



Sunday, 4 May 2014

## Jack Benny on Ego

Show folk are modest folk, to hear Jack Benny tell it. Of course, he wasn't around today to see young stars melt down in public because they don't have the studio system and friendly gossip columnists to protect them any more.

Here's a piece that Benny penned for the Screen & Radio Weekly section of the *Long Island Sunday Press* of February 13, 1938. Perhaps the most interesting part is the little insight Benny gives into himself at the end. Many years later, he admitted he was moody. In 1938, he chalks it up to nervousness.

The picture accompanied the original article.

### ACTORS AREN'T EGOTISTICAL

By JACK BENNY

*A Radio Comedian Turned Screen Actor Here Gives You His Evaluation of His Co-Workers and, in the Benny Manner, Emerges with All Banners Flying in His Defense of This Maligned Profession.*

Jack Benny, as everybody but an unidentified man in French Indo-China knows, appears on radio Sunday nights with his troupe. His next film for Paramount is called "Never Say Die."

HERE is something I've wanted to get off my chest for years. I expect to be given arguments about it. There will be many snorts of "Oh, yeah?" But a Benny never falters for mere snorts. He's faced too many dead-on-their-seats audiences.

I say actors as a class aren't nearly so sold on themselves as non-professionals think. Here's what I mean: An Irishman named Mike wanted to go for a sleigh ride and he didn't have a sled. His friend Pat did. Mike thought over the situation and he said to his wife:

"Sure it's a fine morning for a sleigh ride. I wish I had a sled."

"Well, Pat has a sled. Why don't you go over and ask him if you can borrow it," said his wife.

"Ah, he'd never let me have it, the tightwad," said Mike.

"Maybe he would. Go ask him, Mike," said his wife.

So Mike started for Pat's house, and all the way he muttered to himself:

"He'll never do it. I don't know why I should be after asking him. Fine friend he is. He wouldn't give me a potato if I was starving."

By the time he reached Pat's house he'd worked himself up into a fury. He pounded on the door and when Pat stuck his head out Mike shouted: "Listen, I don't want your so-and-so sled. You can keep it!"

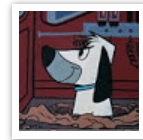
THAT'S the way people are about actors. Everybody outside of show business thinks everybody inside is egotistical, conceited, egocentric and all the other fine sounding adjectives that mean stuck-on-yourself. An actor is licked before he has a chance to open his mouth to defend himself. People say: "Of course he's conceited. If he weren't he wouldn't be an actor."

Who wants to bet? I've been in show business for more than 20 years and I've known a whale of a lot of actors. I say they're no more in love with themselves than other men and less than some classes of men. High-powered salesmen, for instance, or hotel managers. If an actor talked about his performances at the length to which I've heard salesmen go in describing big deals they've put over single-handed, some listener would get mad and pop him on the nose.

I've found hotel managers who could praise themselves by the hour. When I went to Europe last summer I came home 10 days earlier just so I could drive from Chicago to Los Angeles, taking my time along the way; and it takes a lot of time in that Maxwell of mine. I liked that part of the trip better than anything in Europe, except maybe London. This is a great country to drive over. I remember one night I stopped in a hotel in a fair sized Middle-Western city. After I'd gone to my room the manager sent me a note inviting me to his suite for cocktails. He said his wife and daughter would enjoy meeting me.

I went, of course. It is always flattering when folks say they want to meet you. I expected to be asked a few questions about Hollywood and motion pictures and radio. But from the time I crossed that guy's threshold

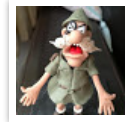
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Knox...and families of these comic artists can see these gems... - made with fimo clay I had ago and its not very easy to do...  
2 hours ago

#### 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

Jack Benny did a complete fade-out, conversationally. He had me there for the sole purpose of telling me how wonderful he was. He enumerated the hotels he'd put on a big paying basis. It would be no trouble for him to show them how to run the Ritz. Then he started in on what was the matter with the way motion pictures are made and how he could improve them. Pretty soon he was telling me how to run my radio shows.

