

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL COMEDY

ASTONISHING SHORTS FROM THE SLAPSTICK ERA



January 13–26, 2017

The Roy & Niuta Titus Theaters, New York

For only the fifth time in its history, MoMA plunges into their film archive to showcase the silent comedy shorts that dominated filmmaking for decades before talkies.

Presenting never-before-seen and one-of-a-kind prints, CRUEL AND UNUSUAL COMEDY offers audiences their only chance to experience these short classics alongside live musical accompaniment.

Beginning January 13, the series features multiple daily programs showcasing the unique style of comedy that disappeared with the introduction of sound. Some highlights include:

- Some of **Mickey Rooney's earliest films** including *Mickey's Battle* (1927) and *Mickey's Little Eva* (1927).
- A pre-Laurel & Hardy performance by **Oliver Hardy** in *The Serenade* (1916).
- The earliest surviving **Harold Lloyd** appearance in *Just Nuts* (1915).
- Iconic performances from some of the era's leading actresses including **Jean Arthur**, **Alice Howell** and the "female Laurel & Hardy" **Anita Garvin & Marion Byron** (*Going Ga-Ga*, 1929).
- Shorts featuring audience favorites including Fatty Arbuckle, Marcel Perez, Lupino Lane, Hank Mann and the ever-popular child actors of Hal Roach's *Our Gang* films.

- A dedicated program highlighting “Chaplinitis”, where a slew of films borrowed heavily from Charlie Chaplin’s style to cash in on his wild popularity.

All films have been preserved by MoMA and are only available at their archive. Like today’s stand-up comedians, the eccentric comics of the 1910s and 1920s found their material in the anxieties of the moment, and their work reveals, for better or worse, an America often hidden in the more polished feature films of the period. The filmmakers flung themselves heedlessly into a wide range of discomfiting social, cultural, political, and aesthetic topics, including ethnic stereotypes, domestic abuse, sexual identity, violence, and even the plague of Chaplin imitators.

For more information and ticketing, visit moma.org/film

Organized by Dave Kehr, Adjunct Curator, Department of Film, MoMA, and independent curators Steve Massa and Ben Model. Special thanks to Eileen Bowser, Ron Magliozzi, and the late Charles Silver.

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