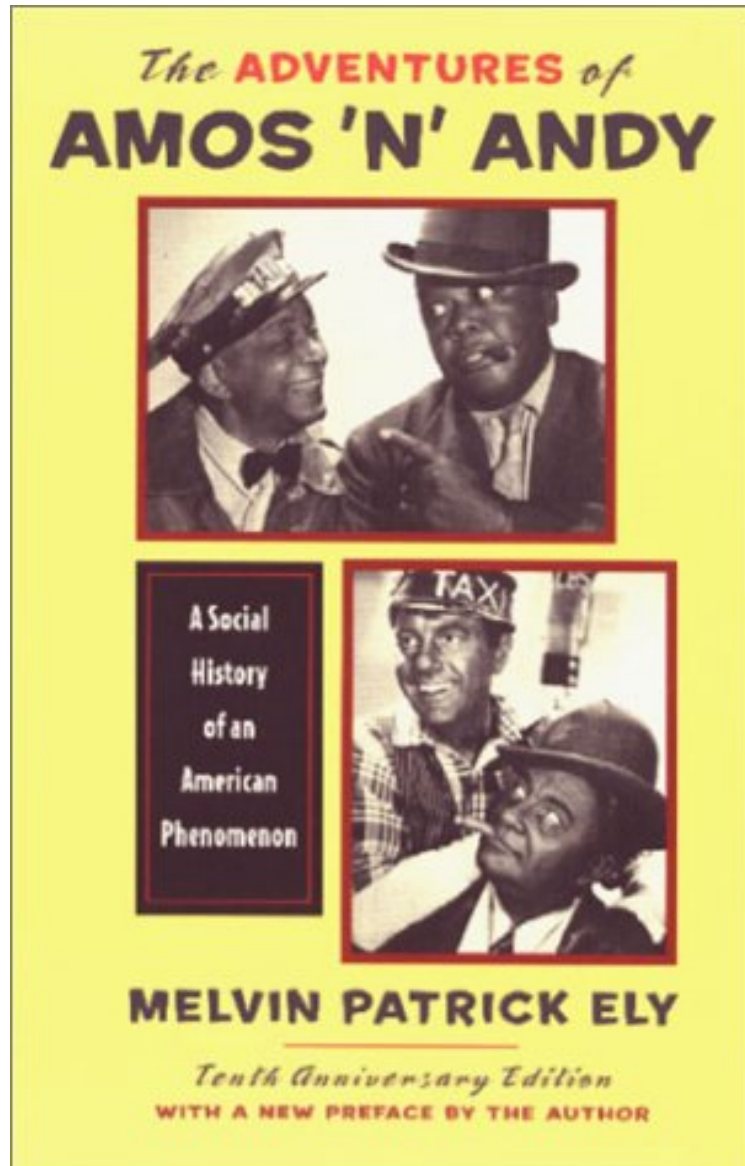


The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon

Melvin Patrick Ely

ebooks / Download PDF / *ePub / DOC / audiobook



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#803647 in Books University of Virginia Press 2001-10-29 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.28 x .92 x 6.211, 1.25 #File Name: 0813920922322 pages | File size: 35.Mb

