



The Buzzing

Jim Knipfel

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Meet Roscoe Baragon—crack reporter at a major (well, maybe not that major) metropolitan newspaper. Baragon covers what is affectionately called the Kook Beat—where the loonies call and tell him in meticulously deranged detail what it's like to live in their bizarre and lonely world. Lately Baragon's been writing stories about voodoo curses and alien abductions; about fungus-riddled satellites falling to earth and thefts of plumbing fixtures from SRO hotels by strange aquatic-looking creatures. Not exactly *New York Times* material.

Maybe it's the radioactive corpse that puts him over the edge. Or maybe it's the guy who claims to have been kidnapped *by the state of Alaska!* But Baragon is now convinced that a vast conspiracy is under way that could take the whole city down—something so deeply strange that it could be straight out of one of the old Japanese monster movies that he watches every night before he goes to sleep. But stuff like this only happens in the movies. Right?

The Buzzing marks the fictional debut of the acclaimed author of **Slackjaw**. It is a novel of deep paranoia and startling originality. And it could certainly never happen. Right? *Right?*

The Buzzing Details

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Author : Jim Knipfel

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From Reader Review The Buzzing for online ebook

Ron says

You'll blow through this somewhat entertaining book in less than a day, but Knipfel is like Chinese food: you're hungry again an hour later. Don't fall into that trap. Unlike good food, Knipfel doesn't really offer much substance or resolution to his stories and there isn't enough in the way of literary flash to recommend it.

Mikey says

If you're truly exhausted, where your sweat begins to smell like a cross between lemon rind and the tiles of public bathroom, raged and weary from alcohol, you might like this book. It has little beginning, and in truth it ducks out before the end. If you have a soft and loving heart you may appreciate the tenaciousness of its main character. I did. Also, the thought of Godzilla coming to kill everyone can seem soothing at certain times of the day.

Steve Kline says

Ehn. This one was hard to finish.

The author tried to put his reporter character into an absurd plot involving schizophrenics, generalized kooks, and the state of Alaska, but instead just repeats himself over and over about how the world is a strange place and the reporter is jaded.

It's as if the author wrote a short story and said, "Holy Jesus, I have to turn this into a book," and added a bunch of filler to see how many more pages he could squeeze out.

Bandit says

This is actually the first Knipfel fiction book, though not the first one I have read. He's grown stronger as a writer since, but what a great start he had. The way that man can write disheveled beaten down by life protagonists or New York City or wacky off the wall stories or paranoia are just absolutely awesome. This book is no exception, with characters ranging from eccentric to insane and a conspiracy theory quite literally straight out of a B scifi flick. Very entertaining, very quick (about 3 hours) read. Recommended.

D.M. Dutcher says

Your enjoyment if this is directly tied to your love of old Toho monster flicks. If you like them a lot, this

book will be pure genius while managing to be a little bit scary and profound at the same time.

Roscoe Baragon is a reporter who used to be one of the best in the country, but traded that in for a secure, comfortable beat at a small NYC paper. He seems to magically attract kooks who tell him their life stories. The problem is that their stories are starting to link together: something to do with Barrow, Alaska. And more things keep coming: radioactive corpses, homeless people disappearing, a very strange realty corp, and Biolab 1 falling from the sky. Why are the whales disappearing?

If you love Toho monster flicks enough to recognize where Roscoe's last name comes from, you will adore this book. It also manages to be a commentary on conspiracy theories and unreality, and how craziness may not be altogether crazy when the things might have a good chance of actually happening. If you've ever stayed up till 3 am in the morning with an old VHS of Destroy All Monsters, you're this book's audience.

Holly says

Roscoe Baragon works at a major newspaper in New York City covering the not-so-prestigious off-beat stories, the alien abductions, the conspiracy stories, the dirty government coverups. Somehow, all the crazy people in NYC find a willing ear in Baragon. When some of the stories begin to interweave in a world-wide takeover plan, no one believes it but Baragon, who falls into the rabbit hole.

