

# The Flying Deuces.

*Magazine for fans of Laurel & Hardy and Abbott & Costello.*

February 2026 Edition —Volume 1, Issue 12

HAPPY  
1<sup>st</sup>  
BIRTHDAY



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The Flying Deuces.

February 2026 Edition  
Volume 1, Issue 12



# Pardon My Sarong

*"That wild goose chase of yours is going to lay an egg. " Lou Costello*

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of our newsletter.

This is our twelfth issue and marks one year old. When we started this magazine we didn't know much about DTP, and made a few mistakes. But now we should have mastered the basics.

But I wanted to quickly list the articles in the previous issues and show what we had shared with our readers.

Laurel and Hardy Bio  
Abbott and Costello Bio

Laurel & Hardy LP Vinyl and CD Releases

Movies Listed (14)

Flying Deuces Film  
Abbott & Costello In Society  
Sailors Beware!  
Buck Privates Movie  
One Night In The Tropics  
45 Minutes from Hollywood

In The Navy  
Hold That Ghost  
Battle of the Century  
Ride Em Cowboy  
The Flying Deuces  
Here Come The Co Eds  
Should Husbands Go Home  
Flying Elephants

Who's On First  
History of Who's On First

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Evelyn Felisa Ankers  
Lynn Baggett  
Lenore Aubert  
Vivien Oakland  
Catherine Downs  
Virginia Bruce  
Kathryn Grayson  
Frances Anne Rafferty  
Jane Frazee  
Vivian Blaine  
Hillary Brooke  
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Hal Roach  
Jerome David Kern  
Jean Yarbrough

Newbury History  
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Christmas in Newbury

Email Software  
Computer Help  
PC Cleaning Software  
Don't Get Scammed

Websites

Did You Know

Short Stories, Novels and Screenplays Written By Me (10)

The Laurel and Hardy Murder Case  
The Unassailable Crowns  
A Fine Mess on First Base  
The Map in the Margin  
A Timeless Tug  
Treasure Trawlers  
Case of the corporate crumpet  
The Bus Boys  
Santas Little Helpers  
Ravenshollow Castle Mystery

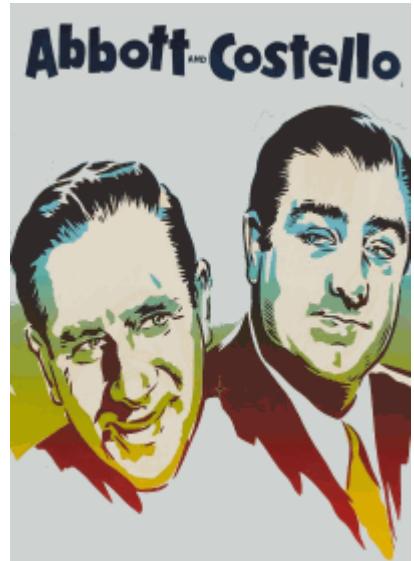
The Wizard of Oz  
Moneyspire Review.

Our newsletter isn't just about the duo's, its about the other cast members, the producers, directors, writers, lighting, make-up team, cinematography and all the other area's that come together to make the films we love.

I hope you have enjoyed our past newsletters, and we hope to entertain you over the next year.

Phillip. The Fez Wearing Editor.

# YEAR IN REVIEW



## Hollywood Party 1934

Hollywood Party is a 1934 American pre-Code musical film produced and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). The film stars Laurel and Hardy, Jimmy Durante, Lupe Vélez, Jack Pearl, Charles Butterworth, Polly Moran, and The Three Stooges (in their final appearance for MGM, written by Arthur Kober).[1] Mickey Mouse (voiced by an uncredited Walt Disney) introduces Disney's Technicolor cartoon The Hot Choc-late Soldiers, with music by Nacio Herb Brown and lyrics by Arthur Freed.

Jungle movie star "Schnarzan" (satirizing Tarzan), is advised by his manager that he needs new lions for his pictures, as his old ones are "worn out". Schnarzan's rival Liondora, who also makes jungle pictures, is determined to buy the new lions himself. An international explorer, Baron Munchausen, intervenes and buys the lions for his friend Schnarzan. Schnarzan celebrates his victory by throwing a huge Hollywood party.

Laurel and Hardy arrive about three quarters into the picture, as the owners of the lions. The baron has given them a bad check for the lions they provided, and they show up at Schnarzan's party to collect their fee in person. Instead, they get into an egg-breaking battle with the fiery Lupe Vélez. When Laurel and Hardy never do get paid, they loose the lions on the party. A nightmarish riot ensues, and Schnarzan awakens to find he is just plain Jimmy Durante, who had a crazy dream.

### Cast

Stan Laurel as Stan  
Oliver Hardy as Ollie  
Jimmy Durante as Himself/Schnarzan  
Jack Pearl as Baron Munchausen  
Polly Moran as Henrietta Clemp  
Charles Butterworth as Harvey Clemp  
Eddie Quillan as Bob Benson  
June Clyde as Linda Clemp  
Lupe Vélez as Jungle Woman/Jane in Schnarzan Sequence  
George Givot as Liondora, aka Grand Royal  
Duke Nicholas  
Richard Carle as Producer Knapp



Edwin Maxwell as Producer Buddy Goldfarb  
Ted Healy as Reporter  
The Three Stooges (Moe Howard, Larry Fine, and Curly Howard) as Themselves  
Clarence Wilson as Scientist  
Richard Cramer as Scientist  
Nora Cecil as Offended Matron  
Robert Young as Radio Announcer  
Jeanne Olsen as herself (Mrs. Jimmy Durante)  
Tom London as Paul Revere  
Arthur Treacher as Durante's English Butler  
Tom Kennedy as Durante's American Butler  
Beatrice Hagen as Show Girl/Party Guest  
Bess Flowers as Party Guest

### Voice cast

Walt Disney as Mickey Mouse (uncredited)

Hollywood Party was originally intended as an all-star attraction, like the studio's successful The Hollywood Revue of 1929 produced by Harry Rapf. During production, the movie was known as The Hollywood Revue of 1933 and Star Spangled Banquet. Rapf's 1933 revue would star Jean Harlow, Joan Crawford, Marie Dressler, and Lee Tracy, supported by studio comedians Jimmy Durante, Lupe Vélez, Charles Butterworth, and Jack Pearl. After a series of expensive rewrites and revisions, with numerous directors taking a hand in

## Hollywood Party 1934

the filming, only the comedians remained, with Polly Moran, George Givot, and Ted Healy and his (Three) Stooges augmenting the cast. Laurel and Hardy were borrowed from producer Hal Roach to appear in the final section of the film. The revue format was abandoned, and the film became a farcical comedy with music.

Production proceeded on a haphazard course, with many hands taking turns at the helm. It has been asserted that Richard Boleslavski directed much of the film, with various scenes directed by Allan Dwan, Edmund Goulding, Russell Mack, Roy Rowland, Sam Wood, and finally Charles Reisner. George Stevens directed the Laurel and Hardy sequence and Dave Gould directed the "Feelin' High" dance number with choreography by Georgie Hale. Seymour Felix and Eddie Prinz directed final musical retakes. Around the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer backlot, the choreographers of the dance sequences were competing with those staging the MGM movie *Dancing Lady*, vying to see who could create the most elaborate dance number.

The movie had many sequences cut or reshot after several references proved too esoteric for international audiences. A sequence that had featured Thelma Todd (impersonating Mae West), Lupe Vélez, Jimmy Durante, and ZaSu Pitts playing bridge was deleted after it was lost on British viewers not yet familiar with the game. Additional episodes that featured actors Herman Bing, Johnny Weissmuller, Jackie Cooper, and Max Baer were cut from the movie. Famed songwriters Rodgers and Hart contributed most of the music. Gus Kahn wrote "Moonlight Serenade" for the 1933 Busby Berkeley movie *Footlight Parade*. However, when that song was cut from the Warner Bros. picture, it was placed a year later in *Hollywood Party* and sung by Eddie Quillan.



Bob Lynch of MGM's Philadelphia branch was well aware of the film's flimsy structure, and advertised it to local showmen as "a musical travesty". Motion Picture Herald's review withheld critical comment in favor of ways to sell the film: "Names, laughs, and a novel and nutty idea will be the basis of a wide open opportunity for the showman to do some lively selling of this conglomeration of amusing material. And that is the tack to take in the selling, billing it as a comedy riot. The word riot is used in its specific and dictionary [emphasis theirs] sense: a good deal excitedly happening at the same time." Motion Picture Daily summed it up as "just a lot of hilarious nonsense – but what nonsense – on a background that looks like it cost plenty of money."

"Laurel and Hardy Steal MGM's Hollywood Party", headlined *The Hollywood Reporter*: their sequence "had last night's audience rolling in the aisles and actually sobbing with laughter. That sequence is worth the price of admission and is the highlight in an otherwise dull musical. It is pretty much of a patchwork; the picture hardly rates the time and money that MGM has expended." *Film Daily* raved, "Hilarious entertainment of novel design packed with laughs, flash, good music, and marquee names. Very different from anything seen before in the way of musical fare... all in all it is a bargain for anybody's money." Other reviews were more guarded. *Wanda Hale* of the *New York Daily News* shrugged, "Look over the cast and take it or leave it. It is only fair to report that many of the customers laughed long and loud at several of the sequences in this cinematic patch-quilt. But there was no rolling in the aisles." *Mordaunt Hall* of *The New York Times* wrote that it

## Hollywood Part 1934



"may have been very funny while it was being made, but as it comes to the screen it is not a little disappointing." Motion Picture Reviews, published by a panel of all-women reviewers advising what films were fit for adolescents and children, hated Hollywood Party: "With such a collection of so-called comedians, it is strange that anything as completely vacuous as Hollywood Party could have been produced. It is an indiscriminate hodgepodge of comic sequences and songs framed by the slightest suggestion of a story."

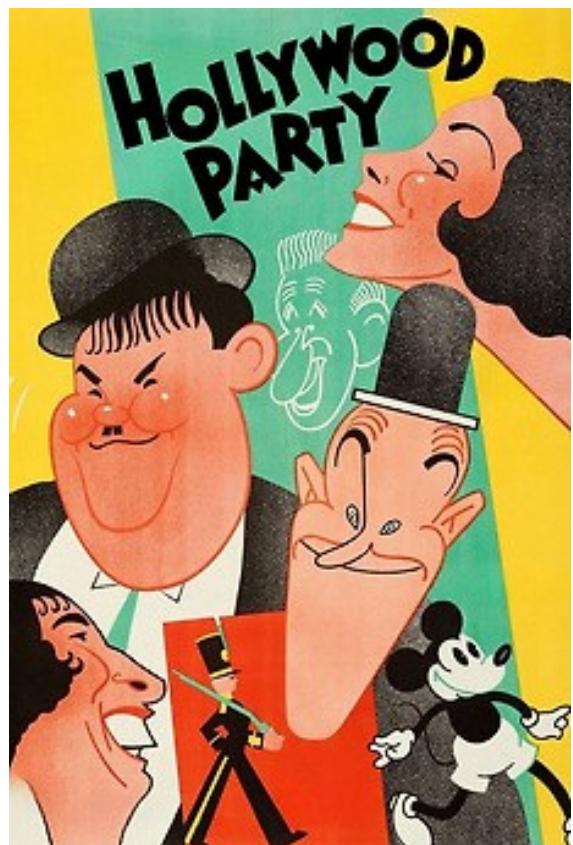
Theater managers who played the film submitted their audiences' reactions to Motion Picture Herald. A few reports were positive: "This is certainly a novelty and our patrons liked it. Most all of the funny guys are in it and they were all working. All I can say is, it satisfied all we got in to see it." "This is a very good picture that failed to do business in our town. [Played] one day to only fair business." [ But most exhibitors were extremely downbeat: "Just a lot of nothing, half thrown together. One of the poorest excuses for a picture we have ever played. Not even funny except about five minutes with Laurel & Hardy, and my patrons want more than a five-minute show for their money." "An A No. 1 flop. Nothing to it. Don't book this one if you wish to please patrons. Business terrible." "Never have I seen a worse, mixed-up mess than this picture was. Picture not liked and the panning was almost unanimous. More squawks on this one than I have had for a long time. For once I agreed with them." [ "I stood in the lobby all night and apologized to the customers as they came out." ]

The studio regarded Hollywood Party as such an embarrassment that producer Harry Rapf took his name off the film, none of the directors claimed screen credit, and the creative and technical personnel were actually hidden from the public. These credits were traditionally listed at the beginning of every MGM film, on successive title cards, but not in this case: the names of the production personnel were crowded onto a single panel, and only disclosed after the end title.

The film was a box office disaster, posting a

loss of \$500,000 in Depression dollars, the equivalent of almost \$12,000,000 today. It was producer Harry Rapf's last attempt to stage an expensive revue – or any expensive project at all. The failure of Hollywood Party resulted in Rapf being demoted to MGM's short-subjects department. After one of his shorts won a "Best Short Subject" Academy Award (How to Sleep starring Robert Benchley), Rapf returned to low-budget feature productions, which he produced until his death in 1949.

Hollywood Party did recoup some of its losses later. Hal Roach had discontinued his releasing arrangement with MGM in 1938, so MGM would have no further Laurel and Hardy comedies to offer exhibitors. The studio filled the void with a reissue of Hollywood Party in 1939. With its crazy-quilt approach, the film could now pass for a screwball comedy, and its cast of Jimmy Durante, Lupe Vélez, and The Three Stooges now had more name value.



## Lupe Vélez

María Guadalupe "Lupe" Villalobos Vélez (July 18, 1908 – December 14, 1944) was a Mexican actress, singer, and dancer during the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema.

Vélez began her career as a performer in Mexican vaudeville in the early 1920s. After moving to the United States, she made her first film appearance in a short in 1927. By the end of the decade, she was acting in full-length silent films and had progressed to leading roles in *The Gaucho* (1927), *Lady of the Pavements* (1928) and *Wolf Song* (1929), among others. Vélez made the transition to sound films without difficulty. She was one of the first successful Mexican actresses in Hollywood. During the 1930s, her explosive screen persona was exploited in successful comedic films like *Hot Pepper* (1933), *Strictly Dynamite* (1934) and *Hollywood Party* (1934). In the 1940s, Vélez's popularity peaked while appearing as Carmelita Fuentes in eight Mexican Spitfire films, a series created to capitalize on her fiery personality.

