



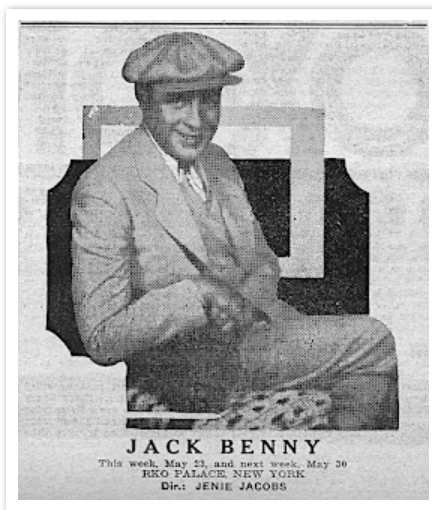
Sunday 13 October 2024

Playing the Palace

When Rochester answered the phone and described Jack Benny as "star of stage, screen and radio," it was not like Benny being cheap or driving a Maxwell. He didn't do either of those things in real life, but he actually WAS a star. Prior to beginning a radio career in 1932, he headlined on stage at the Palace in New York and, in 1931, also toured the U.S., Canada and Europe.

One of the things I've noticed in reading reviews of his vaudeville act in the 1920s and into the '30s was he almost always won the approval of critics.

There really is oodles of print material about Jack in New York in 1931, but I'll stick to reviews in *Variety*. They go through the whole bill, so I'm dropping some non-Benny parts in the interest of brevity. This is from the Show Biz Bible of February 11:



CAPITOL

New York, Feb. 7.

Loew's "Bits of Wit" unit, current with the Greta Garbo talker, "Inspiration," follows the new trend away from standard stage band presentation toward the less decorative, but also less stereotyped variety formation.

Jack Benny is starred over the unit and works in between the numbers as a gagging m. c., later bringing part of the pit crew to the stage for some comedy band biz. He formerly used the same number in floor shows and vaude. That almost completes the cycle for this particular bit and even so it held up here.

Garbo was bringing them in opening day, forcing the Capitol to five shows, all capacity. They were standing up almost to the finish of the last performance at night and into the midnight straight picture show. That gave Benny five full houses to talk and play to Friday and at the last one he made mention of the hardship on his pipes.

Capitol, a big place empty or filled, is unlike the intimate vaude and revue theatres to which Benny is accustomed. By the night show he apparently has struck the right chatter system, (or they were getting his light comedy banter in the rear), giving this single the entire audience to juggle. The average talking act coming from the smaller theatres to a place of the Capitol's size generally finds itself potent with only about half the audience, Benny's stuff landed all over.

Mrs. Jack Benny is on the program as Marie Marsh for her dumb dora foiling bit with her husband. She has two chances, one including a song.

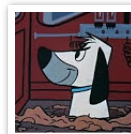
Benny's flip talk, fiddle solo and band stuff were meant to stand out. They do, and manager to carry the unit. *Big*

Jack wasn't through with this particular show. Among other venues that booked it were the Valencia in Jamaica, New York, and Loew's Jersey City before heading to other cities in the east.

He was back in New York at the May, but wasn't the star. That honour went to another one of Fred Allen's buddies. No less than the founder of *Variety* wrote the paper's review on May 31.

PALACE

About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

NOTE

Comments on an article will be limited to the first few days after it is posted. While there will be a spurt of posts to mid-November, this blog is pretty much retired.

My Blog List

Old TV History



July 1928 - Uncle Miltie, the first TV star?

Hardly. A case could be made instead for Jeanne Marie Belote. Or Catherine and Constance Rounds. They were seen when 3X...

22 hours ago

Yowp



Farewell to Elliot Field - The last of Hanna-Barbera's voice actors

from the 1950s has passed away. Elliot Field was 97. He died last Monday, the 23rd. Elliot was the afternoon dr...

2 weeks ago

Blogs to See

(St. Vaude)

Way over the average entertaining bill of eight acts at the Palace, currently. It is headlined by Dr. Rockwell and none of those coming or going actors known as stooges.

To Jack Benny goes the mark for holding up and sending the show over the average. Without him it would be just a good show. With Benny it's a beaut bill. To prevent squawks by others it may be said that no m. c. excels Benny, letting it go at that. Which also takes him in as a single talking turn.

