

The Flying Deuces

The Flying Deuces, also known as *Flying Aces*, is a 1939 comedy film starring Laurel and Hardy, in which the duo join the French Foreign Legion. It is a partial remake of their 1931 short film *Beau Hunks*.

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Plot

While the boys are working in the fish market in Paris, Ollie falls in love with Georgette (Jean Parker), the beautiful daughter of an innkeeper. She turns down his marriage proposal because she is married to a Foreign Legion officer named Francois (Reginald Gardiner). Heartbroken, Ollie contemplates suicide. He is joined by his friend Stan in sinking himself into a river. (In some versions this proceeding is complicated by the presence of an "escaped shark".) Stan repeatedly interrupts Ollie as he is about to throw the weight in, and asks him to consider the possibility of reincarnation. Ollie decides his preference is to be reincarnated as a horse. Francois catches sight of them and convinces them to enlist in the Foreign Legion in order to forget Ollie's failed romance. When Stan asks how long it will take Ollie to forget, Francois says it will only take a matter of a few days.

The commandant (Charles B. Middleton) introduces Ollie and Stan to their daily legionnaire duties, for which their daily wage is 100 centimes, which, translated into American currency amounts to only three cents. Ollie and Stan attempt to negotiate for a higher wage. For this uppity attitude they are sentenced to menial labor, washing and ironing a mountain of laundry, with legion officers constantly on their backs. Finally and 'miraculously', Ollie forgets his broken romance completely.

<i>The Flying Deuces</i>	
	
	Film poster
Directed by	A. Edward Sutherland
Produced by	Boris Morros
Written by	Ralph Spence Charley Rogers Fred Schiller Harry Langdon
Starring	Stan Laurel Oliver Hardy Jean Parker Reginald Gardiner
Music by	John Leipold Leo Shuken
Cinematography	Art Lloyd
Edited by	Jack Dennis
Production company	Boris Morros Productions
Distributed by	RKO Radio Pictures
Release date	November 3, 1939 ^[1]
Running time	69 min
Country	United States
Language	English

His and Stan's purpose in joining the Foreign Legion fulfilled, they abandon their task, discarding the still hot iron, which unintentionally sets the laundry pile aflame. Angered by the hard work and low pay of the Foreign Legion, Ollie writes the commander an insulting farewell letter and signs it.

They meet Georgette again. Ollie, delighted that she has seemingly changed her mind and come back to him, proceeds to embrace and kiss her. Francois arrives, informs him that Georgette is his wife and warns him to stay away from her. After Francois leaves, the commandant appears and, having discovered their farewell note and the mountain of burning laundry, pronounces them under arrest for desertion. They are taken to the prison, locked up and sentenced to be shot at dawn. Stan amazes Ollie by playing "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise" on the bedsprings. As he is about to play another piece, the jailor yells at them to be quiet. Later in the evening, someone throws a note that says they can escape by means of a tunnel leading from their cell to the outside wall. Stan brings on an accidental cave-in which causes the underground path to lead to Francois and Georgette's dwelling. The whole legion engages in hot pursuit of the boys, who flee to a nearby hangar and hide out in an airplane, which Stan accidentally starts up. The boys fly it until it crashes. Stan emerges unharmed from the crash, but Ollie has died, seen ascending into Heaven. However, Stan later bumps into Ollie, reincarnated as a horse in accordance with the wish he expressed during his aborted suicide attempt. Stan is elated to find his friend alive, but Ollie grumpily remarks, "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into."

Cast

Principal credited cast members (in order of on-screen credits) and roles:^[2]

Actor	Role
<u>Stan Laurel</u>	Stan
<u>Oliver Hardy</u>	Ollie
<u>Jean Parker</u>	Georgette
<u>Reginald Gardiner</u>	François
<u>Charles B. Middleton</u>	the Legion Commandant
<u>Jean Del Val</u>	Sergeant
<u>Clem Wilenchick</u>	Corporal
<u>Jimmy Finlayson</u>	Jailer

Charles B. Middleton reprises the Legion Commandant role he played in 1931's *Beau Hunks*, while Laurel and Hardy's frequent co-star James Finlayson also makes an appearance as a jailer.

Production

As Laurel and Hardy did not have an exclusive contract with Hal Roach, they were able to appear in films for studios other than his as they pleased. A remake of *Beau Hunks*, *The Flying Deuces* was released by RKO Radio Pictures and was made by independent producer Boris Morros. Director A. Edward Sutherland and Stan Laurel did not get along during filming, with Sutherland having reportedly commented that he "would rather eat a tarantula than work with Laurel again".^[3]

At the beginning of the film, the innkeeper's daughter is seen looking at a framed photograph of Ollie. The same photograph can also be seen in the short film *Our Wife* (1931), where sight of it prompts the father of Ollie's fiancé to forbid the wedding.

