

Sunday, 23 March 2025

As Old as Aristophanes

Publicity departments churned out all kinds of material in the days of yore.

In radio, networks or agencies or producers would bash out copy and send them with photos to newspapers hoping to get some free ink.

I suspect that's what happened in 1952 when the Ogden Standard-Examiner printed a life story of Jack Benny in a special TV edition on Nov. 12, 1952. The article was unbylined, so it likely didn't come from a newspaper staff writer, and specifically mentions CBS TV stations, so it likely came from the network P.R. department. At the



time, Benny's TV show aired on KSL-TV on Sundays at 5:30 p.m. Mountain.

As a biography, there are a few things you could quibble about when it comes to accuracy, but it's a good summary. I find it remarkable that among Jack's movie accomplishments there is no mention of To Be or Not to Be, arguably his finest picture, and one he was proud of. It should be noted "The Bee" programme of Fred Allen's in December 1936 was not a take-off. Allen actually conducted an amateur show on the second half hour of his weekly broadcasts for several seasons. I half-expected a joke about Jack's age next to the mention of Aristophanes but we all know Aristophanes is ridiculous.

There was a nice caricature of Jack, his violin and Rochester that was printed with this article but I can't fix the lousy scan to make it look decent.

He Started at Full Speed

Believe It or Not, Jack Benny Was a Child Prodigy on the Violin

Jack Benny, who for 18 years on radio had created solely through his voice one of the greatest of comedy characters, entered America's living rooms "in the flesh" when he made his debut on the CBS Television Network Oct. 28, 1950.

And the millions of delighted fans who saw him on television for the first time found he fitted exactly the penny-pinching, frustrated, lovable laughmaker they had so vividly imagined him to be. Jack Benny made four broadcasts from New York during the 1950-51 season. He launched his second season Nov. 4, 1951, in a transcontinental broadcast originating from the CBS-TV outlet, KNXT, in Hollywood.

Benny was one of the first of the major comedians to make the changeover from vaudeville to radio, in 1932. Vaudeville was going out, bigtime radio coming in. Benny bumped into columnist Ed Sullivan one night in a Broadway restaurant. Sullivan asked him, that night in 1932, to guest on his radio program the following evening. "But I don't know anything about radio," Jack protested. "Nobody does," Sullivan replied.

Gave It A Whirl

Benny offered to give it a whirl, gratis, and on this first broadcast of his life introduced, himself with an immortal line: "This is Jack Benny talking. Now there will be a brief pause for everyone to say, 'Who cares?" " Millions did care, as Benny soon found out. The same year, 1932, he had a sponsor and a network program. He was a sensation from the start.

Benny on television, as on radio, is the central figure in what historians of comedy call the classic insult method, which goes back to Aristophanes.

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Not So Magical Bear - Yogi Bear tries a magic trick in one of

those cartoons-betweenthe-cartoons on the *Huckleberry Hound Show*. *Alakazam, Alagazoom Come out, little bear, ... 23 hours ago

Old TV History



A Snapshot Television. 1931, Part 2 - The technology

wasn't there yet. Television was around in the late 1920s. By mid-1931, a number of stations were on the air but they were hampered by all ... 1 week ago

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News From ME

Today's Video Link - I've always liked this song. It's the title tune from a musical I don't particularly care for but the song is, to me, just wonderful. I also like the

7 hours ago

His knack of building unknown personalities into stars in their own right is well known. Dennis Day, Eddie Anderson, who plays Rochester, and Phil Harris are notable examples.

Benny's sense of timing and spontaneity of delivery have been underscored by critics and fellow comics alike, qualities which contrast strangely with the dither he works himself into in preparing his scripts. He sweats out the lines which appear to flow effortlessly and merrily over the air. Although a battery of top gagsters whip together the raw material, Benny does the final editing, unifying and polishing. To keep the lines fresh, he cuts rehearsals to the minimum. And during the broadcast he rarely ad libs, but stops the show and howls with unrestrained laughter when others put over an unscheduled nifty. From Waukegan

Waukegan, Benny's home town, is a suburb of Chicago. His father, a haberdasher, insisted that his son take violin lessons at an early age, and he was considered a child prodigy on the fiddle in Waukegan. One of Jack's early triumphs was playing "The Bee," a short violin piece that has been the butt of Benny jokes on the air for a decade. "The Bee" sparked his famous radio feud with Fred Allen. A moppet in an Allen skit which was a take-off on amateur programs played the song and Fred commented afterward that it was Benny's old vaudeville specialty.



"Only eight and you already can play 'the Bee'," Allen joked. "Why Jack Benny ought to be ashamed of himself."

