



Sunday, 8 March 2015

## Plug Plug Plug

Plugola on radio comedy shows was good for everyone, it seems. A company got a free plug. Audiences got laughs. Writers got freebie gifts in return.

For a period of a few years, no comedian seemed to take advantage of this more than Jack Benny. He had a sure-fire laugh formula based on his character being cheap. Someone on his show would mention a product, then Benny would joke that the mention would result in him getting the product for nothing. One show topped it by turning it into one of Benny's great running gags that always came out of nowhere—Frank Nelson played a man who interrupted a scene later in the show by delivering the product.

Script writer Milt Josefsberg explained in his book about the Benny show that situation wasn't quite as it played out on radio. Benny would rarely take advantage of the plug, he said; the company getting the freebie would generally send alcohol to the writers.



It seems the idea of inserting plug-gags on a radio show didn't always originate with its writer. Witness this interesting column that appeared April 8, 1948:

### Radio Full of Ad Plugs Sugar-Coated as Gags

By **ALINE MOSBY**

*United Press Correspondent*

HOLLYWOOD

The radio shows are getting so shot full of sneaked-in ads, disguised as gags, that you wonder how they have time for the commercial the sponsor is paying for. These plugs most listeners don't know about.

They hear Jack Benny make a crack about which end of a Studebaker you get into. Or Bob Hope spiel about somebody who combs his hair with a Mixmaster. They yak at the gags and figure the trademarks got there by accident.

Not in this bright commercial age. . . . The plugs are out-and-out ads. But neither Benny and Hope, their writers, nor the networks get paid for 'em. The only guy who does is the "script plugger." He takes dough from companies to get their names mentioned in a gag on a radio show.

#### Gift-Sending Part Of Ad Plugging

Script pluggers, we always thought, were mole-like characters who pulled slick deals with customers in the back booths of dim bars on Vine St. We found one sprinting around in broad daylight.

"This is strictly on the up-and-up," says Joe Gardner.

"We do not," he added indignantly, "pay writers to plug our clients in their scripts. Of course, we send them gifts, but that's just to cultivate their good will . . ."

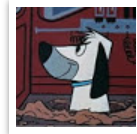
He operates this way: He takes a script-writer for the Benny show, say, to lunch.

"Got a great gag on a Studebaker," he barks to the writer, and tells it to him. The gag's good. The writer says thanks, he'll use it.

"Everybody's happy," beams Mr. Gardiner. "My client gets a plug on a radio show that would cost him thousands if he bought it as a sponsor. He gets the plug for practically nothing—just the few hundred he pays me.

"The writer's happy. He has a good gag and a bottle of scotch I send him. Benny likes the gag, too."

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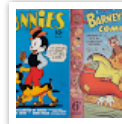


**Cowboy Church #67**  
- Hello my friends and welcome back for another

service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe...

1 hour ago

### **Termite Terrace headlines**

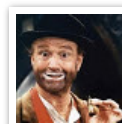


**Question for All You Cartoon Collectors!** - OK so I've been doing some

looking around. Bosko apparently had a comic book and I'm wondering if any of you know of additional covers you could share! ...

10 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**

(f...

1 day ago

### **Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons**



**'Cozy Bear' Group Tied to Hacks on Covid Vaccine Research. - ©2020**

fernandollercartoons.com

1 day ago

## Free Merchandise Helps Get Plugs

Hey, what about the networks, we said. After all, they're in business to get paid for the ads they broadcast, aren't they?

"Sure, the radio boys raised a fuss for a while," grinned Mr. G.

They shut up, he whispered, after the "script pluggers" began furnishing free merchandise for give-away shows. If the radio folks had to buy all the prizes they hand out to giggling contestants, they'd be out a few million bucks a year.

The give-away show is where Gardiner operates best. He loads 'em down with prizes like ball-bearing lipstick (for making-up under water), things to bake potatoes in atop a stove, egg beaters with low and high gears, shoulder pads for coat hangers, etc., etc.

Each time the master of ceremonies gives one of these treasures away, he lovingly describes it. The lady gets her prize that the show didn't have to pay for, the company gets a cheap plug, and Gardiner collects his commission.

