

MEDIA KIT
BILLY VAN ZANDT
AUTHOR & PLAYWRIGHT

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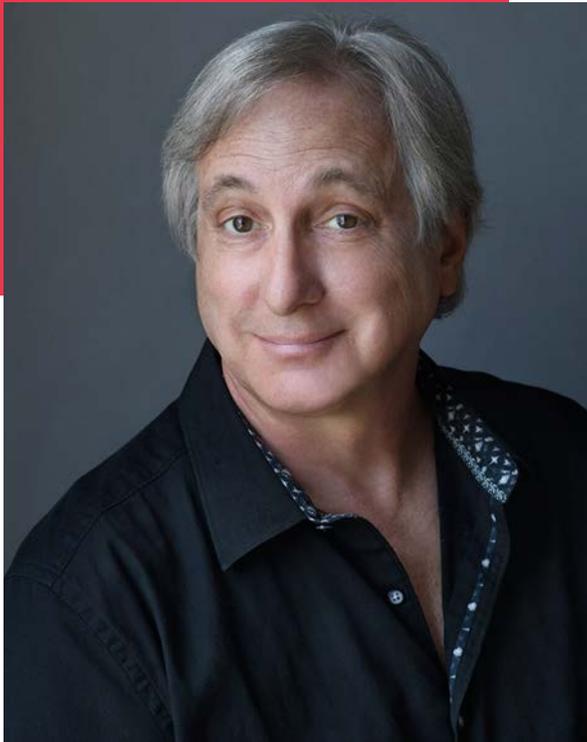


get in the car, jane!



GET IN THE CAR, JANE! Adventures In The TV Wasteland is the television equivalent of William Goldman's *Adventures in the Screen Trade*. A behind the scenes memoir of Emmy-nominated writer/producer Billy Van Zandt and his years making America's favorite (and not so favorite) sit-coms. It is filled with first hand observations of **Lucille Ball, Brooke Shields, Frank Sinatra, Don Rickles, Martin Lawrence, Andrew Dice Clay, Richard Lewis, Bob Newhart, Jamie Lee Curtis, The Wayans Bros., Richard Mulligan, Alan Arkin, DL Hughley**, film legend **Dorothy Lamour**, Broadway legend **Elaine Stritch, Rosie O'Donnell**, Oscar-winner **Olympia Dukakis, Penny Marshall**, and **Matthew Perry** among many others. Part behind-the-scenes gossip, part textbook, all truth. A funny insider's look at Hollywood as well as an invaluable and insightful guide to writing and producing sit-coms, *GET IN THE CAR, JANE!* Is a book for everybody who's ever been passionate about their work and frustrated with the obstacles they need to overcome just to do their job.

about



Billy Van Zandt and his writing partner, the late Jane Milmore, are two of the most often-produced playwrights in the world.

Billy and Jane met at a high school drama competition in their home state of New Jersey. Together ever since, they have written and starred in twenty-five plays, including the international hit comedy *"You've Got Hate Mail"*; Off-Broadway's tribute to slapstick comedy *"Silent Laughter;"* cult favorite *"Drop Dead;"* the Marx Bros. musical *"A Night at the Nutcracker;"* and the summer stock perennial *"Love Sex, and the I.R.S."*

Billy's solo play *"The Property Known as Garland"* starring Adrienne Barbeau broke house records at Off-Broadway's Actors Playhouse. Their plays have been produced in thousands of theaters worldwide, including two productions directed by Oscar-winner Olympia Dukakis ("Billy and Jane are funny, outrageous, off the charts/writer/performers!"), and one by film legend Burt Reynolds.

All plays are published by Samuel French, Inc., and translated into multiple languages around the globe. *"You've Got Hate Mail"* (which won **Mexico's New Best Play**) continues to be an ongoing international hit, currently playing in Poland, Hungary, Germany, and Slovenia. *"Love, Sex, and the I.R.S."* and *"Suitehearts"* are still running in Warsaw after five years and recently opened in Russia; *"Having a Wonderful Time Wish You Were Her"* is running in Romania; *"Wrong Window"* in New Zealand and Turkey; and *"The Property Known as Garland"* ran three years in Warsaw with Polish icon Hanna Sleszynska.

For television, these award-winning writers have produced over three hundred hours of comedy, including *"Newhart;"* *"Martin"* which won them a People's Choice Award and two **NAACP Image Awards;** *"The Hughleys;"* *"Suddenly Susan"* with Brooke Shields; *"Daddy Dearest"* with Don Rickles and Richard Lewis; *"Anything But Love"* with Jamie Lee Curtis; *"Bless This House"* with Andrew Dice Clay and Cathy Moriarty; *"The Wayans Bros.;"* *"Yes, Dear,"* *"Center of the Universe"* with John Goodman and Jean Smart, and *"I Love Lucy: The Very First Show"* which won them an **Emmy nomination.**

On the big screen, Billy made his movie acting debut in *"Jaws 2,"* and appeared in *"Taps"* with Tom Cruise and Sean Penn; *"Star Trek: the Motion Picture,"* and *"A Wake in Providence"* written by Billy and Jane, which won the **Audience Award** at both the **Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival** and the **Boston Film Festival.**

Billy lives in Los Angeles, when he's not touring the country in the 25th Van Zandt/Milmore play "The Boomer Boys Musical."