Nicknamed The Mexican Spitfire by the media, Vélez had a personal life that was as colourful as her screen persona. She had several highly-publicized romances with Hollywood actors and a stormy marriage with Johnny Weissmuller. Vélez died at age 36 in December 1944 of an intentional overdose of the barbiturate drug Seconal. Her death and the circumstances surrounding it were the subject of speculation and controversy.

Vélez was born in the city of San Luis Potosí in Mexico, the daughter of Jacobo Villalobos Reyes, a colonel in the armed forces of the dictator Porfirio Diaz, and his wife Josefina Vélez, an opera singer according to some sources, or vaudeville singer according to others. She was one of five children; she had three sisters: Mercedes, Reina and Josefina and a brother, Emigdio. The Villalobos were considered a prominent, financially comfortable family in San Luis Potosí. According to Vélez's second cousin, they lived in a



large home, and most of the male members received a college education.

At the age of 13, her parents sent her to study at Our Lady of the Lake (now Our Lady of the Lake University) in San Antonio, Texas, where Vélez learned to speak English and dance. She later admitted that she liked dance class, but was otherwise a poor student.

Vélez began her career in Mexican revues in the early 1920s. She initially performed under her paternal surname of Villalobos, but after her father returned home from the war (he did not die in combat as some sources state), he was outraged that his daughter had decided to become a stage performer. She chose her maternal surname Vélez as her stage name. Their mother introduced Vélez and her sister Josefina to the popular Spanish Mexican vedette María Conesa, "La Gatita Blanca". Vélez debuted in a show led by Conesa, where she sang "Oh Charley, My Boy" and danced the shimmy. In 1924, Aurelio Campos, a young pianist and friend of the Vélez sisters, recommended Vélez to stage producers Carlos Ortega and Manuel Castro. Ortega and Castro were preparing a season revue at the Regis Theatre, and

## Lupe Vélez

hired Vélez to join the company in March 1925. Later that year, Vélez starred in the revues Mexican Rataplan and *¡No lo tapes!* (both parodies of the Bataclan's shows in Paris). Her suggestive singing and provocative dancing was a hit with audiences, and she soon established herself as one of the main stars of vaudeville in Mexico. After a year and a half, Vélez left the revue after the manager refused to give her a raise. She then joined the Teatro Principal, but was fired after three months due to her "feisty attitude". Vélez was quickly hired by the Teatro Lirico, where her salary rose to 100 pesos a day.

Vélez, whose volatile and spirited personality and feuds with other performers were often covered by the Mexican press, also honed her ability for garnering publicity. Her most bitter rivals included the Mexican vedettes Celia Padiña, Celia Montalván, and Delia Magaña. Called La Niña Lupe because of her youth, Vélez soon established herself as one of the main stars of vaudeville in Mexico. Among her admirers were notable Mexican poets and writers like José Gorostiza and Renato Leduc.

In 1926, Frank A. Woodyard, an American who had seen Vélez perform, recommended her to stage director Richard Bennett (the father of actresses Joan and Constance Bennett). Bennett was looking for an actress to portray a Mexican cantina singer in his upcoming play *The Dove*. He sent Vélez a telegram inviting her to Los Angeles to appear in the play. Vélez had been planning to go to Cuba to perform, but quickly changed her plans and travelled to Los Angeles. However, upon arrival, she discovered that she had been replaced by another actress.

While in Los Angeles, she met the comedian Fanny Brice. Brice was taken with



Vélez and later said she had never met a more fascinating personality. She promoted Vélez's career as a dancer and recommended her to Flo Ziegfeld, who hired her to perform in New York City. While Vélez was preparing to leave Los Angeles, she received a call from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer producer Harry Rapf, who offered her a screen test. Producer and director Hal Roach saw Vélez's screen test and hired her for a small role in the comic Laurel and Hardy short *Sailors, Beware!*<sup>[15]</sup> She advanced to the ingenue role opposite Charley Chase in Roach's two-reel comedy *What Women Did for Me* (1927).

Later that year, she did a screen test for the upcoming Douglas Fairbanks full-length film *The Gaucho*. Fairbanks was impressed by Vélez and he quickly signed her to a contract. Upon its release in 1927, *The Gaucho* was a hit and critics were duly impressed with Vélez's ability to hold her own with Fairbanks, who was well-known for his spirited acting and impressive stunts.

## Lupe Vélez

Vélez made her second major film, *Stand and Deliver* (1928), directed by Cecil B. DeMille. That same year, she was named one of the WAMPAS Baby Stars. In 1929, Vélez appeared in *Lady of the Pavements*, directed by D. W. Griffith and *Where East Is East*, playing a young Chinese woman. In the Western film *Wolf Song*, directed by Victor Fleming, she appears with Gary Cooper. Because she was regularly cast as "exotic" or "ethnic" women that were volatile and hot-tempered,[17] gossip columnists took to referring to Vélez as "The Mexican Hurricane", "The Mexican Wildcat", "The Mexican Madcap", "Whoopee Lupe" and "The Hot Tamale".

By 1929, the film industry was transitioning from silents to sound films. Several stars of the era saw their careers abruptly end due to heavy accents or voices that recorded poorly. Studio executives predicted that Vélez's accent would probably hamper her ability to make the transition. That idea was dispelled after she appeared in her first all-talking picture in 1929, the *Rin Tin Tin* vehicle *Tiger Rose*.[19] The film was a hit and Vélez's sound career was established.

With the arrival of talkies, Vélez appeared in a series of Pre-Code films like *Hell Harbor* (directed by Henry King), *The Storm* (1930, directed by William Wyler), and the crime drama *East Is West*, with Edward G. Robinson (1930). In 1931, she appeared in her second film for Cecil B. DeMille, *Squaw Man*, with Warner Baxter, and in *Resurrection*, directed by Edwin Carewe. In 1932, Vélez filmed *The Cuban Love Song* (1931), with the popular singer Lawrence Tibbett. That same year, she had a supporting role in *Kongo* (a sound remake of *West of Zanzibar*), with Walter Huston. She also starred in Spanish-language versions of some of her movies produced by Universal Studios like *Resurrección* (1931, the Spanish version of *Resurrection*), and *Hombres en mi vida* (1932, the Spanish version of *Men in Her Life*). Vélez found her niche in comedy,



playing beautiful, volatile characters.

In February 1932, Vélez took a break from her film career and traveled to New York City where she was signed by Broadway impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. to take over the role of "Conchita" in the musical revue *Hot-Cha!*. The show also starred Bert Lahr, Eleanor Powell and Buddy Rogers.

In 1933, Vélez appeared in the films *The Half-Naked Truth* with Lee Tracy and *Hot Pepper*, with Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe. Later that year, she returned to Broadway where she starred with Jimmy Durante in the musical revue *Strike Me Pink*. She was reunited with Durante in three 1934 movie comedies, *Palooka*, *Strictly Dynamite* and, most famously, *Hollywood Party*. That same year, Vélez was cast as "Slim Girl" in *Laughing Boy* with Ramón Novarro. The film was quietly released and largely ignored. The few reviews it received panned the film, but praised Vélez's performance. She had more success with her brief appearance in the all-comedy-cast film *Hollywood Party*, where

## Lupe Vélez

she has an egg-breaking routine with Laurel and Hardy.

Although Vélez was a popular actress, MGM Studios did not renew her contract. Over the next few years, Vélez worked for various studios as a freelance actress; she also spent two years in England, where she filmed *The Morals of Marcus* and *Gypsy Melody* (both 1936). She returned to Los Angeles the following year, where she signed with RKO for the Wheeler & Woolsey comedy *High Flyers* (1937, featuring some of her celebrity impersonations).

Vélez's last Broadway performance was in the 1938 musical *You Never Know*, by Cole Porter. The show received poor reviews from critics, but received a large amount of publicity due to the feud between Vélez and fellow cast member Libby Holman. Holman was also irritated by the attention Vélez garnered from the show with her impressions of several actresses, including Gloria Swanson, Katharine Hepburn, and Shirley Temple. The feud came to a head during a performance in New Haven, Connecticut, after Vélez punched Holman between curtain calls and gave her a black eye. The feud effectively ended the show.

Upon her return to Mexico City in 1938 to star in her first Mexican film, Vélez was greeted by ten thousand fans. The film *La Zandunga* directed by Fernando de Fuentes, co-starring Mexican actor Arturo de Córdova, was a critical and financial success, and Vélez was slated to appear in four more Mexican films. She instead returned to Los Angeles and went back to work for RKO.

In 1939, Vélez was cast with Leon Errol and Donald Woods in *The Girl from Mexico*. Despite being a low-budget B picture, it was a hit with audiences and RKO re-teamed her with Errol and Woods for the sequel *Mexican Spitfire*. That film was also a success and led to a series of *Spitfire* films (eight in all). In



the series, Vélez portrays Carmelita Lindsay, a temperamental yet friendly Mexican singer married to Dennis "Denny" Lindsay (Woods), an elegant American advertising executive. The *Spitfire* films rejuvenated Vélez's career. Moreover, they were films in which a Latina headlined for eight movies straight – a true rarity.

Lupe Vélez was Hollywood's number-one Latina by this time, and producer-director Mark Sandrich asked her to headline a live stage show in Ensenada, Mexico. This was in preparation for the Hollywood Victory Caravan tour, and the March 22, 1942 show featured many of the Caravan participants: Laurel and Hardy, James Cagney, Desi Arnaz, Lucille Ball, and Joan Bennett, among others. Vélez emceed the show as well, addressing the audience of 2,500 Mexican servicemen in Spanish.

In addition to the Mexican *Spitfire* series, she was cast in other musical and comedy features for RKO, Universal Pictures, and Columbia Pictures. Some of these films were *Six Lessons from Madame La Zonga* (with Leon Errol, 1941), *Playmates* (with John Barrymore, 1941), and *Redhead from Manhattan* (1943). The last film has Vélez playing the dual role of a Broadway star and her visiting twin sister, and offers the viewer a rare chance to hear Lupe Vélez's actual speaking voice. She plays the visiting sister with her customary, exaggerated

## Lupe Vélez

Mexican accent, but plays the actress with her own, gently inflected voice, betraying only a trace of an accent.

In 1943, the final film in the Spitfire series, Mexican Spitfire's Blessed Event, was released. By that time, the mistaken-identity scripts and situations had been repeating themselves, and the novelty of the series had begun to wane,[26] but Vélez's energy and Errol's clowning never flagged.

Vélez co-starred with Eddie Albert in a 1943 romantic comedy, *Ladies' Day*, about an actress and a baseball player. In 1944, Vélez returned to Mexico to star in an adaptation of Émile Zola's novel *Nana*, which was well received. It would be her final film. After filming wrapped, Vélez returned to Los Angeles and began preparing for another stage role in New York.

Throughout her career, Vélez's onscreen persona of a hot-tempered, lusty "wild" woman was closely tied to her off-screen personality.[29] The press often referred to her by such names as "The Mexican Spitfire", "The Mexican It girl" and "The Mexican Kitten". Publicly promoted with the "Whoopee Lupe" persona that tried to define her, she dismissed the idea that she was uncontrollably wild. In an interview, she said:

What I attribute my success?, I think, simply, because I'm different. I'm not beautiful, but I have beautiful eyes and know exactly what to do with them. Although the public thinks that I'm a very wild girl. Actually I'm not. I'm just me, Lupe Vélez, simple and natural Lupe. If I'm happy, I dance and sing and acted like a child. And if something irritates me, I cry and sob. Someone called that 'personality'. The Personality is nothing more than behave with others as you really are. If I tried to look and act like Norma Talmadge, the great dramatic actress, or like Corinne Griffith, the aristocrat of the movies, or like Mary Pickford, the sweet and gentle Mary, I would be nothing more than an



imitation. I just want to be myself: Lupe Vélez.

Vélez's off-screen behavior blurred the line between her onscreen persona and her real personality. After her death, journalist Bob Thomas recalled that Vélez was a "lively part of the Hollywood scene" who wore loud clothing and made as much noise as possible. She attended boxing matches every Friday night at the Hollywood Legion Stadium and would stand on her ringside seat and scream at the fighters.

Vélez's temper and jealousy in her often tempestuous romantic relationships were well documented and became tabloid fodder, often overshadowing her career. Vélez was straightforward with the press and was regularly contacted by gossip columnists for stories about her romantic exploits. One such incident included Vélez chasing her lover Gary Cooper around with a knife during an argument and cutting him severely enough to require stitches. After their breakup, Vélez attempted to shoot Cooper while he boarded a train. During her marriage to actor Johnny Weissmuller, stories of their frequent physical fights were regularly reported in the press. Vélez reportedly inflicted scratches, bruises, and love-bites on

## Lupe Vélez



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Weissmuller during their fights and "passionate love-making".

Vélez often targeted fellow actresses whom she deemed rivals, professionally or otherwise, a habit which began back in her vaudeville days and continued in films. Vélez's image was that of a wild, highly sexualized woman who spoke her mind and was not considered a "lady", while fellow Mexican actress Dolores del Río projected herself as sensual, but elegant and restrained, often hailing from aristocratic roots. Vélez hated del Río and called her a "bird of bad omen". Del Río was terrified to meet her in public places. When this happened, Vélez was scathing and aggressive. Vélez openly mimicked del Río, ironically making fun of her elegance. Vélez also disliked Marlene Dietrich, whom she suspected of having an affair with Gary Cooper while filming Morocco in 1930. Her rivalries with Jetta Goudal, Lilyan Tashman and Libby Holman were well documented. In retaliation, Vélez would perform wicked impersonations of the women she disliked at Hollywood parties. She made these imitations part of her comic repertoire, exaggerating the facial and vocal mannerisms of Marlene Dietrich, Fanny Brice, Gloria Swanson, Katharine Hepburn, Simone Simon, and Shirley Temple.

