



Pure Drivel

By Steve Martin



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From a re-imagining of the Schroedinger's Cat conundrum to a skit entitled "I Love Loosely", in which Lucy and Ricky Ricardo play the parts of Hillary and President Clinton, this collection by comic genius Steve Martin--some pieces of which have appeared in *The New Yorker*--is both hilariously funny and intelligent in its skewering of the topic at hand.



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Pure Drivel By Steve Martin Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Steve Martin has always been one of the most intelligent of comedians (you won't find Adam Sandler writing a play about Einstein and Picasso anytime soon), but this intelligence is manifested in gymnastically absurd flights of fancy, rather than the politically informed riffs typical of performers like Lenny Bruce. *Pure Drivel* is a collection of pieces, most of them written for the *New Yorker*, that demonstrate Martin's playful way with words and his unerring ability to create a feeling of serendipitous improvisation even on the printed page. Here's a passage from a piece that announces a shortage of periods in the Times Roman font:

"Most vulnerable are writers who work in short, choppy sentences," said a spokesperson for Times Roman, who continued, "We are trying to remedy the situation and have suggested alternatives, like umlauts, since we have plenty of umlauts--and, in fact, have more umlauts than we could possibly use in a lifetime! Don't forget, umlauts can really spice up a page with their delicate symmetry--resting often midway in a word, letters spilling on either side--and not only indicate the pronunciation of a word but also contribute to a writer's greater glory because they're fancy, not to mention that they even look like periods, indeed, are indistinguishable from periods, and will lead casual readers to believe that the article actually contains periods!"

Although some of these pieces flirted with topicality when they first appeared, Martin is most successful when he leaves the real world behind and gives his wit free rein. This collection preserves the best (so far) of his glorious improvisations. --*Simon Leake*

From [Booklist](#)

Like Woody Allen, Martin expresses his intelligent, innovative, and self-conscious humor in many forms, including the written word. The short essays, conversations, and proclamations collected here are relayed in a slyly deadpan Valley voice that belies the coiled craziness of their content. Martin also brings his gift for comedic timing to these creations, setting a quirky beat that perfectly sets off their ironic wiles. The laugh-out-loud funniest pieces have a vivid physicality to them, such as "Side Effects," a hilarious takeoff on the precautions accompanying prescription drugs, while the most complex works offer witty commentary on the esotericism of science, the pretension of art, and the act of writing itself. The last gave rise to the delectable "Times Roman Font Announces Shortage of Periods," in which even the typography is amusing. Martin gets in some quick jabs at the absurdities of Washington, D.C., tells a tale from a dog's perspective, and pokes fun at Mensa, always crafting prose as notable for its meticulousness as for its drollery. And then he turns all but poetic in a piece about a "New York writer . . . forced to visit Los Angeles," a story that turns into a bittersweet and unexpectedly moving defense of his almost-beautiful, ever-hopeful city against its harshest critics. *Donna Seaman*

From Kirkus Reviews

Martin (Cruel Shoes, 1979), star of stage and screen, and a guy once glimpsed with an arrow through his cranium, here toys with ink and paper. With a gathering just shy of two dozen little pieces, of which many originally appeared in the *New Yorker*, the comedian-actor-author offers commentary in the vein of his *New Yorker* forebears, S.J. Perelman, Robert Benchley, and Woody Allen. He has improved since his *Cruel Shoes*, arrow-in-the-head days; if he hasn't yet beaten those other worthies at their special game, Martin is at least a contender. He, like them, shows continuing evidence of linguistic hypomania - he's more than a bit mad on punctuation, words, et cetera. Like Perelman, he - s also good at commentary on current and

ephemeral events, like tripping up friends or relatives with clandestine recordings, or casting the roles of incumbent chief executive and first lady with Lucy and Ricky, or deconstructing a dumb remark by Marlon Brando. Especially sharp wit is brought to bear on the bicoastal drivel of showbiz luminaries, who babble of Prada leather pants in order to hide from the fans their real intellectual prowess. Certainly the Martin oeuvre is not uniform, never monotonous. True, there's a piece about an eager dog with a set-up that doesn't support the punch line, for example, but even a belabored item about a mature Lolita can offer lines like, - - Lo-lee-tah, - she tongued. A column of sweat drained down the boy, and he entered puberty." Three or so neat and nice pages even announce a shortage of periods in the Times Roman font - and the piece does indeed finally use just one of those very punctuation points. Lighter-than-air mockery. Often ingenious. (Book-of-the-Month Club/Quality Paperback Book Club selection; radio and tv satellite tour) -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Frye:

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