



Sunday, 24 May 2020

Bring Back Vaudeville

Jack Benny may have spent plenty of time in front of microphones, and for a while staring at a motion picture camera, but he never did give up appearing live on stage.

Of course, he began his vaudeville career before World War One. In the '30s, after becoming a huge radio star, he mounted his own personal appearance tour with a singer, acrobatic act, and so on, just like a vaudeville show. During World War Two, he and his little unit of singers and musicians appeared before soldiers around the world. He was still appearing on stage when he went into television in the early '50s, and then expanded that with violin concert performances until his health gave out in 1974.

It's no surprise, perhaps, he was a little saddened by the demise of vaudeville at the hands of talkies and radio, and happy it got a boost 20 years later. He wrote for the UP about it (or someone ghosted for him) in a column published July 15, 1953. He, again, shows his affection and respect for other entertainers.



Benny Plans Tour In Vaudeville Show

(Jack Benny, CBS TV and radio star, is today's guest columnist during Jack Gaver's vacation.)

By JACK BENNY

Written For United Press

NEW YORK (UP)—Recently I completed a three-week engagement at the Curran Theatre in San Francisco. While I was there, a young couple rushed up to me in the lobby of my hotel, and the boy breathlessly asked, "Are you Jack Benny?" I nodded yes.

"Mr. Benny," he said. "we are on our honeymoon and seeing you here and on the stage last night is the biggest thrill we've had."

This is a rather sad commentary on honeymoons, but it does emphasize the fact that people do love to see actors entertain in person. And entertainers also love to entertain—in person. I know that I got such a kick out of my three-week stand in San Francisco that I plan to play a lot of cities around the country next year in a good old-fashioned vaudeville show.

Danny Kaye, Judy Garland, Betty Hutton and a lot of us feel the same way about it, and we all owe this revival of vaudeville in America to one man and he isn't even an American. His name is Val Parnell, and he's managing director of the Palladium Theatre in London.

When vaudeville died in America in the 1930s, all of us who love the theatre were very sad about its passing and felt there was nothing to do about it except mourn a phase of show business that was outdated.

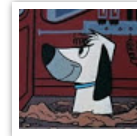
Although radio and television have been very good to me, I guess my first love is still the stage. I know I must be a ham. The old, trite familiar smell of the grease paint still smells good to me. And hearing the laughter and applause of a live audience night after night still sounds awfully pretty to those tired old ears.

In the old days, B. P.—Before Parnell—there weren't many of us who could take time off from radio and picture work to do a Broadway show. So, in order to go out and play to a live audience, we had to appear in the big picture theatre. We did make a lot of money. But five, six and seven shows a day is pretty tough when a man gets to be 39. And also, you always had the feeling that you were merely an extra added attraction.

But all this time, the variety theatre was doing very well in England, Ireland and Scotland, under the capable hands of Val Parnell and a few other showmen. However, in 1947, when business there started to slack off a bit, Val didn't shrug his shoulders and say, "too bad." He decided to import a flock of big name American stars to rejuvenate the variety theatre. His first big hit was Danny Kaye, and the rest is history.

Real Criticism

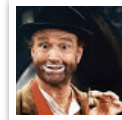
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with the Guzzler's Gin routine (from Ziegfeld Follies) by R...

33 minutes ago

Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons



'Cozy Bear' Group Tied to Hacks on Covid Vaccine Research. - ©2020

fernandollera.com
14 hours ago

News From ME

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...

18 hours ago

Movies with Michael



Summer Concert Series: Bob Dylan: No Direction Home (2005) -

Anyone who thinks because this film was directed by Martin Scorsese, it will be anything like 'The Last Waltz' *(1978) is dead wrong. This is much less of

...

1 day ago

Cartoon Research

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

I think Parnell knows more about vaudeville than any man in the business. I played the Palladium four times in the first six years and every suggestion or criticism Val had to offer was constructive, and a great improvement to my show. The Palladium policy is to do a strictly vaudeville first half of five acts, with a top star taking over the second half of the bill. All seats are reserved, and many Londoners buy their tickets a month in advance.

The night they come to the Palladium is a big event for these folks. And if the entertainment is good, they love every minute of it. Danny Kaye, Judy Garland, Betty Hutton, myself and many of the other Americans who came to the Palladium, kept asking each other "if the English people love this type of show so much, why shouldn't the Americans." None of us had the guts to try it—except Judy.

Judy Did It

Judy, who hadn't sung before a live audience in years and years, stepped out on the stage of the Palladium one night and stepped off to one of the greatest ovations ever recorded a star in all history. And when she finished her engagement, she was so thrilled with the warmth of the live audiences, she decided to try it at the Palace in New York. As we all know, Judy stayed 18 weeks, and could have stayed 18 more. Danny could have done the same.

Judy, Danny Kay and Betty Hutton found that if you give them a good show, people will come to see whether it's New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Kokomo, London or Glasgow.

So I know I am speaking for Danny, Judy, Betty and all the rest of the entertainers in the U.S.A., when I publicly say, "thank you, Val Parnell, for bringing vaudeville back to America."



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:20](#)



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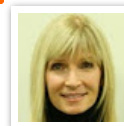
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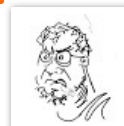


[Mary Turner](#)
1985 - Mary Turner today Mary Turner really

rocked the house. Normally when any of the jocks got a reaction, it'd be split. The ones that were really liked wou...

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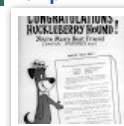
The World of Knight



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Yowp

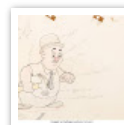


[Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows](#) - 63 years ago today, some

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



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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

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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...

23 hours ago

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