

# Past Times

No. 23 THE NOSTALGIA ENTERTAINMENT NEWSLETTER \$5.00

## Gene Kelly's Talents Revisited on Laserdisc



It is a tragic case of impeccable timing that MGM/UA's lavish laserdisc box set of **The Gene Kelly Collection** (ML105144; \$125.99) was released a scant six days after Mr. Kelly's death. But a more fitting tribute to this giant of the film musical will not be offered anywhere.

From the opening montage of memorable Kelly moments on screen, through the beautiful transfers of three of his finest films, to the exhaustive supplementals, this box is every bit as stylish as the star represented therein. First and foremost, there are the films themselves; each has been previously released individually on laserdisc, but each is dramatically improved in the remastering here.

*On the Town*, from 1949, was a musical milestone, foreshadowing *West Side Story* twelve years later, in that the entire opening number was shot on location in New York City. Up until that time, musicals had been confined

to soundstages and studio backlots, and MGM fought first-time co-directors Kelly and Stanley Donen all the way on location shooting, finally limiting them to a scant three days in which to film the "New York, New York" opening and several quick establishing shots.

Otherwise, producer Arthur Freed gave the two carte blanche to let their imaginations roam. Based on the 1944 Broadway hit with music by Leonard Bernstein and with lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, it's of course the story of three sailors who have to "pick up a date, maybe seven or eight" (!) on one day's shore leave in the Big Apple.

In typical Hollywood fashion of the period, the original score was largely jettisoned and replaced with newer, supposedly more commercial songs by Comden and Green, but one can't complain too much because the new ones, such as the title tune and "Main Street" are dandies. "The Miss Turnstiles Ballet," one of the few numbers kept from the original production, featured a device that was used again a couple of years later in *An American in Paris*, where, in a fantasy sequence, the heroine pantomimes the various somewhat contradictory talents of the young lady who has been named the current month's Miss Turnstiles as a subway publicity stunt.

Vera-Ellen, who always manages to be smolderingly sexy and demure at the same time, is this girl who's the Holy Grail of Kelly's 24-hour tour of Manhattan. Meanwhile, Frank Sinatra is being pursued by vivacious Betty Garrett, and Jules Munshin has to settle (!) for Ann Miller. Alice Pearce reprises her Broadway turn as Garrett's nasal roommate, Lucy Schmeeler, and together they go on the town for 98 minutes of pure fun.

For the first time on home video, the picture is properly framed, so that you can finally see the entire ring of New York landmarks that surround the opening titles. The Times Square style rolling display of the current time as the story progresses is for once completely contained on the television screen. The color is a little less garish and more

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## Donen: Gracious Man, Stylish Films

When you've finished watching the Gene Kelly laserdisc box set described at left, you may want to read a newly-published biography of the man who co-directed *On the Town*, *It's Always Fair Weather* and *Singin' in the Rain*—and who directed *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *The Pajama Game*, *Damn Yankees* and other memorable films.

In **Dancing on the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and His Movies** (Knopf; 416 pages, hardcover; \$35.00), Stephen M. Silverman captures the gentle wit, grace and elegance that characterize Donen as man and artist. As a movie-struck, precocious boy growing up in Columbia, South Carolina, Donen saw Fred Astaire dance in *Flying Down to Rio* and felt "as if something had exploded inside me." He took dancing lessons and, just out of high school, went to New York—where he promptly got a job in the chorus of *Pal Joey*, working with George Abbott, Rodgers and Hart and Gene Kelly. By age 20, he was a choreographer at Columbia and MGM. At 26 he was directing Fred Astaire in *Royal Wedding*.

Donen offers many wonderful stories about his work, augmented by quotes from Billy Wilder, Cyd Charisse, Debbie Reynolds and others. Silverman's own thoughts on Donen's work are illuminating, and sometimes at odds with Donen's own opinions. The director is quick to praise the talents of others and diplomatically avoids harsh criticism, although he allows that his "co-directing" relationship with Kelly was often difficult ("If you substitute the word 'fight' for 'co-direct,' then you have it.") This is a delicious book which celebrates charm, wit, style and grace in a time when those qualities are all but extinct.

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## Nostalgia Newswire

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the motion picture, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, based at the Vatican, has compiled a listing of 45 feature films which have special artistic and religious merit. As you might expect, many are vintage releases. The titles include D.W. Griffith's 1916 epic *Intolerance* and the 1946 Frank Capra classic *It's a Wonderful Life*; more surprisingly, the list also includes the 1951 bank-heist comedy *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and F.W. Murnau's 1922 vampire shocker *Nosferatu*.

Thus far, the U.S. Postal Service hasn't yet announced plans to commemorate any more vintage comedians or silent film personalities on stamps, but a couple of the movies' early technical giants are being honored. Eadweard Muybridge, whose "motion studies" of a galloping horse were an important step toward motion pictures, will have his own image printed on postage, as will W.K.L. Dickson, pioneer cinematographer. (Dickson's portrait, in a neat touch, is framed by images from *Fred Ott's Sneeze!*)

One gifted and mercurial actor is portraying another on stage, as Nicol Williamson stars in *Jack: A Night on the Town With John Barrymore*, which he co-wrote and co-directed with Leslie Megahey. The one-man show, which examines Barrymore's triumphs on the stage and screen as well as his penchant for self-destruction, was a hit in London in 1994-95 and recently played in Los Angeles.

The UCLA Film and Television Archive received a grant of \$50,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts; this will go toward preserving a group of silent features made between 1917 and 1929; selected animated cartoons directed by Ub Iwerks and George Pal, and two comedies starring Harold Lloyd. The Archive recently acquired several vintage films, including a 35mm safety print of the 1931 *Threepenny Opera*, nine Randolph Scott features, and several episodes of television's *Loretta Young Show*. Last October, the Archive's Preservation Officer, Robert Gitt, appeared at the Giornate del Cinema Muto, a silent film festival held annually in Pordenone, Italy, where he received the Prix Jean Mitry in recognition of his lifetime achievement in preserving silent films.

## From the Editor:

As the sage philosopher Arthur Stanley Jefferson once said, "A blizzard is the inside of a buzzard." Well, the blizzard of '96 caused some copies of *Past Times* #21 to be all but sacrificed to the buzzards. That issue was mailed in November '95, but some subscribers didn't receive their copies until February '96 (just around the time they should have received their copies of *PT* #22). According to my Postal Business representative, the blizzard and the government shutdown did a double-whammy on bulk mail delivery. With this issue, I'm increasing the allotted time for delivery to just about one month.

On a happier note, a number of folks submitted articles for this issue, notably radio's Frank Bresee. Thanks to all of them, and thanks to you for subscribing!

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.

## SUBSCRIBE NOW

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## Past Times

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## 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

Last Moving Picture Company memorabilia auction, Columbus, OH, May 1996. Info: (216) 781-1821; fax, (216) 579-9172.

Memphis Film Festival, Best Western Airport Hotel, Memphis TN, August 7-10, 1996. 25th anniversary of this festival has vintage movie and TV shows, celebrity guests. Info: send SASE to P.O. Box 40272, Memphis TN 38174.

### MUSIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Los Angeles Classic Jazz Festival, LAX Doubletree Hotel, August 30-September 2. Guests include Rosy McHargue, Bob Haggart, Ian Whitcomb, Richard Zimmerman, and other fine performers of traditional jazz, ragtime and swing. Info: (310) 521-6893.

Greater Des Moines Good Times Jazz Festival, August 31-September 1, Living History Farms, Des Moines. Two-day traditional jazz and ragtime festival, with special guest Spiggle Willcox, trombonist with the great Jean Goldkette band in the '20s. Info: (515) 223-9796.

Sacramento Jazz Jubilee, May 24-27. California's capitol will host 100 trad-jazz bands from around the world at four sites; guests include Abe Most, Tommy Newsom, many others. Info: (916) 372-5277.

Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, May 29-June 4, Sedalia MO. Concerts, tours, symposiums and tea dances celebrating ragtime in the town where Joplin lived and wrote. Info: (816) 826-2271.

### OLD-TIME RADIO EVENTS

Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound Showcase IV, Bellevue WA, June 27-29. Recreations of vintage radio shows and panel discussions. Guests include many actors and technicians from the golden age. \$63.00 registration fee per person for three-day program and banquet. Info: REPS Radio Showcase, 9936 NE 197th Street, Bothell, WA 98011; (206) 488-9518.

### COLLECTIBLE SHOWS

Hollywood Collectors Show and Auction, North Hollywood CA, June 29-30; New York NY, July 19-20. Huge gathering of memorabilia dealers; California conclaves also have dozens of movie and TV stars in attendance. Info on all events: (352) 683-5110.

Back to the Past Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Horror Show, Pasadena Center, Pasadena CA, June 29-30. Info: (909) 880-8558.

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

## Cinephiles Plan 32nd Bash

The Society of Cinephiles is already making plans for Cinecon 32, which will be held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel from August 29 through September 2. Among the rarities scheduled to be screened are *Lena Rivers*, a 1914 feature based on a popular novel and stage melodrama of the era; a Boris Karloff-Marian Marsh horror film, *The Black Room*, made for Columbia in 1935 (to be introduced by its sound man, Edward Bernds, later a director of many shorts and features); the recently-restored 1926 Vitaphone short *Al Jolson in A Plantation Act*; some two-strip Technicolor shorts from MGM's series *The March of Time*; and a long-misplaced Tod Browning film from 1921.

If you love old movies and you haven't yet been to the Cinecon, we'd strongly urge you to attend. The films, the special guests, the old-Hollywood atmosphere of the hotel are all great, but what's truly special is the camaraderie you'll enjoy with hundreds of other folks who also love vintage films. For further information, contact The Society for Cinephiles, P.O. Box 1632, Hollywood, CA 90028.

## Do The Veidt Thing

The Conrad Veidt Society, based in Sacramento, continues to provide news about the late actor. (Despite a distinguished film career in Germany, Veidt fled the country in 1932 and became best known to American audiences in a *Casablanca* role that angered the Nazis.) The Society is looking for proper archival housing for some of Veidt's photos, memorabilia and personal articles — not to mention the ashes of Veidt and his widow, Lily. Veidt's biographer, J.C. Allen is also searching for a new home for his collection. The actor (recently commemorated with "Conrad-Veidt-Strasse" in Babelsberg, Potsdam, Germany) will be discussed at length in two forthcoming books; the Society offers a Bibliography and Videography for those seeking Veidt's available films and information about them. Contact The Conrad Veidt Society c/o James H. Rathlesberger, 2757 11th Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95818.

## A Reference Book With Character

British film journalist David Quinlan is not infallible, but he is more reliable than many of his American counterparts. He proves it once again with **Quinlan's Illustrated Directory of Film Character Actors** (B.T. Batsford Ltd., \$35.00), which has been extensively revised and updated since its first publication a decade ago (under the title, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Movie Character Actors*).

The latest edition is a film buff's treasure. Not only does it have just about everyone you'd expect to find — Philip Ahn, Douglass Dumbrille, Ruth Donnelly, Clarence Muse, Agnes Moorehead, Gale Sondergaard — but a great many obscure actors who are usually forgotten in such volumes.

Ann Doran, who played leads opposite Charley Chase and Walter Catlett in Columbia two-reelers, is a case in point. Few character actresses were more dependable, more resilient — or more anonymous — than the Texas-born Doran, a member of Frank Capra's stock company perhaps best known for her role as James Dean's mother in *Rebel Without a Cause*. Quinlan has devoted nearly a full page to her credits, which date from 1922 to 1985.

Edgar Kennedy, Anita Garvin and the "ever popular" Charlie Hall are inexplicably excluded. For that matter, Clyde Cook, Wilfrid Lucas, Tiny Sanford, Dorothy Granger and Ellinor Vanderveer are also missing — one might assume that perhaps Quinlan simply doesn't like Hal Roach comedies. (However, James Finlayson — Laurel & Hardy perennial and master of the double-take — is included, and the voluminous short subject credits date back to 1919.) Oddly, Kennedy appeared in the previous edition of the book, as well as the author's *Directory of Film Comedy Stars*. (Since Fritz Feld and Edward Everett Horton are in *both* directories, Kennedy's exclusion is especially puzzling. No wonder he was sighted recently doing a slow burn).

Quinlan finds credits that startle — silent features for sneaky, squeaky-voiced Percy Helton dating back to 1915, and wry, mild-mannered Paul Fix to 1920. He excels at digging up obscure British actors like music hall veteran Syd Crossley (but misses *his* Roach credits); Everly Gregg, who debuted in films as the nagging last wife in *The Private Life of Henry VIII*; and Amy Veness, a "pleasantly plump" portrayeur of housekeepers.

He is less knowledgeable about American bit players, but has seen fit to include such now-you-see-him-now-you-don't actors as Rolfe Sedan — while he "borrowed" the credits from the Sedan filmography in my book, *Reel Characters: Great Movie Character Actors*, he has added a few — and acknowledges the source, unlike some less-scrupulous authors. (Available from Batsford's U.S. distributor, Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret VT 05053).

— Jordan R. Young

## Thrills Released from MCA's Zoo

Not everything released under MCA Home Video's Universal Horror Classics banner is a masterpiece, but we applaud the studio's efforts to dip deeper into the vaults, and rescue their lesser films from obscurity. Among the latest VHS releases is the 1933 **Murders in the Zoo** (14.98), which zips by at a breathtaking pace in 62 minutes flat. Director Eddie Sutherland doesn't waste a second of the film's running time. The camera never dawdles or meanders anywhere, nor examines anything in detail; it stops just long enough to set things in motion, get the point of a scene across and move on.

Lionel Atwill is suave and sinister in the role of a sportsman whose jealousy over his wife's indiscretions sets the plot of this programmer in motion. His performance is a minor masterpiece of timing and subtlety, never resorting to the hysterionics which Vincent Price later employed in similar roles.

Charles Ruggles is hilarious as a nervous press agent, but his comic relief is almost intrusive on the mood created by the atmospheric lighting and otherwise restrained performances of the cast. Randolph Scott makes little impression as a zoo toxicologist; Gail Patrick comes off better (in her first major role) as his girlfriend, and Kathleen Burke is effective as Atwill's unfortunate spouse.

This low-key film is not exactly a classic of the horror genre, but it's well worth investigating. Jealousy is a monster like no other, and Lionel Atwill displays its fangs with a quiet intensity that has seldom been equaled.

— Jordan R. Young



# Rare Silent Comedies Now Available From Video Classic

By Richard M. Roberts

Fans of classic (and even not so classic) silent film comedy will certainly enjoy the product of Video Classic, a new video company from the out of the way area of White River Junction, Vermont, that holds one of the largest catalogs of one and two reel comedies from the Teens and Twenties. The selection is certainly eclectic, and includes many titles not available elsewhere.

You can order tapes in two ways: customized tapes in which you select the titles (7 reels, or about 70 minutes' worth of programming, for \$16.95 plus postage — \$1.50 for the first tape, .50 for each additional) or special package tapes featuring the works of a specific comedian, comedy producer or studio. For example, Video Classics offers two volumes in the latter variety of the early comedy films of Jack and Jules White, later of Three Stooges and Columbia Pictures fame. Jack White was quite a successful producer of comedy shorts for the curiously named Educational Pictures, one of the largest distributors of theatrical shorts in the silent era. Younger brother Jules cut his teeth directing Cameo Comedies for his older sibling.

**The White Bros., Volume One** features two of Jules' apprentice works, *Oh Mamma* (1927) featuring an utterly forgotten comic (and deservedly so) named Jack Miller, and *Hot Sports* (1929) starring another forgotten comedian (and unjustly so) named Monty Collins, teamed with the perennial second banana Vernon Dent. Jack White produced three comedy series for Educational that were much to General Motors classification; *The Mermaid Comedies* (luxury model), *The Tuxedos* (mid-size) and *The Cameos* (compact). The amazing thing about the majority of the Cameos is that they are usually solid little comedies, despite the use of interchangeable lead comics from Educational's secondary ranks. Messrs. Collins and Dent appeared in support with most of the major comics, and it is refreshing to see them carry even a little film like *Hot Sports* quite capably.

The two Jack White Mermaid comedies that close the tape contain terrific examples of the fast-moving elaborate stuntwork that graced many a two-reeler. *Fast and Furious* (1925) is an apt title for this hair-raising Lige Conley comedy. Plot is of little consequence here. Lige (who resembles Charlie Chaplin sans moustache) wreaks havoc in a grocery store in the first half, cooking cement pancakes for customers and spilling flour sacks, but when the store is robbed, he sets after the criminals in a spectacular car and train chase that would have made Larry Semon jealous. *Family Life* (1924) is a delicious spoof on California suburban living, from prefab bungalows with cardboard walls, to a violent and destructive camping trip that will make environmentalists flinch. The short stars Mark Jones, as obscure a comedian as you'll ever encounter (the only other place I've ever seen him is in some Stan Laurel and Paul Parrott comedies), who makes what may be his only starring appearance a moment to be savored. The entire tape package costs a very reasonable \$14.95 plus postage and handling.

Another recent Video Classic release is **The Films of Mickey McGuire** (\$14.95). Based on a character from Fontaine Fox's "Toonerville Trolley" comic strip, these late Twenties two-reelers were produced by Larry Darmour for the independent Standard Cinema company and released through FBO. They starred a young ham named Joe Yule, Jr., who legally had his name

changed to Mickey McGuire so Darmour could bypass a royalty payment to Fox. When the series expired in the early Thirties, McGuire changed his name once again to Mickey Rooney.

The three shorts in Volume One, *Mickey's Circus* (1927), *Mickey's Brown Derby* (1929) and *Mickey's Great Idea* (1929) are fine examples of what had to be one of the best of the many Our Gang knockoffs released during the silent era. Much of the responsibility for the films' success rests squarely on McGuire / Rooney's shoulders; even at this tender age many of his scene stealing talents were firmly in place. *Mickey's Circus* contains many variants on the mechanical contraptions that Our Gang made famous. There is also a stunt with a high wire-walking goat that has to be seen to be believed.



The Mickey McGuire comedies unfortunately stood out from Our Gang comedies in the cruelty of their humor, sometimes reaching new lows in political incorrectness. In *Mickey's Great Idea*, Hambone (the Farina clone) is hit in the head with a hammer, and though he is apparently unharmed, the hammer is smashed flat by the impact! Despite the films' occasional lapses in taste, *The Films of Mickey McGuire Volume One* is

an excellent opportunity to view a neglected comedy series. This is rare viewing indeed, especially in the original two-reel form.

Lupino Lane was a popular star of the British stage and American two-reel comedy in the Twenties, and he is well represented in **The Films of Lupino Lane Volume One** (\$11.95). Lane's acrobatic skills were second only to Buster Keaton's. With support from his equally talented brother Wallace Lupino, Lane starred in an excellent series of shorts for Educational that are seldom seen today. Volume One features two excellent examples of Lane's work, *Movieland* (1926) and *Drama Deluxe* (1927). In the former, Lane is a rich young dandy trying to get into Educational Pictures to meet an actress he fancies. After being physically tossed over the studio wall numerous times, he actually manages to sneak into the studio where he wreaks havoc with other Educational comedy stars, most notably Lloyd Hamilton, making a delightful cameo. *Drama Deluxe* puts Lupino in a theatrical setting as he works backstage in a vaudeville house, engaging in some spectacular acrobatic work with his brother Wallace, the theatre manager. This moonfaced little comic deserves far more representation and it is hoped Video Classics has more volumes of his work to come.

Video Classics' picture quality varies from short to short, depending on preprint quality, but it's never less than acceptable, especially considering the rarity of the material. All films are accompanied by suitable scoring, mostly great hot dance music from the period. With so little of this material available in the video market, a company specializing in its distribution such as Video Classic deserves praise and support. Catalogs are available from Video Classic, P.O. Box 293, White River Junction, VT 05001; (802) 295-4903.



