

Cheat: A Man's Guide to Infidelity

By Bill Burr, Joe DeRosa, Robert Kelly • Simon & Schuster • Paperback, 256 Pages, \$14.95

I love an honest man, and you don't get any more honest than Burr, DeRosa, and Kelly do in *Cheat*: "Do you wanna get your dick wet or not? Then stop being a pussy." A lot of thought and accumulated penile wisdom went into this fascinatingly well-researched guide on how to cheat without getting caught. The authors delve into the science behind cheating, point to historical role models, and even offer psychological advice on dealing with the guilt. The crux of their argument centers on the fact that the penis is stupid and becomes a dangerous weapon if you listen to it. They cover all the bases of the how, why, where, and to whom. They even go so far as to profile the different kinds of cheaters, acknowledging different needs and approaches. What made me laugh most was the advice on what to do if you find your woman cheating on you. First, many women cheat with the intention of getting caught because nothing is funnier than a mad dick. Second, cheating is the one area in life where women are statistically catching up to men, and I'd wager that a book called *Cheat: A Woman's Guide to Infidelity* would outsell the male version because penises don't read. Overall, *Cheat* offers unfaithful men sound but ultimately irrelevant knowledge because, gentlemen, a woman *always* knows. (See the author interviews in this issue of *The Comic Bible*)



John Kenneth Muir

Comedy...The Great Truth Teller

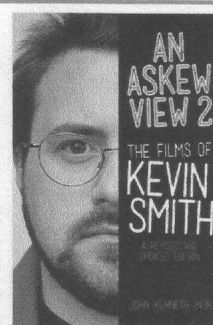
Author

An Askew View 2

The Films of Kevin Smith

By John Kenneth Muir

Applause Theatre & Cinema Books
Paperback, 256 Pages, \$19.99



John Kenneth Muir returns to the View Askewniverse in *An Askew View 2*, covering director and "social gadfly" Kevin Smith's second controversial decade. Long after Smith arrived in Hollywood via his credit cards—maxing them out to make *Clerks*—he continues to incite and provoke. Muir, an award-winning author of over 24 books about film and television, studies the unusual world of Kevin Askew...both the man and his Askewniverse. As a *Top 100 Film Study* blogger and creator of the sci-fi web series *The House Between*, Muir also adds much to the debate with a discussion of his own Muiriverse.

IN THIS AGE OF WEBSISODES AND YOUTUBE WHERE SPEED AND STYLE ARE OFTEN VALUED OVER CONTENT, WHAT CAN ASPIRING WRITERS AND FILMMAKERS LEARN FROM KEVIN SMITH?

Kevin Smith is a great writer in terms of character and dialogue. He imbues his creations with

eccentricity, humor, and humanity. So, one important lesson is: write with a sense of individuality. When you listen to the dialogue cadences of characters in Smith's films, they sound "real" and also very far astray from cookie-cutter Hollywood screenwriting. Just as importantly, Kevin Smith (in the early 1990s and also in 2011) looked outside the system and "industry" and decided he could succeed by doing things differently: In the first case, he self-financed his movie *Clerks*; in the second case, he distributed *Red State* himself. The message is that you don't need to accept the status quo if you write with a sense of individuality and distinction...if you have something "personal" to say. I think the message, really, to learn from Kevin Smith, is to go your own way, and trust your own talent. Speed and style are fine in short bouts, but at some point, people seek meaningful content. Smith is so valuable an artist because he asks meaningful questions about religion (*Dogma*, *Red State*), and sexuality (*Chasing Amy*) among other topics, and he's done so in

ways that we recognize and make us laugh.

WHAT ARE HEALTHY WAYS FOR YOUNG FILMMAKERS TO BUCK THE SYSTEM WHEN THEY HAVEN'T ACTUALLY ENTERED THE SYSTEM YET?

The healthiest way to buck the system is to believe in your vision, pursue that vision, and don't compromise on that vision. When you look at films like *Clerks*, Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*, or the early works of David Cronenberg, you can see how unique the visions remain. The industry can really blur or soften a filmmaker's sharp edges, but sharp edges make art...and bring success. A healthy way to buck the system is to make a movie unlike any other movie, a product of YOUR imagination, even outside the strictures of decorum and standard three-act structure. People want to see something they haven't seen before. It's extremely hard to do that in terms of stories. So instead, pursue individual vision in a unique personal aesthetic. For

Smith, that aesthetic is the weird, paradoxical mix of raunchy humor and genuine "heart."

