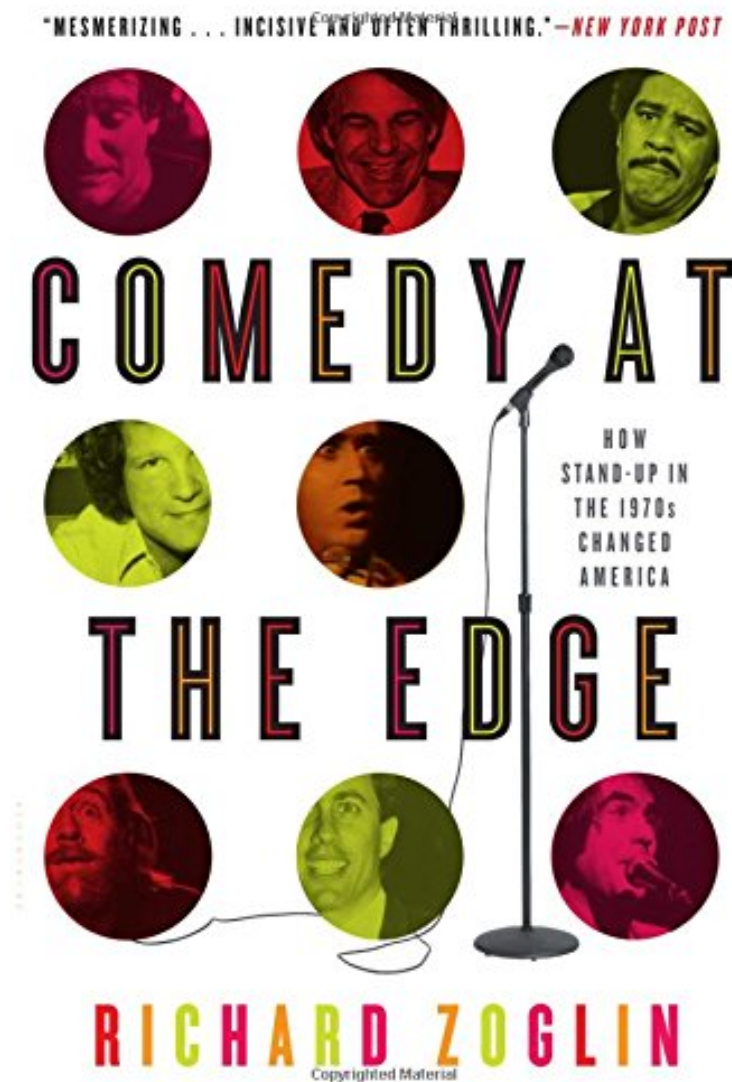


Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America

Richard Zoglin

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Richard Zoglin : Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. ...and Beyond the Edge into a Great Ride over TimeBy Nathan A. GordonRichard Zoglin, who interviewed over 100 people in the business, has over-delivered with his well written synopsis of the state of stand-up comedy from the 40-year period beginning from the mid-sixties. Zoglin convincingly shows how stand-up comedy has evolved from the (at-the-time) groundbreaking (and for many at the time), "over-the-

line" somewhat drug-induced rants of Lenny Bruce to the domestic observations of Jerry Seinfeld ("I admire socks"). Zoglin draws an interesting arch that starts with Bruce and runs through (among many others) George Carlin, Richard Pryor, David Steinberg, Robert Klein, Steve Martin, Albert Brooks, Richard Lewis, Jay Leno, Andy Kaufman, Robin Williams and, of course, Jerry. Zoglin's brief biographical sketches are only the beginning of his discussion of a particular performer. He offers incisive analysis as to how the various artists' developed, who influenced them and their evolution. What is particularly remarkable is how Zoglin is able to successfully weave his long comedy arch with the smallest of incisive and funny details and observations. Where else can you find that at a chance encounter at some concert, Robert Klein told a joke to (the very serious) Steve Martin only to have an annoyed Martin ask Klein, "Are you always on?" What about Albert Brooks seeking out some advice in 1974 from one of his comic icons (the beloved) Jack Benny who was confused by his request (Jack died four days later). This book will make the reader understand how difficult it is to rise to the top in stand-up. Amateur comedians take note: It's not enough to be funny with your friends; you need to make strangers laugh on a consistent basis. "Beyond the Edge" documents the long road. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining History of Comedy By bongo And in the US, the 70's was the start of the modern era of comedy. The post war guys were reacting to Vietnam, Watergate, Civil Rights and reacting against the vaudeville era Henny Youngman stuff. The books starts off with the late George Carlin and Richard Pryor and works it's way up til Jerry Seinfeld. Couple of the things I learned: Comics went on strike once against the Comedy Store, what happened to the careers of Robert Klein and Richard Belzer, Robin William's managers once got a court stenographer to transcribe a gig cause he was so freestyle that was the best way to help hone it. Lots of good stuff about the comics, that for me, really were the Beatles and Rolling Stones of the form. If you like reading about comedy, you should like this book. The author has good taste and writes well. My only quibble is that the book is a little over 200 pages. I'd bet it could have been expanded to 400 pages or so. It was fun to read and I wanted more. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. great story, good laughs By ann caywood anyone who remembers the 70's as more than a tv show will identify the issues and the times.. very in depth how it all began for many of today's big comedians.

