

MARCH 13, 2019

THE DANCING MASTERS - Filmed June 1 through June 25, 1943. Added scenes shot during July of 1943. Released November 19, 1943.

This film went on to become the third highest grossing movie of 1943 for producers 20th Century Fox. It finished number 20 of the top 50 first run pictures for 1943. 20th Century Fox's biggest hits for 1943-44 were (1) *The Song Of Bernadette* (2) *The Gang's All Here* (3) *The Dancing Masters*.

In the original story outline, Laurel & Hardy ran a repair shop but in the final film version, the boys were in charge of a dancing school. Screenwriter Scott Darling was advised to view some of Laurel & Hardy's earlier films in order to familiarize himself their type of comedy.

Cameraman Norbert Brodine had been the cinematographer with Laurel & Hardy on their Hal Roach Studios features *Swiss Miss* and *Pick A Star* along with Oliver's film with Harry Langdon, *Zenobia*. He would also be the cameraman on Laurel & Hardy's final Fox film, *The Bullfighters*.

The scene where Stan is standing in front of a bar was a prop bar that was used the year before in *Tales From Manhattan*.

Margaret Dumont - (birth name Daisy Juliette Baker) is best-known for her performances as the ultimate straight woman in seven of the Marx Brothers' films. By all accounts she never understood their jokes (offscreen and on). Apart from a small role in a 1917 Dickens adaptation, she spent her early career on the

stage, ending up with the Marx Brothers in the late 1920s in the stage versions of *The Cocoanuts* (1929) and *Animal Crackers* (1930), and was given a Paramount contract at the same time they were. She played similar roles alongside other great comedians, including W.C. Fields and Jack Benny. She also played straight dramatic parts (her chief love), but few of them made much impact. It was as Groucho Marx's foil that she ranks among the immortals. In *The Dancing Masters*, it is unfortunate that she had no dialogue scenes with Laurel & Hardy.

Matt Briggs - He was an actor, known for *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1942), *Buffalo Bill* (1944) and *The Babe Ruth Story* (1948).

Allan "Rocky" Lane started as a leading man in major studio dramas and segued into "B" serials and sagebrush sagas in later life. He enjoyed second lead roles throughout the late 30s, including "Stowaway"(1936), with little Shirley Temple, "Maid's Night Out" (1938) with Joan Fontaine and "Twelve Crowded Hours" (1939), co-starring Lucille Ball. He signed with Republic in 1940 and teamed with Linda Stirling, in the popular serial "The Tiger Woman"(1944). His own serials as Mountie Dave King, proved popular around this time. Eventually, he left films and toured with circuses and rodeo shows until the TV series "Red Ryder" (1956) came his way. He is best remembered as the off-camera voice for the talking horse "Mister Ed" (1961-1966). Lane retired shortly thereafter.

Robert "Bob" Bailey - Well known old time radio personality. Famous for title role in "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar".

Robert Mitchum makes one of his early screen appearances in this film.

L&H co-star **Daphne Pollard** in her final Laurel & Hardy film with a one-liner as Stan Laurel is dancing.

Hank Mann - was one of the earliest of film comedians, working first for Mack Sennett as an original Keystone Cop, and later for producers William Fox and Morris R. Schlang in silent film comedies. Last survivor of the original Keystone Kops. Taught Jerry Lewis how to do pratfalls. Entered films in 1912. After his acting days were over, he worked for a short time as a makeup artist for Warner Brothers, before leaving the film industry behind. Next, he operated a malt shop in Sierra Madre for one year, and then spent his remaining years as a resident apartment manager with his wife Dolly in the Los Feliz section of Los Angeles.

Charley Rogers - was a long time friend of Stan Laurel where they both worked on the Music Hall stages of England and Scotland before moving to America. His ability to write comedy took him to the Hal Roach Studios in 1928. While he appeared in bit parts in many films his main ability was in writing and directing. He worked well with Stan Laurel and directed eight of Laurel and Hardy's films but mainly let Stan do what he wanted. He was often to be found with Stan and other writers planning gags for up coming films. Amongst those he directed were *Them Thar Hills*, *The Live Ghost*, *Tit For Tat* and the feature *Babes in Toyland* which he co-directed with Gus Meins.

Nestor Paiva - As a character actor, he had a natural gift for dialects that allowed him to play practically any type of foreigner. He played in a Los Angeles production of "The Drunkard" for 11 years. Film buffs remember him as the main villain, "The Scorpion" in the wartime classic serial "Don Winslow of the Coast Guard" (1943). In hundreds of film and TV roles from 1938-67 which included 14 appearances on Walt Disney's Zorro with Guy

Williams. Paiva played everything from Spaniards, Greeks, Russians and Portuguese to Italians, Indians and Arabs. He took a job at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank during World War II.

This film also has many moments of physical comedy with the boys. At this time, Stan was 53 and Ollie was 51.

The Arthur Hurry School Of Dancing is the name of the establishment run by Laurel & Hardy. Most likely it is play on words with the Arthur Murray Dance School.

Some of the scenes in this film seem to have an abrupt ending or content that doesn't relate to anything. This is because about 15 minutes of this film was deleted. Unfortunately, none of the deleted material exists today.

Of the six films Laurel & Hardy made at 20th Century Fox, this film has more elements of Laurel & Hardy's comedic style.

- The auction scene is almost identical to the one they filmed for Thicker Than Water which co-starred Daphne Pollard as Ollie's wife. Originally, this scene continued with the driver getting out of this truck and having it out with Ollie.
- The banana peel on the sidewalk routine was a recreation from Laurel & Hardy's *The Battle Of The Century* silent comedy from 1927.
- Bricks falling on Ollie's head was reminiscent of *Hog Wild* and *Dirty Work*.
- Throwing out the gear was done in *Perfect Day*.

- The final shot of the movie with Ollie in a hospital bed with his right foot heavily plastered, is almost identical to his predicament in County Hospital.

The drinks bar/library set is actually a leftover set from the film, *Tales Of Manhattan* (1942).

Notice when everybody runs out of the bus (including the driver and the dog), nobody bothered to stop the bus.

Long shots of rollercoaster are miniatures.

REFERENCES:

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

The Laurel and Hardy Collection - 20th Century Fox - DVD Set
Commentary by Scott MacGillivray

Internet Movie Database