



Sunday, 15 September 2013

Phil's Not So Bad

Phil Harris had a great head-start when he and Alice Faye launched their sitcom in the 1946-47 radio season (under the guise of "The Fitch Bandwagon"). Harris had been on Jack Benny's top-rated show for so long, he was like an old friend.

The problem the show's writers faced was to take Harris' drunken, ladies' man character from the Benny show and adapt it as a family man. Fortunately, Benny's writers had endowed Harris with enough characteristics (illiteracy, poor musicianship, a love of awful puns and a rambling Southern song) that they had enough to play with while making Harris a doting and lovey-dovey husband.

Renowed radio critic John Crosby hated the domesticity. We posted a 1946 review [HERE](#). But shows evolve and fine-tune if they're given the chance. And the Harris-Faye sitcom evolved in the right direction as far as Crosby was concerned. Here's what he had to say in his newspaper column that appeared beginning January 30, 1950.

Phil Harris Show Hits New Stride

By JOHN CROSBY

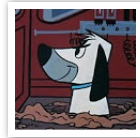
Probably no show in radio ever started out less auspiciously than the Phil Harris-Alice Faye operation back in the fall of 1946. Radio critics everywhere shuddered in rare unison. Looking back through my yellowing clippings on this program, I discover the first few episodes were largely kissing games, which simplified the task of the writers. Either Phil was kissing Alice. Or both of them were kissing the children.

What little dialogue there was revolved around this osculation, more or less reviewing it. "You ain't giving, honey," Mr. Harris would mutter, a bad notice for Miss Faye. Or he'd exclaim--there's no more exclamatory comedian in the business than Harris--"You beautiful bundle of dynamite. Put your arms around me and tell me how much you love me!"

While not exactly opposed to domestic felicity, critics--not just this one, either--muttered that it was a rather slim pretext for a radio show. Even as late as 1948, I find myself complaining that the Harris show was loud, crude and in questionable taste.

Well, all that is in the past. Great changes have been wrought in the Harris household. The writers, for one thing, have been put to work dreaming up something besides stage directions for kissing sequences. The children, while still in existence, are largely kept in the back room safely out of mischief, especially at the microphone. Miss Faye, who is not the most vivid of radio performers, has been pepped up a bit and, at the same, her role has been abbreviated, a wise measure. Above all, the flame of love that once lit up the countryside for miles around has been dimmed to something approaching connubial candlepower. Miss Faye and Harris appear to have got used to having one another around the house.

About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

My Blog List

Old TV History

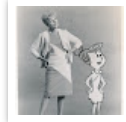


May 1940 - You couldn't blame David Sarnoff if he

mumbled some uncomplimentary comments at the F.C.C. in May of 1940. The Commission made two rulings, basically tell...

1 day ago

Yowp



Wilma - Jean Vander Pyl didn't have a big name on

television when she was cast to play Wilma Flintstone in 1960. The others were a bit different. Bea Benaderet ap...

3 weeks ago

Blogs to See

Termite Terrace headlines



Today's Post: The 1964 World's Fair Documentary and other

64 World's Fair stuff - This documentary is quite good. Most of you have probably already seen it, but I'm sharing it here anyways. While I'm add it, why not share some ...

31 minutes ago

The writers have happily turned Mr. Harris loose with his pal, Frankie (Elliott Lewis), a character as innocent of book learning and as full of pool room wisdom as Mr. H. himself. These two raffish, ingenious hoodlums are wonderfully funny together, grappling with Harris' home life, something Harris only vaguely understands, or trying to pound some sense into Harris' carefree band.

The best way I can describe the Harris band is to point out that Harris is unquestionably the intellectual superior of any member of it. When he explains that he and the band are about to go into television and are there any the questions, the guitar player speaks up and says, "Yes. What's television?"

Several new characters have been added to fill in the spaces left by the absent children. One of a lad named is a Julius, a pugnacious boy with a fierce disdain for both Harris and Remley. Another is Miss Faye's brother Willie, a fey lisping character who represents culture as opposed to Harris and Remley who are pure animal. Culture, in this case, has grounds for a libel suit. Mr. Harris addresses this creature in what may be described as verbal pirouettes.

"I hope your upside-down cake turns right side-up." It's pretty bad and I wish they'd quit it. And I'm not referring simply to Harris. All these fey characters on comedy programs have become not only tiresome but just a little indecent.

Miss Faye's personality has been substantially rearranged so that, instead of being required to flame like white fire, she is now asked to be an all-wise mother to her husband-child. This is an impossible role for any woman but, well, there isn't too much of Miss Faye any more.

The Harris program is unabashed farce not susceptible to close examination but at its best when, for instance, Remley and Julius are lousing up an auction, it is hilarious fun and I'm sorry I said all the harsh things about it that I once did. It was the show that changed, though, not me.

Unless I haven't paid attention, Crosby's mistaken on one thing. Walter Tetley's Julius Abruzzio began appearing on the show in 1947. Radio was full of annoying children. But Tetley's Julius is almost a parody of them. He's so over-the-top, so disdainful, so almost evil that he's a treat to listen to.

There are some things about the later Harris shows I don't like—Philsy and Remley/Elliott are just too unbelievably dumb sometimes—but generally, it was one of the better sitcoms on radio as television was slowly taking over the living room. And, in many ways, the takeover was not for the better.

Posted by Yowp at 10:10



Labels: [John Crosby](#)

No comments:

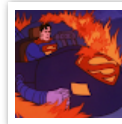
Post a Comment



Enter comment



Movies with Michael



The World's Greatest Super Friends:
Lex Luthor Strikes

Back (1979) - A wonderful episode. In this episode, Lex Luthor escapes from prison by switching places with Lois Lane. After escaping he captures each of the Supe...

