



Sunday, 21 May 2017

Mad, Mad Jack

Stanley Kramer shoehorned as many comedians as he possibly could in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963). One of them, appearing for roughly 15 seconds, was Jack Benny in a pretty good looking antique car.

An expert on this film, I'm not. And one of the things I didn't know was that Jack Benny was supposed to have been the lead. Instead, the part went to Spencer Tracy, who I think was a far better choice.



Jack's movie career pretty much ended with *The Horn Blows at Midnight* (1945), an odd film that Benny continually ridiculed thereafter on his radio show. But there was a time when he was starring for several movie studios simultaneously (in an era of contract players) and his comedic films got good reviews and attracted big audiences.

Here are a couple of United Press International columns where Jack refers to the lead in *Mad*, etc. First up is a piece from 1962.

Jack Benny, Recovered From 'Horn,' Coming Back

By JAMES BACON

HOLLYWOOD, Feb. 2, (UPI) — Jack Benny, blamed by many for the present disastrous state of movies, is returning to the scene of his crimes to appear in a new picture.

It is not uncommon in this community to date the decline of films back to "The Horn Blows at Midnight," which Benny petulantly admits was something less than a classic.

"But they forget my hits," he protests.

Jack, who is either the oldest 39-year-old in the world or the youngest 67, was propped up in bed in his luxurious Beverly Hills home. The comedian wasn't sick. He just enjoys lying in bed when he isn't working—which is most of the time.

Jack admits he is enthusiastic about returning to the silver screen, but undoubtedly would be ecstatic if it were the golden screen.

Benny's first flicker appearance since "The Born Blows at Midnight" in 1946, will be in Mervyn Leroy's "Gypsy." He describes his role as a "cameo" part as differentiated from a walk-on.

"It's the kind of thing you do for a friend like Mervyn," Jack said. "I play scenes from the old days of the Palace Theater in New York. I think the part will be kinda cute."

It was suggested Jack's track record in movies might cause a whammy on Leroy's picture and bring their friendship to a screaming halt.

"My record isn't that bad," Jack sniffed indignantly.

"People forget I made 20 pictures, none of which lost money. If you'll remember, I did do such things as 'Buck Benny Rides Again,' 'George Washington Slept Here,' 'Artists and Models' and 'Charlie's Aunt.' They were all very successful."

Somewhat mollified by his own defense, the CBS-TV star went further.

"Stanley Kramer wanted me to do his big new comedy, 'Mad, Mad, Mad World,' but I couldn't accept. It was a big part and would have taken up too much of my time.

"There was a lot of money in it, too," Jack said thoughtfully, almost as if this consideration could change his mind.

"No, no. I just can't do it. It would be impossible to take six or eight weeks away from my

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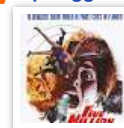
[Bugz' Livez: Antz \(pt. 2\)](#) -

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Rip Jagger's Dojo



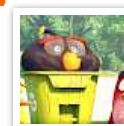
[Five Million Years To Earth!](#) - It's felt like five million years sometimes.

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

television show."

Modest to a fault, the violinist said his appearance in "Gypsy" does not signal a full fledged movie comeback, although the industry could well be grateful for such a shot in the arm.

"Television is taking up all my time now," he explained, "just as radio did a few years ago. I gave up pictures because it was impossible for a comedian to find good directors in those days. Now that there are many fine ones around I haven't time." Benny pulled the blankets up around his chin and smiled. "I'm playing myself in the Leroy picture--as I was back in vaudeville days," he said. "They will probably want me to wear a toupee, but I'm really not sure that I need it."

This story is from 1963.

Benny 'almost' makes a film

By JOSEPH FINNIGAN

HOLLYWOOD, Jan. 5 (UPI)—Jack Benny came perilously close to making a motion picture comeback recently, which would have filled the need for a violin-playing comedian, assuming there is such a void.

As a performer, Benny's popularity was first attained on radio, nurtured by a movie career which now appears in the dim past and cemented in television where he ranks with the best.

Benny almost returned to feature films recently in the multi - million dollar comedy "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." He was supposed to play the police inspector's role which finally went to Spencer Tracy.

BETTER FOR TRACY

"I personally think the picture is better for Tracy," Benny said. "At the end of the picture he has the comedy scene and he's funny. It's sort of a pivot for the whole thing."

Benny's heavy television schedule ruled out the picture for him so the world must wait a little longer for Jack's comeback.

"If I ever found a real great picture I would do it," he said.

"If I could get a movie as good as 'To Be or Not to Be,' I would have to make it.

"I was in the picture with Carole Lombard. It was one of the best comedies ever made, that's what everybody says. I made it about 1941 and it's still being played in foreign countries. It looks better now."

FILMS MADE MONEY

Benny is one of the first in Hollywood to joke about his own movies, especially his somewhat less than epic picture, "The Horn Blows at Midnight." Apparently nobody heard the horn because the film has never been considered an industry classic. But Benny made other films, some of which earned money.

"Nearly all of my pictures made money," Benny said.

"Out of 20 pictures I made, about 15 of them were good ones. Some that looked good then might not look so good now, though."

BROADWAY SHOW

Benny has only four more CBS-TV shows to complete for the 1962-63 season, then it's off to New York for a Broadway show, his first in more than 30 years.

