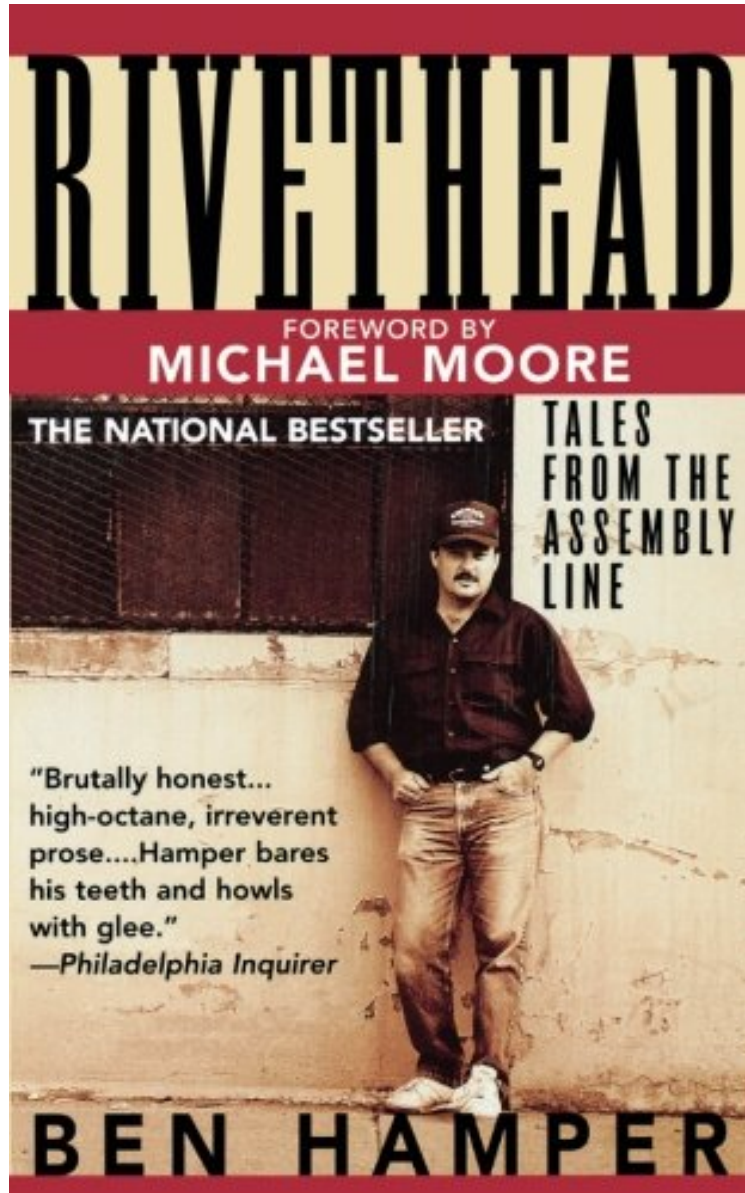


[Pdf free] Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line

Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line

Ben Hamper

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Ben Hamper : Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Some good, some bad
By Grant I have an interest in cars in general and the design and manufacturing process behind them. I don't think I could ever work on an assembly line, but I'm very interested in how they are able to build that many complicated machines that quickly and get them right as often as they do. That is what I wanted to get out of this book, but it fell a bit short of my expectations. I agree with the reviewer who said it had a little too much Ben Hamper in it and not enough GM. Overall it was much better in some spots than others, which is why I stuck with it until the end. There were places in the book that were so eye rollingly bad that I was tempted to stop wasting my time with it, but then came something a bit more worth reading. It was just good enough to keep me hopeful that it was about to get better. At times Hamper seems a bit more self-aware and willing to own up to his dysfunctions, while at other times he wallows in too much scapegoating and doesn't seem to see how he tended to be his own worst enemy. It was very hard to feel sorry for him and his periodic "misfortunes" when at other times he described how he gamed the system to get paid for work he didn't do (or wasn't even present for) and mostly got away with it. I also could have done without his political views. I really just wanted to read about the assembly process from a line worker's point of view. I knew two GM auto assembly workers in the late '70s, one who worked the line at Lordstown and the other at Wilmington, Delaware, and I enjoyed hearing their "war" stories. It's worth noting that they were two of the most "normal" guys you'd ever want to meet, Neither was a substance abuser, neither smoked, one didn't drink at all and the other was a light social drinker only (a glass of wine with dinner, etc). So no, contrary to the implication in this book, not everyone who worked in those plants in those days was or needed to be a Ben Hamper type.
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Blue-collar worker
By Juanita Bradstreet I would have to say the book was enjoyable, creative, but not intellectual by far. There was a lot of dry humor which I didn't think was amusing and I thought it hindered the thought process of imagining the average blue collar worker. This book was written roughly about the 70s and 80s of a man who worked the assembly line for General Motors in Flint, Michigan. They called him Rivethead which suited his character. I guess its hard for me to think that this person, Ben Hamper and others spent so much time mischievously causing chaos everyday they went to work without any concern about their job, co-workers or management. It was clear that Mr. Hampers ambitions went no further then quitting-time, whether it was 10 am, 1 pm, or 3pm. Him and his buddies would drink on the job, some did drugs and the management sometimes gave out warnings but mostly looked the other way because the workers would harassed them intensely. All their effort went into booze, drugs, and rock and roll music prominently in the lives of these men in the 70s. Most of the men wanted to get their thirty years in for their pension but in this time of auto making it was off, collecting unemployment and on the job working when the economy permitted. So, it was going to take years to be able to get that pension. I felt like it was a catch twenty-two situation for them so maybe their behaviors were warranted. Combinations of daily repetitious routine, lack of a clear sense of purpose, and guiltless self-destructive habits can make thirty years seem like an eternity. However, the life of Ben Hamper seemed like an endemic of downright insanity. His motto was, to work less, make more money, and spend it all on booze and music. The motto was the hard labor he did day to day. Ben Hamper wrote an excellent description of the assembly line and American automobile industry but it was shocking to read how the workers behaved. However, this is only one mans description of the blue collar job but there were plenty of reviews that agreed with his definition of the management and auto-workers at General Motors at that time. The umpteen stories, comical events, bad behaviors, and working on the assembly line kept the lives of these men surviving in order to receive their pay-checks. Yet, I have to say the authenticity to the blue collar voice Ben sometimes sounded like a fair stand-up comic with the intent of keeping the readers laughing through dry-irony and wisdom. I also worked in a shoe factory for years in the 70s and 80s and I was on an assembly line; paid by piece-work and made good money, became one of the top stitchers, and created quality work. My co-workers and I had plenty of fun and laughter but we respected others and the company. I guess some men might have been friskier and thought a job is something you make the best of and they did!!
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is one of the great ones. Jim Bouton's Ball Four about downward spiraling ...
By Tom Graves -- Author of Pay zero attention to the trolls. This book is one of the great ones. Jim Bouton's Ball Four about downward spiraling from the major league to the minors, Anthony Bourdain's tale about life in America's kitchens, Kitchen Confidential, and this classic about life on the GM assembly line. Ben Hamper is a great writer, just that simple. And this is a great story. Anyone who says otherwise -- like the reviewer from Library Journal who complains about four-letter words -- doesn't know great writing and is not deserving of attention. Read this book.

