

# BILLY BEVAN BIOGRAPHY

*By Brent Walker, author of 'Mack Sennett's Fun Factory'*

**William Bevan Harris was born on September 29, 1887, in Orange, New South Wales, Australia. Despite its name, Orange was a bit too cool for growing oranges. However, it was a hub of Australia's 1851 Gold Rush.**

Billy's parents were Robert Harris and Jane Marion Torpy. Her father (Billy's grandfather) James Torpy served as the Mayor of Orange from 1879 to 1880, and then as a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for numerous years.

As a teen, Billy worked at the Advocate newspaper in Orange, before heading to Sydney in 1904 for university studies. However, he was bitten by the theatrical bug, and left school to appear on stage in Australian light opera for eight years, dropping his surname of "Harris" and using the sobriquet "Willie Bevan." His middle name "Bevan" was not known to be particularly significant in his family line, though it would be the adopted last name by which he would become best known.



In 1912, Bevan joined the Pollard's Lilliputian Opera Company for a tour of the United States and Canada, settling in Vancouver. The Pollard company specialized in talented juveniles performing adult roles in popular plays and musicals. Many of the principals, including Daphne Pollard, Snub Pollard, Ted McNamara and stage manager Alf Goulding would later have success in American films. Bevan was unique amongst them in that he was not from Melbourne, and he joined the troupe when he was already of adult age. Bevan specialized in characters such as the criminal named "Cookie Scrubbs" in the play "Sergeant Brue," where he wore a wig and costume that made him look much older.

Bevan stayed with the Pollard troupe until about 1914, continuing his West Coast theatrics with the Fletcher stock company, then Anderson's Gaiety Company in San Francisco followed by additional work in vaudeville and musical comedy.



In late 1915, he entered motion pictures in Universal's L-KO Comedies, and continued there over the next two years, supporting stars Alice Howell, Fatty Voss, Phil Dunham and Billie Richie in comedies such as Dad's Dollars and Dirty Doings, Phony Friends and

False Teeth and Backward Sons and Forward Daughters. Bevan had not yet adopted his famous walrus mustache, appearing usually clean-shaven, and occasionally older characters, aged as he had been in the Pollard company.

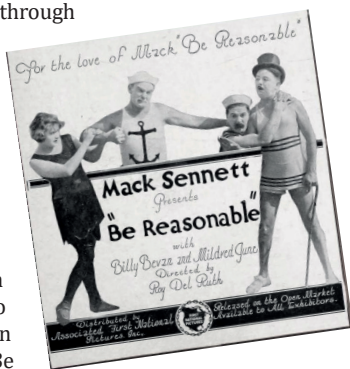
Bevan's L-KO stint was most significant for something that happened off-screen. A young L-KO cashier by the name of Leah Leona Kohn (born September 5, 1895, in New York City, and the sister of actress Edith Roberts) caught Billy's eye. On October 1, 1917, they were married in Santa Ana, Orange County, California.

In 1917, Bevan signed on with Fox's Sunshine Comedies, then appeared in a number of Al Christie's Strand Comedies in 1918 with Billie Rhodes. He next freelanced in a pair of 1919 Century Animal Comedies for Universal, starring Dot Farley and the Century Lions.

Finally in 1919, Billy Bevan landed at the place where he would gain his lasting fame -Mack Sennett's Studios in Edendale. Sennett had left his famous Keystone brand behind two years earlier, and was now releasing his two-reel comedies with distribution by Paramount Famous Players-Lasky. Bevan's first appearance was in Treating 'Em Rough, completed by early July 1919 and starring Louise Fazenda. He would continue with bits and small supporting roles into 1920, playing crooks, butlers and whatever roles were needed.

In Let 'Er Go (1920), Billy received a featured role as a farmhand opposite Louise Fazenda, with whom he would continue to work with at Sennett until 1921, after Sennett began releasing his comedies through First National. Bevan would also appear in many of Sennett's feature-length comedies of 1920-21.