1 hour ago

Fernando Liera Cartoons



CONAGUA's
cybersecurity payments found unverified

by ASF's 2002 audit. -

©2023

fernandollera.com

4 hours ago

Pete Hale



My First Carl Barks - I decided to become a cartoonist last year, so

I started reading some old "animal" comic strips and books for study and enjoyment. I've already tried out...

7 hours ago

News From ME

Today's Video Link - We haven't had any Tom Lehrer on this site in many years so let's rectify that. Here he is on one of David Frost's eighty zillion TV shows in Great Britain...

13 hours ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Tomorrow Afternoon at Niles:
Silent Era Animation and Jerry

Beck -

1 day ago

AFRTS Archive



Your audience awaits! - Many of us saved a tape or

acetate or two. There are a lot of people that would like to hear them again. The airchecks from AFN/AFKN/SCN etc usually t...


1 day ago

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

**The Exposure Sheet**



A Taste of What's to Come - Hey guys! I'll be out of town this weekend, and due to this trip, I decided to push back my next planned post to Monday, so I have some more time to iron ...
2 days ago

**Cartoon Research**

New York State of Mind: The 35th Anniversary of "Oliver & Company" - An excellent "warm-up lap" for the artistic leaps and box-office blowouts on the horizon for Disney.
2 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Felix Vs. A Spy From Brigandia - In these Felix strips from 4-24 to 5-7-32, Felix returns from the Moon, only to encounter a spy from the kingdom of Brigandia, who wants to steal all the p...
6 days ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

- [Cartoonerific](#)
- [Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)
- [Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)
- [Format Films Roadrunners](#)

Blog Archive

- ▶ [2023](#) (320)
- ▶ [2022](#) (382)
- ▶ [2021](#) (380)
- ▶ [2020](#) (389)
- ▶ [2019](#) (376)
- ▶ [2018](#) (379)
- ▶ [2017](#) (380)
- ▶ [2016](#) (396)
- ▶ [2015](#) (389)
- ▶ [2014](#) (390)
- ▼ [2013](#) (388)
 - ▶ [December](#) (31)
 - ▶ [November](#) (31)
 - ▶ [October](#) (34)
 - ▼ [September](#) (31)
 - [Legs of Spike](#)
 - [The Stub Story](#)
 - [Farewell, Hugh and Rudy — Again](#)

[The Other Skeleton Dance](#)

[Ghost Fist of a Fox](#)

[This Could Make a Good Book Some Day](#)

[Necking By the TV](#)

[Clobbering Elmer](#)

[TV Without Mary](#)

[To Make a Terrytoon](#)

[Piggie Pick-Up](#)

[Eyes and Noses of Tom](#)

[Atsamatter With Luigi](#)

[No Vacancy](#)

[Escape From Grandma](#)

[No Wire Hangers](#)

[Phil's Not So Bad](#)

[The Wonderful World of Color of 1936](#)

[The Hungry Eyes](#)

[Where Pete Hothead Shops](#)

[Tell Him What He Wins](#)

[I Think I Swallowed Something](#)

[The Hidden Friz](#)

[Kenny Baker's Farewell to Footlights](#)

[How to Make a Krazy Kat](#)

[Who Killed Who Death Scene](#)

[Multiplying Sylvesters](#)

[Radio's Failure is Television's Success](#)

[Suicidal Flame](#)

[Disappearing Paper](#)

[The Jack Benny Story, Short Version](#)

- ▶ [August](#) (33)
- ▶ [July](#) (33)
- ▶ [June](#) (34)
- ▶ [May](#) (33)
- ▶ [April](#) (30)
- ▶ [March](#) (36)
- ▶ [February](#) (29)
- ▶ [January](#) (33)
- ▶ [2012](#) (397)
- ▶ [2011](#) (106)

Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (20)

[Art Davis](#) (46)

[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)

[Bob and Ray](#) (17)

[Bob Clampett](#) (116)

[Bob McKimson](#) (82)

[Bob Thomas](#) (66)

[Chuck Jones](#) (186)

[Columbia](#) (68)

[Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)

[Cynthia Lowry](#) (36)

[Dick Thomas](#) (18)

[Don Patterson](#) (24)

[Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)

[Earl Wilson](#) (19)

[Erskine Johnson](#) (44)

[Felix the Cat](#) (38)

[Film Daily](#) (50)

[Fleischer](#) (211)

[Frank Tashlin](#) (43)

[Fred Allen](#) (57)

[Fred Brunish](#) (13)

[Friz Freleng](#) (193)

[Gene Deitch](#) (24)

[George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (10)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (131)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (10)

[Hans Conried](#) (5)

[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)

[Harman-Ising](#) (101)

[Henry Morgan](#) (14)

[Irv Spence](#) (12)

[Jack Benny](#) (622)

[Jay Ward](#) (35)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (108)

[John Sutherland](#) (41)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (42)

[Johnny Olson](#) (5)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (9)

[Laugh-In](#) (18)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (7)

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)

[Magical Maestro](#) (10)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

[Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)

[MGM](#) (745)

[Norm McCabe](#) (10)

[Pat Matthews](#) (13)

[Paul Julian](#) (16)

- Sara Berner (6)
- Screwy Squirrel (42)
- Spider-Man (3)
- Terrytoons (117)
- Tex Avery (651)
- The Cat That Hated People (10)
- Toby the Pup (4)
- Tom and Jerry Human (46)
- Traifaz Sunday Theatre (21)
- Ub Iwerks (126)
- UPA (78)
- Van Beuren (141)
- Vernon Scott (52)
- Virginia MacPherson (14)
- Walt Disney (209)
- Walter Lantz (325)
- Warner Bros. (879)
- Who Killed Who (13)