

Sunday, 30 June 2013

Newcomer Jack Benny

Jack Benny wasn't always Jack Benny. He was born Benny Kubelsky and it's part of the Benny lore that he went through several names in vaudeville before changing his billing from Ben. K. Benny to Jack Benny. In his autobiographical notes contained in a book written by his daughter Joan, he doesn't explain the reason for the final change, though it's generally conceded it was because of legal rumblings from orchestra leader Ben Bernie; the two toured on the same circuit at the time. And there are several explanations about how the name "Jack Benny" was picked; Jack himself stated in the posthumous book it was comedian Benny Rubin's idea after hearing Jack and his ex-Navy buddies call each other "Jack" at a restaurant in St. Louis.

Benny never specified in his autobiographical notes when he made the name switch, but wrote that his act had changed by 1921 and he only used his violin to play himself off the stage at the end. He spent most of the first half of 1920 as Ben K. Benny in a show on the Orpheum circuit and headlined much of the time by the Four Marx Brothers. The "Show Biz Bible," *Variety* reported on September 10, 1920, he was Ben K. at the State-Lake in Chicago starting the week of the 13th. In the edition the following week, the trade paper revealed that Jack Benny was at the Majestic in Milwaukee (another Orpheum theatre) starting on the 20th.

Benny travelled east. He played at the Prospect Theatre in Brooklyn on the F.F. Proctor Time the week of January 10th, and the following week was on the first half of the bill at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York City; the headliner was Eddie Foy and Family. He was reviewed under the "Newcomers" column in *Variety* of Friday, January 21, 1921 by none other than founder Sime Silverman. Evidently Silverman didn't realise Benny had played the Orpheum circuit as it was hardly small time (the term "time," as you can see, originated in vaudeville). Here's what Silverman had to say:

JACK BENNY. Monologist.

14 Mins.; One.
5th Ave.

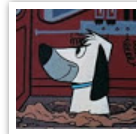
Jack Benny has a violin and talk. Mainly talk. He handles himself as though having played small time, though his talk material is new. When Benny said he had stopped smoking as smoking: is now too effeminate, he waited for the expected laugh which was not as hearty as he looked for, so he repeated the gag. Later when nearing the finish and the right exit, he pointed to his name on the card, while playing the violin, and saying, "Jack Benny. That's me. They couldn't get my right name on it."

His talk is along the lines of his girl, who lives in Philadelphia, with an idle brother and a father, who died, Benny said, the same evening he was to take his girl to the theatre. On account of the death of his girl's father, he added, they were late for the performance. The 5th Ave. audience thought that was funnier than the smoking gag, which about sums up the 5th Ave.

In outline of turn, Benny has been a student of Ben Bernie, it seems. He talks much like Bernie, but has none of Bernie's gags. His violin playing is negligible for results. He holds the instrument in the regular way, under the neck, whereas Bernie holds it carelessly, often against his body, which Green of Green and Myra, on the same bill, must have intently observed, as he played his violin along that style. It wasn't vaudeville to have two violinists on the same bill and have both of them recall Bernie, although Bernie may not mind it. It certainly



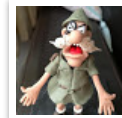
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Blogs to See

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...
2 hours ago

Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com
4 hours ago

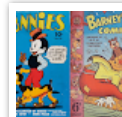
Movies with Michael



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..."
7 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

did not help Benny. But Benny seems able to help [sic] himself. He has gags, presence and assurance. His only worry just now may be how he is going to follow Bernie if he can make the big time. The answer seems to be for Benny to throw away his violin while Bernie is using one, and try another method of working in his talk, if he doesn't care to become a monologist, outright. The Delmar time can handle Benny, also the Orpheum Circuit, and the other bookings in between and below, but while Benny looks good enough to make all the time, he can't make the best as at present framed up. Sime.

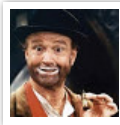
“One” means he was a solo act, standing in front of the curtain.

Jack took out an ad in the *New York Dramatic World* of February 26, 1921, announcing he was represented by Thos. J. Fitzpatrick. His career was on its way again, travelling across the U.S. and western Canada. And I hear they loved him in St. Joe.



additional covers you could share! ...
16 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...
1 day 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 -

Posted by Yowp at 07:52



Labels: Jack Benny

2 comments:

J Lee 30 June 2013 at 09:07
But Benny seems able to help [sic] himself. He has gags, presence and assurance.

From the snippets of audio/video available of Jack in the late 1920s-early 1930s, the persona he adopted on stage then was a more confident/in control of his environment Jack Benny as a solo performer than the one America came to know, as the character with comic flaws who also served as the hub of relative calm to the craziness around him (Jack's self-assured interaction with the singer in this clip from a 1929 MGM short, and his reaction to mom being with her, is more of a gag you'd expect Benny and his writers to give Phil Harris than to Jack, if it had been done a decade later).

[Reply](#)

Anonymous 9 April 2014 at 13:08
Jack Benny:
May his memory be eternal! Well done, Jack. Rest in peace.

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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... 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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