After Fazenda left Sennett in 1921, Bevan began supporting cross-eyed comedy star Ben Turpin in his 1921-22 two-reelers. On the home front, Billy and Leona had become parents with the births of two daughters - Edith in 1919 and Joan in 1921. In conjunction with fatherhood, Billy Bevan was now also finally on the cusp of comedy stardom. On October 31 1921, Mack Sennett released Be Reasonable - the first two-reeler to present Billy Bevan as the sole star of the picture. This led to a series of Sennett two-reelers for First National release in 1921-22, usually directed by Roy Del Ruth.



When Sennett switched his distribution to Pathe in 1923, Billy Bevan continued as one of the comedy king's primary stars, initially playing opposite Harry Gribbon in several comedies. He also teamed with the director he would be most associated with - former stuntman and stunt driver Del Lord, whose two-reelers would feature absurd sight gags and breath-taking chases, with Bevan's comic performances at

the center. By 1924, Bevan was being paired with Sid Smith under Lord's direction, while also finding time to appear in character roles in Sennett's Ralph Graves two-reelers, and even freelanced away from Sennett in 1924 to play a role in the Madge Bellamy drama *The White Sin*.

Despite his peaking motion picture career, Billy wasn't taking his Hollywood career for granted. With a young family to support, Bevan was looking for investments, if not a future career path for his later years, and purchased a 31-acre ranch in the northern San Diego County town of Escondido, around 100 miles south of Los Angeles. The area was noted for its agricultural soil and climate, friendly to cultivation of avocados and citrus fruits.

In June 1925, Billy signed a one-year contract with Sennett paying him \$400 per week for the first six months and \$450 per week for the second six, with options. His contract was less than fellow Sennett stars Ben Turpin and Harry Langdon, but was structured to allow Bevan to have time to attend to the needs of his ranch.



Billy's walrus mustache was now so well known to audiences that Sennett conducted a "We Want Whiskers" campaign in the fall of that year. Many of these films featured Sennett makeup master Andy Clyde in support, and by 1926 Clyde had become a full-fledged partner to Bevan as the Del Lord slapsticks continued.

In 1926, Billy teamed with Vernon Dent for two-reelers which often cast Bevan as an annoying wiseacre that made life hell for Dent. Bevan also took a break from his mustache, by going clean-shaven in a few 1926-27 films that veered towards lighter situational comedy.

In December 1926, Bevan's contract with Sennett ended. He briefly retreated to his ranch in Escondido, then took a prominent role as a detective in the First National feature *Easy Pickings*. By spring of 1927 he had returned to the Sennett studio, signing a new six-month, \$600 per week contract. He teamed with director Harry Edwards and Vernon Dent, for pleasing comedies such as *The Best Man*. At the beginning of 1928, Sennett had built his new studio in Studio City, and in April Bevan signed a contract to produce a series of six "Tired Businessman" two-reelers at a rate of \$500 per picture. These would be his last starring silent comedies for Sennett.



Sound had come to Hollywood, and Billy Bevan starred in Sennett's first talkie offering (released December 9, 1928, well ahead of Sennett's rivals Al Christie and Hal Roach's first talkies) *The Lion's Roar*. As it would turn out, during the rest of the sound era, Bevan would appear in only four more two-reelers for Mack Sennett, on a free-lance basis during 1930-33. He would also appear in one of Del Lord's *Taxi Boys* comedies for Hal Roach, and a few shorts for Educational Pictures.

However, the talkie era offered the best opportunities for Bevan as a character player in feature films, not shorts. One of his best performances came in 1929, in a serio-comic performance as Trotter in James Whale's World War I drama *Journey's End*. Bevan earned raves for his performance, and he continued in features such as *Waterloo Bridge* (1931) and *Sky Devils* (1932).

Nevertheless, Bevan's interests had been turning more and more toward his fruit orchards in San Diego County. In 1931, he built a lavish Spanish-style home called *Rancho La Lomita*, and at that point moved permanently to Escondido. According to his grandson, Billy never really liked the Hollywood "scene," and complained of the smog as early as the 1920s. Over the next two decades, Bevan would commute to Los Angeles for film work on a periodic basis, though only when the film job meshed with his primary concern of attending to his oranges, lemons, and avocados.



