



In a Hollywood cemetery stands a gravestone with an epitaph which reads "That's All Folks". It is the final resting place of Mel Blanc, Master of voices, dialects, and characters. The inscription is fitting, yet inaccurate. Although Blanc passed away July 10, 1989 at age 81, his voices live on forever through outrageous Looney Tunes cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck and hundreds of animated pranksters.

That's **Not** All, Folks

The **Exceptional Characters** of **Mel Blanc** & **Noel Blanc**

But that's still not all. Blanc's son Noel is preserving his father's voice for eternity. His company Warner-Blanc, a joint venture with Warner Bros., is computerizing Blanc's character voices both to archive these animated treasures and to apply them to future consumer products that use voice technology.

The Mel Blanc Voice Watch Collection by Armitron, produced to celebrate the 90th anniversary of his birthday, is just such a product. The talking watches reproduce Mel Blanc's Looney Tunes voice characterizations with cutting-edge technology.

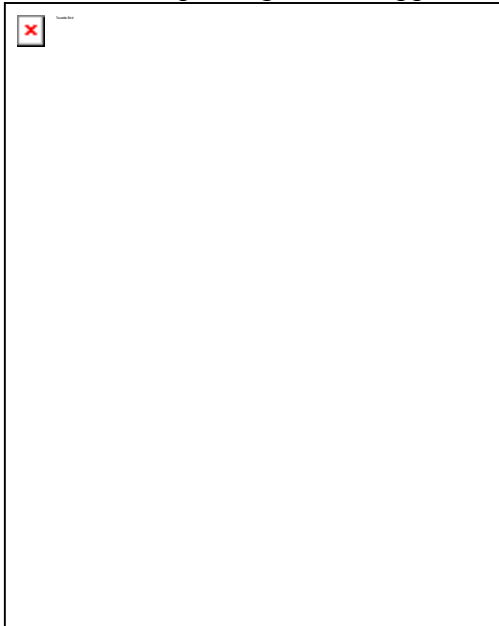
Dubbed "the man of a thousand voices," Blanc's animated antics are classics, even if some fans may not know the name behind the voice. From cartoons to film to commercials to radio, more than 250 million people worldwide still hear his voice each day, and the new watches only add to this staggering total. His repertoire is long



and legendary-1,500 voices mastered in his 53-year career. He has performed hundreds of familiar voices for Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera, including Elmer Fudd, Tweety Pie, Sylvester, Barney Rubble, Road Runner, the Tasmanian devil, Wile E. Coyote, Woody Woodpecker, Foghorn Leghorn, Heathcliff, Pepe Le Pew, Speedy Gonzales, Captain Caveman and more. His favorites, Noel says, were Bugs, Tweety and "Taz," which were also among his most outrageous.

Looney Tunes quips became a part of the American vernacular. "What's up, Doc?" "I tawt I saw a puddy tat," and "You're despicable," are just a few. These are the classic lines which have come alive in the Met Blanc Voice Watch. The clear sound is generated from a computer chip and miniature speaker. A press of a button and the characters speak as the watch plays 10- to 15-second messages. At under \$50, the entertainment is affordable.

After Blanc's passing, Noel stepped into his father's huge footprints, performing voices



and continuing the tradition of laughter that these characters always brought to millions of people. It's a hard act to follow, but Noel knows it well, having grown up in the middle of all that cartoon commotion. Those looney characters are his honorary siblings.

Noel says he drove his father "crazy," constantly begging Mel to read him the Sunday comics. Mel obliged by spontaneously creating voices for characters such as Dagwood and others, and his son loved every minute of it.

"Mel was always a wonderful father and a lot of fun," Noel says, explaining that because Blanc was his friend as well as his father, he always refers to him by first name. "All the kids would knock on the door after school and have him

audition voices. On Halloween he'd have 1,200 kids coming to the door. I still get about 1,000. They just want to hear the voices and get good candy."

