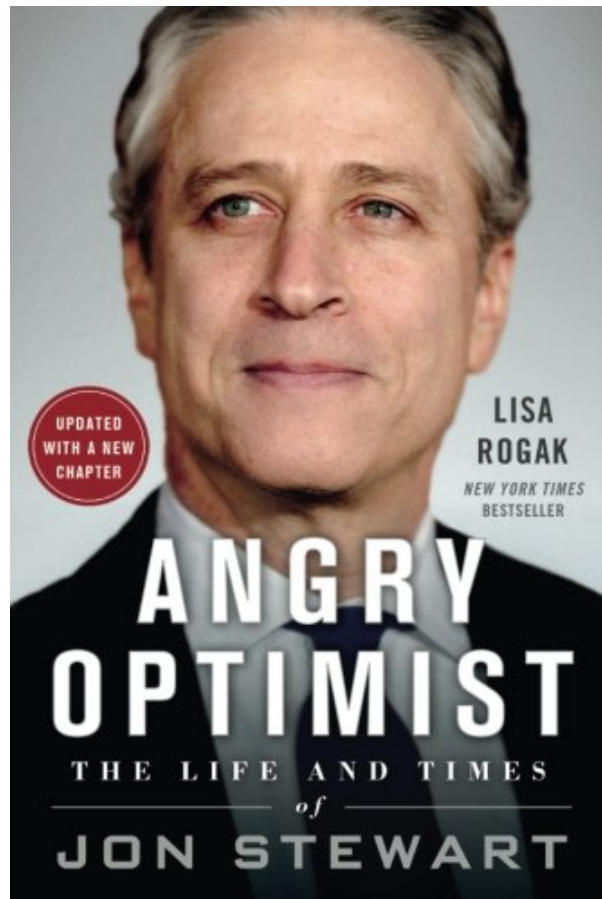
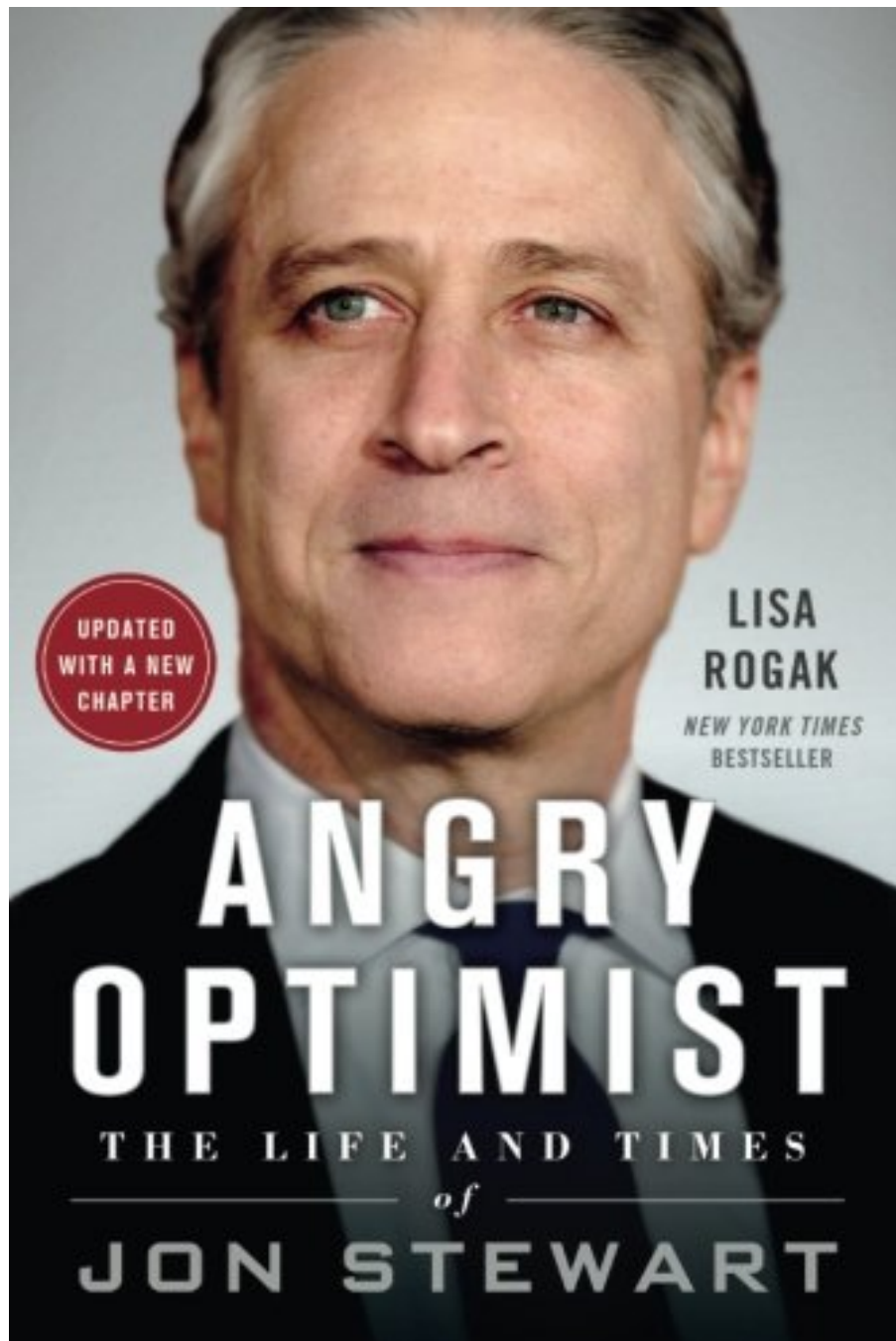


ANGRY OPTIMIST: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JON STEWART BY LISA ROGAK



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Review

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About the Author

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A New York Times Bestseller

Since his arrival at The Daily Show, Jon Stewart has become one of the major players in comedy as well as one of the most significant liberal voices in the media. In *Angry Optimist*, Lisa Rogak follows his unlikely rise to stardom, from his early days growing up in New Jersey, through his years as a struggling stand-up comic in New York, and on to the short-lived but acclaimed *The Jon Stewart Show*, before at last landing a job as host of a half-hour comedy show that at the time was still finding its footing amidst roiling internal drama.