Despite Billy's distaste for Hollywood life, and his physical removal from it, some of his best feature film roles were still to come, in films like *Lost Patrol* (1934), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941), *The Picture of*

*Dorian Gray* (1945) and several of Universal's *Sherlock Holmes* films.

Sometimes when Billy travelled north for studio work, he would stay with his old friend Andy Clyde (still a busy film character actor) and his wife Elsie Tarron. Besides Clyde, he also remained close with James Finlayson, but did not keep in touch with many other film people. He would at least on one occasion, see his former Sennett co-star Carole Lombard and her husband Clark Gable, who stopped by Billy's ranch on their way to Mexico.

Billy Bevan quickly became a respected and influential member of the agricultural community in the region. He invented a wind machine that became widely-used to prevent frost damage to crops. Bevan was one of the founders and initial president of the Escondido Fish and Game Association, and also served as director of the Escondido Soil Conservation District. He served as district director of Calavo Inc., became chairman of the avocado department of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, and vice president of the Escondido Chamber of Commerce. Bevan served as president of the Escondido Country Club, was active in the Consuelo Lodge No. 325

of the Free and Accepted Masons, and recorded historical lore for the area. The man who once starred in *The Duck Hunter* was active in a waterfowl organization called Ducks Unlimited, and raised pointer dogs which he entered in field trials. That was more than a full slate for any person.

Yet, despite that and his Hollywood work, he also managed to appear in the theater occasionally. In the Summer of 1941, Bevan played the innkeeper in "The Red Mill" in a Los Angeles theater production. In February 1943, to aid the war effort, Billy appeared on stage at Escondido's Pala Theater to aid the sales effort for the United States War Bonds and Stamps, starring in and co-directing the play "Poor Old Jim."



According to his grandson, Billy Bevan rarely went to the movies in his later years, and didn't keep abreast of any new movies other than those he appeared in (likely never even seeing the finished result of his work). Once in a while, a local theater would screen some of his films as a tribute, and he'd make an appearance.

On April 24, 1952, Leona, his wife of 35 years, passed away, leaving Billy, two daughters and four grandchildren. Within six months, Billy Bevan had sold his ranch and Rancho La Lomita house, retiring from citrus and avocado growing at age 65. His excursions to Hollywood also ended at this time.

On October 16, 1954, Billy married 49-year-old Betsy Rees, a former Ziegfeld girl who was a member of a prominent Escondido family, and had been Billy's daughter's dancing teacher when they were younger. They lived together in a home in Escondido for three years, until Billy Bevan's death on November 26, 1957, at age 70. Billy was buried in Oak Hill Memorial Park in Escondido, where his tombstone gives his full birth name, "William Bevan Harris."

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Bevan's former 31-acre ranch was subdivided into multiple housing developments, and his former showplace home Rancho La Lomita was later razed. However, Billy Bevan's impact on both the agricultural life of California, and the world of comedy continues.

Special thanks to Bob Oaks and Jane Oaks Smith.

# BILLY BEVAN FILMS

By Dave Wyatt, with thanks to Matthew Ross

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## BOMBS AND BANDITS

4 July 1917 - Extra

*Directed by A.Jaeschke. With Sammy Burns, Vin Moore, Charles Inslee, Dolly Dimples.*

So little survives representing Billy Bevan's work at LK-O, but this rare example has it all - speed, mayhem and a cops chase by plane and train which almost out Keystones Keystone. The plot

involving Mexican bandits kidnapping an eloping couple for ransom money ended, to quote *Moving Picture World*, "with an exceptional whirlwind finish". A second review in *Moving Picture Weekly* detailed what's missing in this only known copy: Sammy (Burns) and his girl (Dimples) are imprisoned in a room of steel "the walls of which are gradually closing in on them. The only open wall leads to a pit of flame .... just as they are about to skid over the edge the advance guard of the police arrives." Fine for a happy ending to a slapstick comedy, but the review adds "The bride is saved from a fiery death but Sammy is heartlessly left to be pushed over the edge." Perhaps it played funnier than it sounds.