The "laundry scene" in *The Flying Deuces* was filmed on the Iverson Movie Ranch in the Chatsworth section of Los Angeles, California, considered to be the most often used outdoor shooting location for films and television shows. In the scene, the characters played by Laurel and Hardy, having disrupted training camp soon after joining the Foreign Legion, are forced to do a massive amount of laundry—seemingly the laundry for the entire Foreign

Legion. For the shoot, a facsimile of a huge pile of laundry was built on top of one of the giant sandstone boulders of Iverson's Garden of the Gods, which is now a park.^[4] Aerial footage of the scene, including a large spread consisting of laundry hanging on lines, was shot for the movie but was not used in it, and later turned up in a number of other productions, including the Republic serials *Manhunt of Mystery Island* (1945) and *Radar Patrol vs. Spy King* (1949), along with the Allied Artists movie *The Cyclops* (1957).

Critical reception

On Rotten Tomatoes, *The Flying Deuces* has a score of 83% based on six critic reviews, with an average rating of 6/10.^[5]

Public domain

The Flying Deuces is one of two Laurel and Hardy features in the public domain, the other being *Atoll K*. As such, it regularly appears on inexpensive DVD or video compilations. Turner/Warner Bros currently possess the original negative, but have not released the film.

When the film was originally released, it contained a scene featuring an escaped shark (a strange-looking model fin being pulled back and forth) in the river Stan and Ollie are planning to jump into. This was edited out of some releases of the film.

An uncut version, transferred from a nitrate 35mm negative discovered in France, was restored by Lobster Films and released by Kino Video in 2004.^[3] The Legend Films edition contains the edited version of the film.

Stan and Ollie as "légionnaires" in *The Flying Deuces*

In the United Kingdom, Network Distributing released the film on DVD and Blu-ray in 2015. This is the uncut version, as are the 2015 DVD-R and Blu-ray releases by VCI Entertainment in America. Unlike previous home video versions that have generally used a snatch of the opening music during the end titles, these releases include the correct closing music. There is also a German-issued Blu-ray (With the German title 'Dick & Doof - In der Fremdenlegion' on the front cover), released by Edel Germany GmbH in October 2015 that includes Blu-ray 3D and 2D versions of the film on a single disc, and has English and German audio tracks.

Music

- "Shine On, Harvest Moon"
- "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise"

Popular culture

In an episode of *Doctor Who*, entitled "The Impossible Astronaut" (2011), Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) and Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill) watch the movie on DVD. Rory sees The Doctor (Matt Smith) appear in the film, running towards the camera wearing his fez and waving, before returning to dance with Stan and Ollie. This was achieved with Matt Smith dancing in front of a green screen.

The scene in Georgette's bedroom briefly appears on television in an apartment for elderly people in the movie *Cocoon*.

The image of Stan and Ollie dancing to "Shine on Harvest Moon" appears in a 1985 Hershey commercial, 'One of the all-time greats'; their suitcases are replaced with images of giant Hershey bars.

The "Shine On Harvest Moon" sequence appears early in the 1987 movie *Dot Goes to Hollywood*, with Dot dancing alongside Stan.

See also

- List of films in the public domain in the United States

References

Notes

- "The Flying Deuces: Detail View" (<http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=4171>). American Film Institute. Retrieved April 12, 2014.
- "The Flying Deuces (1939) Full credits." (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031322/fullcredits>) *imdb.com*. Retrieved: March 21, 2010.
- Amazon.com, Kino Video (<http://amzn.com/B0002CHIFG>)
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20171214221133/http://iversonmovieranch.blogspot.com/2014/08/laurel-and-hardy-take-on-iverson-movie.html>
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External links

- The Flying Deuces* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031322/>) on IMDb
- "The Flying Deuces" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bd1TI2BtC8>) on YouTube
- The Flying Deuces* (<http://www.tcm.turner.com/tcmdb/title/title.jsp?stid=18933>) at the TCM Movie Database
- The Flying Deuces* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v17966>) at AllMovie
- The Flying Deuces* (<https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/4171>) at the American Film Institute Catalog
- The Flying Deuces* (<https://archive.org/details/TheFlyingDeucesVideoQualityUpgrade>) is available for free download at the Internet Archive
- The Flying Deuces* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_flying_deuces) at Rotten Tomatoes
- The shoot for the laundry scene in *The Flying Deuces* at the Iverson Movie Ranch (<http://iversonmovieranch.blogspot.com/2014/08/laurel-and-hardy-take-on-iverson-movie.html>)

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