



It's Good to Be the King: The Seriously Funny Life of Mel Brooks

By James Robert Parish



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This book traces the extraordinary life and career of Mel Brooks, who has ridden a wave of show business success perhaps unsurpassed by anyone of his generation. Offering many insights into the wacky world of Brooks and his many collaborators, as well as an intimate look into his successful marriage to the brilliant and beautiful actress Anne Bancroft, *It's Good to Be the King* might just be the most delightful, engaging, and entertaining biography you'll ever read.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Parish, author of many books including *Katharine Hepburn: The Untold Story* and *Fiasco: A History of Hollywood's Iconic Flaps*), here traces the life and career of mirthmaker Mel Brooks from the Borscht Belt to Broadway. Born Melvin Kaminsky, he grew up as a Brooklyn classroom clown, honing his stage skills in the Catskills before arriving in WWII France as an army combat engineer. The bombastic Brooks clawed his way into early television as a writer for Sid Caesar: "I was aggressive. I was a terrier, a pit bull terrier. I was unstoppable. I would keep going until my joke or my sketch was in the show." Caesar's shows were a launchpad, catapulting Brooks into a multifaceted comedy career that embraced theater (*Shinbone Alley*) and sitcoms (*Get Smart*), recordings (the 2000 Year Old Man series) and acting (*Mad About You*). He began directing in 1968 with *The Producers*, followed by the equally hilarious *Blazing Saddles* and *Young Frankenstein*. Along the way, he picked up Emmys, Tonys, a Grammy, an Oscar and Anne Bancroft, whom he married in 1964. Brooks's probing self-insights and clever quotes abound. While his sense of timing, delivery and charming goofiness may not always translate to the written page, readers will be satisfied with the details unearthed by Parish's exhaustive research. 16 b&w photos. (Mar.)

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From the Inside Flap

From the Golden Age of television to the cutting edge of comedy recordings, from dazzling movie mega-hits to a record-breaking Broadway musical, he has ridden a wave of show business success perhaps unsurpassed by anyone of his generation. It may be good to be the king, but it's even better to be Mel Brooks.

"It's Good to Be the King" traces the life and career of little Melvin Kaminsky, who began life as the adored youngest son of a Brooklyn Jewish family, thrown into poverty by the death of his father when Mel was four years old. It examines the roots of Brooks's need to entertain and how he developed his unique blend of slapstick, satire, and just plain silliness into a winning and flexible comedy style that would stand the test of time.

Noted Hollywood biographer James Robert Parish traces Brooks's rise from street-corner wit to Borscht Belt

comedian; explores his long and fruitful collaboration with comic genius Sid Caesar, during which Brooks came of age as a comedy writer; and recounts Brooks's mad scramble to find a future in show business after Caesar lost his footing in the medium.

And the rest is history! Well . . . not exactly. Parish traces the roots of the Brooks/Carl Reiner "Two Thousand Year Old Man" routine back to its origins during World War II, reveals that neither Mel nor Carl thought it was their best material, and maps the routine's circuitous path from backstage gag to hit comedy album.

Parish follows Brooks from the disappointing initial box office of his first two movies, *The Producers* and *"The Twelve Chairs,"* through the gradual growth of *"The Producers"* into a cult favorite, to the phenomenal success of his western spoof *"Blazing Saddles,"* Hereveals that Brooks was always at his best when stretching himself, doing things he "couldn't" do-- directing, writing songs, playing the lead. But Mel also learned the value of surrounding himself with talented people like Carl Reiner, Buck Henry, Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder, Richard Pryor, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, and others.

Offering many insights into the wacky world of Brooks and his many collaborators, as well as an intimate look into Mel's seemingly unlikely, yet highly successful marriage to the brilliant and beautiful actress Anne Bancroft, *"It's Good to Be the King"* might just be the most delightful, engaging, and entertaining biography you'll ever read.

Users Review

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