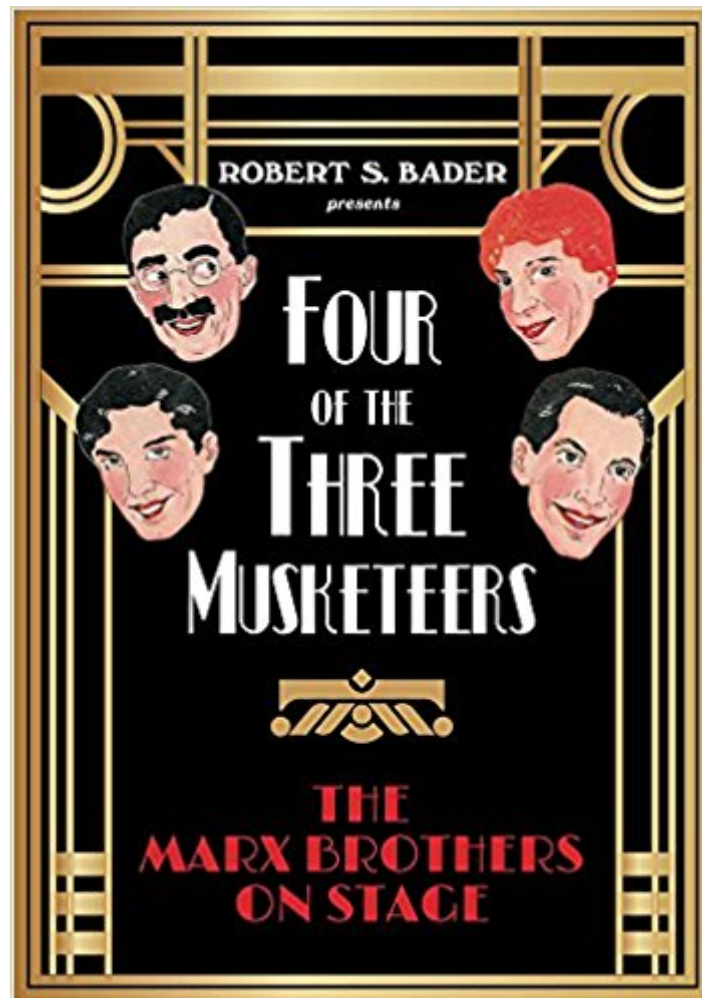




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Four Of The Three Musketeers: The Marx Brothers On Stage



Synopsis

Before film made them international comedy legends, the Marx Brothers developed their comic skills on stage for twenty-five years. In *Four of the Three Musketeers: The Marx Brothers on Stage*, Robert S. Bader offers the first comprehensive history of the foursome's hardscrabble early years honing their act in front of live audiences. From Groucho's debut in 1905 to their final live performances of scenes from *A Night in Casablanca* in 1945, the brothers' stage career shows how their characters and routines evolved before their arrival in Hollywood. *Four of the Three Musketeers* draws on an unmatched array of sources, many not referenced elsewhere. Bader's detailed portrait of the struggling young actors both brings to vivid life a typical night on the road for the Marx Brothers and also illuminates the inner workings of the vaudeville business, especially during its peak in the 1920s. As Bader traces the origins of the characters that would later come to be beloved by filmgoers, he also skillfully scrapes away the accretion of rumors and mythology perpetuated not only by fans and writers but by the Marx Brothers themselves. Revealing, vital, and entertaining, *Four of the Three Musketeers* will take its place as an essential reference for this iconic American act.

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Customer Reviews

"A new benchmark in Marx scholarship." —Los Angeles Times

"As far as I'm concerned, the Marx Brothers practically invented comedy. And I love this great new book about them by Robert Bader!" —Jerry Seinfeld "Who

would have dreamed that there could be much, much more to learn in still another book about the Marx Brothers? Not I. And yet, Robert Bader—focusing on the under-researched vaudeville days of the hilarious siblings—has gone where no man went before, discovering a treasure trove of Marxiana to delight the hearts and minds of those of us who can never get enough."

—Dick Cavett "I have read virtually every book ever published about the Marx Brothers. I have even written about them myself. Robert Bader's book is a revelation."

—Leonard Maltin, author of Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide and The Great Movie Comedians "In *Four of the Three Musketeers* Robert S. Bader shows that Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Zeppo had nothing on Minnie Marx—the booster, nag and agent who set them on their way to fame." —Wall Street Journal "A book that no devoted Marx Brothers fan should be without—*Four of the Three Musketeers* is a fascinating, indispensable book that details the evolution of one of the greatest comedy teams as they went through a long, bumpy trial by fire." —Montreal Times

ROBERT S. BADER is the editor of *Groucho Marx and Other Short Stories and Tall Tales*. He is the curator of the Bing Crosby Archive and produced the television special *The Legendary Bing Crosby*. Bader is also the writer and producer of the Warner Bros. documentary *The Dawn of Sound: How Movies Learned to Talk*, and has produced numerous archival DVD releases, including two sets of *You Bet Your Life with Groucho Marx*. His recent DVD productions include the Marx Brothers TV Collection; *The Honeymooners: Lost Episodes, 1951-1957*; and *The Best of the Danny Kaye Show*. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and several dogs.

