Butterbeans and Susie Encyclopedia Article

Butterbeans and Susie

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Contents

Butterbeans and Susie Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Butterbeans and Susie.....3

Butterbeans and Susie

The married couple Jodie (1895-1967) and Susie Edwards (1896-1963), performing as Butterbeans and Susie, were among the most popular African American musical comedy acts of the mid-twentieth century. From 1917 until Susie's death in 1963, they toured regularly. Their act featured double entendre songs, ludicrous costuming, domestic comedy sketches, and Butterbeans' famous "Heebie Jeebie" dance. Racial segregation shaped their career in important ways—their recordings were marketed as "Race" records, and at their peak they played primarily in segregated venues. Their broad humor exploited racial stereotypes in a manner reminiscent of minstrel shows. Yet within the world of African American show business such strategies were common, and clearly Butterbeans and Susie's antics delighted African American audiences. Butterbeans and Susie achieved success by working with dominant racial images within the discriminatory racial structures of America.

Further Reading:

Sampson, Henry T. *Blacks in Blackface: A Source Book on Early Black Musical Shows.* Metuchen, New Jersey, The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1980.