The Three Stooges
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The Three Stooges

The Three Stooges were an American vaudeville and comedy act of the early to mid–20th century best known for their numerous short subject films. Their hallmark was physical farce and extreme slapstick. In films, the Stooges were commonly known by their first names: "Moe, Larry, and Curly" and "Moe, Larry, and Shemp," among other lineups. The film trio was originally composed of Moe Howard, brother Shemp Howard and Larry Fine. Curly Howard replaced brother Shemp, who later returned when Curly suffered a debilitating stroke in May 1946.

After Shemp's death from a heart attack in November 1955, he was replaced by comedian Joe Besser, after the use of film actor Joe Palma to film four Shemp-era shorts. Ultimately, Joe DeRita (nicknamed "Curly Joe") replaced Joe Besser by 1958. The act regained momentum throughout the 1960s as popular kiddie fare until Larry's paralyzing stroke in January 1970 effectively marked the end of the act proper. Moe tried unsuccessfully one final time to revive the Stooges with longtime supporting actor Emil Sitka filling in for Larry. Larry ultimately succumbed to a series of additional strokes in January 1975, followed by Moe, who died of lung cancer in May 1975.

History

Ted Healy and his stooges

The Three Stooges started in 1925 as part of a raucous vaudeville act called 'Ted Healy and His Stooges' (a.k.a. 'Ted Healy and His Southern Gentlemen', 'Ted Healy and His Three Lost Souls' and 'Ted Healy and His Racketeers'—the moniker 'Three Stooges' was never used during their tenure with Healy). In the act, lead comedian Healy would attempt to sing or tell jokes while his noisy assistants would keep "interrupting" him. Healy would respond by verbally and physically abusing his stooges. Brothers Moe and Shemp were joined later that year by violinist-comedian Larry Fine, and Fred Sanborn joined the group as well.
The original Three Stooges in their film debut, *Soup to Nuts*. Many fans forget that Shemp Howard (far left) was the original third Stooge before his youngest brother Curly Howard assumed the role.

In 1930, Ted Healey and His Stooges (including Sanborn) appeared in their first Hollywood feature film, *Soup to Nuts*, released by Fox Film Corporation. The film was not a success with the critics, but the Stooges' performances were singled out as memorable, leading Fox to offer the trio a contract minus Healey. This enraged the prickly Healy, who told studio executives that the Stooges were his employees. The offer was withdrawn, and after Howard, Fine and Howard learned of the reason, they left Healy to form their own act, which quickly took off with a tour of the theatre circuit. Healy attempted to stop the new act with legal action, claiming they were using his copyrighted material. There are accounts of Healy threatening to bomb theaters if Howard, Fine and Howard ever performed there, which worried Shemp so much that he almost left the act; reportedly, only a pay raise kept him on board. Healy tried to save his act by hiring replacement stooges, but they were inexperienced and not as well-received as their predecessors. In 1932, with Moe now acting as business manager, Healy reached a new agreement with his former Stooges, and they were booked in a production of Jacob J. Shubert's *The Passing Show of 1932*. During rehearsals, Healy received a more lucrative offer and found a loophole in his contract allowing him to leave the production. Shemp, fed up with Healy's abrasiveness, decided to quit the act and found work almost immediately, in Vitaphone movie comedies produced in Brooklyn, New York.

With Shemp gone, Healy and the two remaining stooges (Moe and Larry) needed a replacement, so Moe suggested his younger brother Jerry Howard. Healy reportedly took one look at Jerry, who had long chestnut red locks and a handlebar mustache, and remarked that he did not look like he was funny. Jerry left the room and returned a few moments later with his head shaved (though his mustache remained for a time), and then quipped "Boy, do I look girly." Healy heard "Curly," and the name stuck. (There are varying accounts as to how the Curly character actually came about.)

In 1933, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) signed Healy and his Stooges to a movie contract. They appeared in feature films and short subjects, either together, individually, or with various combinations of actors. The trio was featured in a series of musical comedy shorts, beginning with *Nertsery Rhymes*. The short was one of a few shorts to be made with an early two-strip Technicolor process, including one featuring Curly without Healy or the other Stooges, *Roast Beef and Movies* (1934). The shorts themselves were built around recycled film footage of production numbers cut from MGM musicals, such as *Children of Pleasure*, *Lord Byron of Broadway*, and the unfinished *March of Time* (all 1930), which had been filmed in early Technicolor. Soon, additional shorts followed (sans the experimental Technicolor), including *Beer and Pretzels* (1933), *Plane Nuts* (1933), and *The Big Idea* (1934).

Healy and company also appeared in several MGM feature films as comic relief, such as *Turn Back the Clock* (1933), *Meet the Baron* (1933), *Dancing Lady* (1933), *Fugitive Lovers* (1934), and *Hollywood Party* (1934). Healy and the Stooges also appeared together in *Myrt and Marge* for Universal Pictures.

In 1934, the team's contract with MGM expired, and the Stooges parted professional company with Healy. According to Moe Howard's autobiography, the Stooges split with Ted Healy in 1934 once and for all because of Healy's alcoholism and abrasiveness. Their final film with Healy was MGM's 1934 film, *Hollywood Party*. Both Healy and the Stooges went on to separate successes, with Healy dying under mysterious circumstances in 1937.
The Columbia years: Moe, Larry and Curly

In 1934, the trio (now officially christened "The Three Stooges") signed on to appear in two-reel comedy short subjects for Columbia Pictures. In Moe's autobiography, he said they each got $600 per week on a one-year contract with a renewable option;[2] in the Ted Okuda–Edward Watz book The Columbia Comedy Shorts, the Stooges are said to have received $1,000 between them for their first Columbia effort, Woman Haters, and then signed a term contract for $7,500 per film, to be divided among the trio.[3]

Within their first year at Columbia, the Stooges became wildly popular. Realizing this, Columbia Pictures president Harry Cohn used the Stooges as leverage, as the demand for their films was so great that Columbia eventually refused to supply exhibitors with the trio's shorts unless they also agreed to book some of the studio's mediocre B movies. Cohn also saw to it that the Stooges remain ignorant of their popularity. During their 23 years spent at Columbia, the Stooges were never completely aware of their amazing drawing power at the box office. As their contracts with the studio included an open option that had to be renewed every year, Cohn would tell the boys that the short subjects were in decline, which was not a complete fabrication ("The market for comedy shorts is dying out, fellahs."). Thinking theirs days were numbered, the Stooges would sweat it out each and every year, with Cohn signing the trio up for another year at the last minute. This cruel deception kept the insecure Stooges unaware of their true value, resulting in them having second thoughts about asking for a better contract without a yearly option. Cohn's scare tactics worked for all 23 years the Stooges were at Columbia; the team never once asked for—or were they ever given—a salary increase. It was not until after they stopped making the shorts in December 1957 did Moe learn of the game Cohn was playing, what a valuable commodity the Stooges had been for the ailing studio, and how many millions more the act could have earned.[3]

The Stooges were required to churn out up to eight short films per year within a 40-week period; for the remaining 12 or so weeks, they were free to pursue other employment. Usually, the Stooges would either spend this time with their families or tour the country promoting their live act.[4] The Stooges appeared in 190 film shorts and five features while at Columbia. Del Lord directed more than three dozen Stooge film; Jules White directed dozens more, and his brother Jack White directed several under the pseudonym "Preston Black".

According to a published report,[5] Moe, Larry, and director Jules White considered their best film to be You Nazty Spy!. This 18-minute short subject starred Moe as "Moe Hailstone", an Adolf Hitler-like character, and satirized the Nazis in a period when America was still neutral and resolutely isolationist. Curly played a Herman Goering character, replete with medals, and Larry a Ribbentrop-type ambassador. You Nazty Spy! was the first Hollywood film to spoof Hitler, as it was released in January, 1940, nine months before Charlie Chaplin's The Great Dictator. Reportedly this film caused the Stooges to be placed on Hitler's so-called "death list" because of its anti-Nazi stance. Chaplin, along with Jack Benny, would also be on this list due to their later anti-Nazi films. The Stooges made occasional guest appearances in feature films, though generally they stuck to short subjects. Columbia offered theater owners an entire program of two-reel comedies (15 to 25 titles annually) featuring such stars as Buster Keaton, Andy Clyde, Charley Chase, and Hugh Herbert, but the Three Stooges shorts were the most popular of all.[1]

Curly was easily the most popular member of the team.[1] His childlike mannerisms and natural comedic charm (he had no previous acting experience) made him a hit with audiences. The fact that Curly had to shave his head for the act led him to feel unappealing to women. To mask his insecurities, Curly ate and drank excessively and caroused whenever the Stooges made personal appearances, which was approximately seven months out of the year. His weight ballooned in the 1940s, and his blood pressure was dangerously high.[6] His wild lifestyle and constant drinking eventually caught up with him in 1945, and his performances suffered. In his last dozen shorts (ranging
from 1945's *If a Body Meets a Body* through 1947's *Half-Wits Holiday*, he was seriously ill, struggling to get through even the most basic scenes.\[1\]

It was during the final day of filming *Half-Wits Holiday* on May 6, 1946 that Curly suffered a debilitating stroke on the set, ending his 14-year career. Curly's health necessitated a temporary retirement from the act, and while the Stooges hoped for a full recovery, Curly never starred in a film again. He did make one brief cameo appearance in the third film after Shemp returned to the trio, *Hold That Lion!* It was the only film that contained all four of the original Stooges (the three Howard brothers + Larry) on screen simultaneously; Jules White recalled Curly visiting the set one day, and White had him do this bit for fun. (Curly's cameo appearance was recycled in the 1953 remake *Booty and the Beast*.\[2\]) In 1949, Curly was supposed to play a cameo role in the Stooge comedy *Malice in the Palace*, but he was physically unable to perform. His chef role was played by Larry.

**Shemp returns**

Moe Howard turned to his older brother Shemp Howard to take Curly's place. Shemp, however, was hesitant to rejoin the Stooges, as he had a successful solo career at the time of Curly's untimely illness. However, he realized that Moe and Larry's careers would be finished without the Stooge act. Shemp wanted some kind of assurance that his rejoining was indeed temporary, and that he could leave the Stooges once Curly recovered. Unfortunately, Curly remained gravely ill after 1950, dying of a cerebral hemorrhage caused by additional strokes on January 18, 1952.

Shemp appeared with the Stooges in 76 more shorts and a quickie Western comedy feature titled *Gold Raiders*. Upon Shemp's return, the quality of the films picked up (the last few Curly efforts were marred by his sluggish performances). Entries like *Out West*, *Squareheads of the Round Table*, and *Punchy Cowpunchers* proved that there was life after Curly, and that Shemp could easily hold his own. Though some say he lacked his younger brother's childlike charisma, Shemp was a gifted, professional comedian. More often than not, his astute gift of comedic timing buoys weak material. In fact, one the finest entries in the series, *Brideless Groom*, was made during this period.\[3\]

Another interesting plus from the Shemp era was that Larry was given more time on screen. Throughout most of the Curly era, Larry was relegated to a background role, only being called upon to break up a potential scuffle between Moe and Curly. By the time Shemp rejoined the Stooges, Larry was allotted equal footage, even becoming the focus of several films (*Fuelin' Around*, *He Cooked His Goose*).\[3\]

During this period, Moe, Larry, and Shemp made a pilot for a *Three Stooges* television show called *Jerks of All Trades* in 1949. The series was never picked up, although the pilot is currently in the public domain and is available on home video, as is an early television appearance from around the same time on a vaudeville-style comedy series, *Camel Comedy Caravan*, originally broadcast live on CBS-TV on March 11, 1950 and starring Ed Wynn. Also available commercially is a kinescope of Moe, Larry, and Shemp's appearance on *The Frank Sinatra Show*, broadcast live over CBS-TV on January 1, 1952. Frank Sinatra was reportedly a big fan of the Stooges and slapstick comedy in general. On this broadcast, the Stooges are joined by one of their longtime stock-company members, Vernon Dent, who plays "Mr. Mortimer", a party-goer who requests a drink. The Stooges oblige with disastrous results.
Columbia's short-subject division downsized in 1952. Producer Hugh McCollum was discharged and director Edward Bernds resigned out of loyalty to McCollum, leaving only Jules White to both produce and direct the Stooges' remaining Columbia comedies. Production was significantly faster, with the former four-day filming schedules now tightened to two or three days. In another cost-cutting measure, White would create a "new" Stooge short by borrowing footage from old ones, setting it in a slightly different storyline, and filming a few new scenes often with the same actors in the same costumes. White was initially very subtle when recycling older footage: he would reuse only a single sequence of old film, re-edited so cleverly that it was not easy to detect. The later shorts were cheaper and the recycling more obvious, with as much as 75% of the running time consisting of old footage. White came to rely so much on older material that he could film the "new" shorts in a single day. Three years after Curly's death, Shemp Howard died of a sudden heart attack at age 60 on November 22, 1955. Archived footage of Shemp, combined with new footage of Joe Palma, were used to complete the last four films originally planned with Shemp: Rumpus in the Harem, Hot Stuff, Scheming Schemers, and Commotion on the Ocean.

**Joe Besser replaces Shemp**

Joe Besser replaced Shemp in 1956, appearing in 16 shorts. Besser, noting how one side of Larry Fine's face seemed "calloused"[7] had a clause in his contract specifically prohibiting him from being hit too hard (though this restriction was later lifted). Besser was the only "third" Stooge that dared to hit Moe back in retaliation and get away with it; Larry Fine was also known to hit Moe on occasion, but always with serious repercussions. "I usually played the kind of character who would hit others back," Besser recalled[8]

With Besser on board, the Stooge films began to resemble sitcoms. Sitcoms, though, were now available for free. Television was the new popular medium, and by the time Besser joined the act, the Stooges were generally considered throwbacks to an obsolete era. In addition, Moe and Larry were growing older, and could not perform pratfalls and physical comedy as they once had. The inevitable occurred soon enough. Columbia was the last studio still producing shorts, and the market for such films had all but dried up. As a result, the studio opted not to renew the Stooges' contract when it expired in late December 1957. The final comedy produced was Flying Saucer Daffy, filmed on December 19–20, 1957.[4] Several days later, the Stooges were unceremoniously fired from Columbia Pictures after 24 years of making low-budget shorts. Joan Howard Maurer, daughter of Moe, wrote the following in 1982:
The Three Stooges had suddenly come to an end. They were at Columbia one day and gone the next—no ‘Thank yous,’ no farewell party for their 24 years of dedication and service and the dollars their comedies had reaped for the studio.

Moe Howard recalled that a few weeks after their exit from Columbia, he drove to the studio to say goodbye to several studio executives when he was stopped by a guard at the gate (obviously, not a Stooges fan) and, since he did not have the current year's studio pass, was refused entry. For the moment, it was a crushing blow.[6]

Although the Stooges were no longer working for Columbia, the studio had enough completed films on the shelf to keep releasing new comedies for another 18 months, and not in the order they were produced. The final Stooge release, Sappy Bull Fighters, did not reach theaters until June 4, 1959. With no active contract in place, Moe and Larry discussed plans for a personal appearance tour; meanwhile, Besser’s wife had a minor heart attack, and he preferred to stay local, leading him to withdraw from the act. For the first time in nearly 30 years, the Stooges hit a dead end.

The comeback: Larry, Moe and Curly-Joe

Seeing the success of how television, in its early years, allowed movie studios to unload a backlog of short films thought unmarketable, the Stooge films seemed perfect for the burgeoning genre. ABC television had even expressed interest as far back as 1949, purchasing exclusive rights to 30 of the trio's shorts.[9] However, the success of television revivals for such names as Laurel and Hardy, Woody Woodpecker, Tom and Jerry and the Our Gang series in the late 1950s led Columbia to cash in again on the Stooges. In January 1958, Columbia's television subsidiary Screen Gems offered a package consisting of 78 Stooge shorts (mainly from the Curly era), which were well received.[10] Almost immediately, an additional 40 shorts hit the market, and by 1959, all 190 Stooge shorts were airing regularly. Due to the massive quantity of Stooge product available for broadcast, the films were broadcast Monday through Friday, leading to heavy exposure aimed squarely at children. This led parents to watch alongside of their offspring, and before long, Howard and Fine found themselves in high demand.[3] Moe quickly signed movie and burlesque comic Joe DeRita for the "third Stooge" role; DeRita shaved his head crew cut style and became "Curly Joe" because of his resemblance to the original Curly Howard (also to make it easier to distinguish him from Joe Besser, the earlier Stooge called Joe).