Once there, Stewart transformed *The Daily Show* into one of the most influential news programs on television today. Drawing on interviews with current and former colleagues and with new material on his departure from *The Daily Show*, *Angry Optimist* reveals how Jon Stewart has come to wield incredible power in American politics and changed how the news is reported along the way.

- Sales Rank: #115156 in Books
- Published on: 2015-07-21
- Released on: 2015-07-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.16" h x .77" w x 5.49" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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22 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Understanding Stewart

By Matthew Ries

The life and times of Jon Stewart are more than the last fifteen years of helming The Daily Show with Jon Stewart as author Lisa Rogak writes. The unlikely rise of the short wise-cracking Jewish kid from Jersey rising to become one of the most influential, and comedic, voices of political commentary is a told expertly and without bias.

Given Stewart's impact the last fifteen years, Rogak could have easily just given a brief synopsis of his life prior to January 1999 instead she spent the a third of the book detailing Stewart's childhood, collegiate years, and life before and after deciding to go into comedy. Rogak gives the reader as glimpse to Stewart as a young man that will affect how he helmed The Daily Show, including the triumphs and the many failures that he experienced throughout the 1980s and 90s.

Once Rogak gets to Stewart's tenure on The Daily Show, instead of just detailing the next decade and a half, she shows how Stewart made the show more in his style and how he was hands on than previous host Craig Kilborn. Throughout the last two-thirds of the book, Rogak tackles The Daily Show years not strictly chronologically but as a mixture of chronology and themes. This approach allowed Rogak to give the reader a fuller understand of Stewart and The Daily Show as a whole.

Rogak was very evenhanded in her approach to the overall view of Stewart, mixing praise and criticism from critics and how the viewing audience has seen Stewart. Triumphs and embarrassments are told in their detail as well as controversies surrounding the show from his interview style, to the lack of female writers, and his liberal bias. And as Stewart seems on the verge of a major shakeup in his professional life, Rogak writes about his possible transition to films as director not actor.

Given Jon Stewart's continued presence within media, Lisa Rogak did an wonderful job in writing about his life and career. Although it is hard for an author not to have some bias for their subject, Rogak is able to give a balanced portrayal of Stewart in her book from accomplishments to stumbles. I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand the host of The Daily Show.

I received a free copy of this book via Goodreads First Reads.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

More Boredom than Entertainment

By Just My Op

The beginning of this biography of Jon Stewart felt like it was a high school writing assignment. Facts, no heart, fairly boring. No, not fairly boring; really boring. It stayed that way for far too long. It became more interesting once Jon Stewart became host of The Daily Show. At that point, there was more about the person, his personality, his interactions with people, some anecdotes sprinkled in.

I knew very little of Mr. Stewart although I usually enjoy The Daily Show. I still feel like I don't know very much. He can be contradictory, he can be stubborn, he has a temper. He has a soft spot in his heart for pit

bull, and he has three rescued dogs, my favorite factoid. He is a devoted husband and father. He is 5'7". Yes, there is more than that, but it all felt fairly superficial.

I listened to an unabridged audio version narrated by Cassandra Campbell, and her reading did not add to the story. It did, for me, detract.

Although now I know a little more about Mr. Stewart, this biography was ultimately unsatisfying.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Informative, but sometimes dry, read about America's most important political satirist today.

By Samana Siddiqui

Jon Stewart may be easily dismissed by older Americans for his "fake news show" The Daily Show, but among younger Americans, his influence is unmatched. One statistic from *Angry Optimist* makes that clear: "According to *Advertising Age*, the median age of the average Daily Show viewer for the third quarter of 2004 was 35.7; in comparison, the median age for news shows on the three major networks was a whopping 60-plus. The age of the average O'Reilly viewer was pegged at 58" (p. 160). Stewart is clearly filling a need and a niche for political satire among young Americans who prefer their news delivered with laughs. This is why understanding Stewart's background, how he developed his talent, and his worldview are key to gaining insight into this critical phenomenon in American political culture.

The strength of *Angry Optimist* lies largely in its early chapters, detailing Stewart's life as a middle class, Jewish-American who lived a comfortable lifestyle in an affluent suburb, but, like most minorities in the United States, was ridiculed and excluded. Whether it was a passing comment from a WASP classmate, or anti-Semitic barbs he endured on the field playing soccer in college, humor became Stewart's way of handling his detractors.

It was also how he dealt with the pain of his family's break up at age 10, when his father left his mother. The financial struggles Stewart, his mother, and brother endured as a result marked him deeply.

Further on, though, the book becomes paragraphs and paragraphs of quotes minus deeper insight into his character and motivations. While it presents the basic information required of a biography, along with some heartwarming anecdotes (e.g. how he proposed to his wife), *Angry Optimist* became a dry read along the way.

One additional plus of the book is understanding a day in the life of the Daily Show. In other words, how each episode is put together, which is surprisingly very much like a "real" newsroom.

Angry Optimist presents an informative view of one of America's most prominent political satirists today, someone who has, and will no doubt have, considerable influence on younger U.S. voters. While weak in presentation in some parts, it offers a detailed enough look at his past, present, and possible future.

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