



Dear Fatty

Dawn French

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Dawn French is one of the greatest comedy actresses of our time, with a career spanning nearly three decades and encompassing a vast and brilliant array of characters that would eventually establish her as a national treasure.

She first appeared on the British entertainment scene as part of the groundbreaking alternative comedy group, the Comic Strip, which marked a radical departure from the more traditional comedy acts of the time. Later came the all-female Girls on Top with Jennifer Saunders, Ruby Wax and Tracy Ullman. Then, as part of the wildly successful duo, French and Saunders, Dawn helped create a repertoire of brilliantly observed recurring characters parodying popular culture and impersonating everything from Madonna and Harry Potter to The Exorcist. Dawn's more recent role in The Vicar of Dibley again has showcased not only her talent but also her ability to take a controversial issue and make it mainstream and funny. From her early years as an RAF child to her flat-sharing antics with Jennifer Saunders, from her outspoken views on sizeism to her marriage to Lenny Henry, Dear Fatty will chronicle the fascinating and hilarious rise of a complex, dynamic and unstoppable woman.

Dear Fatty Details

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From Reader Review Dear Fatty for online ebook

Alex says

3 days before Christmas found me standing in Smiths, with zero inspiration, looking at the bestsellers shelves - and wondering why the hell I would want to read any of them. Katy Price, Jonathan Ross, Chris Evans...celebrity "auto" biographies... blah, blah blah. Then in post Christmas desperation I picked up Dear Fatty from the shelves at home...and half way through I was still wondering why I was bothering. Now, I like Dawn French, I love F&S and the Vicar of Dibley, she is very, very talented, and very, very funny - but does that mean that her life might be of interest to me just because she's famous? I mean it probably wouldn't be if she wasn't famous would it? Viz the opening of one chapter "I loved Lincoln" - yes well I'm sure you did Dawn, great place, but why is that worthy of my reading time? I expect lots of people love Lincoln.

What I am questioning here is the premise that text has an intrinsic worth if it is framed in the context of a celeb life - parts of Dawn's life are indeed interesting, some are tragic, but none is momentous in any wider sense - well, not yet, anyway. Now, in case this sounds overly crabby, I have read "Rich: the Life of Richard Burton" by Melvyn Bragg twice, and will probably go for a third read because it is a stupendous biog of a stupendous life. Plus it has the advantage of time - it was written at a decent interval after the death of the subject, which gives us time to reflect on a life hard-lived, time to put that life into context, and assess the contribution, the impact, the significance.

Come on guys - your lives aren't even half over and you're boring us rigid already - leave the autobiogs until there is something to sayoh, unless this is all really just about the money....

Laurie says

A lot of this memoir is bittersweet, as a large chunk of it is written to her father whom she tragically lost when she was only 19. The bits in between are interesting though not necessarily funny. I only laughed out loud twice, which I thought was surprisingly seldom for such a funny gal. Oh well, like I said Dawn has had a pretty darn interesting life, full of people and I really admire her self-confidence and upbeat attitude.

Pros: Her voice really shines through the writing and the inclusion of so many personal photos was fab.

Cons: Terrifically grating letters to Madonna. I cringed every time they came up, when I should have just skipped them.

Tania says

I liked this book. I just didn't love it as much as I wanted to or expected I would. French really is a very funny woman. As someone who always loved French and Saunders, it was interesting to read how her career developed. There are some wonderful passages in the book. Some of it, though, was a bit long and even a tad boring. I also can't say I really understand the author more now than I did prior to reading the book. With the exception of a few letters, it all felt a bit on the shallow side, and that does not work for me with a book like this one.

Overall, I'll re-read parts of this book again. I just don't see it finding a permanent home on my bookshelf.

Susan says

Poor Dawn, her denial and utter lack of self-awareness really jumps off the page. Boring, unfunny, and sad.

Bill says

Dear Dawn French. I enjoyed my first exposure to your writing style in Dear Fatty. Note how witty I am by employing your technique for the start of each chapter. (For those that haven't read the book, each chapter starts Dear 'Someone' as you address your thoughts to a family member or dear friend) I was introduced to Dawn by my wife, who is from England. We have enjoyed so much of your humour and acting; French and Saunders, The Vicar of Dibley, your acting in Lark Rise to Candleford, etc.

So I have been interested in reading this for quite awhile since I bought it for the missus back in 2008. I have to say that I've enjoyed this look at your life, the highs and lows. I found it especially interesting that you were a military brat like I was; my father was also in the Air Force, the Canadian Air Force, mind you. So I have an appreciation with that portion of your life; the moving around constantly, the trying to make and keep friends who you might only know for 2 or 3 years.

There were many touching and poignant moments in this book. I can't relate to it but I found those portions dealing with your father's internal struggles very touching. Your family dealt with it strongly and seems to have made the most of their lives, especially your mothers.

