

Past Times

No. 32 THE NOSTALGIA ENTERTAINMENT NEWSLETTER \$5.00

An Encyclopedia of Silent Comedies

By Richard M. Roberts



Mack Sennett

For decades, slapstick comedy shorts (that weren't made by Chaplin) were underrated, if not dismissed entirely, by film studios, critics and historians. But the public embraced these films, and later generations who rediscovered them on TV in the '50s and '60s (practically the only silents regularly on the tube) also fell in love with them. Despite their often mutilated form, the films' humor survived the decades.

The opening dedication of Kino on Video's four-volume **Slapstick Encyclopedia** (available singly for \$24.95 per VHS cassette or in a box set for \$89.95), salutes "The Film Collectors who rescued and preserved silent comedy." Indeed, it was not the archives or the studios who saved these priceless comedies, but the fans.

"Curated" by Joe Adamson and David Shepard, the *Encyclopedia* helps rectify the poor treatment silent comedy shorts have received in the video/laserdisc marketplace. This fine cross-section

of silent comedies looks terrific in sparkling new digital transfers. The collection may well introduce a new generation to these talented yet frequently obscure comedians.

Volume One, **In the Beginning**, presents the film clowns who became famous in the first two decades of the twentieth century. *One Too Many*, a 1916 Vim comedy, features a baby-faced, 24-year-old Oliver Hardy, teamed with diminutive Billy Ruge as "Plump and Runt" ten years before Stan Laurel.

The Wrong Mr. Fox (1917), a Paramount Klever Comedy, shows us the youthful Victor Moore, who strangely enough doesn't look much different from the old Victor Moore. The film's plot is almost a prototype for Chaplin's later *The Pilgrim* (1923), as Moore plays an actor who is mistaken for a priest in a small town.

The earliest comedy in the entire collection is *Mr. Flip*, a 1909 Essanay split-reeler featuring a very young Ben Turpin. Turpin may be the first important American comedian; this film comes a full two years after he joined Essanay as janitor and part-time actor. (Note: this film is not included in the laserdisc edition of the *Encyclopedia*.) Another important early comedian, Augustus Carney, stars in the Essanay comedy *Alkali Ike's Auto* (1912).

Our first taste of Keystone madness arrives with *Mabel's Dramatic Career*, a 1913 Mack Sennett comedy with surprisingly sophisticated comments on film stardom. Mabel Normand leaves her country bumpkin beau (played by Sennett himself) for Hollywood and movie stardom. Mack sees his former love on the screen being menaced by villain Ford Sterling. Heading for Hollywood to rescue her, Mack is surprised to discover Mabel actually married to Sterling, and the happy mother of his children!

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A Golden View of Radio Greats

As you know from the past several issues of PT, Frank Bresee and Bobb Lynes' feature *Radio's Golden Years*, is entertaining, informative and visually appealing. A whole treasure trove of these drawings arrives in book form with **Radio's Golden Years: A Visual Guide to the Shows and the Stars** (264 pages, paperback; \$19.95).



Bob Hope

Bresee and Lynes have created 254 beautifully-illustrated histories of radio's great shows and performers. Somewhat reminiscent of the old "Seein' Stars" feature drawn back in the '30s by illustrator Feg Murray, the

full-page line-art drawings (measuring about 8" by 11") by Lynes show us what radio's creators looked like. Lynes' depictions of these folks are not caricatures or cartoons; they are almost photographic in their accuracy, yet they have a character to them that is Lynes' own technique. The drawings are warm and human, and they fully convey Lynes' longtime passion for old-time radio. (He has hosted various series devoted to OTR in the Southern California area and can be heard via satellite on the Yesterday USA Superstation. In addition, he's been a board member of SPERDVAC—the Society for Preservation and Encouragement of Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy—for 23 years.)

Bresee—the producer and host of *Golden Days of Radio*, the first "old-time radio" program, which ran for 29 years on the Armed Forces Radio service—adds a

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Love Vintage Movies, Big Bands, Old Time Radio?
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NOSTALGIA NEWSWIRE

First off, our apologies to those who received PT 31 late; normally, we're able to send the spring and summer issues by bulk and get them to readers on time, but this spring we ran into a blizzard of campaign literature that massively delayed bulk-mail delivery. So, henceforth, *Past Times* will at last be solely a first-class operation.....

The past year has seen a welcome renewal of interest in popular music of the past; new "swing" bands such as the Royal Crown Revue, the Squirrel Nut Zippers and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy (which actually sound more like the "jump bands" of the late '40s) have been issuing CDs at furious rates, and the labels which own the classic swing recordings of the '30s and '40s have been going into the vaults. BMG/RCA Victor's *The Fabulous Big Band Collection* (BMG 63119; \$11.98) has 15 tracks, and its companion volume *The Fabulous Swing Collection* (68987; \$11.98) has 19—but four tracks are duplicated on *both* volumes (Miller's "In the Mood," Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing," Ellington's "Take the A Train" and Dorsey's "Opus One"). With all of the treasures in the BMG/RCA vaults, they couldn't find 34 big-band titles?.....

Better is Decca/GRP's new series, featuring titles by Chick Webb and Count Basie. The contemporary look of the packaging and the choice of titles indicates that this is clearly being marketed to the new generation of swing enthusiasts.....

1920s Hot-Dance Music Alert: In addition to the forthcoming second volume of **Bix** Restored from **Origin Jazz Library** (see page 12), you'll want to be on the lookout for Volume 3 of the complete **Coon-Sanders Nighthawks** series, coming from **The Old Masters**. Also in the works from TOM: a complete four-volume series of **The Six Jumping Jacks**, one of the hottest and funniest of '20s bands. The **Diamond Cut** label, famed for its restorations of rare **Edison** recordings, has issued *Hot Tunes from Rare Bands and Recordings*, featuring the bands of **Phil Baxter**, **Earl Gresh**, **Harold Austin**, **Mal Halett**, **Adrian Schubert**, **Ted Weems** and others.....If you enjoy the **Paul Whiteman** recordings of compositions by **Ferde Grofé**, you'll want to hear the re-creations of the original 1920s arrangements by the Dutch dance band **The Beau Hunks**. *The Modern American Music of Ferde Grofé* is a hard CD to find in stores, but you can obtain it on-line at <http://www.basta.nl>.....

Notable books just received as we were going to press include **Anthony Slide's** *The New Historical Dictionary of the American Film Industry* (Scarecrow Press), with a wealth of information about early studios; *The Films of Lon Chaney* by **Michael F. Blake** (Vestal Press); and *The Republic Pictures Checklist* by **Len D. Martin** (McFarland & Co.), a must-have for fans of B-Westerns and serials...

Also out on video, **Republic Entertainment's** new *Legendary Ladies of the Silver Screen* series, featuring new introductions from **Roddy McDowall**; titles include a newly-mastered print of *The Devil and Miss Jones*, a delightful comedy with **Jean Arthur**....**Universal Home Video** has really been mining the vaults lately, and their new offerings include a *Film Noir* series and four new-to-video titles starring **Marlene Dietrich** (*The Devil is a Woman*, *A Foreign Affair*, *The Song of Songs*, and *Flame of New Orleans*)....

The company of the **Three Stooges'** heirs, Comedy III, has a deal with **Columbia Pictures** to produce a new Stooges feature—not a biography, but a comedy film. In happier news, a comprehensive Stogie biography by entertainment writer **Michael Fleming** will be published by Doubleday; and the new Knuckleheads memorabilia stores have opened at the Glendale Galleria and the Ontario Mills Mall, both in southern California; all the world's a Stogie.....

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

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Past Times

<http://www.ptnostalgia.com>

(ISSN 1050-5504)

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

FILM EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Cinecon 34, Red Lion Hotel, Glendale CA, September 3-7. Rare films including *Old Clothes* (1925), *Jane Eyre* (1934), *Fate of a Flirt* (1925); dealers' rooms, guests. Info: P.O. Box 1632, Hollywood CA 90028; 1-800-317-9177.

Fall Cinesation 98, Saginaw MI, Sept. 25-27. Over 25 hours of rare film shown at Temple Theatre, a 1927 movie palace with pipe organ. Films include new restoration of *The Lost World*, Gloria Swanson in *Zaza*. Info: Dennis Atkinson, (517) 652-8881.

Ninth Annual Lone Pine Film Festival, Lone Pine CA, October 9-11. Guests include Dale Evans, Claire Trevor, Roddy McDowall, William Wellman, Jr. (films include a tribute to his director dad); location tours. Info: (760) 876-4314.

MUSIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

California Antique Phonograph Society show, UFCW Auditorium, Buena Park CA, August 9. Cylinder and early 78 players, records and memorabilia for sale. Info: Karyn Sitter, (714) 777-2486.

Phonovention, Best Western Midway Motel, Lansing MI, October 9-10. Antique phonos and vintage records. Info: Phil Stewart, 60 Central St., Battle Creek MI 49017; pgstewart@aol.com

Ragtime Weekend, Indianapolis IN, Aug 21-23. Max Morath, Joan Reynolds and other performers; info: Classic Ragtime Society, 2340 St. Peter St., Indianapolis IN 46203; (317) 786-6419.

Sweet and Hot Music Festival, Airport Marriott, Los Angeles CA, Sept 4-7. Trad jazz, '20s jazz, big band music with guests Rosy McHargue, Page Cavanaugh, Abe Most, Ian Whitcomb, many others. Info: Sweet & Hot Foundation, P.O. Box 642269, Los Angeles CA 90064-2269.

Arizona Classic Jazz Festival, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Phoenix AZ, October 30-Nov. 1. Info: ACJS, 4040 E. McDowell, Suite 120, Phoenix AZ 85008; 1-800-473-5396.

OLD-TIME RADIO/TV EVENTS

23rd Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention, Holiday Inn North, Newark NJ, October 22-24. Re-creations of radio shows, dealers' rooms with radio memorabilia, and dozens of guests: Mason Adams, Kay Armen, Jackson Beck, Elliott Reid, Carmel Quinn, many, many more. Info: Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden CT 06514; (203) 248-2887; JayHick@aol.com.

15th Annual SPERDVAC Convention, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles CA, November 13-15. Radio show re-creations, workshops, panel discussions, guests. For info: Larry Gassman, (562) 947-9800.

Movies

Bad Girls and Femmes Fatales

Film Noir is a movie genre that, like the Western, has its customs: A hero, often a detective, who's tempted but whose better impulses prevail; a sense of events spinning out of control; scenes played largely at night (but looking shadowy even in daylight); and a leading lady who's an enigma—is she outwardly a “good girl” with a bad soul, or vice versa? This mystery is what keeps the women of film noir so intriguing.



Also intriguing is Karen Burroughs Hannsberry's excellent book **Femme Noir: Bad Girls of Film** (McFarland; 634 pages, hard-cover; \$79.00 post-paid). Forty-nine actresses are profiled in chapters that admirably combine full details about their noir film work with intriguing accounts of their off-screen lives. Naturally, Lauren Bacall, Barbara Stanwyck and Lana Turner are here, but so are Peggie Castle, Helen Walker and Dorothy Hart. Some of them, such as and Veronica Lake, have had lives just as stormy as those of the characters they portrayed; others, such as Jane Greer, have had more tranquil existences.

Along with the profiles—which admirably convey the unique qualities of each actress—are two portrait photos. Each chapter is supplemented with a filmography of the actresses' film noir appearances; it's a surprise to see that so many of these women whom we associate with the genre only appeared in two or three such films. Peggy Cummins, indelible as the trigger-happy Annie in *Gun Crazy*, made only this noir, appearing mainly in romantic films and comedies. Ann Blyth, unforgettable as the bratty Veda in *Mildred Pierce*, has one other noir credit, 1947's *Brute Force*. (With this in mind, it's surprising that Ann Savage of *Detour* fame isn't included.)

Femme Noir is well researched and engagingly written, one of the better books we've encountered over the past year. It's a fine history of women who played some of the most complex and mesmerizing characters on the screen. (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (336) 246-4460.)

Image Clarity GWTW In Re-Release

Forget about *Godzilla* and *Armageddon*; for our money, the biggest disaster on the screen in 1998 thus far is the remastered print of *Gone With the Wind*.

The new prints of the 1939 classic are the first to be made using the original Technicolor dye process since 1972's *The Godfather*. The current distributor, New Line Cinema, had some problems to consider when readying the film for re-release. The film was shot in the old three-strip Technicolor process, which uses three separate negatives, one for each primary color. These have to be in perfect alignment when new prints are struck.

In addition, *GWTW* was photographed in the then-standard aspect ratio of 1:37 to 1. Since contemporary projection equipment uses a widescreen format, New Line added black borders to the left and right sides of the frame, to ensure that the full original top-to-bottom image would be preserved. This means that the actual image area on the new prints takes up less than half of the frame. To make the best use of this smaller picture area and minimize grain, it was decided to use a Cinemascope anamorphic lens process: the image is squeezed on the film, but expanded when projected through this lens.

We saw the film at a local theatre, and the first reel had a problem with misalignment of the three negatives. This was not only magnified by the anamorphic lens, it was expanded—to the point where we felt like we were watching a 3-D movie without our glasses. Things settled down a bit after the first ten minutes, but at no time was the image as sharp as we've seen in previous theatrical reissues and video releases. The blurred focus was a legacy of the Cinemascope lens, which is notorious for conveying a soft image.

Characters had red or blue outlines around their faces. Black costumes no longer had any degree of texture. The color in many cases was dingy—with the exception of reds, which lit up the screen out of proportion to their true color temperature. There were marked color shifts from one reel to the next—during a given scene, the overall color would have a brownish hue, then the reel would change and the same scene would have a yellowish-green cast. Every shot which involved an optical effect (such as a dissolve) now had a strange misty cloud hanging over the top of the frame.

Since we couldn't imagine that all prints looked as bad as this one, we saw it again at a different theatre; we're happy to report that this print was much better.

The registration problem was virtually eliminated on the first reel, and cropped up only occasionally through the rest of the film. The problems with color shifting from one reel to the next were largely corrected as well. The clarity of the image, however, still left much to be desired. The color was better, with no glowing reds, although some scenes still looked unnaturally dark. We didn't see the misty cloud, since the extreme top of the frame was out of the screen range at this theatre.

The newly-mixed soundtrack, which employs a subtle stereo effect, was quite good—that is when the center speaker, directly behind the screen, wasn't cutting out. This annoying problem happened at both theatres.

Most newspaper reviewers were falling all over themselves in describing the beauty of the new prints. *Daily Variety*, however, printed a scathing article criticizing the print quality. Louis B. Parks of the *Houston Chronicle* was not complimentary, either: “A preview screening in Houston earlier this week was a visual and aural mess, with many scenes in the first half out of focus, many scenes too dark and with several short but annoying sound dropouts.” Parks quoted film restoration technician Robert A. Harris as saying, “This is the biggest piece of garbage I have ever seen on the screen.”

The *Los Angeles Times* also ran an article entitled “Frankly, My Dear, You're a Bit Blurry,” to which New Line President of Marketing and Distribution Mitchell Goldman responded, “We worked swiftly with Technicolor and our partners in the theatrical exhibition community to replace approximately 20 damaged reels....there are almost 2,800 reels in circulation, and we have not received any complaints since this rotation took place.”

Well, as the saying goes, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. We're happy that the film grossed nearly \$4 million in its first three weeks, and even happier that one-quarter of the audience had never seen the film before. We fear, however, that younger moviegoers seeing *GWTW* for the first time in this presentation will assume the the image problems are simply due to this being a nearly 60-year-old film. The folks at New Line and Technicolor will have their work cut out for them when they prepare the theatrical reissue of *The Wizard of Oz* scheduled for December.

Rediscovering Slapstick's Forgotten Stars

Continued from Page 1

Two fine Vitagraph comedies show that not all early film humor was slapstick. *Fox-Trot Finesse* (1915) stars Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Drew in a clever and subtle spoof of the then-current dancing craze. *A Cure For Pokeritis* (1912) teams John Bunny, the most popular comedian of his day, with the eternal spinster Flora Finch in a wry marital comedy about the evils of gambling.

A 20-minute excerpt from *Be My Wife* (1921) is a fine example of the later work of the first great film comedian, Frenchman Max Linder. Volume One ends with one of the few movies made by the wonderful black comedian Bert Williams. *A Natural Born Gambler* (1916) preserves Williams' classic solo poker game, and shows us a legendary performer whose talent transcended the racist limitations of his time.



Volume Two, **Keystone Tonight!**, delivers several prime Mack Sennett films from the teens and twenties, starting with a gorgeous print of *Saturday Afternoon* (1926), perhaps Harry Langdon's most perfectly realized comedy. (This, alas, is also not included in the laserdisc edition.) Two wildly wacky Billy

Bevan comedies pick up the pace: *Super-Hooper-Dyne Lizzies* (1925) and *Wandering Willies* (1926). *Willies* may be the quintessential Sennett comedy, full of impossible sight gags (notably Bevan's battle with an ornery clam in his chowder) and a hilarious chase finale with the Keystone Kops. *A Muddy Romance* (1913) was created to make use of the actual draining of the lake in Echo Park near the Sennett studios in Edendale. Mabel Normand, Ford Sterling, and a gaggle of Kops all get dragged through the muck in the name of comedy. *A Movie Star* (1916) has Mack Swain as an egotistical western star visiting a small-town theater to see his latest movie; Harry McCoy is great as the theater's overzealous piano player. Closing volume two is *Barney Oldfield's Race For Life* (1913), in which the legendary race car driver saves Mabel Normand once again from Ford Sterling's clutches.

Volume Three is entitled **Funny Girls**, although it opens with a film starring a very funny guy—Charley Chase's *Mighty Like a Moose* (1926), one of the greatest two-reel comedies of all time. It's a perfectly constructed story of a facially-impaired married couple. (Chase has ugly teeth; wife Vivian Oakland is overly blessed in the nasal department.) Through the miracles of plastic surgery, they simultaneously become beautiful—and consequently unrecognizable to each other. Meeting at a party that evening (only in silent comedy would one go partying after major surgery) they meet and fall in love, then are accidentally photographed for the newspapers. To tell more would spoil the fun, but the film has one perfect gag after another.

Mighty Like a Moose is included thanks to the appearance of Gale Henry, an Olive Oyl lookalike who plays a spinster chasing Charley Chase at the party. She stars in *The Detectress* (1919), one of the comedies she produced for the Bullseye Film Corporation. Henry was a popular comedienne at Universal and elsewhere during the silent era, as was Alice Howell, the tiny gal with the tall fuzzy hairdo, represented here by *One Wet Night* (1924), a Universal comedy which teams her with Neely Edwards and Bert Roach. Stan Laurel once commented that Alice Howell was one of the funniest

women working in pictures; here's proof that he knew what he was talking about.

Al Christie probably introduced more female comedienues than any other producer, including such lovely laughmakers as Betty Compson, Colleen Moore, Billie Rhodes and Dorothy Devore, who is the star of *Know Thy Wife* (1918). In an early example of gender reversal, Dorothy masquerades as a boy in order to be close to her husband Earl Rodney at an all-boys' college. Fay Tincher is another comedienne who, though she wasn't discovered by Christie, made some of her best films for him. In *Rowdy Ann* (1919) Fay is a rough and ready cowgirl wreaking havoc at an eastern all-girls' school. She sends the ballet students scattering when they see the six-guns strapped to her tutu.

Louise Fazenda stars in *Hearts and Flowers* (1919) a Mack Sennett comedy from his Paramount period in which he veered toward a more sophisticated style of humor. Ford Sterling plays a bandleader chasing after Louise. It is interesting to compare his more subdued acting style here; not once during *Hearts and Flowers* does he attempt to bite off someone's ear.