A couple of times I got as far as "That reminds me," but no further. Finally his daughter said, "Daddy, I wish you'd let Mr. Benny talk a little." It was no use. He was too busy to hear her.

I DON'T know any actors who could get away with a monolog like that. I don't know any actors who would try. Sometimes in a discussion of the self-importance of those in my profession I've asked critics to name six who have gone overboard. They never get beyond two, even in Hollywood, where it is supposed to be a case of dog eat dog.

Take fellows like Bing Crosby. He has earned a race track, a handsome hut in the San Fernando Valley, a ranch at Santa Fe Springs, a yacht and plenty of money to run 'em all, by his own efforts. He has one of the most popular radio programs on the air and his pictures are in greater demand every time a new one is released. Yet Bing will proclaim to anyone who will listen that he knows "from nothing" about acting. One of his favorite occupations is poking fun at himself as an actor.

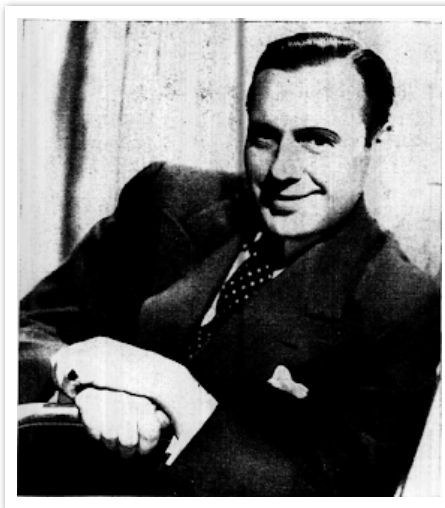
Nelson Eddy, who is swamped by fan-mail most of which is sweetly scented, loves to tell about the time Woody Van Dyke, the director, met him outside the Chinese Theater after the premiere of "Naughty Marietta." The director asked Nelson how it felt to be a great actor. "But I'm not an actor," said Nelson. "I know that," said Van Dyke, "but how does it feel?"

John Barrymore calls himself a ham.

When actors start talking big, they are scared. They are trying to cover up for the squeamish feeling in the pits of their stomachs.

AN ACTOR'S only asset is himself. No matter how successful he becomes he can't build up anything that will go on after him. There's no business to hand down to his children. And he knows his days as an actor are numbered under the average man's productivity. You're darn tooting he's scared! And he can't conduct himself as an ordinary human being, because like Pat in the story he's taken the count before he begins.

Anybody else can pass a friend in the street, and if he's in a hurry and his mind is doing grasshopper jumps with all the things he has to do, he can nod hello to the friend and go on without being blamed for it. An actor doesn't dare. He has to stop and put on an act regardless. If he doesn't the friend says to himself, "Hum—so. The fellow is going high-hat. That's just what I thought all along." And do you know what state a motion picture player is in when he's about to begin a new picture? Let a so-called comedian tell you. He is fit to be tied. I speak feelingly. I'm about to do a piece called "Never Say Die. When the picture gets under way everything will be all right for a while. I'll relax and feel happy about the whole thing. Then as it gets down toward the shank end I know what will happen. The jitters will come back. I'll be in what those who have no sympathy sarcastically call a "mood." Around the set they'll say: "Get a load of Benny. What's he trying to do, give himself airs?" And it will be nothing but fright, plain fright. Don't let anybody tell you old troupers are different. They never get that old. And do you know where I'll be the night the picture is previewed? I'll be at the rights with the shakes and an awful headache, trying to forget it all.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:37](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

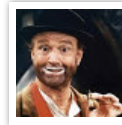
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Born on July 18, 1913 - Red Skelton - \*Today's post commences

with the Guzzler's Gin routine ...

1 day ago

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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

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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

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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

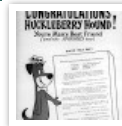
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TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

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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

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Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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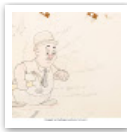
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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

for the ink and paint department. Release date: 12/20/41 Availability: Looney Tunes Gol... 3 weeks ago

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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... 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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