

Bottoms Up!

UK : 1960 : dir. Mario Zampi : Associated British : 89 min
 prod: Mario Zampi : scr: Michael Pertwee : dir.ph.:

John Mitchell; Paul Castaldini
 Jimmy Edwards; Arthur Howard; Melvyn Hayes; Sidney Tafler; Raymond Huntley;
 Martita Hunt; Reginald Beckwith; Donald Hewlett; Richard Briers; Neil Wilson; Gordon Phillott;
 John Wilder; Graham Tonbridge; Vanda Hudson; George Pastell; George Selway;
 Richard Shaw; John Stuart

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∅ M ☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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His trusty weapon at the ready, Jim mingles with the hoi polloi (Melvyn Hayes centre)

Source: indeterminate

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A seedy schoolmaster passes off his bookie's son as an eastern prince. Rambling film version of a successful TV series "**Whack-O!**". * "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"If, by some personal aberration, you happen to think Jimmy Edwards in his Will Hay-type schoolmaster rôle is funny, don't let us stop you from chortling over this nonsense about

rebellion at his school; others, keep away.¹
 77 "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"A full-blown film version of the radio and TV series "**Whack-O!**", with Jimmy Edwards blustering away splendidly as the school head whose accountant is turf rather than chartered.

¹ *You leave my personal aberrations out of it.*



All stills (unless otherwise indicated) source: original distributor's exploitation pamphlet

Arthur Howard is the dithering deputy head, Pettigrew, and Vanda Hudson makes a delectable matron. The plot, which shouldn't be paid too much attention, is something about an oriental prince coming to the school as a pupil. ** ”

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

“Jimmy Edwards, he of the luxuriant moustache and dementedly upper-crust manner, stars in this big-screen adaptation of his hit TV series **"Whacko!"**. Lots of shouting, mistaken identity and running about in no particular direction in this school-set comedy scripted by Michael Pertwee. If you

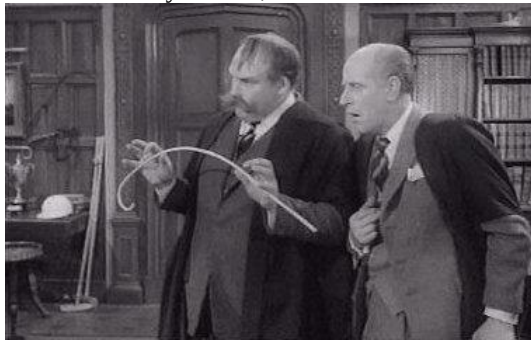
like Edwards this is whacking fun; if not, the result is tiresome rather than tittersome. ** ”

“A feature inspired by the successful **"Whacko!"** series. Headmaster Jim Edwards faces dismissal from Chiselbury School if its terrible academic record fails to improve. Screenplay Michael Pertwee, with additional dialogue by Frank Muir and Denis Norden.”

Distributor's promotional brochure to exhibitors – "The Story"

“Chiselbury School, according to the prospectus, is a school "for the sons of Gentlefolk". But, regardless of what the prospectus says, the boys are very far from being gentlemen. They are an undisciplined rabble. In fact, it is a school like no other – anywhere. All this provides the headmaster, Professor J Edwards, with many headaches – and his staff do not help matters. Headed by Oliver Pettigrew, they are a dithering collection, utterly terrified by the boys. Only one member of the staff receives universal respect – the matron. Unlike any other matron she is blonde, beautiful and very seductive.

But these are not the only worries of Professor Edwards. Lady Tasker, new Chairman of the



School's Governors, arrives on a sudden visit.



The new term is about to get into proper swing with a hundred of the best for Wendover, when his father the bishop strolls into Jim's office and spoils the fun. Boo! – cry the audience – Swindle! This will he-won't he game was the central joke of the TV series "Whack-O!". Like Wile E. Coyote in the Roadrunner cartoons, Edwards never quite achieves the gratification so earnestly sought.

Source: indeterminate website



Appalled by the school's standards, she issues an ultimatum. If things don't improve she will demand Professor Edwards' resignation. Realising he may lose his "cushy number", Professor Edwards' agile brain goes to work. He spots a newspaper story reporting that a young Prince from a trouble-torn Middle East

oil country is to be secretly educated in England.