Volume Four has the most important and rare material. **Keaton, Arbuckle and St. John**, salutes three of the greatest physical comics of any age. First on the bill is *The Rounders* (1914), which teams Arbuckle with Charles Chaplin in what could be called a drunken comic challenge. A gorgeous tinted print of *Fatty and Mabel Adrift* (1916) follows. It is one of Arbuckle and Mabel Normand's finest outings, featuring

some subtle work by Arbuckle as the director of the film. Arbuckle may have taught Keaton more about filmmaking than historians want to admit.

The rarest and most welcome film in this collection is *Oh, Doctor!* (1917) a previously thought lost entry from Arbuckle's Paramount Comique series, which introduced Keaton to motion pictures. In this, Keaton's fifth film appearance, he uncharacteristically emotes as Dr. Fatty's bratty offspring, crying and laughing as Daddy Roscoe provides tender care (at one point Buster does a spectacular somersault after Roscoe pushes him head over heels over a table and into a chair).

A tinted but unfortunately spliced original print of *The Garage* (1920) shows what a difference three years have made to the Arbuckle-Keaton team, which is now a more mature, precisioned partnership. Keaton's subtle influence over his mentor is more pronounced here than in any of the other Arbuckle-Keaton films, partially because this was his last film with Roscoe before starting his own two-reel comedy series.

Keaton's fatalistic classic *The Boat* (1921) is presented here in a slower transfer than on Kino's Keaton box set. (Announced in pre-publicity as being an improved print, it turns out to be exactly the same one.) While the pace is perhaps a bit too leisurely—the film runs 28 minutes here, 21 minutes in the earlier transfer—the new version allows us to see several subtle nuances in the performances, and the new score is excellent.

An Encyclopedia of Pratfalls

After supporting roles in three of the preceding films, Al St. John comes to the forefront in *The Iron Mule* (1925) a Tuxedo Comedy made for Educational Pictures, directed by Arbuckle (who was St. John's uncle) and featuring the Jefferson Rocket steam locomotive Keaton built for his film *Our Hospitality*. Keaton himself made a cameo in the picture as a marauding Indian attacking the train. The Museum of Modern Art's print has a longer Keaton bit (featuring a very recognizable fall), not in the preprint material used for this collection. That is a pity, for that gag can probably be considered the last time all three comedians worked together.

All in all, *The Slapstick Encyclopedia* (which will conclude with four more volumes, due out in August) is a valuable collection of comedy films which could introduce new audiences to this wonderful work. This makes the flaws in the material's presentation all the more frustrating. Flaw number one is the concept of "correct projection speed" used in the transfers of the films. A vast amount of historical evidence (instructions on film music cue sheets, original leaders on silent film prints, memories of the people who made, exhibited or accompanied the films) shows that though silent films were shot at a speed between 16 and 22 frames per second, they were meant by their creators to be run at speeds that were sometimes even faster than the sound speed of 24 fps. (Keaton's *The General* and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* were originally released with instructions requesting projection speeds of 28 frames per second!) The difference between the shooting speed and the intended projection speed creates that incredible fantasy world and gives silent comedians their agility and grace. Mack Sennett deliberately made his cameramen "undercrank" to create such delicious, delirious action.

Unfortunately, it appears that all of the films in the first four volumes of *The Slapstick Encyclopedia* were transferred at a speed of around 20 to 22 frames per second, slow enough to destroy the flow of many of these films. Harry Langdon moves slowly enough without slowing him down further.

The newly-recorded scoring was done by a variety of accompanists and much of it is fine; I especially like the use of the Photoplayer, a mechanical device which sounds like a carousel organ. Yet there seems to be a preponderance of late-19th century ballroom music, much of which sounds too stately, too formal, for silent comedy's irreverent excesses. The combined effect, along with the slower projection speeds, is the presentation of these films as museum pieces, rather than the irrepressible flights of fancy that they are. (The best accompaniment for silent comedy is the great hot dance music of the '20s. Created at the same time as most of the films, it has that same exuberance, and can really bring these films to life.)

Despite my criticisms, which one might well chalk up to personal taste anyway, I champion Kino's *Slapstick Encyclopedia* as a worthy addition to anyone's collection. This old-comedy fan's heart is gladdened at the thought that budding vintage-film enthusiasts may walk into a Tower Records or Borders store and now come upon this material for the first time. The nagging question is, in this form, will the films whet their appetites for more?

An alternate view from your editor:

I respect the viewpoint of Richard M. Roberts, who has been researching (and one might say excavating) silent comedy films for decades and knows the field well. But we respectfully differ on the point of the speeds chosen by producer David Shepard for these films. Richard finds many of them too slow, but I find the speed for each film well chosen. The Charley Chase *Mighty Like a Moose*, for example, seems to be running at sound speed or 24 frames per second; earlier films have been transferred at slower rates, but still retain their grace and exuberance. After back-to-back viewings of the old and new transfers of Keaton's *The Boat*, I found the new and slower one to be a much richer experience; action which races by so fast as to be unintelligible in the old version is easily comprehended here, and many little nuances lost in the faster transfer finally register properly in the new one.

It would have been nice to have some '20s-style dance band music on the shorts made in the '20s (something for David Shepard to consider in the future), but I find the scores used here to be perfectly appropriate for the shorts made before 1920. Happily, they accentuate the films' action—so many scores on video releases of silent films either ignore the narrative or actually detract from the overall experience.

Classic Clowns in Print, on CD

Fans of vintage film comedy may want to look out for *The Films of Mack Sennett: Credit Documentation from the Mack Sennett Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library*, compiled and edited by Warren Sherk. This 321-page hardcover has been published by Scarecrow Press; it details 855 films produced by the Sennett Company from September 1912 through 1933. It does not cover all of the Sennett films (the Chaplin films from 1914 are not included); only those for which files exist at the Herrick library are documented. We'll have a full review in the next issue of PT.

Scheduled for publication in August is *Laurel & Hardy: From the Forties Forward* by Scott MacGillivray. This is an examination of the team's studio-controlled 20th Century-Fox and MGM films, generally agreed to be disasters. We sincerely hope that this is not a book-length attempt to justify films which were detested by their two stars, who were prevented from contributing behind the camera as they had at the Hal Roach Studios. In any event, the book will also cover revivals of the team's films in theatres and on TV, the personal-appearance tours, and the Robert Youngson compilations of the prime silent material from the Roach years. The 216-page volume will be published by Vestal Press, retailing at \$40.00 in hardcover and \$19.95 for paperback.

Somewhat better comedy of the 1940s is revisited in a recent compact disc: *On The Road* (Vintage Jazz Band VJB 1949-2; \$16.00) revisits the roads taken by Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour from *Singapore* to *Rio* (*Bali* and *Hong Kong* are not scheduled on this itinerary). While a few of the one-liners are included, the emphasis is mainly on the music. Crosby, of course, has the lion's share of the songs, but Hope joins in on seven numbers, and Dottie is heard either with the boys or solo on seven tunes as well.

A number of hit songs accompanied these journeys, among them "Too Romantic," "It's Always You," "Moonlight Becomes You," "Personality" and "But Beautiful"—not to mention Bob & Bing's "Put It There, Pal" and the zany theme song for *Morocco*. On "You Don't Have to Know the Language," Bing is joined by the Andrews Sisters. The sound quality is just fine throughout, and the booklet is nicely designed and informative. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)



The Literate Wit of The Three Stooges

Recently, we've been greeted with a number of Encyclopedias devoted to the careers of film comedians: Glenn Mitchell's volumes devoted to Laurel & Hardy, Chaplin and the Marx Brothers, all reviewed in earlier issues of *PT*, are welcome and

exhaustive examinations of these artists' work. A new book by Robert Kurson, **The Official Three Stooges Encyclopedia** (Contemporary Books; 365 pages, hardcover; \$29.95) takes a different tack. Rather than profiling the history of the Stooges' careers, Mr. Kurson explores the world of the Stooges' films, detailing characters, locales, songs, key lines, and what he calls "Immutable Stooges Laws."

Mr. Kurson makes a key point with this book which has been all but unmentioned by previous volumes: "The meat and potatoes of the Three Stooges is in their fists, but the flavor is in the language. After the last pie has flown, after the last eye has been poked, the words of the Stooges remain." As this book makes abundantly clear, there's a wealth of funny material in the Stooge films which has nothing to do with slapstick or violence. Moreso than any comics except the Marx Brothers, the Stooges and their writers had a passion for funny language; the films abound with locales such as "Hotel Costa Plente," historical figures such as "King Rutentuten," business names such as "Diggs, Graves and Berry, Undertakers," and unusual ingredients such as "cedascram, eenots, and ectowhozis." Maybe this isn't on the level of George S. Kaufman, but it has a wonderful vaudevillian ring to it that can render the viewer helplessly giddy.

The first section of the book contains capsule biographies of the Stooges, the main supporting players, and a few of the other notable cast members (most—but not all—of whom are also represented with photos). The longest section, part two, alphabetically lists and explains the citizens, locales, slogans and dialogue to be found in the films. The entries are wittily written with an air of bemused gentility, such as this entry for "G.Y. Prince": "It's tempting while watching *Quiz Whizz* to criticize Joe for investing his jackpot prize money in Consolidated Fujiyama California Smog Bags. But can any of us say that amid the excitement of making a big investment we would have noticed the suspicious initials of the product's eager pitchmen, G.Y. Prince and R.O. Broad?"

The third section lists the entries by category, and the forth lists them by film. Finally, in the fifth section all of the Stooges' Columbia films are listed alphabetically (none of the early MGM films, nor the United Artists *Gold Raiders*, nor the independent production *Kook's Tour* are included), with synopses and key gags detailed. Release dates (beyond year) and cast and credit information are not to be found here; for that you'll have to consult *The Three Stooges Scrapbook* by Greg and Jeff Lenburg with Joan Maurer. The many illustrations include a few deleted scenes, and some production shots; sidebars include explanations of the classic sound effects, a "top ten" listing of film titles, and a list of Moe's colorful insults (we're fond of "Bunionhead" and "Mashed potato muscles").

This book is a wonderfully detailed chronicle of the Stooges' humor, and should provide a convincing rebuttal to the argument that "All those men do is hit each other!" There's plenty of wit and whimsy between the physical assaults in the Stooges' films, and it's accentuated by Robert Kurson's own witty prose in this volume. (Available in bookstores and on-line from Amazon.Com; information: Contemporary Books, 4255 West Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60646-1975.)

By the way, there might be a meeting of the Stooge fan club held in the Philadelphia area if there's enough interest. This is for members only—one of whom you can become by writing to Gary Lassin in care of The Three Stooges Fan Club Inc., P.O. Box 747, Gwynedd Valley, PA 19437. Annual dues, which includes a subscription to the club's quarterly newsletter, is \$9.00 within the U.S. and Canada. Mr. Lassin's long-running Fan Club should not be confused with the new "Official Three Stooges Fan Club," run by Comedy III Productions, the firm through which the Stooges' heirs control licensing. *That* club is having a convention from August 21 through the 23rd at the Burbank Airport Hilton in Burbank, California, with many special guests, a live pie fight, and other highjinks. (For registration information, see the online site: <http://www.threestooges.com>.)

Another Top 100. of the Movies

Now that the American Film Institute has tabulated a ranking of the 100 best American movies, along comes author Scott Smith with **The Film 100** (Citadel Press; 318 pages, hardcover; \$25.95), which does the same thing for "The most influential people in the history of the movies." Note that this isn't merely a listing of actors and directors; Smith's list includes watchdog Will Hays, animator J.R. Bray, cameraman Billy Bitzer, critic André Bazin and exhibitor Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel.

Invariably with a book of this type, there are some eyebrow-raising choices. How does Looney Tunes producer Leon Schlesinger place at No. 47 when his directors Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Friz Freleng and Bob Clampett don't make the list? (According to Smith, for providing the "hands-off" atmosphere which let them flourish.) Why is Katharine Hepburn listed at No. 35 when the equally illustrious Spencer Tracy is absent? By comparison, it's nice to see people such as stunt coordinator Yakima Canutt and optical effects inventor Linwood Dunn given credit.

This book began as a site on the World Wide Web (www.film100.com), so it's a bit surprising that the volume isn't biased towards filmmakers of the '70s and later; indeed, film-related people from the industry's beginnings through the '40s are very well represented here. Unfortunately, there are occasional errors in these profiles, which run about two and one-half pages each. Tex Avery is credited with directing cartoons "that showered the Warners division with more Oscars," but in fact Warners cartoons won no Oscars until 1947's *Tweetie Pie*, made five years after Avery's departure; Lon Chaney is credited with playing "all of the leading characters" in *The Unholy Three*, which would be news to Mae Busch, Victor McLaglen and Harry Earles. (Available in bookstores.)

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Movie Music on CDs: Fred & Ginger, WB, Lanza

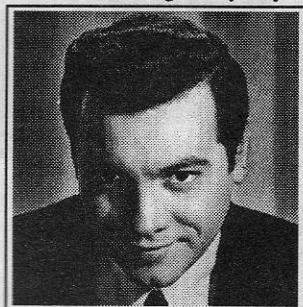
Fans of vintage movie music have several new reasons to celebrate. First off, Turner Classic Movies and Rhino have jointly produced another excellent soundtrack collection, **Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers at RKO** (R2 72957; \$29.98). A companion to Rhino's earlier *Fred Astaire at MGM* collection, this two-CD set has even more memorable music than its predecessor.

The scores for eight of the team's RKO features (omitting *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*) are included, with wonderful songs by Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and the Gershwins. All of the numbers are included in their entirety ("The Continental" from *The Gay Divorcee* clocks in at a whopping 8:15), which isn't to say that all of the songs are here. We miss Ginger's song "Music Makes Me" from *Flying Down to Rio*—a strange omission, since she sings on only ten of the 35 tracks.

Four of the Gershwin songs from Fred's Ginger-less *A Damsel in Distress* are included, along with Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's classic "One For My Baby" from 1943's *The Sky's the Limit* (associated today with Sinatra, but introduced by Astaire). While RKO's sound quality never matched Warners' or MGM's, the audio is generally fine; most tracks are taken from 35mm fine-grain prints, with a few taken from acetate discs ("Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" is rather raspy). Will Friedwald's lengthy Appreciation in the nicely-illustrated booklet is typically illuminating.

We can't believe it's been a quarter-century since we bought the big LP box set *Fifty Years of Film Music*, celebrating the scores and songs from Warner Bros. But, alas, it has been, and Rhino has now brought out a four-CD set entitled **Warner Bros.: 75 Years of Film Music** (R2 75287; \$59.98). Surprisingly, only one disc of the four is devoted to scores, so we have to content ourselves with only brief snippets from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Now Voyager*, *Kings Row* and *Casablanca*, to make way for selections from *Dirty Harry*, *Chariots of Fire* and *Batman*. The second CD has songs from films made between 1927 (*The Jazz Singer*, of course) and 1953 (*Calamity Jane*, which brought us Doris Day's "Secret Love"). Along the way there are expected classics ("Lullaby of Broadway" from *Gold Diggers of 1935*) and happy surprises ("Blues In the Night," from a Jimmie Lunceford short). All of these are the original soundtrack performances.

There are a couple of fine numbers on disc three ("The Man That Got Away" from Garland's *A Star is Born*) before we get into the likes of "One Tin Soldier" from (yuck!) *Billy Jack*. Disc Four misses the boat entirely; surely the Warners movies of the last 20 years have yielded scores and songs better than the radio-friendly singles collected here. (Is Madonna's "Who's That Girl?," from a notorious flop film, really among Warners' finest music? Or even Paul McCartney's okay "The World Tonight" from the less-than-successful *Father's Day*?) Fortunately, the collection ends with Johnny Mercer's "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive"—used in *L.A. Confidential*. The lavishly illustrated 80-page booklet, with full credits and long essays by the likes of Rudy Behlmer, is actually better than the CDs.



panies Lanza on four tracks. Of particular interest are the outtakes, including a lovely reading of "All the Things You Are." Although recording techniques were changing rapidly between 1949 and '54, these tracks all sound fine. Rudy Behlmer's well-researched and engagingly written notes accompany this release, a major event for Lanza's fans. (Available in stores, and from Rhino Direct: 1-800-432-0020)

If your tastes lean more toward operetta, you'll rejoice at **Be My Love: Mario Lanza at MGM** (TCM/Rhino R2 72958). Incredibly, this CD marks the first issue of Lanza soundtrack material; of the 20 selections, only "Be My Love" has been previously released. Titles from *That Midnight Kiss*, *The Toast of New Orleans*, *The Great Caruso*, *Because You're Mine* and *The Student Prince* are included, thirteen of them in stereo. The material ranges from pop standards to grand opera, Lanza's magnificent voice handling all equally well. Kathryn Grayson accom-



New Book Proves Ruby Really a Gem

In *42nd Street*, Warner Baxter pushed her onstage with the warning, "You've got to come back a star!" Sure enough, that's exactly what Ruby Keeler did. But according to author and longtime friend Nancy Marlow-Trump in **Ruby Keeler: A Photographic Biography** (McFarland; 169 pages, hardcover; \$32.95 postpaid), the actress found her most rewarding career as the wife of California real-estate broker John Lowe and as a doting mother of five children.



While she may have grown to think of her performing career as a mere side-light, Ruby Keeler certainly became a top star, first as a featured dancer at Texas Guinan's nightclubs, then in Broadway productions such as *Show*

Girl, which boasted a Gershwin score. In September, 1928, she married Al Jolson, whose jealousy made the marriage an 11-year nightmare for her. One night, Warners producer Darryl Zanuck sat next to the Jolsons at a prizefight and remembered a screen test that Ruby had made. He asked Al and Ruby if he could review the test, and the next day he signed Ruby for *42nd Street*.

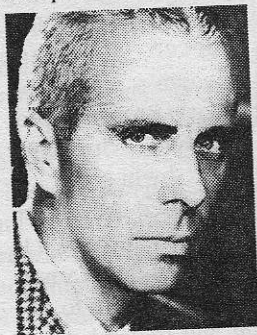
She was a sensation in this and eight subsequent Warners musicals; she wasn't a great dancer, singer or actress, but she came across as genuine and sincere. (Your editor met her on three occasions and can attest to her true kindness.) When her career and her marriage to Jolson ended, she spent 27 idyllic years as Mrs. John Lowe. After he died, she made a spectacular comeback on Broadway in a 1971 revival of *No, No Nanette*. Although felled by a stroke in 1974, she courageously regained her health and appeared at film festivals and cruises.

The text covers the basics of Ruby's life briskly and succinctly with many quotes from friends, family and co-workers; this may not be the definitive book on Keeler, but it's an enjoyable read. The hundreds of illustrations, however, are treasures—portraits, magazine and sheet music covers, news articles, family snapshots, and other goodies from Ruby's own scrapbooks. (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)

Reappraising Classic Films

The title, the dust jacket copy, and the table of contents for Andrew Sarris' **You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet** (Oxford; 573 pages, hardcover; \$35.00) might well lead one to think that this book is yet another all-inclusive yet superficial chronicle of Hollywood's Golden Era. Sections devoted to genres (The Musical, The Gangster Film), directors (Ford, Hawks, Welles), and actors and actresses (Garbo, Cagney, Bogart) might make this volume seem more of a history book than it is.

It's really a chronicle of how public and critical reaction to the films of the '30s and '40s has changed over the decades. Sarris is more than willing to re-evaluate his own previously published opinions. He confesses a prior profound underrating of Billy Wilder, for example. Sarris—described in shorthand as the auteur of the auteur theory, which has elevated the vision of the director to the detriment of other creative contributors—seems to have modified his viewpoint. The book does include a section (albeit brief) on the studios and their distinctive styles, which truly would be more attributable to producers, production designers, cinematographers, composers and even costumers than to the man yelling "action".



