



WWE's Ashley Massaro See Ashley on fuse tv's new show The Sauce. Check it out here!



« QSE News: 5/1/2007 | Home | Quick Stop Thingamabobs: 5/2/2007 »

Interview: Chuck McCann



- Features
- Interviews
- Columns
- Quickcasts
- Production Blogs
- Comic Strips
- News
- Contests
- Message Board
- RSS Feed
- Contact Us



Search Amazon.com:

All Products

Keywords:

GO!

Search New and Used amazon.com.

Search Quick Stop:

Search

May 2007

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

« Apr

-by Joe Corey

Chuck McCann is a stealth superstar of showbiz.

While many of you may not immediately recognize his name, odds are high that you've repeated his classic catch phrases: "How about a Hawaiian Punch?" "I'm Cuckoo for Cocopuffs!" "I said lunch, not launch!" And "Kibbles 'n Bits, Kibbles 'n Bits. I'm gonna get me some Kibbles 'n Bits!"



He was on the legendary *First Family* record. The comedy album about the JFK White House sold 9 million copies and won the Grammy for Album of the Year in 1963. Chuck not only appeared on the record, but put up the money.

You might recognize his face from his 50 years in movies and television. He was in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *Herbie Rides Again* and *Silent Movie* on the big screen. And when it comes to TV, he's appeared with nearly the history of crime fighters including *Kojack*, *Columbo*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *CHiPs*, *Police Woman*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Matt Houston*, *Knight Rider* and *The Rockford Files*. Although for a lot of grown children, he's remembered for being Barney against Bob Denver's Junior in the Kroffts' *Far Out Space Nuts*. Did that help?

He recently appeared on *The Girls Next Door* teaching Bridget Marquardt how to do voiceover work. Now you know who he is.

The Party Favors had a chance to call up the man who taught a *Playboy* covergal how to sell a product with just her voice. Chuck is promoting *Cool McCool: The Complete Series*, a boxset from BCI containing all 20 episodes. The animated series features a superspy with a Jack Benny accent taking on colorful villains. It was a more flamboyant version of *Get Smart*. The characters were designed by Bob Kane, best known for creating *Batman*.



McCann did tons of kid shows in the greater New York City area for nearly every channel including a Dumont network affiliate. I asked him if it was a weird experience going from the guy who introduced the cartoons to becoming animated?

"No, because I did puppets on my show, too," Chuck said. "I did puppets for Paul Ashley. We did *Rootie Kazootie* for NBC. I wound up doing an act with Paul where I did impressions for the voices of the puppets. I started to create my own puppet voices when we created new characters. They were unique characters like Mr. McNasty, Mildred and Lester. Al Brodax, a great animator, had a bunch of shows for King Syndicate. He wound up hearing me and becoming a fan of mine. He asked me if I'd do the voices for *Cool McCool*, a new animation series he was doing. There was three of us. Carol Corbett, Bob McFadden and myself. Bob played Cool and I wound up doing 90 percent of the other voices. I could do multi-voices."

Unlike today's animation where a voice actor can record all their lines separately and have them digitally edited together without much fuss, *Cool McCool* was done like a live radio play. Chuck wasn't given time to get into the various characters.

"We did them at once as they came up on the script. And so you had to change them that fast. That's why they used me. But I could have done Cool." Chuck starts repeating a few espionage lines. Chuck did enjoy working with McFadden and their interaction during the recording sessions. "We were like a jazz band. it was almost like a trio. Because you're at the microphone and we didn't have the electronic editing. We're cutting it like an arrangement."

Bob Kane did more than lend him name to the series and cash a check. "Bob Kane was at the



sessions. He created those characters. They're very Bob Kane-like," Chuck said. "It was an adult look." Brodax's next major project would be the much more adult *Yellow Submarine* featuring the Beatles. By the way, Peter Max had nothing to do with the art in that movie.

Chuck remembered those days when kids' programs mixed the levels of humor so it didn't appeal to a defined demographic. "My show in New York was very much like that. What I did visually, I did for the kids. What I said, I said for adults. I had a big, wide range audience because my stuff was considered broader than most kid shows. It was a comedy show. It certainly wasn't Captain Kangaroo." Chuck would know that since he got his start playing Sailor Clyde on *Captain Kangaroo*.

Chuck was part of the most infamous moment in children's TV. On New Year's day 1965 Soupy Sales told the kids that their parents were still sleeping from the night before. He asked the kids to go into their parents' wallets and purses and find the "little green pieces of paper with pictures of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Lincoln, and Jefferson on them, send them to me, and I'll send you a postcard from Puerto Rico." Soupy was fired from the show because of this stunt. Chuck's show at the time aired on the same channel as Soupy.

