

Past Times

No. 20 THE NOSTALGIA ENTERTAINMENT NEWSLETTER \$5.00

A New Look at "Banjo Eyes"



A couple of years ago, we at *Past Times* wondered why there seemed to be so little interest in Eddie Cantor; his films, records and radio shows were largely unavailable. Since then, there's been an explosion of interest in the wide-eyed entertainer. Thanks largely to his devoted grandson Brian Gari, many of Cantor's records have been reissued on CDs from BMG and Columbia/Legacy; a recording of his legendary Carnegie Hall concert has been released on Original Cast Records; the same label has put out a number of his vintage broadcasts, including one show which never aired; and The Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society has been formed (interested parties may write to it c/o Sheila Riddle, P.O. Box 312, Mt. Gay, WV 25637).

The profusion of new releases continues. Herbert G. Goldman is still at work on his biography of Cantor, which will complete his trilogy of books for Oxford University Press about great entertainers, the other two being Al Jolson and Fanny Brice. He'll have some pretty tough competition from a new book by Gregory Koseluk, **Eddie Cantor: A Life in Show Business** (McFarland & Co.; 448 pages, hardcover; \$39.95).

Koseluk's book is not strictly a biography; while there are sections devoted to Cantor's childhood and his life after the heart attack that caused his semi-retirement, most of the book's 43 chapters are devoted to a specific theatrical production or film in which Eddie appeared. Despite the seeming impossibility of resurrecting Cantor's first vaudeville acts—such as his apprenticeship to jugglers Bedini and Arthur, or his early teaming with comic Al Lee—Koseluk makes these ancient routines live again with script excerpts and colorful accounts of triumphs and mishaps.

Koseluk carefully and entertainingly examines the origins of each stage show or film and assesses its ultimate success by artistic, critical and financial standards; each chapter ends with excerpts from reviews of the time. Along with the well-remembered Cantor vehicles such as the films *Palmy Days* and *Roman Scandals*, Koseluk describes in detail Cantor's stage work in four of Florenz Ziegfeld's *Follies*, highlights the differences between the stage and film versions of *Kid Boots* and *Whoopee!*, and describes forgotten Cantor films such as *Special Delivery* (his second silent feature comedy) and his 1924 experimental talkie for Lee DeForest, *A Few Moments With Eddie Cantor*.

If there's any flaw in the book, it's in the relatively small amount of print devoted to Cantor's radio career. The number of people who saw Cantor on stage or in the movies was a tiny fraction of the millions who listened to him weekly from 1931 through 1955. Koseluk himself writes that "perhaps his greatest and clearly his longest success was in radio," yet only 24 pages out of 448 are devoted to the radio work.

Although it's brief, the chapter does an adequate job of detailing Eddie's microphone work from his first appearance in the early '20s on experimental station WDY, to his many series starting with the *Chase and Sanborn Hour* in 1931 and ending with a syndicated five-minute feature, *Ask Eddie Cantor*, in 1961. To his credit, Koseluk details how Eddie was off the air for a year after criticizing radical commentator Father Coughlin; he gives script excerpts from several shows and mentions radio sidekicks such as Parkyakarkus, The Mad Russian and discoveries Deanna Durbin, Bobby Breen and Dinah Shore.

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King Leo's Selected Short Subjects

By John T. Aldrich III

The days when short subjects were an important part of every movie theater's program are celebrated in **Cavalcade of MGM Shorts**, a new Laserdisc box set from MGM/UA Home Video (ML 105140; \$99.98). Focusing on the prodigious output from the most prestigious studio, this is an outstanding selection of some of the funniest and most interesting MGM shorts produced from 1931 to 1948.

This most welcome four-disc box set contains seven and one-half hours of the best from several of MGM's short subject units. Each side highlights a different series. Included are John Nesbitt's "Passing Parade" shorts, Robert Benchley and Pete Smith comedies, MGM musical shorts, and a dazzling series of Technicolor shorts produced by Louis Lewyn, featuring Hollywood stars at play.

The films were obviously selected with great care. As mentioned, the box highlights individual series, but also includes enough variety to represent the entire MGM output over a nearly 20-year period. One regrets the omission of the wonderful *Fitzpatrick Traveltalks*, the *Crime Does Not Pay* series, the *Carey Wilson Miniatures* and the *MGM Oddities*, but obviously not everything can be covered here. One can only hope that *Cavalcade* sells well enough to justify a Volume 2.

If one has a copy of Leonard Maltin's wonderful 1972 book "The Great Movie Shorts" (later reprinted as "Selected Short Subjects"), it becomes obvious that the producers of this box relied heavily on it when selecting the shorts. Maltin penned the liner notes and, we suspect, was consulted on the entire project. Pete Smith's hilarious *Movie Pests* and Benchley's Oscar-winning *How to Sleep* seem to be obvious choices, while *Gems of MGM* and *Wild People* (set in a prehistoric nightclub) are not. Kudos to producer George Feltenstein and MGM/UA for such a well-researched effort.

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Nostalgia Newswire

Kino on Video, which earlier this year delighted fans of the Great Stone Face with its series *The Art of Buster Keaton*, now does the same for the Man of a Thousand Faces. **The Lon Chaney Collection**, due out on October 10, will include eight VHS cassettes, retailing for \$24.95 each. Titles include a newly-restored edition of *The Phantom of the Opera*, the 1923 *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Shadows, Outside the Law*, *Oliver Twist*, a double-feature of *The Shock* and *The Light of Faith*, *Nomads of the North* and a new documentary entitled *Lon Chaney: Behind the Mask*. Also making their video debuts are James Whale's tongue-in-cheek chiller *The Old Dark House* (1932) and the 1935 adventure classic *She* with Randolph Scott. (Kino on Video, (212) 629-6880.)

The American Movie Classics cable network will be giving birthday tributes to **George Gershwin** (with *A Damsel in Distress* and *Shall We Dance* screening on September 26) and **Gene Autry** (with five of his films showing on the 29th).

On November 7, MGM/UA Home Video will lower the price on *That's Entertainment III* on VHS to only \$19.98, and will put all three TE's in a boxed set for \$44.92. (We understand a new laserdisc version of *TEIII* will be released soon, with different "extras" from last year's edition!) We're anxiously awaiting MGM/UA's forthcoming laserdisc box of early Vitaphone shorts, featuring vaudevillians and '20s dance-bands such as **Harry Reser** and his Eskimos. Some of the lesser-known MGM musicals, such as *The Kissing Bandit*, a 1947 epic with **Frank Sinatra** and **Kathryn Grayson**, or *Living in a Big Way* with **Gene Kelly**, are now available on VHS from Movies Unlimited; for info, call (800) 4-MOVIES.

Rhino Records and Turner Classic Movies are jointly producing a series of newly-remastered soundtrack CDs from classic MGM musicals (see related article on page 8). Forthcoming is a four-CD **Mickey Rooney** and **Judy Garland** box-set, with soundtracks from four of their classic films. The TCM cable network will screen those films on September 23, Rooney's 75th birthday.

If you love British dance bands and vocalists of the '30s, such as **Ray Noble** with **Al Bowlly**, you should read *Memory Lane*, an English quarterly devoted to vintage UK popular music. U.S. subscribers can send cash or British Sterling by draft—\$30 for surface, \$50 for airmail—to 226 Station Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3BS, England.

Radio great **Parley Baer** guested at the National **Lum & Abner** Society Convention on June 24. The Society publishes a bi-monthly journal; annual dues are \$10. For information, write Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora AL 35062.

Tough Cookie

They broke the mold after they made Elisha Cook. He was one tough guy off the screen—the complete opposite of the mousy, weak-in-the-knees little characters he played in *The Maltese Falcon* and so many other films. There was a red-blooded bravado in that wiry frame that rarely surfaced on celluloid. And underneath the gritty facade of an inveterate city dweller was a sportsman who cherished the great outdoors.

He lived in Bishop, Calif., near his beloved Sierra Nevadas—where he took me camping one memorable 4th of July weekend—and far from the Hollywood he loathed. Cook enjoyed making movies because they brought pleasure to people, but never watched them himself until a stroke slowed his pace a few years back. When he passed away in May, at the ripe old age of 91, he was the last of a breed.

—Jordan R. Young

When ordering books reviewed in *Past Times*, please note that prices are retail and do not include shipping. You should add \$4.00 for the first book, .75 each additional book, plus applicable state sales tax.

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Managing Editor
RANDY SKRETVEDT

Associate Editor
JORDAN R. YOUNG

Contributors
ROB RAY,
JOHN T. ALDRICH III,
DAVID HAYES

Technical Support
ROB STONE

CALENDAR

Please send notice of forthcoming events to: Past Times, 7308 Fillmore Dr., Buena Park CA 90620. Be sure to include a phone number for additional information.

FILM EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Oliver Hardy Festival, Harlem GA, October 7. The native son is honored with a parade, film screenings, look-alike contests and more. Info: (706) 556-3448.

Virginia Festival of American Film, Charlottesville VA, October 26-29. Includes classic films by Welles, Wilder, Robert Flaherty, and a Roger Ebert workshop on *The Third Man*. Info: (800) UVA-FEST.

Buster Keaton Centennial Tribute, Bowlus Fine Arts Center, Iola KS, September 29-30. Displays of memorabilia, speakers and scholars, film screenings. Info: (316) 365-4765.

MUSIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Midland Jazz Classic, Hilton Hotel, Midland TX, September 21-24. Featuring big-band clarinetist Abe Most and many trad-jazz performers. Info: P.O. Box 5333, Midland TX 79704; (915) 683-6131.

Early Jas Fall Jazz Festival, Strongsville OH, September 22-24. New Orleans and traditional jazz. Info: (216) 896-9842.

High Mountains Dixieland Jazz Festival, Sisters, OR, September 15-17. Trad jazz bands such as the Rent Party Revellers and the Chicago Six play in this scenic setting. Info: (503) 549-1332.

Pasadena City College Record Swap, 1570 E. Colorado (at Hill), Pasadena CA, October 1. Held first Sunday of each month. 78s, rare jazz. Info: (818) 585-7906.

OLD-TIME RADIO EVENTS

Friends of Old Time Radio Convention, Newark NJ, October 19-21. The group marks its 20th annual gathering with dozens of special guests, presentations, and program re-creations including *Nightbeat* with Peggy Webber and *My Little Margie* with Gale Storm, Dick van Patten and Bob Hastings. Info: (203) 248-2887; FAX: (203) 281-1322.

COLLECTIBLE SHOWS

Hollywood Collector's Show, Beverly Garland Hotel, 4222 Vineland Ave., North Hollywood CA, September 23-24. Celebrity guests; hundreds of memorabilia dealers. Info: (904) 683-5110.

Entertainment Memorabilia and Film Poster Auction, Butterfield and Butterfield, 7601 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles CA, October 14-15. To order a catalogue: (800) 223-2854, ext. 525.

For a virtually complete list of vintage film and traditional music festivals, consult *The Nostalgia Entertainment Sourcebook*, available from Past Times (see page 28).

Movies

Those Old Familiar Faces

Veteran actors in new and recent feature films: LAUREN BACALL in *Ready to Wear* (*Prêt à Porter*)... GEORGE BURNS, BILLY BARTY, ROSEMARY CLOONEY and MOUSIE GARNER in *Radioland Murders*.... BILL ZUCKERT in *Ace Ventura, Pet Detective*... JACK PALANCE (voice) in *The Swan Princess*... PARLEY BAER in *The Last of the Dog Men*... LOU JACOBI in *I.Q.*... The late DONALD PLEASANCE in *Halloween 6*.

On TV: CARL REINER and VITO SCOTTI in *Mad About You*.... THE NICHOLAS BROTHERS in *Straight Up* (PBS).... KATHARINE HEPBURN in *One Christmas*... KIRK DOUGLAS in *Take Me Home Again*... RICHARD CRENNAN in *A Silent Betrayal*... MILTON BERLE in *Beverly Hills 90210*... SHEREE NORTH in *Seinfeld*... PHIL LEEDS in *Double Rush*... ROBERT MITCHUM in *100 Years of the Hollywood Western*... RAY WALSTON for AT&T... MOREY AMSTERDAM in *Cybill*.



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A Date With Judy

By Rob Ray

Someone should give MGM/UA Home Video's George Feltenstein a special Oscar for his dogged determination in unearthing the buried treasures of MGM's bygone glory days. His dedication to the preservation and distribution of the entertainment of the golden age of Hollywood has been evident in such past releases as *The Ultimate Oz*, *Swing Swing Swing*, *That's Entertainment III* and *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes*. Now he and co-producers Allan Fisch and John Fricke have released the overwhelming 5-disc collection entitled **Judy Garland - The Golden Years at MGM** (ML 104869; \$125).

The set includes *The Harvey Girls* from 1946, *The Pirate* (1948) and 1950's *Summer Stock*. All three titles have been previously available on disc and tape individually and only the first film could be called an unqualified success. So what makes this release so special?

First of all, each musical has been restored from the original Technicolor elements. The transfer of *The Harvey Girls* is a bit too contrasty, but is still lovely. The other two films have never looked this good on the home screen. This is especially important for *The Pirate*, which is overrun with the deep reds and yellows which director Vincente Minnelli loved so much. These three restored features are only part of the program, however.

Judy's short with Deanna Durbin, *Every Sunday* (1936), is included in its entirety, followed by the great find of the entire set, the complete 1930 Vitaphone short, *Bubbles*, beautifully restored and presented here for the first time in 65 years. Excerpts from two more shorts, *The Big Revue* (1929) and *La Fiesta de Santa Barbara* (1935) are included. The former is in rough condition and the latter is available in its entirety on MGM/UA's *Libeled Lady* laserdisc (ML 100892). Other rare short films collected here include a brief Christmas trailer, *Silent Night*, as well as Judy's appearance in the 1941 short *We Must Have Music* and a 1942 live performance of *Over the Rainbow*.

Deleted and long-lost musical numbers add to the value of this laserdisc package. They include "March of the Doagies" and "My Intuition" from *The Harvey Girls*, and "Last Night When We Were Young" from *The Pirate*. *Babes in Arms* (1939) originally had a sequence with Mickey Rooney and Judy doing an impersonation of Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt. This brief segment was cut from the film's negative for a reissue after FDR's death, and was lost until a 16mm print with Spanish subtitles turned up. It's included here, followed by Judy's number from *Thousands Cheer*, "The Joint is Really Jumpin'."

One can then trace Garland's career by examining, in chronological order, the trailers from 30 of her films. To save space, I will note that the only features NOT included are Fox's *Pigskin Parade* and Warner Bros.' *A Star is Born*, as well as her voice-only appearances in Columbia's *Pepe* and Warners' *Gay Purr-ee*.

Finally, we have four familiar sequences with the sound completely remixed in true stereo for the first time, using the studio's original audio separation masters. The entire "Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe" number from *The Harvey Girls* is followed by a clip from *Babes on Broadway* and "Look For the Silver Lining" from *Till The Clouds Roll By*.

The audio tracks by themselves provide more wonderful rarities. The analog soundtracks contain more than seven hours of previously unissued pre-recordings, several of them mixed for true stereo. These pre-recordings span Garland's entire career at MGM from *Broadway Melody of 1938* to her final MGM film, *Summer Stock*. Many are alternate takes of songs heard in her films, and others are complete recordings of numbers which were shortened or entirely eliminated in the final cuts.

Also on the analog tracks are the soundtracks to two more Vitaphone shorts Judy appeared in when she was Frances Gumm, one of the Gumm Sisters. So far, the picture elements to these early shorts have not turned up and probably do not survive.

A second audio track for *The Harvey Girls* consists of reminiscences by its director, George Sidney. He tends to ramble, but the spontaneity of his discussion makes it seem as if he's sitting next to you watching his film. The more he goes off onto other tangents, the more you realize that he's quite a colorful personality in his own right.

A still-step gallery of photos traces Garland's career from Baby Gumm to superstar. It also outlines the musical numbers and routines deleted from her films. The still section concludes with production and publicity stills from the three features presented in the collection.

All this is annotated in a beautiful six-page foldout with a thoroughly researched essay by John Fricke, a complete overview of this exhaustive collection, production notes by George Feltenstein and a listing of other Garland films available on laserdisc.

About the only Garland rarities not included here are her songs for *Annie Get Your Gun*, in which she was subsequently replaced by Betty Hutton. (We hope that ultimately the Irving Berlin estate will allow MGM/UA to release this long-suppressed film on video, and that the existing materials on the original version with Garland will be included.) This set was obviously a labor of love; it's worth every penny of its cost



Cooking up Laughter

Apart from a recent evening devoted to his films at the Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles, Clyde Cook has been generally forgotten. Videobrary comes to the rescue once again with **Clyde Cook: Classic Comedy Shorts** (\$14.95)—a splendid introduction to this Australian-born music hall clown, comprising four 1926 Hal Roach two-reelers. Print quality, happily, is above average.

With his puppy-dog eyes, rubbery frame and balletic grace, Cook invariably brings to mind a Poor Man's Chaplin, but he often reminds you of Stan Laurel. A scene in *Starvation Blues*, in which the camera studies Clyde's face at length—as it dawns on him he's accidentally stuck his foot in a furnace—may remind you of a scene shot years later wherein Stan eats a wax apple, and reacts ever so slowly to the displeasure.

Starvation Blues is no great shakes of a film, but it will further intrigue students of movie comedy who recall Laurel and Hardy as a pair of street musicians in *Below Zero*. For here are Cook and Syd Crossley performing some of the same scenes in much the same manner, four years earlier. (Stan not so coincidentally worked on this film as a gag writer.)

Cook has little footage in the amusing *Wife Tamers*, which stars Lionel Barrymore at the apparent nadir of his career (even brother John was never reduced to appearing in Hal Roach two-reelers). The fur flies when Barrymore hires Vivian Oakland to make his wife (the deliciously haughty Gertrude Astor) jealous during a marital squabble; Clyde is a servant, and a terrific foil for Oakland in the scene where he lures her to Lionel's lair.

Wandering Papas, directed by Laurel, gives a supporting player named Hardy a chance to practice his slow burn, something he was pretty good at even in his pre-L&H days (if Clyde cooked your breakfast, you could do a dandy imitation of it yourself).

What's the World Coming To? indeed, with two attractive young ladies in pursuit of the scrawny Cook? Not to worry, this trifle gives the acrobatic comic plenty of opportunity for fast-paced knockabout, and allows Jimmy Finlayson (Stan and Ollie's frequent nemesis) a few moments to chew the scenery—as only Fin could do—while a mouse nibbles at his scalp. (Available from Videobrary, 6117 Carpenter Avenue, North Hollywood CA 91606; (818) 761-5265.)

For more on Cook, see *Let Me Entertain You: Conversations with Show People*, available from Past Times (see page 28).

A Guide to the World of Silent Comedy

Blair Miller's new book **American Silent Film Comedies: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Persons, Studios and Terminology** (McFarland; 288 pages, hardcover; \$42.50) endeavors to bring us new information about the "comedy factories," and about the actors and technicians, famous or obscure, whose combined talents made the silent comedy era such a rich one.

