



SILENT LAUGHTER WEEKEND 2022

APRIL 23RD-24TH, AT THE CINEMA MUSEUM, LONDON.

Presented by the Kennington Bioscope team, in association with Kevin Brownlow.
Event curated by David Wyatt.

	SATURDAY 23RD APRIL		SUNDAY 24TH APRIL
10:00	WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?	10:00	THE WRIGHT IDEA
11:40	REDISCOVERING ROSCOE	11:40	MACK SENNETT MADNESS
	<i>LUNCH BREAK</i>		<i>LUNCH BREAK</i>
14:00	MY BEST GIRL	14:00	WHAT HAPPENED TO JONES?
15:40	ALMOST LOST LAUGHS	15:40	LUPINO LANE
17:30	THE STRONG MAN	17:20	THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE
	<i>DINNER BREAK</i>		<i>DINNER BREAK</i>
20:00	SAFETY LAST	20:00	AN EVENING WITH LAUREL & HARDY

In addition to the lunch and dinner breaks there will be short breaks between each programme.

Many thanks go to our accompanists: **Lilian Henley, Meg Morley, Costas Fotopolous & John Sweeney.**

Thanks also to our many contributors: Christopher Bird, Neil Brand, Geoff Brown, Susan Cygan, Dave Glass, Sara Lupino Lane, Steve Massa & Matthew Ross; to the BFI National Archive, Serge Bromberg at Lobster Films, Ben Model of Undercrank productions, and of course Phil Clark our projectionist and the team of volunteers at The Cinema Museum.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? (1929)

ARCHIBALD NETTLEFOLD PRODUCTIONS. RELEASED 10 JUNE 1929 (SILENT VERSION). PRODUCED BY ARCHIBALD NETTLEFOLD. DIRECTED BY WALTER FORDE. SCENARIO BY HARRY FOWLER MEAR. STORY BY WALTER FORDE AND HARRY FOWLER MEAR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFFREY FAITHFULL. EDITED BY ADELINE CULLEY. ART DIRECTION BY W. G. SAUNDERS. 58 MINUTES

CAST: WALTER FORDE (WALTER), ARTHUR STRATTON (CUTHBERT), PAULINE JOHNSON (PAULINE), ALBERT BROUETT (THE SPY), ANITA O'DAY (THE FARMER'S WIFE), ANITA SHARP BOLSTER (THE PRESBYTERIAN), IAN WILSON (BANDSMAN), SIDNEY GILLIAT (FIRST CUSTOMER RUNNING OUT OF RESTAURANT).

Would You Believe It?, shot between mid-December 1928 and mid-March 1929 on location and at the Nettlefold studio (formerly Hepworth) at Walton-on-Thames, was the third feature-length comedy starring and directed by Walter Forde, Britain's only star film comedian of the 1920s. It was also the penultimate one, with just *You'd Be Surprised** (1929/1930) following. He recalled the film in the 1970s as "the one which really put me on the map", and it was indeed a prodigal success, playing in the West End for 22 consecutive weeks at the Tivoli Theatre (then a record for a British picture) in tandem with Ronald Colman's first talkie, *Bulldog Drummond*. Typically downplaying his own achievements, he also recalled that "it wasn't very well done", mentioning the studio's poky facilities; though that wasn't the view of critics at the time and hasn't been of most viewers since.

Produced and released first as a silent film, *Would You Believe It?* reappeared towards the end of 1929 with added sound effects and a synchronised musical score by Paul Mulder, captured on 16-inch discs recorded by the Vocalion Gramophone Company, a subsidiary of Brunswick. The BFI Archive's print, which we show, appears to derive from this synchronised version, but the accompanying discs have long disappeared. So the film is silent once more.

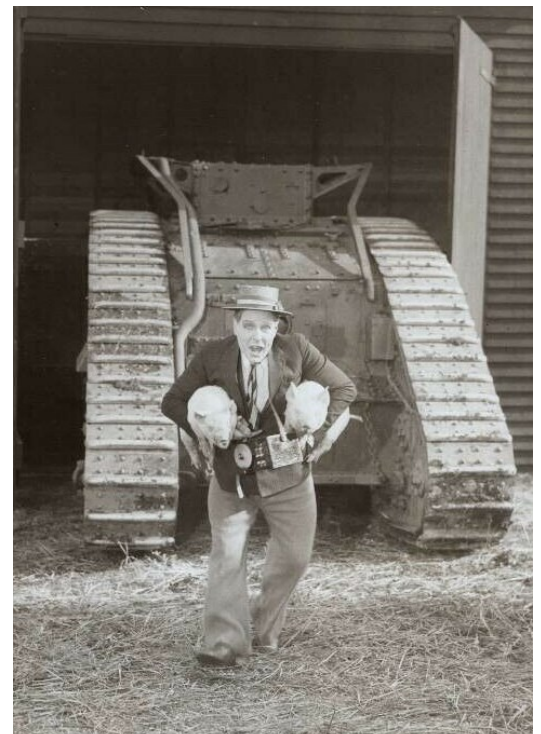
Review from *The Bioscope*, 20 May 1929:

In brief: "Walter Forde in a diverting comedy of which he is part author, director and star comedian, packed with amusing farcical situations, clever invention and a plausible story. A really funny film certain of general approval.

Plot: Walter is a youth who has an inventive turn of mind and devotes his time to the construction of an Army Tank with wireless control. He seeks to obtain War Office consideration through feminine influence, but has to deal with foreign spies who are anxious to obtain Walter's plans and wreck his model. Walter goes near to wrecking Whitehall and himself, but fate watches over him, his plans are favourably considered, and the tank becomes a bridal coach.

Comment: This highly amusing comedy is an advance even on Walter Forde's previous successes, and is good entertainment from start to finish. Much ingenious humour is got out of the idea of mechanical invention, and clockwork figures under the influence of wireless control contribute greatly to the fun. The action proceeds at a feverish pace and there is no dull moment throughout the length of the film.

Acting: Walter Forde carries the chief burden of the entertainment on his own shoulders, and seems well equal to the strain. Mr. Forde is a worthy rival to Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton in his comedy inventiveness, and has a pleasing personality which is entirely his own. Pauline Johnson and a well-selected company give excellent support, and the tank itself contributes greatly to the general success."



- Geoff Brown

*shown at a previous weekend.

REDISCOVERING ROSCOE



For almost one hundred years it's been impossible to separate the legend surrounding Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle from his work as a filmmaker and comedian. Practically everything written about him has detailed the infamous scandal and the trials that followed, leaving his many skills as a laugh-maker relatively unexplored. Steve Massa's recent book, *Rediscovering Roscoe: The Films of "Fatty" Arbuckle*, is a film -by -film examination of his talents as a performer, director, and all-around comedy creator.

In this recorded presentation Steve will give a guided tour through Arbuckle's career and works, complete with generous selections of film clips and rare photographs. The closer for the show is a screening of *His Wife's Mistake* (1916), an overlooked Arbuckle gem shot in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

HIS WIFE'S MISTAKE (1916)

DIRECTOR: ROSCOE ARBUCKLE. CAST: ROSCOE ARBUCKLE, MINTA DURFEE,(MRS. STEELE), AL ST.JOHN,(OFFICE BOY) BETTY GRAY, (TELEPHONE GIRL), WILLIAM JEFFERSON (MR I.STEELE), ARTHUR EARLE (R.U.STOUT), JOE BORDEAUX (WAITER) . KEYSTONE. RELEASED BY TRIANGLE, 2 REELS.

When Jefferson's wife Minta mistakes Fatty for rich client Earle, she takes him to lunch, creating jealousy on the part of her husband.

