



A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern

Lee Hill

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"When they're no longer surprised or astonished or engaged by what you say, the ball game is over. If they find it repulsive, or outlandish, or disgusting, that's all right, or if they love it, that's all right, but if they just shrug it off, it's time to retire."

-- Terry Southern

A Grand Guy

He was the hipster's hipster, the perfect icon of cool. A small-town Texan who disdained his "good ol' boy" roots, he bopped with the Beats, hobnobbed with Sartre and Camus, and called William Faulkner friend. He was considered one of the most creative and original players in the *Paris Review* Quality Lit Game, yet his greatest literary success was a semi pornographic pulp novel. For decades, the crowd he ran with was composed of the most famous creative artists of the day. He wrote *Dr. Strangelove* with Stanley Kubrick, *Easy Rider* with Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, and worked on Saturday Night Live with a younger, louder breed of sacred cow torpedoers. He's a face in the crowd on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (the guy in the sunglasses). Wherever the cultural action was, he was there, the life of every party -- Paris in the '50s, London in the swinging '60s, Greenwich Village, and Big Bad Hollywood. Brilliant, dynamic, irrepressible, he enjoyed remarkable success and then squandered it with almost superhuman excess. There was, and ever will be, only one Terry Southern.

In a biography as vibrant and colorful as the life it celebrates, Lee Hill masterfully explores the high and low times of the unique, incomparable Terry Southern, one of the most genuine talents of this or any other age. Illuminating, exhilarating, and sobering, it is an intimate portrait of an unequalled satirist and satyr who whose appetite for life was enormous -- and whose aim was sure and true as he took shots at consumerism, America's repressive political culture, upper-class amorality, and middle-class banality.

But more than simply the story of one man, here is a wide-screen, Technicolor view of a century in the throes of profound cultural change -- from the first chilly blasts of the Cold War and McCarthyism to the Vietnam era and the Reagan years; from Miles and Kerouac to the Beatles, the Stones, and beyond. And always at the center of the whirlwind was Terry Southern -- outrageous, unpredictable, charming, erudite, and eternally cool; a brazen innovator and unappreciated genius; and most of all, *A Grand Guy*.

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