Howard Hawks

However, Sarris still has a myopia that's very peculiar for someone who has largely earned his living at a typewriter—an underdeveloped appreciation for the screenwriter. Director Howard Hawks is cited extensively throughout the book, but his key collaborator, Jules Furthman, is mentioned only once—and then in a reference to a movie directed by Josef von Sternberg! Julius and Philip Epstein's script for *Casablanca* is noted as "crafty" and let go at that; they're mentioned more frequently

as the writers of a 1949 trifle called *My Foolish Heart*. The book's appendices list Academy- and New York Film Critics Circle Award-winning Pictures, Actors, Actresses and Directors, and Sarris lists his own favorite directors and performances, but, tellingly, the screenwriter goes unmentioned. (To be fair, Sarris notes that Hollywood's screenwriters are "shamefully unsung," but he doesn't sing much about them himself.)

Which is not to say at all that the book is fatally compromised. On the contrary, it's a lively, thought-provoking, entertaining and highly personal reflection upon the questions of why we react to movies and their stars the way we do, and how those reactions have changed over time. Sarris explodes assumptions that have been printed and reprinted over the years—often his own. (His redefinition of screwball comedy, and his new appreciation for Harold Lloyd, are particularly enlightening.) He doesn't topple the long-established Greats from their pedestals; rather, he provides a better understanding of why they're great.

As noted earlier, this is not an introductory history of the movies; it's a book for people who have immersed themselves in '30s and '40s movies and are ready to assess their meaning and their value after all these decades. We live in a time when much of the public doubts the worth of any film made in black and white, so we hope that this thoughtful book about a true high point of American culture will find an audience. It's probably too much to hope that contemporary directors could be called away from their explosives to read it. (Available in bookstores, and online from Amazon.com.)

The Riddle of Gary Cooper

Gary Cooper was a bit of an enigma to other actors and directors. Frank Capra, Billy Wilder and others have remarked that his performances on the movie set seemed emotionless and dull, but when they'd watch the rushes the next day, those same performances on film were mesmerizing.

Cooper was a bit mysterious as a person, too, as recounted by Jeffrey Meyers in **Gary Cooper: American Hero** (Morrow; 379 pages, hardcover; \$26.00). Although his portrayals could range from the guileless Longfellow Deeds to Marco Polo, he's remembered primarily as the soft-spoken, self-reliant man of integrity who stands up against adversaries from the Old West (as in *High Noon*) or the big city (*Meet John Doe*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*). In real



life, Cooper around friends was just as reserved as his movie characters, but had sophisticated tastes. (His "very, very British" parents had settled a ranch in Helena, Montana, but sent Gary to a boys' school in Kent, England, which helps explain why he could so convincingly play cowboys and men of the world.) Politically, he changed over the years from a Roosevelt democrat to a conservative. He was an astute businessman, avoiding long-term contracts and

He was deeply attached to his wife, Rocky, and remained married to her for almost thirty years; he was very devoted to his daughter, Maria (who assisted Meyers in researching this book). Yet he had a startling parade of mistresses, including Clara Bow, Tallulah Bankhead, Ingrid Bergman, Evelyn Brent, Marlene Dietrich, Grace Kelly, Lupe Velez and Patricia Neal, the most serious of his extramarital attachments. Cooper's bedroom escapades are described with discretion (except in the lurid photo captions) and are not given undue emphasis. There are few photographs, and the bare-bones filmography is rather uselessly divided into Best Films, Important Films, Seeable Films and Poor Films; further, film titles are not cited in the index. Even so, this is a very readable book which ably describes a multifaceted man. (Available in bookstores.)

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Valentino, Janet Gaynor on Laserdisc

By Rob Ray

The American Film Institute didn't ask us to vote, but had we been among the 1,500 folks deciding the 100 best films of the last 100 years, we certainly would have included a wonderful film now out on laserdisc: **Sunrise - A Song of Two Humans** (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment 0876280; \$49.98) The silent film was reaching new artistic heights in 1928 when sound killed it, and *Sunrise* is a prime example of the form at its zenith.

Quite simply one of the greatest motion pictures ever made, it's a simple tale of a farmer who, lured by a Wicked City Woman, plots to murder his wife. Without spoiling a wonderful film, let's just say things don't happen as he planned and several primal emotions come into play before the end is reached.

German director F.W. Murnau was recruited by Fox Films, based on his earlier successes such as *The Last Laugh*; although shot on the Fox lot and at Lake Arrowhead, the film has a distinctively European look to it. Murnau moves his camera as if choreographing an intricate dance. The set designs, from a brooding swamp to a bustling city, are prime examples of German Expressionism as interpreted by Hollywood. (A city square was shot in a forced perspective, using children and midgets as extras in the background.) George O'Brien and Janet Gaynor are outstanding as the young couple whose marriage faces its greatest challenge over the course of a day and a night before they can meet the sunrise.

Until now, *Sunrise* has been one of the most glaring omissions in domestic laserdisc catalogs (it was available from Japan at one point), but now Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment has rectified that with this new release and it's worth the wait. The few prints that have surfaced before have been dark and blurry; this laserdisc, however, was digitally mastered from Fox's 35mm fine grain master print, and windowboxed to the correct 1.2:1 aspect ratio. Though it's still not as sharp as some other films from 1927, it's much clearer and brighter than it has ever been before on video.

Sunrise was the first feature film to use Fox's Movietone sound process which placed the sound track directly on the film rather than on a separate disc and this laserdisc has this 1927 monaural orchestral score by Hugo Riesenfeld on the analog tracks. The digital tracks have a new stereophonic score composed and conducted by Timothy Brock and performed by the Olympia Chamber Orchestra. While we prefer the original score, the new score is extremely well done and it's nice to be given a pleasant choice.

The film's editor, Harold Schuster, knowing a masterpiece when he saw one, saved several outtakes in the form of a 35mm workprint and these are included on the disc. As an added bonus, a manuscript of the film's opening scenes is displayed in the CLV format in both English and German, with Murnau's notes on the German copy. The disc, produced by David Shepard, contains 19 chapter stops and the supplemental section contains another 10.

In 1925, Rudolph Valentino made his first independent production, **Cobra**, now available on laserdisc (Image Entertainment ID4432DS; \$39.98). Sadly, it was almost his last: he was less than a year away from his untimely death when it was released. The fascinating liner notes on the back of the jacket note how the cast and crew were originally assembled to film *The Hooded Falcon*, a sprawling epic of medieval Spain. When that project proved too unwieldy, the Broadway success *Cobra* was rushed into production.

Valentino and his wife and manager, Natacha Rambova, were looking to downplay Rudy's latin lover image, so there is little actual passion in the film. The liner notes point out that although the picture failed at the box office as a result of this decision, Valentino's performance here is less dated than some of his other more typical roles and thus *Cobra* is one of his better films for a modern-day perspective.

Rudy plays a chronic lothario who flees Italy and comes to America to escape the trouble caused by his roving eye. But his best friend's wife cobra-like manner brings out his old self and tragedy and heartache lead up to a bittersweet finale.

Valentino fans may not agree with the liner notes' disparaging remarks about his Great Lover persona, but no one can argue that the print on view in this David Shepard-produced disc is outstandingly sharp and clean; some long shots are incredibly fluid and bely their 73 years. The film was mastered at 22 frames per second from a full aperture 35mm positive print made off the original camera negative. The impressive digital stereo score was compiled by Rodney Sauer and Susan Hall from period arrangements and was recorded by the Mont Alto Theater Orchestra. The two-sided disc, running 75 minutes, contains 19 chapter stops.

Rarities From Critics' Choice

A number of rare early films, including a number of silents, have been showing up in the catalog of the Critics' Choice Video mail-order company. The firm has an exclusive agreement with the Killiam Library, which has been distributing vintage films since 1949.

Among the goodies you'll find only in this catalog are *Sunny Side Up*, a 1929 musical starring Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, with a great score by DeSylva, Brown and Henderson; *The Sky Pilot*, a 1921 silent directed by King Vidor, starring Colleen Moore and John Bowers as a minister in the Canadian Northwest; *My Lady of Whims* (1925), with Clara Bow as—what else—a fun-loving flapper; *The Iron Horse*, a 1924 John Ford epic about the construction of the transcontinental railroad; Tom Mix in *The Last Trail* and *The Great K & A Train Robbery*, two of his late '20s Fox westerns; William Haines' breakthrough film, *Brown of Harvard*, from 1926; and the rowdy 1926 Howard Hawks comedy *A Girl In Every Port*, starring Victor McLaglen, Robert Armstrong and Louise Brooks.

Most of these tapes retail for \$19.95, although occasionally some of them are on sale for as little as \$9.97. The print quality, however, varies greatly from title to title; some are taken from excellent, sharp prints, while others are from substandard dupes. We were disappointed in *Seventh Heaven* and *Street Angel*, two Janet Gaynor-Charles Farrell silents from 1927 and '28. Both were contrasty and badly cropped (the left quarter of the frame was lopped off); further, the image was unbalanced—titles slanted downward to the right. Some of these silents have nicely muted tints and tones; others are rather overdone, with garish oranges and blues dominating; still others are in black and white or in sepia. Most have piano scores. We'll try to see as many of these tapes as we can and report on the image quality.

In addition to the Killiam silents, Critics' Choice offers a number of vintage films which are difficult to find at your average video store (for example, Alice Faye's 1934 musical *365 Nights In Hollywood* and the 1938 Joe E. Brown comedy *The Gladiator*), and several collections of vintage TV shows, among them a 9-cassette package of early Jack Benny programs. (Critics' Choice Video, P.O. Box 749, Itasca, IL 60143-0749; 1-800-367-7765; www.ccvideo.com.)

Sets Designed and Demolished

McFarland continues to publish books which recognize the unsung professions of the film industry. Recently, we reviewed their excellent *Film Choreographers and Dance Directors* by Larry Billman; now comes **Hollywood Stunt Performers** by Gene Scott Fresse (McFarland; 261 pages, hardcover; \$52.50 postpaid).

The overwhelming number of entries are for stuntmen working in the 1970s and beyond (thanks to the unions ensuring screen credit for these performers). However, you will find one-paragraph biographies and film credits for such earlier daredevils as Ted Mapes (the top stunt double for Gary Cooper and James Stewart); Jock Mahoney, who graduated into leading-man roles; Harvey Perry, whose doubling for Harold Lloyd remained a secret for years; 1930s serials stalwart Tom Steele; and the great Yakima Canutt, a stuntman, actor and second-unit director who made films from 1922 through 1976.

The stylish look of Hollywood films of the '20s through the '40s is in large measure due to art directors (or production designers). Some of us know that Alfred Hitchcock began as a production designer, but who recalls the creators of the memorable sets for *Casablanca* or *Citizen Kane*? You'll find the answers in Michael Stephens' **Art Directors in Cinema** (McFarland; 350 pages, hardcover; \$69 postpaid). In addition to *Casablanca*'s Carl Jules Weyl and *Kane*'s Perry Ferguson, Stephens profiles 300 of these artists, most of them having career peaks in the '30s and '40s.

Along with names well-known to film buffs such as Cedric Gibbons, Charles D. Hall and Van Nest Polglase, Stephens recounts the careers of lesser-remembered talents such as Anton Grot, who designed many of Warners' gritty crime dramas and swashbucklers; Stephen Goosson, whose work ranged from *Lost Horizon* to *The Lady From Shanghai*; and Ben Carré, a top art director of the silent era.

Occasionally there are contradictions—Cedric Gibbons' entry notes that the *Wizard of Oz* sets were "largely designed by William Horning," yet Horning's own entry states that his role was overseeing the construction of sets designed by Jack Martin Smith and Arnold Gillespie. Nevertheless, this is an illuminating book, filled with original research. (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)

Unsung Films and Their Makers Profiled

Scarecrow Press often documents aspects of film history which haven't been explored by larger houses. Five new books continue the tradition. **Paramount in Paris** by Harry Waldman (272 pages, hardcover; \$47.50) is a fascinating look at the studio's 1930-33 attempt to dominate markets overseas by establishing a studio complex in Joinville, near Paris. Ultimately more than 300 films in a variety of languages were made there. Most of the book summarizes the plots of the films (very valuable, since most are now lost), and provides concise biographies of the actors and technicians who worked at Joinville. It's unfortunate that there are no photographs, and we'd love a bit more of the background information about the studio's operations. Nevertheless, the synopses (of films often more risqué than would have been allowed in the States) and the biographies are an enticing read.

Larry Langman has written over a dozen books about varied film genres, but **Return To Paradise** (373 pages, hardcover; \$48.00) may be the first devoted to films taking place in the South Pacific. Over 600 films made between 1908 and 1994 are detailed with basic credits and synopses. Langman has grouped them chronologically; the genre seemed to change a bit with each decade, so the '20s are the era of the "Search for Paradise," the '30s highlight "Music and Violence in Paradise" and the war-torn '40s mark "Paradise Lost." Serials and documentaries are included with the theatrical productions, which on a single page can range from the famous (MGM's *Mutiny on the Bounty*) to the obscure (*Rip Roaring Riley*, a 1935 action drama starring Lloyd Hughes and released by Puritan).

Eric Knight is best known as the author of *Lassie Come-Home*—a short story, later a novel, still later the start of a cottage film and TV industry which made everyone rich but the author. In **Down But Not Quite Out in Hollow-weird** (229 pages, hardcover; \$39.50), biographer Geoff Gehman lets Knight tell much of his own story in letters to friends; his fierce intellect, and his "champagne personality" come through vividly. Originally from Yorkshire, Knight came to Philadelphia at age 15, in 1912. In the early '30s, he was the much admired cinema editor for that city's *Public Ledger*, writing reviews which were literate, funny, highly personal and often scathingly critical. By 1934, he was hired at Fox, where he quickly ran afoul of the studio system. During World War II, Captain Knight wrote scripts for American propaganda films, including the Frank Capra *Why We Fight* series; he was killed when a bomb exploded aboard his plane in January 1943. This book is a fine testament to his intellect and his integrity.

An entirely different brand of filmmaker is the topic of **Marihuana, Motherhood & Madness** (272 pages, hardcover; \$38.00). Author Bret Wood has collected the shooting scripts for *Modern Motherhood*, *Maniac* and *Marihuana: Weed With Roots in Hell*, three of the notorious 1930s exploitation films of Dwain Esper, who produced microbudget features about such taboo topics as drug addiction and promiscuity. Esper was an ex-carnival man who exploited not only his films but almost all of his associates. His wife, Hildagarde, was the true author of these gratuitously titillating and sometimes grisly screenplays. After a brief introduction to the Espers and their unusual world, Wood presents each script, followed by an afterword detailing differences in the finished films. *Modern Motherhood* is sketchy, but since no prints survive it's valuable to students of the genre. We wish there were more than the handful of illustrations; an interesting appendix includes correspondence between Mrs. Esper and the New York Censor Board.

If you've ever seen *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, you know how unforgettable Walter Huston is as Howard, the grizzled prospector. He won an Oscar for this portrayal, but it's by no means his only fine performance, as recalled in **September Song** by John Weld (283 pages, hardcover; \$39.50). An actor who could convincingly portray Abraham Lincoln and also personify evil incarnate in *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, Huston had a 30-year career in vaudeville and the legitimate theatre before entering films in 1929. This book was begun in 1937, when Huston agreed to work with Weld, a respected author and longtime friend. Publishers weren't interested at the time, but Weld, now 93, has at last finished the project begun 62 years ago. Walter Huston is often thought of now as the father of director John Huston and grandfather of Angelica. If you've seen him in *Dodsworth* or *Yankee Doodle Dandy* or heard his unforgettable recording of "September Song," you're likely to agree with Spencer Tracy that "Walter Huston just happened to be the best, that's all." This book, with illuminating quotes from its subject, helps make the case. (Scarecrow Press, 15200 NBN Way, P.O. Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214-0191; 1-800-462-6420)



Birth of Movie Genres Shown in *Origins of Film*

By David P. Hayes

Origins of Film (Image Entertainment ID4135AP; \$150.00) is a 9-1/2 hour, ten-side laserdisc collection; it contains six feature films, 24 shorts and two fragments of shorts made between 1900 and

1926, most of them from 1913-1919. The set is divided into six volumes of about 100 minutes (each has been previously released on VHS by the Library of Congress). Volumes are devoted to early gangster films, fantasy, animation and women directors, with two volumes exploring the work of early black film-makers. Although these films may have been chosen for meeting "politically-correct" criteria, such restrictions are unfair to the filmmakers, who made stirring dramas about vital conflicts with wide appeal.

The "fantasy" volume contains two features, *Florida Enchantment* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, both from 1914 and each a stylistic complement to the other. *Florida Enchantment* concerns magic beans that convert men to women and women to men, but the film treats the gender reversals with a dry acceptance of the situation as if it were Shakespeare's "As You Like It" rather than with the alternate-reality atmosphere of "The Twilight Zone." The *Oz* film, made by Frank Baum from his own series of children's books, does attempt to create a world unlike any experienced by the audience, but is defeated by its frugality; even compared to a cheap television show, this 1914 film has costumes that look like what children would sew together from old pieces of worn carpet. (Inside the cowardly-lion costume was an actor who would realize that if a production was to look as if children created it, the young showmen's backstage endeavors should be the focal point of the film's story. That actor's name was Hal Roach.)

The women's volume likewise provides a contrast, this time between two women directors, Alice Guy-Blaché and Lois Weber. Each is represented by two films, although only Weber is accorded a feature, *Too Wise Wives*. Weber's 1921 six-reeler about two married couples concentrates on "the hunting instinct" that brings each husband to the neighbor's wife who slyly tests her attractiveness through maliciousness, cattiness, and false pride at the service of appetite. Weber tells her story through vivid facial expressions that convey a story just as rich as a spy or detective yarn.

The gangster-drama feature, *Alias Jimmy Valentine* (1915), though made a year after the two fantasy films, shows that filmmakers still fell upon such stage-play conventions as having confrontations played out in long talks (with few dialogue titles, these become long, mouthed conversations). The film succeeds brilliantly when the story allows it to be visual: Robert Warwick is shown as a well-dressed, kind-looking young man, who turns via dissolve into the despicable Jimmy Valentine — with different clothes, expression and background, yet obviously the same man. A savage fistfight takes place on the rear platform of a moving train, the two combatants delivering blows to the head that don't look like the faked punches choreographed by later filmmakers. Some scenes take place in immense prison buildings which dwarf the prisoners. (These prison scenes were actually shot at Sing-Sing by special arrangement.)

Race consciousness is prevalent in the two volumes of "African American Cinema." *The Scar of Shame*, from 1926 (making it the last-filmed selection among these discs), introduces us first to a boozing bully who mercilessly beats his fearful step-daughter when she refuses to fill his empty hootch bottles. A sensitive young composer leaps out his tenement window onto a fire escape and races downstairs to help the young woman ward off the attack. Brought together by chance, these two young people will clash over his mother's ideas of "caste" within the black race, prompting the girl to drift into vice. The mixed-race team that made the film convey plot and character with rich visuals.

Pioneering black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's work is represented here by the earliest surviving black-made feature, *Within Our Gates* (1919). A veteran novelist, Micheaux told his film story as it unfolded rather than in strict chronology; viewers should make allowances for this narrative style previously tried by Edwin Porter and D.W. Griffith. Micheaux tells a story of a black woman aspiring to be a schoolmaster, a white benefactor, a black preacher ashamed that he sells out his race, and (briefly) white men pursuing the rape of black women.