The last of three comedies starring Sammy Burns at LK-O. After a short, problematic film career he would eventually return to vaudeville. Billy Bevan here plays a very Keystone-like police chief, complete with moustache if not yet his trademark walrus one.

## SOMEBODY'S WIDOW

29 January 1918 - Extra

*Directed by Scott Sidney. With Billie Rhodes, Cullen Landis.*

Billie Rhodes stars in this one reel Strand comedy - one of a series of light comedies, somewhat like today's TV sitcoms though with the supporting cast playing different roles from one film to the next.

Producer Al Christie and Billie herself preferred light comedy to the mostly knockabout style of the opposition. "Utterly devoid of any element of slapstick ... (they are) built around the love affairs, quarrels and adventures of young people, and depict laughable incidents of everyday life" announced Mutual their distributor. Credited as William Bevan, Billy invariably played these younger characters sans moustache, though here he briefly acquires a large false one in his imagination.



## THE QUACK DOCTOR

4 July 1920

*Directed by George Gray and Billy Bevan. With Louise Fazenda, Billy Armstrong, Dave 'Andy' Anderson, John Henry Jr, Kalla Pasha, Al Cooke.*

Billy Bevan's first major Sennett appearance, having just arrived from LKO, found him taking on the role of co-director as well, when Sennett let original director James Davis go, due to a drink problem. The cast involved mostly everyone on the Sennett lot from top comedienne Louise Fazenda, (in her oft-repeated role of country girl, forever falling prey to a city slicker - in this case Billy Armstrong), Sennett's own child star

John Henry Jr. (who would retire by the age of 8) to heaviest of heavies, Kalla Pasha (here in drag as Billy Armstrong's wife). Even Ben Turpin appears in a brief bit as a Justice of the Peace. A fast paced gag-fest with perhaps just two oddities (three if you count Kalla Pasha in drag) - the shell game sequence with Billy and Al Cooke is done in sustained long shot without cuts (just as Buster Keaton might have done years later), and the race to the rescue for once isn't the climax of the film.



## SHE SIGHED BY THE SEASIDE

8 May 1921

*Directed by Erle C. Kenton. With Ben Turpin, Marie Prevost, James Finlayson, Charles 'Heinie' Conklin, Charlotte Mineau, Bert Roach, Roscoe 'Tiny' Ward*

Actually filmed around mid-1920, this was a leftover from Sennett's previous term releasing through Paramount. Ben Turpin

stars as an unlikely lifeguard with suitors James Finlayson and Heinie Conklin vying for the affections of Marie Prevost on the beach. Sadly it seems to be a missing film. Footage assembled here (mostly from clips in various comedy compilations) seems to be the only material that survives. And Billy Bevan wasn't known to appear - but here he is helping Heinie Conklin into a very fashionable, if poorly made barrel.

## ON PATROL

12 March 1922

*Directed by Roy Del Ruth. With Mildred June, James Donnelly, Kalla Pasha, Kewpie Morgan, Al Cooke.*

If you've seen any TV documentary on Mack Sennett or silent comedy generally, ten to one you've seen clips from ON PATROL. The iconic shots of cops chasing Billy Bevan in convict gear have turned up representing Sennett in everything from 'Laughter USA'

(1962) to 'Hollywood - the Pioneers' (1984) and beyond. Which is ironic, since the complete film no longer exists. (unless .....) As with many Mack Sennett comedies released by Associated Producers and Associated First National (1921-22) only these clips survive thanks to their inclusion in a handful of previous compilations. Please prove us wrong - we want the complete ON PATROL!