"HIS WIFE'S MISTAKE confirms opinion expressed long ago that Roscoe Arbuckle is a whole play in himself. ... Yet all that he does is so intelligently performed that there is no evidence of effort. To the contrary, it has the appearance of spontaneity so rare in comedy of any kind. Nothing stagey, nothing artificial mars his interpretation of stupidity, and nothing that offends. Even the farce has a story, and the concluding scenes are of a decorative wealth rarely seen in serious drama. HIS WIFE'S MISTAKE will rank high among the best of its kind." - *Moving Picture World*,(April 22, 1916)

"The rarely screened HIS WIFE'S MISTAKE is an unsung gem in the Arbuckle cannon that follows Roscoe as he riffs and fools around as the janitor of a shopping arcade. There is lots of good physical business with fatty mopping floors and trying to pick up a bar of soap that he's dropped. Despite manning a barber shop and ice cream parlour for their slapstick potential, he also does an extended routine involving a revolving door that predates Chaplin's (1917) by a year. All this is done in a leisurely and playful manner, without a trace of being frenetic, which demonstrates Arbuckle's confidence and mastery of physical comedy" - Steve Massa, 'Rediscovering Roscoe'

MY BEST GIRL (1927)

PRODUCED BY MARY PICKFORD/UNITED ARTISTS, DIRECTED BY SAM TAYLOR. LENGTH: 79 MINUTES FORMAT: 16MM
ADAPTATION: HOPE LORING FROM A STORY BY KATHLEEN NORRIS, SCREENPLAY BY ALLEN MCNEIL, TIM WHELAN

CAST: MARY PICKFORD (MAGGIE JOHNSON), CHARLES 'BUDDY' ROGERS (JOSEPH 'JOE' GRANT), SUNSHINE HART (MA JOHNSON), LUCIEN LITTLEFIELD (PA JOHNSON), CARMELITA GERAGHTY (ELIZABETH 'LIZ' JOHNSON), HOBART BOSWORTH (FATHER ROBERT E. MERRILL), EVELYN HALL (MOTHER ESTHER MERRILL), AVONNE TAYLOR (MILLCENT ROGERS), MACK SWAIN (THE JUDGE), MAX DAVIDSON (NIGHT COURT SPECTATOR, UNCREDITED), CAROLE LOMBARD (SALESGIRL, UNCREDITED)

CINEMATOGRAPHY: CHARLES ROSHER, DAVID KESSON. ART DIRECTION: JOHN DUCASSE SCHULZE. COMEDY ASSISTANT: CLARENCE HENNECKE



A Contemporary Review:

“With a story by Kathleen Norris, an adaptation by Hope Loring, and ‘America’s Sweetheart’ to play in it, the picture could not fail to be interesting. Not the story, which is flimsy, nor all the comedy running through it (and it is frequently slapstick), makes you remember the picture. But you will carry away memories of the beautiful love episode between Mary Pickford and ‘Buddy’ Rogers. You might not think of romance in connection with a ten-cent store, but, when Mary was stock girl in Merrill’s store, she discovered a wonderful beau, whom she tried to train in the business. Thereby hangs the tale. The love scenes between these two are marvellous – beautiful, clean and gripping. The best picture Mary has made in several years.”
The Shadow Stage - Photoplay December 1927

MY BEST GIRL is notable for several reasons. It was the final silent film made by actress, celebrity and pioneering businesswoman, **Mary Pickford** (1892-1979), the 239th in an astonishing screen career, starting in 1909, with only a handful of pictures to follow after sound came in. Mary became close, during filming, to her MY BEST GIRL leading man, **Charles ‘Buddy’ Rogers** (1904-1999), and they would begin a secret romance which would not become public until the separation and divorce of Mary from Douglas Fairbanks in 1936. Rogers, “America’s Boyfriend”, married Pickford, “America’s Sweetheart”, in 1937 and they remained together for 42 years, until her passing parted them. Rogers, twelve years her junior, and just 20, starting in movies only the year prior to production, had appeared in the acclaimed WINGS (1927), opposite Clara Bow and Richard Arlen, the film which won the first Best Picture Oscar. He was musically inclined and played the trombone and would join in playing with the on set musicians while shooting MY BEST GIRL.

Apart from the main cast, there are multiple appearances of known screen comedians, including Mack Swain and Max Davidson, but also the United Artists press book reveals that Mary’s cousin, **Isabelle Sheridan** (1906-1996), a young business-woman, thinking of entering into the movies, also appears: “aside from having much the same colouring, Miss Sheridan does not resemble her famous relative, (...but) Miss Pickford offered her the role of a sales-girl.” Sheridan had another bit-part in Ernst Lubitsch’s ETERNAL LOVE (1929) and took up stand-in work through the 1930’s.

Another uncredited blonde sales assistant in MY BEST GIRL went on to a far more celebrated film career, until tragedy cut it short, that being **Carole Lombard** (1908-1942). For the other featured players, we’ll see Texan, **Lucien Littlefield** (1895-1960), praised for his performance, who clocked up hundreds of appearances in film over decades, and in the mid ‘20’s was a fixture of the company at Hal Roach’s studios. **Carmelita Geraghty** (1901-1966) was a Mack Sennett contract player and WAMPAS Baby Star for 1924. Her father was a writer for Douglas Fairbanks and ran the London arm of the Famous Players-Lasky studios. After years playing in vaudeville, as ‘Miss Sunshine’, **Sunshine Hart** (1886-1930) started in films in 1916. Mack Sennett signed her to a long-term contract in 1924, she was known as ‘The Female Fatty Arbuckle.’ Game to participate in stunts, this became her undoing in the production of MY BEST GIRL as she badly injured her foot when she fell doing an automobile stunt and never fully recovered. Bedridden, she died three years later.

Veteran actor/writer/director **Hobart Bosworth** (1867-1843) brought some gravitas to the proceedings playing the father of Buddy Rogers’ character. A news piece in a July 1927 Moving Picture World magazine, regarding the addition of Hobart Bosworth to the cast, while the production was already in full swing, gives an idea of the atmos-

phere of its making, "MY BEST GIRL set a new record in that it was nearly half finished before the supporting players were selected. So many of the scenes required only the appearance of Miss Pickford and Rogers, that it was decided to take these scenes first. Director Sam Taylor 'shot' for more than six weeks on preliminary sequences, which included a 5-and-10-cent store interior, as well as one of the largest and most elaborate 'down-town' street scenes ever built. Although a thousand extras were used in some of these scenes, there were no principals other than Miss Pickford and Rogers."

Director **Sam Taylor** (1895-1958), in 1920, after a stint at Kalem in the 'teen's, moved over to the Hal Roach stable as screenwriter, becoming an integral part of Harold Lloyd's writing team. Co-directing with Fred C. Newmeyer for such hits as SAFETY LAST (1923) and THE FRESHMAN (1925), he struck out on his own for Lloyd in 1926 with the brilliant FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE and also helmed EXIT SMILING, Beatrice Lillie's only silent film, directly prior to MY BEST GIRL, demonstrating that he was also highly adept at handling a female-led star vehicle. Taylor's association with Pickford would continue for three of her last features, both as writer and director for COQUETTE (1929), TAMING OF THE SHREW (1929) and KIKI (1931).



Clarence Hennecke (1884-1969), was listed as a 'Comedy Constructor' in the 1928 Film Daily Year Book, where his recent credits include MY BEST GIRL and three Harry Langdon pictures, LONG PANTS, STRONG MAN and THE CHASER, was a Sennett comedy story writer, brought in probably to aid the slapstick sequences in the film. He played a string of uncredited bit parts in the '40's and '50's, most appropriately as one of the Keystone Cops in the 1947 version of MERTON OF THE MOVIES.

