



Sunday, 6 November 2016

Jack Benny Visits Texas

A few weeks ago, we posted a review of one of Jack Benny's seemingly innumerable benefit concerts, this one in Austin, Texas in 1966. Jack's arrival in Austin was a big deal, and there was a flurry of advance publicity and a number of events once he arrived. The State Senate made him an honorary Texan and gave him an engraved certificate attesting he was officially 39 years old. And there were the interviews.

Jack kept up a very taxing schedule. It's no wonder he tried to be as comfortable as possible as he met reporters day after day after day. It seems Jack preferred doing interviews in his hotel room while wearing his bathrobe. I've found a number of newspaper stories in the '60s in that setting.



Here are two from the *Austin Statesman*, first from February 1, 1966, the other from February 22nd. The second is unbylined, the first is by a reporter who positively gushes over the fact she met Jack Benny. Jack seems a little short-sighted about his comments on rock music; just ask fans of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or any of the long-time rock acts still touring today. Jack should have remembered people at one time thought Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra were young people's fads and wouldn't last, too.

CONCERT: Benny, Symphony Feb. 22

By KAY POWERS

Special Writer

Beg—borrow—go into hock if you have to—but get yourself the best seat possible for the Feb. 22 Jack Benny Benefit Concert with the Austin Symphony Orchestra. The man is terrific. Warmly human, wonderfully witty and absolutely amazing.

All this became apparent in a Houston hotel suite Sunday afternoon while Irving Fein, Jack Benny's long-time manager and friend, was talking over concert details with Mr. and Mrs. Dick Brown and another Austin couple. Brown, chairman of the committee which is going all out to make the Benny benefit a smashing success, was giving Fein the latest information on concert plans.

A door opened quietly and in wandered Jack Benny in a somewhat crumpled navy-and-white silk dressing gown—with nothing showing 'twixt it and the floor except two typically male legs and a pair of black socks! It wasn't a gag. It wasn't an act. It was Jack Benny being himself—and there is nothing more delightful than Jack Benny being himself, we learned in the next 90 minutes.

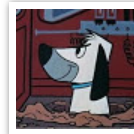
Despite the fact that not one penny of the receipts on the Austin concert will go to the Benny vaults, he was eager to hear how ticket sales are going. "In San Diego last Sunday—in Orlando Tuesday night and in Tampa Thursday night—a whole lot of people paid \$100 apiece for the concerts. Not just to hear me play, mind you, but for charity . . . my favorite charity, which happens to be good music."

"Pictures? Sure you can make pictures. Anybody who files from Austin to Houston just to work on plans for a symphony benefit with us is entitled to pictures," Benny smiles, and shortly thereafter he disappeared in the bedroom.

But it wasn't a change of attire he had in mind, because the plink-plink-plink of a violin being tuned came floating from the room and back came Jack Benny with his Stradivarius tucked under his chin. It did contrast rather strangely with the dressing gown and black socks.

He didn't play "Love In Bloom." Instead, he backgrounded our small talk with some agile arpeggios and

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several double-stopped passages that bespoke hours of practice and considerable skill.

"I knew you had to be a real musician," exclaimed Dick Brown. "Nobody who isn't a musician could make it sound so bad so consistently."

"No, I'm not," Jack insisted. "Honestly, I play as good as I can when I'm up there in front of a symphony orchestra—it just comes out lousy, that's all." At any rate, his hands are definitely those of an artist, and he punctuates his remarks with them freely. Although he was to have dinner with all the Astronauts this evening, he regaled us for an hour and a half with lively anecdotes from his several decades in showbiz. His memory is fantastic and his appearance amazingly youthful.

Learning that Brown hails from Corsicana, he remembered a week's stand there on the old Interstate vaudeville circuit back in the mid-twenties. For just a moment, he seemed annoyed that he couldn't recall the last name of a Texan he had known years ago.

"You know, Irv, I really must be getting old," he remarked. It could have been a real scoop for us—except Jack Benny's delightful humor, quit wit and warm personality will always be 39 years young, and everyone knows it who comes in contact with him.

Austinites will have several opportunities to rub elbows with this famous comedian-fiddler-philanthropist when he comes into town this month. The really Big Spenders (those seeing the concert via seats in the front rows with \$100 donations to the cause) will enjoy a dinner with Jack on Monday night.

Tickets for the concert, which promises to be one of the season's most glittering social events as well as a bonanza of fun and music, are now on sale at Dillard's of Austin, Hemphills and J.R. Reed Music Co. They range in price from \$3.50 to \$100 . . . and the top-bracket ones (\$50 and \$100) carry the privilege of meeting Mr. Benny after the concert at a gala champagne reception "on stage."

Invitations for the Monday night dinner and the Tuesday night reception are being handled by a special committee which may be contacted through the Austin Symphony Office.

Benny the Fiddler To Fiddle Tonight

Crank up the Maxwell, Rochester, it's almost time to go hear Jack Benny.

That's what hundreds of Austinites will be saying shortly before 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Benny will join the Austin Symphony Orchestra for a benefit concert in Municipal Auditorium.

Although a near-capacity crowd is expected, seats in nearly all price ranges will be available at the auditorium box office until curtain time. Only the \$100 seats are already sold out.

Benny arrived at Municipal Airport shortly after noon Monday. He came here from Corpus Christi, where he performed Sunday night.

As the plane rolled up to the airport gate, Vincent DiNiro was leading the Longhorn Band through a deliberately off-key version of "Love in Bloom," the familiar Benny theme.

On hand to greet the visiting comedian-musician were Austin Symphony maestro Ezra Rachlin, benefit concert chairman Richard F. Brown and other civic officials.

Mayor Lester Palmer showed Benny the street marker that changed Congress Avenue to Jack Benny Avenue for the comedian's visit.

Texas Ranger Captain Clint Peoples stepped up to present Benny the traditional 10-gallon hat. Later at a press conference at the Crest Hotel, Benny fielded a wide variety of questions candidly and cheerfully. Among the subjects and responses:

On traveling with two violins: "I travel like a real fine violinist. I've got all the equipment, but it's all in the case."

On his musical talent: "I'm probably the worst violinist giving concerts. In fact, I wouldn't be permitted to give concerts if I didn't have something else to do as part of it. When I make mistakes, people think I'm doing it purposefully. But I can be quite modest and say my concerts are delightful."

On his leisurely manner of speech: "People think my timing is good because I talk slow. When Milton Berle does 10 minutes, it would last me an entire season."

On today's pop music: "Rock 'n' roll is fine—if everybody likes it. But I think people will get tired of it. I can only compare it to, say, jungle drums, though. Of course, I've got the Righteous Brothers to work with me soon in Lake Tahoe. If people don't want to see me, they can see them. I'm only interested in doing business. I don't care who does it."

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:38](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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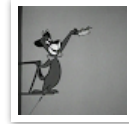
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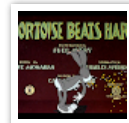
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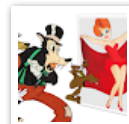


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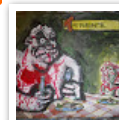
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New blog on my Art work...Original art...prints for sale petergrayart

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- I don't want to start a practice of publishing an interview every time someone from Ren & Stimpy dies, but Chris Reccardi (1964-2019) was too important a f...
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[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...
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[Swamp](#) - Director: Gil Alkabetz Release Date: October 1992 Rating: ★★★★★ Review: With 'Swamp' Gil Alkabetz showed to be a strong new

voice in the animation
world. M...
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