The man the Detroit Free Press calls "a blue collar Tom Wolfe" delivers a full-barreled blast of truth and gritty reality in Rivethead, a no-holds-barred journey through the belly of the American industrial beast.

From Publishers Weekly In a voice often as powerful as the riveting gun he wielded in the 1970s and '80s in a Flint, Mich., General Motors assembly plant, Hamper nails down the excruciating boredom of a shoprat's life on the line. These roughly chronological essays, many published in the local press, bare the rage and humor that, with booze and drugs, friendships and enmities, served to speed along the timeclock's "suffocating minute hand." A fourth-generation factory worker, raised on hard music, hard liquor and soft drugs, given a parochial school education, Hamper was the

eldest of eight children deserted by their father, supported by their mother. He was determined not to be an auto worker but soon after high school, married and a father, he needed the steady work GM offered. With free-ranging intelligence and a sharply anarchic sensibility, he tries to figure out and establish some control over his place in GM's massive corporate system. While these essays might best satisfy in small doses, Hamper, no longer a GM employee, writes with unrelenting energy. BOMC and QPB selections; film rights to Warner Bros. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Hamper, a son, a grandson, and a great-grandson of General Motors' "shoprats," chronicles ten years spent in an abusive marriage with GM in Flint, Michigan. Despite exploitative management policies, arrogant and/or incompetent supervisors, and mind-numbing working conditions, Hamper, like the abused spouse who keeps returning to the abuser, becomes depressed during layoffs and revives when recalled to the assembly line. Hamper copes with his perceived limited options by consuming impressive quantities of alcohol and writing an irreverent, cynically humorous column about shoprat life for an alternative newspaper. How much of Hamper's alienation and later panic disorder are the result of his ten years at GM and how much are due to genetics and choices is unexplored. Another weakness is Hamper's graceless style and his overuse of four-letter words. Despite these shortcomings, blue-collar voices are rarely heard, and therefore this is recommended for public libraries.- Andrea C. Dragon, Coll. of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sBased on his "Rivethhead" column that has appeared in Midwest newspapers as well as in Mother Jones, here is Hamper's tortured description of his wretched career as a General Motors worker in the factories of Flint, Michigan. A fourth generation "shoprat" (one uncle spent 45 years at the Buick Engine Plant), Hamper explains how an irresponsible father, numerous siblings, and his own penchant for laziness, drugs, and taverns pointed directly to a future in the plants, despite his inclinations toward poetry and music. In 1977, he reluctantly began work in the cab shop (a place with a noise level "like some hideous unrelenting tape loop of trains having sex"). Ranging from this experience to his retirement ten years later, Hamper writes of the drudgery of factory labor; repeated layoffs and call-backs; extensive on-the-job alcohol and drug consumption by himself and fellow workers; ongoing battles with foremen and supervisors; and his quest, similar to that of his mentor, Michael Moore, director of Roger and Me, to go bowling with GM chairman Roger Smith. His "Rivethhead" series hardly endeared him to management, nor did his often obnoxious behavior. In 1986, at about the time his column first appeared in Mother Jones, he began to experience "severe panic disorder," or anxiety attacks, and has spent the past few years in and out of a mental-health clinic. Although perceptively critical of American business management, practice, and values, Hamper nearsightedly finds little of worth or integrity in his fellow workers, and is downright offensive toward women, who, in his world, "lust for summer sausage." Rivethhead indeed. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.