## Finding Our Way to Lupino Lane

*Editor's note: British comic Lupino Lane seems to be the subject of a mini-rediscovery. You can compare Jordan R. Young's assessment of his gifts with Richard M. Roberts' on the preceding page.*



Never heard of Lupino Lane? Perhaps the name is familiar but you haven't had the opportunity to watch him in action? This undeservedly obscure comic

(a cousin of Ida Lupino's) was the revelation of a recent Cinecon — at least for me, knowing his identity full well but never having had the pleasure of seeing him on film. And a distinct pleasure it is, as anyone with access to a VCR can now see for themselves.

As an acrobat, Lane (1892-1959) was every inch Buster Keaton's equal. Like Keaton, he was the progeny of a theatrical family, and made a name for himself as a rubber-limbed boy comedian. He made his film debut in his native Britain in 1915, and was appearing on the American stage when he found success in two-reel comedies. In one, the inventive *Only Me*, he played 23 different roles, recalling Keaton's similar stunt in *The Paleface*.

The advent of talkies sent him packing when "his raucous London tones" clashed with the image he projected on screen, according to author David Quinlan. He became a director before making a comeback with the stage musical *Me and My Girl* — and its hit song, "The Lambeth Walk" — which resulted in a Command Performance and proved his meal ticket for many years.

Lane's amazing agility and highly developed sense of timing is well in evidence in Videobrary's **Lupino Lane: Classic Comedy Shorts**. *His Private Life* and *Maid in Morocco* are probably typical of the two-reelers he made in the mid-twenties; *Purely Circumstantial*, a 1929 sound short, is pretty silly, but Lane's deft physical humor makes up for its flaws. (Available from Videobrary Inc., 6117 Carpenter Ave., North Hollywood CA 91606.)

— Jordan R. Young

## More Two-Reelers on VHS from Videobrary

Videobrary, that fine source for vintage comedy shorts on VHS videocassettes, continues to pour forth all sorts of rare gems. Their latest releases include a collection of eight one-reelers starring Paul Parrott (who was actually *James* Parrott, later the director of many fine Laurel & Hardy shorts but here showing his talents in front of the camera). Parrott — whose brother, just to confuse matters, was Charles Parrott, better known as Charley Chase — is seen here in titles such as *Don't Butt In*, *Whistling Lions* and *Dear Old Pal*, the latter co-starring Snub Pollard.

Also new to the Videobrary catalog is a collection of shorts starring Max Linder, the real father of silent film comedy and the man who exerted great influence on Chaplin. The rarities, dating from the pre-World War I era and running about seven minutes each, include *His First Cigar* and *Juggling For Love*.

Lloyd Hamilton, a plump, doughy-faced comic with a sour expression and dainty gestures, was much admired by Buster Keaton and other top comics. He has been largely forgotten because so few of his films survive. A new Videobrary tape combines two of his silent shorts (*Who's Kidding Who?* and *Move Along*, much admired by critic Walter Kerr in his book *The Silent Clowns*) with two talkies, *False Impressions* and *His Big Moment*.

Also welcome are the four musical shorts that Bing Crosby made for Mack Sennett in 1931 and '32. *Blue of the Night*, *I Surrender Dear*, *Billboard Girl* and *Dream House* display Bing's early crooning style, of course (sometimes in songs that he never commercially recorded). They also display his easy charm and his natural comic flair. Another singer who made short comedies was not nearly so well known as Crosby — in fact, we've never heard of her before. But Niela Goodelle certainly looks appealing, and so do titles such as *Slacks Appeal* and *Air Parade*. Finally, Videobrary has new collections of shorts with Leon Errol and Edgar Kennedy, each of whom starred in RKO series for 18 years. While each series numbers about 100 two-reelers, the films are rarely seen today, so the new cassettes are especially welcome. Each tape sells for \$14.95, or three for \$40.00. (Videobrary, 6117 Carpenter Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91606; (818) 761-5265.

## New "Comedies" Won't Match the Originals

Given the dreadful quality of Hollywood's attempts to resuscitate the great comics of the past in fiascoes such as *The Buster Keaton Story* and *W.C. Fields and Me*, you'll excuse us if we greet this next news with something less than unalloyed joy: Larry Harmon, the *Bozo* merchandiser who has been trading on the likenesses of Laurel & Hardy since the early '60s, has announced the imminent production of *Jungle Bungle*, a feature film budgeted at \$20 million, to be directed by John R. Cherry III, who gave us those, ah, memorable *Ernest* comedies. The film's two main roles — the modern-day nephews of Stan and Ollie — haven't yet been cast.

Mr. Harmon is responsible (perhaps culpable is a better word) for a mediocre 1967 L&H cartoon series, which, however, was a classic compared to two later epics. One was an hour-long cartoon in which Laurel & Hardy joined the Scooby-Doo gang in capturing Bigfoot (!). The other was an episode of *Matt Houston*; Harmon himself played a Laurel impersonator whose likeness was compromised by the metal hook replacing one of his hands — with which he slashed several young ladies. We can always hope that *Jungle Bungle* won't be as unfunny and insulting to Stan and Ollie's memory as Harmon's earlier work; better yet, we can hope that this project will meet the same fate as the other never-produced "new" L&H films that Harmon has announced since the mid-1960s.

Only slightly less disturbing is news that Columbia Pictures is developing a new comedy feature based on the Three Stooges' characters, possibly starring the three comics who have been impersonating Curly, Larry and Moe in a live stage show at the Las Vegas MGM Grand since 1994. And Ivan Reitman, producer of *Ghostbusters* and *Dave*, is now at work on a "new" Marx Brothers film. (We hope he'll learn a lesson from *Brain Donors*, a 1992 comedy which unsuccessfully tried to recreate the spirit of the Marxes.)

A message to the misguided producers of all three projects: the unique qualities of those great comedians cannot be duplicated. Better you should spend your millions developing comedies with performers who follow in the *tradition* of the great comics, instead of trying to imitate the inimitable.



# Gene Kelly MGM Classics Restored on Laserdisc

Continued from Page 1



accurate here than in previous releases and the picture is as sharp as ever. The sound is no better or worse than before however, but is fine just the same.

*Brigadoon*, from 1954, is also a milestone of sorts. This was one of the first film translations of previous Broadway hits where Hollywood respected the

source material and let movie audiences see something of what theater audiences saw originally. Filmed simultaneously in a flat wide-screen version (with a 1.85 to 1 aspect ratio) and in the new CinemaScope process, the version on this laserdisc is letterboxed for the first time to a full 2.55:1 aspect ratio, bringing a severe case of black bars to your television screen, but offering the full width of the CinemaScope edition.

Gene and pal Van Johnson who are hunting in Scotland stumble across the magic village of Brigadoon, which comes to life only one day every one hundred years, and naturally Gene falls in love with one of its inhabitants, the lovely Cyd Charisse. The music of Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe includes "The Heather on the Hill" and "Almost Like Being in Love." While somewhat underrated in this country because it was all shot on the MGM soundstages (location shooting in Scotland was nixed due to weather considerations), it has something of a cult following in France, sort of like Jerry Lewis. One could argue that its fantasy storyline makes shooting on the obviously fake sets a wise decision, but judge for yourself. It may not be *Singin' in the Rain*, but it's enchanting nonetheless.

*It's Always Fair Weather* has always been somewhat underrated as a Kelly musical because, although it was a big hit in 1955, it came very late in his stint at MGM, when the handwriting was on the wall about the future of the movie musical. It also doesn't help that of all the CinemaScope films made in the '50s, this one may suffer the most when its image is chopped up to fit the smaller dimensions of television.

It's the story of three G.I.s who were inseparable during World War Two and made a pact at its end to reunite in the very same New York bar ten years later. Fast forward to 1955, and guess what? They have each gone in different directions in the ensuing years and now find they can't stand one another.

When the film came out, television was the studios' enemy, and the medium is targeted when Dolores Grey plays the venomous hostess of a national variety show seeking to exploit our three heroes by playing up the human interest angle in their reunion.

Cyd Charisse is the agent who falls for Gene but gets naturally caught in the middle. Dan Dailey and Michael Kidd are Gene's buddies in this outing; together and singly they provide many of the highlights. Making full use of the CinemaScope screen as never before, the three boys go on a musical "Binge" as they wreak havoc on the streets of New York and do a memorable dance with trash can lids. Then there's the "Time for Parting" for the trio, and the classic "I Like Myself" where Gene does for roller skates what he did for galoshes a few years earlier. Not to be left out, Cyd displays her leggy charms in "Baby You Knock Me Out."

Split screen effects are used in the "Blue Danube" and "Once Upon a Time" numbers, making this one film where letterboxing is not only desirable but essential. Although released in a widescreen laserdisc several years ago, the new transfer properly retains the full image for the first time on video, so that Dan Dailey stays on screen during "Once Upon a Time."

Between features, the really special aspects of the box take center stage. At the conclusion of *On the Town*, we are treated to two separate takes of a number with Gene and Esther Williams entitled "Baby Doll," cut from 1949's *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*. Take 10 features a temporary music track with an offscreen voice calling out the beats, and take 13 has the finished music track without the incidental dialogue and sound effects. Immediately following are the trailers for *Brigadoon* and *It's Always Fair Weather*. Then we get a snippet from "A Salute to the Theatres" (found in its entirety on MGM/UA's *Love Me or Leave Me* disc) in which George Murphy drops in on a *Fair Weather* rehearsal with Gene and Cyd. Murphy interviews Cyd for *The MGM Parade*, a self-serving MGM puff piece that ran on TV for one season in 1955-56. The first disc ends with a clip from *Love is Better Than Ever* in which Gene had an unbilled cameo appearance in 1952.

After *Brigadoon*, on the second disc, we get to see three numbers cut from the picture in order to make it more cinematic and less theatrical: the lovely "Come to Me, Bend to Me," "From This Day On" and the "Sword Dance."

On the third disc, there are two numbers cut from *It's Always Fair Weather*: "Jack and the Space Giants," Michael Kidd's solo performance which is rather silly and which was never completed, and "Love is Nothing But a Racket" with Gene and Cyd — a spirited number but also a little over-the-top.

The fourth and last disc is all supplemental material. As in other recent MGM/UA releases, the soundtracks receive true-stereo remixes as Gene performs the title tune from *For Me and My Gal* (1942) with Judy Garland, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" from *Thousands Cheer* (1944), "I Begged Her" with Frank Sinatra and "The Worry Song" with Jerry the Mouse, both from *Anchors Aweigh* (1945). We also get two numbers from the low budget black and white 1947 comedy *Living in a Big Way*, and the complete "Circus" sequence from Kelly's most ambitious project, the doomed *Invitation to the Dance*, which is one of the rare MGM musicals that has yet to be released on disc.

Next comes "Main Street" from *On the Town*, reprised here in stereo (the multi-channel tracks for the rest of the film don't survive). It's followed by "Moses Supposes" with Donald O'Connor from *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and "I Love to Go Swimmin' With Women," Gene's duet with brother Fred from *Deep in My Heart* (1954). Gene asks "Why Am I So Gone About the Girl?" while poking fun at Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* persona in a scene with Mitzi Gaynor from *Les Girls* (1957). The producers saved the best clip for last: the title tune for *Singin' in the Rain* makes its stereo debut on this disc.

There's still more: Betty Comden and Adolph Green spend a few minutes reminiscing about making *On the Town* and *It's Always Fair Weather*, and that's followed by a CAV still-step section with publicity stills and behind-the-scenes photos from all three feature films.

Continued on Page 32



## Nostalgia on the Net, Part 2 • By Jordan R. Young

*Editor's Note: In issue #21 we attempted to extol the virtues of technology — but some computer gremlins displayed its flaws instead, by wreaking havoc with part of Jordan R. Young's article on nostalgia entertainment-related internet resources. The music newsgroups and most of the movie websites were inadvertently omitted; here follows the missing portion.*

### Movie Sites

#### Silent Movies

<http://www.cs.monash.edu.au/~pringle/silent/>

A good place to begin your tour. Here you will find a library of links to sites featuring stars of the era, and much else of interest.

#### Silent Film Screenings

<http://www.cs.monash.edu.au/~pringle/silent/screenings.html>

A page which lists showings nationwide — or will eventually.

#### Early Motion Pictures Home Page

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/papr/mpixhome.html>

Short films from the Library of Congress (1897-1916), which can be downloaded and viewed on systems (like the new Power Macs) that support that AVI format, using QuickTime.

#### Early Cinema Research

<http://graphics.histart.umontreal.ca/default-eng.html>

#### Laurel and Hardy Page

<http://www.iquest.net/~bstevens/lh/index2.html>

Sponsored by the Hog Wild internet "tent" or chapter, this page contains a bibliography, a write-up on the Laurel & Hardy museum in Ulverston, England and more.

<http://www.sirius.com/~sramsey/TheBoys/LandH.html>

Steve Ramsey's L&H page lures the visitor to a "Screening Room" with listings of TV showings, and provides a filmography, among other things.

#### Little Rascals Page

<http://www.sirius.com/~sramsey/LittleRascals/rascals.html>

Recommended by reader Don Spears, who is putting together a web page devoted to the Gang's "Miss Crabtree," June Marlowe.

#### Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford Home Page

<http://157.242.97.98/silents/pickfair.html>

This site (under construction until recently) contains links to many other silent film sites, silent film news ("any news is good news about silent films" — a philosophy we endorse!), film source information, and more.

#### Lillian Gish Home Page

<http://ernie.bgsu.edu/~pcharle/gish/>

#### D.W. Griffith Home Page

<http://ernie.bgsu.edu/~pcharle/gish/dwg.html>

On this site you can view scenes from "Birth of a Nation" and "Intolerance."

#### Louise Brooks Home Page

<http://www.escape.ca/~ianmcc/LB-index.html>

#### Buster Keaton Page

<http://www.hotwired.com/kino/95/34/feature/stuff/flat/cop.flip.mov>

Buster is all over the Internet due to his 1995 Centennial; the most interesting thing we found was not the obligatory bare-bones "home page" but this Hot Wired-Kino Feature ("Keaton: The Man Who Fell to Earth") which offers a nice little essay, accompanied by film clips of the man in action; however it appears to be a temporary site (the world of cyberspace is an ephemeral, ever-changing one).

#### Harold Lloyd Page

<http://www.asb.com/usr/helloharold/>

Annette D'Agostino's new site is so extensive it not only includes information on Lloyd's "Lonesome Luke" and "glasses character" films, it even has details on his virtually unknown career in radio.

#### Three Stooges Page

<http://rowlf.nmsu.edu/stooges.html>

We have not yet been able to access this site devoted to the trio, due to its apparent popularity. There's always too much traffic on the on-ramp.

<http://www.cfn.cs.dal.ca/Recreation/EMA/guides/stooges.html>

This Stooges Info Page, relating the history of the team and biographical sketches of the comedians, is more accessible.

#### Looney Tunes

[http://www.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Comics/Looney\\_Tunes/](http://www.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Comics/Looney_Tunes/)

What's up, doc? You're sure to find the answer in this website for aficionados of Warner Bros. animation.

#### Alfred Hitchcock Page

<http://nextdch.mty.itesm.mx/~plopezg/Kaplan/Hitchcock.html>

#### Black Film Center/Archive

<http://www.indiana.edu/~bfca/about.html>

Based at the University of Indiana on the Bloomington campus, this site provides information on a repository of films and related materials by and about African-Americans, including the work of producer Oscar Micheaux and many vintage black entertainers. The archive maintains a database of over 4,600 films, not all of which are in the collection.

#### Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences

<http://www.oscars.org/ampas>

AMPAS dispenses information on the Oscars past and present, naturally, along with news of special screenings and other useful information.

#### The Internet Movie Database

<http://rte66.com/Movies/blurb.html>

This site provides biographical sketches and filmographies of film personalities at the tap of a button, but be forewarned: just because it's on the Net — just as with any print resource — doesn't mean it's necessarily correct or complete. The database is handy, but no substitute for a good reference book such as Ephraim Katz's *The Film Encyclopedia* or Leonard Maltin's *Movie & Video Guide*. (This also holds true for a CD-ROM program called Cinemania, which is little more than a very distracting toy.)

*Continued on Page 18*



# What's Old on Video: New Releases on VHS and Laserdisc

*These releases can be special ordered through your local video store, or can be purchased from mail-order sources such as Movies Unlimited, 6736 Castor Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19149; (800) 4-MOVIES.*

## New on VHS:

Bandit King of Texas Allan "Rocky" Lane Republic 0190 \$9.98  
 The Big Stampede (1932) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 The Black Swan (1942) Tyrone Power, Maureen O'Hara, FoxVideo 1664 \$19.98  
 Boomerang! (1947) Dana Andrews, Jane Wyatt FoxVideo 1882 \$19.98  
 Border Saddlemates (1952) Rex Allen Republic 0395 \$9.98  
 The Bronze Buckaroo (1939) Herb Jeffries Video Yesteryear 2306 \$19.95  
 Caesar and Cleopatra (1946) Claude Rains, Vivien Leigh Hallmark 20053 \$14.98  
 Criss Cross (1948) Burt Lancaster, Yvonne DeCarlo MCA 80678 \$14.98  
 Cyrano de Bergerac (1925; in Pathécolor) Kino on Video 879 \$29.95  
 The Dark Angel (1935) Fredric March, Merle Oberon HBO 91254 \$19.98  
 The Dolly Sisters (1945) Betty Grable, June Haver FoxVideo 1306 \$19.98  
 The Drop Kick (1927) Richard Barthelmess Video Yesteryear 2200 \$19.95  
 Earthworm Tractors (1936) Joe E. Brown Video Yesteryear 2302 \$19.95  
 Edgar Kennedy Sound Shorts, Volume 5 (1934-47) Videobrary \$14.95

Faust (1926) Emil Jannings (newly restored) Kino on Video 880 \$29.95  
 First Love (1939) Deanna Durbin, Robert Stack MCA 81445 \$19.98  
 The Gigolettes of Paris (1933) Madge Bellamy, Gilbert Roland Videobrary 19.95  
 Give Me a Sailor (1938) Bob Hope, Martha Raye MCA \$14.98  
 The Grapes of Wrath (1940) Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell FoxVideo 1024 \$19.98  
 The Hairy Ape (1944) William Bendix Video Yesteryear 2248 \$19.95  
 Hands Across the Table (1935) Carole Lombard, Ralph Bellamy MCA \$14.98  
 Happy Go Lucky (1937) Phil Regan, Jed Prouty Video Yesteryear 2305 \$19.95  
 Haunted Gold (1933) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 Hell Harbor (1930) Lupe Velez, Jean Hersholt Videobrary \$19.95  
 His Butler's Sister (1943) Deanna Durbin, Pat O'Brien MCA 81457 \$19.98

Janice Meredith (1924) Marion Davies, W.C. Fields Videobrary 19.95  
 Juno and the Paycock (1930) Sara Allgood, Barry Fitzgerald Video Yesteryear 2272 \$19.95  
 Lady on a Train (1945) Deanna Durbin, Ralph Bellamy MCA 81973 \$19.98  
 Leon Errol Sound Shorts, Volume 3 (1936-43) Videobrary \$14.95  
 Lloyd Hamilton Volume 2 (1927-early '30s) Videobrary \$14.95  
 Lyrical Nitrate: Vintage Cinema 1905-1915 (1991) Kino on Video 890 \$59.95  
 Mad About Music (1938) Deanna Durbin, Herbert Marshall MCA 81964 \$19.98  
 Male and Female (1919) Gloria Swanson Video Yesteryear 2156 \$19.95  
 The Man From Monterey (1933) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 Max Linder Silent Shorts (c 1907-1911) Videobrary \$14.95  
 Money Means Nothing (1934) Wallace Ford Video Yesteryear 2301 \$19.95  
 The Moon and Sixpence (1942) George Sanders Video Yesteryear 2316 \$19.95

