



Sunday, 19 August 2012

Ban Rochester Van Jones

Everyone loved Rochester on the Jack Benny show. Almost everyone.

We don't know if Lloyd Binford actually disliked Eddie Anderson. But I strongly suspect he'd certainly want Anderson to, as some odiously put it back then, "know his place."

In looking for stories about Rochester and the Benny show, I stumbled upon this column from the Scripps-Howard News Service that appeared on editorial pages beginning November 14, 1950. That was almost four score and seven years to the day that President Abe Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address.

Is TV a Modern Abe Lincoln in Dixie?

By ROBERT C. RUARK

MEMPHIS.—Mr. Lloyd T. Binford, the bull censor of Memphis, is confronted with a new and horrifying medium to test his mettle, and may wind up as the most frustrated censor in the land.

Television has come to Memphis, thereby posing quite a problem for Mr. Binford, who has long fought a valiant battle against anything in the entertainment business which might show the Negro in the light of equality.

When he banned a film called "Imitation of Life," he said it illustrated "one of most disgusting cases of racial equality I have ever seen." He also slew a comedy called "Curley" because, he said, it showed equality between children of different races.

Mr. Binford has a long, proud record in the banning business. He cut an oldie called "King of Kings," a Biblical show. He banned "Lost Boundaries" while approving "Pinky," a story of a Negro girl who was light enough to pass for white, but decided not to.

He also banned a road show version of "Annie Get Your Gun," because "Negroes sing, and dance on equal terms with white performers." He killed "Duel in the Sun," one of the dullest hoss-operas ever compounded and in this instant did the town a favor.

But in the case of television, Mr. Binford is undecided. He tells me he has never seen a television show which is just as well for his heart because all sorts of horrifying examples of racial equality are in daily evidence.

Mr. Arthur Godfrey, who get into more Southern homes than the South's entire population of meter readers, steadily employs a mixed quartet called "The Mariners." Horrors of horrors, the Mariners are composed of two white, two black, and they sing on equal term with Mr. Godfrey and his other white associates.

* * *

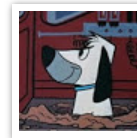
Then there is the awful example of Jack Benny and Rochester. Rochester is declaredly a Negro and often winds up as the sly superior of his boss, Mr. Benny. He is sarcastic with Mr. Benny, and taunts him all the time, and makes cracks behind his back. This would be unsettling to Mr. Binford, I am sure.

Then you got Ethel Waters, Negro actress, playing a recent TV show called "Beulah"; and, of course, most of the talent variety shows feature Negro entertainers. Recently, on a Cedric Adams talent show, a little Negro boy who won hands down over flock of white competition.

We have also the reissuing of the old movies for the Video screen possibly many of the very movie banned by Mr. Binford. The equalizing effect on Memphis' children must be terrifying indeed, since note that the old "Our Gang" comedies are being replayed for TV—over, of all things, Howdy Doody, a children's program. If I remember rightly, the most appealing member of the gang was Farina, a little Negro girl with a runny nose.



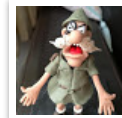
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Peter Gray's Comics and Art



Spencer Jordan's amazing work... we are hoping artists like Ian

Knox...and families of these comic artists can see these gems... - made with fimo clay I had ago and its not very easy to do...

4 hours ago

Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com

5 hours ago

Movies with Michael

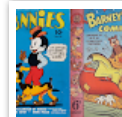


Cowboy Church #67 - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

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

8 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

* * *

Mr. Binford tells me he does not believe that he can censor television so long as people see it a home, and is also somewhat dubious about the possibility of banning it in public places.

"I will cross that bridge when I come to it," Mr. Binford says. "But I imagine some sort of legal structure could be set up to protect the public, if this becomes necessary."

Television is red hot in the South, and on its screen, at least, equality is rampant. It would be odd indeed if the coaxial cable eventually takes up where Abe Lincoln left off, despite the valiant effort of Mr. Binford in other fields of artistic endeavor.

Ruark, for what it's worth, was from North Carolina. Lest anyone think from the column above that he was a raving small-l liberal, a month earlier he penned a snide and smug piece about Paul Robeson not winning the Nobel Peace Prize, succumbing to the red-baiting of the day.

As for Mr. Binford, his muzzling mantra became much quieter soon after this story. He spent his last few years in arthritic pain and died in 1956. Remarkably, he was a member of several service clubs and fraternal orders which champion equality amongst humanity. You can read about him [at this site](#).

Eddie Anderson's Rochester is still loved by countless fans of TV and old radio shows. No one can ban that.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:27](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

7 comments:



J Lee 19 August 2012 at 09:27

The problem would continue through the 50s, as evidenced by NBC's woes with "The Nat King Cole Show" five years after this article.

