

Sunday, 2 September 2012

What is Offensive Comedy?

Everything in this world offends someone, somewhere. So where should the line be drawn to determine what humour is legitimately offensive?

There probably isn't an answer to that question any more. But, years ago, Jack Benny had one. He felt common sense should prevail. Maybe it was possible in 1961 when he was interviewed by the National Enterprise Association but far more people today are quick to take umbrage and demand instant mollification.

I'll simply post Jack's comments and let you decide for yourself how much, if anything, has changed since this interview.



PERENNIAL JACK BENNY IS VENDOR OF GOOD TASTE

By ERSKINE JOHNSON

Hollywood Correspondent Newspaper Enterprise Assn.

HOLLYWOOD (NEA)—Jack Benny has a vault full of money, shelves loaded with trophies and awards, a record of 29 years on the air—he's now approaching conclusion of his 11th season on television—and a head full of enthusiasm.

"Next to Bob Hope I'm the biggest ham around," he laughed to us the other day. "I'm relaxed only when I'm working."

Seldom topical, never faddish, Jack Benny's humor always seems to be in style and the years wear as well on his scripts as they do on Jack himself.

THERE'S NO BIG SECRET about it, he admits.

"It's good taste—good taste is the most important single ingredient.

"Shook value comedy—they call it 'sick' comedy today—may make people sit up and take notice at first, but it quickly wears thin.

"Good warm humor, without abuse and in good taste—the ability to laugh at yourself—this can win friends and affection even for a minority group, whether it's political, religious, racial or some other type of minority."

THAT GOOD TASTE couldn't have a better frame than Jack's show and he's justly proud when he says:

"Rochester has played my butler for many years but the NAACP has never protested our showing a Negro as a servant. We always let Rochester come out the victor, showing me up as a stupid jerk.

"My home hasn't been bombed because Dennis Day, an Irishman, is depicted as a silly kid. We don't get letters from fat people because I always insult Don Wilson.

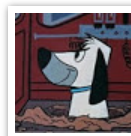
"Any intelligent person who himself belongs to a minority group is aware of the risk of offending. But it is a shame that people who are capable of handling any situation in good taste, with an understanding of the problems involved, are prohibited from certain types of comedy because others abuse the unwritten rules of common sense."

Benny pointed out that these restrictions on comedy apply not only to ethnic groups. You seldom see stuttering comedians any more because stutterers in the audience are offended and may not buy the sponsor's product.

"Unless you're a Jimmy Durante or a Danny Thomas you don't make jokes about big noses," he points out, too.

DESPITE THE LIMITATIONS it imposes Benny favors the elimination of any joke, gag or sequence which, within bounds of reason, may offend.

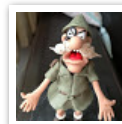
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Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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 fernandollera.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

"Let's face it," he says, "we're living in an age when millions of human beings who were villified in concentration camps are trying to establish their right to a decent life. People of one color want the right to use the same railroad station waiting room as people of another color. The world is watching. We must be careful. "There are enough basic concepts in life to poke fun at. Funny things happen to all of us all the time. The comedian or comedy writer must be alert to these, remember them, and then invent variations on them. If a gag is hurtful, I don't need it."

Jack's lucky, of course. The Benny character — stingy, picayunish, vain with no real reason for vanity, intolerant of Rochester and insulting to his announcer, Don Wilson—is familiar to all. He's milked each gag on the character for more years than most comedians can milk an entire career.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:41](#)



Labels: [Erskine Johnson](#), [Jack Benny](#)

2 comments:



Mike 2 September 2012 at 10:41

Benny always let the other person come out on top, and it was key to his appeal. But more than letting Rochester "win," he always interacted with him in a respectful tone -- that is, he didn't treat Rochester any different than he did Don Wilson. They were both on his staff, in different capacities, but they were not treated as "the help." This allowed him to do comedy with Rochester that didn't come across as demeaning or condescending.

[Reply](#)



J Lee 2 September 2012 at 20:28

Great article find, Yowp. One of my biggest online annoyances is seeing a YouTube video of Jack's show or some World War II era cartoon and reading the comments from the "morally enlightened" types who are totally aghast at either the mere idea Rochester is Benny's servant, or that they could show something as awful as Mel Blanc killing himself after being driven crazy by Jack's Christmas shopping (the World War II irritations are more the people who see the war-themed cartoons of the era and act as though if they were around in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, they would be setting everyone straight on the insensitivity of all these propaganda broadcasts, movies or cartoons).

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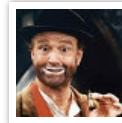
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additional covers you could share! ...

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

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2 days ago



Cartoon Research

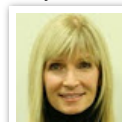
In His Own Words: H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor - Suspended Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

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

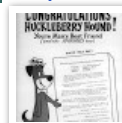


TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

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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

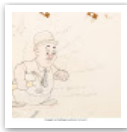
Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

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