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MARY



The Marxonian

HA CHICO GROUCHO Y LA ESTRELLA DE LA T.V. LUCILLE BALL (LUCY)



DIRECTED BY LEON KAY
a Paramount Picture

The Marxonian

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Welcome to The Marxonian ... Fredonia's first – and only – magazine dedicated to
all things Marx Brothers.

As you may have guessed, this magazine is being produced to coincide with the
annual Fredonia Marxonia event at the State University of New York at Fredonia.

But it's also the result of the creative efforts of the students in Comm 315 (Arts
Journalism) and Comm 346 (Editing and Design). The students in the first class wrote
the stories and the students in the latter put together the magazine.

It will be a truly limited edition, with the print run totaling enough to give every
student, event director Cindy Yochym and guest speaker Trav S.D. each a copy (and
maybe one for President Hefner as well).

Putting the project together has been a fun process, although the student editors
who have been learning Adobe InDesign at warp speed might have other words for it.

For me, the Fredonia Marxonia has offered not only an opportunity to let my stu-
dents develop their skills in a professional world scenario but also a chance to explore
the world of the Marx Brothers. Growing up, I knew who Groucho was, and I had an
idea of who the Marx Brothers were, but I never got a chance to actually watch their
work.

Fredonia Marxonia has changed that. I'm gradually working my way through the
brothers' film catalog and learning a whole lot through my students' research. I'm also
gaining a greater appreciation of the world of my grandparents, who were contempo-
raries of the Marxes.

My students are viewing a different world, too. My hope is that they'll be able to see
past the blatant sexism and inherent racism of the Marx Brothers' world to appreciate
the way the brothers "punched up," as the interviewee in one of our stories put it, to
take the air out of the high and might of the time.

And, of course, I hope they'll leave the class appreciating the Brothers word play.
But if they don't, I guess I'll just end up telling them to go to South America. You
know, "well, you go Uruguay, and I'll go mine. ... and how did the elephant get in
those pajamas, anyway?"

Elmer Ploetz
SUNY Fredonia

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How Freedonia came to Fredonia

By Elizabeth Nelson

The legendary and infamous Fred Fest may no longer be recognized by SUNY Fredonia, but one of its events continues to thrive for years.

The Freedonia Marxonia festival was started in 1987 by Fredonia alumnus and former marketing major, Douglass Canham.

He saw the connection between Fredonia and the Marx Brothers' popular movie "Duck Soup," as the fictional country in it was called "Freedonia."

Canham thought that the connection between the movie's "Freedonia" and Fredonia, NY was unique and interesting, and something no other town could have.

Also, a lot of students didn't know about the Marx Brothers, and he thought this was a good way to get more students excited and informed about them.

The name "Freedonia" was not the only connection at the time.

The mayor of Fredonia in 1987, Harry B. Hickey, wrote to the studio that produced the movie "Duck Soup."

He complained that they needed to change the town's name in the movie because it was giving Fredonia, NY a bad image.

However, Hickey was never expecting the response he got.

Instead of no response, or one from a person working on the movie, he heard back from Groucho Marx himself.

Marx, being the comedian he was, told the mayor: "The village of Fredonia should change its name because it's hurting our movie."

After Canham heard that this encounter with the mayor happened, he knew he had to try to get a festival going at the college.

He spoke to the President at the time, Dr. Belle, to set up funds and plans for this festival.

Finally, in 1987, the first festival was set to be the theme of that year's Fred Fest.

Fred Fest continued until 1990, and it is unclear why exactly the festival stopped.

Some say it's because there wasn't enough funding, while others say it's simply because Fred Fest stopped being a big event on campus.

However, Canham managed to get enough funding in 2009 to bring it back for one year.

That time, it was held in the library, and is still held there to this day.

In 2010, a couple from Maryland heard about this event and created the Endowment Foundation to fund the festival annually.

Mathew and Sherry Hahn are Marx Brothers fans, and wanted to contribute to bring the Marx Brothers to the younger generations' attention. Freedonia Marxonia continues to



be funded by them.

One of their most important requirements to continue funding is that there must be a student intern helping the library plan and put the festival together.

Every year, the library staff at Fredonia sets the theme, picks the speaker and performs any other task to make sure this festival is a hit every year.

Cynthia Yochym is a Fredonia faculty member who is heavily involved in Freedonia Marxonia.

Thanks to the Hahn's foundation, she always has help with the student intern.

Each year, the festival is started off by the traditional Groucho picture, where everyone puts on Groucho's signature glasses and matching mustache.

Posters are made every year with these pictures.

There is also always an art contest where the top three artists can win prizes and movie screenings of Marx Brothers films, especially "Duck Soup."

Yochym said that there used to be a look-alike contest, but she decided to do away with it as not many people entered.

Another big part of Freedonia Marxonia is the featured guest speaker.

The guest speaker always complements the theme, or the theme is chosen based on who the speaker is. Speakers from past years include Douglass Canham and Tom Duisk, who is a Fredonia alumnus, an avid fan of the Marx Brothers and a playwright.

Another year, the executive director of the National Comedy Center in Jamestown came for the event.

This year, Trav S.D. will be there, who is a perfect example of how the theme connects with the speaker.

This year's theme is Vaudeville, which is significant since the Marx Brothers started in Vaudeville and on Broadway.

Trav S.D. wrote a book on Vaudeville and is a Marx Brothers fanatic.



Cindy Yochym. Photo credit: Jessica Meditz

The Marx Brothers' biggest fan

By Samuel Lewandowski

Trav S.D., a performer, playwright, journalist and author, has spent a great portion of his career drawing people's attention to vaudeville and the works of the Marx Brothers.

S.D.'s very eclectic career began when he went to Regional Theatres Acting Conservatory at Trinity Rapid Providence.

"I went to Regional Theatres Acting Conservatory when I was a young person at Trinity Rapid Providence," said S.D., "and then I moved to New York, worked at The Big Apple Circus, and that inspired me to start my own, not-for-profit theatre company that specialized in vaudeville and also playwright."

Today, S.D. said he self-produces variety shows, plays, solo pieces, and remains heavily involved in theater.

More recently, S.D. said that he began writing criticisms for newspapers and magazines.

TRAV S.D.

"Around the year 2000," said S.D., "I started writing criticisms for newspapers and magazines. I wrote for *Timeout New York*, I completed a fellowship at the American Theatre Magazine, I wrote for the *Village Voice*, and I had one piece in *The New York Times*."

In 2008, S.D. found himself in communication with a member of a prestigious publishing house.

"An editor at Faber and Faber approached me and asked me if I had an idea for a book," said S.D., "and I sort of did have a pitch practically at the ready for a book about vaudeville."

"There was kind of a niche for it," said S.D., "it had been many decades since anyone has written about it — and it's obviously been dead for decades."

After the release of his first book in 2005, S.D. said he started a blog which caught the attention of many.

"In 2008," said S.D., "I started a blog — which has profiled thousands of blogs, old stars, or movie stars and silent comedy."

S.D. became involved in Fredonia around 2014, "when there was a citywide Marx Brothers festival that I helped co-produce."

"As one of the highlights in the festival," he said, "We revived for the first time, the Marx Brothers first Broadway show called 'I'll Say She Is,' which premiered in 1923."

S.D. also co-produced the New York Fringe Festival, where he participated in a bigger off-Broadway production.

He said he is still at work on an even larger upcoming project, but is hesitant to give too many details away.

"You know, it's a little touchy to talk



Photo by Bill Scurry

about," said S.D. "We don't want to spoil anything that's in the works. But ultimately, our hope is to go to Broadway. So, we're talking to producers and directors and potential backers, trying to figure out the next plan."

S.D. said Fredonia became the site of the Marx Brothers festival because of their film "Duck Soup."

"Duck Soup" is set in the fictional country of Freedonia," said S.D., "which is why your local festival started to come about."

Still, S.D. said he does not believe the film's country was named after Fredonia.

"I think a lot of people are wondering if they named it after the town of Fredonia," said S.D., "but I think it's just a coincidence."