Interested in knowing about King-Bee, the studio that produced the films of Chaplin impersonator Billy West? Mr. Miller gives us the many addresses of the firm as it moved from New York to Florida to Hollywood, then reprints a 1917 article from *Moving Picture World* about the establishment of the company by producer Louis Burstein. Want to know how Mack Swain, rotund comic in Mack Sennett comedies, died? We are informed that he had an internal hemorrhage on August 25, 1935, while visiting Gig Harbor, Washington. If you need to know about Rollie Totheroh, Chaplin's longtime cameraman, there's an excerpt from a 1972 interview.

It's unfortunate that the book is badly compromised by a plethora of very obvious errors. Mr. Miller writes about Eric Campbell playing the heavy in "the Chaplin one reel Mutual comedies," when every one of them ran two reels; he notes that Buster Keaton wrote, directed and starred in "19 one-reel films and one feature film," when in fact it was 19 two-reelers and ten features; he gives Stan Laurel's birthplace as "Ulverston, Lancaster county" when it was actually Lanca^{shire}. Laurel & Hardy's last silent film was not *Double Whoopee*, but *Angora Love*. Recounting Harry Langdon's career, Miller notes that Langdon got his first film contract in 1923 with Principal Pictures Corporation, which then sold his contract to Sennett—but in the next sentence, he writes, "While appearing in Los Angeles, Harry was hired by Mack Sennett." Which is it? He also has Langdon making films for Educational Pictures in 1929, when in fact he was making shorts for Hal Roach in 1929-30 and didn't go to Educational until late in 1932. Anita Garvin, beloved co-star of many silent comedies, has no entry—and, worse, is referred to as "Anita Garvey" in the entry on Hal Roach. Director Leo McCarey's surname is misspelled repeatedly as "McCary."

Trade-paper articles from the period are liberally reprinted, and they are interesting and valuable. However, the multitude of errors and contradictions in the entries about the major personalities do make one question the accuracy of the entries about those who are obscure. (Available from McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (800) 253-2187.)

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About L&H

In the past few years, a number of books about Laurel & Hardy have been issued, most of them quick rehashes of earlier works, designed for the "remainder" racks of your local bookstore. What a pleasure it is to note the arrival of an important new work about the team, Glenn Mitchell's splendid book **The Laurel & Hardy Encyclopedia** (B.T. Batsford;

304 pages, paperback; \$22.95).

Mr. Mitchell briskly yet thoroughly covers just about every topic imaginable that pertains to the team. He provides biographical sketches of their supporting actors,



writers, producers, directors, cameramen and editors; gives complete plot information and incisive commentary for each film, including notes on variations between prints from different sources; and discusses recurring themes in their work ("Hats," "Judges," "Pianos," "The Hereafter," etc.). Hundreds of the team's associates are profiled, including one-time acquaintances and friends of long standing. Practically every aspect of the lives of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy is examined here—solo and team work, silent shorts and sound features, private lives and public appearances.

The 250 photos are generally familiar scenes from the films, with an occasional snapshot, "behind the scenes" still or advertisement added for variety. (We particularly like the early '30s ad from France for home-movie editions of the L&H films.) The stills are all excellent prints, and they're very well reproduced—something which, alas, is becoming a rarity in books about early films.

As with any book of this massive scale, there are a few errors. The gentleman identified in a photo as director James Parrott is most assuredly not; actress June Marlowe died in 1984, not 1980; the head still photographer for the Roach studios was not Chester Lee "Bud" Graves but instead his brother, Clarence "Stax" Graves, who did not leave the studio in 1929 but in fact remained there through at least the late '30s. Most of the errors are minor, however, and in any event they are far outweighed by the vast amount of fascinating new material.

Mr. Mitchell's wry sense of humor and healthy perspective is most gratifying. He is able to discern the important from the trivial; each entry receives its due amount of space and no more. This is a truly wonderful book, and Glenn Mitchell deserves several tips of the derby for compiling so much intriguing information. (Available from Past Times Publishing Co.; see page 28.)

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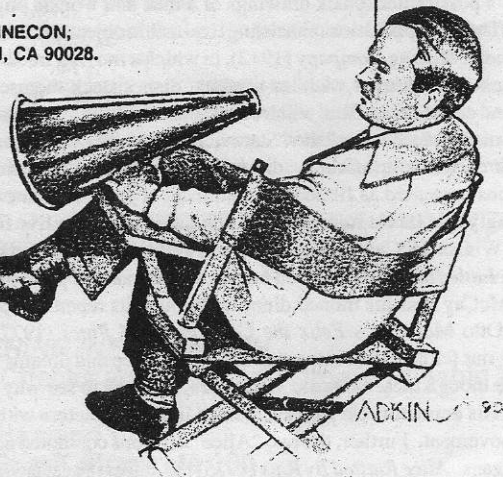
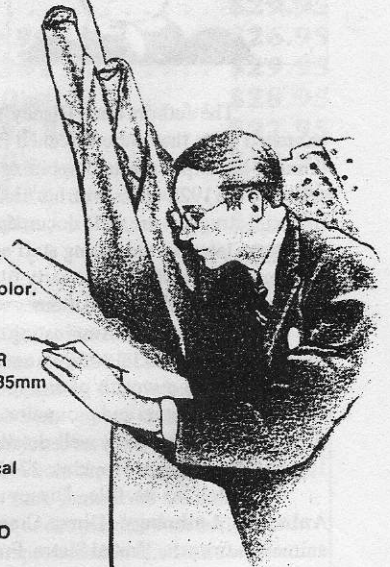
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Disney and Other Silent-Era Animators



With "Pocahontas" making millions as the latest mass-marketed product of the Disney entertainment machine, it's fascinating to examine this international empire's humble beginnings. The creator of this empire spent a frustrating yet fruitful first decade of churning out silent cartoons, as detailed in a wonderful book, **Walt in Wonderland: The Silent Films of Walt Disney** by Russell Merritt and J.B. Kaufman (Johns Hopkins University Press; 168 pages, hardcover). As the authors note, "The story of Disney's silent film career is not so much a struggle for artistic expression as it is a fight for commercial stability." Indeed, Disney became so adept at making money later on because he seems to have been cheated so frequently in his career's first few years.

The authors trace Disney's beginnings from the "Laugh-O-Grams," reels of local, topical animated gags that were screened in the three theatres of Kansas City exhibitor Frank Newman, through his experiments combining live-action footage with animation in the successful "Alice" series, to the 1928 series with his first popular cartoon character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Disney's financial struggles are well-documented—he was driven into bankruptcy by his first distributor, and five years later his animating staff and the rights to the Oswald character were usurped by another distributor. But while these early films brought Disney little in the way of capital, they helped him develop the techniques and themes which he would use in his great cartoons of the '30s and beyond.

The author's illuminating text is accompanied by a wealth of illustrations. Having received full access to the official archives and private collections, the authors are able to show Disney's artistic growth through a wealth of storyboards, frame enlargements, script excerpts, behind-the-scenes stills, advertisements and promotional articles. A color section of original posters is a bonus, and the filmography is especially well-detailed, listing archival and rental sources for the films in 35mm and 16mm prints. (Johns Hopkins, 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore MD 21218; (410) 516-6936.)

Despite its title, Disney cartoons are among the highlights of **Before Mickey: An Animated Anthology** (Direct Cinema Limited; 120 minutes; \$39.95). The pioneering work of animators from the United States, France, Sweden and Russia is collected on this VHS cassette in 25 films ranging in length from 30 seconds to a full six minutes.

It's a shame this collection is not what it could have been. There's no attempt made to inform us of the background or importance of each animator (which could have been accomplished with a single title before each film). The video camera used in making the transfers is occasionally bumped (!); a "countdown leader" and a repeated scene intrude on one cartoon; the barrelhouse blues piano score fails to connect with the visuals. The chronology of animation from 1900 to 1928 is generally followed, although a couple of 1912 films suddenly pop up in the midst of others from 1920.

That said, the films themselves provide some entertaining moments. James Stuart Blackton's films from the turn of the century, some drawn on chalkboard, show an early grasp of animation's possibilities (chalk drawings of a man and woman emerge from smudges).

The art of pixilation (animating live-action objects) reaches a high point in Romeo Bosetti's *The Automatic Moving Company* (1912), in which a moving truck's contents empty themselves into an apartment. A mattress waddles upstairs; dishes stack themselves on shelves. This is still an amazing and entertaining film, with complex and witty animation smoothly accomplished. Another pixilation masterpiece is Ladislav Starevich's 1912 *The Cameraman's Revenge*, in which Mr. and Mrs. Beetle each have an affair, are discovered by a peeping-tom cameraman, reconcile, then see their indiscretions presented as filmed entertainment at a resort. Starevich tells his story so clearly and entertainingly that this is impressive as animation *and* narrative for its period.

Winsor McCay's imagination and ability to express personality through animation shines through in *Little Nemo* (1911), seen here in a hand-painted print, and in the landmark *Gertie* (1914), in which McCay runs his trained dinosaur through its repertoire of tricks.

Otto Messmer's *Felix the Cat Dines and Pines* (1927) is one of the highlights of the collection; our feline friend eats too much, falls asleep and dreams up some psychedelic adventures. Impressive though these fantastic visions are, it's easy to see why Walt Disney became the king of cartoons. His animator, Ub Iwerks, created living characters with distinct personalities expressed through movement. Further, the two "Alice" cartoons contained here have inventive story lines and some fine gags. *Alice Rattled By Rats* (1925) has Julius the cat trying to catch some rodents, shooting a hole in the floor, and falling into a vat of potent home brew in the basement. With the cat thoroughly inebriated, the mice will play. One does a convincing Egyptian shimmy dance; another splits into three parts, with its head, legs and torso bouncing on a piano keyboard.

Despite the many frustrating flaws in this video, it still serves as a good introduction to the varied and imaginative work of animators obscure and well-known in the art's first quarter-century. (Available from Direct Cinema Limited, P.O. Box 10003, Santa Monica CA 90410; (800) 525-0000.)

Méliès' Magic Reborn



The Magic of Méliès, newly available on laserdisc (Image ID 8070DS; \$39.95), is a wonderful introduction to the French cinema pioneer Georges Méliès, who is justifiably lauded for the "trick" films he made from 1896 through 1912. The 101-minute disc starts with a 20-minute documentary on Méliès made in 1978 containing tantalizing excerpts from many of his films (several snippets are from the 14 subjects shown in their entirety on side two). A narrator relates the events of Méliès' career as if he were the master showman himself. Still photographs are used where appropriate, although sometimes these frozen images dominate the presentation. An orchestral score sets the mood with classical standards, many from the French repertoire.

As a filmmaker, Méliès accomplished what had impossible to do in his stage shows: he manipulated the image by stopping the camera mid-shot; filmed two sides of a shot at separate times; double-exposed over black backgrounds for a seamless picture-in-picture; and did combinations of these so intricate that the illusion can awe even today's audiences.

Some tricks are spoiled by obvious camera stoppage (actors sometimes jump location when new props pop into view, and occasionally the lighting changes), but more often than not the sleight-of-hand goes unnoticed.

Méliès kept his audiences coming back with fanciful settings and situations: his films take us to Satan's lair, to the moon, to undersea kingdoms (all actually shot inside Méliès' studio, often with the use of elaborate painted backdrops). Along with the camera tricks and often outlandish settings, Méliès had a wonderful, impish sense of humor. He used tumbling, fumbling policemen in two shorts included here (from 1905 and 1907), the first of which was seen seven years before Mack Sennett introduced the Keystone Cops. In another short, figures on posters come to life and interact with each other, decades before the Warner Bros. cartoonists repeated the idea.

Many of the films have superb quality and excellent contrast. A very few are of only fair quality, although the age of the films probably makes better materials unavailable.

One title is copied from a color-stenciled print; all others are unadorned black-and-white. Piano and electronic scores accompany the 14 shorts. (Also available on VHS from Kino on Video.)

—David Hayes

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Major columnists are well represented in this series with their particular points of view.

Day by day Industry analysis, speculation of what films the stars would appear in, reports of on-set or location visits is among the things rarely given in most standard biographies that can be found here. If you think there is nothing left to be learned of your favorite star and that all books are merely rehashes of earlier books, you will be delighted to find all of the fascinating information that can only be found in these books or by visiting a Los Angeles research library and spending months hunched over a microfilm machine. The editor of this series spent a year in the y4th level basement of the Los Angeles Public Library gathering materials for this series!

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All Talking, All Singing, a Few Dazzling

Between 1927's *The Jazz Singer* and 1933's *42nd Street*, there was a deluge of movie musicals, varying wildly in all aspects of artistic, technical and financial success. These were films in which sound and silence cohabitated uneasily, Black-and-White unpredictably exploded into Technicolor, and Broadway imports fought with Hollywood experts.

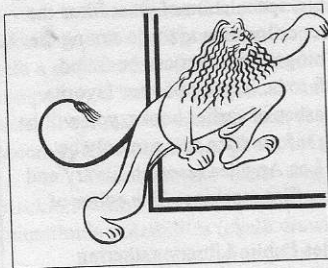
A few of the films are innovative on many levels, such as Rouben Mamoulian's *Applause*; others are slightly creaky yet still delightful (*Follow Thru*, with Buddy Rogers, Jack Haley and Nancy Carroll). Many of them are pure and simple godawful—such as *Golden Dawn*, a jaw-dropping collision of jungle hooley and Viennese kitsch which was described by one 1930 reviewer as “a definitive catalogue of vulgarity, witlessness, and utterly pathetic and preposterous nonsense.” Most of the films careen from wonderful to horrific and back again.

It takes a brave man to march through this musical minefield. Richard Barrios, however, has come through the battle reasonably unscathed, and the result is his book **A Song in the Dark** (Oxford University Press; 493 pages; \$21.95, paperback). Thankfully, he has the acuity to realize that films which may not seem terribly impressive to today's audiences still deserve to be lauded for their innovations.

Barrios notes the many fascinating sub-genres of early musicals: backstage melodramas, plotless revues, exotic operettas, adaptations of stage successes, comedy musicals, the films in which established silent screen favorites tried to find singing and speaking voices simultaneously, and what Barrios terms the “Dueling Mammies” films—pictures modeled on Jolson's smash hits *The Jazz Singer* and *The Singing Fool*, in which a Broadway star (Fanny Brice, Ted Lewis, Sophie Tucker, George Jessel, Harry Richman) surmounts professional and personal problems to become a big star—with lots of sentiment, ethnic humor and songs along the way.

Barrios' writing style is a little uneven; at times the book reads like a doctoral dissertation, but for the most part it's folksy and funny while it spins its absorbing, entertaining and very well-researched story. The 50-odd illustrations are well-chosen if too few; Barrios includes a fine discography as well as a saddening note on lost films. (Oxford University Press, 2001 Evans Road, Cary NC 27513; (800) 451-7556.)

Leo Meets Rhino on MGM Soundtracks



Rhino Records, renowned for its reissues of music from the rock era, continues delving deeper into the past with its new Rhino Movie Music series, with definitive soundtrack albums from the great MGM films.

The compact discs of **Meet Me in St. Louis** (R2 71598) and **Ziegfeld Follies** (R2 71599) are identical to those issued with the “deluxe” VHS video packages recently (and reviewed in *Past Times* #19). Both have fine sound quality, since the source material is the original 35mm optical tracks; they are mixed in true stereo from various “stem” recordings made at different perspectives.

The crown jewel of the series is **The Wizard of Oz: The Deluxe Edition** (R2 71964), a two-disc set packaged in an oversize box with a 48-page booklet. (The booklet itself is a gem, filled with behind-the-scenes photos and an informative essay by *Oz* scholar and Garland biographer John Fricke.) There have been “soundtrack” albums galore for this film since 1956, but this is the first one which allows us to hear Herbert Stothart's magnificent score by itself, without dialogue and sound effects. Those who own MGM/UA Home Video's laserdisc box set *The Ultimate Oz* will have these tracks, but in multiple takes with the identifying “slates” marking each take; Rhino's CD includes the takes actually used in the film, and they're frequently grouped together without audible breaks, so that they play as a unified sequence. (Each track is digitally indexed, however.)

Many of the takes are much longer than in the final edit of the film, and occasionally there are themes which were omitted entirely. The best known outtake is “The Jitterbug,” a cute song but one which is ultimately too tied to the Swing Era to work in the fantasy setting.

The second half of the second CD is a treasure trove of unused material, including a breakdown take of “Over the Rainbow” and an alternate version of “If I Only Had a Heart” sung by original Tin Man Buddy Ebsen (whose vocal, incidentally was retained on “We're Off to See the Wizard” in the finished film). There's also a delightful demo recording of the “Munchkinland” sequence sung by composers Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg. The sound quality is superb, marred only by the very slight hiss that's inherent in optical materials of the period.

Continued on Page 32



The Real Movie Makers

When books began to proliferate about Hollywood's “Golden Era” in the 1960s, the only people sharing their reminiscences were the big stars. In the '70s, critics began arriving in droves to interview surviving big-name directors. But virtually no one realized that the most vivid accounts of how movies were actually made are provided by the little-known, rarely credited people behind the scenes—the army of technicians who were in the studios every day, watching the big stars and directors rise to the top and fade away to obscurity. These people have an all-encompassing perspective about the picture business, and they're usually a lot more honest in their recollections than the big names.

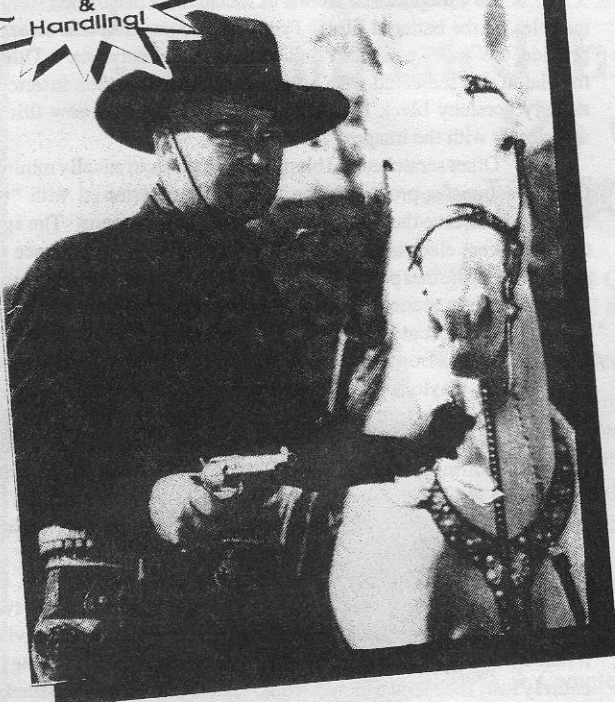
The actual process of writing, filming and promoting movies comes through more vividly in **Talking Pictures: With the People Who Made Them** by Sylvia Shorris and Marion Abbott Bundy (The New Press; 372 pages, hardcover; \$25.00) than in practically any previous book. The only comparable titles we can think of are Kevin Brownlow's landmark study of silent films *The Parade's Gone By*, and the collection of interviews by Bernard Rosenberg and Harry Silverstein published in 1970 as *The Real Tinsel*. Even those fine books concentrated more on the well-known.