COULD YOU SPEAK TO THE IMPORTANCE OF COMEDY IN DELIVERING A LARGER THEME OR MESSAGE?

Comedy is about two things primarily: observation and recognition. If you observe well, people recognize the situation...and laugh because it is familiar and true. So the thing about comedy is that it doesn't have to push to succeed; it doesn't have to be over-the-top or outrageous. Life is funny and absurd enough without nutty embellishment. Comedy is a great truth-teller. Truth isn't always easy to digest, so laughs help the medicine go down. If you're talking about sex, religion and even parenting, comedy can make tough and accurate observations that straight dramas cannot; much in a way that the horror genre does. We listen better in a comedy or horror film, because we don't feel like we're on the receiving end of a lecture.

A Once Crowded Sky by Tom King
Touchstone • Hardcover, 336 Pages, \$26.00

Tom King shakes up the novel genre with comic book superheroes, creating something completely unique, and engaging people on both sides of the comic book debate—those who like to read comic books and those who don't. *A Once Crowded Sky* poses the question: What happens to comic book heroes when they lose their powers? King's characters discover that it takes a different kind of heroism to live a common life. Like normal human beings, they succumb to human ordinariness when they no longer have a storyline to guide their actions or an archetype to define their morality: "There's no life...outside the game." *A Once Crowded Sky* is an unexpected debut that pushes the envelope in cross-genre creativity.





I Want You to Shut the F#ck Up: How the Audacity of Dopes Is Ruining America
By D.L. Hughley • Crown Archetype • Hardcover, 288 Pages, \$25.00

D.L. Hughley throws many stones in his new book, *I Want You to Shut the F#ck Up: How the Audacity of Dopes Is Ruining America*. However, they are equal opportunity stones cast at anyone living in a glass bubble of complacency and denial, which is pretty much everyone and everything: politicians, the law, education, racism, affirmative action (as tokenism), society, his family, himself, and...(yikes)...black women. There are funny stones, as when he creates his own analogy for the marshmallow now versus marshmallow later experiment (a child behavior experiment that predicts future success) using something that is not your ordinary putty tat. There are also serious stones. But, even then Hughley is not judging so much as he is informing, connecting the dots between complex legal, sociological, and cultural factors, creating a more honest picture of how we, as a people, have created our current disaster. Without this understanding, there is no hope for change. We live in a time where very few people are willing to hear the truth: "We are so fragile as a society that the truth angers us because the comments strike a nerve." Hughley has obviously lived life with his eyes wide open, imbibing truth with a rare and admirable fervor. His personal experiences, combined with his curiosity and compassion, have created a potent alchemy—a wisdom that is uniquely Hughley. In asking us to boldly examine our own participation in the world in which we live, he is asking us to take responsibility for both the things we do and say, as well as the things not done or said—to choose what is right rather than what is easy. Hughley is teaching us how to think and he is telling us to wake the f#ck up.



Yael Kohen

Women & The Love of Comedy

Author

We Killed

The Rise of Women in American Comedy
By Yael Kohen
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
Hardcover, 336 Pages, \$27.00



Yael Kohen's new book, *We Killed* tackles the ago-old. "wrong-headed" assertion that women aren't funny. With over a hundred interviews and spanning over fifty years, Kohen chronicles the trials and tribulations of comedienne while simultaneously demonstrating the breadth of female comedic talent and passion. Kohen is a reporter and editor in NYC, and a contributing editor at *Marie Claire*. She covers books, pop culture, and issues important to women.

WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS OF *WE KILLED* TO COME AWAY WITH?

I realize my intro seems to suggest that my intention in writing the book was to prove the old notion that women aren't funny—but really it was more of a jumping off point since that seems to be the focus of most women in comedy discussions over the past five years. The fact is, "are women funny?" is a pretty dated idea, and it keeps coming up decade after decade—we can continue to go on about it or we can advance the conversation. I thought it would be more interesting to look at the women in the context of the eras during which they emerged, how their comedy was informed by the times they began their careers, and how the times changed because of the barriers they pushed. I'm also

hoping the reader comes away with a deeper understanding of where these women fit into the history of American comedy as a whole. And I wanted to explore various themes that come up with women comics. One example is self-deprecation. A lot of critics will tend to lump self-deprecating comics like Phyllis Diller, Joan Rivers and Janeane Garofalo into one category—but that's just wrong. There is a world of difference between what Diller does and what Garofalo does, and much of that is generational and it's also style. So I look at some of that stuff.