S.D. said that the Marx Brothers will be a big part of his upcoming talk at this year's Marxonia festival, which will begin on October 3rd.

"Mostly, I'll be talking a great deal about the Marx Brothers," said S.D., "where they came from, what vaudeville was — because a lot of people nowadays don't know."

S.D. said that he has described the Marx Brothers as a "Super Group" in his blog, and has long admired them for a number of reasons.

"I think one is because they're almost like a rock band. They're so talented, and they kind of carved up their own slices of the comedy world," he said.

"They had all of the skills," said S.D., "They played their instruments extremely well, and they were really funny."

S.D. said that, when he was a kid, there were only three television networks, and he explained that most Americans were watching the same content from the same performers.

In today's world, where there are hundreds of TV channels, S.D. said that young people are unlikely to stumble upon the Marx Brothers or vaudeville.

S.D. claims that the Marx Brothers have inspired the work of many writers and comedians. All of this, giving reason for S.D. to speak

publicly about their work.

"A long list of major Comedy Broadway playwrights for decades modeled themselves after the Marx Brothers," said S.D. "Hero one liners and wisecracks as an old old tradition goes back to the 19th century."

Additionally, S.D. said his admiration inspired him to write pieces based on theirs.

"The main thing about them is that they're extremely nonsensical and surreal," said S.D.

"In fact, when I was extremely obsessed with the Marx Brothers, I sort of felt pressure to write my own Marx Brothers comedies, my own sort of plays modeled on their movies."

S.D. said his favorite Marx Brothers film is "Horse Feathers." Still, he believes many would rank other works of theirs before this film.

"Most movie fans would pick 'Duck Soup,'" said S.D., "which is their craziest movie of all and is satire. A lot of other people will choose 'A Night at the Opera' as their favorite, because it's kind of their slickest, best, most professionally made movie for MGM. But, if you put a gun to my head, I will say I like 'Horse Feathers' best."

S.D. said that he has recently been at work on a small tour, visiting places like San Francisco and Boston.

Aside from this, S.D. said he is working on a solo show, as well as an operetta with a composer, which will most likely open next year.

As mentioned earlier, S.D. said a larger project is in the works. The particulars of this project have been kept a secret — but he hopes it will make its way to Broadway.

S.D. said his best advice for those aspiring to join the theatre world would be to love it.

"Lots of young people go into this field," said S.D., "But it's challenging. You have to be really devoted to it."

"It's not like a nine to five job," he said.

"It takes a lot of work, but it's important to love it."

Inside the world of Trav S.D.

By Caysey Lofquist

Ask writer and performer Trav S.D. what word he would use to describe his career, and he will tell you “eclectic.” After speaking with him about the variety of books, movies, plays, and articles he has created, I understand why “eclectic” is appropriate.

S.D. has released a plethora of self-produced variety shows and plays in theatre. Throughout his career, he has done stand up comedy, acted in movies, written on a blog, written for magazines and even wrote his very own book.

Most recently, S.D. released a parody on the infamous Woodstock music festival, featuring him wearing a hippie costume.

In 2000, S.D. started writing criticism for magazines, specifically American Theatre Magazine. This opened many doors for S.D., and in 2012 he was fortunate enough to have his piece, “Theatre Talkback: Boxers on Broadway,” featured in the New York Times.

S.D.’s piece was about former heavy-weight boxer Jake LaMotta’s transition from boxing to stand up comedy. S.D. discusses the connection between boxing and comedy, and how boxing can be used in the context of a similar form of entertainment to comedy, dancing and singing.

In 2005, S.D. wrote a book on vaudeville. In 2008, he started his popular blog inspired by vaudeville, appropriately titled “Travalanche.”

What is the source of S.D.’s fascination with vaudeville? The Marx Brothers, of course!

S.D. considers the Marx Brothers to be the inspirational foundation for most of his career. Claiming himself to be, “much more Groucho than Harpo,” S.D. loves the surreal, nonsensical aspects of the Marx Brothers, and has worked to implement them into his own comedy and craft.

He spoke on the differing styles of humor between Harpo and Groucho, like how Harpo was much more pantomimic, while Groucho was the verbally funny one. To S.D., the Marx Brothers haven’t just influenced him, but most stand up comedians.

I asked S.D. if he feels there is a difference between entertainment back in the era of the Marx Brothers, vaudeville and entertainment today. He touched on how fascinating it is that everything we seem to be interested in today is in a “short format,” similar to how sets on vaudeville would each be short.

The biggest difference is, of course, the extent to which the audience has over what they choose to view.

Back in the day, the audience hardly had any choices for entertainment. People today do not get to experience the same appreciation for comedy and entertainment because there is no longer a heightened sense of the “unknown,” as they have a good idea of what to expect.

To S.D., “it is like the whole world is vaudeville.”

To be fair, he has done a lot of speaking on vaudeville recently. S.D. has been traveling the country and giving speeches in different cities, tailoring each speech accordingly. He refers to himself as his “own worst enemy,” as he tries to make each speech unique.

So what is next for S.D.? A lot.

S.D. is hoping to start a podcast, and even wants to shoot video footage right here in Fredonia and release a piece on this little town we call home.

He is also working on a much grander production, one that he hopes will make it all the way to Broadway.

S.D. admits he is a little nervous to share what he has in the works, worried that he will “jinx” himself or spoil it. That doesn’t stop him from hoping that it will be big.

He has been speaking with potential backers, trying to figure out what is to come next, and is hoping for this next project to really be a game changer for him.

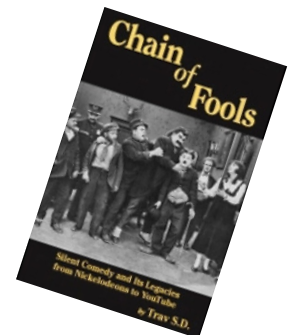
His ultimate hope is that when the audience sees it, they will feel like they are walking directly



Photo by Tom Bibla

into the 1920s, right back into the era of vaudeville.

Despite his great success, S.D. has no intention of slowing down. For him, it seems safe to say that the best is yet to come.



The real connection between town and brother

By Avril King

Residents of Fredonia and students at the college alike know the story of the Marx Brothers.

It all began in 1933 when the Marx Brothers movie, "Duck Soup," was first released.

In the film, there exists a small town by the name of Freedonia which has been taken over by Rufus T. Firefly (Groucho Marx.)

In true Marx Brothers fashion, the bankrupt country is brought to the verge of war and narrowly escapes catastrophe.

The comedy was well-loved by audiences around the country. In fact, the movie made around \$200,000 in its day.

But not everyone was a fan.

In November 1933, TIME Magazine published an article that detailed a dispute between Paramount, the company that produced the Marx Brothers movies, and Fredonia Mayor Harry B. Hickey.

"The name of Fredonia has been without a blot since 1817," Hickey said. "I feel it is my duty as mayor to question your intentions in using the name of our city in your picture."

Of course, the Marx Brothers shot back with, "Our advice is that you change the name of your town."

Add in the speculations about the Marx Brothers' grudge against Fredonia when they performed at the Opera House due to the fact that the town was dry during prohibition, and you've got a nice story to tell tourists when they visit the area.

From this bitterness dating back to Depression-era Fredonia sprouted celebrations.

In 1987, Fredonia marketing major, Doug-

las Canham, drew the connection between the movie and the town.

He suggested there be a celebration in which students learn more about the Marx Brothers as pop-culture figures and integrate some amusement in the midst of their academics.



Thus, Freedonia Marxonia was born.

This is what the residents of Fredonia and students at the college

Even if it wasn't a hoax from the very beginning, the story came out of the studio and was significant enough that we are still talking about it today. Coincidence? It seems unlikely.

So, what is the real connection

between Fredonia and the Marx Brothers?

Quite frankly, there isn't one. At least there isn't one in the sense that the Marx Brothers had little Fredonia, NY in mind at any point during the production their movie.

Ultimately, the connection comes from one student who thought it would be a nice break for students if they celebrated some old black and white movies.

Why?

