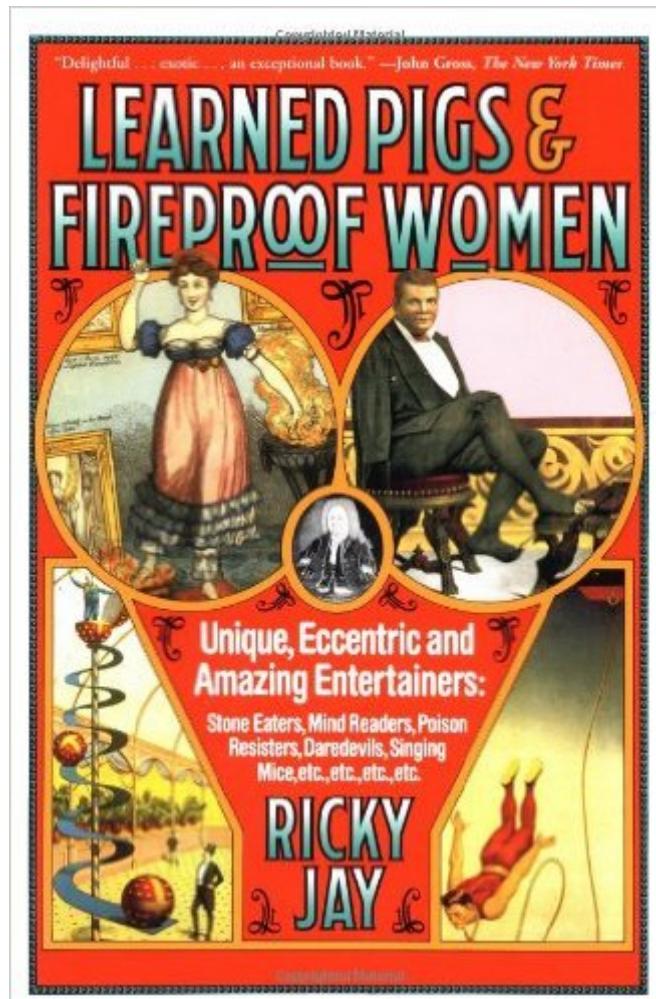


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Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women: Unique, Eccentric And Amazing Entertainers



Synopsis

A cult classic and a work of remarkable scholarship restored to print. Ricky Jay is one of the world's great sleight-of-hand artists. He is also a most unusual and talented scholar, specializing in the bizarre, exotic, and fantastic side of the human species. The youngest magician to have appeared on television, Jay has become well known for his astonishing stage show as well as for his cameos in such movies as *Glengarry Glen Ross* and, most recently, *Boogie Nights*. Jay's unparalleled collection of books, posters, photographs, programs, broadsides, and, most important, data about unjustifiably forgotten entertainers all over the world made this unique book possible. An investigation into the inspired world of sideshows, circuses, and singularly talented performers, *Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women* is history of the most unusual--and irresistible--sort.

Book Information

Paperback: 356 pages

Publisher: Noonday Press; 1st Farrar, Straus and Giroux pbk. ed edition (November 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374525706

ISBN-13: 978-0374525705

Product Dimensions: 10.9 x 7.5 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (29 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,153,630 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Circus #808 inÂ Books > Humor & Entertainment > Trivia & Fun Facts #5898 inÂ Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > General

Customer Reviews

You've come to the right place. Buy Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women if you want amazing stories, incredible histories, unbelievable accounts of some of the best acts of the last few centuries. If I didn't know Ricky Jay's fine reputation as a magic historian, I'd think this book was a joke. The people and acts described are too outlandish, too impressive to be true. But I trust Jay to strike awe into me, and he does so repeatedly and without fail in this book. The book's illustrations and photographs are marvelous supplements to Jay's smoothly written histories of performers--memory artists, dwarf magicians without arms or legs, women who walk into ovens. This is the quintessential introduction to this bizarre world.

In Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women, Ricky Jay takes on the history of oddball performers: men who claimed to cram their entire bodies into quart jars, armless ladies who could paint miniatures holding a brush between their teeth, gentlemen whose specialty was to enter large ovens accompanied by raw meat and exit (unharmed) with fully-cooked steaks, as well as mind readers of all sorts and species (human, pig, and horse). Organized into chapters by skill by oddball skill, Jay is sometimes able to document such performers back into the 1700s by tracking newspaper reports, handbills, etc., many of which are reproduced in color plates and black-and-white photographs. Ricky Jay occupies an engaging hole in intellectual space between enthusiast and academic. He is comprehensive in the extreme, but his writing style is anecdotal and he does not go for any elaborate sociological explanation of why such performers exist or what they 'mean' to society. He just wants you to have fun, and perhaps to freak you out just a wee bit. The book is also very nicely designed; its large wide pages lie flat and there are loads of remarkable illustrations. Definitely worth a look!

As a magician and card wielder Ricky Jay is fascinating to watch as well as listen to. As a writer Mr. Jay also brings his own fascination at the work of others to play and writes a truly well-written, very interesting and enlightening book about the arcane world of many sometimes downright odd entertainers. Thorough in his presentation of details Mr. Jay's book is well-researched and his appreciation and awe for these unique people makes us quite enthralled as we read page after page about performers such as Le Petomaine, with his unusual ability to produce sounds of musical quality from a most unusual source on his body. Ricky Jay, besides being fascinating to watch, is also fascinating to read.

Loaded with photos and Mr. Jay's learned commentary, this book must be the best of its kind, a celebration of what individuals can do, even under the toughest of circumstances. Yes, some of these may seem like "Freak Shows" in circus/carnivals of old, but still these performances are awe-inspiring even today, sometimes hundreds of years later. The most incredible is the severely handicapped Matthew Buchinger, master engraver/artist, who had neither hands nor feet, perhaps neglected among art historians, but revived thanks to Mr. Jay. There are many others here as well, perhaps equally interesting and unusual, but you can be sure that Mr. Buchinger's story is worth the price of admission here!!

A celebration of the strange in performance, by a man who has made a career out of amassing the

most comprehensive collection of stage and vaudeville arcana imaginable. Jay isn't just a brilliant performer: his writing crackles with desert-dry wit, and deep affection -- never, and this is important, condescension -- for his subjects, even for the crackpots and con artists. This is a glorious celebration of performing artists who are wonderful in their sheer oddness, and a paean to all that is uniquely human, and humanly unique. Marvelous; it's one of my favorite books of all time, and more than stands up to multiple re-readings.

A scholar and a practitioner. This book transformed my intellectual life in a small way. I had already known that the blabber about using only two or ten per cent of our brains is an urban legend or worse. Jay takes us into the only world I know where multi-tasking is real. The practitioners all said they were not gifted or smarter. But you must read what it was all about.

This wonderful book profiles some of the most unusual entertainers of all times: calculating pigs and acrobatic horses, stone eaters, poison resisters, daredevils, and mind readers. The contents of this meticulously researched and lovingly presented book often boggle the mind, inducing, at times, a wonderment that is nearly stupefying. Profusely illustrated with contemporary broadsides, lithographs, and photographs, the book is also enlivened by Jay's seemingly inexhaustible knowledge of each performer's antecedents, biography, and critical reception. Engrossing from start to finish, but particularly notable for Jay's account of the controversial career and bizarre death of mind reader Washington Irving Bishop, whose story beggars imagination. Also not to be missed is the final chapter on Joseph Pujol, whose career as Le PÃ t tombe was based on his ability to create music and sound effects with the least reputable of bodily orifices. A treasure

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