



Sunday, 23 January 2022

## What? Me Worry?

Stories abounded in print at the time about how Jack used to worry all the time in the days of network radio. Evidently TV changed that, judging by this story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of October 27, 1957.

During the '50s, Jack's show wasn't on every week, but he was still busy on TV. He periodically hosted a show called *Shower of Stars* for the Chrysler Corporation. In fact, that was the programme where his 40th birthday was celebrated (and soon forgotten).

The story gets into ratings. Jack occasionally got testy when interviewers asked him about them when he was opposite *Maverick*, which had numbers that kicked Jack out of the Sunday 7:30 p.m. timeslot at the end of the 1958-59 season. He's more relaxed about them here (*Sally* didn't last the full season).



## No Private Worrying For Jack Benny

**At ease when off-stage, he finds it profitable to do all his worrying in front of the camera**

**BY HARRY HARRIS**

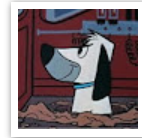
TRADITIONALLY, public funnymen are private worry-warts. Punchinello to Pagliacci at the drop of a curtain. CBS' Jack Benny, a versatile switch-hitter—from stage, screen, radio and TV to concert hall and "The \$64,000 Question," with equal ease—reverses this hallowed procedure, too.

Jack does his worrying—about his age, his finances, his appearances—for all to see, hear and enjoy. The real Benny, however, is blithe and unruffled. Other TV comics may head, neurosis-ridden, for the hills. Other frequent visitors to TV screens may shiver and shake at the idea of "overexposure." Other program hosts may fret over the tightening guest star market. Not Benny.

"I love TV," he told us enthusiastically, "just love it. I don't know how other comics feel about the medium, but we have so much fun with it. Ours aren't worrying shows. There are no ulcers. We even have fun during the writing and during the rehearsing."

So while other members of the laugh-it-up fraternity are carefully limiting their video visits, Jack's launched on a 1957-1958 season that will include 10 live and six film Sunday night half hours, five hour-long "Shower of Stars" assignments, guest shots with Gisele MacKenzie, Danny Thomas and others, and—if suitable scripts come along—a drama or two.

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The first "Shower," Thursday at 8:30 P. M. on Channel 10—with Carol Channing, Fred MacMurray, the Lennon Sisters and Jimmie ("Honeycomb") Rodgers in attendance—will have a Western theme. "Buck Benny" rides again!

### On Western bandwagon

Although George Burns is his closest friend, Jack denies that this spoof of the all-over-the-channels cowboy sagas will be part of Burns' announced campaign to "laugh Westerns off the Air."

"We're doing it only because audiences are so Western-conscious these days," he said. "We used to do the Buck Benny things before there were TV Westerns—or TV." Jack denies he shares non-cowboys' widespread cowboyphobia, even though one of his every-other-Sunday competitors, ABC's "Maverick," has been showing surprising strength in the ratings, galloping past Steve Allen and closing in on Ed Sullivan.

As for published reports that Frank Ross, Joan Caulfield's husband and producer of her "Sally" series, deliberately asked NBC to schedule "Sally" against Benny, on the theory that, after eight seasons, it was time for Benny's TV popularity to start slipping, Jack only shrugs.

He doesn't "sweat out" the ratings after each show, he said, "but sometimes they call me and tell me." For his second show of the season, Oct. 6, the Trendex scoreboard was: Benny, 24.9; "Maverick," 14.7; "Sally," 10.1. Benny admits he was pleased. "You've got to see that your first two shows are good," he said. "The first one is always the weakest, because lots of people don't know you're back on. But if the first two are OK, people say, 'It looks like he'll have another good year.'"

He's not planning any radical changes from past seasons to combat his new Sunday night competition. "I figure that would be difficult for me," he said. "I just go along trying to have good shows. If the opposition is tough, there's nothing I can do about that.

"You can't buck everything. Of course, I wish nobody at all was on against me, but . . ."

He's not planning to stress audience-luring, big-name stars, either, though last Sunday he played host to Hal March. That was a follow-up to his gag visit to "The \$64,000 Question" earlier this month, when he quit and demanded cash after answering the first, or \$64 question.

"No," he grinned, "\$64 wasn't bad for 10 minutes' work." (Actually, he returned the money, chipped in by various people on stage.) "We're always looking for things to do that will furnish a couple of shows. Last year it was my Carnegie Hall concert and the concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra. This year it's The \$64,000 Question'."

Ginger Rogers appears on his first film show of the season, next Sunday, and Van Johnson on a later film, but Jack's guest star policy is, "We sort of think of people as we go along."

### Guests no problem

He doesn't worry about the guest shortage this season, he adds, because "Our shows can be written without guest stars.

"Besides, I can always get wonderful people like Dennis Day, Rochester and Mel Blanc when I need them.

There's only one member of our old radio gang I can't get to do a live show with me."

Who that?

"My wife Mary!"

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:01](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

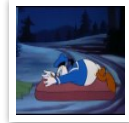
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