

BOOK REVIEWS

John Smith
Life and Soul of the Party
By Gordon Brown
and James Naughtie
\$35.00/Mainstream/1994

John Smith came as close to becoming the Prime Minister as one can without actually holding the office. He became the Opposition (Labour Party) Leader in Parliament and gained great ground in the polls against the ruling Conservatives. It was widely believed that as soon as another general election were held, he would replace John Major as the Prime Minister. Then Smith died suddenly of a heart attack in May 1994. His place was taken by another Scottish lawyer, Tony Blair, who finally won the Labour victory on May 1, 1997. Smith paved the way for Blair's triumph. Smith's greatest achievement was not being Prime Minister, but being entombed among the greatest of all Scots at Iona.

This book is a collection of articles and tributes to Smith's life. By those who knew him well, we are told of his Highland origins, his education in Glasgow, and how we grew from a law practice in Edinburgh to become the leader of the Labour Party in Westminster. The life of Smith provides numerous insights into the British political scene of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s.

Brown and Naughtie's biography will appeal greatly to readers interested in British domestic politics and the personalities of Scots in national affairs. In addition to the tributes, the authors collected several insightful speeches given by John Smith. Of particular note is Smith's "My Scotland" and "I

Love Islands," both of which are commentaries on contemporary Scotland.
- Stephen Millett

**Scotching the Myths:
An Alternative Route Map
to Scottish History**
by Jim Hewitson

\$22.95/Mainstream Publishing/1995

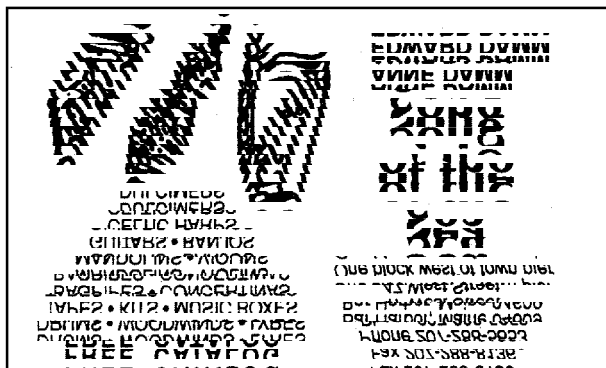
Jim Hewitson is the reigning king of Scottish trivia. A freelance journalist who lives in the Orkney Islands, he writes amusing vignettes for both Scottish and American newspapers. His commentaries typically appeal to those who like light entertainment with a minimum of serious and controversial thoughts. This book is an excellent example of his style.

Organized into a calendar of historical events from January 1 through December 31 across centuries of time, he delves into the minutia of Scottish life. For example, on May 1 he never mentions May Day or the long traditions of Beltane; rather, he tells us that May 1 is the day that there was a truce signed between England and Scotland in 1438, that Charles II created the Scots Guards in 1661, that the Treaty of Union came into force in 1707 (hardly trivial), and that a sewing maid was sought by a wealthy Lowland family for 10 pounds sterling a year in 1858. But no explanation is offered beyond the mentioning of events.

This book will appeal to those looking beyond serious Scottish history for the light and the unusual. It will appeal to some more than others.

- Stephen Millett

Tam Blake & Co.
The Story of the Scots in America



By Jim Hewitson
\$16.95/Canongate Books/1995
For Jim Hewitson, this book is a rather serious attempt at real history. It is very much an account of Scottish emigrants into America as seen by a Scot rather than an account of Scottish immigrants into the U.S. as seen by an American. The material on the early period (17th and 18th centuries) is weak, but the material on the 19th and 20th centuries is worthwhile, almost unique. He particularly likes to discuss the Scots of the Old West — which is a fun topic to cover — but he never quite gets beyond the obvious. He merely mentions Ewan Cameron, but does not give him enough credit for contributing to the creation of the Texan cattle business before the Civil War. Hewitson totally missed Murdo Mackenzie, the Scottish-born manager of the Matador Ranch who became the godfather of American cattle ranching at the turn of the last century.

Most of the book consists of names and dates and places without too much analytical narration. In many respects, this history looks like a modern (and much more attractive) variation on MacDougall's Scots and Scots' Descendant in America (1917).

Yet Hewitson's tone reflects his Strathclyde cultural orientations. His book is an extremely interesting Scottish view of Scots in America. He is gently critical of Americans who oversimplify and over-romanticize Scottish life. The Highlanders of today, for example, are as close to the kilted clan warriors of the 18th century as today's Arizonans are to the gun-toting cowboys of the 19th century. Hewitson comments that "...the Scots Diaspora [need to be] reminded that Scotland is a nation still, a complex people with complex aspirations, not a theme park." He would like to see Americans get involved with helping the Scots today with their problems of today. Yet Hewitson himself might take his own advice and produce provocative as well as enjoyable commentaries on Scottish life for Americans. This book, with all of its shortcomings, be-

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longs in any collection of volumes on the Scottish experience in America.