Niela Goodelle Sound Shorts (1930s) Videobrary \$14.95  
 Outcasts of the Trail Monte Hale Republic 3092 \$9.98  
 Outpost in Morocco (1949) George Raft Video Yesteryear 2244 \$19.95  
 Painted Faces (1929) Joe E. Brown Video Yesteryear 2320 \$19.95  
 Paul Parrott Silent Shorts (1922) Videobrary \$14.95  
 Ride Him, Cowboy (1932) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 Roar of the Press (1941) Jean Parker, Wallace Ford Video Yesteryear 2241 \$19.95

Silver City Bonanza Rex Allen Republic 3686 \$9.98  
 Silver City Kid Allan "Rocky" Lane Republic 3687 \$9.98  
 Sin Takes a Holiday (1930) Constance Bennett Video Yesteryear 2324 \$19.95  
 Singapore (1947) Fred MacMurray, Ava Gardner MCA 82517 \$14.98  
 Slaves in Bondage (1937) Lona Andre Video Yesteryear 2325 \$19.95  
 Somewhere in Sonora (1933) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 The Song of Bernadette (1943) Jennifer Jones FoxVideo 1034 \$19.98  
 Stan and Ollie Solo, Volume 7 (1916-27) Videobrary \$14.95  
 The Story of Dr. Wassell (1944) Gary Cooper MCA 82553 \$14.98  
 Supernatural (1933) Carole Lombard, Randolph Scott MCA \$14.98

Tall, Tan and Terrific (1946) Mantan Moreland Video Yesteryear 2322 \$19.95  
 The Telegraph Trail (1933) John Wayne MGM/UA \$19.98  
 Tillie Wakes Up (1917) Marie Dressler Video Yesteryear 2157 \$14.95  
 Under Colorado Skies Monte Hale Republic 4360 \$9.98  
 The Virginian (1946) Joel McCrea, Brian Donlevy MCA 80559 \$14.98  
 The Wages of Fear (1952; 43 minutes added) Homevision WAG040 \$29.95  
 Wolves of Kultur (1918; 7-episode serial) Video Yesteryear 2219 \$29.95  
 Yankee Doodle in Berlin (1919) Ford Sterling Video Yesteryear 2197 \$19.95

## New on Laserdisc:

Boris Karloff-Bela Lugosi Box Set (British Intelligence, The Invisible Ghost, Ghosts on the Loose, Mr. Wong, Detective and The Devil Bat) Roan Group 9601 \$99.95  
 The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) (restored) Image ID3400DS \$49.99  
 MGM Composers' Collection (Till the Clouds Roll By, Words and Music and Deep in My Heart; all restored with outtakes, true-stereo audio mixes, deleted material and original trailers) ML105155 \$124.98  
 Oliver Twist (1948) Alec Guinness Voyager 1419 \$49.95  
 The Universal Story (1996) MCA 42568 \$34.98  
 W.C. Fields: Six Classic Shorts (1915-1933) Voyager 1094 \$49.95

## Forthcoming on Laserdisc:

Animal Kingdom (1932) Leslie Howard, Myrna Loy Roan Group  
 Bells of San Angelo (1947) Roy Rogers Roan Group  
 The Best of Bette Davis (Dark Victory, Jezebel, Mr. Skeffington) MGM/UA  
 The Best of Bogart: (Casablanca, The Maltese Falcon, Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The Big Sleep) (with extras) MGM/UA  
 Cavalcade of MGM Shorts II (Pete Smith, Crime Does Not Pay, Fitzpatrick Travel Talks) MGM/UA  
 Classics of Soviet Cinema (Earth, The End of St. Petersburg, Strike, The Man With a Movie Camera) Image  
 Colonel Effingham's Raid (1945) Charles Coburn, Joan Bennett Roan Group

The Dolly Sisters (1945) Betty Grable, John Payne FoxVideo  
 Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Collection (The Three Musketeers, Robin Hood, Thief of Bagdad, The Gaucho) Image  
 First American Features 1912-1916 (Young Romance, The Cheat, From the Manger to the Cross, Traffic in Souls, Regeneration, Civilization, Police Force of New York, Girl's Folly) Image  
 Forbidden Hollywood II (Illicit, Strange Love of Molly Louvain, Beauty and the Boss, They Call it Sin, Havana Widows, The Easiest Way) MGM/UA  
 Forever Amber (1947) Linda Darnell (uncut version) FoxVideo  
 The Gang's All Here (1943) Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda FoxVideo  
 Garbo Silents (Love (with alternate ending), Wild Orchids, The Torrent, fragments from Divine Woman) MGM/UA  
 Golden Age of German Cinema (Berlin Symphony, Loves of Jean Ney, Faust) Image  
 Golden Age of Looney Tunes, Volume 5 (includes alternate endings, special remasters, and other supplements.) MGM/UA

Ida Lupino Double Bill (The Man I Love /The Hard Way) MGM/UA  
 Jane Powell Double Bill (Nancy Goes to Rio /Luxury Liner) MGM/UA  
 The Kennel Murder Case (1933) /Hotel Anchovy (Ritz Bros. short) Roan Group  
 Laurel & Hardy and Friends Volume 7 Image  
 The Lon Chaney Collection: Where East is East, He Who Gets Slapped, The Unknown MGM/UA  
 MGM Horror Classics Collection: Mad Love, Devil Doll, Mark of the Vampire, restored Mask of Fu Manchu plus extras MGM/UA  
 New Moon (1940) Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy MGM/UA  
 Noah's Ark (1929 silent) Dolores Costello, George O'Brien MGM/UA

Of Human Bondage (1934) Leslie Howard, Bette Davis Roan Group  
 The Old Dark House (1932) Boris Karloff, Melvyn Douglas Image  
 The Outlaw (1943) Jane Russell, Walter Huston Roan Group  
 The Perils of Pauline (1949) Betty Hutton Roan Group  
 The Red House (1947) Edward G. Robinson Roan Group  
 Roy Rogers Collection: My Pal Trigger / King of the Cowboys Roan Group  
 Santa Fe Trail (1940) Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland Roan Group  
 The Sin of Harold Diddlebock (1947) Harold Lloyd Roan Group  
 Svengali (1931) John Barrymore Roan Group

T-Men (1947) Dennis O'Keefe Roan Group  
 That Hamilton Woman (1941) Vivien Leigh Pioneer Special Editions  
 That Uncertain Feeling (1941) Merle Oberon Roan Group  
 Tulsa (1949) Susan Hayward Roan Group  
 Vitaphone 70th Anniversary Celebration (5-disc box set of dance band and vaudeville shorts) MGM/UA  
 Why We Fight - Frank Capra Documentary Series (1942) Roan Group



# BUSTERMANIA!

By Jordan R. Young

There seems to be no end in sight to the Buster Keaton phenomenon. We've stopped counting the books, websites, video reissues and other manifestations of homage, but still they pour in from the far corners of the earth. One of the reasons for the deluge of attention paid The Great Stone Face is that his work "incarnates a sensibility so in tune with the anxieties of our age," according to **Buster Keaton: A Bio-Bibliography** by Joanna E. Rapf and Gary L. Green (Greenwood Press, \$55). The biographical sketch doesn't add much to what is already known about Keaton, although there are some quotes of interest from MGM story editor Sam Marx. There is also new information about forgotten MGM co-founder Harry Rapf, which would seem self-serving in that he is the grandfather of co-author Rapf; however, she is honest enough to describe *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* — which he produced — as "corny and dull."

The filmography may well live up to its claim of being the most complete to date; it has the advantage, of course, of borrowing information from the many that have preceded it, notably Maryann Chach's, compiled for Tom Dardis' biography of Keaton. (Kevin Brownlow allowed the authors the use of files assembled for his Emmy-winning documentary.)

The meat of the Rapf-Green tome is the bibliographical essay, which skillfully critiques the major and minor books and articles devoted to the comic. Rudi Blesh's seminal biography is praised for its insight into the production of Keaton's films, but is harshly criticized for "blatant inaccuracies" and over-dependence on Buster's selective memory. Dardis' later biography is found to set the record straight about some aspects of the comic's life but lacks Blesh's warmth, "approaching Keaton as the subject of a psychological case study."

(Marion Meade's recent biography, *Buster Keaton: Cut to the Chase* — reviewed in *Past Times* No. 21 — had not yet been published when the book went to press.)

The massive **Buster Keaton: The Little Iron Man** edited by Oliver Lindsey Scott (Buster Books, \$130 hardcover; \$100 paperback), is an admirable but problematic attempt to debunk the popular mythology about the acrobatic silent clown. Self-proclaimed "Professor of Keatonology" Scott has compiled the gospel according to Buster from extant interviews, plus *My Wonderful World of Slapstick* — the comic's autobiography, as told to Charles Samuels — minus the repetition. He has reshuffled it all in chronological order and persuaded Keaton's widow, Eleanor, to add a running commentary, which is easily the most valuable part of this unusual effort.

"I am not an author," asserts Scott, who is based in New Zealand. "I am simply the bloke who got sick of all the rotten, inaccurate biographies... and got mad enough to compile all the

historically accurate info into a hopefully readable form." Of course, "the facts as Buster viewed them" are often questionable — thus the virtue of Eleanor Keaton's contribution — nor is this oversized volume of nearly 500 pages as reader-friendly as its editor hoped.

Eleanor (who authorized and approved the book) says much that will surprise the reader. Even the trivia startles: next time you watch *The General*, she suggests, keep a sharp eye peeled for Boris Karloff (or a dead ringer for him) in the dinner table scene, as the man whose cigar burns a hole in the table cloth. Eleanor's blunt comments on the biographers are particularly intriguing. On Samuels: "He didn't want to speak to anyone except Buster... he didn't even talk to me." On Blesh: "Buster would tell him a story... by the time he got it into print he killed it by improving it; it wasn't as funny." On Dardis: "He was a royal pain. I spent six weeks with that man... and there was nothing in [his book] that I had had to say."

by the time he got it into print he killed it by improving it; it wasn't as funny." On Dardis: "He was a royal pain. I spent six weeks with that man... and there was nothing in [his book] that I had had to say."

Scott's book is set in a variety of typefaces, in a pointless effort to distinguish between sources. This succeeds mainly in giving his tome a distinctly amateurish look; imagine a phonebook-sized ransom note, and you'll have some idea. The sources themselves are identified in the back of the book, which makes it difficult to discern where the text derives from and helps defeat the purpose of a volume aimed largely at the scholar and the cognoscenti. (A copy of the separate index/addendum, due off the press soon, was unavailable for review.)

There is also the matter of the book's hefty price tag, which is enough to give even die-hard Keaton fans sticker shock — or cardiac arrest. Scott claims this self-published effort is not a profit-making venture, and given the size of the printing — a

limited edition of 500 copies — there is little reason to doubt his word. But the price puts the book largely out of the range of its intended audience, despite its status as a collector's item. (Available from Buster Books, P.O. Box 221-157, Christchurch, New Zealand; fax, 011-64-03-365-1903. Paperbacks with damaged covers available at \$50. Airmail postage, \$30; surface, \$20.)

Yet another Keaton book became known to us just before we went to press. It's billed as the first in-depth study of Keaton's talkies, and is appropriately titled **The Sound of Buster Keaton**. According to author David Macleod, the book includes several appearances never featured in earlier Keaton filmographies. Residents of the U.S. should send a check for \$25 for each copy (which includes surface mail postage; add an extra five bucks per copy if you want it sent via airmail). Make checks payable to "D. Macleod" and send to Buster Books (great minds think alike — same name, different address): 5 Vanburgh Court, Wincott Street, London SE11 4NS, England.





Coming in May 1996 from Split Reel Publishing. . .

# Laurel OR Hardy:

*The Solo Films of Stan Laurel and Oliver "Babe" Hardy*



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**Written by Rob Stone**

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## More MGM Music From Rhino and TCM

Rhino Records and Turner Classic Movies continue their jointly-produced series of compact discs releasing the great musical moments from MGM films. Recent releases include *Ain't It The Truth: The Lena Horne MGM Anthology*; the soundtrack to the 1943 fantasy *Cabin in the Sky*; and collections of the songs and background scores for *Gigi*, *The Harvey Girls* and *For Me and My Gal*. Rhino's five-volume box set of *Academy Award Winning Songs* from 1934-1993 will now be available as individual CDs; if your tastes run exclusively to the vintage songs, Volumes One and Two will most to your liking. In 1996, Rhino will also issue box sets of *The Complete Judy Garland at MGM*, and two "Complete" box sets for Fred Astaire, one representing his early work at RKO, and another collecting all of the MGM material.

## Videobrary Showing More Than Just Their Shorts

In addition to several new collections of comedy shorts (see page 5), the folks at Videobrary have released three rare features as the first entries in their new Silver Series. These exceptionally rare titles are mastered from pristine prints on high grade tape, and sell for \$19.95 each, slightly more than the usual Videobrary price. *Janice Meredith* is a romance which takes place during the Revolutionary War; this 1924 silent, running about 110 minutes, stars Marion Davies and the first Harrison Ford, but we imagine that many will purchase it because W.C. Fields is in the cast. Also available are two lurid early '30s talkies made for small studios: *The Gigolettes of Paris* features former silent stars Madge Bellamy and Gilbert Roland in a story about playboys and gold-diggers exacting their revenge on each other in Paris and Monte Carlo (although we'll bet the glamour is dimmed somewhat by the budget available to Equitable Pictures, the producing studio). *Hell Harbor* was directed by reliable pro Henry King, with Lupe Velez and Jean Hersholt (in a decidedly un-Christian role!) cavorting in the Caribbean, with murder and blackmail in the air. This tape is mastered from an uncut, ten-reel print. (Videobrary, 6117 Carpenter Avenue, North Hollywood, CA 91606; (818) 761-5265.)

## The Theda Bara Story, or Vamp 'til Ready

By Jordan R. Young

What was a nice Jewish girl from Cincinnati like Theodosia Goodman doing in a place like Hollywood during World War I? Finding short-lived fame and notoriety as the movies' first sex symbol, aka "Satan's handmaiden," better known as Theda Bara.

Although Bara's status as an icon of the silent era is unrelenting — she surfaced on a U.S. postage stamp in 1994 — the woman behind the sultry image has been largely lost to the ages. Eve Golden, the author of *Platinum Blonde: The Life and Legends of Jean Harlow*, has rescued Bara from near-total obscurity, in **Vamp: The Rise and Fall of Theda Bara** (Emprise Publishing Inc./Vestal Press; 274 pages, hardcover; \$29.95), a revealing biography that painstakingly attempts to sort fact from fiction.



Bara's few surviving films are not representative of her best work (*Cleopatra*, one of her personal favorites, was lost in a Museum of Modern Art vault fire). The unavailability of her films and lack of scandal in her life, Golden theorizes, may well be the reason that this is the first biography of the star. Unlike Pickford, she made no attempt at talkies; unlike Gish, she did not live long enough to be re-discovered. When she died at 69 in 1955, the author reminds us, silent films were still only "a faintly embarrassing memory, more to be laughed at [as with Jay Ward's *Fractured Flickers*] than studied."

The slinky vixen with the heavy eye makeup was the first star created by the movie capital's rampant publicity machine — there's a hilarious description of her initial meeting with the press in 1914, during which studio PR mavens passed her off on gullible journalists as the exotic offspring of a French actress and an Italian sculptor, born in the shadow of Egypt's pyramids. But she was more than a fabricated

sex goddess, as Golden found out — many contemporary film critics felt she was one of the great talents of her day.

The chubby, stagestruck daughter of a Polish fabric cutter and a Swiss-born wigmaker, Bara toured in second-string road companies before she made her movie debut as an extra (a fact she denied for many years). She was nearly 30 when she found overnight success as the vamp (short for vampire) in *A Fool There Was* (1915). The scandalous star-making vehicle was based on a melodrama, which was in turn inspired by a poem by Rudyard Kipling.

So popular was Theda that more than a thousand babies were named after her; she single-handedly saved Fox Studios from bankruptcy. Bara sent further shockwaves across the silver screen as *Carmen*, *Salome*, *Madame DuBarry* and a half-naked *Cleopatra* (her snake-bra resembled Madonna's costumes) before the vamp vogue faded in 1919. An attempt to resuscitate her career by playing against type as the beloved Irish heroine, *Kathleen Mavourneen*, resulted in violent protests, riots and death threats — one of the biggest theatrical disasters in history. Bara abruptly disappeared from the screen; she returned five years later, only to make her swan song in a two-reel Hal Roach comedy co-directed by Stan Laurel.

Bara became "something of a den mother" to the stars of the '30s, and appeared on stage and (like Pickford) on radio; as late as 1943, she traded quips with Groucho Marx. The well-heeled society matron threatened to write her autobiography "because nobody ever wrote a true word about me" — but like so many celebrity memoirs, nothing came of it. Golden's well-researched biography pays long overdue tribute to this self-aware woman of intelligence and taste. The handsome, profusely-illustrated book also marks an auspicious debut for Vestal Press' new Emprise Publishing imprint. (Available from Vestal, P.O. Box 97, Vestal NY 13851.)



# Music

## The Amazing Benny Carter

Benny Carter has been making records since the late '20s. His résumé includes work with Horace Henderson, James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Charlie Johnson, Chick Webb, McKinney's Cotton Pickers and Don Redman — not to mention making hundreds of recordings with his own big bands, and writing the scores for dozens of feature films and television shows.

The multi-talented arranger-composer-performer (who plays alto sax, trumpet, tenor sax, clarinet, trombone and piano) will turn 89 on August 8th; he is still performing for enthusiastic audiences all over the world, and recording for the MusicMasters label. Two of his recent albums, *Harlem Renaissance* and *Elegy in Blue*, have won Grammy awards; his most recent release, *Benny Carter Songbook* (MusicMasters 65134-2; \$11.99) includes contributions from Ruth Brown, Peggy Lee, Bobby Short and Joe Williams.

## Mills Bros. Fans Unite!

If you love the smooth harmonies of the Mills Brothers, join the club. Literally! We've just become aware of The Mills Brothers Society, which publishes a nifty quarterly newsletter. The publication, *Remembering the Mills Brothers*, is edited by longtime Mills fan Daniel Clemson. The newsletter provides updates on the current activities of Don Mills—the last surviving member of the group, who's still singing around the country with his son John—and also includes fond reminiscences from fans and tips for record collectors.

The current issue features an article about the Brothers' rare radio transcriptions; background on the group's early years in Piqua, Ohio; and an interesting sidebar about the Mills Brothers' work with jazz violin great Joe Venuti. You can join the Society by sending \$15.00 (\$19.00 for overseas residents) to Clemson at 604 N. Market Street, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-2727. (Incidentally, John and Donald Mills will be performing with Kay Starr at Harrah's in Reno, Nevada, from September 10 through the 22nd.)

## Sublime Sophistication From Eddy Duchin

Last year, Jim Bedoian's fine CD label, Take Two Records, issued an excellent disc featuring some of the early work of pianist Eddy Duchin. The reception was enthusiastic enough to warrant a new album, **The Sophisticated Styling of Eddy Duchin & His Orchestra 1933-37, Volume II** (Take Two TT417CD; \$15.98). If anything, this volume improves upon the first in sound quality and in repertoire.

Duchin's "society band" played in the swankiest nightclubs and ballrooms in the country, but had enough sparkle and bounce in its music to attract fans from all walks of life. His men recorded for Columbia and Brunswick in 1932-33 and again from 1938 onward, but all 20 tracks on this CD are from their tenure with Victor, during which they were at a peak of musical quality.

Duchin's extravagant pianistics sometimes seem a little corny and overdone, and the band will never be mistaken for Count Basie's, but it had a surprising amount of musical muscle; in its own quiet way, it swings just fine. Tenor saxes and muted trumpets lay down a cushion of chords while a soulful violin states the melody and a surprisingly sprightly bass keeps the rhythm going; Eddy flails away at the ivories, his hyperactive piano filigrees adding color to the musical decor.