The 38 interviews here are conducted with the likes of script girl Florence Mack (who began working at the Ince studio in 1919), gaffer Ed Rike (who recalls doing the lighting for *The Jazz Singer*), sound man Ralph Butler (who contrasts working with Laurel & Hardy to working with Abbott & Costello) and publicity director Hubert Voight (who engagingly describes the process of turning Leonard Slye into Roy Rogers).

For those who prefer hearing from better-known “names,” optical-effects legend Linwood Dunn tells how he added the leopard in *Bringing Up Baby* to previously-shot scenes of Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant; he also tells how he learned from film novice Orson Welles during *Citizen Kane*. There are funny and informative comments from director Andre de Toth, cinematographer George Folsey, lyricist Sammy Cahn, dancer Fayard Nicholas and editor Rudi Fehr. All of them provide wonderful anecdotes, and they also provide a view into the real world of filmmaking that's better than four years of film school.

If there's any criticism to be leveled, it's that many of the interviews are too brief; you have the feeling that these survivors have much more to tell. Since many of the subjects have since passed on, it seems that those untold stories have gone with them, but we're grateful for the insights into their respective crafts that they've given us in this wonderful book. (Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110.)

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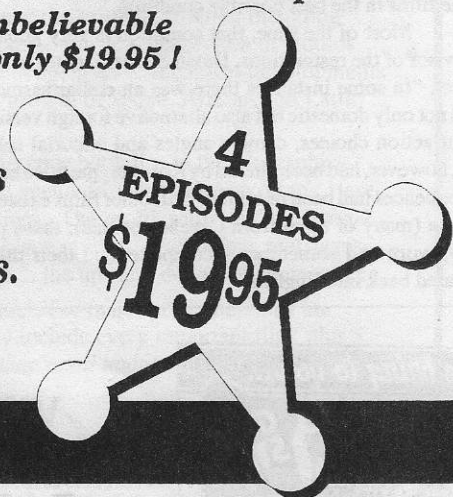


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Preserving The Art of Buster Keaton

Although Chaplin and Keaton are now thought of as equals, the two greatest comedy directors, writers and performers of the Silent era, their films met with different fates. Chaplin owned most of his own work and kept negatives and protection prints safely housed in a home vault. Keaton was not a majority owner of his own film company, and after its dissolution the negatives and prints were not well maintained. While Chaplin's silent classics were frequently reissued, no one seemed to care about the ultimate fate of Keaton's finest work.

That began to change in the 1950s, when Keaton met the manager of a "classic film" theater, one Raymond Rohauer. People in film-preservation circles generally have strong opinions about the late Mr. Rohauer, and they are often not complimentary ones. He had an obsession with acquiring old films, and on more than one occasion claimed to own the rights to movies which were not in fact his. However, this very strange man did manage to preserve many films which otherwise would probably have been lost forever, and the Keaton films are among them. Rohauer managed to secure prints of all 19 of Keaton's shorts, and 11 feature films (including *The Saphead*, which Keaton appeared in just before his own studio started production). He also gained the rights to Keaton's films, and began exhibiting them to great acclaim, with Buster—and later, his widow, Eleanor—sharing in the proceeds.

Rohauer died in 1987, and since then the Keaton films have been almost impossible to see. In 1994, however, the home-video rights were cleared with the Douris Corporation (the distributor of Rohauer's films), and this year Keaton fans had their dream come true with the release of all of Buster's self-produced films in a series entitled **The Art of Buster Keaton**. Available in ten VHS videocassettes from Kino on Video and in three laserdisc box sets from Image Entertainment, the series allows us to see the films in the best possible condition.

Most of the time, that condition is very good indeed. As the supervisor of the restorations, David Shepard, notes in an accompanying booklet, "In some instances there was an embarrassment of riches: we found not only domestic but also alternative foreign versions of films with variant action choices, camera angles and editorial selections." Other films, however, had been altered by Rohauer; the titles had been rewritten, and sequences had been re-edited. Still other films existed only in foreign versions (many of them from Czechoslovakia); these prints were often dupey, worn and sometimes incomplete, and their titles needed to be translated back into English.

Mr. Shepard and a crew of technicians performed some minor miracles on the battered films. Prints were compared and assembled to provide the most complete and best looking versions. Titles were translated and recreated with a period typeface and then inserted into a slightly scratchy black film background, so that the new titles blend seamlessly with the images.

Other scratches and blemishes were electronically minimized in the video transfer process. The films were transferred with "window boxes" to preserve the full image on home video screens. The speeds of the films were electronically varied as a given film or sequence needed, going from 19 frames per second to as fast as 26 fps. Blue tinting was added for certain night scenes, especially those shot "day for night."

As presented in this video package, some of the films have orchestral scores from previous reissues; others have pipe-organ accompaniment by Gaylord Carter or John Muri; *Sherlock, Jr.* has a rather ostentatious new score by the Club Foot Orchestra. Some of the shorts are scored with a charming antique mechanical instrument called a Fotoplayer. Most of the films, however, are given lovely new accompaniments by a small band led by pianist Robert Israel. These "light classical" scores perfectly capture the elegance of Keaton's comedy, and enhance the excitement without destroying any of the nuances.

It's a thrill to see magical films such as *Sherlock, Jr.* and *The Playhouse* in pristine prints. Likewise, it's gratifying to see the two-strip Technicolor prologue for *Batling Butler*, even though the surviving print is faded. *Hard Luck* and *The Love Nest* are two Keaton shorts long thought entirely lost; they look a bit worn (and missing footage of the final gag for *Hard Luck* has been replaced with a still), but they are still wonderfully funny despite the visual flaws.

A couple of films have looked better elsewhere, at least in certain scenes. *The Boat* and *The Paleface* have brief passages where the image is marred by negative deterioration; these scenes looked fine in the Super 8 prints made in Japan by Rohauer's licensee, the Toho Film Co., in the mid-1970s. *The General* has a slightly soft focus, and the print used has more blemishes than that used in Image's earlier laserdisc release.

Those minor problems aside, *The Art of Buster Keaton* is a triumph. David Shepard and the small army of technicians who worked on the restorations have done posterity a great favor in preserving the work of a great filmmaker-- one whose work was neglected until it was almost too late.



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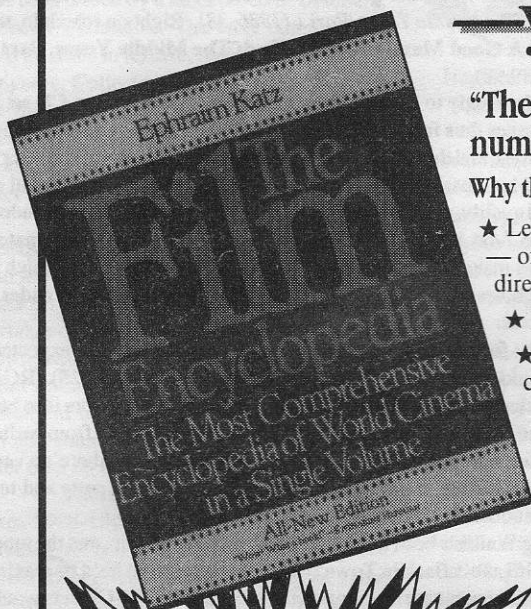
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Duchin's Elegant Pianistics

Eddy Duchin's story was marked by triumph and tragedy, and it's not surprising that Hollywood made a very popular film about his dramatic, and brief, lifetime. Born in 1909, by age twenty Duchin was playing piano in the elegant orchestra of Leo Reisman, then the toast of New York society. Reisman provided Duchin with the encouragement and means to start his own orchestra; practically from the start, Duchin's distinctive sound was a tremendous favorite with the upper crust and the general public alike.

Impeccably tailored and dashing handsome, Duchin played piano in an exuberant and emotional style that made the most trifling pop ditty sound like a Rachmaninoff piano concerto. His band was smooth and unobtrusive, marked by a throbbing tenor sax section (most bands used the higher pitched alto saxes). The vocals were usually by Lew Sherwood, who had the pleasant distinction of sounding like an average middle-aged guy instead of the dewy young romantic crooners featured by most bands.

Duchin's marriage to a young socialite was controversial (he was, after all, a musician—and Jewish), and it ended two years later when his wife died giving birth to their son, Peter. Duchin carried on, changing styles successfully with the advent of Swing. When World War II broke out, he rejected an offer to head the Navy's entertainment division and instead saw battle at the invasion of Normandy and in the Pacific. His post-war career was successful, but cut short by his death from leukemia at the early age of 41.

His distinctive music, however, is newly available on **The Elegant Eddy Duchin** (Take Two TT413CD; \$15.98). Producer Jim Bedoian has selected 22 excellent tracks from Duchin's 1933-37 tenure with Victor, most of them standards such as "I Only Have Eyes For You," "Let's Fall in Love," and "Too Marvelous For Words." Vocalist Buddy Clark guests on "A Star is Born" and "Heaven Help This Heart of Mine," while composer Harold Arlen demonstrates his new number "Ill Wind." The band is romantic and pleasantly old-fashioned but *never* corny in the Lombardo sense. The slight surface noise seems to expand and contract rather unpredictably (an artifact of an "improved" CEDAR noise-reduction system), but as the original 78s used for this CD are extremely clean, the noise is a very minor distraction. In all, this is a welcome tribute to a distinctive stylist. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)



Waller's Wizardry Revisited

More than fifty years after his untimely death, pianist and singer Fats Waller is still one of the giants of jazz; unfortunately, many of his recordings have been surprisingly hard to find in the United States. A "Complete" Waller LP set begun in 1975 was never completed. An attempt to make amends began in 1989 with RCA's release of *Fats Waller: The Last Years (1940-43)*, a three-CD set. Three years later, the next volume of Fats's "Rhythm" sides appeared, *The Middle Years, Part 1 (1936-38)*. Right on schedule, the

third volume came out early this year: **A Good Man Is Hard to Find: The Middle Years, Part 2 (1938-40)** (RCA/Bluebird 66552-2; \$39.98).

It's been worth the wait, we're happy to report. The sound quality of this three-CD set is excellent, easily the best of RCA's reissues thus far. Original metal stampers or test pressings were used for all except eight of the 68 selections, and the transfers are excellent. (It's a shame that Waller's boisterous version of "Hold Tight" and his classic "Your Feet's Too Big" are among the handful of tracks that have less-than-terrific sound quality.) The issued takes *and* the rare alternates are included, a welcome change of policy from the *Last Years* collection, which gave us only the alternates. Hearing two consecutive takes of a song makes one marvel at Fats's endless inventiveness, which is amply displayed in the two wonderful takes of the title track. Pianist Butch Thompson provides a performer's perspective in his liner notes.

The RCA folks may actually finish the Waller reissue series sooner than we expected, because they've already released **Breakin' The Ice: The Early Years, Part 1 (1934-35)** (RCA/Bluebird 66618-2; \$24.98). These tracks were issued on LPs, and our advice for collectors is to buy this new two-CD set, but hang on to the old vinyl. Many of the 44 tracks are improved from earlier issues; several don't sound quite as good. Overall, the sound quality is acceptable, but there's a very pronounced hiss; overdone CEDAR processing is probably the culprit, since metal parts and test pressings were used for all but six selections.

The performances are among Waller's best; he and his band are enthusiastic, and the tunes ("Rosetta," "Don't Let it Bother You," "Lulu's Back in Town") are better than what he'd be waxing a few years hence. Dan Morgenstern's liner notes are illuminating. Two more double-CD sets would fill up the gap from May 1935 through December 1936; we hope RCA will release these as quickly as they can, while still taking the time to ensure the best possible sound quality. Fats deserves it.

Alec Templeton's Keyboard Comedy

Before Victor Borge came to America, this country was graced by another visitor from overseas whose great talents as a pianist were matched by his singular sense of humor. Born blind in Cardiff, Wales, Alec Templeton came to the U.S. in 1935 as a featured performer with Jack Hylton's English dance band. His superabundant talent as pianist, humorist, mimic and composer suddenly made the 25-year-old entertainer a sought-after guest on radio's top variety shows.

By 1939, he had his own program, and had already begun making records for Victor, Columbia and other labels. Twenty-four of his recordings made between 1938 and 1942 have been collected on **Bach Goes to Town** (Flapper PASTCD7057; \$15.98). This CD might well bring his unique brand of musical humor out of the obscurity in which it has languished since the pianist's early death in 1963.

Like Victor Borge, Templeton was fond of mixing classical and pop music, as heard in tracks such as "The Music Goes 'Round and 'Round" (played in the manner of Mozart, Johann Strauss and Handel), or "Grieg's in the Groove." He also enjoyed puncturing the pomposity surrounding classical music, as demonstrated in his devastating impression of Milton Cross (the host of broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House) describing grandiose arrangements of "South of the Border" and "And the Angels Sing." His imitation of conductor Walter Damrosch providing an explanation of the nuances to be heard in "Three Little Fishes" is hilarious, too, whether or not you've heard the genuine article.

Templeton's gifts for parody and mimicry weren't limited to the classical field; in a "heigh-ho" version of "Brünnhilde's Battle Cry," he affectionately spoofs Rudy Vallee; Carmen Lombardo, however, is given rougher treatment. In the tour de force "Man With New Radio," Templeton employs split-second changes in vocal and piano styles to mimic the "channel surfing" of the title character.

Apart from the comedy, Templeton was a fine composer, as shown by "Ghost Rhapsody" and "A Sultry Day in New York," and his jazz interpretation of "Blues in the Night" is sublime. The transfers are fine, even if the original recordings are sometimes poorly engineered. Nevertheless, this is a well-programmed tribute to a multifaceted talent who deserves to be better remembered. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler, AZ 85244.)

Rare 78s Now "Classics"

Scandinavia is home to a number of fine vintage-jazz reissue labels. Sweden has brought us labels such as Jazz Information, Everybody's, Tax and Phontastic, all of which have kept in print hundreds of American jazz records which are unavailable from domestic U.S. labels. Now, a number of compact discs have been issued by a label based in Denmark, Collector's Classics. The label currently has some 20 titles in release, mostly in the vintage jazz genre. Collector's Classics releases generally have excellent sound quality thanks to audio engineer John R.T. Davies. Many of the tracks are quite rare, but they generally sound better here than in any previous reissues.

A good example of this is **Luis Russell 1926-34** (COCD-7), a retrospective of the hot band led by the Panamanian pianist. The first tracks on this disc, "29th and Dearborn" and two takes of "Sweet Mumtaz," are from a little-known session for Vocalion in March 1926. In earlier reissues, these rare recordings were so scratchy as to be almost unlistenable. While they still sound a bit rough here, they're much better than on any of the previous reissues.

The Earl Hines Collection: Piano Solos, 1928-1940 (COCD-11) has 24 tracks, including several alternate takes which prove that Mr. Hines never played anything the same way twice. The eight solos which he made for the QRS label in December 1928 have always been of indifferent quality on previous reissues; here they have a strong, full sound. The four solos made for Okeh in the same month, including "I Ain't Got Nobody" and "57 Varieties" are wonderfully clear (gratifying in light of the awful reissues of the latter title released by Columbia in the U.S.). What a treat it is to hear all the nuances of Hines' performances, recorded when his incredible talent was at a peak.

Collector's Classics has expanded its horizons somewhat with **The Boswell Sisters Collection, Vol. 1, 1931-32** (COCD-21). The sisters' music is a bit more pop-oriented than that of the other artists previously anthologized on the label; however, the Boswells' incredible re-inventions of Tin Pan Alley numbers, and the hot backing of the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, turns these records into true jazz. "It's the Girl" (a track which seems to be plagued by problems on every reissue) is from a slightly worn copy, but the other 23 tracks are excellent.

The label has recently issued CDs of the Washboard Rhythm Kings, The Original Memphis Five, and early tracks by pianist Clarence Williams. With their extended running times of over 70 minutes and mostly superior sound quality, the Collector's Classics series is highly recommended, even if you own this music in another medium. (Each Collector's Classics CD costs \$14.98; available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)

—John T. Aldrich III

The Forgotten Music of Joe Haymes



Even among enthusiasts of dance-band music from the '30s, Joe Haymes is largely unknown. Some know him only as The Guy Who Sold His Band to Tommy Dorsey. Indeed, in 1935 Haymes turned his group over to the trombonist, and then watched the band quickly attain the recognition and success that it had never gotten under his own leadership.

Actually, Haymes was never cut out to be a leader. He was a quiet introvert who was entirely preoccupied with music and had absolutely no business sense. His many records for Victor, Columbia, Banner and ARC were frequently issued under pseudonyms, which kept him from building any marquee value. Where he did have talent, abundantly, was in arranging.

Haymes created the buoyant, chugging trademark sound of the Ted Weems band in charts for "Piccolo Pete" and other hits of the late '20s.

That driving, relentlessly happy sound characterized Haymes' own band when he began recording in 1932, and he paid a price for it. The '20s sound was considered passé by most bandleaders at that point; formerly hot groups such as Jan Garber's or Hal Kemp's were now providing slow and dreamy sweet music, a tranquilizer to offset the traumas of the Depression. Haymes' music was joyous and celebratory in a period when there wasn't much to celebrate. He also stuck to the two-beat rhythm long after newer bands began to swing; as a result, Haymes was admired by musicians who recognized the brilliance of his arrangements, but he was ignored by the public.

Haymes' underappreciated legacy can be heard anew thanks to a new 23-track compact disc, **Joe Haymes and His Orchestra 1932-1936** (IAJRC CD 1008; \$15.98), which shows the leader writing consistently fine charts despite varying bands, styles and record labels. Haymes' fondness for funny and unusual songs comes through in titles such as "One Note Trumpet Player," "Don't Be Like an Eskimo" and "The Bathtub Ran Over Again" (a neglected Johnny Mercer gem). Collectors familiar with the Bluebird versions of "Toll" and "Hot Jazz Pie" will enjoy the different arrangements here, originally made for Columbia. Haymes comes to terms with Swing in 1936 by writing "modern" charts of old '20s tunes such as "Sister Kate," "That's a Plenty" and "St. Louis Blues," the latter a brilliant interpretation. Tenor sax star Bud Freeman and trumpeter Chris Griffin play superbly, but it's Haymes' writing that shines most brightly. The sound is generally excellent despite the variety of sources. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato, CA 94948.)

The King of Jazz After His Reign



The folks at Capitol have come up with an improbable but most welcome CD reissue. **Paul Whiteman: The Complete Capitol Recordings** (CDP 30103) is improbable since the bandleader was not exactly a hit-maker during the time represented by this collection. Whiteman's orchestra was innovative and wildly popular during the '20s, but in the '30s his star faded; he seemed uncomfortable with the new swing idiom, and it was clear that innovations in popular music were now being made by a new generation of bandleaders.

