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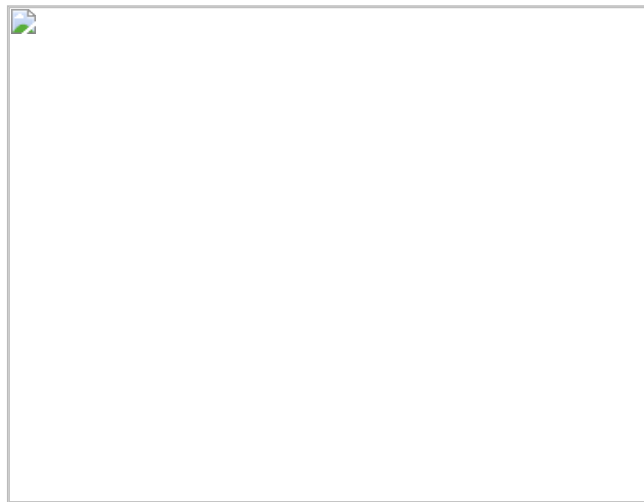
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KNUCKLEHEADS IN NEW JERSEY? WHY SOITENLY!

By Molly Golubcow

Posted: 7/22/2014



The Three Stooges, Larry, Curly, and Moe

In the 1960s, kids all around the Delaware Valley would run home from school to catch “The Sally Starr Show.” Our Gal Sal, dressed to the cowgirl nines in pointy boots, sequin stars on fringed shirts, and a not sure-how-many-gallon cowboy hat, would host an hour of Popeye cartoons along with hilarious Three Stooges shorts. On several occasions, Moe and Larry made guest appearances on her TV show. Seeing the real Moe and Larry was a thrill and half—although a bit odd for a kid to seeing movie heroes looking slightly older and worn out compared to their movies.

What a hoot those guys were, on stage and on film! Whether imitating college professors, plumbers, doctors (“Dr. Howard, paging Dr. Howard!”), or even Hitler-like fascists, the Three Stooges really knew how to get a laugh with slapstick humor and an armory of insults. The Stooges, whose popularity entertained live audiences from 1930s Burlesque days to short films and movies into the early 1960s, remain comic icons even today. From “Nyuck-nyuck-nyuck” to “wub-wub-wub,” their antics are still loved and impersonated.

Today, some look at their poking and slapping as too violent. However, violence on TV may be in the eye (“pick two”) of the beholder. Don Hurley, producer for the Ed Hurst and The Steel Pier Radio Show on WPG Talk Radio 1450, has been a fan for as long as he can remember. Hurley explains, “Even though they slapped each other around now and then, we never viewed it as violence because in the end they were always there for one another.”

Atlantic City Bound

Although the Stooges hailed from New York (brothers Moe, Shemp, and Curly Howard) and Philadelphia (Larry Fine), the comedians had many ties to New Jersey. Their first performance in Atlantic City was at Steel Pier on July 24, 1936. For two nice Jewish boys from Brooklyn (Moe and Curly) and a Jewish boy from Philadelphia (Larry), performing at the legendary Steel Pier in Atlantic City must have been just as thrilling for them as it was for the eager audiences that filled the Music Hall.



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Times were tough and money was tight, but for considerably less than a dollar, Steel Pier offered a day of first run movies, live acts, top notch entertainers, and plenty of “nyucks” if the Stooges were in town.

In addition to Steel Pier gigs, The Three Stooges also appeared on Million Dollar Pier in 1937. In the 1930s, Million Dollar Pier (now The Pier Shops at Caesars) entertained audiences with circus acts, dance marathons, and big band acts as well as show business headliners like the Stooges. Garden Pier, now home to the Atlantic City Historical Society and Arts Center, also boasted quite a list of live acts when the Stooges performed there in 1938.