## WHEN SUMMER COMES

23 September 1922

*Directed by Roy Del Ruth. With Mildred June, Kewpie Morgan, Billy Armstrong, Roscoe 'Tiny' Ward, Jack Cooper, John J. (Jack) Richardson.*

Sennett director Roy Del Ruth took surrealism to new heights, seemingly influenced by his time in Europe. In turn the surrealist movement would later fall for silent comedies like this one. Unfortunately little more than half a reel of this two reel comedy survives, making the action seem even more surreal! Originally reel one spent time establishing Mildred June as a wealthy heiress and Billy Bevan as her sweetheart. When Bevan arrives to meet her at a hunting lodge (via the outlandishly long limousine seen here) he is thrown into a lions' den by plotting fortune hunters. What we're left with is the lions chasing him, and everyone else, throughout reel two.



## NIP AND TUCK

12 August 1923

*Directed by Roy Del Ruth. With Harry Gribbon, Kewpie Morgan, Alberta Vaughn, Mildred June & Cameo the dog.*

Pathe announced NIP AND TUCK as "the first Mack Sennett comedy it has been privileged to release" though Ben Turpin's WHERE'S MY WANDERING BOY THIS EVENING? actually beat it by a month. Ben Turpin was Sennett's most popular comedian, by now alternating in starring shorts with Billy Bevan. This script was originally intended for Turpin, but it was Bevan who played the sailor getting involved in

a crooked poker game with Harry Gribbon and Kewpie Morgan. The real star though is Cameo - the highly gifted dog performer owned and trained by fellow comedian Hap Ward. Perhaps Ben Turpin was afraid he'd be upstaged, and yes Cameo steals the show both in the glorious climactic cop chase and the cleverly edited poker game (unless Cameo really could play poker?). These highlights were excerpted in Robert Youngson's pioneering cinema compilation THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMEDY (1957), and it's thanks to Youngson making a 35mm fine grain from the film's original camera negative that we now have the complete film on this blu-ray set. As Pathe said in their advertising "You who have laughs to laugh, prepare to laugh them now!"



## ONE CYLINDER LOVE

4 November 1923 - Extra

*Directed by Del Lord. With Harry Gribbon, Charlotte Mineau, Eugenia Gilbert, Dot Farley, Billy Fay.*

"Rich bachelor Harry and valet Billy - who must fill a number of domestic jobs in different disguises - go to the beach, where Harry meets Eugenia and gets involved with amateur aeroplaning and a trained bear." Thus the synopsis, quoted by Brent Walker in 'Mack Sennett's Fun Factory.' As with many of these extras, the plot is missing, as is so much more.

## WALL STREET BLUES

10 August 1924

*Directed by Del Lord. With Sid Smith, Andy Clyde, Natalie Kingston, Barbara Pierce, John J. "Jack" Richardson, Vernon Dent, Edgar Kennedy, Sunshine Hart.*

Director Del Lord's move to the Billy Bevan unit ushered in a string of classic, stunt-filled gag comedies. Everything seems to be thrown into WALL STREET BLUES - Jack Richardson falling from a tall building, Bevan's car missing a train and dangling over a cliff ("that cliff" - the much-used Sennett location at Pacific Palisades), trick cartoon shots, a final chase between speedboat and seaplane - and incredibly for Del Lord, a complex and fairly coherent plot. We believe it's restored to its full length, though some prime quality elements still need to be found.

## LIZZIES OF THE FIELD

7 September 1924

*Directed by Del Lord. With Sid Smith, Barbara Pierce, John J. "Jack" Richardson, Jack V.Lloyd, Andy Clyde, Spencer Bell.*

The title of LIZZIES OF THE FIELD is a spoof of the then current LILIES OF THE FIELD, but there any connection ends. LIZZIES OF THE FIELD is a 100% classic, non-stop action comedy with car stunts galore. Del Lord was Sennett's top stunt driver beginning in 1916 at Keystone. "Talk about laughs and thrills. The best we've played for a long time. The auto race is a riot" (manager, Atlantic Theatre, Atlantic, Mass). Clips from the auto race have turned up everywhere, once seen, never forgotten, but the drivers of the cars, comedians Bevan and Smith may not have registered so well. "Billy Bevan ..... acted as a sort of moustachioed feather being blown about in a whirlwind of chaos" said Steve Massa (in 'Lamebrains and Lunatics') - never more true than in LIZZIES OF THE FIELD. The preliminaries do include Bevan and Smith vying for customers at rival garages (the effect of a car stretching between the two being superbly done) and an opening dream sequence where Bevan drives his bed cross country as if it were a car. French comedian Pierre Etaix expanded this idea brilliantly in his first colour feature LE GRAND AMOUR (1969). Surely a homage to LIZZIES OF THE FIELD? For years the original Bevan