He still had marquee value, though, and in 1942 Buddy DeSylva, Johnny Mercer and record retailer Glenn Wallichs asked Whiteman to join the roster of their nascent record label. Capitol 101, the very first issue from the new company, coupled the bandleader's "I Found a New Baby" with "The General Jumped at Dawn."

The erstwhile King of Jazz had a brief and checkered career at his new label. Two sessions recorded a week apart in June 1942 provided eight sides, one of which became a much-cherished and frequently-reissued jazz classic: "Trav'lin' Light." The reason for the side's popularity was the sultry vocal by Billie Holiday, credited on the original label as "Lady Day" thanks to her concurrent contract with Decca. Other tracks from this period are also excellent; Martha Tilton's vocals on "Serenade in Blue" and "I'm Old Fashioned" are standouts. Johnny Mercer and Jack Teagarden team up again for a duet (as they had on Whiteman records in 1934) for a romping lesson in musical history with "The Old Music Master."

Thanks to the American Federation of Musicians' ban on recording in 1943 and '44, Whiteman didn't enter Capitol's studios again until February 19, 1945, whereupon he made two outstanding remakes of earlier hits: "Wang Wang Blues" and "San," the latter having been a spotlight for Bix Beiderbecke in the original 1928 version. The remake has trumpeter Tommy Gott (late of Harry Reser's Cliquot Club Eskimos) taking Bix's place, and it's a joyous gambol through Dixieland, worth the cost of the CD by itself. The maestro ended his Capitol tenure in 1951 by conducting pianist Leonard Pennario and a fine orchestra in definitive readings of "An American in Paris" and, of course, "Rhapsody in Blue." These twelve selections may not be Whiteman's most important recordings, but they show that he was still capable of producing memorable music long after his peak of popularity.

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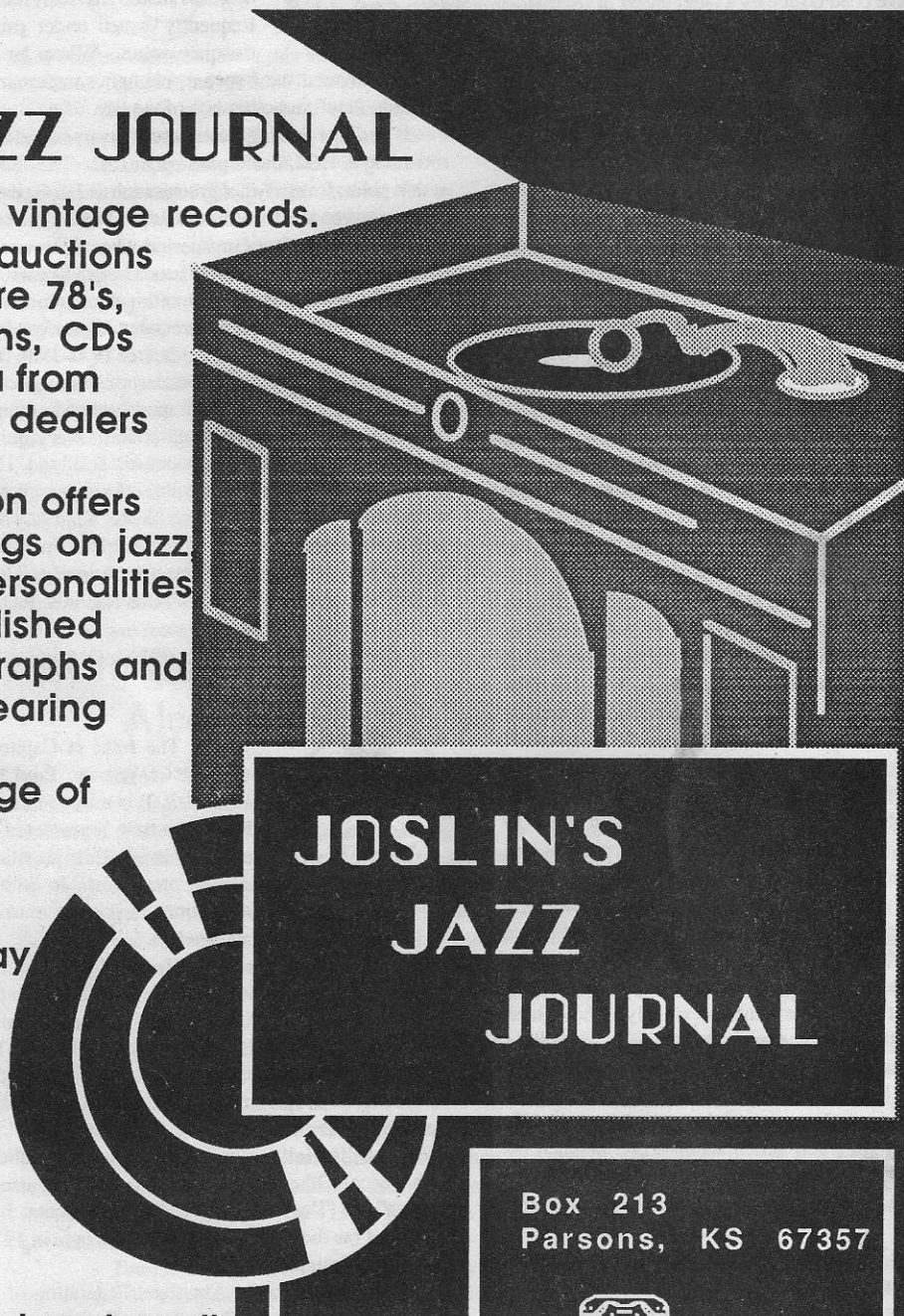
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Swing on Saturday Night

In 1936, a young producer and jazz enthusiast named Phil Cohan convinced his bosses at CBS that the new phenomenon called swing music deserved a weekly program. The show debuted on June 20, 1936 and lasted through April 1, 1939; in the process it introduced young America to an army of great jazzmen.

Sadly, only two episodes of this landmark series survive. (CBS's flagship station in New York, WABC, incredibly had no recording facilities; if a show was to be preserved, it had to be prearranged with a transcription service, a fairly expensive proposition.) We're fortunate that a new 2-CD album preserves the first anniversary show of **The Saturday Night Swing Club** (Memphis Archives MA 7002; \$22.98).

It's a terrific show, too, running about 95 minutes instead of the usual half-hour. Naturally, the regulars are on hand: hosts Paul Douglas and Mel Allen, pennywhistle virtuoso Les Leiber, Leith Stevens and the Saturday Night Swing Club Band. You'll also hear the small combo formed for this series which attained a measure of immortality: Raymond Scott and the "Toy Town Quintet," so named after their hit record, "The Toy Trumpet."

Along with that gang are guests Duke Ellington and his band (who perform a hot rendition of "Frollic Sam" and a moody "Caravan"). Benny Goodman plays "There's a Lull in My Life" with Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa, and "Nagasaki" with the addition of Lionel Hampton. Glen Gray's Casa Loma Orchestra provides two numbers, and Claude Thornhill does a medley of a Bach Fugue with "Flight of the Bumblebee," while trumpeter Bunny Berigan contributes a soulful "Am I Blue."

Lesser-known but deserving talents get their moment to shine as well. Jazz harpist Casper Reardon plays an elegant arrangement of "Ain't Misbehavin'." Guitarists Carl Kress and Dick McDonough contribute "Chicken a la Swing," and vibraphonist Adrian Rollini and his Trio romp through "Rebound."

A special treat is the appearance, via short-wave, of guitarist Django Reinhardt, violinist Stephane Grappelly and the Quintet of the Hot Club of France; their string swing is as nimble and inventive as ever, even if there are minor transmission problems.

Douglas and Allen are genial hosts even if they don't come across as jazz buffs. The sound quality is crisp and clean, marred only by occasional slight wear on the original transcription discs.

More detailed liner notes would have been appreciated, but even so this is an essential addition to any vintage jazz fan's collection. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)

Gray, Nelson: Great Bands in Hindsight



In its almost 20-year history, Hindsight Records has released dozens of wonderful albums of rare transcriptions, originally made only for radio use, by big bands famous and obscure. Their recent titles include a couple by bands whose records aren't frequently available.

Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra: The Continental (Hindsight HCD-261) contains 16 tracks, all from 1935, by a band which helped inaugurate the Swing Era, yet which was neglected in the wake of Benny Goodman.

The group started in the mid-'20s as one of many bands based in Detroit and managed by Jean Goldkette. By 1929, the band became a cooperative—which meant that, as co-owners, the sidemen received a much better share of the earnings than musicians in most bands. Thus the personnel remained pretty much the same for years, which resulted in a tightly precisioned and polished band. If they didn't swing as much as Goodman and those who followed, they had plenty of vitality—which they displayed in terrific arrangements by Gene Gifford and Larry Wagner. Gray had left the sax section to become the baton-waving front man—one with no sense of tempo, by all accounts. The bandsmen didn't need a conductor to give them a sense of rhythm, and many were great soloists besides. Trumpeters Sonny Dunham and Grady Watts, clarinetist Clarence Hutchinrider, and trombonists Bill Rausch and Pee Wee Hunt (who also supplied growly, good-natured vocals) were inspired musicians.

The 16 tracks here are mainly standards. Many of the tunes are wrapped in unusual arrangements: "The Continental" becomes a rather slowly-paced bolero, while "The Man I Love" turns into an uptempo flag-waver. Most of the tracks, such as "Who's Sorry Now?", "I May Be Wrong" and "Sunny Disposish" are played brightly in a moderate-to-fast tempo. Occasional ballads such as "Night and Day" (with young Kenny Sargent vocalizing) and hell-bent-for-leather numbers like "Chinatown, My Chinatown" add variety.

The sound quality is variable on this CD. The source transcriptions are far superior to commercial 78s of the period, with full, rich bass and excellent sound overall. However, it sounds as if the new CEDAR system has been employed, which results in a strange-sounding end product. The greater the volume, the brighter the sound—so quiet passages tend to sound muddy, and louder passages (such as trumpet solos) suddenly sound much clearer. If the high frequencies were kept at a consistent level, the listener could psychologically filter out any surface noise—but with the continual variation from muddy to bright, it's much harder to concentrate on the music.



Happily, there are no such problems with **Ozzie Nelson and His Orchestra: Head Over Heels in Love** (Hindsight HCD 259).

The later success of Ozzie and vocalist-wife Harriet Hilliard as icons of radio, television and middle-American values overshadowed this fine band, which is a shame. Nelson's first records, made in 1930 for Brunswick, display him as a crooner much influenced by Rudy Vallee. Within a few years, though, he had developed a first-class band which never stopped evolving, as these tracks from 1937 through 1942 demonstrate. Early tracks such as "Head Over Heels in Love" and "I Must See Annie Tonight" have a bouncy sound, while later recordings such as "Everyone But Me" swing without compromise (the latter track, in fact, sounds like a Charlie Barnet number!).

Despite the stylistic changes, the band always had a full-bodied sound, thanks to the prominence of Charlie Buebeck's baritone sax in the reed section and the warm-toned trumpet of Bo Ashford. Nelson also had a fondness for out-and-out comedy numbers such as "Breathless," in which the melody line is so long that Harriet has to gasp for breath before she can finish the chorus, or "Wave the Stick Blues," in which Ozzie depicts the many unforeseen tribulations of a bandleader. Both excel as ballad singers, Harriet on "Let's Have Another Cigarette," and Ozzie on "You and I Know." The two are featured together only on the aforementioned "Breathless" and on a rather caustic comedy version of Hoagy Carmichael's "Two Sleepy People"; Harriet does a bit as Ozzie's secretary on "Wave the Stick Blues," however. No matter what the song or tempo, the warmth of Ozzie and Harriet's personalities permeates every vocal, be it a solo or duet.

These transcriptions are wonderfully well recorded, and their brilliance is not hindered in the transfer to CD by any noise-reduction process. We hope that Hindsight will release future volumes of transcriptions by the Nelson band. We'd also be overjoyed to see the reissue of Nelson's commercial recordings, particularly those which he made for Bluebird from 1937 through '41. His renditions of "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" and "You Can't Run Away From Love Tonight" are little masterpieces and deserve to be better known. (Available in record stores or from Hindsight Records, P.O. Box 7114, Burbank CA 91510.)

Joe Franklin's Nostalgic Waxings

Joe Franklin is well known to residents of New York as the host of a long-running TV talk show frequently devoted to the entertainers of the past. Mr. Franklin has been promoting "nostalgia entertainment" since before there was any "nostalgia" to be attached to it. (He started out by writing material for his idol, Eddie Cantor, when the latter began a program of "records and reminiscences" in 1951.)

The self-titled "King of Nostalgia" now presents four new CDs of vintage recordings. Longtime collectors of this material will recognize many of the tracks from previous Columbia or Legacy reissues; many of them were last issued only a year ago, as part of the "Art Deco" or "16 Most Requested Songs" series. However, there are a number of tracks not previously reissued, the sound quality is usually very crisp and clear, each CD is budget-priced (generally retailing for \$11.99), and overall the series is fine for the general audience to which it is being marketed.

Each CD contains 12 vintage tracks, with a final track of reminiscences by Mr. Franklin. His comments are more enthusiastic than illuminating, but his heart is certainly in the right place, and it's good to have such a passionate proponent of these entertainers.

Volume one, **Growing Up With Radio** (Legacy JK 64640) has among its highlights "You've Got Me Crying Again" by Phil Harris's orchestra (but with Lee Norton, not Phil, on the vocal); "Wake Up and Live," a rarity from the very first session by the Andrews Sisters (not *Andrew*, as mistakenly spelled on the packaging); an insane rendition of "On the Road to Mandalay" by Jerry Colonna; a surprisingly fine vocal by Eddie Rochester Anderson on "My! My!," and a beautiful, bright transfer of Hoagy Carmichael's "Hong Kong Blues." The one real faux-pas here is that only part one of "George Burns and Gracie Allen, Part 1 and Part 2" is included. Those who want to hear the complete recording will have to find the old LPs *Great Moments in Show Business* or *The Great Stars of Vaudeville*.

Hooray For Hollywood (JK 64641) is worthwhile for Gene Autry's "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" (with phrasing significantly different from the Sons of the Pioneers' original) and bright, clean transfers of Dick Powell's "Lullaby of Broadway" and Kay Kyser's "Humpty Dumpty Heart." The other tracks are available on various "Art Deco," "Best of the Big Bands" or "16 Most Requested Songs" CDs, and sound exactly the same as on those releases, for better (Martha Raye's infectious "Mr. Paganini," Alice Faye's "Slumming on Park Avenue") or for worse (Fred Astaire's "Let's Face the Music and Dance," which is deadened by a dull, muffled transfer).

One might quibble a bit with the programming on **The Roaring '20s Roar Again** (JK64642); with only twelve tracks available, why are there two apiece for Ted Lewis and for Louis Armstrong? We love both artists, but it might have been wise to have something by Paul Whiteman, the Happiness Boys or other '20s icons who recorded for Columbia. There's very little that's newly-reissued here, but "Let's Do It" by the Dorsey Brothers' Orchestra with Bing Crosby is a fine transfer and a fun record; "I Must Have That Man" features Adelaide Hall with Duke Ellington in a 1933 record of a hit song from '28; Blossom Seeley's "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" is a magnificent performance that is, sadly, pretty rumble and raspy sounding here. (It sounded much better in Columbia's 1964 LP release, *The Original Sounds of the Twenties*.)

The fourth volume is **The Big Vaudeville Show in the Sky** (JK 64643); with people like Irene Dunne and Carl Brisson in the line-up, the interpretation of "vaudeville" is pretty broad. Nevertheless, it's a pleasant collection, with good new transfers of Ethel Merman's "The Lady in Red" and Mae West's "I'm No Angel." Titles which have been unavailable for quite some time include Brisson's charming original version of "Cocktails For Two," songwriter Joe Howard's quaint rendition of "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," and the Benny Fields recording of "There's a Lull in My Life." The only disappointment (besides another muffled transfer of Fred Astaire's "I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket") is Jimmy Durante's 1934 "Inka Dinka Doo." The original 78 runs exactly three minutes, but here, as in previous Columbia reissues, it's been cut down to only 1:39. (Columbia made this edited version for a documentary album about old-time radio in the early '60s, and they've mistakenly used this master for every subsequent reissue. The full version was available on the Intersound label's *The Fabulous Thirties* collection, now out of print.)

The booklets (actually one single sheet) list the composers, recording dates and matrix numbers, and they're illustrated with a few tiny photographs. Mr. Franklin provides some brief notes which, as with his audible comments on the CDs, essentially say nothing: "What could be more reminiscent of great entertainment than a collection of timeless classics from the biggest names in Hollywood during the golden age of entertainment?"

There's no denying Joe Franklin's impenetrable enthusiasm for the entertainers of this era, but one wishes that these collections which sport his name and image so prominently would have been assembled a bit more carefully. However, they do have much to recommend them, and if they're not as well produced as Columbia/Legacy's "Art Deco" series, they're certainly not the disasters that a few of the label's other vintage-music reissues are. They serve as a good introduction to the entertainers of this period for the novice or casual fan, and still have a few pleasant surprises for the more advanced collector.

Munn's the Word

Not many people today remember a vocalist of the '20s through the '40s named Frank Munn. All the more reason to celebrate a book by Rodney Steiner and Thomas A. DeLong, **Frank Munn: A Biodiscography of The Golden Voice of Radio** (Sasco Associates; 132 pages, paperback; \$12.50).

Munn was magnificently talented within a very limited range of material. His tenor voice wasn't strong enough for opera, and he couldn't do uptempo numbers. What he did, splendidly, was sing popular and light-classical ballads. He had a wonderfully mellow voice and clear diction, but more than that he radiated warmth and sincerity.

It's fascinating to note that Munn was totally untrained; he was a factory worker from the Bronx who liked to listen to John McCormack's records, and was forced to pursue singing as a career after an injury at work. Moreover, he never performed for live audiences, nor films or television; he avoided the limelight as much as possible, owing to sensitivity about his weight (he stood five feet, six inches tall and weighed 260 pounds). Even though he performed only on recordings and radio programs, he became a popular vocalist, especially on musical programs produced by Frank and Anne Hummert such as *The American Album of Familiar Music* and *Waltz Time*.

Munn suddenly gave up his career at its peak in 1945, staying firmly and happily in retirement until his death of a heart attack at 59 in 1953. His records are very hard to find today; all that's on CD is his lovely reading of "The Song is You" on Columbia's *Eddy Duchin: Best of the Big Bands*. It's tantalizing to read the lengthy annotated discography of Munn's 300-plus recordings. This is a well-researched and heartfelt tribute to a singer who should be better remembered. (Available from Sasco Associates, P.O. Box 335, Southport CT 06490.)

