineteca Bologna are publishing Chaplin’s planned screenplay. Initial publication will be in Italian, but an English-language version is likely to follow.

SCREENING NOTES

Through Ice and Fire with Harry Langdon

HOTTER THAN HOT and SKY BOY have always been some of the holy grail of Harry Langdon films. Both survive complete, but missing their soundtracks, meaning they have languished in the vaults, unloved and unseen for almost 90 years. Now, they are the highlights of the wonderful DVD, *Harry Langdon: the Hal Roach Talkies*. The missing soundtracks have been catered for with subtitles and music from Andrew Earle Simpson, which carries them along nicely. After all, the visual is the essence of Langdon's beautiful pantomime performances. Even if he never made me laugh, I could happily sit and watch him act for hours. In fact, he made me laugh a lot in these shorts. I laughed out loud, and often.

The two films, contrasting tales of fire and ice, are among the most offbeat of all Langdon's work (against some stiff competition!). HOTTER THAN HOT might just be one of my new favourite Langdon shorts. Harry plays, of all things, a genuine pyromaniac. He is chasing after a fire engine when Edgar Kennedy bribes him to take a 'Dear John' letter to Thelma Todd's apartment (Edgar is the one dumping Thelma? Really?). Thelma vamps Harry to get back at Edgar, but the room sets on fire, leaving them trapped in the burning building.

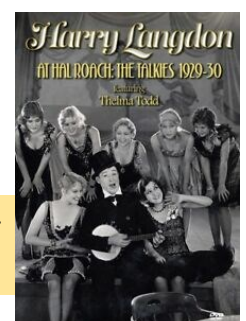
There are some lovely sight gags in this one, including Harry showing beautiful comic body control while trying to cross a slippery floor, and his attempts to retrieve a key that an unconscious Thelma has hidden in her dress. To add to the catalogue of Langdon patented dolls and dummies gags, there's a very funny bit where he manipulates a large doll so that it seems to have Thelma's legs. Funniest of all is a moment where Harry is fascinated with some firecrackers, followed by a close up shot of him, gleefully sat with fingers in ears and the firecracker fizzing away in his mouth!

The film was based on Langdon's own vaudeville skit THE MESSENGER, so he was intimately familiar with the material and pulls it off wonderfully. While we can't hear the dialogue, the footage and subtitles don't show him going overboard with talking. Though there are sometimes accusations that Langdon was inept with dialogue, he had obviously found a way to make it work for audiences in performing the sketch live. However, HOTTER THAN HOT works just fine as a silent. Like all the best sound films of the silent clowns, it's essentially visual, with dialogue essentially used to drive the plot or add character.

SKY BOY is an even more offbeat film, playing out rather like a strange dream: Harry is marooned on an iceberg with Thelma, Eddie Dunn and a bear! Harry has been stowing away on Thelma and Eddie's plane, hoping to see Paris. When they crash on the iceberg, he believes he has arrived and starts spouting a stream of unintelligible French gobbledegook!

The striking iceberg setting is an unusual but fitting backdrop for Langdon's minimalism, as he attempts to go fishing and avoids the attentions of the bear. The comic centrepiece of the film is a long routine of Harry trying to shave the bullying Eddie Dunn. Playing at a grown up job always had Harry in his element, and his attempts at barber shop patter are perfect for adding dialogue to his character. However, the angelic Langdon character often had darkness lurking not far away, and there's a wonderful example here, as Thelma tries to persuade him to cut Eddie's throat! Add to this a fishing line attached to Harry's wrist that causes his hand to jerk dangerously all over the place, and you have a routine that's funny and suspenseful.

SKY BOY is the lesser of the two films, not benefitting from the long rehearsal that HOTTER THAN HOT enjoyed. However, it's a strikingly original short with plenty to recommend it; who else would make a film like this but Harry Langdon. While his oddball Hal Roach shorts have their detractors, I personally find them refreshingly different, and a determined effort to follow his own comic vision. He would go on to make plenty of decent talkies, but none as quirky and original as this series. It's a wonderful treat to have these two long-unseen shorts available again to enjoy.



HOTTER THAN HOT & SKY BOY are just two of the 8 Harry Langdon-Hal Roach films featured on the wonderful recent DVD set from The Sprocket Vault. It's a must-have! [Here's the link to Amazon.](#)

Buster's Last Stand

The King of daredevil comedy makes a Health & Safety film! The last film made by Buster Keaton may not be a classic, but it still offers pleasures for the Keaton fan...



In the 1950s and 60s, Buster Keaton found a nice sideline making 'Industrial' films. These varied from company training films to promotional advertisements, and even one (1952's PARADISE FOR BUSTER) that was a pure comedy to be shown as a treat for employees of John Deere. In October 1965, shortly after his 70th birthday, Keaton travelled to Canada for another industrial assignment. He didn't know it then, but it would turn out to be his last appearance before a camera.

Some years earlier, he had been involved with an abortive film called TEN GIRLS AGO. Among the journalists covering that project was editorial photographer John Sebert; now Sebert found himself helming an industrial safety film for the Construction Safety Association of Ontario. The acquaintance was renewed and Keaton had a job.

