

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART CONTINUES SECOND SERIES  
OF FORTY YEARS OF AMERICAN FILM COMEDY  
INCLUDING EARLY CHAPLIN FILMS

The popular series of motion pictures, Forty Years of American Film Comedy, Part II, consisting of twenty-four films arranged in eleven programs, will be extended from March 30 (the original closing date) through Monday, May 19. This series includes The Thin Man, produced in 1934 and starring William Powell and Myrna Loy; Million Dollar Legs, 1932, with Oakie, Fields and Turpin; Two Tars, 1928, with Laurel and Hardy; The Navigator, 1924, with Buster Keaton; and other famous comedy films of the past three decades. The series concludes with three Chaplin programs of four films each, including some of the comedian's best known early comedies such as The Pawnshop, The Immigrant and Easy Street.

These film programs are shown in the Museum's auditorium daily including Saturdays at 4 P.M.; on Sundays at 2 and 4 P.M. There is never an admission charge for motion picture programs at the Museum as the twenty-five-cent general entrance fee to the Museum includes film showings as well as exhibitions in the galleries.

The new schedule for the continuation of the series through Monday, May 19, is as follows: (See the attached program schedule).

# THE ART OF THE MOTION PICTURE: SERIES IX

## FORTY YEARS OF AMERICAN FILM COMEDY

### PART II

Presented by THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM LIBRARY

DAILY AT 4 O'CLOCK AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK SUNDAYS AT 2 AND 4 O'CLOCK

1. **The Thin Man, 1934**  
Directed by W. S. Van Dyke, with William Powell and Myrna Loy. (Loew's).  
Mar. 13, 24; April 4, 15, 26;  
May 7, 18
2. **What! No Beer?, 1933**  
Directed by Edward Sedgwick, with Buster Keaton and Jimmy Durante. (Loew's).  
Mar. 14, 25; April 5, 16, 27;  
May 8, 19
3. **Bombshell, 1933**  
Directed by Victor Fleming, with Jean Harlow, Lee Tracy, Frank Morgan, Franchot Tone. (Loew's).  
Mar. 15, 26; April 6, 17, 28;  
May 9
4. **Million Dollar Legs, 1932**  
Directed by Edward Cline, with Jack Oakie, W. C. Fields, Andy Clyde, Lyda Roberti, Ben Turpin, Hugh Herbert. (Paramount Pictures).  
Mar. 16, 27; April 7, 18, 29;  
May 10
5. **Trouble in Paradise, 1932**  
Directed by Ernst Lubitsch, with Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis, Herbert Marshall, Charles Ruggles, Edward Everett Horton. (Paramount Pictures).  
Mar. 17, 28; April 8, 19, 30;  
May 11
6. **Hands Up, 1926**  
Directed by Clarence Badger, with Raymond Griffith, Marian Nixon, Montague Love. (Paramount Pictures).  
  
**Two Tars, 1928**  
Directed by James Parrott under the supervision of Leo McCarey, with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. (Hal Roach-Loew's).  
Mar. 18, 29; April 9, 20;  
May 1, 12
7. **Dream of a Rarebit Fiend, 1906**  
Directed and photographed by Edwin S. Porter. (Edison Co.).  
**High and Dizzy, 1920**  
Produced and directed by Hal Roach, with Harold Lloyd and Mildred Davis. (Harold Lloyd).  
**The Navigator, 1924**  
Directed by Donald Crisp and Buster Keaton, and featuring Keaton. (Loew's).  
Mar. 19, 30; April 10, 21;  
May 2, 13
8. **He Comes Up Smiling, 1918**  
and  
**A Modern Musketeer, 1918**  
Directed by Allan Dwan, with Douglas Fairbanks. (Douglas Fairbanks).  
Mar. 20, 31; April 11, 22;  
May 3, 14
9. **Charlie Chaplin: Four Essanay Comedies, 1915:**  
**A Night in the Show Work**  
**A Night Out**  
**Carmen (reels 4 and 5 only)**  
Mar. 10, 21; April 1, 12, 23;  
May 4, 15
10. **Charlie Chaplin: Four Mutual Comedies, 1916 (RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.):**  
**The Count**  
**The Floorwalker**  
**Behind the Screen**  
**The Pawnshop**  
Mar. 11, 22; April 2, 13, 24;  
May 5, 16
11. **Charlie Chaplin: Four Mutual Comedies, 1917 (RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.):**  
**The Cure**  
**The Immigrant**  
**The Adventurer**  
**Easy Street**  
Mar. 12, 23; April 3, 14, 25;  
May 6, 17

## A NOTE ON AMERICAN FILM COMEDY

By Iris Barry

**T**HAT film comedy has been largely underestimated is apparent to anyone scanning the literature of the motion picture to date. Much has been written about Chaplin, perhaps too much for his own good: otherwise, the whole wealth of humorous cinematography seems to have provoked less comment and celebration than it deserves. Greatly to the public taste and defiantly the product of the people themselves, screen comedy has reached down for its sources into elemental situations and beliefs. It is for this reason, as well as for its mastery of tempo and situation, its inventiveness in character and gag, its flashing comment on human weakness and folly, that it richly deserves the study and re-examination which, until now, have not been possible.

Nowhere has the art of the motion picture developed with more vigor and originality than in the realm of comedy. Because the film is a profane or popular art, "comedy" on the screen has usually implied clowning, charades, spontaneous play and a whole repertory of fantasy and caricature, markedly unlike that of modern stage comedy, though it has borrowed freely from the theatre both in themes and in actors. In America, from the earliest slapstick to the latest screwball comedy, the native vitality has created a comic genre as widely delightful as it is indigenous. Its characteristics have been speed, irreverence, unreason, exaggeration, violence, genial vulgarity allied to acute observation and a sharp but never cross humor that delights in mishaps.

These programs in reverse chronology trace a cross-section through the work of several decades and many men, reviving some half-forgotten pictures as well as others more recent. Generally, the main roots of American screen comedy stem from the work of Mack Sennett and the films made under his guidance after he left Biograph to become the undisputed and instinctive master of the comic in films. Sennett was inspired by French farces of still earlier days like *Fun After The Wedding* and there is a nice descent from these wild improvisations through his Keystone comedies via Chaplin to René Clair and back again. It was Sennett, however, who *invented* American film comedy and gave us the great tribe of film grotesques and zanies enacted by Chester Conklin, Ford Sterling, Ben Turpin, Louise Fazenda and the rest. His, too, were the heroic posse of highly unstable cops, bathing maidens, hail of harmless revolver-shots, climaxes of catastrophe involving property, ocean, traffic, dignity and the law but never human life. Traditional humor from earlier periods often survives in this realm with its irate fathers, helpless blonde heroines and the old serviceable jokes concerning underwear, burst plumbing, dog-bites, drunks and babies. But mingled with them in a heady stew of merriment come also abbreviated bathing-suits, pesky automobiles, perilous skyscrapers and an exasperated struggle with mechanical contrivances very characteristic of our time and used with indomitably inventive humor.

Here are preserved many an instructive and surprising glimpse of forgotten fads, trends, social stresses as well as rich source-material on the essentials of humor. Since films of this type also challenge as well as reflect accepted values, they must prove a godsend to modern historians and to psychologists while visitors to the Museum will be newly grateful to the film industry for cooperating with the Film Library to provide this opportunity for re-examining one of the richest veins of American art. The first series of comedies was similarly restored to view in the fall of 1940.