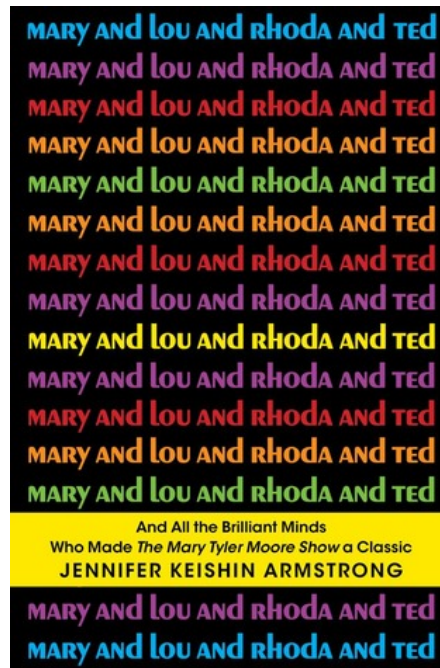




Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted: And All the Brilliant Minds Who Made The Mary Tyler Moore Show a Classic

Jennifer Keishin Armstrong

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The story of the making of a classic and groundbreaking TV show, as experienced by its producers, writers, and cast.

Mary Tyler Moore made her name as Dick Van Dyke's wife on the eponymous show, a cute, unassuming housewife that audiences loved. But when her writer/producers James Brooks and Allan Burnes dreamed up an edgy show about a divorced woman with a career, network executives replied: *Americans won't watch television about New York City, divorcees, men with mustaches, or Jews*. But Moore and her team were committed, and when the show finally aired, in spite of tepid reviews, fans loved it.

Jennifer Armstrong introduces readers to the show's creators; its principled producer, Grant Tinker; and the writers and actors who attracted millions of viewers. As the first situation comedy to employ numerous women as writers and producers, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* became a guiding light for women in the 1970s. The show also became the centerpiece of one of greatest evenings of comedy in television history, and Jennifer Armstrong describes how the television industry evolved during these golden years.

Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted: And All the Brilliant Minds Who Made The Mary Tyler Moore Show a Classic Details

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From Reader Review Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted: And All the Brilliant Minds Who Made The Mary Tyler Moore Show a Classic for online ebook

Gretchen says

I'm torn on this book...probably more because of my expectations of what the book could be.

The book opens up with great promise. There's a great social history perspective to MTM: the rise of the women's movement, and the impact on Hollywood, including opportunities for female writers to break in to television for the first time. There is also a really interesting opportunity to talk about Television as a social medium. What happens when "women's issues" are presented on TV? And how did MTM's approach differ from say Maude, or All in the Family. These topics are really great - and addressed well in the book.

The other side of the book, though, was disappointing for me. I think the author felt the need to share more from some of her interviews, even if they didn't really advance the story. I didn't care as much about one writer leaving for Europe....unless there was some broader statement about how this changed the show? Other writer's career? Same issue with the fan writing his 15 page letters - what value did this add?

Of course there is a good amount of behind the scenes content, showing how the cast came together initially, and how those relationships developed over time.

I was too young to understand MTM when it aired, although I remember my grandparents being glued to the TV to watch. This book was a good opportunity to put the show into more perspective and appreciate its place in the pantheon of great comedies. I just wish it had gone further in that direction.

Fergie says

A must read for any fan of The Mary Tyler Moore Show. This book is packed with countless behind the scene details into what went into making the classic T.V. show. Author Jennifer Keishin Armstrong covers all her bases, focusing not only on the actors who brought the characters we've come to love to life, but also on the writers and producers who dreamed big enough and had enough talent to make an indelible mark on T.V. programming in an age that would rightfully become known as the "Golden Age of Comedy". In many ways, this book details how the MTM Show was at the forefront of that time. MARY AND LOU AND RHODA and TED: AND ALL THE BRILLIANT MINDS WHO MADE THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW A CLASSIC informs while entertains. It provides insight into the progressive, creative, talented minds that went into creating one of America's most beloved shows.

