

## Hindenburg: an Illustrated History

(Viking Studio/Madison Press)

Text by Rick Archbold

Paintings by Ken Marschall

Immensity: that is the sensation pervading Rick Archbold's illustrated history of lighter-than-air craft and their most infamous representative, the Hindenburg. It is a tale of epic scope, spanning years, with an immense and surprisingly engaging cast; and at its centre are the great airships, almost unimaginable in their size, grace, and ultimate fragility. It is a hauntingly nostalgic and tragic tale of a bygone era, recreated in painstaking and sometimes breathtaking detail.

The book traces the development of lighter-than-air ships from the first balloon flights in the 1700's to the German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin's pioneering development of the rigid-framed, gigantic, gas-filled airships that would become synonymous with his name. Zeppelin's ships and their development were a focus of German nationalist pride in the early twentieth century, and his company would survive his death under the charismatic and courageous Hugo Eckener, master aviator and beloved global celebrity. But not even Eckener could stem the tide of Nazi domination of both Germany and its zeppelins, and it was the Nazis who later scrapped the great airships after a mysterious fire destroyed the mighty Hindenburg and discredited zeppelins once and for all. Dreams of widespread passenger and military applications of the great airships died with the Hindenburg.

Author Rick Archbold also traces the development (and in many cases, the demise) of these crafts throughout the world in those early decades of airship experimentation before the Hindenburg's fiery fate in 1937. The story of Count Zeppelin, Hugo Eckener and their grandiose dreams of an airship empire is a compelling historical novel in itself, but we are also given detailed looks at the disastrous British zeppelins, the use of airships in war (from Germany's infamous WWI bombers to the USA's WWII scout ships), and the few remaining airships in operation today (mostly for advertising and television purposes). And, of course, the rise and fall of the Hindenburg is reported in detail.

Archbold skilfully weaves technical facts with firsthand accounts and a dash of imagination to vividly recreate the airships, the people, and their voyages. Augmenting this are the illustrations: a plethora of photographs provide excellent visual reference, and a series of paintings capture great moments in the airship saga with arresting vibrancy. There are also technical diagrams aplenty, including step-by-step reconstructions of airship disasters and a detailed, fold-out cutaway schematic of the Hindenburg. Additionally, reproductions of airship mementos ranging from luggage stickers to charred mail from the Hindenburg appear throughout the book, making it a miniature museum of airship memorabilia.

This is a fascinating book from a technical standpoint, packed with information on the zeppelins and related craft: but it is also a great story of a once-proud technological achievement struggling to survive, and of the people whose lives were changed - and in some cases, destroyed - by this dream. Archbold and his collaborators succeed admirably as both historians and storytellers with this impressive volume, a lavish coffee table book worthy of the lavish airships it pays homage to.

-- Sean McQuaid

## the devil knows you're dead

(Avon Books)

Lawrence Block

Sam Spade get out of the way! Lawrence Block is a good old-fashioned crime mystery writer. After reading Block's latest work I felt renewed. A clearly refreshing piece. The plot, although not complex, contains a lovely little twist. Block has not cluttered up the action with unnecessary window dressing or senseless sensationalism.

New York city is the backdrop, one neighbourhood in particular. It includes two very distinct and separate worlds. Character development is superb. Matt Scudder is an unlicensed P.I., not the Magnum P.I. sort, but an actively recovering alcoholic with several extremely interesting relationships. Glenn Holtzmann, the dead guy, appears to be the stereotypical yuppie lawyer until Scudder starts to investigate his murder.

Jan, one of Scudder's former roommates, wants something from him; he gets it for her; then she changes her mind. Aha! There is a mystery within the mystery. Read it to find out who dunnit(s).

-- Kate Lehmann

## Choices

(Arion Books)

Marion Morra and Eve Potts

Every doctor should have a ready supply of *Choices* available for cancer patients and their significant others. This reasonably priced (\$18.00 Canadian) source book is written in a very readable question-and-answer format. All of my previously unanswered questions on various cancers have now been answered, at long last!

Being an American publication, *Choices* has certain sections concerning hospitals, doctors, where to get help, and health insurance which are not applicable for Canadians. *Choices* offers little information on alternative forms of treatment, and thus doesn't present all possible choices. Nonetheless, it is an excellent book.

-- Kate Lehmann

## Low Rent

(Grove Atlantic)

Edited by Kurt Hollander

This book is a collection of articles which were published in "The Portable Lower East Side," a literary venue for the New York alternative crowd in the 1980s. Each chapter is an article written by either a murderer, a prostitute, a junkie, or an "outsider". The authors describe their pathetic and perverse lives: for example, there is one chapter on a murderer's view of his crime. In another: why a prostitute actually enjoys her work. I didn't like it. Most of the stories did not make sense because they were written from the perspective of a junkie who was high at the time. This book is an interesting collection of smut.

-- Jennifer Caseley

## My First Puppy

(Andrews and McMeel)

Written by Karla Olson

Illustrated by Diane Blasius

This little hardcover is a charmer from the cover (containing a reflective dog bone i.d. tag) to the tail, er, I mean end. Designed as a children's source book for pet care, I found the humour appealed to the child in me, especially the section on Puppy Astrology. Karla Olson has written an incredibly comprehensive and readable pet book. Bravo!

The illustrations are colourful without being gaudy. Diane Blasius uses coloured pencils to depict an endless variety of breeds in realistic and fanciful scenes. She uses colour and framing to draw attention to important text. Yes, the illustrations compliment the text.

People of all ages will enjoy this book. The only possible drawback I could find is that the measurements are imperial rather than metric. But this could be a good opportunity to teach children how to convert to metric! I just can't find fault with this book-- although it may be a bit pricey (\$9.95 American).

--Kate Lehmann

# book reviews