



Sunday, 28 May 2023

To Be

Jack Benny synonymous with clowning horseplay? Riotous slapstick?

Was Lolly into her fifth martini when she came up with that?

Benny was the very opposite of "riotous slapstick." He stood there and looked out at the audience. They laughed. He kept looking. They laughed harder. "Clowning horseplay" was for people like Red Skelton or (especially) Milton Berle.

But that's what Louella Parsons told her readers in her column of March 1, 1942. It wasn't like she and Jack were strangers. She even appeared on his radio show twice.

The subject is mostly Jack's latest movie, *To Be or Not to Be*. Lolly, as usual, injects herself into her own story.



Shakespearean Comedy May Alter Jack Benny's Career

CLOWNING ACTOR CONVERTED INTO ROMANTIC LEAD

Carole Lombard Has Lead Role in "To Be or Not to Be," Proclaimed a Hit.

By Louella O. Parsons

Motion Picture Editor, I. N. S.

Hollywood, Cal. — Curious that "To Be or Not to Be," the comedy that was born in tears, should be the one that perhaps will change Jack Benny's whole career. The same Benny is synonymous with clowning horseplay and riotous slapstick. Who would ever have thought that Jack Benny, super-comedian, clown and funny man, would turn out a romantic hero? Yet Ernst Lubitsch, by a simple twist of the wrist, converts Jack into a leading man with the appeal of a Tyrone Power.

Mary Livingstone has always kidded Jack about his thinning hair, his age and even his waistline, although he is not the least bit on the portly side. They have gotten some of their biggest laughs from the way she has ribbed him, pretending to fall for a young hero and ridiculing Benny in their hilariously funny skits.

Mary Likes Preview.

I went to call on the Bennys at their home in Beverly Hills just as Jack was getting ready to go to San Francisco to do a radio show at the Presidio. Jack and Mary had been playing gin rummy and Joan, their little daughter, done up in little pink nightie, had come in to say goodnight.

Before I had a chance to even sit down Mary said, "Wasn't he handsome? I fell in love with him all over again." She had gone to the preview because Jack had not felt up to it. Carole Lombard's tragic death a few days after they finished the picture had been such a blow he wanted to see the picture in the theatre or in the privacy of a quiet projection room. "I feel differently now," he said, "after Mary said the picture was so good and the reviews so satisfactory. I know how happy it would have made Carole and she would have wanted everyone to see our movie. I am more glad for her sake most people like it than I am on my own account.

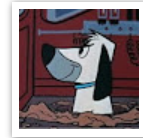
Afraid of Role.

"Wait until Fred Allen and Bob Hope see you," I said. "Won't



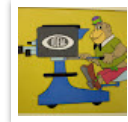
As Poland's leading actors, Jack Benny and Carole Lombard

About Me



View my complete profile

My Blog List



Musical Magilla - As a cartoon show, Magilla Gorilla was

a great merchandising opportunity. Hanna-Barbera already had a marketing deal in place with the Ideal Toy Corp., wh...
22 hours ago



October 1947 Part 2 - You could count on one hand the number

of regular daytime television shows there were at the start of October 1947 (not including test patterns). Tex and ...

1 day ago

Blogs to See



More than a Disney Background Painter: The Ephemera Art of Bill Layne - Layne was a background artist for the Walt Disney Studios in the 1940s before embarking on a robust commercial art career.
5 hours ago



How 2 Write Comic Books - As I have said several times on the blog, there are many different ways to write a comic book...and here I'm talking about page format and the way a writer c...
15 hours ago

they burn? You have given Errol Flynn and our other dashing he
"When Ernst Lubitsch asked me to play the Shakespearian actor

play many strange roles in Ernst Lubitsch's exciting comedy,
"To Be Or Not To Be," showing at the Center theatre, Sunday,
Monday and Tuesday.

young, handsome leading Shakespearian man—a hero who will give the girls a thrill."

