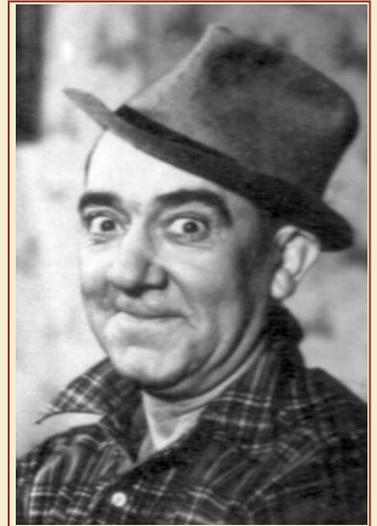


OH WHAT A NIGHT

Year of release: 1932 • Screenplay: George Wallace

As an "under-the-weather husband returning home to face an irate wife," [George Wallace](#) (as John) performs a number of comedy drunk routines in the staged version of this sketch. The sketch begins with the couple bickering as they prepare for bed. Then the wife thinks she hears a burglar. In the ensuing mayhem their neighbour, Mrs Malone, comes to investigate and is mistaken for the burglar by John who knocks her unconscious. They put her in to the bed but when her husband Mike turns up John jumps under the covers to hide thinking it's the burglar. Malone discovers them in bed together and the riotous shenanigans continue.

The "Oh What a Night" sketch is first known to have been presented by Wallace and his revue company at the New Opera House, Christchurch, New Zealand on 16 January 1928 (as one of the support entertainments to Wallace's *Dangerous Dan* revusical). Its earliest known staging (to date) in Australia was at Perth's [Theatre Royal](#) on 9 August 1930.¹ Wallace played the husband and Nell Stirling the wife.² Other characters in the story, as identified in the screenplay submitted to the Attorney-General's Department Copyright Office in 1932 (see details below) are Mrs Malone, Mr Malone, The Policeman, The Burglar and Larry, the Bat.



2292-9 Form F.

Copyrights
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Copyright Act 1912.

Copyright

Application for Registration of the Sole Right to Perform or Authorize the Performance of a Musical or Dramatic Work.

I, FRANCIS WILLIAM THRING, trading as "EFFTEE FILM PRODUCTIONS", His Majesty's Theatre, Exhibition Street, Melbourne, in the State of Victoria, Commonwealth of Australia, hereby make application for the registration of the sole right to perform or authorize the performance in the Commonwealth of Australia of a Dramatic work entitled "OH, WHAT A NIGHT" by George Wallace

I do hereby declare that George Wallace, Hotel Metropole, Melbourne is the Author of the said Dramatic work, and that I, FRANCIS WILLIAM THRING, am by virtue of an assignment dated 12th May, 1932, and made between George Wallace and Francis William Thring the owner of the sole right to perform or authorize the performance of the said Dramatic work in the Commonwealth of Australia, by means of talking pictures.

And I make this declaration conscientiously believing the statements contained therein to be true in every particular.

Declared at Melbourne this 29th day of Sept 1932

Before me

To the REGISTRAR OF COPYRIGHTS,
Commonwealth of Australia

(1) Name of Applicant (in full).
(2) Address.
(3) Occupation.
(4) State whether "Musical" or "Dramatic" Work.
(5) Title of Work (in full).
(6) State the Name and Address of the Author of the Work. Where the Applicant is the Author insert "I am."
(7) If the Applicant is not the Author of the Work, his title to apply for registration must be traced here.
(8) Signature of Applicant.
(9) Signature of Applicant if the Declaration is made.
Note.—The Applicant must forward with his application such assignment or assignments of right which he derives his title, with an attached copy thereof.

C.4106—4/31—308

In a review of the the April 1931 theatrical version at Brisbane's [Theatre Royal](#), the *Telegraph's* theatre critic wrote: 'A sketch entitled "Oh! What a Night," reveals George Wallace as a drunken husband, who gets into complications by hitting his neighbour's wife on the head in mistake for a burglar. Phil Baker makes an attractive wife and Jack Ashworth a ludicrously foolish policeman' (3).

