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The Hyena & Other Men



Synopsis

Many myths surround the "Hyena Men" who haunt the peripheries of Nigeria's cities. Accompanied by hyenas, rock pythons and baboons, these men earn a living by performing before crowds and selling traditional medicines. Pieter Hugo's extraordinary portraits of their liminal existence reveal an uncanny world of complex, codependent relationships, where familiar distinctions between dominance and submission, wildness and domesticity, tradition and modernity are constantly subverted. Nigerian journalist Adetokunbo Abiola introduces readers to the "Hyena Men," explaining the traditions and mystique behind their practices. Presented in thirty-five full-color plates, these intense portraits reveal why Hugo is one of the most exciting young photographers at work today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ever since I heard about this book at a photo festival I knew that I had to have it. The photos are very captivating. The most difficult part about being a great photojournalist is not to capture sharp or well composed images, but rather the telling of stories from areas or societies that not everyone has access to. Hugo has done a phenomenal job on gaining the acceptance of the dog trainers and perhaps even the dogs/hyenas themselves. The photos in this book are masterfully done in every respect. Printing is exquisite. However, my gripe is with the editing of the book itself and in the selection of images. After about 20 photos of the same couple of guys posing with their hyenas I want to see more. Several photos look like they have been taken minutes apart. There is little contact between man and dog and even with their surroundings. We don't get to know the people behind

the hyenas, it is as if we meet them by chance on the street and they agree to pose for us. All that said, I think this book is slated to be a future classic, especially if Hugo made a re-edition with more varied images!

It never fails. A friend picks up my copy of the book, staring at the photo on the jacket, and then starts to turn each page, slowly, softly whistling, or humming, or whispering, "what IS this?" I've been around wild hyenas a bit, and they're fascinating animals. Their "laughing" is clearly a complex, almost dolphin-like language. They're rather timid, nowhere near as ferocious and dangerous as the big cats, to which they are apparently related. And then, the photos of man and baboon, just two stoic guys looking at the camera. These are photos that defy description. It's true, as one reviewer observed, there aren't enough photos. How could there be enough?

If you're unsure as to whether or not you might like this book, search online for the author's web site. He has one of the two text narratives posted as well as most of the photos in small images. If you like what you see there, you'll love this book. Though the book layout is very simple, the print quality is top notch. Finally, if you care about such things, the copy of the book I received in the mail today was the fourth printing, not the second printing like the product description promised. Highly recommended.

This was the first photo book I've ever purchased and it was mesmerizing. Incredible subject, fascinating environment and mind-blowing images. Reproduction is great. I just loved this book and its clarity. Well worth it.

Beautiful, full-colour pictures in this book. I love hyenas, so this was a real treat to find for me. There are also very nice pictures of these men with baboons and pythons as well. Very well-put-together.

Definitely worth purchasing. The book is top quality and the commentary is very good.

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