"Ernst said he had written 'To Be or Not to Be' with me in mind and naturally I was flattered to do a picture with Lubitsch and Carole. If Lubitsch ever asks me to make another movie," said Jack, "I won't even read the script. I'll say yes before he can say his own name."

"I hadn't worked with Ernst two days before I knew what he told me to do was right. I had complete confidence in his judgment in the scene where I make Robert Stack walk thru the door first—we had shot it the other way first—with me in the lead. 'Try following Stack,' he said, "and that scene is one of the laugh sequences in the entire movie."

Laughs Must Be Natural.

"Comedy, Lubitsch believes, must never be pushed. You must never force a laugh. Why I threw away my most important laughs and did nothing to call attention to the dialog we hoped would be funny. The results showed that Lubitsch knows all the answers and the way to put over subtle humor."

" 'To Be or Not to Be' could very easily be a serious picture," added Mary, "and a good one. It is so exciting and filled with such great suspense."

"Ah, but the comedy," said Jack, is what makes the drama all the more potent and Lubitsch knew that so well."

As I was leaving Mary and Jack walked to the door with me and waved goodbye. Just then dilapidated car with a man and women and some children drove by. They drove to the curb and the man asked, "Is that Jack Benny?" I said "Yes." He said, "Well, I'm from Boston and Benny is the one person we came all the way to California to see."

Guess that man and thousands like him over the world are glad that "To Be or Not to Be" is good for Jack is loved, not only by those who know him, but by Mr. and Mrs. Public all over the United States.

Despite her characterisation of Benny's comedy, Parsons seems to have got one of the few interviews with Jack immediately after the film's release. I've found plenty of reviews in newspapers in 1942, but nothing quoting Jack to any great extent. Maybe he didn't give interviews because he was busy with his radio show. Or Lombard's death still upset him.

Years later, it was different. Jack proclaimed it one of his best pictures and critics agreed. As he got laughs on radio by ridiculing his last movie for Warners, *The Horn Blows at Midnight*, the studio audience reacted the same way when cast members praised it. Not exactly "riotous slapstick," is it?

Posted by [Yowp](#) at 07:15



No comments:

Post a Comment



Enter comment

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

[Fernando Llera](#) [Cartoons](#)

[Liga MX Final between Chivas de Guadalajara and Tigres.](#) - ©2023
[fernandollercartoons.com](#)
17 hours ago

[Movies with Michael](#)



[Cowboy Church #226](#) - Hello my friends and welcome

back for another service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry with his 1945 recording of* Sil...
18 hours ago

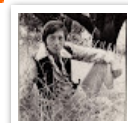
[Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog](#)

[Sir Christopher Lee](#) . . .
[ROCKS](#) - *Do we love it when Frankenstein, Dracula and the Wolfman whip out Fender Stratocasters, Gibson L...
1 day ago

[Termite Terrace headlines](#)

[Mr. Jinks and Boo Boo?](#)
[Sure Why Not!](#) - Now these two characters were paired together in this record and this coloring book but their connection pretty much stops at the cover. Why they were pair...
2 days ago

[AFRTS Archive](#)



[Charlie Tuna 1980](#) - In Korea we had a wall of 8x10s of the AFRTS-

LA talent, sort of a reminder. Vicente was recording the Torrejon AFB station and saved the tapes. Here...
2 days ago

[The Exposure Sheet And Now, A Less Than Stellar Review of The Flintstones](#)

The Flintstones might be considered a cartoon classic these days, but it that wasn't always the case. Back when the show was new, reviews were anything bu...
4 days ago

[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)

[Felix Foils an Umbrella Thief](#) - Welcome back readers, as we present the Felix the Cat strips from 3-13-1932 to 3-26-1932. Felix is still a Police Cat Detective in these, trying to locate ...
1 week ago

**Buddy's Cartoons**

I Need YOUR Suggestions!
- I'm sure you all miss the more traditional content--the essays and stuff--but this book has occupied my being for so long...I'm sorry, but that's what I'm ...
2 weeks ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

