



The Hell of It All

Charlie Brooker

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'Mankind clearly peaked about 40 years ago. It's been downhill ever since. For all this talk of our dazzling modern age, the two biggest advances of the past decade are Wi-Fi and Nando's. That's the best we can do.'

In his latest laugh-out-loud collection of misanthropic scribbles, hideous Q-list celebrity failure Charlie Brooker tackles everything from the misery of nightclubs to the death of Michael Jackson, making room for Sir Alan Sugar, potato crisps, global financial meltdown, conspiracy theories and *Hole in the Wall* along the way. The collapse of civilisation has never felt this funny (unless you're a sociopath, in which case it's been an uninterrupted laugh riot since the days of the Somme).

This book is guaranteed to brighten your life, put a spring in your step, and lie to you on its back cover.

The Hell of It All Details

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From Reader Review The Hell of It All for online ebook

MJ Nicholls says

I don't own a TV, and consequently have become that smug gloater at parties who stands there pooh-poohing all forms of boxed entertainment in favour of books. *The Wire*, you say? Oh, very impressive I'm sure, but have you read Sorrentino's *Aberration of Starlight*? Big Brother is the bane of civilisation, you say? Well, you've only got yourself to blame, sitting there in your pants at 3AM watching Jonecy tongue a carrot. Have you read any Gert Jonke? Don't: he's *soo* tiresome.

As TV critic for The Guardian, Charlie Brooker sifts through the rubble of television for signs of life among the intellectual decay. He's like Don Johnson in the cult film *A Man & His Dog*: wandering through a post-apocalyptic wasteland, he stumbles upon an underground cult of clown-faced freaks, then decides he'd rather starve than be corrupted by morons. Amen.

He's either a prophet or another transitory sneerer making a living through bile. I lean towards the former: this is sharp, incisive, furiously sensible prose.

Jo says

I think I just wet my pants. Too funny.

Godzilla says

Charlie brooker's books can be a difficult read, as it a relentless stream of invective and brutal summarising of how crap the world we live in is.

However the writing is superb and his dark humour has some genuine laugh out loud moments.

It's one of those books that will infuriate anyone else in the room with you whilst you read it. I found myself making involuntary remarks, sniggers and guffaws. This is irritating for anyone around you, and you certainly can't explain to your kids why you're laughing!

The book also serves as a short term memory jogger for recent events, as Charlie hangs a lot of stuff around topical news events (the book is a compliation of his weekly newspaper columns)and I found myself marvelling at how these things always feel like they happened last week, but in fact it's been a couple of years since the event.

The points about the vacuity of Big Brother and other reality shows are made crystal clear when you realise that you have no clue who he is going on about.

Charlie's world may be bleak and hate filled, but frankly it seems to reflect the current world we live in pretty well....

Edward says

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Oscar says

Even a few years after the columns were written (08-09) this collection is still brilliant. Hilariously dry.

Tonielle says

This book is tricky. It probably deserves at least a 3 star, but despite the hilarious truths and times I laughed so hard I cried, I still couldn't finish it. If I owned a copy I would have finished it and while I love the hundreds of pages of pure sarcasm, I found that it could only be read in small increments and I was infinitely scanning over paragraphs about 'I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!', 'Big Brother' and 'X-Factor'. If you are into reality/trash TV and fake celebrity culture then this book is for you, however I despise this sort of entertainment. The other reason that I felt I could only read this in small increments is that the constant antagonistic and sarcastic approach to seemingly indiscriminate topics is trying over the course of 400 pages. Another point is that if you do not live in the UK or have never been to London, you will not get 85% of the references and/or jokes. I didn't have this problem as I lived in London for many years, but I would not recommend this book to any of my American family or friends for the aforementioned reason. I would however recommend this book to my British/English friends because it really is a very good laugh.

Sarah Perry says

I laughed loudly, in public. People nearby must have thought I was a bit demented. But Brooker's a funny bastard.

