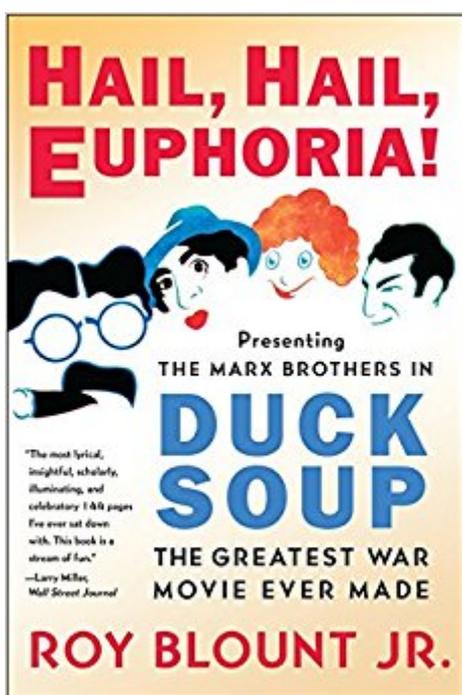


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# Hail, Hail, Euphoria!: Presenting The Marx Brothers In Duck Soup, The Greatest War Movie Ever Made



## Synopsis

Bestselling author Roy Blount Jr. tells the story of the classic Marx Brothers wartime satire *Duck Soup*. As always, Blount is informed yet informal, tongue-in-cheek yet tempered, providing the perfect voice to recount the irreverent antics of Harpo, Chico, Groucho, and Zeppo. Readers of *Harpo Speaks*, *The Essential Groucho*, and *Monkey Business* and fans of *Animal Crackers*, *A Night at the Opera* and the Marx Brothers' other timeless comedies—as well as all fans of Blount's witty and insightful books like *Alphabet Juice* and *Feet on the Street* and listeners to NPR's weekly news quiz, *Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me*—will be captivated by the lyrical humorist's compelling, behind-the-scenes storytelling of the 1933 classic film.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fifty years after first seeing *Duck Soup*, humorist Blount watched it again, worried that a new generation of viewers would “walk all over my heaven” and disrespect the experience. Instead, he found that parents and children alike appreciated the wacky humor and subversive sensibilities of the movie that debuted in 1933. The Depression-era film didn't catch on until the 1960s, when the idea of reveling in a silly, completely unnecessary war was somehow construed as an antiwar message. Blount takes the reader through the more famous scenes of the movie, as Groucho Marx, playing Rufus Firefly, the leader of Freedonia, pushes the nation into bankruptcy and war with the occasional assistance and resistance of his brothers (Harpo as Pinky, Chico as Chicolini, and Zeppo as Lieutenant Bob Roland). Blount includes commentary on

the Marx Brothers' personalities and careers: Groucho's acerbic wit, Chico's gambling and womanizing, Harpo's few speaking occasions. Zeppo, the straight man and former car thief, was reluctantly drafted into the act to replace brother Gummo, the least known of the brothers. Their mother, Minnie, was a stage mother to top all others, with a master plan for her sons that included capitalizing on shtick from vaudeville and memories of growing up Jewish in ethnic New York. Readers will enjoy the stories behind this iconic film and the careers of the Marx Brothers, director Leo McCarey, and frequent costar Margaret Dumont.

--Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Hail, Hail, Euphoria! is the most lyrical, insightful, scholarly, illuminating and celebratory 144 pages I've ever sat down with. This book is a stream of fun." (Wall Street Journal)  
"Roy Blount Jr. knows from humor. In [Hail, Hail, Euphoria!], he sets out to remedy the lack of a scene-by-scene commentary on the Marx Brothers' greatest movie, the sublimely nonsensical Duck Soup." (Washington Post)  
"An essential read for Marx Brothers fans, those curious about the melding of war and humor in film, and browsers looking for a good read." (Library Journal)  
"Readers will enjoy the stories behind this iconic film and the careers of the Marx Brothers." (Booklist)  
"Roy Blount Jr. deconstructs the Marx Brothers' magic." (Los Angeles Times)

The moment I saw that this book was just on Duck Soup, I had to check it out. I'm a Marx Brothers fan who all too often finds bios on the boys depressing or dull because the movies I love are such a small snapshot of what their lives were. Blount at times uses the narrative to ambitiously give a window into the popular culture and the Marx family history and how it influenced what made it to the screen. Other times he uses it for an excuse for Marx and other anecdotes and to wax comically. If you stick too close to expectations you have for the book, it can get tedious or meandering at times. If you take it in the spirit of fun and love the author has for the material, it's a fun quick read that will make you want to revisit the movie (or watch if you've never seen it before).

