

The following is excerpted from

“OUR TIME”

A Four Character Comedy

By Ken Levine

OUR TIME is a loosely autobiographical comedy about breaking into the world of comedy in 1975 Los Angeles during a golden era for comedy. Four young Baby Boomers come of age and try to find their place in this inspiring new world. They face levels of talent, degrees of desire, jealousy, confusion, competition, the sexual revolution, parental pressure, ego, insecurity, religion, discrimination, luck, struggle, and decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. Who will make it and who won't?

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# OUR TIME

by  
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OUR TIME is in one set – a tacky West Hollywood Apartment.

## CHARACTERS

SARAH – 20's, Jewish, attractive, earthy, and not shy.

ALAN – 20's, Jewish, gay but not extreme.

DOUG – 20's. Force of nature. Robin Williams-type

BOBBY – 20's Jewish, sweet disposition.

"Our Time"

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SCENE ONE -- APARTMENT -- DAY

OVER BLACK. MUSIC UP: The theme for "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." When they get to the line "You're going to make it after all" WE HEAR two voices:

ALAN (V.O.)

Hell yeah, we are! We're coming, Mary.

SARAH (V.O.)

Just let us in, Goddamn it!

Once the theme ends, LIGHTS UP.

Fall, 1975. A somewhat tacky West Hollywood two-bedroom furnished apartment.

There's a small kitchen area. A phone and now-primitive answering machine on the counter. An UPSTAGE hallway leads to two o.s. bedrooms. Furnishings are sparse. Small kitchen table with chairs, cheap bookshelves, couch, and the back of a portable TV.

NOTE: Characters have appropriate hair and wardrobe but not extreme. This isn't "Boogie Nights."

ALAN STEIN and SARAH SZIGETI are at the kitchen table. Both in their mid 20's. Alan is gay (but not extreme), Jewish, nice looking with an easy charm and wicked wit. Sarah is Jewish, attractive, earthy, funny, and not shy.

Alan is playing with a Rubik's cube. Sarah is hunched over a portable typewriter. They are writing a script, both lost in thought. Finally:

SARAH

Okay, what about this? Lou is fiddling with a Rubik's Cube and Mary says, "Mr. Grant, what do I have to do to get your attention? Jump out of a cake?"

ALAN

What? Our modest Mary Richards would never say that. You know in the opening titles where she's all bundled up and flings her hat in the air?

SARAH

Yeah?

ALAN

It was summer.

SARAH

Mary Richards is not a prude. She's just... cautious. You can't be too careful these days. Sexual Revolution be damned. She's read "Looking For Mr. Goodbar." A one-night stand can lead to murder. Okay, Rhoda's the one who gets killed, but still. Mary realizes that meaningless sex eats away at your self respect and very soul. GOD, I GOTTA GET LAID!

ALAN

Yes you do. (takes her hands) Sarah, darling, as your partner and best friend in the whole world, I order you to sleep with the first guy you see. I don't care if he's from Arkansas.

SARAH

I can't do that.

ALAN

It's been eight months. You can and you must.

SARAH

Whatever happened to the "three-date" rule?

ALAN

Oh, honey, it's 1975. It's the "three-drink" rule.

SARAH

No. I'm sorry but I have raised my standards. If I'm going to surrender my precious body to a guy now -- One -- I must want to see him a second time. Two -- (beat) actually there's only one.

ALAN

Well, please look harder. Or use that vibrator you won at the B'nai Brith raffle.

SARAH

(changing subjects) Okay, Mary comes in, says "Can we talk, Mr. Grant?" And he says, "Just let me finish this Rubik's Cube," and she says, "Fine. I'll come back in four years."

ALAN

Good.

SARAH  
Or... "Imagine you're color blind and it is finished."

ALAN  
Okay.

SARAH  
Or... "Open a jar. It's much more satisfying."

ALAN  
Wow.

SARAH  
Wait. I've got another. He's fiddling with the cube and says, "If anyone asks, I have Ted's brain."

ALAN  
(considering) Hmmmm. I just wonder if there's a better "Ted's an idiot" joke.

SARAH  
Gotcha. He comes in, sees the Rubik's Cube, and eats it.

ALAN  
(laughs, then) You're on fire today.

SARAH  
So you're going with that?

ALAN  
No.

The phone RINGS.

SARAH  
Don't say hello. Say "KHJ plays the hits." If it's them you win a thousand dollars.

ALAN  
The machine will get it.

SARAH  
What machine?

ALAN  
I just bought a 'telephone answering machine.' You answer your phone "KHJ plays the hits" and wonder why you haven't found Mr. Right?

