



the *other* oprahs



Interview with comedian and author Michael Gelbart - part 1

By [Cendrine Marrouat](#), Canada Independent Artist Examiner
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Michael Gelbart divides his time between Canada and the United States. He has starred in his own half-hour comedy specials, worked as a writer and performer on series for several networks, and been a two-time guest on "The Late Late Show" with Craig Ferguson. When he's not headlining his own shows, he frequently opens for Norm MacDonald and Greg Behrendt ("He's Just Not That Into You"). In this interview, he will discuss his new book.

Cendrine Marrouat: Hello Michael, it is great to have you. How long have you been a comedian?

Michael Gelbart: **I started at 17. I did it casually in high school and on weekends while in college. Shortly after graduating, the CBC in Canada offered me my first half-hour special and I started taking comedy more seriously.**

CM: "The Other Oprahs," your new book, was released in 2010. I love the title! What is the story behind it?

MG: **I was performing with Greg Behrendt, who had written "He's Just Not That Into You," and the shows were sold out. He said it was a result of having been a two-time guest on Oprah. I started thinking about the impact she's made and how much it would suck if your name was Oprah and you weren't her, because no matter what you accomplished it would pale in comparison. "Hey, Oprah Johnson, way to go with your successful tutoring business. Cool. Oh, did you hear that Oprah Winfrey started a school in Africa?"**

I also knew I wanted to write a book about what I'd learned about women through dating and my more long-term relationships. This proved to be an excellent outlet to tell those stories in a fictional way.

CM: I was looking at the cover of your book earlier. Its simplicity is striking. Why go for such a "naked" look?

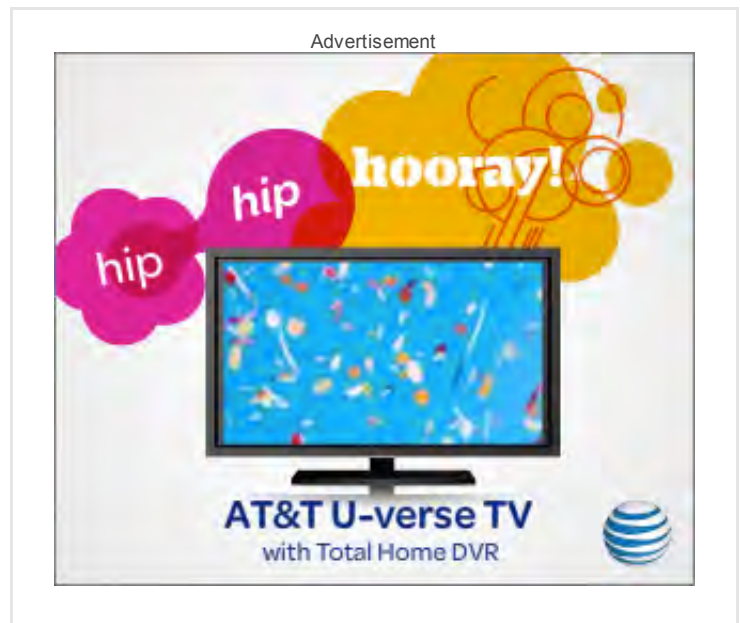
MG: **The Oprahs in the book never meet but become friends in a chatroom. So, the cover looks like the white you see in a chatroom or on a computer screen before it gets filled with words. Since they never see each other, I chose four emoticons to reflect the four characters' personalities. Plus, the most common instinct people have is to overdo a cover out of fear that they won't be exciting enough. So when everyone else competes for who can go bigger, brighter and most colorful, my cover actually stands out by virtue of not doing so. Some bands have**

gotten into fights with marketing departments over this kind of thing but I think The Beatles' "White Album" looks great the way it is.

CM: Are the Oprahs in the book based on real people?

MG: **I took some things from past relationships and other women I've known well. I even took a few things that have happened to me and gave them to the characters. Although they are fictional, everything that they think or feel comes from the universal want and need for love, friendship and self-respect.**

End of part 1.



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Interview with comedian and author Michael Gelbart - part 2

By [Cendrine Marrouat](#), Canada Independent Artist Examiner
February 8th, 2011 1:39 pm ET

To read part 1, click [here](#).

Cendrine Marrouat: How has your comedic work helped you write the book?

Michael Gelbart: **I come from a background in TV and film writing and I'm a dialogue guy. Since a portion of the book is in a chat room, that really came in handy. I originally saw it as a movie but wrote the book first. And I always have felt that we care more about characters when they have made us laugh. That way, when something happens of greater emotional impact, it happens to someone we are invested in. An emotional scene that comes from what starts out in a comedic place is more moving to me than when it comes from an advance proclamation that what you're watching or reading is important, tear-inducing or heavily dramatic. There are different styles, but the kind that speaks to me is where a reader is disarmed by comedy.**

CM: Would you share a short extract from "The Other Oprahs"?

MG: **On the [book's Website](#), I have posted the first few pages from each character so that readers can get to know them before committing to buying. I am a big believer in previews.**

CM: How have readers reacted to your book so far? Have you noticed a difference between Canadian and American audiences?

MG: **So far, it's been nothing but positive. There's no difference in the US or Canadian attitude about it because it's a book about universal feelings that aren't subject to borders. What concerned me more was the different reactions I would get from men and women. It's natural that men would hear about a book where the main characters are women and would shy away at first. Fortunately, people who have seen my stand-up haven't let that get in the way too much and the male readers I've heard from have found the book really funny and insightful. If anyone learns something about women or thinks a bit differently about themselves or gets inspired, that's a great thing. If the book just makes them laugh and smile, I'll take that too.**

CM: What is next for you?

MG: **In 2011, I will tour with the book by headlining clubs and theaters and do signings, as well as all local media in each city. I also have upcoming signings and readings in bookstores. I'm really**

excited about one I'm doing at Book Soup in Los

CM: Where can people find more information on you and your book?

MG: I have made TheOtherOprahs.com the definitive place to get the book. People can watch the trailer, read excerpts and see my latest TV appearance. When people buy it there, I sign every copy.

End of the interview.

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