



Sunday, 10 February 2019

## Benny Tries TV

Jack Benny's leap into television in fall 1950 might strike today's audiences as unusual. For one thing, Benny had no intention to be on every week. At first, he appeared every six weeks. For another, his first broadcast was 45 minutes; Benny felt he couldn't fit his material in a half hour so his sponsor went to the unusual lengths of purchasing the time period of the next half-show show and giving 15 minutes of it to Benny. And for another, technology hadn't been invented to send broadcast quality pictures from Los Angeles to the network, so stars had to fly to New York to do live broadcasts (the West had to watch the Benny shows later, aired from low-tech kinescopes).

We posted about Benny's debut show [here](#). Let's pass along some of Benny's thoughts as he was about to make his second TV broadcast on January 28, 1951 (it aired February 11th in Los Angeles) with guests Frank Sinatra, Faye Emerson and Frank Fontaine as John L.C. Sivoney. He talks about the difference between TV and radio, radio in general and TV audience burnout. The first is a United Press story of January 26th, the second a column in the Oakland *Tribune* two days later.



## Jack Benny Advises More Performers, Fewer Appearances For Successful TV

By ELIZABETH TOOMEY

UP Staff Correspondent

NEW YORK, Jan. 26. (UP) — Weekly television performers are like relatives who show up at the house too often, Jack Benny says. He's for more performers and fewer appearances, "to keep the excitement of show business."

The comedian, who agreed to do just four television shows this year, arrived here from the coast to rehearse for his second show next Sunday night and found things pretty crowded."

"First I couldn't get 45 minutes, only a half hour," he complained. "Imagine trying to crowd Faye Emerson, Frank Sinatra and me into 30 minutes. It's murder." Then when he called Sinatra and Faye, his two guest stars, for the first rehearsal, there was no studio available. That's why Benny was sitting on a straight chair in the middle of a deserted hotel ballroom while he talked. It was the only available rehearsal spot.

"It's different on radio, once a week is all right there. But when they see you," Benny took his cigar out of his mouth and shrugged, "well, you just get too familiar to them. The excitement gradually diminishes."

He doesn't agree with his competitors who talk about the terrific demands television puts on a performer. His professional personality as the perennial worrier was shed completely as he directed the rehearsal in an easy-going, relaxed way.

"I've done this sketch with Faye before on the stage," he said. "Then I can use some of the stuff I've done on radio. Television isn't so tough."



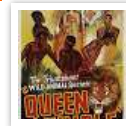
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11 hours ago

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Longest living animals in Chapultepec's Zoo in need of special

care. - ©2019 fernandollera.com  
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Cowboy Church #19 - Hello my friends and welcome to another addition of Cowboy Church. We start

He got up to begin the rehearsal.

"Now wait a minute everybody. I want to open the show with a guy walking into the dressing room with a toupee," Benny began.

"Does he wear a toupee?" somebody whispered, eyeing the comedian's receding hairline.

"Not even on television. That's a gag," was the answer. Then somebody asked Benny why his wife, Mary Livingston, wasn't on the show.

"There just isn't room in a half hour show," he answered. If some of the regulars would just move over, he said he'd be glad to expand the show. "But once a month is enough."

## On the Air

### with James Abbe

On the eve of his second swan dive into television, Jack Benny breaks out with a semi-obvious statement, in New York, that radio programs will have to be good, from now on, to withstand the competition of television. He (or whoever thought up that ponderous prediction) might have tacked on to the tail of the statement, "or vice versa." Because unless the producers of television programs start worrying soon, about what the public will do after the novelty of having reduced version of movies in the living room has worn off, a bored people may resort to the old-fashioned business of reading, or just looking out the window for a glimpse of the outside world.