I particularly enjoyed hearing about your life in the Comic Strip and your development as a comic and actress. I wish there might have been more covered about that aspect of your life. All in all, it was an enjoyable read and I liked discussing with my wife, especially your references to pop culture in the UK. Thanks for the enjoyment. (3.5 stars)

Danni Borde says

I'm sorry to see so many reviewers putting down this book. I agree its not storyline that will solve world hunger or cure cancer but that wasn't its intention in the first place. It was just a work of creative insight into the comedy and tragedy of one of the leading artists of our time. Its an easy pick up and put down book written as if one was chatting with a good mate. I thought it was a great summer read. Cheers to the laughter and the love of Ms. French.

Kirsty says

I love watching Dawn French on TV and so I naturally had to have her book when it was released.

The book takes the less-used form of a collection of letters written to various people in her life. Through the letters she communicates her most prominent memories of experiences in her life.

Dawn definitely has a way with words. The writing flows well and it's made all the better by the fact that she's written it herself instead of having a ghost writer do it for her. The letters she writes manage to be funny (naturally) and heart-wrenching all at the same time. The letters to her Dad are particularly touching,

as he committed suicide when she was 19 and left her with so many unanswered questions.

I like the fact that she's been pretty honest throughout the book, whilst managing to keep the private things private. She writes to her husband - Lenny Henry - but doesn't really go into lots of intimate details. I respect her more for this - there are too many autobiographies now that feel the need to reveal *Everything*.

I loved this book, and I also really enjoyed looking through the (many) photographs that accompany the letters. Dawn has led a pretty interesting life, and after reading her book I like her even more.

Louise (A Strong Belief in Wicker) says

I've recently started to listen to audiobooks in the car on my short commute to work. And I'm really enjoying them. This was my second one. I was initially disappointed that Dawn wasn't reading it herself, but she does a short section at the beginning saying she felt some of it too personal and difficult to have attempted to read herself. Ok, fair enough. She enlisted a friend, Liza Tarbuck, to do the reading, and she does a great job. Liza sounds quite a bit like Dawn actually. The book is written as a series of letters to family, and friends, and would be friends like the letter her teenage self writes to David Cassidy. There's great stuff here. Some very funny. Often intelligent and well observed. Some very poignant. We learn early on that Dawn's father is to die quite young, and the most poignant letters are often those Dawn has written to her now dead father. My only real complaint is that the audio version is abridged, and I missed out on an unknown amount of this fun book.

My review on my blog
<http://astrongbeliefinwicker.blogspot...>

Laura Jackson says

Being a fairly young fan, I'm one of those who became exposed to the brilliance of Dawn French through "The Vicar of Dibley." The life of a comedian may seem glamorous and, with the way Dawn wears it to the public eye, it certainly seems to be. As with most things, this is a slightly different story behind closed doors. One thing I admire most about her is her ability to move on from hardships in her life. Dawn has adopted the "Yes, it happened but I'm not going to waste my life dwelling on it" attitude. Her letters to her Dad and to Jennifer Saunders (aka Fatty) were my personal favourites, while I found the ones to Madonna a bit odd. It was a privilege to be a second-hand witness into the life of an amazing, strong woman.

Deborah Jelinek-Lloyd says

Concentrating on memories that she finds important and vivid Dawn French uses the unusual technique of telling her life story in letters to assorted correspondents, living and dead. Endearingly, the first letter begins 'Dear You' and goes on to explain how she has decided to approach the writing of the book.

It is humorous where humour is called for but what makes the book so good, in my reading, is her ability to eloquently and appropriately convey the full range of emotion when dealing with the subjects of bereavement, love, infidelity infertility and celebrity.

Petra Eggs says

Celebrity is about as far from what you see is what you get. It's what you see is photo-shopped, spin-doctored, tailored, sanitized sound bites and images that highly paid publicists have manufactured around the original person.

Celebrity memoirs often betray the fact that behind the image of the perfectly-groomed and stunningly witty celebrity is a rather ordinary person who, outside of what they are famous for, never did anything much that anyone else would be thrilled to pay money for and read. Much like you and me.

Except that Dawn isn't like you and me, she's much more popular, much more talented and much, much nicer. She is actually the nicest person on the planet or the fakest. There is no one in the book, except one of her grandmas who is a character, who gets even a small amount of criticism. Her other grandmother is a saint and endless pages are devoted to telling us just how and repeatedly thanking her. We get the same for her (ex) husband but expanded later in the book. The only downer for her is that her father committed suicide. But still, she can thank him endlessly for all his support and just being him etc.

All her fellow actors, all her family, friends and everyone she meets is too, too wonderful, talented and loves her very much and needs to be thanked for every little thing they are. So much appreciation. So much gratitude. So little celebrity gossip or scurrilous insider information!