Many of the tunes here are standards such as "Cheek to Cheek," "Pennies From Heaven," "You Are My Lucky Star," and "Lovely to Look At." Bedoian shows his fine musical taste by also selecting neglected gems such as "I'm Building Up to An Awful Letdown" and "I Just Couldn't Take it Baby." Lew Sherwood sings on 15 tracks, and if he's not the most flexible or romantic of vocalists, his average-guy baritone is a pleasant change from the mannered crooning of many band singers. Jerry Cooper sings "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," the DeMarco Sisters add spice to two tracks, and young Buddy Clark sings on an excellent if obscure song, "The Camera Doesn't Lie."

The transfers by George Morrow are absolutely first-rate, with every nuance of the band perfectly defined. The sole exception is "A Needle in a Haystack," which abruptly changes sonic character about 21 seconds through. A terrific album. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)

## Jolie, Satch, Merm, Mildred Commemorated

The postage stamps honoring American performers are the springboard for a new LaserLight CD and cassette series entitled **American Legends**. Twenty titles are planned; the four currently available are rather a mixed bag.

While all other entries have 12 tracks, the album for **Ethel Merman** (LaserLight 12 741) has 13—probably because two of them are different versions of "You're the Top." The first is an enjoyable duet with Bing Crosby from the soundtrack of the 1936 film *Anything Goes*; the second is a stereo version recorded with Billy May's orchestra in the 1960s. The rest of the album (and the whole series) draws upon a diverse array of sources, with a resulting wide variance in audio quality.

Similarly, the **Mildred Bailey** volume (12 733) has some of her late '40s discs with the bands of Eddie Sauter and Ellis Larkens, heard here in unaltered mono but from slightly worn copies. A nice surprise is her 1937 version of "Thanks For the Memory." **Louis Armstrong** (12 734) has some material from Satch's 1947 landmark Town Hall concert (recently reissued in its entirety by BMG), early '30s waxings of "I've Got the World on a String" and "Black and Blue," and the soundtrack version of "Pennies From Heaven" from the Paramount film. Some of the tracks for **Al Jolson** (12 738) are reference recordings for *The Jolson Story*; others are Decca 78s (worn copies in not-great transfers), and just for variety, there's the 1916 acoustic of "Where Did Robinson Crusoe Go." These certainly aren't definitive albums, but for the price (\$6.98 or thereabouts, available in many retail outlets) they're worth a listen.

One LaserLight release which is definitely worth having is **Al Jolson Live!** (12 585) which includes 12 tracks from Jolie's Kraft Music Hall shows which were not issued commercially. The tunes include "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" (not recorded commercially by Jolson) and newly available live versions of some trademark songs ("Avalon," "Ma Blushin' Rosie"). The tracks have been mixed seamlessly to give the impression of a live Jolson concert. Well worth having, and inexpensive.



## CDs Spotlight the Versatile Phil Harris

In August 1995, Phil Harris—the bandleader and singer who drawled his way through novelty songs in a voice that sounded like gravel dipped in honey—passed away at the age of 91. Harris probably became best known to most of the public as a sidekick to Jack Benny on radio, but he also appeared as co-star of a very popular show with his wife, Alice Faye, from 1946 to 1955; he appeared in films, among them the Academy Award-winning short *So This is Harris*; and he made a number of successful recordings.

Most of those records are from the '40s and '50s, but a precious few showcase the young Phil Harris. Four sides made in October 1931 for Victor tell us how Phil sounded as the young vocalist and co-leader of the Carol Lofner-Phil Harris St. Francis Hotel Orchestra, which was a sensation for three years in San Francisco. Four other sides made for Columbia on March 3, 1933 provide a glimpse of the magic that was made by Phil's own band during its residency at the glamorous Cocoanut Grove. (This nightclub, located inside the Ambassador Hotel on the outskirts of Los Angeles, was *the* night spot for Hollywood celebrities in the early '30s.)



Since Harris made so few commercial recordings in the early days, it's really a thrill to hear twenty selections by his 1932-33 band in excellent fidelity on a new CD from Take Two Records, **Phil Harris: Echoes From the Cocoanut Grove** (TT 416 CD; \$15.98). These selections are from rare but extremely well recorded transcriptions originally intended for radio broadcast only. Producer Jim Bedoian tells us that this album was in production well before Phil's passing — in fact, Mr. Bedoian had been planning to do an LP release of material by this band when the recording industry conversion from LPs to CDs made it unfeasible.

This album continues Take Two's series of CD retrospectives by the Grove's bandleaders; the label earlier released a collection of similar transcriptions by Gus Arnheim, and we hope that eventually we'll hear some of the Jimmie Grier material. All three bands had the bouncy "West Coast" sound — marked by hotter and more supple rhythm sections than the East Coast bands generally had, and by a greater emphasis on chirpy alto sax sections, with frequent hot solos from the brass section adding musical heat. All three bands also shared a vocal trio known as the Three Ambassadors, heard to good advantage in five tracks on the Harris CD. One of the Ambassadors was a very young Jack Smith, who would have hit records for Capitol in the '40s.

The Harris band was distinguished by a violin section, which added polish and a slightly sweet sound. Of course, the leader's own vocals added a very distinctive touch, as one can tell by listening to "Rockin' Chair," "Lazy River" and "I've Got Nothing to Do But Love." Phil shares a duet with canary Leah Ray on the saucy "How's About It?," and Leah's sultry voice (somewhat like Connie Boswell's) is showcased on numbers like "How Can You Say No" and "I'm Making Hay in the Moonlight."

The band itself shows its mettle on hot renditions of "Twelfth Street Rag," "Young and Healthy" and "Mimi." All in all, a fine collection that spotlights a part of Harris's career which should be better remembered. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)

The Take Two CD is such a joy that we can hardly imagine anyone being disappointed with it; however, if you want to hear Phil's novelty hits of the 1940s you'll have to look elsewhere. Elsewhere is a CD entitled **That's What I Like About Phil Harris** (Good Music 118521; \$16.98). The album has 24 of Phil's best tracks—most of which feature him rattling off hilarious lyrics in a deadpan drawl, while a hot, loud and very brassy band stomps away behind him.

A few of the tracks show Phil's love of the great black entertainer Bert Williams ("The Darktown Poker Club," "The Preacher and the Bear," "Woodman, Spare That Tree") while others are reworking of vintage tunes ("Row, Row, Row" and "Muskrat Ramble"). Several are Phil's own hits, including "The Thing" and that ubiquitous tune about the place called Do-Wah-Diddy that ain't no town and ain't no city. All of them are most enjoyable, and the sound quality is excellent. (Available from Good Music Record Co., P.O. Box 1935, Ridgely, MD 21681-1935.)

## Music That Really Smokes

Some key figures in Western Swing music are finally getting their due on Compact Discs. In our last issue, we reviewed the new 5-disc box set by Milton Brown, and a recent CD by the band of fiddler Spade Cooley. Now, the prime recordings of Cooley's one-time lead singer have been reissued as part of Capitol Nashville's *Vintage Collections* series. **Tex Williams & His Western Caravan** (Capitol Nashville 8-36184-2) is a welcome collection that displays the leader's droll sense of humor and his band's hot music.

Despite the seemingly authentic Southwestern twang in Williams' voice, he was born and raised in Ramsey, Illinois. An impaired leg from a childhood attack of polio didn't cripple his ambition, and at 13, in 1930, he was singing as "Jack Williams" over WJDL-Decatur.

After a detour to Washington state, where he was an apple-picker by day and a guitarist by night, he came to Los Angeles in 1942 and found plenty of work in country dancehalls which catered to thousands of Southwesterners who had been lured to California by factory jobs. Williams joined Spade Cooley's popular band at the Venice Pier ballroom in Santa Monica, playing bass and singing as part of a vocal trio which Cooley's manager christened "Oakie, Arkie and Tex" in order to appeal to the homesick audiences. Williams sang lead on Cooley's biggest hits, and when Capitol offered him a contract, most of Cooley's band, weary of the leader's tirades, joined Tex.

Tex's most successful years were 1947-49, sparked by the monster hit "Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)," written mainly by Merle Travis. A number of similar "patter song" releases followed, with Tex's mile-a-minute, droll delivery of hilarious lyrics backed by the hot fiddle section, swinging bass and stinging steel guitar. Most of the 20 selections contained here are from that peak period, with two enjoyable tracks from a 1963 live album. All are delights, especially "Suspicion," "Never Trust a Woman" and "Wild Card," the latter co-written by Buddy Ebsen. Seven tracks are from rare radio transcriptions, and two are previously unreleased in any form. Tex is gone, having died—ironically, from lung cancer—in 1985, but his music is full of life and worthy of rediscovery.



# What's Old on Audio: Vintage Music on New and Recent CDs

*These CDs can be special ordered through your local record store, or can be purchased by mail order from sources such as Worlds Records (P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948; (800) 742-6663) or Vintage Sound Works (see page 17).*

Allen, Henry "Red": Best of Jazz 4031  
 Andrews Sisters: The Andrews Sisters (1937-1940) Flapper 9766  
 Armstrong, Louis: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68486-4  
 Armstrong, Louis: Pocketful of Dreams, Volume 3 (1935-38) GRP 649  
 Armstrong, Louis: West End Blues 1926-1933 Indigo 2035  
 Astaire, Fred: 1930-1938 L'Art Vocal 16  
 Basie, Count: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68493-4  
 Basie, Count: His Best Recordings Best of Jazz 4026  
 Bechet, Sidney: 1941-1944 Classics 860  
 Berigan, Bunny: and His Orchestra 1938-1942 (with rare Elite sides) Classics 844  
 Berry, Chu: Blowing Up a Breeze (1933-1941) Topaz 1024  
 Bigard, Barney: His Best Recordings Best of Jazz 4028  
 Bradley, Will and Ray McKinley: Basin Street Boogie Aerospace 7110  
 Bradley, Will and Ray McKinley: Five O'Clock Whistle Aerospace 7101  
 Bradley, Will and Ray McKinley: Rock-a-Bye the Boogie Aerospace 7112  
  
 Cabin in the Sky: Original Soundtrack Rhino/TCM 72245  
 Carter Family: When the Roses Bloom in Dixieland (1929-1930) Rounder 1066  
 Carter Family: Worried Man Blues (1930) Rounder 1067  
 Chester, Bob: Octave Jump (1939-42) Aerospace 7103  
 City Lights: The Chaplin Score Conducted by Carl Davis Silva 1054  
 Clinton, Larry: Feeling Like a Dream (1940-41) Hep 1047  
 Cole, Cozy: 1944-45 Classics 865  
 Cole, Nat King: 1944-1945 Classics 861  
 Como, Perry and Raymond Scott Orchestra: The Perry Como Shows 1943 On the Air 101905  
 Condon, Eddie: Condon Town Hall Concerts Volume 10 (1944) Jazzology JCD 1019-1020  
 Condon, Eddie: Windy City Jazz (1927-1942) Topaz 1026  
 Coon-Sanders Nighthawks: Volume One Parklane  
 Crosby, Bob: Sugar Foot Stomp (1936-42) Aerospace 7121  
 Crosby, Bob: The Big Apple (1936-1940) Aerospace 7111  
 Dandridge, Putney: 1936 Classics 869  
 Dandridge, Putney: 1935-36 Classics 846  
 Dorsey, Jimmy: Don't Be That Way (1935-1940) Aerospace 7120  
 Dorsey, Tommy and Frank Sinatra: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68487-4  
 Dorsey, Tommy: and his Orchestra 1935-1936 Classics 854  
 Dorsey, Tommy: His Best Recordings Best of Jazz 4029  
 Downey, Morton: The Irish Nightingale ASV-Living Era 5173  
 Duchin, Eddy: The Sophisticated Styling of, 1933-37, Vol. II Take Two TT417  
 Durbin, Deanna: Can't Help Singing (1936-45 soundtracks) Jasmine 101  
  
 Eldridge, Roy: The Big Sound of Little Jazz (1935-43) Topaz 1021  
 Ellington, Duke: 1941 Classics 851  
 Ellington, Duke: and His Orchestra, 1942-44 Classics 867  
 Ellington, Duke: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68488-4  
 Ellington, Duke: The Duke Plays Ellington, Vol. 1 (1927-38) Topaz 1020  
 Ellis, Anita: And Eugenie Baird (1945-50) Audiophile 38  
 Fitzgerald, Ella: 1941-44 Classics 840  
 Fitzgerald, Ella: The Early Years, Part 1 and Part 2 (1935-1941) GRP 654 (4-CD set)  
 Friedman, Snooks: Snooks and His Memphis Stompers (1928-32) Parklane 100  
 Gaillard, Slim: 1945 Classics 864  
 Garner, Erroll: 1944, Volume 3 Classics 850  
 Gillum, Jazz: Key to the Highway 1935-1942 Blues Collection 840  
 Goodman, Benny: and His Orchestra 1936-1937 Classics 858  
 Goodman, Benny: Benny Goodman's Carnegie Festival Jazztory 102411  
 Goodman, Benny: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68489-4  
  
 Hall, Juanita: The Glory of Love Audiophile ACD-53  
 Hampton, Lionel: All Star Jazz Sessions, Volume 2 Jazztory 102408  
 Hampton, Lionel: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68496-4  
 Harris, Phil: Echoes From the Cocoanut Grove (1932-33) Take Two TT416  
 Hawkins, Coleman: 1944 Classics 842  
 Hawkins, Coleman: 1944-1945 Classics 863  
 Hawkins, Coleman: Body and Soul (1929-43) Topaz 1022  
 Hawkins, Coleman: Hawk Talk Tradition 1007  
 Hawkins, Coleman: Swing Jazztory 102419

Hawkins, Erskine: and His Orchestra, 1941-45 Classics 868  
 Herbeck, Ray: Modern Music With Romance (1941-42) Circle 78  
 Herman, Woody: Amen (1937-1942) Aerospace 7108  
 Herman, Woody: and his Orchestra at the Hollywood Palladium 1942-44 RST 91536  
 Herman, Woody: Blues on Parade (1937-1941) Aerospace 7122  
 Herman, Woody: Wildroot Tradition 1009  
 Hines, Earl and Billy Eckstine: The Father Jumps (1940-42) Aerospace 7115  
 Horne, Lena: at MGM - Ain' It The Truth Rhino/TCM 72246  
 James, Harry: All or Nothing at All (1939 broadcasts) Hindsight 263  
 Johnson, James P.: 1944 Classics 856  
 Jolson, Al: I Love to Sing (1927-39 soundtracks) Jasmine 100  
 Jones, Isham: Swinging Down the Lane Memphis Archives MA 7014  
 Jones, Richard M.: 1927-1944 Classics 853  
 Jones, Spike: For the Love of Spike (1942-1954) Vintage 1001  
 Jordan Louis: and His Tympany Five, 1943-45 Classics 866  
  
 Kenton, Stan: and His Orchestra 1940-44 Classics 848  
 Krupa, Gene: and his Orchestra 1940 Classics 859  
 Lewis, George: At Manny's Tavern (1949) American Music 85  
 Lewis, Meade Lux: 1941-44 Classics 841  
 Lewis, Willie: and His Entertainers 1936-38 Classics 847  
 Lunceford, Jimmie: And his Orchestra 1941-1945 Classics 862  
 Lynn, Vera: The Early Years: We'll Meet Again ASV-Living Era AJA-5145  
 Manone, Wingy: and His Orchestra 1936 Classics 849  
 Masters, Frankie: And His Orchestra, 1947 Circle CCD-63  
 Mayerl, Billy: Plays Billy Mayerl Piano Favourites (1925-1939) ASV-Living Era AJA 5162  
 McCoy, Clyde: And His Orchestra, 1951: Sugar Blues Circle CCD-82  
 Memphis Jug Band: State of Tennessee Blues Memphis Archives MA 7019  
 Mercer, Johnny: Sweet Georgia Brown (1949) Hindsight 152  
 Miller, Emmett: Minstrel Man From Georgia (1928-29) Columbia CK 66999  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Missing Chapters Vol. 1: American Patrol Avid 556  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Missing Chapters Vol. 2: Keep 'em Flying Avid 557  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Vol. 3: All's Well Mademoiselle Avid 558  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Vol. 4: The Red Cavalry March Avid 559  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Vol. 5: Abbey Road Recordings Avid 560  
 Miller, Glenn AAF Orch: Missing Chapters Vol. 6: Blue Champagne Avid 561  
 Miller, Glenn: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68490-4  
 Morton, Jelly Roll: Piano Solos, 1923-1926 Retrieval 79002  
 Moskowitz, Joseph: The Art of the Cymbalom, 1916-1953  
 Moten, Bennie: His Best Recordings Best of Jazz 4027  
 Murphy, Rose: and Evalyn Tyner Audiophile ACD-70  
  
 NBC's Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street (1940-1942) Harlequin 60  
 Negri, Pola: and Rudolph Valentino Chansophone 120  
 Nichols, Red: 1929-1930 IAJRC 1011  
 Oliver, King: Shake It and Break It Jazz Hour 73536  
 Pastor, Tony: Confessin' (1940-49) Aerospace 7114  
 Reinhardt, Django: 1940-41 Classics 852  
 Reinhardt, Django: Are You in the Mood? Jazztory 102415  
 Reinhardt, Django: Swing De Paris Iris 139  
 Rollini, Adrian: Bouncin' in Rhythm (1926-1935) Topaz 1027  
 Royal Society Jazz Orchestra: Roll Up the Carpet Circle CCD-147  
 Rushing, Jimmy: Mr. Five By Five Topaz Jazz 1019  
 Shaw, Artie: and his Orchestra 1936 Classics 855  
 Shaw, Artie: Greatest Hits RCA Victor 68494-4  
 Smith, Bessie: 1925-1927 Classics 843  
 Smith, Bessie: Her Best Recordings Best of Jazz 4030  
 Smith, Bessie: The Complete Recordings, Volume 5 - The Final Chapter Columbia C2K 57546  
 Smith, Whispering Jack: Whispering Jack Smith Flapper PASTCD7074  
 Strong, Bob: And His Orchestra (1944-45) Circle 129  
  
 Tatum, Art: Body and Soul Jazz Hour 73514  
 Tatum, Art: Fine Art and Dandy (1939-1945) Drive 41047  
 Tatum, Art: The Rococo Piano of Art Tatum (1939-1941) Flapper 7031  
 Teagarden, Jack: The Club Hangover Broadcasts (1954) Arbors Jazz 19150



## What's Old on CD

*Continued from Page 14*

Trenet, Charles: *Boum!* (1936-1944) ASV-Living Era AJA 5166  
 Vallee, Rudy: *Heigh-Ho Everybody!* (1929-1938) Flapper 7077

Various Artists: *Anthology of Scat Singing, Volume 1* (1924-1929), *Volume 2* (1929-1933) Masters of Jazz 801, 802

Various Artists: *Beginner's Guide to Jazz* (CD-ROM Enhanced Sampler) RCA Victor 68491-4

Various Artists: *Boogie Woogie Special* (1928-1944) Topaz 1025

Various Artists: *Booze and the Blues* Columbia CK 67002

Various Artists: *Cattle Call: Early Cowboy Music and Its Roots* Rounder 1101

Various Artists: *Country Radio Shows, Volume One On the Air* 101908

Various Artists: *Don't Fence Me In: Western Music's Early Golden Era* Rounder 1102

Various Artists: *From Galway to Dublin: Early Recordings of Irish Traditional Music 1921-1959* Rounder 1087

Various Artists: *Great Crooners* (CD with book by Delilah Jones) Friedman/Fairfax 301-X

Various Artists: *Harmonica Blues 1927-1941* Fremaux 2740 (2-CD set)

Various Artists: *Hawaiian Music 1927-1944* Fremaux 2735 (2-CD set)

Various Artists: *Jazz Dance Music 1923-1941* Fremaux FA 037 (2-CD set)

Various Artists: *Jazz New Orleans 1918-1944* Fremaux 2739 (2-CD set)

Various Artists: *Messed Up in Love...and Other Tales of Woe* Columbia CK 52831

Various Artists: *Milestone at the Garden: Irish Fiddle Masters from the 78 RPM Era 1922-1959* Rounder 1123

Various Artists: *On the Beach at Waikiki - Music of Hawaii 1914-1952* Harlequin 57

Various Artists: *Scott Joplin and the Age of Ragtime* (CD with book by Tim Frew) Friedman/Fairfax 305-2

Various Artists: *Stampede! Western Music's Late Golden Era, 1945-60* Rounder 1103

Various Artists: *Swing Into Bop (1941-1944)* Topaz 1028

Various Artists: *The Great Film Musicals* Memoir 514

Various Artists: *They All Played Big Band Boogie (1939-1950)* Aerospace 7107

Various Artists: *Vintage Original Hawaiian Memories (1928-1934)* Vintage 1002

Waller, Fats: *1937 Classics* 857

Waller, Fats: *Greatest Hits* RCA Victor 68495-4

Watters, Lu: *Yerba Buena Jazz Band Live, Volume 3* GHB 119

Wells, Dicky: *Dicky's Blues (1933-1941)* Topaz 1023

White, Josh: *Blues Singer (1932-1936)* Columbia CK 67001

Whiteman, Paul: *Portrait of Paul Whiteman* ASV-Living Era AJA 5170

Wiley, Lee: *1931-1940 L'Art Vocal* 15

Williams, Clarence: *1933 Classics* 845

Williams, Clarence: *Volume 2, 1928* Collectors Classics 28

Young, Lester with Count Basie: *Lady Be Good* Jazztory 102418

## Crazy Rhythms of 1920s Played By New Bands

Interest in the hot-dance music of the 1920s continues to grow rapidly. New Yorkers have long been treated to Vince Giordano's Nighthawks and the Blue Bird Society Orchestra. In the Los Angeles area, you can tap your toes to bands led by Brad Kay, pianist Dean Mora, crooner Johnny Crawford (who played Chuck Connors' son on the 1960s TV series *The Rifleman*) and clarinetist Mike Henebry, who leads the Crazy Rhythm Hot Society Orchestra. Henebry has founded the American Society of Twenties Orchestras, which might more accurately be described as an International society, since it has member bands in Australia, Canada, Scotland, England, Denmark, Holland, Germany and New Zealand.