London-born Cameraman **Charles Rosher** (1885-1974) studied still photography at Regents Street's Polytechnic Institute, became assistant to the Royal Court photographer, left for California, found work with Nestor, Mutual, Lasky, Universal, then in 1919 he joined United Artists, photographing every Pickford picture for ten years. Just prior to shooting Mary's last silent, he'd completed photography for F.W. Murnau's SUNRISE: A SONG OF TWO HUMANS (1927), and beforehand, in preparation for that, he'd travelled to Germany to learn the techniques of the renowned artistic camerawork and lighting techniques emanating from that country. Ironically, Photoplay's glowing review (above) for MY BEST GIRL is found on the same page as that for SUNRISE and the latter is given short shrift by the reviewer. Nonetheless, it was for SUNRISE that Rosher, one of the founding members of the A.S.C. (American Society of Cinematographers), received the very first Oscar in 1928, awarded alongside Karl Struss, for their cinematography. Rosher would win again for THE YEARLING (1946) and receive several further nominations.

The UA press campaign book certainly sought to exploit the obvious screen chemistry being captured between Mary and her leading man and it is chock full of promotional ideas, from drawing contests, to MY BEST GIRL-related throwaway cryptograms, mercantile-style dry goods box displays, covered with one sheet posters of Mary and Buddy, 'romance motif' shadow boxes, in the shape of hearts, again bearing the image of the screen couple, dozens of different lobby cards, photos and posters to order. Exhibitors were encouraged to decorate their lobbies with signs you'd find in a store like Merrill's, details were suggested on mounting a toy ballet and (my favourite), instructions and a diagram for installing a "My Best Girl' Fun-o-meter", gauging available "Laughs Per Minute", by means of a mechanised box, rigged with "a phonograph loud speaker and laughing record, to help get over the idea of a big audience reaction..." What a promotional spectacle!

Michelle Facey

(ALMOST) LOST LAUGHS

Once thought lost, these silent comedies have recently been recovered – or partly recovered – thanks to the efforts of film buffs and archives worldwide.

MANY A SLIP (1927)

STARRING CHARLEY BOWERS WITH CORINNE POWERS (HIS WIFE), RICCA ALLEN (HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW), EDDIE DUNN (HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW).

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY CHARLEY BOWERS & HF. MULLER. RELEASED BY FBO.



Charley Bowers (1889—1946) was a real one-off among silent comedians, whose work is beginning to be rediscovered. A cartoonist and animator by trade, in the late 1920s he made two pioneering series of short comedies combining live action with stop-motion animation. Bowers usually played a crazed inventor designing bizarre machines or inventions, and in this film he works on an invention that could have put many a silent comic out of business: the non-slip banana peel! There's less of a focus on animation than in some of his other films, but a series of wonderfully goofy and surreal sight gags make *MANY A SLIP* a delight. This is a recent restoration by Lobster Films: for many years only the second half of the film existed, but we can now enjoy it complete once more.

- **Matthew Ross**

NOW I'LL TELL ONE (1927)

STARRING CHARLEY CHASE WITH EDNA MARION (HIS WIFE), STAN LAUREL (LAWYER), MAY WALLACE, LINCOLN PLUMER, WILL R. WALLING, WILSON BENGE (BUTLER), OLIVER HARDY (COP)

DIRECTED BY JAMES PARROTT. PRODUCER: HAL ROACH. RELEASED BY PATHE EXCHANGE.

Stan Laurel listed his supporting role in this Charley Chase comedy when compiling his filmography in later years, but hadn't remembered that Oliver Hardy had also appeared in one scene. It wasn't until a nitrate copy of reel 2 turned up in the 1980's that everyone realised. Alas to date only this reel preserved by the BFI National Film Archive has been found of the original 2 reel comedy.

A review from *Moving Picture World* provides a synopsis of the complete film: "Charley and Edna are happily married. One quarrel leads to a divorce court where, egged on by a vamping judge, Edna makes up a wild series of yarns as to how he was cruel, got drunk, abused her, etc. Each of these is pictured and cleverly travestied. In addition there are some original comedy bits introduced in the courtroom procedure, and the absurd antics of Charley's lawyer, portrayed by Stan Laurel."

- **David Wyatt**

KRI KRI DETECTIVE (1912)

STARRING AND DIRECTED BY RAYMOND FRAU.

An ingenious 'trick' comedy rescued in France and identified at 'Mostly Lost' – one of the annual events hosted by the Library of Congress in Culpeper, Virginia.

Raymond Frau (1887 -1953) was born in Senegal and came to films from a career as an acrobatic clown in the circus. Recruited by Cines of Rome, he created the character of Kri Kri, to an extent influenced by the dandified style of Max Linder. Kri Kri is generally knowing AND ingenious whereas the likes of Cretinetti & Polidor are foolish innocents. After the first World War Frau returned to France where he created the character of Dandy in a series for Éclair, permanently changing his name to Raymond Dandy. He subsequently played small roles in a few feature films until 1946.

- **David Robinson (Pordenone Silent Festival notes 2011).**

DAD'S CHOICE (1920)

DIRECTED BY: JAY A.HOWE. PHOTOGRAPHY: WALTER LUNDIN. WITH EDWARD EVERETT HORTON, SHARON LYNN (HIS FIANCÉE), OTIS HARLAN (HER FATHER), JOSEPHINE CROWELL (HER MOTHER). RELEASED BY PARAMOUNT.



Edward Everett Horton is a bachelor planning to elope with his girl (Sharon Lynn) since the girl's dad (Otis Harlan) has other ideas. Instantly recognisable from so many supporting roles throughout Hollywood's golden age (Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers' *TOP HAT*, *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE* etc), Edward Everett Horton has been completely forgotten as a silent star. Of his seventeen starring feature films, only four survive. This series of late 1920's silent shorts was produced by Harold Lloyd and there are obvious Lloyd connections, both in personnel and in gags. Steve Massa calls this "a great example of the final peak of silent comedy – right up there with Max Davidson's *PASS THE GRAVY*, Charley Chase's *LIMOUSINE LOVE* and Laurel & Hardy's *BIG BUSINESS*." –We've shown the first two at past weekends so we just had to show this one.

- **David Wyatt**

THE STRONG MAN (1926)

FIRST NATIONAL, 1926. PRODUCED BY THE HARRY LANGDON CORPORATION.

STARRING HARRY LANGDON (PAUL BERGOT) WITH PRISCILLA BONNER (MARY BROWN), ARTHUR THALASSO (THE GREAT ZANDOW), GERTRUDE ASTOR (GOLD-DIGGER), BROOKS BENEDICT, ROBERT KORTMAN.

DIRECTED BY FRANK CAPRA, ASSISTED BY J. FRANK HOLLIDAY. SCENARIO: ARTHUR RIPLEY, TIM WHELAN, FRANK CAPRA, JAMES LANGDON, HAL CONKLIN, MURRAY ROTH. CINEMATOGRAPHY BY ELGIN LESSLEY & GLENN KERSCHNER.

Comedy producer Hal Roach once gave the opinion that the best comedians imitate children, and Harry Langdon is perhaps the ultimate example. He played a wistful innocent, a unique childlike character entirely his own. Langdon's baby-faced character has been called 'The Little Elf, an overgrown baby, a lost child; in *The Silent Clowns*, Walter Kerr instructed his readers to "imagine Laurel without Hardy. Now imagine Laurel preoccupied with the loss, and you are surprisingly close to Harry Langdon".



