

Sunday, 13 May 2012

## The Same Old Jack

Publicity agents by the office-load spent their careers fretting how to dream up gimmicks that would get their clients noticed. Jack Benny got publicity by doing absolutely nothing new.

Jack began the 1956 TV season with more than one major wire service writing about his debut show. They all admitted it was the same old Jack. And they all admitted that's what the audience wanted.

Ostensibly, the season opener was on Sunday, September 23rd but a number of cities (Des Moines and San Antonio, to name two) didn't see it until the following Sunday and got 'Private Secretary' instead. One local paper mentioned the delay without giving the reason.

Thus the Associated Press plugged the opening show, but the column ran in papers before and after the 23rd. Here's a version taken from various papers. And the story contains yet another example of how Mary influenced Jack's business dealings, though he seems to have consulted her about almost anything before making a decision.



### 39 Plus 23 Can't Stop Jack Benny

By BOB THOMAS

HOLLYWOOD, Sept. 22 (AP)—Jack Benny, who is 39 in his scripts but 62 in real life, begins another strenuous TV season tomorrow night over CBS.

He'll account for 20 half-hour shows in the Sunday night spot alternating with Ann Sothorn, plus five hour-long Shower of Stars shows. In addition, he'll probably drop in on other shows. And he plans to make charity appearances with symphony orchestras, the first being at New York's Carnegie Hall Oct. 1.

Over lunch at Romanoff's, Benny explained his decision on the season's activities:

"Mary was right. I had been thinking about leveling off this season — maybe doing only four or five big shows, playing Las Vegas and generally calling my own shots. But Mary argued against this.

"She pointed out that I would miss having the deadlines. If I did just a few shows this year, each one would grow so important to me that I would worry about making them successes. In between the shows, I wouldn't know what to do with myself.

"But if I had a deadline for my shows, I'd keep working, always striving for good shows, but not worrying like crazy if one isn't a hit."

Mary, of course, is Mary Livingstone, his ever-loving spouse. She'll appear on most of the filmed shows this year, especially those Benny shot in Europe this summer.

The comedian looks forward to the new season with none of the panic that grips most funnymen.

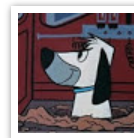
"For instance, my first show will be all about leaving for the Carnegie Hall concert. The second show will be about what happened at the concert."

Nor does Benny worry about his rating, as most comics do. He had been discussing what Elvis Presley had done to the ratings of shows opposing him.

"I wouldn't want him opposite me," Benny remarked. "I wouldn't want anybody good opposite me. But you can't worry about those things. You just try to do the best you can.

"I'm not going to worry," said Jack. "If I had to start from scratch and devise comedy situations, it would be a rough job. But I've got characters and situations that we have been building up for 25 years in radio and TV. The situations just about write themselves."

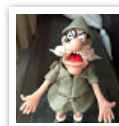
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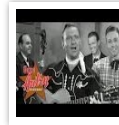


Vehicle Verification Centers of Mexico City will reopen in August with COVID

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com

6 hours ago

### Movies with Michael

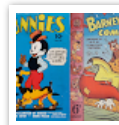


Cowboy Church #67 - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

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

The opening show featured the usual cast along with familiar bit players Mel Blanc, Artie Auerbach (as Mr. Kitzel) and Benny Rubin, all old friends in the living room. The audience never tired of the string of Benny routines. And why? The Associated Press' New York TV writer saw the show and had an answer.

## Jack Benny Returns With Old Formula

By CHARLES MERCER

NEW YORK, Sept. 26 (AP)—In an age of uncertainty there is a pleasant certainty about Jack Benny. Comedians come and comedians go, but Benny goes on forever with a squeaky fiddle, a butler named Rochester and vault filled with hoarded money.

If you were tuned to his return or a new season on CBS-TV Sunday, you could close your eyes and believe you were listening to Benny on radio 20 years ago. At least 90 per cent of his opening program was auditory humor with none of the camera techniques so many comedians strain for on television.

That was perfectly all right with at least one viewer.

Why does Benny fail to tire one as the years pass? Probably it is because of his superb sense of timing, his absolute self-assurance.

Hal Humphrey, with the *Los Angeles Mirror's* syndication service at the time, expanded on that.

## Old Jack Benny Gags Still Click

By HAL HUMPHREY

HOLLYWOOD, Sept. 28 — Other TV comedians who watched Jack Benny's first new season show last Sunday must have turned positively green with envy.

While they and their writers knock themselves out to come up with new gags and jokes each week, here was Jack employing many of the same old running comedy bits that he has worked for 20 years. And doing very well with them I should add.

There was the business with Rochester looking up the word "parsimonious" in the dictionary, which referred to "penurious." When Rochester looked up the latter, the dictionary read, "See cheap," and when he got to the word "cheap," it read "Jack Benny."

The viewers were treated to situations having to do with Jack's vault, his violin playing, and his being taken in by Rochester.

In other words, most of this half-hour consisted of jokes hung on the character which Jack has built up over the years. They were simply dropped into a slightly different situation, and the laughs (which were many) came from the audience's recognizing an old friend with all of the same "faults" and foibles.

