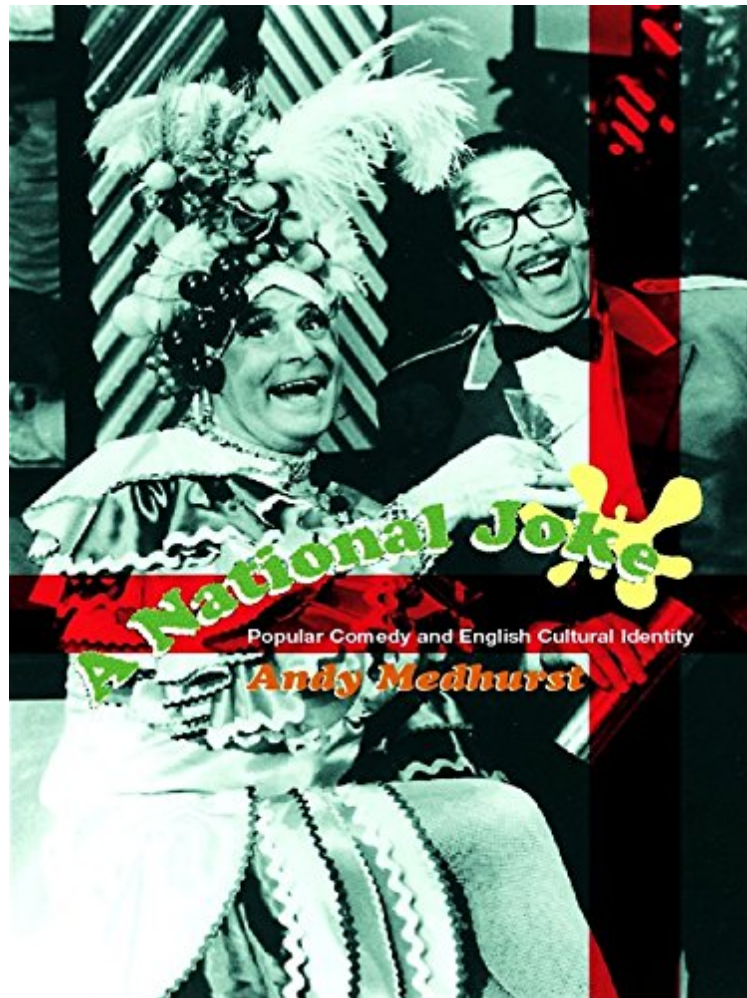


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A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities (Sussex Studies in Culture and Communication)

Andy Medhurst

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Andy Medhurst : A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities (Sussex Studies in Culture and Communication) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities (Sussex Studies in Culture and Communication):

Comedy is crucial to how the English see themselves. This book considers that proposition through a series of case studies of popular English comedies and comedians in the twentieth century, ranging from the Carry On films to the work of Mike Leigh and contemporary sitcoms such as The Royle Family, and from George Formby to Alan Bennett

and Roy 'Chubby' Brown. Relating comic traditions to questions of class, gender, sexuality and geography, *A National Joke* looks at how comedy is a cultural thermometer, taking the temperature of its times. It asks why vulgarity has always delighted English audiences, why camp is such a strong thread in English humour, why class influences what we laugh at and why comedy has been so neglected in most theoretical writing about cultural identity. Part history and part polemic, it argues that the English urgently need to reflect on who they are, who they have been and who they might become, and insists that comedy offers a particularly illuminating location for undertaking those reflections.

'In *A National Joke*, Medhurst...uses comedy to pin down that most elusive of things, the English national identity.' The Guardian 'This is an excellent study of a popular comedy that links it into a variety of English cultural identities. Unusually for a book classified as cultural studies, it is clearly written, and by an author who enjoys humour... a splendid account' - The Times Higher Education 'Most of the best scholarly work on comedy in the UK that has appeared during the last 25 years has come from Medhurst... At last there is an engaging but serious study of what makes English comedy both English and funny.' - Critical Studies in Television About the Author Andy Medhurst works in the Department of Media and Film at the University of Sussex. He has been teaching and writing about issues of identity, representation and popular culture since 1982. He is the co-editor of *Lesbian and Gay Studies* and the author of a forthcoming book on *Coronation Street*.