

From Spicy to the Mooch: A Farewell to White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer

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Region: [USA](#)

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*What will entertainers do in his absence? White House **Press Secretary Sean Spicer** was more than grist to the mill of celluloid delights, becoming, by the admission of the US President, a “tv hit” smoking the ratings. When a press secretary’s conduct is valued, not for the substance of his material, but the entertainment he garners, the Republic is surely stuttering towards vacuity and ruin.*

But journalists and the entertainment industry have also colluded with this complex, feeding off the critical host. Such establishment venues as the *New York Times* have walked in step with Trump, noting how “the White House briefing – once a Sisyphean burden for ruffled reporters – became the hottest reality show in town, a star-making showcase for journalists where heated exchanges went viral and drove big ratings.”[1]

The Guardian similar intoned that the Spicer tenure had been one of turbulent propulsion, excitement and impossibilities.

“In the space of six months, Spicer had become a reality TV celebrity doing what critics said was the toughest job in the world: defending the indefensible.”[2]

As for **Conor Duffy** writing in *The New Daily*, Spicer “hasn’t just broken the first rule of being a spin doctor – becoming the story – he’s smashed it. Spectacularly.”[3] Instead of being denigrated and mocked into oblivion, the press secretary began, over time, to cultivate an affection of the sadomasochistic sort.

Precisely because idiot box ratings are what matters as a measurement of value in Trumpland, such displays as the Spicer Show, launched from the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, have been indispensable to the West Wing. He hectored, bullied, cajoled and stumbled, directing his fury at the fake news industry with monomaniacal desperation.

As one correspondent is reported to have said, Spicer “tore a strip off the media as wide as an Iowa farm”. But in time, he found himself a convict to the press brief lectern, the gargantuan incoherence of the Trump machine proving impossible to capture. If you can’t beat the show, transform into it.



April D. Ryan (Source:
@AprilDRyan / Twitter)

In a fundamental sense, then, the Spicer show has been symbiotic to American cultural and media life. Spicer brought the shine to careers otherwise kept in miniature spotlight, such as **April D. Ryan** of American Urban Radio. He latched on to Ryan early, sniffing a journalist peddling an agenda.

“It seems like you’re hellbent on trying to make sure that whatever image you want to tell about this White House stays.”[4]

What irritated Spicer, in an encounter that got a viral shot, was Ryan’s disapproving head movement.

“You’re asking me a question and I’m going to answer it. I’m sorry, please stop shaking your head again.”

This was gold dust for those obsessed with detecting gender or racial overtones. Ryan fit the casting, being a black female reporter. The social media feeding frenzy began. The hashtag #BlackWomenatWork made its inexorable march to “trending” status. Actors such as **Whoopi Goldberg** were outraged.

Naturally, **Hillary Clinton** had to add her bit to a script that was essentially writing itself. Ryan, respected, oozing integrity, “was doing her job just this afternoon in the White House press room, when she was patronized and cut off trying to answer a question.”

The Spicer promotion show has also been indispensable to such actors as **Melissa McCarthy**, whose Spicer impression earned an Emmy nomination.[5] The Trump administration may not be making America great again (in truth, probably revealing its long anticipated fall from grace) but it is minting careers in media industries and alternate realities.



Sarah Huckabee Sanders, New White House Press Secretary
(Source: [The White House / Wikimedia Commons](#))

In recent weeks, the Spicer show has been gradually wound down, suggesting that the director and producer were not overly pleased. **Sarah Huckabee Sanders**, who, with little surprise to anyone, has assumed the mantle of press secretary, started to feature more regularly. Under her strengthening hand, live audio and video coverage of the daily briefings has been banned. Transparency, hardly a word to feature in the Trump argot, has been kicked downstairs.

The new White House communications director seems to have been the catalyst for Spicer's jump. Anthony ("the Mooch") Scaramucci has stood in for Spicer at stages since May, suggesting that he was being warmed up as an addition to the show. Speculation abounds that Spicer's resignation was prompted by his disapproval of Scaramucci's rising star.

"I can say," explained Sanders, "that he understood that the president wanted to bring in and add new people to the team, and Sean felt like it would be best for that team to be able to start with a totally clean slate." [6]

Never muddy pools, even ones filled with impurities.

Scaramucci has shown himself in the past as a shape changer. He initially backed Hillary Clinton, deeming her "incredibly competent" and "the real deal". Trump, in contrast, was "anti-American" and a mere "hack politician". On Fox Business in August 2015, he ventured the view that his current employer would become the president of the "Queens County Bullies Association".

The game, then, has been upped, and the communications director will face a similarly impossible task in crafting a "communications strategy". In the temper of an atypical White House, the Mooch wished Spicer well, hoping he "goes on to make a tremendous amount of money". B-Grade directors, take note.

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Notes

[1] <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/21/business/media/sean-spicer-show.html>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/21/sean-spicer-quits-and-the-world-loses-another-reality-tv-celebrity>

[3] <http://thenewdaily.com.au/news/world/2017/06/28/sean-spicer-nostalgia/>

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/business/media/april-ryan-white-house-spicer-trump.html?mcu_bz=2

[5] <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/21/sean-spicer-saturday-night-live-melissa-mccarthy>

[6] http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/sarah-huckabee-sanders-press-secretary_us_597247f3e4b0e79ec19910b0

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