

November 18, 2019

Abbott and Costello Christmas Show - Aired Sunday evening, 8:00PM on NBC - December 14, 1952. Performed "LIVE" before a studio audience. Abbott & Costello anchored the West Coast, broadcasting from the El Capitan Theater in Hollywood.

Opened on January 24, 1927, this theater was also the home of This Is Your Life, Ken Murray's Blackouts, Fanny Brice's Baby Snooks, Lucille Ball's My Favorite Husband, The Lawrence Welk Show and The Hollywood Palace. It was renamed the El Capitan Theater in the 1940's. Today, this building is known as Avalon Hollywood.

Bud Abbott - met Lou Costello in 1936 while each were working with different partners. Costello would fill in for Abbott's partner from time to time. Within a year, they were a team. They had enormous success in radio, films and television during the 1940's. On July 14, 1957, they officially announced the end of their partnership.

Lou Costello - After the split, Costello appeared many times on The Steve Allen Show. He also made two dramatic television appearances on *General Electric Theater* and *Wagon Train*. Costello's final job was in Las Vegas at the Dunes Hotel with Sid Fields assuming the Bud Abbott role in several of their memorable routines.

Jack Lomas - with over 100 from credits to his name, he appeared in *It's A Wonderful Life* along with numerous parts on television during the 1950's.

Gordon Jones - is best known for playing Lou Costello's TV nemesis "Mike the Cop". He was star football guard at UCLA and played a few seasons of professional football. He also had a recurring role as neighbor Butch Barton during the early years of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

Buster Shaver and Olive - Olive was offered a part as a "Munchkin" in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), but turned it down because she and her brother were making more money in vaudeville. Olive once said, "They offered \$75 a week, but in vaudeville, my brothers and I were making \$150 a week. We didn't know the movie would be so big." She and her brother, George, also appeared in *Our Gang's Shrimps For A Day* in 1934, *Charlie Chan at the Circus* in 1936 and *Little Miss Broadway* with Shirley Temple (1938). She danced with Donald O'Connor at the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas during the 1950s and 1960s. O'Connor told *Daily Variety*, "She was one of the finest dancers I ever worked with. Working with her on the stage I forgot she was a little person, she suddenly became six feet tall."

Shaver also danced with another little person named Millita Wronga. By the 1960's, Shaver was working solo as an actor. He is in several episodes of the TV show *Death Valley Days* between 1965 and 1969.

Margaret Whiting - Margaret began singing as a small child and by the age of seven, signed with Johnny Mercer, the popular songwriter and founder of Capitol Records, for whom her father worked. When Mercer and his two partners launched Capitol, she was the first artist to be engaged by the label, where she began recording in 1942. In the early 1940s, her hits included "That Old Black Magic", "Moonlight in Vermont" and "It Might As Well Be

Spring". Between 1946 and 1954, she had more than 40 solo hit tunes for Capitol.

Tom and Jerry - not much is known about this incredible act.

The Nicholas Brothers (Fayard and Harold) - Compliments followed them wherever they went. Fred Astaire once called The Nicholas Brothers' "Jumpin' Jive" dance sequence in the film *Stormy Weather* (1943) the greatest movie musical number he had ever seen. Choreographer George Balanchine called their acrobatic movement ballet, despite their lack of formal training. Gregory Hines once said that if a film were ever made about the Nicholas Brothers, the dance numbers would have to be computer-generated because nobody could duplicate them. Mikhail Baryshnikov once called them the most amazing dancers he had ever seen in his life. The Nicholas Brothers were inducted into the inaugural class of the International Tap Dance Hall of Fame in 2002.

Sid Fields - He worked on Eddie Cantor's radio show as a writer and actor and then with Ben Blue, Rudy Vallee, Fred Allen and Milton Berle. He began working with Abbott and Costello in 1944, in the film *In Society* (1944) and as a writer/performer on their radio series. From 1951 he supported Abbott and Costello on NBC-TV's *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, and in 1952, he was cast in the team's *The Abbott and Costello Show*. He also wrote the majority of scripts for the first season.

Dorothy Granger - In 1930, her father took her to producer Hal Roach, who was testing talent for his upcoming comedy series, *The Boy Friends*. Granger's natural comedy timing got her the job immediately and she was placed under contract to Hal Roach Studios. Among her credits are with Laurel & Hardy, W.C. Fields,

The Three Stooges, Andy Clyde, Charley Chase, Edgar Kennedy, Harry Langdon, as well as on live television with Abbott & Costello. Granger is best remembered as the sarcastic, suspicious wife in Leon Errol's series of two-reelers for RKO.

The Four Pipers - appeared on four Colgate Comedy Hours with Abbott and Costello in 1952 and 1953. They are not to be confused with the Pied Pipers who sang with Tommy Dorsey in the 1940's.

Hal Sawyer - in addition to the Colgate Comedy Hour, Sawyer was the announcer for the television programs of Milton Berle, George Jessel and The All-Star Review.

Al Goodman - conducted and arranged for Al Jolson plus he conducted for many Broadway musicals. Goodman directed over 150 first-night performances and became one of the Great White Way's most popular conductors. He became a radio conductor in 1932 and conducted for television beginning in 1949.

