

Sunday, 29 January 2012

## Television, Here I Come

September 1950 was a busy time for Jack Benny. He had just returned from a two-month stay in Europe with Mary, and Phil Harris and Alice Faye. He and Bob Hope embarked on a jaunt to Korea to entertain troops. And he decided to make the jump into television. At least on a semi-regular basis.

Television was at the back of Bill Paley's mind when CBS opened up its vault to put money in Jack's at the start of 1949 and lure him from NBC. Jack was one of radio's biggest stars so there was no reason he shouldn't be big on television, too, was been Paley's ultimately correct logic. CBS wasn't loaded down with heavyweight TV shows as 1949 turned into 1950—a couple of broadcasts with Arthur Godfrey, Ed Sullivan's "Toast of the Town" and a wheezy variety show with Ed Wynn were probably the highlights on the schedule. There was prime time when the network offered nothing to local affiliates.



During this time, Jack obviously weighed the move to television, as you shall read. But it was inevitable. Columnists speculated on when it would happen. Finally, he made the announcement a few days before the start of the 1950-51 radio season.

### JACK BENNY ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR TELEVISION

By **BOB THOMAS**

HOLLYWOOD, Sept. 7 — (AP) — Jack Benny announced today he is going to take the big jump into television. The fiddle-murdering comedian will make his regular television debut on October 29. The show will be for his radio sponsor and he will do three others this season, at intervals of eight weeks. I asked him how he picked his timing.

"I have to go to New York for the television shows," he explained. "That means I will have to tape record my air show a week in advance so I can get away. If I tried to do this every four weeks it would be too much. So my sponsor and I agreed on every eight weeks."

Last year Benny made his TV debut on a program to dedicate the local station KTTV. He views his new program with this philosophy:

"I don't say that I'm going to be any better than anyone else on television. But on the other hand, I see no reason why I should be worse, either."

What about the format?

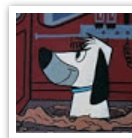
"I'll do an hour-long show. It will be variety entertainment with perhaps a scene from my radio program. The first show might picture Rochester and me at home. We could show some of the things that we talk about on the radio—the cigarette machine, the pay telephone, and so forth. On other shows I might have a scene with Dennis Day or Phil Harris or Mary.

"People tell me that television is a completely new medium. I don't think so. I'm going to give them the same kind of entertainment I do on stage appearances. It's the same type of show I used to do at the Orpheum in vaudeville days."

I asked Benny about his future in television. He admitted that he foresees the day when he will give up radio entirely.

"It would be hard to do both radio and TV and make both of them good," he said. "And perhaps radio will not be able to afford a show like mine. After all, the others on my show are stars in their own right and have their own shows."

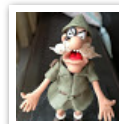
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5 hours ago

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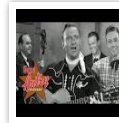


Vehicle Verification Centers of Mexico City will reopen in August with COVID

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com

6 hours ago

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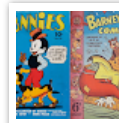


Cowboy Church #67 - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe..."

9 hours ago

### Termite Terrace headlines



Question for All You Cartoon Collectors! - OK so I've been doing some

looking around. Bosko apparently had a comic book and I'm wondering if any of you know of

He admitted he would have to live in New York when he starts doing television exclusively. "I wouldn't mind living in New York for a year," he said. But he indicated he would return westward as soon as cross-country video becomes a fact. When I asked how often he would want to do TV, he gave an interesting insight into the new medium. "I think I would do something like a half-hour every two weeks," he said. "I wonder if it isn't a mistake to be on television every week. The matter of coming into people's homes and being seen is a lot different from just being heard on radio.

"Even if you could be good every week—and that is doubtful—I wonder if that isn't too much of an intrusion. Pretty soon people might become so used to seeing you that they no longer can judge whether are good or not."

Benny said he didn't know whether he will be using one of his noted props on TV.

"We'll have to take tests to see whether I should wear the toupee," he said.



Benny wasn't the only veteran of radio eyeing the television camera. The AP pointed out a week later that Eddie Cantor, Fred Allen, Groucho Marx and Don Ameche were about to swing over from radio. Of the four, only Groucho was an unqualified success after a hit-and-miss radio career. But Jack was a bigger success than them all. Although his regular show ended in 1965, he continued with occasional specials (and even appearances on "Rowan and Martin's Laugh In" among with other radio long-timers) up until the day he died. Television was the right move after all.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [06:36](#)



Labels: [Bob Thomas](#), [Jack Benny](#)

## 1 comment:

 [bgrauman](#) 24 October 2018 at 01:39

Jack eventually decided against appearing on an hour-long show; he thought it was "too long", and a half-hour was "too short" for what HE had in mind for his first national TV appearance. He suggested 45 minutes- and his sponsor, American Tobacco, agreed. They, and CBS, convinced Anheuser-Busch, who sponsored "THE KEN MURRAY SHOW" on Saturday nights for Budweiser, to relinquish their "time" [8pm(et)] for one evening: Saturday, October 28th [the 29th would have taken up the 7:30pm(et) time slot American Tobacco "owned" to sponsor "THIS IS SHOW BUSINESS" for Lucky Strike]. The remaining quarter-hour, at 8:45pm(et), was "sold" to Wildroot Cream Oil, who presented what was essentially a Sam Levenson "audition" {he got his own weekly series, for Oldsmobile, the following January on CBS}. Here's what Jack's first "special" looked like: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vegljW6y-Xc>

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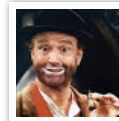
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additional covers you could share! ...

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Born on July 18, 1913 - [Red Skelton](#) - \*Today's post commences

with the Guzzler's Gin routine ...

1 day ago

### [News From ME](#)

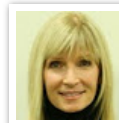
Sorry... - As far as I know, I do not have any diseases. I just have too much to deal with right now so I won't be blogging much if at all. I'm postponing all the web... 2 days ago

### [Cartoon Research](#)

In His Own Words: [H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor](#) - Suspended Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)... 2 days ago

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[Mary Turner 1985](#) - Mary Turner today Mary Turner really rocked the house.



Normally when any of the jocks got a reaction, it'd be split.

The ones that were really liked wou...

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TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

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**The Lady and the Tiger** - From the Cathy Hill Archive of Unpublished Comics comes "The Lady and the Tiger". This story was drawn before Cathy started the "Mad Raccoons" series. U... 4 weeks ago

**What About Thad?**  
**Cartoon Logic Podcast** - And yet another distraction from this brick and mortar blog... I've entered the world of podcasting with renowned animation director and historian Bob Jaques... 10 months ago

 **Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie**  
**That's all, folks!** - My posts have gotten thinner over the years. I'm aware of that. I've been hopeful for a long time, that I can remain active with blogging and sharing furth... 1 year ago

 **Dr. Grob's Animation Review**  
**The Flying Man** - 'The Flying Man' is a very short absurdist film in which a man drops his coat to take a swim in mid air. Another man with a dog drops by, tries the same th... 2 days ago

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