

Melvin Jerome "Mel" Blanc (May 30, 1908 – July 10, 1989)

was an American voice actor and comedian. Although he began his nearly six-decade-long career performing in radio commercials, Blanc is best remembered for his work with Warner Bros. during the so-called "Golden Age of American animation" (and later for Hanna-Barbera television productions) as the voice of such well-known characters as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Sylvester the Cat, Beaky Buzzard, Tweety Bird, Foghorn Leghorn, Yosemite Sam, Wile E. Coyote, Barney Rubble, Mr. Spacely, and hundreds of others. Having earned the nickname "The Man of a Thousand Voices," Blanc is regarded as one of the most influential persons in his field. Born Melvin Jerome Blank in San Francisco, California, to Jewish parents, Frederick and Eva Blank, he grew up in Portland, Oregon, attending Lincoln High School. At 16, he changed the spelling of his last name from "Blank," reportedly because a teacher told him that he would amount to nothing and be, like his last name, "blank." Blanc began his radio career in 1927 as a voice actor on the KGW program *The Hoot Owls*, where his ability to create voices for multiple characters first attracted attention. Blanc moved to sister station KEX in 1933 to produce and host his *Cobweb And Nuts* program, which debuted on June 15, 1933. The show ran Monday through Saturday 11:00pm to midnight. By the time the show ended on KEX June 15, 1935 it was on 10:30pm to 11:00pm six nights a week.

Moving to Warner Bros.-owned KFWB in Hollywood, California, in 1935, Blanc joined *The Johnny Murray Show*; then, in 1936, he moved to CBS Radio and *The Joe Penner Show*. Beginning in the late 1930s, Blanc was a regular on the NBC Red Network show *The Jack Benny Program* in various roles, including Benny's automobile (a Maxwell in desperate need of a tune-up), violin teacher Professor LeBlanc, Polly the Parrot, Benny's pet polar bear Carmichael, the tormented department store clerk, and the train announcer (see below).

One of Blanc's most memorable characters from Benny's radio (and later TV) programs was "Sy, the Little Mexican," who spoke one word at a time. The famous "Sí...Sy...sew...Sue" routine was so effective that no matter how many times it was performed, the laughter was always there, thanks to the comedic timing of Blanc and Benny.[3]

At times, sharp-eyed audience members (and later, TV viewers) could see Benny struggling to keep a straight face; Blanc's absolute dead-pan delivery was a formidable challenge for him. Benny's daughter, Joan, recalls that Mel Blanc was one of her father's closest friends in real life, because "nobody else on the show could make him laugh the way Mel could."

Another famous Blanc shtick on Jack's show was the train depot announcer who

inevitably intoned, sidelong, "Train leaving on Track Five for Anaheim, Azusa, and Cucamonga". Part of the joke was the Angeleno studio audience's awareness that no such train existed connecting those then-small towns (years before Disneyland opened). To the wider audience, the primary joke was the pregnant pause that evolved over time between "Cuc.." and "...amonga"; eventually, minutes would pass while the skit went on as the audience awaited the inevitable conclusion of the word. (At least once, a completely different skit followed before the inevitable "...amonga" finally appeared.)

Blanc's success on The Jack Benny Program led to his own radio show on the CBS Radio Network, The Mel Blanc Show, which ran from September 3, 1946, to June 24, 1947. Blanc played himself as the hapless owner of a fix-it shop, as well as his young cousin Zookie (who sounded quite a bit like Porky Pig). Many episodes required Mel to impersonate an exotic foreigner or other stranger in town, ostensibly for carrying out a minor deception on his girlfriend's father, but of course simply as a vehicle for him to show off his talents. Other regular characters were played by Mary Jane Croft, Joseph Kearns, Hans Conried, Alan Reed, Earle Ross, Jim Backus, Bea Benaderet and The Sportsmen Quartet, who would supply a song and sing the Colgate Tooth Powder commercials. (Blanc would later work with Reed and Benaderet on The Flintstones.) Shows usually adhered to a predictable formula, involving a date with his girl Betty Colby (Mary Jane Croft) and trying to either impress her father or at least avoid angering him. However, Mr. Colby (Earle Ross) usually had occasion to deliver his trademark line, "Mel Blanc, I'm going to break every bone in your body!"

Blanc appeared frequently on The Great Gildersleeve, uncredited, often voicing two or more supporting characters in a single episode: deliverymen in "Planting a Tree" and "Father's Day Chair" also "Gus", a petty crook in the latter; a radio station manager and a policeman in "Mystery Singer", and many others.

Blanc also appeared on such other national radio programs as The Abbott and Costello Show, the Happy Postman on Burns and Allen, and as August Moon on Point Sublime. During World War II, he appeared as Private Sad Sack on various radio shows, most notably G.I. Journal. The character of Sad Sack was a bumbling Army private with an even worse stutter than Porky Pig. ("I'm Lieutena-eh-Lieutena-eh-Capta-eh-Majo-eh-Colone-eh-p-p-Private Sad Sack.")

For his contribution to radio, Mel Blanc has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6385 Hollywood Boulevard.

For the Old Time Radio Researchers, I'm,
_____. Now on with the show!

Article taken from Wikipedia, the on-line encyclopedia.