Henebry publishes a hefty newsletter on a schedule he describes as "semiannually (ish)." Each issue runs about 100 pages; the layout is a little chaotic and since the newsletter is photocopied, the image quality of some vintage reprints is a trifle dark—but what the newsletter lacks in design, it more than makes up for in fascinating information. A recent edition featured a reprint of a 1926 article by British dance band leader Jack Hylton, a theatre-orchestra "cue sheet" for the silent film *Behind the Front*, selected articles from 1934 issues of *Billboard*, and label art from vintage 78s.

The publication is mainly directed at leaders or managers of '20s style orchestras, with the objective of promoting and preserving this style of music. "The groups can be hot or sweet, large or small, any instrumentation, and use authentic or original material," Henebry states. The publication is free to bandleaders or managers; subscriptions for others are "\$35.00 per year and discouraged," with the note, "Please subscribe only if you can't bear the thought of doing without!" Such are the perils of being a one-man, spare-time publisher.



Henebry's own band has been busy playing California jazz festivals, ballroom dances and "Gatsby parties." The CRHSO is a colorful sight on the bandstand, nattily costumed in pinstripe shirts, suspenders, bowties, fedoras—and shoes with spats. Maybe this isn't the authentic '20s band attire (where tuxedos were the rule), but it certainly transports the audience back in time. Banners, megaphones and a 1920s microphone help complete the picture.

Recently, the group released a compact disc, entitled *One Hour With You*, a joyous romp through 22 songs originally dating from 1921 through 1934. Most of the arrangements are transcribed from vintage recordings, with an inventive chart for "Ma! (He's Making Eyes at Me)" and a surprisingly sprightly arrangement for the title track being Henebry originals. The band's precision is very impressive: the three saxophones blithely negotiate the tricky twists and turns of Ellington's "Daybreak Express Medley," and play the glissandi in "Creole Love Call" in perfect unison. The drumming by Mike Sumrall is authentic, without a trace of Swing or Bebop influence (often the downfall of other '20s-style bands).

The album includes other homages to Duke ("Black Beauty," a slightly ragged rendition of "Ring Dem Bells" and the rare 1930 version of "Cotton Club Stomp"); vocalist Robert York pays tribute to Bing Crosby with "Please," "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Dinah." Sultry-voiced Kelley Foster lights the torch on "Ill Wind" and the James P. Johnson-Andy Razaf rarity "Misery," which is much more fun than its title suggests. Special guest Cheryl Chase does a fine impression of boop-boop-a-doop girl Helen Kane on "Button Up Your Overcoat," "I Wanna Be Loved By You" and "Do Something," the latter an especially spirited saga of romantic frustration. Jim Jones doesn't quite match Cab Calloway's lung power on "Minnie the Moocher" (for that matter, who could?), but he certainly has fun with the material.

The recording quality is excellent; we love old 78s beyond all reason, but we admit it is a thrill to hear a properly performed authentic '20s arrangement in pristine, you-are-there sound quality. For information on the band, the CD, the Society and the newsletter, contact Mike Henebry, 3011 Druid Lane, Los Alamitos, CA 90720.



## Whispers that Speak Volumes

The crooner whose "confidential" style was a sensation during the pre-Depression years has been served admirably in a new CD from the British-based Flapper label: **Whispering Jack Smith** (Flapper PAST CD 7074). A solid overview of his recording career is provided by 26 well selected and nicely transferred tracks from 1925-1931. Many of his best known discs are included, such as "Gimme a Little Kiss (Will Ya, Huh?)," "Baby Face" and "Me and My Shadow." On some tracks, Smith is accompanied by the bands of Bert Ambrose, Carroll Gibbons and Hal Roach Studio composer LeRoy Shield.

Whispering Jack's breathy baritone was caused by either exposure to gasses during World War I, or by a bad cold which affected his voice in such a pleasing way that Smith changed his way of singing permanently. No matter which story is true, his diction was precise and clear and it is said that at live performances he could be heard clearly in every corner of the theater. His emergence in 1925 was not unrelated to the introduction of the electrical recording process, which allowed his low-volume style to be properly reproduced. He soon had many imitators, such as "Confidential Charley."

Here we can trace Smith's career from his first record, "Cecilia," (1925) through his 1928 visit to England, where he would enjoy greater popularity and longer-lasting fame than at home. Another rare treat is "I Kiss Your Hand, Madame," recorded in Berlin, which Smith sings in German and English.

After a trip to Hollywood in 1930 and major success on radio, the deepening Depression brought Smith's recording career to an abrupt halt. He waxed a mere two titles for the dime-store label Banner in 1931 (both included here), and four sides for Decca in 1940. It is rumored that a drinking problem may have contributed to his slide, but in any event his style and favored musical setting (a solo piano) were no longer in vogue. Smith continued to appear occasionally on radio throughout the '30s, but the hit-making days were over. He died in 1951 and has remained largely forgotten, but he truly typifies the halcyon days of the '20s. This new CD allows us to visit that time and to enjoy a unique and delightfully polished performer.

—John T. Aldrich III

## Pennsylvanians' Hot Music is Waring Well

From the mid-'30s onward, Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians was a large choral group with discreet orchestral backing. The formula succeeded spectacularly, and resulted in popular records for Decca and Capitol, a long-running TV show and live engagements that lasted until Waring's own demise in 1984.

Unfortunately, this success has obscured the fact that from 1923 to 1932, Waring led one of the hottest, funniest, most exuberant dance bands of the era. They made dozens of records for Victor, and one of them, "Collegiate," became a signature song of the Roaring '20s. The band made a feature film, *Syncopation*, and appeared on Broadway in *Hello Yourself*. Then, in November 1932, Waring abruptly quit recording (evidently because he feared that other bands would steal his arrangements) and didn't resurface on 78s until the mid-'40s, by which time the group had totally changed its musical direction.

Twenty tracks from the peak early years are reissued in a new CD from the Viper's Nest label, **The Fred Waring Memorial Album** (VN-179; \$11.98). "Collegiate" isn't here (you can find that on BMG's disc *Nipper's Greatest Hits of the '20s*), but all of the tracks display the band's great blend of inventive arrangements, hot solos, comedy vocals and pure showmanship. Popeye-voiced drummer Poley McClintock growls through several numbers ("Navy Blues," "I Heard"); frantic Johnny "Scat" Davis yelps all over "How'm I Doin'?" and Fred himself leads the vocals on "Farewell Blues" and "Hello Montreal." Sixteen of the selections appeared on a vinyl LP released by Stash back in '84; all of the tracks sound brighter on the CD, and the four new tunes are all gems. "Bolshevik" is a hilarious nonsense song about the lucky Russians who could get vodka in '26; "What a Night for Spooning" is a solid hot-dance track; "Dance Selections" and "Flying Colors" are experimental long-play rarities from late in '32.

The Pennsylvanians' polish, showmanship and humor survived in later years (as you can see in the '50s TV show recently released as part of Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* laserdisc box set); it's a pity that their brilliant hot arrangements didn't. (Available from Stash Mail Order, 122 W. 22nd St., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10011; (800) 666-5277.)

## Honors for Satch and Bix

In mid-February, newspapers reported that Louis Armstrong's home, a three-story house in Corona, Queens, New York which his wife Lucille bought in 1943, will become a museum. The house is already a national landmark; as a museum, it will be operated by Queens College, home to the Armstrong archives.

Another great man with a horn isn't being forgotten, either: The Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Society, based in Bix's hometown of Davenport, Iowa, has commissioned pianist-composer-conductor Lalo Schifrin to write a symphonic homage to the cornetist.

The piece will be premiered by the Quad City Symphony at the Mark Arena in Moline, Illinois on October 12. Participating in the performance will be bassist Ray Brown, drummer Louis Bellson and Australian cornetist James Morrison.

Proceeds from the event, which will be broadcast on Iowa Public Television, will go toward jazz education. Schifrin has a special affection for Bix; as a 14-year-old in Buenos Aires, he first heard jazz when he borrowed a Beiderbecke 78.

## Jan Scobey: Keeping Hot Music's Flame Bright

Some of you might remember the fiery trumpet playing of Bob Scobey, who first came to prominence as a member of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band, a San Francisco-based group that really started the traditional jazz revival in the early '40s. Bob later led his own fine trad-jazz band, making several successful records for the Good Time Jazz label and for RCA Victor before cancer claimed him in 1963; he was only 46.

Scobey's former wife Jan has for years kept the flame bright by running her own mail-order source for trad-jazz recordings; she's also frequently seen at Dixieland festivals around the country.

Last November, Jan began writing a monthly column on hot jazz for *Jazz-Now*, a magazine based in Oakland, California which brings news about all kinds of jazz to readers worldwide. Ms. Scobey covers festivals, recordings, and other activities of hot-jazz groups; for information about her column or her mail-order service, write Jan Scobey's Hot Jazz, P.O. Box 6, Upper Lake, CA 95485-0006.



# VINTAGE SOUND WORKS



**NEW! • RUDY VALLEE** Here are 22 of the crooner's '20s and '30s classics, newly remastered for superior sound quality. Rudy wraps his velvet tonsils around *I'm Just a Vagabond Lover*; *The Whiffenpoof Song*; *The Stein Song*; *Deep Night*; *Kitty From Kansas City*; *Let's Do It* and a few rarities such as *I'll Be Reminded of You*; *Goodnight My Love* (recorded in England); and *I Love the Moon*. FL 70772.....\$16.98



**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 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 greats join in on *Copenhagen*, *Everybody Loves My Baby*, *Prince of Wails*, *Alabamy Bound*, *Sugar Foot Stomp*, *TNT* and other essential jazz recordings. F-38001/2/3 (3-CD SET).....\$44.98

**NEW! • MILTON BROWN AND THE MUSICAL BROWNIES** Here's the band that really started Western Swing! With fiddles, banjo and guitars in their line-up, these fellows played jazz with a southwestern flavor. This 5-CD set has everything the group ever made, almost six hours' worth of great tracks such as *Sweet Jennie Lee*; *Copenhagen*; *Some of These Days*; *Avalon*; and *Right or Wrong*. Also included are the 14 tracks with the band led by younger brother Derwood Brown after Milton's untimely death. The sound quality is magnificent. TXRCD1-5 (5-CD SET).....\$69.98

**NEW! • LULLABY OF BROADWAY-THE MUSIC OF HARRY WARREN** It's amazing that one guy could write so many great melodies. Here's 24 of 'em. You'll enjoy Al Jolson singing *About a Quarter to Nine*; Al Bowlly crooning *You're My Everything* and *Shadow Waltz*; Frances Langford touring the *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*; British trumpeter-vocalist Nat Gonella performing fun versions of *Jeepers Creepers* and *Nagasaki*; and Jack Hylton's band playing a medley of *42nd Street Selections*. FL 97952.....\$16.98

**NEW! • STATESIDE SWEET MUSIC** Here's 22 tracks by 13 bands; some of them are dyed-in-the-wool sweet bands (Shep Fields, Art Kassel) others are groups that played sweet music in addition to swing (Artie Shaw, Charlie Barnet, Bunny Berigan). You'll enjoy hearing rarities such as *Strange Enchantment* and *That Sentimental Sandwich* by Ozzie Nelson; *Flamingo* by Freddy Martin; *If the Moon Turns Green* by Art Kassel; Vincent Lopez taking us on *A Little Rendezvous in Honolulu*; and Paul Whiteman's *Afterglow*. Fine music, and hard to find elsewhere. FL 97872.....\$16.98

**NEW! • ADRIAN ROLLINI: BOUNCIN' IN RHYTHM** Rollini was proficient on the bass sax, vibraphone, piano, drums—and a novelty instrument called the goofus. This 23-track survey of his career finds him with jazzmen Bix Beiderbecke, Frank Trumbauer, Red Nichols, Miff Mole, Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang on hot numbers such as *Shake*; *Sidewalk Blues*; *Mississippi Basin*; *Somebody Loves Me*; *Toledo Shuffle* and the title track. FLT 10272.....\$16.98

**NEW! • HARRY ROY** Harry was a top bandleader in England during the '30s—his band did everything well, with hot jazz and comedy numbers prominent. This 22-track CD features an exciting live 1938 stage show, and studio recordings of hot numbers like *Tiger Rag*; *Canadian Capers* and *Bugle Call Rag*; novelties such as *My Dog Loves Your Dog*; *Who Walks In When I Walk Out* and *I Stole Back the Gal*; and Latin-tinged tunes such as *Campešina*. FL 97412.....\$16.98

**NEW! • ISHAM JONES: SWINGING DOWN THE LANE** Hot-dance music fans will be very happy with this fine 18-track compilation. Most of the performances are from 1924 and '25, with a few from '23 and '30; about half are acoustics (very nicely remastered with a full, rich sound) and the others are early electrical recordings. The tunes include *It Had to Be You*; *My Best Girl*; *I'll See You in My Dreams*; *That Certain Party* and *It's the Blues*. MA7014.....\$11.98

**NEW! • PIANO WIZARDS** 15 keyboard giants play 18 tunes, displaying a wide variety of piano-jazz styles. Meade Lux Lewis plays the rollicking *Honky Tonk Train*; Duke Ellington plays *Fast and Furious*; Little Brother Montgomery does the *Farish Street Jive*; Bix Beiderbecke plays his delicate *In a Mist* and Jess Stacy performs two of Bix's other compositions, *Flashes* and *In the Dark*. Art Tatum's virtuoso rendition of *Tiger Rag* will leave you awestruck. MA7015.....\$11.98

**LEW STONE: THE LEGENDARY MONSIEUR BAND** This was one of the top British dance bands of the early '30s; the 70 selections on 3 CDs, taken from rare discs and broadcasts made in London between 1932 and '34, show why. The band goes from hot jazz to sweet music to bouncy big-band sounds in such songs as *Miss Otis Regrets*, *Lazy Rhythm*, *Canadian Capers*, *Isle of Capri* and dozens of others. Over 40 Al Bowlly vocals! CLAVES 9507/9 (3-CD SET).....\$44.98

**PHIL HARRIS: ECHOES FROM THE COCA-NUT GROVE** Phil's great early band is heard here in rare radio transcriptions from 1932-33, with many songs that have never been reissued on CD or LP. Vocals by Phil, The Three Ambassadors, Leah Ray, Jack Smith and others. The tunes include *Gotta Date With an Angel*, *Rockin' Chair*, *Mimi*, and the wonderfully funny *How's About It*. Harris' band had a full, rich sound and it reflected the leader's humor, charm and personality. TT416CD.....\$14.98

**FRED RICH Volume One** This volume has 22 tracks of great hot dance music from 1929 and '30; every track has been digitally restored and remastered, and the sound quality is superb. 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; so is the music. MB101.....\$12.98

**BEN SELVIN Volume One** 21 fine hot dance selections from 1931-32, originally made for Columbia and OKeh by the most prolific of all bandleaders. The toe-tappers include *My Sweet Tooth Says "I Wanna"*, *Happy Days are Here Again*, *Last Dollar*, and *Little Mary Brown*. There are also some gorgeous ballads such as *When We're Alone* and *You Call it Madness*. Among the sidemen are Benny Goodman and trumpet legend Jack Purvis. MB102.....\$12.98

**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

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**



## New CD Recalls Snooks' Stompers

"Snooks" Friedman may not be the best-remembered of bandleaders, even among those who collect hot-dance records of the '20s and early '30s. However, the drummer-leader's group made many fine recordings which, happily, are available again on a new CD. **Snooks and His Memphis Stompers** (Parklane 100; \$18.99) contains 23 tunes spanning the band's brief but productive tenure for Victor: they made 31 sides between January 1931 and April 1932, and 11 sides for the smaller Melotone and Banner labels.

The band's searlier, jazzier incarnation as the plain-and-simple "Memphis Stompers" is noted with a hot version of (what else?) "Memphis Stomp," one of eight titles released in 1928. A lovely touch is a track from 1990, running 41 seconds, called "Snooks Remembers," in which Snooks praises his bandmates. (He has since, alas, passed on.) The liner notes are also by Snooks himself. Information on the original 78-rpm releases is not included in the booklet, although the recording dates and the sidemen are listed.

Most of the tracks are Tin Pan Alley tunes, done at a leisurely dance tempo with some nice solos and inoffensive vocals—depending on how easily you're offended. Among the highlights is a fine rendition of "Soliloquy," an adventurous tune written by pianist Rube Bloom. "Hello Beautiful" has a fine vocal trio, and nice clarinet and piano solos played respectively by Walter Ashby and Rupe Biggadike. "Bon Soir" is a lovely ballad featuring trombonist Ken Herlin. The band's version of Fats Waller's "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby" isn't the jazziest ever, but they romp joyously through inherently hot songs like "Dip Your Brush in the Sunshine," "One More Time" and "Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On." (Snooks seems to have been drawn to songs with unusual titles, such as "I Found a Peanut" and "Sittin' on a Rubbish Can.")

The quality of the transfers is excellent throughout. We're sad that the band's fine version of "Wha'd Ja Do to Me" isn't here, but we can hope for a Volume Two. We look forward to announced Parklane CDs by the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks and Bert Lown. (Available for \$18.99 postpaid from L&J Vending, P.O. Box 740725, Rego Park NY 11374-0725.)

