



Sunday, 8 May 2016

Blah About Benny

Jack Benny's radio show had top ratings through much of its life. Poor numbers didn't take it off the air in 1955; the main reason was the sponsor wanted to put more of its radio money into television.

The show generally got good reviews, though as time wore on some critics griped a bit about the sameness of the shows from year to year. Still, Benny knew what routines the audience wanted and that's what he gave them. "39", "the Maxwell" and poor violin playing never wore themselves out like Jack Pearl's "Wass you dere, Sharlie?" or Joe Penner's "Wanna buy a duck?" did in the 1930s.

One person who was miffed at the Benny show was *PM*'s columnist John T. McManus. Well, he wasn't miffed at the show per se. He was miffed that when Jack Benny brought his touring show to New York City in 1947, it was a warmed-over radio show, not a real vaudeville act. In a way, he had a point, but it doesn't look like Benny was promising much more than his radio show. It certainly wasn't as elaborate and eclectic as his touring company of the mid-'30s.



The show debuted on May 21, 1947 at the Roxy Theatre. This clipping isn't dated, but I presume it was from the next day's edition of *PM*. McManus saves his praise for Benny's "rival," Fred Allen, who was hired to be part of the show. We thank Kathy Fuller Seeley, who scanned this from Allen's personal scrapbook collection.

Allen Steals Benny's \$40,000-a-Week Show

As carefully planned for Jack Benny's stageshow opening at the Roxy yesterday morning, his radio rival Fred Allen popped up in the audience and aimed a few amiable ad libs at Mr. Benny, the audience, the press, etc., utterly convulsing even Mr. Benny.

Mr. Benny's show—including Phil Harris, Rochester, the Sportsmen Quartet from the radio cast and Miss Marjorie Reynolds as an added blonde attraction—is one of those things only a week-in-and-week-out radio fan could really love.

I recognize that no man is an Islande, as the old poem goes, and the virtually no American with his ears in working order can have entirely missed a weekly occurrence such as the Benny program.

Yet for that unhappy (or happy?) man existing the year 'round in an aural null, should he happen into the Roxy during the next two weeks, the Benny show I feel sure would prove interesting almost entirely because of the rest of the audience's joyous appreciation of much seemingly inexplicable stuff. Mr. Benny comes on, following the Gae Foster girls and their squires, blows kisses into two microphones on stage, and informs the audience that his last Roxy stage appearance was 12 years ago.

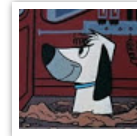
"I was such a big hit," he says proudly, "that they brought me back!"

That is broadly funny enough, I guess, for an opening line. No so funny, but at least topically alert, was the next crack, about the style in which he is living at the Sherry Netherland.

"I've been living so well since I got to town," he says, "that people think I'm on relief."

From there on, Mr. Benny mainly saunters on and off while others of his troupe do their stints. Rochester does a song-and-dance that wouldn't get within a mile of the stage on its own, and

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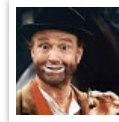


Some Cartoons For Saturday Morning #80 - Hello my friends

and welcome back for another selection of classic cartoons. Today's selection begins with one of the great Mickey, Donald and Goofy car...

5 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 (from Zieg...

6 hours ago

[Fernando Llera Blog](#) [Cartoons](#)

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

fernandollera.com



19 hours 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

Marjorie Reynolds' parts is solely to be passed from the arms of Mr. Benny to Mr. Harris in a very painful competition in kissing techniques.

As for Benny himself, his main fascination still seems to lie concealed somewhere in his professed inability to play *Love in Bloom* on the violin. Allen's scheduled intrusion came yesterday almost at the conclusion of the Benny troupe's act. he rose from somewhere down front in the audience during one of Benny's false starts on the violin and strode up on the stage. A half-dozen or so photographers clustered in front of the stage. Allen, fedora hat in hand and the inevitable bundle of newspapers under his arm, peered down at them through the glaring footlights.

"What is this, PM?" he inquired. "Who's watching the office? They're all here!"

Mr. Allen eventually demanded his 80 cents admission back. The ads promised, he said, that he would die laughing at the Benny show.

"I'm still alive," he complained. They finally settled for a 12-cent refund of which Benny borrowed back a dime. Then Allen left, after no more than a four-minute visit, to a gust of applause such as I have seldom seen.

Benny's act closed with the blare of newsreel music blacking out his last, futile efforts to fiddle *Love in Bloom*.

Just to show you how inflation gets around, the Benny troupe collects a total of \$40,000 a week for their act at the Roxy. Repeat, \$40,000.

From a radio audience viewpoint, the Benny stage engagement is heaven-sent, since it can accommodate many thousands unable to attend a Benny broadcast. But strictly from the angle of an old vaudeville fan, \$40,000 a week is terrific recompense for not being able to fiddle *Love in Bloom*.

Whether this audio clip is from the show McManus witnessed is anyone's guess, but take a listen, along with other snippets of the Benny-Allen feud.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:02](#)



Labels: [Fred Allen](#), [Jack Benny](#)

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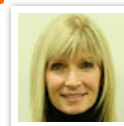
Preview

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Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

1 day 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

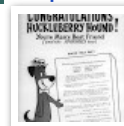
The World of Knight



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

3 days ago

Yowp

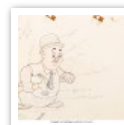


Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows - 63 years ago today, some

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

Termite Terrace headlines

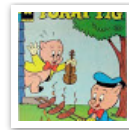
[Porky's Hot Dog Intake](#) - Western Publishing definitely isn't free of

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when it
comes to
comics
featuring
Porky Pig.
These are

just some of the covers in
which Porky is ei...

4 weeks ago

Peter Gray's Comics and Art



An early
Tom Thug
page for
sale and
other comic
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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=&_f rom=

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

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