There's only one guy who doesn't profit by this neat arrangement—the sponsor who pays for the show. Why he hasn't kicked up a storm yet, we don't know. Once the sponsor of a give-away show took a test. The ladies in the studio audience were asked to tell what the show advertised. Each carefully listed the brand names of all the fantastic prizes. Not one remembered the company that only shells out several thousand dollars a week so the housewives can win those things!

The most famous plug on the Benny show likely occurred on November 27, 1949:

JACK: And Rochester, the evenings are getting chilly so don't forget to plug in my General Electric blanket.

ROCH: Boss, boss, we haven't got a General Electric blanket.

JACK: We've got one now. *(laughter and applause)* I'm *(ad-libs)* oh, brother, will my home be full of General Electric blankets. *(resumes script)* I'm going into the den and read now.

ROCH: Are you gonna walk or shall I drive you in a Cadillac?

JACK: Let's not over-do it.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:23](#)



Labels: [Aline Mosby](#), [Jack Benny](#)

## 3 comments:



**J Lee** 8 March 2015 at 16:55

The first episode of Season 10 of the TV contains what may be the only freebie "thank you" plug, in which the running gag is Don Wilson and the Sportsmen Quartet have been out of the country over the summer and don't know Jack's switched sponsors and the Quartet can't stop singing about Lucky Strike (it's hard to kick a 15-year singing habit....)

[Reply](#)

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**It's So Hanna-Barberaesque** 9 March 2015 at 10:59

And speaking of the Sportsmen Quartet, one of its members (as alternated the tenor role) was the late Thurl Ravenscroft, as later voiced Tony the Tiger and Toucan Sam for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and Froot Loops, respectively.

[Reply](#)



**bgrauman** 8 March 2015 at 17:22

General Electric DID send electric blankets to the Jack and the cast, despite the "plug" being strictly a gag, and intended to be nothing more. A few years later, Jack wanted to buy a TV set for a less affluent friend, and Josefsberg told him to wait until he and the writers could figure out a way to get it "free". They did it during the episode where Jack imagines himself being married to Mary, and Joan appeared as their teenage daughter. She's entertaining her boyfriend in the living room, and he notices a photo of Jack in a Navy uniform on top of the TV set. "Gee, you must be proud of him", the boy says. "Underneath, it says 'Admiral!'. "That's the name of the television set", Joanie insists. The gag got a laugh, and Admiral sent Jack a TV set a few days later.

[Reply](#)



**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

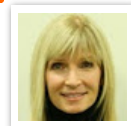


**Cartoon Research**

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...  
3 days ago



**The World of Knight**

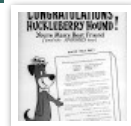
TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT



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

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**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*

 **Peter Gray's Comics and Art**  
 An early  
Tom Thug  
page for  
sale and  
other comic  
art by Lew  
Stringer go  
to link and ebay.. -  
<http://lewstringercomics.blogspot.com/2020/02/original-art-for-sale.html>  
[https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?\\_\\_nk=\\_\\_armrs=1&\\_ipg=&\\_from=](https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?__nk=__armrs=1&_ipg=&_from=)  
*5 months 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...  
*1 day ago*

Blog Archive

- ▶ [2020](#) (215)
- ▶ [2019](#) (376)
- ▶ [2018](#) (379)
- ▶ [2017](#) (380)
- ▶ [2016](#) (396)
- ▼ [2015](#) (389)
  - ▶ [December](#) (33)
  - ▶ [November](#) (30)
  - ▶ [October](#) (33)
  - ▶ [September](#) (32)

- ▶ [August \(34\)](#)
- ▶ [July \(32\)](#)
- ▶ [June \(33\)](#)
- ▶ [May \(33\)](#)
- ▶ [April \(31\)](#)
- ▼ [March \(33\)](#)
  - [Sheep Wrecked Pan](#)
  - [Out You Go Once And For All](#)
  - [Johnny Green](#)
  - [We're Not in Kansas Any More, We're in Ottawa](#)
  - [Hot and Cold Cat](#)
  - [The Last Hungry Cat Backgrounds](#)
  - [The Other Jolson](#)
  - [Take That, You Rat](#)
  - [Son of Beauty and The Beast](#)
  - [Jack Benny's History of Comedy](#)
  - [He was Popeye?](#)
  - [The Little Flame](#)
  - [The \(Cartoon\) Voice](#)
  - [Gilligan, Danny Clover and the Dinosaur](#)
  - [The S.S. Leon](#)
  - [Woody the Lady Killer](#)
  - [A Real/Fake Jack Benny Show No. 2](#)
  - [San Antonio, Cartoon Capital](#)
  - [Gene Gene](#)
  - [You Silly Goose](#)
  - [Shrinking Pupil Take](#)
  - [Were Bob and Ray a Success?](#)
  - [Dogs Catch On](#)
  - [Pop Up Rabbits](#)
  - [Plug Plug Plug](#)
  - [That's \(Crash! Boom! Tinkle! Zorp!\) Oswald](#)
  - [Climbing Mannequins](#)
  - [Night Owls](#)
  - [What Made Fibber and Molly](#)
  - [It's Brown. No, It's Green](#)
  - [Fox Catches Dog](#)
  - [The Golden Dayton Allen](#)
  - [A Star in Spite of Herself](#)
- ▶ [February \(30\)](#)
- ▶ [January \(35\)](#)