If you don't have an entire evening to devote to early silents, you'll appreciate the two dozen short films, which can be enjoyed in brief viewing sessions. In addition to the aforementioned three women-directed shorts and an early sound short starring the composers and singers Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, there is a 1912 Griffith-directed gangster short starring Mary Pickford. On the lighter side, there are 21 animated shorts plus two fragments. Made from 1900 to 1921 (although mainly from 1915-1918), their styles vary from comic-strip adaptations to an animated chalkboard to early "claymation." A 1917 *Hansel and Gretel* made with stop-motion puppets has the style of 1970s Rankin-Bass television productions in its well-motioned, gently-gestured, sympathetic characters. Willis O'Brien's admirers will be thrilled by the 1917 clay-model dinosaurs and giant ape that presage *King Kong*.

None of the selections has fantastic picture quality, nor are any unpleasant to look at; when there is source-material deterioration, it usually lasts mere seconds. Some early sides have frequent, small, light, pastel color streaks that overlap small parts of the picture, even on the newly-made introductory titles; turning down the color eliminates the problem, but also removes the tinting on the few works that are affected.

Pianist Philip Carli performs scores for the entire series (other than for the Noble Sissie-Eubie Blake sound short). The movies have been transferred to video with small black bars on the top and bottom edges to preserve the full film frame.



The Scar of Shame, 1926

Music

A Long, Sweet Song

We're saddened to report the passing on May 17 of Arnold Brilhart, whom we had just profiled in issue 31. (A few days before, he had received several copies, and had much enjoyed the article.) He died in his sleep, probably from a blood clot.

As noted in that article, Arnold had been a top saxophonist and had played on literally thousands of dance-band recordings and radio shows. His natural ingenuity and enthusiasm led him to start a small sideline mail-order business making saxophone mouthpieces and reeds; his product quickly became the standard in the industry, and Arnold found himself gradually phasing out his performing career to concentrate on manufacturing. Ultimately, he had a huge plant employing over 500 workers.

As if this wasn't enough activity, Arnold was an avid golfer, playing the pro-am circuit and winning several tournaments. He hobnobbed with the brightest lights in the entertainment world, yet was always a gracious and humble man. Your editor was honored to meet him in December 1993, when he was 89; he was astonishing, and remained so right up to his passing. He was unencumbered by age. His memory of events from seventy years before was detailed and precise (he readily remembered names of his fellow sidemen). He was more informed about current events and television shows than I was, and he saw absolutely every new movie. Physically, he was in such fine shape and would walk so vigorously that I found it hard to keep up with him ("People tell me I have a fast gait," he'd chuckle).

In short, this was a remarkable man even apart from his fascinating career. I'm proud to have hosted a 93rd birthday party for him last year, which was attended by hundreds of friends, young and old. Arnold Brilhart's life was a long, sweet song, and he played every note perfectly.

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Bix Lives Again in Print and on CD

Bix Beiderbecke fans will have two reasons to rejoice in the coming months. In August, Origin Jazz Library will issue Volume Two of its *Bix Restored* series. The three-CD set will include all of the jazz cornetist's recordings from September 1927 through March 1928. (For you Bixophiles, it starts with "Humpty Dumpty" and ends with take 6 of "From Monday On.") All of the master takes and alternates are included, a total of 64 tracks.

The seven months covered here were among the most interesting and prolific of Beiderbecke's career. He made more of the classic small-group jazz records with saxophonist Frank Trumbauer, then the pair briefly free-lanced with studio groups led by Sam Lanin and Willard Robison. Bix made a couple of classic sessions with a Dixieland style group he dubbed "His Gang" before he and Trumbauer joined the huge—and hugely popular—Paul Whiteman orchestra.

The Whiteman aggregation has been disparaged by jazz critics over the years for its lavish, pseudo-symphonic orchestrations (the band numbered 34 men at one point!), but thanks to Bix, Tram, bassist Steve Brown and arranger Bill Challis, the orchestra also turned out some classic jazz sides, among them "Changes," "Lonely Melody," "San," "Mississippi Mud," "Dardanella" and "From Monday On," all included in these three discs.

The sound quality is the finest yet achieved in Beiderbecke reissues, with engineers John R. T. Davies and Michael Kieffer improving upon the excellent transfers which Davies made for the 1988 20-LP Bix collection issued by Sunbeam Records. All of the tracks have been re-equalized and many have been entirely remastered from better quality originals. The three-CD set will be available in September from Origin Jazz Library, P.O. Box 85, Santa Monica CA 90406.

Furthermore, what promises to be the ultimate Bix book will soon be published. Phil Evans—a tenacious jazz researcher who has been inquiring into all things Beiderbecke since his teenage years—and his wife Linda have co-written *Bix: The Leon Bix Beiderbecke Story*, which reconstructs the jazz legend's life virtually day-by-day through over 1,000 letters (many of them written by Bix) and hundreds of interviews with family members and associates including Louis Armstrong, Nick LaRocca, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Red Nichols, Frank Trumbauer, Hoagy Carmichael, Eddie Condon, Spiggle Willcox, Bing Crosby, Paul Whiteman and many more.

Evans has co-written books about Al Jolson, Red Nichols and Frank Trumbauer, all meticulously researched. Says wife and co-author Linda, "The new book is like a diary—going from day to day with comments directly from those who knew him. The whole truth and nothing but the truth is in this book." Among the myths the book will dispel is the notion that Bix's family rejected him for having become a jazzman. "His family dearly loved their Bix," relates Linda. "They knew he was drinking too much and were very concerned as any family would be. We have the Bix letters in the text exactly as he wrote them, and you will see Bix in a whole new light."

The Evanses have been helped in their quest for every last detail about Bix by an army of fans, and many members of the Beiderbecke family. "Bix's nephews and their families have given us all the information available to them, including articles about the family and a letter from Bix's mother written in 1931," Ms. Evans notes. The book will contain more than 250 photos, over 100 of which will depict Bix—a tremendous addition to the handful that have previously been available. A fully detailed discography is also included. The book will be a 7"x 10" "perfect bound" softcover, and can be purchased for \$45.00 plus \$5.50 for shipping within the U.S. (California residents must add 7.75% sales tax per copy.) The ordering address is Phil and Linda Evans, P.O. Box 10507, Bakersfield CA 93389-0507; you can reserve a copy of the book via E-mail at: leonbix@juno.com.

"It was a monumental task to peruse each letter and listen to each tape and review the interviews," notes Linda Evans, "but as never before, the reader will learn from the many who knew him what Bix was like, what he liked and how very human he was. We are happy to have contributed to the understanding of Bix—the musician, the friend, the beloved family member and the man." While they haven't yet uncovered a hidden treasure trove of unissued Beiderbecke recordings, Phil and Linda Evans have done everything else to bring Bix back to vivid life, and jazz fans worldwide owe them a debt of gratitude.

Uke Can't Stop the Music

Eddie Lang played violin, mandolin and banjo in addition to the guitar, but there's no known recording of him on the ukulele—a very popular instrument in the '20s. It was cheap and easy to play, it was extremely portable, it required no amplification or other players, and it was the perfect accompaniment for a Sheik serenading his Sheba. Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards, Johnny Marvin and Roy Smeck were but a few of the artists who sold millions of records on which they played the four-string wonder.

They're included—along with George Formby, Arthur Godfrey, King Bennie Nawahi and the Kalima Brothers—on **Legends of Ukulele** (Rhino R2 75278; \$16.98), an 18-track collection which spans from 1927 to 1998. Ably assembled by ukulele player and historian Jim Beloff (whose biographies of the players and history of the uke in the accompanying booklet are wonderfully informative), these recordings take us from the hot ukulele jazz era (Marvin's duet on "Twelfth Street Rag" is astonishing; Formby's saucy "My Ukulele" is charming) to the present day, where we have such innovators as the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain (a nine-piece group strumming "Johnny B. Goode") and old-style professionals such as Ian Whitcomb and the wonderful Lyle Ritz, who plays a complex jazz arrangement of "Lulu's Back In Town."

The transfers of the early recordings are quite good (Godfrey's "Makin' Love Ukulele Style"—replete with cylinder-style spoken intro—has some slight scratch), and the booklet photos of vintage performers and ukuleles are wonderful. (We particularly like the Betty Boop and Harold Teen ukes which adorn the cover.) Beloff has written a book-length history of the ukulele and three songbooks, and has recorded two CDs; you may contact him through Flea Market Music, Box 1127, Studio City CA 91614; <http://www.flea-mkt-music.com>; the Rhino CD is available through retail stores or from Rhino Direct, 1-800-432-0020.



Janet Klein

Another contemporary ukulele player and singer has just released a debut CD; Janet Klein's **Come Into My Parlor** contains 24 "scintillating tunes from the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s," and the collection of "emotive ballads, hot chansonettes, jingling foxtrots and lyrical notions" is most fetching. Most of the tunes are forgotten but lovely Tin Pan Alley numbers such as "In a Great Big Way," "Nasty Man," and "That's You, Baby," all much beloved by collectors of 78s. A few standards are here, too, such as "Mountain Greenery" and "You're the Cream In My Coffee," and Miss Klein's lyrical, sunny voice envelops each tune in a warm and playful style. While some selections feature the guitar accompaniment of John Reynolds or varied instrumentation of producer Robert Loveless, most have Janet singing and strumming on her own. A charming first release;

we'd love to hear Miss Klein with a small backing band on the next go-round. (Available for \$15.00—which includes tax and postage—from Coeur de Jeanette Productions, 1318 N. Genesse Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90046.)

If you prefer a six-stringed instrument to the four-string uke, check out **The Ultimate Guitar Book** by Tony Bacon and Paul Day (Knopf; 192 pages, paperback; \$25.00). In this sumptuously-produced book filled to bursting with color photographs, hundreds of guitars are depicted and analyzed, ranging from a ten-string model built in 1590 to synthesized-guitar combinations made recently. In between, though, there's quite a gallery of guitars from the '20s through the '40s: National resonator guitars from the late '20s; an unusually-designed, Django Reinhardt style Maccaferri from 1932; singing cowboy Ray Whitley's specially-made Gibson acoustic from 1937. Perry Botkin, a prolific guitarist in the '30s and '40s, is shown with an early electric guitar with motorized pulleys to create the vibrato (!); Les Paul's home-made "log," the first solid-body electric guitar, which he began assembling in 1939, is shown and described in loving detail. All in all, this is a fascinating history, proving that the guitar can be a feast for the eyes as well as the ears. (Available in bookstores.)



Arthur Godfrey

The First Guitar Hero

We have plenty of "guitar heroes" in the rock 'n' roll era, but the granddaddy of them all is Eddie Lang. Born in Philadelphia in 1902 as Salvatore Massaro (his alias was borrowed from a basketball player he'd idolized as a child), Lang made the acoustic guitar a distinctive solo voice. He was a fine accompanist whose lightning-quick chord changes showed an advanced understanding of harmony; when given a solo chorus, he'd complement those chords with dazzling single-note runs around the fretboard. Lang was tremendously versatile, a point underscored by **The Quintessential Eddie Lang** (Timeless CBC 1-043; \$17.00).



Eddie Lang

The 24 selections range from a smoldering "Guitar Blues" duet with his only peer at the time, bluesman Lonnie Johnson, to a solo interpretation of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude Opus 3, No. 2."

We also find him with the novelty group The Mound City Blue Blowers (on the rare "Best Black" from 1925), and as accompanist to vocalists as diverse as Bessie Smith and Ruth Etting. He excels with the dance bands of Roger Wolfe Kahn, Jean Goldkette and Paul Whiteman, but many of his finest records team him with his lifelong friend, jazz violinist Joe Venuti—their telepathic interplay is astonishing even now. The duo's records became a major influence on Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelly.

Along with classics such as "Wild Cat" and "Doin' Things," it's good to have superb new transfers of obscurities such as Eddie's composition "April Kisses," and his duet with guitarist Carl Kress on "Feelin' My Way." The fellow travelers, among them Bix Beiderbecke and Jack Teagarden, provide several pleasures as well. Lang died at 30 in March 1933 after a botched tonsilectomy; fortunately, he left a vast legacy of recordings. His ability, range and unceasing creativity make these tracks required listening for any guitarist; this CD is a wonderfully well-selected and transferred introduction to his work. The booklet notes by Sally-Ann Worsfold are insightful. (Available from retailers such as Tower Records, and by mail from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948; 1-800-742-6663.)



The Andrews Sisters with Miller...

Since we complain loudly when a major label does a less than stellar job on a reissue CD—see our Tommy Dorsey review, page 20—we need to praise the company just as loudly when it does a good one. **The Andrews Sisters With the Glenn Miller Orchestra** (RCA Victor 09026-63113-2; \$11.98) is an extremely well-done package of previously unavailable material, all from broadcasts sponsored by Chesterfield which

aired between December 1939 and March 1940. (Miller, a canny businessman, ensured that he got recordings of his radio shows; his estate has reaped the rewards for decades.)

Since nothing evokes the early '40s more vividly than the Miller band or the Andrews girls, this meeting of icons is something special. These are not complete 15-minute broadcasts—the original shows were loaded with commercials, and repetition of songs over the series' lifespan would make them interesting only to the staunchest fans. The resulting 51-minute program has been carefully edited to present, in the words of producer John Snyder, "a re-creation of a radio show that features the Sisters predominantly, but includes performances by the band and the other Miller regulars." The broadcast date for every song and introduction is scrupulously noted in the booklet.

Announcers Paul Douglas and Ed Herlihy keep the show moving, and Glenn himself introduces several selections. The Sisters sing on 11 of the 16 songs, including their rarely-heard versions of "I've Got No Strings" from *Pinocchio* and "Chico's Love Song," not to mention Patti's solo on "I Love You Much Too Much." The girls sing a song that was a hit for Glenn's band with Marion Hutton singing, "Say Si Si."

Most of the tracks are Andrews staples ("Beer Barrel Polka," "Hold Tight") which swing more than usual thanks to Miller's slightly altered band arrangements. The non-Andrews selections include a lovely "Indian Summer" sung by Ray Eberle, yet another "In the Mood," a hot version of "One O'Clock Jump" and a lively reading of "The Rumba Jumps" by Miss Hutton with Tex Beneke.

The source materials were tapes made in 1965 of the original acetates; while occasional audio blemishes remain, the sound quality is generally bright, full and clear. Big-band historian Ed Polic contributes a very informative and entertaining essay; we particularly liked the lengthy quote from series producer Larry Bruff, who recalls how the Sisters' off-mike battles caused Chesterfield to not renew their contract. A first-class package all around, this CD is well-transferred, nicely sequenced and fully annotated; the meticulous Miller would have approved heartily. We're looking forward eagerly to the second volume.

If you're looking for the Sisters' original records, MCA Records has provided a steady supply of Andrews releases over the years. **Andrews Sisters Greatest Hits: The 60th Anniversary Collection** (MCAD-11727; \$11.98) has 16 of Maxene, Patty and LaVerne's biggest successes made between 1937 and 1950. Eight of the tracks appeared ten years ago on MCA's 50th Anniversary collection; the good news is that new transfers have been done by Steven Lasker on all tracks, and the sound quality is much improved (with the exception of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," which is a bit harsh).

While there aren't any rarities here—which is reason enough to seek out MCA's earlier Andrews releases—this collection serves well as an inexpensive introduction to the trio. "Hot Time In the Town of Berlin," "Don't Fence Me In" and "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" pair the sisters with Bing Crosby. Danny Kaye grabs the spotlight on "Civilization," but otherwise the girls are left to their own devices. Patty goes solo—almost—on "I Can Dream, Can't I?" and "I Wanna Be Loved"; Leonard Maltin's wonderful booklet essay has some great anecdotes about these two recordings, not to mention colorful quotes from Patty about the team's entire career.

As for the old standbys—"Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen" (whose anniversary is being celebrated here), "Hold Tight," "Beer Barrel Polka" et al—they're still wonderful records, and they sound better than on any previous reissues thanks to Lasker's careful restoration. We'd love to see a comprehensive box set of the Andrews Sisters along the lines of the 4-CD Bing Crosby and Judy Garland collections issued in recent years. For now, it's good to have the cream of the crop in excellent sound. (Available in retail stores, and on-line from sources such as CDNow; <http://www.cdnow.com>)

...and the Modernaires Without

The Andrews Sisters were hardly the only vocal group on the scene in the '40s. The Smoothies, Six Hits and a Miss, the Merry Macs and the Pied Pipers kept things harmonious all through the decade. Glenn Miller didn't do too badly with his vocal group, either, and they did just fine on their own later, as shown by **The Modernaires: Juke Box Saturday Night** (Sony Music Special Products A 28101; \$6.98). As John P. Cooper points out in his notes, the group's stint with Miller lasted only 19 months, and they'd performed earlier with the bands of Ted Fio Rito, George Hall, Ozzie Nelson and Paul Whiteman. When Miller disbanded in September 1942, the Modernaires played nightclubs around the country, coped with some replacements during wartime, and won a Columbia contract in March 1945.

The ten tracks heard here range from the first date with their new label ("There! I've Said It Again") to an engagement with Bob Crosby and his band (the hilarious "I Can't Carry a Tune"). The title track is a virtual remake of the Miller classic, but the others find the group thriving with new material. Mitchell Ayres' Orchestra accompanies the group on "Autumn Serenade," "I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night" and "Connecticut." Les Brown's band guests on "Dig-Dig-Dig For Your Dinner," a tune from the MGM Judy Garland musical *Summer Stock*. The Mods join another vocal group, the Skylarks, to back Buddy Clark on the wistfully nostalgic "One Sunday Afternoon" (this a capella number was recorded during the 1948 AFM recording ban, showing—as in 1942-44—that the singers could get along without the bands if they had to). Finally, the group salutes Fats Waller with a lively arrangement of "Ain't Misbehavin'" from 1947.

The four lads and one lass (Paula Kelly, whose daughter Paula junior sings with the current line-up) left an impressive recorded legacy aside from the often-reissued work with Miller. As Cooper notes, this is the first Modernaires package since 1957; another CD has recently appeared showcasing their work for Decca. We hope that Sony will explore their vaults and bring out more of the group's Columbia work. In the meantime, this ten-track, half-hour budget-priced collection is a delight, with superb sound quality. (Available in retail stores on on-line from sources such as CDNow; <http://www.cdnow.com>)



The Spots in the '40s

The Ink Spots After the Ink Spots

The Ink Spots must be in competition with the Sons of the Pioneers for the title of longest-running pop vocal group. There have been many personnel changes, to be sure; the original line-up in 1934 was Jerry Daniels, lead tenor; tenor-guitarist Charles Fuqua, baritone-guitarist Ivory "Deek" Watson, and Baritone-bassist Orville "Hoppy" Jones. Daniels was replaced by the silky-voiced Bill Kenny in the late '30s, and Bill's brother

Herb came in after Hoppy Jones died in 1944.

In the '50s and beyond there seemed to be Ink Spots all over the place. Low-priced "high-fidelity" LPs by the group—or perhaps groups—were churned out prolifically. One of those late '50s collections has been reissued on CD as **The Ink Spots: If I Didn't Care** (Pickwick 11912; \$4.98). The 10-track stereo disc has far better sound than the original LPs, and while the performances aren't quite up to the Decca originals, they're still very nice. The instrumentation is a bit fuller, and the arrangements are sometimes quite different. The tunes, natch, are mainly Ink Spots perennials, with a tribute to the Mills Brothers thrown in ("Paper Doll"). Two welcome additions to the repertoire are a charming rendition of "Shine On, Harvest Moon" and a nearly-five-minute uptempo "Old Man River." This budget-priced CD isn't the definitive Ink Spots collection, but it's an entertaining snapshot of the quartet in the '50s. (Available in retail stores, and on-line from <http://www.simitar.com>.)