****spoiler alert****

This short book could have been even shorter; I was frustrated by this seemingly unconnected string of crazy stories and characters for approximately 50% of the book; it didn't read like a mystery where the reader follows the protagonist as he or she tries to make connections - Baragon appeared to be a washed up alcoholic with his own levels of crazy paranoia. I think the intent was tension between wondering whether Roscoe was nuts or whether he was actually on to something, but for most of the book this reader couldn't have cared less either way. Once it was clear it was the latter, I hoped the book would end in a firework display of crazy, of total world annihilation à la Vonnegut or Michael Faber but all we get is four paragraphs contained w/in one page! "Splat" goes the climax.

The book's cover design is by Chip Kidd and is amazing; that and the blurb by Pynchon were why I was drawn to this book in the first place - clearly surfaces can be deceiving.

Brendan says

Another reason I miss bookstores is stumbling across gems in the way I did this one, Jim Knipfel's funny and bizarre (and at times, poignant) *The Buzzing*. Though I'd never heard of Knipfel, any book with Godzilla on the cover is going to get my attention.

What I remember of the plot is that Roscoe Baragon, a once respected and award-winning journalist, has fallen so far that he now covers the "kook beat" for a New York newspaper. That means he's used to taking phone calls from crazy people, schizophrenics and bipolar and the like, and digging into all kinds of strange happenings. Of course, most of them don't pan out, but Baragon is a dogged reporter and he'll follow up on anything.

Throw in a bizarre phone call from Barrow, Alaska, homeless people going missing, his medical examiner girlfriend reporting that one of the bodies in the morgue had set off their radiation detector, a nuclear submarine sinking a Japanese fishing boat, and an earthquake off . . . Barrow, Alaska! . . . then Baragon is either going as crazy as his tipsters, or he's somehow managed to stumble onto the biggest story of his life.

What I remember liking very much about this book was it capturing perfectly an old school reporter watching everyone in the newsroom (including his bosses) getting younger and younger than him. A long time smoker finding it harder and harder to find places to smoke. Baragon's obsession with Japanese monster movies of the sixties. And the relationship between Baragon and his girlfriend, who dances by herself, and may (or may not!) be in on the plot (if there is one!)

I know the book isn't for everyone, but I enjoyed the hell out of it. Funny thing too, I remember not long after reading it, seeing dozens of copies in the remainder bin, and being both disappointed and curious about that. So, I did some Googling.

I didn't know this while reading it, but Knipfel (though far younger than Baragon) had been a longtime journalist himself. He'd also famously suffered with losing his vision and had written a very well received memoir about that. So, whether this, his first work of fiction, was just too far afield for either his newspaper or memoir readers to follow, I don't know.

All I know is, you ever want to read something that might have been created by a collaboration of Kurt Vonnegut and Philip K. Dick while both were high on mushrooms, you could do a lot worse than *The Buzzing*.

Adam says

This was, all said, an 'alright' read. It definitely falls short of Knipfel's "Slackjaw" which I read first and thought was great. The Buzzings main character is a lazy, conspiracy-theorist of a journalist who, when he's not watching old B rated Japanese monster movies, writes the for what is referred to as the 'kook beat'. Its a recurring article in the newspaper he works for that cover wacky, off-beat and sometimes downright crazy people and their lives, opinions, fears and stories from little green men to giant corporate and government cover-ups. In this book he comes upon one that he actually believes may be true and happening; that a submariner/atlantis-type sea people are planning to take over the earth. He follows leads until he thinks he has it all figured out. The ending leaves you wondering if it was all a delusion in his head or if the guys hunch was spot-on all along. All in all not a great read but it helped pass the time on the train to and from work for about 6 days.

Austin says

Just finished this over three nights before bed. I picked it up at a used bookstore because it looked like it might be funny and surreal and it had a quote from Thomas Pynchon on the cover. At the very least, it didn't look sentimental.

So anyways, I found most of "The Buzzing" pretty cutesy and forced on the whole. Knipfel is supposedly a great memoir writer, so I expected some more verisimilitude with regard to how actual spoken speech

sounds, whereas the dialogue here was dull when it didn't ring false.