—John T. Aldrich III and Randy Skretvedt

## Those Wonderful Years CD Visits the '20s

Essex Entertainment has produced a series of compact discs and cassettes entitled *Those Wonderful Years*. Now numbering 22 volumes, the series is billed as "The Definitive Collection of Pop Hits 1920s - 1960s." Many of the tracks in each album, of course, have been issued dozens of times before in previous pop collections, but producers Jerome Bowie and Allan Steckler have made an effort to include a few rarities in each package.

Since the series' emphasis is on vocalists, most of the albums contain material from the late '40s onward. A few, though, contain tracks of an earlier vintage: *Happy Days Are Here Again* (JCT/JCD-7005) has the title track by Ben Selvin, along with staples like Glenn Miller's "Little Brown Jug" and Goodman's "Goody Goody." *On Broadway Vol. II* (JCT/JCD-7015) has "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" by Tamara and the original "Easter Parade" by Leo Reisman's orchestra with Clifton Webb singing (!).

One of the more recent entries is **Yes Sir! That's My Baby: Music of the Roaring '20s** (JCT/JCD-7019). The 14 tracks include some staples of such collections, which will educate newcomers to this kind of music (Sophie Tucker's 1926 version of "Some of These Days" with Ted Lewis's band; Paul Whiteman's 1920 acoustic recording of "Whispering"). There are also enough rarities to justify its purchase by seasoned collectors. Gene Austin's April 1925 record of the title track has never been reissued before to our knowledge, and it's a hoot—Gene steps wildly out of character to do the ultimate send-up of Ukulele Ike while Billy Carpenter practically strums the strings off his uke. Art Hickman's Orchestra plays "Hold Me" and the great singer Marion Harris does a fine "St. Louis Blues," both of them acoustic records from 1920. (Half of the 14 tracks are acoustics, including Van & Schenck's hilarious "Ain't We Got Fun" and Jolson's original waxing of "Toot, Toot, Tootsie," although the version of "My Man" by Fannie Brice is an electrical December 1927 remake, not the 1921 acoustic original alluded to in the booklet.)

The transfers are in mono, with no artificial echo; most are excellent, although Guy Lombardo's "Charmaine" and Sophie's "Some of These Days" sound over-processed. Thesewell-distributed cassettes and CDs can be found in most record stores.

## Internet Nostalgia

Continued from Page

### Music Newsgroups

Vintage music enthusiasts will find plenty of interest at [rec.music.ragtime](#) and [rec.music.big-band](#), depending on their preference. Those who like the harmony a little on the crazy side will find similarly-inclined advocates of mad music on [rec.music.dementia](#), where people discuss everything from Spike Jones and the Hoosier Hot Shots to the latest "demented discs" in this vein. (The group is named for Dr. Demento, the syndicated radio personality whose nationwide show is devoted to such musical aberration.)

Not all newsgroups are available from all providers. Although we'd like to take a peek behind the red velvet curtain, [alt.comedy.vaudeville](#) is one we've heard about but haven't been able to locate yet.

## Light on His Feet

Leonard Reed, who created the "Shim Sham Shimmy" dance in 1927, is still tapping his toes at age 89. Further, he's the subject of a new video program produced by tap-dancing historian Rust E. Frank. Ms. Frank is the author of *TAP: The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories*, published by Da Capo Press, in which Mr. Reed recounts his fascinating career. Half white, one-quarter black and one-quarter Choctaw Cherokee, Reed for time was able to "pass for white" and worked in white vaudeville as well as the black T.O.B.A. circuit in a time when the entertainment world was strictly segregated. For info on the video, write DeepFocus On Tap Productions, 8565 Chalmers Drive No. 2, Los Angeles, CA 90035.

## Keeping Big Bands Alive

Houston residents have enjoyed Sunday-night big-band program on KQUE FM for many years. Originally, the show's host was Ronnie Renfrow, who has since left the airwaves to concentrate on leading his own big band. Although he's only 37, Renfrow has been a big-band aficionado since childhood; at one point he took drum lessons from the great Ray Bauduc. Off the bandstand, Renfrow runs a booking agency for other big bands and annotates big band reissues for several record labels. His band, which performs regularly at Birraporetti's in Houston, released a CD last year entitled *It's About Time*.



## A Magic Night Preserved on Cole-ectable Porter CD

What a swellegant, elegant party it must have been. On February 12, 1967, the opening of the Cole Porter Library at the University of Southern California was commemorated with an intimate little soiree; the invited guests included Frank Sinatra, Ethel Merman, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and James Stewart, not to mention screenwriter Garson Kanin, lyricist Alan Jay Lerner and pianist-arranger Roger Edens. It must've seemed a spectacular evening 29 years ago, and with the passage of time such a gathering of greats almost assumes mythic proportions.

But it did happen, and the proof is **Cole Porter - You're the Top: A Testimonial** (Viper's Nest VN-180; \$12.98), a fine new CD which preserves much of the evening's entertainment for us. All of the participants share fond reminiscences: Frank Sinatra recalls first nervously meeting Porter in the late '30s when the composer dropped into a shabby nightclub in which the skinny crooner was working; Fred Astaire describes his initial reaction to "Night and Day" as intense fear that he wouldn't be able to sing its wide range. But sing it he does—a gorgeous rendition that proves his voice was in fine shape at age 68. Sinatra opens the show with five numbers, including a breathtaking version of "I've Got You Under My Skin" that's utterly unlike the standard swingin' Nelson Riddle arrangement. Ethel Merman practically blows out the P.A. system with high-volume, high-intensity readings of "Anything Goes," "You're the Top" and "Down in the Depths (on the 90th Floor)," after which Sinatra quips, "What the hell are you hollering about? You got the job!" Gene Kelly's contribution is brief and a little off-key; he sounds as if he had a cold, and perhaps he couldn't hear Edens' piano accompaniment on "Be a Clown." Jimmy Stewart dryly introduces "Easy to Love" by mentioning that the high notes have always intimidated him, but gets through it pretty ably. A magic, memorable evening; what a joy that it's been preserved.

Still available on a Vipers' Nest sister label is **A Cole Porter Collection** (Jass JCD 632; \$15.98), with 25 recordings from 1928-41 of then brand-new Porter songs. The bands include Joe Haymes, Paul Whiteman, and Johnny Green. (Available from Jazz Catalogue, P.O. Box 1936, New York NY 10113-1936.)

## The Other Gershwin's Lyrical Genius



Well, here comes another book about Gershwin—but this one is different. It's about Ira. More accurately, it's about his craft. In **Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist** (Oxford; 278 pages, hardcover; \$25.00), Philip Furia illustrates many aspects of lyric writing which most of us only grasp subliminally, but which explain why Ira's lyrics are so memorable.

Older by nearly two years than George, Ira shunned the spotlight that transfixed his younger brother. George was exuberant and extroverted; Ira was withdrawn and self-effacing. George led his life in a whirlwind of frenetic activity; Ira hated physical exertion of any kind. (A friend quipped, "He's a hard man to get out of an easy chair.") But in his work, he was a consummate craftsman, meticulously reworking his lyrics until they attained a perfect balance of narrative, emotion, rhyme, meter and "singability." Not for nothing did other songwriters label Ira "the Jeweller."

Furia discusses Ira's career chronologically, and in so doing he gives us a guided tour of the American musical scene, from Tin Pan Alley in the Teens to Broadway of the Twenties, from the "little" revues of the '30s to the Technicolor, Cinemascope movie epics of the '50s. We see how Ira's own style developed from a stilted emulation of Gilbert and Sullivan to the colloquial format of his mature lyrics, which sounded like everyday speech, but which were arrived at only by continual refinement. In dozens of examples, Furia shows us how well Ira adjusted to other composers after George's untimely death, crafting lyrics for *Lady in the Dark* with Kurt Weill, *The Barkleys of Broadway* with Harry Warren, *Cover Girl* with Jerome Kern and *A Star is Born* with Harold Arlen. (He also kept George alive by writing new lyrics for his unpublished tunes, using them in films such as *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*.) This is a wonderfully well-detailed and readable book which, at last, brings a great artist out of the shadows.

## New CD Pays Tribute to Lyricist Irving Caesar

Having celebrated his 100th birthday a while back, lyricist Irving Caesar (born July 4, 1895) is again toasted by a truly wonderful new CD, **Irving Caesar: The Great Ones** (Flapper PAST CD 7075). Caesar's personality and body of work typify the golden age of Tin Pan Alley. Cigar chomping, blustery, and supremely talented, Caesar wrote the words for a staggering array of classic songs, including "Tea for Two," "Swanee," "Crazy Rhythm" and "Sometimes I'm Happy." Listening to the songs contained on this CD is like attending a seminar on songwriting. Every tune is beautifully crafted, no matter who the composer is; Caesar's lyrics always bring a smile.

Many of the songs here are from Broadway musicals such as *No, No Nanette* (or its sequel *Yes, Yes Yvette*), *Hit the Deck* and *Here's Howe!*—or from films like the 1934 *George White's Scandals* or Eddie Cantor's 1932 epic *The Kid from Spain*. Caesar worked with such diverse talents as George Gershwin, Vincent Youmans, Cliff Friend, Jimmy Durante, Oscar Levant, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. His first hit was "Swanee," which he set to George Gershwin's melody in 1919; Caesar's 1931 lyric for "Just a Gigolo" was a hit again in the 1980s in a version by rock singer David Lee Roth.

The renditions selected for this tribute CD have been creatively and wisely chosen. Of course, Jolson has to do "Swanee" (this version from a memorial program for Gershwin broadcast from the Hollywood Bowl in 1937). Harry Reser's 1928 version of "Crazy Rhythm," Marion Harris' "Tea for Two" from 1924, Roger Wolfe Kahn's "Imagination" (1928) and Annette Hanshaw's 1928 waxing of "My Blackbirds Are Bluebirds Now" are perfect choices. It's most gratifying to hear these classics in full, rich sound, reproduced with all the dynamic range and clarity possible when dealing with 65-year-old records.

As he approached the century mark, Caesar pointed out, "I've written 1,000 songs and, out of a group like that, if you can have five standards, you're fortunate. I've been fortunate." The songs collected here prove that it is we who have been fortunate. This entry kicks off Flapper's "Songwriter's Series." We hope that future issues are as well done as this one. (Available from Vintage Sound Works, P.O. Box 2830, Chandler AZ 85244.)

—John T. Aldrich III



## The Minstrel Who Shaped Country Music

In these Politically Correct times, you may need some courage to purchase a fine new CD, **Emmett Miller: The Minstrel Man From Georgia** (Columbia/Legacy CK 66999). The full-color cover art, taken from a vintage Minstrel-show poster, shows him in blackface, a green derby rakishly tilted atop his tightly-kinked wig. The liner notes on the back anticipate a negative reaction, noting that "though his blackface act conjures images of racism and degradation, his music and performances speak out as anything but."

Born in Macon, Georgia in 1903, Miller was fascinated with the speech patterns and songs of Black people, and at sixteen joined a minstrel troupe; although this form of show business was already dying out in 1919, Miller managed to make a living as a blackface comic and singer until at least 1951. In 1928 and '29, he made 30 issued sides for Okeh; five of them preserve his good-natured humor in skits such as "You Lose," included here. However, on 19 recordings, we get to hear Miller's singing, and here's where he deserves to join the immortals.

Miller's signature songs were "Lovesick Blues" and "Anytime," which he delivered in a high tenor accented by surprising breaks into falsetto—almost a yodel but not quite. (Hank Williams copied Miller's style exactly on his million-selling, career-making version of "Lovesick Blues;" Miller was also a major influence on Bob Wills.) The Okeh executives asked him to tone down the dialect and the falsetto in later recordings such as "You're the Cream in My Coffee," and Miller complained that they were "trying to make a damn Gene Austin out of me." Perhaps the execs simply wanted audiences (and Miller himself!) to hear the beautiful warmth of his natural tenor. The sidemen billed as "The Georgia Crackers" include the Dorsey Brothers, guitarist Eddie Lang, cornetist Leo McConville and trombone great Jack Teagarden. The transfers by George Morrow are generally excellent. Charles Wolfe's liner notes are fascinating, as are the recently-discovered photos of Miller. This is a fine tribute to an obscure but worthy performer who had a surprisingly powerful influence on country and popular music.

## A Spellbinding Saga of Country Music's Past

Country music is sadly following pop music's example of neglecting any artists who have been active for longer than five years. Radio programmers and mass-marketers have placed an undue emphasis on performers that are hot, hip and happening, with the result that country music's heritage, which used to be revered, has now been forgotten.

What a joy it is, therefore, to read **The Illustrated History of Country Music**, edited by Patrick Carr (Times Books; 564 pages, paperback; \$25.00). Unlike many chronicles of popular culture, this book doesn't quickly dispense with the "history lesson" in order to get to today's young stars. Country music's fascinating past is affectionately recounted here, in an absorbing narrative illustrated with 650 evocative photographs.

Fully half of this mammoth book, written by Carr and seven other editors of *Country Music Magazine*, is devoted to country of the pre-Rockabilly era. Along with early icons such as Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family, we also learn about obscurities such as Dr. Humphrey Bate and His Possum Hunters; The Binkley Brothers' Dixie Clodhoppers, and The Fruit Jar Drinkers. The powerful influences of recordings, radio and motion pictures are all well chronicled, with the illustrative assist of publicity photos, record labels, sheet music covers, rare postcards and vintage record catalogs. (One of our favorite photos depicts WSM-Nashville's first broadcast of country music in 1925; the station would soon begin broadcasting the *Grand Ole Opry*.) The illustrations are almost entirely different from those featured in the 1979 first edition. This beautifully designed, painstakingly documented book tells a story that is fascinating—even if you're not a C&W fan.

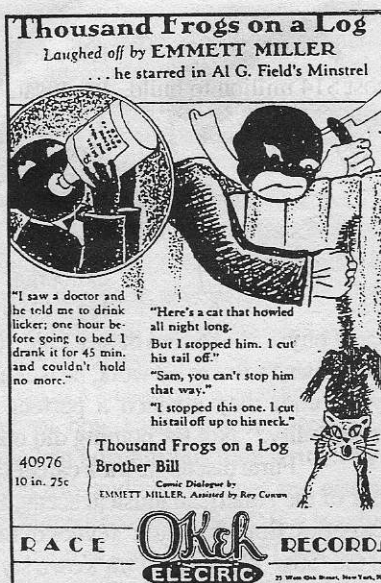
## Kentucky Music Before "Bluegrass"

We ought to remember that there was a world of music in the '20s and '30s that wasn't cranked out by Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths. Several recording companies made field trips to rural areas of the country, and captured traditional music just before it was influenced (or corrupted) by the influences of big-city radio and other mass media. Only one or two copies remain of many of these records, which is one of many reasons to be grateful that they've been preserved in two new CDs: **The Music of Kentucky, Volume One** (Yazoo 2013) and **Volume Two** (Yazoo 2014; \$12.95 each). Each disc contains over 25 tracks of "Early American rural music," recorded between 1927 and 1937.

Your humble correspondent is unable to distinguish the "eastern Kentucky mountain style" from the "north central Kentucky style" mentioned by Charles Wolfe in the liner notes. All I know is that the state produced a wide variety of musical forms, all of them mesmerizing. Each volume spans the whole '27-'37 decade with different performers featured. Volume One includes Alfred Karnes, who sings spirituals in a powerful voice (and whose conceptions of harmony and meter may prove challenging to the listener); the hot guitar-banjo-mandolin playing of the Kentucky Ramblers; and the solo fiddling of W.M. Stepp.

Volume Two includes the mournful singing of Emory Arthur ("Short Life of Trouble," "I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow"), the haunting unaccompanied fiddling of Luther Strong, the jaunty guitar-fiddle-vocal combinations of the Carver Boys, and the infectious music of fiddler Monroe Gevedon. Despite the apologies about the sound quality in the liner notes, most of these ultra-rare tracks are strong and clear; the exceptions are two sides by fiddler-singer Bill Shepherd, whose only two issued sides are reproduced here from the lone, battered surviving 78. Despite the blizzard of surface noise, these are mesmerizing performances that point the way to Bill Monroe.

We do wish the recording sessions were better documented in the booklets; nevertheless, these CDs preserve some vitally important aspects of America's musical heritage. (Available from Shanachie, 37 E. Clinton St., Newton N.J. 07860; (800) 497-1043.)





# Radio

## News in the Air

George Burns, who admitted that he could barely read when he left school for show business, had a new book entitled *100 Years, 100 Stories* on the best-seller lists when he passed away on March 9th; it was the tenth book under his byline.

Thirteen radiodramas written and directed by the great Norman Corwin in the '40s will be rebroadcast on NPR this spring, with the addition of new introductions by celebrity admirers of his work; even better, Corwin will write six new radio dramas for the network. Norman can set his own deadlines for these new shows, a much healthier schedule than the nerve-wracking one-new-drama-a-week pace for the old *26 by Corwin* series.

Author John Dunning's mammoth reference book, *Tune in Yesterday*, will be updated in an even more mammoth volume, slated to be published in early 1997. Copies of the original edition, published by Prentice-Hall in 1976 and long out of print, have been fetching high prices at OTR conventions for well over a decade. Speaking of conventions, Jay Hickerson's Friends of Old-Time Radio club will hold its 21st annual bash October 17-19 at the Holiday Inn North, Newark, New Jersey; write Jay at Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 for further information on the convention and his newsletter, "Hello Again."

In addition to hosting the syndicated program *When Radio Was*, satirist Stan Freberg has been busy recording the sequel to his classic album *Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America*. At a recording session in mid-March, Stan emulated Thomas Edison by recording "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on an antique cylinder phonograph; we'll bet that cylinder will be the all-time rarest Freberg record.

The Radio Hall of Fame at Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications has named its nominees for 1996. Network or Syndicated Pioneer nominees include Eddie Cantor, William Conrad, Bing Crosby and Kate Smith; the Local/Regional Pioneer nominees include the late William B. Williams, host of "Make Believe Ballroom" on WNEW-New York. The awards ceremony will be broadcast nationally from Chicago on October 27.

## Radio, TV History Celebrated at L.A. MT&R

On March 18, the Los Angeles-area branch of the Museum of Television and Radio opened its doors. The lavish three-story structure has 23,000 square feet of space and cost \$14 million to build. It's located just one block from Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, at 465 North Beverly (on the corner of Little Santa Monica Blvd.) Local architecture critics have been praising the elegant design of the building, but we're a little more interested in the archival contents.

The original MT&R in New York opened in November 1976 (as the Museum of Broadcasting) with only two small floors of office space. In 1991 it moved into the much more spacious William Paley Building at 25 West 52nd Street. It has a collection of 75,000 radio and TV programs, spanning 70 years of broadcasting history; this collection has been entirely duplicated for the Beverly Hills branch.

Robert Batscha, the museum's president, stresses that making these shows available to the public is the key reason for the MT&R's existence. "They don't have to be doing research, they don't have to apply. They can just walk in." Since Southern California is where most television programs are generated (and where large holdings of vintage radio and TV programs are stored), Batscha anticipates that the museum's holdings will grow as it becomes an established presence.

On the main floor, you'll find a Radio Listening Room, with 20 listening consoles. You can choose from five pre-selected programs (one of the channels currently offers a history of the Jack Benny-Fred Allen feud.) Eventually, live broadcasts will originate from the small studio in this room. The main floor also has an Education Room, seating 45, which will host many special programs for kids and adults alike starting in the fall.

The second floor contains the Stanley E. Hubbard Library, where you can gain access to a computerized card catalog on one of the 50 available computers. Choose the programs you wish to hear or see (up to four shows or two hours' worth of programming at a time). Then go to the information desk, where you'll receive a coded printout of your selected shows, and you'll be assigned a viewing console. Sit at one of the 50 TV-radio consoles (another 14 are in a scholars' room, for research purposes), type in the code number of the show, and it's showtime.