Joan says

It is likely obvious why I read this. I grew up on Mary Tyler Moore and All In The Family, so I grabbed this when Mary Tyler Moore died. I agree with the author that the show had an enormous effect on the way women regarded themselves. I never had the slightest hesitation that of course I'd have a career. It is lovely to read just how nice the cast was to each other. They were a real family. Like real family, there were falling outs, such as Ed Asner and Ted Knight. Ed Asner rose above the discord and visited Knight when he was

dying, which is a wonderful thing to have done. I had not realized that we are on the second and third generation of women actors who consider this show a role model. I am glad that a show that influenced me so much influenced others the same way. I also hadn't realized what a benefit the show was for women comedians. Glad I read this! RIP MTM.

Geoffrey says

I really loved this book. I think it is an excellent study of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and of the individuals involved in its production. This book does not provide a detailed synopsis and/or critical analysis of each episode of the series, like other books on television programs. Instead, author Jennifer Armstrong explores other important dimensions of the series. She details the circumstances concerning the creation of the program itself, such as the initial network resistance to and critical condemnation of the program. Armstrong also provides detailed profiles of the writers, producers, cast members, and other parties whose work helped make the show a classic. Thirdly, the author explores the different contexts of the series. For example, she describes this show's distinction from its television predecessors, specifically 50s and 60s sitcoms, and contemporaries, like "All in the Family." Armstrong also discusses the making of some of the series' most famous episodes, including the pilot, the series finale, and "Chuckles Bites the Dust." Finally, the author considers the "legacy" of the program by exploring its influence on the creation and production of television shows in the years since its original CBS network run. Because of the book's exploration of these and other facets of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," I highly recommend it to fans of the series.

Mediaman says

I love the MTM show but this is one of those books written by a know-it-all young pop culture writer who knows nothing about what she's writing. She apparently wasn't around when the original Mary Tyler Moore Show aired and has no sense of the cultural context in which to put it.

To me the show was the greatest sitcom ever and it deserves huge praise. But this book is filled with hyperbole, major mistakes, and gross exaggerations. And the "women's lib" spin to the whole book mistakes what ended up on the screen—the MTM Show was a pioneer in advancing women's equality but not as a feminist. Instead it was a great at modern comedy where the female cast members held there own with the male cast members while the show retained a moral base by having a conservative woman at its center.

The book fails to make some major points (the fact that the MTM writers couldn't get the central time zone correct for the 10 p.m. local news in Minneapolis, the fact that Mary Richards is apparently Republican because she says she's not supporting the Democrat but "the other guy" in one election). It throws away the truly innovative That Girl, with the author dismissing Marlo Thomas as "ditzzy and dependent on her boyfriend and father, even if she was technically single." A whole book could be written about That Girl vs. Mary Tyler Moore Show (MTM's creator wrote for That Girl), but let's just say that Armstrong's demeaning "technically single" is an insult to Thomas and single women in the 1960s. Without That Girl breaking ground four years earlier there would have been no Mary Tyler Moore Show.

The irony is that while ridiculing That Girl she calls the MTM Show "realistic," but in truth MTM was somewhat a fantasy (a 30-year-old single woman living on her own for the first time? A New York Jewish woman as her Minneapolis neighbor? Even the New York Times called the premise "preposterous") while That Girl was actually based on Marlo Thomas's real-life attempt to get out from under her famous father's

grip by becoming an independent New York actress.

The author goes off on ridiculous tangents, apparently trying to insert her research into chapters where it has no business. At one point she mentions the tallest TV tower in North Dakota, the history of radio ratings, the architect who built the new CBS building in New York, and calls TV Guide a “Pepsi coaster.” None of it has anything to do with the Mary Tyler Moore Show.

Then she leaves some of the major issues completely unanswered. For example, Mary’s change of living space was a “jump the shark” moment, so why was it done? We don’t know because it’s not even mentioned! And what about Ted Bessell, who appeared a couple times as Mary’s boyfriend but isn’t even mentioned here although he is the direct link to the true first sitcom about a single working woman *That Girl*!?!?

The middle section of the book is atrocious, wandering off into the private lives of a few female writers who worked on the show and trying to analyze women’s sitcoms in the 1970s. Worst is how the author turns the book into an overblown statement on how “perfect” the show’s feminist female writers were and how slow some of the men were to catch up with women’s lib. Little of this actually focuses on the MTM Show itself and can be completely skipped by most readers.

There’s also a long section on a guy from Rhode Island who was a fan of the show and was allowed to come out to watch some tapings. Wow. Big deal. It added nothing. One gets the idea that she interviewed a few minor people (like the female writers and the fan) so she stuffs the book with them instead of giving details on the important behind-the-scenes elements.