This Three Stooges lineup went on to make a series of popular full-length films from 1959 to 1965, most notably Have Rocket, Will Travel, The Three Stooges Meet Hercules and The Three Stooges Go Around the World in a Daze. The films were aimed at the kiddie-matinee market, and most were Farce outings in the Stooge tradition, with the exception of Snow White and the Three Stooges, a children's fantasy in Technicolor. They also appeared as firemen (the role that helped make them famous in Soup to Nuts) in the film It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World. Throughout the 1960s, The Three Stooges were one of the most popular and highest-paid live acts in America.[8] The trio also filmed 41 short comedy skits for The New Three Stooges, which features a series of 156 animated cartoons produced for television. The Stooges appeared in live-action color footage, which preceded and followed each animated adventure in which they voiced their respective characters.
Final years

In 1969, the Three Stooges filmed a pilot episode for a new TV series titled *Kook's Tour*, a combination travelogue-sitcom that had the "retired" Stooges traveling around the world, with the episodes filmed on location. On January 9, 1970, during production of the pilot, Larry suffered a paralyzing stroke, ending his acting career, as well as plans for the television series.

Plans were in the works for longtime foil Emil Sitka to replace Larry as the "Middle Stooge" in 1971, but nothing other than a proposed publicity still was ever made. Larry Fine suffered another stroke in December 1974. The following month, he suffered a more serious one and slipped into a coma. He died on January 24, 1975 at the age of 72. Devastated by his friend's death, Moe nevertheless decided that the Three Stooges would continue. Several movie ideas were considered, including one called *Blazing Stewardesses* according to Leonard Maltin, who also uncovered a pre-production photo (the film was ultimately made with the last surviving Ritz Brothers). However, Moe fell ill from lung cancer, and died on May 4, 1975.[2]


Legacy and perspective

Some 50 years after their last short film was released, the Three Stooges remain wildly popular with audiences. Their films have never left the television airwaves since first appearing in 1958, and they continue to delight old fans while attracting a new legion of fervent admirers. A hard-working group of working-class comedians who were never the critic's darlings, the team endured several personnel changes in their careers that would have permanently sidelined a less persistent act.[3] Despite watching two of his brothers die in a brief span of time, the Stooges would not have lasted as long as they did as a unit without Moe Howard's guiding hand.[6]

The Ted Okuda/Edward Watz-penned book *The Columbia Comedy Shorts* puts the Stooges legacy in critical perspective:

> Many scholarly studies of motion picture comedy have overlooked the Three Stooges entirely—and not without valid reasoning. Aesthetically, the Stooges violated every rule that constitutes "good" comedic style. Their characters lacked the emotional depth of Charlie Chaplin and Harry Langdon; they were never as witty or subtle as Buster Keaton. They were not disciplined enough to sustain lengthy comic sequences; far too often, they were willing to suspend what little narrative structure their pictures possessed in order to insert a number of gratuitous jokes. Nearly every premise they have employed (spoofs of westerns, horror films, costume melodramas) has been done to better effect by other comedians. And yet, in spite of the overwhelming artistic odds against them, they were responsible for some of the finest comedies ever made. Their humor was the most undistilled form of low comedy; they were not great innovators, but as quick laugh practitioners, they place second to none. If public taste is any criterion, the Stooges have been the reigning kings of comedy for over fifty years.”[3]

Beginning in the 1980s, the Stooges finally began to receive long-overdue critical recognition. More often than not, the praise was directed at Curly, usually at the expense of his teammates, particularly Shemp. With the advent of cable television and burgeoning home video market, the praise was eventually spread more evenly throughout the team. Critics began to realize that Moe and Larry were gifted performers; though less flamboyant than Curly, they were by no means less talented. Curly was indeed brilliant and a one-of-a-kind, but taken for long periods of time, he
could also be irritating and exhausting without Moe and Larry present to provide a counterbalance. This balance would be handled better after Shemp returned to the act, with Larry in particular receiving more screen time.\cite{3} The release of nearly all their films on DVD by 2010 has allowed critics of Joe Besser and Joe DeRita—often the recipients of significant fan backlash—to appreciate the unique style of comedy both comedians brought to the Stooges. In addition, the DVD market in particular has allowed fans to view the entire Stooge film corpus as distinct periods in their long, distinguished career instead of comparing one Stooge to the other (the Curly vs. Shemp debate continues to this day\cite{11} \cite{12} \cite{13} \cite{14}).

In the end, it is the durability of the 190 timeless short films the Stooges made at Columbia Pictures that acts as an enduring tribute to the Stooges. Their continued popularity worldwide has proven to even the most skeptic critics that the Stooge films—quite simply—are funny.\cite{3} American television personality Steve Allen went on record in the mid-1980s saying "though they never achieved widespread critical acclaim, the achieved exactly what they had always intended to do: they made people laugh."\cite{15}

### Line-ups

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<th>Ted</th>
<th>Moe</th>
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<th>Larry</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1971–1975</td>
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**Ted Healy**
Real Name: Clarence Ernst Lee Nash
Born: December 22, 1896
Died: December 21, 1937 (aged 41)
Stooge Years: 1922–1931, 1932–1934

**Moe Howard**
Real Name: Moses Harry Horwitz
Born: June 19, 1897
Died: May 4, 1975 (aged 77)
Stooge years: 1922–1927, 1928–1971

**Larry Fine**
Real Name: Louis Feinberg
Born: October 5, 1902
Died: January 24, 1975 (aged 72)
Stooge years: 1925–1927, 1928–1971

**Curly Howard**
Real Name: Jerome Lester Horwitz
Born: October 22, 1903
Died: January 18, 1952 (aged 48)

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Curly has his ears twisted in 1938's *Healthy, Wealthy and Dumb*. 
Stooge years: 1932–1946

**Shemp Howard**
Real Name: Samuel Horwitz
Born: December 22, 1895
Died: November 22, 1955 (aged 60)

**Joe Besser**
Born: December 22, 1907
Died: March 1, 1988 (aged 80)
Stooge years: 1956–1958

**Joe DeRita**
Real Name: Joseph Wardell
Born: December 22, 1909
Died: July 3, 1993 (aged 83)
Stooge years: 1958–1975

**Shorts**
The Stooges released 190 short films between 1934 and 1959 at Columbia Pictures. Their contract was extended each year from 1934 until the final one expired on December 31, 1957. The last 8 of the 16 shorts with Joe Besser were released soon afterwards.

**C3 Entertainment, Inc.**
Throughout their career, Moe acted as both their main creative force and business manager. Comedy III was formed by Moe, Larry and Curly-Joe in 1959 to manage all business and merchandise transactions for the team. Comedy III was basically in the background, with Moe's son-in-law Norman Maurer managing the comedy teams' film interests under Normandy Productions, and merchandising affairs under Norman Maurer Productions (NMP). Norman Maurer died in 1986.

In 1994 the heirs of Larry Fine and Joe DeRita filed a lawsuit against Moe's family, particularly Joan Howard Maurer and her son Jeffrey, who had inherited the NMP/Normandy business. The result reestablished Comedy III as a three-way interest of Fine/[Moe]Howard/DeRita. The DeRita heirs received the proxy to the Howard share, giving them majority control on the company's management. Curly-Joe's stepsons, Robert and Earl Benjamin, became the senior management of Comedy III. The Benjamins later incorporated the company, and C3 Entertainment, Inc. is currently the owner of all Three Stooges trademarks and merchandising. Larry's grandson Eric Lamond is the representative of the Fines' one-third interest in the company.16

C3 has also, since 1995, authorized and provided the services of veteran actors Jim Skousen, Alan Semok, and Dave Knight (as Moe, Larry, and Curly respectively) for numerous "personal appearances" by the Stooge characters for a variety of merchandising and promotional events. This latter day trio has also provided voices for the characters in a variety of radio spots, merchandising tie-ins, and most recently for the first new Three Stooges short in fifty years. A CGI animation by Famous Frames Mobile Interactive, a first-wave "new media" company, entitled *The Grate Debate*, has Moe, Larry and Curly running for President.
Television broadcasts and rights issues

A handful of Three Stooges shorts first aired on television in 1949, on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) network. It was not until 1958 that Screen Gems packaged 78 shorts for national syndication; the package was gradually enlarged to encompass the entire library of 190 shorts. In 1959, KTTV in Los Angeles purchased the Three Stooges films for air, but by the early 1970s, rival station KTLA began airing the Stooges films, keeping them in the schedule until early 1994. The Family Channel (now ABC Family) ran the shorts as part of their Stooge TV block from February 19, 1996 to January 2, 1998. In the late 1990s, AMC had held the rights to the Three Stooges shorts, originally airing them under the Stooges Playhouse block, but replacing it in 1999 with N.Y.U.K. (New Yuk University of Knuckleheads). Featuring host Leslie Nielsen in the form of a college instructor, the block aired several shorts often grouped by a theme, such as similar schticks used in different films. Although the block was discontinued after AMC revamped their format in 2002, the network still ran Stooges shorts occasionally. The AMC run ended when Spike TV picked them up in 2004, airing them in their Stooges Slap-Happy Hour. By 2007, the network had discontinued the block. Although Spike did air Stooges shorts for a brief period of time after the block was cancelled, as of late April 2008, Three Stooges has disappeared from the network's schedule entirely. The Three Stooges returned on December 31, 2009 on AMC, starting with the "Countdown with the Stooges" New Year's Eve marathon. AMC planned to put several episodes on their website in 2010.

Since the 1990s Columbia and its television division's successor, Sony Pictures Television, has preferred to license the Stooges shorts to cable networks, precluding the films from being shown on local broadcast TV. Two stations in Chicago and Boston, however, signed long-term syndication contracts with Columbia years ago and have declined to terminate them. Thus, WWME-CA in Chicago currently airs all 190 Three Stooges shorts on Stooge-a-Palooza, hosted by Rich Koz, and WSBK-TV in Boston airs Stooge shorts and feature films. KTLA-TV in Los Angeles dropped the shorts in 1994, but brought them back in 2007 as part of a special retro-marathon commemorating the station's 50th anniversary. Since that time, the station's original 16mm Stooges film prints have aired occasionally as part of mini-marathons on holidays.

Some of the Stooge films have been colorized by two separate companies. The first colorized DVD releases, distributed by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, were prepared by West Wing Studios in 2004. The following year, Legend Films colorized the public domain shorts Malice in the Palace, Sing a Song of Six Pants, Disorder in the Court and Brideless Groom. Disorder in the Court and Brideless Groom also appear on two of West Wing's colorized releases. In any event, the Columbia-produced shorts (aside from the public domain films) are handled by Sony Pictures Entertainment, while the MGM Stooges shorts are owned by Warner Bros. via their Turner Entertainment division. Sony offers 21 of the shorts on their web platform Crackle, along with eleven Minisodes. Meanwhile, the rights to the Stooges' feature films rests with the studios that originally produced them (Columbia/Sony for the Columbia films, and 20th Century Fox for the Fox films).
Chronological DVD release and public reception

On October 30, 2007, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment released a two-disc DVD set entitled The Three Stooges Collection, Volume One: 1934–1936. The set contains shorts from the first three years the Stooges worked at Columbia Pictures. This is the first time ever that all 19 shorts have been released in their original theatrical order to DVD. Every short was remastered in high definition, a first for the Stooge films.[17] Previous DVD releases were based on themes (wartime, history, work, etc.), and sold poorly. Fans and critics alike praised Sony for finally giving the Stooges the proper DVD treatment. One critic states "the Three Stooges on DVD has been a real mix'n match hodge-podge of un-restored titles and illogical entries. This new...boxset...seems to be the first concerted effort to categorize their huge body of work chronologically with many shorts seeing the digital light for the first time."[18] Videolibrarian.com critic added "finally, the studio knuckleheads got it right! The way that the Three Stooges have been presented on home video has been a real slap in the face and poke in the eye to fans. They've been anthologized, colorized, and public domain-ed, as their shorts have been released and re-released in varying degrees of quality. Highly recommended."[19] Critic James Plath of DVDtown.com added, "Thank you, Sony, for finally giving these Columbia Pictures icons the kind of DVD retrospective that they deserve. Remastered in High Definition and presented in chronological order, these short films now give fans the chance to appreciate the development of one of the most successful comedy teams in history."[20]

The chronological series has proven very successful and wildly popular. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment wasted little time preparing the next set for release. Volume Two: 1937–1939 was released on May 27, 2008,[21] followed by Volume Three: 1940–1942 three months later on August 26, 2008.[22] Demand exceeded supply, proving to Sony that they had a hit on their hands. In response, Volume Four: 1943–1945 was released on October 7, 2008, a mere two months after its predecessor.[23] The global economic crisis slowed down the release schedule after Volume Four, and Volume Five: 1946–1948 was belatedly released on March 17, 2009. Volume Five is the first in the series to feature Shemp Howard with the Stooges.[24] Volume Six: 1949–1951 was released June 16, 2009.[25] and Volume Seven: 1952–1954 was released on November 10, 2009.[26] The eighth and final volume was released on June 1, 2010, bringing the series to a close. For the first time in history, all 190 Three Stooges short subjects are available to the public.

Music

• Several instrumental tunes were played over the opening credits at different times in the production of the short features. The most commonly used themes were:
  • The verse portion of the Civil War era song "Listen to the Mockingbird", played in a comical way, complete with sounds of birds and such. This was first used in Pardon My Scotch, their ninth short film, in 1935. (Prior to that comedic short, the opening theme varied and was typically connected to the storyline in some fashion.)
  • "Three Blind Mice", beginning in 1939 as a slow but straightforward presentation (dubbed the "sliding strings" version), often breaking into a "jazzy" style before ending. In mid-1942, another more driving version,
• The Complete History of "The Three Stooges"

The Three Stooges

complete with accordion was played fast all the way through.

• The Columbia short subject Woman Haters was done completely in rhyme, mostly recited (not sung), in rhythm with a Jazz-Age underscore running throughout the film, but with some key lines sung. It was sixth in a Musical Novelties short subject series, and appropriated its musical score from the first five films. The memorable "My Life, My Love, My All," was originally "At Last!" from the film Um-Pa.

• "Swinging the Alphabet" (a.k.a. B-A-bay, B-E-be, B-I-bicky-bi...) from Violent Is the Word for Curly is perhaps the best-known song performed by the Stooges on film.

• The "Lucia Sextet" (Chi mi frena in tal memento?), from the opera Lucia di Lammermoor by Gaetano Donizetti (announced by Moe as "the sextet from Lucy"), is played on a record player and lip-synched by the Stooges in Micro-Phonies. The same melody re-appears in Squareheads of the Round Table as the tune of "Oh, Elaine, can you come out tonight?". Micro-Phonies also includes the Johann Strauss II waltz "Voices of Spring" ("Frühlingsstimmen") Op. 410. Another Strauss waltz, "The Blue Danube", is featured in Ants in the Pantry and Punch Drunks.

• Snippets of the song "Frederic March" (named after the actor) appear in at least 6 different Columbia shorts:
  • Termite of 1938 (1938)- the Stooges "play" this song on a violin, flute, and string bass at a dinner party in an attempt to attract mice.
  • Dutiful But Dumb (1941)- Curley is hidden inside a floor-standing radio, and plays the song on a modified harmonica.
  • Three Little Twirps (1943)- heard as background music at the circus while Moe & Curley sell tickets.
  • Idle Roomers (1944)- Curley "plays" the song on a trombone to calm the wolf-man.
  • Gents Without Cents (1944)- three girls perform acrobatics on stage while this song is playing.
  • Gents in a Jam (1952)- Shemp, Moe & Larry have a problem with a broken-apart radio that won't stop playing this song.