For the first time an m. c. vaudevillian or any other stage person has found how to pull a gag out of news reel. Benny is doing it this week with Pathe sound news. In the reel is a sound scene of artillery practice. The reel on the sheet goes blooey in this scene. It is a natural guess of a break in the booth. Benny steps out, saying the house wants him to fill in the wait. He asks the orchestra leader for a violin and starts to play "Mighty Lak a Rose." He's barely started when the reel behind him resumes. He continues playing during the heavily sounded gunnery with the horses tearing headlong out of the sheet and over Benny's head. That ends the news reel, with Benny's playing now heard. It might be made known who picked this spot in the reel for a gag. It was perfect and tells what a comedy vision he had. Probably Benny. Nearly all of the standard acts are return dates here, excepting Armida, single, who isn't standard yet, and perhaps the first two turns. Benny made a gag out of that also. No. 2 is a Chinese act, the Joe Wong turn. Benny entering after it for the first time, to announce he is the announcer, mentioned it seemed strange for a Chinese act to be on No. 2. "Generally," he said, "it takes two Japs to open." Then he added: "Anyway, I'm glad to see a Chinese act. It's the first time there have been Gentiles up here in months."

Armida seems to have enough to make the single turn grade, but perhaps would make it more solidly and quickly if turning the joke she indulged in with Benny later into a literal fact. Benny asks the Mex girl if she isn't a Gus Edwards protege and how does she like Gus. "I like him," she answered, "but he holds me down." That's for the purpose of the Lincoln car gag, etc., for a laugh. But that holding her down may be so, in so far as Armida might do several things better if permitted to frame her own turn, at least in part.

During Benny's own act which wasn't, [tap dancer Jim] Barton broke in on it to have the orchestra leader rehearse his waltz music, and again Armida stepped out, neither noticing Benny with both interrupting him, and Armida mentioning she had forgotten to thank the audience for her reception. Armida did a nice bit with Benny here. *Sime*

Benny stayed for another week. Wrote "Bige" in the June 2 edition: "Levoda brought some action, opening the second part, after Jack Benny had soothed 'em with his smooth m. c.'ing during a first part that came in last. Benny is the only holdover currently, which sets a modern record for the Palace."

The headliner was Georgie Jessel, who replaced him as the Palace emcee the following week. But there was a surprise. As *The Billboard* put in on June 13: "While Jessel was carrying on, Jack Benny sprung a real surprise by coming on for a corking bit, giving the impression that he had forgotten his engagement as emcee ended the night before."

The two were on the bill again on June 21 at the Friars' Frolic at the New Amsterdam Theatre. Jack played his violin with Phil Baker on the accordion, as they kibbitzed.

Jack's next big tour took to the Palladium in London, where he worked out a contract signed in 1927. *Variety* stated he opened August 10 and stayed a week, rejecting a two-week appearance to return to New York. From the edition of *Variety*, Aug. 11:

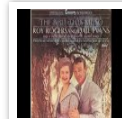
London, Aug. 10

Jack Benny, billed as "the world's most famous master of ceremonies" proved a revelation at the opening show today, scoring immediate popularity. He did an m. c. for the bill. Benny objected to the billing, with the program merely announcing his as being "direct from Carroll's 'Vanities.'"

Remainder of the bill is not up to standard. It's lucky Benny is there.



Movies with Michael



Cowboy Church #193 - Hello my friends and welcome

back for another service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans with "In the Sw..."
29 minutes ago

Fernando Liera Cartoons



The UN peacekeeping mission caught in the crosshairs

in southern Lebanon. -

©2024

fernandollercartoons.com

1 hour ago

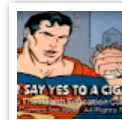
News From ME

Today's Political Comment -

I just want to point something out. I've been saying for months now that when one looks at polls, one should remember that a lot of possibly game-changing ...

9 hours ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Today's Topic: Animated Commercial s -

1 day ago

AFRTS Archive

My Best Sounds - After a BUNCH of issues, the streaming station is back online.

www.mybestsounds.com I'll be merging the best of MyBestSounds from before and "The Hook"....

1 day ago

The Exposure Sheet

Jean Vander Pyl Speaks

With Satellite Surgery - On

this day in 1919, Jean Vander Pyl, the voice behind Wilma Flintstone and countless others, was born. I've shared TV interviews and print interviews inv...

