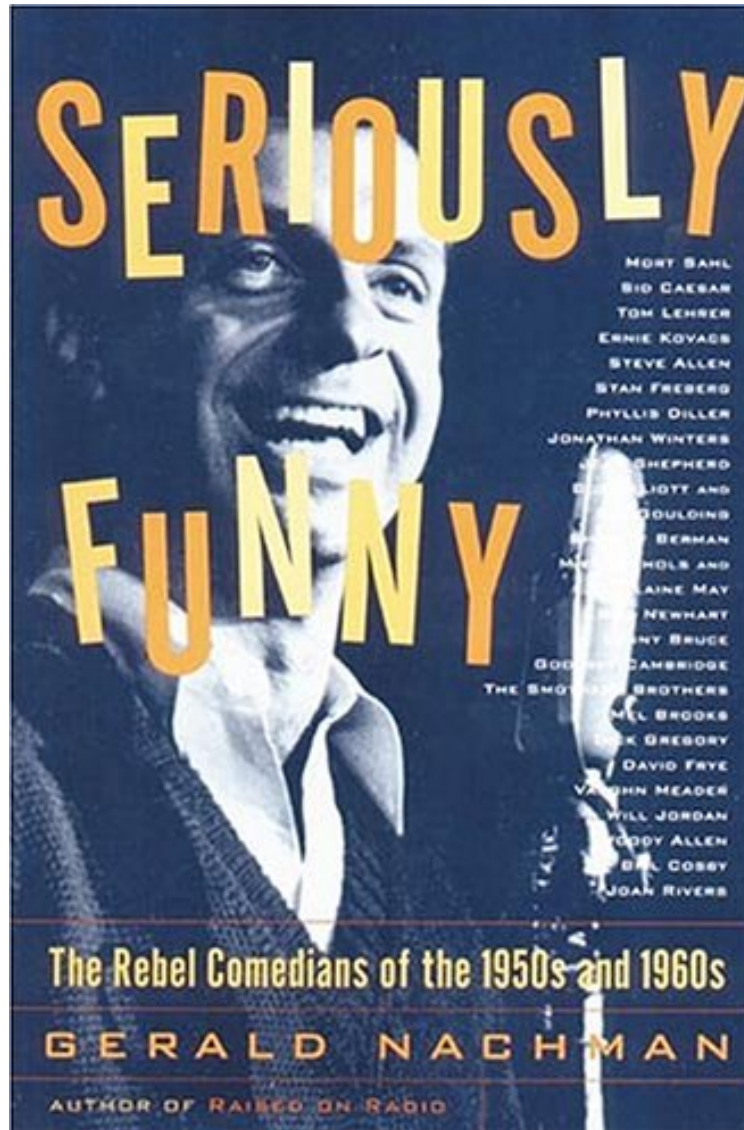


(Read ebook) Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s

## Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s

Gerald Nachman

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**Gerald Nachman : Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Seriously Funny is seriously interesting entertaining!By Stephen TrusedellNachman's book is a collection of profiles of some of the most creative people on the planet, comedians who rebelled against the accepted practices of joke telling and formed the basis of stand-up comedy as we know it and

appreciate it today. Biographical sketches of trend-setting comedians and satirists that have greatly influenced every comic performing today and shaped the entire trajectory of the art as performed in the early 21st century are included here. These are the true innovators of comedy and their stories are told with great insight and style. There are only a few format errors in the Kindle edition but otherwise the text is written quite well. If you think Carlin is the only significant comic to appear in the late '60s, read Nachman and begin to appreciate the ground-breaking work of people like Sahl, Freberg, Diller, etc. (a decade before Carlin!)--the book does not include everyone but it does include the best! 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant! By Eddie Landsberg After reading this book, and RAISED ON RADIO I'm convinced... Nachman is a brilliant chronicler of generations, passionate and on such a mission his enthusiasm gushes through with each Peabody Award waiting to happen phrase whether or not you share his enthusiasm. - - Like RAISED ON RADIO, the book is neither definitive nor wishy-washy either. The chapters simply paint portraits of the people. In fact, the book goes a bit DEEPER into the subject matter than RAISED ON RADIO though not too deep. Further, though Nachman did interview subjects and did research, a lot of the information isn't exactly new (at least if you're a nerdish comedy album collector and already into what the book is about.) - - And although yes, sometimes he goes on and on to make a point, especially in the way he breaks down the personalities of the comics he analyzes, I have to say, Nachman's writing is so delightful its forgivable (whether or not some of the chapters could have been cut in half.) Also what I like about this book is the choice of comedians go well beyond the obvious and really make you think... recognizing not just the Lenny Bruce's and Mort Sahl's, but radio and TV comics that paved the way... (Bob and Ray, Ernie Kovacs and Steve Allen included!) All in all, this is a great book presented through the mind of a brilliant columnist... and yes NACHMAN definitely is a columnist... a master storyteller who can schpiel by the column inch and hold your attention all the way. The only danger of reading this book is that after each chapter you want to go out and get the CDs... but with so many comedians covered, that's a lot of bread! Though I happen to be a fan of the topics covered in this and RAISED ON RADIO, I have to say, whatever Nachman decides to write about next, I'm fair game for it! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Terrific memories of mid-century comics By Katy Bejarano A very entertainingly written history of many comics from the 50s 60s. It covers both their professional careers as well as some things about their private lives that led them to be the funny people they were - or are (!). Enjoyed many of them when they were popular, and surprised to learn that several are still plying their trade.

