

THE COMEDY GAZELLE

THE LATEST IN CHICAGO COMEDY



**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:
CORREY BOYD-BELL**

ABOUT THE GAZELLE

When I moved to Chicago last October, I was immediately struck by the level of talent in the scene. "Fuck, she's good," I thought as I watched Kristen Toomey supercharge herself with a firm slap of the puss.

Why haven't I heard of her before?

It's a question I come back to often, and a major problem here. The city's bursting with household-name-level talent, but unless you're in the midst of it, it's easy to miss.

That's why I'm starting The Comedy Gazelle — to bring outsiders into the heart of Chicago comedy, and to showcase this city's unrivaled talent. To keep everyone up-to-date on the scene, and to do it in a fun way. And not just in a one-off article, but all the time.

Each issue will feature an exclusive interview, as well as whatever else I can pull together.

Hope you enjoy.

— Jerry

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INTERVIEW: CORREY-BOYD BELL

Correy Boyd-Bell (@correyb) is a force. A wife, mother, grandmother, and one of Chicago's hottest comics, she's made her presence known in just a few short years. She's opened for Mo'Nique, appeared on Laff Mobb's Laff Tracks on truTV, and is well on her way to becoming a household name. We talked about her quick success, her dreams of being a game show host, North vs. South Side comedy, and more.



I saw an interview with you, and you were talking about working at Groupon. You got fired and your husband said you had one year to crack it as a stand up. Were you nervous about that? Did you feel a lot of pressure?

It wasn't really one year, it was more like six months. And that was only because we are a two parent household and we got all of these children. We have bills. We got stuff that we have to do. I was making quite a bit of money at Groupon, but at the time, I felt like I was serving two masters. I had just started comedy and I loved Groupon. But once I got bit by the comedy bug, I started loving comedy more, even though I wasn't really making any money at all. And when I got fired from Groupon for being late, might I add, and I worked from home —

That's like some Friday shit.

"How do you get fired on your day off?" Right. How do you get fired for being late when you work from home? It's nuts. Anyway, when I got fired December 1, my husband said, "Look I got this. Take six months and just go full throttle. Do what you need to do. And if it works, baby, let's just keep going and see what we can do. But if it don't work, you work." And six months later, I ended up in LA taping the first season of Laff Mobb's Laff Tracks on truTV.

Six months in and you're already taping?

I had been doing comedy for about six months, so it was about a year. But my first year in comedy, they were flying me to LA to tape a TV show. It was nuts. And honestly, it was the taping of that TV show that let me know that this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. And it all has to do with craft services [the people that give cast members snacks, drinks, etc.].

I was standing at the table at craft services. I don't know anybody. I've never been on a set like this. I don't know what craft services is. I was standing by the table, it was early morning and they had all the fruit and stuff out there. And I was like, "Dang, I wish I had some peaches." I didn't see the guy standing behind me, he had on a headset, he was like, "Alright Ms. Bell wants peaches. We need peaches stat". And I saw this guy take off down the street like he was running to Marianos. And I was like, "Get the fuck outta here." I was like, "Man, there ain't a thousand dollars laying around here nowhere. I wish I had a thousand dollars!" But that part didn't work. But I want to be able to be my best self and have other people around me want to help me make sure that I'm my best self when I'm creating. That feeling I never wanted to lose.

What do you think enabled you to find success so quickly?

Well, comedy is a gift. A lot of people don't understand that. And when comedy is a gift it's already inside you. There are things about comedy that you

have to teach, like timing and callbacks and structure and punching up a joke. But the actual gift of funny, you have to have that inside of you. And when you utilize that gift and then show God, or the universe, or whoever you believe in, that you appreciate the gift, then the doors open. So the way I do that is I'm good to people. Please and thank you is really big with me. I make sure that everyone I come into contact with, I'm giving good energy. I'm an auntie. I make everybody feel warm. I just want to make sure that when I walk into the room, I'm bringing the energy that everyone is excited to see me. And then the doors open. I still honestly have not been able to catch my breath and I'm just so grateful.

Do you have anything in store for 2021 you can let us know about?

Yeah, I'll put it to you this way. I've never recorded anything in my six years of comedy. And I see that happening in the near future.

Ooo! Good for you.

There's a recording coming. I won't tell you how and which way, but the ink has dried on the contract and that's coming up. I'm nervous, but I'm excited. Even when I thought that I had done so much, I haven't even scratched the surface of things that I wanna do.

What do you wanna do?

Well, my ultimate goal is to be a game show host.

