

The Museum of Modern Art

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A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF FILM ACCOMPLISHMENT:

HAL ROACH HONORED BY MUSEUM

Hal Roach, the producer who discovered and developed stars and directors such as Harold Lloyd, Charley Chase, Laurel and Hardy, Will Rogers, Our Gang, Leo McCarey, and George Stevens, will be honored by the presentation of nearly 100 of his films to be shown from February 12 through March 24 at The Museum of Modern Art. He will attend a private reception in the Museum Penthouse the evening preceding the tribute, which covers the period from 1915 to 1940, Mr. Roach's most productive years in film, though he continues to be active in television production to this day.

Roach, also known for the Topper series, was a rival of the early comedy pioneer Mack Sennett, according to William K. Everson, who has assembled this retrospective. Mr. Everson, an authority on American film who teaches at the New School for Social Research and New York University, has just completed a book on Hal Roach, which the Museum is publishing concurrently with the Roach program.

What sustained Roach's productions when the popularity of other comedies, such as Mack Sennett's, began to wane, was the reliance on construction. Everson points out, "Roach's world was serious and orderly...concerning itself far more with everyday nightmares of frustration and embarrassment" than with the "time honored chase" or other standard sight gags. Even Roach's weaker comedies always had a story-line and characterization to bolster them when gags failed.

The silent comedy world, Everson indicates, by its very nature "created a barrier that dissolved time, realism and logic." The contemporaries of Roach, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harry Langdon, like him, were sufficiently disciplined and young enough to be original and uninhibited. It was a happy time for film-goers, writes Everson, who speculates that Roach probably "re-lived" through the absurdities

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of the behavior of Laurel and Hardy some of the early, precarious, hard-up experiences he had endured.

Born in Elmira, New York, in 1892, Hal Roach originally wanted to become a railroad fireman. Fortunately for millions of people, however, after trying his hand as a mule skinner, saloon swamper, gold seeker, and fish wagon driver, he drifted into films. In 1912 he became a cowboy bit player and stunt man at Universal Studios, where he met an equally determined small part actor, Harold Lloyd. They both earned twenty-five dollars a week.

The two men started to collaborate, and after Roach raised enough capital in 1915, they produced some unheralded comedies on their own. The result was the character of Willie Work, who later evolved into the Lonesome Luke Comedies, directed by Roach and advertised as "Phunfilms." Any resemblance to Chaplin was not intended, though "such pillaging was commonplace" in the young motion picture industry where copyright laws were not yet known.

With the Lonesome Luke Comedies certain Hal Roach characteristics began to emerge, particularly the stress on "construction" or well thought out stories, situations and characters. Roach wanted a comic hero who was not a carbon copy of Chaplin, and chose to outfit Lloyd as a "regular" human being whose only distinguishing characteristic was a pair of oversize, owl-rim glasses which emphasized his innocence.

In addition to Lloyd, Roach worked with dozens of comedians and stars-to-be such as Snub Pollard, Bebe Daniels, Zasu Pitts, Jean Harlow, Fay Wray, and Paulette Goddard. But he was best known for his association with Laurel and Hardy, of whom Everson says, "No comedians have ever been able to do so much -- or create so much comedy -- purely out of their own quite normal personalities." Roach recognized their talent and gave them great freedom in the creation of their work.

In the 1930's, Roach moved from two-, three-, and four-reelers to the production of features, and he reached a peak of productivity in 1939-40. He

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occasionally moved away from comedy, too, as in "One Million B.C.," a monster epic for which D. W. Griffith was signed as director and from which he was subsequently removed. But his best-known dramatic venture was undoubtedly "Of Mice and Men," made in 1939 after he had moved from MGM to United Artists. Everson calls it "A superb example of remaining entirely faithful to the content and structure of a literary work, yet transposing a story told exclusively through dialogue into visual (often lyrically so) terms."

Roach himself has said, "I always considered the construction of comedy of prime importance...You've got to set up a situation believably, establish people that the audience knows." Many audiences not only know, but will never forget characters like Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, Will Rogers, Our Gang, and the many others whom Hal Roach brought to the screen.

