



Make 'Em Laugh: The Funny Business of America

Michael Kantor, Laurence Maslon

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From the most popular routines and the most ingenious physical shtick to the snappiest wisecracks and the most biting satire of the last century, MAKE 'EM LAUGH illuminates who we are as a nation by exploring what makes us laugh, and why. Authors Laurence Maslon and Michael Kantor draw on countless sources to chronicle the past century of American comedy and the geniuses who created and performed it-melding biography, American history, and a lotta laughs into an exuberant, important book.

Each of the six chapters focuses a different style or archetype of comedy, from the slapstick pratfalls of Buster Keaton and Lucille Ball through the wiseguy put-downs of Groucho Marx and Larry David, to the incendiary bombshells of Mae West and Richard Pryor . And at every turn the significance of these comedians-smashing social boundaries, challenging the definition of good taste, speaking the truth to the powerful-is vividly tangible. MAKE 'EM LAUGH is more than a compendium of American comic genius; it is a window onto the way comedy both reflects the world and changes it-one laugh at a time.

Starting from the groundbreaking PBS series, the authors have gone deeper into the works and lives of America's great comic artists, with biographical portraits, archival materials, cultural overviews, and rare photos. Brilliantly illustrated, with insights (and jokes) from comedians, writers and producers, along with film, radio, television, and theater historians, MAKE 'EM LAUGH is an indispensable, definitive book about comedy in America.

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