I could totally see that. That's awesome.

Yeah, I wanna tour, do TV, movies, stuff like that. But I wanna be a game show host. That is going to be the fun part. I'm gonna create my own game show and I'm gonna be a game show host.

Have you started thinking through any ideas?

I already have the idea and it was so good I had to take it down. I was testing it out online and the buzz was so crazy that I had to take it down. Someone very close to me in entertainment was like, "If you don't get your business behind it and get it copywritten, someone can take this from right up under you and make millions on it." So I completely took it down until I can get my business right. Then I'll be prepared to show it. Hopefully by spring or summer of next year.

Do you see yourself staying in standup?

Absolutely. I'll never leave standup. I can't breathe without it, it's what I do. Standup is what I like to call my



bottom bitch. It's everything to me – [to husband] Don't look at me like that, baby. You're not my bitch at all, you're the love of my life. Can I finish my interview? Thank you –

See Jerry? What you see is what you get. I talk about my husband on stage. I talk about my children, so I can be this transparent with people and let them know the same shit you see on stage is exactly what you get off stage.

I heard you say before that things really changed for you when you started being real about your family. Was that a difficult jump for you to make?

Yep and it's still difficult. There are still so many things I haven't tapped into because I'm just not ready yet. But once you stop caring so much is when you become your best creative self. Once you stop caring about "Ooh, my auntie might hear this" or "My boss might see that" and just become your organic self – "This is

me, take it or leave it" — is when you will create at your highest and be your funniest. Trust me. It wasn't until I was like, "Man, fuck all of that. Let me just be funny," that it worked. You gotta understand that as a creative, put it out there. Put it out there to the world. Put all of it out there. Because you don't know what's gonna pop. You being safe will keep you regular. You being safe will keep you in the bottom, in the pit with everybody else. You gotta take risks.

Was there a specific moment that kinda flipped the switch for you?

I got tired of being passed over. It was already hard enough being a black female comic in Chicago. And Chicago was notorious for so much great talent, that it's easy to get looked over. So being new and being a female it was almost inevitable. And I got tired of getting looked over and that was because I was starting to sound like everybody else. So what am I gonna do to make sure that I'm standing out from everybody else? And that's kind of what it was.

What were some of the difficulties you faced as a black female comic?

All of them. I faced all of them. Everybody knows that in Chicago it's divided. The comedy is just as segregated as the city. Urban rooms or black rooms are on the South Side, and mainstream or white rooms are on the North Side. And the rule is, it still is, for money you go to the black rooms, for opportunity you go to the white rooms. Most comics from the North Side don't come south and vice versa. I knew I wanted to go to both sides because I wanted to be well rounded.

The hardest part for me was trying to get the stage time on both sides. I didn't really have the issue that a lot of other girls face with the sexual harassment, because my husband comes to a lot of my shows with me and a lot of people know him. He's 6'2, 260 and as dark as the dark part of this screen. So nobody's really fucking with him. Getting in the door is the hard part. But once I'm in there, you might as well lock that bitch up because I'm going to make the stage my bitch every time I step on it. Period. And when they didn't let me get in the door, I took my ball and I built my own court. And I ran the number one weekly room in the Chicago comedy circuit.

Was that on the South Side?

Yeah, it was called So What Sundays. It was at Tilly's. It sat almost 200 people every Sunday and there was always a line out the door. And those very same comics who didn't let me get on stage were begging for a guest spot on my show. And I absolutely gave it to them. That's how I give back, to show that I'm appreciative of my gift. It's still hard out here for a pimp, Jerry.

"PUT IT OUT THERE TO THE WORLD. YOU BEING SAFE WILL KEEP YOU REGULAR. YOU BEING SAFE WILL KEEP YOU IN THE BOTTOM, IN THE PIT WITH EVERYBODY ELSE. YOU GOTTA TAKE RISKS."

What do you think can be done to bridge that gap between the North and South Side comedy scenes?

I'm grateful for Laugh Factory. Curtis allowed me to produce a show called Cross Town Comedy Classic. I'd take three comics from the North Side and three comics from the South Side and put them on the same stage. Because it's like, why do we have this stigma? Why are we not working together? If I never would've gotten a chance to do House of Blues or Comedy Bar – when I went on tour with Mo'Nique and did Las Vegas for eight months, I would not have been able to do that. Just because she's Mo'Nique doesn't mean it's an all black room. Everybody that sat in those seats and packed that room every weekend was people from out of town from all around the world. So I had to make sure that my jokes could translate to anybody. I wanted to be funny to every-goddamn-body.

