



Sunday, 5 December 2021

Jack Benny's Two Shows

There was a running gag in the mid to late '40s on the Jack Benny radio programme about Phil Harris and Dennis Day having two shows; both had their own sitcoms in addition to their weekly Benny appearances.

It was a gag of convenience. Don Wilson announced a number of shows. Kenny Baker was on two shows during his final season with Jack (he signed an exclusive deal with the other show in 1939 and didn't return to the Benny show. Even Phil Harris was still doing short band remote show when he was signed by Benny in 1936.

But Jack had two shows himself. In a way. One was on radio. The other was on stage.

The first show Benny and his troupe broadcast for Jell-O was on October 14, 1934. To divert a bit, he and the cast were on a special show on Saturday, October 6th which was a half-hour plug for his Jell-O show. It aired on the NBC Blue network. The Los Angeles *Times* said "Miss Livingstone threatens to assist Interviewer Kennedy by telling what she knows about the comedian. Frank Black also will be on hand to furnish what he considers appropriate music." What *Times* columnist Carroll Nye had against Black, I don't know. Black hadn't been on the show for over six months anyway.

Here's what the Akron newspaper had to say about it in its October 1st edition. It's part of a longer column; I've omitted the non-Benny items.

Jack Benny's Kidding Keeps His Radio Cast Amused In Rehearsal

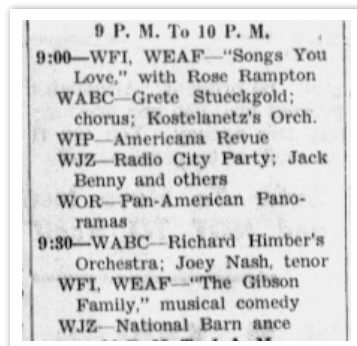
By DOROTHY DORAN

Beacon Journal Radio Editor

NEW YORK, Oct. 1.—Now that he has concluded his series for his Akron sponsor, Jack Benny is planning a preview sample of his humor that will feature his next program, starting a week from Sunday.

HIS preview is scheduled for John B. Kennedy's Radio City party next Saturday night at 9 o'clock over the Blue net.

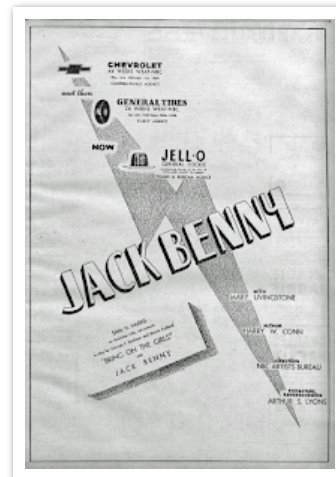
IT is surprising to note the ease and calm with which Benny rehearses his cast for his air shows. The other day he breezed into the studio, wearing a gray suit and soft gray hat, and smoking a big cigar.



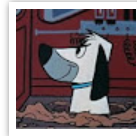
"HELLO, Jack, hello, Jack," came from the various members of the cast including the dignified appearing Don Bestor, maestro of the program.

CLOSELY following Benny into the studio was Mary Livingstone, a stunning figure in a brown suit and matching hat. Frank Parker was there and also Don Wilson, the giant of the program. Wilson, you know, came from the west coast and has been holding forth in New York for some time.

The cast saw the script for the first time when they gathered for rehearsal and no audience ever laughed more heartily at the air program than did the cast at the first reading of the script. The good-natured kidding that Benny concocts would put any group in a good humor.



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Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



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...

25 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

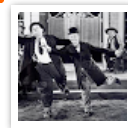
News From ME

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

There is no display of temperament in the Benny rehearsal, there's just a change in a line here and there and presto, the program is ready.

While this was going on, Broadway producer Sam Harris started rehearsals on the farce "Bring on the Girls." He had signed Benny in May to star in it. The play was a satire on Roosevelt's Reconstruction Finance Corporation, with Benny playing a banker. It opened at the National Theatre on October 23, 1934. It closed at the National Theatre on October 23, 1934. Harris and authors George Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind decided the third act needed to be completely re-written. It re-opened in New Haven on November 22nd. *Variety* reported the audience lost interest after a while and it needed more re-writing.

But it hit the road anyway. Here's Jack talking to the *Boston Globe* of December 2, 1934.