Langdon was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1884. For many years he worked on stage in variations of an act called 'Johnny's New Car', playing a rudimentary version of the innocent, impotent character he would develop on screen. By the time he joined Mack Sennett's studio in 1923, he was a seasoned veteran of comedy. The intimate, close-up performance offered by film cameras would enable him to hone his style in new ways to perfect a minimalist comedy of subtle pantomime. 'Minimalist' and 'subtle' aren't usually words associated with the Sennett Studios however, and at first Langdon seemed an awkward fit for the studio's manic comedy style.

Gradually, over the next couple of years, Langdon began to carve his niche. He became, effectively, a reaction to the wider world of silent comedy madness. His work was slower, more offbeat, with a unique comic touch. The Langdon films soon became the work of a close team of comedy collaborators – working with Harry were director Harry Edwards, scenarist Arthur Ripley and a young gagman called Frank Capra.

In 1926 Langdon and his team jumped ship from Sennett to First National to make a series of feature films. Harry Edwards left the team after directing TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP, and Frank Capra was promoted to the director's chair for the follow-up.

Capra's first directorial effort began filming under the title THE YES MAN in the spring of 1926, and was eventually released as THE STRONG MAN. In it, Langdon plays Paul Bergot, a Belgian private in World War I, who is captured by burly German soldier Zandow (Arthur Thalasso). After the war, Paul remains Zandow's dogsbody, and travels with him to America where he is touring as a strong man. Paul also has a secondary quest: searching out his American pen-pal Mary Brown. His search for Mary provides some of the film's comic highlights, as the hapless Paul is taken in by an opportunistic gold digger (Gertrude Astor).

Zandow and Paul's tour eventually takes them to the small town of Cloverdale, where a moral stand-off is raging between the town's churchgoers and the patrons of the seedy local saloon. It just so happens that Mary Brown is the daughter of the town's parson; she is also blind, a fact she has concealed in her letters from Paul. The pair are destined to meet, but can two innocents find love in a world of corruption, and loose morals?

The story of THE STRONG MAN is perfect for Langdon's innocent character, and its relaxed pacing gives him plenty of opportunity for the extended comic set pieces that suit him best. There's clearly a big chunk of Capra's developing style too, in this small-town tale with a strong moral undertone. Also of note is the use of a blind heroine, several years before Chaplin's CITY LIGHTS.

On its release in August 1926, THE STRONG MAN was greeted with rapturous reviews: "Look out, Charlie & Harold!" proclaimed *Photoplay*. However, Langdon's success soon began to dissolve. After one more film, he fired Capra; his other collaborators also drifted away. Langdon subsequently indulged himself in a series of very personal, offbeat and sometimes quite bleak comedy films. They are certainly not without merit, but in an age before arthouse cinema became widespread, his quirky, indie approach to film-making was ultimately too much for mainstream audiences to swallow. By the time talkies arrived, his time at the top was over.

Langdon's fall was not helped by the spurned Capra, who publicly condemned him as a talentless has-been. It has since been endlessly parroted that Langdon was a directionless waif who never understood his own character, an egotist with a totally unmerited Chaplin complex. This has been comprehensively challenged in recent years, and it is very clear that Langdon was in fact a talented craftsman with a great grasp of his own comedy. Evidence of Langdon's talent exists in films made both before and after he worked with Capra, and he remained popular and in demand right up until his death in 1944. Among those seeking his expertise was Stan Laurel, who employed Langdon as a gagman on several of Laurel & Hardy's best feature films.

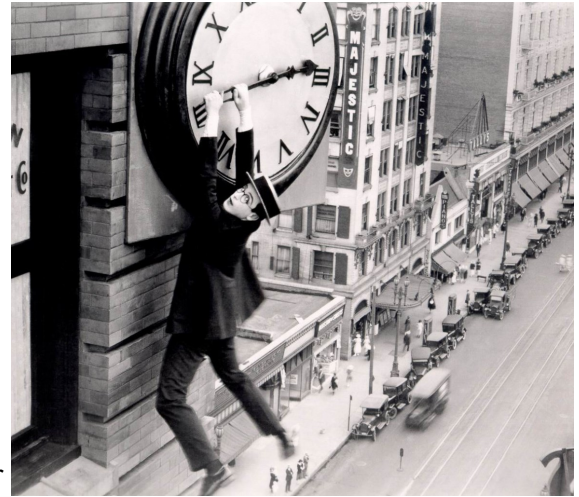
Despite the subsequent drama between its star and director, THE STRONG MAN represents that happy moment where a collaboration works perfectly. It remains the apotheosis of Harry Langdon's film career.

SAFETY LAST (1923)

PRODUCED BY HAL ROACH. RELEASED BY PATHÉ EXCHANGE, 1st APRIL 1923. DIRECTED BY FRED C. NEWMAYER AND SAM TAYLOR. PHOTOGRAPHY: WALTER LUNDIN. EDITING: T.J. CRIZER. STORY BY HAL ROACH, SAM TAYLOR AND TIM WHELAN. TITLES: H.M. WALKER.

CAST: HAROLD LLOYD (THE BOY), MILDRED DAVIS (THE GIRL), BILL STROTHER (THE PAL, 'LIMPY BILL'), NOAH YOUNG (THE LAW), WESTCOTT CLARKE (MR. STUBBS, THE FLOORWALKER), EARL MOHAN (DRUNK), MICKEY DANIELS (KID), ANNA TOWNSEND (GRANDMA).

"I made nearly 300 pictures," said Lloyd, "and only about five were thrill pictures, but they've got me down as a thrill comedian." The image of the man on the clock is so indelibly associated with Lloyd it appeared on the cover of all three of the biographies. *Safety Last* (1923), the film for which it was shot, was a high water mark he was never able to top.



Bill Strother was the cause of it all. He was a human fly, about to climb the Brockman Building in downtown Los Angeles, when Harold Lloyd was attracted by the crowd. Lloyd's fear of heights took the form of extreme alarm when anyone else was in danger. He had climbed St. Mark's Church, Durango, Colorado, as a kid. But he couldn't watch high-wire acts in circuses. Nevertheless, Lloyd watched Strother for three floors.

"It had such an emotional effect on me that I started walking up the street. I was afraid that at any minute he'd fall and kill himself. I walked about a block up the street, but my curiosity held me back. I didn't go away, but I went around the corner, so I could peek around every so often and see where he was. There were other people there, too, and I'd enquire "How's he doing?"

"Oh, he's on the sixth floor."

"He went up via the windows, from one window to another. I still don't know how he could possibly have done it, but he did. When he'd finished climbing the building, he rode a bicycle around the edge – and went up a flagpole and stood on his head. When it was all over, I went up and introduced myself. I told him I was in motion pictures, and I asked him to come in on our next one. I figured that if I was affected that way, an audience would be, too. We could incorporate his climb into our story."

Roach and Lloyd signed up Strother, and they began work on their story with the gag writers. But Strother grew bored doing nothing. He was offered another job climbing a building.

'No, no,' said Lloyd and Roach. 'You might break a leg!'

Time dragged on, and eventually they relented. Strother climbed a building which was only three storeys – but he fell from the first and broke a leg. He kept his part in the picture, however, but his name became 'Limp Bill'. Incredibly, he was still able to double Lloyd for the extreme long shots [incidentally, shot on a Sunday with four cameras under the direction of Hal Roach]. His leg was partially healed, but if you look closely you can see that he cannot bend it fully.