SARAH  
It's a thousand bucks. I sell caramel corn at Farmer's Market! Is there any cockamamie new gadget you don't have?

ALAN

We live in a golden age of invention. Mark my words, someday everybody will have their own computers -- in their homes.

SARAH

Really?

ALAN

Yes. And they'll be cheap pieces of shit. But eventually they'll figure it out.

WE HEAR A BEEP, then:

MOTHER (V.O.)

Alan, it's your mother. What is this thing? I hate it. Where are you? Listen, I was watching the "Merv Griffin Show" last night and he had on your Elton John.

ALAN

(rolls his eyes) My Elton John.

MOTHER (V.O.)

And all I can say is -- thank God I taught you how to dress.

ALAN

(re his clothes) She takes credit for this?

MOTHER (V.O.)

So aren't your two years up already? You and Sarah were going to give this silly pipe dream two years, right?

ALAN

Now you know why I have the machine. And bald spot already.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Sarah's a funny girl. So if you can't break in with her then clearly it's not meant to be.

ALAN

You're the son she never had.

MOTHER (V.O.)

And don't tell me you're a writer. You're a waiter. At DuPar's no less, which makes the I-Hop seem like a kosher deli. Call me. Get rid of this thing.

SARAH

Wow.

ALAN

Yes. This was my life growing up -- "Gypsy" without the songs.

SARAH

It's a wonder you're not running down the street naked with a rubber glove on your head yelling, "Hey, I'm a squid!"

ALAN

Thank you. That's why we have to make it, so one day my mother can say: "Oh well. At least he's successful."

SARAH

Okay, so let me ask you -- does it have to be in sitcoms?

ALAN

Huh? What?

SARAH

Well, there may be another opportunity. It's not exactly what we planned, but a friend in New York just got a job writing on some new weekly sketch show NBC is starting next month. I don't know the details. There will be skits and music but all done by people our age. So we're not writing 90 year-old Bob Hope in a Beatles' wig chasing after Brooke Shields. It's supposed to be edgy and topical.

ALAN

How can it be topical?

SARAH

It's going to air live on Saturday nights at 11:30. Yeah, I know that's late, but that'll give them more freedom to be subversive. It sounds kind of intriguing, doesn't it?

ALAN

Variety is dead, Sarah. It's old, it's tired, it's pop stars in tuxedos doing Beach Boy medleys with John Wayne.

SARAH

This is supposed to be revolutionary.

ALAN

And 11:30 on Saturday night? That's the one time of the week we all go out. So who's going to be watching? Babysitters and old people who can't figure out the remote.

SARAH

You could move to New York. And forget to tell your mother.

ALAN

Excuse me, but aren't you the one who couldn't wait to get out of that hellhole?

SARAH

That's when I was a stand-up and New York robbed me of my youth and dignity. But those bagels -- you can't get 'em anywhere like that.



ALAN

I love L.A. I don't want to move to New York. It snows there, it's crowded, it's where Mr. Goodbar lives.

SARAH

I'll only date rabbis.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Alan crosses to answer.

ALAN

Sarah, we're going to make it. All we need is one break. And no one has more talent than us.

Alan opens the door. DOUG  
MANOOGALARIAN ENTERS. (Ma-noog-a-larare-ian) He's in his 20's, scruffy, charming, a force of nature. He's a young Robin Williams type but with an edge. He is carrying two old suitcases.

DOUG

Hi, where's Bobby Drucker? Which one of you ordered a Filipino bride? I'll cuddle but I won't drive carpool. Hey, do you realize there are only men out at the pool? It's like the Sea World cast of "Chorus Line." (simulates underwater) "One singular sensation." And they're all wearing Speedos. Have some decency! (a la preacher) "God Almighty will smite down you sinner boys at the pool for those grape smugglers, those banana hammocks, those ouch pouches. Say hallelujah!"

Alan patiently waits for him to finally finish. Then:

ALAN

And you are...?

DOUG

Doug Manoogalararian. I like to make an entrance. Bobby said I could crash a few days.

Alan crosses to the hallway and KNOCKS on an o.s. door.

ALAN

Bobby, there's a disturbed Jehovah's Witness to see you.

BOBBY (OFF STAGE)

Huh? Oh. Doug!

BOBBY DRUCKER(mid 20's, Jewish, sweet disposition) ENTERS.

DOUG  
Hey there, rowdy.

BOBBY  
You made it.

They hug, then:

BOBBY  
Everyone, this is Doug Manoogalararian. We were disc jockeys together in Fresno...

DOUG  
People make fun of Fresno but they had the first modern landfill in the United States.

