



What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic

Henry Jenkins

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What Made Pistachio Nuts? examines what Henry Jenkins calls anarchistic comedy, a body of comedian-centered films produced in the early 1930s, the first years of the sound era. Bringing a fresh perspective to long-forgotten films by W. C. Fields, Wheeler and Woolsey, Eddie Cantor, and George Burns and Gracie Allen, among others, Jenkins shows how they represented the intersection between the vaudeville aesthetic and classical Hollywood norms, exemplifying the complex interplay between performance spectacle and narrative causality. Unjustly dismissed by critics, exuberant and often zany works such as *Diplomaniacs*, *Duck Soup*, and *Hollywood Party* rejoiced in the collapse of the social order and the freeing of the creativity and impulsiveness of their protagonists. Each chapter of this lively and eclectic study breaks new ground. Included is a reconsideration of the role of female comic performers; an in-depth profile of Eddie Cantor's precarious career; a case study of the scripting of a single film, *Hollywood Party*; and a discussion of the American popular press's treatment of laughter, which serves to illuminate many of the class-based issues regarding the form and style of popular comedy. What Made Pistachio Nuts? maintains that these comedies reflect Hollywood attempt to assimilate aspects of vaudeville practice into the formal and thematic conventions of the classical film narrative. The resulting work sheds light not only on the development of screen comedy but on the role of genre within the studio-era Hollywood film. In so doing Jenkins recounts the process by which anarchistic comedy was abandoned in favor of more ideologically and formally conservative comic texts. Vivid and highly original, What Made Pistachio Nuts? will delight both specialists and those who look with nostalgia and fondness upon comic film stars and the legacy of vaudeville.

What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic Details

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From Reader Review What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic for online ebook

Robert says

An exploration of the influence of vaudeville and burlesque on movie comedies in the 1930s, this is a very informative book, though to be honest it is impossible to know if the scholarly tone in the descriptions of some of the zaniness is intentionally serious or tongue-in-cheek

Kathy says

Proof positive that, given enough pages, a theorist can strip the joy out of even the most potentially entertaining subject.

Evan says

Great information about comics both famous and obscure -- but I remember it being a little academic for my feeble little mind.