The high point of the climb was the swing on the clock, so they dropped in references to time whenever they could. In the 1920s, society was more disciplined than it is today, and punctuality was regarded as an essential virtue. The idea of being late would bring many employees out in the cold sweat we experience from the climb. So they made Harold a department store employee, so keen for success that he arrives before anyone else, and waits at the employees' entrance, writing letters to his girl. 'Keep on being earlier, son, and you'll end up President – or night watchman' he is told. Circumstances contrive to take him away from that spot, to prevent him clocking in on time, and we share his desperation. We see one man threatened with dismissal for being ten minutes late, and Harold spins an intricate scheme for creeping in unnoticed.

The idea of the young man from the sticks coming to the Big City to achieve success produced a story for which the climb was the symbol. With five reels to fill, Lloyd and his team could have produced a story which added nothing to the climb. As it is, without the story the climb carries only a fraction of the impact. We get to know the boy – and although there are still hangovers from his previous, Chaplinesque character Lonesome Luke, particularly in the way he treats the deaf van driver and the ambulance men – we also get to like him very much. We cannot avoid identifying with him.

- Kevin Brownlow

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, BYNUNSKY 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, AUGUST 5th 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. Hines was one of the "light comedians" - smartly dressed young men who traded in situational humour and farce rather than slapstick (see also Reginald Denny in *WHAT HAPPENED TO JONES*, later in today's programme).

Hines played a likeable character, an eternal optimist who was even more of a go-getter than Harold Lloyd. His chief identifying feature was a Cheshire Cat grin that split his face from ear to ear. To quote *Motion Picture Weekly*: "*Johnny Hines, 'tis surely outrageous - to harbour a smile so contagious!*". That smile was symbolic of the breezy manner that carried him through a decade's worth of light, frothy comedies.

Born in 1895, he had come up through leading man and lightly comic roles, notably opposite Marie Dressler in *TILLIE WAKES UP*. This work led to a series of *TORCHY* comedies for producer C.C. Burr, and a starring career in his own vehicles. Beginning with *BURN 'EM UP BARNES* (1921), his other films included *CONDUCTOR 13*, *THE SPEED SPOOK*, *THE LIVE WIRE* and *THE CRACKERJACK*. Several of these films were directed by Johnny's brother Charles Hines, and the two settled on a pleasant formula of gentle comedy, a few thrills, a dash of pathos and a few silly sight gags on the way.

The formula kept them busy throughout the decade. The Hines comedies meander through unlikely contrivances to get from A to B, but they sure have a good time along the way. Sprightly little vehicles, they have an irreverent charm of their own and plenty of amusing sight gags. Sadly, a lot of Hines' films, like *CHINATOWN CHARLIE* and *STEPPING ALONG* are lost, but *THE WRIGHT IDEA* is a happy exception. It was rediscovered by Christopher Bird recently, and today's screening is its first public showing in at least ninety years.

Released by First National on August 5th, 1928, *THE WRIGHT IDEA* features Hines as inventor Johnny Wright, who has invented a luminous, blotterless ink. He soon becomes embroiled with an escaped lunatic (Edmund Breese) who he believes to be a millionaire. In silent comedy, an escaped lunatic is always good for some plot contrivances, and this is no exception: Johnny soon mistakenly believes he has been gifted a yacht, *The Sultana*, by the millionaire. He plans to throw a party on board the yacht to entice backers for his ink, but is unaware that the yacht is being used by rum-runners... Throw in a pretty secretary (Louise Lorraine), some stolen bonds, and an incompetent detective (Fred Kelsey), and you have all the ingredients for a fast-moving farce!

The improbabilities in the plot wouldn't stand up to a lot of scrutiny, but *THE WRIGHT IDEA* keeps up a good clip, and has plenty of gags. Leading lady Louise Lorraine (1901 -1981) has a sparky part opposite Hines; she was used to fast-paced, physical films, having many appearances in serials and comedies through the 1920s. For Century Comedies she had appeared with Baby Peggy and Queenie the Human Horse(!), before rising to more prominent roles at M.G.M. opposite Beatrice Lillie and the team of Karl Dane & George K. Arthur. This was her second and final appearance with Johnny Hines; she retired soon after talkies came in.

Many of the funniest moments in the film are thanks to gruff, bejewelled Fred Kelsey, who managed to carve himself a niche playing hard-boiled (but comically inefficient) detectives for years. Comedy fans perhaps best remember him today for his role in *THE LAUREL-HARDY MURDER CASE* (1930). In *THE WRIGHT IDEA* he is excellent as always, blustering and confident in his ability despite all evidence pointing to his incompetence.

This film was Johnny Hine's final silent, and his final starring feature. When sound came in, he was lost in the shuffle and his stardom quickly fizzled out. He made a handful of talkie shorts for Educational Pictures (some of them quite good), and then moved into a few supporting roles and a bit of behind-the-scenes work. One of his last roles was as Walter Pidgeon's assistant in the Clark Gable film *TOO HOT TO HANDLE* (1938). He lived on until 1970, long forgotten as a comedy star, but in recent years his films have been rediscovered and several have been re-released on DVD. Today's showing is a rare chance to see him back on the big screen.

MACK SENNETT MADNESS! FEATURING BILLY BEVAN

In his book 'Keystone – the Life and Clowns of Mack Sennett' Simon Louvish has a chapter on 'The Neglected King of Gags: Billy Bevan.' As he says "Sennett's studio was the largest comedy stock company right up until the age of sound. (Ben)Turpin and (Harry) Langdon apart, a host of lesser known 'Clown Princes' turned out films directed by hard working craftsmen like Roy Del Ruth, Harry Edwards, Lloyd Bacon and Del Lord. One of the most prolific & popular stars on the lot was the Australian- born Billy Bevan (who) appeared in over 110 films commencing in 1919".

As Brent Walker adds In 'Mack Sennett's Fun Factory' "Bevan would remain one of Sennett's stars through the end of the 1920s, while remaining very economical for Sennett – his contracts typically paying him only about one fourth of what the higher –priced Turpin earned. To shore up the need for someone to take on the lion's share of direction for these 2 reel comedies Sennett had turned to a former employ- ee ...in (his) scenario dept, Roy Del Ruth. It turned out to be one of the best decisions he made. Where previous Sennett comedies had been full of frenetic action, Del Ruth introduced a symmetry & mechanism to the process like a fine Swiss watch that had been wound just a little too tight. "

Dave Glass presents a Billy Bevan bonanza – some of the best of these comedies restored and made available in a new Bluray set, 'Billy Bevan – Silent Comedian.' As this has been produced at enormous expense by an illustrious pair of highly respected silent comedy buffs ie. Dave Glass and myself - we'll be plugging it mercilessly throughout the weekend. Best give in and buy it or we'll set Kalla Pasha on you.....



ON PATROL (USA 1922)

DIRECTED BY ROY DEL RUTH. WITH MILDRED JUNE, JAMES DONNELLY, KALLA PASHA, KEWPIE MORGAN, MARVIN LOBACK, AL COOKE.

Janitor turned policeman Bevan goes after hardened crook Kalla Pasha (in real life an ex wrestler) when he robs the payroll safe, but is pursued by cops himself when a convict swaps clothes with him.

If you've seen any documentary on silent comedy, ten to one you've seen clips from ON PATROL. The now iconic shots of cops chasing Bevan in convict garb have turned up everywhere from Bob Monkhouse's 'Mad Movies' to Thames tv's 'Hollywood – the Pioneers'. Ironically though, the complete film may no longer exist – one of many Mack Sennett silents later owned by Warner Brothers who used clips in their compilations but didn't bother to keep the complete films. This is what we've found so far.