The comedians of the 1950s and 1960s were a totally different breed of relevant, revolutionary performer from any that came before or after, comics whose humor did much more than pry guffaws out of audiences. Gerald Nachman presents the stories of the groundbreaking comedy stars of those years, each one a cultural harbinger: Mort Sahl, of a new political cynicism Lenny Bruce, of the sexual, drug, and language revolution Dick Gregory, of racial unrest Bill Cosby and Godfrey Cambridge, of racial harmony Phyllis Diller, of housewifely complaint Mike Nichols Elaine May and Woody Allen, of self-analytical angst and a rearrangement of male-female relations Stan Freberg and Bob Newhart, of encroaching, pervasive pop media manipulation and, in the case of Bob Elliott Ray Goulding, of the banalities of broadcasting Mel Brooks, of the Yiddishization of American comedy Sid Caesar, of a new awareness of the satirical possibilities of television Joan Rivers, of the obsessive craving for celebrity gossip and of a latent bitchy sensibility Tom Lehrer, of the inane, hypocritical, mawkishly sentimental nature of hallowed American folkways and, in the case of the Smothers Brothers, of overly revered folk songs and folklore Steve Allen, of the late-night talk show as a force in American comedy David Frye and Vaughn Meader, of the merger of showbiz and politics and, along with Will Jordan, of stretching the boundaries of mimicry Shelley Berman, of a generation of obsessively self-confessional humor Jonathan Winters and Jean Shepherd, of the daring new free-form improvisational comedy and of a sardonically updated view of Midwestern archetypes Ernie Kovacs, of surreal visual effects and the unbounded vistas of video Taken together, they made up the faculty of a new school of vigorous, socially aware satire, a vibrant group of voices that reigned from approximately 1953 to 1965. Nachman shines a flashlight into the corners of these comedians chaotic and often troubled lives, illuminating their genius as well as their demons, damaged souls, and desperate drive. His exhaustive research and intimate interviews reveal characters that are intriguing and all too human, full of rich stories, confessions, regrets, and traumas. Seriously Funny is at once a dazzling cultural history and a joyous celebration of an extraordinary era in American comedy.

.com It's been said that analyzing comedy is a bit like dissecting a frog: you arrive at a greater understanding of the frog but the frog does tend to die in the process. The purpose of Gerald Nachman's Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s is not to provide a laugh riot of his subjects' best punch lines, but rather to explore their lives, careers, and influence. Nachman's scope is impressive. He provides detailed biographies not only of household names Sid Caesar, Lenny Bruce, Bob Newhart, and Woody Allen but also comics like Jean Shepherd, Shelley Berman, and Will Jordan whose legacies have far outpaced their name recognition. Nachman has done his research; the book profiles 26 comedians, each in exhaustive detail, and no fan of this era will feel cheated at the end of its 768 pages. There are plenty of entertaining show biz anecdotes (Sid Caesar throwing a lit cigar at young writer

Mel Brooks, Bill Cosby punching out Tommy Smothers) along with tales of the darker sides of Mort Sahl, Jonathan Winters, and others whose private lives were far less amusing than their stage acts. But what makes *Seriously Funny* so compelling, and its dopey title at least partially forgivable, is the author's meticulous attention to each comedian's imprint on the landscape of comedy itself. And while the jokes cited often seem a bit stale and obvious, it bears noting that they were revolutionary when these comedians first made them. --John Moe

From Publishers Weekly

Something happened to comedy beginning in the late 1950s. Geniuses like Mort Sahl, Mel Brooks, Lenny Bruce and Woody Allen took a tired medium ("Take my wife-please" was about as good as it got) and transformed it into a sharper, meaner, more personal and more politicized art form than any comedy that had come before. It was, as Nachman notes in this broad survey, a "satirical revolution." Suddenly, police might arrest a comic for obscenity (Bruce). Or the American president might demand an explanation of a punch line (Sahl). Or network censors might freak out over politically charged TV scripts (the Smothers brothers). As a group, Nachman argues, these comedians changed the cultural landscape, pushing the boundaries of humor, art and good taste. But for many, genius had a price. Jonathan Winters spent time in a sanatorium; Bruce succumbed to drug addiction; and Sahl became paranoid and unbalanced, oddly obsessed with JFK's assassination. The list could go on-and does. Nachman (*Raised on Radio*) covers 26 comedians here. Necessarily, some details are lost. But whatever Nachman lacks in depth, he makes up for with his enthusiasm and firsthand knowledge (he interviewed many of his subjects himself, repeatedly, over decades). Even better, Nachman knows when to shut up and let the comics speak for themselves (Sahl on Barry Goldwater: "The fascist gun in the West"; Allen on the modern condition: "Not only is God dead but try getting a plumber on the weekends"). A must-have for comedy fans, this book is also a notable study of America as it shed its gray flannel suit and began, finally, to laugh. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Booklist

Now that Lenny Bruce is lionized for freeing stand-up from most constraints on material and language, Nachman figures it is time other "rebel" comics of the 1950s and 1960s got some attention, and he certainly knows whom to attend to. Sid Caesar, Ernie Kovacs, and Jonathan Winters are arguably the standouts in the section on the '50s, but even Jean Shepherd, most famous today as creator of the classic Christmas flick *A Christmas Story*, gets his due, in the same chapter as absurdist extraordinaire Bob and Ray. In the '60s section, figures as diverse yet comparably insightful as Bob Newhart and Godfrey Cambridge are profiled. Lenny does, of course, get his chapter, and so do the Smothers brothers, Dick Gregory, and Mel Brooks, plus the now relatively unknown David Frye, Vaughan Meader, and Will Jordan. Rather like aesthetically pondering rock musicians' instrumental techniques, serious discussion of comedy is a chancy proposition. Nachman manages, however, to leaven his content analysis with sheer enjoyment. All entertainment scholarship should be this enjoyable and informative. Mike Tribby

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