One Great Larynx

Mel Blanc developed his talent for voices as a child in Portland, Oregon. The neighborhood was his classroom and school was the stage where he starred as class clown. Although he spent those days as an entertainer, his after-school time was spent observing the various accents in his neighborhood. First he perfected a thick Yiddish dialect which he developed from an old Jewish couple at the local grocery store. Next he became a master of imitating the intonations he heard in Chinatown.

"He had a great larynx," Noel says. "They measured it one day and the doctor said the only larynx he'd seen with that muscular structure belonged to Enrico Caruso, one of

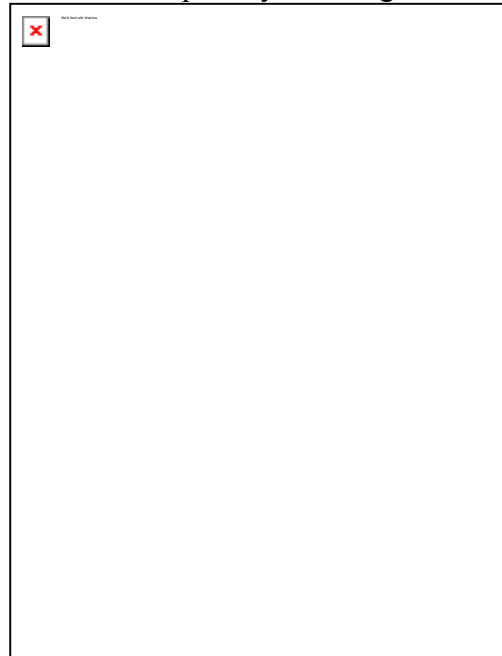
the greatest opera tenors who ever lived. Mel had an eight-octave I range and perfect pitch and was able to sing in every character's voice. He could do accents and dialects from any country; he had a 'photographic' ear."

His characters ham it up with exaggerated linguistic idiosyncrasies. Lovable wiseguy Bugs Bunny has an innocent, yet sinister laugh that complements his unusual Brooklyn-Bronx accent. The hyperactive Tasmanian devil mumbles unintelligibly. Porky, Tweety, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester and Daffy all have apparent speech difficulties-sloppy lisps, stutters, the inability to pronounce words with the letter "R," or just bad grammar.

These are funny character flaws, Noel says. He calls them "etiquettely-challenged."

Noel explains (in character of course), "We like to say Porky went to the pig farm and it's a constant grunt," he says, sounding remarkably similar to his father's Porky. "Daffy spits, and Sylvester has a bigger spit," he adds. So stand back when requesting Daffy and Sylvester.

Mel threw a little of his own personality into each character -- especially Bugs Bunny, who Noel says was most like his father. Like Bugs, Mel was a natural prankster. Like Wile E. Coyote, he was a "super genius." "He became the characters," Noel says. "Even if you turned off the sound you could tell what voice he was doing just by looking at him. He was a method actor. He was as Stanislavsky [acclaimed actor and acting teacher Constantin] as you can get. When he performed, his whole body contorted like that character."



Time Out

When not perfecting voices, the Blancs collected timepieces. From the 1940s, Noel and Mel shared an extensive vintage watch collection-up to 400 pieces at one time. They attended auctions together, coming home with antique Patek Philippe watches, vintage Jules Jurgensens and more. Among their favorites were eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pocketwatches, enameled watches and automaton watches from Patek Philippe. "We're both horologists," Noel says. "That was our hobby. So Mel would feel wonderful about having his own character watches. He'd love them."

Noel celebrated his father's 90th birthday (May 30) by getting married one day later and by touring the country to promote both the watches and his father's legend. "No one really took over for Mel," says Noel. "I filled in some and other people did too. The voices came so naturally to him, but it's hard for the rest of us. When you copy someone, it's taught. We all try to imitate his sounds, but we lose some of the acting

ability he brought to the characters. It takes so many of us to do what he did."
Mel Blanc turned class clowning into an art form and a career, and he's given millions of people enough laughs for a lifetime. Now, with the new Mel Blanc Voice Watches, he will again.