All is not bad. There are some interesting tidbits, but they are few and when written are often incomplete. For example, the story about the creation of the theme song and title footage is interesting but way too short. It raises more questions than it answers. And the author is correct that the MTM Show “hit its peak influence in the third season,” but then fails to suggest that it also jumped the shark when having Mary Richards do uncharacteristic things and started to focus on sexual humor. While Armstrong champions the addition of Sue Ann as being proof that the series finally caught up with America’s hunger for sexuality, the character destroyed the pure nature of the original series and began the show’s decline.

A big reason was the show’s producers also had to oversee the Rhoda spin-off, which made both shows weaker. The book’s author, of course, overpraises the Rhoda series and claims the producer got “more brilliant the more shows he produced.” False. The MTM Show began to lose credibility and went off on tangents that had its star saying and doing things completely outside the first three years of the show. Yes, it did “edgy” sexual material that gets awards from amoral Hollywood friends, but it failed to stay true to the characters.

The biggest problem with the book is the author’s subjective opinion inserted throughout. This woman doesn’t have a correct sense of television history and interprets facts through her 21st century feminist eyes. She also gets most of her information from secondary and tertiary sources, including apparently believing what she reads on Wikipedia (see #16 below). There is little first-hand information here and it’s a sloppy mixture of mishandled facts and conjecture.

For those that want specific examples of the many errors in the book, here is a detailed list of the top twenty. Many deal with the fact that the writer doesn’t understand TV history or MTM Show’s place in it. For those that want to pretend any book that praises the MTM Show should ignore mistakes and poor writing, then don’t read any further:

1. She says on *Father Knows Best* and *Donna Reed Show* “the woman’s only role was to say ‘Yes dear.’” That is completely wrong—go back and look at the episodes. The husband is made to look like a buffoon and the wife is the wise one who comes up with the solution to life’s problems. Those shows made women

look brilliant. (Don't trust your memory or what others write—go back and watch the episodes and see that while the women were housewives as were 90% of the women in America at the time, they were absolutely in charge of the homes through their secondary role.)

2. She calls Room 222 “groundbreaking.” For what? Go watch it—it was a mixed race show, but Julia and I Spy had already done that. Later in the book she says the show was “making television history.” How so? It didn't set any records and none of what it did was new—other shows had done almost every topic before MTM. (And I loved Room 222.)

3. She says the MTM Show “made history.” Again, no details. Yes, it set an Emmy nomination record (which I don't believe she mentions) that since has been broken but it wasn't even the first series about a single woman living on her own (thanks, That Girl!).

4. “News was at the forefront of every development in television.” Absolutely false. Sports brought replay and zoom lenses, I Love Lucy started the three-camera recording, etc.

5. The Dick Van Dyke Show “had more believable characters than the sitcoms that came before it.” Really? Only if you are a New York City comedy writer who lives in Connecticut was Dick Van Dyke believable. It was a great comedy but most of America didn't live that way. The example she gives for “realism”? When Laura getting her toe stuck in a bathtub faucet! Seriously. That's realistic? It was probably the most unrealistic plot in the history of the show (if you don't count the flashbacks, space alien, walnuts in the closet, dying your hands black, etc.).

6. p. 25—she calls Room 222 “an hour-long drama.” Oops. It was a half-hour sitcom that was nominated for “Best Comedy” at the Emmy Awards in 1970. That's TV 101.

7. She claims that MTM was required to not be divorced on the show even though “the divorce rate in the country was skyrocketing.” The truth is that it was 12.5% in 1968 and 13.4% in 1969—not exactly skyrocketing yet.

8. The show didn't “divide Mary's time equally between home and work” (it was weighted toward the office), nor was such a device “an innovation for a female character.” Julia, That Girl, even Our Miss Brooks could be said to have done the same.

9. The author mentions the two tapings of the MTM Show pilot, but fails to mention that the first disastrous taping of the “You've got spunk” scene did air as part of a CBS fall preview, along with a laugh track—which the author claims the show never used. Once Fred Silverman took over the network in the summer of 1970, Armstrong says the MTM Show was seen as the network's “savior,” but it just isn't true. It was presented as a sweet, charming show similar in stature to the new Headmaster with Andy Griffith, Tim Conway Comedy Hour, and Arnie (which was promoted as the potential big hit in a time slot preceding Moore's show).