version was seen only in truncated form, all copies deriving from a one reel version in the 16mm Kodak library. The complete two reel film was recently discovered in the Eye Filmmuseum archive and appears here for the first time.

## WANDERING WAISTLINES

5 October 1924

*Directed by Ralph Ceder. With Sid Smith, Kalla Pasha, Madeline Hurlock, Barbara Pierce, Yorke Sherwood, Andy Clyde.*

“Billy Bevan and Sid Smith have an excellent comedy in WANDERING WAISTLINES, and indeed make as much of it as they can .... many laughs punctuate the picture for there is an element of simple stupidity about Billy Bevan that invites the laughter! Madeline Hurlock ... fits the role of vamp excellently. .... the trio of names in the cast alone will bring audiences down.” (Exhibitors Trade Review) (down to the cinema, presumably, not down in mood). Another teaming of Bevan and Smith. Here it's Sid Smith who gets to go over “that cliff”, he being already well known for this kind of ‘high up’ stunt work for previous studios, notably in the Hall Room Boys series for CBC. Actually it's heavy Kalla Pasha who gets the lion's share of the footage with Bevan though, as he tries to separate him from his wife Madeline's advances. Ralph Ceder, recently promoted from gagman (although he'd already directed Snub Pollard, Stan Laurel and others at Hal Roach) helmed a beautifully paced short with this one. A real rarity.

## THE LION'S WHISKERS

19 April 1925

*Directed by Del Lord. With Madeline Hurlock, John J. “Jack” Richardson, Andy Clyde, Sunshine Hart, Bobby Dunn, Louise Carver, Numa the lion.*

Another Bevan / Del Lord extravaganza. Extracts seemed to turn up everywhere in the days of black & white TV, and there was no sign of the complete two reeler. However, a few months into our project, further footage was discovered in Russia, so that now means we've been able to piece together most of the film. The plot has Bevan as a chauffeur, secretly married to film actress Madeline Hurlock and becoming jealous of her leading man (Jack Richardson). A relentless stream of gags ends with Madeline Hurlock, Sunshine Hart and Bevan braving the finale with Numa the lion.

## FROM RAGS TO BRITCHES

13 December 1925

*Directed by Del Lord. With Madeline Hurlock, Kewpie Morgan, Leo Sulky, Sunshine Hart, Andy Clyde, James Donnelly, Thelma Hill, Louise Carver.*

Billy and Madeline must remain unmarried to inherit a fashion house, while their jealous spouses (Sunshine and Kewpie respectively) get cleaning jobs to spy on them. Many of the sight gags will be familiar from clips, if not this plot which is mainly conveyed via

titles. (Kids watching the 'Comedy Capers' edited tv version in the 60's with all the titles removed stood no chance!) Is it possible that director Del Lord skipped over the odd plot point himself, though, as he rushed from gag to gag? When a couple of the fashion models act like robots, Moving Picture World's review explained that "lawyers send detectives who pose as automatic models to learn if the owners (of the fashion house) are unmarried". Maybe that was learned from a studio synopsis as we see no lawyers sending detectives in the film. The reviewer though rightly applauded that "there is some good slapstick stuff in this Mack Sennett comedy."



