

JUNE 25, 2019

The Devil's Brother - Filmed February 1 through March 4, 1933.
Released May 5, 1933.

Notice the autographs after each performer's name in the opening credits. Then pay particular attention to Stan Laurel's autograph at the end of the opening credits.

The original title was going to be *Fra Diavolo*, but the salespeople at Metro did not know what *Fra Diavolo* was. As a result, it was changed to *The Devil's Brother* for the release in the United States. Overseas, the film was released as *Fra Diavolo*.

This is Laurel & Hardy's longest film running at 90 minutes. It was originally 117 minutes. After previews, 27 minutes were deleted. It was produced by Hal Roach who directed the musical and dramatic sequences. Charley Rogers directed the comedy scenes, although in later years Hal Roach maintained that he also directed "all of the important Laurel and Hardy scenes". Over the years, both Stan and Ollie would regard *The Devil's Brother* as one of their favorite films.

Exteriors of this film are believed to have been shot in the Angeles National Forest in the San Gabriel Mountains and Sierra Pelona Mountains, primarily within Los Angeles County in southern California.

As a young boy in Elmira, New York, Hal Roach saw a stage production of the comic opera, *Fra Diavolo* at the beginning of the 20th century. This story which featured wandering vagrants Giacomo and Beppo, originally debuted at the Salle Ventadour in Paris, France on January 28, 1830. The music and lyrics were written by Daniel François Esprit Auber in collaboration with Eugène Scribe.

Laurel & Hardy's first encounter with comic opera was in late 1929 when they filmed scenes for *The Rogue Song*. Hal Roach had intended to feature Laurel & Hardy in a comic opera some day. *Fra Diavolo* would be the vehicle for them. This would be the first time that a film comedian would try an opera plot line since 1915 when Charlie Chaplin parodied *Carmen*.

Although Jeanie McPherson did the screen adaptation for this film, Stan Laurel, Hal Roach, Charley Rogers and gagmen took care of writing the comedy material. During this production, T. Marvin Hatley, the musical director at the Hal Roach Studios, was busy writing songs for Charley Chase and overseeing the scores for many other short comedies. Hal Roach re-hired Leroy Shield with his background in classical music to adapt Auber's music with new arrangements for this film.

Frank Terry - can be seen as the butler in *Me And My Pal* and the safecracker in *The Midnight Patrol*.

Rolfe Sedan - one of the townspeople in this film, played the hotel desk clerk in *Double Whoopee*.

James C. Morton - appeared with Laurel & Hardy numerous times, usually as a policeman in comedies like *Tit For Tat*, *Me And My Pal* and *Pack Up Your Troubles*.

Tiny Sandford - At 6' 5" tall, Stanley John "Tiny" Sandford appeared in 23 Laurel & Hardy films. His movie career spanned from 1916 through 1943. After his acting days were over, he was employed as the head of a contracting firm.

Ferdinand Munier - played the part of Santa Claus in *Babes in Toyland* aka *March Of The Wooden Soldiers*.

Kay Deslys - she played Mrs. Hardy two times in *Should Married Men Go Home?* (1928) and *Perfect Day* (1929). She was also one of the ladies Stan and Ollie innocently met before being caught by their wives in *We Faw Down*.

James Finlayson - featured here in one of his 33 appearances in a Laurel & Hardy comedy.

Henry Armetta - was born in Palermo, Sicily and arrived in America when he was 14 years old. His film career began in 1915, but became a fixture in films by 1927. He usually played friendly, but easily frustrated characters in over 160 films.

Lucile Browne - Her career spanned from 1930 to 1950 appearing in about 50 films. Just before being in the cast of *The Devil's Brother*, Lucile had finished work on the Universal serial, *The Airmail Mystery*. It was there she met and co-starred with actor James Flavin who had over 500 film and television credits during a 44 year career. Soon after meeting James, they were married in a union that would last for 44 years. Heartbroken after his death in April of 1976, she died just 17 days later.

Dennis King - Born Dennis Pratt in England, he had a very active career on stage for 50 years, mostly on Broadway from 1921 to 1970. At the time of his signing for *The Devil's Brother*, King had just finished a 1932 revival of Florenz Ziegfeld's *Show Boat*. He received a Tony Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor in his final Broadway show, *A Patriot For Me* in 1970.

Thelma Todd - was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts. She began appearing in one and two reel shorts, mostly comedy, which showcased her timing and aptitude for physical comedy. She had been making shorts for the Hal Roach Studios when she was signed to Paramount Pictures. Unlike many silent era stars whose voices didn't fit their screen persona, Thelma's bright, clear voice with a pleasant trace of an aristocratic, but not snobbish, New England accent made the transition to sound films easily.

Matt McHugh - Although he appeared in more than 200 films, he never quite achieved the fame his brother, Frank reached during the same period from 1931c through 1955.

Arthur Pierson - was born in Norway on Stan Laurel's 11th birthday. He had a very successful career as a dialogue director, actor, director and producer of several animated series for Hanna-Barbera.

Edith Fellows - Edith made her screen debut in Charley Chase's 1929's short *Movie Night*. She was signed by Columbia and appeared in features including *The Rider of Death Valley* with Tom Mix, the Bing Crosby classic *Pennies from Heaven* and *Music in My Heart*. Nine year old Edith was sitting in an area under some klieg lights. She had just left that spot to go over to say hello to Thelma Todd when one of the lights came crashing down on the studio floor. Had she not gotten up to speak with Thelma, she would have been killed.

REFERENCES

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

Internet Movie Database