Four of the Three Musketeers: The Marx Brothers on Stage—I'm not saying that this is the greatest non-fiction book ever written. I haven't read every non-fiction book ever written, so the comparison would be a false one. "Four of the Three Musketeers" is just the greatest non-fiction book I've ever read. If you've already read "Harpo Speaks," "Groucho and Me," "Growing Up with Chico" and all of the other dozen or so books on the Marx Brothers, this one is the book that lines up all the rest and makes them behave. All the legendary Marx Brothers stories are either debunked or verified. If verified, names, dates and places are detailed. The years of climbing the Mount Everest of vaudeville? There's a list of all performances. With notations such as the time the fifteen year old Groucho appeared on a

vaudeville bill with the twenty-five year old juggler, W.C. Fields. Or the ocean cruise where entertainment was provided by the Four Marx Brothers and Clark & McCullough (my other favorites). Or the stretch of performance dates missed by Chico because of a Mystery Illness and in a day when performers' illnesses were specified by the trade papers, speculation is that the womanizing Chico had been caught by a father/brother/husband and that he was recovering from a bullet wound. Harpo's sojourn as a whorehouse piano player forced to drive a getaway carriage for burglars? The entire court case is detailed. The four sympathetic prostitutes who gave Harpo train fare home? All named. MY GOD, THIS BOOK IS FABULOUS. I tracked down one of the theaters where the Four Marx Brothers first appeared after Chico joined the act in 1912. Not a theater anymore, but the building is still there and it's located around the corner from a theater where I've been performing/directing. History! Three details, and I'll shut up. ***** From the list of vaudeville dates: "May 14-16, 1914 Galesburg, Illinois Gaiety Theatre The Four Marx Brothers got their nicknames from comic Art Fisher at a backstage poker game. ***** A Marx By Any Other Name" The legend is, as with Groucho dropping his onstage German accent in 1917, that Harpo changed his name from Adolph to Arthur due to anti-German WWI sentiment. Not true. Bader reveals that Adolph became Arthur as far back as 1909. Why? Because during the ten years the Marx family lived in Chicago & LaGrange, also based in Chicago was an attorney named Adolph Marks, who specialized in suing vaudeville actors and was roundly despised by same. ***** Zeppo's Escape. IRVING THALBERG: Do you think three of you should be paid the same as four? GROUCHO: Without Zeppo we're worth twice as much. I always thought that was a little harsh, even for Groucho; but Bader reveals why the Brothers were touchy about the subject: after leaving Paramount, there was a changing of the guard, and the new executives wanted the Marx Brothers back. Negotiations broke down because Paramount wouldn't pay the same money for three that they paid for four. And they were far from the only objectors. Yep. The Marx Brothers had trouble getting work without Zeppo. And considering the way they treated him (also detailed in this amazing tome), the only possible conclusion is, "Karma's a bitch." If you're a Marx Brothers fan; if you're a student of vaudeville (and all of early 20th century entertainment); or you just want to read the Greatest Non-Fiction Book Ever Written| sorry, I said I wouldn't do that. Sorry| BUY THIS BOOK.

I've been a fanatical Marx Brothers fan for almost 50 years. I've interviewed Groucho on radio. I've read EVERY darn book written by or about them. I thought I knew it all. But this amazing book told me many, many things I did not know. He sweeps away the lies and great-but-untrue stories that fill all the other books, and get down to as much of the truth as could ever be discovered a century after its events. The book is FASCINATING. I can not recommend it TOO highly. Great book.

I enjoyed this book so much, and did NOT want it to end. For the fan of the Marx Brothers, you can buy this book without any fear of it being repetitious or doubling over the same old stories and information you've acquired from other books about the team or the individual "players". Brand-new research, color, history, etc., all pertaining to the years BEFORE the brothers hit the movies big-time. Finally, you can learn in tremendous detail the way in which the Marx Brothers morphed throughout the formative years. In so doing, they mirrored the tremendous power and scope of the Vaudeville industry during the early years of the 20th Century, and the reader will gain enormous insight into the ways of the Vaudeville culture that so dominated the early years of the last century. Notable too, is the fact that the book includes as near-complete an itinerary of the Brothers' individual stage appearances in a very detailed listing as is possible. Season-by-season information on players, plot lines, locales, theater names, dates, etc..... Incredible coverage. Informative, entertaining, fascinating, educational, revealing, unique,FUN! This book, by Robert S. Bader, called "FOUR OF THE THE THREE MUSKETEERS" - THE MARX BROTHERS ON STAGE." Was years in the writing and compilation, and worth the wait. So glad this book exists. Wonderful to discover as well, that after a lifetime of enraptured study, there is still so much to learn about the subjects that I love. Richly illustrated, including many pictures that have previously been unseen by the general public, and also including many contemporary newspaper ads for the Brothers' various stage appearances.

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