# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# And that's not all, folks

By DOUG NYE
Knight-Ridder News Service

Boop-oop-a-doop!

Whenever moviegoers of the 1930s heard that phrase, the image of a cute, curvaceous flapper with a short skirt and low-cut blouse quickly came to mind.

She was Betty Boop, the sexiest cartoon character to wiggle across the movie screen.

The creation of animation pioneer Max Fleischer and his brother Dave, Betty Boop has become a legendary figure (pun intended) in the world of movie cartoons. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in her screen adventures, and today you can find her image on T-shirts, coffee cups, and dozens of other items.

American Movie Classics will celebrate the 65th anniversary of her first screen appearance at 7:45 tonight with a "Betty Boop Anniversary Special." Richard Fleischer, son of Max, hosts the two-hour show which also showcases 10 of Betty's cartoons.

The younger Fleischer has nothing but warm memories of growing up in a household where animation often dominated the dinner conversations.

"It was just a wonderful childhood surrounded by those cartoon characters and their creators," Fleischer said in a telephone interview. "I felt like the cartoon characters were a part of my family."

During his career, Max Fleischer was the only serious rival to Walt Disney in the field of animation.

He began turning out cartoons during the silent days, launching a series called "Out of the Inkwell." It featured a character called Ko-Ko the clown who climbed out of an ink bottle to start each episode and had adventures in the real world, thereby combining live-action and animation.

He also introduced the bouncing ball, sing-along cartoons with the coming of sound movies. Betty Boop was introduced as a sexy female dog in 1930's "Dizzy Dishes." She quickly evolved into a human female who was not only sexy, but also independent and fiesty.

Betty's skimpy costume and the cartoons' risqué humor made the series enormously popular. But after the motion picture industry adopted the stricter Production Code of 1934, the Betty Boop films became considerably tamer.

By the early 1940s, the Betty Boop cartoons were history. However, they were rediscovered in the 1950s when many were released to television. Their popularity, especially among animation fans, has grown ever since.

Richard Fleischer thinks he knows why Betty Boop continues to entertain.

"It was quite a different concept compared to what Disney was doing," Fleischer said. "Disney depended on nature for a lot of his humor. Betty Boop was very big-city New York humor.

"The humor is pervasive. The laughs don't come from somebody getting hit over the head by a sledgehammer.

"And Betty Boop had great sex appeal and naiveté at the same time. Despite her sexy looks, she retained her purity but was not above putting in a sly wink or a flirtatious smile."

Despite growing up around the wacky and wild animators who worked at his father's studio, Fleischer never considered taking the same path.

"I planned to be a psychiatrist," Fleischer said. He added with a chuckle, "I figured I had a lot of potential clients at Dad's studio."

But while attending Yale, Fleischer became involved with the drama department. Soon he was directing plays, and that led to a job directing movie short subjects for the RKO studios.

From there Fleischer went on to a long and prolific career as a director of feature films. Some of his credits include "Compulsion" with Orson Welles, "Tora! Tora! Tora!," the recreation of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, and "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," based on the Jules Verne novel.

A bit of irony came with that latter assignment. Fleischer directed the film for his dad's old nemesis, Walt Disney.

"It was like a reunion for me," Fleischer said. "Many of the animators who had worked with Dad were now working for Disney."

That was in 1954, and by then Max and Dave Fleischer had been pushed out of the cartoon business. Paramount, which had taken over the Fleischer studio, was winding down its animation department as were most other studios at the time.

Not only had the Fleischers brought the public Betty Boop and her pals Ko-Ko and Bimbo the dog, they also had been responsible for animating the Popeye cartoons from 1933 to the early 1940s. Max also oversaw an expensive series of Superman cartoons from 1941 to 1943.

One of the trademarks of a Fleischer cartoon is the use of his own invention: the rotoscope. It provided a stunning three-dimensional effect during camera movement.

Some film historians say that Max Fleischer never got the credit he deserved, but son Richard said he never heard his dad complain about that.

