



Sunday, 9 March 2014

## Television Worries

In 1947, there was television, but there wasn't television.

There were about a dozen stations scattered across the U.S. and no hook-up between the east and west coasts. The networks, such as they were, didn't offer programming during much of the week, and all the big stars were still on radio.

But television had been steadily developing after the war and the FCC was in the process of tripling the number of stations with the granting of licenses. The big stars of radio knew it would just be a matter of time before TV would be calling them.

Television may have still been developing in 1947 but Jack Benny could already see the pitfalls for someone like himself. Radio painted pictures in people's minds. Seeing the same thing on screen couldn't possibly measure up to someone's imagination. And Jack realised that TV would swallow material even more than radio. No doubt that's why he committed himself to only four shows on his first season in 1950-51.

As it turned out, Benny didn't do "a whole new kind of program" as he predicted. In fact, many of his successful routines on TV were taken from old radio scripts, in some cases verbatim. Here's what he had to say in a United Press column that appeared in newspapers beginning September 24, 1947. As a matter of interest, the *Brooklyn Eagle* of that day reveal TV listings in New York City consisting of test patterns, news, a movie, sports events, a kids' show, a soap opera ("Highway to the Stars") and a disc jockey programme. It'd be a year before the Uncle Miltie phenomenon made manufacturers of TV sets very happy and profitable.

### Jack Benny Fears Television Advent Will Spoil Act

By VIRGINIA MacPHERSON

United Press Hollywood Correspondent

HOLLYWOOD, Sept. 24 (U.P.)—Television, Jack Benny lamented today, will probably louse up that nice, soft deal he's worked 16 years to perfect. He'll have to start all over. So, he says, will every ether radio funnyman. Which is probably why the veteran jokesters are beating no drums to hurry up this miracle of the air waves.

"All the comedy shows—as we know 'em—will die out," Benny says. "You'll have a whole new kind of program. I imagine we'll have to go in for plays. Heaven help my writers!"

No more peering through spectacles at neatly-typed scripts. The scripts will have to go. So will those spectacles. And ditto for the sound effects.

"Because the audience will be looking right smack at us," Benny explained. "And we'll never be able to get as wild over a television screen as the listeners have us get in their own minds."

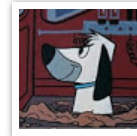
Take that business of "tightwad" Benny clomping down to the basement vault.

"We could do that for television," he said, "but it'd never be as funny. Neither would the squeaking hinges. Or my smoking old Maxwell. Or making Phil Harris put his dimes in my cigarette machine. All those gimmicks paint mental pictures that are twice as hilarious as what really goes on."

The only funnyman who won't have to begin from the bottom again, Benny figures, are the boys who rely on visual antics for their giggles. "People like Billy De Wolfe and Danny Kaye and Danny Thomas," plugged the



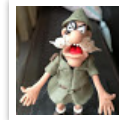
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## Blogs to See

### 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  
3 hours ago

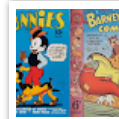
### Movies with Michael



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..."  
6 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

only man in the business who can afford to. "They don't have situation comedy. They are funny just to watch. "Fred Allen's puss might be, too." Benny added. "But he's not taking any chances on the kind of chuckles the Benny pan might bring on.

"Nope, what we'll have to do is a fast switch to half-hour comedies," he said, "and that'll be murder. I don't see how we could do a show oftener than once a month."



Benny figures it'll take him that long to get that "hilarious" play written, sets built, costumes made up, cast hired, and all his lines memorized. His only consolation is that old "enemy Allen" will be in the same fix. Meanwhile, he's starting his 16th consecutive year Oct. 5 on good, old-fashioned radio. And he's plenty thankful that television's still limited to fights and football games.

"By the time everybody has a home set," Benny grinned, "I'll probably be too old anyway. Let the kids worry about it I'll be retired to the golf links."


Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:29](#)    

Labels: [Jack Benny](#), [Virginia MacPherson](#)

2 comments:

-  **J Lee** 9 March 2014 at 09:32
- I'm happy Jack was wrong here, though he was probably smart to take it slowly in the early going to see what did and what didn't work (his movie experience probably helped here, especially in the filmed episodes, which in the single-camera format were pretty much the equivalent of the theatrical two-reelers and allowed the show to expand into visual/special effect gags that couldn't be done on the radio).
- [Reply](#)
-  **bgrauman** 9 March 2014 at 19:42
- Jack continued his radio show during the first five years of his TV appearances; by the time he finished his first season of alternate week TV shows in May 1955, the radio series ended; he didn't WANT it to end, but American Tobacco, his sponsor, insisted they wanted to sustain him on television exclusively, and that there just wasn't enough of an audience to justify the cost of sponsoring his weekly radio show for another season. He was perfectly free to find another radio sponsor, but Jack decided to end his radio career with the May 22, 1955 episode.
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additional covers you could share! ...  
15 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](#) -




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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