



Monday, 2 May 2022

Happy 90th Jack Benny

Jack Benny likely never thought that people could listen to his first show 90 years after it aired.

But they can.

It was on this date in 1932 that the Canada Dry programme debuted.

The show does not feature the Jack Benny you would expect to hear. There's no Mary, Rochester, Maxwell, age 39, vault, or Frank Nelson going "Yehhhhs?" All that was in the future.

The show seems to have been designed as a co-starring vehicle with Jack and George Olsen's orchestra. Olsen played musical numbers and Jack joked between them. The first broadcast had no audience at a studio in the former roof garden of New York's New Amsterdam Theatre. Benny's patter came from his vaudeville appearances.

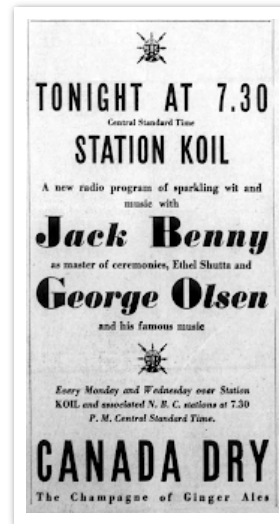
Unlike other comedians, Jack was hired to be on the air twice a week, on Monday and Wednesday nights. Radio chowed down pretty quickly on his Orpheum routines. The only solution was to get some help, so Jack hired writer Harry Conn.

Something started to happen. Jack moved away from monologues, instead kibitzing with the NBC staff announcer as well as Olsen and his vocalists. Parody plays were added. Commercials for Canada Dry were somewhat dismissive of the soft drink.

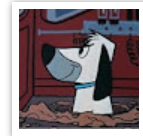
Benny scholar Kathy Fuller-Seeley has discovered that within eight weeks, Jack was talking about hiring someone to handle the show's volume of mail. But it doesn't appear all that many stations were airing it. A check of newspapers for May 2, 1932 is a little maddening. One version of the Associated Press radio schedule sent to member papers had outdated listings, with two 15-minute shows in the Benny time slot. However, the following stations were scheduled to run the first Canada Dry programme:

WJZ, New York
KDKA, Pittsburgh
KWK, St. Louis
WMAQ, Chicago
WBZ, Boston
WLW, Cincinnati
KOIL, Council Bluffs, Iowa
WREN, Lawrence, Kansas
WJR, Detroit
WKCR, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
WSM, Nashville
WBAL, Baltimore
WHAM, Rochester (second half only)

Charles E. Butterfield, radio writer of Associated Press, promoted the new show in his column of May 1, so word of it reached people who might have to haul in a distant station to listen to Jack.



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Mexico City's Ambulance Certification Process is due next week and still 100 ambulances remain to comply. - ©2022 fernandollera.com 3 hours ago

Yowp
Flintstones Daily Comics, Dec. 1961, Pt. 1 - There's a site which has posted the Monday-through-Saturday newspaper comic strips of The Flintstones. I wasn't going to post my copies because of that, bu... 7 hours ago

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December 1945 - Santa Claus wasn't able to do it. Anyone expecting Jolly Old St. Nick to bring them a nice, shiny, post-war television for Christmas in 1945 would be dis... 22 hours ago

The show aired on the NBC Blue network. It was the less prestigious of the two NBC national chains. Jack was not heard on the West Coast until Canada Dry moved the show to CBS in October 1932. No Canadian station picked it up, either. The *Ottawa Citizen* of May 2 opened its "On the Air Tonight" column this way:

Jack Benny, as master of ceremonies (m.c. or emcee) in screen productions which were usually flops, could always make us laugh no matter how terrible the picture. About the most ingratiating of his tribe, Jack injects his laughs slyly into the continuity, never spoiling a sense of intimate nonsense with the audience. Now he's on the air, premiering a new series with George Olsen's orchestra from NBC-WJZ at 9:30 p.m.

The day after the debut, Ben Gross' column in the New York *Daily News* called it "a delightful melange of fun and music." A week later, he was more enthusiastic. "WJZ's 9:30 program, with George Olsen's Orchestra, Ethel Shutta and Jack Benny," wrote Gross, "has qualified as one of our brighter radio attractions. The Olsen music is first rate and so is the Shutta warbling. Benny has surprised many, including this eavesdropper, by the deft manner in which he handles the master of ceremony assignment. And the secret of it all is that these performers inject an informal, spontaneous note into their divertissement."



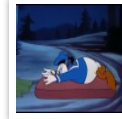
Some trivia notes:

- The announcer for the first 15 shows was Ed Thorgerson. He went on to voice sports newsreels for 20th Century Fox, and challenged DuMont's Captain Video and NBC's Kukla, Fran and Ollie for viewers as the 7 p.m. newscaster on New York's WPIX, Channel 11. He died in 1997.
- Not counting the opening/closing theme, there were seven musical numbers in the first programme. At the end of Jack Benny's radio run in 1955, the band had no number and there was no song if Dennis Day didn't appear.
- The night before the broadcast, Jack took part in a National Variety Artists' Fund show at the Met. George Burns and Gracie Allen handled some of the m.c. duties. On May 7, Jack returned to the Met to perform in the Friars Club annual frolic.
- People with future Benny connections were on the air the same evening. The announcer of "Parade of the States" on the NBC Red network was Howard Claney, who pushed Chevrolets when the car company sponsored the Benny show. Also on the Red network was the A&P Gypsies, featuring vocalist Frank Parker, who had a two-year career with Benny. And beaming out that evening from KGO San Francisco was Phil Harris' orchestra, which spent more than 15 years with Jack.

