Sunday, 17 November 2019

# The Young Benny

People will always be cheap. People will always have a high opinion of themselves.

That's the reason Jack Benny's "character" works today. You could take Jack's character type—someone who would go to insane lengths to save a dollar, who felt he was a great star, ladies man and musician—put it on some streaming service and people would binge-watch (if the writing and acting were good). You can't do it with most of his variety show contemporaries. They're singers of old songs and tellers of old jokes. (Look how Bob Hope became a sad shell on TV specials at the end).

That premise was picked up by a columnist with the Herald Tribune News Service in 1958. Granted this was before the socially-conscious '60s when comedians felt obligated to try to do hip routines on television and looked like someone's grandfather embarrassingly trying to act 18. It was published on November 16th.

#### GOOD OLD DAYS ARE TODAY

### Through Jack Benny, Fans Thumb Nose at the Years By BOB SALMAGGI

(Copyright 1958, N. Y. Herald Tribune)

NEW YORK—Curious as it seems, TV audiences are inclined to accept Jack Benny as nothing but a latter-day comedian, even in the face of a rumor that it was he who stood by George Washington when he crossed the

Each time Benny attempts to pass himself off as a mere stripling, audiences nod assent and laugh with him. Through him, people vicariously thumb their noses at the passing years. It's almost as if they were saying, See? Jack Benny doesn't know the meaning of the word old. . . he'll always remain young, no matter how time flies. . .there'll always be Jack Benny.

For with Benny, the chronological element is quickly dismissed. It's as if he invented the adage, "You're as young as you feel."

In effect, Benny, like so many of his contemporaries—Sophie Tucker, Fred Astaire, Ed Wynn, Ted Lewis-thinks young. He lives young, acts young, and consequently feels young. So what if there are a few streaks of gray, a wrinkle or two where they shouldn't be-Benny and his confreres laugh at the years, and point the way to bigger things with each passing century.

In Benny's design for entertaining, however, there is one notable factor that sets him apart from Durante, Cantor and the rest. He guardedly steers clear of nostalgia in his act. He shuns saccharine sentiment, doesn't glorify the "good old days," nor does he deprecate today's show business standards. He doesn't throw verbal bouquets at his contemporaries without purpose, or adhere to the old-timer's practice of "sticking together."

Benny wisely stays aloof, plays it cool, and basks in the aura of modernism. The only major concession he makes to the bygone days is his show prop, the ancient Maxwell car, but this is strictly for effect,

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just for laughs. His act is as modern as sliced bread, and as wholesome. Although devoted to the proposition that Benny hates to part with a nickel, his television show and his nightclub act, even his concerts, are fastpaced, stylized and strictly up-to-date.

When you think of Sophie Tucker, you think of vaudeville, one-nighters, and torchy blues of yesteryear. So too with the Jessels, the Cantors, and others of his generation. But there's no kindling of old memories or old associations when Jack Benny strides on stage in that familiar style of his.

He is regarded as a latter-day comedian, period-a comedian who came up during the early days of radio and

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21 minutes ago

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fernandolleracartoons.com 15 hours ago

#### News From ME

JACK BENNY

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... 19 hours ago

#### Cartoon Research In His Own Words: H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor - Suspended

Animation #276 Many

vaudeville, to be sure, but one who made the transition to the fearsome new television medium, without so much as a dropped decimal point in his Hooper, or Trendex, if you will. Many who starred with Benny years ago tried to hurdle the obstacle of time and make a place for themselves on TV, but they weren't attuned to the times. They couldn't adapt themselves as did Benny, who has been riding high, wide and lucrative on radio and/or TV steadily since 1932.

In essence, his credo is to "keep working if you want to keep young." To this he adds: "I really hate it when I'm not busy enough. I mean that. When I'm idle it's then I begin to feel a little older. Look at Fred Astaire . .if he's not working, he's at home practicing like mad. He's better than ever these days . . but if he ever stopped working, well. . . "

It wasn't too long ago that Benny announced to a bemused world that he was going to turn forty. But these days he's feeling so chipper that he is "thinking about going back" to 39 very soon now.

"I was 36, you know, for a little over a year," mused Benny, "and then I turned 37 for a few years, but I hung on to 39 the longest. I guess I'll always be 39," he said with a sly grin.

"It's such a comfortable age."

Posted by Yowp at 07:09



Labels: Jack Benny

## 3 comments:

#### Gary 17 November 2019 at 12:16

I've read that when Benny was doing specials for NBC in the late 1960s and early '70s, he was very cautious about using his old "gang" (Rochester, Don Wilson, et al) because he never wanted his shows to feel like they were drawing on nostalgia for "the good old days." He certainly never came across as being hung up on how great radio was and aren't TV and movies terrible these days and, really, wasn't entertainment just better back then?

I think Bob Hope did his reputation a lot of harm by his insistence on working until his act was just a shadow of what it had once been. When I first began listening to him in his prime, his radio shows and movies from the 1940s and early '50s, I was surprised at how good he was.

#### Reply

#### Replies



Yowp 21 November 2019 at 02:22

What was surprising to me was how good Hope was in the early '50s on TV, having been used to the go-through-the-motions shows of later years.

I think Hope's radio show eventually ran out of material for Colonna and Vera Vague and his writers didn't create characters that captured people's imagination. I like Irene Ryan but not in any of the shows I've heard her on radio.

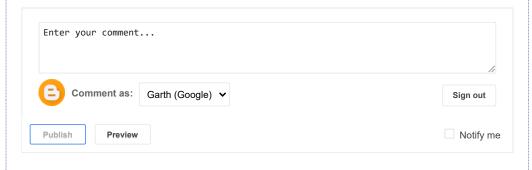
#### Reply



#### J Lee 18 November 2019 at 07:34

Hope and Benny in the 1940s and the 50s also shared the idea of self-deprecating humor. Many of the gags in their work were at the expense of the characters — in Bob's case, he was the cowardly womanizer in his movies (with or without Crosby). But that part of his persona was pretty much abandoned by the 1960s, while Jack continued to incorporate his on-stage flaws into his TV shows and specials, which is why they're re-watchable in ways Bob's shows from the same time period aren't.

#### Reply



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

## E The World of Knight



TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. -COPYRIGH T 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

## E Termite Terrace headlines

Porky's Hot Dog Intake -Western Publishing definitely isn't free of cannibalism when it comes 7/18/2020 Tralfaz: The Young Benny

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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 art by Lew Stringer go

#### to link and ebay .. -

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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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