"The only time I ever saw my father down was when Paramount took over the studio," Fleischer said. "During his time of creativity, he was recognized and appreciated all over the world."

Thanks to creations such as Betty Boop, that appreciation continues for new generations.

Boop-oop-a-doop!

**TV PREVIEW**

**BETTY BOOP ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL** airs at 7:45 tonight on the American Movie Classics cable network.

## The best of Betty Boop

The lineup for the "Betty Boop Anniversary Festival" at 7:45 tonight on American Movie Classics:

- "Dizzy Dishes" (1930), Betty's first appearance.
- "Bimbo's Initiation" (1931).
- "Musical Justice" (1931), a live-action film with Mae Questal, the voice of Betty Boop.
- "Any Rags" (1932).
- "Minnie the Moocher" (1932) with Cab Calloway.
- "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" (1932) with Ethel Merman.
- "Snow White" (1933) with Cab Calloway.

Sexy cartoon flapper Betty Boop started life as a dog 65 years ago.

## WHAT'S Hot

**A RARE OPPORTUNITY**

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir makes a rare New York appearance tonight and Wednesday when it premieres James DeMars' "An American Requiem" at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, Manhattan. Performances begin at 8 p.m. $50 for reserved seats, $26.50 general admission. To charge tickets, call CityTix at (212) 581-1212. Information: (212) 662-2133.

**ALLMAN BROTHER**

The Allman Brothers Band continues its summer tour at 8 tonight at the Garden State Arts Center in Holmdel. $22.50 (lawn). (908) 442-9200 box office or 507-8900 TicketMaster Charge.

**OUT OF IRELAND**

Irish phenoms The Cranberries perform, along with Toad the Wet Sprocket, at 7:30 tonight at Blockbuster-Sony Music Entertainment Centre at the Waterfront, 1 Harbour Blvd., Camden. $17.50 (lawn) and $25. (609) 635-1445 box office or (800) 833-0080 Telecharge.

— STEVEN C. JOHNSON

**MOVIE AUDIENCE GUIDE**

These ratings apply to films released after Nov. 1, 1968

THIS SEAL in ads indicates the film was submitted and approved under the Motion Picture Code of Self-Regulation

G ALL AGES ADMITTED — General Audiences

R RESTRICTED — Under 17 requires accompanying Parent or Adult Guardian

PG ALL AGES ADMITTED — Parental Guidance Suggested

NO ONE UNDER 17 ADMITTED — (Age limit may vary in certain areas)

PG-13 Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13

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# Tracing a passion for fashion

By FRANK DeCARO
Special from Newsday

Ask Isaac Mizrahi how much festival audiences at Cannes and Sundance enjoyed "Unzipped," the new film about him, and the fashion designer will out-hype any movie-poster blurb. "The response," he says, "has been like finding the Dead Sea scrolls or the opening of King Tut's tomb. I can't believe how much people love this movie."

The so-called frockumentary, the first feature by fashion photographer Douglas Keeve, opened Friday in New York City, opens next week in Los Angeles, and later this month everywhere else. Its distributor, Miramax Films, is hoping that, by then, audiences will know why the fashion community generally considers "Unzipped" the best film about the garment business since William Klein's 1966 "Qui etes-vous, Polly Magoo?" and why Mizrahi has been the darling of Seventh Avenue since his first fashion show, in 1987.

Telling the story of how Mizrahi created his Fall 1994 collection — a "Nanook of the North"-inspired faux-fur fest — "Unzipped" features such supermodels as Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Linda Evangelista, all of whom are billed over the designer's name in movie ads. But no one eclipses Mizrahi on film. Whether he's admitting to his mother that as a teenager he stole money from her to buy fabric, nibbling Tater Tots, or making a Donna Karan joke, the nice Jewish boy with a mopful of curls on his forever-kerchiefed head finally gets his close-up in "Unzipped." He's been ready for it ever since his days at the High School of the Performing Arts in Manhattan and his appearance in the 1980 film "Fame."