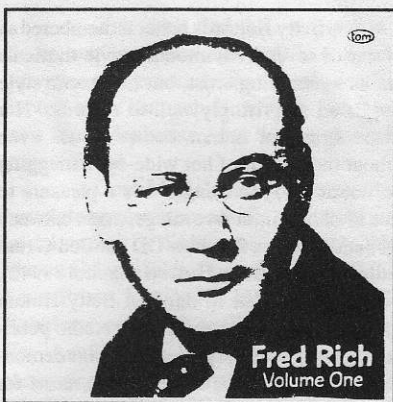
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VINTAGE SOUND WORKS



NEW! • FRED RICH Volume One The Old Masters, a label which pioneered the reissue of '20s dance bands on LPs, has started a CD series; every track has been digitally restored and remastered, and the sound quality is *superb*. This volume has 22 tracks of great hot dance music from 1929 and '30. The usual New York studio wizards are here—the Dorseys, Venuti and Lang, etc.—playing *A Peach of a Pair*, *Cheerful Little Earful*, *Ukulele Moon* and two takes each of *Dixie Jamboree*, *He's So Unusual* and *I Got Rhythm*. The fidelity is exceptional, and so is the music.
MB101.....\$12.98

NEW! • BEN SELVIN Volume One Another "Old Masters" release of 21 fine hot dance selections from 1931-32, originally made for Columbia and OKeh by the most prolific of all bandleaders. You can't stop from tapping your feet when you hear tunes such as *My Sweet Tooth Says "I Wanna," Happy Days are Here Again*, *Last Dollar*, and *Little Mary Brown*. There are also gorgeous ballads such as *When We're Alone* and *You Call it Madness*. Sidemen include Benny Goodman and trumpet legend Jack Purvis.
MB102.....\$12.98

NEW! • MILDRED BAILEY: Volume One, Sweet Beginnings One of the premier vocalists of jazz finally gets her due with two splendid CDs from The Old Masters. The first volume contains Mildred's first 21 recordings (including *Wrap your Troubles in Dreams*, *Georgia On My Mind* and two versions of *When It's Sleepy Time Down South*). She's teamed on these 1929-32 tracks with Eddie Lang, Frank Trumbauer, clarinetist Jimmie Noone, and the bands of Paul Whiteman and Glen Gray.
MB103.....\$12.98

NEW! • MILDRED BAILEY: Volume Two, Band Vocalist More terrific singing from Miss Bailey in 22 selections from 1931 through '34; the fidelity and the performances are excellent on waxings such as *I'll Never Be the Same*, *Love Me Tonight*, *Lazy Bones*, her signature song *Rockin' Chair*, and jumping renditions of *Heat Wave* and *But I Can't Make a Man*. She's paired with the orchestras of Paul Whiteman, Leonard Joy, the Dorsey Brothers and the early band of Benny Goodman. Essential jazz.
MB 104.....\$12.98

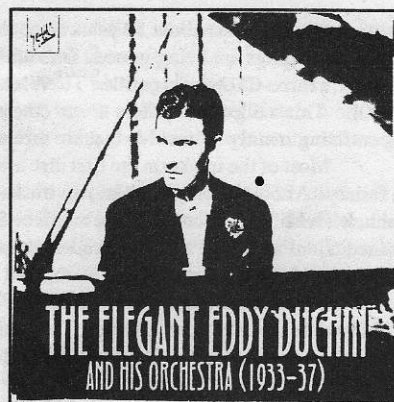
UNRELEASED EDISON LATERALS 1 Don't let the odd title throw you; this is a 21-track anthology primarily of hot and happy dance-band music, electrically recorded by Edison in 1928 and '29 and unreleased until now! Your feet will start tapping when you hear Tom Timothy's Frivolity Club Orchestra doing *Tell Me You're Sorry*; the California Ramblers' *Cause I Feel Low Down*; the Piccadilly Players playing a *hot* version of *Sonny Boy*; Winegar's Pennsylvania Boys' *My Gal Sal* and others. Fine transfers of incredibly rare material!
DCP201D.....\$15.98

THE CALIFORNIA RAMBLERS: Edison Laterals 2 One of the best hot dance bands of the '20s romps through 20 unreleased tracks from 1928 and '29. Despite their extreme rarity, these tracks have excellent sound quality. Songs include *You're the Cream in My Coffee*, *Button Up Your Overcoat*, *Tiptoe Through the Tulips*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *I'm a Dreamer (Aren't We All)* and wonderful lesser-known songs like *Guess Who*, *Lady Luck* and *Broadway Baby Dolls*. A real gem.
DCP301D.....\$15.98

NEW! • HOT DANCE OF THE ROARING 20's Here's a brand new collection of *unreleased* Edison material from 1928 and '29, a 21-track marathon of beloved songs like *Let's Do It, Singin' in the Rain*, *I'll Get By* and *Makin' Whoopee*—along with wonderful obscurities such as *Sunny Skies*, *Hitting the Ceiling*, *Hello Sweetie* and *Wipin' the Pan*. The bands include the Piccadilly Players, the Seven Blues Babies, and the orchestras of Bernie Stevens, Al Friedman, Duke Yellman, B.A. Rolfe and Phil Spitalny. Music doesn't get any more fun than this!
DCP202D.....\$17.98

NEW! • JOE HAYMES: WHITE STARS AND SKY ROCKETS Oh, boy! If you haven't heard this band, what a treat you're in for. Haymes was a magnificently talented arranger—and not so talented a businessman, which is why he's so obscure. But what great records he made, as these 23 sides from 1932-36 prove. There are hot renditions of jazz standards like *St. Louis Blues*, *Sister Kate* and *That's A Plenty*, but mostly you'll hear very inventive arrangements of novelties like *Jazz Pie*, *Goblin Market*, *One Note Trumpet Player*, *The Bathtub Ran Over Again* and *Don't Be Like an Eskimo*. If you've never heard of the band or the tunes, never fear—this is joyous hot-dance band music of the highest order!
IAJRCCD1008.....\$14.98

OBSCURE AND NEGLECTED CHICAGOANS Here's 25 rare or unissued sides by Chicagoans such as Dud Mecum (whose band plays his classic tune *Angry*) and the post-Bix "Original Wolverines" with new cornetist Jimmy McParland. Ray Miller's great hot dance band is heard on eleven sides such as *Is She My Girl Friend?*, *Sorry*, and *My Honey's Lovin' Arms*—and bass-playing Thelma Terry brings in her Playboys for six tunes, including *When Sweet Susie Goes Steppin' By*. Hot music from 1925-28.
IAJRCCD1007.....\$14.98



NEW! • THE ELEGANT EDDY DUCHIN The suave pianist led one of the most popular dance bands of the '30s—and their records are often surprisingly hot, judging from the 22 tracks made between 1933 and '37 in this excellent Take Two collection. Along with the ballads (*Moon Over Miami*, *Let's Fall in Love*, *Ill Wind*, *I Cover the Waterfront*), there are bouncy numbers such as *It's De-Lovely*, *Dames*, and *I've Got a Feelin' You're Foolin'*.
TT413CD.....\$14.98

LOUIS WITH FLETCHER HENDERSON This 3-CD set has all 65 tracks (including alternates) made by Fletcher Henderson's orchestra during the pivotal time when young trumpeter Louis Armstrong taught the band how to play it hot! The sound quality varies from track to track on these astonishingly rare 1924-25 records, most of which are acoustics, but thanks to John R.T. Davies' careful engineering the whole package is a joy to hear. Don Redman, Coleman Hawkins, Buster Bailey and other jazz greats join in on *Copenhagen*, *Prince of Wails*, *Alabama Bound*, *Sugar Foot Stomp*, *TNT* and other essentials.
F-38001/2/3 (3-CD SET).....\$45.00

THE BOSWELL SISTERS COLLECTION, Vol.1 The high priestesses of hot harmonies display their vocal pyrotechnics on 24 recordings from 1931-32. The titles include *When I Take My Sugar to Tea*, *I Found a Million Dollar Baby*, *Shine on Harvest Moon*, and lesser-known gems such as *If It Ain't Love*, *An Evening in Caroline* and *Sing a Little Jingle*. Great jazz from the Dorsey Bros., Bunny Berigan, Manny Klein and the girls themselves.
COCD21.....\$14.98

THE EARL HINES COLLECTION: PIANO SOLOS, 1928-40 It'll take you several hearings of each of these 24 tracks just to absorb everything Earl is playing. Along with classics such as *Fifty-Seven Varieties* and *A Monday Date*, you'll hear the rare 1928 solos he made for QRS (sounding much better than ever before) and rarities such as all three takes of *Love Me Tonight* from 1932 (each very different from the others!). Other tunes include *Glad Rag Doll*, *Down Among the Sheltering Palms*, *Body and Soul* and Hines' composition *Rosetta*.
COCD11.....\$14.98

Please enclose \$2.00 shipping for the first CD you order, 50 cents for each additional. Arizona residents please add 5% sales tax.

Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler, AZ 85244

Musical Memories of World War II

Since it's just about 50 years since the end of World War II, several new compilations of wartime recordings are being issued. One of the finest is a collaboration between the Smithsonian and RCA, a three-CD box set entitled **The Victory Collection** (RCA Special Products DMC3-1243; \$45.00). This collection differs from others that have been issued in the past few years by concentrating mainly on records that are rare and unusual.

Most of the tracks on the first disc are mainly novelty songs, with a few blues tracks added for variety. About the only well-known tracks here are Glenn Miller's "Pistol Packin' Mama" and "Shhh, It's a Military Secret." There are three Spike Jones tracks, but instead of using the frequently reissued "Der Fuehrer's Face," the producers have chosen "Leave the Dishes in the Sink, Ma," "Little Bo Peep Has Lost Her Jeep," and "Siam," the last of which is making its debut on CD.

Double-talk artist Cliff Nazarro brings us a rapid-fire, nonsensical look at "News of the World," while country-novelty singer Carson Robison gives us his gruff and cynical viewpoint on world events in nine tracks, among them "Hitler's Last Letter to Hirohito" and the wonderful "I'm Goin' Back to Whur I Come From."

Jazz is represented by trumpeter Wingy Manone's "Stop the War (The Cats are Killin' Themselves)" and by Fats Waller's very last commercial recording, a full-orchestra arrangement of "That's What the Well-Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear." The blues numbers range from Jazz Gillum's spirited "Wartime Blues" to Sonny Boy Williamson's fiercely patriotic "Win the War Blues." The sound quality on all 23 tracks is sparkling.

Disc Two features 22 wartime numbers by big bands, personalities and country artists. Among the better numbers are Dinah Shore's "Three Little Sisters," Ethel Merman's terrific "Marching Through Berlin," and "This is Worth Fighting For" by Shep Fields' all-reed orchestra. The oddest track is Texas Jim Robertson's "Last Page of Mein Kampf," and the most swinging is the spectacular Vaughn Monroe arrangement of "Rum and Coca-Cola," a song which has nothing to do with the war, but which is included as an example of what the home front was listening to. Most of the tracks have fine sound quality, although Glenn Miller's "She'll Always Remember" is taken from a worn copy, and Dinah Shore's "He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings" has a muffled sound that's evidently inherent in the original recording.

The third CD is an audio documentary entitled "For the Duration," running 52 minutes. While a few snippets from original wartime broadcasts are used, the program is mainly comprised of reminiscences from the famous (Margaret Whiting, Hildegard) and the little-known (a number of former soldiers and their family members). The small details of life during wartime bring the conflict home with remarkable impact. Hearing about the many hardships endured by these people on and off the battlefield inspires gratitude from those of us who have benefited from their struggles.

Another collection of wartime songs is a recent release from the budget-line LaserLight label. Ten CDs comprise the **Songs That Won the War** series; they're available in record stores for around \$6.98 if purchased separately, and they also come in two different five-CD box sets for \$37.00 each. Every CD contains 13 or 14 tracks, and runs about 40 minutes.

The collection is a mixed bag, since each disc combines original '40s tracks (taken from commercial records, broadcasts and V-Discs) with more recent stereo recordings of songs from the period. The difference in audio quality isn't as jarring as the sudden change in musical styles; the "modern" recordings often have arrangements which make no attempt to emulate the '40s-style orchestrations. Jo Stafford, Vera Lynn and Lena Horne sound as good in these "hi-fi" tracks as they did in the '40s, but purists should be advised that their selections are remakes. (One exception is Stafford's V-Disc of "Blue Moon." Those who purchase the whole series can hear Stafford's "Yes Indeed" and "Let's Get Away From it All" in original and remake versions.)

One might quibble with producer Rod McKuen's decision to include a couple of his own recordings of vintage tunes on each CD, since he obviously was not a recording star during the '40s; it's even more difficult to understand why he has included a few of his own compositions written long after the war (such as "Saturday Night in Knightbridge," written in 1968).

That said, there are a number of nice rarities in the modestly-priced series. The Knights' "Rockabye My Baby, There Ain't Gonna Be No War," isn't exactly prescient; Frankie Masters' "Goodbye Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama" is more like it. British bandleader Ambrose plays "I'll Walk Alone," while fellow Brit Florence Desmond invites us to see "The Deepest Shelter in Town." Tex Beneke's post-war band does a splendid arrangement of "A Gal in Calico," and it's fun to hear wartime novelties such as the Andrews Sisters' "I'm Gettin' Corns for My Country" and Kay Kyser's "Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet." In a rare V-Disc, Judy Garland sends a message to the fellas overseas before launching into "Over the Rainbow," and another V-Disc has a 4-F crooner from Hoboken named Sinatra looking forward to "A Hot Time in the Town of Berlin."

Many of the vintage tracks collected here have been frequently reissued before (and often in better sound quality), but there are enough of the unusual tracks to justify purchasing one or all of the LaserLight releases.

Hutton's Hidden Charms Revealed on Capitol CD

Betty Hutton is better remembered as the star of several Paramount movie musicals than as a recording artist, but her manic style transferred surprisingly well to records. Her intense brand of humor comes across even without the benefit of her wide-eyed mugging and frantic body language. It's a pleasure to have 17 of her finest recordings, made between 1944 and '49, in a fine new CD entitled **Great Ladies of Song: Betty Hutton** (Capitol 89942).

It's unfair to think of Betty Hutton only as a comedienne, even if her studio publicized her that way. As these recordings demonstrate, she could have made quite a name for herself as a pop singer; in fact, her first wide exposure came as a band singer with Vincent Lopez, and she made three recordings with him for Bluebird in 1939. (Another souvenir of her stint with Lopez is a short film now on MGM/UA Home Video's *Swing, Swing, Swing* laserdisc collection.) Underneath the vocal contortions, she could really sing.

A few of the recordings here, made during her peak years of stardom, allow her to demonstrate her way with a ballad. She threatens to break into a comedy interpretation toward the end of "It Had to be You," but ultimately turns in a lovely reading. She's more confident of her ballad singing in "I Wish I Didn't Love You So" and "Now That I Need You," written for her by Frank Loesser, composer of eight of the tunes in this package. "Blue Skies" runs the gamut, starting with a slow, sensitive interpretation and changing midway into a yodeling, yelping romp.

Most of the remaining 13 sides are novelties of one sort or another, going from bouncy tunes such as "Stuff Like That There" to the brash, in-your-face, frantic comedy of "A Square in the Social Circle" (in which Betty tells us, "Finger bowls irk me the worst / They just don't quench my thirst"). Betty plays both mother and daughter in a previously unissued take of "Love is the Darnedest Thing," complains to dad in "Poppa, Don't Preach to Me," and is a harried mother in "His Rocking Horse Ran Away." Two of the funniest tracks are her three-minute condensation of "Hamlet," and her woes in living next door to a musician whose piano is constantly going "Rumble, Rumble, Rumble."

The sound quality is spectacular throughout, and producer Brad Benedict has included some surprise introductions by Betty for the songs from "Red, Hot and Blue" (including one fluffed take). Joseph F. Laredo's essay in the accompanying booklet is excellent as well. Like Martha Raye, Miss Hutton was so successful as a comedienne that her other talents were somewhat overlooked—and she made too few records. It's wonderful to have the best of them available again.

Sounds Like Old Times: Good Music Thrives

You can't find their releases in the stores, but Good Music Record Co. is a prolific purveyor of memories from times past. They operate out of Katonah, New York—an hour by train from Manhattan—but they're as close as your mailbox.

Good Music's catalog is jammed with nostalgia on cassettes and CDs, including popular collections by the likes of Phil Harris, Dinah Shore, Nelson Eddy & Jeanette MacDonald, Louis Prima, Les Paul & Mary Ford, the Korn Kobblers (see *Past Times* #16), country pioneer Roy Acuff, polka king Frank Yankovic and harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler. Music of World War II is a specialty of the house. The man who runs the company has a song in his heart—the firm also publishes *Sheet Music Magazine*.

Johnny Mercer Sings! (S21 17505) is comprised of 22 songs recorded by the co-founder of Capitol Records, including eight numbers written or co-written by the four-time Academy Award-winning lyricist. He is teamed with the Pied Pipers on several of the selections, including the evergreen "Ac-cent-thu-ate the Positive" (one of Mercer's many memorable collaborations with Harold Arlen) and the Oscar-winning "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe" (which he wrote with Harry Warren). Mercer's 1940 duet with Bing Crosby on "Mister Meadowlark" is not included, but partnerships with Jo Stafford, Margaret Whiting, Nat King Cole and Benny Goodman are reprised.

Arthur Tracy: The Street Singer (130427) collects 23 selections by the accordion-playing troubadour of the '30s, whose popularity in England surpassed his reputation in the U.S. then and now. This CD is comprised of soulful ballads ("The Way You Look Tonight") and vibrant exotica ("Dance, Gypsy, Dance"), as well as the crooner's biggest hits ("Pennies from Heaven," "Marta"). Tracy, who made his Broadway debut in 1921, is still going strong at 95; Good Music recently gave him a "gold record" to celebrate the impressive sales.

Mairzy Doats: 44 Wacky Hits (MSD2-35180) is one of the perennials in Good Music's catalog. The tracks are a mix of novelty (Arthur Godfrey's "Too Fat Polka" and Red Ingle's "Tim-Tay-Shun") and offbeat (Count Basie's "Open the Door, Richard!") If "wacky" is too loosely defined—"Buttons and Bows," sung here by Dinah Shore, seems a bit out of place—the album is a nice combination of the familiar (Kay Kyser's rendition of "Three Little Fishies") and the seldom reprised (Vaughn Monroe's "The Maharajah of Magador," with a nutty vocal by Ziggy Talent).

Many recordings on Good Music albums are unavailable elsewhere. For a copy of their mail order catalog, contact Good Music at (800) 538-4200, or write: P.O. Box 1935, Ridgely, MD 21681.

Of Katz and Klezmer: Old World Jazz

by Jordan R. Young

Mickey Katz, the clarinet-playing bandleader-comedian who was perhaps the greatest exponent of "Jewish jazz" in his day—but was too modest to suggest such a thing—is making a comeback, a decade after his passing. You don't have to be Jewish to appreciate his artistry, as proven by another clarinetist who has expended much energy in recent years reviving Katz's work—Don Byron—whose dreadlocks, not to mention the color of his skin, give him the appearance of a reggae musician.

I have special memories of Katz, whom I was privileged to call a friend. The last time I saw the little giant, the year before his death in 1985, I asked him if he was familiar with the Klezmerim, the Berkeley, California-based band that was reviving the forgotten sounds of a once-popular ethnic music. "That's what we did—klezmer!" exclaimed Katz. "But we didn't call it that in my day."

