Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life by Steve Martin

The Emmy and Grammy Award-winner's candid, spectacularly amusing memoir of his years in stand-up In the mid-seventies, Steve Martin exploded onto the comedy scene. By 1978 he was the biggest concert draw in the history of stand-up. In 1981 he quit forever. Born Standing Up is, in his own words, the story of "why I did stand-up and why I walked away." At age ten Martin started his career at Disneyland, selling guidebooks in the newly opened theme park. In the decade that followed, he worked in the Disney magic shop and the Bird Cage Theatre at Knott’s Berry Farm, performing his first magic/comedy act a dozen times a week. The story of these years, during which he practiced and honed his craft, is moving and revelatory. Martin illuminates the sacrifice, discipline and originality that made him an icon and informs his work to this day. To be this good, to perform so frequently, was isolating and lonely. It took Martin decades to reconnect with his parents and sister, and he tells that story with great tenderness. Martin also paints a portrait of his times: the era of free love and protests against the war in Vietnam, the heady irreverence of The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour in the late sixties, and the transformative new voice of Saturday Night Live in the seventies.
Reviews of the *Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life* by Steve Martin

Hellstaff
I can hardly believe it’s been two years since I purchased this book and just now read it! Life takes us on a strange journey sometimes when we think we have found our calling (mine being comedy), yet life had different plans. I had been doing Hospice care as a volunteer for a few years when I took a break, thinking this will be my time to learn comedy again! Well, my sister became deathly ill and needed three brain surgeries so I was back doing bedside service...I’m not complaining at all, in fact, I’m greatly appreciative that I wasn’t working at the time so I could help her. I’m now taking a Master Class on Comedy, by Steve Martin, which reminded me of this book. So I read it!

What does this have to do with Steve Martin’s book? Comedy is born out of life’s tragedies and traumas; they force us to become stronger and more resilient, and over time - look at things - in a sometimes disturbing humorous light.

Steve’s book was enlightening and uplifting, from learning about his triumphs and struggles- in all that he endured to become the comic, and man he is today. I admire him greatly! The biggest obstacle and accomplishment when reading this, and I’d think he’d agree, was after obtaining a certain amount of respect, fame, and fortune, and having written “Lapin Agile” a play set in 1905 about the hypothetical meeting of Picasso and Einstein – Steve returned home. He earned the respect of love of his father, and basked in the love of his mother and sister; taking delight in their stories of forgotten anecdotes. There isn’t any greater gift in life than that!

If you desire to be a comic/entertainer I highly recommend reading this book. It will not only inspire you, but offer you an introspective look at what and why you wish to be a comic. Comedy is a journey - such is life, and what better way to view it than in this humorous biography, “Born Standing Up.”

Still In Mind
There are few people out there who have not heard of Steve Martin. Many know him from his famous movies or appearances on Saturday Night Live. Born Standing up is the story of Martin’s previous life as a standup comedian. He tells the story of growing up working at magic shops, performing skits at empty bars, and running out of money not once, but several times.

I leave a 3-star review mainly because I felt that I was left with a lot of unanswered questions. The book is quite short for a memoir and at the end, I felt that I was just getting started. Martin tells the story of his childhood and the early years of his standup career well, but I personally feel like this book is an unfinished product. It felt as if there were intentions to write a comprehensive memoir at some point, but the publishing deadline arrived and the book was shipped as is.

Despite my critical review, I would say the book is fully worth the read. It is one of those books you have to sit down and digest all at once and enjoy entering the mind of the man who invented an entirely new version of standup comedy.

Fountain_tenderness
Steve Martin doesn’t really give us an autobiography — engaging in the public soul searching and detailed exposition of oneself that makes a good autobiography is not in his character. He’s much too private a person (at least that much of his personality comes across in this book). Instead, he gives us an overview of how he became famous, what he became famous for, and his reactions to both. There is some introspection, and enough personal reflection to connect us to Steve ... Martin ... but not a whole lot of detail. The question is, do we really need more? The author's goal for this book wasn't to tell his life story; it was to tell his early career story, which, to be sure, is impossible
without some of the other stuff. Overall, I think, he gives us just enough of the personal to understand the professional, and enough of the professional to see how he got so famous. He doesn't deal with his career in movies, or his other accomplishments. It is strictly about his emergence as the biggest name in stand-up comedy. It is, therefore, an easy, gentle, reassuring read, bound to please his biggest fans, like me, and, yet, leave them wanting more. That's show biz for you.

Gela

If you are interested in the life of Steve Martin, or know someone who is, or just like autobiographies...whatever. You're here looking at the book, yes? Great. It is a fascinating look at Martin's stand-up career as told by himself. He recounts his time at Disneyland, some of his early jokes and methodology, and when he blew up and everyone wanted a piece of him. It is hard to think of a more enjoyable book about stand-up comedy. Certainly, most of the other comedians would say so, even if it was out of false humility. I was expecting more jokes, there are a ton in there, but some how I wanted more. I suppose "leave them wanting more" is an adage of show business. Hopefully there will be more in the next volume, "Steve Martin: Here, Leave Me Alone Now."

Shomeshet

This book has been recommended over and over again by entrepreneurs and creators lately, so added to the pile by recommending it on my book recommendations email list. I had always thought Steve Martin was at least mildly funny, but didn't think about him beyond that. This book is a great story of a creator's journey, and it was interesting peer into the history of the beginnings of stadium-filling comedy shows.

Steve Martin set records filling stadiums for comedy shows. Before that, he was an opening act at concerts. Before that, like many comedians, he struggled, doing five shows a day for twelve years. He gives insights into how family dynamics drove him into his craft, and what it was like to discover his unique creative voice.

It's well-written, which is something I'm especially appreciative of lately. I recently read a book by another comic that was poorly-written. I finished it because I was interested in that person's story, but the stink crept into my own writing, and it took a few days of practice to shake it.

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