



ENTERTAINMENT

# Show goes on for legendary performer

NICK THOMAS, SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, OCTOBER 05, 2009 01:53 AM EDT | UPDATED: MONDAY, OCTOBER 05, 2009 01:55 AM EDT

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Cary Grant called him the greatest entertainer ever. Last year, the Guinness Book of World Records listed him as the actor with the longest career on stage and screen.

The creative longevity of Mickey Rooney is astounding, with more than 350 film and television roles stretching back to 1926 and silent films. Far from slowing down, the veteran entertainer is planning to celebrate his 89th birthday with a two-week, 15-city Ontario tour with his Let's Put on a Show! autobiographical musical, which takes the stage at Centrepointe Theatre tomorrow night.

Rooney will be joined on stage by his eighth wife, Jan -- herself an accomplished singer and actress -- as the couple joke, sing, and dance their way down Hollywood's memory lane and celebrate Rooney's eight decades in show business. A video montage will highlight Rooney's film career, including clips with his frequent co-star of the 1930s and '40s, Judy Garland.

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

"Jan and I came up with the idea to put the show together about 10 years ago," said Rooney by phone from his home in Westlake Village, Calif. "It looks back on all the great people I have worked with, and it's a show you can bring the whole family to."

Rooney and his wife first began touring with the show in Australia in the late '90s.

"Since then we've done hundreds of shows in other countries and all across the U.S.," recalled Jan, whose mother was from Manitoba. "We love coming to Canada and the audiences seem to enjoy the show tremendously."

Jan said she met Mickey for the first time rather informally at an airport back in the '70s. "I remember he was grappling with some luggage on one of the carousels," she said with a chuckle. Rooney's son, who she knew at the time, invited her to later meet his dad more formally.

"Mickey was playing the piano," she said. "I had always been a big fan, but had forgotten what a talented musician he was. So I started humming along. Well heck, we've been humming along together ever since."

That was 31 years ago, more than Rooney's seven other marriages combined, including a year with actress Ava Gardner.

But if Jan had any concerns about hooking up with Rooney, they were short lived. "Did I have reservations when I learned he'd been married seven times? I certainly did," joked Jan. "I had been married once before to a person in the movie industry too, and I thought once was enough."

LOVE OF HIS LIFE

Though Rooney can claim many achievements, including an honorary Oscar, an Emmy, and a couple of Golden Globes, he seems most proud of his three-decade marriage. "Jan is the love of my life," he said.

Rooney is clearly proud of his show heading to Canada.

"We received a joint star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for our work in live entertainment," he said.

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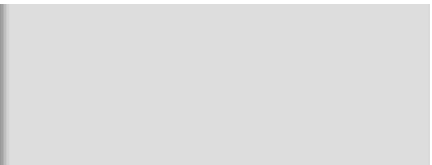
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"Jan and I are crazy about it," said Rooney of their current live show. "We're sure everyone who comes will enjoy it, too."



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