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Why Not Me? The Inside Story Of The Making And Unmaking Of The Franken Presidency



Synopsis

First came Theodore White's *The Making of the President, 1960*. Then *All the President's Men*. Now the searing chronicle that will forever change the way we view the man and the office. The dramatic rise and dizzying fall of Al Franken, who would become the first Jewish president of the United States. Franken began his unique American journey in the small town of Christhaven, Minnesota, the self-described "son of the son of immigrants and the son of a daughter of a son and daughter of immigrants." Follow the Franken campaign from its infancy as the candidate pledges "to walk the state of New Hampshire, diagonally and then from side to side." As he candidly admits "causing pain in his marriage," then boldly refuses to dignify any questions from the media regarding past, present, or future sexual behavior. Go behind the scenes and meet Team Franken, the candidate's brain trust. Including brother and deputy campaign manager Otto, a recovering sex addict and alcoholic. Campaign manager Norm Ornstein, the think-tank policy wonk who masterminds the single-issue (ATM fees) campaign. Media consultant Dick Morris, who exploits the shocking millennium bug-induced "ATM meltdown" by building an ad campaign around a diabetic woman who loses her right foot after computers erase all her ATM deposits. And former *Grizzly Adams* star Dan Haggerty. Cheer as Franken stuns the pundits by defeating Al Gore for the Democratic nomination, then is swept into office with a landslide victory over Newt Gingrich. As he chooses an all-Jewish Cabinet because "America doesn't want a Cabinet that looks like America, it wants a Cabinet the President is comfortable with." Then, through excerpts from Bob Woodward's detailed account of the first hundred days, *The Void*, go inside the Franken White House. Gripped by crisis from day one, the president develops a severe case of chronic fatigue syndrome. After the highly medicated chief executive exhibits a roller coaster of bipolar behavior, including the "slugging Nelson Mandela" incident and an attempt to clone himself, Franken is forced to cooperate with the Joint Congressional Committee on the President's Mood Swings. And when the committee releases Franken's personal diaries to the public, his presidency faces its ultimate crisis.

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Customer Reviews

In this hilarious political satire, Al Franken reveals how, by focusing relentlessly on the issue of ATM fees, he managed to wrest the Democratic presidential nomination away from Vice President Al Gore in the 2000 elections and become the 44th president of the United States. He then wound up running the second-shortest administration in American history, announcing in his resignation speech: "It is my fondest wish that, in the fullness of time, the American people will look back on the Franken presidency as something of a mixed bag and not as a complete disaster." *Why Not Me?* is divided into three main sections. The first, "Daring to Lead," is Franken's "authorized campaign autobiography," in which he lays out his life story and his reasons for seeking the nation's highest office. Then, in his campaign diaries, we follow Franken and his team of advisers--including former Clinton pollster Dick Morris and Dan Haggerty, TV's Grizzly Adams--across New Hampshire and Iowa. Finally, there's "The Void," the behind-the-scenes account by Bob Woodward of Franken's first 100 days in the Oval Office. As a writer, Franken takes aim at a lot of targets, with nary a miss; there are enough great jokes in *Why Not Me?* to make almost anybody break down with a fit of the giggles at some point (especially at pages 132 to 133, but don't peek! It'll spoil the buildup). --Ron Hogan

For all those who want their political humor more political?and funnier?than the usual late-night TV fare, there's Al Franken. Here's the scenario: the millennial presidential campaign is nearly upon us, and Franken (*Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*) has not merely thrown his hat in the ring?he's provided the three-ring-plus circus as well. With dead-on parodies of several forms of political media (campaign diary, strategist's memo, televised debate, Sunday morning talk show, newspaper story, magazine feature, Bob Woodward expose, etc.), this book tells the story of the improbable Franken candidacy, the humorist's more improbable success and his scandalous downfall. The pandering single issue is lower ATM fees, which allows Franken to win the Democratic primary by painting

