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Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights

Bruce Schoenfeld

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#3149469 in Books Simon n Schuster 1992-03-15Original language:English .90 x 6.30 x 9.40l, #File Name: 0671727486240 pages | File size: 25.Mb

Bruce Schoenfeld : Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A well-written and illuminating insight into a complex worldBy A CustomerRecommended not because it contributes greatly to the literature on bullfighting, but because it is a well-written and fascinating book in its own right. Some knowledge of Spain and bullfighting is helpful, but the book has a broad appeal to anyone who enjoys the exploration of human drive and compulsion.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. fascinating look at the bullfight and the aficionadoBy scrabbleSchoenfeld followed the 1989 bullfight season in Seville and elsewhere in Spain. Excellent insight into the mind of the aficionado and the workings of the bullfight.

Bullfighting is the vivid focus of this absorbing portrait of Spain-a nation poised ambivalently on the cusp between past and future. The Last Serious Thing is about the spectacle of bullfighting: its technique, its present heroes, its resplendent history, its place in the world. But it is also a probing work about Spain and the Spanish soul - a book as deeply perceptive as any by Bruce Chatwin or Jan Morris. Set in the historic city of Seville, now poised to be transformed by the events of 1992-the Spanish Olympics, the World's Fair, the new unique market of Europe-The Last Serious Thing sweeps the reader into the spectacular pageantry of bullfighting-the romantic, deadly art that to countless proud Spaniards symbolizes all that is best and bravest about their country.

From Publishers Weekly
Freelance sportswriter Schoenfeld claims that bullfighting is an art that makes viewers keenly aware of their own mortality. "It's serious stuff," he muses. Based on a recent stay in Seville and a sidetrip to Madrid, this smoothly written travelogue profiles famous matadors, alive and dead, including the American John Fulton. Schoenfeld probes the psychology of the crowd and conveys details about the history of the so-called sport, bull breeding, fighting techniques, Hemingway lore and Spaniards' vicious prejudice against Gypsies (many matadors have Gypsy blood). Those who believe that bullfighting is a sadistic spectacle will find this book repellent, notwithstanding Schoenfeld's impassioned defense of bullfighting, an argument with more holes than a sieve. His descriptions of "brave" matadors' maneuvers, their "artistry" and "graceful" kills make one root for the bull. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus s
Blending the passion of an enraptured fan with the measured eye of a seasoned journalist, free-lance sportswriter Schoenfeld (The New York Times, Sport, etc.) delivers a lyrical, unapologetic paean to bullfighting and its devoted followers. Set primarily in toreo-mad Sevilla, a contemporary city with its heart firmly in the past, the narrative, while impressive in sketching the history and current status of the sport, is overwhelmingly (and delightfully) a tribute to the unique relationship between fans and this oddly "metaphysical" sport. Unlike Hemingway's *The Dangerous Summer* (mentioned frequently, along with his *Death in the Afternoon* and James Michener's *Iberia*), Schoenfeld's study lacks a specific focus in terms of the bullfighting world, with the author meandering from bullfight to bullfight as he attempts to invoke the essence of that contest as experienced by those in its spell. Foremost are the dedicated fans, Schoenfeld included, enduring the tedium of uninspiring matches ("in contemporary bullfighting...quality is scarce") in pursuit of one transcendent performance ("something unavailable within the bounds of daily life...the glimpse of immortality"). Among them is a strange coterie of Hemingwayesque foreign aficionados, deftly depicted, who follow the bulls throughout Spain each season. Center stage, of course, belongs to the matadors--skillful figuras, uneven young aspirants, and stubborn old-timers--alternately adored and reviled by the masses of "taurine junkies." Rounding out the text is a skillful explanation of the distinct rituals and intricate maneuvers of the sport, pictured here as the ultimate high-stakes performance art. Although Schoenfeld will not convert any bullfight detractors--true, crowds applaud particularly noble bulls, but even the best get no reprieve--he succeeds admirably on his own terms in offering an entrancing portrait of an unusual, "passionately illogical" world. -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.