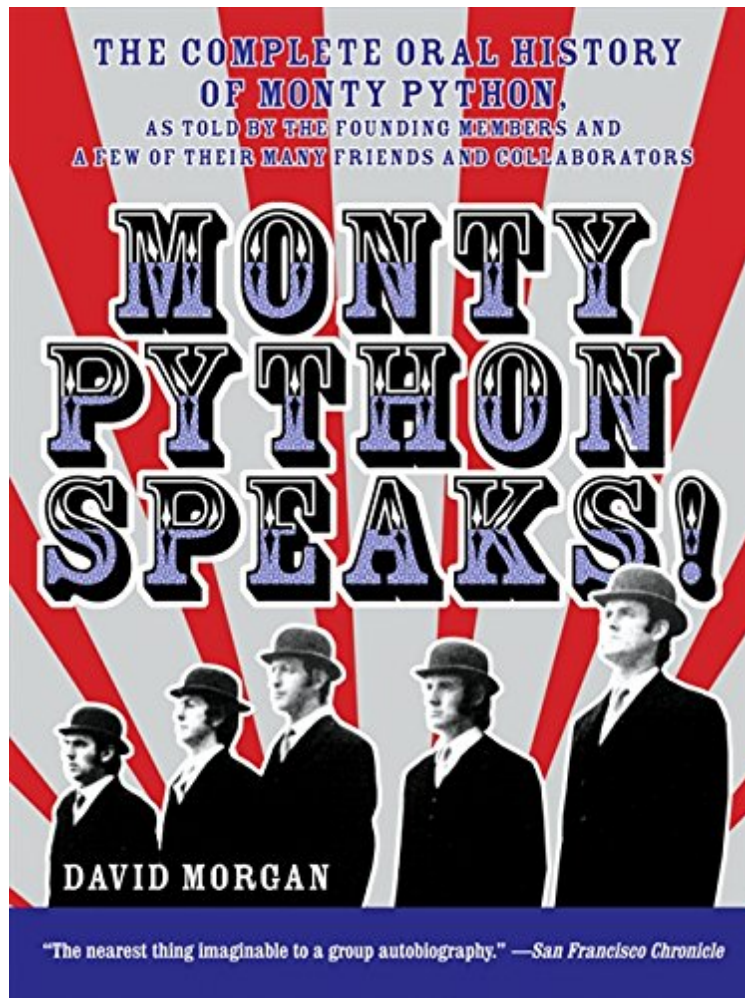


Monty Python Speaks

David Morgan

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David Morgan : Monty Python Speaks before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Monty Python Speaks:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A bit haphazard, and not much new. By Clem. How does one actually describe the humor of Monty Python? It seems as though you cannot find a more diverse set of opinions. On one side, you have the devout worshipers who seem to relish in the fact that they have every scene from every show and movie memorized. On the other side, you have multitudes that just never got it. You can't deny the influence nor their longevity, however. It's also a bit odd that even though the group came into existence 47 years ago, they've actually only spent a very small amount of that time working together. There was a BBC television show that lasted about 5 years, 3 movies that probably took up a total of about 18 months of the team's time, and a couple of live tours (the most recent was a very successful 2014 reunion featuring the 5 surviving members. This book was written before that). All

of the Python projects have been well documented. There's almost more material out there about the team than there is actual original material. That's a bit where this book suffers. Yes, it's chocked full of interview snippets from the group, as well as those closely associated with them, but you can't really help feel that you've read most of this stuff before. The author wisely chooses the chronological approach. We first read about the pre Python days when all of the members were working on various television projects in Britain. We then read about the successful Flying Circus television program. Then, we transfer to the brief times from 1974-1983 and read a bit about each of the three feature films. There's some focus on the individual projects (there were many), but not really that much. After all, this is supposed to be about the group, not the individuals. The interview process throughout the book also seemed a bit haphazard. There were periods in the team's history, where it seems only one or two people are being interviewed. Many times this person wasn't even a Python member. I seem to recall one stretch of several pages where the only person interviewed was the author Douglas Adams (*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*). So it does seem oddly uneven at times. There were also parts of the book that I simply didn't find as interesting as I had hoped. When we get to the time period featuring Monty Python and the Holy Grail, for instance, it seems as though 90% of the interviews dealt with the describing the differences between the two directors, Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. You do learn a bit more about the personalities. John Cleese seemed to be a bit insufferable once he became bored early in the television program, Terry Gilliam seems to now only enjoy comedy about anarchistic tendencies to blow everything up, Graham Chapman seemed to be aloof and lazy, and Michael Palin, fortunately, seemed to be a very likable, amiable fellow. Speaking of Cleese and Gilliam, it also seems from this book that the two really didn't get along very well. This is a good read if you're a fan, but it is by no means a must read. The history of this comedy troupe has been so well documented in so many formats that you'll only pick up a few things that you didn't already know. For the diehard fan only.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It's...
By Hrd2Spt
The book does go into the personalities of the Pythons and their work as a group in putting together what would become a revolutionary approach to on-screen comedy. It does not seem to pull any punches although the handling of Graham Chapman was...interesting. The book is a collection of interview responses from the Pythons and people involved with the Pythons to questions by the author. The answers appear to be as spoken by the interviewee so the book does become a bit tedious depending upon the ability of the speaker to assemble their thoughts into verbal presentation. In other words, it reads like the spoken word. This did slow my reading of the book down. It was written for someone who has seen the movies and sketches. If the reader is not familiar with the work of this group, they will find themselves either seeking out that work or lost in some of the detail. For instance, a sketch may be mentioned (i.e. the Parrot Sketch) but if the reader has not seen the Parrot Sketch (you really should...it is typical Python) then the comments will be a challenge to understand. I believe I came away with a better understanding of this group after the reading and after all isn't that the reason people read biographies?