THE SCHEDULE OF HAL ROACH FILMS FOLLOWS:

Thursday, February 12 (2:00 and 5:30)

MIGHTY LIKE A MOOSE,* 1923, with Charlie Chase; NEVER WEAKEN,* 1921, with Harold Lloyd; BIG BUSINESS,* 1929, with Laurel and Hardy; HELPMATES, 1931, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Friday, February 13 (2:00 and 5:30)

TIN CAT ALLEY,* 1924, with Harold Lloyd; IT'S A GIFT,* 1923, with Snub Pollard; ORANGES AND LEMONS, 1923, with Stan Laurel; SLIPPING WIVES,* 1927, with Laurel and Hardy; FIXER UPPERS, 1935, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Saturday, February 14 (3:00 and 5:30)

LONESOME LUKE,* 1927, with Harold Lloyd; ALL ABOARD,* with Harold Lloyd; HIGH AND DIZZY,* 1920, with Harold Lloyd; ALL WET,* 1924, with Charlie Chase; FALLEN ARCHES, 1933, with Charlie Chase. ca. 80 min.

Sunday, February 15 (2:00 and 5:30)

PASS THE GRAVY,* 1928, with Max Davidson; MAN ABOUT TOWN,* 1923, with Stan Laurel; GRANDMA'S BOY,* 1922, with Harold Lloyd. ca. 90 min.

Monday, February 16 (2:30, 5:30, and 8:00)

THERE AIN'T NO SANTA CLAUS,* 1926, with Charlie Chase; WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO?,* 1926; DEVIL HORSE,* 1926, with Yakima Canutt. ca. 100 min.

Tuesday, February 17 (2:00 only)

DR. JACK,* 1922, with Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis; NEVER WEAKEN,* 1921, with Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis. ca. 80 min.

* Silent film. Piano accompaniment by Charles Hofmann.

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Thursday, February 19 (2:00 and 5:30)

KILL OR CURE,* 1923, with Stan Laurel; PUTTING PANTS ON PHILIP,* 1928, with Laurel and Hardy; SAFETY LAST,* 1923, with Harold Lloyd. ca. 90 min.

Friday, February 20 (2:00 and 5:30)

BIG BUSINESS, * 1924, with Laurel and Hardy; DON'T PARK THERE,* 1924, with Will Rogers; FLUTTERING HEARTS, 8 1927, with Charlie Chase, Oliver Hardy; CALL OF THE CUCKOO,* 1927, with Max Davidson, Charlie Chase, Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Saturday, February 21 (3:00 and 5:30)

GIRL SHY,* 1924, with Harold Lloyd; MOVIE NIGHT,* 1929, with Charlie Chase. ca. 95 min

Sunday, February 22 (2:00 and 5:30)

See Saturday, February 21.

Monday, February 23 (2:30, 5:30 and 8:00)

UNCENSORED MOVIES,* 1923, with Will Rogers; HIS WOODEN WEDDING,* 1925, with Charlie Chase; THE UNKISSED MAN,* 1929, with Herbert Rawlinson, Jean Harlow; THE NICKLE HOPPER,* 1926, with Mabel Norman, Oliver Hardy, Boris Karloff. ca. 90 min.

Tuesday, February 24 (2:00 and 5:30)

MIGHTY LIKE A MOOSE,* 1923, with Charlie Chase; BAD BOY,* 1925, with Charlie Chase; LIMOUSINE LOVE,* 1925, with Charlie Chase; ON THE WRONG TREK, 1936, with Charlie Chase, Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Thursday, February 26 (2:00 and 5:30)

BIG MOMENTS FROM LITTLE PICTURES,* 1924, with Will Rogers; YOU'RE DARN TOOTIN',* 1928, with Laurel and Hardy; LEAVE 'EM LAUGHING,* 1928, with Laurel and Hardy, Edgar Kennedy; LAW AND ORDER,* 1921, with Snub Pollard. ca. 70 min.

Friday, February 27 (2:00 and 5:30)

RAGGEDY ROSE,* 1926, with Mabel Normand; THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS,* 1927, with Laurel and Hardy; selections from the OUR GANG* comedy series. ca. 100 min.

Saturday, February 28 (3:00 and 5:30)

TRUTHFUL LIAR,* with Will Rogers; A PAIR OF TIGHTS,* with Stuart Erwin, Edgar Kennedy; THE SOILERS,* with Stan Laurel; SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME?,* with Laurel and Hardy; WHAT PRICE GOOFY?,* with Charlie Chase, Fay Wray. ca. 90 min.

Sunday, March 1 (2:00 and 5:30)

US,* 1927, with Charlie Chase; YOUNG IRONSIDES, 1932, with Charlie Chase; TWO TARS,* 1928, with Laurel and Hardy; A PERFECT DAY,* 1929, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Monday, March 2 (2:30, 5:30 and 8:00)

BARGAIN OF THE CENTURY, 1933, with Thelma Todd, ZaSu Pitts; SONS OF THE DESERT, 1933, with Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chase. ca. 95 min.