10. Armstrong incorrectly states that “CBS was at least promoting the show now, with ...the tagline We've Got It All Together.” No—that was the tagline for the entire fall CBS lineup, not specifically the MTM Show! Even minimal research would have uncovered that. She also is mistaken saying CBS didn't promote any of the show's plotlines or characters—I can personally tell you of the CBS fall preview show that ran revealing what the show was about (and I have the tape of it!). The author's sweeping conclusions are not based on knowledge but on a few facts she uncovered in old photos that led her to make wrong statements.

11. At some point the writer goes off on a tangent and incorrectly states, “All in the Family topped the Nielsen rating charts for its first five seasons.” Nope—its first season it was near the bottom, then it hit the top in seasons two through six.

12. Possibly kissing up to the show's producers and stars with hyperbole, she states that "The MTM Show was growing into a full-fledged phenomenon." Wrong. It never was a gigantic hit when it aired. It was certainly an industry favorite and was a strong performer but it wasn't All in the Family. Never would anyone at the time have called MTM a "phenomenon." It was a show that did well but never great.

13. P. 133—the author calls MTM "TV's first truly female-dominated sitcom." That is so shockingly not true it's hard to believe it made it past the editor. The Goldbergs (written and produced by it's starring female) or the Donna Reed Show were female dominated (watch the Reed Show—there are half women, half men in the regular cast and the guys get overpowered by the women each week). The female-dominated Doris Day Show was already on CBS when MTM premiered. And I Love Lucy wasn't exactly male dominated—Lucy was the front and center star, (as well as owning her own studio and allowing others to make fun of her) with half of the four regular cast members later turning it into the Lucy Show (which had a cast that was a majority of women years before MTM Show!).

If anything the book's author ignores the fact that the MTM Show's regular cast was split 50/50 male/female in front of the camera in its first season, typically leaning toward the men in the newsroom, then got more male dominated with Gordy (and even Phyllis, Georgette and Sue Ann didn't appear in all of their seasons' episodes), and was male-dominated behind the scenes. The producers and most writers were men. There was nothing female-dominated about the show. This wasn't Murphy Brown or 30 Rock—it was a show about a woman who invades a male-dominated world.

14. She says that Mary's wardrobe deal with Evan-Picone "marked TV's first fashion product placement of sorts." Nope. Johnny Carson is the most obvious example, who had a deal to have his own line of clothing starting in 1970. But there had been other deals with daytime hosts, newscasters and, of course, That Girl's promotion of Cardinali in big lettering at the end of each episode. Why, oh why, does this author ignore the fact that That Girl did everything years before the "innovative" and "ground-breaking" MTM Show?

15. Claims Penny Marshall had a "recurring part as Mary's new neighbor in the fourth season." Not really. Marshall appeared once in the fourth season as "Toni," then in season six came back twice as a different character named Paula. Not exactly "recurring."

16. In a whopper of an error, the author claims that the Rhoda wedding was "the second most-watched (TV episode) of all time" only beaten by Little Ricky's birth on I Love Lucy. (Compare the paragraph from p. 215-216 to the Wikipedia entry about Rhoda's wedding and it's almost a word-for-word plagiarism either by her or of her.) In truth, as any student of TV history knows, The Fugitive's final episode in 1967 had 78 million viewers and was the top episode at that time. The Rhoda wedding years later had only 52 million.

17. While the author correctly notes that Rhoda topped the MTM Show in initial ratings, she fails to mention that spin-off Phyllis did the same thing. While Phyllis was a disaster creatively, it came in sixth place in the Nielsen ratings in 1976, placing it higher than both MTM and Rhoda! It's odd to leave that fact out and leads to distorted impressions. Rhoda and Phyllis were both creative disasters and both did well in the ratings at first.

18. She mentions that network programmer Fred Silverman left for ABC in 1975, stating, "He abandoned CBS just as it faltered." Um, CBS was the #1 network in 1975. It had 8 of the top ten shows and 19 of the top 30. It was a huge success and didn't "falter" until after Silverman left and turned ABC into a #1 success!