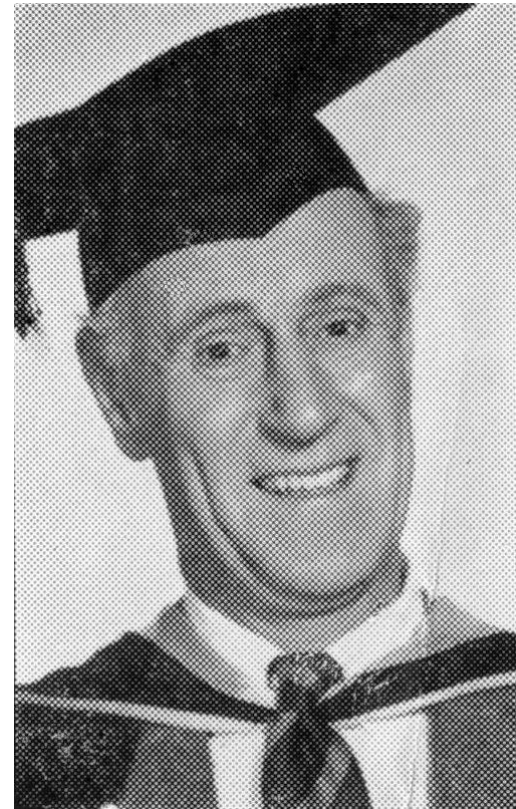
A few days later Professor Edwards' bookie Sid Biggs arrives and demands that the headmaster pay his gambling debts. The two men put their heads together, and Biggs agrees to forget the debt if his son, a potential thug,

can be taken into the school. Professor Edwards agrees – on condition that he poses as the Eastern Prince. Biggs' son Cecil readily falls in with the plans. He sees it as a method of obtaining every sort of privilege.

But all three of them have reckoned without the "sons of Gentlefolk". Tired of the treatment dished up by Professor Edwards, the boys stage a full-scale rebellion led by Wendover. They establish a rebel headquarters in the gymnasium, and with a series of attacks planned with military precision, proceed to take over the school and imprison the masters. Next, they capture Cecil and hold him to ransom.

Just when it seems that Professor Edwards' days at the school are numbered, fortune smiles on him. The real Prince arrives on the scene. The Foreign Office are obviously under the impression that Chiselbury is the last place anyone would look for a Prince. But they are wrong. A gang of foreign spies attempt to kidnap the Prince, a bid that is foiled by the boys of the school. Professor Edwards is covered in glory; Lady Tasker is more than satisfied; and life at Chiselbury School settles down to its normal, uproarious routine.

Length 7,863 ft; Certificate "U"; Reg. no. BR/E 25140. Available for British quota "



Whatever **did** happen to the handlebar moustache?

Modest "advance review" of their own film supplied by the distributors – "**BOTTOMS UP!**" SPANKING GOOD FUN !!!":

"The countless fans of Jimmy Edwards – and anyone who likes lusty, down-to-earth comedy – will be more than satisfied with next week's film at the Theatre.

The picture is "**BOTTOMS UP!**", the rollicking, high-spirited story of the infamous Chiselbury School where anything can happen, and very often does.

Jimmy Edwards stars as the school's irascible and rumbustious headmaster whose life is plagued by the boys of the school, an undisciplined rabble who do just as they please.

The role is filled to perfection by Jimmy Edwards, who faces a schoolboy rebellion armed with a cane in one hand and a bottle of brandy in the other. And he injects his own bubbling personality into the part.

With him is the ever-present and dithering Arthur "Pettigrew" Howard as the school's second-in-command. Terrified of Jimmy

Edwards and equally petrified by the boys, his life is a constant round of worry and problems.

Supporting the two masters is luscious, blonde Vanda Hudson, a girl with a very shapely figure. She portrays the school's matron, and, not surprisingly, is very popular with the boys.



These three characters are woven skilfully into the film's hilarious plot, and with expert direction from Mario Zampi keep the picture moving at top speed, full of gags and impossible, uproarious situations.

The film's climax comes with a full-scale rebellion by the boys. Angered by the treatment meted out by Jimmy Edwards, they organise themselves into a military-style unit, and with planned precision take over the school, keeping the masters imprisoned.

