



Sunday, 12 March 2017

Buck Benny Interviews Again

Westerns giveth and Westerns taketh away.

In the late 1930s, Jack Benny rode his Western serial parody, "Buck Benny Rides Again," from a series of parody sketches on his radio show to a feature film, enriching his bank account along the way. In the late 1950s, TV Westerns were all the rage, and *Maverick* ate into the Benny TV audience. For example, *Variety* reported on March 11, 1958 that the Trendex ratings had *Maverick* at 27.1 and Benny at 19.7. Television columnists started raising the question of whether this was the beginning of the end for Jack Benny. Jack got a little testy when asked about it in some interviews.

There was one interview, though, where Jack seems to laugh off the competition. The interviewer was...himself. Or so we are to believe in this feature story in the *New York Herald Tribune* of May 4, 1958. He's in character for the first part of it until he gets to the questions about Westerns. His responses about young comedians were repeated in other interviews. And he almost seems to try to placate Mary Livingstone with his "answer" about her forcing him to practice his violin in the bathroom (she did) by making light of it.

BENNY DOES A "double-take"

The multi-talented Jack Benny can even interview himself!

Jack: Q. Tell me Mr. Benny, to what do you attribute your legendary success in show business? (The book said to always begin an interview with a pleasant question to get your subject in a pleasant mood.)

Benny: A. *Well, my natural modesty makes that question a little difficult to answer, but since you asked, I have to be honest. Talent, what else!*

Q. Do you feel that if you had not entered show business you would have been as successful in another field, for instance, banking, or finance?

A. *Now that's a ridiculous question. Banking is a hobby with me. Why just this morning I was discussing a loan with the head of one of the nation's big banks. Incidentally, I had to refuse them.*



"Yes, I like money. Who doesn't? Matter of fact, you might say I collect money."

Q. Many times on television reference is made to your blue eyes. Tell me, Mr. Benny, are your eyes really blue?

A. *Bluer than the winner of a bathing beauty contest in Nome, Alaska.*

Q. Recently you celebrated your 40th birthday on *Shower of Stars*. Are you really 40?

A. *Well, age is a relative condition and I'm not sure. I don't feel 40, and you must admit, I certainly don't look 40. Many of my fans don't believe I'm 40, and besides I feel when a person reaches 40 he's entitled to forget a year or two. I may go back to begin 39—out of deference to my fans, of course.*

Q. You are often depicted as something of a tightwad on your television programs. Are you really cheap?

A. *Of course not. It's just that I detest ostentation in anyone, particularly myself. Check grabbers and spend-thrifts are such show-offs. I have always felt that being a celebrity anyway, I should allow someone else the limelight given the flashy spender who makes a big thing out of picking up a check.*

Q. Are you really as devoted to money as your writers

would have the public believe?

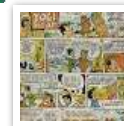
A. *Certainly not. True, I like money. Who doesn't? As a matter of fact, you might say I collect money. But, after all, lots of people collect things. Stamps, valuable paintings, first editions, things like that. When you*

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graciously offered to send scans of the Yogi Bear and Flintstones weekend newspaper comics he had collected over the ...

1 hour ago



Cartoon Research

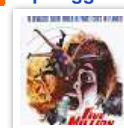
Bugz' Livez: Antz (pt. 2) -

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8 hours ago



Rip Jagger's Dojo



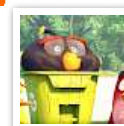
Five Million Years To Earth! - It's felt like five million years sometimes.

I've yearned to have "Five Million Years to Earth" *or as it's otherwise know* Quatermass and the Pit i*n my ...

10 hours ago



Movies with Michael



Movie Review: The Angry Birds Movie 2 - Michael's Movie

Grade: B+ To be honest I didn't care for the first *Angry Birds Movie*. I simply just did not find that film enjoyable. That is what made ...

14 hours ago

examine a dollar bill closely, it is a work of art. The engraving, the ink colors, even the texture of the paper. It's a fascinating and practical hobby, and you don't have to buy frames, or books in which to keep your collection.

Q. That brings up another question. Do you really have an underground moat around your vault?

A. Of course not. Moats went out with the middle ages. It's true I have a sunken fish pool—but not by any stretch of the imagination could it be called a moat.

Q. Do you keep tropical, or gold fish in your pool?

A. Neither. I tried both, but the alligators kept eating them.

Q. Do you feel that Western television programs have really hurt comedians?

A. Not at all. As a matter of fact some of the Westerns are pretty funny.

Q. Not that many comedians feel that way about Westerns. How do you find them funny?

A. Well, the hero for instance never gets his hat knocked off in a fight which usually puts at least three men in the hospital and leaves the saloon in a shambles. Another instance is where the hero, after chasing the dirty villain all over the badlands for days, finally catches him, gets the drop of him, and then throws away the gun and finished the villain off in a fist fight.

