



Sunday, 7 November 2021

The Quizzical Youth

What was Jack Benny doing 100 years ago today?

He was about to play a full week at the Palace in Chicago.

Jack wasn't the headliner back in 1921. The bill also featured:

Gus Edwards' Revue

De Haven and Nice

Joe Rome and Lou Gaut (in "When Extremes Meet")

Sandy

Norton and Nicholson (in "A Dramatic Cartoon")

Paul Gordon and Ame Rica

The Cavana Duo, Harry and Nancy

How did Jack do? The *Chicago Tribune's* Sheppard Butler reviewed what he saw of opening night on Monday, November 7th under the headline "A Good Show at the Palace." As you can imagine, with Gus Edwards as the top act, he gets the bulk of the ink.

MR. GUS EDWARDS is an earnest gentleman who takes precocious youngsters and makes them more precocious. He teaches them to sign sentimentally or dance their heads off, and then he puts the Peter Pan curse on them, forbidding them to grow up. This, unhappily, they always do, become people like Eddie Cantor or the Duncan sisters or Lila Lee of the movies (all these were his protégés) and Mr. Edwards has to look around for some one else. Perhaps that is why he has the saddest eyes in vaudeville.

He always manages to find somebody, however, and his entertainments, though immature, have a quality of engaging sprightliness that every one seems to like. At the Palace this week he submits such an entertainment, his "Song Revue of 1921," a lively, tuneful jumble of this and that, peopled by more boy and girl performers than you can conveniently keep track of.

Those I remember best are Miss Alice Furness, a demure blonde who sings, and Chester Fredericks, who looks like a cherub by Raphael and dances like a young demon. These and many others go through a variety of spirited evolutions, illustrating the changing modes in melody, from the songs of the moment back to "Annie Rooney" and "The Sidewalks of New York." It's a clean, mannerly show, and the customers love it.

Other items of an uncommonly good bill are:

"Sandy"—An urchin with an infectious grin and a comic Scotch burr, giving imitations of Harry Lauder. He is one of Edwards' performers, but, for no apparent reason, is given a separate place on the program.

Ethel Forde and Lester Sheehan—With Marion Forde, in picturesque dances. Marion is an extraordinarily lumber young woman, who doesn't seem to mind in the least if she breaks her neck.

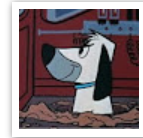
Jack Benny—A quizzical youth with a glib tongue, who talks and fiddles intermittently. He "stopped the show" yesterday, which means they wouldn't let the next act go on for a while.

Miss Norton and Paul Nicholson—In one of those "tough" comedies.

De Haven and Nice—Dancing and cutting up in a series of droll travesties. Their antics with two enormous red balloons are a classic example of sheer nonsense.



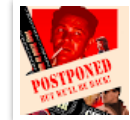
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Noir City 19
Postponed
(thanks A
LOT,
Omicron) -
*The hope

for 2022 was that screenings, festivals and events would finally return at least semi-permanently, but, alas, COVID-19 has the las...

27 minutes ago

[Cartoon Research](#)

In His Own Words: Willis Pyle - Pyle worked at Disney and UPA and later enjoyed a long career as a freelance animator on such projects as Richard Williams' Raggedy Ann and Andy.

7 hours ago

[News From ME](#)

Orlando Busino, R.I.P. - Veteran gag cartoonist Orlando Busino has left us at the age of 95. I don't write these about a lot of magazine cartoonists but Mr. Busino did exceptional

10 hours ago

[Movies with Michael](#)



Way Out West (1937) - If *Sons of the Desert* (1933) is

Laurel and Hardy's most popular feature than "Way Out West" is a close second. Its popularity is well founded as t...

23 hours ago

[Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons](#)

It was 5 o'clock when I left yesterday's matinée, and there were two acts to go. This was due partly to certain impromptu interruptions, which are getting to be characteristic of Monday performances in the varieties. Thus, Eddie Cantor was in a box, explaining that he couldn't sing because of his contract with the "opposition." Frisco, the comedian, also was present and put in his oar now and then, as did several other notables in the audience. Vaudeville isn't as formal as it used to be.

Patrons leaving early wasn't just something restricted to the Monday matinée. *Variety* reviewed Wednesday's daytime performance and noted that people started leaving after 5 p.m., so they missed Rome and Gaut and the Cavana Duo. Rome and Gaut were moved up in the evening performance. Jack Osterman attended at least one performance and bantered from the theatre.

Variety's review of Benny was concise: "Jack Benny came into his own, spotted just right; not a gag or line was muffed. It only proved that position on some acts does count, and on Benny anything less than four spells disaster, which was proven in the last two times seen. He walked away with the laughing hit of the bill."

In case you're wondering, Gordon and Rica were the opening act; patter, songs and trick bike riding by Paul Gordon.

All aboard!! Jack got on the train and headed east without any of the other acts. Jack played a split week, with performances in Dayton, Ohio and Lexington, Kentucky. *Variety* called it "the best show Keith's has had since inaugurating the three-a-day policy." As for Jack, he was a hit: "Jack Benny stopped the show in No. 2, taking two bows after his encore. Benny is very versatile and capable. He can monologue with up-to-date material and his violin touch is very pleasing to the ear."