19. In a bizarre section that talks about the influence of the religious right, she tosses in unnecessary names like Pat Boone and Anita Bryant. Then she says, "Iowa Democrat Harold Hughes resigned from the U.S. Senate to become an evangelist." Wrong. He did not "resign." He just didn't run for another term and ended the term he was elected to. Namely, he retired from the Senate. He then stayed in the D.C. area for awhile to help people battle alcoholism (which he had recovered from) and to lead prayers groups before returning to

Iowa to work at a realty company—not exactly becoming an “evangelist.”

20. The spin-off show Lou Grant was said to have “ended in part because Asner had publicly supported medical aid for communist-leaning rebel troops in El Salvador.” That has long been proven false—it was cancelled due to low ratings. She may have read the misleading Ed Asner Wikipedia entry that tries to claim the show was highly rated—it had been on for five years and in its last season it didn’t even make the top 30 of the season ratings. (There’s an entire book out about the making of Lou Grant, and Asner’s political beliefs didn’t get the show cancelled.)

Even this book’s title could have been improved: “Lou and Mary and Ted and Rhoda” would have better matched the original cadence of “Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice.” Ted is even in the title the book is trying to copy—why not place it where it should be? Or on second thought why even use the goofy four-person title at all? It’s a gimmick that doesn’t work.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show was the greatest sitcom of all time. This book’s poor writing, mistakes, incomplete details, and misguided focus on a couple female writers doesn’t do the series justice.

Richard Kramer says

Before I spent some years in show business I used to think show business was interesting. It's not. And neither is this book. The author is a fan, and not a dumb one, and she makes all the expected dull arguments for this show as feminist statement (an argument deployed with great wit and insight by MG Lord in her book on Liz Taylor, THE ACCIDENTAL FEMINIST). The problem might be that happy tv families, like any families, are all alike. No one really knows what they're doing while they're doing it until "outsiders" tell them how great or important it is. It's a job you go to, better than many, not as good as some others, but you're grateful to have the work. What matters is the work done at day's end, not that Cloris Leachman was "eccentric" or Valerie Harper beloved.

I met MTM once. I was with a producer I worked with, now in the sky, who was part of the small goyische corps of Hollywood people that included MTM and her husband Grant Tinker (said producer was a lovely man whose father had written THE PHILADELPHIA STORY and who spent some childhood years with the likes of the Fitzgeralds, Gerald and Sara Murphy, and the very young Jerry Seinfeld.) Ms Moore was appearing on Broadway in WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY? The big evening was we would see the play (I don't remember anything about it) and "have dinner with Mary" afterward. Phil warned me she could be a bit distant. Well -- we went to Sardi's, THAT Sardi's, and I was seated next to her. She wore a mink coat, so she must not then have been a proponent of animal rights, or if she was, it didn't apply to minks. She never took the coat off. Throughout the meal she smoked and chewed gum and said NOT. ONE. WORD. "I warned you," Phil said afterwards.

Fame eats people. It cores them. Whatever she had left to give she was giving on that stage. It was naive of me to hope she would say "Oh, ROBBBBBBB!" at dinner or even "Mr. GRAAAAANNNT!" Was it naive to expect she might respond to some of my idiotic questions (Do you still see Dick Van Dyke? Were you and Rose Marie friends? Any inside poop on BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S? How's the diabetes?) I look back, at anyone I've ever known who didn't live up to my expectation of them, and I say: I get it. I forgive you. Life is tough all over.

There are still three essential showbiz books. But I forget what they are.

Jordan says

Whenever I'm down or sick (word @ dis week), I usually revert to a handful of classic shows, most notably *I Love Lucy* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

So, you can imagine my nerdgasm when this book informed me that auditions for MTM happened AT THE OLD LUCY STUDIO. !@#\$%^&*()_+AMAZING.

Jennifer Keishin Armstrong's new history is brimming with such facts: what it was really like to work with Mary Tyler Moore; how the beloved show as we know it was originally pitched to CBS, and what had to change; what risks the show took, even in its more benign format (hint: S&M!); why Gavin Macleod and Cloris Leachman hated each other, pre- and post-MTM; and many, *many* more. Needless to say, I was enthralled by the backstage antics of some of my favorite TV characters of all time.