Tuesday, March 3 (2:00 only)

TOP FLAT, 1935, with Thelma Todd, Patsy Kelly; AIR TIGHT, 1931; HOG WILD, 1930, with Laurel and Hardy; MUSIC BOX, 1932, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 90 min.

Thursday, March 5 (2:00 only)

BOHEMIAN GIRL, 1936, with Laurel and Hardy; MIXED NUTS, 1934, with Duggie Wakefield; HIGH GEAR, 1931. ca. 100 min.

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Friday, March 6 (2:00 and 5:30)

OUR RELATIONS, 1936, with Laurel and Hardy; BUSY BODIES, 1933, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 95 min.

Saturday, March 7 (3:00 and 5:30)

GENERAL SPANKY, 1936, with Spanky McFarland, Phillips Holmes; BRATS, 1930, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 85 min.

Sunday, March 8 (2:00 and 5:30)

BABES IN TOYLAND, 1934; THEIR FIRST MISTAKE, 1932, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 100 min.

Monday, March 9 (2:30, 5:30 and 8:00)

FOUR PARTS, 1934, with Charlie Chase; TWICE TWO, 1933, with Laurel and Hardy; NATURE IN THE WRONG, 1933, with Charlie Chase; COME CLEAN, 1931, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Tuesday, March 10 (2:00 only)

WAY OUT WEST, 1937, with Laurel and Hardy. Program will also feature a short film with Harry Langdon and a two-reel film with Irvin S. Cobb. ca. 100 min.

Thursday, March 12 (2:00, 5:30, and 8:00)

TOPPER, 1937, directed by Norman Z. McLeod. With Roland Young, Constance Bennett, Cary Grant. 80 min.

Friday, March 13 (2:00 and 5:30)

MERRILY WE LIVE, 1938, directed by Norman Z. McLeod, with Constance Bennett, Brian Aherne. 80 min.

Saturday, March 14 (3:00 and 5:30)

OUR GANG COMEDY. ca. 20 min.; THERE GOES MY HEART, 1938, directed by Norman Z. McLeod. With Fredric March, Virginia Bruce, Harry Langdon, Nancy Carroll. 78 min.

Sunday, March 15 (2:00 and 5:30)

BLOCKHEADS, 1938, with Laurel and Hardy; THICKER THAN WATER, 1935, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 80 min.

Monday, March 16 (2:30 only)

CAPTAIN FURY, 1939, directed by Hal Roach, with Brian Aherne, June Lang, George Zucco, 85 min.

(5:30 only) CAPTAIN CAUTION, 1940, directed by Richard Wallace, with Victor Mature, Louise Platt. 85 min.

(8:00 only) THE HOUSEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER, 1939, directed by Hal Roach, with Joan Bennett, Adolphe Menjou, John Hubbard, Victor Mature. 85 min.

Tuesday, March 17 (2:00 only)

ROAD SHOW, 1941, directed by Hal Roach, with Adolphe Menjou, Carole Landis, John Hubbard. 85 min.

Thursday, March 19 (2:00, 5:30 and 8:00)

TURNABOUT, 1940, directed by Hal Roach, With Carole Landis, John Hubbard, Adolphe Menjou. 80 min.

Friday, March 20 (2:00 and 5:30)

A CHUMP AT OXFORD, 1940, with Laurel and Hardy; TAXI MISTER, 1943, with William Bendix, Joe Sawyer, Grace Bradley. 109 min.

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Saturday, March 21 (3:00 and 5:30)

OF MICE AND MEN, 1939, directed by Lewis Milestone. With Burgess Meredith, Lon Chaney Jr., Betty Field. Music by Aaron Copland. ca. 110 min.

Sunday, March 22 (2:00 and 5:30)

ONE MILLION, B.C., 1940, directed by Hal Roach; GET OUT AND GET UNDER, with Harold Lloyd.

Monday, March 23 (2:30, 5:30 and 8:00)

TOWED IN A HOLE, 1933, with Laurel and Hardy; TIT FOR TAT, 1935, with Laurel and Hardy; JUST NUTS, 1915, with Harold Lloyd; SAILOR MADE MAN,* 1921, with Harold Lloyd. 90 min.

Tuesday, March 24 (2:00 and 5:30)

ZENOBI, 1939, with Oliver Hardy, Harry Langdon; GOING BYE-BYE, 1934, with Laurel and Hardy. ca. 95 min.