- [Cartoonerific](#)
- [Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)
- [Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)
- [Format Films Roadrunners](#)

Blog Archive

- ▼ [2023](#) (153)
 - ▼ [May](#) (29)
 - [To Be](#)
 - [Animation's Vet](#)
 - [Anchor's Aweigh](#)
 - [Please, No More Fleas](#)
 - [Margie](#)
 - [Gophers, McCabe-Style](#)
 - [Wheely Birds](#)
 - [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre: Charlie's Haunt](#)
 - [That's P-A-L-M...](#)
 - [The Life of a Talkartoon](#)
 - [Three-in-One Dinosaur](#)
 - [Woody Comes to Rigor Mortis](#)
 - [Knock, Knock. Who Are You?](#)
 - [A Nutzi Kiss](#)
 - [Carving Out Gags](#)
 - [Track Five For Vancouver, Edmonton and Cucamonga](#)
 - [Keith Darling](#)
 - [That Sound Looks Like Lightning](#)
 - [No Chicken Tonight](#)
 - [What Golden Age?](#)
 - [Switchboard, Switch Clothes](#)
 - [Mutiny on the Bunny Backgrounds](#)
 - [The Mayor Goes to Anaheim](#)
 - [Silent Stars Meet a Silent Star](#)
 - [Plugging Paint](#)

[Silhouettes in a Storm](#)

[Give a Whit](#)

[Black Beauty Explodes](#)

[Today's Inside Jokes](#)

- [April](#) (31)
- [March](#) (31)
- [February](#) (29)
- [January](#) (33)

- [2022](#) (382)
- [2021](#) (380)
- [2020](#) (389)
- [2019](#) (376)
- [2018](#) (379)
- [2017](#) (380)
- [2016](#) (396)
- [2015](#) (389)
- [2014](#) (390)
- [2013](#) (388)
- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

- [Aline Mosby](#) (18)
- [Art Davis](#) (42)
- [Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)
- [Bob and Ray](#) (16)
- [Bob Clampett](#) (113)
- [Bob McKimson](#) (79)
- [Bob Thomas](#) (65)
- [Chuck Jones](#) (179)
- [Columbia](#) (64)
- [Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)
- [Cynthia Lowry](#) (35)
- [Dick Thomas](#) (18)
- [Don Patterson](#) (23)
- [Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)
- [Earl Wilson](#) (18)
- [Erskine Johnson](#) (43)
- [Felix the Cat](#) (36)
- [Film Daily](#) (50)
- [Fleischer](#) (203)
- [Frank Tashlin](#) (40)
- [Fred Allen](#) (56)
- [Fred Brunish](#) (12)
- [Friz Freleng](#) (188)
- [Gene Deitch](#) (23)
- [George Pal](#) (11)
- [Grant Simmons](#) (10)
- [Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (127)

Hanna-Barbera (6)

Hans Conried (5)

Hardaway-Dalton unit (7)

Harman-Ising (95)

Henry Morgan (14)

Irv Spence (12)

Jack Benny (596)

Jay Ward (35)

Jimmy Durante (21)

John Crosby (105)

John Sutherland (39)

Johnny Johnsen (39)

Johnny Olson (5)

Kenny Baker (6)

King-Size Canary (9)

Laugh-In (16)

Legend of Rockabye Point (6)

Little Rural Riding Hood (7)

Magical Maestro (10)

Maurice Noble (12)

Mel-O-Toons (5)

MGM (719)

Norm McCabe (10)

Pat Matthews (13)

Paul Julian (16)

Sara Berner (5)

Screwy Squirrel (40)

Spider-Man (2)

Terrytoons (111)

Tex Avery (628)

The Cat That Hated People (10)

Toby the Pup (4)

Tom and Jerry Human (46)

Tralfaz Sunday Theatre (20)

Ub Iwerks (119)

UPA (76)

Van Beuren (132)

Vernon Scott (52)

Virginia MacPherson (14)

Walt Disney (196)

Walter Lantz (314)

Warner Bros. (831)

Who Killed Who (10)