


# Another Fine Mess: A History of American Film Comedy (Cappella Books (Paperback))

*By Saul Austerlitz*

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Charlie Chaplin. Buster Keaton. The Marx Brothers. Billy Wilder. Woody Allen. The Coen brothers. Where would the American film be without them? Yet the cinematic genre these artists represent--comedy--has perennially received short shrift from critics, film buffs, and the Academy Awards.

Saul Austerlitz's *Another Fine Mess* is an attempt to right that wrong. Running the gamut of film history from *City Lights* to *Knocked Up, Another Fine Mess* retells the story of American film from the perspective of its unwanted stepbrother--the comedy. In 30 long chapters and 100 shorter entries, each devoted primarily to a single performer or director, *Another Fine Mess* retraces the steps of the American comedy film, filling in the gaps and following the connections that link Mae West to Doris Day, or W. C. Fields to Will Ferrell. The first book of its kind in more than a generation, *Another Fine Mess* is an eye-opening, entertaining, and enlightening tour of the American comedy, encompassing the masterpieces, the box-office smashes, and all the little-known gems in between.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
American film comedy is barely a century old and already commentary on it can fill bookshelves, with countless pages devoted to the evolution of physical comedy, the influence of notable comedians like Charlie Chaplin, and the effects of technology on the form. Austerlitz touches on all of these things, but his objective is to provide a chronological set of biographies of the most important figures, both major (the top 30) and minor (over 100 more), and comment on their achievements and influence. The result is a comprehensive textbook that traces a legitimate line of succession from Chaplin to Apatow. Clearly Austerlitz has great affection for and knowledge of his subject; he can comment with equal skill on Renee Zellweger and W.C. Fields. Still, his take on the century is not without bias. Never less than candid ("Mel Brooks is overrated"), his tastes are also present in what he leaves out (Hal Ashby, Hal Hartley, and Cameron Crowe are all missing). Though readers will surely disagree with some of his choices, the breadth of material Austerlitz has compiled here is a feat. Photos. (Sept.)
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From Booklist
*Starred Review* Austerlitz asserts that comedy has been underappreciated as a cinematic genre by critics and historians, and that this has resulted in underrepresentation in Academy Awards presentations and nominations. To redress this inequity, Austerlitz presents more than 100 biographical sketches of top comedy talents from Charlie Chaplin to Judd Apatow, augmented by shorter tidbits regarding lesser players. So the Jim Carrey saga coexists with the legend of Harold Lloyd, and the debonair comic stylings of Cary Grant contrast nicely with those of Will Ferrell. As the title would indicate, Laurel and Hardy are limned, as are Buster Keaton, W. C. Fields, Mae West, and the Marx Brothers. Katharine Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, and Doris Day are the only other women accorded full chapters, but Myrna Loy, Carole Lombard, and Tina Fey, among others, garner tidbit status. More recent comic masters featured include Ben Stiller, the Coen Brothers, and Steve Martin. With broad coverage like this, the book has some reference applications, though most of the pieces are unfailingly upbeat. Even tragic death is fraught with dreamy potential: regarding Jean Harlow’s death at 26, Austerlitz muses, “What might Preston Sturges have made of her had she lived?” Entertaining reading. --Mike Tribby

Review

"Entertaining reading." —*Booklist*

“Conventional wisdom holds that analyzing comedy is a thankless task—who’s to say what’s funny, and why kill the fun of it?—but Saul Austerlitz’s wide-ranging survey of American film comedy is both illuminating and hugely enjoyable. With its sharp insights and vivid biographical sketches, it’s first-rate film criticism and a terrific resource to boot.” —Dennis Lim, editor, *The Village Voice Film Guide*

"I was enrapt, argumentative, gobsmacked, amused and ready to rethink what I know about American film comedy. Crack this book open, and let the debate—and the flying pies—begin." —Glen David Gold, author, *Carter Beats the Devil* and *Sunnyside*

"Comprehensive yet reader-friendly account." —LAWeekly.com

"A sprawling but incisive biography of film comedy history." —*North County Times*

"Entertaining and amusing . . . this book truly highlights the best of the genre." —COEDMagazine.com

"Clever and well-researched." —*Library Journal*

"Sharp, scholarly." —AmericanProfile.com

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Catherine Williams:**

This book untitled Another Fine Mess: A History of American Film Comedy (Cappella Books (Paperback)) to be one of several books this best seller in this year, that is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this specific book in the book store or you can order it through online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, since you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason to you to past this e-book from your list.

**Alysa Appel:**

Spent a free time to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book may be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the publication untitled Another Fine Mess: A History of American Film Comedy (Cappella Books (Paperback)) can be good book to read. May be it might be best activity to you.

**Richard Nix:**

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**Angela Latham:**

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