Actually, the true Ink Spots sound is far better captured in a new cassette, **The Legendary Ink Spots: If I Didn't Care & Other Great Hits** (Round Trip Records MRT T201). Lead tenor Arthur Rand, who has been with the group since 1952, really captures the falsetto style of Bill Kenny. The three other current members joined in 1979 or '80: Bob Horton, second tenor; Larry Nettles, bass; and Major Black, baritone and player of the keyboards, guitar, drums and bass here

The arrangements are very creative, adding new tonal colors and rhythms while staying true to the feel of the originals. "My Prayer" has a Latin beat; "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall" becomes an uptempo rhythm number; "To Each His Own" is dressed in more modern styles, but still a gorgeous ballad. Major Black takes the lead vocal on a few tracks, sounding remarkably like Louis Jordan on the enjoyable reworking of "Saturday Night Fish Fry." The only tracks likely to raise eyebrows are "Sing a Happy Song" and the new arrangement of "Maybe," which venture into 1970s O'Jays territory.

The stereo cassette release—which is very nicely recorded and packaged—has a more modern sound, but in the main it's faithful to the group's long-established style. Original member Charles Fuqua asked Arthur Rand to join the Spots 46 years ago, and we'd have to say he's done a splendid job of sustaining the group's tradition. (Available by mail for \$12.95, including shipping, from Macrotone Music, P.O. Box 566, Patton, CA 92369; 1-800-207-4366. Also available on the Web at <http://www.gemm.com/s.cgi/macrotone>.)



The Spots in the '90s

England and US in Harmony

A fully comprehensive overview of vocal groups of the '20s through the '40s comes to us courtesy of ASV/Living Era's recent CD, **Sweetest Harmony: 25 Vintage Harmony Groups** (AJA 5216; \$13.00). The tracks are arranged chronologically to show the progression of the style from 1926 through 1942. Beyond the big stars of the genre, it's surprising to realize just how many other harmony groups were recording during the era. (Just about every exponent of the style seems to be here, with the notable exceptions of the Spirits of Rhythm, the Yacht Club Boys and the Four Blackbirds.)

The late '20s was an especially rich period, thanks to the popularity and influence of The Revelers, who recorded prolifically for Victor (and other labels under pseudonyms). They seem to have inspired the cheeky California Humming Birds and the Four Rajahs. Unfortunately, the first five tracks on this CD suffer from boxy-sounding transfers of poor-condition originals.

The sound brightens considerably with track 6 (the very funny "Girl In the Little Green Hat" by the Four Musketeers) and generally remains on a high level. If The Big Four's reading of "Sweet Jennie Lee" is rather stiff and formal, the Cole Brothers' rendition of "Dinah" is an exuberant delight. The three aforementioned groups are British, as are The Three Admirals, the Carlyle Cousins, the Four Aces (not the '50s U.S. group!), the Three Peters Sisters (doing a respectable imitation of the Boswell Sisters) and the Cavendish Three, who set Shakespeare's sonnets a-swingin'.

While we wouldn't expect to know these British groups, there are still a few American groups whose acquaintance we're happy to make. The Three Keys do a sizzling version of "Oh, By Jingo"; the Dandridge Sisters (a trio including 15-year-old Dorothy) sound like three Ella Fitzgeralds on "Undecided." The Foursome perform their show-stopping "Bidin' My Time," while the Modernaires display their pre-Glenn Miller sound in a 1939 recording of "Mandy" made with Paul Whiteman.

Despite the audio flaws of the first five tracks, this is still a very worthwhile collection with several records that have been obscure for decades. We welcome the opportunity to add these samples of hot harmony to our collections. (Available from retail stores, and by mail from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato, CA 94948.)



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American Records of the '20s and '30s Reissued by UK's ASV

American record companies seem to be largely disinterested in exhuming the treasures in their vaults. That's not the situation in England, however, where copyright and royalty laws are much more favorable. One of the most prominent English labels is ASV (Academy Sound and Vision), which has been reissuing material from the 78-rpm era since 1981. The quality of their releases varies a bit, but generally they're well done.

The Songs of Ray Henderson (ASV 5207) is a recent entry in a series devoted to classic songwriters. Henderson wrote the melodies for dozens of standards—most of them with lyricists Buddy DeSylva and Lew Brown—but his songs are better remembered than he is. Twenty-five of them are contained here, in recordings made between 1925 ("Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue" by the California Ramblers) to 1944 ("Together" by Dick Haymes). Henderson's heyday was the late '20s, as shown by the great dance bands on this disc's line-up. Johnny Hamp's Kentucky Serenaders do a great version of "Sunny Side Up" from 1929; also from that year is a wonderful rendition of "If I Had a Talking Picture of You" by the British band of Jack Hylton. Fine vocalists are here too, among them Zelma O'Neal ("Varsity Drag") and Rudy Vallee ("My Song"). Most of the 25 titles haven't been previously reissued, and despite the wide variety of sources, the sound quality is generally excellent.



Back in 1982, ASV released *Encore Maurice!* (AJA 5016), a 19-track collection of vintage Chevalier, in English and French, recorded between 1925 through 1931. Another two dozen such recordings are grouped on **Maurice Chevalier: Louise** (AJA 5233). Several of Maurice's signature songs are here—"You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me" and "Mimi," for example. The lesser-known tunes are just as charming, among them "Moonlight Saving Time." Four of the earliest tracks (from 1921-'28) and the last five

tracks, made between 1935 through 1946, were recorded in Paris, in French. They're still enjoyable even if vous ne parlez pas le Français. Although the sound quality is feeble on the title track, the other 23 are transferred well.

Chevalier's career lasted for more than six decades, but crooner Russ Columbo's barely lasted six years. The suave baritone, who died in a freak accident with an antique pistol at age 26, was a popular radio and recording star, and was being groomed for movie stardom. Fifteen of the 23 tracks on **Prisoner of Love** (AJA 5234) were issued on a Coumbo CD in 1994 by Take Two Records (*Save the Last Dance For Me*), where the transfers were better than they are on the new ASV release. However, the new disc includes the rare, early "Glad Rag Doll" sung by Columbo when he was with Gus Arnheim's band, and a number of early-'30s gems: "Guilty," "You Call It Madness," "Call Me Darling," "Just Friends," "You're My Everything" and "Goodnight, Sweetheart." The transfers, while not spectacular, are certainly very listenable.

A singer who more than fulfilled her early promise is **The Fabulous Lena Horne** (AJA 5238), whose first decade of recordings is revisited on 22 tracks. Her very first waxings, made in 1936 with the swinging band of Noble Sissle, are followed by the better-known torch songs she cut in 1941 with Charlie Barnet ("You're My

Thrill," "All I Desire"). From there, we go to four tracks made with the jazz band from NBC's Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, among them blues from St. Louis and Basin Street. Artie Shaw and Teddy Wilson contribute musical cameos before we hear six of the tracks Lena made in December 1941 for Victor—among them classics such as "Stormy Weather" and "Where Or When." The final four tracks, from 1944 through '46, find Lena with the bands of Horace Henderson and Phil Moore. She grows more confident with each track, starting as a slightly nervous hot-cha singer and flowering into an elegant chanteuse. The sound quality is excellent, and this CD makes a fine companion to the new Capitol Lena Horne disc reviewed on page 18.

You might think at first that **25 Sweethearts of Yesteryear** (AJA 5243) would be a collection of records by female vocalists, but it's actually an album of songs *about* young ladies. As a result, the only canaries chirping here are Dinah Shore ("Chloë"), Anne Shelton ("Lili Marlene") and Gracie Fields (who sings her theme song, "Sally"). Otherwise, it's all guys singin' about their gals—Al Jolson belting out "Liza," Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers detailing the delights of "Dinah," Nat King Cole saluting "Sweet Lorraine." Not all of the recordings or artists are as well known: "Sweet Sue" is sung by George Metaxa; the piano-vocal duet of Layton and Johnstone perform "Oh, Donna Clara" and tenor Donald Novis sings the hit from *Seventh Heaven*, "Diane." Most of these selections have appeared on previous ASV albums, and the sound quality varies a bit, although generally fine.

It's a shame that more Americans aren't aware of Gracie Fields; although she made a few films in the States, she was greatly beloved in Britain from the mid '20s until her death in 1979. She's probably remembered mostly as a comedienne (generally playing an earthy, working-class, North Country girl), but she was a performer of tremendous range. On **Our Gracie** (AJA 5259), she goes from the saucy comedy of "What Can You Give a Nudist On His Birthday?" to a charming rendition of "Isle of Capri" to the reverent "Ave Maria." The bands of Ray Noble, Carroll Gibbons and Percival Mackey contribute to the fun, and the transfers are surprisingly full and clear. Some tracks are rare, which makes this a fine collection for longtime fans as well as people making Gracie's acquaintance.



Benny Goodman was a veteran of the recording studios long before he became a star in 1936; his output for 1931 alone would fill several CDs. His most jazz-oriented work from 1926 through '31 has been collected on **A Jazz Holiday: The Early Benny Goodman** (AJA 5263). Benny appears in the band of Ben Pollack ("Deed I Do"), plays some hot jazz in small groups ("Yellow Dog Blues,"), supports Red Nichols ("Dinah") and sits in with Ted Lewis and Fats Waller ("Royal Garden Blues"). This is a wonderfully comprehensive overview of Goodman's hottest early recordings. (He also plays alto sax and even cornet on a few selections.) Aside from a slightly dull-sounding "Sweetest Melody," the transfers are bright, clear and full. (All are available from retail stores such as Tower Records, or can be obtained for \$13.00 each from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)

Ragtime's Influence Shown on New CDs

Ragtime reigned between the 1890s and the early Teens, but its influence spread into the next few decades and many forms of music. **Classic Ragtime: Roots and Offshoots** (RCA/BMG 09026 63206-2; \$11.98) shows how it affected popular songs, jazz, hillbilly music and big-band swing in 25 tracks made between 1907 and 1939.

The earliest recording is a raggy dialect song by Arthur Collins, "Brother Noah Gave Out Checks For Rain," which sets a comedy lyric combining the Bible and baseball to a ragtime-inflected tune. Arthur Pryor's Band provides a full orchestral arrangement of "The African 400 (An Educated Rag)," while a small-group version of the genre is heard in the Six Brown Brothers' "That Moanin' Saxophone Rag." Ragtime-oriented pop songs are represented with Elida Morris's "The Trolley Car Swing" from 1912, and the influence of ragtime becomes a topic for "Operatic Rag," in which cymbalum player Joseph Moskowitz plays a number of well-known arias in a raggy style. This track dates from 1916; a year later, a new form of popular music would supplant ragtime.

Jazz paid many respectful nods to the form which had preceded it, as shown by Jelly Roll Morton's "The Pearls" and Bennie Moten's "12th Street Rag." A more rural form of ragtime is heard in "Tom's Rag" by Watkin's Band, a guitar-mandolin-banjo quartet recorded in Atlanta in 1928. Another string-band rag number is the lively "South Street Stomp" by the South Street Trio who, although they lived in Philadelphia, sound more like a band from the Deep South. An out-and-out country number with a ragtime flavor to it is "Ragtime Annie," played by Dallas-based fiddlers Ervin Solomon and Joe Hughes.

A couple of tracks seem to have little in common with classic ragtime ("Hot Notes" by the Savoy Bearcats, for example) but we're glad to see them reissued. The transfers, by Netherlands-based audio engineer Harry Coster, are better than BMG's usual standards, although our copy of the CD had some digitally-generated crackle which we hope will be eliminated in future pressings. Richard Spottswood's annotation is lively, although the ultra-hip package design (unfocused shots of hands and feet) is useless and unattractive. Overall, a good package from producer Michael Brooks, who seems to have jumped to BMG from his longtime home at CBS Records. (Available in retail stores.)

A more focused look at ragtime's influence is provided by **Ragtime to Jazz 1912-1919** (Timeless CBC 1-035; \$16.00). The 25 track CD starts at the twilight of piano ragtime with "Red Onion Rag" by Roy Spangler and the oddly-named "1915 Rag," recorded in 1913 by Mike Bernard. The vogue for orchestral arrangements of ragtime comes into play with Europe's Society Orchestra's rendition of "Down Home Rag"—which is followed by two more renditions of the tune, first by a British combo called The Versatile Four, and then by a quartet led by the song's composer, Wilbur C. Sweatman. Clarinetist-composer Sweatman also leads progressively jazzier combos on "Joe Turner Blues" from April 1917 and "Ev'rybody's Crazy 'Bout the Doggone Blues" from the following March.

That raucous new music bursts onto the scene with two of the rarest tracks by the Original Dixieland Jass Band—"Darktown Strutters' Ball" and "Indiana," recorded for Columbia on January 30, 1917 but shelved, and thus predating the first *issued* jazz record, which the ODJB cut for Victor on February 26. Two even rarer ODJB items are the vertically-cut Aeolian Vocalion waxings of "Tiger Rag" and "Oriental Jazz," evidently being reissued for the first time here. The latter two sound rather thin, but their scarcity justifies their inclusion.

Along with Sweatman's groups and the ODJB, the most prominent artists on the disc are the Frisco Jazz Band (featuring saxophone virtuoso Rudy Wiedoeft) and Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band, with cackling clarinetist Ted Lewis. In late 1918, Lewis formed his own band—with several of the Fuller musicians—which we hear in "Blues (My Naughty Sweetie Gave to Me)" from September 1919. The Louisiana Five and an obscure group called Blake's Jazzzone Orchestra round out the album, with Mike Bernard making a last pitch for piano ragtime in a 1918 waxing of "Blaze Away," but playing much faster and jazzier than he had five years earlier.

All 24 tracks are acoustically recorded, of course, but John R.T. Davies' audio restoration gives them a fullness that makes them a pleasure to hear. This CD is more than a history lesson; it's lively music, generally well recorded for its time, which will still set your feet tapping. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)

What Goes Around Comes Around: Carousel Music

You'll get a double dose of nostalgia with a new collection from Marion Roehl Recordings. The 22 songs included on **Fair Organ Follies** (MRR 1033) are all big hits of the Teens and early Twenties—except one. "Margie," "Chicago," "Swanee" and the others will be instantly recognized (and they'll be quickly learned by anyone hearing these catchy numbers for the first time). Just as nostalgia-inducing as the tunes is the instrument playing them: a fairground organ (also known as a carousel or band organ) made in Paris by the Gavioli company in 1905. Play the first track, and you're instantly transported to those long-ago days when instruments such as this were used to attract patrons to various rides.

New technology has helped in the production of this album, however. Originally, this instrument used heavy cardboard books with perforations much like the rolls used for player pianos. For these recording sessions, a special computer-controlled playing device sat above the band organ's metal keys and played them. The arrangements are new, as well; created by Dutch arranger Tom Meijer, the new charts use the fairground organ's full array of tonal colors in a light, nimble, jazz-influenced manner.

The authentic sound of the organ hasn't been modified one whit, however. It's beautifully in tune and has been captured in gorgeous stereo sound. If you suffered through those old 1950s LPs whose producers thought that the "authentic" mechanical-music sound meant out-of-tune, fear not; the new collection provides 52 minutes of full, rich, melodious mechanical music.

Oh, about that one song that wasn't a big hit—it's "Dodge Brothers March," which was composed in 1920 by Victor Herbert. The writer of "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life" wrote it in tribute to the recently-deceased Horace Dodge (yes, of the auto firm), who had been a patron of the arts.

Marion Roehl Recordings, formerly located in Vestal, New York, has just been purchased by Miner Manufacturing Company, which has been producing and selling calliopes and band organs since 1984. We hope the new owners will continue the label's tradition of quality recordings. (\$14.95 for CD, \$9.95 cassette; available from Marion Roehl Recordings, 2208 220th Street, Donnellson, IA 52625; (319) 837-8106; <http://www.mrrrecordings.com>.)

Big Bands Briefly

Among the nicer new import CDs is **Carroll Gibbons & Hildgarde: Oh That Kiss** (Vocalion CDEA 6004; \$14.98). Gibbons, born in Massachusetts, gained fame as a pianist and bandleader in London, and made hundreds of records from 1927 through the mid-'40s. His bright, bubbly piano and the smooth but lively band glide through "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "Body and Soul," and other gems. Eight numbers feature the sultry vocals of Hildgarde, including her signature song "Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup." The sound quality is, for the most part, breathtaking.

British trombonist Ted Heath was inspired to form a big band after Glenn Miller arrived in England in 1944. Oddly, his band sounds more like Les Brown's, but that's hardly a comedown. On **It's Swingtime** (Magic DAW82; \$14.98), Heath's highly-precisioned band plays ballads such as "Oh, What It Seemed to Be" sweetly and swings powerfully on the hot numbers ("I Found a New Baby"). These 25 tracks, taken from 1946 broadcasts, prove that Heath's band was the equal of the best Stateside orchestras and should be required listening for swing fans.

Several long unavailable recordings highlight **Kay Kyser: Music, Maestro, Please** (Empress RAJCD 874; \$13.98). This British-produced CD primarily focuses on the late '30s Kyser sound, when the band was half swing, half "Mickey Mouse." The bouncy style is still fun, as heard on "You're Lovely Madame," and the title track. Harry Babbitt, Ginny Simms, Sully Mason and Ish Kabibble are in evidence as is the band's later, hotter sound on "I'm Sorry For Myself." The sound is bright if the source 78s are occasionally a bit worn.

Don Redman was a pint-sized bundle of pure talent who played alto sax, sang, and arranged for McKinney's Cotton Pickers in the late '20s, and led his own hot band in the '30s. **For Europeans Only** (SteepleChase SCCD 36020; \$16.98) is a live concert in Copenhagen from September 1946; the opening drum solo might be a bit off-putting, but the band gets to swinging in modern arrangements of "Laura," "How High the Moon" and 12 others; a salute to Redman's early '30s sound comes with "Chant of the Weed." Pianist Billy Taylor and saxophonist Don Byas are featured. (All available on-line from <http://www.cdnw.com>, and in retail stores.)

Musical Biographies a Capitol Idea

If you enjoy the vocalists as much as the bands, you'll probably rejoice over Capitol's new **Biography: A Musical Anthology** series, produced in conjunction with the A&E Network's series. Each disc is an enhanced CD, meaning that you can pop it into the CD-ROM drive of your computer and watch a two-minute capsule biography of the artist, with narration by Jack Perkins and lots of interesting photographs. (The discs are compatible for Windows and Mac users.) The 16-page booklet which accompanies each volume is nicely designed, with full biographical information and a healthy sampling of photos.



The video and booklet portions of **Mel Tormé** (Capitol 94749) trace the singer's career from his 1929 debut with the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks to the present; the 16 tracks are largely from his Capitol period of the late '40s, but his Columbia, Verve and MCA stints are represented as well. Among the 16 tracks are the unreleased "I Like to Recognize the Tune," "A Lonesome Cup o' Coffee," and "Goodbye." Other highlights include a hi-fi reunion with Mel's vocal group the Mel-Tones, and a duet with Peggy Lee on "The Old Master Painter."

Most of the 17 tracks chronicling the career of **Judy Garland** (94750) are from her Capitol period, with the exception of "I Don't Care" (from the soundtrack of the 1949 film *In the Good Old Summertime*) and "We're Off To See the Wizard" from you-know-what. There's one unreleased track, a career-summarizing number called "It's All For You," from a *Tonight Show* of December 1968; Judy sounds much older than her 46 years, and it shouldn't have come as much of a surprise that she "just wore out" six months later. If the recordings are mainly from the '50s and '60s, the booklet and CD-ROM program are full of fine pictures going all the way back to her '20s vaudeville days as Baby Gumm.



