A Mad World, My Masters

John Simpson
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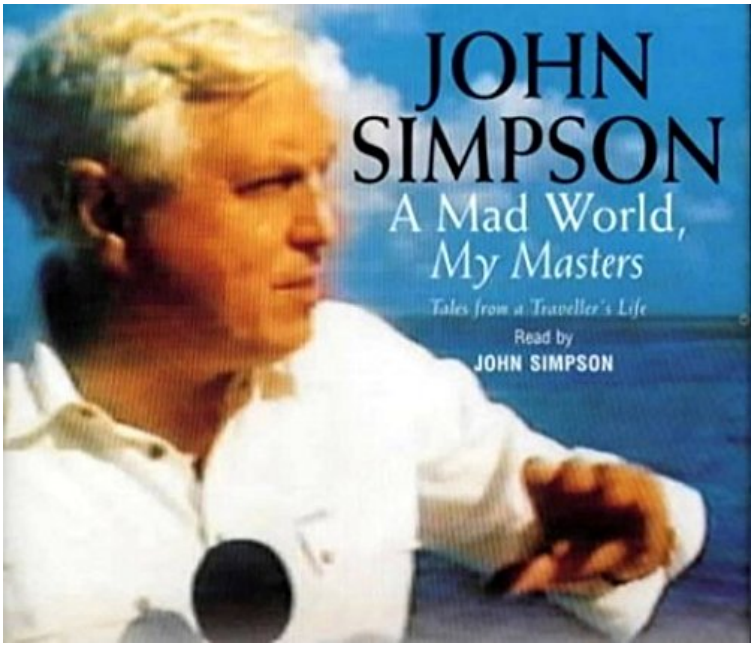

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John Simpson : A Mad World, My Masters before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Mad World, My Masters:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Seen it, been there, reported on itBy Philip SpiresIn A Mad World, My Masters John Simpson presents a set of observations and anecdotes drawn from a near lifetime of reporting for television news. Over a career spanning decades, John Simpson has worked on many of the major stories of recent history. He has covered conflicts, such as the Gulf War and the Balkans, general interest stories, such as Hong Kong's transfer and the new millennium, and more general issues such as such as the drugs and arms trades. But it is John Simpson's contact with political leaders and heads of state that adds real spice to these memoirs, some of his contacts proving decidedly surreal, all of them offering unusual insight.The book is organised around themes, such as journeys, villains, spies, bombing and absurdities. This allows the presentation of similar kinds of experience derived from different trips. It does also facilitate the reading of the book via casual dips. A consequence is that the whole experience becomes rather episodic. Apart from the sometimes tenuous theme, there is little attempt to create a consistent, general narrative. Again this facilitates the casual read, but it might antagonise a reader who wants a tad more reflection from the author.The thematic arrangement also means that on several occasions the reader re-visits a trip, leading to some inevitable repetition of material. This, however, is kept to a minimum and does not detract from the overall experience if an occasional feeling of impatience is ignored.Thus far this review has sounded like a lukewarm reception, but this would be far from the truth of the experience. The book's subject matter alone is thought-provoking, stimulating and enlightening. In addition, John Simpson's own observations are quite wonderful. And this mix is persuasive. The reader feels that the book "takes you there" rather than "tells us what it's like". It is the vividness of John Simpson's recollections and related experience that brings so much of the subject matter completely to life that we feel we might have smelled Gaddafi's flatulence, sensed a Peruvian mayor's danger or felt an Iraqi

Kurd's bitterness.Anyone familiar with John Simpson's exemplary reporting for the BBC will expect these anecdotes to contain more than trivia or merely personal experience, and, thus, will not be disappointed. But it is when the author deals with the mechanics and technicalities of news gathering that some of the more vivid experiences appear. We often forget that the process is dangerous, tiring and relentless if the product is to contain even a grain of interest. Throughout, John Simpson acknowledges the difficulties, but he also always recognises the contributions of others to the teamwork that is clearly essential to the process.This book has much to offer to anyone interested in recent history or current affairs. Even those who are unfamiliar with the author's broadcasting work will discover engaging and arresting perspectives on many issues and, in some cases, there will be analyses that will question some generally accepted positions. The book may be a little too long, but its consistent high quality ensures that this is barely an issue.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. one of the best biographies everBy AnonymousJohn Simpson describes his many years as a reporter working mostly in war zones, including some time in hospital when the rest of the overseas reporters had been made to leave. Even in hospital his workaholic tendencies kicked in...If you like hearing about travel, bizarre situations and a bit of social/cultural commentary then this will really interest you. He talks about many of the political situations and politicians he has met in a way which is more open and honest than normal BBC journalism allows. He also gives his personal opinion on some of the bombing carried out - which is at odds with official British policy.I found it really interesting to hear about John and his colleagues attempting to work an electronic editing machine in order to put their news reports together, whilst in a hotel with no electricity and no lighting.Some of his experiences and anecdotes are pretty humorous too. His words also give you an insight into a rather British upper-class (affluent) mindset and he spends almost no time commenting on the lack of basic facilities in many of the war zones he visit, and doesn't spend much time thinking about the danger he is in. He just seems to focus on the situation around him and the practicalities that interfere with him interviewing people, editing and transmitting reports. I did notice however that his 100% loyalty to the BBC never wavers. Hmm.

'Highly entertaining' - "The Times". 'What amazing tales he has to tell, and with what enthralling vividness ...Riveting' - "Daily Mail". 'The range of his travels is staggering ...Never less than entertaining, sometimes moving and often funny' - "Sunday Telegraph". There are only a handful of places left on this earth where you can't buy a McDonald's hamburger or stay in a Holiday Inn - and John Simpson has been to them all. This hugely successful volume of writing is a celebration of some of the world's wilder places. His extraordinary experiences include stories about a television camera that killed people, about how Colonel Gadhaffi farted his way through an interview and how he - Simpson - mooned the Queen.

'Highly entertaining' The Times; 'What amazing tales he has to tell, and with what enthralling vividness...Riveting' Daily Mail; 'The range of his travels is staggering...Never less than entertaining, sometimes moving and often funny' Sunday TelegraphAbout the AuthorJohn Simpson is the BBC's World Affairs Editor. He has twice been the Royal Television Society's Journalist of the Year and won countless other major television awards. He has written several books, including Strange Places, Questionable People, News from No Man's Land and Days From a Different World.