"When Soupy was fired off the air, they made me go in and apologize for him," Chuck said. "I went in and said, I can't do that. The program manager told me that I have to do it. It was in my contract. So I went down to the studio and got on the set. I had Soupy's crew there. They all knew me. I could see the program manager standing in the back of the studio. I said, 'A few days ago, Soupy came on the air and told you to take the money from your dad's pocket, put in envelope and send it to him. This was a terrible, terrible thing. Soupy made a terrible mistake.' You could see the manager in the back nodding his head like that's it. The crew looked at me like I was so terrible for saying that. And I said, 'It really was a big mistake on Soupy's part since he forgot to give you the address. It's WNEW.....' Shit hit the fan. A roar went up from the guy. It was really stupid and Soupy was brought back."

In the end the management's fear that somehow the kids took Soupy's plea for cash seriously was unfounded as the thousands of dollars never arrived at the station. "There was no big money," Chuck said. "They were getting pennies and nickels."

But cash would show up in the mail. Chuck told a story about a female fan that would send him hand drawn reproduction of money. "She meticulously sat there and drew every bill." He discovered that she also sent fellow on TV host [Joe Bolton](#) wads of the artistic currency. "He was there before me and would get \$100,000 a week from the woman." In addition to fake money, "She drew the stamps and they were cancelled."

In addition to doing the various voices on *Cool McCool*, he contributed a multitude of short vocal roles to *The Jetsons*. Chuck couldn't quite remember which bit characters he did. "I forget. I've done so many voices for Hanna-Barbara. Everything from *The New Schmoo* to *Drak Pack* to CB Bears. I always loved the Schmoo. He looked like tremendous bowling ball with a mustache."

McCann also served as fill in voice for quite a few famous characters. "When Daws couldn't come in to New York, I did Yogi Bear. I did an album called *Wake Up America With Yogi Bear*. I did all the characters." He does a quick run thought of Yogi, Boo Boo and Ranger Smith that was more entertaining than John K's Yogi cartoon. "I did Bullwinkle for General Mills. I created the Cuckoo Bird for Coco Puffs. I was not only Sonny, but I was Gramps." And with that Chuck breaks into the voices showing he can still push a chocolate coated cereal. You can find several of his Coco Puffs ads on YouTube.

Unlike some showbiz people that fear the internet, Chuck sees it as useful for letting folks follow his resume. "I think its a blessing. When you're a character actor, you're buried under make up. I was Oliver Hardy for 40 years for Anco windshield wipers Jim MacGeorge was Stan Laurel, with Stan's blessing." Those were the ads that featured Laurel cutting off Hardy's necktie to help the wiper blades. "I did one with Groucho Marx," Chuck mentioned.

Remember that if you ever meet anyone with a tale of working with Groucho Marx, you must immediately ask, "What was it like meeting Groucho?"

"Fantastic," Chuck said. "We really hit it off. We did the commercial in about two hours and we were out of there. They asked me to keep him occupied for a while since he was known for having a short fuse. He didn't. He had a wonderful time. He said, 'What are you doing for lunch, McCann?' We went to a restaurant across the street from my office. About six of the guys working at the studio came with us - they automatically invited themselves. Then we all wound up across the street at my apartment where I had a screening room, 'cause I had a production company. He started talking about *Day at the Races*. And I said, 'I have a print of *Day at the Races*.' So I ran a 16mm print for him. He would go, 'Stop it! Stop it! Let me tell you about this.' And he would talk about the scene we had just seen. He did that with about three of his films. When we finished it was ten o'clock. The phone rings and it was his nurse wondering where he was. She had tracked him down. She was so pissed at me. He had a wonderful time. I later met him at the Playboy Mansion."

Chuck is friends with Hugh Hefner and gets to enjoy movie nights at the Playboy Mansion. The screening room in the living room is equipped to show 35mm and projected video. "(Hefner) grew up as a kid always saying, 'I always wanted to be able to show movies in my living room.' He loves the living room and having people coming in, sitting down and watching the films. That is his dream and that's what he created for himself." Chuck's own screening room is more about the cinema experience. "I grew up in the Roxy Theater. My father was an arranger. I grew up in the dark, sitting in front of a proscenium arch and watching movies that way. That's what I created in my house. I have a stage. I like the lights and the curtain open."

Chuck and the inner circle of movie lovers that meet at the Mansion are very active in working with UCLA, The Library of Congress and



Ads by Google

Top Quality Entertainment
Thousands of Kids can't be wrong! Professional Puppet Shows. See Why!
www.thepuppetman.com

The Dummy Works
Ventriloquist Supply Superstore! Pro Figures, Puppets, Books, More!
www.dummyworks.com

Ashley Judd in "Bug"
See Ashley Judd's New Movie "Bug". Watch The Trailer. Opens Friday.
Lionsgate.com/Bug

Shadow Puppets - DVD
Explore a unique theatrical vocabulary of shadow puppetry
shadowlightstore.semkehr.com

Entertainment for Kids
Clowns, puppets, magic, balloons, face painting, sing-alongs, FUN!
www.SillySallysEntertainment.com



advertisement

Eastman House in finding films for preservation. They're a very giving group, including Hef.