- [2014](#) (390)
- [2013](#) (388)
- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

<a href="#">Aline Mosby</a> (17)
<a href="#">Art Davis</a> (33)
<a href="#">Bad Luck Blackie</a> (9)
<a href="#">Bob and Ray</a> (10)
<a href="#">Bob Clampett</a> (82)
<a href="#">Bob McKimson</a> (59)
<a href="#">Bob Thomas</a> (53)
<a href="#">Chuck Jones</a> (142)
<a href="#">Columbia</a> (33)
<a href="#">Counterfeit Cat</a> (8)
<a href="#">Cynthia Lowry</a> (26)
<a href="#">Dick Thomas</a> (14)
<a href="#">Don Patterson</a> (17)
<a href="#">Earl Wilson</a> (6)
<a href="#">Erskine Johnson</a> (37)
<a href="#">Felix the Cat</a> (27)
<a href="#">Film Daily</a> (50)
<a href="#">Fleischer</a> (154)
<a href="#">Frank Tashlin</a> (24)
<a href="#">Fred Allen</a> (43)
<a href="#">Fred Brunish</a> (11)
<a href="#">Friz Freleng</a> (137)
<a href="#">Gene Deitch</a> (18)
<a href="#">George Pal</a> (10)
<a href="#">Grant Simmons</a> (4)
<a href="#">Hanna and Barbera unit</a> (99)
<a href="#">Hanna-Barbera</a> (2)
<a href="#">Harman-Ising</a> (61)
<a href="#">Henry Morgan</a> (13)
<a href="#">Irv Spence</a> (8)
<a href="#">Jack Benny</a> (453)
<a href="#">Jay Ward</a> (30)
<a href="#">Jimmy Durante</a> (17)
<a href="#">John Crosby</a> (84)
<a href="#">John Sutherland</a> (28)
<a href="#">Johnny Johnsen</a> (27)
<a href="#">Kenny Baker</a> (6)
<a href="#">King-Size Canary</a> (8)
<a href="#">Laugh-In</a> (11)
<a href="#">Legend of Rockabye Point</a> (6)
<a href="#">Little Rural Riding Hood</a> (7)
<a href="#">Magical Maestro</a> (9)
<a href="#">Maurice Noble</a> (12)
<a href="#">Mel-O-Toons</a> (4)
<a href="#">MGM</a> (553)

<a href="#">Norm McCabe</a>	(5)
<a href="#">Pat Matthews</a>	(10)
<a href="#">Paul Julian</a>	(13)
<a href="#">Paul Terry</a>	(2)
<a href="#">Sara Berner</a>	(5)
<a href="#">Screwy Squirrel</a>	(34)
<a href="#">Spider-Man</a>	(1)
<a href="#">Terrytoons</a>	(84)
<a href="#">Tex Avery</a>	(468)
<a href="#">Tom and Jerry Human</a>	(29)
<a href="#">Trafaz Sunday Theatre</a>	(17)
<a href="#">Ub Iwerks</a>	(80)
<a href="#">UPA</a>	(57)
<a href="#">Van Beuren</a>	(94)
<a href="#">Vernon Scott</a>	(42)
<a href="#">Virginia MacPherson</a>	(14)
<a href="#">Walt Disney</a>	(145)
<a href="#">Walter Lantz</a>	(241)
<a href="#">Warner Bros.</a>	(586)
<a href="#">Who Killed Who</a>	(10)