About 40 percent of the museum's radio and TV programs are stored in "The Collection," and can be accessed immediately. The other shows are in "The Archive" and can be sought after within the museum's computerized catalog, but they take about a week to retrieve.

The Mezzanine, or third floor, has a large room seating 150, with a large-screen video projection system for special exhibits, seminars and screenings.

Admission is \$6.00 for adults, \$4.00 for students and seniors, and \$3.00 for children under 13. If you purchase a General Membership, costing \$50 per year, you'll be admitted to members-only receptions, seminars and special events, and you'll also gain extended time at the radio-TV consoles.

For the archivally-minded, you can choose a program from the museum's holdings and underwrite its preservation; the donation is \$250 for a half-hour show, or \$500 for an hour-long program. You'll receive credit as the underwriter of the show—your name will be listed along with the credits whenever anyone calls up the program.

The museum's curators are very much on the lookout for important, artistically valuable and historically worthy shows to add to the collection. According to radio curator Ken Mueller, the most wanted radio programs include:

- Any early KDKA broadcasts, particularly a recording of the actual Harding/Cox election returns on November 2, 1920 (alas, this first official radio broadcast was probably never recorded)
- The first Major League All-Star baseball game, broadcast by NBC from Comiskey Park on July 6, 1933. (The AL beat the ML, 4-2.)
- Commentator H.V. Kaltenborn's 1932 interview with Adolf Hitler. Also wanted is a Kaltenborn report broadcast on September 3, 1936 from the French-Spanish border during the Spanish Civil War.

The museum is open from Noon until 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, and open until 9 p.m. on Thursdays. For further information: (310) 786-1000. You can access the museum on the World Wide Web at <http://www.mtr.org>





## Fifty Years of Radio: The '20s and '30s By Frank Bresee

*Editor's note: Frank Bresee is uniquely qualified to write about radio history, as the writer and producer of the weekly **Golden Days of Radio** program, syndicated worldwide for years on the American Forces Network. We're honored that Frank offered this history of radio's early years.*

It really began when a young Westinghouse engineer, Frank Conrad, set up a home made radio station in his garage in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, called it 8XK and played phonograph records to the few persons lucky enough to have a crystal set receiver. This early station became Pittsburgh's KDKA, one of the most successful stations in the nation.

Programs in those days consisted of phonograph records, played a few hours each day—but it wasn't until the Harding-Cox election returns were broadcast on November 2, 1920 that we knew the potential impact of radio. The result? Warren G. Harding won...and so did we.

America had discovered one of the greatest entertainment media ever to shine upon the horizon of our collective imagination. But radio, like most scientific advances, arrived on the scene with mixed blessings. Those who ran Vaudeville, stage shows, dance halls and silent movies weren't radio's most enthusiastic boosters. In fact, some of radio's early opponents went to ridiculous extremes. It's noted that before and after each show, one silent movie house would flash on the screen, "You have to be nuts to listen to radio programs." But the listeners wanted more.

By the early '30s, the crystal sets gave way to the more sophisticated radios manufactured by Atwater-Kent, Philco, Westinghouse and Crosley. Broadcasting had reached such a position of prominence that Will Rogers remarked, "Radio is too big a thing to be out of."

*Amos 'n' Andy*, played by Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, became radio's first daily sitcom. At 7:00 every night, everything stopped for 15 minutes as the nation listened to these two funny fellows. As the show's theme ("The Perfect Song") faded, their long time announcer Bill Hay would introduce them with "Here they are!" For a time, movie theatres would stop the film and actually play the *Amos 'n' Andy* show to the assembled audience. It was either do that, or have no audience at all.

In the mid-thirties, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an ardent fan, wrote to Correll and Gosden for advance information on one of their future episodes.

The first superstar on radio was Rudy Vallée, and his program, *The Fleischmann Hour*, ran from October 24, 1929 to July 16, 1936-- with Rudy's *Royal Gelatin Hour* running for the balance of the decade (and other shows for Sealtest, Drene and Philip Morris taking up the decade after that). His program introduced the greatest parade of talent to ever debut on this new medium.

Rudy's radio discoveries read like a who's who of show business. Eddie Cantor appeared on radio for the first time on the Vallée show...so did Noel Coward, Ed Wynn, Red Skelton, Carmen Miranda, Alice Faye, Milton Berle and brilliant radio writer Arch Oboler, later renowned for *Lights Out*.

Perhaps Rudy's greatest discovery was heard on December 17, 1936, when a dapper young man named Edgar Bergen first wisecracked on the air with a wooden young man, the wonder Charlie McCarthy. Several weeks earlier Edgar Bergen had been booked to appear at one of those posh New York parties given by Elsa Maxwell. Noel Coward was the honored guest and after seeing Bergen perform suggested to Rudy that he would make a wonderful guest on the show.

Rudy Vallée proved that on radio, it was the sound that counted; Edgar's voice and Charlie's personality were star material, and their big time was just around the corner...on radio.

In spite of what was originally considered a flash in the pan, radio was becoming a smashing success. This was especially significant considering that the radio sets cost from \$50 to as much as \$150. By the mid-thirties, radio was labeled America's fourth largest industry, but its entertainment was first rate—and everyone coast to coast tuned in.

By the middle of the decade, we were tuning in to a cornucopia of thrills, chills, chuckles and box tops: From five to seven in the afternoon, the air waves brought us *Dick Tracy*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Jack Armstrong*, the *All-American Boy* and *Tom Mix*, played by Curley Bradley.

You could even become a "special friend" by tearing off the top from a box of Wheaties, or the label from a tin of Ovaltine...send it to the sponsor with a dime and in a few weeks you'd be the happiest kid on the block with your new ring, secret code badge or Orphan Annie mug. It didn't make any difference if the plaster on the rim of the mug made the drink taste worse; that the badge sometimes pierced right through your sweater or shirt and mercifully stopped just short of your pulmonary artery; or that the ring always made your finger turn green if you wore it too long. Who cared? You were a special friend!

Soap operas came into their own in the '30s. One of the longest running was "Oxydol's own *Ma Perkins*." It began on December 4, 1933, with 19-year-old Virginia Payne playing the title role. For 27 years she solved problems for everyone in her town of Rushville Center. Other long running programs included *Stella Dallas*, *Just Plain Bill*, *John's Other Wife*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *Young Widder Brown* and *Pepper Young's Family* with Maseo Adams as Pepper.

Football and baseball games were a regular feature of the radio networks. Clem McCarthy called the first Kentucky Derby during the '30s and Graham McNamee electrified the nation with championship fights. *The March of Time*, Gabriel Heatter, Walter Winchell and H.V. Kaltenborn kept the nation abreast of the latest news. Lowell Thomas went on the air in the '30s and was always there to greet us with "Good evening everyone" for most of the next half century.

The '30s left an indelible impression in the minds of listeners. Radio had built a new entertainment industry. Vaudeville acts performing for \$75 a week were soon performing the same act on radio for \$7500 a week. Major Edward Bowes was earning over a million dollars a year for broadcasting his weekly *Amateur Hour*. Al Jolson was earning \$5000 a week, Paul Whiteman \$4500 a week...fortunes were available to those who knew the possibilities of radio. But the most fortunate were those who tuned in.

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# When Radio Was Program Guide

## May - July 1996

*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 224, Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM Central Time.

### MAY 1996

#### Broadcast Week One

**The Green Hornet** 1940s "Words and Music" starring Al Hodge / **The Mel Blanc Show** 5-27-47 "Painting the Supermarket" starring Mel Blanc (part 1)

**The Mel Blanc Show** 5-27-47 "Painting the Supermarket" starring Mel Blanc (part 2) / **Dragnet** 2-22-53 "The Big Smoke" starring Jack Webb

**Suspense** 6-16-49 "Trap" with Agnes Moorehead / **Unexpected** 1950s "Silver Fox" with Lyle Talbot

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#### Broadcast Week Two

**The Shadow** 3-17-46 "Etched With Acid" starring Bret Morrison / **Burns & Allen** 3-17-49 w/ guest, Marlene Dietrich (part 1)

**Burns & Allen** 3-17-49 w/ guest, Marlene Dietrich (part 2) / **Gangbusters** 1940s "Nicholas Seno"

**The Lone Ranger** 1-2-39 "The False Outlaw" starring Earle Graser / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 1-19-43 "Mrs. Uppington Joins the WAACS" w/Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

**Fibber McGee & Molly** 1-19-43 "Mrs. Uppington Joins the WAACS" w/Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **Boston Blackie** 1945 "The Hooded Gang" starring Dick Kollmar

**The Six Shooter** 1950s "Escape From Smoke Falls" starring James Stewart / **Vic & Sade** 12-15-43 "Mr. Gumpox's Eyes" starring Art Van Harvey

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#### Broadcast Week Three

**Box Thirteen** 1950 with Alan Ladd / **The Stan Freberg Show** 9-15-57 Program 10 of 15 (part 1)

**The Stan Freberg Show** 9-15-57 Program 10 of 15 (part 2) / **Suspense** 9-12-46 "Hunting Trip" starring Vincent Price

**The Saint** 2-11-51 "The Bride Who Lost Her Groom" starring Vincent Price / **The Great Gildersleeve** 11-25-45 "The Football Game" starring Hal Peary (part 1)

**The Great Gildersleeve** 11-25-45 "The Football Game" starring Hal Peary (part 2) / **Frontier Gentleman** 2-9-58 "Charlie Meeker" starring John Dehner

**The Shadow** 12-1-46 "Make-Up for Murder" starring Bret Morrison / **Lum & Abner** 1945 starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff in episode #363 in the series

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#### Broadcast Week Four

**Abbott & Costello** 10-26-44 starring Bud Abbott & Lou Costello / **Johnny Dollar** 12-26-55 "The Forbes Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 1 of 5

**Family Theatre** 4-22-53 "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" starring Gene Lockhart / **Johnny Dollar** 12-27-55 "The Forbes Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 2 of 5

**The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 12-7-47 w/guest Roy Rogers / **Johnny Dollar** 12-28-55 "The Forbes Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 3 of 5

**Gunsmoke** 4-15-56 "The Executioner" starring William Conrad / **Johnny Dollar** 12-29-55 "The Forbes Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 4 of 5

**The Jack Benny Program** 2-20-49 w/guest, Jack Warner / **Johnny Dollar** 12-30-55 "The Forbes Matter" starring Bob Bailey in part 5 of 5

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#### Broadcast Week Five

**The Screen Director's Playhouse** 4-21-50 "A Kiss in the Dark" starring Jane Wyman / **Duffy's Tavern** 2-16-49 "Archie's Schoolmate Visits" starring Ed Gardner (part 1)

**Duffy's Tavern** 2-16-49 "Archie's Schoolmate Visits" starring Ed Gardner (part 2) / **Suspense** 6-30-49 "The Day I Died" starring Joseph Cotten

**Lights Out** 1944 "Special to Hollywood" starring Howard Duff / **The Life of Riley** 5-29-48 "Riley and Gillis Buy a Car" starring William Bendix (part 1)

**The Life of Riley** 5-29-48 "Riley and Gillis Buy a Car" starring William Bendix (part 2) / **The Hermit's Cave** 1930s "It Happened on Sunday" starring Mel Johnson

**The Shadow** 5-16-48 "The Giant of Madras" starring Bret Morrison / **Unsolved Mysteries** 1930s "Houdini" starring Hans Conreid

### JUNE 1996

#### Broadcast Week One

**Escape** 9-28-49 "Wild Oranges" w/Van Heflin / **Abbott & Costello** 12-7-44 (part 1)

**Abbott & Costello** 12-7-44 (part 2) / **Boston Blackie** 7-2-45 "Blackie Gives Mary the Air" w/ Dick Kollmar

**The Lone Ranger** 11-2-49 "Boastful Bandit" w/ Brace Beemer and John Todd / **Burns & Allen** 4-28-49 "George's Ladyfingers" (part 1)

**Burns & Allen** 4-28-49 "George's Ladyfingers" (part 2) / **The Whistler** 1-29-45 "Murder on Paper" w/ Elliott Lewis

**The Jack Benny Program** 2-27-49 w/Jack Benny and guest, Claude Rains / **Vic & Sade** 8-24-42 "Rush's New School Clothes" w/ Art Van Harvey

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#### Broadcast Week Two

**Have Gun, Will Travel** 12-7-58 "Ella West" w/ John Dehner / **Duffy's Tavern** 1951 w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner and guest, Boris Karloff (part 1)

**Duffy's Tavern** 1951 w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner and guest, Boris Karloff (part 2) / **Suspense** 1-25-45 "Drury's Bones" w/ Boris Karloff

**The Casebook of Gregory Hood** 7-15-46 "South of the Boarder" w/ Gale Gordon / **The Edgar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-12-43 w/W.C. Fields, William Gaxton (part 1)

**The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-12-43 w/ W.C. Fields and William Gaxton (part 2) / **Dragnet** 3-29-53 "The Big Dream" w/ Jack Webb

**The Shadow** 12-15-46 "Murders on the Main Stem" w/ Bret Morrison / **The Bickersons** 1940s w/ Don Ameche and Frances Langford



# When Radio Was Program Guide

## May - July 1996 Continued

### Broadcast Week Three

**Gangbusters** 1930s "Case of the Tennessee Trigger Men" / **The Aldrich Family** 11-11-48 w/ Ezra Stone (part 1)

**The Aldrich Family** 11-11-48 w/ Ezra Stone (part 2) / **Dimension X** 7-28-50 "The Potters of Firsk" w/ Karl Webber

**The Green Hornet** 1930s "The Impostor" w/ Al Hodge / **The Fred Allen Show** 3-3-46 w/ guest, Orson Welles (part 1)

**The Fred Allen Show** 3-3-46 w/ guest, Orson Welles (part 2) / **Gunsmoke** 3-25-55 "The Hanging Man" w/ William Conrad

**The Stan Freberg Show** 9-22-57 w/ Stan Freberg, June Foray and Daws Butler. Program 11 of 15 / **The Strange Dr. Weird** 1944 "The Man Who Knew Everything" w/ Maurice Tarplin

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### Broadcast Week Four

**The Lone Ranger** 11-7-49 "Covered Wagon Robbery" w/ Brace Beemer / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 1-26-43 "McGee Writes a Novel" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

**Fibber McGee & Molly** 1-26-43 "McGee Writes a Novel" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1) / **Box Thirteen** 1948 w/ Alan Ladd and Sylvia Picker

**The Six Shooter** 1952 "Gabriel Starbuck" w/ James Stewart / **The Great Gildersleeve** 12-2-45 "Town Opera" w/ Hal Peary (part 1)

**The Great Gildersleeve** 12-2-45 "Town Opera" w/ Hal Peary (part 2) / **The Shadow** 2-5-39 "The Ghost of Captain Bayloe" w/ Bill Johnstone

**Suspense** 1-30-47 "Three Blind Mice" w/ Van Heflin / **Lum & Abner** w/ Chester Lauck and Norris Goff. Program #364 in the series.

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### JULY 1996

#### Broadcast Week One

**The Saint** 4-29-51 "Fishes Gotta Eat" w/ Vincent Price / **Burns & Allen** 5-5-49 w/ Guest, William "Hopalong Cassidy" Boyd (part 1)

**Burns & Allen** 5-5-49 w/ George Burns & Gracie Allen and guest, William "Hopalong Cassidy" Boyd (part 2) / **Mystery in the Air** 9-8-47 "The Black Cat" w/ Peter Lorre

**Broadway Is My Beat** 6-23-51 "Receipt for a Teapot" w/ Larry Thor / **Abbott & Costello** 12-14-44 w/ Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 1)

**Abbott & Costello** 12-14-44 w/ Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 2) / **Dragnet** 7-13-50 "The Big Bomb" w/ Jack Webb

**The Jack Benny Program** 3-6-49 w/ Jack Benny and guests, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson / **Guest Star** 1950s "Incident of Freedom" w/ Humphrey Bogart

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#### Broadcast Week Two

**The Lone Ranger** 10-4-43 "Slaves in Bondage" w/ Brace Beemer / **Johnny Dollar** 10-17-55 "The Chesapeake Fraud Matter" w/ Bob Bailey (part 1 of 5)

**Suspense** 7-12-45 "Footfalls" w/ J. Carroll Naish / **Johnny Dollar** 10-18-55 "The Chesapeake Fraud Matter" w/ Bob Bailey (part 2 of 5)

**The Life of Riley** 1-14-49 "Riley Going to Arabia" w/ William Bendix / **Johnny Dollar** 10-19-55 "The Chesapeake Fraud Matter" w/ Bob Bailey (part 3 of 5)

**The Green Hornet** 1930s "Trouble Hits the Trolleys" w/ Al Hodge / **Johnny Dollar** 10-20-55 "The Chesapeake Fraud Matter" w/ Bob Bailey (part 4 of 5)

**The Shadow** 3-9-41 "Murder Underground" w/ Bill Johnstone / **Johnny Dollar** 10-21-55 "The Chesapeake Fraud Matter" w/ Bob Bailey (part 5 of 5)

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#### Broadcast Week Three

**Gangbusters** 1930s "The Case of Snyder Kennedy" / **Duffy's Tavern** 2-23-49 "Patent on Electricity" w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner (part 1)

**Duffy's Tavern** 2-23-49 "Patent on Electricity" w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner (part 2) / **Gunsmoke** 6-3-56 "The Pacifist" w/ William Conrad

**Pat Novak For Hire** 1949 "Go Away Dixie" w/ Jack Webb / **The Stan Freberg Show** 9-29-57 w/ Stan Freberg, Daws Butler and June Foray in program 12 of 15 (part 1)

**The Stan Freberg Show** 9-29-57 w/ Stan Freberg, Daws Butler and June Foray in program 12 of 15 (part 2) / **The Whistler** 6-2-48 "Stranger in the House" w/ Virginia Gregg

**Box Thirteen** 1949 w/ Alan Ladd / **Vic & Sade** 6-7-44 "Cincinnati Method" w/ Art Van Harvey

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#### Broadcast Week Four

**The Six Shooter** 1953 "Man and Boy" w/ James Stewart / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-19-43 with guest, Victor Moore (part 1)

**The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-19-43 with guest, Victor Moore (part 2) / **Sergeant Preston of the Yukon** 10-27-48 "Preston Turns the Tables" w/ Paul Sutton

**Suspense** 6-2-49 "The Ten Years" w/ Joan Crawford / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 2-2-43 "Cleaning the Hall Closet" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

**Fibber McGee & Molly** 2-2-43 "Cleaning the Hall Closet" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **The Damon Runyon Theatre** 1948 "The Brain Goes Home" w/ John Brown

**The Lone Ranger** 10-8-43 "Weary River" w/ Brace Beemer / **Lum & Abner** 1945 starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff in episode #365 in the series

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#### Broadcast Week Five

**The Shadow** 9-28-47 "Death Takes the Wheel" w/ Bret Morrison / **The Great Gildersleeve** 12-9-45 "Opera Committee" w/ Hal Peary (part 1)

**The Great Gildersleeve** 12-9-45 "Opera Committee" w/ Hal Peary (part 2) / **The Hermit's Cave** 1939 "House of Purple Shadows" w/ Mel Johnson

**Boston Blackie** 7-9-45 "The Worthington Pearls" w/ Dick Kollmar / **Our Miss Brooks** 1-23-49 "Possible Promotion" w/ Eve Arden (part 1)



## SUSPENSE:

### Truly "Radio's Outstanding Theatre of Thrills"

By Carl Amari

In 1975, at the impressionable age of 12, I heard my first "old-time radio" show. It changed my whole life. The episode was "On A Country Road." The star was Cary Grant. The series was ... "Suspense."

I was spending the night at my friend Vince's house and we were getting rowdy. Vince's father played a cassette of "On A Country Road" to settle us down. I was absolutely awestruck. Having grown up on TV, I had never even heard of "old-time radio." What was this? It was as if I was using my imagination for the very first time.