### HEED THE KING

Be that as it may, any words which fall from the lips of Jack Benny, whether originating in his brain, or those of his writers, just have to be weighed and passed around because Jack Benny has just been voted the tops, the pay dirt, the champion of champions, by the Motion Picture Daily-Fame 15th annual poll of American newspaper, magazine, radio, editors and columnists. It is the third consecutive year that Benny has led the pack, in the organized, well financed, exploited and bally-hooed pursuit of public approval, radio-wise. Burning no bridges from radio as he approaches television, this Jack Benny, with the highest audience rating for any individual performer on radio, makes a point of studying television programs for what he can learn.

### McGEE QUESTION

Fibber McGee and Molly, guests on KLX a few weeks ago, stumped The Tribune's Alan Ward and Ray Haywood (from our sports department) and me, when they asked us, any one or all of us, to tell them why they should flirt with TV when they were still getting along fine in radio. They have, in fact, just been voted radio's top comedy team.

Jack Benny seems to have answered the same question from his standpoint. Benny has just said, that he likes to keep trying at television "because I am stage struck."

So let that be a lesson to all of us, even those of us who admit to being over 39; to remain infatuated with our respective jobs, and maybe we too, will be rated as No. 1 in our respective fields of activity.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:03](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

## 2 comments:

 [bgrauman](#) 10 February 2019 at 23:06

Anheuser-Busch, the brewers of Budweiser, graciously allowed American Tobacco to preempt "THE KEN MURRAY SHOW" so that Jack could appear in his first 45 minute special on October 28th {Ken briefly appeared during the special as well}. During the remaining 15 minutes (at 8:45), Wildroot Cream Oil sponsored what was essentially a Sam Levenson "audition", in which he presented one or two of famous monologues about growing up on the Lower East Side. Sam received enough favorable impression from critics and viewers for Oldsmobile to sponsor a weekly series featuring him the following January.

However, Jack wanted to present another 45 minute special by December. But CBS told him there were no other time periods available that would allow him to do that- and American Tobacco reminded Jack about their Sunday night 7:30pm(et) time period [where they sponsored "THIS IS SHOW BUSINESS", which featured Levenson as a panelist]...and insisted THAT was going to be Benny's "permanent" time slot for his future specials that season. Jack quickly learned how to present a half-hour program for the second special.



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our music selection off with The Sons of the Pioneers' 1947 recording of the go...  
1 day ago

 [The World of Knight](#)  
[SATURDAY AFTERNOON](#) - Nice view. I actually drew it into a panel



today.  
1 day ago


 [Termite Terrace headlines](#)  
 Animation Websites in the Archive #1 - The newest series!

These are some of the best websites on animation that are either unsung or just have been wiped out from the internet. Some of these si...

1 day ago

 [Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog](#)  
 The Classic Comedy Rorschach Test - \* In 13 years and 1072 posts, onl...

2 days ago

 [Yowp](#)  
 Fewer Drawings, More Gimmicks - Adult humour today isn't

what it was 60 years ago. Today, "adult" humour brings to mind a lot of sexual references and crudity. In other words, the stuff...

2 days ago

[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)  
[Racketty Ann's Mystery Flight!](#) - Here are pages 5 through eight of "Racketty Ann and the Lost World". There's delightful fantasy here as Racketty Ann and Bla Bla take a ride on the back o...

2 days ago


 [Peter Gray's Comics and Art](#)



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

[ist@gmail.com](mailto:ist@gmail.com) for prices etc.. - <https://petergrayart.blogspot.com/> Will update it like I do on facebook.


2 weeks ago

**Unknown** 13 February 2019 at 20:16

Benny actually made his TV debut on local LA station KTTV in 1949. KTTV carried CBS in those days before CBS bought channel 2. Probably a local shakedown to get his feet wet before going on the full network.

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




Coming Soon To This Blog...

1 month 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**

[Zozor ruine la réputation de sa famille \(Zozor Ruins the Reputation of His Family\)](#) - After his move to the United States in 1912 Émile Cohl starting experimenting with putting the idiom of comic strips to the animated screen, being the firs...

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