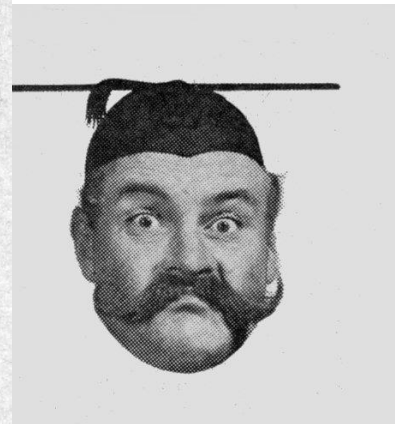
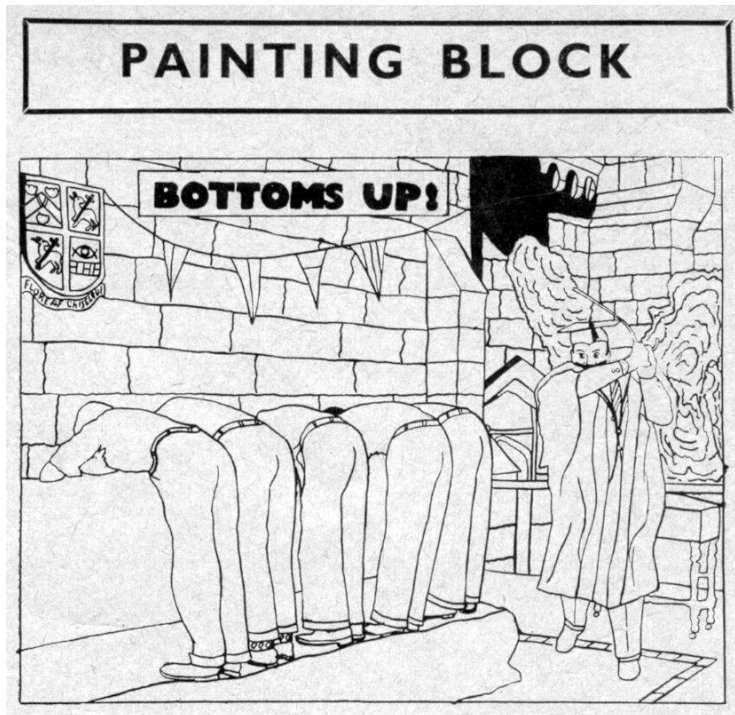
It is the battle that follows that provides the film's hilarious climax. Guided missiles of all types, ranging from flour-bombs to fireworks, fill the air; radio-controlled planes dive-bomb from every angle and the school is in the grip of commando-type warfare. All of which provides director Mario Zampi with ideal material for the funniest sequences in the film.

An Associated British production "**BOTTOMS UP!**" was produced by Mario Zampi, and also features Sidney Tafler, Raymond Huntley, Reginald Beckwith and Melvyn Hayes. It is released through Warner-Pathé Distributors."

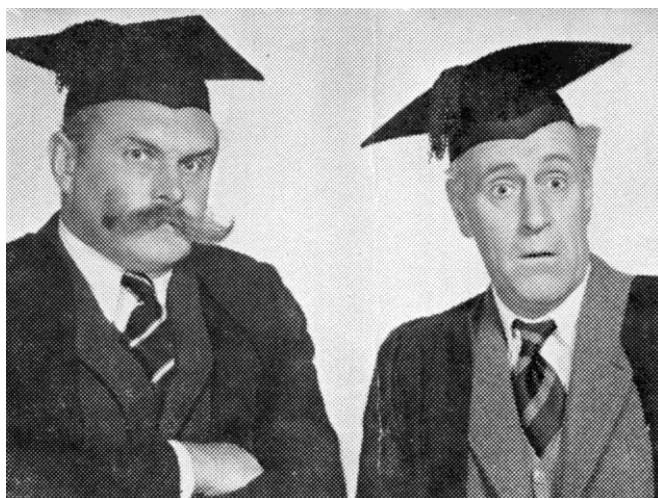
In the 1950s there was caning in schools, and pupils brandished catapults and peashooters. In the 1990s there was no caning in schools, and "students" turned up with machettes and semi-automatic weapons. Not that the two things are related of course...



Erm, number five has been naughtier than number nine, and number two has been naughtiest of all !