SARAH  
Really? Is there a gift shop?

BOBBY  
And he just got hired here at KHJ -- the biggest, most influential radio station in the country.

DOUG  
Yeah, maybe ten years ago.

ALAN  
Wasn't KHJ where one of the disc jockeys shot and killed his wife and the station asked listeners to help find him?

BOBBY  
Yeah, what a contest!

DOUG  
Those were the glory days. Now they're doing "Cash Call."

SARAH  
"KHJ plays the hits."

DOUG  
Yeah, who's dumb enough to answer their phone that way? The odds of us calling have to be like a billion to one.

SARAH  
(scoffing, but overdoing) I know. Gawwwd. Who is that monumentally stuuuuuupid?

BOBBY  
(to Doug) Who cares? You're going to be on K-H-J. Every jock in the world would kill to work there -- including one who did -- and you made it all the way from Fresno.

DOUG  
Still. It's radio, which is one notch above shadow puppets.

ALAN

So what name do you use on the air?

DOUG

Doug Manoogalararian.

ALAN

Was your real name too long?

DOUG

Every station wanted me to change it. But I won't.

BOBBY

It's long but it's not Jewish.

SARAH

They wouldn't let you use Bobby Drucker?

BOBBY

Not even in Jerusalem. I was Bobby Stevens in Fresno, Bobby Williams in Utica, Wolfman Bruce in Pittsfield.

ALAN

Wolfman Bruce?

DOUG

Once they change your name they got you. Pretty soon you have to follow their format, take listener requests (shudders), and then it's just Nazi Germany. (German accent) "You vill play disco music and you vill like it!"

ALAN

"Everybody goose step to Donna Summers!"

DOUG

(a la Alan) And you are...?

BOBBY

Oh. Right. Doug, this is my cousin and roommate, Alan Stein and his writing partner Sarah Szigeti.

Ad lib "hello's," then:

DOUG

So what do you write?

SARAH

Sitcoms. We're trying to sell a "Mary Tyler Moore Show."

DOUG

So what's the script about?

SARAH

(proudly) Well... Murray, the news writer is unhappy at WJM, quits to go to another station, but that place is worse. So he tells Mary and she has to help get him his old job back.

DOUG

Uh huh, uh huh. (beat) Wouldn't it be funnier if Murray took a job working for Sue Ann? Instead of hearing about his lousy new job we see it? We get the fun of watching Sue Ann turn him into a bootlicking flunky.

Alan and Sarah look at each other.  
Shit! That IS better.

ALAN

Yes, well, we of course thought of that but rejected it.

SARAH

When?

ALAN

(sotto) Shut up.

DOUG

Well, good luck. And you, Bobby, stand-up comedy? (a la Rodney Dangerfield) "I get no respect. My parents hated me. My bath toys were a toaster and a radio. I bought a cemetery plot. The guy said, 'There goes the neighborhood.'"

BOBBY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a whole different comedy now. By and for our crowd. There's this new club called the Comedy Store. No one over thirty. It's a great chance to work on your craft and be seen. One comic, Richard Lewis has been on "The Tonight Show" six times already.

DOUG

So how's it going for you?

BOBBY

Shitty. Richard Lewis beat me to my act.

DOUG

Let me hear one of your jokes.

BOBBY

Okay, I do a bit where I'm talking about my mother. She's so fearful. Here's how crazy this woman is -- Remember the Red Dye Number Five scare? Eat one cherry and get cancer. Well, when I was a kid, she would go through my box of Trix cereal and remove all the pink pieces. Can you believe that?

Alan and Sarah laugh politely. Doug just stares.

BOBBY

Oh, I left out a key element. You have to be drunk.

DOUG

Instead of "Trix", what if she got alphabet oat cereal and removed all the sharp letters?

Alan and Sarah really laugh.

BOBBY

Sure. That could work. Thanks. Hey, why don't we get you settled? (pointing) You'll be staying in my room.

Doug grabs his suitcases and starts down the hall.

DOUG

Nice to meet you, kids.

Doug EXITS. Bobby starts to follow.

BOBBY

I am so screwed. Even the goyim write better Jew jokes than me.

SARAH

Wolfman Bruce?

Bobby rolls his eyes and EXITS. Alan and Sarah return to the kitchen table.

ALAN

Okay, Murray works for Sue Ann. We do a scene on the "Happy Homemaker's" set. Maybe see him peeling potatoes, cleaning her oven...

SARAH

Modeling bras, buying "Summer's Eve"... God, this just makes the whole show!

ALAN

I know! (then) I want to punch him in the face.

LIGHTS DIM.

END OF SAMPLE