

Sunday, 28 December 2025

What's Funny, Doc?

Mel Blanc made a very good living from network radio. But when it died in the 1950s, what next?

That's what a number of radio actors were wondering.

In Mel's case, he was still employed at Warner Bros. but, as you know, the studio would close in the early '60s. He found his way onto the Hanna-Barbera payroll. And, occasionally, he showed up on Jack Benny's TV show, but that ended in 1965.

Much like Alan Reed had a novelty business, Blanc decided to go into business as well. At first, he teamed with former Warners boss John Burton. Blanc admits in his autobiography the partnership didn't work out, so he set out on his own.



Blanc had been voicing TV commercials. This was pretty lucrative, especially when the cartoon characters he played being endorsers. Reed said when he wasn't doing much else, he made a comfortable living being Fred Flintstone pushing cereal. Blanc would have being doing the same—plus raking in cash from being Bugs, Sylvester and all his other characters in TV spots.

However, Blanc eyed the profits the makers of the commercials took in. Local commercial radio had taken over the airtime formerly contracted to networks, and there was an opening for anyone canny enough to write and produce commercials and brief filler programming. That's where Blanc put some of his energies.

Here's how the Associated Press explained it on May 24, 1967.

Commercials Need Humor, Blanc Claims

By GENE SANDSAKER

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Most listeners likely will agree that radio commercials featuring mindless jingles, strident voices or weird sounds are a nerve-jangling bore.

And that a few, made with taste and a light touch, can be charming.

But best of all, says one expert, are the ones with wit.

"Humorous commercials are stronger than dirt," quips Mel Blanc.

Mel is the man of many voices who did the talking for Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig in movie cartoons. Now he makes commercials—hopefully funny ones.

His competitors in Hollywood include satirist Stan Freberg, who kids his clients' prunes, chow mein, coffee, tea or airline service—and grosses \$500,000 a year. A half-dozen other firms grind out plugs for everything from carbonated drinks and potato chips to a stomach remedy to take after overindulging.

Blanc, 58, squat and swarthy, with a glum face but cheerful disposition, is a onetime Portland, Ore., violinist, tuba player and radio-band leader.

In Hollywood 30 years ago he originated the voices of Bugs. Porky, Daffy Duck, Tweetie and other Warner Bros. cartoon characters. On the Jack Benny radio show he played a parrot and a Mexican character and even supplied the sputtering sound of Benny's dying Maxwell.

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NOTE

We'll have daily posts to Jan. 3 but this blog is retired. COMMENTS ON OLD POSTS WON'T BE APPROVED.

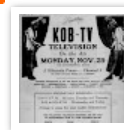
My Blog List



[Yuletide Yogi, Holly Jolly Jetsons and Twisting Tom Cat -](#)

Yogi Bear got into the spirit of Christmas (the secular, not religious version), though not on his TV show. A couple of storybooks with Yuletide Yogi were...

3 days ago

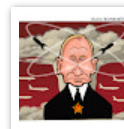


[TV Comes to New Mexico -](#)

Television exploded in 1948. At the start of the year, there were 18 TV stations in the U.S. At the end, *Television* magazine reported 52 were on the ai...

4 weeks ago

Blogs to See



[Russia strikes Kyiv, Ukraine's capital and kills at least 1 person a](#)

day before Zelenskyy-Trump meeting. - ©2025 fernandollera.com 35 minutes ago

Six years ago, Blanc's commercial venture—and Mel himself—nearly failed to get off the ground. On the very day that brochures hit ad agency mail-boxes, announcing the formation of Mel Blanc Associates, a head-on collision accorioned his car and broke, he says, "every bone in my body except my left arm."

Hospitalized two months in traction, Blanc went home in a body cast and there continued recording the voice of Barney Rubble in the "Flintstone" TV series. He now uses a cane only on stairs.

Revived 3 1/2 years ago, Mel Blanc Associates has since doubled its business annually. With 22 writers, Mel says, he sells "entertainment, imagination and comic invention."

In one skit, elephants squirt suds from their trunks to prove that linoleum coated with the client's wax resists detergent. In another, insects cry alarm at the hiss of a bug spray. Another product, called "Superfun," consists of more or less hilarious sketches which radio stations can play between commercials or records.

Mel was at work the other afternoon in his studio.

Standing at a microphone, his bald spot shining under the fluorescents, he jiggled merrily in time with the recorded children's chorus he could hear in his earphones. In Bugs Bunny's voice he sang the praises of a kiddies' drink-mix "for fun that never ends."

"A little happier, Mel," said a visiting producer for whom he was providing the sound track. Mel made it happier.

Mel's company also put together public service announcements. Here's one ironic campaign, outlined by a syndicated news service on March 4, 1968. It's ironic because Blanc died in 1989 of lung cancer caused by smoking (he was 81).

New Commercials Fighting Cigarettes

By LAWRENCE LAURENT

WASHINGTON — Radio stations across the nation are receiving a new collection of commercials. Some are 10 seconds long, some last 30 seconds and some run a full minute. All have the same punch line: stop smoking cigarettes.