Lupe Vélez was involved in several highly publicized and often stormy relationships. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, she was linked to actors Tom Mix, Charlie Chaplin, and Clark Gable. Her first long-term, high-profile relationship was with Gary Cooper. Vélez and Cooper met while filming 1929's *Wolf Song* and began a two-year relationship that was passionate and often stormy. When angered, Vélez was reported to have physically assaulted Cooper. Cooper eventually ended the relationship in mid-1931, at the behest of his mother Alice, who, after meeting her, strongly disapproved of Vélez. With plans to marry him gone, she spoke to the press in 1931: "I turned Cooper down because his parents didn't want me to marry him and because the studio thought it

would injure his career. Now it's over, I'm glad I feel so free ... I must be free. I know men too well they are all the same, no? If you love them they want to be boss. I will never have a boss." The rocky relationship had taken its toll on Cooper, who had lost 45 pounds and was suffering from nervous exhaustion. Paramount Pictures ordered him to take a vacation to recuperate and while he was boarding the train, Vélez showed up at the station and fired a pistol at him.

After her breakup with Cooper, Vélez began a short-lived relationship with actor John Gilbert. They began dating in late 1931 while Gilbert was separated from his third wife Ina Claire. Rumors of an engagement were fueled by the couple, but Gilbert ended the relationship in early 1932, and attempted to reconcile with Claire.

Shortly thereafter, Vélez met Tarzan actor Johnny Weissmuller while the two were in New York. They dated on and off when they returned to Los Angeles, while Vélez also dated actor Errol Flynn. On October 8, 1933, Vélez and Weissmuller were married in Las Vegas. There were reports of domestic violence and public fights. In July 1934, after ten months of marriage, Vélez filed for divorce citing "cruelty". She withdrew the petition a week later after reconciling with Weissmuller. On January 3, 1935, she filed for divorce a second time and was granted an interlocutory decree.<sup>[48]</sup> That decree was dismissed when the couple reconciled a month later. In August 1938, Vélez filed for divorce for a third time, again charging Weissmuller with cruelty. Their divorce was finalized in August 1939.



## Lupe Vélez



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After the divorce became final, Vélez began dating actor/ polo player Guinn "Big Boy" Williams in late 1940. They got engaged, but never married. In late 1941, she became involved with author Erich Maria Remarque. Actress Luise Rainer recalled that Remarque told her "with the greatest of glee" that he found Vélez's volatility wonderful when he recounted to her an occasion where Vélez became so angry with him that she took her shoe off and hit him with it. After dating Remarque, Vélez was linked to boxers Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey.

In 1943, Vélez began an affair with her La Zandunga co-star Arturo de Córdova. de Córdova had recently moved to Los Angeles after signing with Paramount. Despite the fact that De Córdova was married to Mexican actress Enna Arana with whom he had four children, Vélez granted an interview to gossip columnist Louella Parsons in September 1943 and announced that the two were engaged. She told Parsons that she planned to retire after marrying de Córdova to "cook ... and keep house". Vélez ended the engagement in early 1944, after de Córdova's wife refused to give him a divorce.

Vélez then met and began dating a struggling young Austrian actor named Harald Maresch, whose stage

name was Harald Ramond. In September 1944, she discovered she was pregnant with Ramond's child. She announced their engagement in late November 1944. On December 10, four days before her death, Vélez announced she had ended the engagement and kicked Ramond out of her home.

On the evening of December 13, 1944, Vélez dined with two friends, the silent-film star Estelle Taylor and Venita Oakie. In the early morning hours of December 14, Vélez retired to her bedroom, where she consumed 75 Seconal pills and a glass of brandy. Her secretary, Beulah Kinder, said that she found the actress's body on her bed later that morning. A suicide note addressed to Harald Ramond was found nearby. It read:

To Harald, May God forgive you and forgive me too, but I prefer to take my life away and our baby's before I bring him with shame or killing him. – Lupe.

On the back of the note, Vélez wrote:

How could you, Harald, fake such a great love for me and our baby when all the time, you didn't want us? I see no other way out for me, so goodbye, and good luck to you, Love Lupe.

In the book *From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture*, Rosa-Linda Fregoso wrote that Vélez was known for her defiance of contemporary moral convention, and that it seems unlikely that she could not have reconciled having a child out of wedlock. Fregoso believes that in the final year of her life, Vélez exhibited signs of extreme mania and depression. Fregoso goes on to speculate that Vélez's death may have been the result of an untreated mental illness such as bipolar disorder.



## THE DANCING MASTERS 1943

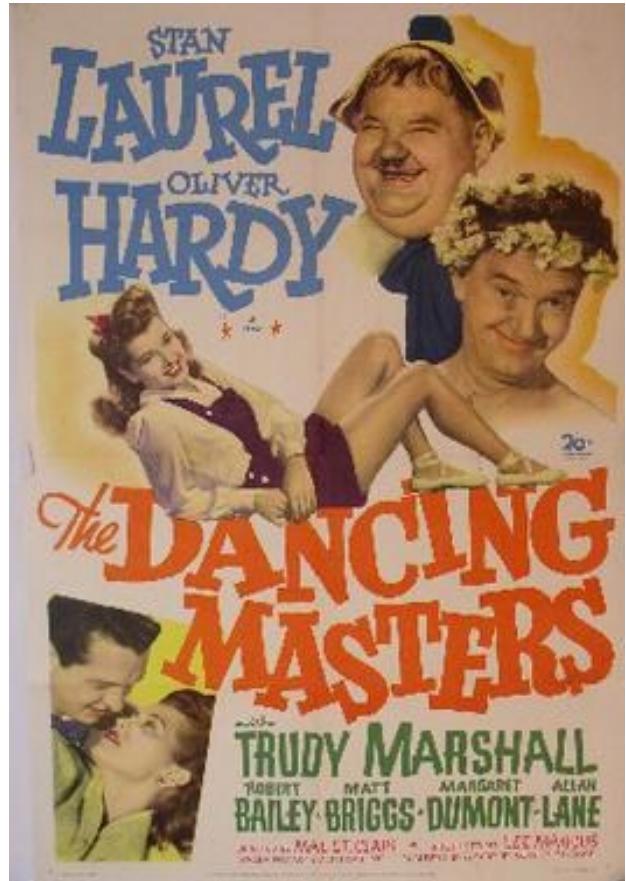
The Dancing Masters is a 1943 black and white American comedy film directed by Malcolm St. Clair, produced by 20th Century-Fox, and featuring Laurel and Hardy. A young Robert Mitchum has a small, uncredited role as a gangster posing as an insurance salesman.

Dancing instructors Laurel and Hardy inadvertently entangle themselves in a fraudulent insurance scheme devised by two impostor gangsters posing as insurance agents. Concurrently, the narrative unfolds around Grant Lawrence, a young inventor working on a revolutionary invisible ray device designed for jungle warfare during World War II. Trudy Harlan, Grant's romantic interest and one of Stan's dance pupils, extends an invitation to Grant and the duo to her residence for tea in her parents' absence.

The precarious situation escalates when Trudy's father, Wentworth Harlan, nearly discovers Laurel and Hardy in his home upon his return. However, the duo narrowly evades detection. The following day, the pair faces impending eviction from their dancing school due to unpaid rent, prompting them to devise a plan to secure funds. Complications ensue as Laurel suggests utilizing Hardy's savings to settle the debt, leading to a series of misadventures culminating in the accidental destruction of a prized antique clock.

Undeterred by setbacks, Laurel and Hardy assist Grant in promoting his invention by masquerading as the inventor and a foreign scientist, respectively. Despite an initial success, a mishap during a demonstration results in the device's destruction. However, the incident garners Grant the approval of Mr. Harlan, Trudy's father.

In a bid to secure finances, Hardy devises a scheme to orchestrate accidents involving Laurel, leveraging the fraudulent insurance document. However, their efforts backfire, leading to unintended



consequences. Meanwhile, Mr. Harlan confronts his friend's attempt to pilfer Grant's invention, ultimately deciding to endorse Grant's endeavors and finance his future inventions.

As Ollie's desperation mounts, he engineers another mishap for Stan, leading to a calamitous bus journey to the beach. A dog nibbles an ice cream cone, leading to cries of "MAD DOG!". Everyone jumps off the lower half of the double decker bus, including the driver. Stan & Ollie are alone on the top deck and know nothing until the driverless bus mounts an amusement park roller coaster and takes Ollie on a harrowing ride. The sequence culminates in Ollie's hospitalization with a broken leg, prompting a heartfelt visit from Trudy, Grant, and Stan.

## Cast

Stan Laurel as Stanley  
Oliver Hardy as Oliver  
Trudy Marshall as Trudy Harlan  
Robert Bailey as Grant Lawrence  
Matt Briggs as Wentworth Harlan

## THE DANCING MASTERS 1943

Margaret Dumont as Louise Harlan  
Allan Lane as George Worthing  
Emory Parnell as Featherstone

Prior to the release of *The Dancing Masters*, 20th Century Fox disclosed a directive to cease production of low-budget B pictures. As a consequence, *The Dancing Masters*, designated as the final B-picture on the schedule, underwent substantial editing, resulting in a notably abbreviated runtime of 63 minutes.

Despite its brevity, the film garnered significant acclaim upon its theatrical debut, emerging as Fox's third-highest-grossing production of the year. Its box office success secured a position as the twentieth highest-grossing film of 1943. The favorable reception prompted Fox to rescind its policy discontinuing B pictures, reinstating their production endeavors.

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## LEE MARCUS PRODUCER

Lee Marcus (December 7, 1893 – January 30, 1969), also known as Lee S. Marcus, was an American film producer of the 1930s and 1940s. During his fifteen-year career he produced over 85 films, most of them between 1934 and 1941 while he was at RKO Studios. Prior to his production career, Marcus worked for FBO and then RKO as a sales executive, reaching the level of vice president in both organizations. At RKO, he was head of production of the studio's b-films during the late 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. He was also responsible for producing what many consider to be the first film noir, 1940's *Stranger on the Third Floor*.

Marcus was born on December 7, 1893, in Buffalo, New York. His father was Albert L. Marcus. During World War I Marcus served with the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), and in 1918 was stationed in Vitry, France.

Growing up in Buffalo, Marcus was an avid theater-goer, attending the performances of many stock theater companies who passed through the city.

Early in his career, he worked for various film distributors. In 1921, he represented W.A.S. Douglas who directed a film for Jowitz Pictures, entitled *Watered Stock* (later retitled *Beware of the Law*), in the sale of its domestic and international rights.<sup>[4]</sup> By the beginning of 1924 he was working for Film Booking Offices of America (FBO). In July 1925 it was announced that he would be the head of sales at FBO, following the death of Harry Berman. In December 1925 Marcus penned an article for *The Film Daily* extolling the virtues of film shorts, and warning exhibitors against the dangers of overlooking the use of shorts. In 1927 Marcus was one of three film industry executives who formed a committee to produce a trailer meant to show the industry in a good light. The other members of the committee were Al Lichtman of United Artists and Edmund Grainger of 20th Century Fox. Also in 1927, Marcus continued his championing of the film short.



In June he announced a list of well-known writers who would be responsible for penning the shorts for FBO. The list included cartoonists Bill Nolan and Fontaine Fox, and short story writer H. C. Witwer. Marcus began reorganizing the sales management and districts within FBO in September 1927. First he promoted his future partner, Charles Rosenzweig, to head the district overseeing FBO's New York State district, and then completely reorganized the mid-west districts. In February 1928 FBO planned a jubilee in honor of the second anniversary of Joseph Kennedy's involvement as owner of FBO. As part of that event, Marcus took the rare step of giving authority to his sales force to directly approve contracts with exhibitors.

In June 1928 Marcus created a separate department to focus on selling film shorts. To lead the new division, Marcus put Cleve Adams in charge. Before the year was out Marcus was promoted to Vice President of FBO, and he predicted that 1929 would be the turn-

## LEE MARCUS PRODUCER

ing point of the motion picture industry, with the advent of sound. He felt that every theater in the country would be equipped to show the new talking pictures before the end of the decade.

With the integration of FBO into the new RKO Radio Pictures in 1929, Marcus became the executive vice-president for the new company. He, along with Joseph I. Schnitzer and William LeBaron, were the triumvirate which ran the new company. In February, Marcus announced that the new RCA Photophone process of sound on film was the direction the studio would go in, rather than the alternative of sound on disc. He stated, "Our synthesis of sound to action is all that we would want in accuracy, and certainly the exhibitor's projection and sound problem is, to our mind, a much simplified one with sound-on-film." With sound films becoming the norm, Marcus announced that RKO would still produce 40–50 per cent of their sound films with silent versions as well in 1929. Later in 1929 Marcus was one of the film executives on a committee representing film distributors in their negotiations with exhibition houses in trying to iron out a deal regarding splitting the revenue from movie showings.

Hiram S. Brown, head of RKO, named Marcus as his liaison officer, splitting his time between Hollywood and New York at the beginning of January 1932. He moved from being RKO's general sales manager. By April 1932 Marcus was a vice-president of RKO Radio Pictures, in charge of east coast production, as well as being the liaison between the distribution and production departments. Marcus, along with his partner, Charles Rosenzweig, began to organize a film distributing company in March 1933, intending to distribute 26 independent films during the 1933–34 season. In March 1933 Marcus became the assistant to Lou Brock, who was an associate producer at RKO. Marcus had been a sales executive for RKO. In March 1934 Marcus graduated from being an assistant producer to producing shorts, succeeding Brock. Bert Gilroy, who would eventually become a producer in his own right, was made Marcus' assistant. For his first season in

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his new role, he would handle the production of eight different short series for the studio, each short consisting a "two-reeler", for a total of 42 short films. Five of the series would consist of six shorts each: Edgar Kennedy Comedies, Blondes and Redheads, Headliners, Four Star Comedies, and Chick Chandlers. The other three series would each have 4 installments: Clark and McCulloughs, Ruth Ettings, and Radio Musicals. At his first national meeting for RKO, Marcus declared his intent to increase the quality of production for short films.

