

Sunday, 29 June 2025

Indestructible Benny

There may not have been a comedian who was analysed so much during his time as Jack Benny.

Over the years, we've posted a number of articles from columnists explaining the appeal of Benny and his show. Jack talked about it himself at the time as well.

This article is from Leon Gutterman of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. What may be interesting is a great deal of credit was given to his irregular supporting cast. Don Wilson, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and Mary Livingstone were the only people to be mentioned at the start of each radio show. Anyone else got credit for their performances only on rare occasion. An exception might have been Mel Blanc, whose name Jack mentioned as the show was unfolding on the air. Unlike other radio shows, you wouldn't hear "Appearing tonight were..." though credits were given on the Benny television programmes.



The writer got Schlepperman's catch-phrase wrong, but his column otherwise sums up the Jack Benny show that people remember today.

It was published Oct. 13, 1950.

OUR FILM FOLK

Why Jack Benny Is the Indestructible Comedian

Jack Benny has returned to the nation's air waves for the 19th season of his comedy career in radio. And he has come back, as always, in his familiar role of the balding, penny-pinching patsy, but his CBS program as in the past, will be replete during the coming year with new riotous laugh skits, new characterizations, new guest surprises. At least that's what Jack tells me.

This indestructible quality of the great wit's character creation and a show format flexible enough for a perennial infusion of fresh idea material and talent point to the secret of his enduring and inimitable success. As one newspaper editor once wrote: "Benny hasn't, as is so persistently rumored, been doing the same thing for 18 years. He wouldn't have lasted that long if he had."

Comedy situations in a Benny program season had, year after year, been marked by freshness and originality. New characterizations, his own and those of an odd assortment of fellow actors and actresses, have paraded across; the script in endless procession. His guests, too, have been spectacularly impressive, as witness the case of the Ronald Colmans, who appeared 16 times on the show.

But the program personalities, including the whimsical portrayals of regular cast members, are probably the most memorable highlights of the Benny saga. Among those who turned up last season was Frank Fontaine, a new comedian, playing a mentally retarded sweepstakes winner named John L. P. Sivony [sic]. Mel Blanc, a regular, (the voice of Bugs Bunny) did a week-by-week impersonation of Al Jolson. Jack himself added another facet to his characterization, that of the naive treasurer of the Beverly Hills Beavers, a boy's club.

Once, there was an ostrich in the script, and even a polar bear named Carmichael. Jack kept Carmichael in the cellar and Rochester was his keeper. At the time, the husky-voiced valet was in an endless search

About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

NOTE

This blog is retired as daily posts ended June 1st. Comments on old posts won't be approved.

My Blog List

Old TV History

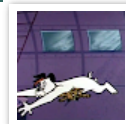


October 1937 - Nope. Their plans weren't going to

happen. NBC had talked about remote broadcasts on W2XBS in October 1937. But the equipment wasn't ready so the idea wa...

1 day ago

Yowp



Music For Cat and Dog in Space - This blog was begun

for the purpose of identifying the background music in the original Hanna-Barbera cartoons. The first music employed by the studio cam...

1 week ago

Blogs to See

Cartoon Research

Card Catalog: The Tales of Roussel in "Ghost in the Shell" - I would like to share with you how one of my favorite animated films introduced me to one of my favorite authors.

6 hours ago

for a gas man to do some repairs. The versatile Mel Blanc played Carmichael. Blanc now is the voice of the Benny parrot, which keeps Rochester from delivering soliloquies while doing the household chores. Its screams drive him to distraction. Blanc is also Benny's French violin teacher. He is the coughing, sputtering voice of the rattletrap Maxwell auto as it tunes up, and he doubles as well as the rhythm-tongued train announcer calling out Azusa, Cucamonga and other weirdly-named stations.

Buck Benny Rides Again

Who doesn't remember the famous Buck Benny of the long-running "Buck Benny Rides Again" sequence? Andy Devine, whose entrance line was "Hiya, Buck" was the chief stooge of this comedy turn. The skit ceased with the release of the Paramount film "Buck Benny Rides Again." in which Jack and most his fibbers appeared.

