

'Is This Anything?' contains a trove of laugh-out-loud one-liners

# Jerry Seinfeld digs into 45 years of his jokes for new book

LOS ANGELES, Nov 28, (AP): Forget the high-performance sports cars, the luxury Rolls-Royces and all those other classic automobiles in which Jerry Seinfeld ushers his fellow comics to the diner on television's "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee."

The most valuable things Seinfeld owns are the thousands of pieces of paper — yellow, scribbled over, sometimes crumpled — that for years he's been cramming into those brown accordion folders that were once a staple of storage until something better came along called the laptop computer.

They contain the jokes Seinfeld has been writing and telling since that first day he walked into a New York nightclub as a 21-year-old wannabe comic who accepted free hamburgers in lieu of a paycheck. They continue right up to the present-day musings of a 66-year-old man wondering how the world keeps getting more crowded when he doesn't see any more cemeteries being built.

"Flights, restaurants, theater shows sell out all the time. Cemetery? Anyone croaks, send them in. We just had an opening. What happened? Somebody came back to life and walked out. You're very lucky."

He's compiled them all in a new book, "Is This Anything?," the title taken from the question every comic asks every other comic when he or she is about to try out new material.

Assembled in chronological order, they provide not just a trove of laugh-out-loud one-liners but also a timeline, beginning with a kid

commuting from his parents' home on Long Island to New York City to try to make strangers laugh. It continues through a career during which Seinfeld became arguably the greatest stand-up comic of his era and the pivotal figure of the funniest TV sitcom of its time.

Still, why did he save every joke of his career? Or at least every one that got a laugh?

"A lot of people ask me that question and I always say I don't know why I saved anything else," he replies with a chuckle in a phone interview. Then he adds more seriously, "This is the most valuable thing I have."

### Project

Hunkered down in the family home with his wife and their three children in East Hampton, New York, he is continuing to add to those folders. He's also working on another project that for the moment he isn't discussing except to say it involves the people with whom he made the hit 2007 animated comedy film "Bee Movie."

Even quarantined from the coronavirus, Seinfeld says he finds no shortage of new material.

"A lot of material just comes out of being constantly irritated by something else, and that seems to go on endlessly," he says, especially when staying home with four other people.

"It's usually one good fight per day, I would say, is our basic routine. Two meals and one good fight."

Books

Variety



This image released by HBI Max shows Melissa McCarthy, (left), in a scene from 'Superintelligence.' (AP)

Film

McCarthy has to save the world in new film

## An AI rom-com in 'Superintelligence'

By Jake Coyle

It's a demonstrably difficult task to find a comic screen partner worthy of standing opposite Melissa McCarthy, so you have to appreciate "Superintelligence" for throwing in the towel.

In it, McCarthy plays Carol Peters, a former Yahoo executive who's chosen, purely for her extreme averageness, by a newly liberated, megalomaniacal artificial intelligence that presents her with a three-day test to prove humanity isn't worth destroying. It's the kind of set-up that would have once presided over by the devil or some demigod, but now that role goes to Alexa.

That means that for much of "Superintelligence," a new comedy which started streaming Thursday on HBO Max, McCarthy is walking around on her own, her only foil a disembodied voice (James Corden's) or an occasional talking screen. That's not as good as McCarthy with either of her best recent on-screen partners — Sandra Bullock ("The Heat"), Richard E. Grant ("Can You Forgive Me?") — but it's not bad. It means McCarthy has the movie if not completely to herself (Corden's cheery warmth still comes through, and Bobby Cannavale winningly plays her love interest) then nearly so. Even though the innocuous "Superintelligence" is on the bland side, it remains hard not to enjoy two hours with McCarthy.

The more telling companion of McCarthy's in "Superintelligence" is her husband, the director Ben Falcone. This is their fourth film together with Falcone behind the camera, and it may be the best of the bunch. That, however, isn't saying much considering their run of "Life of the Party" (2018), "The Boss" (2016) and "Tammy" (2014). Those films have their moments, and they're always shot-through with affection for their leading lady. But they're easily the weaker, more forgettable side of McCarthy's filmography.

"Superintelligence," written by Steve Mallory, is the most high-concept of their films together, and it's ultimately an excuse to bring apocalyptic stakes to a rom-com plot. Faced with the possible end of

the world, Carol resolves to reconnect with an old flame (Cannavale). Their chemistry together is easy and relaxed, if not especially funny. The cast overall feels wasted, especially the supporting performances of Brian Tyree Henry (as a computer scientist), Jean Smart (the president) and Sam Richardson — the talented "Veep" performer who I sincerely hope soon gets his own movie. Like a lot of studio comedies of late, it feels like there's space here for jokes that mostly never quite got filled in.

### Characters

The real romance in "Superintelligence" might not be between any of the characters, but McCarthy and Falcone (who also makes his typical cameo). Their collaborations are uneven but warmhearted, and their movies together feel like an almost sweet sacrifice of quality for the sake of family.