Because the name of the town sounded like the name of a fictional country in the movie.

In the words of Cindy Yochym, the organizer of Freedonia Marxonia and reference librarian at Reed Library, "The connection exists because one person decided that it did."

This year's theme for Freedonia Marxonia is "Vaudeville and the Marx Brothers." There will be exhibits, movie screenings and Trav S.D., Marx Brothers enthusiast, will hold lectures and discussions. There will also be an art contest for anyone able to physically show their enthusiasm for Marxonia.

Anyone and everyone who takes part will be joining history. Maybe not because of events that happened (or did not happen) 80 years ago, but because they are willing to celebrate the connection, organic or fabricated.



know happened for sure. Or so they think.

The fact of the matter is that a few holes exist in these events in the 1930s, with the biggest being that there is no record of the Marx Brothers ever stepping foot in Fredonia.

There are no connections between the name of the small town in Western New York and the fictional country in the movie.

And there are several accounts that claim the dispute between Hickey and Paramount was solely a publicity stunt to gain traction for the movie.

Getting a taste of the Marx Brothers' 'Duck Soup'

By Angelina Dohre

For starters, I haven't had the pleasure of inserting a DVD to watch a movie since the end of my middle school days back in 2011. After putting in the disc and waiting a few patient moments, a title screen that looked as though it had been made in Microsoft PowerPoint appeared. I was ready for a taste of the Marx Brothers' "Duck Soup," a film considered by many to be the brothers' best work.

To my surprise, the first shot of the film greeted me with a fountain of bathing ducks. The film then cuts to an aerial view of the county of Freedonia. This was a place that looked quite similar to our village of Fredonia. The only difference was that everyone was dressed much too fancy.

The 1933 film has a plot that seems a lot darker than previous films by the Marx Brothers, but that certainly doesn't take away from the humor. The story takes place in the county of a bankrupt Freedonia where Rufus T. Firefly, played by Groucho Marx, is declared the new president. Driven by his "love" for the wealthy Mrs. Teasdale, he declares war on the rivaling neighboring county of Sylvania.

At the time, the fact that the film is so dated actually makes it more amusing. It was certainly funny to watch one of the characters stare at Groucho Marx in bewilderment after being told something cost a whopping \$12. It's interesting to think about just how much money that was back in the day, considering \$12 today could only get me a medio-

cre meal at the Fredonia's Cranston Marche.

Unlike another one of the Marx Brothers' titles, "Horse Feathers," "Duck Soup" has a much better comedic flow and is a lot more consistent with the storyline's progression. The humor used isn't as random as some of their other works. While random jokes do have their place in the comedy world, constant randomness can quickly lose its charm.

The film is different than some of the other works because it focuses on plot. However, one thing remains the same: the Marx Brothers.

Groucho Marx is seen playing the authority figure with Zeppo Marx again being in a position under Groucho's authority. The other two brothers, Harpo and Chico, are back at it with their shenanigans, doing everything in their power to annoy the living hell out of those around them.

Groucho also once again manages to be the most sarcastic part of the film. His humor is the most offensive, which is why he is my favorite of the four brothers. However, the underlying sexism in some of his jokes and the odd caressing of Mrs. Teasdale is still cringe-worthy.

What's interesting to note is how familiar a lot of the humor in "Duck Soup" is. A lot of the jokes, especially the random acts displayed by Harpo and Chico, have definitely appeared in several lighthearted childhood cartoons and movies like "Tom and Jerry." No wonder "Duck Soup" is considered to be the best work of the Marx Brothers. I certainly laughed a lot more than I expected to from a 1933 comedy.

The real life of the Marx Brothers

By Anna Gagliano

The Marx Brothers were widely successful as Vaudeville and Broadway performers, with shows such as "I'll Say She Is," "The Cocoanuts" and "Animal Crackers."

They made their film debut with the movie version of *Animal Crackers* in 1930.

This helped the brothers recover from the economic losses their Broadway wealth suffered after the stock market crash of 1929.

Their first official foray into Hollywood film, though, came with *Monkey Business* in 1931. One would think that being thrust into Hollywood would change the brothers, but in reality, they were a little older, and not so interested in glamour and celebrity culture.

Despite their lack of Hollywood drama, it was interesting to come across a brother offscreen, as they shared many similarities and differences with the characters they typically played.

The eldest brother Chico, born Leonard Marx, earned his nickname at a poker game when he was dubbed a "chicken chaser," or someone who chased after the ladies.

This title held up as he was a real womanizer in Hollywood, enjoying a little flirting every now and then, and was a trait that he shared with the types of characters he usually played onscreen.

Chico was also used to portraying a hustler and a con-artist, using an Italian accent and cheeky commentary to bring his characters to life.

Though he wasn't as sneaky in real life, Chico was known to be very charming and cunning. He used these skills to secure many opportunities for the Marx Brothers, like their first Broadway show and international performance.

It was also his friendship with poker-pal and film producer Irving Thalberg that got the Marx Brothers signed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

A not-so-well-kept secret of Chico's, though, was that all that poker playing, along with various other forms of gambling, resulted in him being in a deep debt for practically all of his adult life. The profits from a later Marx Brothers feature, *A Night in Casablanca*, went directly to helping Chico with his debts.

If any of the Marx Brothers were exact opposites of their typical character, it would be the second-eldest, Arthur—better known as Harpo.

Harpo's mute on screen shenanigans consisted of pantomiming or physical comedy, honking horns and just generally acting immature and goofy.

The real Harpo was a kind and gentle man, who liked to paint and play croquet. He made the choice to not speak on stage or screen after receiving a particularly harsh review from



When Groucho wasn't performing with his brothers, he was making movies like this one, "Double Dynamite!" It also featured Jane Russell and Frank Sinatra.

a Chicago critic, who said his pantomiming skills were ruined every time he spoke.

This didn't keep him from staying silent offscreen, though, and his son Bill has even called him "Hollywood's most eligible bachelor."

This was the case until he settled down with actress Susan Fleming at the age of 48 and began his family, around the same time the Marx Brothers were thinking of going into retirement.

If onscreen Harpo and offscreen Harpo could share one thing, though, it would be an incredible proficiency in the harp, thus giving away the origins of the brother's nickname.

The third, and mostly unknown Marx brother was Milton, or Gummo as he was called because of his gum-soled shoes.

Gummo never made it to the big screen with his brothers, as his role of the "straight man" was taken over by his younger brother Zeppo when he left to join the army in 1918.

He later went on to run a successful talent agency alongside Zeppo, and managed to create many opportunities for his brothers.

Julius Henry, or Groucho, Marx was probably the most similar to his onscreen characters, with his sarcastic, witty humor and leader of the pack mentality. Like his characters, he was

known to be a little cynical at times, earning his nickname of Groucho.

This has been disputed, though, with some fans saying it came from a Vaudeville-era bag he used to wear around his neck called a grouch bag.

Either way, Groucho could sometimes get a little grouchy. While his on screen personas lived this personality trait in an entertaining and not so unpleasant manner, it meant that offscreen Groucho preferred to be more serious at times.

Out of all the brothers, he disliked Hollywood life and culture the most.

Groucho didn't care for the company of other actors or celebrities and instead preferred to hang around with his writer friends. He also didn't care for drinking or partying, and saw all three of his marriages end in divorce as each wife became consumed by alcoholism.

Apparently, towards the end of his life he became quite senile and reserved,

something one can only equate to years of his desire for a happy, regular life becoming tainted by everything he hated about Hollywood.

The youngest Marx, Herbert, has a nickname with conflicting origin stories as well.