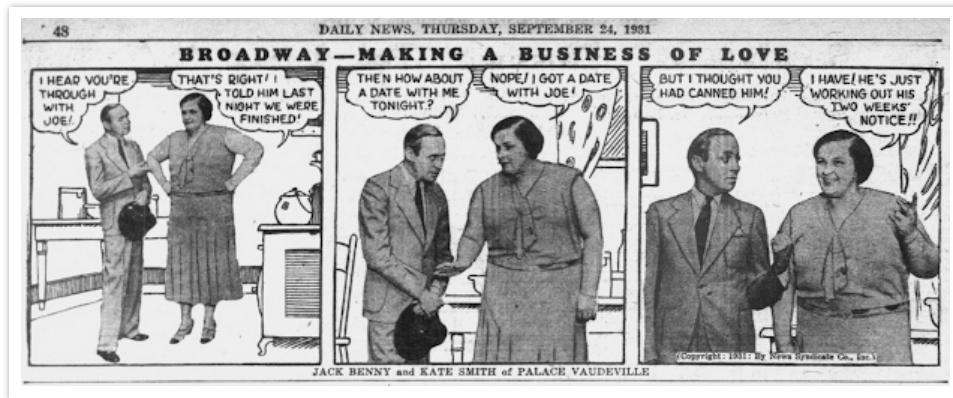
2 days ago

Cartoon Research

Bookmarked: The 30th

Anniversary of "The Pagemaster" - This fall marks the 30th anniversary of the film that encourages reading.

2 days ago



Back in New York, Jack had another week at the Palace. Some of the acts on the bill with him are familiar. One was singer Kate Smith. The other was bandleader Abe Lyman. The two appeared with Benny on his show of March 27, 1938. "Bige" in *Variety* wasn't altogether impressed. He wrote in the paper's September 8, 1931 edition:

CAPITOL (St. Vaude)

Show against show, act versus act, the current layout can complete with the bill that just completed seven weeks. In several ways, especially as a variety program, it's superior. But it just didn't blend like the other one did, while Benny wasn't as funny Saturday as [Lou] Holtz had been for seven weeks previously.

The show's worst handicap, no doubt, was a mental one. The house decided to spend \$13,000 in salaries to duplicate the long run. It must have placed the acts under a strain. This was evident in Benny's work all through the opening performance. Some bad breaks, mechanical and otherwise, didn't make things easier for this usually smooth m.c.

Benny also might have done some thinking or some buying. The two bits he relied on most were used by him at this house several times before, and the last time not so long ago. Through a muff in the projection room, one of them went wrong. The other one has been used here by Benny so many times before, it's now a clause in the lease.

In between-the-acts bits, Benny and [William] Gaxton were shaky at the first show. As the week progresses, so should the m.c. team. A fortunate discovery of an unbilled boy who can do a Holtz in everything but looks gave Benny and Gaxton their best chance of the afternoon. Everybody got it.

The September 1 *Variety* revealed Benny each received \$2,000 for the week, Gaxton got \$2,600, Harriet Hocter, \$2,500 and Lyman and the orchestra \$4,500. The bill was held over for a second week.

Jack was still under contract to Earl Carroll, and *Variety* of Oct. 6 reported the road version opened that evening at Ford's in Baltimore. There were difficulties with Carroll. *Variety* revealed:

Chicago, Dec. 21

Before leaving with 'Vanities' for Milwaukee, Jack Benny, featured principal in the Carroll show, indicated he would ask for a release immediately. Prior to the show's closing at the Erlanger, Carroll ordered a general cut in the payroll, one reason for Benny's balk.

Publix is negotiating with Benny for the Ambassador, St. Louis, now held by Wesley Eddy. If Benny opens in St. Louis it will be after Jan. 1 on a minimum run of four weeks with usual options.

Carroll relented, with the trade paper explaining Carroll held off the cash slash after "gratifying results" in Milwaukee over the Christmas period.