When Lenny Bruce overdosed in 1966, he left behind an impressive legacy of edgy, politically charged comedy. Four short years later, a new breed of comic, inspired by Bruce's artistic fearlessness, made telling jokes an art form, forever putting to rest the stereotype of the one-liner borscht belt set. During the 1970s, a small group of brilliant, iconoclastic comedians, led by George Carlin, Richard Pryor, and Robert Klein, tore through the country and became as big as rock stars in an era when Saturday Night Live and SCTV were the apotheosis of cool, and the Improv and Catch a Rising Star were the hottest clubs around. That a new wave of innovative comedians, like Steve Martin, Albert Brooks, Robin Williams, and Andy Kauffman followed closely behind only cemented comedy's place as one of the most important art forms of the decade. In *Comedy at the Edge*, Richard Zoglin explores in depth this ten-year period when comedians stood, with microphone in hand, at the white-hot center of popular culture, stretching the boundaries of the genre, fighting obscenity laws, and becoming the collective voices of their generation. In the process, they revolutionized an art form. Based on extensive interviews with club owners, booking agents, groupies, and the players themselves, Zoglin traces the decade's tumultuous arc in this no-holds barred, behind-the-scenes look at one of the most influential decades in American popular culture.

From Publishers Weekly Theater and TV critic Zoglin steps into the spotlight to deliver mirthful material also worthy of applause. A senior Time writer-editor who covered the magazine's showbiz beat for 20 years, Zoglin once did major pieces on Carson, Cosby, Letterman, Seinfeld and others. Now he offers a comedy chronicle of laugh makers from the mid-1960s to the early '80s with entertaining excerpts and funny one-liners. In an opening chapter capturing the charisma and revolutionary impact of Lenny Bruce, he notes, What the younger comedians who were influenced by him brought was the discipline and craftsmanship that Bruce lacked. They were better actors and more accomplished writers. The curtain then goes up on a merry mob of iconoclastic innovators: Andy Kaufman, Richard Lewis (I left my shrink too soon; I had to take an incomplete), George Carlin and the seven dirty words, the raw racial anger of Richard Pryor, Robert Klein (Now you can get every record ever recorded!) and many more. The book's centerpiece is a potent profile of Albert Brooks, detailing the lampoons, conflicts and compromises of his now-forgotten standup career. Although some subjects (Steve Martin, Mel Brooks, David Letterman) were initially reluctant to be interviewed, Zoglin's conversations with numerous top talents enabled him to add fresh quotations to his extensive research through books, magazines and liner notes. Always highlighting how these comics transformed the culture, Zoglin on standup is standout. (Feb. 1) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Zoglin is a clear and informative writer. *Comedy at the Edge* is genial and good fun. New York Times Evocative first-rate. Wall Street Journal An intimate glimpse through the keyhole of a rebel subculture birthed on the smoke-filled stages of New York's Improv and Catch a Rising Star that found its way into the heart of mainstream America. Los Angeles Times Sharp, perceptive history Especially fascinating are tales about the inner politics of comedy clubs and the struggles of female comedians. Christian Science Monitor Wise, concise, effortlessly erudite. Boston

GlobeMesmerizing. Incisive and often thrilling. Zoglin conducted meticulous and thorough research [and] manages to uncover new insights. A fun read. New York PostA very desirable addition for the pop-culture shelves.
BooklistMirthful material worthy of applauseZoglin on standup is standout. Publishers WeeklyAbout the
AuthorRichard Zoglin is a senior editor and writer at Time, also serving as the resident television and film critic. In his 20 years covering entertainment for the magazine, he has written cover stories on Bill Cosby, David Letterman, Diane Sawyer, and Arsenio Hall, among others; and done major pieces on Jerry Seinfeld and Johnny Carson. He lives in New York City.