In the [Efftee Film Productions](#) script held by the National Archives of Australia, Wallace's character does not appear to be intoxicated. Much of the humour in the opening segment is, however, developed through bickering with his wife. At 14 minutes duration, the filmed version likely remained faithful to the theatrical sketch in most other respects.

Interestingly, although [F.W. Thring](#) is officially credited as the short's director, it has been claimed by several sources that Wallace himself oversaw the direction of the piece. This is likely given that the screenplay is largely based on his stage version.

The film version of *Oh What a Night* was favourably recieved when it made its screen exhibition premiere as a support to [Pat Hanna's Diggers](#) in early 1932. The first known screening, exhibited as part of a special Efftee Entertainer's presentation, appears to have been at Adelaide's Regent Theatre on 23 April. Indeed the film's popularity was such that it was also included in the pre-feature entertainment during the [Beaumont Smith's The Hayseeds](#) season at Sydney' Civic Theatre (lasting from early December 1933 through until February the following year).

¹ The feature production was Wallace's revusical [The Pickled Porter](#) (1922)

² In reviewing the sketch's revival at the Theatre Royal, Perth, in October 1930, the *West Australian* records Wallace was "ably assisted by Phyl [Phyllis] Baker, Tup Dudley, Marshall Crosby, Jim Romaine, and John Dobbie ("Theatre Royal: Comedy and Song." *West Australian* (Perth) 13 Oct. 1930, 12.

At the Olinda Film Festival held in January 1952, a number of "old Australian comedies" were screened, some for the first time in several decades. Their popularity with audiences saw Hoyts Theatres revive four films made by Pat Hanna and George Wallace (including Hanna's *Diggers* and Wallace's *Harmony Row* and *Oh What a Night*). An *Age* film critic, writing about the Albany Theatrette screening in Melbourne in September that year suggested that it served as a reminder of the commercial success of Australia's earlier films ("[Our Own](#)." *Age* 18 September 1952, 2).

- 1932:** Regent Theatre, Adelaide; 23-29 Apr. [First established public screening]
- 14 min.; black and white; sound (2 reels)
 - **Dir/Prod.** F. W. Thring (Efftee Film Productions); **Dir of Ph.** Arthur Higgins,
 - **Cast** incl. George Wallace (the husband), Nell Stirling (the wife), [Marshall Crosby](#) (Mike Malone), [John Dobbie](#) (Policeman).
 - Staged as supporting entertainment to the Pat Hanna Film, *Diggers*.

FURTHER REFERENCE

McDermott, Celestine. "Australian Music Hall Theatre." Ph D Thesis, Monash University (1980), 20.

"[New Opera House: An Excellent Programme](#)." *Press* (Christchurch, NZ) 17 Jan. 1928, 11.

"[Theatre Royal](#)." *Telegraph* (Brisbane) 13 Apr. 1932, 3.

- ▶ "[Oh What a Night](#)." Manuscript. National Archives of Australia [A1336/22829] Copyright application submitted by Francis Williams Thring (Efftee Film Productions) on 29 Sept. 1932. PDF or digital copy of the manuscript can be accessed online via the link (above).

- See also holding record for George Stephenson Wallace copyright application [A1336/20046]

**AUSTRALIAN TALKIES.
A TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS.
PAT HANNA in
"DIGGERS"**

**A Full-length All-Australian
Talkie, from Efftee Studios—with
GEORGE MOON, JOE VALLI, &c.
All Australian Supports.**

**GEORGE WALLACE in—
"OH WHAT A NIGHT."**

**EFFTEE ENTERTAINERS, in-
cluding MINNIE LOVE, JACK
O'HAGAN, &c.
QUEENSLAND'S BARRIER REEF.
MELBOURNE GAZETTE.
COMING TO—
WINTERGARDEN
TUESDAY NIGHT NEXT.
"DIGGERS" NIGHT,
THURSDAY, 14th JULY.
PLANS AT MUNRO'S.**

Evening News (Rockhampton) 8 July 1932, 13.