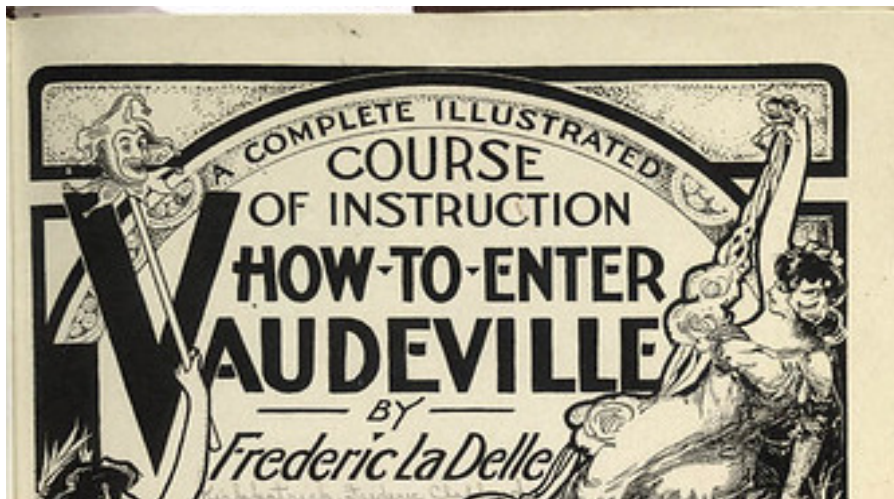
Harpo claimed "Zeppo" came from a famous monkey called Zippo, and Groucho said it derived from Zeppelin airships.

Either way, he found a way to fill Gummo's shoes, and the rest of his brothers, as he would often play an understudy when they got sick.

Though he was stuck playing the straight man or romantic interest in Marx Brothers films, Zeppo was actually known to be quite funny offscreen, and eventually stepped back from performing after *Duck Soup* because of the lack of funny roles for him.

Due to his background, Zeppo decided to open a talent agency with Gummo. Together they ran a fairly successful theatrical agency on Sunset Boulevard and represented many acts, including their brothers'.

While the Marx Brothers eventually bowed out of many of the drinking and partying that the Hollywood culture of their era was engulfed in, they still found ways to put little pieces of their true selves in their films.



Youtube: The modern-day Marx Bros. platform

By Kennedy Rosario

When you think of the Marx Brothers, the image that comes to mind is a band of brothers doing ridiculous acts for the sake of comedy. Flash forward almost a century, and Youtube seems to be the new hotspot for copy cats of this legendary group.

The Marx Brothers made their name to fame by touring the country, making movies, and performing on Broadway. These acts consisted of music and comedy material that was said to be derived of their actual personalities. All of this was done within the pact of their real life brotherhood.

Youtube is a very popular modern-day social media platform that is scattered with Marx Brothers duplicates.

This site gives users the ability to upload videos of any genre and with any sort of content. Based on the popularity of these videos, a user can gain a massive following of subscribers and even make a substantial profit.

Four extremely popular Youtubers that closely resemble the acts of the Marx Brothers are Jake & Logan Paul, and Ethan & Greyson Dolan. As noted by their last names, these four individuals are grouped by their significant other brother. These brothers' relationships and the comedy skits they come up with together are the reasons they have been met with such success.

The Paul brothers have a collective 40 million subscribers - all from videos such as "Being a Dog for the Day," "Funny Pranks," and "Ultimate Onesie Dance Battle." In these videos, the brothers team up together to create funny content and comedy skits for their millions of followers. They have even ventured into the music world by self-producing music videos that

have received 17 million views. Needless to say, the Paul brothers have used their relationship and comedic abilities to make a name for themselves - just as the Marx Brothers did many years before.

The Dolan brothers are two twins who do everything together, including running a Youtube channel with 11 million followers. In their videos, you will find everything from "Starting Our Own Makeup Line," to "Replacing My Brother with a Robot." Their content is scattered, but they always strive to produce content that they know will make their audience laugh. In their videos, they have discussed that everything they do is genuine, improvisational comedy - a trait that hits close to home to the Marx Brothers.

The times are changing, and so are the ways in which we consume entertainment. Unfortunately, today's generation has strayed away from the classic route of things, like going to the movies. The new favored way to get a laugh is logging onto our smartphones and scrolling away on our various social media accounts. 300 hours of videos are uploaded to Youtube every single minute, and over 30 million people visit the site every day.

As we adapt to modern times, the way we view the Marx Brothers and their legacy is going to look a bit different. While the Marx Brothers did black and white satire movies for a small audience that would be reached in theaters, the Dolan twins do high quality, ridiculous comedy videos for a platform that is going to be reached by millions of people in a matter of seconds.

Despite the slight differences, it is clear to see that the legacy of a band of brothers coming together to make people laugh has lived on. The way in which this idea is executed may look a little different from generation to generation, but the spirit of the Marx Brothers and the desire to make an audience laugh remains.

Classic, traditional, and predictably unpredictable



By Matthew Fedczuk

Monkey Business, directed by Norman Z. McLeod and released in 1931, is a silly, whacky story full of classic screwball Marx Brothers antics. Groucho and his brothers stowaway on a cruise ship and pester every person aboard.

What is appreciated about this particular film, is that it's so wholesomely Marx. It's so appropriately their style. Nothing has to do with anything, and it's all dipped in madness.

Although outdated in excess with misogyny frustratingly abound, it's somewhat reasonable that the Marx brothers are still talked about nearly a century on. They made their mark on society and the comedy world with classic and universal bits.

Quick and witty, yet somehow lacking.

The movie draws a chuckle here, and a cringe there, but never brings you to your knees, clutching your sides guffawing.

Its zippy quips seem perfect for fast-paced modern society, but generally its puns are conjured in your mind before the line is finished. Although they are a foundational pillar of historic comedy films we know and love today, this movie would flop if it were released for the first time now.

Suited the chaotic style the brothers thrive off of, the film lacks any real sense of narrative and direction; which is well suited for the Marx brothers, as it opens up room for more pranks and gags, however, its meandering plot leaves quite a bit to be desired.

I found myself frequently bored, as the rapid paced puns start to lose their charm after the same gag repeats itself over and over (and even worse so, if you've watched another Marx brother film in recent days).

Fortunately, the run time of this film is relatively brief, clocking in at only 77 minutes. Any longer, and your brain cells would probably grow Groucho glasses and mustaches of their own.

Nobody wants that.

Given that there isn't any substantial plot, the film could've capped off at 20 minutes and would then retained more of its charm.

Based on its release era, in the midst of the Great Depression, this film's desperate attempt to fill every one of its viewers' breaths with laughter is understandable, and its humor was groundbreaking.

I can't think of any other movie that matches this level of chaos and mischief. If there's anything the Marx brothers do exceptionally, it's making little sense of anything.

2.5/5

Vaudeville: The original variety show

By Cameron Ransom

Vaudeville is known by the textbook definition as a type of entertainment popular chiefly in the U.S. in the early 20th century, featuring a mixture of specialty acts such as burlesque comedy and song and dance.

However, it can be considered as so much more than that — and as the launching pad for the Marx Brothers. The brothers started their career on Vaudeville stages before they came to Broadway and film.

Vaudeville rose to popularity during the mid 1890s and remained popular until the 1930s. It can consist of comedians, acrobats, magicians and even animal acts. It can be compared to a circus in many ways, but the comedy aspect adds a value to it that the circus lacks.

According to Fredonia theatre professor Daniel Lenzian, you could see ten acts for one ticket.

Lenzian, who teaches theatre history, said his definition of Vaudeville is a variety show of varying acts and quality. He believes that this sentiment makes Vaudeville special.

He said that forms of Vaudeville have always existed, although it became more widely known in the late 1800s.

“I think a lot of classic comedic acts take on new forms as time goes by,” he said.

In other words, history repeats itself.

That being said, many early forms of Vaudeville started at concert saloons and variety halls in the early 1860s. However these acts were not nearly as popular as what came to fruition later on. These early forms are now considered “polite Vaudeville.”

The name Vaudeville is an English term derived from the Parisian Boulevard theatre and is possibly derived from the term *vaux-de-vire*, which can be loosely interpreted as

a humorous song or skit. Many acts, like the Marx Brothers, relied on songs and during that time period.

Lenzian said that more times than not, the last act would intentionally be sub-par or downright terrible in order to get people to leave the theatre. He also added that those performances added a comedic element in areas that weren't rooted in comedy.