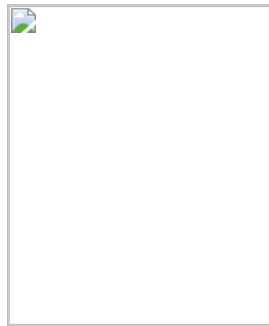
Movie Times

After 1942, the Stooges did not perform again in Atlantic City until the late 50s. Film and TV became the most popular way to entertain America, and the Stooges were very much a part of that trend. From the 1930s to 1950s, The Three Stooges made over 190 shorts for Columbia Pictures. It was not until August 9, 1959 that the Stooges returned to Steel Pier to entertain another generation of Stooges fans. By then the trio included Joe Besser as the third Stooge, having succeeded both Curly, who suffered a debilitating stroke in 1946, and Shemp, who died in 1955.

In addition to live performances in Atlantic City, the Stooges and Atlantic City intersected at the movie world as well. In 1935, Shemp co-starred as a small time hood in “Convention Girl”—a serious drama about an Atlantic City prostitute (who wears some fantastic Art Deco style gowns) longing to escape her “sordid” life and find true love. The movie was filmed on location at the shore capturing nostalgic scenes of 1930s Atlantic City including the Steel Pier diving horse, rolling chairs, beach attire and mores, the Boardwalk, and back room gambling, of course.

Stooges – In Person

Not only did the Stooges have professional ties to Atlantic City, but they also had personal connections as well. Larry Fine made the shore his residence. Because of his devil-may-care attitude and his wife’s dislike for housekeeping, the fun-loving couple lived in the President Hotel on Albany Avenue and the Boardwalk. The Fines lived there for many years raising their daughter, Phyllis, until moving out to Hollywood.



Larry Fine

Since Larry made AC his home, people would often see him on the beach and the Boardwalk clowning around and kibitzing with fans. In the early 1970s, Hurley and his brother came upon Larry sitting on a bench on the Boardwalk. Although Larry had suffered a debilitating stroke by then, he still managed to speak to the brothers. Hurley recalls, “We had the chance to thank him, as ten-year old boys could, for all of the joy that he and his partners had brought us through the years. Larry could not have been nicer to a couple of idolizing young boys.”

Even today, the Stooges are remembered in the Delaware Valley. For example, the building where Larry was born is now a Philly landmark, Jon’s Bar and Grille, at the corner of 3rd and South Streets. In addition to the mural of Larry’s unique face brightly painted on the side of the building, the restaurant displays some Stooges memorabilia.

Stoogeum?

If you take a building and add Stooges photos, memorabilia, and personal items, what do you get? The Stoogeum, of course. Nestled in Ambler, PA, just outside of Philadelphia, the 10,000 square-foot, 3-story building displays some Stooges treasures including Larry’s driver’s license and Shemp’s U.S. Army discharge. Movie props that the trio used are also on display ranging from the



8 captures
9 Aug 2014 - 12 Aug 2016

http://jerseymanmagazine.com/stooges.php

Go

JUL AUG MAR
2013 2014 2016

13

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whether you are a casual fan or a Stogie-aholic, The Stoggeum has a poke and a jab for you. While wandering through the museum and, perhaps, taking in a Stooges film or perusing the hundreds of rare and candid photos capturing 50 years of Stooges history, don't be surprised if you bump into more than one Moe or Curly impersonator! Surreal, to say the least.

Gary Lassin, owner and curator of the Stoggeum, has acquired an impressive collection of Stogie "stuff" including original costumes, scripts, movie props, and the actors' personal effects. Lassin, who married Larry's grandniece, continues to maintain the nyuck factor for Stogie admirers young and old. When asked what he thinks the fellas would think of a museum devoted to their lives and careers Lassin simply replies, "It's the perfect place for Stooges fans to have their ashes scattered over." A little over the top? Hey, it's the Stooges museum, you knucklehead, not the Louvre!

Long Live The Three Stooges

Imagine the trio today on a casino floor, armed with their signature whipped cream pies, of course. Can't you just see the pies plopping all over bus tour ladies at the penny slots, dripping down lacy bustiers of bewildered cocktail waitresses, and all over the tailored suits of pit bosses? Yes, that would be a sight. Unfortunately, the Stooges have all gone up to comedy heaven. But, if the boys could, they would "soitenly" think what a hoot it would be to come back to New Jersey and frolic around again—Stooges style.

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