



Sunday, 1 June 2014

Benny and the Bard

They remained in their jobs for years, content with their work and well-paid for it. They were Jack Benny's writers.

A number of newspaper stories were written over the years about the longevity of Benny's writing team. Benny praised them as the best in the business. And it must have been an accomplishment for them to come up with new material within the structure of the well-established characters on the Benny show (in many cases, they didn't. They reused old jokes and scripts. The fans didn't seem to mind).

Here's a United Press International column of July 29, 1961, supposedly written by Benny himself. Guest columns weren't unusual. John Crosby of the *Herald-Tribune* had them. In this instance, UPI entertainment writer Vernon Scott was on holiday. Benny compares his scribes to one of history's most celebrated playwrights.

One wonders if Stan Freberg took Benny's needling of his fees in a good-natured way.

Could Shakespeare Write for TV?

By JACK BENNY

Written for UP-International

Hollywood—A short time ago five Emmy Awards were presented to a group of talented folk who brought "Macbeth" to television—but the chap who wrote the script was not among those honored.

I mention this because, though my show was fortunate enough to have been chosen the best comedy effort of the season, its four writers were not rewarded.

True, they have won several Emmys in the past—but they seemed to draw comfort from the fact that this year they were not alone: William Shakespeare, too, went home empty-handed on Emmy night.

Truth to tell, there is room for doubt regarding Shakespeare: If, indeed, he were alive today, could he make the grade as a television writer? It is fashionable to associate Shakespeare with snob appeal—but he wrote for the masses who sat on rough board benches in the theater, guzzling whatever preceded popcorn as generally accepted showtime refreshment in his era.

He was the combination Desi Arnaz and Rod Serling of his time, writing, directing producing and even acting his way through an amazing volume of product.

But—and it's an interesting question—could he have withstood the pressures of a weekly TV deadline? Could he have pleased both sponsor and audience?

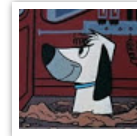
Could he have integrated a commercial for Lipton tea into "King Lear," if he had so desired, and still retained his audience's good will? And, if he were alive today and active in TV, would he be toiling for Davis Susskind or, perchance, might he be under contract to me? I'd like to have him—he could turn a phrase as neatly as Stan Freberg and he'd probably only cost half as much.

But since Shakespeare is not available, let me record here and now that I'm content with Sam Perrin, George Balzer, Al Gordon and Hal Goldman, the four humorists who work so closely with me in tailoring our weekly CBS shows.

Together we were lucky enough to build a character which has been somewhat more resistant than my hairline has been to time's ravages. Many people don't really know where the character ends and I begin. I must admit I find it fun to pick up the phone to have someone try to sell me spare wheels for my Maxwell (I've never really owned one). My great



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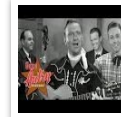
Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com
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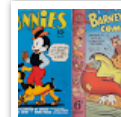
Movies with Michael



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

kicks come from appearances as soloist with leading symphony orchestras—and let's face it, if it were not for my broadcast character as the world's worst fiddle player I'd never get any closer to the stage at Carnegie Hall than the balcony.

One gag we've used through the years, however, does cause occasional embarrassment. It is the portrait of miserliness in which I've been painted. I find myself constantly face to face with it.

For instance, in order to call attention to the start of our coming TV season, a public relations chap who is, to say the least, original, suggested at a recent meeting that the government be asked to put my face on a commemorative penny.

Now this is, of course, a ridiculous idea at best—but I still question the emphasis of a bystander's comment: "Benny doesn't need his face on money," this fellow said. "He's content just to get his hands on it."

I wonder, if Shakespeare had written my scripts would he have painted me differently?

Perhaps heroically? Could be—but the TV schedules are full of dashing heroes whose options are dropped without warning. And my writers have kept me working a long time.

Speaking of television, to the best of my recollection, Benny never parodied Shakespeare in his sketches. He pretty much stuck to movies. Still, it might have been interesting to hear Frank Nelson as Rosencrantz to Benny's "Hamlet" ("What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason. How infinite in faculty. How like a God." "Ooooh! Am I!") or Benny as Richard III dramatically shout the phrase "My kingdom for a Maxwell," followed by Mel Blanc's loud, deathly sputtering, and the line "On second thought..."

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:14](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

2 comments:

Anonymous [3 June 2014 at 05:07](#)

The Jack Benny Show of 11th January 1936 has "Romeo and Juiliet" but it's done in the style of a minstrel show so it's rather non-PC.

[Reply](#)



Yowp [3 June 2014 at 06:57](#)

Anon, you're quite right and I completely forgot about it, partly because it's a sketch within a sketch within a show and partly because I wince at the minstrel concept.

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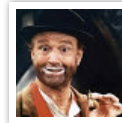
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Born on July 18, 1913 - [Red Skelton](#) - *Today's post commences

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

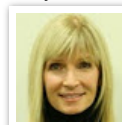
[Cartoon Research](#)

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

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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

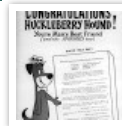
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TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

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[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

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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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