• The Moe–Larry–Curly Joe lineup of the Stooges recorded several musical record albums in the early 1960s. Most of their songs were adaptations of nursery rhymes. Among their more popular recordings were "Making a Record" (a surreal trip to a recording studio built around the song "Go Tell Aunt Mary"), "Three Little Fishes", "All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth", "Wreck the Halls with Boughs of Holly (1959)", "Mairzy Doats", and "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas".

• In 1983, a group called the Jump 'N the Saddle Band recorded a track called "The Curly Shuffle", which featured the narrator singing about his love of the Stooges mixed with a chorus of many of Curly's catchphrases and sound effects. In the middle 1980s, the song became a popular mid-game hit for New York Mets fans in the Shea Stadium bleachers who'd dance in small groups to the tune whenever the song was played between innings.

Feature motion pictures

The Three Stooges also made appearances in many feature length movies in the course of their careers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Moe</th>
<th>Larry</th>
<th>Curly</th>
<th>Shemp</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Curly Joe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soup to Nuts</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Shemp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn Back the Clock</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the Baron</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dancing Lady</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadway to Hollywood</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Myrt and Marge</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugitive Lovers</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hollywood Party</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Captain Hates the Sea</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Cheering</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Out for Rhythm</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My Sister Eileen</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Luck, Mr. Yates</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockin' in the Rockies</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Swing Parade of 1946</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gold Raiders</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Shemp</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia Laff Hour</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Shemp</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Stooges Fan-O-Rama</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have Rocket, Will Travel</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop, Look and Laugh</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Snow White and the Three Stooges</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Stooges Meet Hercules</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Stooges in Orbit</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Curly</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Three Stooges Go Around the World in a Daze</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 for Texas</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Outlaws Is Coming</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kook's Tour</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Moe</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Curly Joe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Museum**

Gary Lassin opened the Stoogeum[27] in 2004 in a renovated architect's office in Spring House, Pennsylvania, 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Philadelphia. The museum-quality exhibits fill three stories (10,000 square feet or 929 square meters), including an 85-seat theater.²⁷ Peter Seely, editor of the book *Stoogeology: Essays on the Three Stooges* said that the Stoogeum has "more stuff than I even imagined existed."²⁸ 2,500 people visit it yearly, many during the annual gathering of the Three Stooges Fan Club.²⁸
In other media

Comic books

Over the years, several Three Stooges comics were produced.

• St. John Publications published the first Three Stooges comics in 1949 with 2 issues, then again in 1953–54 with 7 issues.

• Dell Comics published a Three Stooges series first as one-shots in their *Four Color Comics* line for five issues, then gave them a numbered series for four more issues (#6–9). With #10, the title would be published by Gold Key Comics. Under Gold Key, the series lasted through issue #55 in 1972.

• Gold Key Comics then published the *Little Stooges* series (7 issues, 1972–74) with story and art by Norman Maurer, Moe’s son-in-law. This series featured the adventures of three fictional sons of the Three Stooges, as sort of modern-day teen-age versions of the characters.

• Malibu Comics did a couple of one-shot comics, reprinting stories from the Gold Key Comics in 1989 and 1991.

Music

Beginning in 1959, the Three Stooges began to appear in a series of novelty records. Their first recording was a 45 rpm single of the title song from *Have Rocket, Will Travel*. The trio released additional singles and LPs on the Golden and Coral labels, mixing comedy adventure albums and off-beat renditions of children's songs. Their final recording was the 1966 *Yogi Bear and the Three Stooges Meet the Mad, Mad, Mad Dr. No-No*, which incorporated the Three Stooges into the cast of the Yogi Bear cartoons.[6]

Radio

Sirius XM Radio aired a special about the Stooges hosted by Tom Bergeron on Friday, July 31, 2009, at 2:00PM on the Sirius Howard 101 channel. Bergeron had conducted the interviews at the age of 17 back when he was still in high school in 1971. The television host had the tapes in storage for many years and was convinced on air during a Howard Stern Radio interview to bring them in and turn it into a special show by Howard Stern himself, upon learning how much of a fan Bergeron was of the Three Stooges, as is he. Bergeron agreed.

After finding "the lost tapes," Bergeron brought them into Howard Stern's production studio. He stated that the tapes were so old that the tapes with the Larry Fine interviews began to shred as Howard Stern's radio engineers ran them through their cart players. They only really had the one shot, and fortunately for Three Stooges fans, the tapes were saved.

"The Lost Stooges Tapes" were hosted by Tom Bergeron with modern commentary on the almost 40 year old interviews that he had conducted with Larry Fine and Moe Howard. At the times of these interviews, Moe was still living at home and Larry had suffered a stroke and was living in a Senior Citizen's home.
Television

In addition to the unsuccessful television series pilot *Jerks of All Trades* (see "History", above) and the incomplete *Kook's Tour*, the Stooges appeared in a show called *The New Three Stooges* which ran from 1965 to 1966. This series featured a mix of thirty-nine live-action segments which were used as wraparounds to 156 animated Stooges shorts. That cartoon program became the only regularly scheduled television show in history for the Stooges. Unlike other films shorts that aired on TV like the *Looney Tunes*, *Tom and Jerry*, and *Popeye*, the film shorts of the Stooges never had a regularly scheduled national television program to air in, neither on network nor syndicated. When Columbia/Screen Gems licensed the film library to television, the shorts aired in any fashion the local stations chose (examples: late-night "filler" material between the end of the late movie and the channel's sign-off time; in "marathon" sessions running shorts back-to-back for one, one-and-a-half, or two hours; etc.)

Two episodes of Hanna-Barbera's *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* aired on CBS featuring animated Stooges as guest stars: the premiere, "Ghastly Ghost Town" (September 9, 1972) and "The Ghost of the Red Baron" (November 18, 1972). There also was a short-lived animated series, also produced by Hanna-Barbera, titled *The Robonic Stooges*, originally seen as a featured segment on *The Skatebirds* (CBS, 1977–1978), featuring Moe, Larry, and Curly (voiced by Paul Winchell, Joe Baker and Frank Welker, respectively) as bionic cartoon superheroes with extendable limbs, similar to the later *Inspector Gadget*. *The Robonic Stooges* later aired as a separate half-hour series, retitled *The Three Robonic Stooges* (each half-hour featured two segments of *The Three Robonic Stooges* and one segment of *Woofer And Whimper, Dog Detectives*, the latter re-edited from episodes of *Clue Club*, an earlier Hanna-Barbera cartoon series). There are also many *Stooges* references in the sitcom *ALF*.

In the episode "Beware The Creeper" of *The New Batman Adventures*, the Joker retreats to his hide-out after a quick fight with Batman. He yells out for his three henchmen "Moe? Larr? Cur?" only to find that they are not there. Shortly after that, Batman comes across these three goons in a pool hall; they have distinctive accents and hair styles similar to those of Moe, Larry, and Curly. These henchmen are briefly seen throughout the rest of the season.

2000 television film

In spring of 2000, longtime Stooge fan Mel Gibson executive-produced a TV movie (*The Three Stooges*[^29]) about the lives and careers of the comedians. Playing Moe was Paul Ben-Victor; Evan Handler was Larry; John Kassir was Shemp; and Michael Chiklis was Curly. It was filmed in Sydney, Australia and was produced for and broadcast on ABC. It was based on Michael Fleming's authorized biography of the Stooges, *The Three Stooges: From Amalgamated Morons to American Icons*. Its unflattering portrayal of Ted Healy led Healy's son to give media interviews calling the film inaccurate. Additional errors of fact included the hints that Moe Howard was down on his luck later in life, and worked as a gofer at the studio where he and his brothers had formerly worked as actors, and that he never owned his own house. In reality, of all the group Moe was the most careful with his money, which he invested well. He and his wife Helen owned the comfortable house in Toluca Lake in which they raised their children.

The film regularly runs on the American Movie Classics (AMC) channel.
Planned feature film revival

A film about the Three Stooges, simply titled *The Three Stooges*, is currently in development with MGM and will be directed by the Farrelly Brothers. The film has been in what one critic has dubbed "development hell". The Farrellys, who have wanted to make this film since 1996, have said that they were not going to do a biopic or remake, but instead new Three Stooges episodes set in the present day. The plot of the episodes is said to be an adventure that revolves around the Stooges characters. The studio has had a difficult time putting together a cast to play the Three Stooges. Originally slated were Sean Penn to play Larry, Benicio del Toro, to play Moe and Jim Carrey to play Curly. Both Sean Penn and del Toro left the project but returned while no official confirmation has been made about Jim Carrey. When del Toro was interviewed on MTV News for *The Wolfman* he spoke about playing Moe Howard in *The Three Stooges*. He was later asked who was going to play Larry and Curly in the film and commented that he still thought that Sean Penn and Jim Carrey were going to play them, though he added "Nothing is for sure yet." [32] [33]

Video games

In 1984 Gottlieb released an arcade game featuring the Stooges trying to find three kidnapped brides. Later in 1987, game developers Cinemaware released a successful Three Stooges computer game, available for Apple IIGS, Amiga, Commodore 64, MS-DOS, and Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). Based on the Stooges earning money by doing odd jobs to prevent the foreclosure of an orphanage, it incorporated audio from the original films and was popular enough to be reissued for the Game Boy Advance in 2002, as well as for PlayStation in 2004.[34]

Further reading

- Fine, Larry (with Carone, James), *Stroke of Luck* (1973) Siena Publishing Co. (Larry Fine's autobiography, transcribed from interviews toward the end of his life)
- Fericano, Paul, *Stoogism Anthology* (1977) Poor Souls Printing
- Forrester, Jeffrey, *The Stooges Chronicles* (1981) Contemporary Books, Inc. (Comprehensive overview of the team's career; also discusses the various Ted Healy stooges)
- Feinberg, Morris, *Larry: The Stooge in the Middle* (1984) Last Gasp of San Francisco (Biography of Larry Fine, attributed to his brother but actually ghostwritten by Bob Davis)
- Forrester, Jeffrey, and Forrester, Tom, *The Stooges' Lost Episodes* (1988) Contemporary Books, Inc. (Discussion of obscure Stooges appearances, including solo films by individual Stooges)

**See also**

• The Three Stooges in popular culture

**References**

External links

- **A Three Stooges compilation** ([http://www.archive.org/details/TheThreeStoogesColorCraziness](http://www.archive.org/details/TheThreeStoogesColorCraziness)) available for free download at the Internet Archive [more]
- Portrait (2009) of The Three Stooges ([http://drewfriedman.net/prints/three-stooges.html](http://drewfriedman.net/prints/three-stooges.html)) (with Shemp) by noted illustrator Drew Friedman
- Interview with Moe Howard on new success with the younger generation ([http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=pdYTAAAIMBAJ&sjid=9AQQEAAAAIAJ&pg=5641,2662757&dq=Naked+Gord+Program+@+nakedgord.org](http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=pdYTAAAIMBAJ&sjid=9AQQEAAAAIAJ&pg=5641,2662757&dq=Naked+Gord+Program+@+nakedgord.org)) from the Ocala Star-Banner — Feb 22, 1959 accessed via Google News
Moe Howard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moe Howard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Howard in 1933" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Born       | Moses Harry Horwitz  
|------------| June 19, 1897  
|            | Brownsville, Brooklyn, New  
|            | York  
|            | United States  
| Died       | May 4, 1975 (aged 77)  
|            | Los Angeles, California  
|            | United States  
| Occupation | Actor/Comedian  
| Years active | 1909–1975  
| Spouse     | Helen Schonberger (1925-1975)  
| Website    | thethree stooges.net [1]  |

Moses Harry Horwitz (June 19, 1897 – May 4, 1975), known professionally as Moe Howard, was an American actor and comedian best known as the leader of The Three Stooges, the farce comedy team who starred in motion pictures and television for four decades. His distinctive hairstyle came about when he was a boy and cut off his curls with a pair of scissors, producing a ragged shape approximating a helmet or bowl.

Life and career

Early life

Moses Horwitz was born in Brooklyn, New York, neighborhood of Brownsville, to Solomon Horwitz and Jennie Gorovitz. He was the fourth of the five Horwitz brothers and of Levite and Lithuanian Jewish ancestry. In his younger years, he got the nickname Moe and later adopted the name Harry. Although his parents were not involved in show business, Moe, his older brother Samuel and younger brother Jerome all eventually became world-famous as members of the Three Stooges.

In school, Moe initially did quite well, aided by a prodigious memory. In later years, this helped him in his acting career, making memorizing his lines quick and easy. Moe loved reading, as his older brother Jack commented: "I had many Horatio Alger books and it was Moe's greatest pleasure to read them. They started his imaginative mind working and gave him ideas by the dozen. I think they were instrumental in putting thoughts into his head to become a person of good character and to become successful."[1]
Although his "bowl cut" hairstyle is now widely recognized, as a child his mother refused to cut his hair, letting it grow to shoulder length. One day, he could not take his classmates' years of teasing any longer, sneaked off to a shed in his parents' back yard, and with the help of a friend and a mixing bowl, cut his hair. Moe was so afraid his mother would be upset (she enjoyed curling his hair) that he hid under the house for several hours, causing a panic. He finally came out and his mother was so glad to see him that she did not even mention the hair.