I wanted the reader to come away with the feeling that at the end of the day, these female comics love comedy. It's not a feminist issue for them—they just want the room to be funny alongside their male peers. And a lot of the time, most of the time, their jobs were a lot of fun! I mean we're talking about a life in entertainment! I think an oral history best captures the way these women think about their craft because the reader really gets a sense for the intensity and the passion these women have for their profession.

ARE WOMEN SOMETIMES THEIR OWN WORST ENEMY?

As a group, yes, women do not always help other women. Up until

the 1990s, the most successful female comics were often mentored by their male peers: Roseanne and Paula Poundstone among them. Women comics did not always help other women comics. Now part of this had to do with the fact that the boys clubby atmosphere at the clubs created a competitive environment for women—if you only have one woman on a line up per night, the women are competing for fewer spots. But, even the idea that more women in power necessarily means that women will have opportunities is false. Mitzi Shore, the legendary owner of the Comedy Store was a woman, and depending on who you ask, she was not known for developing many women. Even today, the president of Comedy Central is a woman and that network gears their content toward men 18 to 35. Now, a lot of that changed in the 1990s with the rise of Janeane Garofalo. She was really the first comic who seemed to use her influence to prop other female comics in a significant way. And now you see it with people like Amy Poehler and Chelsea Handler.

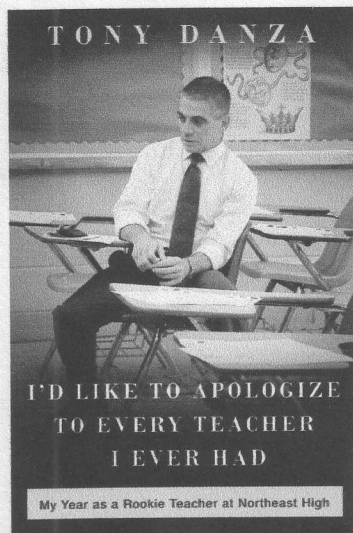
Another barrier for women is the lifestyle—for stand-ups this is especially true. They are on the road for more than 200 days a year—that lifestyle is not conducive to having a family. For some reason, fathers can get away from

not being home every night, much more than mothers can. So a lot of these female comics make the choice to stick with their careers or have a family. Which is one reason why so many women drop out. So that has less to do with any sort of comedy club barriers that exist.



A Fistful of Collars
Chet & Bernie Mystery #5
By Spencer Quinn
Atria Books
Hardcover, 320 Pages, \$25
Canine and Human P.I.
Detective Team

Submission & Review Requests:
alice@thecomicbible.com
visit Alice at:
www.missingchunk.com



I'd Like to Apologize to Every Teacher I Ever Had

My Year as a Rookie Teacher at Northeast High

By Tony Danza • Crown Archetype • Hardcover, 272 Pages, \$24

The word "courage" usually conjures up the *imagery* of a *hero* facing a physical enemy. In *I'd Like to Apologize to Every Teacher I Ever Had: My Year as a Rookie Teacher at Northeast High* (follow-up to his reality TV show), Tony Danza demonstrates that courage comes in many faces: Sometimes courage is a boxer standing up to an opponent in the ring, sometimes it's a celebrity-cum-teacher willing to be vulnerable in front of a classroom of teens, and sometimes it's a student going against the grain of indifference to actively participate in his/her own education. Danza faces *formidable* odds as he struggles to understand the unique problems facing children in the modern educational system, as well as the problems inherent in the system itself. It is *ironic* that his *anguished* attempts to deal with teens are so funny. Yet, that is the entire point. Learning can be fun when administered in a context that students can relate to, by adults who demonstrate that they care. And Danza truly does care. He is able to see past the *arrogant* bravado and feigned indifference that mask the abject despair that *ominously* threatens to thwart learning and growth. Danza's approach is whole-istic, making full use of his curiosity and creativity as he delves into his students' lives in order to identify what needs healing and what needs motivating, and he continues long after the producers lose interest and the cameras stop rolling. It is as if education, for Danza, is a *metaphor* for love: When love is viewed as a verb rather than a noun, it becomes about choosing action and participation rather than waiting to receive something passively. The challenge is not in keeping students *complacently mollified*, but in getting them interested in their own education when the support isn't there at home or in their social circles. What the reader takes away is not reality TV *hyperbole*, but a true sense of what every individual can do. Beyond Danza's call to volunteer, we can each find a way to connect and communicate through playful teachable moments with all the teens we meet in our lives. It is incumbent upon us to do as Danza does, to serve as mentors and show youth the possibilities that lie ahead. (What's with the words in italics? Read the book and find out!)



