



Wednesday, 20 November 2013

## Cantor on Allen

Fred Allen didn't have a real feud with Jack Benny or any other radio comedian. But he didn't hold back about the ones whose acts he didn't like and why. Milton Berle was a target, and so were others on television whom he saw as presenting warmed-over vaudeville acts (despite the fact Allen was nostalgic for vaudeville). And he didn't have much good to say about a few of them on radio, like Eddie Cantor. Here's what he wrote in "Treadmill to Oblivion" about Cantor's show:

The big comedians felt that if they entertained the studio audiences their radio success was assured. Eddie Cantor wore funny costumes, pummeled his announcer with his fist and frequently kicked his guest star to obtain results. A Cantor show would open with the announcer shouting "And here comes Eddie! Eddie's wearing fifty balloons tied to his coat! Ha! ha! Eddie hopes he'll get a break tonight. Ha! ha!"

Allen's point was the audience at home was confused by the studio's audience's reaction to something visual the comedian was doing to get a huge yuck. The listener at home couldn't see what was happening. Allen hated pandering to the studio audience. But he did it himself, most notably in the "King For a Day" sketch (May 26, 1946) where the studio audience goes out of control with laughter because it can see what the listener can't—Jack Benny's clothes being taken off.

It appears Cantor didn't appreciate Allen's point. Cantor had a newspaper column handled by the Bell Syndicate and here's what he wrote that appeared in papers of January 14, 1955.

### Through Eddie Cantor's Eyes

#### Fred Allen Gets Too Analytical

By EDDIE CANTOR

I'm wondering what my teacher at Public School 1, Catherine Luddy, would think if she knew I read two books in two days. Even though she predicted a very black future for me, I was crazy about Miss Luddy. I would have married her except for the difference in our ages. I was older than my teacher. Teacher? I was older than the principal. To get back to the books: One of them was "Treadmill to Oblivion" by Fred Allen. In it you get a lot of "Allen's Alley" and "Allen's allergy." He simply cannot stand the human race—particularly those comedians who are too busy being successful in the various mediums of show business to stop and analyze them. As a contemporary of Fred, I've often noticed that he gets analytical when he should be just comical.

I've been an Allen fan for 25 years. I still laugh out loud every time I think of his description of an American in Paris. Here is a sample: "The American arrives in Paris with a few French phrases he has culled from a conversational guide, or picked up from a friend who owns a beret.

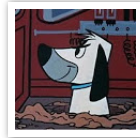
"He speaks the sort of French that is readily understood by another American who, also, has just arrived in Paris. The minute, however, the American attempts to make linguistic contact with a native, verbal bedlam ensues. The Frenchman talks as though his nouns and verbs are red hot and he has to get the words out of his mouth before they blister his tongue.

"As the American gains confidence, he will occasionally risk a cluster of French consonants in public. This often proves embarrassing. One American who had planned to buy a set of andirons found, when he left the antique shop, that he had bought two old ladies, one of whom was in poor condition.

"Another tourist, speaking import French, rattled off something to a waiter at Maxim's. When translated, he found that he had said, 'Who is playing the trombone under my potato salad?' As the American 'ouis' and 'merci's' his way in and out of shops and cafes, he finds that to get what he wants, he invariably has to point. The 'American in Pans' finally learns that to speak French, he doesn't require a tongue—all he needs is a finger." This is good Fred Allen.

In his book, "Treadmill to Oblivion," Fred would like to believe that all comedians merely pass through on the way to the "big nowhere." It may be true, but let's face it—while on that treadmill, the comics, including Fred

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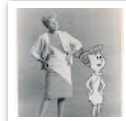


May 1940 - You couldn't blame David Sarnoff if he

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 ...

37 minutes ago

Allen, not only pick up a million or more dollars, but experience and soul-satisfying [sic] knowledge that millions of people who enjoy their particular brand of humor have been made happier.

Maybe it's just me, but I don't quite get Cantor's point. He never really explains why Allen shouldn't be analytical. In fact, a good portion of his column is taken up by a piece of Allen's analytical humour. His final line, after admitting Allen may be right, doesn't deal with analysis by Allen at all. I suspect Cantor's wagging a disapproving finger at Allen for something that's not stated in the column at all—he's annoyed about Allen publicly criticising his on-stage antics during a radio career which, by the time the review was written, was over.



Posted by Yowp at 05:21



Labels: [Fred Allen](#)

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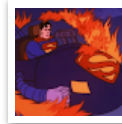
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[The World's Greatest Super Friends: Lex Luthor Strikes](#)

[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

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[by ASF's 2002 audit.](#) -

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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

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[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



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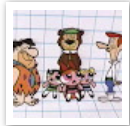
[Your audience awaits!](#) - Many of us saved a tape or

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

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### 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*

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### 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*

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### 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*

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