Moe began to develop an interest in acting and, as a result, his schoolwork suffered. He began playing hooky from school in order to attend theater shows. Moe said, "I used to stand outside the theater knowing the truant officer was looking for me. I would stand there 'til someone came along and then ask them to buy my ticket. It was necessary for an adult to accompany a juvenile into the theater. When I succeeded I'd give him my ten cents — that's all it cost — and I'd go up to the top of the balcony where I'd put my chin on the rail and watch, spellbound, from the first act to the last. I would usually select the actor I liked the most and follow his performance throughout the play..."[1]

Despite his decreasing attendance Moe graduated from P.S. 163 in Brooklyn, but he dropped out of Erasmus Hall High School after only two months. This was the end of his formal education. To mollify his parents he took a class in electric shop, but quit after a few months to pursue a career in show business.[1]

Moe began by running errands for no fee at the Vitagraph Studios in Midwood, Brooklyn (currently the home of the CBS daytime serial As the World Turns), where he was rewarded with bit parts in movies being made there. Unfortunately, a fire at the studios in 1910 destroyed the film of most of Moe's work done there. In 1909 he met a young man named Lee Nash who would later provide a significant boost to Moe's career aspirations. In 1912, they both held a summer job working in Annette Kellerman's aquatic act as diving "girls."[1]

**Career**

Moe continued his attempts at gaining show business experience by singing in a bar with his older brother Shemp until their father put a stop to it, and in 1914 joining a performing troupe on a Mississippi River showboat for the next two summers. In 1921, he joined Lee Nash, who was now firmly established in show business as Ted Healy, in a vaudeville routine. In 1923, Moe spotted Shemp watching the show and yelled at him from the stage. Shemp and Moe heckled each other to a large positive response from the audience and Healy hired Shemp as a permanent part of the act. Next, Healy recruited a vaudeville violinist, Larry Fine, in 1925, to join the comedy troupe, which was billed as "Ted Healy and His Racketeers" (later changed to Ted Healy and His Stooges).[1]

On June 7, 1925, Moe Howard married Helen Schonberger, a cousin of magician Harry Houdini. The next year, Helen pressured Moe to leave the stage, as she was pregnant and wanted Moe nearer to home. Moe attempted to earn a living in a succession of "normal" jobs, none of which was very successful. He soon returned to working with Ted Healy.[1]

By 1930, Ted Healy and his Stooges were on the verge of "the big time," and made their first movie, Soup to Nuts — featuring Ted Healy, and his four Stooges (Moe (billed as "Harry Howard"), Shemp, Larry, and one-shot Stooge Fred Sanborn) — for Fox Films (later 20th Century Fox). Shemp had never seen eye-to-eye with the hard-drinking and sometimes belligerent Healy, and left the group shortly after filming in order to pursue a solo film career. After a short search for a replacement, Moe suggested his youngest brother, Jerome ("Jerry" to his friends, "Babe" to Moe and Shemp). Healy originally passed on Jerry (whom he disliked), but Jerry was so eager to join the act that he shaved off his luxuriant auburn mustache and hair and ran on stage during Healy's routine. Healy hired Jerry, who took the stage name of "Curly."[1]

Healy and the Stooges were hired by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer as "nut" comics, to liven up feature films and short subjects with their antics. After a number of appearances in MGM films, Healy was being groomed as a solo character comedian. With Healy pursuing his own career, his Stooges (now renamed The Three Stooges) signed with Columbia Pictures where they stayed until December 1959, making 190 short films.[1]

With Healy's departure, Moe's character assumed Healy's previous role of the aggressive, take-charge leader of the Three Stooges: a short-tempered bully, prone to slapstick violence against the other two Stooges. However, despite
his rather cruel demeanor towards his pals, Moe’s character was also very loyal and protective of the other Stooges, keeping them from harm and, should it befall them, do whatever it takes to save them. In many ways, this was the antithesis of Moe Howard’s real personality; he was quiet, loving, and generous to his family. He was also a shrewd businessman, and invested the money made from his film career wisely. However, the Stooges got no subsequent royalties from any of their many shorts: they were paid a flat amount for each one and Columbia owned the rights (and profits) thereafter.[1]

In 1934, Columbia released its first Three Stooges short, *Woman Haters*, where their stooge characters were not quite finalized. It was not a Stooge comedy in the classic sense, but rather a romantic farce; Columbia was then making a series of two-reel "Musical Novelties" with the dialogue spoken in rhyme, and the Stooges were recruited to support comedienne Marjorie White. Only after the Stooges became established as short-subject stars were the main titles changed to give the Stooges top billing. The version seen on TV and video today is this reissue print.[1]

Their next film, *Punch Drunks*, was the only short film that was written entirely by the Three Stooges, with Curly as a reluctant boxer who goes ballistic every time he hears "Pop Goes the Weasel." Their next short, *Men in Black* (a parody of the hospital drama *Men in White*) was their first and only film to be nominated for an Academy Award (with the classic catchphrase, "Calling Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard"). They continued making short films at a steady pace of eight per year, such as *Three Little Pigskins* (with a very young Lucille Ball), *Pop Goes the Easel*, *Hoi Polloi* (where two professors make a bet trying to turn the Three Stooges into gentlemen), and many others.[1]

In the 1940s, the Three Stooges became topical, making several anti-Nazi movies including *You Nazty Spy!* (Moe’s favorite Three Stooges film), *I'll Never Heil Again*, and *They Stooge to Conga*. Moe’s impersonation of Adolf Hitler highlighted these shorts, the first of which preceded Charlie Chaplin’s controversial film satire, *The Great Dictator*, by months.[1]

On May 6, 1946, during the filming of *Half-Wits Holiday*, brother Curly suffered a stroke. He was replaced in the Three Stooges by Shemp, who agreed to return to the group until Curly would be well enough to rejoin. Although Curly recovered enough to appear in *Hold That Lion!* in a cameo appearance (the only Three Stooges film to contain all three Howard brothers; Moe, Curly, and Shemp), he soon suffered a series of strokes which led to his death on January 18, 1952.[1]

The Three Stooges’ series of shorts continued to be popular through the 1950s; Shemp co-starred in 73 comedies. (The Stooges also co-starred in a George O'Brien western, *Gold Raiders*, in 1951.) Moe also co-produced occasional western and musical films in the 1950s.

On November 22, 1955, Shemp died of a heart attack, necessitating the need for another Stooge. Producer Jules White used old footage of Shemp to complete four more films with Columbia regular Joe Palma filling in for Shemp (thus creating the Fake Shemp phenomenon), until Harry Cohn hired Joe Besser in 1956. According to Moe’s autobiography, Howard wanted a "two stooge" act, and it was Cohn’s idea, not Moe’s, to replace Shemp as part of the act. Joe, Larry, and Moe filmed 16 shorts through December 1957. Shortly before the death of Columbia head Harry Cohn in February 1958, the making of short subjects came to an end. Keeping himself busy, Moe was hired by Harry Romm as an Associate Producer; stories that Howard was forced to take a job as a gofer at Columbia are completely false.[1]

Fortunately for the Stooges, Columbia sold the Three Stooges’ library of short films to television under the "Screen Gems" brand. With this, the Three Stooges quickly gained a new audience of young fans. Ever the businessman, Moe Howard put together a new Stooges act, with burlesque and screen comic Joe DeRita (dubbed "Curly-Joe") due
to his resemblance to Curly Howard) as the new "third Stooge." The revitalized trio starred in several feature-length movies: *Have Rocket, Will Travel, Snow White and the Three Stooges, The Three Stooges Meet Hercules, The Three Stooges in Orbit, The Three Stooges Go Around the World in a Daze,* and *The Outlaws Is Coming.*[1]

Moe, Larry and Curly-Joe continued to make live appearances, many notable "guest appearances", notably in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (as three firemen who appear for only a few seconds) and *4 for Texas.* The boys tried their hand at a children's cartoon show titled *The New Three Stooges,* with the cartoons sandwiched between live action segments of the boys. However, by 1965, the three had aged too much to continue performing slapstick comedy. They did receive royalties from their features with Curly-Joe, and income from the volume of Three Stooges merchandising.

Moe sold real estate when his show-business life slowed down, although he still did minor roles and walk-on bits in movies (*Don't Worry, We'll Think of a Title, Dr. Death: Seeker of Souls*) and television appearances (*Here's Hollywood, Toast of the Town, Masquerade Party, Truth or Consequences* and several appearances on *The Mike Douglas Show*). In one episode of *The Mike Douglas Show,* Howard, his hair in a style popular at the time, made a surprise appearance during an interview of the writer of a "where-are-they-now" book. When the audience was given the chance to ask the writer about famous people, Howard asked "What ever happened to the Three Stooges?" Finally recognized by Douglas, he then combed his hair into his trademark style. The Stooges also made several appearances on late night television, particularly *The Tonight Show.*

The Stooges attempted to make a final film in 1969, *Kook's Tour,* which was essentially an early "reality TV" show of Moe, Larry and Curly-Joe, out of character, touring the country and interacting with fans. On January 8, 1970, Larry suffered a major stroke during filming, paralyzing the left side of his body; he died on 24 January 1975 at age 72. Moe asked long-time Three Stooges supporting actor Emil Sitka to replace Larry, but this final lineup never recorded any material.

**Death**

Moe was working on his autobiography, tentatively titled *I Stooged to Conquer* when he died of lung cancer on May 4, 1975, a month shy of his 78th birthday.  He was entombed in Culver City's Hillside Memorial Park Cemetery. His wife died of a heart attack in October 1975 and was entombed next to him. Moe's autobiography was released in 1977 as *Moe Howard and the Three Stooges.*

Moe and Helen had two children: Joan Howard Maurer (born 1927) and Paul Howard (born 1935).
Legacy

Moe and the Three Stooges received a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on August 30, 1983, at 1560 Vine Street. Moe was portrayed by actor Paul Ben-Victor in *The Three Stooges*, a made-for-TV biopic that focused on the trio's years in show business and their off-screen lives.

References


External links

- My Pal Moe by Bob Bernet (http://web2.airmail.net/wilddogs/) (featuring letters and rare photos of Moe Howard at home)
- Moe Howard (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002935/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Moe Howard (http://www.ibdb.com/person.asp?ID=88613) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Moe Howard (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=512) at Find a Grave
## Larry Fine

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Larry Fine</th>
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| Born  | Louis Feinberg  
|        | October 5, 1902  
|        | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.  
| Died   | January 24, 1975 (aged 72)  
|        | Woodland Hills, California, U.S.  
| Occupation | Actor/Comedian  
| Years active | 1923–1970  
| Spouse | Mabel Haney (1926-1967)  
| Website | threestooges.net [1] |

**Louis Feinberg** (October 5, 1902 – January 24, 1975), known professionally as **Larry Fine**, was an American comedian and actor, who is best known as a member of the comedy act The Three Stooges.

## Early life

Fine was born to a Jewish family as **Louis Feinberg**[1] in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the corner of 3rd and South Streets. The building there is now a restaurant which is called Jon's Bar & Grill - "the birth place of Larry Fine," but is not actually the building in which he was born. The upstairs houses a small Stooge museum. His father, Joseph Feinberg (who was Russian-Jewish), and mother, Fanny Lieberman, owned a watch repair and jewelry shop. When Larry was a child he burned his arm with some acid that his father used to test whether or not gold was real. Mistaking it for a cool drink Larry had the bottle to his lips when his father noticed and slapped it from his hand, splashing his forearm with acid. Later Larry received violin training to help strengthen his damaged muscles and this skill would be observed in many of the Stooges' films. He became quite proficient on the instrument, and his parents wanted to send him to a European music conservatory, but the outbreak of World War I prevented him from going. In scenes where all three are playing fiddles, only Larry is actually playing his instrument; the others are pantomiming. To further strengthen his arm, Larry took up boxing as a teenager. He fought and won one professional bout. His career as a pugilist was stopped by his father, who was opposed to Larry's fighting in public.[1]
**Acting career**

As Larry Fine, he first performed as a violinist in vaudeville at an early age. In 1925, he met Moe Howard and Ted Healy. Howard and his brother Shemp had been working as audience stooges for Healy. Shemp left soon after to attempt a solo career and was in turn replaced by another brother, Curly. Larry's trademark bushy hair came out, according to rumor, from his first meeting with Healy, in which he had just wet his hair in a basin, and as they talked, it dried oddly. Healy told him to keep the zany hairstyle and, according to a 1973 TV interview on the Mike Douglas show with Moe:

> "So Healy said 'Would you like to be one of the stooges and make three instead of two?' And Larry said 'Yes, I would love that.' Healy said 'I'll give you ninety bucks a week.' 'Fine.' He also said, 'I'll give you an extra ten dollars a week if you throw that fiddle away."

Beginning in 1933, The Three Stooges made 206 short films, and several features, with their most prolific period featuring the characters of Larry, Moe and Curly. Their career with Healy was marked by disputes over pay, film contracts, and Healy's drinking and abuse. They left Healy for good in 1934.

In many of the Stooge shorts, Fine did more reacting than acting, staying in the background and providing the voice of reason between the extreme characterizations of Moe and Curly. He was known for his very curly hair, this gave him the name "Porcupine", which Moe calls him on occasion. He was a surrealistic foil and the middle-ground between Moe's gruff "bossiness" and Curly and Shemp's (and later Joe's) childish personas. (in the short *Three Loan Wolves*, Larry was pressed into service to replace an ailing Curly, who was unable to perform as the lead stooge.) After Curly left the act, Larry shared screen time equally with his two partners.

But in the earliest Stooge two-reelers (and occasionally the later ones) Larry indulges in utterly nutty behavior. He would liven up a scene by improvising some random remark or ridiculous action. In the hospital spoof *Men in Black*, Larry wields a scalpel and shortlites, "Let's plug him... and see if he's ripe!" In *Disorder in the Court*, a tense courtroom scene is interrupted by Larry breaking into a wild Tarzan yell. Of course, after each of his outbursts, Moe would gruffly discipline him. According to his brother, Larry had developed a callus on one side of his face from being slapped innumerable times by Moe over the years.

Larry's on-screen goofiness was an extension of his own relaxed personality. Director Charles Lamont recalled, "Larry was a nut. He was the kind of guy who always said anything. He was a yapper." Writer-director Edward Bernds remembered that Larry's suggestions for the scripts were often "flaky," but would occasionally contain a good comic idea.

Offstage, Larry was a social butterfly. He liked a good time and surrounded himself with friends. Larry and his wife, Mabel, loved having parties and every Christmas threw lavish midnight suppers. Larry was what some friends have called a "yes man," since he was always so agreeable, no matter what the circumstances.

Larry's devil-may-care personality carried over to the world of finance. He was a terrible businessman and spent his money as soon as he earned it. He had a serious gambling addiction, and would gamble away all of the money he had on him either at the horserace track or at high-stakes gin rummy card games. In an interview, Fine even admitted that he often gave money to actors and friends who needed help and never asked to be reimbursed. Joe Besser and director Edward Bernds remember that because of his constant and free spending and gambling, Larry was almost forced into bankruptcy when Columbia terminated the Three Stooges comedies in December 1957.

Because of his profligate ways and his wife's dislike for housekeeping, Larry and his family lived in hotels — first in the President Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where his daughter Phyllis was raised, then the Knickerbocker Hotel in Hollywood. Not until the late 1940s did Larry buy a home in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles, California.

The Stooges became a big hit in 1959 on television, when Columbia Pictures released a batch of the trio's films. The popularity brought the Stooges to a new audience and revitalized their careers.
On May 30, 1967, Fine's wife, Mabel, died of a sudden heart attack. According to the DVD supplemental material for the Midway Pictures documentary *You Must Be This Tall: The Story of Rocky Point Park*, Fine was on the road and about to take the stage for a live show at Rocky Point Amusement Park in Warwick, Rhode Island when he heard news of Mabel's passing. Fine immediately flew home to California, leaving his fellow two stooges to improvise their remaining shows at the park.

Mabel's death came nearly six years after the death of their only son, John, in a car accident on November 17, 1961. The couple's daughter, Phyllis, died of cancer at the age of 60 in 1988. John's wife, Christy (Kraus), died on October 26, 2007 after a lengthy illness.

**Final acting years and death**

Returning to work, Fine and the Stooges were working on a new TV series entitled *Kook's Tour* in January, 1970, when Larry suffered a debilitating stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body. He eventually moved to the Motion Picture House, an industry retirement community in Woodland Hills, where he spent his remaining years. In spite of his paralyzed condition, he did what he could to entertain the other patients, and was visited regularly by his friend Moe Howard.\[^2\]

Fine used a wheelchair during the last five years of his life. Like Curly Howard, Fine suffered several additional strokes before his death on January 24, 1975.\[^3\] He was entombed in Glendale's Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in the Freedom Mausoleum, Sanctuary of Liberation.\[^4\]

Fine is sometimes erroneously listed as the father of sportscaster Warner Wolf, who is in fact the son of Jack Wolf, one of several other "stooges" who played in Ted Healy's vaudeville act at one time or another. He is, however, the father-in-law of actor and Los Angeles television personality Don Lamond, best known for hosting Stooges shorts on KTTV for many years.\[^5\]

**Posthumous fame**
• The Three Stooges have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for their contributions to Motion Pictures, at 1560 Vine Street in Hollywood, dedicated on August 30, 1983, with ex-stooge Joe Besser in attendance.

• In the 2000 TV movie, Larry Fine was played by Evan Handler.

• In a 2004 New Yorker feature on the Farrelly Brothers’s attempt to write a script for a new Three Stooges movie, Peter Farrelly offered his theory of Stooge appreciation: “Growing up, first you watched Curly, then Moe, and then your eyes got to Larry. He’s the reactor, the most vulnerable. Five to fourteen, Curly; fourteen to twenty-one, Moe. Anyone out of college, if you’re not looking at Larry, you don’t have a good brain.”

• A large mural of Larry Fine appears on a wall at the busy intersection of 3rd and South Streets, near his birthplace in Philadelphia. The effort to create a mural on that site began when a local weekly newspaper suggested that the city should somehow honor Fine. Dedicated on October 26, 1999, with Fine’s sister in attendance, that mural showed Larry with a peculiar look on his face. In May 2006, a similar mural showing Larry with a more animated expression and playing a violin was painted over the original mural. This mural stands over Jon’s Bar and Grill and a sign reads "Birthplace of Larry Fine."