It reminds me of something which comedy writer Joe Bigelow once told me. "A comic must have a point of view. It isn't enough today to just stand up and tell jokes," said Joe.

That has been the case with Jack. He has built up a point of view, and his millions of fans know what it is, and love him for it.

Radio fans should be happy to learn that CBS is planning to bring Jack Benny back on the air next month via tape-recordings of his old radio shows.

The radio net is waiting approval from the American Federation of Radio-Television Artists of a fee arrangement for the re-runs.

Here again Jack is in a better position than any of his colleagues. Those old shows will stand up very well for the simple reason that Jack has not changed his point of view. He'll still be "cheap," blue-eyed and 39.

Even the Carnegie concert at the centre of the plots of the first two shows of the season became a template for many more to follow over the years. More of that Benny Familiarity at work.

## Jack Benny Says Practice No Help On Violin Tunes

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 —(INS)—Jack Benny, the poor man's Jascha Heifitz, will make his "debut" at Carnegie Hall Oct. 2, but he won't be playing any rock 'n' roll.

"If there weren't any ladies present," said the movietown maestro, "I'd tell you what I really think about that kinda music!"

Jack twirled his \$8,000 fiddle and played a few scratchy tunes for the benefit of a group of newsmen and photographers who gathered to get the lowdown on his upcoming classical concert.

"It's on the level," Benny insisted, "I'm gonna play Mendelsshon's Concerto in E Minor, Sarasate "Gypsy Airs" and that famous classic, "Love In Bloom."

He said "Love In Bloom" wasn't really on the bill, but added:

"I'll slip it in somewhere along the line."

Jack admitted he "plays awful," but "the worse I play the funnier it is. I practice all the time. It just doesn't help much."

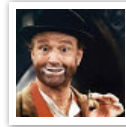
Not only will Mr. "Jascha" Benny scratch out three classical numbers, he'll also take over the concertmaster's job near the end of the performance.

"What's that thing — 'Cappriccio Espagnol?'" Benny said, "Well . . . the orchestra will be playing that. But

additional covers you could share! ...

17 hours ago

### Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



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

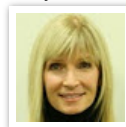
### Cartoon Research

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

### AFRTS Archive

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...

4 days ago

### The World of Knight



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

4 days ago

### Yowp



Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows - 63 years ago today, some

forms were signed by George Sidney, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera creating what eventually became the biggest TV cartoon operation i...

1 week ago

### Supervised By Fred Avery: Tex Avery's Warner Brothers Cartoons

Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

they'll be playing so loud it won't make any difference what I do in there."

Benny's all-out musical effort will be for benefit of the National Association for Retarded Children and the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall. (There's a movement afoot to tear down the hallowed building to make way for a new hotel).

Jack Benny was a rarity. Comedy audiences always want something new. Radio listeners of the mid-1930s tired of Joe Penner's catchphrases after a few years (a fate suffered about 35 years later by "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In"). Milton Berle's mugging soon got to TV viewers, who discovered themselves changing the channel. And countless shows moving into later seasons found they needed to shore up their weekly hi-jinks (and ratings) with guest stars. But up to his death, Benny and his team of aging scribes kept plugging away on routines that never seemed to age, routines that fans always wanted to see or hear just one more time.

Judging by the fans Jack has today almost 40 years after his death, they still do.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at 07:45



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

## 5 comments:

[Sarah Cole](#) 13 May 2012 at 13:59

Always nice to see someone talking about Jack Benny!

[Reply](#)



[J Lee](#) 13 May 2012 at 15:12

While I've always felt the episodes that feature Jack's repertory company hold up better today than the more variety/guest star-oriented episodes, part of Benny's longevity with audiences of the time was no doubt due in part to the fact he did alternate his shows between feature guest stars (some still well-known today, others not-so-much) and the group of regulars. That meant when regulars like Mel Blanc or Frank Nelson showed up, it was still special, and not something listeners/viewers had available every week.

Jack may have been there each time, and Jack's basic persona may not have changed over the years, but by the post-World War II period, he and his writers had built up such a stable of supporting players they didn't have to go to the well each week and do the same thing. As a result, they were able to leave the audience wanting more in a way that the more limited shows of the same period could not.

[Reply](#)



[Yowp](#) 14 May 2012 at 05:49

Not only players, but persona-based gags. He had enough so they could be used periodically and not wear them out.

[Reply](#)

[Anonymous](#) 7 June 2012 at 13:00

I'm really appreciate all your Jack Benny-related posts! I wonder if you have the same interest in Marx Bros.

[Reply](#)



[Yowp](#) 7 June 2012 at 21:41

Hi, Sanek. Same interest? Not to the extent I'm going to find a bunch of old newspaper stories about them. I post Jack Benny stuff on Sunday because he appeared on radio on Sundays for many years.

[Reply](#)



Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

for the ink and paint department. Release date: 12/20/41 Availability: Looney Tunes Gol...  
3 weeks ago

[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)

[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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