The next week Benny on his own show, indignantly declared he could produce four persons who would attest that he had played "The Bee" at the age of six. And the feud was on. "The Bee," by the way is not "Flight of the Bumble Bee," but a piece composed by a Franz Schubert —but not the Franz Schubert. Seems confusion is the word for Benny. At 13, Jack was a fiddler in Waukegan's leading dance orchestra and also a regular of the Barrison Theater orchestra, a lone knickerbockered figure surrounded by grownups. Since his teachers recall

him more vividly for his wisecracks, it wasn't surprising that Jack quit school before he was 17 to team up with a vaudeville pianist named Cora Salisbury.

Jack billed himself as Benny K. Benny and at \$15 a week he toured Midwest theaters with his partner. He didn't tell jokes, but he managed to draw laughs by sawing away on his violin, with the little finger of the bow hand affectedly extended while his eyes followed its movement in mock curiosity.

Benny Joins Navy

Afterward, Jack joined another pianist named Lyman Woods, and their tours took them, at the outbreak of World War I, to London's famous Palladium. They broke up and Jack joined the Navy. In a Navy revue, he played the fiddle without much success, until one night he paused to make a few wisecracks. The crowd roared, Jack Benny the comic was born and "The Bee"-playing violinist was no more. Thereafter, Jack was pencilled into the show as "Issy There, the Admiral's Disorderly," and for the duration he convulsed both the Navy and the public with his ingratiating patter. Upon his discharge, Benny returned to vaudeville. To avoid confusion with another fiddling comic, Ben Bernie, he adopted the "Jack Benny" tag. As a topflight funnyman. Benny worked with the greats in the heyday of the two-a-day, and went on to further success in Earl Carroll and Shubert shows on Broadway.

His movie debut was as auspicious as his radio bow. A talent scout spotted him in a Los Angeles theater in 1929. Benny got the lead in "The Hollywood Revue," clicked big, and has been starred in a number of pictures since, including "Charley's Aunt," "The Horn Blows at Midnight" and "George Washington Slept Here."

Benny and his wife, Mary Livingstone, have been stage and broadcasting partners for 20 years. She was Sadye Marks, a salesgirl in a Los Angeles department store when they were married in 1927. She recalls that he practically had to drag her on stage to make an actress out of her. But it was not long before she became an invaluable ingredient is the Benny fun formula.

The Bennys have a beautiful home in Beverly Hills, Calif., and their home life has been a happy one. Their daughter, Joan Naomi, adopted at the age of four months and now 17 years old, is the joy of their lives. As practically every Benny fan knows, Jack is the exact opposite in private life to the penurious, protesting character he plays on the air. He is notorious for his over-tipping. His genial manner and friendliness have made him one of the most popular figures in Hollywood.

Benny gets little time off to play, what with television schedule, weekly radio show and business interests, but when he has an hour or so to loaf he's usually out on the golf links.

Sponsor of the "Jack Benny Program" is American Tobacco Co.

Posted by Yowp at 06:56

E Fernando Llera



The source of the country's fresh water is about to disappear.

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The Exposure Sheet



A Spring
Break
Announcem
ent - After a
particularly
lengthy first

two months, spring break is finally here. My workplace tends to get pretty busy around this time, so I'll be taking a w...

1 day ago

Movies with Michael



Some Cartoons for Saturday Morning #223 - Hello

my friends and happy Saturday morning. Once again it is time for some classic cartoons. Today's cartoon selection starts with a very important fi... 1 day ago

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Andy Mansfield 1963 - In 1963 it really hadn't been that

long since we lost MAJ Glenn Miller during WWII. Glenn entertained the troops and cut a lot of exclusive music fo...

1 day ago

Lartoon Research

"Clay"-ing by the Book:
Looking Back at "The
Adventures of Mark Twain" -

The Claymation film, celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, was inspired by stories from one of the world's greatest authors.

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Labels: Jack Benny

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 Write A Blog



Celebrating St. Patrick's Day Early -

1 week ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog Felix Soap Opera - Felix is back, and in Danny Dooit's home to stay! Danny's Dad finds out that Felix rescued Danny, so the Cat deserves a reward. It takes a bit of cha...

1 week ago

Pegbar Profiles



The Animator, January 1938 - The second issue of

The Animator is missing as of this writing, so here is the third edition from the start of January 1938. *Snow White *had its Ca... 4 months ago

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Dr Grob's Animation Review

Tex Avery at Warner Bros

Format Films Roadrunners

Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie

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Magoo's Payoff

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Sinatra Kills Me

Comedians Stay Out of Brawls, Says Jack Benny

That Ain't the Way I Heerd It

Scary Jerry

A Hole in the Ground

He's Not Tom Ewell

Nutsy Blur

How To Escape From the Moon

Blintzes and Bets

From Horse to Hefner

What? How? Why?

Rock and the Villain

More Than Hazel

Van Beuren Farm Fun

Off With His Head

Warm Warner Cartoon Birthday Greetings

First Stop, Kansas

Juul Haalmeyer

Fleischer's Snow-White

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