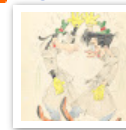
Jack's future appeal on radio may actually be found in a 1931 edition of *Variety*. In reviewing the act of singer comedian Freddie Bernard at the Academy Theatre, a Loew's house on East Houston St. in the Lower East Side, "Earl" wrote on Oct. 13:



Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Felix 100 Smiles to Dixie - Hi Readers, Welcome to Felix from 19320925 to 19321008! Felix tries to find a new home in the dailies, but can't stand a guy with the gout in two feet... 6 days ago

Pegbar Profiles



Pegbar Profile: George Manuell - *Caricature of George

Manuell by T. Hee, circa 1930s. *Image courtesy: Bonhams Auctions.* *George Francis Manuell *was born in Renton, Washington, o... 5 weeks ago

Termite Terrace headlines



A Mistake Only Charlton Could Make - The Jetsons,

here mistakenly referred to by their Spanish name, Los Supersonicos, in Charlton's Huckleberry Hound#3. 3 months ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

[Cartoonific Podcast](#)

[Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)

[Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)

[Format Films Roadrunners](#)

[Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie](#)

Blog Archive

▼ 2024 (118)

▼ October (13)

[Playing the Palace](#)

[Made Of Pen and Ink](#)

[On His Farm He Had an Igloo](#)

[War-Time Comedy](#)

[TV Mother, Reluctant Film Star](#)

[Celebrity in a Jam](#)

[Screen Gems' She-Wolf](#)

[Star of Stage, Screen and Casinos](#)

[Who Likes Van Beuren Cartoons?](#)

[Turn, Turn, Turn](#)

[Tee For Two Background](#)

He tells the umbrella gag, which Jack Benny recently told at the ace Palace, and got nothing. Benny socked 'em with it. Difference in delivery and knowing how.

Perhaps this is why you've heard of Jack Benny and not Freddie Bernard.

Bernard, by the way, emceed for years in Miami after the war, then in Atlanta until the mid-1960s. The "clown prince of show biz" had a Benny story from the days when they worked the Orpheum together.

"Lots of show world comedians get off their best lines off the stage, like for instance once I was working in Winnipeg with Jack Benny. The audience was stony. No laughs. Afterward we were walking back to the hotel in dismal silence when Benny stopped in his tracks and pointed to a child with an expressionless face.

" 'My God, no wonder we can't get laughs from these people,' Jack groaned. 'That kid has a face like a frozen lox.' "

He couldn't ad-lib without his writers? That was something else Benny made up. Ater ditching Earl Carroll in 1932, radio audiences would begin to find out.

Posted by Yowp at 07:28

Labels: Jack Benny

No comments:

Post a Comment



Enter comment

Home

Older Post

Crazy George

Daffy, the One Duck Band

- September (30)
- August (33)
- July (19)
- June (14)
- May (1)
- April (2)
- February (2)
- January (4)

- 2023 (381)
- 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 (20)

Art Davis (51)

Bad Luck Blackie (12)

Bob and Ray (18)

Bob Clampett (122)

Bob McKimson (86)

Bob Thomas (66)

Chuck Jones (191)

Columbia (74)

Counterfeit Cat (10)

Cynthia Lowry (38)

Dick Thomas (18)

Don Patterson (24)

Drag-a-Long Droopy (14)

Earl Wilson (20)

Erskine Johnson (45)

Felix the Cat (40)

Film Daily (50)

Fleischer (221)

Frank Tashlin (43)

Fred Allen (61)

Fred Brunish (13)

Friz Freleng (197)

[Gene Deitch](#) (25)

[George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (11)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (138)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (13)

[Hans Conried](#) (5)

[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)

[Harman-Ising](#) (107)

[Henry Morgan](#) (14)

[Irv Spence](#) (14)

[Jack Benny](#) (648)

[Jay Ward](#) (36)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (111)

[John Sutherland](#) (45)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (42)

[Johnny Olson](#) (6)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (11)

[Laugh-In](#) (20)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (7)

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (8)

[Magical Maestro](#) (10)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

[Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)

[MGM](#) (768)

[Norm McCabe](#) (11)

[Pat Matthews](#) (13)

[Paul Julian](#) (17)

[Sara Berner](#) (6)

[Screwy Squirrel](#) (43)

[Spider-Man](#) (3)

[Terrytoons](#) (119)

[Tex Avery](#) (676)

[The Cat That Hated People](#) (10)

[Toby the Pup](#) (5)

[Tom and Jerry Human](#) (48)

[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (21)

[Ub Iwerks](#) (131)

[UPA](#) (80)

[Van Beuren](#) (148)

[Vernon Scott](#) (53)

[Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)

[Walt Disney](#) (217)

[Walter Lantz](#) (334)

[Warner Bros.](#) (921)

[Who Killed Who](#) (13)