Mr. Billingsley was a quaint character dreamed up and played by Ed Beloin, a former Benny writer. A subnormal, self-appointed house guest, Mr. Billingsley consistently made wry comments at the wrong time in a dry voice. Beloin, never an actor, always had Benny worried that he'd miss his cues or fluff his lines.

Another witty specimen knocked on the Benny door announcing [sic] "A telegram for Mr. Benny." The role was played by Harry Baldwin, Benny's secretary, who would glow with Barrymore-like pride at the end of each performance, over his laconic line.

Mr. Kitzel, a current fabrication, is played by Artie Auerbach, former New York newspaper photographer. His "peekle in the meedle with the mustard on top" and his baseball stories are laugh toppers. Mable Flapsaddle and Gertrude Gershift, the Benny telephone operators [sic], enacted by Sarah Berner [sic] and Bea Benadaret [sic], tie the program in knots with them saucy badgering of the boss.

Schlepperman's "Howdy Stranger"

Off and on the show have been Sheldon Leonard, Sam Hearn, Frank Nelson and many other stooges. Leonard is the racetrack tout with the soft, patronizing voice. Hearn played Mr. Schlepperman, whose greeting, "Howdy, Stranger," stirred a ripple of chuckles. Nelson is often heard as the haughty floorwalker, the butler or some generally nasty type, with a mocking "Yeahus" when addressed.

Jack's main foils of course, have come in for equally hilarious typing. Tenor Dennis Day is the timid mama's boy who is always asking for his salary, and Phil Harris is ribbed as a lady-killer with a predilection for word-mangling and liquid refreshments. Rochester as the extrovert valet and chauffeur constantly befuddles the harassed Benny. Mary Livingstone, Jack's wife, is the heckling girl friend whom Benny constantly threatens to send back to the hosiery counter at the May Company department store. Practically every important figure in show business has guested on the Benny funfest, but Fred Allen's visits have been among the most notable. Jack and Fred carried on a feud for years, on their own programs. Every once in a while they crossed over for mutual calls, letting the quips and sparks fly at close range. "If I had my writers here," Jack once exploded, "you wouldn't talk to me like this."

Benny at His Best

For years, the Benny comedy situations have run the gamut of thing that could possibly happen to Jack Benny has been satirized. Last season, for example, he did a takeoff on an actual operation on his nose, and in another skit he roved through the script for several weeks spending his money like a drunken sailor after a can of tomatoes fell on his head and put him out of his mind. It was Benny at his best. To his sheer delight, the fabulous funnyman has taken the worst beating from his stooges of any comedian in radio history. Everything about him is mercilessly lampooned . . . his thinning hair, his baby blue eyes, his age (39 years), his romantic attractiveness, his Maxwell, his money vault, his thriftiness and his fiddle. A few years ago his writers even dreamed up a contest in which listeners were invited to send in letters of 25 words or less dwelling on the theme "I can't stand Jack Benny because . . ." More than 500,000 letters poured in. Benny revelled in the scheme. That's why Jack Benny is the indestructible comedian, who never changes himself but keeps his show over fresh with funsters. That's the secret of his 19 years of radio success.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:12](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

No comments:

Post a Comment

News From ME

Last Week Tonight Tonight - I wanted to embed John Oliver's show tonight. It's all about The Big, Beautiful Bill. But YouTube has declared it Age-Restricted which means you have to go...

9 hours ago

Movies with Michael



The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution

1926-1930 (1997) - The transition from silent film to sound film was one of the most turbulent and important parts of movie history. Yet somehow it remains quite underw...

9 hours ago

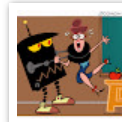
Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



A Post-Psychotronic Post -

18 hours ago

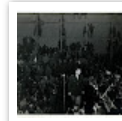
Fernando Liera Cartoons



Helping Educators Reimagine AI's Role in Transformational

Learning. - ©2025 fernandollercartoons.com 22 hours ago

AFRTS Archive



Andy Mansfield 1964 - Andy Mansfield had a long run with

AFRTS, from Turn Back The Clock in the 50s to America's Popular Music in the 1960s he had those oldies. In 1964 he...