## MUSCLEBOUND MUSIC

30 May 1926

*Directed by Alf Goulding. With Dave Morris, Kewpie Morgan, Natalie Kingston, Patsy O'Byrne.*

This has all the hallmarks of a Del Lord short, even though it wasn't one. Fast paced, loaded with cartoon gags at the expense of plot - no link established until later between the boarding house scenes of reel one and the wrestling match in reel two; the background appearance of a bandsman spectator perhaps suggests some deleted band sequence? Plus there's the kind of non sequitur that Lord never lost sleep over - why is there a goat under the wrestling ring? Unusually though, the prolific Alf Goulding directed - while equally unusually returning ex Keystone Dave Morris teamed with Bevan for just this one release. No matter. "Snappy subtitles and enough slapstick gags to hold its own in the average house" said a trade review. Natalie Kingston, outgoing Harry Langdon and Ben Turpin leading lady, has surprisingly little to do, while three year old newcomer Mary Ann Jackson appears in just a couple of shots. Publicised as the youngest actress ever engaged by Sennett, she would shortly be winning hearts in his 'Smith Family' series.



## HUBBY'S QUIET LITTLE GAME

8 August 1926

*Directed by Del Lord. With Thelma Parr, Vernon Dent, Barbara Tennant, Dave Morris, Irving Bacon.*

A domestic farce from Mack Sennett and even more surprisingly, from director Del Lord. Clearly Sennett was hedging his bets - the Del Lord directed comedies before and after this one were A SEA DOG'S TALE (with surreal gags like Bevan as a traffic cop directing fish underwater) and HOBOKEN TO HOLLYWOOD (Indians chase Bevan and

Dent's family caravans as they motor across country.) but these cheaper, domestic comedies were on the horizon. Barely an exterior shot in sight as Bevan plays a dance instructor, bragging to his poker game partner Vernon Dent about flirting with his

latest pupil, Thelma Parr... eventually realising that Vernon is her jealous husband. Mack Sennett was responding to rising production costs as well as to a perceived demand for light comedy, which he had always hated. But at last Bevan was given space to flex his acting skills. Once lost in the speed of sight gags and camera trickery these are now to the fore. At one point he does an Oliver Hardy look to camera with a marvellous "can you believe I got away with that?" reaction. Only in the wrap up is there a fast paced gag sequence as if to prove it's a Mack Sennett comedy after all.

## CALLING HUBBY'S BLUFF

3 February 1929

*Directed by Harry Edwards. With Vernon Dent, Carmelita Geraghty, Dot Farley, Irving Bacon.*

Some of Bevan's best comedies in this later period were made, like this one, partnered with Vernon Dent and director Harry Edwards. Both had worked with Harry Langdon. The influence of Sennett's nearest competitor, Hal Roach, is also apparent in the move towards sophisticated comedy. Film Daily said: "Billy Bevan has a nifty part in this and succeeds in getting a big quota of laughs that come without any effort. (!) .... Carmelita Geraghty looks swell as the wife and with the help of Vernon Dent these three make it a snappy two reeler". Snappy it certainly must have seemed, compared to some of the early talkies being reviewed in the same issue.



## PINK PAJAMAS

21 April 1929

*Directed by Phil Whitman. With Vernon Dent, Natalie Joyce, Alice Ward, Elinor Field.*

Even snappier, this was number five in the "Tired Business Man" series - second to last of a series with Bevan in the title role, the same small cast (although Vernon Dent, again as a suspicious husband, is only in this one) and with similar domestic plots. Although this only took 5 days to film compared to 4 -6 weeks for Bevan's more action-packed shorts of 1926, there are some great moments. One with Dent slipping on a banana peel that Billy has just thrown away is beautifully timed in one wide shot, and is followed by Billy then hiding the banana in Dent's pocket.

Only five more silent Mack Sennetts were released to complete his Pathe contract. Sennett's sound shorts had already found a new distributor in Educational Pictures. Billy Bevan co-starred in the first of these - THE LION'S ROAR. (released 9 December 1928). Although reviews were excellent and Sennett attempted to return to his successful formula (a lion chase, even a custard pie in this first talkie), the writing was on the wall. The golden age of silent comedy ended soon after. But the legacy lives on - as do some of the best silent comedies of Billy Bevan.