"On A Country Road" is the story of an escaped insane woman on a murder spree—and a young couple whose car runs out of gas on the very road where she's reported prowling. Cary Grant gives a stirring performance as the young man, Cathy Lewis plays his terrified wife and Jeanette Nolan plays a frantic woman who fits the description of the insane woman.

Hooked, I began collecting as many "old-time radio" programs as I could and eventually founded Radio Spirits, Inc. As I look back on that night...listening to that program may have been the single greatest influence on my life.

"Suspense" has always been one of my favorite radio series because it was unlike any other. Every script challenged the listener and every Hollywood performer was eager to appear on the show.

On July 22, 1940, the idea for "Suspense" was proposed to listeners on "This Is Hollywood: CBS Presents Forecast," which auditioned new series concepts. Alfred Hitchcock directed a production of "The Lodger," a story about Jack the Ripper starring Herbert Marshall. Performed before a live studio audience, the program received favorable reaction and on June 17, 1942, CBS committed to "Suspense" even though the series had no sponsor.

*Continued on Page 26*



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***Suspense!***

*Continued from Page 25*

After a short run in New York, "Suspense" moved to Hollywood and by August of 1943, William Spier became its director. Spier established the guidelines that made "Suspense" truly "radio's outstanding theatre of thrills." He worked with a stock company of regular writers, musicians and sound men to bring out the best radio had to offer. Some of his episodes became so popular that hundreds of listeners wrote in asking them to be repeated, and many were. "Sorry, Wrong Number," the most famous "Suspense" story, was repeated eight times and was even made into a motion picture.

On December 2, 1943, "Suspense" picked up Roma Wines as a sponsor just as the series was hitting its stride (the series would be sponsored for the remaining 19 years of its run).

Spier left in 1948 but many talented directors continued the tradition for the duration, including Anton M. Leader, Norman Macdonnell, Elliott Lewis, Antony Ellis and William N. Robson. With the arrival of Elliott Lewis in August of 1950, "Suspense" turned to many stories of a non-fiction nature. Lewis, who played the comedy role of "Frankie Remley" on "The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show" enjoyed the outcome of casting comedians in tense and dramatic roles.

In 1959, the series moved back to New York and went off the air temporarily in 1960. In 1961, another CBS series, "Gunsmoke," was canceled and, to fill its timeslot, "Suspense" made a comeback. But on September 30, 1962, with an episode titled "Devilstone," CBS closed shop on "Suspense" without any mention that this was to be its last presentation. Maybe they just wanted to keep us in ... "Suspense."

*Carl Amari is the executive Producer of "When Radio Was," a nationally syndicated vintage radio show hosted by Stan Freberg. He is also CEO of Radio Spirits, Inc., one of the nation's leading suppliers of "old-time radio" shows on cassette. For a free catalog listing thousands of radio shows available through Radio Spirits, call toll-free 1-800-RADIO-48 (1-800-723-4648).*



## John Barrymore's Final Act

With Nicol Williamson currently touring as John Barrymore (see page 2), you might wish to experience the genuine article. Unfortunately, **John Barrymore From Matinee Idol to Buffoon** (Facet FCD 8112; \$8.98) displays the Great Profile's tragic final act, when he appeared as an outrageous spoof of himself on the Rudy Vallée Sealtest program. In these two 1941 shows (minus commercials), Barrymore takes hamminess to new heights. He gasps, snorts, wheezes, spits out consonants and generally paints a portrait of a vainglorious, faded actor which is too close to his actual situation to be funny.

The comedy material isn't much help, although guest Groucho Marx does a wonderful patter song called "Something Must Be Done." Brother Lionel guests on the other episode, and the florid readings of both Barrymores undercut the jokes. However, this program is invaluable for a scene in which John and Lionel reveal their still powerful talent in scenes from *Richard III*. (Available from Delos International, 1645 N. Vine Street, Suite 340, Hollywood CA 90028; (213) 962-2626.)



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## Radio Spotlight: Jeanette Nolan

*Jeanette Nolan and her late husband, John McIntyre, were the Lunt and Fontanne of radio, a tremendously versatile and talented couple. In this interview conducted by Jordan R. Young in December 1991, Miss Nolan tells us about the beginnings of her radio career, her introduction to her future husband, and the couple's rather unorthodox lifestyle.*

Prior to radio, my only acting experience was strictly at the Pasadena Playhouse and also at Los Angeles City College. My radio career began in Los Angeles because of dear True Boardman [a fine radio actor], with whom I'd gone to school at City College. I had to quit because of the Depression, but I would go to the public library and read whatever I could find in the drama department. And True saw me there one day and asked me why I wasn't in school. I told him I couldn't afford to go and he said, "Why don't you get in radio?" And of course I didn't know what he meant because we as a family listened only to symphony. I didn't know there was anything else on radio.

True told me the magical name of Cyril Armbrister [a producer-director], said to go and see this man. I went to see Cyril and he asked me to read a part—and in a couple of days I got a call and I had a job on *Chandu the Magician*. And that was the beginning. The part called for a Hindu dialect. Lindsay Carey, a director at KHJ, heard me and asked me to come in and do a Scottish accent for a job on *Annie Laurie* and so I had a job there. So it was absolute heaven, a total miracle! I was very fortunate that the first two people I met needed a dialectician. I had been raised to appreciate that and had a good ear.

And everybody in radio was so great, so kind about saying, "Go and see so-and-so." It was full of people who had known great adversity in New York. I was always dying to go to New York and they would say, "Don't go. It's too cruel." But anyway my life was a joy; in the Depression where I was making \$2.37 a day at the Army & Navy store, to suddenly get a check for a performance for \$3.50, I was so overwhelmed.

John McIntire was originally an announcer, the first one who ever said "KMPC" [the call letters of one of Los Angeles's biggest stations]. He announced for R.S. Macmillan, the owner of the Macmillan Petroleum Corporation. They selected his voice from hearing him at USC. He had a whole hour of poetry he read before he became a staff member at KMPC. We met in '32 after I started making transcriptions, pre-recorded shows. Sometimes you did them for nothing and sometimes you got \$3.50. Gale Gordon and I were doing a series at Freeman-Lang on Larchmont—a series called *Miracle Diamonds*, a drama of India, and that's how I saw John the first time.

John's dream was to make enough to quit the tension of being a big-time announcer. The announcers were carrying the ball, doing the commercials, and had to have private meetings with sponsors. John announced so many things—Ben Bernie, Guy Lombardo and many big shows in California before coming to New York to do the Mary Pickford show, Jimmy Durante, Ed Wynn, Jack Pearl (Baron Munchausen). John's dream was to go into the woods and build a cabin and live like the Indians, a primitive life. When he told me about it I thought it was fascinating.

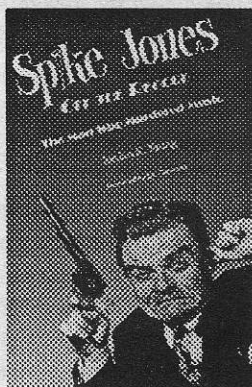
When he followed me to New York to marry me I asked him if he still had that dream. When he said he did, I said that we would save our money and do that. And so that's what we did. It didn't take too long before we were able to cut our professional ties; it took us a year and a half. April of '37 was when we quit the first time. People asked how we could leave our profession. Living in the wilderness is very demanding as far as keeping alive is concerned, but also very inspiring spiritually—being surrounded by the most beautiful country you could ask for.

We had a "nest egg" for wardrobe and transportation in case we ever had to go back to work. The first time, we lasted till John had an accident; we had to go to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and while we were there we got snowed out. John said he was going home if he had to go on a toboggan, but the doctors said he couldn't go back. It was to take a year and a half for him to heal. Arthur Pryor, our wonderful director from *March of Time*, came to see us at Mayo's and said, "If you want to come to New York and heal in a civilized place, maybe you can come back to work." We went to New York and worked on *March of Time* and *Cavalcade* and all the wonderful things until April; as soon as the weather allowed us, we went back to Montana. We came back to New York again in October, 1940, to settle down and make another grubstake. All through the years, the work was just to finance the life in the wilderness.



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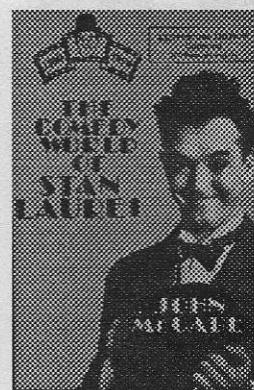
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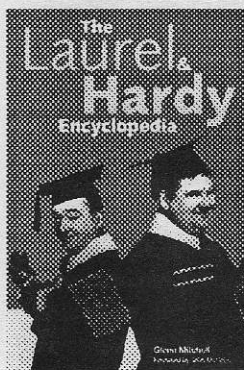
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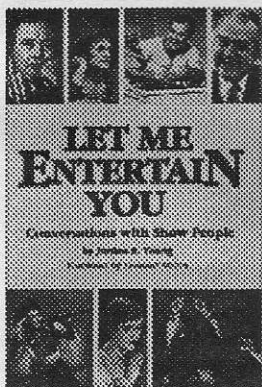


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## Shouting Praises for *Quiet, Please*

The best remembered of all the horror-anthology shows on radio is probably *Lights Out*, which was written, directed and hosted for most of its run by Arch Oboler. Rivaling that show for sheer weirdness and often surpassing it in quality was *Quiet Please*, written and directed by one Wyllis Cooper—the man who had created *Lights Out*.

Cooper is hardly a household name; he didn't have the gift or enthusiasm for self-promotion that Oboler did. However, his scripts are strange little gems—they quicken the listener's pulse through psychological means, rather than the purely visceral effects that Oboler employed.

One *Quiet Please* episode that has circulated for years is *The Thing on the Fourble Board*, in which Porky, a "rough-neck" working on an oil-drilling crew, brings up a strange creature from the bowels of the earth. The creature, which cries like a baby, is invisible until Porky rubs dirt on it, at which point he realizes that it has a body shaped like a spider, but with a lovely, little-girl face. Further, the "thing" is made of stone, is deaf—and has a healthy appetite for human flesh.

Up to this point, the story is standard radio-horror stuff, but Cooper adds a distinctive psychological kicker by having Porky fall in love with the creature and take it home! At the end of the episode he addresses the listener with, "I want you to meet my wife—or, rather, my wife wants to meet you. Come on in, dear..."

The history of this amazing program is well documented in **Quiet Please: One of Radio's Most Thought Provoking Series**, a booklet researched and written by Randy Eidemiller and Chris Lembesis. Printed on 23 single-sided sheets, the slim volume nevertheless packs a great deal of information into its pages.

All 106 episodes from 1947 to '49 are detailed, with airdates, episode titles, story lines and supporting cast. Further, the authors provide an affectionate biography of Cooper; an appreciation of the show's narrator, Ernest Chappell; background on the show's haunting theme; and a fond remembrance from actor Frank Thomas, Jr. A well-done tribute to one of the most creative and imaginative shows on radio. (Available for \$13.00 postpaid from Eidemiller, 7700 Lampson Avenue #37, Garden Grove, CA 92641.)

## LaserLight Comedy CDs Not Always a Laughing Matter

Those who labor to preserve the shows from radio's golden era really face some daunting obstacles. The long-standing problems have been locating the transcription discs (if the shows were recorded in the first place), cleaning them and sensitively transferring them to tape, to ensure that they're preserved with the finest possible audio quality. As shows are dubbed and traded among collectors, new problems result—pitch variance and audio degradation in each successive copy.

The digital era has brought a new problem: overuse of noise-eradication systems such as the CEDAR system and "NoNoise." Properly used, these devices can reduce surface noise to a minimum and eliminate pops and clicks. Unfortunately, some audio engineers eradicate *all* of the surface noise, eliminating natural "room tone" and making the recording sound dry and artificial. Sometimes this problem is compounded by then adding artificial echo. A few of these audio gremlins occasionally rear their ugly heads on a new LaserLight series, **Best of Radio Comedy**, available in stores as five individual CDs for about \$6.98, or in a box for around \$30.00. Many shows are also missing commercials and other original elements. To be fair, most people buying this set probably aren't rabid radio buffs, but casual fans. The box serves the purpose of introducing a new generation to some fine comedy personalities for a modest price. To longtime collectors, however, some of the audio flaws are pretty irritating.

**Fred Allen - Jack Benny** (12 686) includes a nearly complete *Fred Allen Show* episode (missing a few seconds after one of the commercials) in listenable if not sparkling sound quality. Guest James Mason participates in a sketch which pits him against Fred's Chinese detective character, One Long Pan. The Benny show is cut to 25:02; it's the wartime episode in which Phil Harris leaves the show, having joined the Merchant Marine. Unfortunately, the sound is very dull and boxy-sounding, and the pitch is slightly slow.

**Red Skelton - Amos 'n' Andy** (12 687) has four "Skelton Scrapbook of Satire" sketches, each running about six minutes in good audio quality. *The New West* has Skelton as the raucous San Fernando Red; in a sketch on *Education and Schools* Red plays Clem Kadiddlehopper, the world's dumbest student; a routine about *Boxing* features Red, naturally, as Cauliflower McPugg; and Willie Lump-Lump teaches us about the drawbacks of *Photography*. The two *Amos 'n' Andy* sketches have slightly harsh sound; *A House in the Country* runs about eight minutes, with the Kingfish naturally swindling Andy—as he does again in *Andy & Kingfish Take a Ride*, which runs about 22 minutes.

**Duffy's Tavern - Phil Harris & Alice Faye** (12 688) includes a very slightly-edited *Tavern* episode from October 19, 1951 in which manager Archie is about to marry wealthy widow Abigail Piddleton. There are two lengthy *Harris-Faye* sketches: Phil takes up the ukulele in a sketch running about 18 minutes, and the Harris' prepare for a swanky party in the second skit, which runs 21 minutes. The *Tavern* episode is in fairly good sound; the *Harris-Faye* pieces suffer from overprocessing and added echo.

**Ozzie & Harriet - The Bickersons** (12 689) is a clever contrast between two very different married couples on radio. Unfortunately, those overprocessing problems really bedevil the O&H episode, which has been cut down to just under 24 minutes. The three *Bickersons* pieces (complete sketches from *Old Gold* shows, each running about ten minutes) sound somewhat better, although there's a little hiss. All three have to do with John's insomnia, much of it caused by Blanche's nagging.

**Fibber McGee & Molly - Burns & Allen** (12 690) again teams two slightly off-kilter comedy couples. The *Fibber* episode, in which young houseguest Alice Darling is expecting a visit from her boyfriend, has been edited to 22 minutes; the sound is slightly harsh, and the pitch is a shade fast. George and Gracie are featured in a somewhat edited episode (24 minutes) in which Gracie wants George to become a doctor. This is followed by two brief sketches in which George demonstrates his singing skills, and Gracie tells how her brother Willie got hit by a truck because he had his pants on backwards. Sadly, the overprocessing and echo problems really gang up on these three items.

The packaging is very nice (except for a still which shows the TV *Fibber McGee & Molly*, Bob Sweeney and Cathy Lewis, instead of Jim and Marian Jordan). We do wish that the producers ("Camco Enterprises") would have just left the shows alone instead of working so hard to compromise the sound quality. We're sure their intentions were good, but the end result is rarely pleasing to the ear.



## Pop Culture

### Video Sheds Light on Edison



We don't yet have a documentary about Edison's favorite invention, the phonograph, but it's still, ah, illuminating to view Edison's **Miracle of Light**

(Shanachie 976; \$19.95). This hour-long documentary produced for the PBS *American Experience* series depicts the Wizard of Menlo Park's many struggles in his quest to produce a safe electric incandescent light. Those struggles, however, were nothing compared to the business wars Edison waged against George Westinghouse and his new system of alternating current. The documentary is intriguing even if its story is dark and gloomy.

Sad to say, many subsequent cases have been similarly billed, but the new videocassette **Murder of the Century** (Shanachie 975; \$19.95) refers to the 1906 killing of architect Stanford White in New York. White was fabulously talented, brilliant, a bon vivant and apparently very wealthy. He was killed by the eccentric young heir to a Pittsburgh railroad fortune, Harry K. Thaw, because White had taken sexual advantage years before of the woman who later became Thaw's wife—the model and actress Evelyn Nesbitt. (Nesbitt had risen from a childhood of poverty to become one of the famous "Floradora" girls on Broadway, and was also the model for the "Gibson Girl.")

The story encompassed show business, high society, money, sex, obsession and murder—and sold thousands of newspapers. In this hour-long documentary written and produced by Carl Charlson for *American Experience*, we see that this case was as much a media circus as some other more recent trials have been. Vintage news footage and photographs evoke the period; David Ogden Stiers' narration is accompanied by many popular songs of the era. (Shanachie, 37 E. Clinton Street, Newton NJ 07860; (800) 497-1043.)

## Advertise in *Past Times*

*Past Times* readers include film buffs, jazz aficionados, old-time radio fans, home video enthusiasts and record collectors; buyers of books, CDs, video cassettes and laserdiscs; memorabilia collectors and fan club members; libraries, archives, museums, preservation societies; senior citizens; entertainment industry professionals and national media.

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## Kelly Saluted on Laserdisc

*Continued from Page 6*

But that's not all; on the analog tracks, you'll hear stereo audio tracks for several alternate takes from *Anchors Aweigh*, *Living in a Big Way*, *On the Town*, *Brigadoon* and *It's Always Fair Weather*. The tracks for the last two films are exhaustive, including auditions by several ladies hoping to dub the singing for Cyd Charisse (Carol Richards got the job).

Also included are pickups and discarded takes for numbers used in the films, deleted songs for which no visuals survive, and the music cues for the under-scoring.

George Feltenstein, Allan Fisch and Peter Fitzgerald produced this impressive tribute to Mr. Kelly. The excellent career overview included on a four-page insert was supervised by Ramona Mills. The fine audio remixes are credited to Ted Hall at Pacific Ocean Post.

Even with a somewhat hefty price tag, this four-disc box is worth every penny. This collection will help ensure that Gene Kelly's many remarkable talents as actor, singer, dancer and director will live on.

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They were the toast of Broadway in the '30s -- in Gershwin's *Girl Crazy*, they literally stopped the show. Movies, records, radio shows and nightclubs beckoned; the critics raved. And small wonder — they were four handsome lads from the Pacific Northwest who could charm the birds out of the trees. Above all, they were masters of the ocarina (aka the sweet potato), which gave the Foursome a unique sound all their own. Special guest stars Bing Crosby, Dick Powell and Pinky Tomlin — plus a drummer named Spike Jones (heard here on 13 tracks) — join the popular quartet on this 24-track album, an import from the U.K.



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"When the Bloom is On the Sage" w/ Crosby

"I Like Mountain Music"

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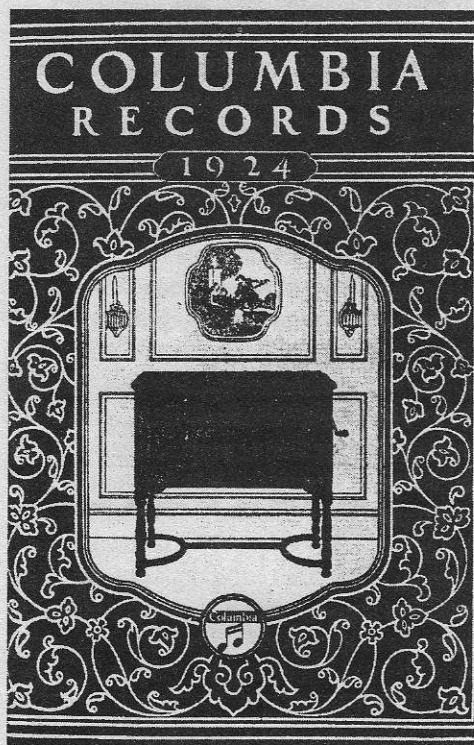
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