

A vibrant history of the British satire explosion of the early 1960s—from Private Eye and Beyond the Fringe to That Was the Week That Was—and its lasting influence on comedy. Humphrey Carpenters A Great, Silly Grin is both a thoughtful history and a great deal of fun. The British satire boom of the early 1960s created a motherlode of styles and material for generations of bright comedians and social critics on both sides of the Atlantic and set a standard for clever humor that still shapes comedy and commentary in America today. Carpenters history of that formative era revisits the 1960 Edinburgh Festival, when a staggeringly inspired satirical review startled a public steeped in the polite, bland banality of the 1950s; recalls the appearance in London coffee bars of a scruffy yellow pamphlet calling itself Private Eye, and looks back at the groundbreaking BBC television program That Was the Week That Was. Exclusive interviews with the people involved are woven together with a wealth of comic material, photographs—most from private collections and never before published—and other contemporary material to bring the era vividly to life. Carpenter also assesses the satirical movements impact in America. A Great, Silly Grin is a feast of nostalgia for those who remember its signature comedians fondly, and an insightful look back at a high-water mark for satire in the English speaking world.

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