• On October 15, 2009, the Associated Alumni of Central High School in Philadelphia inducted Larry Fine in the illustrious school’s Hall of Fame, even though he never graduated. A member of the Central Alumni Hall of Fame Committee stated: "Many people are not even aware that Mr. Fine was a Philadelphian and that is a part of what we’re trying to do."

References
[4] Larry Fine (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=338) at Find a Grave

Further reading
• [My Brother] Larry, the Stooge in the Middle; by Morris Feinberg (ghostwritten by Bob Davis) (Last Gasp, 2001).
• One Fine Stooge: A Frizzy Life in Pictures; by Steve Cox and Jim Terry, (Cumberland House Publishing, 2006).]
External links

- Larry Fine (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0004310/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Larry Fine (http://www.ibdb.com/person.asp?ID=88615) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Larry Fine at The Three Stooges Official Website (http://www.ThreeStooges.com)
Curly Howard

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Curly Howard

Curly Howard in a publicity photo from Nutty but Nice (1940)

Born Jerome Lester Horwitz October 22, 1903 in Brownsville, Brooklyn, New York, United States
Died January 18, 1952 (aged 48) in San Gabriel, California, United States

Other names Curley Howard, Jerry Howard
Occupation Actor/Comedian
Years active 1928–1946
Spouse Julia Rosenthal (1930), Elaine Ackerman (1937-1940), Marion Buxbaum (1945-1946), Valerie Newman (1947-1952)
Website threestooges.net

Jerome Lester "Jerry" Horwitz (October 22, 1903 – January 18, 1952), better known by his stage name Curly Howard, was a United States American comedian and vaudevillian. He is best known as a member of the American slapstick comedy team the Three Stooges, along with his older brothers Moe Howard and Shemp Howard, and actor Larry Fine. Curly is generally considered the most popular and recognizable of the Stooges.

He is well known for his high-pitched voice, vocal expressions ("nyuk-nyuk-nyuk!", "woo-woo-woo!", and barking like a dog), as well as his inventive physical comedy, improvisations, and athleticism.

Curly Howard was born Jerome Lester Horwitz in Brownsville, Brooklyn, a section of Brooklyn, New York. He was the fifth of the five Horwitz brothers and of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry. Because he was the youngest, his brothers called him "Babe" to tease him. The nickname stuck with him all his life, although when Shemp married Gertrude Frank, who was also nicknamed "Babe," the brothers started calling him "Curly" to avoid confusion.

While with the Stooges, he developed his famous exaggerated walk to mask the limp on screen. Curly was interested in music and comedy, and would watch his brothers Shemp and Moe perform as stooges in Ted Healy's vaudeville act. Curly also liked to hang around backstage, though he never participated in any of the routines. Early career and the Three Stooges

From early age, Curly was always "in demand socially," as brother Moe put it. He married his first wife, Julia Rosenthal, on August 5, 1930. The two divorced shortly afterwards. The Three Stooges Journal, Winter 2005;
Issue #76, p. 4
Curly's break onto the stage was as a comedy musical conductor in 1928 for the Orville Knapp Band. Moe later recalled that his performances usually overshadowed those of the band. Though Curly enjoyed the gig, he watched as older brothers Moe and Shemp (and partner Larry Fine) made it big as one of Ted Healy's "Double act stooges." Vaudeville star Ted Healy had a very popular stage act, in which he would try to tell jokes or sing, only to have his stooges wander on stage and interrupt him. By 1930, Healy and company appeared in their first feature film, Rube Goldberg's Soup to Nuts. Shemp, however, never liked Healy's abrasiveness and drunken bouts of anger. In 1932, he was offered a contract at the Vitaphone Studios in Brooklyn. (Contrary to stories told by Moe, the role of "Knobby Walsh" in the Joe Palooka series did not come along until late 1935, after Shemp had been at Vitaphone for three years and had already appeared in almost thirty short subjects.) Shemp was thrilled to be away from Healy, but, as was his nature, worried incessantly about brother Moe and partner Larry. Moe, however, told Shemp to pursue this opportunity: " In 1932, Shemp got the opportunity to play the character Knobby in Joe Palooka pictures out on the coast. And it seemed like a great opportunity for Shemp. And he was reluctant about leaving, he said, 'Well, what are you gonna do for a third man?' I said, 'Shemp, don't worry about that. Grab your opportunity and we'll get the kid brother Curly in.' And Curly was working with a band called Orville Knapp and his Band, he was a comedy guest conductor. And it got a big laugh, so we got in touch with Curly and said, 'Give your man two weeks notice and come on, you're gonna join with us.'

Clip heard on A&E Network
A&E Network's Biography (TV series) Biography
A Plumbing We Will Go. This short was reportedly Curly's favorite film. With Shemp gone, Moe suggested that kid brother Jerry fill the role of the third stooge. However, Ted took one look at Jerry, with his chestnut-red locks and elegant waxed mustache and stated that he was not a funny character like Moe and Larry. Jerry left the room and returned minutes later with a shaved head and face. Healy quipped, "Boy, don't you look girly?" Moe misheard the joke as "curly" and all who witnessed the exchange realized that the nickname "Curly" would be a perfect fit. In one of the few interviews Curly gave in his lifetime, he moaned about the loss of his beloved mane: "I had to shave it off right down to the skin." In 1934, MGM was building Ted Healy up as a solo comedian in feature films and Healy dissolved the act to pursue his own career. Like Shemp, the team of Howard, Fine and Howard were tired of Healy's alcoholism and abrasiveness and renamed their act the "Three Stooges." The same year, they signed on to appear in two-reel comedy short subjects for Columbia Pictures. The Stooges soon became the most popular short-subject attraction, with Curly playing an integral part in the trio's rise to fame.

Prime years
By the end of the 1930s, Curly Howard was clearly the star of the Three Stooges. His childlike mannerisms and natural comedic charm made him a hit with audiences, particularly children. He was famous for having an "indestructible" head, which always won out by breaking anything that assaulted it, most notably saw blades. Having no formal acting training, his comedic skill was entirely spontaneous. Many times, directors would simply let the camera roll to see what Curly came up with. Jules White, in particular, would leave gaps in the Stooge scripts where he could improvise for several minutes. By the time the Stooges hit their peak in the late 1930s, their films had almost become vehicles for Curly's unbridled comic performances. Classics like A Plumbing We Will Go, We Want Our Mummy, An Ache in Every Stake and Cactus Makes Perfect (film) Cactus Makes Perfect display his innate ability to take inanimate objects (like food, tools, pipes, etc.) and turn them into comic genius. Moe later confirmed that Curly forgetting his lines merely allowed him to improvise on the spot rather than ruin the shot: " If we were going through a scene and he'd forget his words for a moment, you know. Rather than stand, get pale and stop, you never knew what he was going to do. On one occasion he'd get down to the floor and spin around like a top until he remembered what he had to say. " Curly also developed a set of reactions and expressions that the other Stooges would imitate long after he had left the act: "N'yuuk, n'yuuk, n'yuuk" - Curly's traditional laughter, accompanied by a manic finger snapping routine, was often used when Curly had amused himself "Woo, woo, woo" - used when he was either scared, dazed, or flirting with a "dame" "N'gyah-ahh-ahhh!" - scare reaction (this was the most-often used reaction by the other Stooges after Curly's departure) "Ruff, ruff" - a dog bark, used to give an enemy a final push before departing the scene "Ah-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba!" - used during his later years, a sort of nonsensical, high-pitched yelling that signifies being scared or overly excited. On several occasions, Moe was convinced that rising star Lou Costello (a close friend of Shemp) was siphoning material from Howard. Costello was known to
acquire prints of the Stooges' films from Columbia Pictures on occasion, presumably to study Curly. Inevitably, Curly's routines would show up in Abbott and Costello features, much to Moe's chagrin (it did not help that Columbia Pictures president Harry Cohn would not give the Stooges a chance to make feature-length films like contemporaries Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers and Abbott and Costello). willdogsCurly (center) was in his glory while filming the dog-themed Calling All Curs. His love of dogs was unabated throughout his life. Oddly enough, Curly's offscreen personality was the antithesis of his onscreen manic persona. An introvert, he generally kept to himself, rarely socializing with people unless he was intoxicated. In addition, he came to life when in the presence of brother Shemp. Curly could not be himself around brother Moe, who treated his younger brother with a fatherly wag of the finger. Never an intellect, Curly simply refrained from engaging in "crazy antics" unless he was in his element: with family, performing, or slightly intoxicated. On June 7, 1937, Curly married Elaine Ackerman, who gave birth to their first child, Marilyn, the following year. The couple divorced in 1940. After this divorce, Curly gained a tremendous amount of weight and developed hypertension. The fact that Curly always believed that his shaved head made him unappealing to women caused him to drink excessively to mask his insecurities. As such, he took to wearing a hat in public to convey an image of masculinity, saying he felt like a little kid with his hair shaved off. However, he was popular with women all his life. In fact, many who knew him said women were Curly's main weakness. Moe's son-in-law Norman Maurer even went so far as to say he "was a pushover for women. If a pretty girl went up to him and gave him a spiel, Curly would marry them. Then she would take his money and run off. It was the same when a real estate agent would come up and say 'I have a house for you,' Curly would sell his current home and buy another one." During World War II, for seven months out of each year, the trio's filming schedule would go on hiatus, which allowed them to make personal appearances. The Stooges entertained servicemen constantly, and the intense work schedule took its toll on Curly. He never drank while performing in film or on stage, as Moe would not allow it. However, once away from Moe's watchful eye, he would find the nearest nightclub, down a few drinks, and enjoy himself. His drinking, eating, and carousing increased. He had difficulties managing his finances, often spending his money on wine, food, women, homes, cars, and especially dogs and was often near poverty. Moe eventually handled all of Curly's financial affairs, helped him manage his money, and even completed his income tax returns. Curly at home with two of his many canine friends. Curly found constant companionship in his dogs and often befriended strays whenever the Stooges were traveling. He would pick up homeless dogs and take them with him from town to town, until finding them homes somewhere else on the tour. When not performing, Curly would usually have a few dogs waiting for him at home as well. The Making of the Stooges VHS Documentary, narrated by Steve Allen (1984) Slow decline By 1944, Curly's energy began to wane. Films like Idle Roomers (1944 film) and Idle Roomers and Booby Dupes present a Curly whose voice was deeper and his actions slower. After the filming of Idiots Deluxe, Curly finally checked himself (at Moe's insistence) into Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara, California on January 23, 1945 and was diagnosed with extreme hypertension, a retinal hemorrhage and obesity. Curly's ill health forced him to rest, leading to only five shorts released in 1945 (the normal output was six to eight films per year). It is also believed that Howard suffered the first in a series of mild strokes at this time. Moe pleaded with Harry Cohn to allow Howard some time off upon discharge to regain his strength. Cohn would not halt the production of his profitable Stooge shorts and flatly refused Moe's request. Author Michael Fleming stated that "...it was a disastrous course of action." The first film produced after Curly's stroke was the lackluster If a Body Meets a Body, and his actions and mannerisms were noticeably slower. In the hands of a sympathetic director like novice Edward Bernds, Curly could produce decent work. This was because Bernds painstakingly devised ways that the ailing Stooge could still be the star without actually contributing a great deal. Films like Monkey Businessmen (in which Curly had to be coached by Moe on camera), Micro-Phonies and A Bird in the Head were examples of Bernds factoring in the reality that Curly was no longer in his prime. Other directors, such as Jules White, simply shifted the action to Moe and Larry. Films like Beer Barrel Polecats and Uncivil War Birds were mediocre at best and clearly showed that Curly was suffering. Subsequently, Moe urged Howard to find himself a wife, hoping it would convince his brother to finally settle down and allow his health to somewhat improve. After a two-week courtship, Curly married Marion Buxbaum on October 17, 1945, a union which lasted
approximately three months. The divorce proceeding was a bitter one, exacerbated by exploitation in the local media. After this divorce, Curly's health began a rapid and devastating decline. Illness By early 1946, Curly's voice had become even more coarse than before, and he had increasing difficulty remembering even the simplest dialogue. He had lost a considerable amount of weight and lines had creased his baby face. The quality of his performances seriously declined; as his strength and energy plummeted his final twelve films became the nadir of a once-bright career. A thinner, ailing Curly (far left) struggles to get through his dialogue in Rhythm and Weep. The extent to which Curly's performing had slipped can be clearly seen in the 1946 short Beer Barrel Polecats, which uses extensive stock footage from So Long Mr. Chumps, made five years earlier. Two of Jules White's efforts—Three Loan Wolves and Rhythm and Weep—clearly display a sick Curly as indicated by his much slower movements. Ed Bernds, however, was lucky enough to capture the ailing Stooge on an "up" day when filming Three Little Pirates. Curly seemed better and there was some hope that his illness was finally under control. "I guess I should be thankful that Curly was in one of his 'up' periods," Bernds said later.Okuda, Ted; Watz, Edward; (1986). The Columbia Comedy Shorts, p. 69, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. ISBN 0899501818 "In Three Little Pirates, he was terrific. It was the last flash of the old Curly." Half-Wits Holiday would be Curly's final appearance as an official member of the Stooges. The film was a remake of the comedy, Hoi Polloi (1935 film)Hoi Polloi. During filming on May 6, 1946, Curly suffered a severe stroke while sitting in director Jules White's chair while waiting to film the last scene of the day. When Curly was called by the assistant director to take the stage, he didn't answer. Moe ran over to Howard, whose head had dropped to his chest. Moe described the event in his book, Moe Howard and the Three Stooges. Moe called out to him using his nickname, "Babe." Moe has stated that Curly's mouth was distorted, and he was unable to speak, all he could do was cry. Curly was rushed to his home, where Moe joined him.Curly was actually supposed to be featured prominently in the pie-fight scene, but after Moe found him with his head slumped on his shoulder, it was apparent the comedian was in no shape to perform. Moe quietly alerted director Jules White of Howard's situation, leading White to quickly rework the scene to be divided between Moe and Larry. After being discharged, Curly took up residence at the Motion Picture & Television Country House and Hospital in Woodland Hills, Los Angeles, CaliforniaWoodland Hills, California. Curly makes a cameo, in Hold That Lion!, after his career-ending stroke. This marked the only instance in which brothers Curly, Moe and Shemp appeared together on screen. Curly's cameo appearance, from Hold That Lion, was recycled in the 1953 remake, Booty and the Beast, one year after Howard had died. Curly had to leave the team to recuperate. Shemp returned to the trio, to replace him in the Columbia shorts; an extant copy of the Stooges' 1947 Columbia Pictures contract was signed by all four Stooges and stipulated that Shemp's joining "in place and stead of Jerry Howard" would be temporary, until Curly recovered sufficiently to return to work full time. During the last two years of Curly's career, Shemp had been recruited occasionally to substitute for him during live performances; now the replacement became permanent."Moe and Shemp Howard and Larry Fine, who were the originals in the Three Stooges act, compose the trio to appear here. Curle [sic] Howard, who took Shemp's place after the act had been organized some years and whose appearance is familiar to movie audiences, is not on the current tour because of illness." The Times-Picayune; January 18, 1946 editionDonning a full head of hair, Curly made a brief cameo appearance (doing his barking-dog routine) in the third film after brother Shemp returned to the trio, Hold That Lion!. It was the only film that featured Larry Fine and all three Howard brothers, Moe, Shemp and Curly, simultaneously; director Jules White later said he spontaneously staged the bit during Curly's impromptu visit to the soundstage: " It was a spur of the moment idea. Curly was visiting the set; this was sometime after his stroke. Apparently he came in on his own, since I didn't see a nurse with him. He was sitting around, reading a newspaper. As I walked in, the newspaper, which he had in front of his face, came down and he waved hello to me. I thought it would be funny, to have him do a bit in the picture and he was happy to do it. " Curly filmed a second cameo as an irate chef two years later for the short Malice in the Palace, but his scenes were eventually cut. A lobby card for the short shows him with the other Stooges, though he never appeared in the final product. Retirement Still not fully recovered from his stroke, Curly met Valerie Newman, whom he married on July 31, 1947. A friend later recalled, "Valerie was the only decent thing that happened to Curly and the only one that really cared about him." Although his health worsened after the marriage, Valerie gave birth to a
Curly Howard


Notes

Further reading


External links

Curly Howard at The Three Stooges Official Website

Curly Howard at the Internet Movie Database

Curly Howard at the Internet Broadway Database

Shemp Howard

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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Samuel Horwitz</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 4, 1895</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brownsville, Brooklyn, New York, United States</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(aged 60) Hollywood, California, United States</td>
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<th>Spouse</th>
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<th>Website</th>
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Shemp Howard (March 4, 1895[1] – November 22, 1955) was an American actor and comedian best known as a part of the Three Stooges comedy team. Born Samuel Horwitz, he was called “Shemp” because “Sam” came out that way in his mother's thick Litvak accent. He was the older brother of Moe Howard and "third stooge" in the early years of the act. He would rejoin the trio in May 1946, after youngest brother Jerome "Curly" Howard suffered a stroke.