Keeve's documentary is a fond portrait of the 33-year-old fashion-mad artist — someone who, as the designer's mother says in "Unzipped," was "4 years old and he noticed the daisies on my mules." And it's a sly but loving look at an industry in which a candy-colored monkey coat is greeted with the response, "This is so major."

"What I set out to document," Keeve says, "is what I love about fashion, what I love about Isaac, how he works, and a stream of consciousness about the time it was made. ... I always tell people how mean this business is. The people aren't nice, and they don't treat you well. But people in this business love what they do more than anyone." And no one, Keeve says, has more passion for fashion than Isaac Mizrahi.

Fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi in Douglas Keeve's "Unzipped."

"Isaac embodies everything I love about the fashion world," Keeve says. "He'd kill for fashion. He's uncanny the way he turns a phrase. He's a storyteller like Garrison Keillor. He's a conversationalist. The biggest gift you can have is to be funny and he has that, too. You throw all those things together and you have your dream subject."

For Mizrahi, it was just a matter of being himself.

"People say, 'You were so great in 'Unzipped,' but I wasn't giving a performance; I was living my life," he says. "I'm not acting. I'm just being." But being Isaac Mizrahi is being more flamboyant than most people, and even the designer admits it. "I can't tell which came first, my drama queen approach to everything or the constant cameras in my face making me that way. Am I Diana Vreeland by nature or did I become that way when they started to take my picture? Actually, I was always like this. It's true."

Mizrahi's vulnerability and likability are chief among the reasons why "Unzipped" has proven so popular. At Sundance, it received the Audience Award. At OutFest, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, it tied for the Grand Jury Prize. But Mizrahi doesn't take all the credit for the film's warm welcome. The reason "Unzipped" works, he says, when so many fashion films (like Robert Altman's recent "Ready-to-Wear") do not, is that this documentary "succeeds in making fashion an animate character. It really describes fashion as this incredibly irritating thing that creates a pearl at the end. It also says that fashion is the most glamorous pursuit today ... even more than the movies. There's such an incredible artificialness to this industry."

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## BRIDGE

By ALFRED SHEINWOLD and FRANK STEWART

Today's deal was like a slice of Dostoevski: North punished South in the bidding, and West punished his side in the play.

When South bid, he counted on North for a few points since East-West had stopped so low. South wanted only to push his opponents higher, but North sadistically raised him to game.

West cashed two diamonds and led a heart. South took the ace, led a trump to dummy, ruffed a diamond, led a club to the 10, and ruffed another diamond. He drew trumps, forced out the ace of clubs, and claimed his contract.

West should punish his opponents by switching to a trump at Trick 2. South wins in dummy, gives up a diamond, wins the trump return, ruffs a diamond, leads a club to dummy, and ruffs another diamond.

If South then leads another club, West wins and gives East a club ruff; and if South reaches dummy with a heart ruff to draw trumps, he's lost control, and the defenders can cash hearts when West takes the ace of clubs.

**DAILY QUESTION:** You hold S-8-5, H-J-10-9-3, D-A-K-Q-4, C-A-7-6. You open one diamond, and your partner bids one spade. The opponents pass. What do you say?

**ANSWER:** Bid 1NT to show a balanced hand with 12 to 15 high-card points. Bidding two hearts promises a stronger hand by pushing your partner to three diamonds with a minimum hand. If your partner has length in hearts, he can bid two hearts over 1NT.

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West dealer
E-W vulnerable

NORTH
♠AQJ3
♡8
◇J983
♣Q1085

WEST
♠85
♡J1093
◇AKQ4
♣A76

EAST
♠1092
♡KQ752
◇1065
♣94

SOUTH
♠K764
♡A64
◇72
♣KJ32

| West | North | East | South |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1◇ | Pass | 1♡ | Pass |
| 2♡ | Pass | Pass | 2♠ |
| 3♡ | 4♠ | All Pass | |

Opening lead — ◇K