The commercials were commissioned by the American Cancer Society. The creative work was done by Mel Blanc Associates of Hollywood. A humorous approach is used in all ten of the commercials.

One tells of a man being tortured to death. He is forced to smoke cigarettes.

Another uses the sound of a gunshot to illustrate "murder"; the sound of a crashing automobile to show "accident" and the sound of a cigarette lighter and a puffing man to demonstrate: "suicide: stop smoking cigarettes."

Here's an example of one of Mel Blanc's 10-second commercials: "the next time you think you're dying for a cigarette . . . you might be right." One commercial is based on "hate" and offers this advice: "the next time you have to give something to someone you don't like, give 'em a carton of cigarettes. And if you really hate this person, give two cartons. Right?"

COMEDY ROLE

The "humorous," approach comes naturally to Mel Blanc. For more than 20 years, he provided a variety of voices for Warner Bros. animated cartoons. These included Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker. He still can be heard on tv in cartoons of Secret Squirrel and Sinbad Jr. (in which he furnishes the voice of the parrot). He can also be heard in tv commercials for Kool Aid, Raid and Kellogg Co. cereals.

Blanc's radio commercials are to be broadcast as part of a station's public service programming. No payment is made.

The station may feel obligated to broadcast them, in light of a Federal Communications Commission decision that smoking is 'controversial,' and, therefore, subject to the FCC's "fairness doctrine." In essence, the FCC says that a station carrying cigarette commercials has a "fairness" obligation to carry anti-smoking messages.

Blanc also claims: "We're telling the truth. We believe our campaign will be effective because it will force the listeners to have involvement through humor."

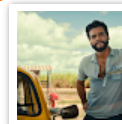
His work on the commercials even had an effect on Mel Blanc. He switched from cigarettes to cigars, but "that was awful."

Right now, Mel Blanc is concentrating on "cutting down."

The anti-smoking tv commercials have been made chiefly by Tony Schwartz of New York. His main theme is the parental obligation toward children and the work is so subtle that the final pitch has the impact of an unexpected karate chop. Schwartz shows children putting on grown-up clothing. They chat happily. A narrator notes that children imitate grown-ups and asks, "have you thought about quitting smoking?"



Movies with Michael

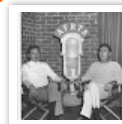


Movie
Review:
The Secret
Agent (O
Agente
Secreto) -

Michael's Movie Grade: A+
A fantastic political thriller from Brazil. This film tells the story of a man who in 1977 Brazil goes back to his hometo...

15 hours ago

AFRTS Archive



Roger
Carroll
1977 -
Roger
Carroll with
Doc

Severenson Roger Carroll had an interesting story about how he became a DJ: "Many years ago when ABC never played records live o...

15 hours ago

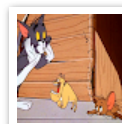
News From ME

FACT CHECK: 25 of Many -

I forgot to say something bad about Donald Trump yesterday as I said I would...but don't worry. I'll make up for it before the weekend is over. Today, let's ...

21 hours ago

Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon

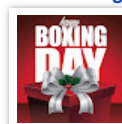


The Cat's
Me-Ouch
(1965) -
*The Cat's
Me-Ouch
*marks the

last Tom and Jerry cartoon of 1965, which was a surprisingly strong year for the cat and mouse duo. In this cartoon Je...

1 day ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Happy
Boxing Day
2025! -

1 day ago

Cartoon Research

The 70th Anniversary of "One Froggy Evening" -

Lets celebrate Chuck Jones masterwork of an animated short on its platinum anniversary.

2 days ago

Another commercial has a child happily copying every action of his father. They sit under a tree and the father lights up. The child picks up the pack and plays with the cigarettes. Again, the narrator notes that the child likes to imitate his father.

Tony Schwartz, by the way, doesn't smoke.

Comedy radio commercials running on a national basis seem to be few and far between these days. For quite a number of years, a fellow named Dick Orkin created many. About the only criticism you could level is they all sounded the same, with Orkin's droning voice cold-opening them, so it was a little difficult remembering what he was advertising.

Here's Mel talking in 1966 at a lunch gathering of the Independent Station Representatives Association.

0:00 / 23:42

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:21](#)

Labels: [Hanna-Barbera](#), [Warner Bros.](#)

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Noah Pasternak



Xmas 2025
- Click on the image for a better-quality look!

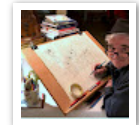
3 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

[Merry Christmas from Jimmie Acorn](#) - Merry Christmas Readers! In these two episodes of Jimmie Acorn from Children's Activities Magazine of October and December 1954, Jimmie hitches a ride on t...
5 days ago



The Exposure Sheet



Tony Benedict: A Tribute - The animation community

lost one of its great veterans this Saturday. This weekend, we were shocked and saddened to learn that Tony Benedict, one of the gre...

3 weeks ago

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