So, I had the North Side. I performed in bookstores where I had no idea what those other fucking comics were talking about. I'm like, "All these jokes are going over my head because I have no idea about Shakespeare or your Greek heritage." I was the black person in the room, so I didn't know. But I think making sure that you're unafraid and to keep putting us with each other. But I don't want it for nobody who doesn't want it for themselves. I can't hold their hands and say, "Hey, don't be scared. Come over here." I'd much rather work with those who are fearless.

What kind of advice would you give to someone trying to branch out from the north side?

Let me tell you who's really good that you'll always see on the South Side. Zako Ryan, who is my best friend in the whole wide world. Kristen Toomey. Anthony Bonazzo. They always come, and not just to the regular South Side rooms. They come to the hood. They come to the HOOD HOOD HOOD. They came in and they listened for a couple weeks, then they got on stage. And they're fearless. They don't care. They allow themselves to be creatively free, and if it don't work that time, they come back. Cause they're gonna give you a hard time. But are you fearless? How bad do you want it? And then it becomes fun. Ask any of those comics. They love to come down.

How would you say it's different than a North Side room?

Well the culture is different, so the jokes are different. On the South Side, we don't have places like Laugh Factory or Comedy Bar. We don't have a comedy club. We do comedy in places that don't want comedy. That's what builds our muscle. We go right into the most hood bars where we gotta get you to shut up and listen and then try to make you laugh. And that's not what you came for.

Most nights I wouldn't tell one joke. It's all crowd work. If they're not there to pay attention to a comedy show, the only way to keep them engaged is to be right in there with them. "Sir is it your birthday? No? Well you look like it" – you have to go into that crowd. Otherwise you're losing them if you're trying to do a club set. People that come to Laugh Factory or Comedy Bar, they came to hear a set. When you go to Mike Samp's room or Meechie Hall's room, they didn't come to hear a set. You really gotta get your shit together to do one of those rooms. But if you get in there and make them laugh, them motherfuckers will love you forever. I'm telling you.

The North Side is where you build your structure, your timing, your callbacks, your punch ups. The South Side is where you build your integrity and your grit and your muscle. That's why you need both sides. And if you can master or half-way master both sides, you can literally travel anywhere in the country and when they hear you're from Chicago, they already know you're a problem.

Chicago's got this rep. It's like, "Oh they're for real."

Cause we don't take no shit. You can't just show up at Frances', "Hi I'm Jerry, my mom bought me this for Christmas." We gonna be like, "You can't claim Chicago comedy. No. Boo, boo, boo."

So you talk about your family a lot on stage. But with your kids, is it ever like, "Oh I shouldn't be saying this?" You give them a lot of shit.

They give me a lot of shit, Jerry. But my children are just like me. Nothing I talk about is a secret to them. If it's anything that I think would do harm to them – like when that Juicy bit first came out, it was a bit risque cause it was like, "Is your fat kid getting bullied?" And so you have to talk about it in a way that it's funny. And we have to learn not to be so sensitive. We're so sensitive all of a sudden, and I will not allow the 20% of very loud, sensitive people to stifle my creativity. If it's not doing harm to my family and my friends, then I don't worry about it.

And that includes your family. You don't want them stifling your creativity?

Yeah, I'm not gonna allow them to stifle it either. I don't discuss my jokes with them. If I'm gonna talk about something that my husband doesn't like, we'll talk about it. It's different. But I don't have to be funny at their expense. I don't ever want to hurt their feelings and stuff of that nature. But my son also understands fat jokes. But now he's grown out of it, he ain't even Juicy no more. Go figure that. So now when people say which one of your kids is Juicy, they point at each other.

Do any of them want to be comics?

That 13 year old is the mothafucka. He gets a call home from school every day. Every single day. And I'll never stifle his creativity. Ever. But he has to learn when to turn it on and when to turn it off. The other day, the teacher called me to tell me that Jordan was distracting the class on Zoom. Everything that she was saying, he was signing. People were like, "Well, maybe there's a deaf kid in class and that's not a bad thing." Well, nobody has taught this mothafucka how to sign. So I don't know what the fuck he was doing. Like that kinda shit, Jerry. That's what I'm trying to tell you. This is my goddamn life.



You were talking earlier about your gift. Did you always feel like you had that thing inside of you? Why do you think it took so long to explore it on stage?

