



The Haunted Smile: The Story Of Jewish Comedians In America

Lawrence J. Epstein

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Lawrence Epstein's *The Haunted Smile* tackles a subject both poignant and delightful: the story of Jewish comedians in America. For the past century and more, American comedy has drawn its strength and soul from the comic genius of Jewish performers and writers. An incomplete listing of names makes the point: The Marx Brothers, Jack Benny, Fanny Brice, George Burns, Milton Berle, Jackie Mason, Joan Rivers, Rodney Dangerfield, Mel Brooks, Alan King, Mort Sahl, Buddy Hackett, Woody Allen, Lenny Bruce, Andy Kaufman, Richard Belzer, Jerry Seinfeld. These men and women, among others, form the canon of Jewish-American comedy.

In the words of the *Detroit Jewish News*, *The Haunted Smile* "offers us a deep and subtle understanding of how Jewish culture and American openness gave birth to a new style of entertainment." Often the best way to illuminate a point is to recount some of these comedians' own brilliant routines, and Epstein uses the comedian's work to great effect, making for a book that is both a thoughtful work of history and a great deal of fun.

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