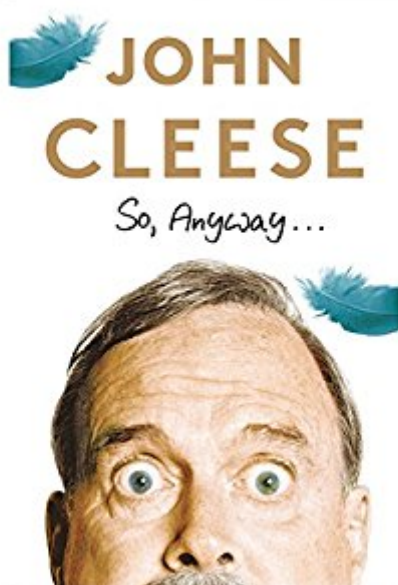


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# So, Anyway...



## Synopsis

John Cleese's huge comedic influence has stretched across generations; his sharp, irreverent eye and the unique brand of physical comedy he perfected with Monty Python, on Fawlty Towers, and beyond now seem written into comedy's DNA. In this rollicking memoir, *So, Anyway...*, Cleese takes listeners on a grand tour of his ascent in the entertainment world, from his humble beginnings in a sleepy English town and his early comedic days at Cambridge University (with future Python partner Graham Chapman) to the founding of the landmark comedy troupe that would propel him to worldwide renown. Cleese was just days away from graduating Cambridge and setting off on a law career when he was visited by two BBC executives who offered him a job writing comedy for radio. That fateful moment - and a near-simultaneous offer to take his university humor revue to London's famed West End - propelled him down a different path, cutting his teeth writing for stars like David Frost and Peter Sellers and eventually joining the five other Pythons to pioneer a new kind of comedy that prized invention, silliness, and absurdity. Along the way he found his first true love with the actress Connie Booth and transformed himself from a reluctant performer to a world-class actor and back again. Twisting and turning through surprising stories and hilarious digressions - with some brief pauses along the way that comprise a fascinating primer on what's funny and why - this story of a young man's journey to the pinnacle of comedy is a masterly performance by a master performer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is not a celebrity book and it is not a funny book primarily. Rather, in my view, this is an

account of how an extraordinary artistic talent is forged in an "ordinary" human being as we all start. What works particularly for this book is that, especially if you're a Python fan, you know the person very well from the outside, so when you hear what happened on the inside, and how slowly and painfully that talent has developed, it makes it that much easier to understand and appreciate the process. And you would care for that, I think, if you care about psychology, art, and if you are working to develop artistic talent yourself, regardless of whether it is related to comedy (Cleese's art in question) or not. There is some very good advice to be heard in this book. There is bitterness in it too, as if there is a grumpy old man sharing the same skull with the genius who delighted so many people around the world, and the grumpy man is wondering why he can't experience some of that delight for himself. That man seems to be searching for meaning, something I hope John will find eventually. Though I suspect had he found it earlier in life, he'd have been a happier man and we wouldn't have as much of his hilarious work to enjoy. But there is also good fun peppered throughout the book -- a few stories you'll remember which I think were alone worth the price and the time. In the end, I was sorry the book ended, but given that John basically just covered the first half of his life, there's hope that one day we'll get part II.

Subtitled, "The Making of a Python," John Cleese's "So, Anyway" is the story of Cleese's life up to the formation of Monty Python's Flying Circus, with a final chapter about the Pythons after their recent reunion performances at London's O2 Centre. Those looking for a complete memoir of the Pythons will be disappointed, but those readers genuinely interested in Cleese himself will find "So, Anyway" essential reading. Cleese's imitable wit--half martini-dry, half totally outrageous--is in evidence throughout, as well as many fascinating anecdotes about the people he knew. "So, Anyway" is the story of the making of one of the greatest comedians ever. It tells of his childhood in the Somerset and Devon countryside with his gentle father and hyper-neurotic mother. ("Whereas Dad might prefer to sleep with the window open, Mother had to have it shut, because she just couldn't cope with the alternative.") There is also a great deal about Cleese's school days, including his adventures with the Cambridge Footlights Club, and his meeting the young performers who, like him, would soon become comedy legends. Naturally, there were a lot of hijinks. (The tale of a practical joke, played on Cleese by Marty Feldman on the island of Ibiza, appears on page 265 of this edition; it alone is worth the price of the book.) One of the most interesting tales is Cleese's complete and utter shock when Graham Chapman, his close friend and writing partner, came out as gay, at a time when it was still dangerous to do so. ("I had known Gra for over five years and he had always worn brogue shoes and cord trousers and a sports jacket with leather patches on the

elbows, and he had been a beer-drinking, pipe-smoking, rugby-football playing medical student. In the '60s, if you were wondering if someone might be gay, these habits were not thought of as dead giveaways. Unless, of course, the person in question was female." "So, Anyway" is both hilarious and engrossing. as well as wise. Cleese is a man who has thought long and deeply about the wellsprings of comedy, and he shares that wisdom with us in this book. He also, not incidentally, comes across as a genuinely nice man. If you're looking for a stocking-stuffer this year, you can do far worse than giving your friends and family the gift of the life story of the man who created Fawlty Towers, A Fish Called Wanda, and the Ministry of Silly Walks.

It was a good review of his early life and comedic foundation prior to Python but if one is looking for more on that time in his life, you will be soundly disappointed as there are only hints at his formative relationships with the Pythons, except for Graham Chapman.

A memoir of virtually all postwar British humorist by the Monty Python tall guy, who rounds them all up, Two Ronnies, David Frost, Bill Oddie, and so many more. Tales of being a school teacher, not becoming a lawyer despite his family's insistence, writing for all those folks just mentioned, appearing as a standup comic, dancing (which he is actually totally incapable performing) and tales of Monty Python (which I have not gotten to yet).

Brilliantly funny look inside the (barely) controlled insanity of Monty Python and THE LIFE OF John Cleese. Mr. Cleese has written a witty and often touching and sentimental account of his life, both as an English schoolboy trying to understand the confusions and conflicts of the system he was born into, and as a comedy writer and performer and ultimately a celebrity. Despite all, this book is proof that his sense of humor survives and thrives.

This is not really a funny book nor is it meant to be. That being said there is really not much here about John Cleese the man. It is more about his work and collaborations with others. Got kinda dull towards the middle but I still like John Cleese.

While I really like John Cleese and Monty Python, I can't say that I really enjoyed this book all that much. In form, it is rather rambling and, whereas it is unfortunate that Cleese has and has had social adjustment problems and insecurities, I felt that there was too much information about these handicaps and not enough about the Flying Circus.

I have loved John Cleese since I began watching Monty Python as a teenager. I've always thought British humor is the best: Black Adder, Fawlty Towers, Benny Hill, etc. I enjoyed the book to a degree. The only disappointment is that there are only a few references to Monty Python. OK, so there may be other books dedicated to MP, maybe even written by JC, but I haven't read them. I was so hoping to get at least a chapter or two on MP, but barely a mention here and there. I think the book went into too much detail about his early life, but that's just me. Maybe others enjoyed the early-years biography, but I kept looking for that Monty Python chapter (Please, Johnny?), but no such luck. Otherwise, an enjoyable read.

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