Penny Marshall

All Fingers Point to

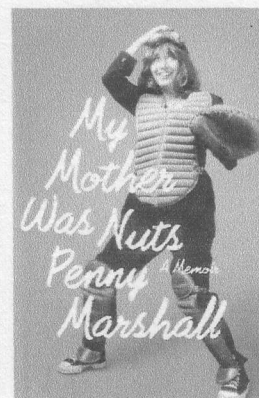
PLAY

My Mother Was Nuts

By Penny Marshall

New Harvest

Hardcover, 352 Pages, \$26.00



Penny Marshall's Q&A at the Strand Book Store turned into a Bronx reunion: First, Leonard introduced himself as an old childhood classmate ("Lenny! I kissed you! You're in the book!"); then there was Gary who said they used to climb trees together, play cowboys, and something about someone falling through the ice ("Gary! We lived in the same building! I went to your Bar Mitzvah! In those days you gave them a pen. Nowadays you have to give them an apartment or something."); and, there were those who had taken dance lessons from Marshall's mother, including Richard, one of only three boys in the dance school. With all that Penny Marshall has been through in the decades since she left the Bronx, and with the thousands of people she has met in between, these people were kept alive in her memory through the power of play.

My older brother was funny. My older sister was girly. And I just wanted to play...I am not much different now. I have never wanted to grow up and stop playing. In many ways, I haven't. In my work and in my personal life, I still try to maintain a connection to the sense of play that I remember from my childhood. Those experiences taught me the lessons that came in handy later in my life: Try hard, play by the rules, help your friends, don't get too crazy, and have fun.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY BOTH IN FRONT OF AND BEHIND THE CAMERA:

It's very important. You eat chalk. You interrelate. Young people today [mimics texting] don't know how to interrelate. They can't carry a conversation. Behavior (onscreen) is very important to me; talking heads, not so much.

GETTING INTO DIRECTING:

We all directed an episode because how many doors can you come through? My brother said, 'This is a strange business—they pay you to learn.'

ADVICE TO ASPIRING FILM-MAKERS:

Make it funny. Make it real. If you want to make a film, make it. Just try it. Do a reading and you can hear what goes wrong.

WHO, AMONG THOSE SHE DISCOVERED, IS SHE STILL EXCITED TO WATCH:

Mark Wahlberg. He can improvise, he's interesting to watch, and he's a good guy. Got him out of the...funky bunch.'

HOW SHE MADE IT FROM THE BRONX TO TELEVISION:

If someone asks me to do something, I'll try it. I'll try anything once.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEN AND NOW:

Back then there were three channels. Then Fox came along and there were four. They used to give you a little more time to refine show. Now they put crap on all the time. Kids don't have an original thought and they keep remaking things when the original person who starred in it is still alive. A lot [of stations] show reruns all the time. Bless them!

HOW SHE STARTED DOING PHYSICAL COMEDY:

There's a thing called exposition. It's boring. So, you find business to do to keep the audience from listening to boring exposition. You distract them. It became physical.

OTHER LIFE ADVICE:

Get to know your firemen. They come faster than the police."

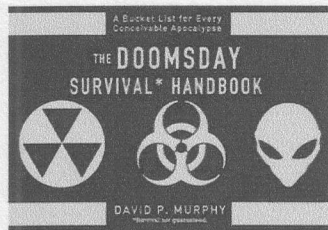
Comediennes:

Laugh be a Lady

By Darryl & Tuezdae Littleton
Applause Theatre & Cinema Books
Paperback, 240 Pages, \$19.99

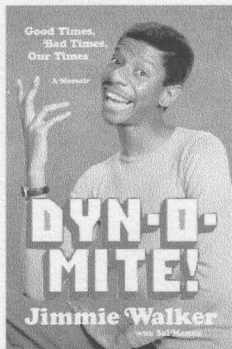
Don't Wear Shorts on Stage

By Rob Durham
CreateSpace
Paperback, 158 Pages, \$15.99



The Domsday Survival Handbook: A Bucket List for Every Conceivable Apocalypse

By David P. Murphy
Sourcebooks
Paperback, 236 Pages, \$10.99



Dynomite!