Duck Soup is one of my favorite Marx Brothers movies, which makes it one of my favorite movies period I suppose. And I usually like the writing of Roy Blount Jr. So how could I miss picking up this book? But the book is quite annoying in places, and so left me somewhat disappointed. Blount keeps getting in the way of the genius of the Marx Brothers. There are certainly plenty of interesting tidbits of information, some of which may be unfamiliar even to diehard Marxists. For example,

everyone is aware of Harpo's prowess on his namesake instrument, and Chico's piano skills are showcased in most of the movies, but apparently Groucho was just as accomplished musically on the guitar. However, Groucho playing the guitar only occurs in one movie, Horsefeathers, and then as a comedic device. And did you know that Chico's name was actually meant to be pronounced not "Cheeko" as most do, but "Chick-o" because of his woman chasing? Stuff like this makes the book worthwhile, but Blount still grates on the nerves. His imaginary movie dialogue between him and Chico is a particularly egregious example. Blount's ego at least allows him to acknowledge the lameness of the attempt, but still leads him to inflict it upon us. Completely unnecessary, yet painful. So give me more of the background of the brothers and their movies and less Blount and the book gets five stars. As it is I can give it no more than three.

I have been looking for a book focusing solely on Duck Soup, one of the funniest and most important films ever made. This movie is the very best of the Marx Brothers and should be seen by all. Ok, now on to the matter at hand...this book. This is a fairly light read (I read it in a few hours) and is not the definitive book I prayed for. It's worth reading nevertheless. The author goes through the plot of the movie while also discussing the brothers themselves, the context of the movie, and why this movie is rightly called one of the best war films ever made. The book is fairly funny, both because of scenes from the movie quoted and the author's own import. There are two fairly minor things that I have to mention. First, sometimes the author's attempts at humor fall flat. Second, because I already knew a lot about the Marxes some of the side stories lost my interest. At last one is not a problem if you know little or nothing about the brothers. So in conclusion, WATCH DUCK SOUP, watch it again, and then get this book if you want to know more about this masterpiece of madness.

Roy Blount's treatise on Duck Soup is fascinating. Blount obviously loves the film and knows quite a bit about it, sharing many anecdotes in asides as he proceeds to go through the movie almost scene-by-scene. The book is fun because it reads easily (despite some of the puns) and is filled with a lot of humorous observations by the author. Duck Soup, for those who are not familiar with it, is a movie about a country which is literally broke and desperately seeks more money to continue operating. The President, a total incompetent, manages to get his bankrupt country into a war. However, before anyone starts saying that there is a resemblance to someone living or dead I should point out that THIS incompetent president is pretty likeable. Includes several photos but no maps.

A really fun look at a really great Marx Brothers movie. It's like a DVD commentary track in book form. Roy Blount's writing is always enjoyable and always clear.

Not enough Harpo.

I enjoyed this book slowly, delectably, and with relish, in contrast to the way I enjoy Duck Soup and other Marx Brothers movies. The author gives more depth to the Soup than I would ever have gleaned from continued watching of the film. I appreciate the humorous take from this humorous author, guest on NPR's "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me" on the most humorous movie I've ever seen. What a brilliant and enjoyable chuckle and outright guffaw I've had while reading!

The Philadelphia Inquirer review of this book made it sound as though it were a laugh a minute. It was not. Roy Blount fashions himself to be as clever a writer as the writers of the Marx Brothers films. He is not. The book does not make a very clear case for why "Duck Soup" is the greatest anti-war movie ever made. I hate to say this about a book which has the Marx Brothers as its subject, but it was boring.

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