Personal life

Shemp, like his brothers Moe and Curly, was born in Brownsville, Brooklyn. He was the third of the five Horwitz brothers and of Levite and Lithuanian Jewish ancestry. In September 1925, Shemp (age 30) married Gertrude Frank (age 28) a fellow New Yorker. They had one child, Morton (1926–1972). (U.S. Representative Barney Frank is the son of Gertrude's cousin, Sam Frank.[2])

Shemp used his somewhat homely appearance for comic effect, often mugging grotesquely or allowing his hair to fall in disarray. He even played along with a publicity stunt that named him “The Ugliest Man in Hollywood.” (“I'm hideous,” he explained to reporters.) Notoriously phobic, his fears included airplanes, automobiles, dogs and water. According to Moe's autobiography, Shemp was involved in a driving accident as a teenager and thus never obtained a driver's license.
Show business

Moe Howard entered show business as a youngster, on stage and in films. By the 1920s he was part of a roughhouse act with vaudeville star Ted Healy. One day Moe spotted his brother Shemp in the audience, and yelled at him from the stage. Quick-witted Shemp yelled right back, and walked onto the stage. From then on, Shemp was part of the act, usually known as "Ted Healy and His Stooges." On stage, Healy would sing and tell jokes while his three noisy stooges (show-business slang for assistants) would get in his way. Healy would retaliate with physical and verbal abuse. Healy's original stooges were the Howard brothers and Larry Fine. Shemp played a bumbling fireman in the Stooges' first film, *Soup to Nuts*, the only film in which he plays one of Healy's gang.

Healy was always the main attraction of the act, and his stooges were in constant disagreement with him over billing, money, and management. Tired of Healy's shenanigans, Shemp left Healy's act in 1932 to pursue a solo film career.

Solo years

Shemp Howard, like many New York-based performers, found work at the Vitaphone studio in Brooklyn. Originally playing bit roles in Vitaphone's Roscoe Arbuckle comedies, showing off his goofy appearance, he was entrusted with speaking roles and supporting parts almost immediately. He was featured with Vitaphone comics Jack Haley, Ben Blue, and Gus Shy, then co-starred with Harry Gribbon, Daphne Pollard, and Johnnie Berkes, and finally starred in his own two-reel comedies. (A 1934 Gribbon-Howard short, *Art Trouble*, also featured the then unknown James Stewart in his first film role.) Shemp would seldom stick to the script, and would liven up a scene with ad-libbed, incidental dialogue or wisecracks. This became a trademark of his performances. Late 1935 Vitaphone licensed rights to produce short comedies based on the "Joe Palooka" comic strip. Shemp was cast as "Knobby Walsh" and although he was only a supporting character, Shemp became the comic focus of the series, with Johnny Berkes and Lee Weber as his foils. Shemp costarred in the first 7 shorts, released during 1936 and 1937; 9 were produced altogether, with the last 2 done after Shemp left Vitaphone to move to greener pastures on the West Coast.

Away from Vitaphone he attempted, unsuccessfully, to lead his own group of "stooges" in the Van Beuren musical comedy short *The Knife of the Party*. Otherwise, Shemp Howard's solo career was very successful. He followed his brothers' lead, moved to the west coast in 1937, and picked up supporting actor roles at several studios, predominantly at Columbia Pictures and Universal Studios. He performed with such comic greats as W. C. Fields with whom he played the bartender in the 1940 film *The Bank Dick*, and the comedy team Abbott and Costello, who would reportedly trim his scene-stealing material. He also lent comic relief to Charlie Chan and The Thin Man murder mysteries, and was in several Universal B-musicals of the early 1940s, among them *Strictly in the Groove, How's About It? Moonlight and Cactus*, and *San Antonio Rose*, in which he is paired with Lon Chaney, Jr. as a faux Abbott and Costello. In most of these, his improvisational skills are highlighted. He was briefly teamed with comedians Billy Gilbert and Maxie Rosenbloom for three B-comedy features in 1944-45. He also played a few dramatic roles, such as his small role in the John Wayne film *Pittsburgh* in 1942.

The Three Stooges: 1946–1955

Since 1939, Shemp had been appearing frequently in Columbia's two-reel comedies, co-starring with Columbia regulars Andy Clyde, The Glove Slingers, El Brendel, and Tom Kennedy. Howard was given his own starring series in 1944; he was working for Columbia in this capacity when his brother Curly was felled by a debilitating stroke on May 6, 1946. Shemp reluctantly replaced Curly in Columbia's popular Stooge shorts, knowing that Moe and Larry would be out of work if he refused. Initially, Shemp rejoined the Stooges on a temporary basis until Curly recovered, but as Curly's condition worsened, it became apparent that Shemp's association with the Stooges would be permanent. (Prior to replacing Curly on film, Shemp had substituted for his brother in some personal appearances in the early 1940s.)
Shemp's take as the third Stooge was much different than Curly's. While he could still roll with the punches as the recipient of Moe's slapstick abuse, he was more of a laid-back dimwit versus Curly's energetic man-child persona. And unlike Curly, who has plentiful mannerisms, Shemp's main Stooge action was a high-pitched "heep-heep-heep!" sound, a sort of soft screech done by inhaling. This was rather multi-use, as Shemp uttered this sound when scared, overtly happy, or dazed.

Shemp appeared with Moe and Larry in 73 short subjects and the feature film Gold Raiders. He suffered a mild stroke in November 1952, though without noticeable effect on his remaining films with the Stooges (largely remakes of earlier films that recycled footage to reduce costs). Some fans, however, contend that in these later cheapies, Shemp looks weak, pale, and even disoriented.

**Death**

On November 22, 1955, while returning home by taxicab from attending a boxing match (one of Shemp's favorite pastimes), Shemp died of a massive heart attack. Shemp was lighting a cigar after telling a joke when he suddenly slumped over on his friend Al Winston's lap. Moe Howard's autobiography states that Shemp died on November 23, 1955 and most subsequent accounts point to that date due to Moe's book. But much of Moe's book was finished posthumously by his daughter and son-in-law, and some specific details were confused as a result. The Los Angeles county coroner death certificate states that Shemp Howard died on Tuesday November 22, 1955 at 11:35 PST; confirming that, Shemp's obituary appeared in the 11/23 afternoon editions of L.A. newspapers, establishing the night of November 22 as the date of death. He was entombed at Home of Peace Cemetery in East Los Angeles, the same place his brother, Curly, was buried.

"*Fake Shemp*"

Columbia had promised exhibitors eight Three Stooges comedies for 1956, but only four were completed when Shemp died. To fulfill the contract, producer Jules White manufactured four more shorts by reusing old footage of Shemp and filming new connecting scenes with a double (longtime Stooge supporting actor Joe Palma), seen mostly from the back.

The re-edited films range from clever to blatantly patchy, and Stooge fans often dismiss them as second-rate. *Rumpus in the Harem* borrows from *Malice in the Palace*, *Hot Stuff* from *Fuelin' Around*, *Commotion on the Ocean* from *Dunked in the Deep*. The best (and most technically accomplished) is *Scheming Schemers*, combining new footage with recycled clips from three old Stooge shorts: *A Plumbing We Will Go*, *Half-Wits Holiday*, and *Vagabond Loafers*. [3]

When it was time to renew the Stooges' contract, Columbia hired comedian Joe Besser to replace Shemp. After 16 films, Columbia replaced Joe by (in a sense) bringing back Shemp: Columbia kept the series going into the 1960s by reissuing Shemp's Stooge comedies. Thus, Shemp Howard remained a popular movie star for more than a decade after his death.
Director Sam Raimi and his childhood friend actor Bruce Campbell refer to body doubles and stand-ins as “Shemps” or "Fake Shemps" in reference to the postmortem Stooges shorts.

In a 2000 TV-movie, Shemp was portrayed by John Kassir, who donned a floopy, straight-haired wig to portray the comic.

**See also**

- Fake Shemp

**References**


ISBN 0-9715801-0-3

**External links**

- Shemp Howard (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0397602/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Shemp Howard (http://www.ibdb.com/person.asp?ID=45735) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Shemp Howard (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=6130700) at Find a Grave
Joe Palma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joe Palma</th>
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| **Born** | Joseph Provenzano  
March 17, 1905  
New York, New York |
| **Died** | August 14, 1994  
(aged 89)  
Poway, California |
| **Years active** | 1937–1968 |
| **Spouse** | Marjorie Ann Ries |

**Joe Palma** (March 17, 1905 – August 14, 1994) was an American film actor. Born in New York, New York, Palma appeared in over 120 films between 1937 and 1968.

**Early years**

Palma grew up in New York City, and worked as a mortician in the Provenzano Funeral Home, owned by his parents. Eventually, Hollywood called, and Palma headed west. He joined the stock company at Columbia Pictures in 1937, and played scores of bit parts over 30 years.[1]

With his lean build, brushed-back hair, and unassuming appearance, Joe Palma almost always played incidental roles, which is probably why he lasted so long as a Columbia contract player. He was usually in the background, and at most, he would be given only a few lines of dialogue. In the 1945 Three Stooges comedy *Beer Barrel Polecats*, for instance, Palma plays an angry convict who dares Curly Howard to punch him in the nose.

Palma can be glimpsed in all kinds of movies, including crime dramas, musical comedies, costume epics, westerns, serials, and two-reel comedies. Several of his many roles consisted of the following:

- a railroad brakeman picking up runaway Scotty Beckett in *The Jolson Story*
- a plainclothes detective making a positive identification in the Jean Porter musical *Little Miss Broadway*
- a bandit defying authority in the Three Stooges' *Guns a Poppin'*
- a waiter in Sam Katzman's production *Rock Around the Clock.*

Palma's largest speaking role is probably in the Schilling & Lane short *Training for Trouble*, in which Palma attempts a Jewish dialect: "This is Goldstein, Goldberg, Goldblatt, and O'Brien, booking agents. O'Brien speaking" (a gag borrowed from the Stooges' *A Pain in the Pullman*).
"The Fake Shemp"

Today, Palma is best known as Shemp Howard's posthumous double. In 1955, Three Stooges member Shemp Howard died of a sudden heart attack. At the time, the Stooges still had four short films left to deliver on their annual contract with Columbia Pictures. By 1955, budget cuts had forced them to utilize stock footage from previous shorts as a matter of survival. As a result, the Stooges managed to complete the four films without Shemp. To do this, Palma was made up to resemble the late Stooge, complete with wig, and would be filmed only from the back or side. On occasion, Palma was required to add a brief line of dialogue or sound (most notably in *Hot Stuff*). The few new shots Palma appeared in were then edited together with the recycled footage containing the real Shemp, and new films were born.\(^2\)

Later years

Palma spent his last years in the entertainment industry as an assistant to Jack Lemmon. He appears as "Mr. Palma," the mailman, in Lemmon's 1964 Columbia comedy *Good Neighbor Sam*. His final film appearance was as a butcher in Lemmon's 1968 Paramount film *The Odd Couple*.\(^1\) He died of natural causes on August 14, 1994.

See also

- Fake Shemp

Selected filmography

- *The Odd Couple* (1968)
- *The Great Race* (1965)
- *Sappy Bull Fighters* (1959)
- *Flying Saucer Daffy* (1958)
- *Fifi Blows Her Top* (1958)
- *Outer Space Jitters* (1957)
- *Guns A Poppin* (1957)
- *Hoofs and Goofs* (1957)
- *Commotion on the Ocean* (1956)
- *Scheming Schemers* (1956)
- *Hot Stuff* (1956)
- *Rumpus in the Harem* (1956)
- *Hook a Crook* (1955)
- *Stone Age Romeos* (1955) [archival footage]
- *Fling in the Ring* (1955)
- *Shot in the Frontier* (1954)
- *Knutzy Knights* (1954)
- *Pals and Gals*
- *Musty Musketeers* (1954)
- *Fraidy Cat* (1951)
- *Hugs and Mugs* (1950)
- *Punchy Cowpunchers* (1950)
- *Malice in the Palace* (1949)
- *I'm a Monkey's Uncle* (1948)
- *Fiddlers Three* (1948)
Squareheads of the Round Table (1948)
Shivering Sherlocks (1948)
Boston Blackie and the Law (1946)
Three Little Pirates (1946)
Three Loan Wolves (1946)
Beer Barrel Polecats (1946)
The Bells of St. Mary's (1945)
A Hit with a Miss (1945)
If a Body Meets a Body (1945)
Boston Blackie Booked on Suspicion (1945)
Pick a Peck of Plumbers
Louisiana Hayride (1944)
A Blitz on the Fritz (1943)
From Nurse to Worse (1940)
Blondie Brings Up Baby (1939)
Adventure in Sahara (1938)
Goofs and Saddles (1937)

References
[1] Joe Palma in the Internet Movie Database (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0658012/)
Joe Besser (August 12, 1907 – March 1, 1988) was an American comedian, known for his impish humor and wimpy characters, and is now best remembered for his brief stint as a member of the Three Stooges in movie short subjects of 1956-57. He is also remembered for his television roles: Stinky, the spoiled mamma's boy in The Abbott and Costello Show, and Jillson, the maintenance man in The Joey Bishop Show.

Early life

Besser was born in St. Louis, Missouri, making him the only Stooge member not born on the East Coast. He was the ninth child of Morris and Fanny Besser (Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe). He had seven older sisters, and an older brother Manny who was in show business, primarily as an ethnic Jewish comic. From an early age, Joe was fascinated with show business, especially the magic act of Howard Thurston that visited his town annually. When Joe was 12, Thurston allowed him to play an audience plant (as in "stooge"). Besser was so excited by this, he sneaked into Thurston's train after the St. Louis run of the show was over, and was discovered the next day sleeping on top of the lion's cage in Detroit.

Thurston gave in, informed Besser's parents of the situation, and trained him as an assistant. The first act involved pulling a rabbit out of a hat. The trick involved two rabbits, one hidden in a pocket of Thurston's cape. But young Besser was so nervous that he botched badly, pulling out the rabbit from the cape at the same time as the other rabbit was on display, before the trick had been performed. The audience roared with laughter, and Besser from then on was assigned "comic mishap" roles only.
Acting

Besser remained in show business and developed a unique comic character: a whiny sissy who flew into temper tantrums with little provocation. Besser, with his frequent outbursts of “You crazy, youuuuu!” and "Not so faaaaasst!" was so original and so outrageously silly that he became a vaudeville headliner, and movie and radio appearances soon followed.