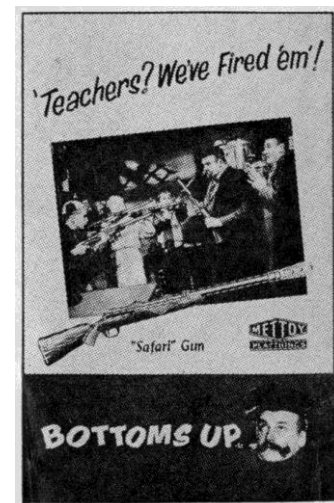
"Use this painting competition block for newspaper contests, and as a medium for leaflets to young patrons"



Below: the much-vaunted Vanda Hudson, who has a bit part in the film. Blink and you'll miss her – but see the poster below!



Below: Melvyn Hayes in blackface as an "Eastern prince", and his bookmaker father, who delivers the prince by elephant...



Distributors' exploitation pamphlet
guidelines to exhibitors :

FOYERS:

Place a blackboard and easel in your foyer well in advance of playdate and chalk on it details regarding the film. Invite patrons to draw caricatures of Jimmy Edwards, and award guest tickets for the best attempts.

COSTUMES:

Have a member of your staff walk the streets in mortar board and gown, carrying an outsize book with the film credits on the

cover. Use similar costumes for the usherettes and the male uniformed staff at the theatres.

THEATRE DOORS AND KIOSK:

Use school terms for all the doors in the building, e.g. Headmaster's Study, Prefects Room, Staff Room, and alter your kiosk to "SCHOOL TUCK SHOP" by the use of hand written cards. The pay box could be utilised in the general scheme by placing cards above the windows captioned "ALL NEW PUPILS PLEASE REPORT HERE".

PRESS CONTEST:

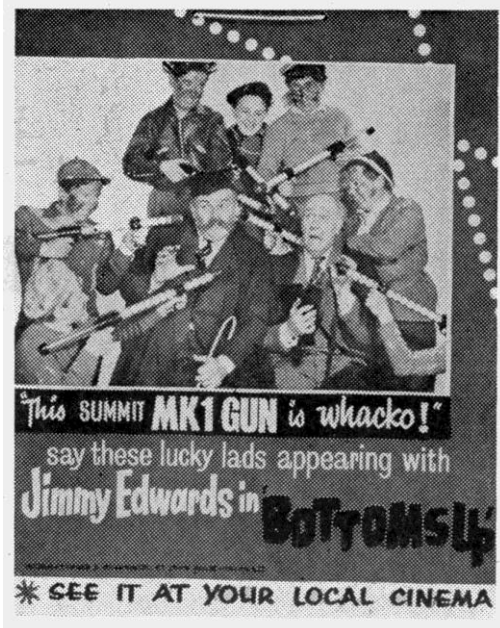
Arrange a competition with the local press in which readers are invited to send in their most amusing true school story, schoolboy howlers, or even school boy jokes and pranks, and promote prizes locally for the best entries that are received and printed by the newspaper.

RAG PROCESSIONS AND CARNIVAL FLOATS:

If a local college is planning its Rag Day, be sure that its organisers know of "**BOTTOMS UP!**" The inclusion of a float for the film would give them an ideal opportunity of guying their own masters as well as advertising the film.

FRONT OF HOUSE AND CANOPY:

Wherever possible use caricature cut-outs of Jimmy Edwards on the theatre canopy and on all the front-of-house doors – this would immediately establish the comedy angles of the film and suggest that



Chiselbury School is the location.

MINORS CLUBS:

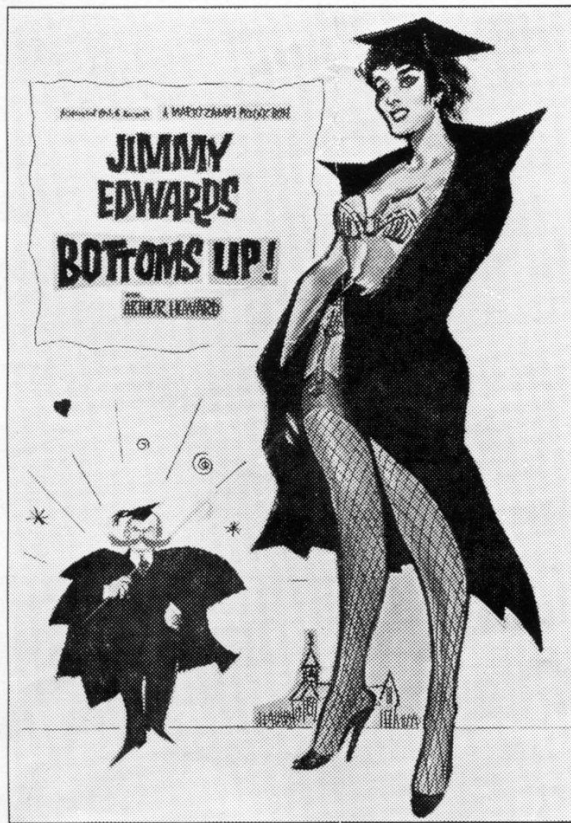
If you have a children's matinee at your theatre, make sure that the trailer is shown to them on the Saturday morning prior to playdate. The "word of mouth" publicity would be outstanding and it would guarantee that every youngster in the district would know Jimmy Edwards, Arthur Howard and "Bend over" Wendover were coming to your cinema in "**BOTTOMS UP!**"

LOCAL BREWERIES:

A title like "**BOTTOMS UP!**" is a "natural" for a tie-up with a local Brewer. Wording on a hanging card could establish "Bottoms Up!" as a motto for local beer, may even form the basis for a "**BOTTOMS UP!**" Drinking Contest.

"HANDLE BAR" CLUBS:

In various towns, gentlemen with large moustaches have formed "Handle Bar" clubs, so contact your local group and invite them along to the cinema to see Jimmy Edwards (a famous "Handle Bar" man) in "**BOTTOMS UP!**". A collection of large moustaches with a pictorial quad as a background should be of interest to the local newspaper. "



Left: there was no Trades Descriptions Act in 1960, or cinemagoers would have had an excellent case for misrepresentation.

Below: Merchandising shots (not in the film itself) were prepared to promote everything from whiskey to travel luggage.



Not to be confused with a 1934 Hollywood musical of the same name with Spencer Tracy. Clearly this is a film for boys, pitched at the prep school age range, and one has to wonder quite what 1990s schoolboys – I'm sorry, "students" – make of it all when it's televised periodically in the school holidays. Although shot in 1960, it must have looked distinctly antique even then, its sensibilities those of a 1930s knockabout farce made for public school pupils. Unlike, say, Frank Launder's **"St TRINIAN'S"** farces, or Anthony Newley's **"VICE VERSA"**, which were made for adult audiences, the pupils here are actually of the appropriate age, with the exception of Melvyn Hayes, who was an absurd 25. The masters bustle about in mortar boards and gowns, there are tuckshops and dormitory raids, and the script is suffused with the boyish *frisson* of being caned on the bottom, which even in 1960 was a dwindling practice in British schools.

In fact, the only person to receive the cane in the film is dithering deputy head Pettigrew, but (as the title clearly promises) there is much bending over in anticipation, and endless badinage about whackings – "Once more into the breeches!"; "That was definitely at the *bottom* of the hit parade!"; "We'll have a sit-down strike sir!"; "When *my* strike is done, you won't be *able* to sit down!", etc. At one point audience appetites are whetted to a frenzy by the promise of "a full-scale public flogging!". Five ringleaders march up to be caned before the assembled school on a founder's day rostrum. When they turn about and bend over, Pettigrew is deputed to frisk their bottoms for concealed padding (more excruciating puns) and, a shower of protective articles having been discarded, Edwards produces a ten-foot cane – "My new five-seater model! Beats as it sweeps as it hurts!" – and manoeuvres the five waiting backsides into a neat delectable row with all the precision of a master craftsman. The caning is aborted of course – this is a comedy – but the whole scene feeds into a prurient juvenile *schadenfreude* which modern educators would hotly deny ever existed. It did, though.