NIP AND TUCK (1923)

DIRECTED BY ROY DEL RUTH. WITH HARRY GRIBBON, KEWPIE MORGAN, ALBERTA VAUGHN, MILDRED JUNE & CAMEO THE DOG.

A script originally intended for Ben Turpin, but passed on to Bevan who played the sailor getting involved in a crooked poker game with Harry Gribbon and Kewpie Morgan. Perhaps Turpin was afraid he'd be upstaged by Cameo, the highly gifted dog who steals the show both in the poker game and the chase finale. You may have seen these highlights before, notably in the feature length THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMEDY – now see the full film, thanks to compiler Robert Youngson copying the complete camera negative. As Pathe said in their advertising "You who have laughs to laugh, prepare to laugh them now."

WANDERING WAISTLINES (1924)

DIRECTED BY RALPH CEDER. WITH SID SMITH, KALLA PASHA, MADELINE HURLOCK, BARBARA PIERCE, YORKE SHERWOOD, ANDY CLYDE

Ralph Ceder, recently promoted from gagman at Sennett (he'd already directed Snub Pollard, Stan Laurel and others at Hal Roach .) helmed a beautifully paced short with this one. A real rarity.

"Billy Bevan and Sid Smith have an excellent comedy in WANDERING WAISTLINES, and indeed make as much of it as they can many laughs punctuate the picture for there is an element of simple stupidity about Billy Bevan that invites the laughter! Madeline Hurlock ... fits the role of vamp excellently." Meanwhile, Kalla Pasha tries to separate our hero from Madeline's advances.

CALLING HUBBY'S BLUFF (1929)

DIRECTED BY HARRY EDWARDS. WITH VERNON DENT, CARMELITA GERAGHTY, DOT FARLEY, IRVING BACON

The influence of Sennett's nearest competitor, Hal Roach, is apparent in this later two reeler as Sennett moved into the world of sophisticated comedy. Apart from the attempted teaming of Bevan and Vernon Dent, Laurel & Hardy fans may notice some more precise borrowing - when Billy is caught by his wife with flirtatious widow Dot Farley, the scene is straight out of their pre –team 'All Star' comedy LOVE 'EM AND WEEP (1927), as is the business with Dot Farley singing, though somewhat revamped. "Billy Bevan has a nifty part in this" said Film Daily, "and succeeds in getting a big quota of laughs that come without any effort. (!) Carmelita Geraghty looks swell as the wife and with the help of Vernon Dent these three make it a snappy two reeler" . Snappy it certainly must have seemed compared to some of the early talkies being released elsewhere.

- David Wyatt

WHAT HAPPENED TO JONES?

USA. UNIVERSAL 1926. DIRECTOR: WILLIAM SEITER. PRESENTED BY CARL LAEMMLE. PHOTOGRAPHY: ARTHUR TODD. ART DIRECTOR: LEO E. KUTER.

CAST: REGINALD DENNY, MARIAN NIXON, OTIS HARLAN, MELBOURNE MACDOWELL, FRANCES RAYMOND, EMILY FITZROY, MARGARET QUIMBY, BEN HENDRICKS JR, WILLIAM AUSTIN, ZASU PITTS, JOHN ELLIOTT, EDWARD CECIL, BRODERICK O'FARRELL.



Universal acquired WHAT HAPPENED TO JONES? (a stage farce by George Broadhurst from 1897) for Reginald Denny in 1925. Denny had starred for them in light comedies since coming to prominence in a boxing series – THE LEATHER PUSHERS of 1922 -4. Studio executives wanted Jones played with over –the-top broad comedy, but Denny and director William Seiter felt that slapstick didn't fit the British stage actor's personality. "The actor and director agreed they were going to do it their way and have little clowning. The story was silly enough already and Reg played it naturally, where it was believable. As can clearly be seen on screen, the crew had a blast making this hilarious comedy" = Kimberly Pucci, 'Le Giornate del Cinema Muto' Pordenone programme, 2019.

This third teaming of Denny and Seiter was hailed as a 'laugh –riot' on its release with some claiming it as one of the funniest pictures ever seen on Broadway.

Motion Picture Magazine – " The comedy which has been played in every town boasting an opera house since it was written many years ago, comes as a Reginald Denny number – and he happens to make it as spirited and amusing as it ever was on the stage. Denny has the faculty of knowing how to gauge the gags that score. He has a good sense of spontaneity, and we have yet to see him try to hog a picture – his aim being to surround himself with competent performers. I bring up this point because Otis Harlan, a round little fat man, nearly succeeds in stealing the picture from the star.

.... that old wheeze 'Ladies' night in a Turkish Bath' is used for the material, and from the episode Messrs Denny and Harlan bound forth in feminine attire masquerading as this, that and the other man – or woman. There's a good sparkle in the picture. It keeps moving at a good pace, the situations being well timed, and the players evidently enjoying their work."

Los Angeles Times – "The greatest comedy success of the current season Guffaws, not giggles accompany its showing this week. ... if you don't laugh until you cry ... you will be different from the gang including myself which yesterday simply howled with laughter all through the comedy's unrolling. If other comedians don't watch out, Denny is going to tear the laurels from all their brows. His comedy gifts are being cultivated. But especially he has a tremendous likable personality. That wide crooked grin of his is a fortune in itself."

Kansas City Times – "... Universal Pictures Corporation is holding the comedy star against the attractive offers of paramount and other rival producers. Denny has created an unusual following and each succeeding picture seems to be an improvement over its predecessor."

These reviews must have helped soothe frazzled studio nerves when their star went missing the week before the film's release. Denny and two friends (one was co star Ben Hendricks Jr) went marlin fishing on his yacht and a violent storm resulted in three days out of communication until he could call Carl Laemmle that they were safe and alive.

David Wyatt

LUPINO LANE



The English Music Hall was a rich and fertile breeding ground for silent comedians. Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel both famously drew on their past “on the halls” in establishing their comic characters, but no comedian quite brought music hall to Hollywood as much as Lupino Lane.

Lane was born into a proud pantomime heritage: the Lupino Family had been on stage since the 17th Century, and had earned the soubriquet “the royal family of grease paint”. He was born Henry George Lupino on June 16th, 1892; the surname Lane was later taken to please a relative, Sarah Lane. However, for his whole life he was known to family and friends as ‘Nip’.

Just like other family trades, each generation of Lupinos would pass down the secrets of their business on to the next, and Nip received a thorough schooling in pantomime, acrobatics and comedy routines. On stage from an early age, he soon became a famous boy comedian.



From 1915 he made film comedies in Britain, but it was in the 1920s, in the USA, that Lane found his greatest screen stardom. First Fox, then Educational Pictures, starred him in series of shorts between 1922 and 1929. These films are great fun, a wonderful amalgam of Lane’s pantomime routines and acrobatics with American Silent Comedy technique. Lane always had a big role in the creation of his films, directing many himself under the name ‘Henry W George’, and in many he was aided and abetted by his brother Wallace. Each short featured a dazzling mixture of acrobatics and pantomime routines, often drawn from his encyclopedic knowledge of classic music hall; to watch a Lupino Lane comedy is to see centuries of comedy expertise distilled with concision, into a small but perfectly formed package. Although he may not have been able to attain the character-based feature film success, of Keaton, Chaplin or Langdon, Lane’s films presented first-class clowning in his own individual style.