Since most of the recording career of **Nat King Cole** (94751) was for Capitol, there's a healthy number of early-'40s items with his Trio among the 17 tracks here; most are well-known ("Route 66," "Straighten Up and Fly Right") but it's nice to have an alternate take of "Embraceable You" and the rare first version of "The Christmas Song" (in which Nat sings "to see if *reindeers* really know how to fly"; when composer Mel Tormé gently mentioned that the plural had no "s," Cole immediately scheduled a re-make session). A couple of tracks are preceded by studio chatter (Nat mentions that he wants a pizza before singing "Non Dimenticar"), and others have Nat's introductions from a syndicated radio series. The booklet describes Nat's quiet, dignified reaction to some very undignified racist behavior over the years.

The amazing six-decade career of **Lena Horne** (94758) is nicely encapsulated through music, video and booklet in this new package. Lena's early '40s sound is represented by her Victor records of "Stormy Weather," and "One For My Baby (And One More For the Road)," while her MGM film career provides "Ain't It the Truth" (a rare outtake from *Cabin in the Sky*) and "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" from *Till the Clouds Roll By*. Her later successes as a chanteuse are documented in tracks from the '50s through 1995 (some of the '60s arrangements sound much more dated than those from 20 years earlier). As with Nat King Cole, Ms. Horne suffered a number of unfair career setbacks thanks to racism, but she is a true survivor and has comported herself with more dignity than she realizes.



You folks who enjoy more contemporary entertainers will want the **Bobby Darin** volume (94752); most of it is devoted to his "crooner" period, although a little of his later folk-rock material is included. Five tracks recorded in concert in 1963 and '73 are previously unreleased. (Available in record stores and on-line from retailers such as CDNow.)

1920s Jazz in Chi-town and the Golden State

The term "Chicago-style Jazz" always seemed to be a nebulous one, even to the musicians who ostensibly played it. It's generally applied to the agitated, rough-around-the-edges hot music as played on several late-'20s records by clarinetist Frank Teschemacher, trumpeter Jimmy McPartland, saxophonist Bud Freeman, pianist Joe Sullivan, banjoist Eddie Condon and drummer Gene Krupa. But Chicago was also the adopted home of several New Orleans musicians (Armstrong, Morton, Oliver, Noone). What's been forgotten by many jazz historians is that the city also boasted several fine hot dance bands, nine of which are featured on **The Chicago Hot Bands 1924-1928** (Timeless CBC1-041; \$17.00).

You'll find such well-remembered musicians as pianist Jess Stacy, cornetist Muggsy Spanier and drummer George Wettling lurking in these 26 tracks, but more often you'll find bands where hot arrangements were more prominent than solos. There are

several fine solo contributions by unknowns, such as trombonist Ted Skiles, featured with Ray Miller's Orchestra. Miller's band and the Benson Orchestra of Chicago are probably the only two groups to be remembered in the history books; even after three decades of collecting, we'd never heard of Al Handler and his Alamo Cafe Orchestra, nor Sol Wagner and his Orchestra (whose delightful version of "Zulu Wail" receives its first release anywhere on this CD).

One well-known band traveling incognito here is the Coon-Sanders Orchestra, whose five tracks here were credited to the Louisiana Rhythm Kings. This collection boasts a previously unknown and un-reissued alternate of "Skinner's

Sock." All six of the hot sides recorded by bass-playing Thelma Terry and Her Playboys are here, and gems such as "Mama's Gone, Goodbye" make you wish she'd spent more time in the studios.

If the bands are little known, many of the tunes are well-remembered: "Copenhagen," "Riverboat Shuffle," "Ace In the Hole," "I Ain't Got Nobody" and "My Honey's Love Arms" are a few of the 26 titles, most of which have not been reissued before. This collection proves that so-called "commercial" white dance bands had a good deal of jazz content, and that there were plenty of fine jazz soloists beyond the handful of immortals.

If home-grown Chicago jazz is often obscure, the hot music native to California and recorded in the '20s is virtually unknown. But the Golden State has always been receptive to music as sizzling as its climate: the first record of a black New Orleans jazz band were actually made in Los Angeles by trombonist Kid Ory's band in 1922, and Jelly Roll Morton had performed there the year before.

The bands heard on **Jazz In California 1923-1930** (Timeless CBC 1-034; \$17.00) range from out-and-out jazz bands (Sonny Clay's Plantation Orchestra; Reb Spikes' Majors and Minors) to commercial dance bands allowing themselves a musical fling (Vic Meyers, Henry Halstead, Tom Gerunovich). The latter bands may not have a purebred jazz pedigree, but their stuff is enjoyable nevertheless. Halstead's hot treatment of "Panama" isn't shabby at all, and Meyers' fine "Shake It and Break It" is astonishingly well-recorded for 1923, especially as heard in the excellent transfer by John R.T. Davies.

This collection really gives the spotlight to Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders, a terrific black band which included drummer Lionel Hampton, trombonist Lawrence Brown (later a standout with Duke Ellington), talented trumpeter George Orendorff, pianist Reginald Foresythe, and brilliant composer-arranger-reedman Charlie Lawrence, who wrote most of the band's repertoire. All thirteen of the band's recordings are included, among them the great "Quality Shout," "New Kinda Blues," two takes of "Overnight Blues" and "California Swing," which features a scat vocal by Hampton. (Film buffs will be interested to know that the first eleven Howard tracks were made at the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City.) All 25 transfers are fine (although "Burma Girl" does have a bit of added echo), and Brian Rust's booklet notes are engaging and informative as always. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)

Red Nichols, Miffed and Not



Miff Mole

Miff Mole had one of the all-time great jazz names (his real name was Irving Milfred Mole, which explains why he preferred Miff). He was also the first great jazz trombonist. Born in 1898 on Long Island, he'd started out with

a band led by Jimmy Durante, then joined the Original Memphis Five, led by trumpeter Phil Napoleon. He made dozens of recordings with them during the '20s. Cornetist Red Nichols heard Miff in 1923, and subsequently the pair made dozens of records with jazz combos and studio orchestras. Mole developed a jaunty, staccato style, which made the trombone an effective solo voice.

Mole and Nichols worked together almost constantly until mid-1929; if the pair had a falling out or not isn't known, but after that time Nichols seemed to work with every trombonist except Mole. (Miff became a staff musician at NBC at this time, and it may be that his radio schedule was too demanding for many recording sessions.) In any event, the jazz world had embraced a hot new trombonist from Texas named Jack Teagarden, and Miff suddenly seemed to be old news.

Later, he soldiered on with the Paul Whiteman orchestra, had a spell with Benny Goodman, and played in the house band at Nick's in New York for several years. His last years were marked by illnesses—including ulcers and six hip operations—and he was selling pretzels in a New York subway before he died in April 1961.

It's high time that his accomplishments were remembered, and a new CD will help the process. **Slippin' Around** (Frog DGF 19; \$16.50) has a whopping 26 tracks cut between January 1927 and February 1930; all except the last two feature Nichols on cornet; he's replaced by Phil Napoleon on "Navy Blues" and "Lucky Little Devil." All of the sides originally credited to Miff Mole's Molers are here (except for the vocal versions of the two songs just mentioned). Also here are two sessions by Red and Miff's Stompers and one attributed to Red Nichols and His Orchestra (one wonders why the change in billing, since the band isn't any bigger than usual).

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Tommy

TD, JD at MGM in WWII

Tommy Dorsey was under contract to Victor from 1935 through 1950, but the post-'39 discs, except those with Frank Sinatra, have been virtually ignored on reissues. This is a pity, since Dorsey was at a peak in the early '40s, with trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Pete Candoli, clarinetists Hank D'Amico and Buddy DeFranco, pianists Dodo Marmarosa and Jess Stacy, and drummer Buddy Rich in the ranks at various times, with Sy

Oliver writing the charts. We hoped this situation would be remedied by **Tommy Dorsey: The Homefront 1941-1945** (BMG 09026-68961-2; \$11.99).

Of the 15 tracks that make up this 48-minute CD (a bit short), four are among the heavily-reissued Sinatra tracks, and another six are Dorsey standards recorded well before 1941. We wouldn't mind hearing "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "Marie," "Boogie Woogie," "Well, All Right!," "All the Things You Are" and "Song of India" again if these were alternate takes or taken from broadcasts, but they're the same old commercial recordings recycled yet again. Since they were cut between 1935 and '39, they don't belong in this package. The transfers are generally fine, except for "Marie" and "Song of India," which have the annoying added echo common to RCA's old LP reissues of the '60s.

Which leaves us with five non-Sinatra tracks actually made between 1941 and '45. "Opus One," "Well, Git It!" and "Yes, Indeed" are among the few tracks from this period which have been reissued (on BMG's 1990 *Yes, Indeed!* album, the one domestic collection of 1939-45 Dorsey material; we should also mention BMG's *The Post-War Era*, a good package of TD jazz from 1946-50). We're left with "Kiss the Boys Goodbye" and "Will You Still Be Mine?"—both with Connie Haines—as the two "new" items in the package.

In his liner notes for this new CD, Edward F. Polic mentions that during 1942-43 Dorsey "made scores of Armed Forces Radio Service transcriptions and V-Discs." We sure wish that someone would clear the rights to these so we could hear 'em today. And we wish that someone at BMG would do another 1939-45 non-Sinatra Dorsey collection. For that matter, it's high time that BMG reissued *anything* on CD by Larry Clinton, Freddy Martin, Ozzie Nelson, Hal McIntyre, Shep Fields, Wingy Manone, Alvino Rey, Ziggy Elman, Tony Pastor, Charlie Spivak, Vaughn Monroe, Hal Kemp... (Available in retail stores.)

Stepping into the void so conspicuously left by the producers at BMG is Rhino Records, a small label which became a major one by really caring about doing reissues properly. As part of their ongoing soundtrack series produced in conjunction with Turner Classic Movies, they've gone into the MGM vaults and retrieved **Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey: Swingin' in Hollywood** (R2 75283; \$16.98). This generous 21-track disc gives us 75-minutes of prime Dorsey from the wartime years, when Tommy was appearing in Metro epics such as *Broadway Rhythm* and *DuBarry Was a Lady*, and Jimmy's band showed up for *I Dood It* and *Lost In a Harem*. Both bands were at a peak of performance, and they're captured here in gorgeous sound quality. As a bonus thirteen of the tracks are in true stereo; "Well, Git It!" (mis-labeled here as "We'll Get It") is a real stunner.

Tommy was far more prolific at MGM than Jimmy, so he dominates this CD; along with fresh performances of "Song of India," "Opus One" and "Hawaiian War Chant" (a rendition which outclasses the original record) we hear "Katie Went to Haiti," "I Should Care" and "Battle of the Balcony Jive." We also get versions of "Fascinating Rhythm" and "Boy! What Love Has Done to Me!" which are longer than those in *Girl Crazy*.

Jimmy doesn't do too badly here, either, performing his hit "John Silver" and the swinging "Thunder and Blazes," not to mention a fine version of Basie's "One O'Clock Jump." Vocalist Bob Eberly gets the spotlight for "So Long, Sarah Jane," and he joins with Helen O'Connell for an extended take of "Star Eyes."

Will Friedwald contributes another lengthy, sensitively written essay to the well-illustrated booklet, which includes complete synopses of all seven Dorsey-MGM films, and recording data for the 21 selections. Once again, Rhino sets a standard of quality in reissues which we wish the other major labels would meet more frequently. (Available in retail stores and by mail from Rhino Direct, 1-800-432-0020).



Jimmy

Red & Miff

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Red Nichols

The delights are many, from a slow-paced rendition of "Alexander's Ragtime Band" to the impressionistic "Delirium." Two very different arrangements apiece of Bix Beiderbecke's "Davenport Blues" and Fud Livingston's "Feeling No Pain" attest to the creativity of these jazzmen. Miff's graceful, witty trombone is a delight throughout, as is the playing of Nichols. The magnificent drumming of Vic Berton propels the band on many of the tracks here—his tuned tympani are heard to good effect on "Delirium." Reedmen Jimmy Dorsey and Frank Teschmacher, pianists Arthur Schutt and Joe Sullivan, and guitarists Eddie Lang and Carl Kress add their talents; Sophie Tucker shimmies in to belt out four numbers.

The sound quality is superb, far better than on earlier reissues of this material. The titles originally made for Okeh sound a bit cleaner than those made for Victor, but audio wizard John R.T. Davies has brought remarkable clarity to all of them. This is an essential purchase for anyone who loves 1920s jazz.

Meanwhile, Miff's former partner kept plugging along, and except for a brief detour into the big band style during the late '30s, he stuck largely to a traditional jazz repertoire. **Red Nichols: Happy Jazz** (Magic DAW84; \$16.00) is taken from radio transcriptions made for the U.S. Marine Corps in 1950. Del Sharbutt announces the numbers (with Red occasionally helping with the intros); the seven-piece band is well recorded and plays with enthusiasm. Among the "Pennies" this time are Don Lodice on tenor sax, Kingsley Jackson (ex-Spike Jones) playing trombone, and the indefatigable Rosy McHargue on clarinet—with Joe Rushton, as seemingly always, playing bass sax.

The tunes are mainly Dixieland standards ("Clarinet Marmalade," "Tin Roof Blues") with a few marches as a nod to the Marines ("American Patrol"). Vocalist Dottie O'Brien adds some humor and updates the catalog a bit with "Brooklyn Love Song," among others. And just for variety, there's "Tenderly." The high-spirited music on display here more than lives up to the disc's title. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)

Theater's Mysteries Solved

Over the past thirty years, many brave souls have tried to return original radio drama to the U.S. airwaves. Many have been quite successful on a regional basis: Peggy Webber's long-running California Artists Radio Theatre continues to produce fine new programs; Norman Corwin continues to create brilliant radio for National Public Radio. But the most sustained rebirth of original radio drama came in 1974, when producer Himan Brown created The CBS Radio Mystery Theater. Premiering on January 6, 1974, the program was at first carried by 78 stations; the first reviews were not favorable, but the show quickly became a success with reviewers and audiences. Ultimately, it lasted for nine years.

Brown's lengthy career (which began in 1927 and is *still* ongoing) had numbered among its successes *Inner Sanctum*, and Brown brought not only that show's creaking door signature, but a lifetime of production experience to the new series. Radio veterans such as Agnes Moorehead, Mason Adams, Mandel Kramer and Mercedes McCambridge were joined by young actors like Mandy Patinkin. With a more contemporary sound, it appealed to younger listeners as well as those who had enjoyed radio drama in the '40s.

Fans of this program will welcome **The CBS Radio Mystery Theater** by Gordon Payton and Martin Grams, Jr., which is scheduled to be published by McFarland in October 1998. (Grams is the author of the excellent *Suspense: Twenty Years of Thrills and Chills*, reviewed previously in PT.) The book will include the recollections of Himan Brown and a number of his actors, including Elliott Reid, Kim Hunter and Tony Roberts. A detailed broadcast log of all 2900-plus episodes, including full credits and synopses, will no doubt form the bulk of the book. The book will run about 320 pages; cost is \$48.50 plus \$4.00 for shipping. For information, or to order a copy, call 1-800-253-2187.



On the Trail of Early TV Detectives

In our last issue, we reviewed Radio Spirits' box set devoted to radio's detectives. Now, the video incarnations of several radio gumshoes can be seen in a seven-videocassette box set, **TV's Cops & Private Eyes** (Marathon Music & Video 35063; \$29.95). *Dragnet*, *Richard Diamond*, *Boston Blackie*, *Dangerous Assignment*, *Gangbusters* and *Charlie Chan* are among the series whose lead characters pounded the pavement in radio and TV series. While the lead actors usually change from the radio to video versions, these shows should still be great fun for those of us who know these series primarily as radio shows.

Gangbusters, from 1952, is rather stodgy compared to the exciting radio version. This episode is ostensibly about John Dillinger, although little thought has been given to recreating an authentic early-'30s look (cars from the late '40s and early '50s abound). It does benefit from the support of Percy Helton, and radio buffs will enjoy seeing the show's creator, Phillips H. Lord, as the narrator. (*Gangbusters* was phenomenally successful on TV, averaging a 42 rating, but it was cancelled after one season because it was only intended to be a substitute for *Dragnet* during the weeks when Jack Webb couldn't provide a new episode!)

On the *Dragnet* show, from 1956, Joe Friday's partner is played by Ben Alexander, who'd also played the role on the radio edition. Webb seems a little more animated here than on the radio show or the second *Dragnet* TV series of the late '60s; this episode, about a car-theft ring, is filled with the show's trademark low-key drama and occasional humor.

Boston Blackie had run on radio from 1944 to 1950, with Chester Morris and then Richard Kollmar playing the dapper detective; the TV version, a syndicated half-hour, ran from 1951 through '53, with Kent Taylor assuming the lead. The wisecracking Blackie is an engaging character, and the episode on display here also includes Billy Halop (the former Dead End Kid) and Peter Leeds. *Dangerous Assignment* ran from 1949 through 1953 on radio, starring Brian Donlevy as undercover agent Steve Mitchell. He reprises this role in the 1952 television episode here, which has the usual complement of action and exotic locales.

A certain oriental detective operating out of Honolulu was popular in novels and a long-running film series, not to mention several radio programs which aired between 1932 and 1948. In 1957, *The New Adventures of Charlie Chan* debuted on TV, with J. Carroll Naish (late of radio's *Life With Luigi*) taking the role which Ed Begley had played on radio. Reference books state that this series was filmed in England, with Chan's headquarters moving to London, but the show included here is unquestionably a Hollywood product. Naish is a fairly good Chan, although he was really a New Yorker of Irish descent.

A classic radio detective, *Richard Diamond*, had been played by Dick Powell from 1949 to 1953. Powell produced the TV version, which ran from 1957 to 1960 and starred David Janssen. Despite Powell's involvement, the TV Diamond bore little resemblance to the radio character. The series is remembered mainly for employing Mary Tyler Moore as assistant "Sam," who was seen only from the waist down (she's not in the episode included here).

The other shows, all TV originals, include *The Lawless Years* (featuring superb movie villain Henry Brandon), *Highway Patrol* with Broderick Crawford, *Peter Gunn*, *Decoy*, *Passport to Danger* (starring the suave Cesar Romero), *The Third Man*, *Man Behind the Badge* and *Foreign Intrigue*.

Each of the seven VHS cassettes contains two half-hour shows, bookended with narration which provides a bit of background about the show. The prints are of good quality, mainly free from splices and scratches, although the volume on a couple of tapes was a wee bit low. Since most of these shows were syndicated, there aren't many commercials (although original Maxwell House spots are in the *Richard Diamond* show). Ending credits have been omitted, and we were a little miffed at the constant "MM&V" logo at the bottom right corner of the screen. Generally, we found this an entertaining collection of detective drama from the '50s, with some rare shows that make it especially appealing. (Available from retailers such as Costco, and by mail for \$29.95 plus 3.50 shipping from Entertainment Distributing, P.O. Box 22738, Eugene OR 97402-0421.)



Turn Out Your Lights!

Radio's Mystery and Horror Shows Collected

Radio Spirits, Inc. has released another of its excellent 20-cassette box sets. Thus far, these abundant packages have been devoted to detective shows, comedy programs, and radio's all-time greatest series. Now, we can shiver to **Old Time Radio's Greatest Mysteries** (Stock # 4400; \$59.98), which provides 60 shows or 30 hours' worth of the greatest terror ever to electrify the airwaves.

The 20 different series represented here have unique spins on the mystery/horror genre. Some are literary, such as *Mystery in the Air*, a 1947 summer series starring the scenery-chewing Peter Lorre and based on great short stories or novels. So is *The Weird Circle*, a series where fine acting overcomes the rather modest production values (there's rarely any background music, as opposed to the stinging pipe organs or full orchestras common to the genre).



