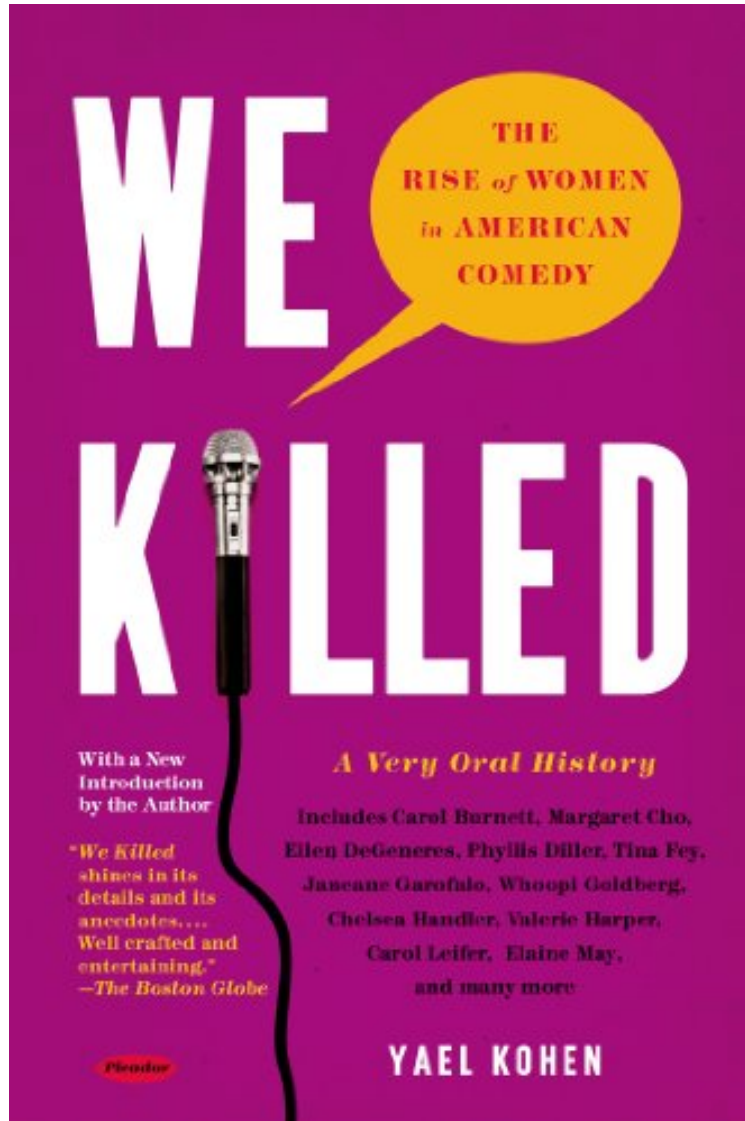


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We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy

Yael Kohen

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Yael Kohen : We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Couple reading this book with YouTube videos By Karen K. Little This well researched and written book is filled almost exclusively with quotes. As I am an older adult, I am familiar with the work of early female comedians, but have begun to lose touch with all but the top names over the last ten years. To augment my understanding of everyone's talent, I copied the performer list from the book and have used it to find and watch videos of their works. I read the book on a Kindle PaperWhite (I love this reader!), but on this

