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Irving Brecher

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The Wicked Wit of the West

The last great Golden-Age screenwriter shares the hilarity and heartaches of working with Groucho, Garland, Gleason, Burns, Berle, Benny & many more



by **Irving Brecher** as told to **Hank Rosenfeld**

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Wicked Wit of the West: The Last Great Golden Age Screenwriter Shares the Hilarity and Heartaches of Working With Groucho, Garland, Gleason, Burns, Berle, Benny, and many more:*

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I am a good friend of HankBy Ridge TolbertDisclaimer: I am a good friend of Hank. Also, Irv paid me to read drafts of the book to him so he could make comments to me to pass along to Hank.I read the book when it was newly published just like an ordinary reader, someone who relishes tales of Hollywood past and present. I loved it. I could hear Irv's wisecracking voice and Hank's softer humor. Don't you just love a history book with photographs? I do. But mostly this book is funny. Two funny guys together. One old guy with lots of tales and a younger guy egging him on. And the tales told, oh my. Having lived in Los Angeles for many years I knew the locations and as a film lover I knew the movies even though much of the story happens long before there was a me.And now I am reading it once again in Kindle form. Hank asked me to look it over and let him know that the formatting, the look and feel of the book, was right. It is. Plus, I am having a great time once again immersed in old Hollywood. Even knowing all the stories and punchlines it is still a marvelous time in my head in these uncertain times. If you like funny writing, if you like Hollywood history, if you like reading on your Kindle, then buy the book and sit down by your fireplace for a very good time. Be prepared to laugh.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *The Wicked Wit of the West - Groucho Marx*By T. G. VelliniName another Man who single-handedly wrote TWO Marx brothers Movies. Who wrote the first Television situation Comedy? Wrote scores of movies. Wrote material for Milton Berle and Jackie Gleason to name a couple. Irving Brecher is probably one of the Funniest Men who ever lived, and yet few have heard of him. A wonderful book full of stories and adventures. Kudos to Mr. Rosenfeld for gathering these priceless stories before it was too late. If you like Comedy and Comedy writing you will enjoy this volume.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Brecher's moment to shine is the reader's golden opportunity.By Joe HartmanIt seems like Irving Brecher was involved in every possible facet of entertainment in the "Golden Age". Vaudeville, radio, MGM musicals, television, stand-up comedy, he was not just there, he was creating some of the best we've got.This uniquely formatted book is his chance to step out and have some spotlight on his face and both he and the reader deserve it. It's an effortless read, warm, respectful but extremely candid, and a must for anyone who's ever wanted to know what it was like, really like to be in the thick of the entertainment industry in a bygone era. Yes, you'll get those terrific cameos you're buying the book for, but the unexpected treat is the opportunity to hear Brecher's story, to get to know him, respect him, and appreciate his warmth, fortitude, kindness, and of course his humor. You'll close the book knowing more about Garland, Groucho, Gleason, Benny, Benny, Burns, and most importantly, Brecher. I'm sure that like myself, you'll be grateful he was here.

Who is this Irving Brecher? What was it like to be the only man ever to write two Marx Brothers movies by himself? To be the last of the great MGM roundtable of screenwriters? To be the famous unknown who wrote vaudeville and radio shows for Milton Berle, punched up *The Wizard of Oz*, and created "*The Life of Riley*"-on radio, in the movies, and as the very first television sitcom! Once Hank met Irv, questions like these dogged him. And Hank dogged Irv. He couldn't get enough of Irv's rapid-fire patter and acid wit. This book is the product of 6 years of Hank's tagging along with Irv, splitting pastrami sandwiches, and hanging on Irv's every word. Irv convinced Judy Garland to star in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, wrote *Bye Bye Birdie*, and gave Jackie Gleason his first TV series and a new set of teeth. The "*Wicked Wit of the West*" (as Groucho dubbed him) tells juicy tales about Hollywood legends John Wayne, L.B. Mayer, Jack Benny, George Burns, Ann-Margret, Ernie Kovacs, Cleo the basset hound, and of course, Groucho, Harpo and Chico. At 94, Irving Brecher finally gets the last word!

"The only good thing about making *At the Circus* was beginning my friendship with Irving Brecher." --Groucho Marx
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"Irving Brecher was hilarious in 1938 and he's hilarious in 2008" -Scott Eyman, author of *Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer*
"Wit is defined as the ability to perceive and express ingeniously humorous manner the relationship between seemingly incongruous things. My own definition is infinitely simpler. I define wit as Irving Brecher." -- Larry Gelbart