I would always hear stuff like, "You missed your calling." I've always been funny. It didn't really take me so long. I got on stage when it was time for me to get on stage. I trust the process and know that these steps that I'm taking, I didn't order them. I'm just there to follow them. And a lot of times we try to structure and order the path we're supposed to go on, and then get frustrated when it's not what we thought it was. So once I learned to let go and just trust how things play out and just follow that, then I'm okay. When I see shit not going right, over and over again, I'm like, "This is not what I'm supposed to be doing." If I don't get a gig or something that I tried out for, then that one wasn't for me. And I haven't always been that way, but I had to learn. And once I learned it, it just made life a lot easier.

Do you think a lot of things are predestined?

Absolutely. I think wherever you are in your life right now, at some point in the past you made the appointment to be here. Whatever steps you took then is why you are where you are right now. You're not a victim of circumstance — you made this appointment to be where you are.

When I was 300 pounds, I knew why. I could say, "I was in a depression and my daddy wasn't there" — no bitch, you love the buffet. You want the hot wings and the pizza, bitch. You wanna eat all of it. And your friends do the shit too, so them raggedy bitches will drag you out and say, "Bitch we going out to the buffet." Like I know why I was fat. I made the appointment to be 300 pounds. Then all this time trying to prove why it wasn't my fault — distractions are expensive. You can't be distracted by the excuses. What're you gonna do about it? You can only call me once with a problem. The second phone call should be, "How are we gonna get this done?" I know the problem, please stop crying over it. "Oh I keep signing the list on the open mic and so and so walked in and I'll never get to go up." Make yourself undeniable. Make them want to bump someone else. You gonna keep doing the same thing every week? Then that's where you want to be.

You've travelled a lot and seen a lot of different scenes. In general, is there anything you like about the Chicago scene?

There's nowhere else like it. We have our own style. If you can make people in Chicago laugh, you can make people laugh all around the world. I'd cash my check over to someone who can prove me wrong. Chicago breeds monsters. It's just who we are. When you hear people from New York, you know they're from New York. When you hear an LA comic you know they're an LA comic. Chicago can adapt anywhere. I love the Chicago comedy scene, because we take pride in our scene and we're not gonna let anybody just claim us. We take pride in that Chicago comedy name.

Do you wish there was anything different about the Chicago scene?

I wish we didn't have to leave to get famous. I wish we had our own Warner Brothers here. I wish we didn't have to go there and be subjected to that. I wish we could build that here. I wish we had enough sense to pool our resources together. Because we have the talent, but we don't have enough of us with our business in order. All we know is we wanna be funny and that's how we end up funny and broke. This pandemic, there were more people in comedy that suffered that should not have, all because of something as simple as you don't have a checking account. Or you haven't created an LLC for your brand because you don't know that as a comic you are a brand. I'm mad that we haven't come together to make sure that we're taking care of each other and giving each other the right amount of knowledge so that we'll all be straight and not out here creating Gofundmes and shit.

**DISTRACTIONS ARE EXPENSIVE. YOU
CAN'T BE DISTRACTED BY THE EXCUSES.
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT IT?**

You see yourself as a brand?

Yes. I am a brand and I'm very protective of it. I'm my own entity, so I'm careful about who I share my space with, because I'm still trying to market myself. I am still trying to land an agent or a manager, because I have to be able to take it to the next level. I'm very careful about what I put out because it's tied to me. I tell my daughters, be careful about what you put out because you're tied to me. You can't get the fame without the bullshit. So when it's your turn, it's your turn. Be unapologetic about the life that you've lived. Make sure that you tell your story before anybody else gets to tell it, because all of that is tied back to you. One wrong thing could completely demolish my brand, so I have to be protective of it. And I won't let anybody else ruin it. If anybody is going to ruin my name, it's going to be me.

Now if you wanna help me catapult it, that's one thing. Like Jerry, me and you could put out a sex tape and I'm sure most of us would get off. I am 100% sure our sex tape would go viral. Now one of us is gonna die afterwards, because my husband will kill you. So only one of us will get to live and tell the story, and it's probably gonna be me.

As long as you get your game show.

That's all I'm saying – Jerry, see. I knew you was down for the call. I knew you was a team fucking player. I knew it.



