

The 19th British Silent Film Festival



Cocktails

UK / Denmark 1928

Thursday 14 September, 8pm

Introduced by Laraine Porter

Production companies: British International Pictures, A-/S Film-Centralen Palladium (Copenhagen)

Director: Monty Banks

Original story by: Scott Sidney, Rex Taylor

Scenario: Val Valentine, Roger Burford

Photography: Walter Blakeley, James Rogers

Editor: Emile de Ruelle

Assistant director: Billy Ewins

Studio: British International Pictures, Elstree

Shooting: August – September 1928

Running time: 69 minutes

Cast: Pat [Carl Schenstrom] (Gin), Patachon [Harald Madsen] (It), Enid Stamp-Taylor (Betty), Nigel Barrie (Giles), Harry Terry (Bosco), Tony Wyld (Jerry), Lorna Suveen (Mary), Warren Hastings (Judge), Lorna Duveen (Mary)

The Sketch, 20 November 1929, pp. xxvi, xxvii,

Michael Orme:

"A couple of Danish clowns – Pat and Patachon, famous all over the Continent – will find their way into universal favour with their genial fooling in this British film directed by Monty Banks. *Cocktails* can claim to a definite story, a dope-smuggling villain who uses the comic couple as his unwilling agents, and tries to fasten his own guilt on to an innocent lad – a black deed sensationally revealed by the redoubtable clowns. But the story is of less account than the hilarious adventures of the long and melancholy Pat and the chubby, benign Patachon. The comedy moves swiftly from town to country, from dock-side to liner, from theater to speedway, until, finally, a captured lorry lands the couple right in the middle of the court-room in time to save the villain's victim."



Portsmouth Evening News, 22 November 1929, p. 1, cinema listings advertisement:

"Don't Miss This One – It's a Scream. Pat and Patachon as 'Gin' and 'It' in the laughing success of the year".

Variety, 26 Dec 1928, p. 42, Frat.:

"... eight reels of slapstick with a dash of meller . . . Starts fairly well, but runs very thin in the middle and drags so that it almost loses out. Would stand cutting and be better for it. Speeds up nicely later and makes a fast finish with the two Danes hopping a steam truck and coming into court in the middle of Jerry's trial by wall crashing. Full of hoke and trick stuff and fine for a double programme, especially if the other feature is heavy . . . The two Danish comedians are average, and too much addicted to Continental vaude and circus ideas of comedy, especially of the taking a mouthful and squirting it out sort. Will do fairly well here, and may slip in on your side. Technically, it is okay."

Pat and Patachon

One of them is tall, spindly and lugubrious. The other is short, chubby, often baffled but mostly cheerful. They are the Danish comic team of Pat and Patachon, first brought together in 1921 by the Danish director Lau Lauritsen. Carl Schenstrøm (Pat) had been acting in films since 1909; Harold Madsen (Patachon), a circus clown, had much less film experience. They clicked with audiences immediately, and the comedies made with Lauritsen were widely exported, even reaching the Soviet Union. British audiences knew them as 'Long and Short' in comedies bearing titles including *The Bilberries*, *Luck*, and *The Mill*. *Picturegoer* in April 1927 called *The Mill* "a good thing to take children to": their humour

was knockabout and broad, but sweetly coloured by their contrasting personalities and technical finesse. In *Cocktails*, the first of two films in England with British International Pictures (the second was *Alf's Carpet*, 1929), they endearingly walk together holding each other's hands, as if they were children. Aren't comics children anyway, in adult disguise?

Cocktails was to have been directed by Scott Sidney, an American veteran of Christie comedies, imported to Elstree for the purpose. But on July 20, 1928, one day before production was to start, he died of a heart attack in his hotel while discussing the script with his Danish stars. Three days later, BIP appointed Monty Banks (Italian-born, Hollywood-honed) as the replacement director. The film marked his directing debut. Pat and Patachon's teaming in films lasted until 1940.

Geoff Brown

Programme note compiled by Geoff Brown



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