Some of the more famous performers still



echo in theatrical culture today, Lenzian said. They include the Marx Brothers, Gypsy Rose Lee and Jenny Lind. Each of these three performers can be linked to entertainment today.

Many sitcoms and the jokes in them can be linked to the Marx Brothers as their shows and films centered around skits that all link together to form a plot. Lee had a musical based around her life, which is based off of her 1957 memoirs. Lind is still talked about in movies, though not always historically accurately (specifically in “The Greatest Showman,” where she played a pivotal role in the

downfall of P.T. Barnum).

Vaudeville allowed many new acts to become popular, but all good things must come to an end. The rise of film overshadowed Vaudeville entertainment.

But according to Lenzian, the films at this time still represented somewhat of a variety show — just as Vaudeville had. Many performers, like Judy Garland and the Three Stooges, moved to this venue and became much larger stars.

It became hard for Vaudeville to continue when film was so popular and was blurring the lines between the two. Film drew a larger audience and also many of the Vaudeville stars.

It became abundantly clear in the 1930s that Vaudeville was not going to continue because of the high cost of live performances during the Great Depression.

Similar types of shows such as burlesque and cabaret also declined or changed to fit the way the world was moving. Many have argued that these various forms of art and entertainment have lived on and still continue today, especially Vaudeville.

Lenzian said that “America’s Got Talent,” a popular television competition created by Simon Cowell and broadcast on NBC, is a reflection of Vaudeville. The show contains four judges, most notably Cowell, Howie Mandel, Howard Stern and Sharon Osbourne. It centers around many acts competing to earn a large chunk of money.

Lenzian said acts from Vaudeville, like Gus Visser and his singing duck, were notably similar to acts on the current series. They also have a similar theme of putting terrible performances in their show in order to provide a comical aspect that the audience can enjoy.

Review: Animal Crackers

By Madeline Little

The Great Depression defined the 1930s — The stock market had crashed, businesses closed and many became unemployed.

Homes were lost and so was hope.

Distractions from reality were needed. There were illegal ways (bootleg booze), and then there were the Marx Brothers.

Their movies brought laughs into a country that was filled with tears.

“Animal Crackers” was a decent one of their movies. It had a plot to a certain extent. Definitely way more than “Horse Feathers,” one of their later films, would.

Women had long dresses with gaudy hats and jewelry, and the men wore trench coats.

Also in this time, African Americans weren't really recognized as actors, so you only get a glimpse of them in movies.

In this movie they were the servants who

wore “traditional” tribal wear and carried some form of throne over their heads.

What did surprise me is that women had major parts in this movie.

Groucho Marx played Captain T. Spaulding, the guest of honor at the hotel from Africa.

In all the scenes he appeared in, he cracked jokes or did something funny.

In the first scene he appeared in he begins to sing, dance and rhyme. Once he begins talking, the people in the background continue to sing cutting him off each time.

In another scene, Captain Spaulding asks Mrs. Rittenhouse and Ms. Whitehead, another woman in the movie, can he marry the both of them. He said traditional marriage got boring, and not even their fathers wanted just their mother.

Captain Spaulding was asked to figure out who took the original painting of Roscoe

Chandler, a man from Europe.

We see many couples plot to take it and get to see that there are so many remakes of it.

Mrs. Whitehead and her friend get the butler involved to help steal the painting first.

In this scene we see how a woman can use her looks and influence on men to get what they want.

Mrs. Whitehead's friend has made a remake of the original painting, and tend to swap them out.

Ms. Rittenhouse's daughter and her boyfriend, the artist, plotting to take it for money to have a wedding. The artist has a remake that may even be better than the original. They plan to swap it out as well.

The Professor and Ravelli, who are played by Chico and Harper Marx, may also be the true thieves in the movie.

Harpo always plays mute in the Marx brothers movies. In this particular movie, his mute character was extremely funny.

The Marx Brothers kept America laughing during hard times

By Elyse Grieco

The Marx Brothers have been making America laugh for over 100 years.

But what might be the most interesting thing about the comedy group was their ability to keep the nation laughing during some of the hardest times.

The Marx Brothers were born to Jewish immigrants Simon and Minnie Marx.

Their mother Minnie was originally from East Frisia, Germany and their father Simon was from Alsac, France.

The two married in 1885 and settled in the Yorkville section of the Upper East Side of New York City, a poor neighborhood at the time.

This neighborhood consisted of immigrants from Italian, German and Irish backgrounds.

In 1909, the Marx family relocated to Chicago.

Just five years later, The United States declared war on the German Empire.

World War I is remembered as the first global war.

When the war began, America's Army and National Guard were numbered around 215,000 men combined.

In 1916, The National Defense Act replaced federal law implemented by The Militia Act of 1903.

This act believed in strength in numbers, and ordered an expansion of both military branches.

Originally, President Woodrow Wilson wished to only use those who volunteered to fight.

But due to low numbers of participants, it became clear that a draft would have to take place.

According to the National Archives military records, three registrations took place.

Men ages 18 to 45 were eligible.

"The registration cards consist of approximately 24,000,000 cards for men who registered for the draft, about 23% of the population in 1918," the archives said.

Like most mothers, Minnie was concerned about her sons.

In 1917, she bought a farm in La Grange, south-west Chicago.

According to Groucho in "The Marx Brothers Scrapbook" his mother had heard farmers "who fed the nation" could be exempt from the war.

However, the family was much better comedians than farmers.

Groucho wrote that his family bought

about 200 chickens, but couldn't get any of the hens to lay eggs themselves.

Embarrassed, the brothers would go to the market and buy eggs.

When guests would visit the grange, the brothers would put the store-bought eggs under their chickens.

He also wrote that for a while, they tried to wake up early in the morning like good farmers do, but the brothers truly were not morning people.

increased and families were purchasing items that became everyday essentials such as refrigerators, vacuums, radios and cars.

For the first time in a long time, a vast majority of the nation was experiencing economic security and disposable incomes.

They now had time and money to enjoy leisurely activities such as wearing the latest trends and going to a show.

During this time, the brothers moved back to New York City.



The Marx Brothers grew up amid tough times in New York City.

Despite their mother's efforts, original group member Gummo enlisted in World War I stating that anything was better than being in show business.

The youngest of the brothers, Zeppo, took his place.

After the war, the new decade famously known as the Roaring Twenties brought the brothers monumental success.

Since the war had destroyed a vast majority of Europe, America began producing about half of the world's output.

As manufacturing increased, so did the economy.

Banks were booming and the value of the stock market rocketed.

Stockbrokers allowed consumers to buy stock on margin, also known as borrowed money.

The average household income substantially

The Vaudeville act found themselves on Broadway under Chico's management.

In 1924, the brothers debut with the musical, "I'll Say She Is."

The following year they performed "Cocoanuts," a zany story about the staff and visitors of the fictional Hotel de Cocanuts located in Florida.

In 1928, the brothers performed "Animal Crackers," which depicts the antics of the group after a valuable painting goes missing.

New technology in the '20s brought a shift in the production of movies.

Motion pictures were becoming million dollar projects, and movie theaters were popping up across the nation.

"Talkies," films that included spoken dialogue, were favored over the now out-dated silent films.

The Marx Brothers live comedies were extremely successful around this time, and "Cocoanuts" and "Animal Crackers" were adapted by Paramount studios for the big screen.

From 1931 to 1933, the brothers put out three films - "Monkey Business," "Horse Feathers" and arguably their most famous and funniest film, "Duck Soup."

Chico, Harpo, Groucho and Zeppo quickly became household names.

In September, 1929, the stock prices began to fall.

On October 24, 1929, better known as Black Thursday, a wave of panic swept Wall Street.

For the next five days, the country saw a decrease in the market, leading to it crashing.

The Great Depression was an unfortunate chain of events.

Buying stock had almost become a national pastime during the '20s.

A countless amount of shares ended up worthless and those who bought stock on margin were left with nothing.

The downturn of money led to a slower in production, and factories began to lay off workers who were no longer needed.

These workers found themselves unemployed with little to no income.