The trouble with "The Buzzing" is that it was SUPPOSED to be right up my alley - the subject matter is conspiracy theories, the kooks who believe in them, fringe journalism, and cheesy horror and monster movie buffs. As a dedicated MST3K fan, I appreciated the "Godzilla Vs. Megalon" jokes (even the protagonist, Barragon, is named after a monster in a Godzilla movie). Some of the plot turns were clever, but too much of this was merely clever, if you know what I mean. This book is a small trifle recommended to truly foaming-at-the-mouth Mystery Science Theater 3000 fans for all the references, but not exactly life-changing.

Novack says

after reading all 3 of his fantastically caustic memoirs, this was a real disappointment in all aspects. quite forgettable. in fact, i'm not sure i ever knew what it was about.

Paul says

This never gets off the ground, and is boring as well. Not sure why there s any hype for this writer, I will not be trying another.

Kaite Stover says

In a psychedelic ode to paranoia, New York style, Knipfel has the reader follow "kook beat" journalist Roscoe Barragon as he researches the story that will earn either a Pulitzer Prize or a rubber room at Bellevue. Noirish characters Barragon and his friends, NY morgue pathologist Emily and trash SF filmmaker Eel, become caught up in Barragon's pursuit of a conspiracy involving whales, earthquakes, Japanese fishing boats, nuclear submarines under the control of vacationing golfers, a lost mythical sea colony akin to Atlantis, and Godzilla. If it seems like a challenge to bring this conglomerate of subjects together, Knipfel meets it head on and ties up all the loose ends at te end of his first novel. The story takes a while to build as the author carefully lays out all the unusual puzzle pieces for Barragon and the reader to discover. Once the pieces start falling together te plot moves quickly to the end, taking the reader on as harrowing a ride as the roller coaster at Coney Island. Fans of "Lost" may get a big kick out of this novel that brought warped mythologies and scratch-yr-head theories together before the desert island whacky spa became a household name.

J.C. says

a quick little read about a guy who is either caught up in an elaborate, international conspiracy or is losing his mind.

This is Knipfl's first work of fiction. I would highly recommend his first book Slackjaw, a biography, before

trying to read anything else. He is an interesting, crazy ass person and it would help you appreciate this book more if you know what he has been through.

Josh Newhouse says

I recently discovered this author and I read the 1st chapter on Amazon. Now having read the whole book in one sitting I am left flummoxed...

On the one hand it pulled me through from start to finish... on the other I felt cheapened by the albeit telegraphed unfinished, wide-open ending... really liked the book... but I wanted a resolution I feel I did not get...

even just a simple muttered Thank the Gods by his friends... or something else... the ending was so far fetched if taken one way, but too sad if taken the other... it made me angry which I suppose is a success...

Second book I did not think I would finish that I devoured by Knipfel and I await his third eagerly... though with a little trepidation!

Ron Grunberg says

This is a little scary. Jim Knipfel is an amazing writer. He's written about kooky things in a weekly column (now finished) in NY Press, for several years, and the protagonist in this first novel of his is a grizzled newspaperman who works the "kook beat" for a major NY metropolitan daily. This guy's even more of a misanthrope than the real author. Or perhaps better put: unlike Jim, this fictional writer is much too much wrapped up in his off-the-wall characters. He believes or thinks too much of what they say is possible. It's more than lending an empathetic ear. To follow the crazies, the paranoids, deep into their delusional testimonies is to risk getting lost...

Jim paints an all-too-accurate picture of modern society, which is sort of in his periphery...the world of young cookie-cutter journalists, the corporate world, the world of authority, the "official" world that goes on all around him.

The only reason I didn't give five stars, which I usually do when I love a book or think the writer is fantastic, is that so deeply does Jim go into many of the characters' off-the-wall ravings that it became difficult to maintain the stamina to stick with those bizarre twisted nonsensical tales; to my perhaps too impatient soul, it became a bit tedious.

Isn't a main reason so many reviewers give less than sterling reviews a reflection of their own (our own) shortcomings as readers? I remember, especially years ago, whenever coming across a difficult or impossible-to-understand passage by what was obviously a great author, I'd tend to blame the author, for writing a "bad patch"--never myself, for just not being intelligent enough, or quiet enough, receptive enough, to read what he was saying...