However, in addition to being the head of Radio's comedy shorts division, Marcus was given the title of associate producer for features by the end of the summer of 1934. Associate producers during this time were the supervising producers for film production at RKO, and were given on-screen credit as either an associate producer, or simply, producer. Marcus' first feature was Kentucky

## LEE MARCUS PRODUCER

Kernels, starring the comedy duo of Wheeler and Woolsey, and directed by George Stevens. He would work with the comedy team again the following year, once more with Stevens at the helm, on *The Nitwits*. The film's original title was *Melodicks*, which Marcus found repugnant. He offered \$50 to any employee of RKO who could come up with a better title. While he received numerous suggestions, he finally settled on the picture's final title, which had been a generic title around the RKO lot for years. In all, Marcus produced the final six films made by duo between 1934 and 1937, the others being *The Rainmakers* (1935), *Silly Billies* (1936), *Mummy's Boys* (1936), and *High Flyers* (1937).

Marcus would continue in his dual role at the studio for the 1935–36 season, scheduled to produce 36 shorts as well as three feature films. In May 1936, RKO exercised their option on Marcus, extending his contract. He was one of eight producers featured in RKO promotional features for the studio, heralding their upcoming film schedule. One of the first films Marcus produced in the new season was the next Wheeler and Woolsey comedy, *The Rainmakers*, this picture directed by Fred Guiol. That season also saw Marcus produce a "tone film", *Metropolitan Nocturne*, wherein there was no dialogue, instead a musical composition, in this instance the symphony of the same name by Louis Alter, was interpreted on the screen using all pantomime. Shortly after it was announced that the RKO film shorts program for 1936–37 would consist of 36 films, including 12 musicals, Marcus' contract was renewed by Sam Briskin, head of the studio. Before the end of the year Marcus was promoted to Briskin's assistant, wherein he was responsible for

overseeing the work of several producers' output, primarily handling the studio's B-film output. With this promotion Marcus finally relinquished his direct control over the RKO short film production. While overseeing other producers, Marcus continued to be the supervising producer on his own pictures during 1936 and 1937, such as *We're on the Jury* (1937), and *High Flyers* (1937), another Wheeler/Woolsey film. *High Flyers* was originally titled *The Kangaroos* (the name of the play on which it was based), and initially had a relatively unknown Betty Grable as the female lead. Grable was eventually replaced by Marjorie Lord in the picture, which was the final film for the duo of Wheeler and Woolsey, due to Robert Woolsey's death less than a year later. Marcus' work on the 1936 romantic comedy *Love on a Bet* was singled out for its production value.

At the studio's annual sales meeting in June 1937, Briskin announced that Marcus' position within the organization would remain unchanged for the upcoming 1937–38 season. Marcus was responsible for overseeing about half of the overall production for RKO. Briskin, rather than giving Marcus a budgeted amount for each picture, simply gave Marcus an overall lump sum with which he was responsible for completing all his filming assignments. This was an effort to do away with the practice of grading pictures as either "A" or "B" films. When Briskin departed RKO in the fall of 1937, Marcus retained his position, although there was some discussion of him replacing Berman. His name was on a short list, along with David O. Selznick, Mervyn LeRoy, Ben Kahane, and Jesse L. Lasky. When that didn't materialize, by the beginning of 1938 there was talk that he would split the head production activities of the studio with Pandro S. Berman, with Marcus in charge of B-films and Berman in charge of A-films. By the end of February 1938 that arrangement was made official by Leo Spitz, the new president of RKO, and in August Marcus was given a new three-year contract with the studio. In 1938 RKO created a new

## LEE MARCUS PRODUCER

type of motion picture, the exploitation film, in response to potential issues from the Hays commission and the National Legion of Decency about the number of crime dramas which were being produced by the studios. One of the first was *Smashing the Rackets* (1938), after which Marcus suggested two other exploitation films, *Clip Joint* and *Strip Tease*. Neither had either social significance or artistic value, but were conceived solely to drive viewers through the turnstiles. While they perfectly fit the bill of what Spitz was looking for, he passed on making either film. When Berman was replaced by Harry Eddington in December 1939 as the head of A-film production, Marcus remained in charge of RKO's B product. In 1940, Marcus produced what many consider the first film noir, *Stranger on the Third Floor*. Marcus remained in charge of the low-budget films at RKO until February 19, 1941, when studio head George J. Schaefer assumed total control of production, demoting both Eddington and Marcus. Marcus was relegated to being simply a studio producer. Marcus lasted three months in his new position, resigning from RKO at the end of April, 1941.

After leaving RKO, Marcus only worked on a single film during the remainder of 1941 and all of 1942. In early 1942 he was the associate producer on *The Spoilers* for Universal Pictures, which starred John Wayne, Randolph Scott, and Marlene Dietrich. Later that year, in August, Marcus signed a long-term contract to produce for 20th Century Fox. His first assignment at 20th Century was supposed to be *Bad Men of Texas*, written by Frank Gruber, however that project does not appear to have been completed. His first completed project for Fox was *Crash Dive*, which he finished producing after Milton Sperling was called up to join the United States Marine Corps in September 1942. This was followed by

*They Came to Blow Up America*, a spy thriller starring George Sanders, for which Marcus' production quality received positive reviews. In June 1943, Marcus resigned from 20th-Century, to work for Edward Small at his independent production company. The final two films he produced for Fox, *The Dancing Masters*, a Laurel and Hardy comedy, and *Roger Touhy, Gangster*, a gangster film with Preston Foster in the titular role, were not released until after his departure from the studio. His tenure with Small was short-lived, however, and he resigned in March 1944, due to an unspecified illness. At the end of 1944, he co-produced, with Bert Gilroy, a musical short for his old studio, RKO, *Songs of the Colleges*. In 1946 he rejoined forces with Small, this time along with Joseph Fields, in forming an independent production company. In 1946 Marcus produced a compilation film for Astor Pictures. Titled *Hollywood Bound*, it consisted of three film shorts featuring Betty Grable, which Marcus had produced in the 1930s. In early 1947, Marcus produced his final film, *Lost Honeymoon*, which was written by Fields. Starring Franchot Tone, Ann Richards, and Tom Conway, the picture was produced and released by Eagle-Lion Films.

On October 17, 1927, Marcus married Claire S. Warner. The two were married at the restaurant, Sherry's, before leaving on their three-week honeymoon in Bermuda. Marcus died on January 30, 1969, at the age of 75.



## MALCOLM ST. CLAIR (FILMMAKER)

Malcolm St. Clair (May 17, 1897 – June 1, 1952) was a Hollywood film director, writer, producer and actor.

St. Clair's film career spanned the silent and sound era during the Hollywood Golden Age. His work is characterized by a "dynamic visual style" evident in all the genres he treated.

The zenith of St. Clair's filmmaking occurred during the silent film era, demonstrating his flexibility in wielding the medium as a director of comedies. His films included slapstick for Sennett, outrageous gag routines with Keaton and sophisticated comic-romances for Paramount.

His performance as a director declined with the advent of sound, suffering from the increased censorship, and his difficulty adapting to a less mobile camera and studio editing of his work. His later films were often limited to B movie "family" comedies, such as the Jones Family series, Lum and Abner and the later Laurel and Hardy features.

Most of St. Clair's silent films are lost or have limited access in archives.

Malcolm St. Clair worked for a comedy movie producer Mack Sennett and Triangle -Keystone studio for five years "a period in which he established most of his basic film vocabulary he was to use throughout his entire career."

At age 17, St. Clair was hired by the Los Angeles Express to draw sports caricatures. A former associate at the Express, Lige Conley, was performing as a Keystone Kop for Mack Sennett, and introduced St. Clair to actor Owen Moore who co-starred with Mabel Normand. Moore convinced producer Sennett that St. Clair, whose only demonstrable skill was drawing, would excel as a "gag" writer for the studio.

Sennett, on this specious recommendation, engaged St. Clair, and was quickly disabused: the teen—"thin and spindly"—St. Clair was provided a bit part as a Keystone Kop. Thus began his acting apprenticeship,



performing often dangerous stunt work in the summer of 1915 during the filming of *My Valet* (1915), earning \$3 per day. His fellow comedians included veteran actors Charlie Chaplin, Eddie Cline and Al St. John. St. Clair left the Keystone Kops in early 1916 under the auspices of Mabel Normand, joining the company of players who performed comic roles at Triangle studios. St. Clair appeared in 13 of these Sennett films, nine of which he was credited.

His first credited film was *Dollars and Sense* (1916), in which he was cast as "the Englishman." His final role at Triangle was as "The Crown Prince" in *Yankee Doodle in Berlin* (1919) and its associated release *The Mack Sennett Bathing Beauties in Why Beaches Are Popular* (1919), in which represents a post-World War I comic "Teutonic heavy." Between 1919 and 1921 St. Clair graduated to directing and made about two dozen 2-reel comedies for Sennett, inventing some of the characteristic gag routines.

His first directing credit was *Rip & Stitch Tailors* (1919).

Near the end of his employment by Sennett, St. Clair co-directed two pictures with comic actor and filmmaker Buster Keaton: *The Goat* (1921) and *The Blacksmith* (1922). Keaton's approach to cinematic comedy integrated the "gag" scenes with the thematic elements of the story. St. Clair adopted Keaton's methods in his future films: "the humor in his work stems from well-constructed gags which are connected to each other and/or to the central plot line, a comic style refined while working with Buster

Keaton."

The 25-year-old Mal St. Clair directed The Tele-



## MALCOLM ST. CLAIR (FILMMAKER)

cluding that her “unpleasant assessment of St. Clair’s directing technique [was] highly inaccurate.” Dwyer adds that her own account “should correct any misconceptions caused by Brooks’ assertions.”

Despite professional friction, the director and the actress maintained a friendly relationship. In John Kobal’s book of interviews, *People Will Talk*, Brooks described St. Clair as “a charming man, a lovely man.” Around the time of the filming of *The Show Off*, St. Clair drew two caricatures of Brooks, both of which were published in magazines and newspapers.

St. Clair struggled to adapt to sound technology with the establishment of the new technology in 1930 in the United States. St. Clair’s performance as a director declined, suffering from the increased censorship, and his difficulty adapting to a less mobile camera and studio editing of his work. He made a handful of pictures during the early 1930s at various studios, including MGM, (Montana Moon, Remote Control), Paramount (Dangerous Nan McGrew), Universal (The Boudoir Diplomat), Fox (Olsen’s Night Out), and RKO (Goldie Gets Along).

St. Clair joined 20th Century-Fox in 1936 and served with the studio for 12 years. He directed an assortment of comedies and dramas, including the Jones Family series of domestic comedies and a Milton Berle feature. He also accepted freelance assignments, including two Lum and Abner features. Mal St. Clair is perhaps best known in his late career as the director of four Laurel and Hardy comedies, released by Fox between June 1943 and May 1945.

Fox closed its B unit in December 1944, leaving St. Clair inactive until 1948, when he directed two low-budget features for Fox release. In 1950, he wanted to direct Buster Keaton in a television series, but ill health prevented him from directing again.

Malcolm St. Clair died on June 1, 1952, at age 55.

St. Clair’s directing career ended as it had begun, with lesser known actors in unpretentious films with moderate budgets. The highlights of his career, the silent work at which he became so adept, lie forgotten.”



## NORBERT BRODINE CINEMATOGRAPHER.



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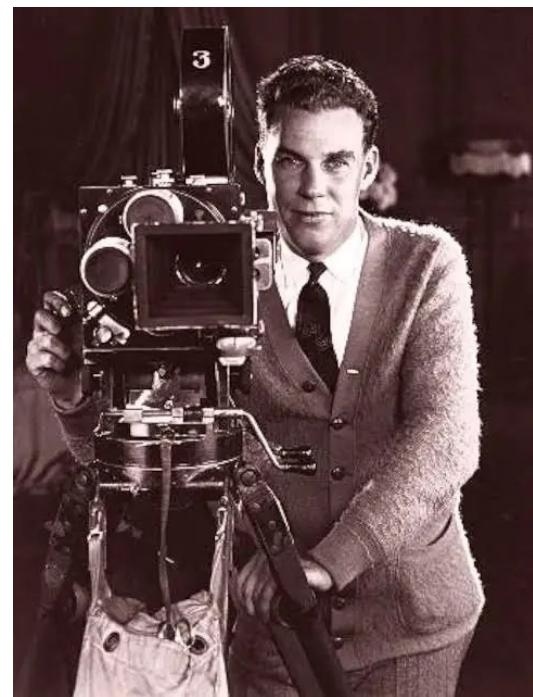
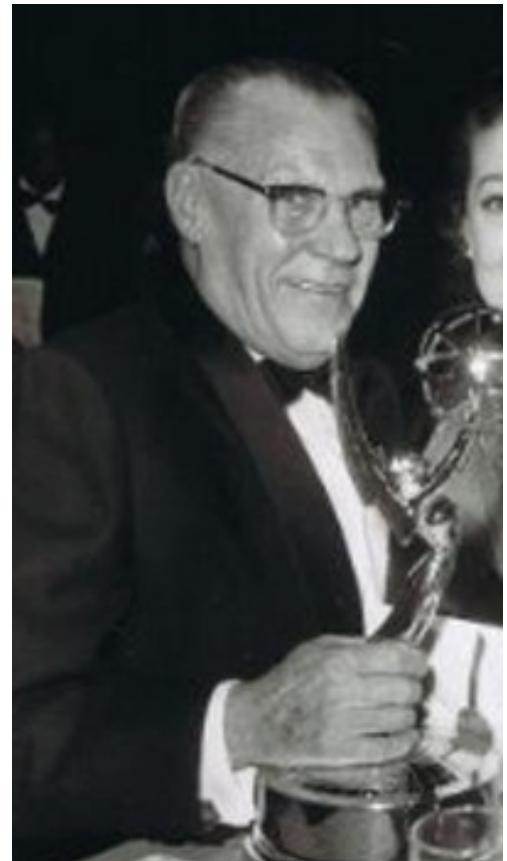
Nobert Brodine (December 16, 1896 – February 28, 1970), also credited as Norbert F. Brodin and Norbert Brodin, was an American film cinematographer. The Saint Joseph, Missouri-born cameraman worked on over 100 films in his career before retiring from film making in 1953, at which time he worked exclusively in television until 1960.

Brodine began his cameraman career working in a camera shop and later building on that experience in the Army Signal Corps, as an army photographer during World War I. After studying at Columbia University, he began working as a still photographer in Hollywood before moving to motion pictures in 1919. He began working exclusively for Hal Roach Studios in 1937 and then moved on to 20th Century Fox in 1943.