In 1932, Besser married dancer Erna Kay (born Ernestine Dora Kretschmer), known as "Ernie". They were neighbors and friends of Lou Costello, of Abbott and Costello fame. In 1949, Besser appeared in one of Abbott and Costello's movies, Africa Screams, which also featured Shemp Howard of the Three Stooges. Joe and Shemp were old friends, having met in 1932.

The zany comedy team of Olsen and Johnson, whose Broadway revues were fast-paced collections of songs and blackouts, hired Joe Besser to join their company. Besser's noisy intrusions were perfect for the anything-can-happen O & J format. Besser's work caught the attention of the Shubert brothers, who signed Besser to a theatrical contract. Columbia Pictures hired Besser away from the Shuberts, and Besser relocated to Hollywood in 1944, where he brought his unique comic character to feature-length musical comedies like Hey, Rookie! and Eadie Was a Lady. Besser also starred in short-subject comedies for Columbia from 1949 to 1956. By this point his persona was sufficiently well-known that he was frequently caricatured in Looney Tunes animated shorts of the era.

In 1950 he appeared in the action film The Desert Hawk.

Besser had substituted for Lou Costello on radio, opposite Bud Abbott, and by the 1950s he was firmly established as one of the A & C regulars. When Bud and Lou filmed The Abbott and Costello Show for television, they hired Joe Besser to play "Stinky," a bratty, loudmouthed child dressed in an oversized Little Lord Fauntleroy outfit, shorts, and a flat top hat with overhanging brim. He appeared during the first season of The Abbott and Costello Show. In 1953, Joe was cast for the role of Yonkel, a chariot man in the biblical low-budget film Sins of Jezebel which starred Paulette Goddard as the titular wicked queen.

The Three Stooges: Joe, Larry, and Moe

After Shemp Howard died of a sudden heart attack on November 22, 1955, his brother Moe suggested that he and teammate Larry Fine continue working as "The Two Stooges". Studio chief Harry Cohn rejected the proposal. Although Moe had legal approval to allow new members into the act, Columbia executives had final say about any actor who would appear in the studio's films, and insisted on a performer already under contract to Columbia: Joe Besser. At the time (early 1956), Besser was one of a few comedians still making comedy shorts at the studio. He successfully renegotiated his contract, and was paid his former feature-film salary (which was more than the other Stooges earned).

Joe Besser refrained from imitating Curly or Shemp. He continued to play the same whiny character he had developed over his long career. He had a clause in his contract prohibiting being hit excessively (one that would be rescinded later on), insisting that his humor was more about comedic revenge for being bullied. (He usually reacted to Moe's anger by wimpily hitting Moe's shoulder and complaining. "Not so harrrrrd!") Besser recalled, "I usually played the kind of character who would hit others back." He claimed that Larry volunteered to take the brunt of Moe's screen abuse. In a 2002 "E Entertainment" episode which used file footage of Besser, the comic stated that the left side of Larry Fine's face was noticeably coarser than the other side, which he attributed to Moe's less-than-staged slaps. (Larry Fine's daughter attributes this, plus scars to the comic's left hand, to a chemical spill that occurred when Larry was a child.)

"Stooge-a-polooza" TV host Rich Koz has even apologized on the air before showing Besser shorts, as during the show's tenure he had gotten more than a fair share of emails and letters from fans expressing their outrage over his airing them. Third-stooge Joe does have his defenders—Koz himself once hosted an episode featuring only Besser shorts, and Columbia historians Ted Okuda and Edward Watz have written appreciatively of Besser bringing new
energy to what was then a flagging theatrical series.

Besser was a Stooge from the spring of 1956 to the end of 1957. His Stooge tenure ended when Columbia shut down the two-reel-comedy department on December 20, 1957. Producer-director Jules White had shot enough film for 16 comedies, which were released a few months apart until June 1959, with Sappy Bull Fighters being the final release. Moe Howard and Larry Fine discussed plans to tour with a live act, but Besser declined. His wife had suffered a heart attack in November 1957, and he was unwilling to leave without her. In later life, Besser honorably called his Stooges shorts “The Two Stooges featuring Joe Besser” and praised Moe and Larry in a 1985 radio interview, of which a quote from said interview was aired on A&E Network’s Biography. Besser said:

“Moe and Larry, they were the best. I enjoyed every minute of it with them. In fact, to show you how wonderful they were, I never liked to be hit with anything. And Larry would always say to me, ‘Don’t worry Joe, I'll take it.’ Now that's the kind of guys that they were...

After the Stooges

Besser returned to films and television, most notably as the superintendent "Jillson" for four seasons (1961–1965) of The Joey Bishop Show, and the voice of Babu the genie in Jeannie, an animated version of I Dream of Jeannie. He also made occasional appearances on the ABC late-night series, also called The Joey Bishop Show between 1967 and 1969. Besser also voiced the character Putty Puss on the DePatie-Freleng cartoon series The Houndcats in 1972. Later in life, Besser expressed some dismay that fans only recognized him for his brief tenure with the Stooges. His autobiography title, Not Just a Stooge, bears this out. However, he eventually softened, realizing that the Stooges continued to bring him his greatest exposure. As such, the book would later be retitled as Once a Stooge, Always a Stooge by his publisher, and remarkeed to emphasize the Stooge connection.

Besser recalled his friendship with the Stooges in an emotional speech referring to “the four boys” (Moe, Larry, Curly, and Shemp) up in heaven looking down at the dedication of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on August 30, 1983. He was the only official Stooge to speak at the event, as Joe DeRita was ill at the time, although he outlived Besser by five years. Stooge supporting player Emil Sitka (who was signed as a Stooge in 1974 but appeared at no public functions) officially replaced Larry Fine.

In the spring of 2000, ABC aired a made-for-television movie about the Stooges, with actor Laurence Coy appearing briefly as Joe Besser.

Death

Joe Besser died of heart failure on March 1, 1988. His wife Erna died on July 1, 1989, from a heart attack at age 89. Both spouses are buried in the same plot in Glendale's Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery.

Notes

- Besser is the great uncle of Christopher Palid, CFO of Motts and one of the discoverers of aerogel.
- In the film This Is Spinal Tap, the heavy metal rock band Spinal Tap's replacement drummer is named Joe "Mama" Besser, most likely a reference to Besser's role as a replacement Stooge as well as the insult "Yo mama."
Further reading

- *Not Just a Stooge* (later retitled *Once a Stooge, Always a Stooge*) by Joe Besser with Jeff Lenburg and Greg Lenburg [1], (Knightsbridge Publishing Co., 1990).

External links

- Joe Besser [2] at the Internet Movie Database
- Joe Besser [3] at Allmovie
Joe DeRita (July 12, 1909 – July 3, 1993), born Joseph Wardell, was an American comedian who is best known as Curly-Joe DeRita, the "sixth" member of the Three Stooges.

DeRita was born into a show-business family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wardell's father was a stage technician, his mother a professional stage dancer, and the three often acted on stage together from his early childhood. Taking his mother's maiden name, DeRita (Portuguese),[2] the actor joined the burlesque circuit during the 1920s, gaining fame as a comedian. During World War II, DeRita joined the USO, performing through Britain and France with such celebrities as Bing Crosby and Randolph Scott.

### Career with The Three Stooges

The Three Stooges (Curly Howard, Larry Fine, and Moe Howard) had been making short comedies for Columbia Pictures since 1934. Curly suffered a stroke in 1946, forcing him to retire; his brother Shemp Howard, the original third Stooge before leaving the act in 1932 for a solo career, only wanted to be a temporary replacement. Joe DeRita was also making short slapstick comedies for Stooges producer-director Jules White at the time. White attempted to recruit Joe DeRita for the Three Stooges, because he wanted "another Curly." However, the strong-willed DeRita refused to change his act or imitate another performer, and White eventually gave up on DeRita. (DeRita's own short-subject contract was not renewed.)[3] DeRita returned to burlesque, and in the 1950s he recorded a risque LP called *Burlesque Uncensored.*
Shemp Howard died in 1955, and was succeeded by Joe Besser. Columbia shut down the short-subjects department at the end of 1957, and Besser quit the act to take care of his ailing wife. The two remaining Stooges seriously considered retirement. Then Columbia's television subsidiary, Screen Gems, syndicated the Stooges' old comedies to television, and The Three Stooges were suddenly television superstars.

Now Moe and Larry had many job offers, but they needed a new partner. Larry saw Joe DeRita in a Las Vegas stage engagement, and told Moe that DeRita would be "perfect for the third Stooge." Howard and Fine invited DeRita to join the act, and he readily accepted. Because of his physical resemblance to both Curly and Joe Besser, and to avoid confusion with his predecessors, DeRita was renamed "Curly-Joe" and became the third Stooge in 1958.

The team embarked on a new series of theatrical Three Stooges films, including *Have Rocket, Will Travel* and *Snow White and the Three Stooges*. Aimed primarily at children, these films rarely reached the same comedic heights as their shorts. (Moe and Larry's advanced ages, plus pressure from the PTA and other children's advocates, led to the toning-down of the trio's trademark violent slapstick.) While DeRita's physical appearance was reminiscent of the original "Curly," his characterization was milder, and not as manic or surreal. Curly-Joe also showed a bit more backbone, even occasionally talking back to Moe, calling him "buddy boy."

Through the 1960s, DeRita remained a member of the team, participating in animated cartoons (with live-action introductions) and a failed television pilot titled *Kook's Tour*. However, Larry Fine suffered a paralyzing stroke in 1970, putting all new Stooges-related material on hold. Emil Sitka was named as "the middle stooge", but never got to perform with the team. Before Moe's death in 1975, the Stooges (with Emil Sitka taking on the role as the middle stooge) had planned to film an R-rated movie called *The Jet Set* (later produced with the surviving members of the Ritz Brothers and released as *Blazing Stewardesses*).

In the 1970s, DeRita attempted to form a truly "new" Three Stooges. He recruited burlesque and vaudeville veterans Mousie Garner and Frank Mitchell to replace Moe and Larry for nightclub engagements, but the act failed and DeRita retired.

**Death**

On July 3, 1993, DeRita died of pneumonia at the Motion Picture & Television Country House and Hospital in Woodland Hills, California. He was buried in the Valhalla Memorial Park Cemetery in North Hollywood; his epitaph reads "The Last Stooge".

**Legacy**

Although DeRita enjoyed working with Moe and Larry, and made a good living doing it, he was not a fan of the Stooges' humor. He told an interviewer the following:
"I don't think the Stooges were funny. I'm not putting you on, I'm telling the truth — they were physical, but they just didn't have any humor about them. Take, for instance, Laurel and Hardy. I can watch their films and I still laugh at them and maybe I've seen them four or five times before. But when I see that pie or seltzer bottle, I know that it's not just lying around for no reason. It's going to be used for something. I was with the Stooges for 12 years and it was a very pleasant association but I just don't think they were funny." [5]

**Personal**

DeRita was married twice. His first marriage was to a co-worker named Bonnie Brooks. They were married in 1935 and divorced some 30 years later. He remarried in 1967 to Jean Sullivan; they remained together until his death.

**Popular culture**

In the spring of 2000, ABC aired a made-for-television movie about the Stooges, with actor Peter Callan playing the role of Joe DeRita.

**References**


**External links**

- Joe DeRita (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0220388/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Joe DeRita (http://www.allmovie.com/artist/17955) at Allmovie
- Joe DeRita (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&G Rid=1557) at Find a Grave
Ted Healy (October 1, 1896 – December 21, 1937) was an American vaudeville performer, comedian, and actor. He is chiefly remembered today as the original employer of the Three Stooges, but had a successful stage and film career of his own.

Healy's was the first caricature drawn by Alex Gard to grace the walls of Sardi's, a legendary restaurant located in the New York City theater district.[1]

Early life

Healy was born in Houston, Texas as Charles Ernest Lee Nash, and was known as Lee. In 1912, as teenagers, Nash and his childhood friend Harry Moses Horwitz (later known as Moe Howard of the Three Stooges) joined the Annette Kellerman Diving Girls, a vaudeville act which included four boys. The work ended quickly, however, after an accident on stage. Nash and Howard then went their separate ways. Nash developed a vaudeville act and adopted the stage name Ted Healy.

Healy's act was a hit, and he soon expanded his role as a comedian and master of ceremonies. He added performers to his stage show, including his new wife Betty. When some of his acrobats quit in 1922, Moe Howard answered the advertisement for replacements. Since Howard was no acrobat, Healy cast his old friend as a stooge (someone who impersonated a member of the audience who is called on stage). In the routine, Howard's appearance on stage would end with Healy losing his trousers.
**The beginning of the Stooges**

Howard's brother Shemp joined the act soon after as a heckler in 1923, with Larry Fine joining in 1925. Healy's vaudeville revues (with names like *A Night in Venice*, *A Night in Spain*, and *New Yorker Nights*) included the trio under various names, such as Ted Healy and his Southern Gentlemen, but never as Ted Healy and the Three Stooges.

Moe Howard took a break from show business in 1927 after the birth of his daughter. The group reconvened in 1928 and appeared in several Broadway productions, leading to an appearance in the 1930 film *Soup to Nuts*. In 1931 the Stooges broke from Healy after a dispute over a movie contract. They began performing on their own (using such monikers as "The Three Lost Souls" and "Howard, Fine and Howard"), often using some of the material from the Healy shows. Healy subsequently sued the Stooges for using his material. However, the copyright was actually held by the Shubert Theatre Corporation (for which the routines had been produced)—and since the Stooges had the Shuberts' permission to use it, Healy lost the suit.

Healy then hired a new set of stooges, consisting of Eddie Moran (soon replaced by Richard "Dick" Hakins), Jack Wolf, and Paul "Mousie" Garner. The Howard-Fine-Howard Stooges rejoined Healy's act in 1932, but Shemp quit the act shortly thereafter, soon to be replaced by his younger brother Curly Howard. The reunion did not last, however, and in early 1934, Howard, Fine and Howard parted ways with Healy for good.

**After the Stooges**

Healy went on to establish a promising career in motion pictures, where he was successful in both comedic roles (where he was often grouped with new "stooges", including Jimmy Brewster, Red Pearson and Sammy Glasser) and dramatic roles. After Larry Fine, Moe Howard and Curly Howard left his act in 1934, Healy appeared in a succession of films for 20th Century Fox, Warner Brothers, and MGM. During this period, Healy took to wearing a full toupee in public.[2] He was 41 and under contract to MGM at the time of his death on December 21, 1937, a few hours after preview audiences had acclaimed his work in the Warner Brothers film *Hollywood Hotel*.

**Sudden death**

A cloud of mystery still hangs over the cause of Healy's untimely death (see Henry Taylor's and E. J. Fleming's controversially conflicting versions below). Newspaper accounts attributed it to serious head injuries sustained in a nightclub brawl while celebrating the birth of his first child. Conflicting reports claimed the comedian died of a heart attack at his Los Angeles home.

