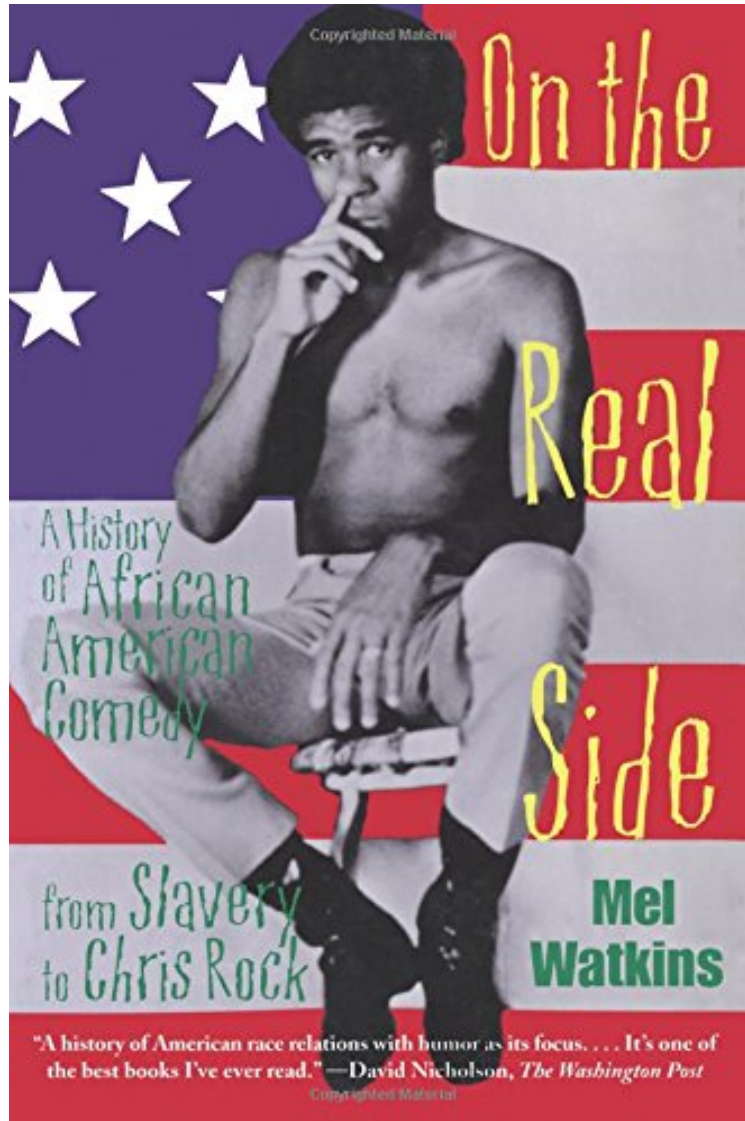


(Read free) On the Real Side: A History of African American Comedy

On the Real Side: A History of African American Comedy

Mel Watkins

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Mel Watkins : On the Real Side: A History of African American Comedy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On the Real Side: A History of African American Comedy:

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By Px3I'm a comedy nerd and have always

been interested in the various cultures, hardships, suffering, and other experiences that lead to humor. This book covers it all with regard to African Americans in this history of comedy. I read this book shortly after it was originally released in hardback. I loaned it to a young lady and she never gave it back. I loved it so much that I decided to buy another copy,

This comprehensive history of black humor sets it in the context of American popular culture. Blackface minstrelsy, Stepin Fetchit, and the Amos n Andy show presented a distorted picture of African Americans; this book contrasts this image with the authentic underground humor of African Americans found in folktales, race records, and all-black shows and films. After generations of stereotypes, the underground humor finally emerged before the American public with Richard Pryor in the 1970s. But Pryor was not the first popular comic to present authentically black humor. Watkins offers surprising reassessments of such seminal figures as Fetchit, Bert Williams, Moms Mabley, and Redd Foxx, looking at how they paved the way for contemporary comics such as Whoopi Goldberg, Eddie Murphy, and Bill Cosby.

.com From the ribald tall tales of "The Signifying Monkey" and Moms Mabley's grandmotherly earthiness to Richard Pryor's blues-based character Mudbone, author Mel Watkins takes us beyond the seemingly harmless face of the black comedian and shows the complex, multifaceted, and historical use of humor by African Americans to articulate, combat, and overcome the effects of racism. Watkins begins with the coded, behind-master's-back mockery of slave humor and its outgrowth, the minstrels, where whites such as Al Jolson as well as blacks wore horrible blackface makeup. Watkins also chronicles the ascendancy of performers such as Bert Williams, Stepin Fetchit, Redd Foxx, and Bill Cosby from the '30s to the '60s, when vaudeville, radio, motion pictures, and recordings catapulted black comedy around the world. For Watkins, the emergence of several socially aware comedians--for example, Dick Gregory and Richard Pryor--marked an important break with the tradition of concealed references. "Pryor and a few of his predecessors," Watkins writes, "began unveiling the satirical barbs concealed beneath the black jester's clownish attire." After Pryor's career was slowed down by health complications, he was followed by what Watkins views as a less political and more materialistic hip-hop generation, led by Eddie Murphy, Martin Lawrence, Chris Rock, and the Wayans brothers. With shows such as Def Comedy Jam and In Living Color Watkins feels, "some of the subtlety, misdirection, and magic that have previously characterized black American humor have been lost, the most outrageous and impious elements of African American humor are now being emphasized." --Eugene Holley Jr.