Brodine's films include the sought after lost film *A Blind Bargain* (1922) starring Lon Chaney, *This Thing Called Love* (1929), *The Death Kiss* (1932), *Counsellor at Law* (1933), *Deluge* (1933), *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), *Somewhere in the Night* (1946), *Boomerang* (1947), *Kiss of Death* (1947), *Thieves' Highway* (1949), and *5 Fingers* (1952).

Brodine shot several films with Laurel and Hardy at both Roach and Fox, such as *Pick a Star* (1937), *Swiss Miss* (1938), *The Dancing Masters* (1943), and *The Bullfighters* (1945). Brodine moved back to Hal Roach Studios to end his film career in the early 1950s. He worked in television from 1952 to 1960, and finished his career on the well-known television series *The Loretta Young Show*, for which he won a Primetime Emmy Award.

Brodine died at the age of 73, on February 28, 1970. He was buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, Los Angeles County, California.



## TRUDY MARSHALL

Gertrude Madeline "Trudy" Marshall (February 14, 1920 – May 23, 2004) was an American actress and model.

Marshall was born in Brooklyn, New York, the daughter of Madeline (née Brennan) and Frederick Marshall. She graduated from Floral Park Memorial High School.

A popular magazine cigarette girl during her modeling days for Harry Conover, Marshall was at different times "The Old Gold Girl", "The Chesterfield Girl", and "The Lucky Strike Girl".

Marshall was signed by 20th Century-Fox in 1942 and groomed in bit parts. In *The Dancing Masters* (1943) she was female lead to Laurel and Hardy. She next played a featured role in the World War II war drama *The Fighting Sullivans* (1944), the true story of a family that lost all five enlisted sons in the sinking of the USS *Juneau* off Guadalcanal in November 1942. Marshall played the surviving sister Genevieve.

Taking roles as a decorative ingenue for a time, Marshall later played the "other woman" in a few features. Semi-retired by the 1960s, she returned very infrequently to Hollywood. She appeared in the movie *Once Is Not Enough* (1975) with her daughter Deborah Raffin. Marshall was the hostess of her own radio and TV show in the 1980s in which she interviewed stars who attended special Hollywood events.

In 1944, Marshall married businessman Phillip Raffin, with whom she had three children, including model and actress Deborah Raffin. They remained together until his death in 1981.

On May 23, 2004, Marshall died at age 84 in her Century City, Los Angeles, home. She is interred in Hillside Memorial Park Cemetery.

### Partial filmography

*Secret Agent of Japan* (1942) - Minor Role (uncredited)  
*Footlight Serenade* (1942) - Secretary (uncredited)  
*Berlin Correspondent* (1942) - Minor Role (uncredited)  
*Orchestra Wives* (1942) - Irene (uncredited)  
*Girl Trouble* (1942) - Miss Kennedy  
*Thunder Birds* (1942) - Red Cross Nurse Trainee (uncredited)



*Springtime in the Rockies* (1942) - Marilyn Crothers (uncredited)

*Crash Dive* (1943) - Telephone Operator (uncredited)

*Coney Island* (1943) - Girl Friend (uncredited)  
*Heaven Can Wait* (1943) - Jane Van Cleve - Jack's Wife (uncredited)

*The Dancing Masters* (1943) - Trudy Harlan  
*The Fighting Sullivans* (1944) - Genevieve 'Gen' Sullivan

*The Purple Heart* (1944) - Mrs. Ross  
*Ladies of Washington* (1944) - Carol Northrup  
*Roger Touhy, Gangster* (1944) - Gloria

*Circumstantial Evidence* (1945) - Agnes Hannon  
*The Dolly Sisters* (1945) - Lenora Baldwin

*Sentimental Journey* (1946) - Ruth  
*Talk About a Lady* (1946) - Toni Marlowe  
*Dragonwyck* (1946) - Elizabeth Van Borden

*Boston Blackie and the Law* (1946) - Irene  
*Alias Mr. Twilight* (1946) - Corky Corcoran

*Too Many Winners* (1947) - Phyllis Hamilton  
*Joe Palooka in the Knockout* (1947) - Nina

*Key Witness* (1947) - Marge Andrews  
*Beyond Our Own* (1947) - Ann Rogers  
*The Fuller Brush Man* (1948) - Sara Franzen

*Disaster* (1948) - Jerry Hansford  
*Shamrock Hill* (1949) - Carol Judson  
*Barbary Pirate* (1949) - Anne Ridgeway  
*Mark of the Gorilla* (1950) - Barbara Bentley  
*I'll See You in My Dreams* (1951) - Frankie Mason (uncredited)

## ABBOTT AND COSTELLOS SEASIDE SHENANIGANS

The Flying Deuces



After five successful years running their modest travel company, "Abbott & Costello Tours," Bud Abbott and Lou Costello found themselves at a crossroads that would change their lives forever. The duo had built a respectable business arranging trips for middle-class families, but when Harold Pemberton, a wealthy businessman from the coast, approached them with an offer to purchase a fifty percent stake in his struggling seaside resort, "The Whispering Waves," they couldn't resist the opportunity.

"Lou, this is our chance to hit the big time," Abbott explained to his rotund partner as they sat in their cramped office above Murphy's Delicatessen. "We'll be part owners of a real resort, not just booking other people's vacations."

Costello, who had been nervously fidgeting with a rubber band, looked up with his characteristic wide-eyed expression. "But Bud, what do we know about running a resort? I can barely run to catch the bus without getting winded!"

"That's exactly why we'll be perfect for this," Abbott replied with his usual confidence. "We understand what regular people want from a vacation because we ARE regular people. Well, you're regular. I'm exceptional."

The Whispering Waves Resort sat on a pictur-

esque stretch of coastline, complete with a private beach, a main lodge, twenty guest cabins, and what Pemberton generously described as "rustic charm." What he failed to mention was that the rustic charm included peeling paint, creaky floorboards, and plumbing that seemed to have a mind of its own. The previous season had been a disaster, with only thirty percent occupancy and reviews that ranged from "disappointing" to "I want my money back and therapy for the trauma."

Upon their first inspection of the property, Costello stood on the main deck overlooking the ocean, breathing in the salt air with genuine enthusiasm. "Gee, Bud, this place could really be something special. Look at that view! And listen to those waves whispering!"

"Those aren't whispers, Lou," Abbott said dryly, pointing to a section of the roof where seagulls had taken up permanent residence. "That's the sound of our investment going down the drain. But don't worry, we're going to turn this place around."

Their first order of business was to assess what needed immediate attention. The resort's previous manager, a dour man named Grimsby who seemed to take personal offense at the concept of hospitality, had left behind a notebook filled with complaints and a maintenance log that read like a horror

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novel. The hot water system was temperamental, the dining room chairs wobbled, and the "scenic nature trail" had become so overgrown that three guests had gotten lost the previous summer and had to be rescued by the local fire department.

"We need to think outside the box," Abbott declared during their first official planning meeting in the resort's musty office. "What do people really want from a seaside vacation?"

Costello, who had been trying to fix a desk lamp by hitting it with a stapler, paused thoughtfully. "Well, they want to relax, have fun, eat good food, and maybe get a tan without looking like a lobster."

"Exactly! And we're going to give them all of that; plus, things they never knew they wanted. We're going to revolutionize the resort experience."

Their first innovation was what Abbott grandly termed "Interactive Dining Experiences." Instead of the traditional restaurant setup where guests simply ordered from a menu, they decided to create themed dinner events that would engage visitors in unique ways. The inaugural event was "Pirate Night," where guests would be encouraged to dress as buccaneers and participate in treasure hunts between courses.

Costello threw himself into the preparation with characteristic enthusiasm, spending an entire afternoon crafting a pirate costume complete with an eye patch, a plastic sword, and a parrot he had borrowed from Mrs. Henderson, the resort's elderly bookkeeper. The parrot, whose name was Captain Featherworth, had a vocabulary consisting primarily of stock market quotes and complaints about the weather.

"Ahoy, mateys!" Costello bellowed as the first guests arrived for Pirate Night, his eye patch slightly askew and his plastic sword already showing signs of wear. "Welcome to the most swashbuckling dining experience on the seven seas!"

The evening began promisingly enough. Guests seemed charmed by the decorations Abbott had hastily assembled, including fish-



ing nets draped from the ceiling, plastic skulls scattered around the dining room, and a makeshift treasure chest filled with chocolate coins. The trouble began when Costello, in his enthusiasm to stay in character, decided to demonstrate proper pirate sword fighting techniques using the serving utensils.

"You see, landlubbers," he announced, wielding a large serving spoon like a cutlass, "a true pirate must be ready to defend his treasure at all times!" He lunged forward dramatically, intending to engage in mock combat with Abbott, but instead caught his foot in one of the decorative fishing nets. The resulting tumble sent him crashing into the dessert table, which collapsed under his weight and launched three coconut cream pies directly into the faces of the Weatherby family from Connecticut.

Captain Featherworth, startled by the commotion, began squawking stock prices at an alarming volume while Mrs. Weatherby attempted to remove coconut cream from her hair. Her husband, a stern-looking man who clearly took his vacations very seriously, stood up with pie filling dripping from his glasses and declared, "This is not what we had in mind when we booked a relaxing seaside getaway!"

Abbott, ever the smooth talker, quickly stepped in to salvage the situation. "Ladies and gentlemen, what you've just witnessed is an authentic recreation of the famous Battle of Coconut Cove, where the notorious Pirate Pete Costello single-handedly defeated an entire dessert armada!"

Costello, still tangled in the fishing net and now decorated with various pie fillings, looked up hopefully. "Did I win?"

## ABBOTT AND COSTELLOS SEASIDE SHENANIGANS

The Flying Deuces

The evening concluded with the guests helping to clean up the dining room, which somehow transformed the disaster into a bonding experience. The Weatherby children declared it the best dinner they'd ever had, and several other families requested that future pirate nights include "more authentic battle reenactments."

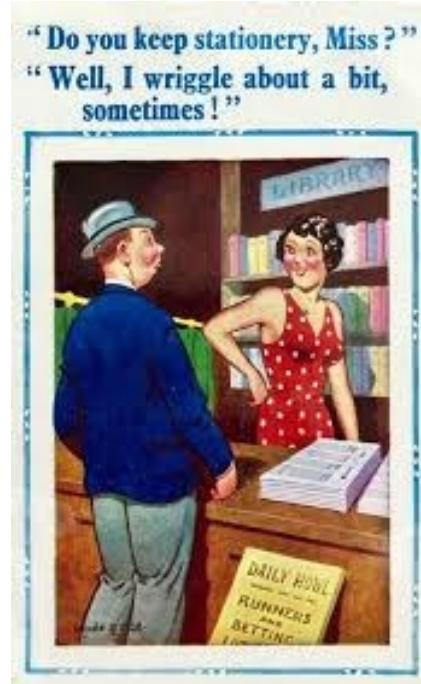
Emboldened by what they chose to interpret as success, Abbott and Costello moved on to their next innovation: "Adventure Excursions with a Twist." Traditional resorts offered standard activities like fishing trips, nature walks, and beach volleyball. The duo decided to elevate these experiences by adding elements of surprise and education.

Their first adventure excursion was billed as "The Great Seashell Safari," a guided beach walk that would teach guests about marine biology while they collected interesting specimens. Costello had spent several evenings reading library books about ocean life, filling a notebook with facts that he was eager to share.

"Did you know," he announced to the group of twelve guests assembled on the beach, "that some seashells are actually the homes of creatures called mollusks? It's like they're carrying their houses around with them, just like I do when I can't remember where I parked my car!"

The group, which included several families with children, seemed genuinely interested as Costello led them along the shoreline, pointing out different types of shells and sharing increasingly creative interpretations of the facts he had memorized. Abbott followed behind, carrying a large beach bag and occasionally correcting his partner's more imaginative scientific claims.

The trouble began when Costello spotted what he was certain was a rare and valuable conch shell partially buried in the sand near some rocks. "Ladies and gentlemen," he announced with great excite-



ment, "I believe we've discovered a genuine Atlantic Queen Conch, one of the most prized specimens in all of marine biology!"

He began digging enthusiastically, encouraging the children in the group to help him uncover this "treasure of the deep." What they actually uncovered was a large, very much alive hermit crab that had apparently been enjoying a peaceful afternoon nap. The crab, understandably startled by the sudden excavation, emerged from its shell with considerable indignation and immediately attached itself to Costello's thumb.

"Bud! Bud!" Costello yelped, dancing around the beach while waving his hand frantically. "The shell is fighting back! I think it's trying to adopt me!"

The children found this development absolutely delightful, following Costello as he performed an impromptu dance of panic along the water's edge. Abbott, meanwhile, was attempting to calm the adults while also trying to figure out how to safely remove an agitated hermit crab from his partner's digit.

"This is all part of the educational experience," Abbott explained to Mrs. Patterson, whose twin boys were now chanting "Crab dance! Crab dance!" and imitating Costello's frantic movements. "You're witnessing firsthand the defensive behaviours of coastal crustaceans."

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The situation was eventually resolved when old Mr. Kowalski, a retired fisherman among the guests, calmly approached Costello and gently coaxed the hermit crab to release its grip by offering it a piece of his sandwich. The crab, apparently satisfied with this tribute, scuttled back to its shell and disappeared into the sand.

"Well," Costello said, examining his slightly bruised thumb, "I guess that's why they call it a hermit crab. It doesn't like visitors!"

The Great Seashell Safari concluded with the group having collected an impressive array of shells, several interesting pieces of sea glass, and what young Tommy Patterson insisted was a "pirate's tooth" but was more likely a worn piece of driftwood. More importantly, the families declared it one of the most entertaining and educational activities they had ever experienced at a resort.

Word of Abbott and Costello's unique approach to hospitality began to spread, and bookings started to increase. Encouraged by their growing reputation, they decided to tackle the resort's most challenging problem: the evening entertainment program. Previous attempts at organized activities had been limited to bingo games hosted by the perpetually grumpy Grimsby and occasional movie screenings in the main lodge, where the ancient projector had a tendency to overheat and fill the room with smoke.