Arch Oboler

The giants of the genre are *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*, *Suspense*, *Escape!*, and *Lights Out*—all here in three episodes each. *Sanctum* has a wonderfully warped sense of humor, as the host regales us with awful, macabre puns before we segue to the murder of the week. *Suspense* was a star-studded show, one of the most sophisticated and best-written in the history of radio; the episodes here star Robert Taylor, Cary Grant and—of all people—Ralph Edwards. *Escape!* specialized in ex-

otic and dangerous locales; it usually starred the reliable CBS pros (John Dehner, William Conrad, Lou Krugman) and had the same high level of quality as *Suspense*. For most of its run, *Lights Out* featured the writing of Arch Oboler, which could be wonderfully imaginative—sometimes horrific, sometimes whimsical. (Sometimes, it got away with gory set-pieces which would never have been permissible on television. Sound effects and creative writing can be just as horrific as bloody visuals.)

Lights Out was actually created by Wyllis Cooper, who brought the same wildly imaginative talent to *Quiet, Please*, a 1947-49 series which until recently was all but lost. What a joy it is to have three more episodes, among them the amusing "Pathetic Fallacy," in which a scientist's computer falls in love with him, and the terrifying "Whence Came You?," where an archeological expedition goes wrong. Host-star Ernest Chappell is one of radio's unsung greats.

An all-time great who's better remembered is Orson Welles, who stars in two series collected here. *The Shadow* needs no introduction even to casual OTR fans, and the two 1938 episodes with Welles ("Murders in Wax" and "Aboard the Steamship Amazon") are exuberant fun. (So is "Carnival of Death," a 1940 episode with Bill Johnstone as Lamont Cranston.) *The Black Museum* was produced in England in 1952; Welles is a charming tour guide through a repository of items which somehow caused a homicide, and relates just how "The Chain," "The Canvas Bag" and "The Mandolin String" accomplished this.

The Whistler and *The Mysterious Traveler* both ran for about a decade; each show had a smooth-voiced, insinuating narrator who related stories that were low on bloodshed but filled with irony. *Whistler* benefits from the ever-reliable CBS stock company, with Doris Singleton, Gerald Mohr and Howard Duff (moonlighting

from *Sam Spade*) as the characters trapped in these dramas which usually have twist endings.

Screen Director's Playhouse was not a mystery-horror show, but a *Lux Radio Theatre*-style anthology of varied stories from the movies. Among the spookier entries are the three included here: Ray Milland in "The Uninvited," Dorothy McGuire starring in "The Spiral Staircase," and "Dark Mirror" with Olivia DeHavilland.

Which brings us to a number of lesser-remembered but still excellent series. *The Clock* was a dramatic anthology, much like the two shows mentioned above. The three episodes included here are from the later days of the series, when it starred William Conrad and Cathy and Elliott Lewis, with William Spier directing. Jeanette Nolan and Hans Conreid are among the supporting actors (Conreid plays an inquisitive mortician in "Nicky," where a convict plans to outwit the electric chair.)

Elliott Lewis was the creator, producer and director of the wonderful *Crime Classics*, a 1953-54 series which explored true murders in a wry and witty fashion to musical settings by Bernard Herrmann. "The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln" is a terrific episode, beginning with the Lincoln's premonition about his own death. Lewis is a master director, using sound effects alone to create very complete images in the listener's mind.

Crime Club is similar to *Inner Sanctum*, with a grimly amusing librarian perusing his collection of crime books and relating the latest tale of homicide, to the accompaniment of a hyperactive organist. *Dark Fantasy* is a very obscure early '40s series produced at WKY-Oklahoma City and carried by NBC; *The Haunting Hour* is likewise little-known, a syndicated series from the '40s which sadly doesn't identify the cast or production staff. Both programs, in the *Inner Sanctum* mode, are excellent despite their obscurity, and we're grateful that these examples are available.

Mollé Mystery Theatre was suspenseful rather than horrific. The stories usually had twist endings, and the music, sound effects, and performances are all top rate. The sponsor, Mollé, was a shaving cream company, which makes it appropriate that one episode is entitled "Close Shave."

The New York-produced *Murder at Midnight* ("when the graves gape open and death—strikes!") is another *Sanctum* wannabe, filled with melodramatic homicides and spooky, overbearing organ music. The creepy narrator, Raymond Morgan, was formerly a minister! Top honors in oddball overacting, however, go to Philip Clarke as the "Keeper" of *The Sealed Book*. With intense acting, wild organ music and mind-bending sound effects, this series (in the mode of *The Hermit's Cave*) is juicy fun for devotees of the genre.

The sound quality is just fine; occasionally there's some (very) minor surface noise from the original transcriptions, but every one of the 60 episodes is crisp and clear. All of them are complete and uncut (many of these shows were syndicated, so there aren't a lot of commercials). With three shows per 90-minute cassette, the middle show is divided halfway, but the transition is always smoothly done and causes no disruption in the narrative.

We hope that Carl Amari and the folks at Radio Spirits are planning more of these box sets grouped by genre; each is a wonderfully entertaining crash-course in a vital aspect of radio drama. (Available from Radio Spirits, P.O. Box 2141, Schiller Park, IL 60176; 1-800-RADIO-48.)

When Radio Was Program Guide

August - October 1998

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 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 1-847-524-0200 extension 234, Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM Central Time.

AUGUST 1998

Broadcast Week One

Escape! 3-26-49 "Adaptive Ultimate" w/ Edgar Barrier / **The Burns & Allen Show** 4-15-48 "George Green with Envy" w/ George Burns & Gracie Allen (Pt. 1)

The Burns & Allen Show 4-15-48 "George Green with Envy" (Pt. 2) / **The Adventures of Sam Spade** 9-19-48 "Hot Hundred Grand Cap-er" w/ Howard Duff

The Green Hornet 1940s "Circumstances Alter the Case" w/ Robert Hall / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 4-2-46 "Car Ignition Invention" w/ Jim & Marian Jordan (Pt. 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 4-2-46 "Car Ignition Invention" w/ Jim & Marian Jordan (Pt. 2) / **Dimension X** 6-24-50 "Destination Moon" w/ Joe de Santis

Suspense 10-21-48 "Give Me Liberty" w/ William Powell / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-13-40 Episode #40 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

Dragnet 9-29-53 "The Big Try" w/ Jack Webb / **The Jack Benny Program** 2-23-47 "Jack fires the Sportsmen Quartet" (Pt. 1)

The Jack Benny Program 2-23-47 "Jack fires the Sportsmen Quartet" (Pt. 2) / **Have Gun, Will Travel** 2-22-59 "Winchester Quarantine" w/ John Dehner

The Adventures of Philip Marlowe 5-9-50 "Hiding Place" w/ Gerald Mohr / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-17-44 w/ guest, Leo Carillo (Pt. 1)

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 9-17-44 w/ guest, Leo Carillo (Pt. 2) / **The Black Museum** 1952 "The Key" w/ Orson Welles

The Shadow 1-9-38 "League of Terror" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-15-40 Episode #41 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Gunsmoke 2-14-53 "The Round-Up" w/ William Conrad / **The Great Gildersleeve** 3-3-46 "State Water Commissioner" w/ Hal Peary (Pt. 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 3-3-46 "State Water Commissioner" w/ Hal Peary (Pt. 2) / **Mercury Summer Theatre On the Air** 9-6-46 "Apple Tree" w/ Orson Welles

Gangbusters 1940s "The Case of the Triple Case Bandit" / **The Life of Riley** 11-30-46 "Riley Gets Medical Advice" w/ William Bendix (Pt. 1)

The Life of Riley 11-30-46 "Riley Gets Medical Advice" w/ William Bendix (Pt. 2) / **Tales of the Texas Rangers** 3-16-52 "Prelude to Felony" w/ Joel McCrea

Suspense 9-19-46 "Till the Day I Die" w/ Dane Clark / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-17-40 Episode #42 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

The Hermit's Cave 1930s "The House of Fear" / **My Favorite Husband** 4-29-49 "Vacation Time" w/ Lucille Ball and Richard Denning (Pt. 1)

My Favorite Husband 4-29-49 "Vacation Time" w/ Lucille Ball and Richard Denning (Pt. 2) / **The Lone Ranger** 4-13-53 "A Bullet For Speck" w/ Brace Beemer

The Third Man 1952 "The Reward" w/ Orson Welles / **The Abbott & Costello Program** 12-9-43 w/ Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (Pt. 1)

The Abbott & Costello Program 12-9-43 w/ Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (Pt. 2) / **Boston Blackie** 1-14-47 "Janet's New Fur Coat" w/ Dick Kollmar

The Shadow 1-16-38 "Sabotage" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-20-40 Episode #43 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Five

Frontier Gentleman 4-13-58 "The Trial" w/ John Dehner / **The Aldrich Family** 5-5-49 "Homer Gets Engaged to Agnes" w/ Ezra Stone (Pt. 1)

SEPTEMBER 1998

Broadcast Week One

The Aldrich Family 5-5-49 "Homer Gets Engaged to Agnes" w/ Ezra Stone (Pt. 2) / **Lights Out!** 9-14-43 "The Word" Hosted by Arch Oboler

Sergeant Preston of the Yukon 12-15-48 "Marlow's Gang" w/ Paul Sutton / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 4-9-46 "McGee the Artist" w/ Jim & Marian Jordan (Pt. 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 4-9-46 "McGee the Artist" w/ Jim & Marian Jordan (Pt. 2) / **This Is Your FBI** 1-25-52 "The Fiesta Fugitives" w/ Stacy Harris

Suspense 10-31-46 "Lazarus Walks" w/ Brian Donlevy / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-22-40 Episode #44 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

Dragnet 10-6-53 "Big Little Mom" w/ Jack Webb / **The Jack Benny Program** 3-16-47 "New Quartet" w/ Jack and all this gang (Pt. 1)

The Jack Benny Program 3-16-47 "New Quartet" w/ Jack and all his gang (Pt. 2) / **Escape!** 4-2-49 "Confidential Agent" w/ Barry Kroeger

Mercury Summer Theatre On the Air 9-13-46 "King Lear" w/ Orson Welles / **The Burns & Allen Show** 2-24-49 "Handwriting Analysis" (Pt. 1)

The Burns & Allen Show 2-24-49 "Handwriting Analysis" w/ George Burns & Gracie Allen (Pt. 2) / **The Black Museum** 1952 "The Car Tire" w/ Orson Welles

The Shadow 3-10-40 "The Laughing Corpse" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-24-40 Episode #45 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

When Radio Was Program Guide

August - October 1998 Continued

Broadcast Week Two

Gunsmoke 2-21-53 "The Meshouga" w/ William Conrad / **The Great Gildersleeve** 3-10-46 "Marjorie Goes to the Dance" w/ Hal Peary (Pt. 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 3-10-46 "Marjorie Goes to the Dance" w/ Hal Peary (Pt. 2) / **This Is My Best** 10-16-45 "Mr. Bisbey's Princess" w/ Orson Welles

Gangbusters 1940s "The Case of the Mysterious Rooming House" / **The Life of Riley** 2-1-47 "Baby Mix-Up" w/ William Bendix (Pt. 1)

The Life of Riley 2-1-47 "Baby Mix-Up" w/ William Bendix (Pt. 2) / **Tales of the Texas Rangers** 4-13-52 "Uncertain Death" w/ Joel McCrea

Suspense 11-7-46 "Easy Money" w/ Jack Carson / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-27-40 Episode #46 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Richard Diamond, Private Detective 10-8-49 "Gibson Murder Case" w/ Dick Powell / **My Favorite Husband** 5-20-49 "Getting Old" w/ Lucille Ball (Pt. 1)

My Favorite Husband 5-20-49 "Getting Old" w/ Lucille Ball and Richard Denning (Pt. 2) / **The Lone Ranger** 3-10-54 "The Enfield Rifles" w/ Brace Beemer

The Third Man 1952 "The Clown" w/ Orson Welles / **Our Miss Brooks** 5-28-50 "Traffic Court" w/ Eve Arden (Pt. 1)

Our Miss Brooks 5-28-50 "Traffic Court" w/ Eve Arden (Pt. 2) / **Boston Blackie** 1-21-47 "Jim Gary is Wanted" w/ Dick Kollmar

The Shadow 3-6-38 "Bride of Death" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman!** 5-29-40 Episode #47 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

Frontier Gentleman 4-20-58 "Aces and Eights" w/ John Dehner / **Father Knows Best** 3-5-53 "Overdue Vacation" w/ Robert Young (Pt. 1)

Father Knows Best 3-5-53 "Overdue Vacation" w/ Robert Young (Pt. 2) / **Rocky Fortune** 10-27-53 "Shipboard Jewel Robbery" w/ Frank Sinatra

The Whistler 5-20-46 "Broken Chain" w/ Bill Forman / **Duffy's Tavern** 5-25-49 w/ Ed Gardner and guest, Ed Wynn (Pt. 1)

OCTOBER 1998

Broadcast Week One

Duffy's Tavern 5-25-49 w/ Ed Gardner (Part 2) / **The Crime Club** 3-27-47 "Silent Witnesses" w/ Raymond Edward Johnson

Suspense 11-7-46 "Easy Money" w/ Jack Carson / **The Adventures of Superman** 6-1-40 Episode #48 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

The Lone Ranger 6-3-46 "Law Man Proteem" w/ Brace Beemer / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 4-30-46 "Barbershop Quartet" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (Part 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 4-30-46 "Barbershop Quartet" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (Part 2) / **This Is Your FBI** 7-27-51 "Connoisseurs of Crime" w/ Stacy Harris

Tales of the Texas Rangers 1-14-51 "Death in the Cards" w/ Joel McCrea / **The Jack Benny Program** 3-23-47 "The Sportsmen Return" w/ Jack Benny (Part 1)

The Jack Benny Program 3-23-47 "The Sportsmen Return" w/ Jack Benny (Part 2) / **Nightbeat** 4-17-50 "Tong War" w/ Frank Lovejoy

The Shadow 11-17-40 "The House of Horror" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 6-3-40 Episode #49 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Dragnet 10-13-53 "The Big Plea" w/ Jack Webb / **The Fred Allen Show** 10-19-47 w/ guest, James Mason (Part 1)

The Fred Allen Show 10-19-47 w/ guest, James Mason (Part 2) / **The CBS Radio Workshop** 3-23-56 "The Legend of Jimmy Blue Eyes" w/ William Conrad

Richard Diamond Private Detective 10-15-49 "Counterfeit Ring" w/ Dick Powell / **The Red Skelton Show** 1-2-52 w/ Red and all his gang (Part 1)

The Red Skelton Show 1-2-52 w/ Red and all his gang (Part 2) / **Casey, Crime Photographer** 8-14-47 "The Chivalrous Gunman" w/ Staats Cottsworth

Suspense 11-14-46 "The One Who Got Away" w/ Hume Cronyn / **The Adventures of Superman** 6-5-40 Episode #50 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

Gunsmoke 2-28-53 "Trojan War" w/ William Conrad / **The Great Gildersleeve** 5-12-46 "Leila's New Beau" w/ Hal Peary (Part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 5-12-46 "Leila's New Beau" w/ Hal Peary (Part 2) / **Broadway Is My Beat** 7-24-50 "Celia Jordan" w/ Larry Thor

Gangbusters 1930s "The Golf Course Murder" / **The Life of Riley** 9-6-47 "Engineering Course at Phony School" w/ William Bendix (Part 1)

The Life of Riley 9-6-47 "Engineering Course at Phony School" w/ William Bendix (Part 2) / **The Whistler** 6-3-46 "The Judas Face" w/ Bill Forman

The Shadow 2-2-41 "Nightmare at Gaelsberry" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 6-7-40 Episode #51 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Five

Escape 4-2-49 "Confidential Agent" w/ Berry Kroeger / **Our Miss Brooks** 5-7-50 "Cold Barbecue" w/ Eve Arden (Part 1)

Our Miss Brooks 5-7-50 "Cold Barbecue" w/ Eve Arden (Part 2) / **Suspense** 1-16-47 "Overture in Two Keys" w/ Joan Bennett

Lights Out! 9-14-43 "The Word" w/ William Shatner / **The Martin & Lewis Show** 10-28-49 "Tickets to South Pacific" w/ Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis (Part 1)

The Martin & Lewis Show 10-28-49 "Tickets to South Pacific" w/ Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis (Part 2) / **The Mercury Theatre On the Air** 10-30-38 "The War of the Worlds" w/ Orson Welles (Part 1)

The Mercury Theatre On the Air 10-30-38 "The War of the Worlds" w/ Orson Welles (Part 2)

Radio News



The International Jack Benny Fan Club is still rolling along nicely, and still publishing their newsletter. A recent issue provided a directory of members with Benny material for trade. For information,

write to P.O. Box 336, Los Creek, WV 26385-0336.

Jay Hickerson continues to publish his fine newsletter *Hello Again*, which has been documenting events in the world of Old-Time Radio since April 1970. A subscription to the bi-monthly publication costs \$15.00; write to Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden CT 06514. By the way, Jay's Friends of Old-Time Radio convention in Newark, New Jersey is scheduled for October 22 through 24 at the Holiday Inn - North in Newark. You may also contact Jay at (203) 248-2887, or by e-mail at JayHick@aol.com.

The SPERDVAC folks are already making plans for their 15th Annual Convention. It's always a great event, with seminars devoted to interesting aspects of vintage radio, and re-creations of great shows with many fine radio actors of the Golden Era participating. For information, contact Larry Gassman at (562) 947-9800.

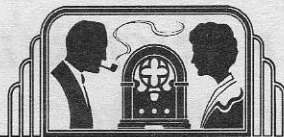
The North American Radio Archives are offering a 10" x 14" poster depicting several old-time radio shows; cost post-paid is \$15.00. Order from Jim Snyder, 2929 East Main St. #149, Mesa AZ 85213.

Radio Spirits has acquired the extensive library of radio shows previously owned by syndicator Charles Michelson. Mr. Michelson has been distributing classic radio shows since they were new programs in the '40s, and he has been vitally important in attracting new fans to vintage radio drama. We salute him and thank him for the many decades he's worked to keep these shows on the air, and we know that the programs he reclaimed are in good hands with Carl Amari's company.

Congratulations also to Sheila R. Riddle, who has been president of The Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society for the past five years. As of July 1, the new president will be Michelle Malik, who, at Sheila's

Continued on Page 26

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This fine mystery series came to radio in 1942 and lasted 14 years. For most of its run, The Whistler was played by Bill Forman and the eerie 13-note whistle was whistled by Dorothy Roberts. All 18 tales are full of twists and surprises that will have you guessing whodunit until the very end! 09-24-45 The Man Who Died Twice • 10-08-45 Death Laughs Last • 10-15-45 The House on Sycamore Road • 10-29-45 Final Return • 11-05-45 Harvest of Death • 11-12-45 The Seeing Eye • 11-19-45 Coincidence • 11-26-45 The Stray Dream • 04-07-47 The Sheriff's Assistant • 12-12-48 Stormy Weather • 01-09-49 Telltale Brand • 02-13-49 The Last Curtain • 04-16-50 Murder In Mind • 04-23-50 Return with the Spray • 05-21-50 The Return • 06-11-50 Rebound • 06-18-50 Jessica • 06-23-50 Manhunt

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It's back to Dodge City Kansas for 18 rare episodes from radio's greatest adult western! Starring William Conrad as Marshal Matt Dillon, Parley Baer as Deputy Chester Proudfoot, Howard McNear as Doc Adams and Georgia Ellis as saloon girl Kitty Russell. 12-12-53 The Cast (In this episode Doc is played by Paul Frees.) • 12-26-53 The Guitar • 01-02-53 Stage Holdup • 01-09-54 Joke's On Us • 02-06-54 Big Broad • 02-13-54 The Killer • 02-20-54 Last Fling • 03-13-54 Confederate Money • 06-12-54 The Cover Up • 06-19-54 Going Bad • 07-12-54 Texas Cowboys • 07-19-54 The Queue • 09-20-54 The F.U. • 09-27-54 Helping Hand • 10-02-54 Matt Gets It • 10-09-54 Love of a Good Woman • 10-30-54 The Patsy • 11-13-54 Wrong Man

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Radio News

Continued from page 25

request, was personally chosen by Eddie's grandson Brian Gari. The new address for the ECAS is 14611 Valley Vista Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91403. The Society's newsletter, The Cantor Connection, is published bi-monthly; dues are \$15 within the U.S., and \$25 outside the states. An article in the May-June issue traced Eddie's involvement in silent films—he made two features, *Kid Boots* and *Special Delivery*—and explains why he didn't make a planned third film, *The Girl Friend*. There are also reprints of two original articles from 1944.