Q&A

What was your inspiration for writing this book?

I realized my sons had no idea what I actually did at the studio all day other than "making TV shows." This was for them.

How did you choose to write these stories?

I kept journals on all the TV shows I wrote or produced. I took these stories from my journals. Anecdotes that stood out or got me the biggest laughs at dinner parties.

Why self-publish?

Why not? The publishing world has changed. I have many friends who are published with big reputable companies who basically have to do their own PR out of their own pocket, and get nothing from the large companies other than the prestige of using their name. And, besides, no one told me I can't.

How did you come to write comedy? Who were some of your inspirations?

It's all I ever wanted to do. Influenced at a very young age by I Love Lucy and the Marx Brothers. That was the type of comedy I loved. The physical comedy of Lucy and the insanity, physical comedy, and word play of the Marxes. As I got older I discovered Buster Keaton, who was one of Lucille Ball's greatest influences. Throw in Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, and a little Jerry Lewis and you'll get a fuller picture of where I came from.

What were some of the most valuable lessons you've learned in your career in TV?

1) No one knows anything. 2) You're there to please the audience, not the network and studio guys. 3) Hold fast to your gut instincts. If you're going to down in flames, go down in your own plane - because (see 1).

How has the television industry changed since you started?

When I started out you were hired to be the creative person with very little interference. Now you can't hire writers to be on your staff that aren't on an "approved" list. You can't even cast a one line walk-in role without getting the studio or network to say yes. Micro-managing has ruined a lot. It's certainly created a lot of unnecessary extra work. And knowing the hurdles you have to jump to get something on the air these days, no matter how terrible a show is, I always think "Good for you!"

"These two people are a riot!"

What made you want to go into television? Did you know what you were getting into?

Our theater in NJ had just closed up – the real estate we were in was pulled out from under us.

Coincidentally, a review of one of our plays at the time said, “These people should be writing for TV.” (It wasn’t meant as a compliment.) But we thought, why not give it a shot, so we loaded up the truck and moved to Beverly. We had no idea what we were doing or how to get into television. We didn’t have any connections. But together Jane and I always fearlessly jumped into new things. Same way we wrote our first movie, wrote our first musical, produced our first show in NYC. Either too naïve, too dumb, or too pigheaded to think we’d ever fail.

From acting to writing to producing, you seem to do it all. Has that been helpful to you as an artist?

I started as an actor. I wrote to give myself something to act in. I started directing so no one would mess up my writing. I started producing so no one would mess up my direction. In school I also took courses in scenic design and lighting design. For me, it was imperative to do it all. Sort of like owning a restaurant. Better to start out washing dishes, then bus some tables, then be a waiter, then a host, then a manager, then you can own the place and know everything that goes into it.

What kind of advice would you have for writers and actors in television today?

Your spec script is the most important tool of your career. You don’t get a second chance. Take your time and make it better than any script you’ve ever read.

Don Rickles on the set of *Daddy Dearest* with Frank Sinatra as he films what will be his last sit-com appearance:

Frank: What do I do?

Q&A

How do you find time to continue writing and producing?

It’s not a job for me. I don’t feel I’ve ever worked a day in my life. It’s just fun. And I haven’t a clue what I’d do if I ever stopped.

What are the pros and cons of having a writing partner?

The pros: you always have someone to watch your back, to inspire you, to commiserate with, and to keep you from writing nasty emails to people that deserve it. And you’ll laugh a lot. The cons: The paycheck gets cut in half.

Any advice for someone looking for a partner?

Find someone who makes you laugh. A lot. And look for someone who doesn’t fight to get to the computer. Find someone who’s better at the things you’re not. And someone who’s maybe lacking in the things you’re good at. If there are two of you bringing the same things to the table, you don’t need a partner. But the key to a successful partnership... you make each other laugh. A lot.

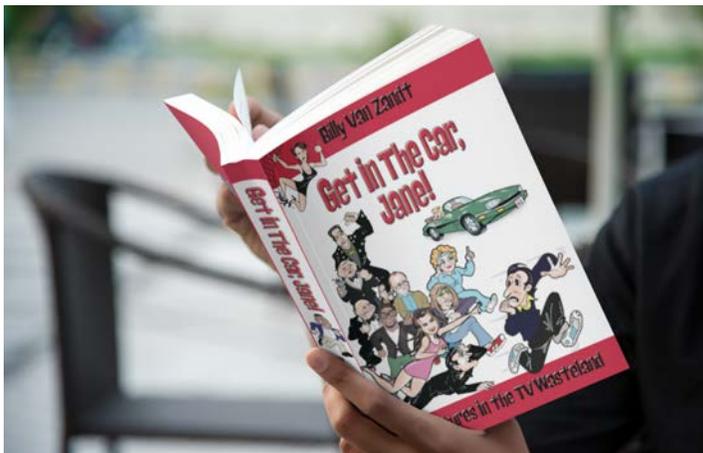
"Nothing Frank. Just stand there, we'll stick a camera on you, and hope to God you're not drooling all over yourself."

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Lucille Ball welcoming Billy into her home to watch the debut of her final TV series after critics have panned the legendary star into tears:

"Hello. I used to be in television!"

Lucille Ball