"What people really want," Abbott declared, "is to be part of the show, not just watch it. We need to create interactive entertainment that brings out everyone's hidden talents."

Their solution was "Talent Night Extravaganza," a weekly event where guests would be encouraged to showcase their abilities in a supportive, fun environment. To kick off the program, Abbott and Costello decided to demonstrate their own comedic talents with a classic routine, followed by an open invitation for guests to take the stage.

The main lodge was transformed for the occasion, with chairs arranged theatre-style and a makeshift stage area marked off with rope

lights that Costello had somewhat haphazardly strung around the room. A microphone system borrowed from the local church provided amplification, though it had a tendency to pick up radio signals from a nearby trucker's CB channel.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Abbott announced as the evening began, "welcome to the first annual Whispering Waves Talent Night Extravaganza! Tonight, you'll witness amazing feats of skill, creativity, and courage as your fellow guests step into the spotlight!"

The duo launched into their famous "Who's on First?" routine, with Costello playing the confused baseball fan and Abbott as the increasingly exasperated manager trying to explain the team roster. The audience, many of whom had never seen the routine performed live, was thoroughly entertained, especially when the microphone began picking up conversations between truckers discussing traffic conditions on the interstate.

"So who's playing first base?" Costello asked, his confusion genuine as a trucker's voice crackled through the speakers announcing, "Breaker one-nine, we got a smokey at mile marker forty-two."

Abbott, maintaining his composure despite the electronic interference, continued the routine while occasionally having to speak over CB chatter about weather conditions and truck stop recommendations. The audience found this unexpected addition hilarious, and several guests later requested that they keep the "radio commentary" as a permanent feature.

Following their opening act, the talent showcase began in earnest. Mrs. Chen, a retired piano teacher from San Francisco, performed a beautiful rendition of "Clair de Lune" on the lodge's old upright piano, which had been tuned for the occasion and only occasionally produced mysterious buzzing sounds. The Kowalski grandchildren presented a synchronized swimming routine that they had adapted for dry land, complete with elaborate arm movements and dramatic poses that left the audience both impressed and slightly confused.

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The evening's most memorable performance came from Mr. Henderson, Mrs. Henderson's husband and Captain Featherworth's primary caretaker. He had decided to present a ventriloquist act featuring the opinionated parrot, apparently unaware that ventriloquism typically involves the performer providing both voices while keeping one mouth closed.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Henderson announced, holding Captain Featherworth on his arm. "My partner and I would like to entertain you with some witty banter and perhaps a song."

What followed was a surreal conversation between Mr. Henderson and Captain Featherworth, who seemed to have his own agenda for the evening. While Mr. Henderson attempted to deliver prepared jokes about resort life, the parrot interjected with stock market updates and complaints about the quality of his birdseed.

"So, Captain Featherworth," Mr. Henderson said, trying to steer the act back on track, "what do you think of our beautiful resort?"

"Dow Jones down three points," Captain Featherworth squawked. "Recommend diversified portfolio. Also, need better crackers."

The audience was delighted by this unexpected comedy duo, and Captain Featherworth seemed to enjoy the attention, eventually launching into what might have been an attempt at singing "Anchors Aweigh," though it sounded more like a weather report delivered in musical notation.

The success of Talent Night Extravaganza led to its becoming a weekly tradition, with guests often extending their stays specifically to participate in or attend the shows. Abbott and Costello found themselves not just resort owners but also talent coordinators, helping nervous performers overcome stage fright and occasionally serving as backup dancers for particularly ambitious acts.

Their next major innovation addressed the resort's recreational facilities, which consisted primarily of a small swimming pool that

had seen better decades and a tennis court where the net had been repaired so many times it resembled a fishing net more than sporting equipment. Rather than simply renovating these standard amenities, the duo decided to create entirely new forms of recreation that would set their resort apart from the competition.

"People come to the beach to play in the water," Abbott reasoned, "but they're limited by things like tides, waves, and the occasional jellyfish. What if we could give them a water experience that was completely under our control?"

Their solution was the "Aquatic Obstacle Course," a elaborate system of floating platforms, ropes, and challenges that would transform the resort's modest swimming pool into an adventure playground. Costello threw himself into the construction project with enthusiasm, though his understanding of engineering principles was somewhat limited.

"See, Bud," he explained while attempting to anchor a floating platform with what appeared to be a boat anchor he had found in the resort's storage shed, "the key is to make it challenging but safe. Like life, but with more pool noodles."

The obstacle course featured a series of increasingly creative challenges. Participants would begin by crossing a bridge made of floating pool noodles, then navigate through a maze of hanging ribbons while balancing on a narrow beam, and finally attempt to ring a bell mounted on a pole in the center of the pool. The course was designed to be completed in under two minutes, though Costello's test run had taken nearly fifteen minutes and resulted in him getting tangled in the ribbon maze while the floating bridge slowly drifted toward the pool's filtration system.

The grand opening of the Aquatic Obstacle Course drew an enthusiastic crowd of guests, ranging from adventurous children to competitive adults who saw it as a chance to prove their athletic prowess. Abbott served as the official timekeeper and announcer, while Costello positioned himself as a "safety coordinator," though his primary qualification for this role seemed to be his extensive experience with pool-related

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mishaps.

The first participant was young Sarah Martinez, a ten-year-old who approached the course with the fearless confidence that only children possess. She navigated the floating bridge with ease, danced through the ribbon maze like a gymnast, and was making excellent time toward the bell when disaster struck in the form of Costello's well-intentioned assistance.

"You're doing great, Sarah!" he called out, leaning over the pool's edge to offer encouragement. "Just remember to keep your balance and—" His words were cut short as he lost his own balance and tumbled into the pool with a tremendous splash, creating a wave that sent Sarah's floating platform spinning like a carnival ride.

Rather than being upset by this unexpected development, Sarah burst into laughter and declared it "the best part of the whole course!" The other children immediately began requesting that the "surprise splash" be made a permanent feature of the obstacle course.

Abbott, watching his partner surface with pool noodles draped around his neck like a bizarre lei, quickly adapted to the situation. "Ladies and gentlemen, what you've just witnessed is the course's secret final challenge: the Tsunami Surprise! Participants must maintain their composure even when faced with unexpected aquatic events!"

The Aquatic Obstacle Course became one of the resort's most popular attractions, though it required constant maintenance due to Costello's tendency to accidentally modify the course layout during his frequent unplanned entries into the pool. Guests began timing their attempts to coincide with his safety inspections, hoping to experience the legendary Tsunami Surprise.

As summer progressed and the resort's reputation grew, Abbott and Costello found themselves facing a new challenge: success. Bookings were at capacity, guests were extending their stays, and travel magazines were beginning to take notice of the unique entertainment offerings at Whispering Waves. However, with success came increased expectations and the pressure to continually innovate.

Their most ambitious project was inspired by a conversation with the Weatherby family, who had returned for a second visit specifically to experience more of what they now called "Abbott and Costello magic." Mrs. Weatherby mentioned that while she loved all the activities, she wished there was something that would help her relax and unwind from the excitement.

"What we need," Abbott announced during one of their evening planning sessions, "is a spa experience. But not just any spa experience—a spa experience that reflects our unique approach to hospitality."

Costello, who had been researching spa treatments by reading magazines in the resort's small library, was immediately enthusiastic. "I've been learning about all sorts of treatments, Bud! There's something called aromatherapy, where they use special smells to make you feel better. And hydrotherapy, which is like taking a bath but fancier. And there's even something called a mud bath, though I can't figure out why anyone would want to get dirty on purpose when they're trying to get clean."

The "Whispering Waves Wellness Retreat" was designed to offer guests a full range of spa services with the duo's characteristic twist. They converted one of the unused guest cabins into a treatment center, complete with massage tables borrowed from the local physical therapy clinic, aromatherapy diffusers that Costello had assembled from various household items, and a mud bath facility that was essentially a large wooden tub filled with what Abbott optimistically described as "therapeutic coastal clay."

The therapeutic coastal clay was actually mud from a nearby tidal flat that Costello had harvested during low tide, convinced that its proximity to the ocean imbued it with special healing properties. He had spent an entire afternoon collecting buckets of the stuff, returning to the resort covered head to toe in mud and proudly announcing that he had "become one with the therapeutic process."

The spa's grand opening featured a demonstration of their signature treatment: the "Serenity Soak and Sensory Journey." Guests would begin

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with a relaxing mud bath while listening to what Abbott called "nature's symphony"—a collection of ocean sounds, bird calls, and what Costello insisted were "whale songs" but were actually recordings of him humming in the shower.

Mrs. Patterson volunteered to be the first client, settling into the wooden tub filled with Costello's carefully harvested mud while Abbott explained the treatment's benefits. "The minerals in this coastal clay will rejuvenate your skin while the aromatherapy blend of sea salt and lavender calms your mind," he said, activating one of Costello's homemade diffusers.

The aromatherapy diffuser, which Costello had constructed using a humidifier, a collection of essential oils, and what appeared to be parts from an old coffee maker, began producing a fragrant mist that smelled like a combination of ocean breeze and someone's grandmother's garden. The effect was actually quite pleasant, and Mrs. Patterson settled back with a contented sigh.

The problems began when Costello, eager to enhance the sensory experience, decided to add what he called "therapeutic sound vibrations" by playing his collection of whale songs at a volume he deemed "immersive." The whale songs, combined with the humming of the aromatherapy diffuser and the bubbling of the mud bath, created a cacophony that was more overwhelming than relaxing.

"Is this supposed to sound like a construction site underwater?" Mrs. Patterson asked, raising her voice to be heard over the audio assault.

Before Abbott could respond, the aromatherapy diffuser began making alarming gurgling sounds and producing clouds of steam that smelled less like lavender and more like burnt coffee. Costello, attempting to adjust the settings, accidentally knocked over a bottle of eucalyptus oil, which spilled directly into the mud bath.

The eucalyptus oil, designed to be used in tiny amounts, created an intense menthol sensation that left Mrs. Patterson feeling like she was soaking in a giant cough drop. Her eyes began watering, and she started making sounds that were somewhere between gasping and laughing.

"This is certainly... invigorating," she managed to say between breaths, though whether from the eucalyptus fumes or the absurdity of the situation was unclear.

Abbott quickly shut off the whale songs and opened all the windows while Costello frantically tried to dilute the eucalyptus oil by adding more mud to the bath. The additional mud, however, had not been properly strained and contained several small shells and what appeared to be a very confused hermit crab.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Patterson," Costello said, attempting to fish the hermit crab out of the bath with a pool skimmer. "This is just part of the authentic coastal experience! You're getting a real taste of marine life!"

Mrs. Patterson, now thoroughly covered in eucalyptus-scented mud and sharing her bath with a hermit crab, began laughing so hard that she could barely speak. "This is definitely not what I expected from a spa treatment, but it's certainly memorable!"

The Serenity Soak and Sensory Journey was quickly redesigned to be less sensory and more focused on simple relaxation, though the hermit crab incident became part of resort folklore. Mrs. Patterson later wrote a review describing it as "the most entertaining spa experience of my life" and specifically requested the same treatment during her next visit.

As autumn approached and the summer season began to wind down, Abbott and Costello reflected on their first year as resort owners. The Whispering Waves had been transformed from a struggling property into a destination that guests actively sought out for its unique blend of relaxation and entertainment. Their unconventional approach to hospitality had created a loyal following of

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The Flying Dunes

visitors who returned not despite the occasional mishaps, but because of them.

"You know, Lou," Abbott said as they sat on the main deck watching the sunset paint the ocean in shades of orange and pink, "I think we've really found our calling here."

Costello, who was feeding crackers to Captain Featherworth while Mrs. Henderson worked on her evening crossword puzzle nearby, nodded thoughtfully. "It's funny, Bud. We started out just trying to give people a good vacation, but I think we ended up giving them something better—stories they'll tell for the rest of their lives."

The success of their first season had not gone unnoticed by the local business community. The mayor had visited twice, praising their contribution to the area's tourism industry, and several other resort owners had quietly inquired about their methods. Travel writers had begun including Whispering Waves in articles about "unique vacation experiences," and reservations for the following summer were already filling up.

However, success brought new challenges. The resort's infrastructure, which had been adequate for their modest beginnings, was showing signs of strain under increased usage. The plumbing system, always temperamental, had begun producing sounds that Costello described as "like a whale with indigestion," and the electrical system occasionally caused the lights to flicker in patterns that guests had started interpreting as morse code messages.

"We need to think about expansion," Abbott said during one of their planning meetings. "Not just fixing what we have, but adding new facilities that can handle more guests while maintaining the personal touch that makes this place special."

Their expansion plans were ambitious but practical. They would add six new guest cabins, expand the dining room, upgrade the kitchen facilities, and create a proper spa building to replace the converted cabin that had served as their wellness center. Most im-

portantly, they would build a dedicated entertainment venue that could accommodate their growing roster of activities and performances.

The construction project became an adventure in itself, with Costello serving as an unofficial supervisor whose enthusiasm often exceeded his expertise. He had strong opinions about everything from the placement of windows to the color of the roof shingles, and his suggestions were always creative, if not always practical.

"Bud, what if we put a slide from the second floor of the new cabins directly into the pool?" he suggested while reviewing the architectural plans. "Guests could wake up and slide right into their morning swim!"

"Lou, that would require guests to sleep in their bathing suits and would probably violate several building codes," Abbott replied patiently. "Let's focus on making sure the cabins have working plumbing before we add water slides."

The construction crew, led by a patient foreman named Mike Sullivan who had worked on resort projects throughout the region, quickly learned to appreciate Costello's unconventional input while diplomatically steering him toward more feasible suggestions. Sullivan later admitted that working on the Whispering Waves expansion was unlike any project he had ever undertaken, but also one of the most enjoyable.

During the construction phase, the resort remained open with reduced capacity, and guests seemed to enjoy watching the progress and occasionally offering their own suggestions. The Martinez family, returning for their third visit, brought their children to observe the construction process, turning it into an educational experience about building and engineering.

"Mr. Costello," young Sarah Martinez asked during one of her daily construction site visits, "why are they putting so many pipes under the new spa building?"

