

## Document Citation

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THE MIRTH OF A NATION  
76 Years of American Film Comedy

Thursday, July 15 - 8pm

THE PATSY

CAST: Patricia Harrington: Marion Davies; Ma Harrington: Marie Dressler; Tony Anderson: Orville Caldwell; Grace Harrington: Jane Winton; Pa Harrington: Del Henderson; Billy: Lawrence Grey

CREDITS: Director: King Vidor; Screenplay: Agnes Christine Johnson, adapted from the play by Barry Conners; Camera: John Seitz; Editor: Hugh Wynn; Set Design: Cedric Gibbons A Cosmopolitan Production MGM

Released in 1928

Running Time: 75 minutes

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They don't make stars like Marion Davies anymore. (Or do they?) Anyway, for those of you who haven't seen CITIZEN KANE, here's a brief rundown: espyed in the chorus line by oh-so-married multimillionaire tycoon William Randolph Hearst, she was transformed by him into a Movie Star, willy-nilly, and chatelaine of San Simeon, Wynton, the biggest beach house there ever was, and a fourteen-room "dressing room" that adorned the lot at MGM. W.R. created his own movie company--Cosmopolitan Production--for her, which released through MGM. He like to see her in lavish romantic epics, perferably with a scene or two in male dress; thus "Beverly of Graustark," "When Knightwood was in Flower", "Young Diana", and the like. As Miss Davies herself once said, "I couldn't act, but the idea of silent pictures appealed to me, because I couldn't talk either." (She stuttered, about which more anon).

W.R. was an easy boss. "He used to coax us not to work. I think he thought it was a waste of time. Sometimes I would get to the set around eleven. Sometimes ten--sometimes noon. Then at luncheon we had banquets at the bungalow, and we'd sit around and talk about things. We wouldn't talk about pictures. We would get back on the set around three, do a scene or so, and then have tea about four-thirty. They would blow the whistle at five, and everybody'd whisk off. So we'd only get a few scenes done all day. But W.R. didn't worry about the budget. He'd even call the set at about a quarter to five and say it was time to quit. He'd be lonesome. He'd say 'You've been working all day' --not knowing we'd only done one scene."

But once in a while Marion would end up in a comedy, and in these she was very well regarded, although they made W.R. a trifle nervous. And he wanted her to be directed by nothing but the best--as King Vidor writes: "After the success of THE BIG PARADE, Mr. Hearst never gave up until he had me directing Miss Davies. Mind you, this was not an unpleasant chore. I directed Marion in three comedies and I considered her to be a most accomplished comedienne. The approach came in the form of a request to do a favor for Mr. Mayer and, in addition, earn a substantial income. W.R. would always pay high when he thought anyone could do a good job for Marion. Our first picture was adapted from a play called The Patsy, and in it I had Marion do three imitations in which she was very adept--Mae Murray, Pola Negri, and Lillian Gish. The picture turned out fine, and even got some good reviews outside of the hearst press. I was in solid." W.R. was sufficiently pleased with Vidor that he made two more comedies with Marion, NOT SO DUMB, and SHOW PEOPLE.

Marion remembers THE PATSY thusly: "...I made THE PATSY, a silent film, in fourteen days. It was a very funny picture and it did very well." (THE PATSY cost \$245,000 to

make, grossed \$617,000, and MGM reported an income of \$155,000 on it. They also recorded a shooting schedule of 27 days).

Oh, about the stuttering: when THE JAZZ SINGER came out, Marion went to go see it with Hubert Voight, then head of publicity at MGM. When the film was over, she turned to him and said, "M-m-m-mister V-v-v-voight, I'm in t-t-t-trouble!!"

Program notes by Meredith Brody

Excerpts from A Tree is a Tree, by King Vidor, and The Times We Had, by Marion Davies

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