

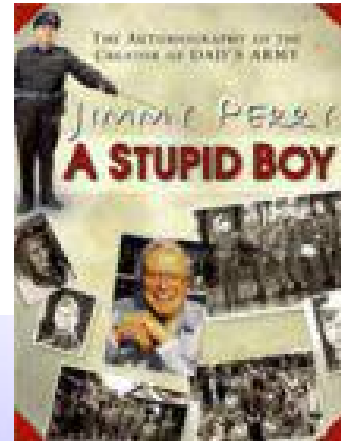


Walmington-on-Line book reviews

A Stupid Boy by Jimmy Perry

A Stupid Boy is billed as an autobiography, but in many respects it is a show business memoir and charts Perry's life until his early career as an actor. This is no criticism for this is a highly entertaining and revealing book and cries-out for a sequel. The form of the book is initially confusing – the sequence of Perry's life is told in order, but interspersed with large sections that look forward to events years or decades in the future.

There is a method to this madness however, as reading the book shows how much Perry's writing career has drawn on his lifetime experiences. And so discussion of his time in the Watford Home Guard inevitably leads on to his writing of *Dad's Army* in which so many of those experiences are set out. Similarly his wartime experiences in Burma lead to discussion of *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* and his time at Butlin's links to *Hi-De-Hi*.



A Stupid Boy is certainly a book, which is difficult to put down. Perry writes his life as a series of adventures shot through with an iron determination to 'make it' in show business, and have a good time along the way. The book offers little insight into Perry's personal life – whilst he devotes a page or two to the girl he nearly married his wife is not even mentioned. Instead the book is heavy on stories and anecdotes from a long and rich career as an actor and writer.

The degree to which Perry has drawn on details and people from his own life to fill the pages of his scripts is quite extraordinary. The book is littered with events and characters that can be seen in episodes of *Dad's Army* and the other programmes. It is also interesting to discover that whilst many would regard *Dad's Army* as his greatest creation Perry seems to take most satisfaction from *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*.

The only real criticism is that *A Stupid Boy* seems to stop rather abruptly at the point at which Perry leaves RADA to start his intended career as an actor-comic. Although some of the later events of his life are covered it feels as though a second volume of memoirs is required to complete the tale. And if he does feel inclined to put pen to paper once more there will be an eager market amongst those who have read this excellent book.

Copyright 2003 – Walmington-on-Line

www.walmington-on-line.co.uk

Arthur Lowe by Graham Lord can be purchased at Amazon or Abebooks