

The Movies



BY CLIFFORD TERRY

'Laurel and Hardy'

● FOUR OR FIVE years ago, it suddenly became the fashion to whip up anthologies of the works of motion picture comedy teams, which led to such products as "The World of Abbott and Costello" [the definitive nonfilm] and "Laurel and Hardy's Laughing Twenties." The result of this particular kind of instant replay usually proved about as satisfying as watching 90 minutes of highlights from the history of western civilization.

"The Crazy World of Laurel and Hardy," released in 1967 and just now having its Chicago area premiere [at the Wilmette theater], is in the same genre, with the steady barrage of slapstick giving one the feeling of leaving the cake and eating the frosting. Still, it is hard to spoil enjoyment of those two geniuses, and in spite of the fleeting development of characters and situations, there are plenty of laughs brought on by the familiar pratfalls, eye-poking, and tie-tiddling.

Most of the material is taken from their sound movies—a mixture of shorts and features including "Swiss Miss," "Sons of the Desert," "The Bohemian Girl," and the classic 1932 Oscar-winner, "The Music Box," with Stan and Ollie trying to move that piano into the house on the hill.

The narration, by Garry Moore, fortunately is restrained.

The co-feature is "The Jay Ward Intergalactic Film Festival," 40 minutes of cinematic silliness that resurrects television cartoons [including Dudley Do-Right and Superchicken, which features a hilarious bandit who looks and talks like John Wayne], and Fractured Flickers [in which Lon Chaney's Hunch-

back of Notre Dame is turned into Dinky Dunstan, Boy Cheerleader].

● "BRANDY in the Wilderness," having its world premiere at the Aardvark Cinematheque, is a curiously appealing film about "little" people who care, in a big world that doesn't.

Directed by Stanton Kaye, a promising 25-year-old New Yorker, it involves a young California film-maker named Simon [played by Kaye] who begins with nostalgic narration about his youth in the fringes of Beverly Hills, where his father sells women's clothing at farm auctions and his mother nudges his father into going back into acting. ["You could take parts like Thomas Gomez."]

After some pretentious symbolism [the youth tied, Christlike, to a tree], Simon moves on to the East Village, where he meets a confused, despairing 21-year-old copywriter named Brandy [played by Brandy French] who becomes his film collaborator and roommate. They take an auto trip across the country, shooting footage as they go, and the relationship moves on to pregnancy, bitterness, childbirth, and an abrupt ending [which undoubtedly will be explained in terms of planned purpose, but which seems more like an exhaustion of ideas and/or money].

At times displaying a "You're a Big Boy Now" vitality, Kaye provides some imaginative photography and dryly humorous narration, and beneath the levity is a credible commentary about loneliness and fear. Perhaps the high point is the acting of Miss French, who delivers a touching performance after shucking off her initial nervously intense posture which makes her seem like a fledgling Sandy Dennis.