Radio Spirits has another program in addition to When Radio Was; it's *Radio Movie Classics*, hosted by well-known movie critic Jeffrey Lyons. The programs featured are hour-long adaptations of movies originally broadcast on *Lux Radio Theatre*. You may search the wonderful Radio Spirits website (www.radiospirits.com) for information about this program and stations which air it.



If you're not within range of one of these stations—and even if you are—you may well want to avail yourself of Radio Spirits' new releases based on this show. Each **Radio**

Movie Classics release includes two hour-long cassettes and retails for \$12.95, not a bad price for a double feature. The tapes include Lyons' introductions. Thus far, the releases are Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious* and *The Seventh Veil*; Humphrey Bogart in *To Have and Have Not* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*; and Clark Gable in *The Buccaneer* (which starred Fredric March in the movie) and *It Happened One Night*.

Cary Grant performs in two adaptations of his comedy films, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* and *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer*; Alfred Hitchcock's films *The 39 Steps* and *Spellbound* are combined; and Barbara Stanwyck stars in *Sorry, Wrong Number* (a radio drama based on a movie based on a radio drama!) and *Stella Dallas* (a movie based on a novel, which subsequently became a daytime radio serial!). Each program has been digitally restored, and all are fully complete, including commercials. (Available from Radio Spirits, P.O. Box 2141, Schiller Park IL 60176; 1-800-RADIO-48.)

Saluting the First Couple of Vintage TV

More than 45 years after its debut, *I Love Lucy* continues to entertain legions of fans worldwide. A couple of years ago, Syracuse University Press published *Laughs, Luck...and Lucy*, a memoir by the show's creator, Jess Oppenheimer (co-written with his son, Gregg Oppenheimer). Much of the book's text has recently been transformed into an audio production, *I Love Lucy: Behind the Scenes* (Soundelux; two audiocassettes, 3 hours; \$17.95).

Jess is, sadly, no longer with us, so his memories have been interpreted by veteran actor Larry Dobkin (who appeared on some episodes of the classic series), who is a colorful and engaging narrator. The story begins in 1948, when Oppenheimer joined the production staff of Lucy's radio show *My Favorite Husband*. Mr. Dobkin's reading is interspersed with generous excerpts from the radio show and the TV show which grew from it, which nicely illustrate the similarities and differences between these two series. (*Husband* isn't quite as wacky, and Richard Denning's "George Cooper" character is a bit more acerbic than Ricky Ricardo.) Many well-known scenes which we remember from *I Love Lucy* were originally written as radio sketches for *My Favorite Husband*.



Lucy set the standard for television sitcoms, creatively and technically. Desi Arnaz (who made a major career switch from bandleader-singer to becoming a producer, actor and ultimately, studio chief) worked out the technical challenges with cameraman Karl Freund for shooting the program on film with three cameras—the standard procedure still used today. Oppenheimer frequently notes the incredible good luck the series enjoyed, but it's clear that a tremendous amount of talent on both sides of the camera were responsible for the

show's tremendous popularity in the '50s and beyond. The excitement of creating a new form of entertainment, and the joy that all participants felt in crafting the show, comes across forcefully. Oppenheimer has a director's eye for the nuances in a great performance, and he beautifully recounts the little details that made Lucille Ball such an exceptional comedienne.

There are anecdotes galore about the show's co-stars Vivian Vance and William Frawley, not to mention Gale Gordon (who had been a co-star on *Husband* and continued his working relationship with Lucy into the mid-1980s). This audio production is essential for Lucy fans, even if they've already bought the book. (Available in bookstores, and from Soundelux Audio Publishing, 37 Commercial Blvd., Novato CA 94949; (415) 883-7701.)

By the way, Lucy fans have a new home on the internet, the *I Love Lucy Mailing List*. It's similar to a newsgroup, except you'll receive the postings in your e-mail. To subscribe, direct your web browser to <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/ilovelucy>. Members of the group share information and work together on researching various aspects of the shows; some subscribers have recently discovered the true birthdate of co-star Vivian Vance.

If you'd prefer a more tangible way of celebrating Lucy than what you can find in cyberspace, you might well want to visit the Lucy-Desi Museum, located in Lucy's hometown of Jamestown, New York. (Desi's hometown, in Cuba, is presumably a bit less accessible to American fans.) Wall panels, interactive video exhibitions and lots of memorabilia tell the story of Lucy and Desi's lives. Hometown friends relate their memories of growing up with Lucy; home movies made available exclusively to the museum by Lucie Arnaz show the couple off-camera. Clothing, photographs, letters and other personal effects help tell the story.

The Museum also has a gift shop (called "Lilacs and Cigars"!), which carries a number of books about Miss Ball and hundreds of mugs, shirts, calendars, and other collectibles. Admission is \$5.00; until October 31, the museum is open Mondays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; from November to April, it's open only on weekends. (The Lucy-Desi Museum, 212 Pine Street, Jamestown NY 14701; (716) 484-7070; <http://www.lucy-desi.com>.)

Radio Directors Emerge From Behind the Mike

While movie directors are often household names, the creative people who guide and shape programs in other media are largely unknown. A few directors of live TV drama were celebrated in the '50s, but aside from the deserving Norman Corwin and Arch Oboler, radio directors have gone unheralded. Thus, it's a pleasure to read **Five Directors: The Golden Years of Radio**, edited by Ira Skutch (Scarecrow; 232 pages; \$55.00 hardcover, \$29.95 paperback).

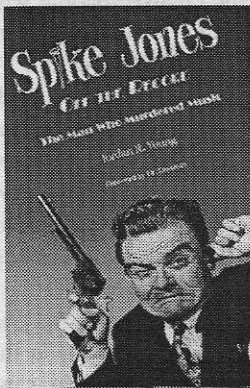
Oboler, who took over *Lights Out* from creator Willis Cooper and made the horror show a success, is profiled. So is the remarkable Himan Brown, who began his radio career in 1927 and is still active in the field; shows which he packaged and directed include *Flash Gordon*, *John's Other Wife*, and of course, *Inner Sanctum*; his continuing devotion to the form resulted in the successful *CBS Radio Mystery Theatre*, which debuted in 1974. Axel Gruenberg, who directed a variety of soap operas before joining Ralph Edwards for *This Is Your Life*, adds his memories, as does Robert Lewis Shayon, director of *Big Story* and *Suspense* before turning to TV documentaries.

Our particular favorite, however, is the wonderful Fletcher Markle, who had a distinguished radio career in his native Canada before coming stateside for the *Columbia Workshop*, *Studio One* and *The Ford Theatre*. Mr. Markle—whom we had the pleasure of meeting not long before his death in 1991—is elegantly funny; he radiates serenity and appreciation of his talented co-workers, even though many of his career experiences were less than amusing.

As you'd expect with people who worked in a medium which conveyed images through language, all five of the subjects are wonderfully articulate. Their stories are presented in first-person narratives (with the exception of Shayon, whose section uses a Q&A format). Each of these gentlemen also talk about their careers in other media, so those who are interested in early television and film will find much of interest. There are anecdotes aplenty and a few surprises. You'll come away with a full understanding of the many obstacles these men faced in creating some of radio's finest shows. A listing of credits is provided. (Available from Scarecrow Press, 15200 NBN Way, P.O. Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214-0191; 1-800-462-6420.)

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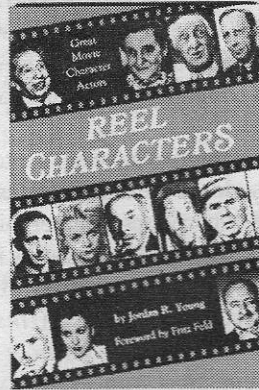
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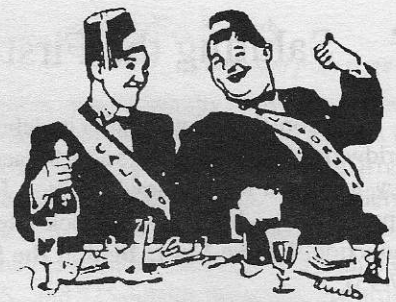
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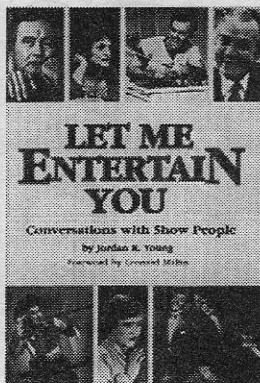
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'20s, '30s and '40s in old and new formats. It includes old movies on 16mm and video; trad jazz and big band music on 78s, LPs and CDs; movie memorabilia dealers; fan clubs devoted to vintage entertainers; revival cinemas; festivals; museums and libraries; and more. 160 pages • Paperback \$9.95 • Hardcover \$24.95 ON SALE 12.95.

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Broadcaster-historian Frank Bresee is the longtime host of "The Golden Days of Radio."

The Proprietors of the Jot 'em Down Store

By Frank Bresee

Lum & Abner is one of radio's best remembered shows—not only for its delightful humor, but because it was on the air live for almost a quarter of a century, and in re-runs on many radio stations to this day. Lum (Chester Lauck) and Abner (Norris Goff) were born near Mena, Arkansas. As they were growing up, they lived a few miles from each other, and went to the same grammar school. They entered the University of Arkansas and traveled after college, but returned to Mena. There they married childhood sweethearts and began regular jobs.

The fellows wanted to be comics, and fashioned an act after "Amos 'n' Andy," who had the hottest act and radio show in the country. They got a chance to audition for the local radio station in Mena, but when they got to the studio, they found the building full of Amos 'n' Andy imitators. They knew they wouldn't stand much of a chance, so they made a decision that would change their lives forever. They switched from a negro dialect to a stereotype of two fellows from the Southern hills. They picked the name "Lum & Abner" out of the blue, and it stuck.

Needless to say, they won the audition hands down, and went on the air with their first program on KTHS, a local Hot Springs, Arkansas station on April 26, 1931. On June 27 of that year, they made the jump to the full NBC network, doing a fifteen-minute show, six days a week (at 8 a.m.!) for Quaker Oats. The L&A show had several different sponsors, timeslots and network affiliations over the years, being heard at various times on the coast-to-coast facilities of NBC, CBS, ABC and Mutual. They were also syndicated on hundreds of additional stations throughout the country, programs which continue to be heard in many parts of the country. For most of its run, it was a 15-minute, five-a-week program.

As the show developed, Chet and Norris developed many characters that appeared on the show, and for many years they played all the voices. Lauck played the dimwitted "Cedric Wehunt," and "Grandpappy Spears," while Goff portrayed "Squire Skimp" and "Dick Huddleston."

The program took place at the "Jot 'em Down Store" in the mythical town of Pine Ridge, Arkansas. The show became such a national sensation that, to celebrate Lum & Abner's fifth year on the air, the town of Waters, Arkansas (18 miles east of Mena) went through an act of Congress and decreed that its name would be changed to Pine Ridge. (Just look at any map, and you'll find Pine Ridge, Arkansas.) I can think of no greater honor being bestowed on a radio program. (Although something similar was enacted in 1950 by the residents of Hot Springs, New Mexico, when they voted to change the city's name to Truth or Consequences.)

In 1948, Lum & Abner became a half-hour show, and was broadcast (with an audience) from Studio B at Columbia Square in Hollywood. The program continued for almost five years as a half-hour show before moving back to the five-time-a-week, fifteen minute program.

In the 1930s, Many Lum & Abner radio premiums were offered, including badges, buttons, L&A Family Almanacs, a Horlick Lum & Abner Malt Maker (a tie-in with their longtime sponsor, Horlick's Malted Milk), and others. In the 1940s, in addition to their radio show, the lovable rubes starred in six theatrical motion pictures for RKO. Video tapes of their movies are highly prized, as are their premiums.

If you are interested in further information about the program, I'm sure you will be interested in the National Lum & Abner Society. Six times a year, the Society publishes the "Jot 'em Down Journal," which features articles about various aspects of the history of Lum & Abner.

Once a year, the NLAS Convention is held in Mena and Pine Ridge. I was thrilled to be one of the honored guests last June, and it was a delight to actually visit the famous Jot 'em Down Store in Pine Ridge. The store is operated by Lon and Kathryn Stucker, and features a museum, plus hundreds of items commemorating those early days of radio. Many of the Lum & Abner items are for sale, and if you are ever in the area, it is well worth visiting. (The National Lum & Abner Society can be contacted by writing to Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora AL 35062; the e-mail address is CampHoll@aol.com. The Lum and Abner Museum and Jot 'Em Down Store can be contacted at P.O. Box 38, Pine Ridge, AR 71966;

Continued on Page 31

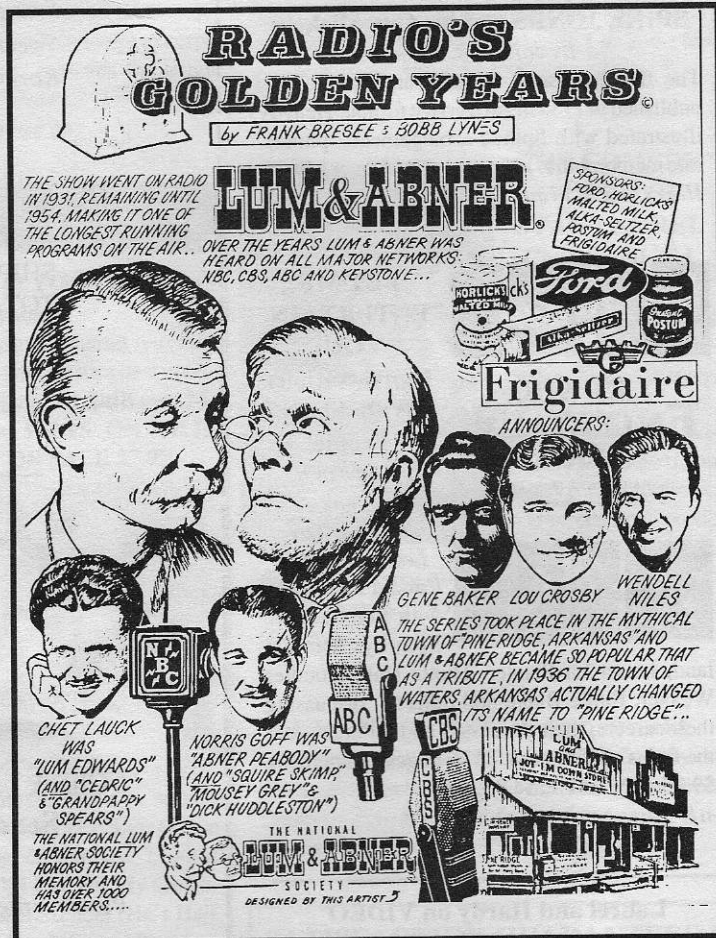


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Pine Ridge Revisited

Continued from page 30

(501)326-4442; you can reach them by e-mail at nstucker@hsnp.com.)

The days of Lum & Abner are long gone, but for those of us who are old enough, they bring back some very happy memories. More than 1,200 of the team's programs are available to collectors, and they provide a rich cornucopia of comedy.

Radio's Golden Years

Continued from page 1

wealth of information to these mini-histories. This OTR fan didn't know that the director of *The Hermit's Cave*—an eerie horror show—was William Conrad, later to star in radio's *Gunsmoke*. Nor did we know that Virginia Payne was only 21 when she began playing the part of *Ma Perkins* (which she did for the show's 27 year run). You'll find yourself saying, "I didn't know that!" and "Is that what they looked like?" as you browse through the little-known facts and faces behind radio's greatest shows.

In addition, radio transcriptions, tickets to broadcasts, original premiums, and advertising artwork are faithfully reproduced. Some of these must've sent Bresee and Lynes on a real chase. In the Bob Hope entry, for example, a '40s-era carton of Pepsodent, and a package of the long-vanished Swan soap are depicted. The Little Orphan Annie illustration not only faithfully shows an Ovaltine shake-up mug, but a box of Quaker Puffed Wheat Sparkies and a Radio Orphan Annie badge from 1938. Since the authors have each spent a lifetime collecting radio memorabilia, I suppose we shouldn't be surprised at all of these wonderful details, but they're impressive anyway.

The individuals profiled include a large number of folks you forgot to remember, such as Ken Murray and Oswald, comedian Al Pearce and his gang, the great and wacky Jim Hawthorne, and husband-and-wife musical comedy team Julia Sanderson and Frank Crumit.

This visually dynamic and fact-filled book is a pure delight, which will enchant any fan of old-time radio. (It will also allow that fan to see if the visages he's imagined for various radio characters match up to the actual ones!) One of radio's finest talents, Norman Corwin, supplies the eloquent and enthusiastic introduction. (Available for \$19.95 plus 3.00 postage from Frank Bresee/Radio's Golden Years, P.O. Box 1222, Hollywood CA 90027)

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Frank Bresee's Radio Quiz

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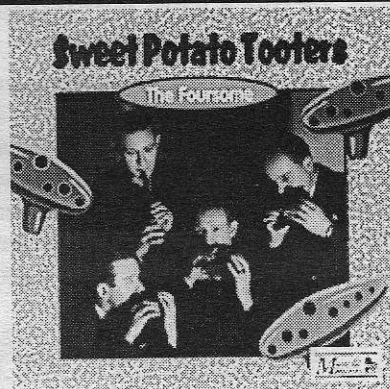
1. What were the original names of Amos 'n' Andy?
2. Who was known as "the Songbird of the South"?
3. What was the nickname of radio bandleader Ben Bernie?
4. What program began with "Ah, ah, ah! Don't touch that dial! Listen to...."
5. What newscaster was paid \$1,000 a minute for his weekly network newscast?
6. Who was The Street Singer, and what was his theme song?
7. What famous writer created *I Love a Mystery*, and what was his other show?
8. What motion picture star also appeared as the lead on CBS's radio show, *Big Town*?

Answers to Last Issue's Quiz:

1. NBC, which went on the air November 15, 1926; 2. Nathan Birnbaum; 3. Lowell Thomas—who was on from September 29, 1930 until May 14, 1976; 4. Creator-writer-producer Nila Mack; 5. Herb Morrison; 6. Brian Donlevy, nominated for Best Supporting Actor in 1939 for *Beau Geste*; 7. Arthur Godfrey; 8. *Make Believe Ballroom*; 9. Fred Allen as "One Long Pan"; 10. Hill owned American Tobacco Co.; Boone was an auctioneer on Lucky Strike commercials

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 "There'll Be Some Changes Made"
 "Ragtime Cowboy Joe" w/ Pinky Tomlin
 "Blue (and Broken-Hearted)"
 "Sweet Georgia Brown"
 "When the Bloom is On the Sage" w/ Crosby

"I Like Mountain Music"
 "Bidin' My Time"
 "Chinatown, My Chinatown"
 "When the Midnight Choo Choo Leaves for Alabam" / "My Pretty Girl"
 "Victory March" w/ Dick Powell
 "Ida! Sweet as Apple Cider"
 "Whittle Out a Whistle"
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