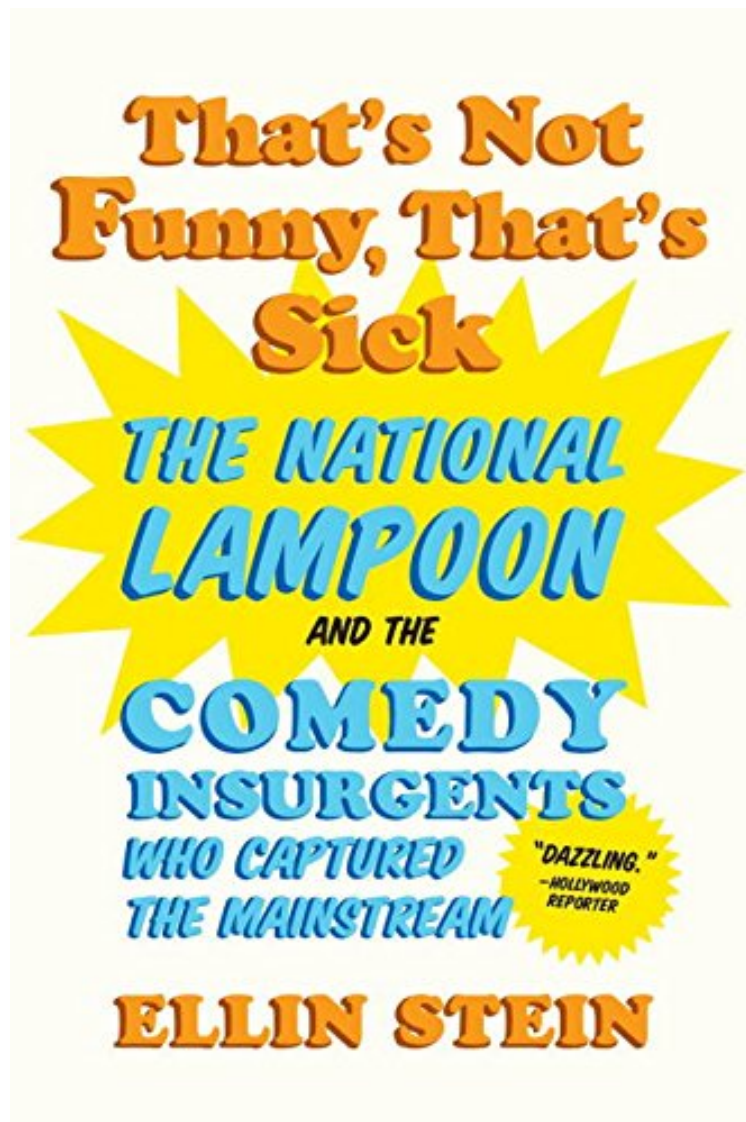


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That's Not Funny, That's Sick: The National Lampoon and the Comedy Insurgents Who Captured the Mainstream

Ellin Stein

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Ellin Stein : That's Not Funny, That's Sick: The National Lampoon and the Comedy Insurgents Who Captured the Mainstream before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised That's Not Funny, That's Sick: The National Lampoon and the Comedy Insurgents Who Captured the Mainstream:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book for anyone interested in humor!By Stephen OrrThis

book is great in describing the origin of National Lampoon and how it set the stage for Saturday Night Live and all cutting edge humor today. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By George P. King, III love this book 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By G. Glosser Excellent history of The National Lampoon.

"Smart, knowing, and deeply reported, the definitive history of one of modern American humor's wellsprings." —Kurt Andersen, author of *Fantasyland*, host of NPR's *Studio 360* Labor Day, 1969. Two recent college graduates move to New York to edit a new magazine called *The National Lampoon*. Over the next decade, Henry Beard and Doug Kenney, along with a loose amalgamation of fellow satirists including Michael O'Donoghue and P. J. O'Rourke, popularized a smart, caustic, ironic brand of humor that has become the dominant voice of American comedy. Ranging from sophisticated political satire to broad raunchy jokes, the *National Lampoon* introduced iconoclasm to the mainstream, selling millions of copies to an audience both large and devoted. Its excursions into live shows, records, and radio helped shape the anarchic earthiness of John Belushi, the suave slapstick of Chevy Chase, and the deadpan wit of Bill Murray, and brought them together with other talents such as Harold Ramis, Christopher Guest, and Gilda Radner. A new generation of humorists emerged from the crucible of the *Lampoon* to help create *Saturday Night Live* and the influential film *Animal House*, among many other notable comedy landmarks. Journalist Ellin Stein, an observer of the scene since the early 1970s, draws on a wealth of revealing, firsthand interviews with the architects and impresarios of this comedy explosion to offer crucial insight into a cultural transformation that still echoes today. Brimming with insider stories and set against the roiling political and cultural landscape of the 1970s, *That's Not Funny, That's Sick* goes behind the jokes to witness the fights, the parties, the collaborations and the competition among this fraternity of the self-consciously disenchanted. Decades later, their brand of subversive humor that provokes, offends, and often illuminates is as relevant and necessary as ever.