Klezmer, for the uninitiated, is basically Old World folk music, indigenous to the villages and cabarets of 19th Century Russia and Eastern Europe. It migrated to the U.S. at the turn of the century on the horns of itinerant musicians, and profoundly influenced American popular music and jazz—from Tin Pan Alley to Gershwin, from Benny Goodman concerts to Betty Boop soundtracks, klez was heard throughout the promised land.

Klezmer was indeed what Katz and his sidemen did, and did brilliantly, regardless of what they called it. Contemporary practitioners of the art (Byron included) sound anemic by comparison with the full-bodied sound of the Kosher Jammers, who can be heard in all their glory on World Pacific's *Simcha Time: Mickey Katz Plays Music for Weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Brisses* (CDP 7243 8 30453 2 7). Among those who accompany Katz on the joyous, high-spirited sessions preserved here are the legendary Goodman trumpet player, Ziggy Elman; trumpeter Mannie Klein, one of the busiest sidemen on the West Coast; trombonist Si Zentner; pianist-arranger Nat Farber and drummer Sammy Weiss, who brought the klezmer sound to Artie Shaw's orchestra.

That none of Katz's zany English-Yiddish parodies (such as "The Barber of Schlemiel") are included on this Will Friedwald-produced CD may be a blessing in disguise—the bandleader could be so clever and wickedly funny, the comedy sometimes obscured the musicianship. (Katz's son, Joel Grey, does Mickey's parodies in his act today, and a tribute to "My Yiddish Poppa.")

There are five previously unreleased klezmer tracks here, plus three selections from Mickey's Broadway revue, "Hello, Solly!" Friedwald's liner notes on the subject of Katz and klez are thoughtful and intelligent; there is plenty to chew on for both the enlightened and the uninformed. However, the packaging is simply awful, proving once more that those who flunk design school have a bright future in today's record industry.

Discovering *Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz* (Elektra 79313-2) is like finding a pork chop on the menu in a kosher deli. Once you get past the jarring combination of artist and material, however, it's evident that Byron is one hep cat. Mickey himself would probably feel honored—if somewhat amazed—by this tribute. A number of his parodies are reprised, but the comic element has been watered down; the focus is on the music, and solid it is.

To get some idea of what klezmer sounded like before it came to America—and gradually evolved, much in the manner of Cajun music—one is advised to seek out *Máramaros: The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania* (Ryko HNCD 1373). Muzsikás, a popular European group of traditionalists, dug deep into its roots for this wonderful collection. The Hungarian wedding dances and laments that comprise the album are from the repertoire of Gypsy musicians Gheorghe Covaci and Árpád Toni, who coached Muzsikás and performed these distinctly Old World melodies with them on the recording.

Two recent CDs from Intersound also offer a sampling of klezmer. Ziggy Elman can be heard playing his signature tune, "And the Angels Sing," on *Shalom: Music of the Jewish People* (CDD 546), which also preserves Sholom Secunda's spirited rendition of "Roumania, Roumania" (with a vocal by Aaron Lebedeff). The follow-up album, *Mazel Tov!* (CDD 3454), gives us Joseph Cherniavsky and his Yiddish-American Jazz Band, along with Abe Schwartz and Sammy Wardell. Entertainers who never forgot their Jewish heritage are well represented on these discs, including Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Fanny Brice, Sophie Tucker, dialect comic Willie Howard and the Bagelman (aka Barry) Sisters.

Having done much to influence American popular music, klezmer is now mixed with elements of modern jazz and rock in the music of the Klezmatics, a five-man, one-woman group of New York-based musicians who call themselves "the planet's only radical Jewish roots band." On their new album *Jews With Horns* (Xenophile 4032), they're not always radical—they're true to the traditional sound on old songs such as "In Kamf." But klezmer clarinet is aligned with rock 'n' roll piano, bass and drums on other numbers such as "Fisherlid" and "Doyna," and some instrumental pieces incorporate elements of Brazilian jazz. The band always has a sense of humor, however, and joyous songs such as "Man in a Hat" would make Mickey Katz proud. (Xenophile, (800) 468-6644.)

For more on Katz, see the interview in issue number 3, or Let Me Entertain You: Conversations with Show People, available from Past Times (see page 29).

Columbia's Gems: Fred Rich and Ben Selvin



Ben Selvin

on all four releases. The sound restoration by George Morrow is superb; all of the full, bright sound of the original 78s comes through, with no obvious filtering through digital noise-reduction processes. It helps that the original discs used for these collections are obviously in fine condition, and that they're generally from Columbia and Okeh, who made the best-sounding 78s during the late '20s and early '30s.

Fred Rich Volume One (MB 101; \$12.98) has 15 of the 16 tracks contained in the label's old LP, plus seven new selections; all have been newly remastered and the sound quality is superior. Rich, a Polish-born pianist, began his bandleading career at the Astor Hotel in 1922 and started recording for small labels such as Regal and Cameo three years later, with occasional waxings for Columbia. His work from this 1925-1928 period is tremendous; tracks such as "Bell Hoppin' Blues" and "Are You Happy?" are among the hottest of hot-dance recordings.

When Rich became the leader of the house band for CBS Radio in 1929, the personnel he used for his record dates changed. Instead of employing gifted unknowns such as trumpeter Nick Casti and clarinetist Ted Klein, Rich now had access to the top New York studio musicians, all of whom were excellent sight-readers and capable (at very least) at improvising. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Bunny Berigan worked frequently for Rich, as did trumpeter Leo McConville, violinist Joe Venuti, guitarists Eddie Lang and Carl Kress, clarinetist Tony Parenti and drummer Stan King.

Rich's recordings from 1929 and '30, featured in this CD's 22 tracks, are sometimes a little stiff rhythmically (as displayed, ironically, on "Revolutionary Rhythm"), but the arrangements are inventive and whimsical (as on "Wedding of the Birds," which is celebrated by a twittering, hyperactive xylophone). "I Got Rhythm," "A Peach of a Pair" and "Cheerful Little Earful" are solid, straight-ahead hot arrangements played by dependable musicians, with vocals by the equally dependable Smith Ballew. If Rich's records of this period were purely "product" as opposed to art, it was product of very high quality.

The same can be said for another Columbia bandleader whose records from 1930-32 are sampled in **Ben Selvin Volume One** (MB 102; \$12.98). Selvin, a violinist, led a band at New York's Moulin Rouge, and had his first hit record with "Dardanella" for Victor in 1919. He made thousands of records for small and major labels, becoming an exclusive Columbia artist in September 1927. Actually, Selvin's work as a contractor for recording sessions far overshadowed his violin playing by this time, although string sections are uniquely conspicuous in the arrangements for his bands.

Selvin may well be the most prolific American recording artist of all time; *The Guinness Book of Recorded Sound* estimates his output at 9,000 titles. This is likely an exaggeration, but there's no disputing that Selvin made a phenomenal number of recordings before becoming an artists' manager in 1934. (He managed the folk group The Limelighters in the early '60s, and was still working for RCA Victor in the '70s. He died at 82 in August, 1980 while at work on an autobiography; if any of it survives, it would be an invaluable contribution to jazz history.)

The musicians appearing on Selvin's records of the early '30s are virtually identical to those on the Fred Rich titles, but somehow Selvin's groups are a little freer rhythmically. Selvin tackled every conceivable type of pop song, and his skill with a wide variety of material is evident here. There's the exuberant fun of uptempo numbers such as "Last Dollar" (written by Red Nichols), "My Sweet Tooth Says 'I Wanna,'" and "Happy Days are Here Again," and there's the heartbreaking beauty of wistful tunes such as "Who Am I?" (a neglected gem of a song) and "You Call it Madness." Many of the vocals are handled by Dick Robertson, whose rather plain voice is bolstered by his infectious personality and his feeling for jazz.

It's wonderful to have these tracks available in such terrific sound quality. The CD packaging, by the way, includes information on recording dates and original releases; it would help to have personnel listings in future releases. Writer Rob Bamberger contributes some informative and entertaining essays. (Available from The Old Masters, P.O. Box 25358, San Mateo, CA 94402.)

Tommy Dorsey Before He Was Sentimental

Before Tommy Dorsey became known as "The Sentimental Gentleman of Swing," he was known as a dependable trombonist and trumpeter—one who could perform a new score flawlessly on first reading, and also improvise some fine jazz when it was called for. As a result, he in constant demand for recording sessions, network radio shows and dances at college campuses and posh hotels.

Between his recording debut as a member of the Scranton Sirens in 1923 and the formation of his own big band in September 1935, Tommy made well over 2,000 records as an uncredited sideman; sometimes he got a solo, other times he was just part of the brass section. The absence of documentation on recording sessions and the scarcity of original 78s makes a totally accurate listing of Dorsey's early records virtually impossible (also true for Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Joe Venuti and scores of other similarly uncredited musicians). A mighty good try at it, however, is provided by author Robert L. Stockdale in his new book **Tommy Dorsey On the Side** (Scarecrow Press; 448 pages, hardcover; \$52.50).

It's well-nigh impossible to hear every record with a possible participation by TD—and even then, the aural evidence isn't always clear. It's very gratifying that Mr. Stockdale is careful to differentiate between records on which Tommy's playing is "positive," "probable" and "possible." The amount of data collected here is mind-boggling; Stockdale provides full listings on personnel, recording dates and locations, matrix and take numbers, and releases of a given record on 78s, LPs, audio cassettes and compact discs—both domestic and foreign.

Record collectors will be mesmerized by the overwhelming number of tantalizing discs listed here—hundreds of which have never been reissued and remain available only on surviving 78-rpm copies. It's great fun to see listings for The Roof Garden Orchestra, The Columbia Photo Players, The High Hatters and The Alabama Red Peppers, just a few of the creative pseudonyms given to various combinations of the handful of top studio men. Stockdale includes brisk, informative and entertaining biographical material where it's needed, which helps greatly in explaining the significance of the data.

Most useful are the four indexes. There's a general list of individuals, locations and companies that figure in Tommy's career; a second index of recording groups, including pseudonyms; a listing of all the performers with whom Tommy recorded; and an index of all listed song titles, including the composers. This is an indispensable book for Dorsey fans and record collectors in general. (Available from Scarecrow Press, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham MD 20706; (301) 459-3366.)

Radio

Ezra Stone's True Voice

Actor Ezra Stone was indelibly linked with the character of Henry Aldrich—the teenager with the cracking voice who was forever making the smallest molehills into mountains of trouble. Stone first played the role professionally on April 13, 1938, when Clifford Goldsmith's play *What a Life* debuted at Broadway's Biltmore Theatre. The play was such a success that Rudy Vallee asked to have scenes from it broadcast on his popular radio variety show. The adventures of young Henry and the rest of the Aldrich family then became a weekly feature on *The Kate Smith Hour*. During the summer of 1939, *The Aldrich Family* became a summer replacement for Jack Benny's program, and it finally got its own slot as a half-hour prime-time show on NBC starting on October 10. Stone played the part of Henry for most of the series' fourteen years on radio. Ultimately, he became director of the TV version during the 1951-52 season.

The public may have thought of Stone as a one-role actor, but in fact he had a long and prosperous career in all aspects of the performing arts, as detailed lovingly in Kenneth L. Stilson's new book **Ezra Stone: A Theatrical Biography** (McFarland & Co., 253 pages, hardcover; \$32.50). Born Ezra Chaim Feinstone in 1917, he was stagestruck as a small child and began acting in Philadelphia theatrical productions and on radio programs such as *The Children's Hour* on WCAU. (This despite having a stern father who hardly encouraged Ezra's theatrical career.) Stone became one of the youngest students accepted to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, where he was taught by Philip Loeb (later to gain fame on *The Goldbergs*). After appearing in three Broadway flops, Stone found work in George Abbott's play *Three Men on a Horse*; before long, the young actor became a production assistant and casting director for Abbott, while still appearing in many of the producer's shows.

Stone directed more than 25 stage productions—including Irving Berlin's wartime revue *This is the Army*. (Some surprising passages focus on Berlin's defensive and paranoid behavior, and the feud with Stone that resulted.) The book concentrates on Stone's career up to the early 1950s; as a result, there's very little about his prolific work as a director of television shows. Nevertheless, Stone's charming, self-deprecating personality and his ability to perform well in several demanding jobs at once are colorfully depicted in this vivid account of a life spent happily in the performing arts. (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (800) 253-2187.)

Mr. Crosby's Modest Little Broadcasts

In an era of big stars, Bing Crosby was the biggest. For most of the '30s and '40s, he was the top star of recordings, movies and radio. The public never seemed to tire of his easygoing style; in a time when the whole globe was consumed with Depression, fascism and war, Bing's dry, erudite humor and plaintive baritone singing were assurances that some things were still right with the world.

Crosby's secure position at the top enticed other great entertainers to appear with him on his radio programs. Renowned performers from Broadway and Hollywood, including many who rarely appeared on radio, were thrilled to be in Crosby's company. Some of the finest moments from Bing's "Philco Radio Time" program of 1946-49 and his Chesterfield series of 1949-52 have been combined in a series of six compact discs issued by the British label Parrot Records. **Hollywood Guys & Dolls, Volume One** (PARCD005) has 77 minutes' worth of prime Crosby, with 20 guests sharing the spotlight. It's almost more entertainment than one can handle.

Crosby's low-key charm put his guests at ease, and made them feel comfortable performing material that was somewhat out of their element. Thus, we get to hear Jimmy Stewart frantically belting out "Mississippi Mud," and Lauren Bacall singing a Chesterfield commercial; husband Humphrey Bogart admonishes Bing with, "If you think you're a baritone, Crosby, just wait'll you hear Baby!" Mr. Bogart also gives us an example of his singing abilities with "The Bold Fisherman," his hit tune from *The African Queen*.

One of the nicest things about this CD is that the comedy, always a key part of Crosby's show, is as much in evidence as the music. Crosby's writers (led in earlier years by Carroll Carroll, and after 1946 by veteran comedy scribe Bill Morrow) had a knack for coming up with material that was genuinely funny without compromising the guests or Crosby. Along with the Bogart/Bacall patter, we get to hear Judy Garland with Bing in a western sketch (and straining her tonsils on "Stop Your Gamblin'"); Fred Astaire joins Bing for a new version of Phil Harris's hit "The Thing" with special lyrics insulting each other and a certain Mr. Hope; Martin and Lewis join Bing for a Hawaiian sketch which casts Jerry as Sweet Leilani; and Ethel Merman abets Crosby in "Your All-Time Flop Parade," with such unforgettable songs as "There's a Flaw in My Flue." Danny Kaye also contributes a memorable vocal with a hilariously off-key rendition of "Begin the Beguine."

The serious vocalizing is just fine, too: Miss Merman and Bing join for a medley of their respective hits; Mary Martin and Bing do a hot version of "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie" as well as a parody version of "Dearie," and Beatrice Lillie joins Bing and pianist Alec Templeton for a fun retrospective of old Music Hall favorites such as "Lily of Laguna" and "When Father Papered the Parlour."

A few new guests show up on **Hollywood Guys & Dolls, Volume Two** (Parrot PARCD006). Among them are Dick Powell, revisiting his early '30s hits in a 1948 broadcast; Victor Moore and Boris Karloff singing (!) a Halloween number with Bing; Peter Lorre restricting his appearance to a talking-only stint as a mad doctor; Robert Taylor playing "The Glow Worm" on the cello; William Frawley showing that he was a pretty capable singer on numbers like "Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider," and Bert Lahr, who joins fun-loving opera diva Dorothy Kirsten and Bing for a wild rendition of "Friendship."

There's also a bit of déjà vu, as Danny Kaye, Fred Astaire, Ethel Merman, James Stewart, Chevalier, Bogie and Bacall return for more songs and tomfoolery; Bogie reprises "The Bold Fisherman" twice more (as producer Geoff Milne asks in his liner notes, "Was that the only song he knew?"). With guests of this caliber, however, return performances are a pleasure.

Bing is paired with one guest in each of the other Parrot entries. We look forward to hearing **It's a Good Day** (PARCD001) with Peggy Lee, **My Happiness** with Ella Fitzgerald (PARCD002) and the Crosby-Judy Garland disc **When You're Smiling** (PARCD003). One that we have heard, though, is the disc that showcases Bing with Al Jolson: **Let Me Sing and I'm Happy** (PARCD004), a title which could apply to both gents. Of the 40 tracks collected here, Bing sings ten numbers alone, Jolie six—and John Charles Thomas joins both for a couple of brief choruses. Jolson performs most of his hits either solo or in duets with Bing, and it's fun to hear him do a few out-of-the-ordinary tunes such as "Sunbonnet Sue." The mutual admiration is obvious. (Whether he admitted it or not, Jolson adapted some of Crosby's style into his own in later years.)

While the import price is a wee bit high, each of these CDs is a tremendous value in running time (close to the maximum possible time of 78 minutes) and in sheer entertainment. The sound quality, for the most part, is crisp and clear, with fine fidelity and little or no surface noise; we should remember that Crosby was the first performer to pre-record his radio shows on magnetic tape, a little invention in which he had a substantial financial interest. (Each Parrot CD costs \$18.50; available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato, CA 94948; (800) 742-6663.)



The Magnificent Schnozzola

Jimmy Durante was one of the most durable stars of the century, and at first it might be hard to explain why. After all, this was a guy whose act consisted of playing rinky-tink piano, singing a few soundalike songs in a gravelly voice, telling hoary jokes punctuated by "I gotta million of 'em!," mangling the English language, and getting steamed by people whom he imagined had slighted him. You might not think that this formula would guarantee success in night clubs, vaudeville, Broadway theaters, films, radio and television over a 62-year career.

What's made abundantly clear in David Bakish's splendid new book **Jimmy Durante: His Show Business Career** (McFarland & Co., 291 pages, hardcover; \$29.95) is that Durante was a master at reinventing himself for each new medium. Over the decades, he changed from a brash nightclub performer to the avuncular comic of the radio years, to the wistful personality of his final television appearances and recordings. The few basic ingredients remained the same, but different elements were emphasized as Durante adapted to changing tastes. The most important ingredient was unspoken, and was the key to his longevity: behind all the bluster, it was clear that Durante was a kindly man who genuinely and deeply loved people. Many comedians don't age well, but Durante's humor became richer with the years; now, he wasn't just railing against everyone who wanted to get into the act, he was wryly and poignantly battling "Old Man Time."

Perhaps the ultimate book on Durante the man still has yet to be written, but his gentle and generous personality shines through in this chronicle of his career. Bakish devotes a chapter to each medium; Durante's progression in each is noted in exacting detail, yet the narrative remains clear and entertaining. The section on Durante's work as a pianist and composer in the Teens and early Twenties is particularly informative, and sheds new light on his musical ability. The reminiscences of Durante and his associates (including producer Phil Cohan and radio teammate Garry Moore) are warm, enlightening, and occasionally contradictory—as illustrated by the varying accounts of how the cryptic "Goodnight, Mrs. Calabash" trademark came to be.