When sound came in, his stage training served him well. He appeared in several Hollywood musicals before returning to England in 1930. There he starred in films, as well as being instrumental in bringing other stage stars to the screen as a director, including Leslie Fuller, his cousin Stanley Lupino, and pantomime dame George Lacey. In the late 30s he returned to the stage, where he had his biggest success of all with the stage musical ME AND MY GIRL. This hit show, and its song-and-dance craze ‘The Lambeth Walk’ became his lasting legacy, eclipsing the success of his films. It spawned a series of spin-off plays that kept the star busy right up until his death in 1959.

The family traditions of comedy and pantomime that Nip loved so much did not die with him: he passed them on to his own son, Lauri Lupino Lane, who had a career of his own on stage and film. We’re very fortunate to have Lauri’s daughter (and Lupino Lane’s granddaughter), Sara Lupino Lane as our very special guest today. As well as sharing her memories of her Grandfather, she has also allowed us to show some clips from a very rare treat: Lupino Lane’s own home movies, featuring behind the scenes footage of Hollywood in the 1920s. A real time capsule, this footage has never been publicly screened before. This programme will also include complete screenings of two newly restored Lupino Lane shorts:

SUMMER SAPS (1929)

EDUCATIONAL PICTURES. PRODUCED BY E.W. HAMMONS. DIRECTED BY HENRY W. GEORGE (LUPINO LANE). STARRING LUPINO LANE, WITH WALLACE LUPINO, SYBIL GROVE, BLANCHE PAYSON, JACKIE LEVINE, TOM WHITELEY.

SUMMER SAPS is an oxymoron: a noisy silent film! This tale of Lane’s disastrous attempts to have a peaceful family holiday anticipates the arrival of sound, basing much of its comedy in frustration caused by noises. As a Brit who frequently toured seaside resorts with music hall acts and pantomimes, one senses that Lane wrenched much of SUMMER SAPS from his own painful memories of wet afternoons in tatty boarding houses! We’ve shown a cut-down version of this film before, but today’s showing is of a new restoration compiled by Dave Glass that enables the film to be seen complete for the first time in many years.

JOY LAND (1929)

EDUCATIONAL PICTURES. PRODUCED BY E.W. HAMMONS. DIRECTED BY HENRY W. GEORGE. WITH WALLACE LUPINO, MURIEL EVANS, TOM WHITELEY, GEORGE ATTERBURY.

Lane always stated that one of his ambitions was to film a traditional English pantomime. Sadly, he never achieved that goal, but JOY LAND is perhaps as close in spirit as he ever got. A wonderful storybook fantasy of toys coming to life, the celebrated centrepiece of this short is an incredible routine of Lane and his pursuers popping in and out of trapdoors at lightning speed. Routines like this were one of his family’s specialities on the stage; Lane later recalled going through 83 ‘traps’ in 3 minutes during his 1926 pantomime ALADDIN.

THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE (1924)

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY ERNST LUBITSCH, DISTRIBUTED BY WARNER BROS. LENGTH: 9,300 FEET (ON RELEASE), 95 MINUTES (DIGITAL)

WRITERS: PAUL BERN BASED ON THE 1909 PLAY "NUR EIN TRAUM/ONLY A DREAM" BY LOTHAR SCHMIDT, HANS KRÄLY (UNCREDITED)

CAST: MONTE BLUE (DOCTOR BRAUN), FLORENCE VIDOR (CHARLOTTE, MRS BRAUN), ADOLPHE MENJOU (PROFESSOR JOSEF STOCK), MARIE PREVOST (MIZZIE, MRS STOCK), CREIGHTON HALE (DOCTOR MUELLER), HARRY MYERS (DETECTIVE), ESTHER RALSTON (MISS HOFER), DALE FULLER (NEUROTIC PATIENT), ALAN GEORGE (PARTY GUEST, UN-CREDITED)

CINEMATOGRAPHY: CHARLES VAN ENGER, HENRY SHARP (UNCREDITED). ART DIRECTION: LEWIS GELB, ESDRAS HARTLEY



*Synopsis: Viennese doctor **Monte Blue** is madly in love with his wife **Florence Vidor**—so much so that many suspect that they aren't married at all! Vidor's best friend **Marie Prevost** is an incurable coquette; Marie's divorce-bound husband **Adolphe Menjou** hires detective **Harry Myers** to keep tabs on his wife. Inevitably, Prevost meets and flirts with the true-blue Blue. Meanwhile, Blue's lecherous partner **Creighton Hale** sets his sights on innocent Vidor. Thanks to the misunderstandings of detective Myers, both Blue and Vidor are suspected of infidelity, but all ends well as doctor and wife are reunited and Prevost ends up with her male counterpart Hale. The first of **Ernst Lubitsch's** sophisticated sex farces, **The Marriage Circle** was reportedly Lubitsch's favourite film; he would remake it in 1932 as the sprightly musical **One Hour With You**, with **Maurice Chevalier** and **Jeanette MacDonald**. (Hal Erickson)*

Ernst Lubitsch (1892-1947) may have left Europe behind, but it was exactly his European sensibility which was so desired in California, his 'take' on moviemaking and the delicious way he had of telling a visual story, in short, what would later come to be known famously as "the Lubitsch Touch." But his first Hollywood picture, ROSITA (1923), a sizeable production, starring Mary Pickford, although a commercial and critical success had somehow not been entirely satisfactory in the making. Something soon happened, steering Lubitsch into a new way of moviemaking, and that epiphany came on viewing Charlie Chaplin's latest production, A WOMAN OF PARIS (1923). Chaplin befriended Lubitsch, showing him an early cut of the film. Lubitsch commented to The New York Times that, "I like it because I feel that an intelligent man speaks to me and nobody's intelligence is insulted in the picture." Lubitsch formed Boulevard Pictures with Nathan Burke, attorney to both himself and Chaplin, in order to legally place his new contract with Warner Bros. It was Harry Warner, keen on recruiting talent and maintaining ties between the Old and New Worlds, who had brought Ernst into the Warner Bros.' fold, as he later would with Michael Curtiz and William Dieterle. Younger brother, Jack Warner, less connected to the Old Country than his eldest sibling, was suspicious of any haughty aspirations of Harry's European signing, putting his foot down when Lubitsch tested the boundaries of the art department's budget by requesting real marble for a set of steps, informed by Jack, in no uncertain terms, "he gets marble paper." Jack relaxed regarding any idea of the imagined snooty superiority of Ernst as *arriviste* when Lubitsch, quite naturally, nurtured a relationship with the Warners' father, Ben, whom, fluent only in Yiddish and Polish, found it hard to find someone to talk to, until the naturally hospitable Lubitsch charmingly took the time to communicate with the older man, both together in their broken English. Ernst eternally embraced America and its culture and people, from wherever they hailed and despised conflict. Production expenditure aside, he appreciated being given a free rein to explore storytelling in his own fashion, telling Harry Carr of Motion Picture Classic, "In my first picture I had to make all sorts of concessions to what they told me the American people wanted. This one I am going to make to please Lubitsch." A modest production though, lent itself to a new, sparing, and unfussy style of set, less of the crowds and showmanship, instead, something more realistic, in which to place his characters and allow happenstance and human nature to happen, whether happily or unhappily, but almost always humorously.

