



Weber & Fields. *Palace tradition was a challenge to moderns.*

Comeback at the Palace

The gloom that hung over Lindy's Restaurant at 49th and Broadway that night in 1933 was as thick as the sour cream on the cheese blintzes.

Vaudeville, the Broadway characters sobbed into their coffee, was dead.

Two blocks south at 47th St., the Palace theater was ending a 20-year era as the high temple of lowbrow entertainment. The dream goal of all song-and-dance teams, jugglers and comic monologists was closing its doors to live talent.

There was some dispute over what killed vaudeville. Some said talking movies. Others said radio. A few cruel critics said it committed suicide. But all agreed that with the fall of its last fortress, the Palace, it was dead.

Eddie Cantor, who had laid 'em in the aisles in the flesh, was launching the house's new all-film policy with his *The Kid From Spain*.

But vaudeville fooled the pessimists. It went into disguise, and refused to die. Top flight acts like Cantor, bulbous-nosed W. C. Fields and Bill (Bojangles) Robinson moved into lush musical revues, and on to Hollywood. Fred Allen transferred his gravel-voiced comic art intact to radio. And lesser bill-fillers holed up in cocktail lounges, night clubs, and the few remaining houses in New York and around the circuit that bravely maintained a film-plus-vaudeville policy.

Wake's End. Last week, the corpse that wouldn't die got up and went home. Sol A. Schwartz, vice president of the Radio-Keith-Orpheum chain, announced restoration of vaudeville at the Palace, beginning May 18.

Ironically, the nation-wide move to revive live talent entertainment at popular prices, pointed up by the Palace, was traced to television.

TV had made the future look suddenly bright for variety talent, suddenly bleak for the movies and radio, which had "killed" vaudeville. Now a new generation could enjoy new artists upholding the traditions of Joe Cook, Joe Frisco, Van and Schenck, Moran and Mack, Julian Eltinge and Sophie Tucker.

At home in Beverly Hills, Cal., a sentimental Cantor commented: "If vaudeville is to have a comeback, what better place than the Palace."