Banks were no longer able to support themselves and shut down, leaving those who invested money or bought on credit in debt.

Small business owners and entrepreneurs were forced to close shop.

Nearing the turn of the decade, life seemed to be taking a turn for the worse.

The Marx Brothers continued entertaining America with the films "A Night at the Opera" (1935), "A Day at the Races" (1937) and "Room Service" (1938).

Despite their comedic demeanor, they weren't oblivious to what was going on.

In fact, they knew it wasn't funny at all.

NPR's Robert Smith said in an interview in 2009, "The Marx brothers were obsessed with a different kind of investment. After Groucho finished filming each scene, he'd call his broker."

The Marx Brothers were scheduled to do a show in Baltimore right after the crash and Groucho couldn't go on. He was sick, depressed."

But these movies seemed to keep America laughing when it was needed the most.

Many argue that a common theme between all of these films is the fact that officials, executives and the wealthy always seem to be taunted.

This was something that made their films resonate with common people.

In a time when the middle class had nothing, it was enjoyable to poke fun at the people who were still doing well.

Even if it was in a fictional world.

The end of the depression was brought



The Marx Brothers in their early Vaudeville career, before Broadway and movies

by The United States joining World War II in 1939.

During that time, Germany invaded Poland and once again became the enemy.

The brothers continued to do what they did best- make the nation laugh.

which he later changed to Arthur because of the association with Hitler.

In return, Hitler was not proud of them either. During his reign, Marx Brothers movies were actually banned from the country.

After the war ended in 1946, the group came out with the movie "A Night in Casablanca."

The film revolved around an escaped Nazi war criminal who was murdering hotel managers in hopes of finding his hidden art and treasure.

Those who have studied Marx Brothers films have agreed that there are underlying Jewish references.

They were significantly weirder, wackier and more unpredictable than the other characters in their movies.

It almost always seems as though the group played "the outsiders" of the films.

Many have argued that this "outsider" tactic was on purpose.

This could be a symbol for the way Jewish people have been belittled all throughout history.

Although that theory is more of an observation than a fact, one this

is for certain.

The Marx Brothers are comedic legends, and their ability to make people forget about reality during a disheartening 30 years was undeniably special.



Dorothea Lange's photo of men at the White Angel breadline in San Francisco captures the moment in 1933-34.

During the time of the war, they released "At the Circus" (1939), "Go West" (1940) and "The Big Store" (1941).

The Marx Brothers were not proud of the country their mother was from.

In fact, Harpo's real name was Adolph,

Do the Marx Brothers matter?

By Austin Galago

To ask whether or not the Marx Brothers still matter today, is to ask if the general basis for any kind of comedy still matters today as much as it did back then.

It would be too easy to say, 'of course' and call it a day. Rather, it should be noted just how much the Marx Brothers still matter to today's audiences, whether they actually know it or not.

There's a certain showmanship and intricacy to their work that sticks out a bit compared to the more improv-heavy comedies that have come out of cinemas recently, but it's hard not to see their love of puns, increasingly intricate slapstick and innuendos as something that would inspire many from today.

The group still matters today due to just how pioneering they were in the world of comedy.

Back in the 1930s, a lot of their comedy was fairly new and inventive.

Sure, there had been comedy acts before, but none were quite as zany and inventive as Groucho, Harpo, Zeppo, Chico and Gummo. Even those who have never heard of the Marx Brothers before likely have the group to thank for a lot of their humor, due to just how wide their influence has been since the group originated.

While some might view the Marx Brothers as outdated, many believe them to actually be fairly progressive in a lot of their satire. Even though their movies are stagey, vaudevillian, and almost a century old, they're

still regarded as exemplars of fast-paced, dialogue-driven comedy. Duck Soup still holds up as political satire, particularly in an era of rising authoritarianism. And in all their movies, the favored targets are stuffy, oblivious upper-class people. Yet they punch up, never down," said Dr. Shannon McRae

The targets in a lot of their films are targets that would often be the butt of jokes found in many comedic films today.



"Despite Groucho's being a constant jerk to her, Margaret Dumont with cheery dignity and in an entirely ladylike fashion, always gives back as good as she gets. Unlike so many other figures of their era, they remain recognizable in popular culture," said McRae.

This brings up a fairly important argument as to why the Marx Brothers still matter today. One of the main arguments for their relevance to today is the fact that they are so widely recognized despite the age.

One could argue that the Marx brothers aren't quite on the level as someone like

Chaplin, but they don't have to be in order to be world famous.

Anyone with any basic knowledge of film would be able to spot Groucho's iconic look in a minute, let alone when the entire group is together. It's hard to argue that the group is irrelevant when they have such a strong cultural footprint in American cinema.

While people might not immediately know every film the group has done, most people do tend to know who exactly the group is. While some might point out that the group is only meant for those above a certain age, Vice President of the Fredonia Film Society, Senior Matthew Turner begs to differ.

"Of course I know the group. They're hilarious and their work can't be denied. We probably wouldn't have half of the comedy acts we have today without them," said Turner.

It's hard to picture groups like SNL, or even individual comedic acts, being quite as successful without the Marx Brothers paving the way for them to happen. The Marx Brothers clearly do still matter today as an institution of comedy, and we have them to thank for so much of the wonderfully snarky comedy that we have today.

While not every one of their jokes hit, it's hard not to see their willingness to throw every potential joke at the wall and see what sticks, and it's that willingness that still sticks with so many of us today, nearly a century later.

By Sarah Hughston

Marxonia 'Cocoanuts' review

The Marx Brothers movie, *The Cocoanuts*, begins with a musical number of (for the time) scantily clad dancing women. They look like a Rockettes show: high kicks and smiling faces.

Around them are buff and tough looking men watching the show, while women hang off of their arms and gaze up at their muscles and power in awe.

Frankly, it was exhausting to watch.

According to the *Cocoanuts* script on marx-brothers.org, the scene is described as "an attractive sunbathing woman stretched out languorously in a beach chair. [The camera cuts to] a manly lifeguard [scanning] the beach with binoculars.

"Two adoring lifeguard groupies sit on either side of him, their heads on his shoulders... the lifeguard is presumably observing twenty shapely girls in four rows of five each, wearing matching tank top swimsuits and doing a calisthenics routine that looks suspiciously like a dance number..."

As a woman, many times watching older movies isn't as enjoyable as it should be.

Most of the women are treated with disre-

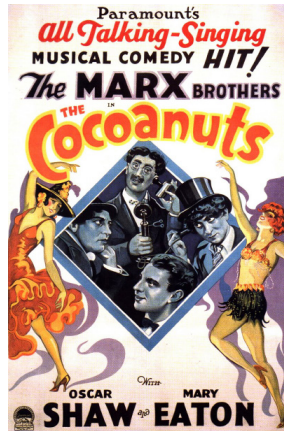
spect, often groped or kissed by men they have little interest in.

It is insulting to watch the characters you are supposed to identify with get objectified repeatedly.

The *Cocoanuts* is no different.

It is so clearly aimed toward an audience that only wants the women to speak when they are saying something complimentary to the men.

Yes, I know it was made in 1929 and it makes



sense for the times. Yes, I know it was revolutionary comedy and is regarded as one of The Marx Brothers' masterpieces. But I'm tired of watching men get praised for making wom-

en the butt of the joke.

In a scene in which Hammer, played by Groucho Marx, is startled by Mrs. Potter, played by Margaret Dumont, she is greeted by him announcing, she was "just the woman [he was] looking for and now, whether [she likes] it or not, [he's] going to tell [her] about Florida real estate."

Mrs. Potter, who tries to interrupt him multiple times, finally says, "Mr. Hammer, will you let me say something, please?"

Hammer, without missing a beat, quickly responds, "I hardly think so," before continuing with his speech about real estate.

This, unfortunately, is still a fairly common experience today.

Getting interrupted in business meetings, assumed unintelligence and being considered "bossy" for being assertive are all consequences faced by women daily for living in a world that continuously promotes sexism. Even more so if you are a woman of color.