Seeing how Chuck was featured on a recent episode of *Girls Next Door*, I raised the internet rumors that Hef has settled on Holly. This season's focus seems to be on the girls finding work outside being Hef's girlfriends as if Bridget and Kendra's time at the Mansion was coming to an end.

"No. No. No. No," Chuck said. He doesn't see the Big Love ending anytime soon in the Holmby Hills or on E!. "The show is a hit and the reactions they've gotten this year have been tremendous. It is fun getting to look at the way they live. And believe me, they're all that way. Bridget is the sweetest kid. Kendra is hysterically funny. I fall down with her. Holly is just a love. She's Hef's main squeeze."

The bigger question is if Bridget has a career doing voiceover work. "I think she has potential. She's going to class and has a great teacher. Unfortunately they didn't pick the best takes. She did a very sexy host voice for a perfume. They didn't use that."

While taking about Carol Burnett suing *Family Guy* over using her image, I ask Chuck what would happen to animation if Phil Silvers ever sued all the cartoons that ripped him off as a character. Chuck gives a hearty laugh.

"I loved Phil. He was a good pal. He used to call me up and say let's do coffee. He was on my show. I did a special with Phil and Pat Morita. He was a funny, intuitive man."

Another of Chuck's comedy role models was Jackie Gleason. "He was over at the Adelphi Theater. I used to go over and sit in the balcony and watch him. I idolized him. He idolized Laurel and Hardy. Who didn't? I had Marlon Brando's attorney here. He said, 'You know, Marlon Brando's biggest love was Laurel and Hardy.' Go figure."

Chuck is upset that the cinematic legacy of Laurel and Hardy is being abused by the companies that have the rights to the films. Even in the age of DVD, this comic twosome's best material has either been kept in the vault or released in substandard prints (such as the TV edited version of *Sons of the Desert*).

Chuck's cult film *The Projectionist* is now out on DVD. He plays the projectionist at a large movie theater. He daydreams and daydreams into the various movies he's playing including *Casablanca* and *Flash Gordon*. The evil theater manager was played by Rodney Dangerfield.



"I loved Rodney. We had a couple of laughs on that. He couldn't believe it. He'd say, 'What kind of a movie is this where you gotta come to work on the subway?' We were rebel filmmakers at that time. I had just finished making *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. This guy came out of the woodwork named Harry Hurwitz. He sent my manager a one sheet copy of the premise. My manager told him that I'd never do it. But by law, my manager has to show it to me. I took one look at it and said, 'Where is he? This is the best thing I've ever read. This is exactly what I want to do. It's Walter Mitty! Does he have the money to do this?' We figured out how to do it. It took us a year."

What's amazing about the film is the numerous film clips that pop up. How could a film with such a small budget get to use *Citizen Kane*? "David Picker (at United Artists) was the one who helped us. He loved the idea and did a different version of it with Steve Martin." That film was *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, which had Martin solve a case while stepping through the best Film Noir flicks.

After being a projectionist, Chuck went on to play a theater manager in *Foul Play*. This wasn't supposed to be a case of typecasting. Chuck was lined up to be the cop, but he was booked on another film during part of the shoot. Brian Dennehy landed the badge role. Chuck was able to show up for the smaller role and get to share screen time with Goldie Hawn.

Seeing how Chuck was in *Herbie Rides Again* and *Knight Rider*, I had to ask which car was more cooperative on the set. "Actually, I love Herbie," Chuck declared. "Kitt was fun. I work with David Hasselhoff a lot." Chuck never worked on *Baywatch*. "He wanted me to, but I was busy." Well that's one less red Speedo on the screen. But this raises the amazing concept that McCann is tight with The Hef & The Hoff. If only Felicity Huffman showed up at the Mansion, he'd be hanging with The Hef, The Hoff and The Huff.

Even with the numerous cop shows on his resume, Chuck has yet to appear on any *CSI* or *Law and Order* series. "I haven't done a *CSI*. But I'm about to do a *Boston Legal*." He's going to be working with *The Shatner*. Perhaps we should refer to McCann as "The Chuck"? He's earned a "The" for his name. But Chuck Norris and Chuck Woolery might put in a cease and desist order.

Every time stars are interviewed about working in animation, they joke about how they don't have to spend hours in makeup and can do the work in their pajamas. Has Chuck ever run into stars in their PJs in the vocal booth? "No. But Brando showed up in a dress one time to do a voice over. It's the Gospel truth. He wanted to get into the character and showed up in a dress."