front-runner Al Gore as a tool of the banking interests. The loose-cannon campaign chief is the candidate's brother, Otto, who pops up in selected states as chief supporter "Dotto Dranken" or "Botto Branken." The effective fund-raising strategy is a 900 number for Franken info and lesbian phone sex. There's also a narrative of presidential scandal as written by Woodward, which includes chronic fatigue syndrome, bipolar episodes, misprescribed medication, an attack on the revered Nelson Mandela (Franken ruptures the great man's spleen) and an abortive attempt to assassinate Saddam Hussein personally. This leads to the first-ever Joint Congressional Committee to Investigate the President's Mood Swings. While the book drags in a few places, it remains consistently often howlingly funny, as well as slyly subversive in the way it punctures the conventions of our highly ritualized campaign system. Did we mention the first all-Jewish Cabinet (including Ralph Lauren as secretary of the interior) arguing about Chinese food? First serial to George; BOMC and QPB alternates; BDD audio; author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As a big fan of Al Franken, perhaps I hold him to too high a standard, but I found that the first half of the book more than lived up to his previous works. The campaign trail and his combination of both clever and ridiculous commentary made the book truly a fun read. I especially loved the extra effort to put in action photos and newspaper headlines, making the whole spectacle of the Franken candidacy seem all the more outrageous. Once in office, I found the book a little lacking. It almost seemed like Al ran out of steam and wanted to stop writing. Beyond the all Jewish cabinet, I really did not read a whole lot to laugh or at least smirk about. The wit that was present during the campaign trail really disappeared. I plan to read the campaign trail part of the book again, since it is really good stuff. Just be warned that it goes downhill from the moment Al enters office.

This novel of political satire by now Senator Al Franken was published in 1999. Looking back from 10 years later, it is interesting to see how things turned out. There are some political positions of the "fictional" candidate that still apply and could be quoted, perhaps showing some prescience, such as "...America is the world's only remaining superpower, and with that comes some responsibility. We have to remember that the world is still a very dangerous place. Even a single war is one war too many, but we have to be prepared to fight on two fronts..." It is not necessarily a great book, but might offer a little insight into the thinking of a person who is now a senator, intermixed with the fictional satirical tale of the rise and fall of a president. Senator Franken is obviously more than just a comedian/writer.

I purchased this book on eager anticipation of hearty guffaws, and was rewarded only with chuckles. Perhaps it is the current political environment, but this portrayal of the absurd seems not so unlikely in this day and age. Perhaps the next logical step in the devolution of the American political landscape is a likeable, bipolar comedian as the next President. Most amusing in this future history was the sputtering Al Gore losing the nomination to Al Franken in a marvelously wicked debate/ smear campaign. Sadly, it is probably an all too accurate portrayal of the behind the scenes machinations of a presidential campaign. I also enjoyed the no holds barred manner in which Franken manages to poke fun at everything and everyone, himself included. The humour ranges from the slapstick and coarse manner in which his brother wages political warfare, to the sublime, smug epilogue at the Franken Presidential Library. Beautifully conceived; rather hasty and slapdash execution.

Let's consider 'Why Not Me' a trial run for Al Franken's better written follow-up 'Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them.' All of Franken's work bears the hallmarks of his sketch comedy background - it's an ensemble of pieces, some of which work, some of which don't. In 'Lies,' roughly 80% or more of the pieces hit the mark (I wasn't a fan of the cartoons). In 'Why Not Me,' it's about 50%. Like the Bob Woodward parody ('The Void'), for example: funny for about the first five pages (you laugh when you see Franken's nailed Woodward's melodramatic scene-setting and habit of assembling conversations as if he were in the room). But it drags on and on. How many readers got through the whole piece? Not many I bet. Like others, I agree that the campaign diary worked the best, followed closely by the faux Newsweek piece - the classic campaign shot of Franken chopping wood with Golden Retriever at his side is a howler. Talk about spot-on. I think the best part of the entire book is the 'one issue' campaign (elimination of ATM Fees) and how Candidate Franken steers all discussion back to that point. Watching both Bush and Kerry try to route every question back to stump speech set pieces makes you realize that there's sometimes a fine line between parody and reality.

Al Franken has once again come up with a screamingly funny book; a great concept that is well executed. Although I prefer his previous ruminations on the girth of Rush Limbaugh, there are many, many amusing moments here. I personally loved the story of his college "business" and the incredibly ill-advised Inauguration Speech is a howler. This is no masterpiece, but it is a good, fun, silly read.

This book is probably a useful primer for the upcoming campaign season. It could help people better recognize ways that candidates distract voters with triviality. It's readable.

This would be the LAST place I would send someone to get a taste of Al Franken. The first half of the book makes the same jokes over and over and over and over again, and throughout, you really need to know a lot of Washington inside stuff to get the jokes. In some ways a sharp expose of our political and media system, and in other ways far, far, far too long with the general feel of a train wreck.

This is my all time favorite Al Franken book! I'm re-ordering it because it's been a few years since my wife and I read "Why Not Me" to each other. We can still make each other laugh by dropping lines from the book: "It was as plain as the Swastika on my face."

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