Along with lengthy notes on sources and a chronology of Durante's life, Mr. Bakish provides wonderfully well-detailed listings of the entertainer's performances on stage, film, radio, television and recordings, along with a surprisingly long listing of Durante's compositions. The 23 photographs are well-chosen if too few. In one of his songs, Jimmy proudly recalled "The Day I Read a Book," and noted, "One of these days, I'm gonna do it again." Should you wish to do likewise, David Bakish's warm and well-detailed account is the volume we'd suggest. (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC28640; (800) 253-2187.)

About the only Durante compact disc that's *not* included in Mr. Bakish's very impressive discography is one released late in 1994 (after the book had gone to press). **Durante: Patron of the Arts** (Viper's Nest VN-151; \$11.98) is a fine collection of songs and sketches from the comedian's 1947-48 Rexall radio series for NBC. The 30-track disc presents a healthy selection of Durante classics ("It's My Nose's Birthday," "Umbriago," "The Day I Read a Book," "The State of Arkansas," and many others).

Jimmy sings many of them in duets with guest stars: Eddie Cantor joins Durante for some reminiscing about working together in Coney Island cabarets (which they actually did in 1911) and a medley of their respective hits. Rose Marie does an impressive impression of the Schnoz in a duet on the delightfully nonsensical "Chidabee, Chidabee, Chidabee (Yah! Yah! Yah!)." Dorothy Lamour and series regular Peggy Lee help Jimmy sing "Any State in the Forty-Eight is Great" and join him for a magic-carpet ride around the country (in the type of sketch that could only be done on radio). Jo Stafford and the Starlighters team up for a raucous rendition of "Feudin', Fussin' and Fightin'," which recalls her earlier hillbilly hit with Red Ingle, "Tim-Tay-Shun." Bing Crosby steps into the role previously held by Frank Sinatra and Helen Traubel for the requisite duet on "The Song's Gotta Come From the Heart."

The supporting cast of the Rexall series adds to the fun, as well. Veddy British butler Arthur Treacher starts the whole show with his uniquely English interpretation of "You Gotta Start Off Each Day With a Song," and later adds dignity to "Ragtime Cowboy Joe." Candy "I'm Feelin' Mighty Low" Candido displays his chameleon-like voice on "Pass That Peace Pipe," going from a squeaky falsetto to his basso-profundo foghorn. Wispy Victor Moore adds his introverted yet sly brand of comedy to the proceedings. The keen of ear will also detect Alan Reed and Hy Averbach in supporting parts, along with Florence Halop as the sultry Hotbreath Houlihan, and announcer Howard Petrie.

This disc is a 73-minute festival of highlights from Durante's Rexall series, all of it in terrific sound quality. It's a reminder of the stellar entertainment which radio offered so abundantly, and which is in such short supply today. (Available from Jazz Catalogue, P.O. Box 1936, New York NY 10113-1936.)



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When Radio Was Program Guide

August - October 1995

When Radio Was is a syndicated radio program broadcast on 300 affiliate radio stations from coast to coast. Up to five hours of *When Radio Was* can be heard in most parts of the country on these 300 affiliates. Some affiliates run the program Monday through Friday, some air the program on the weekends and some do both. Check with your local *When Radio Was* affiliate for exact times of broadcast. To find out what radio station in your area carries *When Radio Was*, call 1-708-465-8245 extension 221, Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM Central Time.

AUGUST 1995

BROADCAST WEEK 1

The Aldrich Family 10-21-48 "Henry's Big Date" starring Ezra Stone (part 2) / **Academy Award** 11-13-46 "Night Train" starring Rex Harrison

The Adventures of Nero Wolfe 3-16-51 "Case of the Midnight Ride" starring Sydney Greenstreet / **Our Miss Brooks** 11-5-50 "Indian Burial Ground" starring Eve Arden as Connie Brooks (part 1)

Our Miss Brooks 11-5-50 "Indian Burial Ground" starring Eve Arden (part 2) / **Suspense** 14-45 "I Had an Alibi" starring Keenan Wynn

Les Miserables 8-20-37 "The Grave" starring Orson Welles in episode 5 of this 7 part story / **Bob & Ray** 1950s starring Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding

BROADCAST WEEK 2

Lights Out 1942 "Lord Marley's Guest" Hosted by Arch Oboler / **The Fred Allen Show** 5-2-48 Fred's guest is Henry Morgan (part 1)

The Fred Allen Show 5-2-48 with Henry Morgan (part 2) / **Adventures of Phillip Marlowe** 1949 "The Dark Tunnel" with Gerald Mohr

Sherlock Holmes 1950s "The Speckled Band" starring Carlton Hobbs and Norman Shelley / **The Life of Riley** 6-8-46 "Black Market Bread" starring William Bendix (part 1)

The Life of Riley 6-8-46 "Black Market Bread" starring William Bendix (part 2) / **This Is Your FBI** 1950s "The Profiteers" with Stacy Harris

Les Miserables 8-27-37 "The Barricade" starring Orson Welles in episode 6 of this 7 part story / **The Bickersons** 1950s starring Don Ameche and Frances Langford

BROADCAST WEEK 3

The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective 10-24-48 "The Insomnia Caper" with Howard Duff / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 5-20-47 "Antique Heirlooms" with Jim and Marian Jordan (pt. 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 5-20-47 "Antique Heirlooms" starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **Suspense** 1-18-45 "To Find Help" starring Frank Sinatra and Agnes Moorehead

The Damon Runyon Theatre 1949 "Joe Terrace" starring John Brown / **The Great Gildersleeve** 2-16-49 "Leila Returns ... Again!" starring Hal Peary (part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 2-16-49 "Leila Returns ... Again!" starring Hal Peary (part 2) / **Boston Blackie** 1946 "The \$50.00 Shoeshine" starring Dick Kollmar

Les Miserables 9-3-37 "The Final Episode" starring Orson Welles in episode 7 of 7, the conclusion / **Bill Stern Sports Newsreel** 1945 w/ guest, bandleader Tommy Dorsey

BROADCAST WEEK 4

The Saint 7-9-50 "The Ronald Stanton Case" starring Vincent Price / **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** 3-12-56 "The Clinton Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 1 of a 5 part adventure

Family Theater 10-9-47 "T-Formation" starring Bob Hope / **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** 3-13-56 "The Clinton Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 2 of a 5 part adventure

The Stan Freberg Show 7-14-57 The premier episode in the series, starring Stan Freberg / **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** 3-14-56 "The Clinton Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 3 of a 5 part adventure

The Martin & Lewis Show 4-10-49 starring Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis with guest, William Bendix / **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** 3-15-56 "The Clinton Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 4 of a 5 part adventure

The Shadow 1-12-41 "Ghost Building" starring Bill Johnstone / **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** 3-16-56 "The Clinton Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 5 of a 5 part adventure

BROADCAST WEEK 5

The Mysterious Traveler 4-20-48 "Murder in Jazz Time" starring Maurice Tarplin / **The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet** 3-20-49 "The Rover Boys" starring Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hilliard (part 1)

The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet 3-20-49 "The Rover Boys" starring Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hilliard (part 2) / **Dimension X** 7-1-50 "A Logic Named Joe" starring Joseph Julian

The Screen Director's Playhouse 7-8-49 "The Big Clock" starring Ray Milland / **Duffy's Tavern** 9-21-50 starring Ed "Archie" Gardner with guest, Barry Nelson (part 1)

Duffy's Tavern 9-21-50 starring Ed "Archie" Gardner with guest, Barry Nelson (part 2) / **Richard Diamond, Private Detective** 12-28-51 "The Plaid Overcoat" starring Dick Powell

SEPTEMBER 1995

BROADCAST WEEK 1

The Adventures of Nero Wolfe 4-6-51 "A Slight Case of Perjury" starring Sydney Greenstreet / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 5-27-47 "Shrimps McGee" starring Jim and Marian Jordan Part 1

Fibber McGee & Molly 5-27-47 "Shrimps McGee" starring Jim and Marian Jordan Part 2 / **Lights Out!** 8-17-43 "State Executioner" Hosted by Arch Oboler

Mystery in the Air 1945 "The Lodger" starring Peter Lorre and Agnes Moorehead / **The Fred Allen Show** 4-25-48 w/ guest, Leo Durocher Part 1

The Fred Allen Show 4-25-48 w/ guest, Leo Durocher Part 2 / **Dr. Christian** 11-2-49 "Old Battle Ax" starring Jean Hersholt

The Lone Ranger 1940s "Golden Cargo" starring Brace Beemer and John Todd / **Sgt. Preston of the Yukon** 8-3-44 "Maintiens le Droit" starring Jay Michael

BROADCAST WEEK 2

The Saint 8-27-50 "The Tony Cartega Case" starring Vincent Price / **The Life of Riley** 11-23-46 "Riley the Football Pro" starring William Bendix Part 1

The Life of Riley 11-23-46 "Riley the Football Pro" starring William Bendix Part 2 / **Dimension X** 7-14-50 "The Man in the Moon" starring Louis Van Rooten

Boston Blackie 1945 "A Murderer is After Blackie" starring Richard Kollmar / **The Martin & Lewis Show** 5-1-49 starring Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis with Madeleine Carroll Part 1

The Martin & Lewis Show 5-1-49 w/ guest, Madeleine Carroll Part 2 / **This Is Your FBI** 1950s "Fraudulent Healer" with Stacy Harris

When Radio Was Program Guide

August - October 1995 Continued

The Shadow 12-10-39 "Flight of the Vulture" starring Bill Johnstone / **Bill Stern Sports Newsreel** 11-26-48 w/ guest, Orchestra Leader Frankie Carle

BROADCAST WEEK 3

Suspense 6-15-44 "A Friend to Alexander" starring Geraldine Fitzgerald / **The Great Gildersleeve** 2-23-49 "Taking Up Singing" starring Hal Peary Part 1

The Great Gildersleeve 2-23-49 "Taking Up Singing" starring Hal Peary Part 2 / **Family Theater** 6-5-47 "Goodbye-Goodbye-Goodbye" starring Ozzie and Harriet Nelson

The Stan Freberg Show 7-21-57 The 2nd show in the series / **The Aldrich Family** 6-18-42 "The Big Bond Drive" starring Ezra Stone Part 1

The Aldrich Family 6-18-42 "The Big-Bond Drive" starring Ezra Stone Part 2 / **The Adventures of Philip Marlowe** 3-7-50 "Monkey's Uncle" starring Gerald Mohr

The Lone Ranger 1940s "Mission Bells" starring Brace Beemer and John Todd / **Sgt. Preston of the Yukon** 8-10-44 "The Plan That Failed" starring Jay Michael

BROADCAST WEEK 4

Escape 10-22-50 "The Time Machine" starring John Dehner / **Duffy's Tavern** 12-21-51 "Atomic Research" starring Ed "Archie" Gardner Part 1

Duffy's Tavern 12-21-51 "Atomic Research" starring Ed "Archie" Gardner Part 2 / **Richard Diamond, Private Detective** 2-26-50 "A Policeman Is Killed" starring Dick Powell

The Hermit's Cave 1939 "Reflected Image of the Desert" starring Mel Johnson / **Our Miss Brooks** 6-19-49 "Saving Money for Summer Vacations" starring Eve Arden Part 1

Our Miss Brooks 6-19-49 "Saving Money for Summer Vacations" starring Eve Arden Part 2 / **The Screen Director's Playhouse** 4-17-49 "The Best Years of Our Lives" starring Dana Andrews

The Shadow 2-27-38 "The Plot Murder" starring Orson Welles / **Lum & Abner** 1945 starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff

OCTOBER 1995 BROADCAST WEEK 1

Broadway Is My Beat 5-12-51 "The Charles Crandle Case" starring Larry Thor / **Archie Andrews** 6-4-49 "Archie Becomes a Baby-Sitter" starring Bob Hastings Part 1

Archie Andrews 6-4-49 "Archie Becomes a Baby-Sitter" starring Bob Hastings Part 2 / **The Damon Runyon Theatre** 1949 "Baseball Hattie" starring John Brown

The Adventures of Sam Spade 9-26-48 "The Dick Foley Caper" starring Howard Duff / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 6-3-47 "Citizenship Test" starring Jim & Marian Jordan Part 1

Fibber McGee & Molly 6-3-47 "Citizenship Test" starring Jim and Marian Jordan Part 2 / **The Screen Director's Assignment** 5-15-49 "Hold Back the Dawn" starring Charles Boyer

The Lone Ranger 1940s "Fugitive" starring Brace Beemer and John Todd / **Sgt. Preston of the Yukon** 8-17-44 "King Breaks the Wheel of Fortune" starring Jay Michael

BROADCAST WEEK 2

The Bickersons 12-13-47 "The Pink Slip" starring Don Ameche and Frances Langford / **Johnny Dollar** 5-21-56 "The Tears of Night Matter" starring Bob Bailey Part 1 of 5

Suspense 8-16-45 "Short Order" starring Joseph Kearns & Gerald Mohr / **Johnny Dollar** 5-22-56 "The Tears of Night Matter" starring Bob Bailey Part 2 of 5

Lights Out 1940s "The Archer" Hosted by Arch Oboler / **Johnny Dollar** 5-23-56 "The Tears of Night Matter" starring Bob Bailey Part 3 of 5

I Was A Communist For the FBI 1950s "Inhuman Element" starring Dana Andrews / **Johnny Dollar** 5-24-56 "The Tears of Night Matter" starring Bob Bailey Part 4 of 5

The Shadow 12-15-40 "The Killer's Rendezvous" starring Bill Johnstone / **Johnny Dollar** 5-25-56 "The Tears of Night Matter" starring Bob Bailey Part 5 of 5

BROADCAST WEEK 3

The Saint 12-10-50 "The Peebles Case" starring Vincent Price / **The Great Gildersleeve** 10-14-45 "A Debt to Pay" starring Hal Peary Part 1

The Great Gildersleeve 10-14-45 "A Debt to Pay" starring Hal Peary Part 2 / **X Minus One** 2-6-57 "Venus is a Man's World" starring Dennis Bellabio

Arch Oboler's Plays 9-20-45 "Rocket From Manhattan" starring Elliott Lewis / **The Fred Allen Show** 10-21-45 w/ guest, Frank Sinatra Part 1

The Fred Allen Show 10-21-45 w/ guest, Frank Sinatra Part 2 / **Casey Crime Photographer** 11-20-47 "Earned Reward" starring Staats Cottsworth

Boston Blackie 1945 "Phonograph Murder" starring Dick Kollmar / **Lum & Abner** 1945 starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff

BROADCAST WEEK 4

Family Theatre 6-12-47 "Laughing Into Glory" starring Vincent Price / **The Life of Riley** 10-12-46 "Babs' School Formal" starring William Bendix Part 1

The Life of Riley 10-12-46 "Babs' School Formal" starring William Bendix Part 2 / **Nightbeat** 7-31-50 "The City At Your Fingertips" starring Frank Lovejoy

The Mysterious Traveler 6-22-48 "Zero Hour" starring Maurice Tarplin / **The Martin & Lewis Show** 6-28-49 with special guest, John Carradine Part 1

The Martin & Lewis Show 6-28-49 w/ guest, John Carradine Part 2 / **This Is Your FBI** 1950s "The Straw Hat Shakedown" starring Stacy Harris

The Stan Freberg Show 7-28-57 starring Stan Freberg in episode #3 in the 15 part series / **Bob & Ray** 1950s starring Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding

BROADCAST WEEK 5

Escape 3-17-50 "Three Skeleton Key" starring Vincent Price / **Ozzie & Harriet** 10-31-48 "The Haunted House" starring Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hilliard Part 1

Ozzie & Harriet 10-31-48 "The Haunted House" starring Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hilliard Part 2 / **Suspense** 8-21-43 "Sorry, Wrong Number" all-time classic starring Agnes Moorehead



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Orson Welles exercised creative control of this project, directed, narrated and starred as Jean Valjean. He gathered a notable cast including Ray Collins, Alice Frost, Martin Gabel, Bill Johnstone, Agnes Moorehead and Everett Sloane. This seven episode, three and a half hour, full cast radio dramatization brings the novel to life with a power that was not approached for almost 50 years. It is extremely true to Victor Hugo's novel. The included twenty-nine page guide to the performance was written by noted Welles historian Michael Dawson.

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The All-American Boy

By Carl Amari

Back during the 1930s and 40s, the most popular juvenile adventurer was Jack Armstrong—a perennial high-schooler with super athletic abilities who fought ne'er-do-wells from the four corners of the world as well as in his own back yard. In the words of his creator, Robert Hardy Andrews, "He was a decent fellow, had a sense of responsibility, and didn't preach like Horatio Alger. In short, if you were like him, you were a pretty good kid." When radio mogul Frank Hummert gave Andrews the task of creating a "soap-opera for kids" to be sponsored by General Mills, he came up with the title by studying a box of Arm & Hammer baking soda. "The All-American Boy" needed a strong arm (like the one pictured on the box) and presumably plenty of "jack."

"Jack Armstrong the All-American Boy" came to CBS radio from station WBBM, Chicago on July 31, 1933, heard five days a week in a serialized format. Armstrong was the captain of nearly every sport for his alma mater, Hudson High. The earliest actor to play the part of Jack Armstrong was Jim Ameche, brother of Don. Stanley Harris and Michael Rye also had a turn as Armstrong, but the actor to play the part longer than anyone was Charles Flynn. In 1939, the 17-year-old Flynn took the part and was still kicking 60-yard field goals in 1950.

In the first year, Jack and his cousins, Betty and Billy Fairfield concentrated on thwarting the evils that surfaced at their school and in their own home town, but before long, Hudson High was only a memory. Jack and his cousins, along with their Uncle Jim Fairfield, branched out, seeking thrills and adventure in exotic locales. By the mid 1930s, globetrotting had become a way of life for Jack while poor Hudson High had to do without its favorite son. After all, Jack had a higher mission than just scoring a winning touch down, his crusade was battling Axis foes, Communism, Prejudice and other threats to World Peace.

Betty Fairfield was played first by Shaindel Kalish and later by Sarah Jane Wells. Her brother, Billy Fairfield, was played by John Gannon and later by Dick York, the star of TV's "Bewitched." Uncle Jim Fairfield was James Goss. Paul Douglas was the first to announce for the show's sponsor "Wheaties" but the most remembered is Franklin McCormack. Other announcers included Bob McKee and Ed Prentiss, who when his own series "Captain Midnight" was in its eleventh hour, left to narrate "Jack Armstrong."

By 1947, the quarter-hour daily serial format ended forever, and "Jack Armstrong" became a 30-minute show broadcast twice a week. In 1950, 28-year old teenager Charles Flynn ended the world's longest truancy record and waved the flag for Hudson High for the last time.

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That million-dollar voice is still pretty thrilling, as evidenced by a new audio memoir entitled *Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch* (8.98 on cassette; 14.98 on CD). Foy's anecdotes are punctuated with excerpts of early performances—starting with his first audition record. We also get to hear the wartime show from Cairo in which Foy served as Jack Benny's straight man, and the sole broadcast in which Foy played the Lone Ranger, subbing for an ailing Brace Beemer. One section helpfully identifies all of the familiar WXYZ players, and there's a very funny montage of "Who was that masked man?" scenes. Our only criticism is that this 40-minute remembrance is too brief. It's great fun to listen to Fred Foy as he returns to his own thrilling days of yesteryear. (Available from Fred Foy, P.O. Box 239, Reading, MA 01867; enclose \$1.50 for shipping.)