BACK STAGE CHAT WITH JACK BENNY

Star of "Bring on the Girls" Hasn't Much to Say Except That He Is Fed Up on Benefits

"I know I'm hard to interview," said Jack Benny, leaning back in his chair, and between sentences scanning his new second act dialogue for "Bring on the Girls" at the Plymouth Theatre. He was preparing for one of the almost constant rehearsals for the new show, and was going over his lines in his dressing room off stage. He shifted his cigar, hitched up a falling brace. "But I'm not very interesting," he continued. "Nothing ever happened to me overnight.

"So many stars of the stage and radio can tell you about exciting nights when they became celebrities between the rise and fall of a curtain. But I have been of the theatre for 22 years and everything I got I worked hard for. There was never a falling into fame for me. It was all[] so gradual that I didn't realize I was in the big money.

"I started out my career as a violinist. That was after I left me home town of Waukegan, Ill. Since then I've played musical comedy, been a vaudeville star, headlined on radio programs and made personal appearances. I never have played in a legitimate show before.

"That's why I wanted to be in 'Bring On the Girls.' I needed to round out my theatrical experience, so to speak. And it was a great break to appear under the management of Sam Harris in a play written by such clever and well known writers as George Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind."

Plans Long Vacation

Now that he is rehearsing so constantly Mr Benny find life very exacting. It takes him many hours each week to write, rehearse and otherwise prepare his radio shows. A new play needs weary hours of rehearsing each day, as well as innumerable night conferences with authors and producer. Fortunately, Jack's wife, Mary Livingston, is with him and can make sure that her husband keeps his appointments and yet doesn't stay up too late at night. Mr Benny is looking forward, with a wistful gleam in his eye, to a real vacation. He wants to take his wife to Europe and forget that there are such things as microphones and stages.

But he remembers that when Amos n' Andy took a long anticipated vacation they were desperately bored and yearned to return to harness a week or so after they started their "rest." Jack is a little afraid he may feel the same way.

The comedian thinks the ideal year would call for one picture (O, yes, he has made several talkies, including "Trans-Atlantic Merry-Go-Round"); one extra-special play that would have a long run in New York, and six months of radio appearances. The play could over-lap the radio, he says.

And then, as the final requirement, there must be three months of vacation in which Benny doesn't have to do a single thing he doesn't want to. Or appear in a single benefit. Benefits are the bane of Benny's existence. He started in being a good fellow when asked to do benefits. Pretty soon no week went by in which he wasn't asked to appear two to five times.

Married 8 Years

"It's a funny thing," says Benny. "If a man like Ed Wynn makes it a rule not to appear at benefits no one holds it against him. He's still a good fellow. But if you appear for one person then don't appear for everybody else, you're known as the lowest sort of rat. 'He's getting a swelled head,' says Broadway. I realize I made a mistake some time ago. But it is hard to remedy now.

A star may be making a lot of money, but he always works for it, says the actor. Charities and income taxes bring down a man's total considerably. There are a million worries for every \$10,000 an actor earns on the stage. There are disappointments, quarrels, jealousies and misunderstandings, too. Fame has a way of turning the tables.

"But I'd rather be in the theatrical business, and that means films, legitimate stage and radio, than doing anything else," says Benny.



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

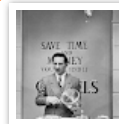
AFRTS Archive



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

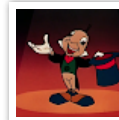


Flintstones Daily Strips, October 1961 - Over the years, the Yowp

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

“I’d miss the worried and the scraps. I guess it’s all part of the fun of being on the stage. You think you are in the worst business in the world, but you couldn’t bear to leave it, no matter how small were your rewards.”

Benny has been married eight years and while his wife appears with him on the radio, she has never been on the stage except when he makes personal appearances.

By the time the show hit Springfield, Mass. on December 10th, the third act had been re-written three times. But even though business was good, Harris pulled it again for rewriting. And, as best as we can tell, it never returned. As a side-note, the only name I recognised in the cast was billed last. It was Alan Hewitt, who you may recall as the nosy detective on *My Favorite Martian*.


Even if the show had been a success, Benny may have had to drop out. He and his gang left for California in April 1935 as Jack was shooting *Broadway Melody of 1936*. And later in the year, he turned down an offer from Harris to star in a different legitimate stage comedy.

As things turned out, Jack didn't need “two shows.” His career on the air was long and hardy. That show was enough.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:24](#)    

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

2 comments:





R. Araya 6 December 2021 at 03:55

Actually, Dr. Frank Black had been replaced by Don Bestor in April 1934 when Jack switched from Chevrolet to General Tire.

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Yowp  6 December 2021 at 04:12

You're right. I've got Black and Green reversed in my mind.

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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...
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