Additionally, and more importantly, Armstrong details how the show affected women of that era. Housewifery was not their only muse; rather, single women in their 20s and 30s (like Mary Richards herself) were inspired to pursue their careers without shame. Jim Brooks and Allan Burns actively encouraged this trend, hiring more women than any other producers of their time; at the show's peak, 25% of the writers on MTM were women, and several held executive positions, while the closest runner-up was *The Partridge Family*, with 7% of their staff. Thanks to their efforts, Treva Silverman, Susan Silver, and even Gail Parent made their TV debuts with MTM, and had long, successful, and admirable careers in their industry. Their mothers may have called them spinsters, but they knew they were more.

Mary Tyler Moore was noteworthy for challenging the existing out-of-touch rural focus of CBS; their lineup of hillbilly hoopla like *Green Acres*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and *Petticoat Junction* made way for a new humor that was keyed in to the problems of the young urbanite. MTM also had the advantage of being the first show to follow young women, and build its plots around their experiences in a man's world. Brooks and Burns' pool of female writers were constantly utilizing their own dates, breakups, divorces, interviews, and other experiences for show content, making it infallibly realistic. Until CBS reverted back to mindless fare in the late 70s, MTM was top of the charts.

And it will remain top of the charts in my heart, especially knowing that Gavin Macleod once accidentally punched Cloris Leachman in the face (whoops, spoiler!).

Buy this title from Powell's Books.

Steve says

This was a 'good listen' from an audiobook borrowed from Hoopla Digital. Interesting detail about the forming of one of the best shows in its time- a Golden Age of TV comedy in the early 1970s. The MTM Show, along with 'M*A*S*H*' and Norman Lear shows like 'All In The Family', 'Good Times' and 'Maude' were pushing the envelope of social mores like showing single women living on their own w/o the need for a man, struggling working class families dealing with racism and economic pressures, and the changing sexual politics of the 1970s. The book not only puts the show in historical perspective, but tells the fascinating backstories of the writers and actors who came together and turned an underdog of a show to a television blockbuster. Most interesting are the writers' stories, especially the women, whose hiring by Mary Tyler Moore and producers Allen Burns and James Brooks were the first creative job for some and life changers for all. As for the main lady, MTM, she's still an elusive subject even in this book about her show, not surprising for her well-known high standard of personal privacy. Well worth a read/listen of you at all

interested in television history or writers' room anecdotes.

Paul Pessolano says

“Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted” by Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, published by Simon and Schuster.

Category – Media/TV

The title of this book should give the subject matter of the book away, especially if you were watching TV in the 1970's. Yes, it is the history of the Mary Tyler Moore Show.

The book is an excellent history of how the show came about, how the plots came about, and how the actors came about. Amazingly enough the show was a hard sell and received some very negative comments from reviewers, in fact, most figured the show would not last beyond the thirteen episodes it was scheduled for. It would last until 1977 becoming one of the most popular shows on TV, lasting for seven seasons. The show also became a proving ground for women sitcom writers who until now were few and far between, existing in a room with almost all male writers. One of the more interesting aspects of the book is how the actors got their jobs. Some thought their auditions failed miserably, one even going back and admitting it and asking for another chance to read the script. Another actor read for a part he really didn't want but managed to get the part he thought was right for him. The show was unique in that the actors were so dedicated to the show and each other. There probably has never been a closer knit group in any media, TV or Movies. The book gives a look into their private lives and how they reacted to their stardom. It also follows their careers after the show was canceled, some did well, others, especially Moore, oft times found failure.

If you have never seen an episode of the series, you owe it to yourself to view “Chuckles Bites the Dust” which maybe one of the funniest skits in the world.

Katharine Holden says

Poorly written, poorly edited, and sorely in need of a fact-checker. The MTM Show was a fun show to watch. It still is. The death of the tv clown, Ted Baxter's inept reading of the news, so many moments made me laugh. But this book tries so hard to prove that it was an earth shatteringly wonderful show and changed the planet forever that it only succeeds in being ridiculous and demeaning the show it tries so hard to praise.

Donna says

There once was a Golden Age of television and it was Saturday night in the 1973-1974 season: *All in the Family*, *M*A*S*H**, *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Bob Newhart*, and *Carol Burnett*. I was in my third year of college and it was worth it not to have a date on Saturday night--television was better.