"I'm going to do two weeks in Toronto and then the Ziegfeld Theater in New York," the comedian said. "It'll be called 'Jack Benny on Broadway' and will be like a very intimate review, two acts."

Benny will unlimber his fiddle for the New York appearance.

"But not like I do in concerts," said Jack, a note of self-satisfaction in his reference to the classics.

Jack had one more "mad" experience. He was one of the co-stars in the animated TV special *Mad, Mad, Mad Comedians* (1970). Had he still been on radio, he would have been making jokes about that one, too.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:31](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

2 comments:



J Lee 21 May 2017 at 11:39

You can kind of see where Kramer would think of Jack, because greed is the driving force for almost everyone in the movie, and one of the main aspects of Jack's radio/TV persona was built around that trait. But the role also has a little more pathos than what audiences were used to from Jack (not that he couldn't do a slightly more serious role, as in "To Be or Not To Be", but there's a bit of sadness to Tracy's police inspector that would have been a little bit out of place with how audiences had come to view Jack's avarice).

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Walt Disney. Today, I'll be talking about Hanna and Barbera. We all know that William Hanna and Joseph Barbera defi...

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The World of Knight



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

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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

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<https://petergrayart.blogspot>

Replies



Sarah Thunell 21 May 2017 at 11:46

Jack was also considered for the lead in Father of the Bride, but, ironically, Spencer Tracy got that one too.

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Chris Reccardi Interviewed
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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

Paranoja (Paranoia) - 'Paranoia' is a short film (lasting only four minutes) about a young man who thinks he's followed on the street.
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Blog Archive

- 2019 (234)
- 2018 (379)
- ▼ 2017 (380)
 - December (33)
 - November (32)
 - October (32)

- ▶ [September](#) (32)
- ▶ [August](#) (33)
- ▶ [July](#) (33)
- ▶ [June](#) (31)
- ▼ [May](#) (31)
 - [Kathleen Freeman](#)
 - [You Dropped Something](#)
 - [Done Swallered a Television](#)
 - [1002 Roxbury Drive](#)
 - [Cartoons in Theatres, 1961](#)
 - [Thanks a Lot, Harry](#)
 - [Silk Worm?](#)
 - [No, It's Not Ted Collins](#)
 - [Fleischer Suburbia](#)
 - [Tom Thumb in Trouble](#)
 - [Mad, Mad Jack](#)
 - [Crusader Rabbit: Waiting For the Whimsy](#)
 - [Drunken Dancing Turtles](#)
 - [Sea Wolf](#)
 - [Shakespeare's Second Banana](#)
 - [Coy Pitcher](#)
 - [Angry Adolf](#)
 - [How To Sign a Guest Star](#)
 - [Mighty Mouse the Money Mouse](#)
 - [A Lantz Cow](#)
 - [Just Order Two Seidels](#)
 - [The Human Joke Machine](#)
 - [Eyes of a Stuttering Pig](#)
 - [Pedestrian of Yesterday](#)
 - [Jack's Babe](#)
 - [Making Bosko](#)
 - [Blow Me Down](#)
 - [Quick Peter Lorre](#)
 - [Another Catastrastroke](#)
 - [Take That, Walt](#)
 - [Rubber Hose Ostrich](#)
- ▶ [April](#) (30)
- ▶ [March](#) (31)
- ▶ [February](#) (29)
- ▶ [January](#) (33)
- ▶ [2016](#) (396)
- ▶ [2015](#) (389)
- ▶ [2014](#) (390)
- ▶ [2013](#) (388)

- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

Aline Mosby	(16)
Art Davis	(30)
Bad Luck Blackie	(9)
Bob and Ray	(9)
Bob Clampett	(72)
Bob McKimson	(51)
Bob Thomas	(53)
Chuck Jones	(134)
Columbia	(25)
Cynthia Lowry	(24)
Dick Thomas	(12)
Don Patterson	(16)
Earl Wilson	(6)
Erskine Johnson	(36)
Felix the Cat	(24)
Film Daily	(50)
Fleischer	(137)
Frank Tashlin	(21)
Fred Allen	(37)
Fred Brunish	(9)
Friz Freleng	(127)
Gene Deitch	(16)
George Pal	(9)
Grant Simmons	(3)
Hanna and Barbera unit	(91)
Hanna-Barbera	(2)
Harman-Ising	(54)
Henry Morgan	(13)
Irv Spence	(8)
Jack Benny	(403)
Jay Ward	(30)
Jimmy Durante	(16)
John Crosby	(79)
John Sutherland	(23)
Johnny Johnsen	(25)
Kenny Baker	(6)
King-Size Canary	(6)
Laugh-In	(10)
Maurice Noble	(12)
Mel-O-Toons	(4)
MGM	(501)
Norm McCabe	(4)
Pat Matthews	(10)
Paul Julian	(13)
Sara Berner	(5)
Screwy Squirrel	(32)
Spider-Man	(1)
Terrytoons	(68)

Tex Avery (415)

Tom and Jerry Human (25)

Tralfaz Sunday Theatre (14)

Ub Iwerks (65)

UPA (51)

Van Beuren (81)

Vernon Scott (40)

Virginia MacPherson (14)

Walt Disney (126)

Walter Lantz (212)

Warner Bros. (523)

Who Killed Who (10)

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