From Booklist We all know the success of *Second City* and its offshoots, including the long-running *Saturday Night Live* (SNL). But there's another comedy story that hasn't been given its proper due, until now. In 1969, history was made when recent Harvard graduates Henry Beard and Doug Kenney moved to New York to edit a new magazine, the *National Lampoon*. Within a decade or so of its founding, the *Lampoon's* absurdist and subversive humor would not only enter the mainstream, but it would, for all intents and purposes, become the mainstream, which led, ultimately, to *South Park*, *The Daily Show*, *30 Rock*, and *The Onion*. Journalist Stein offers detailed portraits of the people behind the magazine's success in a seminal time when politics and comedy intertwined with incendiary results. Many of the big names are here (Bill Murray, John Belushi, Harold Ramis, Gilda Radner), but it is the untold story that resonates the most, the secret history of a profession that, like the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield, doesn't get the respect that it deserves. A serious treatment of a funny topic. --June Sawyers "This idea of a magazine's personality kept coming back to me as I read Ellin Stein's charming and detail-rich new history of the *National Lampoon*, *That's Not Funny, That's Sick*, because it is not really a history at all, but a portrait. You can't pick your offspring's personality, and the way a personality develops on its own, involuntarily, through an array of influences of varying importance and salience, echoes the way the *Lampoon* personality emerges in the pages of Stein's book through a pastiche of eyewitness recollections, some of them contradictory, many of them fascinating, and all accompanied by the author's breezy running commentary on the cultural storms that swirled in the background." - *The Daily Beast* "A worthy addition to the comedy library." - Michael Precker, *Dallas Morning News* "Stein's description... is dazzling." - *Hollywood Reporter* "This rich history of humor, commerce, and backstage conflict is recounted in lively prose and admirable detail by veteran entertainment writer Ellin Stein. Buttressed by dozens of original interviews, as well as access to older ones and to all the yellowing back issues, *That's Not Funny, That's Sick* captures neatly the eccentric personalities and fiery times that converged to propel radically offensive material to the forefront of the American consciousness." - *Boston Globe* "For one thing, the history of the *Lampoon* is a good story, and Stein may be the first person to devote so much of a book to it who doesn't have her own ax to grind." - A. V. Club "Stein understands not only the value of engaging reportage, but the importance of story. Setting the stage socially and historically, she... follows the *Lampoon's* many tributaries and side projects without getting too bogged down explicating jokes." - Matthew Love, *Time Out New York* "It's not much of a stretch to call this exceedingly thorough and wildly entertaining history of modern American comedy a bible on the subject. Ellin Stein goes deep and dirty on the topic.... A book that will serve as a cultural reference work for the ages. And a blast from the past to read." - *Weekly Standard* "Stein offer detailed portraits of the people behind the magazine's success in a seminal time when politics and comedy intertwined with incendiary results.... A serious treatment of a funny topic." - Booklist "Stein leaves no tangent unexplained and no petty grievance unaired as she traces the magazine's evolution and growing fame." - *Publishers Weekly* "If you ever picked up an issue of the *National Lampoon*, or misspent your youth in the sixties and seventies; if you ever wondered about the origins of *Saturday Night Live* or, in fact, ever had any interest in the course of American humor from the late sixties onward, this is a book to read.... *That's Not Funny* takes you on a ride through what was, arguably, the heyday of American humor." - Ellary Eddy, *Realize Magazine* About the Author Ellin Stein has contributed arts

features and criticism to publications including the New York Times, The Times (of London), the Guardian, the London Telegraph, and Variety and is a former reporter for People and InStyle magazines. She currently lives in London, where she teaches screenwriting at Goldsmiths College, University of London.