Anderson's Rochester of course, started out on Benny's show as something closer to your typical 1930s Negro stereotype, but Jack and his writers quickly found that was nowhere nearly as funny as having a butler who could jab his boss over his flaws, while leaving the 'dumb guy' jokes for Dennis Day. Much funnier, as are the Anderson characters in cartoons embracing that quick-witted personality (mainly at Warners and Paramount), compared to the use of Stephin Fetchit-like persona in other shorts, almost all of which are painfully unfunny today (though at the other end, you can troll the interwebs for websites and comments by the hyper-PC types that get the vapors over Rochester, because he was cast a servant for Benny. Those people may not be as hateful as Lloyd Binford, but their knee-jerk reactions an inability to see anything but the surface relationship are just as clueless).

[Reply](#)

▼ [Replies](#)



Graeme Cree 19 August 2012 at 18:58

Not quite. Rochester started as a wisecracking porter on a train. He was so funny that he landed a permanent role as a wisecracking butler. He was never a stereotype, even on Day 1. From the beginning, Rochester and Jack had a Jeeves and Wooster style relationship.



J Lee 19 August 2012 at 23:06

They never played him as a Stephin Fetchit, but as things went along, a few of the 'lesser' stereotypes that made it into the show, like Rochester going to craps games and losing his money, fell by the wayside (though in the cartoon world, not before he won a big pot from Daffy in a hotel elevator).

It was the elimination of those cheap laughs that probably irked someone like Binford, because the audience wasn't being asked to laugh at Anderson's character or his habits, they were asked to laugh with him as he punctured Jack's ego or zinged him about his cheapness. That equality was something Lloyd wouldn't have liked, and (sadly) today's PC police don't bother to try and get.



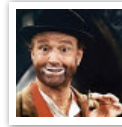
The Snappy Sneezer 25 August 2012 at 19:02

I never had a problem with the crap shooting, Groucho did that sort of thing too. People gamble. He did say yassar and at times appeared less sharp in earlier days but not the total summation

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

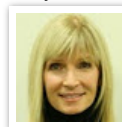
Cartoon Research

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 -

of the early Rochester's character, he quickly evolved.

Reply



Pokey 19 August 2012 at 11:51

But of course, we all know on the flip side of the coin, the other problem also occurred for a long time back then, just like today as J.Lee has said, the problem PC groups have had dogged things like Rochester, and many movies: The NAACP trying this time in the name of EQUALITY to BAN "Amos and Andy", both radio & TV versions and the old movie version from around 1931, "Check and Double Check", like the Italian groups later drove "Life with Luigi" off the air...(shakes head)...they got their victory against ANYTHING REMOTELY Amos and Andy by 1966..And of course both anti- and pro-Native American people probably didn't want portrayals of Indians..like my faithful psl Gumby's exploits with the Pesky Indians back in the 50s and 60s..

Nat King Cole got attacked for both being a Negro on SOUTHERN WHITE TV from one side (the racists) AND for "selling out" from "Mona Lisa", "to the Ends of the Earth" and other "white" songs with huge stirring orchestras on one hand, to the 1900s "Ramblin' Rose" and "Those Lazy-Hazy Crazy Days of Summer" stuff he'd win up singing by 1962 from the other side (the NAACP and hard-jazz fans) on the other. Black performers in those days just couldn't win from either side. Even today Tyler Perry is attacked by PC types for including WHITE folks, and even is attacked by some white dudes for being a successful African American, but a watch of his entertaining comedy-dramas show why BOTH races have embraced him. (If anything today, some of my own favorite black comics these days, Chris Rock and Eddie Murphy, may be considered the shuffling of Amos and Andy to today's NAACP.)

And finally, to see how many people having mixed race entertainment really were the ONLY detractors of that back in the 1940s, four words, one name:

Song of the South. (The NAACP were surely instrumental in getting THAT taken off starting with their criticisms in 1946 when it was REEASED with a lot of their kin reviewing the film QUITE harshly..just read Leonard Maltin's "The Disney Films", itself a Disney classic.....not to mention Neisei Japanese Americans who were upset about WWII Japanese stereotypes, though after the war it would well intentioned....)

Reply



Pokey 20 August 2012 at 06:39

And neither today's PC police or the 1946 PC police got Disney's Uncle Remus or the "Life with Luigi" Italian portrayals, again, nor did every NAACP member understand Amos and Andy, ever. None of the books on that show said it was a (verbatim) "thorn in the side" from the get go. ZOn the other hand, as Yowp states on the blog at the end of his article here, everyone still loves Rochester..well..except today's thought police..and those who lose craps games to him.

Reply

Anonymous 22 August 2012 at 14:19

You tell 'em, "Pokey." Everybody loves an old-fashioned racial stereotype; complainers are just "PC thought police."

I've followed you, Steve Carras, ever since you championed "white power" on the Usenet groups:
<http://groups.google.com/group/alt.mtv-sucks/msg/b978f9aad80cf7e4?hl=en>

I know what you're really made of. You'd really like to keep us out of your restaurants and other businesses, then call us "PC" when we complain. You want freedom to discriminate. We "pesky Indians" don't take it lying down, "Pokey."

(No offense, by the way, to the later depictions of Rochester and the Amos 'n' Andy characters, who really are enjoyable, multifaceted, and not very stereotypical.)

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 further...
 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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