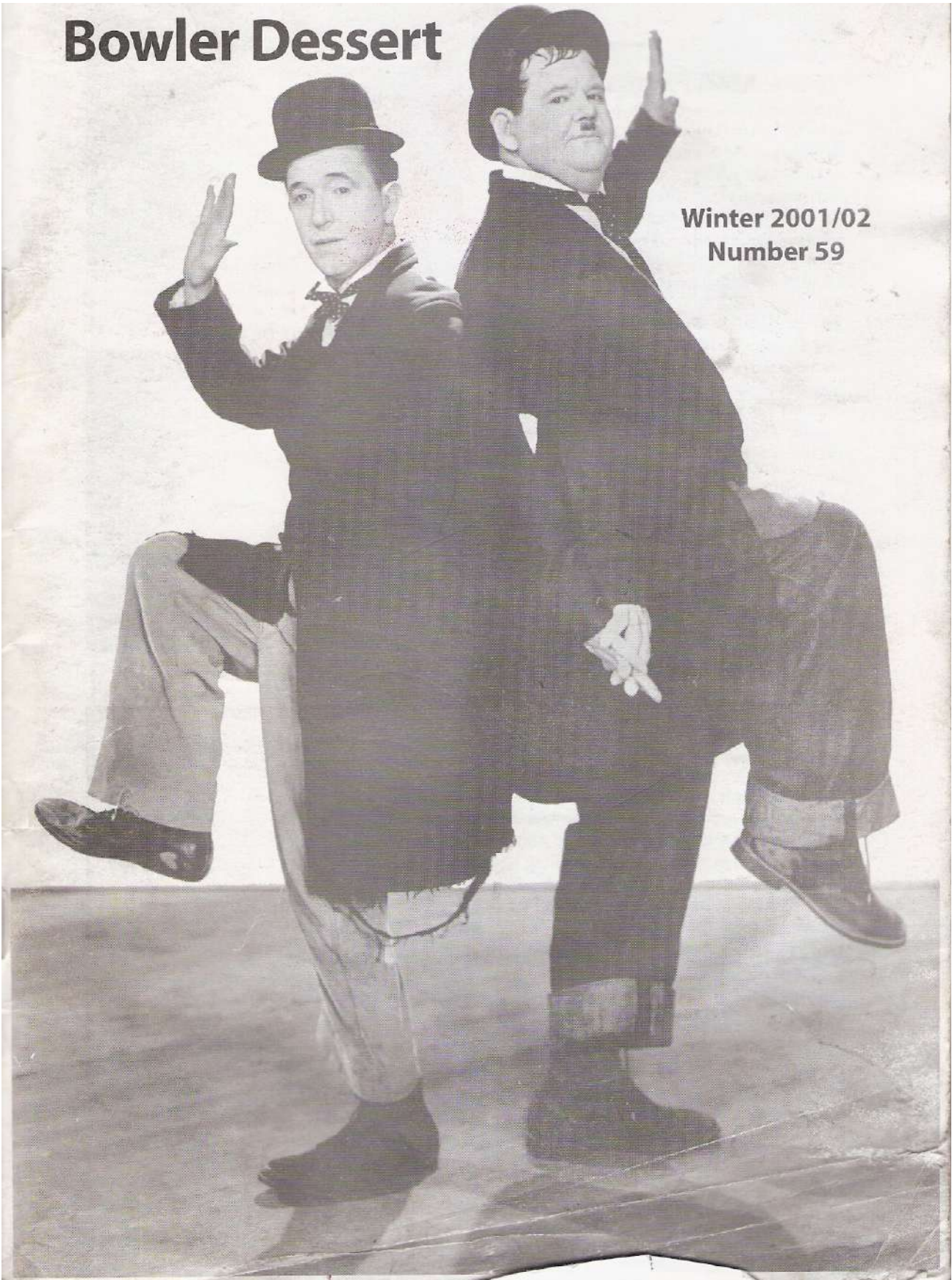


# Bowler Dessert

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# Postbag

## Pauline's pleasure

A friend sent me a cutting from the *Mail Weekend* magazine about people who had been sent to the Actors' Orphanage. One was Pauline Spurling, who was sent there with her brother by her parents, her father being Leslie Spurling who appeared with Stan and Ollie in the UK. She says



"We would join our parents only at Christmas and holidays in shabby digs where we'd all have to live in one room. That never bothered me because going backstage was a highlight, particularly when father was performing with Laurel and Hardy in their variety tour. It was always a treat to go into

Oliver Hardy's dressing room where he'd be sitting on a round stool because he was so enormous and he'd sit me on his knee, asking how I was while he was rolling cigarettes from his white pouch. He gave me two teddies. He was much more friendly than my own parents."

Grahame Morris

## Fred Karno's feat

Robert Womersley, alias Fred Karno, (who once set a world record when he sold twenty-five copies of *Bowler Dessert* in less than fifteen minutes, to a group of Yorkshire men, who, traditionally, get their wives to stitch up their pockets every Friday night before setting out for the pub), took almost three times as long selling the latest batch at Bradford's County Hospital Tent's January meeting. He was given a warning by a tent official for too much talking, not enough selling.

David Oyston

## Novelty on Liberty TV

I was skipping channels on 1st February when I happened across Liberty TV. This is an obscure channel, which tends to screen old, old movies etc. from what look like old, old 16mm prints, many of which are highly missable.

However, on this occasion, I did a whiplash inducing double take as the *This is Your Life* footage unfurled in front of me. It turned out that *Laurel and Hardy Memories*, a video that has been around for a couple of years to my knowledge, had been picked up by Liberty and was receiving an airing.