Melvin Patrick Ely : The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Thoughtful and Balanced Presentation
By A Customer
At a basic level, this book is a detailed, well-researched history of America's longest running (1929-1960 on both radio and television) comedy show. Ely does a fine job of describing the factors that led to the show's great popularity and the successful efforts of its creators, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, to maintain that popularity. At a more sophisticated level, however, the book provides an intimate view of one of the great political events of this century, the American Civil Rights movement. Because *Amos 'n' Andy* was the only nationally popular series prior to 1960 featuring black characters, and because its creators and principal actors were both white, the show repeatedly drew both praise and criticism from the press and various organizations seeking to promote their own political agendas. Ely describes in detail how Gosden and Correll went to great lengths to keep the show from being viewed as racist, yet in the long run they failed. As he points out, that failure may have caused the major networks to shy away from shows featuring black performers and delay their introduction into television for another 20 years. Having listened to *Amos 'n' Andy* on the radio as a child and subsequently watched it on TV, I like many other white Americans, was dumbfounded when the NAACP decided to attack it for being racist. For me at least, Gosden and Correll succeeded in their objective of establishing their characters as human types, not racial types. Sapphire was the spitting image of my best friend's mother, and Algonquin J. Calhoun came to typify every crooked lawyer (Is that redundant?) I later had the misfortune to meet. Unfortunately, Ely touches only peripherally on the black sitcoms of the 80s and 90s (e.g., "The Jeffersons" and "In Living Color") which I (and many other Americans) personally found to be racist. Despite dealing with a highly emotional topic, Ely has produced a lucid, objective and thought-provoking work! His shortcomings consist of his failure to take into consideration the effects of the other great events of the period (the Great Depression, World War II, etc.) and his seeming assumption that all Americans cared about the Civil Rights movement. In fact, I think that more people (both black and white) cared more about putting food on the table and raising their families well.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Trials and Tribulations of Blacks 75 Years Ago
By Mark Sutter
The author should be applauded for the amount of research that went into this book. To be honest, I was somewhat bored by all of the detail that pertained to the radio show but my interest picked up once the author got around to the television series. This book deals with the travails of blacks in the 30s and 40s as much as it focuses on the *Amos 'n' Andy* show itself. Overall, the book was quite educational and I'm glad I read it.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Slice of History
By Alex
This book provides a great, well written, social study of a forgotten slice of American history. Although the book over-emphasizes certain things, and leaves out or under-emphasizes other things, this book was an enjoyable summer read.

Forty million Americans indulged in a national obsession in 1930: they eagerly tuned in *Amos 'n' Andy*, the nightly radio comedy in which a pair of white actors portrayed the adventures of two black men making a new life in the big city. Meanwhile, some angry African Americans demanded that *Amos 'n' Andy* be banned, even as others gathered in the barbershops and radio stores of Harlem to chuckle over the adventures of Amos, Andy, and the Kingfish. Melvin Patrick Ely unveils a fascinating tale of America's shifting color line, in which two professional directors of blackface minstrel shows manage to produce a series so rich and complex that it wins admirers ranging from ultra-racists to outspoken racial egalitarians. Eventually, the pair stir further controversy when they bring their show to television. In a preface written especially for this new edition of his acclaimed classic, Ely shows how white and black responses to his *Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy* since 1991 tell a revealing story of their own about racial hopes and fears at the turn of the twenty-first century.

From Kirkus's *To Ely (African-American Studies Southern History/Yale)*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, the first radio comedy series to portray an all-black world, provides a "small but clear window which, like all windows, reveals more and more as one draws closer to it." Here, Ely looks closely at the changing responses of both blacks and whites to *Amos 'n' Andy* and examines what they reveal about the evolution of racial attitudes during the decades from the 1920's, when the series first aired, to the 50's, when it was transplanted to network TV. Born too late to experience the phenomenon except through TV reruns in the 1950's and 60's, Ely nevertheless writes knowingly of *Amos 'n' Andy*, having pored over hundreds of old scripts, newspaper clippings and fan letters. He looks at its roots in the minstrel shows in which its white writers (and radio performers) Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden learned their trade, and he examines how it won the hearts of millions and created dismay and antagonism in the minds of many. Although it had a huge following among both blacks and whites, thoughtful blacks were always divided in their appraisal--some seeing it as harmful to black self-respect and poisonous to whites' perceptions of blacks, and others finding no racism in its humor. Nor were its critics consistent--some who had praised it in the 30's damned it in the 50's, and vice versa. Ely traces the history of the show and its impact on a changing society with diligence, providing an extensive paper trail for future researchers in American social history. An earnest and thoughtful contribution to the growing literature documenting the development of black consciousness in American society. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. Compelling... a stunningly objective look at the history of the program and how it affected, and was affected by, the culture at large.... Remarkable. (Boston Globe)
Amos 'n' Andy was an instant success, and went on to become

both a national institution and a subject of racial controversy; Mr. Ely's sensitive and scholarly work shows us why. (New Yorker)Engaging.... [Ely] does a brilliant job of sorting out what is in many ways a hellishly complex story.... With exemplary scholarship and well-reasoned eloquence, he advances us a long way toward understanding, while also vividly revealing some unsettling aspects of our culture that shouldn't be forgotten. (San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle)An engrossing, perhaps definitive, account of one of the most fascinating episodes in popular entertainment.Painfully funny... ironic. (Maureen Corrigan, "Fresh Air," National Public Radio)About the AuthorMelvin Patrick Ely is Newton Family Professor of History and Black Studies at the College of William and Mary.