Movies, especially comedic ones, are supposed to be an escape for the audience. But when it represents women in a degrading way, it's not much of an escape.

Marx Brothers trivia!

By Jessica Meditz

The Marx Brothers have been dubbed as American comedic legends as they've risen to success on both the stage and screen. However, there is more to these guys than just *Horse Feathers* or *Duck Soup*. Put your knowledge of Groucho, Harpo, Chico, Gummo and Zeppo to the test by checking out these eye-opening and knee-slapping facts about these beloved comics.

1. Which peculiar job did **Harpo Marx** have prior to joining the comedy act?

- a. A shoe shiner
- b. A butcher's errand boy
- c. A ditch digger
- d. A chimney sweeper

2. (Without cheating,) can you say which old Hollywood starlet made an appearance in The Marx Brothers' 1949 film, "Love Happy?"

- a. Rita Hayworth
- b. Judy Garland
- c. Marilyn Monroe
- d. Elizabeth Taylor

3. Which bad habit did **Chico Marx** have that specifically affected the group's career?

- a. Gambling
- b. Smoking
- c. Drinking
- d. Stealing

4. Although we don't really see it, **Groucho** was pretty musically inclined. Which of the following instruments did he play really well?

- a. Harmonica
- b. Piccolo
- c. Piano
- d. Guitar

5. What happened during one of the Marx Brothers' earlier performances in Nacogdoches, Texas?

- a. They were booed off the stage.
- b. They were upstaged by a mule
- c. There was a fire in the theater.
- d. A woman in the audience realized she was in labor.

1. Harpo was a butcher's errand boy

Born and raised in the tenements of Harlem, New York City, the Marx Brothers had humble beginnings before their claim to fame in the world of comedy. This is especially true for Harpo Marx, the group's second oldest brother, as he ran errands for a local butcher. He did so until 1907, when the boys' mother, Minnie Marx, set up the boys' first stage gig as a singing group. Perhaps this job is the reason why Harpo's hands were nimble enough to play the harp!

2. A young Marilyn Monroe made an appearance in 1949 film, "Love Happy."

The Marx Brothers entered retirement with a bang with "Love Happy" as their final appearance together. The notorious film featured a 23-year-old Marilyn Monroe, one could even say she was still in her Norma Jeane era. She played the role of Sam Grunion's (Groucho's) client. No argument on who the most eye-catching in this film was!

3. Chico had a gambling problem.

After many reckless attempts at gambling and losing, Chico's luck finally came around one day, winning him a large sum of cash. This event affected not only him, but the Marx Brothers as a group, due to the fact that Chico invested in hiring the Casino Theater on Broadway. They then had their Broadway breakthrough with their show, "I'll Say She Is" — their "edgy" humor graced the sophisticated stages of Broadway. Maybe Chico's the reason the lottery tells us to play responsibly, since he was in debt for most of his life as he continued to gamble.

4. Groucho was secretly a stellar guitar player.

It's no surprise to see Chico on the piano or Harpo playing a harp in a Marx Brothers film. according to Will Rogers, however, Groucho can play the guitar as well as his brothers play their respective instruments, but he "never does." He's briefly seen

strumming a guitar in the Marx Brothers' 1932 film "Horse Feathers," but other than that, you probably would never guess. In addition to the guitar, Groucho dabbled in singing. He's often seen singing, including when he sang a song for Queen in the '70s. Two of Queen's albums were named after Marx Brothers films. Can you guess which ones?

5. Yes, the Marx Brothers were upstaged by a mule.

While performing on a small stage in Nacogdoches, Texas, the Marx Brothers were interrupted mid-tune when a man shouted, "MULE'S LOOSE!" through the theater doors. The majority of the audience leapt from their seats and left the theater to see what the commotion was about. After the mule situation was settled, the crowd shuffled back into the theater. The Brothers wound up scratching their original performance plan and started improvising dialogue. The audience loved their presence, and many say this moment is what birthed the Marx Brothers' stardom.



What ever happened to the other Marx Brothers?

By Aidan Pollard

Groucho, Zeppo, Harpo, Chico and Gummo all left a permanent mark on comedy with their works as The Marx Brothers, but only Groucho continued to make waves after the troupe stopped producing films.

Chico Marx, the oldest of the five, fell victim to a severe gambling habit.

He continued performing throughout his time after the Marx Brothers, but he was often reduced to small halls and theaters where he and the other brothers had begun their careers.

The Marx Brothers final film, "A Night in Casablanca," was produced to help Chico get back out of the hole.

His habit was severe to the point that his brothers had to put him on an allowance until he died at the age of 74 in October, 1961.

Gummo Marx left the group early.

While they were still a vaudeville act, Gummo joined the military during World War I.

He said in an interview that he never enjoyed being on stage, and his place in the group was taken over by Zeppo after he left.

After the army he got into the raincoat business, and headed a theatrical agency with Zeppo.

He spent time as a talent agent as well. He worked with Groucho for the T.V. show "The Life of Reilly," which he also helped develop.

Zeppo was the last surviving Marx Brother.

He died in 1979 at the age of 78.

After the fifth Marx Brothers film, Zeppo left the group and began a car company.

The company developed the clamps which held the Fat Man inside the B-29 bomber that flew over Nagasaki in World War II.

He also obtained patents for a wristwatch that monitored heart rate, as well as a therapeutic pad that delivered heat to a medical patient.

Zeppo was married twice — once to Marion Bimberg Benda and once to Barbara Blakeley.

During his relationship with Blakely, Zeppo was incredibly obsessive

and did not take kindly to her speaking with other men.

Zeppo was often caught by Blakely with other women, and eventually Blakely herself had an affair with the couples' friend, Frank Sinatra. The two divorced in 1973.

Harpo continued his performance career long after the Marx Brothers was over.

He toured Russia as a comedian and goodwill ambassador in 1933. He also appeared in a 1936 Disney animated film "Mickey's Polo Team."

Disney also featured Harpo, alongside Groucho and Chico, in the Silly Symphony "Mother Goose Goes Hollywood."

Harpo also began painting, and a few of his works can be found in his autobiography, Harpo Speaks!

He appeared on the sitcom "I Love Lucy" as well as many other television appearances including "General Electric Theater," "The DuPont Show with June Allyson" and "The Red Skelton Show."

Additionally, he recorded harp albums for RCA and Mercury Records.

Harpo died at age 75 in September, 1964, on his 28th wedding anniversary with his wife Susan Fleming.

Groucho was the most prolific Marx Brother post-troupe.

He hosted a radio show called "You Bet Your Life" from 1947 to 1950. The show then moved to be on both T.V. and radio until 1960, and then in 1961, the show became television-exclusive.

Groucho had an illustrious television career, starring in multiple shows and sitcoms.

He was also an interim host for The Tonight Show while it was between hosts Jack Paar and Johnny Carson.

Groucho was the host to announce Johnny Carson taking over the show.

Groucho staged a one-man show in Carnegie Hall, which was released as a double-album.

His final major public appearance was to receive an honorary Academy Award at the 1974 Oscars.

Groucho died at age 86 in August, 1977, after a battle with pneumonia.



In search of signs of the brothers Marx

By Giovanna Vancheri

In today's world, it may seem that the Marx Brothers are losing their influence. They are becoming decreasingly recognizable to the younger generations.

In fact, before I came to Freedonia and was introduced to "Freedonia Marxonia," I had only heard of Groucho and didn't realize he had famous brothers.

The first time I was introduced to them was in Garry Marshall's *The Princess Diaries*, a movie I grew up watching. The line, which references Groucho, is used when the main character is getting a makeover. Her stylist says to her, "If Brooke Shields married Groucho Marx, their child would have your eyebrows."

The movie is from 2001, decades after the Marx Brothers were in their heyday. That is probably also the first time a lot of people in my generation were introduced to them.

The joke was most likely included to appeal to the parents of the kids watching, but it definitely stuck with me. Though I had never actually seen him, I had my own picture of Groucho Marx painted in my head.

