

Title:

The Three Stooges-Classic Comedy Icons

Word Count:

740

Summary:

Ahhhh...The Three Stooges...Classic slapstick comedy and an American tradition. Who hasn't seen a Stooge classic film short? But, who were these men who brought their caustic brand of physical comedy into our living rooms and theaters?

We all know them as Curly, Larry and Moe, but when they first started in 1922 they were with a vaudeville act called Ted Healy and his Stooges (which was originally called Ted Healy and his Southern Gentlemen).

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Keywords:

three stooges, curly, larry, moe, slapstick comedy, physical comedy

Article Body:

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We all know them as Curly, Larry and Moe, but when they first started in 1922 they were with a vaudeville act called Ted Healy and his Stooges (which was originally called Ted Healy and his Southern Gentlemen).

The ensemble consisted of Ted Healy, brothers Harry Moses Howard (Moe), Samuel Howard (Shemp) and Larry Fine (Larry). In 1931, Shemp left the group for a career in feature films, and needing a third stooge, Moe suggested his brother Jerome. Ted, not enamored with his long hair and facial hair, stated he (Jerome) was not a character like Moe and Larry. Jerome left the room and quickly returned with a shaved head and face and Curly, as we know him, was born.

In his autobiography, Moe Howard and The Three Stooges, The Stooges and Ted Healy parted company in 1934 because, as Moe recalled, of Healy's abrasiveness and alcoholism. This is when they began their Columbia Pictures film career and the Three Stooges, as most of us know them, started their long journey into comedy history.

From 1934 until 1959, the Three Stooges starred in 190 film shorts; the longest such series in film history. They also appeared in a dozen movies and entertained millions throughout the world with their catch phrases, physical routines and masterful comedy.

In 1946, Curly suffered a stroke and Shemp was asked to rejoin the group. Knowing that Moe and Larry careers and the Stooges would be finished, he reluctantly agreed to rejoin the group, but only on a temporary basis. Unfortunately, Curly never recovered and died in January of 1952.

The Stooges, with Shemp as Curly's replacement, went on to appear in 77 more short films and a feature film called Gold Raiders (1951). Additionally, in 1949, Moe, Larry and Shemp made a pilot for a Three Stooges television show called "Jerks of All Trades". The show was never picked up, but the pilot is public domain and is available on home video.

The Three Stooges dynasty took another hit when Shemp Howard died of a sudden heart attack in November of 1955 at age 60. Joe Besser replaced Shemp in 1956-57, appearing in 16 short films. Interestingly, Joe had a clause in his contract specifically prohibiting him from being hit too hard, although it was lifted as time passed. Unfortunately, the market for short films and for the Stooges had passed. Columbia Pictures, the last studio still producing short films fired the Three Stooges in 1957. (Because of contractual obligations and backlogs, final Stoooge shorts weren't released until 1959). A new medium, television, had taken over.

The Stooges weren't down for long as the "rebirth" of the Stooges came rather quickly. In 1959, Columbia Pictures syndicated the entire Three Stooges film library to television and the Stooges were rediscovered by the baby boomers.

Stoogemania quickly swept across the country and Moe and Larry found themselves back in the spotlight again. But Joe Besser's wife had a heart attack and he withdrew from the act, so Moe quickly signed Joe DeRita as his replacement. DeRita shaved his head and became Curly-Joe, because he looked like the original Curly.

This version of the Three Stooges went on to make 39 short films and a few full-length movies in the late 1950's and through the 1960's. In 1969 they filmed a pilot for a new TV series called "Kook's Tour", which would have been a show about the "retired" Stooges traveling the world, with episodes filmed on location. Alas, during production, Larry suffered a stroke that ended his acting career as well as the TV series. Larry suffered another stroke in December 1974

and another month later suffered a fatal stroke and died in January 1975.

It was thought that they could carry on, several movie ideas were considered, however Moe Howard passed away in May 1975. Although Curly-Joe (Joe DeRita) did some live work with a new group of "Stooges" in the early 1970's, the Three Stooges, as we knew them, were gone.

This has been a synopsis of the lengthy careers and the phenomenon that was and still is the Three Stooges. With the advent of cable television, home video, dvds and with a loyal army of loyal fans, the Three Stooges are still entertaining the masses and will be for years to come.