I'd like to insert a coin into him for a personalized misanthropic rant every time I get crankyhearted. Topics I would request: cancer, landlords, pet people, coffee sippers, men getting waxed, buskers, Australia... I enjoyed the part about nightclubs, spiders, The Apprentice, relationship failures.. I don't care about his video game preferences and skipped through some of those parts, but that's just me.

Sarbjit says

Charlie Brooker truly has acerbic eyes, two to of them, that make him write funny and acerbic things that are

as funny as they are acerbic. Yay.

Daniel Sevitt says

I've thoroughly enjoyed all three volumes of Brooker's collected Grauniad columns. I'm sure this isn't the ideal medium, but I have found that in this format they read like molten lava that has cooled enough to harden, but would still melt your Crocs if you were to hike across it on your way to sacrifice a small child to the unforgiving gods of Snark Volcano. Also, he makes me laugh.

James says

This is the second Book by Charlie Brooker that I've read, the first being *I Can Make You Hate*, which I enjoyed enough to make me read another, a second, the review for which I'm writing now, at this very moment, my fingers pressing keys, keys that represent symbols, symbols that when strung together make words, and words that when arranged into a certain order express thoughts, on this occasion the thoughts that I have about this book, the book that I've just finished reading.

The Hell of it All, is quite simply, and definitely the funniest book that I've ever read. I found myself frequently erupting and guffawing with laughter in public places. On several occasions I laughed so hard I couldn't read anymore; imagine that, laughing so hard that you had to put the book down, because that's what actually happened. I don't know if this is because I share the author's misanthropic sense of despair and futility towards all human endeavours.

Brooker focuses this sense of futility to make observations about a broad range of banal and senseless events that modern society appears all too happy to embrace. Subjects like reality T.V, holidays, the media, politics, celebrity deaths, and urban living, are all scrutinised with the same level of disaffected resignation. Brooker is able to identify the futility that lies at the heart of modern life, your life to be exact.

If you've long suspected that your life is little more than a meaningless, symbolic procession from the womb to the grave, Brooker will confirm this for you, leaving you in no doubt that it's all been a complete waste of time. Reading this review was just such a waste of time, you see how much of your time I'm wasting? Are you still reading this? You fool, I'm just wasting your time. Still whatever else you might go on and do next is equally as likely to result in a similar feeling of disappointment, so it's up to you. Maybe you should just keep reading this ad nauseum until you've lost your final shred of self dignity, along with your will to live. This is really the only choice that you've got left to make, and both will be utterly pointless, both will leave you scratching your head, saying to yourself, "the hell of it all".

Anthony Ryan says

A collection of Charlie Brooker's Guardian columns from 2007 when his misanthropic rage was at peak boil. Brooker turns his splenetic eye on seemingly every aspect of modern culture, from the soul-sapping inanity of reality television to the empty platitudes of the media-trained political class. Brooker's abrasive critique is often hilarious and also enlightening as to the varied inspirations behind his wonderfully nightmarish TV

series Black Mirror. Recommended for anyone who ever threw something at the telly.

Gav451 says

So the reason this took so long to read (and I was all too aware of the fact it was sat there in my currently reading box) was that it fell down the back of a cupboard and I only re-found it a few weeks ago.

Its great, a series of reprints (with the very occasional updated comment) of articles he wrote in the guardian. I like these books now and again as you can dip in and out of it. You are not following a narrative at all.

More than that it is very pithily and well written it is a book I often chuckled at. Very occasionally it felt a hint mean spirited but it was always funny. It was at its best when the author was being open and frank about himself and his ways. These may have been my favourite bits because I like self depreciation rather than attacking others but that does not change the fact that they were my favourite bits.

I great read. I have already bought another 2 to read so I will be back to Mr Brooker. You could do a lot worse than this if you have a yen for a collection of articles.

