



From Mae to Madonna: Women Entertainers in Twentieth-Century America

June Sochen

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"Entertainers were the first group of successful women to capture the public eye, taking to the stage in vaudeville and film and redefining their place in society. June Sochen introduces the white, African American, and Latina women who danced on Broadway, fell on bananas in silent films, and wisecracked in smoky clubs, as well as the modern icons of today's movies and popular music. Sochen considers such women as Mae West, Bette Davis, Shirley Temple, Lucille Ball, and Mary Tyler Moore to discover what show business did for them and what they did for the world of entertainment. She uses the life of 30s and 40s Latina star Lupe Velez as a case study of the roles available to Latinas in popular culture. She then contrasts her story with that of the African American action star Pam Grier to demonstrate the old and new ways minority women are portrayed in popular culture. *From Mae to Madonna* places each woman within the context of her time and talks about her relationship with dominant female stereotypes. Sochen discusses women's roles as Mary, Eve, and Lilith and asks thought-provoking questions. Why did the Depression give women movie stars so many important roles while the so-called feminist 1970s did not? Why has television been a congenial venue for women comics while film has not? In examining how entertainers worked within or transformed particular genres and how their personal and public lives affected their careers, *From Mae to Madonna* casts the spotlight on a series of remarkable women and their dramatic effect on America's popular culture.



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