Two days before his death, Healy had visited Moe Howard's wife, Helen, at their Hollywood apartment with the news that Betty (Hickman), his second wife, was pregnant. Excited at the prospect of his first child, he told Howard's wife, "I'll make him the richest kid in the world." Howard later stated in an interview that Healy had always wanted children and that it was ironic that the impending birth of his first child shortly preceded his own death. Howard recalled, "He was nuts about kids. He used to visit our homes and envied the fact that we were all married and had children. Healy always loved kids and often gave Christmas parties for underprivileged youngsters and spent hundreds of dollars on toys."[3]

At the time of Healy's death, the Stooges (consisting of Moe, Larry, and Curly) were at Grand Central Terminal in New York City preparing to leave for a personal appearance in Boston. Before their departure, Howard called Rube Jackter, head of Columbia Pictures' sales department, to confirm their benefit performance at Boston's Children's Hospital. During the conversation, Jackter told Howard that the night editor of *The New York Times* wanted to talk to him. Howard phoned *The Times*. The editor, without even a greeting, queried curtly, "Is this Moe?" Howard said it was. The editor then asked, "Would you like to make a statement on the death of Ted Healy?" Howard was stunned. He dropped the phone. Folding his arms over his head, Howard started to sob. Curly and Larry rushed into the phone booth to warn Howard that their train was about to leave. They found him crumpled over, crying. Since Howard seldom openly showed his emotions, Larry cracked to Curly, "Your brother's nuts. He is actually crying." Howard
did not explain the reason for his emotional breakdown until he boarded the train. When they arrived back in Hollywood, they learned the details of Healy's death from a writer friend, Henry Taylor. Taylor told Howard that Healy had been out drinking at the Trocadero nightclub on the Sunset Strip, and an argument broke out with three college boys. Healy called them vile names and offered to go outside the club to take care of them one at a time. Once outside, Ted did not have a chance to raise his fists. The three men jumped him, knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the head, ribs and stomach. Healy's friend actor Joe Frisco came on the scene, picked him up from the sidewalk and took him to his apartment, where Ted died of what medical officials initially called a brain concussion.[4]

However, a very different account asserts that Healy was beaten to death by screen legend Wallace Beery, Albert R. Broccoli (later producer of James Bond films), and notorious gangster (and Broccoli's cousin) Pat DiCicco. This account appears in E. J. Fleming's book The Fixers: Eddie Mannix, Howard Strickling, and the MGM Publicity Machine (2004) about legendary MGM "fixers" Mannix and Strickling. Under orders from studio head Louis B. Mayer, MGM sent Beery, one of their most valuable properties, to Europe for several months, while the story of the "three college boys" was fabricated to conceal the truth. (Immigration records confirm a four-month trip to Europe on Beery's part immediately after Healy's death, ending April 17, 1938).[5]

Despite his sizable salary, Ted Healy died penniless. MGM's staff members started a fund to pay for his burial. Moe Howard later mentioned that producer Bryan Foy of the famed Foy family of vaudevillians footed a sizeable portion of the bill for the funeral. According to Howard, even in the heyday of his stage career, Ted refused to save money and spent every dime of his salary as fast as he earned it. Healy loved betting on horses, and his favorite reading matter was race track charts.

Healy was survived by his widow, Betty Healy (née Hickman, whom he married on May 15, 1936) and his son, John Jacob Nash — who was baptized in St. Augustine's Church, opposite MGM, a week after Healy's death.

Ted Healy is interred at Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles, California.

References
[5] Ile de France passenger list, p. 117, line 9, Microfilm roll T715_6140

Further reading
• The Three Stooges Scrapbook by Jeff Lenburg, Joan Howard Maurer, Greg Lenburg (Citadel Press, 1994).

External links
• Ted Healy (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0372384/) at the Internet Movie Database
• Ted Healy (http://www.ibdb.com/person.asp?ID=44693) at the Internet Broadway Database
• Ted Healy (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=4542) at Find a Grave
Soup to Nuts

For other uses, see Soup to nuts.

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- Directed by: Benjamin Stoloff
- Produced by: A. L. Rocket
- Written by: Rube Goldberg
- Music by: Cliff Friend, James Monaco
- Cinematography: Joseph Valentine
- Editing by: Clyde Carruth
- Distributed by: Fox Film Corporation
- Release date(s): September 28, 1930
- Running time: 69' 49"
- Country: United States
- Language: English
- Followed by: Nertsery Rhymes

*Soup to Nuts* is an American feature film written by Rube Goldberg and directed by Benjamin Stoloff, which marks the film debut of the comic trio who would go on to become known as the Three Stooges. Goldberg made a cameo appearance in the film as himself, opening letters in a restaurant.
Plot

Ted Healy is a salesman for the Schmidt Costume Shop who likes to hang out at the fire station where Moe (billed as "Harry Howard"), Larry and Shemp (along with Fred Sanborn) work. Old man Schmidt spends more time building crazy inventions (typical of devices by writer/cartoonist Rube Goldberg) than tending to his business; as a consequence he is bankrupt and his business is taken over by his creditors, who send a young man named Carlson to manage his business. Carlson immediately falls for Mr. Schmidt's niece, Louise, but she resists him.

Meanwhile, a certain General Avocado wants to organize a revolution and comes to the costume shop to order uniforms. Ted also swings a deal with the Fire Department to supply costumes for the fireman's ball. Carlson wants to take Louise, so Ted hatches a plan to take Louise, and have himself and Carlson dressed alike, then switch places at the ball. When Louise learns of the switch, she runs back to the shop and locks herself in her room. Carlson chases her home, and unknowingly starts a fire while trying to persuade her to come out. The firemen (the Stooges) arrive to extinguish the blaze — with the unexpected help of one of Old Man Schmidt's inventions — and at last Louise and Carlson are a couple.

Cast

- Ted Healy as Ted
- Frances McCoy as Queenie
- Stanley Smith as Richard Carlson
- Lucile Browne as Louise
- Charles Winninger as Otto Schmidt
- Hallam Cooley as D. Quincy Throckmorton
- George Bickel as Gus Klein
- Shemp Howard as Fireman
- Larry Fine as Fireman
- Moe Howard as Fireman
- William H. Tooker as Ferguson
- Fred Sanborn as Mute Fireman

The Three Stooges appearance

This film was released before the Three Stooges started their own film career without Ted Healy. Shemp Howard is the third Stooge since the film was shot before he left the act and was replaced by his and Moe's younger brother Curly Howard (when Curly was debilitated by strokes years later, Shemp reluctantly abandoned his solo career and returned to the Stooges).

In *Soup To Nuts*, Shemp appears to be the "leader" of the three. He has most of the dialogue and does a lot of the pushing and hitting. Plus, Shemp was billed before the other two in the credits. Also note that Moe was credited as "Harry Howard."

In the film, the Stooges use one of their longest running gags. This same gag was used not only in many of their short films but also in their final feature film *Kook's Tour*.

- "Is there gas in the tank?"
- "The arrow points half way. I don't know if it's half empty or half full."
This is the first film where the Stooges sing a cappella style: “You'll Never Know What Tears Are” as well as the only time they sang it in a film with Shemp.

See also

- List of Three Stooges films
- Three Stooges Filmography

External links

- *Soup to Nuts* [1] at the Internet Movie Database
- ThreeStooges.com [2]
**Woman Haters**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directed by</th>
<th>Archie Gottler</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produced by</td>
<td>Jules White</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Larry Fine</td>
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<tr>
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*Woman Haters* is the first short subject starring American slapstick comedy team the Three Stooges. The trio made a total of 190 shorts for Columbia Pictures between 1934 and 1959.
Plot
The Stooges, employed as traveling salesmen, join the Woman Haters Club. They swear never to get romantically involved with a woman. That does not last very long. Larry finds a woman, Mary (Marjorie White), falls in love, and has proposed marriage. Misogynists Moe and Curly talk him out of it, but Mary’s father threatens Larry and makes him marry his very attractive daughter. Later, on a train ride, the confrontation escalates between the Stooges and Mary.

Mary uses her feminine charm to woo both Curly and Moe in an attempt to make Larry jealous. She sings a theme ("for you, for you my life my love my all") with each of the stooges in turn, as she flirts with them. Each is attracted to her charms as she proves the oath they swore as Women Haters was fraudulent. Finally, Mary tells Moe and Curly the truth, that she and Larry are married, and pushes her way into bed with the trio, knocking Moe and Curly out the train window in the process. The film closes as the Stooges, now old men, finally reunite (at the now empty Woman Haters club house) sharing their hatred of women and old age. What happened to Mary is not revealed.

Production background
• This was the sixth entry in Columbia’s "Musical Novelty" series, and the whole film is done in rhyme. Jazz-Age style music plays throughout the entire short, with the rhymes spoken in rhythm with the music. The Three Stooges had different names in this short; Curly: Jackie, Moe: Tom, Larry: Jim.
• This is one of the few Stooge shorts that features Larry as the lead character. Others include Three Loan Wolves and He Cooked His Goose.

• Being the sixth in a "Musical Novelties" short subject series, the movie appropriated its musical score from the first five films. The memorable song "My Life, My Love, My All," featured in this short, was originally "At Last!" from the film Um-Pa.
• Co-star Marjorie White (playing Larry’s wife) died a year after this short in a car accident.
• Bud Jamison’s character delivers the first "eye pokes" to the Stooges, as part of the initiation into the Woman Haters Club. He pokes Larry in the eyes first, followed by Curly. Finally, he delivers an eye poke to Moe, who mistakenly blames Curly and promptly slaps him, igniting the first real Stooge brawl of the short films.
• This short includes a young Walter Brennan playing the train conductor being initiated into the Woman Haters Club by Moe and Curly.
• Curly delivers his first "woo-woo-woo-woo!" and "Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk” in this short, although the latter is not quite delivered in the eventual "classic" style.

Quotes
• Club chairman: "Gentlemen, please, the meeting is called to order, and we need quiet, not a riot. Otherwise, we can’t proceed."
• Jim: "Fellas, I’ll have to quit that club I joined last week.”
• **Tom and Jackie**: "Quit the club??!
• **Tom**: "Now I'll make a toast. To the Three Musketeers/who've stuck along for years/we've traveled together/in every kind of weather."

**External links**
• *Woman Haters* [1] at the Internet Movie Database
• *Woman Haters* [2] at Allmovie
You Nazty Spy!

You Nazty Spy! is the 44th short subject starring American slapstick comedy team the Three Stooges. It was the first Hollywood film that openly satirized Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, months before Charles Chaplin's controversial feature film, *The Great Dictator*. 
Plot

In the fictional country of Moronica, three munitions manufacturers—Messrs. Ixnay (Richard Fiske), Ohnay (Dick Curtis) and Amscray (Don Beddoe)—decide their country is in need of a change. They decide to implement a dictatorship, oust the king, and go about finding someone stupid enough to be a figurehead leader. Ixnay volunteers the three wallpaper hangers simultaneously working in his dining room—the Stooges.

Ixnay presents Moe Hailstone, Curly Gallstone, and Larry Pebble with the offer to run Moronica. Moe is instituted as the leader (the Adolf Hitler role), with Curly as Field Marshal Gallstone (a representation of Hermann Göring), and Larry as Minister of Propaganda Pebble (an amalgamation of Joseph Goebbels and Joachim von Ribbentrop). After his takeover, Hailstone proceeds to give a speech to the masses, cueing Larry to display signs reading "APPLAUSE", "CHEERS" and even "HISS". Moe "bonks" Larry after Larry accidentally raises the cue card for "HISS" at the wrong time during one of Hailstone's speeches. (In this scene Curly is clearly mimicking Benito Mussolini.)

However, the daughter (Lorna Gray) of the overthrown king pays Hailstone a visit, going by the name Mattie Herring (a spoof of World War I spy Mata Hari). The Stooges suspect she is a spy, and attempt to execute her. She escapes, and gathers a huge mob to storm Hailstone's palace. The trio quickly abdicate, and flee into a lion's den. A lion is seen exiting wearing Hailstone's peaked cap.

Significance

*You Nazty Spy!* satirized the Nazis and the Third Reich and helped publicize the Nazi threat in a period when the United States was still neutral about World War II, and isolationist sentiment was prevalent among the public. During this period, isolationist senators such as Burton Wheeler and Gerald Nye objected to Hollywood films on grounds that they were anti-Nazi propaganda vehicles designed to mobilize the American public for war. According to the Internet Movie Database,[1] *You Nazty Spy!* was the first Hollywood film to spoof Hitler. It was released nine months before the more famous Charlie Chaplin film *The Great Dictator*, which was then in production. Heavy publicity in Hollywood about Chaplin's planned film began to circulate in mid-1939, and may have helped serve as inspiration for the film. Much like the case of Chaplin, Moe Howard's physical resemblance to Hitler (when in makeup) was probably a key source of inspiration.

The Hays code discouraged or prohibited many types of political and satirical messages in films, requiring that the history and prominent people of other countries must be portrayed "fairly"; but short subjects may have been subject to less attention than feature films. Another notable feature of *You Nazty Spy!* was the fact that it was implying business interests were behind the Nazi rise to power. This is probably reflective of a common belief among some Americans about the Nazis at the time, possibly from the involvement of Reichsbank president Hjalmar Schacht, among other leaders of German industry, in the pre-World War II years of the Third Reich.

Notes

- Moe Howard became the first American actor to portray/imitate Adolf Hitler in this film.
- Both Moe Howard and Larry Fine cited *You Nazty Spy!* as their favorite Three Stooges short.[1]
- *You Nazty Spy!* was followed by a sequel, *I'll Never Heil Again*, in 1941.
- Larry Fine injured his leg shortly before filming, and can be seen with a limp throughout the short. Fortunately, this was appropriate for his role as a parody of Joseph Goebbels, who walked with a limp due to a club foot.
- The names of the munitions manufacturers are Pig Latin for "Nix" (a slang term of that era), "No", and "Scram", which in turn were known by the audience as slang in their Pig-Latin form.
- The parody of the Nazi banner with two snakes in the form of a swastika says "Moronika for Morons" which is a play on the Nazi slogan "Deutschland den Deutschen" (Germany for Germans).
You Nazty Spy!

- The Stooges—all Ashkenazi Jews—occasionally worked a word or phrase of Yiddish into their dialogue. In particular here, the Stooges make several overt Jewish and Yiddish cultural references: The exclamation "Beblach!" used several times in the film is a Yiddish word meaning "beans". "Shalom Aleichem!", literally "Peace unto you" is a standard greeting in Yiddish meaning "hello, pleased to meet you". "Moe: We'll start a 'Blintzkrieg' (Blitzkrieg). Curly: I just love blintzes especially with sour krieg." This is a reference to the Ashkenazi Jewish dish blintzes with sour cream. In Moe's imitation of a Hitler speech, he says "in pupik gehabt haben" (the semi-obscene "I've had it in the bellybutton" in Yiddish). These references to the Nazi leadership and Hitler speaking Yiddish were particularly ironic inside jokes for the Yiddish-speaking Jewish audience.[1]

- The spy Mati Herring is a play on the Yiddish and German name of soused herring matjeshering.

- When Mr. Ixnay informs the Stooges of how to overthrow Moronica's monarchy, and suggests that the takeover of Moronica start with a "putsch", it refers to the historical Beer Hall Putsch, the real-world Nazi party attempt at a power grab in the Weimar Republic of 1923. Curly's humorous response to Mr Ixnay's suggestion, to explain it to Moe and Larry, was that "You "putsch" your beer down, and wait for the pretzels".

- Curly "Gallstone"'s red book of women's addresses and phone numbers has the rather overt sexual references "Ruby Clutch" "oh, oh oh! G" (bra size) and the unread "Tessie oomph 2 69" which were ignored by the censors. This was a key dig at the attempt to censor The Great Dictator then in production by Charlie Chaplin. (Curly was also noted in his personal life for being a womanizer.)

- Curly Gallstone says to Mati Herring when he takes her out to shoot her "Let's go shoot the works." Hermann Goering was known to be a morphine addict; this was a slang allusion to the intravenous injection of morphine.

- A colorized version of this film was released in 2004. It was part of the DVD collection entitled "Stooged & Confoosed".[3]

- If you watch Curly's lips closely after he shoots Moe, and the three of them are talking together, you can see him mouthing both Moe and Larry's lines.

- You Nazty Spy was also the first Stooges short to bear a new opening title sequence, with the "Torch Lady" on the left-hand corner, standing on a pedestal where each step has printed out "Columbia," "Short Subject" and "Presentation," and the opening titles and credits are inside a box with rounded edges. This format will remain in effect through Booby Dupes.[2]

References


External links

- The Three Stooges vs. Hitler (http://www.sdjewishjournal.com/stories/mar04_5.html)
- You Nazty Spy (http://www.stoogeworld.com/_Videography/Filmography/YouNaztySpy.htm) at StoogeWorld.com
- You Nazty Spy! (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033281/) at the Internet Movie Database
- You Nazty Spy! (http://www.allmovie.com/work/227203) at Allmovie