



Laurel & Hardy: A Celebration

*By Adam Pepper
Session 10*



Welcome to Session 10 of this celebration of the life, times and laughs of Laurel & Hardy! This year marks 60 years since the death of Stan Laurel, the English Vaudeville comedian who became part of the world's most famous on-screen double act.

Over these last ten weeks, we have journeyed through their lives, their movies, their highs and lows, and immersed ourselves in the history of their time in Hollywood; a time when movies were only just beginning!

So, adjust your hat, wiggle your tie and let's follow 'the boys' on an adventure for one last time...

Session 10:

It's the mid-50s and our story is almost over...

The boys are now pretty much retired. Ollie is suffering ill health, the years of carrying so much weight (then throwing it around a film studio) are now taking their toll, and Stan too is starting to feel his age.

The films, while enjoying a mini-revival on the TV, are on the way to being forgotten, replaced by 50s sci-fi, musicals and the post 40s noir glory days.

But what a journey it has been.

We began on the stages of Vaudeville theatres in Victorian London, watching Dan Leno entertain the masses with his characters; we followed Stan and Chaplin over to the US where the beginnings of cinema are looking for the beginnings of movie stars.

And we've seen Stan paired up with Ollie; lightning in a bottle, as their double act becomes a global sensation.

Their story may not have had a glorious triumphant ending, but the legacy of those movies, and those gags, live on forever in the comedy movies of today.

For a short time, Laurel and Hardy ruled the screens, bringing smiles to faces young and old suffering The Great Depression, prohibition and bigotry. That is why we celebrate them now...

Useful information for Session 10:

Larry Harmon

Lawrence Weiss (January 2, 1925 – July 3, 2008), better known by the stage name Larry Harmon and as his alter ego Bozo the Clown, was an American entertainer. Weiss had four children, including filmmaker Jeff Harmon.

Harmon was born to Jewish parents in Toledo, Ohio, and raised in Cleveland. During World War II, he served as a Private in the Army. On returning, he wanted to become a medical doctor, until he met entertainer Al Jolson. According to Harmon's autobiography *The Man Behind the Nose*, Jolson told him, "Being a doctor of medicine is honourable, but you'll touch so many more lives as a doctor of laughter!" Harmon instead attended the University of Southern California, where he majored in theatre and performed in the Spirit of Troy marching band.

Harmon began making the first of thousands of appearances as Bozo the Clown after attending a casting call in the late 1940s. In 1957, Harmon purchased the licensing rights to the Bozo character from Capitol Records, which had promoted the character on its children's albums as "Bozo the Capitol Clown", and he aggressively marketed the

property. By the late 1950s, Harmon had licensed local Bozo TV shows in nearly every major U.S. market, as well as in other countries. He also produced and provided the voice for a series of Bozo animated cartoons intended to be shown with the live-action show.

Harmon's animation studio also produced eighteen *Popeye* cartoons in 1960 as part of a larger TV syndication package.

In 1961, Harmon bought the merchandising rights to the likenesses of Laurel and Hardy. Five years later, he promoted a Laurel and Hardy TV cartoon-short series called *A Laurel and Hardy Cartoon*, animated by Hanna-Barbera Productions. Harmon performed Stan Laurel's voice in that series, with Jim MacGeorge as Hardy.

A Prayer For Clowns (read by Dick Van Dyke at Stan Laurel's funeral in 1965)

God bless all clowns.

Who star in the world with laughter,

Who ring the rafters with flying jest,

Who make the world spin merry on its way.

God bless all clowns.

So poor the world would be,

Lacking their piquant touch, hilarity,

The belly laughs, the ringing lovely.

God bless all clowns.

Give them a long good life,

Make bright their way—they're a race apart!

Alchemists most, who turn their hearts' pain,

Into a dazzling jest to lift the heart.

God bless all clowns.

Films to look out for:

Another Fine Mess (1930)

Way Out West (1937)

Sailor Beware (1952)

The Blues Brothers (1980)

Dumb & Dumber (1994)

The Impostors (1998)

For Love Or Mummy (1999)

21 Jump Street (2012)