"Superintelligence," a Warner Bros. release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America for some suggestive material, language and thematic elements. Running time: 105 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

### Also:

**NEW YORK:** Quentin Tarantino's next work of imagination will be in book form.

The Oscar-winning director has a two-book deal with Harper, beginning with a novelization of "Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood" that is scheduled for next summer. "Once Upon a Time" will be a true Tarantino production: The book will come out first as a mass market paperback, like the old pulp novels the filmmaker loves, and will offer "a fresh, playful and shocking departure from the film," according to Harper.

The film version of "Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood" was released in 2019 and stars Brad Pitt as a television actor and Leonardo DiCaprio as his stunt double. Nominated for 10 Academy Awards and winner of two, the movie is set in Los Angeles

in 1969, around the time of the killings by Charles Manson's followers.

"In the '70s movie novelizations were the first adult books I grew up reading," Tarantino said in a statement recently. "And to this day I have a tremendous amount of affection for the genre. So as a movie-novelization aficionado, I'm proud to announce 'Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood' as my contribution to this often marginalized, yet beloved sub-genre in literature. I'm also thrilled to further explore my characters and their world in a literary endeavor that can (hopefully) sit alongside its cinematic counterpart."

Tarantino's second book will be the nonfiction "Cinema Speculation," which Harper is calling "a deep dive into the movies of the 1970's" that draws in part on the director's admiration for the late New Yorker critic Pauline Kael. A release date has not been determined.

"The book will be a rich mix of essays, reviews, personal writing, and tantalizing 'what if's,' from one of cinema's most celebrated filmmakers, and its most devoted fan," according to Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

Several directors have written fiction in recent years, including Brian De Palma, David Cronenberg and Guillermo del Toro, and Michael Mann has been working on a prequel to his crime classic "Heat." Tarantino, 57, may well have more time in the future for books.

He has said that he will retire from filmmaking after he completes 10 movies: "Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood" was his 9th. Tarantino had not turned 30 when he made his first feature-length film, "Reservoir Dogs," and he has claimed most directors lose their edge in their later years. Writing has long been part of his transition plans.

"I think when it comes to theatrical movies, I've come to the end of the road," Tarantino, who has yet to announce plans for his next film, told GQ Australia last year. "I see myself writing film books and starting to write theater, so I'll still be creative. I just think I've given all I have to give to movies." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Books by and about Kamala Harris proved to be a popular purchase following the election. The vice president-elect was the subject or author of four books on Amazon's top 10.

They included her own children's book "Superheroes Are Everywhere," her memoir "The Truths We Hold: An American Journey," a children's book by her niece Meena Harris called "Kamala and Maya's Big Idea" and Nikki Grimes' illustrated "Kamala Harris: Rooted in Justice."

Harris made history as the first Black woman to become vice president. The California senator, who is also the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency, will become the highest-ranking woman ever to serve in government.

US President-elect Joe Biden also got a spot on the charts just outside of the top 10. Dr Jill Biden's children's book "Joey: The Story of Joe Biden" landed in 14th place. (AP)

NEW YORK: "The Daily Show" host and comedian Trevor Noah has been tapped to host the 2021 Grammy Awards.

The Recording Academy made the announcement hours before the nominees for the upcoming show are revealed. It would mark Noah's first time hosting the Grammys, which will be held Jan 31.

Earlier this year, Noah competed for his first Grammy Award: The 36-year-old Emmy winner was nominated for best comedy album with "Son of Patricia," but lost to Dave Chappelle.

"Despite the fact that I am extremely disappointed that the GRAMMYS have refused to have me sing or be nominated for best pop album, I am thrilled to be hosting this auspicious event," Noah said in a statement. "I think as a one-time GRAMMY nominee, I am the best person to provide a shoulder to all the amazing artists who do not win on the night because I too know the pain of not winning the award! (This is a metaphorical shoulder, I'm not trying to catch Corona)." See you at the 63rd GRAMMYS!

Alicia Keys was the most recent Grammys host. Past hosts include James Corden and LL Cool J.

Noah is a South African comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actor, and television host. He is the host of The Daily Show, an American satirical news program on Comedy Central.

Born in Johannesburg, Noah began his career as a comedian, television host, and actor in South Africa in 2002. He has since had several hosting roles with



Noah



Harris

the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and was the runner-up in the fourth season of South Africa's iteration of Strictly Come Dancing in 2008. From 2010 to 2011, he acted as the creator and host of the late-night talk show Tonight with Trevor Noah, which aired on M-Net and DSTV.

After his stand-up comedy career attained international suc-

cess, Noah began appearing on American late-night talk shows and English panel shows. In 2014, Noah became the Senior International Correspondent for The Daily Show, and the following year, he succeeded long-time host Jon Stewart, and is set to remain in this position until 2022. His autobiographical comedy book Born a Crime was published in 2016

and garnered critical acclaim. Noah has received various accolades, including a Primetime Emmy Award win from nine nominations. He was named one of "The 35 Most Powerful People in New York Media" by The Hollywood Reporter in 2017 and 2018. In 2018, Time magazine named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world. (Agencies)

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ARABO TIMES

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020