The Jack Benny Program - Jack Does Christmas Shopping - Aired Sunday evening, 7:30PM on December 12, 1954 on CBS.

Jack Benny - Born Benjamin Kubelsky, he began to study the violin at the age six. While his musical "ineptness" would later become his trademark, in reality, he was a very accomplished player. When given the opportunity to play in live theatre professionally, Benny played hooky from school to perform. After failing all of his examinations, the principal asked him to leave school. While performing at the same theater as The Marx Brothers, Minnie Marx (the Marx Brothers mother and manager) asked Jack to come with them on the road to be their musical

director. Jack's father would not allow this to happen. Eventually, Benny wound up on a vaudeville tour with the The Marx Brothers. After several disappointing performances following The Marx Brothers act, he was ready to give up. Thanks to Minnie Marx, she encouraged him to keep going. She told him it wasn't because he was a bad performer, rather nobody has ever been able to successfully follow the zany comedy of her sons.

As a gag, Benny appeared as a contestant on The \$64,000 Question on October 8, 1957. The category was the violin. Benny insisted on walking away with \$64 after answering the first question correctly. Hal March finally gave him \$64 out of his own pocket.

Eddie Anderson - (Rochester) - was associated with Jack Benny from 1937 until 1964. He overstrained his vocal cords as a 12-year-old newsboy hawking papers in his home town, which explains his rasp. He played the a part of a cab driver in the all-star cast of *It's A Mad Mad Mad Mad World* in 1963. Eddie Anderson was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 2001.

Don Wilson - In the summer of 1932, Wilson worked as a sportscaster covering the opening of the 1932 Summer Olympics games. In the early part of 1934, Wilson was working as the announcer on the George Gershwin series, "Music by Gershwin". When Jack Benny heard him on the radio, he insisted that Wilson come to work for him. On April 6, 1934, Wilson made his first broadcast as Benny's announcer on his live radio show. That started a relationship with Benny that lasted for over thirty years.

Dennis Day - Born Owen Patrick McNulty, he legally adopted his professional name in 1944 against his family's wishes. Jack Benny gave him his break at the age of 23 in 1939 and kept him

employed as a singer, naive comic sidekick and second-banana through 1974. Dennis Day first had plans on a law career and starting singing in order to earn money for tuition.

Frank Nelson - received \$750 for the word "Yeesssssss?" which was the highest fee for one word in the history of television at that time.

Mel Blanc - known as "The Man of Thousand Voices" is regarded as the most prolific actor to ever work in Hollywood with over a thousand screen credits. He developed and performed nearly 400 distinct character voices with precision and a uniquely expressive vocal range. Early in 1961, Blanc was in a near-fatal car accident while many of the shows that required his services were still in production. In *The Flintstones* (1960), Blanc did the voices of his characters in both his home bed and his hospital bed, in a full body cast and with all his *Flintstones* co-stars and recording equipment crowded into the same room. One of his quotes was "Today was tomorrow yesterday, so don't inhale."

Maxine Semon - was known for her appearances in *The Life of Riley* (1949), *Dragnet* (1947) and *I Love Lucy* (1951). Plus, she appeared in episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.* She also played the recurring characters of Mrs. Jillson on "The Joey Bishop Show" and Mabel Snark on "Petticoat Junction".

Charlie Cantor - Between the 1930's and the 1950s, Cantor was a feature guest on anywhere between 20 and 40 radio programs a week, most of them comedy shows. Some of his radio guest star appearances included *The Shadow*, *Dick Tracy*, *The Life Of Riley*, *The Baby Snooks Show* and *The Kate Smith Hour*.

He also portrayed the dim-witted Socrates Mulligan on Fred Allen's *Allen's Alley*.

Richard Deacon - This was another one of his many pre-Dick Van Dyke Show performances.

Rolfe Sedan - Sedan started his career as a nightclub performer, he also performed in vaudeville with Al Jolson. He was planning on studying scientific agriculture when he went to work on the stage in New York. He worked at the Hal Roach Studios and played with the likes of Laurel & Hardy and Harold Lloyd. He had a recurring role on TV's "Andy's Gang" from 1955-60, he was also a regular on *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1950) and guest-starred in numerous other television series.

Benny Rubin - was a comedian, character actor and dialectician. He was a veteran of almost 70 years in show business. He made frequent guest appearances on both the radio and television versions of *The Jack Benny Program*. In 1972, Benny Rubin published his autobiography, *Come Backstage with Me*.

Paul Maxey - played character roles in films from 1937, notably as the composer Victor Herbert in *Till the Clouds Roll By* (1946). He was in many TV shows from the 1950s on. His best remembered role was Mayor John Peoples in the sitcom *The People's Choice* (1955–1958) and such other shows as *M Squad*, *Wagon Train*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Dennis the Menace*, *The Untouchables*, *Perry Mason* and *Lassie*.

Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians - Aired on December 31, 1957 at 11:15PM on CBS from the Grill Room in the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City.

REFERENCES

Abbott & Costello Fan Club Website

Lou's On First by Chris Costello

Jack Benny: An Intimate Biography by Irving A. Fein

Variety - March 2, 1998 Olive Brasno obituary

Wikipedia

Internet Movie Data Base