The early sound Fleischer cartoons lacked Disney's charm and were often almost ugly in their drawing, but they did have a great deal of real invention and near-surrealist design. This one is very typical.

"FLIRTING IN THE PARK" (Eko Radio, 1933) Directed by George Stevens
Written by George Stevens and Fred Guiol; camera, Jack Mackenzie; Len Powers; produced by Lou Brock;
With Carol Tevis, June Brewster, Grady Sutton, Eddie Nugent, Brooks Benedict
Former cameraman and 2-reel comedy director, George Stevens was here on the verge of transferring to feature films exclusively, and of course would soon become - both commercially and artistically - one of Hollywood's major directors. While not a masterpiece of comedy, "Flirting in the Park" is certainly amusing, and foreshadows the Stevens comedic style of "Swingtime" with its grace, overall charm and extremely good photography.

"WHERE'S THAT FIRE?" (Gainsborough-20th Century Fox, 1939) Directed by Marcel Varnel; produced by Edward Black; screenplay by J.O.C. Orton, Val Guest and Marriott Edgar; Camera, Arthur Crabtree; art direction, Vetchinsky; editor, Alfred Roome; music, Louis Levy; 7 reels
Will Hay was easily Britain's most popular comic of the 30's; his style and content often overlapped into that of W.C. Fields and Buster Keaton, but he was no lazy imitator and drew also on his long music hall experience as well. "Where's that Fire?" immediately followed one of Hay's very best films, "Ask a Policeman" and was perhaps too obvious an attempt to duplicate its plot and formula. However, this minor drawback will not be apparent to U.S. audiences, since neither film was released here, either theatrically or on television. On the whole it survives three decades rather well, and one sequence involving the prolonged hoisting of a pole is a classic of slapstick chaos well up to the best Laurel and Hardy standards. Incidentally, in British films of the 30's and early 40's, one usually found the villains being depicted (by accent and Hollywood-inspired behaviour, if not by direct statement) as being Americans. This was not so much a racial slur as a tribute to American superiority in criminal efficiency, and an admission that no British crook could provide healthy enough opposition to the heroes.

-10 minute intermission-

"HIPS HIPS HOORAY" (Eko Radio, 1934) Directed by Mark Sandrich; written by Harry Ruby, Bert Kalmar, Edward Kaufman; music and lyrics by Ruby and Kalmar; Camera, David Abel; dances staged by Dave Gould; 7 reels
With Wheeler and Woolsey, Dorothy Lee, Thelma Todd, Ruth Etting, George Meeker, Spencer Charters, James Purtis, Matt Briggs, Lee Shumway, Dorothy Granger, Jean Carmen, Stanley Blystone, Bobby Watson.
Wheeler & Woolsey's popularity and prolific output deserve more comment than we have room for here, but there'll be time for such comment in the preceding talk. Through the years we've had many requests for Wheeler and Woolsey, so here it is - a very carefully selected film, which, while it perhaps lacks some of the sustained vaudeville routines that were highlights of their earlier (but cruder) pictures, is still one of their best and most typical - and in addition is so slick, dressed up with glossy production values and zippy musical numbers, as to keep non-Wheeler and Woolsey admirers entertained too. There are none of those long pun-filled dialogue routines which slowed (and dated) their earlier films, and a greater emphasis on the kind of slapstick which the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields likewise used to rambunctious their films. Quite often, the dialogue takes on a Marxian flavor too, with the same kind of unassaillable logic - e.g., that there should be special insurance rates for undertakers, who have to live longer than other people in order to bury them! As usual, 90% of the team's talent seems vested in Bert Wheeler, who hoofs, clowns and romances agreeably, but Woolsey gets off a few good quips and of course pert Dorothy Lee and the stunning Thelma Todd couldn't be bettered as the feminine foils. Produced in late 1933, the film is early enough to escape the full impact of the Production Code, and its spectacularly undressed costuming and near-the-knuckle dialogue are still audaciously amusing.

--- William K. Everson ---