I hadn't actually seen the contents of the video myself, and it was a bit of a surprise to see *This is*

*Your Life* then the Boys with Our Gang in *The Stolen Jools*, *A Day at the Studio* parts 1 and 2, *Hollywood Party*, Babe's QE2 interview, footage from both Tyneside and Edinburgh from the 1931 UK tour, a visit to Stan's apartment in Santa Monica in the sixties, and finally the last and hugely sad footage of Stan and Babe together, during Babe's final illness.

The picture quality was fair throughout and the order in which the clips were presented was as above, with no logic behind the sequence, and no real linking between the clips. The real treat for me, however, was the *Hollywood Party* clip. I had previously only seen the Lupe Velez sequence, but this also featured Stan and Ollie's attempts to get into the party, involving a huge doorbell. I usually cringe at Lupe's antics in this clip, but the new (for me) footage was more than compensatory.

I personally wouldn't rush out and buy the video, which is available from most large stockists, as I have most of the clips already in my collection. The curiosity value was certainly there though and, of course, it is always a joy to see footage of Stan and Ollie for the first time.

Mike Jones



Pick a Star had excerpts called *A Day at the Studio*

## Re the last *Bowler Dessert*

Comments on the last *Bowler Dessert*. . . .

Page 7: With regard to Laurel's dislike of the Marx Brothers, I remember Stan speaking of three comedians whom he said he did not like. I have always thought that Groucho Marx was one of them, Bob Hope another and my guess as to the other is George Burns.

Page 14: I seem to remember *Mad Movies* as an ITV series. Perhaps Steve Bolton meant *The Golden Silents*.

Page 63: In reply to R Bender, Chaplin was as

great as ever in the 1940s, he just wasn't making enough films. The Marx Brothers were undoubtedly past their best by then. As for Laurel and Hardy, I remember enjoying *Nothing But Trouble*, but that was a long time ago. I can also remember *Great Guns* and *The Big Noise* and they



just weren't themselves anymore. *Great Guns* rehashed Abbott and Costello in its plot, with the unique Stan and Ollie we knew and loved replaced by two characters called "Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy" who could almost have been played by other actors. Why did Twentieth-Century Fox and MGM do that to them? Has there ever been an explanation or attempt at defence from the studios?

Mark Toha

Ed: The book *Laurel and Hardy: From The Forties Forward* does much to explain why the forties films were what they were and throws a compassionate light on them.

### Top show

ARTE is a small French/German TV channel, financed by both countries 50:50 and the main content is of high cultural quality. They also have a lot of screenings of very good copies of comedies. There was a press release that the most seen broadcast in the year 2000 was the movie *Below Zero*, with 770,000 viewers.

Axel Schumacher

### Rogue quote

A long, long time ago there was mention in *Bowler Dessert* of a Lawrence Tibbett biography and the suggestion that it might contain valuable information about Laurel and Hardy's contributions to *The Rogue Song*.

I have the book *Dear Rogue* by Herzel Weinstat and Bert Wechsler and, yes, it's mind-boggling. We have on page 99 one paragraph about the Boys:

Larry [Tibbett] enjoyed himself immensely and especially appreciated the antics of two young British comedians MGM had borrowed from the Hal Roach studio. Their names, not yet familiar to American audiences, were Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. They turned the tables on Larry by squirting a tube of shaving cream in his face and by mocking him in pantomime during the film's famous flogging scene.

I never knew shaving cream came in a tube in the late twenties!

Bram Reijnhoudt

### On view

I have become a fan of Laurel and Hardy only in the past couple of years, but have enjoyed their films ever since first seeing them as a boy in the seventies. Even now some of the visual gags and effects make me say, "How did they do that?" Some of the stunts look suicidal, especially in the earlier films, where they made it up as they went along.

It's good to see more of the Boys' films showing on BBC2 over Bank Holidays, especially the restored prints. I wonder how many films the BBC have bought the rights to show, or if they are just picking them up as and when they will be scheduled. Is there some contractual problem with the copyright owners of the short films? I can't recall seeing them ever listed on any UK satellite channels.

I did notice an edit to *Pardon Us*, in the scene where the Boys are blacked up as cotton pickers and Ollie is under the prison governor's car, trying to fix it. Stan calls down, "Hey Ollie, err, Sam." In the mid-nineties BBC2 screening Stan says, "Sambo". In the new print the "bo" has been overdubbed with a music track, but Stan's lips still move to the "bo". Obviously "Sambo" is not a politically correct word anymore. Given the years that have gone by, is there anything else in the Laurel and Hardy films that has been cut because it's considered offensive to a section of viewers?

Is there anyone who may be able to copy for me some videos/audios of the various things not available commercially? Of course, I will cover all costs.

Robert Cheadle, *Copper Beech, Frith Common, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, WR15 8JX*

### Blockheads Tent's banner lost

Has anyone seen our banner, last spotted at the Paisley Convention?

Christine Craig

### We want you

SAMfilms needs your input. We are trying to compile a collection of the greatest moments in Laurel and Hardy's films. We want you to tell us your fave moment. Please keep answers short, for example "the dance scene in *Way Out West*" or "the naughts and crosses game in *Towed in a Hole*". We also want to know your fave short and feature.

Stephen Barlow  
<http://www.stanandollie.co.uk>

Ed: The address of SAMfilms is at the foot of page 51. Gary Winstanley and Stephen have their second "greatest moments" video in the pipeline.