Negin says

I love Charlie Brooker. This book wasn't as relevant and funny as his others. I couldn't fully relate to much of the pop culture in the U.K, since I no longer live there, never mind the fact that the book was slightly dated. It was enjoyable, but not as good as his other book, "I Can Make You Hate".

Paul Chafer says

Charlie Brooker is a literary genius, a first class wit, a sublime intelligence and so very, very smart. I have yet to find anything of his that I do not like or enjoy, from his writing, to his series of Black Mirror. Give me more Charlie Brooker and I will be a happy man.

Helen Callaghan says

Merry Christmas to me! I'm celebrating mine by being laid off from work, waxing too footsore to get any walking in, and indulging in seasonally-affected melancholia with only a hamster and a teapot for company. In short, I'm in the best possible psychological place to appreciate The Hell Of It All by Charlie Brooker, which I should have reviewed on Friday but didn't because I chose to sit around in my dressing gown and snarl bitterly at the computer instead.*

I would have snarled bitterly at the TV, but happily, since I watch Charlie Brooker's Screenwipe on YouTube, I don't have to. He demonstrates convincingly that it's every bit as shit as you suspected, so you can move on with your life. He's been performing this service since the late nineties. His website TV Go Home was a wonderfully surreal mock-up of the Radio Times, featuring shows such as Grief Digestion

Theatre (where actors are told that a close relative has died suddenly 18 seconds before they're due on stage), hallucinogenic synopses of Neighbours where "Toadfish rows a boat made of Disprin across a sea of piss", and ultimately, and most memorably, Cunt, where Nathan Barley, worthless twenty something trustafarian media wannabee, is described in terms of such toe-curling contempt and spleen it can induce spontaneous eye-bleeding ("Nathan Barley visits an overpriced Soho shitstack to waste £350 on a selection of ironic Christmas gifts...and a Japanese digital camera that prints photographs on marzipan-scented recycled fucking toilet paper").

And Cunt is where we get off, because the rage engine that powered such eviscerating loathing for the smug meedja luvvie is the same one powering his column. Media itself is not so much reviewed as the series of lazy assumptions behind it (Heat magazine is described as the "tittering idiot's lunchbreak reading of choice" while it invites readers to make fun of Jordan's disabled son, the convenient appearance of sob story backgrounds from unlikeable Apprentice candidates is critiqued, the double barrelled titillation/empowerment nonsense of shows like "Credit Crunch Monty" where ordinary members of the public are stripped and reduced to tears to give them "confidence" is heaped with scorn).

Underneath it all though, there is a sense of unpleasant realisation. Someone, somewhere, is making this stuff and putting it out, and thinks that this is interesting to you. That they're taking you in. That they know who you are, that they've got your number. And the reflections are all distorted and insulting, a kind of Hall of Mirrors of calumny. This is the thing that you suspect makes Charlie Brooker angry, and before very long, you're pretty fucking angry yourself.

The book itself is a compilation of Brooker's column in the Guardian, so obviously it has no particular ongoing theme other than the fact that everything in the universe is rubbish, but especially the media, politicians, relationships, and himself. Oh, and spiders. Or so he'd have you believe, except that every so often he will write lyrically about the legacy of Oliver Postgate (voicer and co-creator of Bagpuss and The Clangers), or on the TV dissection of elephants, or Heston Blumenthal's Feast, and you realise that things aren't hated on principle, just when they're shit. Which is, unfortunately, fairly often.

But the best thing about it is the relentlessly sharp and vicious word portraits drawn in a single sentence: Alan Sugar "used to look like a water buffalo straining to shit into a lake", Richard Dawkins is "god-hating Professor Yaffle impersonator", William Hague a "cheery dot-eyed cueball". Every article is a delight, containing some new phrase or surreal idea - something to love even while it spears the thing it describes in a display of audacious cruelty.

And the index is a thing of beauty. Be sure to look up the phrase "might as well..." in it.

It may be Hell. But it is also passionate and enormous fun.