What does McCann think of the studios that load up with name stars to read for animated films? "Some of them are good, but some of them should stay home. Robin Williams is terrific."

Chuck is filled with praise for the vocal work of Wally Wingert, who also produced the bonus

features on the *Cool McCool* boxset.

"There are guys out there today that are very talented like Wally Wingert. Wally is the best. He calls himself the modern Chuck McCann. He's very active and doing a lot of work. He helped me with Bridget. He is in love with the genre. And you have to be to be a superior voiceover artist."

When Chuck guest starred on *Diff'rent Strokes*, did he sense that those kids would get into so much adult trouble?

"No," Chuck said. "I loved Gary Coleman. He was a sweetheart. I didn't get to know (Todd Bridges). You just wanted to hug Gary. He was a great kid. He's a good actor. One day he's going to do something outstanding that's going to blow everybody away."

"It's so tough for a kid in this business. Everything is out of proportion. The popularity and the fame. And one day it goes away. Success is like arsenic in a way. You take a little at time in small doses you build up an immunity. But if you get it all at once it'll kill you."

The idea of a child star returning to acting after going through a rough patch brings up Jackie Earle Haley's Oscar nominated comeback in *Little Children* (due out on DVD on May 1).

"I want to see more of him," Chuck said. "He's a helluva an actor. I was glad to see Alan Arkin win since we'd worked together." They had co-starred in *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter*.

On the topic of the Academy Awards, Chuck has agreed to help with the Party Favors campaign to get Gordon Willis a lifetime achievement Oscar for his ground breaking camera work. Willis wasn't even nominated for *The Godfather* and *Manhattan*. It's time to give the Prince of Darkness his shining moment. If you're a member of the Academy, please second Chuck's request for Gordon Willis to receive a standing ovation at the Kodak Theater in 2008.

Another thing the Party Favors is pushing is for Rhino to finally put out *Far Out Space Nuts*. The Saturday morning series featured Chuck and Bob Denver as two food delivery guys who accidentally get shot into outer space. Chuck is eager for a complete collection with all 15 episodes getting released. I'd enjoy hearing Chuck's commentary tracks for a boxset.



"From your lips to God's ears," Chuck said. "I want that not only for myself, but for Bob Denver. I had a lot of fun. I created that show with Earl Dowd. Marty and Sid Krofft were credited, too." When showing the younger friends *H.R. Pufnstuf* and *Land of the Lost*, they all ask the same question: Were the Kroffts on drugs? I ask a man who was there. Was *Lidsville* really a lidsville?

"No. No. No. No!," Chuck said. "If you could have only been there."

According to Chuck the only thing that ever got lit up at Krofft was the *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters* set. "The studio burned down. The stage exploded and the studio burned. Everybody almost lost their lives. Billy Barty was stuck in his costume. It sucked all the air out the studio. The walls buckled and collapsed. It was started in the foam material." Luckily no one was harmed. "They wound up building two new stages. And we inaugurated them with *Far Out Space Nuts*. The stages were huge and gorgeous. We used one for the moonscape."

With our time growing shorter, I asked for any memories of his time on *Fantasy Island*.

"Herve Villechaize was talking about his love of making movies rather than television. Mickey Callan and I are on stage listening to him," Chuck said. "Ricardo Montalban turns to Herve and says, 'You know something, Herve. I got a feeling that this *Fantasy Island* is holding you back.' Within two weeks he was gone. It was incredible. I don't think Ricardo had him removed. Before that I worked with Herve in New York. He played one the elves to a Santa Claus I did." But there would be a third meeting with Herve in the Friendly Skies. "We reunited on a 747. I was walking up the aisle and so was he. The plane hit an air pocket and he literally fell into my arms. He was a sweet guy." Hard now to hear Herve's Tattoo yell, "Da Plane! Da Plane!" without seeing him in midair.

The conversation ended with the subject of Lindsay, Spears, Paris and Nicole. He can't believe the pack of photographers and tabloid journalists chasing after those girls. "I do not envy success," Chuck said. "I don't. That's why I love doing my characters. I don't have people bugging me. It's a pleasure to be able to go into a restaurant. These people are hounded. There's a big price that comes with this."

Chuck has been a major success as a stealth superstar. He has been a part of our lives without being an overbearing nuisance. He's the type of guy you pray to have in the seat next to you on a cross country plane flight. When he says "Hello," you'll realize how much he's been a part of your life.

If you are curious about Chuck McCann's work, [click here](#).

##

« [QSE News: 5/1/2007](#) | [Home](#) | [Quick Stop Thingamabobs: 5/2/2007](#) »