



The World of S.J. Perelman: The Marx Brother's Greatest Scriptwriter

By S.J Perelman

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Entering the warped world of S.J. Perelman is an experience. Written mainly for "New Yorker" magazine from the 1930s onwards, his sketches made reckless guerilla forays behind enemy lines to expose the absurdities of modern life and bring succour to that most persecuted minority of all: the embattled sane. A scalpel-keen satirist and parodist, he assembled a baroque range of registers and genres to lampoon the pretensions and inanities of the new language of popular culture wherever he found it - in advertising, publishing, magazines, movies, television and newspapers. But, more often than not, it is Perelman's own mock-sombre and eternally put-upon fictional persona who is the undoubted star of these sketches. While all he craves is a little peace and sanity, he is continually pushed closer to the edge by the steady stream of those sent to try him: movie moguls, the Marx brothers, Broadway impresarios, dry cleaners, house painters, insurance salesmen, au pairs, dentists and second-hand car dealers.

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