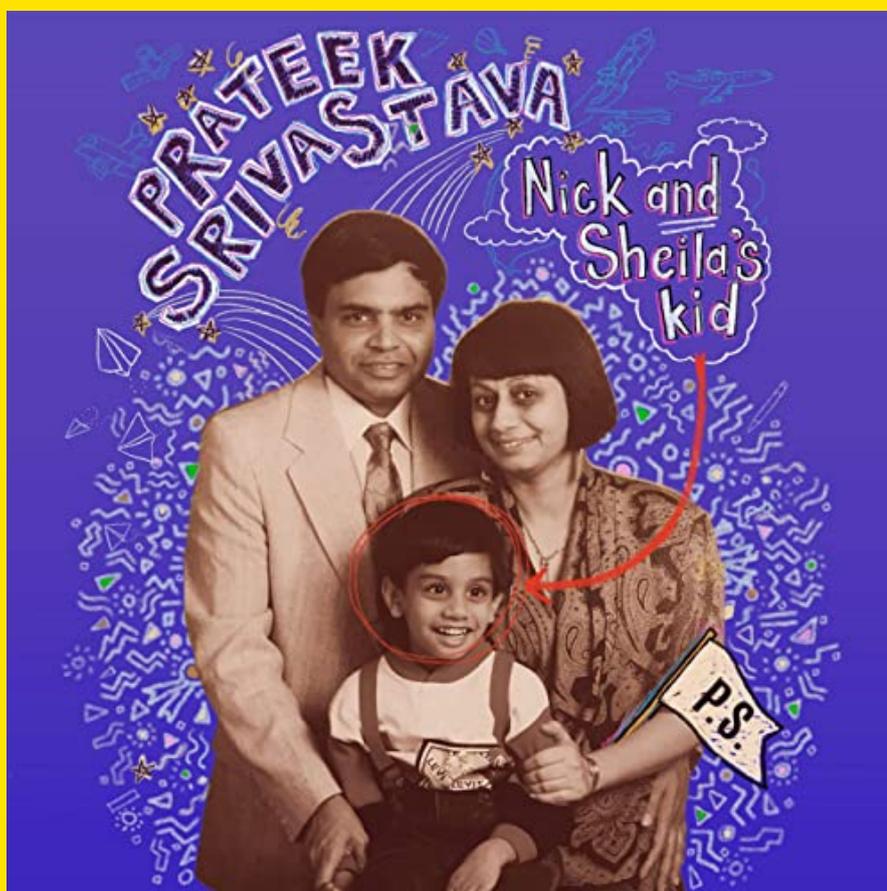
PRATEEK SRIVASTAVA RELEASES HIS DEBUT COMEDY ALBUM "NICK AND SHEILA'S KID."

Chicago Comic Prateek Srivastava releases his debut comedy album "Nick and Sheila's Kid" TOMORROW. Recorded live at the Bughouse Theater in Chicago, IL, Prateek's sharp wit, high energy, and absurdist observations have the audience rolling for an hour of laughs (allegedly). Listen as Prateek touches on a variety of personal family tales mixed with social commentary.

The album was also recorded on his parents' wedding anniversary, which is a really creative way to cheap out on a gift. Hell yeah, Prateek!

Nick and Sheila's Kid will be available on all platforms Dec 22nd. It is available for pre order now on iTunes and Amazon. Go buy the shit!

Got something of your own to promote? DM us @comedygazelle.



COMMUNITY BULLSHIT

This weekend 20 comics came together to clean up trash for a homeless community living under a highway bridge. Basically, the mayor was gonna kick them out unless the area was cleaned up, so Good Guy Nate Burrows took it upon himself to mAKE a DiFfeRenCe.

It was an eye-opening experience that totally fucked my back and genuinely made me hate litterers. You wouldn't believe the amount of shit these people throw out the window. I straight up found two dog crates. Who the fuck throws a DOG CRATE out a window? I get nervous spitting my gum at a stop sign.

Anyway, despite everyone's best efforts, there's still more work to be done. Nate is extending this project, so if you'd like to help with future clean ups, please reach out to him. Five of the people in this community recently became homeless after losing their jobs during the pandemic and need all the support they can get.



Before



After



And to top it all off, the very next day, Good Guy Nate and Moralewich joined forces with Laugh Factory's Curtis Shaw Flagg to host a toy drive:



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FOR MORE INFO EMAIL
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IF YOU'D LIKE TO SUPPORT MORALEWICH AND THEIR CONSTANT EFFORTS IN THE COMMUNITY, YOU CAN DONATE AT: [GOFUNDME.COM/MORALEWICHES-FOR-PRECIOUS-BLOOD-MINISTRY](https://www.gofundme.com/moralewiches-for-precious-blood-ministry)

ARTWORK



KATIA JACKSON IS A CHICAGO-BASED ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER. A CHICAGO NATIVE, SHE FOCUSES ON CAPTURING LOCAL ARTISTS OF ALL KINDS.  @PHOTOSBYKATIAXSENTRY



