



**SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION**

Laurel & Hardy: A Celebration

*By Adam Pepper
Session 8*



Welcome to Session 8 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 ten weeks, we will journey through their lives, their movies, their highs and lows, and immerse 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...

Session 8:

The boys are huge stars! Their films are box office gold and, whether it's the shorts or the features, they seem unstoppable! Even Oscar glory has come their way, and as they hit the end of 1932, maybe it's time to just ease up on the brakes a little.

Time for a trip to Scotland; maybe play a little golf, spend some time with the wives (if they can remember which one they are currently married to!), and catch up on some theatre and life away from the studio.

And the crowds that mob and rush them while they holiday certainly gives the idea that the boys are here to stay!

But, trouble is brewing...

Hal is starting to meddle in the films a little more than Stan would like, and finding material to fill these new features is proving troublesome:

"...a three storey house on a one storey base."

Maybe turning to the classics of the stage will help?

Either way, as we make our way towards 1940, the future is starting to cloud over for our lovable boys...

Useful information for Session 8:

Al Jolson

Al Jolson (born Asa Yoelson: May 26, 1886 or June 9, 1886 – October 23, 1950) was a Lithuanian-born American singer, comedian, actor, and vaudevillian.

Self-billed as "The World's Greatest Entertainer," Jolson was one of the United States' most famous and highest-paid stars of the 1920s, as well as the first openly Jewish man to become an entertainment star in the United States.

He was known for his "shamelessly sentimental, melodramatic approach" towards performing, along with popularizing many of the songs he sang. According to music historian Larry Stempel, "No one had heard anything quite like it before on Broadway." Stephen Banfield wrote that Jolson's style was "arguably the single most important factor in defining the modern musical." Jolson has been referred to by modern critics as "the king of blackface performers".

Although best remembered today as the star of the first talking picture, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), he starred in a series of successful musical films during the 1930s.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, he was the first star to entertain troops overseas during World War II.

After a period of inactivity, his stardom returned with *The Jolson Story* (1946), in which Larry Parks played the younger Jolson, but with sung vocals dubbed by Jolson himself. The formula was repeated in a sequel, *Jolson Sings Again* (1949).

In 1950, he again became the first star to entertain GIs on active service in the Korean War, performing 42 shows in 16 days. He died weeks after returning to the U.S., partly owing to the physical exhaustion from the performance schedule. Defence Secretary George Marshall posthumously awarded him the Medal for Merit.

Eddie Cantor

Eddie Cantor (born Isidore Itzkowitz; January 31, 1892 – October 10, 1964) was an American comedian, actor, dancer, singer, songwriter, film producer, screenwriter and author. Cantor was one of the prominent entertainers of his era.

Some of his hits include "Makin' Whoopee", "Ida (Sweet as Apple Cider)", "If You Knew Susie", "Ma! He's Making Eyes at Me", "Mandy", "My Baby Just Cares for Me", "Margie", and "How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Patee)?" He also wrote a few songs, including "Merrily We Roll Along", the *Merrie Melodies* Warner Bros. cartoon theme.

His eye-rolling song-and-dance routines eventually led to his nickname "Banjo Eyes". In 1933, artist Frederick J. Garner caricatured Cantor with large round eyes resembling the drum-like pot of a banjo. Cantor's eyes became his trademark, often exaggerated in illustrations, and leading to his appearance on Broadway in the musical *Banjo Eyes* (1941).

He helped to develop the March of Dimes and is credited with coining its name. Cantor was awarded an honorary Oscar in 1956 for distinguished service to the film industry.

Reports and accounts of Cantor's early life often conflict with one another. He was born in New York City, the son of Mechel (a.k.a. Michael) Iskowitz, an amateur violinist; and his wife (a.k.a. Maite) Meta Kantrowitz Iskowitz, a young Jewish couple from Russia. It is generally accepted that he was born in 1892, though the day is subject to debate, with either January 31 or Rosh Hashanah, which was on September 10 or September 11, being reported.

Although it was reported Cantor was an orphan, his mother dying in childbirth and his father of pneumonia, official records say otherwise; Meta died from complications of tuberculosis in July 1894, and the fate of Mechel is unclear, as no death certificate exists for him. There is also discrepancy as to his name; both his 1957 autobiography and *The New York Times* obituary for Cantor report his birth name as Isidore Iskowitch, although some articles published after the 20th century give his birth name as Edward (a nickname given him by his future wife, Ida, in 1913) or Israel Itzkowitz.

Films to look out for:

Say It With Songs (1929)

Palmy Days (1931)

Sons Of The Desert (1933)

Fra Diavolo (The Devil's Brother) (1933)

Babes In Toyland (March Of The Wooden Soldiers) (1934)

Our Relations (1936)

Way Out West (1937)

Stan & Ollie (2018)