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Nobody Expects A Properly Formatted Kindle Version!
By Stephen Mann
Candid interviews with each of the surviving Python cast members. Entertaining, revealing, and properly marked up for the Kindle. Even the endnote links work properly. This is how e-books are supposed to look and behave. Worth your money if you are even remotely a Python fan.

Monty Python, the genius comedy troupe from Britain, single-handedly revolutionized sketch comedy and paved the way for everything from Saturday Night Live to Austin Powers. Now, in their official oral history, founding members John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin take readers behind the scenes in this no-holds-barred look at their lives and unforgettable comic works like "The Spanish Inquisition," "Dead Parrot," Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (inspiration for the hit Broadway musical *Spamalot*), and many, many more, with never-before-seen photos and rare interviews from friends and collaborators.

.com Sensibly eschewing any attempt to emulate the inspired lunacy of Monty Python's Flying Circus, this excellent oral history offers instead a straightforward but fascinating peek behind the scenes. Extensive interviews with the team of madmen who created the legendary British television series and four feature films (except Graham Chapman, who died in 1989) give a vivid sense of the dynamic interplay of personalities that revolutionized contemporary comedy, disdaining punch lines and blackout skits in favor of something much weirder and more free-form. The writing duo of Cambridge grads Chapman and John Cleese favored confrontational, deliberately shocking pieces like the infamous Undertaker sketch ("I think we've got an eater!"). Oxford alums Terry Jones and Michael Palin took a more surreal approach to writing ("Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition"). And Eric Idle, who preferred to write alone, was the cheeky one ("nudge, nudge") as well as a respected sounding board for others' ideas. Terry Gilliam, the sole American, provided the wacky animation that gave the show its visual style. It was, as Gilliam remarks, "this amazing chemical balance... I don't think you could invent a group that would work better." All the Pythons are frank about personal and creative differences, making this a thoughtful assessment rather than a hagiography. --Wendy Smith

From Publishers Weekly
The Pythons and several key colleagues look back in a broad retrospective, presented in oral history format, that begins just before the 1969 premiere of Monty Python's Flying Circus, the landmark TV series, and follows the story into the troupe's movie years and beyond. More than anything else, the book reveals that the blend of anarchic

themes, unconventional show structure and chaotic pace that defined Flying Circus was not the product of madcap rebels, but rather the result of hard work by ambitious craftsmen determined to reinvent a form. Fans will be disappointed to find few intimate looks at specific shows and skits. Comparisons of the Pythons' philosophical differences and writing styles are handled in broad strokes. Not until the discussion of the group's film work (Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Life of Brian, The Meaning of Life) will readers encounter specific accounts of clashing artistic attitudes: for instance, how an actor's director (Terry Jones) views production differently than a cinematographer's director (Gilliam), and how the other writers and actors (especially John Cleese) absolutely hated the tedious process of filming. By the time Morgan is done with Life of Brian, the philosophical battles are over, and the discussion consists of good and bad business decisions. Although the book is redundant at times, such clever mates can't help offering some insightful and entertaining perspectives on comedy writing, television and film. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

In their 30th-anniversary year, the surviving members of the famed comedy troupe reminisce about their careers with media journalist Morgan. This entertaining volume consists of interview transcripts covering the full Python spectrum, from the 45 episodes of the BBC's beloved Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969-74) to films like Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979) and recordings like Monty Python's The Final Rip-Off (1988). True to form, the Python members make for witty interviewees, and they relate not only production but also personal details. For example, the deceased Graham Chapman's alcoholism. Their voices are supplemented by such Python collaborators as director Ian MacNaughton, actress Carol Cleveland, and best-selling author Douglas Adams. Illustrated with behind-the-scenes photographs and stills from celebrated sketches, this volume will undoubtedly please fans. Recommended for public libraries and academic collections supporting popular culture curricula. Neal Baker, Earlham Coll., Richmond, IN Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.