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Radio Spotlight: Gale Gordon



The late Gale Gordon was one of radio's greatest comic actors. In October 1990, your editor had the good fortune to interview him. He started by relating how he got his first experience with the new medium in 1926.

I almost killed radio in its tracks. There was a studio at the base of a tower on Sunset Boulevard; it was Warner Brothers Studios. It had a little room at the bottom where they broadcast radio, which was quite a novelty in those days. And somebody told me, "If you have anything at all to say or do, go in and they'll be happy to put you on the air." I was between jobs, looking desperately for jobs. So I went down, and they said "What do you do?" I'd learned three or four chords on the ukulele, and I'd written some new words to "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," which was a

silly popular song of that time—and so they said, "The mike is yours." So I went on and sang "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" with these lousy four chords—I cannot *play* anything—and they said thank you, and I left. Nobody ever heard it, I'm sure, because they only had fifty listeners at the best of times. But that was my first experience with radio.

In the early '30s, with shows such as *English Coronets* and *Flash Gordon* to his credit, Gordon was established as a dramatic radio actor. Later in the decade, he became a comedy foil.

Well, *Fibber McGee and Molly* established that—the first McGee show I did, I was to do a part of a man who had been very much infatuated with Molly when she was young. "Otis Cadwallader" was the character that I was cast for by Cecil Underwood, who was a great director in radio. And Jim Jordan, who played Fibber, objected—he said to Cece, "This is a dramatic actor!" And Cece said, "Yes, but he will wait for laughs, because he's done other things that are funny." I had played a "Mr. Bullhammer" with Joe E. Brown, so they knew I could yell. Whenever they wanted a yeller, they got me. But Jim was a little worried until the first show that I did. And that really established me, because Don Quinn, who wrote the show, created Mayor LaTrivia for me as a result of doing this part. I also did another part before Mayor LaTrivia called Foggy Williams, the weatherman. By that time, they knew that I would wait for laughs. And the Jordans and myself and my wife became very close friends. The whole thing was a family gathering anyway.

A male character in radio cannot be unkind and be liked. And when you blow up and get angry with someone, you have to be able to stop before you get to the point where it sounds as if you might *mean* it. So with the writers, we used to say, "Be very careful." When Mayor LaTrivia would visit Fibber and Molly, he would invariably get tongue-tied, and blow up. But LaTrivia got angry at *himself* because he was tripping over his own teeth—and that's the way Don wrote it. It was always a joy to do that routine, because the frustration would set in, and you're really trying to get it out right, and then you figure the hell with it—and then you pause and finally come out with, "....McGee...." Of course, Jim Jordan would always look forward to those scenes, and he'd be there with a grin on his face, enjoying it so much that it was a great inspiration to me to keep going.

Don Quinn was a genius in his way. He would think of the most wonderful gags; he used to send jokes to other comedians, and to other actors and writers. He'd just say, "I just had an idea..." and he'd send something to them. He wrote his scripts at the last minute—he'd usually type up his script on Sunday night and send it down to us, mimeographed in time for us to get it at 10:00 Monday morning. Don used to put in funny directions, and I remember one. Billy Mills was our orchestra conductor. And the script said, "Billy Mills and Orchestra play, 'If You Don't Want to Set the World on Fire, Stop Arson Around.'" Well, the censors came around and said, "You can't play a song like that!" They had no sense of humor, had no sense that it was a gag. But he'd put in four-letter words every once in a while in the middle of a very innocent sentence, just to irk the censors.

Mr. Gordon tells why he initially rejected the part of principal Osgood Conklin for Eve Arden's radio show, *Our Miss Brooks*.

My wife and I were vacationing at San Ysidro ranch, and I got a call from producer Larry Burns. And Larry said, "Gale, I want you to do a part in a replacement show for Jack Benny; it's going to star Eve Arden, and there's a very good part for you, a principal of a high school. Will you do it?" And I said, "Yes, I'll do it, if you pay me \$150." And there was a terrible pause. And he said, "\$150?" I said yes—I was getting \$150 from *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and my wife had said, "You've got to establish a fee." And I was out of work for a long time because producers wouldn't pay \$150. Larry Burns said, "I can't pay \$150." So I said, "I'm sorry, I won't do it. That's it."

We were still in San Ysidro, and we heard the first *Our Miss Brooks* radio show. When it was over, my wife and I looked at each other, and I said, "Well, thank God they wouldn't pay \$150, because that is the *worst* thing I've ever heard in my life." They had the principal barking like a dog for comedy effect! Well, we were both congratulating ourselves, and the next day I got a phone call, and Larry Burns said, "We will pay \$150. Show up next Sunday."

That was the first contact I had with *Our Miss Brooks* and it ran for nine years—so it shows how little an actor can judge what will play!

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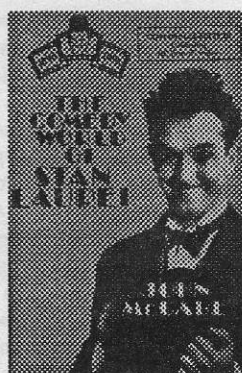
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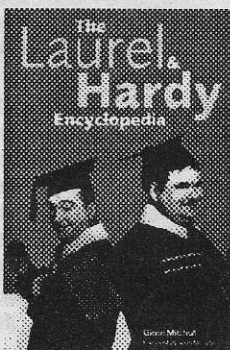
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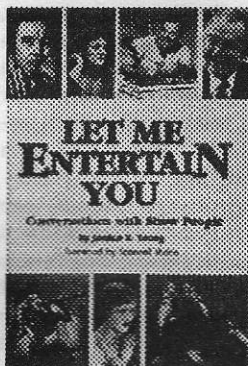


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Kate Smith On and Off the Air

Kate Smith made her debuts on the Broadway stage and as a recording artist in 1926. However, she really began her fifty-year hold on the nation's affections with her radio series, "Kate Smith Sings," which debuted on NBC in March of 1931 and moved to CBS the next month. Although she recorded prolifically for Columbia, Brunswick, Decca, Victor and MGM throughout the '30s and '40s and made a handful of film appearances, radio was her prime activity during her peak years. She did a number of different radio series, broadcast variously for all four networks, between 1931 and 1959. They ranged from elaborate variety hours to 15-minute commentaries (she was known on radio as much for *Speaking Her Mind*, as one show was titled, as for singing her songs).

The full career of Miss Smith (she never married) is examined in great detail in Richard K. Hayes' new book **Kate Smith** (McFarland & Co.; 306 pages, hardcover; \$42.50). The subtitle is "A Biography, with a Discography, Filmography and List of Stage Appearances." This is a slight misnomer: in the text Mr. Hayes correctly places a large emphasis on Kate's broadcasting, and gives a full "Broadcast History" as an appendix. (He goes so far as to list every guest appearance she did on radio and television.) There's even a list of songs published as sheet music with her picture on the cover, along with a bibliography and a full index.

With the massive amount of data collected here, one would expect Mr. Hayes to be an enthusiastic Kate Smith fan—and he is. He began editing her official fan club newsletter in 1968, and enjoyed a friendship with her until her death in 1986. His admiration for her as performer and person does not cloud his ability to write frankly and objectively about Miss Smith, however. The book is by no means an exposé, but Smith's occasional quirks come in for some mild criticism—and her manager, Ted Collins, often receives more than that. (Collins was truly a Svengali; he managed Smith's career brilliantly, but severely sheltered her.)

All of Kate Smith's work is covered in detail, but it's especially gratifying to see the attention given to her radio programs. (Many books about entertainers who were primarily radio stars seem to cover everything but their radio work.) First-hand accounts of Kate's earliest days at CBS are provided by Arthur Tracy, "The Street Singer." André Baruch, who announced for *The Kate Smith Hour*, tells how he met his wife Bea Wain while working on the show and "married" her in a big production on one broadcast. (They were actually married two days later.) Ezra Stone recounts the start of *The Alrich Family* as a feature on *The Kate Smith Hour*; the program also marked the debut of *It Pays to Be Ignorant*, and the first radio performances of Abbott and Costello. Hayes includes script excerpts for comedy sketches and serious commentaries from many of Kate's broadcasts.

Smith's career spanned an amazing amount of time—she played the Palace in 1929 and guested on *The Hollywood Squares* in 1976—and seemingly every engagement is described here. Despite all of the data, the book moves briskly and works well as a narrative. Mr. Hayes manages to get in all of the facts about Kate's career without forgetting that he's telling a story; the personal and professional aspects of her life are nicely intertwined in this account. The 44 photographs show Miss Smith in the company of Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards, Babe Ruth, Jimmy Durante and other luminaries. (Available for \$45.50 postpaid from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (919) 246-4460.)

About the only thing that isn't conveyed fully in Mr. Hayes' book is the actual sound of Kate Smith's voice, which happily can be heard in a number of compact discs. Some of her best early work is collected in **Kate Smith: Emergence of a Legend** (Take Two TT401; \$15.98). The 20 tracks were made between 1930 and '39, most of them made in the early half of the decade. Naturally, her theme song "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain" is here—in the second of four renditions she made. So are a number of forgotten but wonderful songs from the period. It's a surprise to hear the subtle jazz feeling she imparts to the final chorus of "Maybe It's Love," and the Dorsey Brothers add some tasty solos to "Makin' Faces at the Man in the Moon." Oddly, her singing becomes more formal and less relaxed with time; her version of "The Continental" sounds more like opera than a snappy dance number. But the warmth and sincerity of "Snuggled on Your Shoulder" and "Love, You Funny Thing" come through clearly across the decades. The sound quality, as usual with Take Two releases, is remarkably clean. (Available from Take Two Records, P.O. Box 36729, Los Angeles CA 90036.)

Following neatly in chronological order is **Kate Smith: 16 Most Requested Songs** (Columbia Legacy 46097; \$14.98), which examines her work from 1940 to '46. Yet another version of "...Mountain" is here, along with a surprisingly swinging version of "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe." She's not quite as successful with "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo," spelling out the city's name in strict martial time with no "swing" whatsoever (it's not really a song suited for most women, at that). The folksy "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" is perfectly suited to her, though, as are "Be Careful, It's My Heart" and "Memories of You." There's a little crackle and noise on some tracks, but generally it's very good for wartime Columbia material.

Devoted fans will want to seek out the now-out-of-print **God Bless America** (ProArte CDD 518) which has more of Kate's early '30s work (including two *more* recordings of "Moon Over the Mountain"). Further information about Miss Smith can be obtained from The Kate Smith/God Bless America Foundation, P.O. Box 3575, Cranston RI 02910.

Looking at Cantor

Continued from Page 1

However, to this reviewer, it seems that if Mr. Koseluk can devote 14 pages to Cantor's unsuccessful film *Forty Little Mothers*, he ought to devote more than 24 to the mainstay of Cantor's career in the '30s and '40s. Still, this is a very successful and entertaining examination of Cantor's work, and a must-have for his admirers.

A number of Cantor's best films, produced by Samuel Goldwyn, have recently been made available again on laserdisc from Pioneer/HBO Video. **The Kid From Spain** (LD 91235; \$34.95) casts Eddie as a college student who is expelled, mistaken for a bank robber, spirited away to Mexico and then mistaken *again* for a famous bullfighter. While the plot is implausible to say the least and the bullfight finale is marred by obvious back-projection, the film is generally lots of fun, thanks to the script and songs by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. The casting is nothing short of bizarre, with Polish Lyda Roberti as femme fatale Rosalie, and Robert Young as Eddie's Mexican buddy Ricardo.

The print and transfer quality are excellent, although owners of older laserdisc players should note that an evident error in the pressing has omitted the film's soundtrack in the left analog channel on side two. (The full soundtrack is on the digital sound channel, and the right analog channel has a "music and effects" track with significantly different stock library music and overaccentuated effects. It sounds as if this track was recently created for foreign-language video releases.) This problem is also apparent in the recent pressings of *Palmy Days*.

No such problem exists in the pressings of **Strike Me Pink** (LD 91236; \$34.95); the main problems are with the screenplay. You'd think that a film teaming Eddie Cantor with Ethel Merman, with a score by Harold Arlen and Lew Brown, couldn't miss—but it does, for the most part. The gently nutty humor of Cantor's earlier films is gone; instead, this saga of an amusement park owner mixed up with gangsters is overplotted, loud, forced and hectic. The climactic chase on a roller coaster is amusing in spots, and a special-effects tap-dance number called "Shake it Off With Rhythm" is great fun; Gregg Toland's photography is excellent, too. But generally, this one isn't up to the level of Eddie's earlier Goldwyn films. This laserdisc has a strange new "music and effects" track as well, which at one point uses the old Lombardo hit "Boo Hoo" in the background score—decidedly not a tune used in the actual soundtrack.

All of the Goldwyn - Cantor films released by Pioneer/HBO have liner notes by Eddie's grandson, composer Brian Gari, and the jackets feature beautiful reproductions of original lobby cards.

Pop Culture

Mr. Google's Boswell

The life story of an American icon finally sees print: **Barney Google and Snuffy Smith** (Kitchen Sink, \$16.95) by Brian Walker chronicles the 75-year history of the diminutive, pop-eyed pipsqueak who became "the Everyman of the Jazz Age," and the scruffy, gun-toting hillbilly who eventually edged him out of the spotlight.

The man with the "goo-goo googly eyes" (as immortalized in the popular song by Billy Rose and Con Conrad) was created by Billy De Beck in 1919; his assistant, Fred Lasswell, took over the cartoon after DeBeck died in 1942, and reinvented it as a tale of Appalachian folklife featuring Smith and his kin. Walker both informs and entertains, giving us the story behind the strip as it evolved from the Depression era — when it made great use of the fads and slang of the day — to the present. In addition to a fascinating biographical sketch of DeBeck, there is also a first-person piece by Lasswell. (Kitchen Sink Press, 320 Riverside Dr., Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 586-9525.)

Those who like their hillbilly humor a bit more sophisticated may appreciate Arthur Asa Berger's **Li'l Abner: A Study in American Satire** (University Press of Mississippi; 191 pages; paper, 14.95; cloth, \$30.00). Be forewarned, however, that this is a book for those who take their humor very seriously.

Mr. Berger's book was originally a doctoral dissertation, and was first published in 1969 (it was the first book-length study of any comic strip). It's an intricate analysis of Al Capp's saga of the denizens of Dogpatch, which ran from 1934 through 1977. Berger notes how Capp's humor has its roots in the Southwestern literary humor of the mid-1800s, as well as in Yiddish folk tales. He analyzes Capp's narrative technique, his graphic style, and the social and political themes of the strip (which changed as Capp's own politics changed from liberal to conservative.) (University Press of Mississippi, 3825 Ridgewood Rd., Jackson MS 39211.)

A Century of Women Cartoonists (Kitchen Sink, \$16.95) by Trina Robbins pays homage to such pioneers of comic art as Rose O'Neill, creator of the cupid-like Kewpies popular in the teens; Nell Brinkley, whose elegantly-drawn "Brinkley Girls" set the style for women cartoonists of the '20s; and Ethel Hay, creator of "Flapper Fanny." Among the others recalled in these pages are Martha Orr — whose quintessential Depression strip, "Apple Mary," evolved into "Mary Worth" — and Dale Messick, creator of "Brenda Starr," who is generally considered the dean of women cartoonists.

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Selected Short Subjects on MGM/UA Laserdiscs

Continued from Page 1

Highlights of this box include *Sunkist Stars at Palm Springs*, one of the Louis Lewyn produced inanities that somehow proves irresistible almost 60 years removed from any hint of topicality. (This and other Lewyn titles feature a bevy of current and "old-time" stars--such as Buster Keaton, Ben Turpin and Lloyd Hamilton--in gorgeous Technicolor.) *That Inferior Feeling* effectively crystallizes the universality of Robert Benchley's droll screen persona; *Gems of MGM* features the delightful and unjustly forgotten singer Marion Harris; and the fascinating 1943 *Passing Parade* short, *Forgotten Treasure*, is an early look at film preservation.

The Pete Smith shorts, made between 1933 and 1945, display the diversity of the series. For example, *What's Your I.Q.?* is a thought-provoking reel of brain teasers; *Cuban Rhythm* examines the early '40s craze for the conga; *Movie Pests* depicts a gallery of goons at the theatre (and displays the comic talents of Dave O'Brien, a frequent star and director of the Smith shorts).

Fans of the Three Stooges will appreciate the inclusion of several of the team's early shorts, made when they were still supporting comic Ted Healy. *Nertsey Rhymes*, in two-strip Technicolor, is the team's first short with Curly and casts the boys as Healy's precocious young sons. In *Beer and Pretzels* the boys are vaudevillians-turned-waiters; *Plane Nuts* captures the team's entire vaudeville act; and *Roast Beef and Movies* is an oddity with Curly alone in support of dialect comic George Givot. Many of these shorts have elaborate production numbers that look as if they were deleted from MGM musicals of the early '30s. The MGM shorts in general look every bit as polished and professional as the feature films turned out by the studio.

The digital video transfers are extremely good, with many of the shorts looking better than they have at any time since their first release. One cautionary note: The sound volume varies widely from short to short, so adjustments need to be made if one is watching them consecutively. One short, *Sunday Night at the Trocadero* (another Louis Lewyn epic, not one of his best) has just plain terrible sound--a real pity, since Connie Boswell is prominently featured. Apparently a noise-reduction process was used to correct for some deficiencies in the source material, but the end result is that some dialogue is almost unintelligible.

The best way to watch these shorts is the way they were originally meant to be shown--before the feature presentation. Many of them are so good, you'll have a hard time stopping with just one. This is a wonderful time capsule, and is highly recommended.

Rhino's MGM Musical CDs

Continued from Page 8

Unfortunately, the sound quality is not nearly as good on Rhino's disc of *Easter Parade* (R2 71960). Evidently, the optical materials no longer exist, because the producers have used original 78-rpm "playback" discs as their source material. These were merely reference recordings; the performers mimed the lyrics to them when shooting the musical sequences. The sound quality of these playback discs is nowhere near the full, rich fidelity of the film's soundtrack on the MGM/UA laserdisc and VHS release. Three tracks ("I Want to Go Back to Michigan," "Shakin' the Blues Away" and the unused "Mr. Monotony") have fine sound, but the rest are quite feeble.

Still, the CD has many good points; the packaging is superb, with original color poster art, rare stills, and a terrific essay, again by John Fricke. Further, this 31-track release includes all of the film's music, much of which has been ignored in previous soundtrack albums. Neglected songs such as "Along Came Ruth" and "Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon" are presented here, and "Steppin' Out With My Baby" and "A Couple of Swells" are presented in their full-length versions for the first time. Unfortunately, the substandard audio quality makes this package one that's more historically interesting than entertaining.



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