"Save Our Stages"



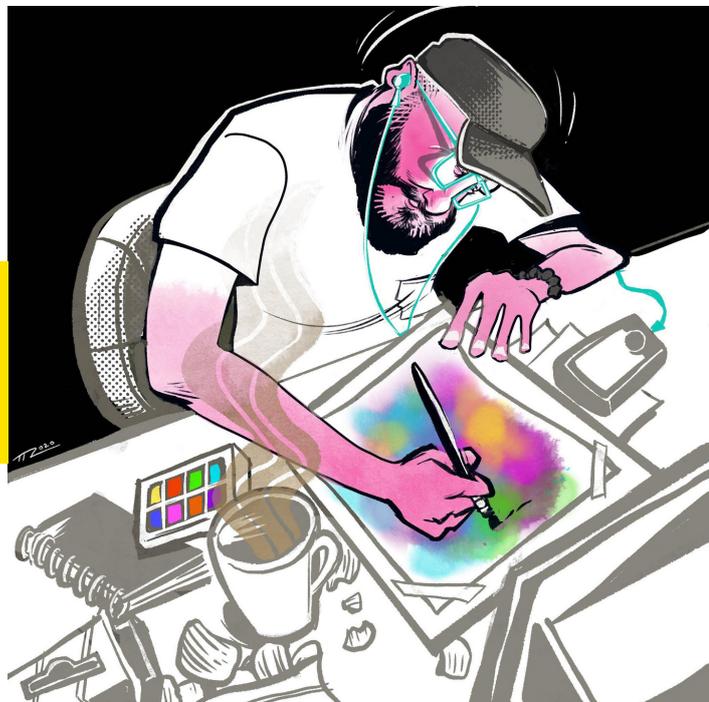
"Reggie's Open Mic"



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COVER ART BY COMEDIAN / ARTIST TOM RYAN

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I'M DYING UP HERE: HEARTBREAK AND HIGH TIMES IN STAND-UP COMEDY'S GOLDEN ERA

By Keay Crandall (@keaycrandall)

I'm Dying Up Here is all about how people tried to make it in standup in the mid 70s-80s.

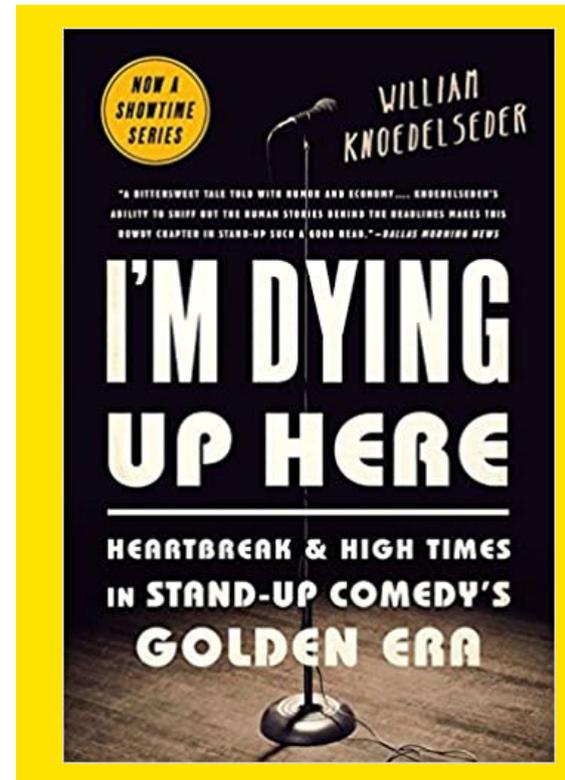
Spoiler: not everyone makes it.

It was really interesting learning about the rifts between clubs and comics in LA, when people like Tom Dreesen, Letterman, Leno, and Elayne Boosler were coming up. Most comedians were working for free, unless they were scouted to be on Late Night or if Mitzi Shore needed the club repainted. Comics saw these clubs raking it in while they made nothing, so they went on strike for fair pay.

So if you've ever been paid for any set ever, you can thank the CFC (Comedians For Compensation) for forming. And if you hate union sympathizers, maybe don't. If a real comedian's union had been formed, you'd probably have some sort of health benefits right now.

At the end of the day, the book's super relatable for any comic trying to work in the current crisis. Comedy has been through tough times before and it all worked out, right?

Overall rating: 4/5 Gazelles



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TOUGH SHIT! READ A BOOK.**

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