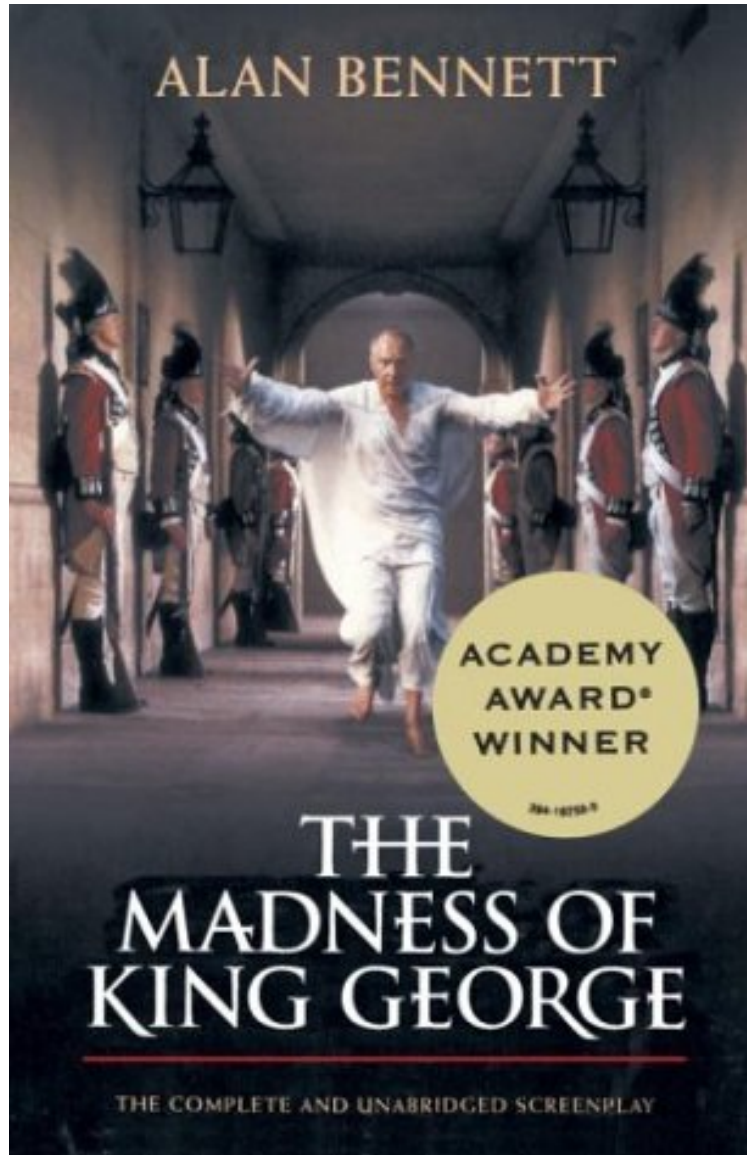


[FREE] The Madness of King George

The Madness of King George

Alan Bennett

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Alan Bennett : The Madness of King George before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Madness of King George:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One StarBy judiI didn't enjoy this book. I read it all but can't say anything positive at all0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A MadmanBy Karen C. KlennertI don't know how a person can show the madness he showed in the manner that he did and when he did. I like these types of books but they are not my favorite reads.9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Masterful Play, A Very Human

DramaBy John F. RooneyIn the fall of 1993 I saw the brilliant British import "The Madness of George III" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) with the superb Nigel Hawthorne in the title role. The beautifully structured play by Alan Bennett was entertaining and on another level highly enlightening. Playgoers come away with an understanding of palace politics and operations as well as an insight into Parliamentary political party maneuvering. The king who ruled from 1760 to 1811, probably through a bout of porphyria has a severe mental breakdown. His servants call attention to his urine which has turned blue. The worthless profligate son, the Prince of Wales, means his father no good and hopes that his condition will deteriorate so he can be named Regent. Quack doctors are called in, and the bloodletting, blistering, and emetics that they prescribe are like torture. Medical science at the time of the play's action (1788-89) was primitive and more like voodoo. The mad king wins over the audience because he is suffering such hardship from his malady and from the constant "cures." The king says, "I am not going out of my mind; my mind is going out of me." His pages have to take on the difficult task of treating their master as a mental patient rather than as a royal personage. One of the pages, Fortnum, leaves the king's service and forms the famous high end food store on Piccadilly called Fortnum and Mason's. A doctor who knows how to treat mental patients, a medical man and clergyman, Dr. Willis, is called in by the king's backers. He treats his patient firmly, sometimes having him strait-jacketed, bound in a chair, even gagged if he thinks the king's language is prurient. The king must be exercised and his spirit broken like a horse, says Willis. The king and his wife Queen Charlotte have a loving relationship calling each other Mr. King and Mrs. King. This is a very witty and literate play. Readers will laugh when they hear lines that have modern applications. The author says his protagonist "goes off the rails." At the beginning of the play a mad woman tries to assassinate the king, ironic because he will soon be unhinged. Early on the king says "what, what" as a conversational gambit. People around the king realize he has come back to sanity when he again says, "what, what." George at his low point says, "I am the king. I tell. I am not told. I am the verb, sir. I am not the object." The movie version was outstanding and faithful to the play, but it did not dwell on the complexities of political intrigue and voting blocs the way the play does. George, when sane, was a very shrewd and knowledgeable sovereign who endorsed a simple agricultural life style and knew a great deal about his people. He lost the American colonies so that subject was anathema to him. Do not be misled; this is a very human and dramatic play. We cannot help but feel deeply for the suffering of a human being who is courageously fighting off his affliction. We cheer for him and his family when he makes it back to sanity. The dramatic give and take of family struggles make us think of Shakespeare's Lear. It's a brilliant piece of theater.

George III's behaviour has often been odd, but now he is deranged, with rumours circulating that he has even addressed an oak tree as the King of Prussia. Doctors are brought in, the government wavers and the Prince Regent manoeuvres himself into power. Alan Bennett's play explores the court of a mad king, and the fearful treatments he was forced to undergo. It is about the nature of kingship itself, showing how by subtle degrees the ruler's delirium erodes his authority and status. The Madness of George III premiered at the National Theatre, London, in November 1991.

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About the Author
Alan Bennett is the author of the number-one British bestseller Writing Home. He is a renowned playwright and essayist, whose screenplay for The Madness of King George was nominated for an Academy Award.
From the Hardcover edition.