

## September 28, 2018

**LIBERTY** - Filmed October 1 through October 17, 1928. Released January 26, 1929.

The idea for this film came from director Leo McCarey and Stan Laurel trying to come up with a story centered around Stan and Ollie having each others pants on by mistake and trying to correct the situation. Leo McCarey is remembered for directing *The Bells Of St. Mary's*, *The Awful Truth*, and *Going My Way*. The cameraman on this short comedy was George Stevens, who himself would gain fame as a director of films such as *Giant*, *The Diary Of Anne Frank* and *Shane*.

Liberty turned out to be a thrill comedy with Stan and Ollie inadvertently winding up on top of an unfinished skyscraper.

Beginning in 1904, Georges Méliès was the first to try this stunt by jumping over rooftops in *The Bath Chairs Of Paris*. Charlie Chaplin, Hank Mann, Larry Semon, Buster Keaton and Ben Turpin were among the many comedians who also took this kind of risk. Harold Lloyd is best remembered for his many thrill movies, especially hanging from the clock in *Safety Last* which was produced by Hal Roach.

After Harold Lloyd left the Hal Roach Studios to go out on his own, Hal Roach had other comics such as Charley Chase, Clyde Cook and Our Gang follow suit in the same type of thrill films. Back then, comedians did their own stunts at their own risk.

In Randy Skretvedt's book, *Laurel & Hardy - The Magic Behind The Movies*, he writes during the filming Liberty, prop and set designer Thomas Benton Roberts noted the following: "We had three stories of supposedly steel structure up on the top of the Western Costume

building; actually it was all made out of wood. The roof of the building was 150 feet and we were working three stories above that.”

Director Leo McCarey shared this remembrance in 1954: "One day they were on this skyscraper and Stan looked down and got panicky and Babe tried to quiet him. 'He said, look, there's nothing to worry about.' There was a platform down below him and Babe said to Stan 'I'm going to show you that it's perfectly safe' and he jumped. Well, it wasn't safe."

Thomas Benton Roberts added: The studio had sent some sugar pine down to make a safety platform for them. I had complained about that, but I wasn't the head stand-by on the company, so I could only carry out orders. When Babe jumped down, the sugar pine, of course, broke. But I had a safety net below that - and that saved him." Ollie only fell about 20 feet instead of 200 feet. He only suffered minor bruises and quickly got back to work.

In the scene where Stan and Ollie are trying to change their pants in a taxi while a young couple waits to enter the car, the young lady is a young actress named Harlean Carpenter who soon became better known as **Jean Harlow**.

The scene where Laurel & Hardy get into the elevator and accidentally go up to the top of the building under construction, is the sight of the Los Angeles County/USC Medical Center on North State Street in Los Angeles. The building was completed in 1933.

### **Reference:**

Laurel & Hardy: The Magic Behind The Movies by Randy Skretvedt

**THE MIDNIGHT PATROL** - Filmed June 19 through July 1, 1933. Studio correspondence and studio personnel don't reflect the exact release date, but the guess it is around the same as the copyright date of August 3, 1933.

The story was for this film was tentatively called *Calling Car Thirteen* and then *Calling All Cars*. This was the only film in which Laurel & Hardy played policeman. This film was released with the title *The Midnight Patrol*. The odd thing about this titled being selected for this short is that Monogram Studios had released a film by the same title in April of 1932.

During the opening titles, you see the point of view of the police car racing down the street. Although it is night time, that street is Wilshire Blvd. in the Miracle Mile district of Los Angeles.

The police car used in this film is not actually a police car. It was a 1927 Cadillac Series 314-A that belonged to Stan Laurel. He purchased the automobile in 1930. Today, that same car resides at the Melody Ranch Museum in Santa Clarita, California.

The voice you hear as the police dispatcher in the film belongs to **Billy Bletcher**. Although he was only 5' 2" tall, he had a very deep, booming voice. He is best remembered as the voice of the Big Bad Wolf in Walt Disney's *Three Little Pigs*.