So what do kids today make of it all? The sadomasochistic panoply of ritual public school floggings as jolly entertainment? It must all seem bizarre to a generation who have never known any punishment at home worse than "grounding", or at school worse than "exclusion". Children have been conditioned to regard themselves as inviolable in an absolute sense, their bodies untouchable by adults, and they will scarcely credit that the bullies and tearaways of twenty years ago submitted so meekly to physical chastisement. In 1960, of course, canings and slipperings were very much a feature of traditional British comics like *"The Beano"* and *"Dandy"*. Strips like *"Billy Bunter"*, *"Lord Snooty"* and *"The Bash Street Kids"* reinforced a classless mirth at corporal punishment, despite first hand experience. In the firing line of the guerrilla war against adult authority, it was understood, casualties were inevitable.

Writers Frank Muir and Denis Norden leave no corny schoolroom gag un milked (right down to the pail of water balanced above the dormitory door) and the plot is merely a clumsy vehicle to carry those puns and precipitate that grand old chestnut, the school revolt. Arch-adversary of Headmaster Jim is John Mitchell, playing (but what else?) Wendover of the Lower Third. When he is framed for cracking open Edwards' confiscation safe by bookie's son Melvyn Hayes, masquerading as Prince Hassid-Ali of Giwak, this affords the pretext for occupation of the tuckshop and all-out trench war with the masters (sucker arrows, water hoses, flour bombs, smoke bombs, radio-controlled model planes, the works). Much fun was doubtless had by the (uncredited) boys involved and, like the slaves' revolt in *"SPARTACUS"*, maybe it can strike a happy chord even yet among the disenfranchised minions at the lower end of secondary schools. Kids are less class conscious today, less obedient to traditional authority, so perhaps they would feel token insurrections of this sort beneath them. Goodness me, none of the boys in the film even **mentions** girls at all! Is that humanly feasible?

Whether you find **"BOTTOMS UP!"** a ghastly relic or quaintly amusing hinges entirely on the blustering persona of Jimmy Edwards, a thoroughgoing sadist compared to Will Hay's comic schoolmaster. His humour is of the **"CARRY ON"** level but, like that other relic of a vanished culture **"The Clitheroe Kid"**, he was highly popular in his day, like a pet child-hating uncle who growls a good deal, but is never seen to bite. For all his bluff and whisker-twitching, he is easily outsmarted by the 12-year olds. The best that can be said of **"BOTTOMS UP!"** is that, compared with other made-for-children British films of its day, or indeed, the entire *oeuvre* of the Children's Film Foundation, it is at least competently made. Better an out-and-out farce than a lame kids' adventure punctuated by "comic relief" bungling adult villains.

The distributors' 6-page promotional pack, extracts from which are above, makes great play, as does the *"TV Times Film & Video Guide"* review, of Vanda Hudson as Chiselbury School's supposedly luscious new schoolmatron. She appears in only two – very brief – scenes, has no spoken lines at all, is never glimpsed in any state of undress, has no dealings with any of the boys, yet she towers over one of the two advertising posters, in a pathetic and rather desperate appeal to heterosexual sensibilities from a film so delicately tinted with homoerotic ones. We've seen instances of this heterosexual panic before, in films situated at boys' schools (**"TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS"**, **"if..."**, **"YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE PYRAMID OF DOOM"**, **"THE FRENCH MISTRESS"**) or other all-male environments (**"THE NAME OF THE ROSE"**). It's as though the producers feel impelled to parachute in an "appropriate" sex object to such environments as a talisman against the awful alternative. It would be hilarious if it weren't so lame.

Note also, from the same pack, the distributors' kindness in providing the press with a pre-written "review" of their own film – "the role is filled to perfection..", "the film's hilarious plot..", "full of gags and uproarious situations.." – and the surprising evidence of early product placement contrivances (though only "Fortes ice cream" gets a clear plug in the film itself). Nothing else is known of John Mitchell (Wendover), or Paul Castaldini, as the bona fide prince Hassid-Ali, and none of the dozens of other boys are named on the credits. Watch out for Richard Briers in a tiny role as one of the junior masters.



Above: a microscopic shot of Paul Castaldini as the kosher prince, who arrives in the final reel. The above shot is a "tie-in" for the luggage makers.

Right: ...for Fortes ice cream

Below: ...and for Jim's tippie of choice.

We've become inured to "product placement" in films now, but it surprised me to find such an early example of it.



See the original TV series "**Whack-O!**" and subject index under **ARISTOCRACY / ROYALTY**, **BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL**, **COMEDY**, [CORPORAL PUNISHMENT](#), **KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS** and **RASCALS & SCALAWAGS**.