The *Dayton Herald* of November 15th had this to say about the bill which also included a 50-minute dramatic film:

MUSIC AND COMEDY MAKE UP KEITH BILL

Exceptional Dancing To Be Seen in Tabloid Revue Which Is Headliner.

Music and comedy in initial proportions make up the really excellent bill at Keith's Strand theater the first half of the week. It is one of the most entertaining shows seen locally in a long time.

Music and dancing exemplified in Billy Lightelle's revue, with Billy and five girls, open the show, and give it a good start on the road to popularity. Lightelle himself is an exceptional dancer, and has several song numbers. The second act is Jack Benny, who makes his violin do all sorts of comedy stunts, as well as furnish real music. The minute Benny speaks the audience feels that he's one of 'em, and they all laugh together. He proved his ability as a violinist Monday. Bob Cook and Dot Oatman, who sing and play, have all sorts of ability, and use it to good advantage.

Some choice blackface comedy and harmonizing is provided by Fred Fenton and Sammy Field, who are adepts at their art, which includes clever eccentric dancing. The vaudeville bill is closed by the Wilhat Trio, who ride about on all sorts of outlandish cycles, including their "krazy kar," which is all the name implies. It is a laughable act.

"Who Am I?" tells the story of a girl owner of a gambling house who's uncertain as to her parents, tries to learn her own identity, and has all sorts of adventure doing it.

As for Lexington, here's what the *Leader* said on Thursday, November 18th about the opening the day before.

BEN ALI VODVIL

PAIR OF BLACKFACE PERFORMERS CATCH CROWD AT ONCE— EXCELLENT PROGRAM IS OFFERED

The audience at the Ben Ali theatre "fell hard" for a couple of blackface performers labeled Fenton and Fields that feature the week end program which began Thursday. Fred and Sammy dashed into the spotlight with a snap that is lacking in most vaudeville acts and dashed out with a lot more. The terpsichorean antics of this outfit seemed to have been the funniest thing the crowd had seen in a long time, for it fought manfully for an encore, the cheering lasted clear into the next act. This pair, which has been here before on the legitimate rostrum, also carries a lot of harmony, but rather devotes its time to tickling the audience than singing to it. The Janet Sisters opened the bill with a singing and dancing act that was very pleasing.

Jack Benny scored another run for the natural gas company in the second inning. Jack had a violin and occasionally played it, but he was so busy poking the crowd in its funny bone, he didn't need the old Strad. The Wilhat Trio didn't say much but it certainly did act queer. A bird brings out a parody on an automobile and the machine plays a stellar part of the act. The offering also includes some good cycling. Love us, love our dog, was the slogan of the trio and the crowd did, for the dog displayed a lot of intelligence.

Bob Cook and Dot Oatman grabbed a hearty round of noise with their singing. Dot is one of the few good comediennesses seen here this season, and the crowd appreciated it by asking for more so insistently that the duo was forced to return for an encore. This act is just a bit bold in spots — and maybe that's what made it so



The price of milk is now higher than gasoline! - ©2022 fernandoller acartoons.c

om
2 days ago

Inbetweens: The Cult Classics of Animation



A Itchin' to Fly: Howard Post's The Itch - It's amusing to me,

compared to last week's cartoon of pick, this week I'm going to be giving some thoughts of something the complete opposite! Think about...

3 days ago

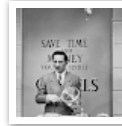
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Wolfman Jack on AFN 1976 - It's howlingly delicious.

More Wolfman Jack
4 days ago

Old TV History



November and December 1943 - NBC shut down its

television cameras in 1942 when the FCC cut the minimal hours of broadcasting to four a week. The sole NBC station, WNBT in New York, sto...

5 days ago

Yowp

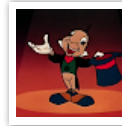


Flintstones Daily Strips, October 1961 - Over the years, the Yowp

blog has posted the Sunday (Saturday in Canada) colour comics starring Yogi Bear and The Flintstones syndicated by McNaught. There...

1 week ago

Prydain on Film



Merry Christmas -

2 weeks ago

Show All

Dr. Grob's Animation Review

popular.
The Joe DeKoe Troupe, which winds up the bill, presents a well distributed offering of plain and fancy tumbling, with most of it in the latter class. This act was an unusual one for this type, and won a great deal of applause.
Will Rogers' drollery is the feature of the motion picture, "A Poor Relation."

The next stops were a week in Pittsburgh ("three bows," noted *Variety*) and the following week of November 28th in Youngstown, Ohio.


We could go on with the reviews, but this shows you how well Jack was received by audiences long before his days in radio.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:02](#) 
Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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[Saruberi \(Miss Hokusai\)](#) -
Based on a manga from the mid-1980s by Hinako Sugiura 'Miss Hokusai' is one of those rare animation films unquestionably directed to an adult audience. The...
4 days ago

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