Good Times, Bad Times, Our Times
A Memoir By Jimmie Walker
Da Capo Press
Hardcover, 296 Pages, \$25.00

Hollywood Stories

By Stephen Schochet
BCH Fulfillment & Distribution
Hardcover, 324 Pages, \$24.95

I'm Easy, You're Lucky

By Harriet Rose
Westcom Press
Paperback, 93 Pages, \$16.95

The Jericho River

By David Carthage
Winifred Press
Paperback, 407 Pages, \$12.50

The Last Testament

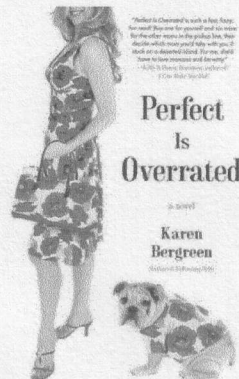
A Memoir by God
With David Javerbaum
Simon & Schuster
Paperback, 464 Pages, \$15.00

Lizz Free or Die

By Lizz Winstead
Riverhead Hardcover
Hardcover, 320 Pages, \$25.95

A New Financial You in 28 Days!

By Brian J. Foley
Gegensatz Press
Ebook, 83 Pages, \$7.98



Perfect is Overrated

By Karen Bergreen
St. Martin's Griffin
Paperback, 320 Pages, \$14.99

Show Me the Funny!: At the Writers' Table with Hollywood's Top Comedy Writers
By Peter Desberg Jeffrey Davis
Sterling Publishing
Paperback, 352 Pages, \$14.95



Star Wars Toys

A Super Collector's Wish Book
By Geoffrey T. Carlton
Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.
Hrdcover, 464 Pages, \$34.99

Step by Step to Stand-Up Comedy

By Greg Dean
Heinemann Drama
Paperback, 208 Pages, \$18.95

Young, Funny, and Unbalanced

By David Smithym
CreateSpace
Paperback, 72 Pages, \$10



Comedy Girl

By Ellen Schreiber
Katherine Tegen Books
Hardcover/Ebook, 298 Pages, --/\$5.99

Shy high school senior Trixie Shapiro kills every night, performing her stand-up routine to a packed house of stuffed animals, but bombs when forced to perform at the school talent show. When the next opportunity arises at the town's comedy club, Trixie confronts her fear, leans into the pain, and comes out ahead. Thus begins her evolution into a stand-up comic. Chronicling her journey, *Comedy Girl* provides "how to" insights on the practical application of stand-up comedy and offers a "what to expect" guide for any girl who dreams of a career in stand-up. Trixie's small successes always come with real life caveats—there is a price to pay for every choice. She finds that sometimes the people closest to you want you to fail, working on your dream takes time away from your friendships, dreams are hard work, and success can be lonely. Moving into a new life certainly changes you and everyone around you. What is especially important for girls and young women is how Trixie handles her life after moving to Los Angeles and finding that doors don't open as readily as they did in her small town. Her choices honor her comedy by treating stand-up as a craft to be refined and honed, and exemplify the true nature of creativity.



Funny: The Book by David Misch

Applause Theatre & Cinema Books
Paperback, 202 Pages, \$18.99

I have always been a fan of anything you can read on the toilet: It is, after all, the place of elimination and assimilation. You will need that extra room to assimilate the vast amount of information in David Misch's *Funny: The Book*. This is not a crackerjack effort on Misch's part as he delves into the philosophy and sociology behind comedy. The juxtaposition of Elvis Presley on the *Milton Berle Show* as an example of the Trickster archetype will give you an idea of what to expect from *Funny*. This is a thinking person's guide to comedy through the ages. It moves fast because there is much ground to cover, and is a great general overview for anyone interested in delving deeper into all things funny.



The Tools: Transform Your Problems Into Courage, Confidence, & Creativity

By Phil Stutz & Barry Michels
Spiegel & Grau/Random House
Hardcover, 288 Pages, \$25.00

What do you do with an obnoxious stand-up comedian named Vinny who believes that anything that moves his career forward is a form of selling out? You give him *The Tools* he needs to dig himself out of the hefty comfort zone he's created. Stutz and Michels move away from the ideas of traditional psychotherapy and help readers tap into a larger force that can change their lives. The program reads much like a practical guide to Zen philosophy—Lean into discomfort, allow the universe to guide you, focus on process—the difference being their concrete set of tools and instructions that focus on the "how" rather than on the "what," transforming philosophy into everyday action: In Vinny's case, when asked to visualize the penalty if he continues down his current path, Vinny gasps, "I'm living in my mother's house." *The Tools* goes a step further than Zen, demonstrating how to push through self-satisfied complacency traps and maintain in the long term. Does their program work? According to my sources at the Strand Book Store, *The Tools* has been "flying off the shelves." A relevant read for all performers at all stages in their careers.