Q. Do you feel that the Westerns portray an important segment of American history?

A. Yes they do. The Western towns, complete with wooden sidewalks, old sideboard buildings with gaslights, these things all recreate an era in history. I find no fault with Westerns. How can anyone criticize something the public so obviously likes. As a matter of fact, I like them.

Q. Since you decided to be serious for a moment, do you see in the current Western craze any threat to comedy or comedians?

A. No, I don't. History will prove that comics have been around almost as long as civilization itself. Clowns, court jesters, and the like, were important factors in the earliest civilizations, which I am sure, you will admit, predates the cowboy era. Humor however is where you find it. A cowboy named Will Rogers managed to combine comedy and the old West into a pretty successful career.

Q. As long as we are on a serious note, let's continue for a minute. Do you feel the chances of young comedians breaking into show business today are as good as the time that you started?

A. I don't feel young comics have much the same chance. In the old days you could be terrible in vaudeville and no one knew it but the handful in the audience. Today, if a comedian is bad his first time on television, the whole country knows it at once.

Q. Your mention of a place in which to be bad brings up another point—your violin playing. Is it true that Mary makes you practise in the bathroom?

A. Of course not. I practise there from choice. The colors are restful and besides I can practise there without being interrupted by the doorbell or the telephone.



(Above, with Mary Livingstone, Maurice Chevalier): "Spendthrifts are showoffs."

enjoy giving concerts anyway.

Q. Do you find all of these concerts rewarding?

A. Very much so. They are all done for charity, with the proceeds going to some worthwhile cause.

Q. Last year, in Las Vegas, you played your first nightclub date. Did you enjoy it, and are you planning to do more nightclub dates?

A. I enjoyed playing the Flamingo very much. It's wonderful to work in front of an audience, and the



Benny: "TV Westerns haven't hurt comics. Matter of fact, some of 'em are funny!"

Q. Do you consider yourself a great fiddler?

A. Well, my concert itinerary should answer that question. Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Philharmonic, the Toronto Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, and recently I played a concert in Kansas City—sponsored by former President Harry Truman. That's no borscht circuit.

Q. True, true, but you still haven't answered the question. Do you consider yourself great?

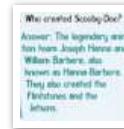
A. Well, I'll admit I'm no Jascha Heifetz.

Q. Then why do you keep giving concerts?

A. Well, if I may be serious again for a minute, I give concerts because for one thing I love good music. I have always been interested in it, and I do study the violin seriously. Granted, I'm a very bad fiddler, but I

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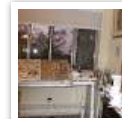
Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Sunday String Swing - *Continuing the thread from last Sunday's

post, as the following caricature of Django ...
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The World of Knight



LAST NIGHT - The sky was a beautiful color last night.

1 week ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Rocketty Ann's Mystery Flight! - Here are pages 5 through eight of "Rocketty Ann and the Lost World". There's delightful fantasy here as Rocketty Ann and Bla Bla take a ride on the back o...
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Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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

ist@gmail.com for prices etc... -
 https://petergrayart.blogspot

audiences in Las Vegas are the best in the world. Yes, I do plan more nightclub dates. As a matter of fact I'm returning to the Flamingo for four more weeks this summer.

Q. I've heard reports that a lot of entertainers who play in Las Vegas take a terrible beating in the gambling casinos. With your respect for money, doesn't this cause you considerable concern?

A. Jack, this may come as a shock to you, but the only way I could get hurt in Las Vegas is if an earthquake topples a slot machine over my foot.


Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:11](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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5 weeks ago

 **Supervised By Fred Avery: Tex Avery's Warner Brothers Cartoons**



Coming Soon To This Blog...

2 months ago

What About Thad?

[Chris Reccardi Interviewed](#)

- 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...

2 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...

6 months ago

Kids, Eh?

[#1288: Bird Call](#) - #1288: Bird Call

10 months ago

 **Cartoons, Model Sheets, & Stuff**



[Pete Hothead Model Sheets](#) - Here are a few model sheets from

the first Pete Hothead short. Released in 1952 and directed former Tom & Jerry animator Pete Burness. Ted Parmelee was the...

1 year ago

 **Dr. Grob's Animation Review**

[Posljednji valcer u starom mlinu \(Last Waltz in the Old Mill\)](#) - In this latter-day Zagreb Film studio short two grains change into a prince and princess who waltz around a remote water mill.

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