You can listen to the first programme on the media player below.



Movies with Michael



Some
Cartoons
for
Saturday
Morning
#189 - Hello

my friends and happy Saturday morning. Once again it is time for some classic cartoons. Today's cartoon selection begins with a delightful Donald...
1 day ago

Cartoon Research

The Problem with Pooh - Suspended Animation #385
Oh bother! The bear with very little brain through no fault of his own certainly seems to be a troublesome bruin and for many yea...
2 days ago

Pegbar Profiles

Pegbar Profile: Emery Hawkins (Part 3) - *Muriel Cigars spot, produced by Shamus Culhane's studio in New York.* Upon his arrival out East, Hawkins found work in film and television ad production...
6 days ago

AFRTS Archive

File download - So the good news is that I did receive a refund from our file host. Still no replies. I'll have to start over. So, do you know a file storage provider w...
2 weeks ago

Inbetweens: The Cult Classics of Animation
Throwing the Bull: Heckle and Jeckle in The Intruders
- Until the mid 40s, Fox had many issues with the Terrytoons Studio, and over the years complaints were regularly sent. Particularly, the lack of true s...
2 weeks ago

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Dr. Grob's Animation Review

Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbours Wife - 'Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbours Wife' is the tenth and last of Phil Mulloy's Ten Commandment films. This installment is the longest of the ten, clocki...
2 days ago

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- ▼ 2022 (241)
 - August (22)
 - July (34)

▶ 0:00 / 30:00 — 🔊 ⋮

As a Trafaz special feature, author Kathy Fuller-Seeley, who is annotating and commenting on the Benny show's first scripts in a series of books, gives us her insights in the raw interview below. Apologies for the distortion; turning down the level on the mike simply cuts the volume but not the over-modulation.

Late note: For reasons I do not understand, there is visual break-up playing this on some browsers. However, you don't need to see me anyway.

video1083852441



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [05:47](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Errol 2 May 2022 at 14:09

Thanks a million Jim for posting this informative interview. Great job.

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 - [Watch Out For That...](#)
 - [Happy 90th Jack Benny](#)
 - [Pigging the Cab](#)

- ▶ [April](#) (30)
- ▶ [March](#) (32)
- ▶ [February](#) (28)
- ▶ [January](#) (34)

- ▶ [2021](#) (380)
- ▶ [2020](#) (389)
- ▶ [2019](#) (376)
- ▶ [2018](#) (379)

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- [2017](#) (380)
- [2016](#) (396)
- [2015](#) (389)
- [2014](#) (390)
- [2013](#) (388)
- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

- [Aline Mosby](#) (18)
- [Art Davis](#) (39)
- [Bad Luck Blackie](#) (11)
- [Bob and Ray](#) (15)
- [Bob Clampett](#) (103)
- [Bob McKimson](#) (75)
- [Bob Thomas](#) (61)
- [Chuck Jones](#) (169)
- [Columbia](#) (56)
- [Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)
- [Cynthia Lowry](#) (35)
- [Dick Thomas](#) (18)
- [Don Patterson](#) (19)
- [Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)
- [Earl Wilson](#) (17)
- [Erskine Johnson](#) (43)
- [Felix the Cat](#) (32)
- [Film Daily](#) (50)
- [Fleischer](#) (190)
- [Frank Tashlin](#) (35)
- [Fred Allen](#) (51)
- [Fred Brunish](#) (11)
- [Friz Freleng](#) (173)
- [Gene Deitch](#) (21)
- [George Pal](#) (11)
- [Grant Simmons](#) (9)
- [Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (121)
- [Hanna-Barbera](#) (4)
- [Harman-Ising](#) (83)
- [Henry Morgan](#) (14)
- [Irv Spence](#) (12)
- [Jack Benny](#) (561)
- [Jay Ward](#) (34)
- [Jimmy Durante](#) (21)
- [John Crosby](#) (99)
- [John Sutherland](#) (37)
- [Johnny Johnsen](#) (37)
- [Kenny Baker](#) (6)
- [King-Size Canary](#) (9)
- [Laugh-In](#) (16)
- [Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (6)

- [Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)
- [Magical Maestro](#) (9)
- [Maurice Noble](#) (12)
- [Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)
- [MGM](#) (678)
- [Norm McCabe](#) (6)
- [Pat Matthews](#) (12)
- [Paul Julian](#) (15)
- [Sara Berner](#) (5)
- [Screwy Squirrel](#) (38)
- [Spider-Man](#) (1)
- [Terrytoons](#) (104)
- [Tex Avery](#) (584)
- [The Cat That Hated People](#) (10)
- [Toby the Pup](#) (3)
- [Tom and Jerry Human](#) (45)
- [Trafaz Sunday Theatre](#) (19)
- [Ub Iwerks](#) (110)
- [UPA](#) (69)
- [Van Beuren](#) (123)
- [Vernon Scott](#) (51)
- [Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)
- [Walt Disney](#) (182)
- [Walter Lantz](#) (293)
- [Warner Bros.](#) (756)
- [Who Killed Who](#) (10)