4 days ago

Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



It's All Greek to Me-Ow (1961) - This short film marks

the third final Tom and Jerry short of 1961, which proved to be a very poor year for the cat and mouse duo. In this short fil...

6 days ago



Enter comment

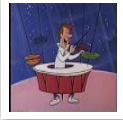
Home

Older Post

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



The Exposure Sheet



Video of the Week: A Belated Father's Day Celebration

- I missed out on a Father's Day post this year, so I hope I'm making it up to you guys now with this week's featured video. Here is a 1995 Cartoon Network ...
1 week ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

[Felix Ends 1932!](#) - At last we finish "Felix 1932"! All the strips from 12-18 to 12-31-1932! I like the gag in the 12-22, where Felix keeps the Wolf from Danny's door by sho...
1 month 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...
8 months ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

[Cartoonerific Podcast](#)

[Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)

[Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)

[Format Films Roadrunners](#)

[Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie](#)

Blog Archive

▼ [2025](#) (168)

▼ [June](#) (11)

[Indestructible Benny](#)

[Swing Symphonies](#)

[Kiss My...](#)

[I Don't Care What You Say](#)

[Before Aunt Harriet](#)

[Bobby Sherman](#)

[Where's Bugs?](#)

[Shotgun Non-Wedding](#)

[Tazzy Birthday \(Not Quite\)](#)

[So Long For Now](#)

[Like a Moose Jaw Needs a Hat Rack](#)

- ▶ [May](#) (34)
- ▶ [April](#) (30)
- ▶ [March](#) (33)
- ▶ [February](#) (28)
- ▶ [January](#) (32)

- ▶ [2024](#) (209)
- ▶ [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](#) (54)
- [Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)
- [Binko](#) (2)
- [Bob and Ray](#) (19)
- [Bob Clampett](#) (129)
- [Bob McKimson](#) (91)
- [Bob Thomas](#) (67)
- [Christmas cartoon](#) (88)
- [Chuck Jones](#) (200)
- [Columbia](#) (84)
- [Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)
- [Cynthia Lowry](#) (40)
- [Dick Thomas](#) (18)
- [Don Patterson](#) (25)
- [Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)
- [Earl Wilson](#) (23)
- [Erskine Johnson](#) (46)
- [Felix the Cat](#) (42)
- [Film Daily](#) (50)
- [Fleischer](#) (231)
- [Frank Tashlin](#) (45)
- [Fred Allen](#) (62)
- [Fred Brunish](#) (15)
- [Friz Freleng](#) (218)
- [Gene Deitch](#) (25)
- [George Pal](#) (12)
- [Grant Simmons](#) (11)

Groucho (15)
Hanna and Barbera unit (147)
Hanna-Barbera (18)
Hans Conried (5)
Hardaway-Dalton unit (7)
Harman-Ising (113)
Henry Morgan (14)
Irv Spence (14)
Jack Benny (681)
Jay Ward (40)
Jim Tyer (14)
Jimmy Durante (22)
John Crosby (118)
John Sutherland (50)
Johnny Johnsen (44)
Johnny Olson (6)
June Foray (10)
Kenny Baker (6)
King-Size Canary (11)
Laugh-In (22)
Legend of Rockabye Point (7)
Little Rural Riding Hood (9)
Magical Maestro (10)
Maurice Noble (12)
Mel-O-Toons (5)
MGM (810)
Norm McCabe (13)
Pat Matthews (13)
Paul Julian (17)
Sara Berner (6)
Screwy Squirrel (44)
Shafu (38)
Spider-Man (3)
Terrytoons (129)
Tex Avery (716)
The Cat That Hated People (13)
Toby the Pup (6)
Tom and Jerry Human (48)
Tralfaz Sunday Theatre (30)
Ub Iwerks (136)
UPA (85)
Van Beuren (157)
Vernon Scott (55)
Virginia MacPherson (14)
Walt Disney (224)
Walter Lantz (351)
Warner Bros. (984)
Who Killed Who (13)

Watermark theme. Powered by [Blogger](#).