The references to anything "Marx" these days seems to revolve solely around Groucho and his eyebrows. Eyebrows, however, are having a big moment in the fashion world, so maybe he's got more influence than we think.

In an interesting crossover of 1930s comedy and modern-day comedy, Groucho appears as a special character in an episode of *Family Guy*. His usual cigar was replaced with a joint, which is a clear symbol of the changing times in itself.

Family Guy is one of the most popular comedy shows in the country, and has been for nearly 20 years.

The type of humor used in the series is clearly derivative of the Marx Brothers' style, so this homage helps connect the two eras of comedy.

In addition to Groucho's special appearance, another *Family Guy* episode parodied "Duck Soup," the Marx Brothers film.

The famous mirror scene from "Duck Soup" is another gag that has been used in countless comedies since. This time, it is Stewie and Adolf Hitler mimicking each other's reflection.

Though the Marx Brothers' presence might not be as obvious in other comedy series, it is definitely still there. In an article for BBC Entertainment, John McKie analyzed how the Marx Brothers hold their appeal in today's world.

scheme to assassinate North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un.

Upon its release, the movie sparked a strong response, most of which was fear and anxiety. Furthermore, Sony Pictures studio famously became hacked and terrorist threats

were sent to the film's premiere.

It is almost impossible not to see the connection between this movie and the Marx Brothers' "Duck Soup."

In his BBC article, McKie compared "The Interview" to "Duck Soup." *Duck Soup* is about a fictional country called Freedonia, of which Groucho Marx is named dictator.

Both movies are satirical and were released at times of intense tension in the world.

If a film like "The Interview" was able to produce such a strong sense of shock in 2016, I can't imagine what the response was in the pre-World War II era when "Duck Soup" was released.

Though they may not be as recognizable among today's generation, the Marx Brothers paved the way for other absurd, slapstick comedy acts. Irreverent humor is popular today, and that sense of contemptuous comedy seems to define the Marx Brothers' act.

This was explored by Donald Liebenson in a 2016 *Vanity Fair* article about the comedy quartet. He argues that their sense of humor is more impactful now than it ever was, even in the height of their fame.

"But now? The Marx Brothers would appear to be made for these fractious times, when institutions ranging from the media and the political establishment to colleges are viewed with heightened partisan skepticism," Liebenson said.

"It's impossible not to think of any of the current presidential candidates when, in 'Duck Soup,' Groucho sings, 'If you think this country's bad off now, just wait till I get through with it.'"

No matter how hidden it may be, their influence is very much present in comedy culture today, and we can still find pieces of the Marx Brothers as long as we look for them.



Groucho makes a joint appearance with the "Family Guy" cast.

"Slapstick and situational comedy is alive and well today," Cooper said.

"Shows like *Modern Family* have a hint of that same sort of deadpan ridiculousness," said McKie in an interview with Alice Cooper, an unlikely but close companion of



Groucho's.

In 2014, James Franco and Seth Rogen released their very controversial movie, "The Interview." The plot of the movie is about two television producers, played by Franco and Rogen, who go to North Korea with a

Drawing the line from the Marx Brothers to Seinfeld and Beyond

By Eriketa Cost

When turning on the TV to watch whatever sitcom is on, you don't ever think about the roots.

For example, what influenced "The Office," or "Friends"?

What influenced the sitcoms that influenced "The Office" and "Friends"?

It starts with roots that trace back to France and Germany, and the Marx Brothers are just one example of how America adopted these comedic ideas.

By just studying a Marx Brothers movie, like "Duck Soup" or "Horse Feathers," you'll notice some common tropes that repeat themselves in sitcoms of today.

Let's take the sitcom "Seinfeld" for example. What elements of the show made "Seinfeld," "Seinfeld?"

If you've seen the show before, you may envision Kramer busting through the door. Or maybe George Costanza's slow wit, terrible attempts at picking up women, and the way he shoved shrimp in his mouth during an office meeting.

Some of these elements are examples of physical comedy — that's when actors use their body to make sounds, stunts, illusions and effects, and violence.

It originates from slapstick humor, which also falls under this category.

Collins dictionary defines slapstick as, "a simple type of comedy in which the actors behave in a rough and foolish way...crude comedy in which the humor depends upon violent activity, horseplay, etc."

Patrick Bromley, in his article "What is Slapstick Comedy?" says slapstick began to evolve into a form of comedy that used violence less. He said, "By the time of the early 20th century, movies started incorporating slapstick in other ways that didn't always involve violence. This can also be referred to as physical comedy."

Let's look at a Seinfeld scene that uses this physical comedy in the episode, "The Junior Mint."

Kramer and Jerry watch a surgical procedure in an operating room. Kramer pulls out a box of junior mints, distracting Jerry. Jerry, annoyed, begins to bicker with Kramer and the two fumble over the box and lose control of a junior mint that flies out and soars across the room. We hear a "plop" sound, and it's implied that the mint lands right into the area of the exposed patient on the operating table.

Later, we learn that the patient survives by "some miracle from above," implying that somehow the junior mint feud ended up sav-



ing a life.

This is just one example of the many ways a show like "Seinfeld" can use physical noises, fumbles and mishaps as comedy.

But early comedians like Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin and eventually the Marx Brothers all adopted this type of comedy from European Vaudeville. Starting in Normandy and spreading all throughout Europe, Vaudeville of the early 18th century involved pantomime, chorus, musical drama and dialogue. The influence of vaudeville can be seen in the many musical dialogues in Marx Brothers movies. In fact, the Marx Brothers were born in New York City to Jewish immigrants from Germany and France. Their mother was involved in show business, and had a brother who was successful in Vaudeville.

The Marx Brothers essentially created comedic scenes that would be reused in future comedic acts, like "Seinfeld."

The "Seinfeld" episode "The Pothole" features a scene where Elaine hides in a janitorial closet. Kramer enters, followed by Costanza and then Seinfeld himself. The door keeps knocking, and more people keep entering. It turns out they are all just waiting for Chinese food delivery, but the zaniness and chaoticness of the cramped space is what makes it funny.

This can be seen in the Marx Brothers movie "A Night At The Opera." The gang claims a cabin closet as their own "room." They get knocks on the door from maid service, an engineer, a beauty stylist, the engineer assistant, and a wandering woman who is looking for her grandmother. A whole

two minutes of characters entering a crowded cabin space, stumbling over one another, Harpo passing out, and a chaotic avalanche of people falling out the door when the last person opens up.

If you talk to a friend or family member who grew up watching Seinfeld, chances are they were exposed to some Marx Brothers, too.

My friend Christian Garzone loved the movie "Duck Soup" as a kid.

"The use of situational and physical comedy in films by the Marx Brothers can be seen re-purposed in TV shows like "Seinfeld," he said.

"Like the Marx Brothers, Jerry Seinfeld and his co-stars cleverly make use of everyday, mundane events, coupled with quirky characters. Both the Marx Brothers and Seinfeld usually accomplished all this with a 'comedy of errors' twist," said

Garzone.

"Nothing seems to go really right in these scenarios. The same style can be seen in films by Laurel & Hardy and The Three Stooges, although those can fall into a harder slapstick genre," he said.

Garzone was influenced by comedy his whole life, leading him to gain an interest in theater and attend New York Film Academy for acting school.

Mike Igoe, in his documentary of SUNY Fredonia's Freedonia Marxonia event, interviews director of the National Comedy Center Journey Gunderson about the influence of Marx Brothers on the comedy of today.

"Without the Marx Brothers, theoretically there wouldn't have been Caddyshack, or the Ghostbusters," she said in the interview.

"Films like Bridesmaids, or Animal House might not have been as funny or even existed without the artists that came before them," said Gunderson.

I tried to reach out to Jerry Seinfeld himself, and Larry David for their thoughts, but was unable to get in touch.

So the next time you watch a sitcom, try to notice recurring motifs or comedic themes pulled from other shows.

You can assure that when Kramer bursts through the door, or falls and stumbles over himself trying to get a seat on the subway, it was probably done at least once by Groucho Marx or Buster Keaton.

These shows wouldn't be what they are now without the comedians that came before them.