- Stephen Millett

Distributed by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, VT 05053.

A Taezali Tippence:

Selected Poems in Doric & English From a North East Loon

by William Buchan

œ6.00/Taezali

William Buchan is a lifetime resident of Aberdeen and Peterhead, Scotland. Not bent towards his family's fishing business, he worked in the oil industry. Poetry is his passion more than profession. The title, *A Taezali Tippence*, is drawn from an ancient Pictish tribe, the Taezali, who lived in the Peterhead area.

This small book of friendly poems is written in a mixture of the Doric language and English. It can be understood best if read out loud. Let the rich brogue ripple off your tongue and transport you to Scotland. Topics are everyday life with a humorous bent. Some of the poems were written for the pupils of St. Combs Primary School who read them during Doric competitions and presentations.

But the best way to see what this collection of verse is all about is a short sample:

THE BACK O' SUNDAY

Distributed by Taezali Publishing

Fairy lights on a coal black screen
Dancin silently
The back o' Sunday in peterheid
As the fishin boats ging ti sea

The hairbour itsel, for an oor or twa
Is bustlin wi noises and lichts
As the boats mak ready for the week
ahead
That starts just aifter midnight

Slippin oot past the hairbourheid
And the crowdy o' folk on the pier
The boaties roll on the open swell
As they find their course ti steer

Noo the last lichts hiv disappeared
And the bairbour has geen ti sleep
May God watch ower every man
On a fishin boat that gings ti sea.

- Jim Davenport

*House, High Street, St. Combs,
Fraserburgh, Scotland, AB43, 8YR.*

*Individual copies will be signed by the
author if requested.*

A Different Man:

Peter Howson's Art: From Bosnia and Beyond

By Alan Jackson

\$35.00/Mainstream/1997

This book is an excellent combination of captivating art and thought-provoking story-telling. It looks into the soul of one of Britain's most controversial and respected artists, examining his work as official war artist of the Bosnian conflict. It focuses on his depictions of the brutality of war and its distorting effect on everyday life.

Peter Howson had achieved a great level of artistic success by the end of 1992, but he also felt a deep unhap-

piness. After two trips to Bosnia, his artistic style became simpler and more direct. He felt revitalized.

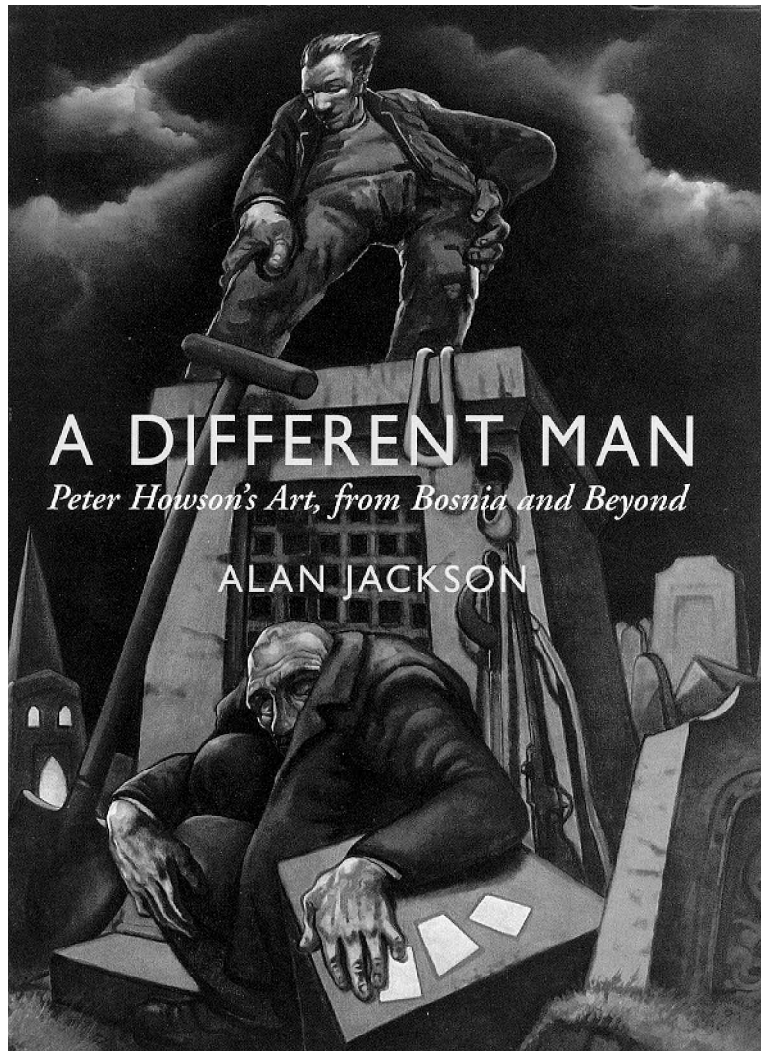
Howson's art is striking and the book presents over 110 prints of his work. His expressionist style is not for the faint of heart, tackling such grim subjects as death, rape, mutilation, and despair. Beyond his Bosnia pieces, his art does not stray far from the grim or hopeless side of life. Figure after figure depict grotesquely strong but mentally stunted men and women. He explores the darker side of the human spirit in all its vices.