platform, it is difficult to switch back and forth between multiple pages and track names. After reading it, I pulled the book into my desktop Kindle app, and copied the list of interviewees into a Word document so that I could continue my research (and laughing). As time goes by, it'll become more and more important to couple this book with performance videos, an activity that is exceptionally rewarding! My takeaway is that what seems effortless requires an enormous amount of study and practice, but even more important is association with like-minded people. And I am impressed with the need by comedians for audience time! As a writer myself (and one who is now studying how to create informative videos), I, too, need feedback and friendship, or the act of writing becomes valueless. While a good stage today is the provided by the Intranet, a production by itself is not enough without eliciting a response. If you are researching tips on how to be a better entertainer (or creative person), want to know more about many fabulously funny people, and be inspired by the progression of talents over time, this is the book for you.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Imagine You are Watching a Documentary By Princess Periwinkle Yael Kohen writes, *We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy* at the time of and in response to Christopher Hitchens article in *Vanity Fair* proclaiming women aren't funny. Comedy has always reflected society- its values, taboos, norms. Surely, then, it only makes sense that the rise of women in comedy has run parallel to the rise of women in our society (5). This is one of several hooks in the introduction, however I lost interest hereafter. Kohen's introductions to chapters are concise, consisting mostly of history with a sprinkle of her own observation. The format of the book is awkward. Each paragraph is an oral account of club proprietors, writers, performers, producers, etc.- the name and profession in bold type followed by their personal story. The problem with this is, the book gave little indication of its format, thus confusing me right out the gate. Another reason this is troublesome is because it doesn't move the history along. There is an abundance of information embedded in the oral accounts and I learned a great deal, but I felt like I had to hunt for the information. Not everything accounted for needed to be recounted. Kohen's book is well researched and surely informative. I loved learning how women dealt with sexism in each of their generations, past to present. I learned Phyllis Diller preferred to work gay clubs because they were chic; the audience had higher brow expectations for jokes unlike the vaudeville clubs. I appreciate Kohen creating an inclusive environment in her book- men and women participate in the discussion- this is how feminism thrives and paradigms begin to shift. Kohen does a wonderful job researching and including so many wonderful people, but I feel there might be a few missing pieces. Chapter Three: Prime Time introduction speaks of the 1970s as the most prolific decade for women in television (57). The introduction and statement discredits the early work of women such as Lucille Ball and Donna Reed (creator and producer, respectively). Without them, how could the most prolific decade for women in television exist? Overall, Kohen pieced together a scrambled and misogynistic history into a densely rich, accessible perspective. For that, I thank her. This book should be the jumping off point for turning this into a documentary.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Here they are - the funny bone-tickling comedians and their histories By Christopher W. Graul Of course this is a book about the women comedians of now and the past, but interestingly, the portraits are painted (for the most part) by other women comedians talking about each other (unfortunately, Sarah Silverman, one of my absolute favorites, declined to participate, which did not prevent others from talking quite a bit ABOUT her). From the earliest television programs (Garry Moore) through Johnny Carson and up to the present, they are all here. What was of interest as well, the author details the rise of comedy clubs, and introduces us to the proprietors - why they succeeded (or didn't), what the policies are and were, and constructs a history of labelling and, actually, quite a bit of discrimination against these wonderfully talented performers. Read it -- you'll like it!

New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice A Very Oral History With a New Introduction by the Author "We Killed shines in its details and its anecdotes.... Well crafted and entertaining." The Boston Globe From live comedy to television and bestseller lists, women rule the comedy industry and, as this fascinating oral history shows, they have fought long and hard to make their way to the top. In *We Killed*, Yael Kohen assembles America's most prominent comedienne along with the writers, producers, and nightclub owners in their orbit to piece together the rise of women in American comedy. Beginning with the emergence of Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers in the fifties, and moving forward to the edgy intelligence of Elaine May and Lily Tomlin on to the tough-ass stand-ups who would take SNL by storm, Kohen chronicles the false starts, backslides, and triumphs of female comedians. With a chorus of more than one hundred creative voices, *We Killed* takes us backstage to tell the story of the revolution that brought us Tina Fey, Sarah Silverman, and Chelsea Handler and a world where women can be smart, attractive, sexually confident, and flat-out funny.

From Booklist Kohen's lively oral history traces female comedians in America during the last six decades, showing how women doggedly fought their way into what was considered a male arena and thrived. The chronicle begins with the late, great Phyllis Diller, whom Kohen interviewed before her death, in August. Diller turned her own life into comedy, offering up joke after joke about being housewife to a loutish husband. While Diller mastered rapid-fire stand-up, Joan Rivers got her start lamenting her single status, and Lily Tomlin created eccentric characters. When Saturday Night Live came on the scene in 1975, Gilda Radner's caricatures of public figures and original creations made an

impression. Men largely dominated the show until the mid-1990s, when Molly Shannon's hyperactive Catholic teen, Mary-Catherine Gallagher, became a sensation, paving the way for funny ladies Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Maya Rudolph, and Kristen Wiig to make it big in the next decade. Filled with recollections from comedians, comedy-club owners, and writers, this remarkable oral history is a must-read for entertainment buffs. --Kristine Huntley

From Bookforum

Kohen winds up presenting a sort of Mr. Toad's Wild Ride of female comedy, one that inadvertently advances the notion that sorting comics based on a pair of chromosomes makes more sense than, say, tossing them into one of two groups: Funny and Not That Funny. From the hot-pink cover to the emotional high five of a title, Kohen's book has that whiff of feminist rallying that renders so much of the for-women, about-women universe faintly uncomfortable. Heather Havrilesky *We Killed* shines in its details and its anecdotes.... Well crafted and entertaining.

The Boston Globe

An anecdotal history of the women who crack us up and push boundaries [told] by the trailblazers themselves.... You'll learn as much as you laugh. Cameron Diaz

A comprehensive oral history... Part show business chronicle and part unabashed (read: drugs, digs, and dirt) confessional, *We Killed* [is] further proof that women, and the men who heed their talent, will have the last laugh. Elle

Comics of all levels of celebrity and vintage, as well as club owners, producers, writers, agents, and network executives, carry the story... [and] there's a bracing dose of shoptalk that puts you right inside their wheelhouse.... Satisfying.

The New York Times Book

A remarkable history of women in comedy. The Observer (London)