**Frank Terry** aka Nat Clifford plays the man trying to break into a safe in a store. If you remember from Laurel & Hardy's film, *Sons Of The Desert*, he wrote the words and music for "Sons" anthem that was sung by the men at the film's beginning. During his lifetime he was a former boxer, pimp, bigamist, songwriter, card shark and overseas escaped prisoner. Along with this role, he was also Oliver Hardy's butler in *ME AND MY PAL*. In 1919, he accidentally handed the prop bomb to Harold Lloyd that was live after all and tore away half the

comedy star's hand. One other occupation: In a 1961 letter to friend and author John McCabe, Stan Laurel explained, "He suddenly took up religion and became a missionary in Hawaii. For a while he was a chaplain on a Leper Island Colony there, then he opened up a little mission house in Honolulu."

**Frank Brownlee** makes his seventh and final appearance in a Laurel & Hardy film. Frank also appeared in comedies with Charley Chase. His film career began in 1911 attaining 121 credits before his last role in 1943.

The butler was played by **O'Reese Corporal**. A talented singer, he was part of the singing quartet The Nuggets in the 1950's. Along with O'Reese the other singers were Herman McCoy, Handel Sutton, Charles Patillo. Their most popular songs with Capitol Records were Shtiggy Boom and Anxious Heart. When radio station WNOE in New Orleans, Louisiana launched its Top 40 format in early 1955, it started by playing the record "Shtiggy Boom" by The Nuggets nonstop for 58 hours and 45 minutes. O'Reese also had a very small part in another Laurel & Hardy film from 1932, *Pack Up Your Troubles*.

## **References:**

Laurel & Hardy: The Magic Behind The Movies by Randy Skretvedt

Wikipedia

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**SCRAM** - Filmed June 14, 16 to 23, 1932. Retakes filmed July 4 to 9, 1932. Released September 10, 1932.

The piano music heard during the dance sequence near the film's end was performed by Laurel & Hardy theme song composer, T. Marvin Hatley. The tune is Harry Warren's and Bud Green's 1926 hit *I Love My Baby - My Baby Loves Me*.

**Wilson Benge** plays the butler in his only talking film with Laurel & Hardy. He was in four silent films with Stan and Ollie. Along with Charles Coleman and Robert Greig, Wilson was one of Hollywood's most familiar butlers in over 200 films in the 1930s and 1940s.

**Vivien Oakland** played the wife to both Stan and Ollie in silent films before this one. Her comedy expertise was also seen with Charley Chase, Edgar Kennedy and Leon Errol. Her most prominent role was in the 1930 Marion Davies film, *The Floradora Girl* as a member of the Floradora Sextette.

**Arthur Housman**, who we saw last week in *Our Relations*, makes his first appearance with Laurel & Hardy in this film. With over 300 film credits to his name, he played a drunk in 60 of them. In a letter to a fan on January 28, 1957 Stan Laurel wrote: "Arthur was really a character, frankly I never saw him sober, he couldn't help being good in those parts he played, many times we would have to hold him up in a scene so he wouldn't fall down! Funny, but a bit pitiful at times. Strange as it may seem, years ago before this, he was quite handsome & used to play romantic leads."

**Richard Cramer** also made his first appearance with Laurel & Hardy in this film as the angry Judge Beaumont. His acting career began on Broadway in 1919 and moved into films in 1928. He was cast usually as a lawman or bad guy in over 250 films and serials.

The original script for this short comedy had a different ending than the one in the film. According to the script as annotated by Randy Skretvedt, the film ends this way after the bedroom scene with the judge, his wife and Laurel & Hardy: Fade in on two little figures in a prison quarry, their backs to the camera. A warden is walking up and down. The two figures are breaking rocks. Cut to front shot and show Stan and Babe with black eyes and court plaster all over their faces and Babe's arm in a sling. Fade out.

### **References:**

Laurel & Hardy: The Magic Behind The Movies by Randy Skretvedt

The Laurel & Hardy Movie Scripts - Annotated by Randy Skretvedt

Internet Movie Database