



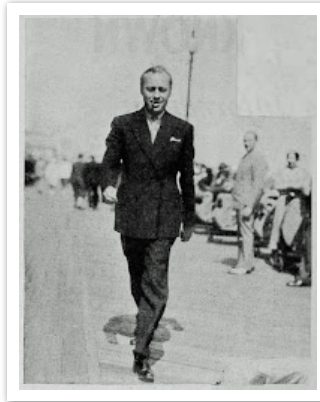
Sunday, 25 July 2021

Sneaking in a Commercial

Jack Benny loved making commercials a part of his show. He was one of the first to do it in 1932 on radio and carried on into the late 1960s when he hosted television specials (he was fortunate that one sponsor picked up the tab, something TV pretty much abandoned due to cost).

The book *A Decade of Radio Advertising*, published in 1933, pointed it out and also quoted an example.

There are two things interesting about it. One is that Jack's character isn't what it later became. No one on TV would assume he was dating a bevy of women or investing money in stocks. The whole idea of Benny being hauled off to a mental hospital is completely improbable; even Dennis Day didn't drive him that crazy.



The other thing is Jack and writer Harry Conn used this same routine, almost word-for-word, to open the show of March 18, 1934. The only difference was the sponsor and the actors. In the latter show, the announcer was Chevrolet-pushing Alois Havrilla, the band leader was Frank Black, and the singer was Frank Parker. In this one, the announcer is Paul Douglas, the band leader is Ted Weems, and the singers are Andrea Marsh and Parker Gibbs. Mary Livingstone is in both broadcasts, though she's his secretary only in the first one.

An example of the dramatized form of commercial announcement is found in the Canada Dry program of January 19, 1933. This company was one of the pioneers in product dramatization, and originally featured the sound of ginger ale being poured into a glass. Later the sales appeal was shifted to that of emphasizing its fountain trade and the fact that five cents would be refunded for every bottle returned to the dealer. In the example in question this is the principal point of selling interest.

The announcement begins with a brief opening comment by the announcer: Ladies and gentlemen, a half hour of sparkling entertainment by Canada Dry—the Champagne of Ginger Ales. Canada Dry is now available in the large, as well as the regular size bottles for the home, and made to order by the glass at fountains. This program stars Jack Benny,—the Canada Dry Humorist—and Ted Weems' Orchestra.

Following this there is a brief musical interlude and the program begins. The announcer, a character by the name of Mary and another by the name of Andrea are hunting for Jack Benny. Finally Ted Weems tells them that Benny has been taken to a sanitarium. The scene shifts to the sanitarium where Mary questions Benny as to why he is there. From here they proceed as follows:

MARY— Hello, Jack. Don't you know me? I'm Mary, your secretary.

JACK—Mary ! How are you, dear?

MARY—Why why don't you know where you are, Jack?

JACK—Yes, Mary, I'm in a sanitarium.

MARY (*whispers*)— Gee, Paul, he seems perfectly sane. They shouldn't have him in here.

PAUL (*whispers*)—Wait—I'll find out how are you feeling, Jack?

JACK—Fine, Paul. I never felt better in my life.

PAUL—WellWell.... then why have they got you in here?

JACK—I don't know, Paul. All I know is that I'm in here. Oh, hello, Andrea.

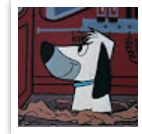
ANDREA—Hello, Jack I'm awfully sorry to see you here.

JACK—That's all right, Andrea. They'll find out their mistake.

PAUL (*whispers*) Say, Ted, you ask him a few questions.

TED—Oh Jack, you remember me, don't you?

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JACK—Sure, Ted Weems did you bring that fruit for me, Ted?

TED—Yes.

JACK—Then stop eating it.

TED (*laughs at this*)—There's nothing the matter with you, Jack. What have they got you in here for?

JACK—You're asking me? Say Ted, there are a lot of people here who don't belong.

TED—Yeah?

JACK—Yeah you see that fellow in the next cell?

TED—Yes, Jack.

JACK—Well, he thinks he's President. He leaves here March the 4th.

(Everybody laughs at this)

MARY—But you don't think you're somebody else, do you, Jack?

JACK—No, Mary, I'm Jack Benny.

MARY—Well, I'm going to see the superintendent and make him let you out. I'll be right back.

TED—There must be something wrong, Jack. Did you lose your money in the market?

JACK—Certainly not. I sold before the crash.

TED—Is it a woman?

JACK—Don't make me laugh I never have trouble with women.

TED—But you must be here for a reason.

JACK—I tell you—it's all a mistake.

PAUL—But it's not a mistake to buy Canada Dry Ginger Ale made to order by the glass, sold in the 5 -glass bottles, with a nickel back on each large bottle Canada Dry Ginger Ale Canada Dry Ginger Ale . . .

[at the word "glass"] *Jack starts to scream.* That's it that's it. Take him away ... Canada Dry Ginger Ale ...

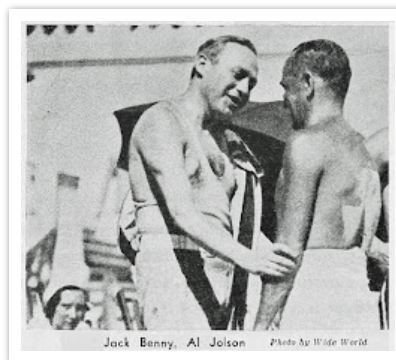
PARKER—Hold him, hold him, hold him.

ANDREA—Jack—Oh Jack ...



At this point, it didn't matter how the Benny show sold soft drinks. Canada Dry had already announced the show was cancelled and would go off the air after January 26th. Benny had run afoul, as *Variety* reported on January 3, 1933, of the show's agency because he insisted on deviating from the script. The agency actually had stenographers transcribe the show as it aired to see if it matched the script.

Benny wasn't off the air for long. After failing to hook up with Old Gold cigarettes, a deal with signed by February 24th and he returned to the air for Chevrolet on March 3rd, replacing Al Jolson.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:09](#)



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