Turning towards the cast, Lubitsch stopped production eight days in and personally picked Warner's contract player, **Monte Blue** (1887-1963), who replaced a hopelessly unsatisfactory Warner Baxter a few days into filming. Blue's suitability to the Lubitsch style would come into its full flowering with his performance in the virtually (and criminally) unknown SO THIS IS PARIS (1926). Irish-American **Creighton Hale** (1882-1965) had worked under Griffith, but his most notable roles would come under European directors in two horror-comedies, Paul Leni's THE CAT AND THE CANARY (1926) and Benjamin Christensen's SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN (1929). It was noted in the press at the time that, under Lubitsch, both Blue and Hale "are so good that you wonder where they have been hiding their remarkable comedy ability all these years." Charming **Florence Vidor** (1895-1977) was divorced from her husband, director King Vidor in the year of the film's release, and perhaps this new style of film and its director was just the

change she needed, as Picture-Play magazine's Agnes Smith noted that here she "shines with a new radiance." Certainly, she was drawn back to work with Lubitsch again in 1928 for *THE PATRIOT*. Debonair **Adolphe Menjou** (1890-1963), having been key to the Chaplin film exerting such influence on Lubitsch, was chosen by the director here, and once again for *FORBIDDEN PARADISE* in 1926, although he professed to a preference for Chaplin's directing style, eschewing Lubitsch's known practice of acting out the parts for his players, showing excitedly exactly how he would like each gesture to be executed for the camera. Let it not be forgotten that Lubitsch had started out on the stage in Max Reinhardt's company before becoming a screen comic actor himself, prior to concentrating solely on directing, his last dual effort as actor/director having been only three years prior to this production, in Germany with *SUMURUN* (1920), starring Pola Negri. His actors here certainly felt the effects of his enthusiasm and persistence for achieving something new on the screen. In obsessive directorial behaviour that would later be emulated notoriously (be it knowingly or otherwise) by Stanley Kubrick, Lubitsch would have his players do take after take until they pushed themselves to the point of a breakthrough or realisation of realness which they hadn't felt before.



For ex-Sennett Bathing Beauty turned leading lady, **Marie Prevost** (1898-1937), her first time with Ernst was a revelation, "He made me do simple scenes, just coming in and out of rooms fifteen or twenty times. At first it seemed as though there wasn't any sense to it at all. Then it began to dawn upon me what the art of acting was all about, and it seemed intolerably and impossibly difficult. Then I began to see it as he saw it... He deals in subtleties that I never dreamed of before." Lubitsch certainly thought an awful lot of both her beauty and her ability, the latter of which he praised publicly and repeatedly, as she appeared in not just one, not two, but three of his pictures over two years, following this film with the difficult-to-see (that is until Kino Lorber release it later in 2022) *THREE WOMEN* (1924) and *KISS ME AGAIN* (1925), also starring Clara Bow, sadly impossible-to-see, as this is a lost film...

Cameraman **Charles Van Enger** (1890-1980) worked on all three of the Lubitsch films starring Marie Prevost, and in addition to those, the one-off U.S. Lubitsch/Pola Negri reunion of *FORBIDDEN PARADISE* (1924), plus *LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN* (1925), before going on to shoot *THE BIG PARADE* (1925), also coming to the UK in 1933 and working on *FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH*, starring Jessie Matthews and *I WAS A SPY* starring Madeleine Carroll and Conrad Veidt, before returning to the States and filming many Westerns over the following decades, also Abbott and Costello movies and TV series such as *Lassie*.

Ernst Lubitsch certainly held *THE MARRIAGE CIRCLE* close to his heart as significant in personal development and as the turning point in his moviemaking and the true commencement of his own Hollywood canon, saying, "I experienced a great change in my career, as it is the first time I have made an important modern drama. I have gotten away from spectacles, as there are only five characters in this film... it is a very intimate drama... and I never got so close to real life as I have in this picture."

Michelle Facey

NEIL BRAND PRESENTS LAUREL AND HARDY

After the national success of his long-running show NEIL BRAND PRESENTS BUSTER KEATON, the composer/writer/broadcaster/musician returns with an all-new show about the immortal comedy duo so recently portrayed in the hit film Stan and Ollie.

From their earliest days on opposite sides of the Atlantic in Music Hall and on the stage, to their individual comedy films before they were paired up by Hal Roach, and on to their silent masterpieces before the arrival of sound, Neil will tell the touching story of the world's greatest comedy team, who could not have been two more different men!

Fully illustrated with stills, clips (both silent and sound) and Neil's superlative piano accompaniment and culminating in one of the Boys' best silent short films, LIBERTY, this is a show that promises gales of laughter throughout, as well as getting under the skin of two warm, funny men who continue to make the world laugh when it needs it most.

LIBERTY (1929)

STARRING STAN LAUREL & OLIVER HARDY, WITH JAMES FINLAYSON, TOM KENNEDY, SAM LUFKIN, JEAN HARLOW.
DIRECTED BY LEO MCCAREY. PRODUCED BY HAL ROACH, RELEASED BY M.G.M., JANUARY 26TH, 1929.

One of Laurel & Hardy's greatest comedies, LIBERTY started out as a way of using up some scraps of unused footage from their previous film, WE FAW DOWN. In that film, the boys get soaked while sneaking out from their wives for the evening, and end up wearing the wrong trousers when they get changed. Their attempts to exchange the too-tight and too-loose trousers generated a huge amount of gag material, but unfortunately it had to be cut to bring the film down to its intended two-reel length. The footage was too good to leave on the cutting room floor and a new film was built around the excised scenes.

Much of the new material was set on a half-completed skyscraper, and LIBERTY's high-and-dizzy antics at first seem more reminiscent of Harold Lloyd. While many comedians threw in a quick scene of dangling from a high building for easy thrills in the wake of Lloyd's success, it speaks volumes of L & H's skill and style that they always remain in character during these scenes. Indeed, LIBERTY is full of beautiful little grace notes that makes the idiom completely their own.

Speaking of Harold Lloyd, the sets of LIBERTY were filmed in a similar manner to SAFETY LAST. The skyscraper set was built on top of an existing building, benefiting from the vertiginous backdrop behind. Even though there is some illusion at play, Stan and Babe were still high up and taking a fair risk. On the team's THIS IS YOUR LIFE tribute, director Leo McCarey recalled Stan's nerves at being so high; he was unconvinced by the safety platform below the set. To put him at ease, Hardy jumped to prove that the platform would live up to its job but, in McCarey's words, "Well... it wasn't safe!". The platform broke as Babe landed, but luckily a further safety net below helped him escape without serious injury.



McCarey had been instrumental in developing the team's comedy style, in collaboration with Stan Laurel. Strangely enough, although he oversaw all of the team's silents, this is one of only three that he directed personally.

Adding to the fun of LIBERTY is one of L & H's greatest co-stars, James Finlayson, seen here at his glowering best. The eagle-eyed will also spot Jean Harlow in one of her earliest roles: she is the lady about to enter the taxi from which Stan and Babe emerge.

-Matthew Ross

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN! (1926)

STARRING LARRY SEMON, DOROTHY DWAN (HIS FIANCÉE), OLIVER HARDY (SHOW MANAGER), MARY CARR, (MOTHER) LIONEL BELMORE (SHERIFF) , BULL MONTAN(STRONGMAN)

DIRECTED BY LARRY SEMON. ASSISTANT DIRECTORS: OLIVER HARDY, EARL MONTGOMERY. LARRY SEMON PRODUCTIONS. RELEASED BY PATHE EXCHANGE.

Larry Semon's second to last independent feature film, (SPUDS the following year is said to have finally bankrupted him) and the only one where Oliver Hardy was credited as assistant director. It was also his last film with Semon. As in THE SHOW (1922) , the plot has Hardy as stage manager , stealing a theatrical troupe's cash whereupon he hijacks a train, leading to a big car and train chase finale. STOP LOOK AND LISTEN was a lost film until Toshihiko Sasayama, a Japanese film collector and historian at Waseda University, discovered this last reel on 16mm. With the help of Junko Lio, the reel was made available to us – possibly its first public showing.