I must say I wondered if it was to make up for being so hugely obese? You know bigger personality and such a nice one. Don't say I'm down on fatties, I've been there and given up the cake. It's not about looks is it, it's about personality.

Dawn was a great comedian, although I never warmed to her acting, the Vicar of Dibley didn't entertain me. I preferred her as half of French & Saunders and I preferred Jennifer Saunders memoir as well, Bonkers: My Life in Laughs. To me, Dawn can be very funny, but Jennifer with her series, Ab Fab and portrayal of Edina was definitely the senior partner in that relationship. And her husband, Lenny, now ex, also a comedian but a strong Shakespearan actor too, outstripped her professionally. You don't really hear of any that in detail though. It's not all about her.

But, thank you for writing this memoir Dawn. Thank you for including all the little bits of your life that you felt people would want to know. Thank you for thanking everyone for everything they did for you and for just, well you know, being themselves and loving you.

One and a half stars and that's being generous. Say thank you.

(view spoiler)

David Edmonds says

Dawn French (one half of the British comedy duo, French and Saunders) may be one of the funniest women alive today. The other funniest woman alive today is Jennifer Saunders, the other half of French and Saunders. For those not familiar with either, they have had a successful run at BBC with their variety show, *French and Saunders*; Dawn French may be best known for her role in *The Vicar of Dibley*; Jennifer Saunders is probably best known for her role as Edina in *Absolutely Fabulous*; both have also starred in shows too numerous to list here. And every single show that I have seen them in has been top notch.

Dear Fatty is Dawn French's memoir. Like anything that French does, her memoir is frequently laugh-out-loud funny. What surprised me most about her memoir is how unflinchingly honest she is throughout. She relates her life, both its ups and downs, as best she remembers it. Written in the form of letters to her friends and loved ones, *Dear Fatty* touches on the funny and the sad in French's life. For instance, one letter is to her father, who committed suicide when she was 19, and in one paragraph that goes on for almost two pages, she asks him questions. Why he did what he did; why didn't he ask for help; etc. By the end of this particular letter, I'm not ashamed to say that I had tears in my eyes. Her frustration of 30 years of unanswered questions is so evident, and she does nothing to hide that. Of course, not wanting to keep her readers in too serious a mood, she immediately segues into far more lighthearted material, but that honesty is there and it can be raw and emotional, and I respect her all the more for it.

I never doubted her ability to write; watch any of her sketches or shows, and it's obvious she has a talent, and she excels at proving that over and over again in her book. One of my favorite lines from the book is:
?

"It's a process of having faith in the self you don't quite know you are yet... Believing that you will find the strength, the means somehow, and trusting in that..."

Words that speak volumes to me in my life right now.

I don't think many people would rush out to buy this book. First off, I'm not even sure it's available in the US yet, and secondly, I don't know that anyone who isn't a fan of Dawn French would really care all that much. But for those of us who are fans, this is a gem of a book, and even if you aren't a fan of Dawn French, I still think you'd find this a funny and revealing look into the life of one of the funniest ladies out there right now.

Highly recommended.

Sarah says

I read this for the 2016 POPSUGAR Reading Challenge (although I read it in 2017) prompt 'An Autobiography'

Jules says

I enjoyed reading this book and, as autobiographies go, found that in the end I had gained in my knowledge about the witty and rather gregarious lady that is Dawn French. I liked the style of writing in the book, however edited, and French does go into some detail about various aspects and stages of her life. Moments of the book are laugh out loud funny but moreover the book is sensitive and nostalgic about subjects such as childhood, school, friends, (and especially) family, etc. You do get the picture that 'people' are the moving force and inspiration to French's life rather than the money, power and fame thing, etc. a la Jordan et Pete. This is refreshing considering the way UK celeb culture constantly inflates and deflates itself as of late. French is definitely more genuine and whole a character. There are moments in the book that bug me, for example, when French 'over'jokes in specific chapters just for the gag factor. Unfunny French. Just stick to the autobio please and tell us about YOU - save the 'specific' jokes for the stage/telly if you please! In other parts of the book, French seems especially guarded like she really struggles with aspects of her fame. This is something that I, and I'm sure other readers, will continue to find contradictory. Surely one walks into fame aware of the pitfalls of bittersweet life, rough with smooth, etc. Non? In all a satisfactory read though. Entertaining, different, well put together, informative and a reminder, if ever we needed one, that family does, must and should come first.

Erica Mangin says

I wouldn't consider myself a devout French follower - the extent of my familiarity comes from watching the occasional episode of The Vicar of Dibley with my parents growing up (which I did find hilarious). However, this memoir was funny and sincere. She's obviously had an interesting life - I mean being a comedian isn't your typical day job - but the parts I enjoyed most were when she talked about her relationships with the important people in her life. Great read.