Costello, wearing a hard hat that was slightly

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The Flying Deuces

too large for his head and carrying a clipboard covered with his own incomprehensible notes, was delighted to explain. "Well, Sarah, those pipes are like the resort's circulatory system. They carry water and heat to all the different rooms, just like your blood carries oxygen to all parts of your body. Except if your blood was hot water and your body was a building, which would be very strange and probably uncomfortable."

Sarah considered this explanation seriously before asking, "But what happens if the pipes get clogged, like when I get a stuffy nose?"

"That's a very good question," Costello replied, making a note on his clipboard. "I suppose we'd need to give the building a giant tissue, or maybe some building-sized decongestant. I should probably ask Mike about that."

These conversations with guests, particularly the children, often led to genuine improvements in the resort's design. Sarah's question about pipe maintenance actually prompted Sullivan to install additional access panels that would make future repairs much easier, and her suggestion about having windows that could open wider in the spa rooms led to a ventilation system that proved invaluable during the busy summer months.

The new entertainment venue, which they decided to call "The Lighthouse Theater" despite being nowhere near an actual lighthouse, was designed to accommodate everything from intimate musical performances to large-scale talent shows. Costello insisted on including a trap door in the stage, convinced that it would add dramatic possibilities to future performances, though Abbott worried about the liability implications.

"What if someone falls through it by accident?" Abbott asked during a design meeting.

"Then it becomes part of the show!" Costello replied cheerfully. "Besides, we'll put a big soft cushion underneath, and maybe some of those pool noodles for extra safety."

The trap door was ultimately included in the

design, though with extensive safety features and a policy that it could only be used during rehearsed performances with proper supervision. It would later become the signature feature of several memorable shows, including a magic act where the magician accidentally made himself disappear and had to be helped out of the basement by the maintenance staff.

As winter approached and the construction neared completion, Abbott and Costello began planning their programming for the following season. They had learned valuable lessons from their first year and wanted to build on their successes while addressing some of the challenges they had encountered.

"We need to be more organized," Abbott said, reviewing a notebook filled with guest feedback and suggestions. "People love the spontaneity, but they also want to know that certain activities will be available when they want them."

They developed a structured schedule that balanced planned activities with opportunities for improvisation. Morning would feature fitness and wellness programs, afternoons would offer adventure excursions and recreational activities, and evenings would alternate between dining experiences, entertainment shows, and relaxation programs.

The spa services were redesigned based on their hard-won experience, with treatments that emphasized relaxation and rejuvenation while minimizing the risk of hermit crab encounters. Costello had become surprisingly knowledgeable about massage techniques and aromatherapy, though his enthusiasm sometimes led to creative interpretations of traditional practices.

"I've been reading about hot stone massage," he announced during one of their planning sessions. "But instead of just putting hot stones on people's backs, what if we heated up some of those smooth beach stones and let people hold them while they watch the sunset? It would be like a porta-

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ble spa experience!"

This idea actually proved quite popular during their test runs, with guests enjoying the warmth of the heated stones while sitting on the beach during cooler evenings. The "Sunset Stone Meditation" became one of their signature wellness offerings, combining the therapeutic benefits of heat therapy with the natural beauty of their coastal location.

Their dining program was expanded to include cooking classes where guests could learn to prepare some of the resort's signature dishes. Costello, who had developed a surprising talent for seafood preparation during his time at the resort, became the primary instructor for these sessions, though his teaching style was unconventional.

"The secret to perfect clam chowder," he would explain to his students, "is to talk to the clams while you're cooking them. Not because they can hear you, but because it helps you pay attention to what you're doing. Plus, if you're talking to the clams, you're not talking to the other ingredients, and they can concentrate on blending together properly."

These cooking classes became some of the resort's most requested activities, with guests often extending their stays specifically to participate in multiple sessions. Costello's unique teaching methods, combined with genuinely delicious results, created an experience that was both educational and entertaining.

The second season at Whispering Waves opened with a celebration that reflected everything Abbott and Costello had learned about creating memorable experiences. The grand reopening featured tours of the new facilities, demonstrations of expanded services, and a special performance in The Lighthouse Theater that showcased the talents of returning guests alongside the duo's own comedic routines.

Captain Featherworth, now considered the resort's unofficial mascot, had been given his own perch in the main lodge and had learned to greet guests with a repertoire that included "Welcome to Whispering Waves" alongside

his usual stock market updates. Mrs. Henderson had taught him several new phrases, though his pronunciation remained uniquely his own.

"Good morning, valued investors—I mean, valued guests!" Captain Featherworth would squawk as families entered the lobby.

"Weather forecast calls for fun with a chance of laughter!"

The success of their second season exceeded even Abbott and Costello's optimistic projections. The resort achieved full capacity for most of the summer, with a waiting list for their most popular activities. More importantly, they had created a community of guests who returned year after year, bringing friends and family members to share in the unique experience they had discovered.

The duo's approach to hospitality had evolved from simply providing entertainment to creating an environment where guests felt comfortable being themselves, trying new things, and connecting with others in ways that traditional resorts rarely facilitated. The occasional mishaps and unexpected developments that had initially worried them had become part of the resort's charm, creating stories that guests shared long after their vacations ended.

"You know what I think our real success is?" Costello asked Abbott as they watched a group of children teaching Captain Featherworth a new song while their parents planned the next day's activities with other families they had met at the resort.

"What's that, Lou?"

"We didn't just create a place for people to visit. We created a place where people want to belong."

Abbott looked around the main lodge, where guests of all ages were engaged in various activities, from card games to impromptu music sessions to animated discussions about the next day's adventure excursions. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with the kind of genuine community feeling that couldn't be manufactured or programmed.

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"I think you're right," Abbott said. "And the best part is, we're just getting started."

As their second successful season drew to a close, Abbott and Costello began planning not just for the following year, but for the long-term future of Whispering Waves. They had proven that their unconventional approach to hospitality could create something truly special, and they were eager to continue innovating and expanding while maintaining the personal touch that made their resort unique.

The travel industry had taken notice of their success, with several major publications featuring articles about the "Abbott and Costello phenomenon" and the growing trend toward experiential travel that emphasized authentic connections and memorable experiences over luxury amenities and formal service.

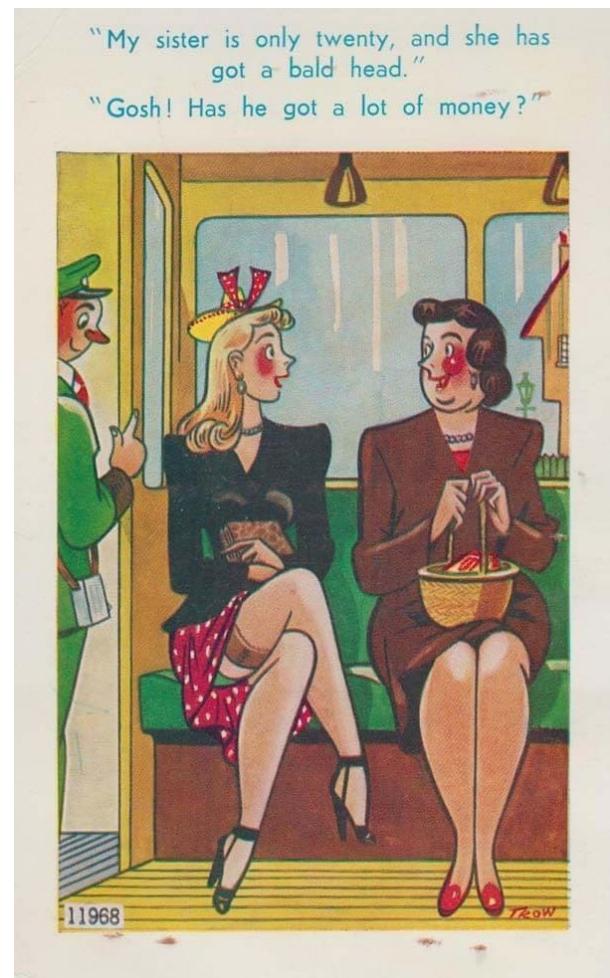
However, the duo remained focused on their core mission: creating a place where people could relax, have fun, and make lasting memories. Whether through elaborate themed dinners that occasionally ended in food fights, adventure excursions that included unexpected wildlife encounters, or spa treatments that might involve the occasional hermit crab, Abbott and Costello had discovered that the secret to hospitality wasn't perfection—it was authenticity, creativity, and the willingness to laugh at yourself when things didn't go according to plan.

Their journey from travel agents to resort owners had been filled with challenges, surprises, and more than a few disasters that somehow transformed into triumphs. But most importantly, it had been an adventure that brought out the best in both of them and created something that neither could have achieved alone.

As they looked toward the future, Abbott and Costello knew that whatever new ideas they tried, whatever innovations they implemented, and whatever unexpected situations they encountered, they would face them with the same combination of optimism, creativity, and humor that had made Whispering

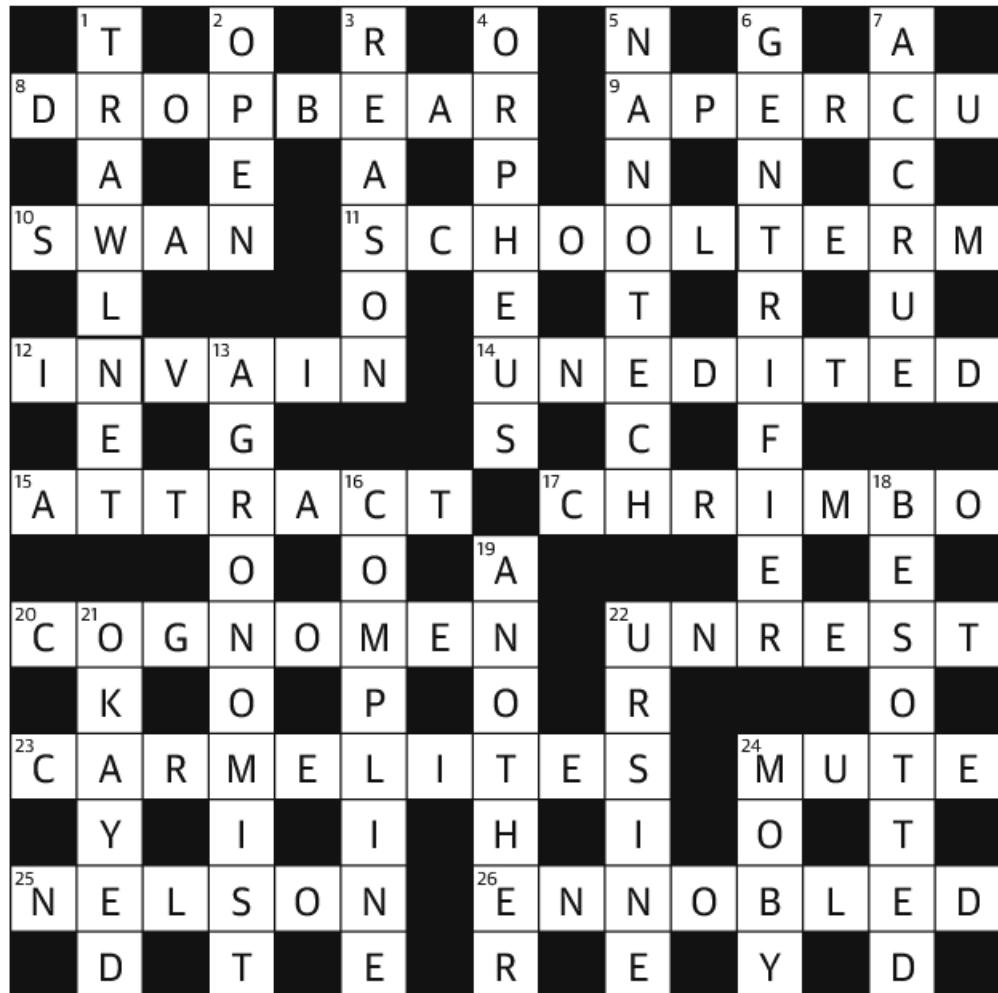
Waves a destination unlike any other.

The resort had become more than a business venture—it was a testament to the power of thinking differently, embracing imperfection, and never losing sight of the simple goal of making people happy. And in a world that often took itself too seriously, Abbott and Costello had created a place where laughter was not just welcome, but essential.



## JANUARY 2026 CROSSWORD ANSWERS

The Flying Deuces



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The Flying Deuces

# CLASSIC COMEDY TEAMS COLLECTION DVD. REVIEW

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## THE THREE STOOGES DOUBLE FEATURE

Available sundry through Saturday! Larry, Shemp and Moe are sundries salesmen in the comedy.

Western GOLD RAIDERS. Larry, Curly, Moe...uh-oh! They're janitors at an all-girl college in the romp MEET THE BARON, also starring Jimmy Durante.

## ABBOTT AND COSTELLO DOUBLE FEATURE

You ought to be in pictures: Tinseltown barbers Bud and Lou take their cut as aspiring talent agents in ABBOTT AND COSTELLO IN HOLLYWOOD.

Sand and silliness. The guys face an evil potentate with hypnotic powers when they're LOST IN A HAREM.

LAUREL AND HARDY DOUBLE FEATURE The army's loss is our gain. Rejected by Uncle Sam, the fellas become AIR RAID WARDENS.

Soup and nuts. It's a comedy banquet when Stan and Ollie play household servants in NOTHING BUT TROUBLE.

This three-disc set is perhaps not the ideal introduction to Abbott and Costello, the Three Stooges, and Laurel and Hardy, but vintage comedy buffs and fans of these legendary teams will welcome the opportunity to fill in their collections with these lesser-known and rarely seen films, packaged as three double features (each volume also available separately).

Abbott & Costello fare best with two films they made for MGM while they were still relatively in their prime. Lost in a Harem(1944) is sublime silliness as hapless entertainers Bud and Lou, stranded in the Middle East, who become embroiled in a plot to dethrone an evil king. This film features a knockabout version of the vintage vaudeville routine "Slowly I turn," as well as bizarrely gratuitous numbers by Jimmy Dorsey and his orchestra, whom the king has kidnapped and hypnotized (!).