This books describes the ground-breaking series which was *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. It was the cultural phenomenon which had an impact on the feminist movement perhaps even more than Gloria Steinem. MTM not only showed a single, thirty-something female who worked and felt no internal pressure to marry, but behind-the-scenes it was the best experience for women comedy writers and other women who would go on

to become executives in the television and movie industry.

Personally, I don't remember MTM as being that ground-breaking, but that was because I was already benefiting from the beginnings of the women's movement. Working in an office with a grumpy boss? I was doing that! Living alone in an apartment? I longed to do that and would in 1980. Well, yes, I thought about being married, but I didn't let that control my life and continued pursuing education even when confronted by a older man who said that guys didn't like girls who were too smart.

The book itself is easy to read and not too long. The text is a bit repetitive and doesn't flow completely chronologically (my personal preference).

This book describes an important moment in women's television history, but is great for a beach read.

Enjoy.

Steve says

It's very hard to believe that it's been over 36 years since the WJM-TV crew formed that famous group hug and then group shuffled over to get a Kleenex to end a seven year run. Full disclosure. I don't remember if I watched that final scene live or not. In fact, I don't remember watching the Mary Taylor Moore Show at all. After beginning my professional career in television, if I was even an occasional viewer, it was probably more out of a curiosity just to see how TV portrayed itself doing TV news.

I picked up this book for a couple of reasons. One, Ted Knight once borrowed my office phone when he was working next door in summer stock. So we were in the same room together. Two, several years ago, I had the privilege of interviewing Gavin MacLeod on the radio by telephone for a family film he starred in.

Author Jennifer Keishin Armstrong does a masterful job of taking us behind the scenes of what has been called a program that "changed the nature of Saturday nights . . . (and) turned the situation comedy into something like an art form." If you never saw TMTMS when it was in its prime, after you read Armstrong's book, I think you'll agree with TIME magazine, "MTM was the sitcom that was intellectually respectable. The writing, acting and directing on MTM have been the best ever displayed in TV comedy." Three years ago, the Onion's AV Club website went so far as to give MTM credit for changing "the face of television radically and influencing virtually every television comedy up through the present." If you don't think so, check out the first two or three season's worth of MTM still available for free on Hulu.com.

Armstrong tells us how they did it. She documents the special role of almost everyone involved, from the creators and writers right down to the secretaries who worked for MTM. Even though Mary Tyler Moore's name was on the marquee as well as the company, she plays a small bit part in this book. I would've loved to have heard more from Moore. In fact, I would've loved to have heard more personal reflections from all the principal cast members themselves, rather than this historical narrative. Other than that, Armstrong covers all the bases. She even tells us what happened to those in the group hug after they shuffled over to the Kleenex and turned out the lights in the WJM-TV newsroom for the last time.

Blair Slavin says

No matter des how influential MTM Show was to Women & TV

I knew I'd liked the show, and I'm currently digging through rewatch all the shows after all these many years. I was under 10 when the show came out. So that I remember them I must have watched it as a kid with my parents. But to find out that Mary Tyler Moore show had leveled the playing field for women so significantly where I guess never occurred to me as a man to think women as anything but equals. Guess I was progressive long before it was popular. LOL. And find out the history on all the the actors along with all the TV shows that MTM inspired and spun off, the rich tapestry in my history and my current viewing habits and others. Be aware if you get the audiobook, which is how I mostly listen/read this book, the lady is very precise in her wording. And slow. So I would suggest to speeded up to 1 1/2 to 2 times speed.

Joy says

I grew up in the 70's and I loved The Mary Tyler Moore show then and I still do today whenever I catch reruns on TV. This book brought back great memories of the series and reminded me why I always loved the show. I recommend this book for fans of one of the most groundbreaking & influential shows of all time.

Diane Corradini says

Great book - made me realize why I liked the Mary Tyler Moore show in the first place. It was groundbreaking for the 70's, a single career woman living in the big city of Minneapolis. Great historical perspective of the thinking of the television executives at that time and since - they wouldn't allow Mary to be a divorced woman, afraid the public wasn't ready for that. Very good perspective on the writers and everyone involved in the series. It opened the door for those t.v. shows to come and led the way, bringing television shows into the real world and its issues. Really interesting reading and gives a lot of detail about how the individual shows developed - I had to look through my dvds and find the first season which I had bought quite a while ago and am enjoying the show all over again. You can't read the book and not want to watch the show again! What a bunch of great characters!