Howson's works are disturbing, but powerful and worth experiencing.

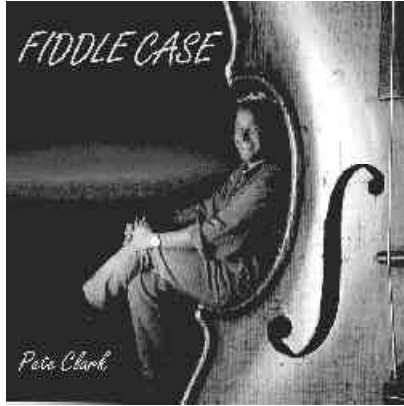
Jackson's telling of the story is superb, making the book hard to put down.

- James Davenport

Distributed by Trafalgar Square.



MUSIC REVIEWS



Fiddlecase

Pete Clark

Smiddymade Recordings and Music Publishing, Palace Road, Essendy, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, Scotland, PH10 6SB

Fiddlecase is the debut CD of one of Scotland's most respected fiddle players, Pete Clark. Within two weeks of its release, it was selected as one of the 'albums of the year' on BBC Radio Scotland.

Pete is joined by many notables on the album such as Martin Hadden (formerly of Silly Wizard), Sandy Brechin, Graham Dixon, and Doreen McKerron.

The tunes are an enjoyable mixture of original tunes and traditionals under new arrangements. Highlights include 'Niel Gow's Lament For His Second Wife,' The Quiet Hills, and Sandy Grant. Medleys of strathspeys and reels lift the collection between waltzes and softer songs. A fine soundtrack for a ceilidh night.

To order, contact Tayberry Music, 760 Ragin Lane, Rockhill, SC 29732.



Riverdance :

Music from the Show

Bill Whelan

Intercultural Niche Strategies

P.O. Box 1592

New York, NY 10028

This CD is perfect for your next foot-stomping Celtic dance.

The live show has been a great success and the soundtrack has surprised the music industry and fueled a small renaissance in Celtic music. Elegant choral work mixes with rousing, modern dances. Traditional instruments such as the Uilleann Pipes and



the Bodhrán is mixed with modern synthesizers and orchestrations.

The album is from Celtic Heartbeat, an Irish recording label established to present the best in authentic Celtic Music. As is typical with great Celtic music, this CD can transport you to far-off glens and warmly lit pubs, to a nostalgic vision of our Celtic homeland. Riverdance was written, arranged and produced by Bill Whelan.

The Celtic Heartbeat Collection

Intercultural Niche Strategies

P.O. Box 1592

New York, NY 10028

Similar to the Riverdance CD, this is a tender collection of Celtic song and music. Artists include Bill Whelan, Sharon Shannon, Frances Black, Clannad, Declan Masterson, Moving Hearts, Eleanor Shanley, Maire Breatnach, Andy Irvine & Davy Spillane, Alec Finn, and Liam O'Flynn.

Legends

James Galway & Phil Coulter

Intercultural Niche Strategies

P.O. Box 1592

New York, NY 10028

We move from traditional-style Celtic music to classic tunes that stray in and out of the Celtic vein. The CD contains lovely renditions of standards such as Danny Boy and Hoedown by Aaron Copeland.

The pairing of Galway and Coulter is a pleasant blend, giving you relaxing music from the masters.

So Inclined: Celtic Guitar

John Sherman

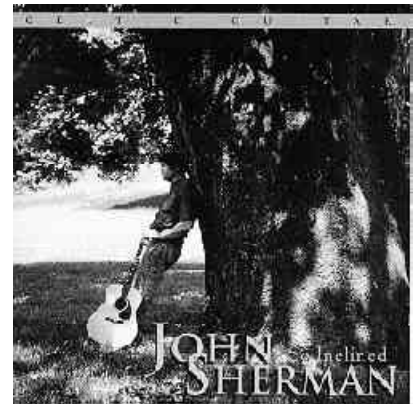
Walhalla Park Productions

410 Clinton Heights Ave

Columbus, OH 43202

A delightful collection of celtic guitar work kissed by the occasional pipes or drums. Each group of tunes is accompanied by a brief description and background, often touched with a humorous bent. While the majority of the tunes are John alone or layered in the studio, the album is strengthened by the able talents of many regional artists.

Some of the best works on the CD are the quieter pieces with a light touch of string accompaniment. John Sherman is an artist to hear if the opportunity arises.



The Post Office will NOT forward this magazine. Always send in your change-of-address early!