In Abbott and Costello in Hollywood (1945), the duo are barbers-turned-agents who run amuck on the MGM lot. Less star-studded than the title promises (Rags Ragland, anyone?), there are some great routines, including a sequence in



which Lou must act as a prop dummy to elude studio guards.

This collection is a particular treasure trove for Stooges fans, unearthing two of the trio's obscure features.

The first, Meet the Baron (1933) captures Moe, Larry, and Curly at the beginning of their screen careers with original partner Ted Healy. The film itself is more a vehicle for radio comedian Jack "Vas you dere, Charlie?" Pearl as his signature character, Baron Munchausen.

Gold Raiders (1951) was the only feature the Stooges made with Shemp. It's a slaphappy "C" western costarring George O'Brien as, yes, a lawman-turned-insurance salesman. Despite the premise, it's played mostly straight, and is not an all-out spoof like the later, The Outlaws Is Coming.

Laurel and Hardy, who began in silent films, were in sad decline by the time they made Air Raid Wardens (1943) and Nothing but Trouble (1944), but these two films at least manage to recapture some of the magic of this most beloved of comedy teams.

Wardens is a wartime "we must all pull together" homefront comedy in which the blundering boys stumble upon a Nazi sabotage plot. Pathos does not become the team ("I guess we're not smart like other people," a dejected Stan says at one point),

## CLASSIC COMEDY TEAMS COLLECTION DVD. REVIEW

but a poster-hanging sequence and an all-too-brief tit-for-tat encounter with the great Edgar Kennedy will evoke fonder memories.

In Trouble, Stan and Ollie are in another fine mess as a butler and chef who make a shambles of high society and foil a plot to murder a boy-king. Whether as sheer nostalgia for a bygone era or as the simple provider of family-friendly laughs, this welcome collection fits the bill.

Product Dimensions : 7.75 x 5.75 x 0.53 inches; 10.4 ounces

Media Format : Black & White, Box set, Closed-captioned, Multiple Formats, NTSC

Run time : 7 hours and 10 minutes

Release date : November 21, 2006

Subtitles: : English, French, Spanish

Language : English (Dolby Digital 1.0)

Studio : WarnerBrothers

ASIN : B000HWZ4F2

Number of discs : 3

[Available from Amazon](#)

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## COMPUTER HELP. BASIC MICROSOFT EXCEL FUNCTIONS.

#	Function	What It Does	Example Usage
1	<b>SUM()</b>	Adds together a range of cells.	=SUM(A1:A5)
2	<b>MIN() / MAX()</b>	Finds the smallest (MIN) or largest (MAX) value.	=MAX(A1:A5)
3	<b>AVERAGE()</b>	Calculates the arithmetic mean.	=AVERAGE(A1:A5)
4	<b>COUNT()</b>	Counts the number of cells that contain numbers.	=COUNT(A1:A5)
5	<b>POWER()</b>	Raises a number to a specific power.	=POWER(A1, 2)
6	<b>CEILING() / FLOOR()</b>	Rounds a number up/down to nearest multiple.	=CEILING(A1, 5)
7	<b>CONCAT()</b>	Joins two or more text strings together.	=CONCAT(A1, " ", B1)
8	<b>TRIM()</b>	Removes extra spaces from text.	=TRIM(A1)
9	<b>REPLACE() / SUBSTITUTE()</b>	Swaps specific text or characters within a cell.	=SUBSTITUTE(A1, "Old", "New")
10	<b>LEFT() / RIGHT() / MID()</b>	Extracts characters from a text string.	=LEFT(A1, 3)
11	<b>UPPER() / LOWER() / PROPER()</b>	Changes text case (caps, lower, proper).	=UPPER(A1)
12	<b>NOW() / TODAY()</b>	Returns current date/time (NOW) or date (TODAY).	=TODAY()

The following describes

# COMPUTER HELP. MICROSOFT WORD SHORTCUTS

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## Word Keyboard Shortcuts (PC Version)

**Quick Reference Guide**  
Comprehensive video training & instruction manuals available at [www.teachucomp.com](http://www.teachucomp.com)

Common		Formatting Characters		Mail Merges (Mailings tab must be selected)	
Adjust Zoom Magnification	<b>ALT, W, Q</b>	Delete one word to right	<b>CTRL+DELETE</b>	NEXT TO ONE ANOTHER	SEPARATED BY COMMAS
Align text left/right	<b>CTRL L or R</b>	Display Object dialog box	<b>ALT+N, J, J</b>	<b>CTRL C</b>	<b>ALT, S, O, N</b>
Apply bold formatting	<b>CTRL B</b>	Display Find/Replace dialog box	<b>CTRL H</b>	Press together (Ctrl+C)	Press and release one at a time, in order
Apply italic formatting	<b>CTRL I</b>	Insert Building Block	<b>Building Block Name, F3</b>	Apply single spacing to paragraph	<b>CTRL 1</b>
Apply underline formatting	<b>CTRL U</b>	Insert SmartArt graphic	<b>ALT+N, M</b>	Apply style: Heading 1 to 3	<b>CTRL+ALT 1...3</b>
Cancel command	<b>ESC</b>	Insert WordArt graphic	<b>ALT+N, W</b>	Apply style: Normal	<b>CTRL SHIFT N</b>
Center text	<b>CTRL E</b>	Move selected content	<b>F2, Move cursor, ENTER</b>	Center paragraph	<b>CTRL E</b>
Close document	<b>CTRL W</b>	Open Clipboard task pane	<b>ALT+H, F, O</b>	Create hanging indent	<b>CTRL T</b>
Close Word	<b>ALT F4</b>	Paste selected formatting*	<b>CTRL+ALT V</b>	Display Apply Styles task pane	<b>CTRL SHIFT S</b>
Copy selection	<b>CTRL C</b>	Paste selection	<b>CTRL V</b>	Display Styles task pane	<b>CTRL+ALT SHIFT S</b>
Create new document	<b>CTRL N</b>	*Older versions use CTRL+SHIFT+V			Enable AutoFormat
Cut selected content	<b>CTRL X</b>	Add bulleted list	<b>CTRL SHIFT L</b>	Indent paragraph	<b>CTRL M</b>
Decrease/Increase font size (1 point)	<b>CTRL [ or ]</b>	Apply bold formatting	<b>CTRL B</b>	Justify paragraph	<b>CTRL J</b>
Find next spelling/grammatical error	<b>ALT F7</b>	Apply double-underline formatting	<b>CTRL SHIFT D</b>	Remove hanging indent	<b>CTRL SHIFT T</b>
Open document	<b>CTRL O</b>	Apply italic formatting	<b>CTRL I</b>	Remove paragraph formatting	<b>CTRL Q</b>
Open Editor pane (Spelling/Grammar)	<b>F7</b>	Apply small caps formatting	<b>CTRL SHIFT K</b>	Remove paragraph indent	<b>CTRL SHIFT M</b>
Open Help pane	<b>F1</b>	Apply subscript formatting	<b>CTRL =</b>		
Open Thesaurus pane	<b>SHIFT F7</b>	Apply superscript formatting	<b>CTRL SHIFT +</b>		
Paste selection	<b>CTRL V</b>	Apply underline formatting	<b>CTRL U</b>		
Print document	<b>CTRL P</b>	Apply underline formatting (words only)	<b>CTRL SHIFT W</b>		
Redo action	<b>CTRL Y</b>	Change selected text to Symbol font	<b>CTRL SHIFT Q</b>		
Remove document window split	<b>ALT SHIFT C</b>	Change text to all upper case	<b>CTRL SHIFT A</b>		
Save As dialog box	<b>F12</b>	Decrease/Increase font size (1 pt)	<b>CTRL [ or ]</b>		
Save document	<b>CTRL S</b>	Decrease/Increase font size (2 pts)	<b>CTRL SHIFT &lt; or &gt;</b>		
Select all document content	<b>CTRL A</b>	Display Font dialog box	<b>CTRL D</b>		
Split document window	<b>CTRL+ALT S</b>	Display nonprinting characters*	<b>CTRL SHIFT 8</b>		
Switch to next open document	<b>CTRL F6</b>	Display Reveal Formatting task pane	<b>SHIFT F1</b>		
Switch to previous open document	<b>CTRL SHIFT F6</b>	Hide selected text	<b>CTRL SHIFT H</b>		
Undo action	<b>CTRL Z</b>	Remove manual character formatting	<b>CTRL SPACE</b>		
		Switch between upper/lower/title case	<b>SHIFT F3</b>		
* Do not use numeric keypad					
Editing Text and Graphics					
Copy header/footer (previous section)	<b>ALT SHIFT R</b>	Formatting Paragraphs			
Copy selection to new location	<b>SHIFT+F2, Move, ENTER</b>	Add/remove space before paragraph	<b>CTRL 0 (zero)</b>	TeachUcomp, Inc. Computer Software Training & Continuing Education.	
Copy selected formatting*	<b>CTRL+ALT C</b>	Align paragraph to left	<b>CTRL L</b>	www.teachucomp.com    877.925.8080	
Copy selection	<b>CTRL C</b>	Align paragraph to right	<b>CTRL R</b>		
Create new Building Block from selection	<b>ALT F3</b>	Apply 1.5-line spacing to paragraph	<b>CTRL 5</b>		
Cut selection	<b>CTRL X</b>	Apply double spacing to paragraph	<b>CTRL 2</b>		
Delete one word to left	<b>CTRL BACKSPACE</b>				
* Older versions use CTRL+SHIFT+C					

**TEACHUCOMP, INC.**  
...it's all about you

# PHISHING EMAILS.

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## Types of Phishing Emails

Phishing is basically a scam that uses fake emails to try and steal your personal information. The fake emails often pretend to be sent by respected companies like banks, internet service providers, credit card companies, etc. They often ask for things like usernames, passwords, account numbers, etc. If you click on the link in the email it will take you to a fake website or product that looks exactly like what it claims to be.

### Spear Phishing

Spear phishing is a kind of phishing attack that targets one person (or company) in particular. Spear phishing is often used in ransomware attacks, where someone holding your files hostage sends you an email pretending to be from a reputable company like your internet service provider or antivirus software telling you that your computer is infected with malware. If you click on the link in the email it will take you to a fake website that looks legitimate so when you enter your email address and password to "scan" your computer, you just gave the criminal access to all of your accounts.

### CEO Fraud

CEO fraud is a kind of spear-phishing that targets specific people, usually by spoofing high-profile or wealthy individuals. The criminal sends you an email pretending to be from the CEO of your company and asking for money. For example, they might ask you to wire some money to a new bank account and then provide instructions on how to do so. People who are less familiar with the company might fall for this or if it's sent to you from someone who looks legitimate, like the real CEO.

### Vishing Attacks

Vishing is a kind of phishing that takes place over the phone. The criminal calls you and pretends to be from a company like your internet service provider, a bank, etc. They will try to trick you into giving up financial information or by directing you to visit a website where they can steal your login information.

### SMiShing Attacks

SMiShing is a kind of phishing that takes place over text messages. The criminal sends you a text message pretending to be from a company like your bank asking for account information or they might send you links to websites where they can steal it. A lot of times the criminals will pretend to be with Google or Microsoft so it's even harder to discern whether or not the message is fake.

### Pharming

Phishing attacks work by tricking people into giving up their sensitive information, but pharming tricks computers by changing Domain Name System (DNS) settings on a router. When you type in a website address your computer goes through several DNS servers before finding the correct IP address to direct you to the correct site. A DNS server is basically a system that points your computer in the right direction so when you type in an address, it can direct your computer to the right website. If someone poisons the DNS servers and redirects it to a fake site, you can fall victim to pharming. The criminal then gets access to all of the information you enter on that site.

### Brand Spoofing

Brand spoofing is when a criminal pretends to be from a company or organization you trust and they use this brand recognition to trick you into giving up your sensitive information. For example, a criminal might send you an email with a logo from Google in the header pretending to be from Google asking for your password. Most people are comfortable giving their password to a company like Google so they will click on the link in the email, enter their information, and give it directly to the criminal.

### How To Identify Phishing Emails: Signs and Phishing Email Examples

While phishing emails can cause serious damage, the good news is that there are a few common red flags you can identify in order to avoid falling prey to a phishing attack.

Phishing emails often:

- Seem to be from legitimate companies like banks, internet service providers, credit card companies, etc.

## PHISHING EMAILS.

- Are unsolicited (you didn't ask for it; they just sent it to you)
- Ask for things like usernames, passwords, account numbers, etc.
- Offer something seemingly valuable, like a prize or discount - Use poor spelling and grammar
- Have strange email addresses or typos in the email address - Have crazy titles

Now that you know the common red flags in phishing emails, here are a few real-world phishing email examples you may encounter:

- A Fake FedEx message saying your package is stuck in customs and needs to be paid for with Bitcoin
- Emails from the "IRS" asking for overdue taxes, someone claiming to be from your internet service provider telling you that there's a problem with your account details (often including an email address that isn't yours), etc.
- Emails from a big company asking for input on new products, where they want you to click a link and provide your account number or password
- Fake USPS email claiming that a package is stuck in customs and needs money for tax/processing/customs fees
- Emails from hackers pretending to be from your internet service provider saying there's been unusual activity on your account - Emails from a big company asking for input on new products, where they want you to click a link and provide your account number or password
- Fake FedEx message saying your package is stuck in customs and needs to be paid for with Bitcoin - Emails from the "IRS" asking for overdue taxes, someone claiming to be from your internet Provider.

I'm now getting scam emails with the header "Road & Vehicle Tax Services" from this email address "noreply-8994T98-0546559057@epimkerala.org". Yep definitely an official UK Gov email address. The email then went on to say:

Vehicle Tax and Road Tax Information Update

Dear Customer

We are writing to inform you that a routine review of our records indicates some vehicle tax and road tax details may require confirmation.

If necessary, you may review and update your information through the official service page provided. ANY updates will be processed in accordance with standard procedures.

If your details are already up to date, no further action is required.

The best advice I can give people is to have two email addresses. One to sign up to crap, one to use for friends and family with the understanding that they don't send you memes, jokes, forward videos because they are funny, no nothing.

But otherwise just be safe and use common sense. If some country you have never heard of says you won their national or state lottery, then no matter how desperate you are for money, don't believe it.