THE SCRIBE is very obviously an instructional film, its purpose being to hammer home company safety policy - "16 steps to LIVE!". Buster's job is to brighten proceedings by demonstrating how flouting each step can cause accidents, in his inimitable manner. Given the set-up, it's not fair to hold the film to the same standards of your average Keaton comedy. Certainly, nobody could call THE SCRIBE a forgotten classic, but for what it is, it's not half bad.

Buster plays a janitor at a newspaper office, who promotes himself to journalist when a call comes in to investigate industrial safety at a building site. Once there, he finds a list of safe working guidance rules, and wanders around the building site trying to enforce them, but usually making matters worse. It's a pretty efficient way of getting the message across, but more importantly allows Keaton to indulge in little sight gag vignettes. Sebert is obviously a fan of Keaton's comedy, and lets him do his thing. Some are better than others; Sebert sometimes bites off more than he can chew, and sequences of Buster being hoisted aloft on a crane or dangling from a rope are unconvincing, especially as a lanky, much younger double is used. Some gags are also sabotaged by the fact that the rest of the cast are genuine construction workers... as actors, they're very good builders!

Much better are the simple visual gags: Buster's constant loss of his hard hat, or his fascination with an ominous red button. Best of all, there are a handful of throwaway gags that don't serve any health and safety purpose at all - a falling door gag gives just a hint of STEAMBOAT BILL, JR, and Buster even uses a ladder gag from Laurel and Hardy's THE FINISHING TOUCH. These are surely on-set additions by Buster himself, proof that his comic mind was active right until the end.

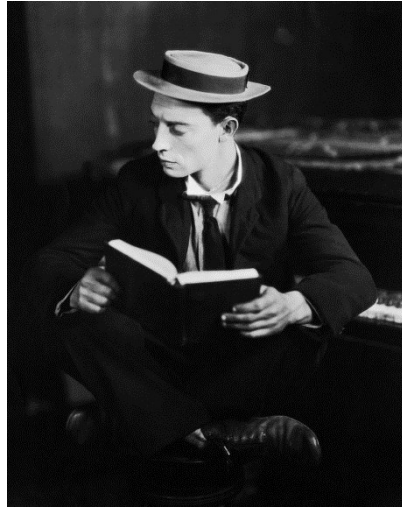
You can tell that all isn't well with him though. As well as the use of a double, scenes of Buster running show his movements much slower than usual. With hindsight, we now know that he was terminally ill, and making this film at all was quite an achievement.

If THE SCRIBE isn't the wonderful final hurrah that THE RAILRODDER had been, there certainly could be a less fitting final role. 46 years earlier, Buster's first starring short had been ONE WEEK, based around house construction. Now, in 1965, with the wooden house changed to a skyscraper, here he was, still pottering about a building site, making gags with planks and doors and cement. There's something quite touching about Buster persevering in the brave new world of the atomic age, as plans were made to put a man on the moon, and as The Beatles were recording RUBBER SOUL. It was a totally different era, but after all he'd been through in his career, he was still in demand and still funny.

The final scenes see him re-enacting one of his earliest comic routines, a floor scrubbing scene from THE BELL BOY (1918). While he is immersed in this, the 'End' title appears on the screen. Buster looks up and taps it away; a nice, playfully cinematic final gag for a comedian who had always stretched the possibilities of film comedy.



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A respectful tip of the porkpie hat to the following sources, which were a great help in writing this issue's articles:

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Access to vintage trade publications is an invaluable asset, courtesy of The Media History Digital Library, accessed through lantern.mediahist.org UK Trade journals such as The Bioscope and Kinematograph Weekly, as well as other vintage newspapers, are available through The British Newspaper Archive/Findmypast Ltd.

In addition, time spent browsing The [Silent Comedy Mafia](#) boards and [Nitrateville](#) is always informative, not to mention watching The Silent Comedy Watch Party! Anthony Slide's introduction to a screening of Walter Forde's YOU'D BE SURPRISED (and a brief chat afterwards) was also a source of some great background information, as was my conversation with Sara Lupino Lane, who generously gave her time to answer my many questions about her grandfather. Big thanks to the two Daves, Glass and Wyatt, for their contributions and encouragement!

IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

MARIE PREVOST

Marie Prevost is mainly remembered today as a tragic example of a star who fell from grace, and few accounts of her life recognise her ability as a comic actress. Our article will focus on Marie's undervalued work in comedy films, from Sennett leading lady to star of sophisticated farces. After all, there aren't many people who worked with both Ben Turpin and Ernst Lubitsch!

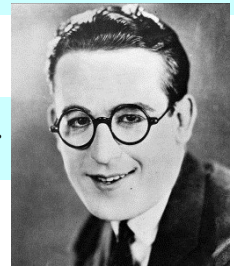


DAN LENO

'The King's Jester', Dan Leno was among the most popular and inspirational of all the English Music Hall clowns. He was a comic ancestor of Charlie Chaplin and, especially, Stan Laurel. We'll trace the comic lineage of his surviving songs and sketches to examine the influence he had on the world of film comedy.

HAROLD LLOYD

The little-told story of his 1932 U.K. visit.



PLUS LAUREL & HARDY, REGINALD DENNY & LOTS MORE!

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