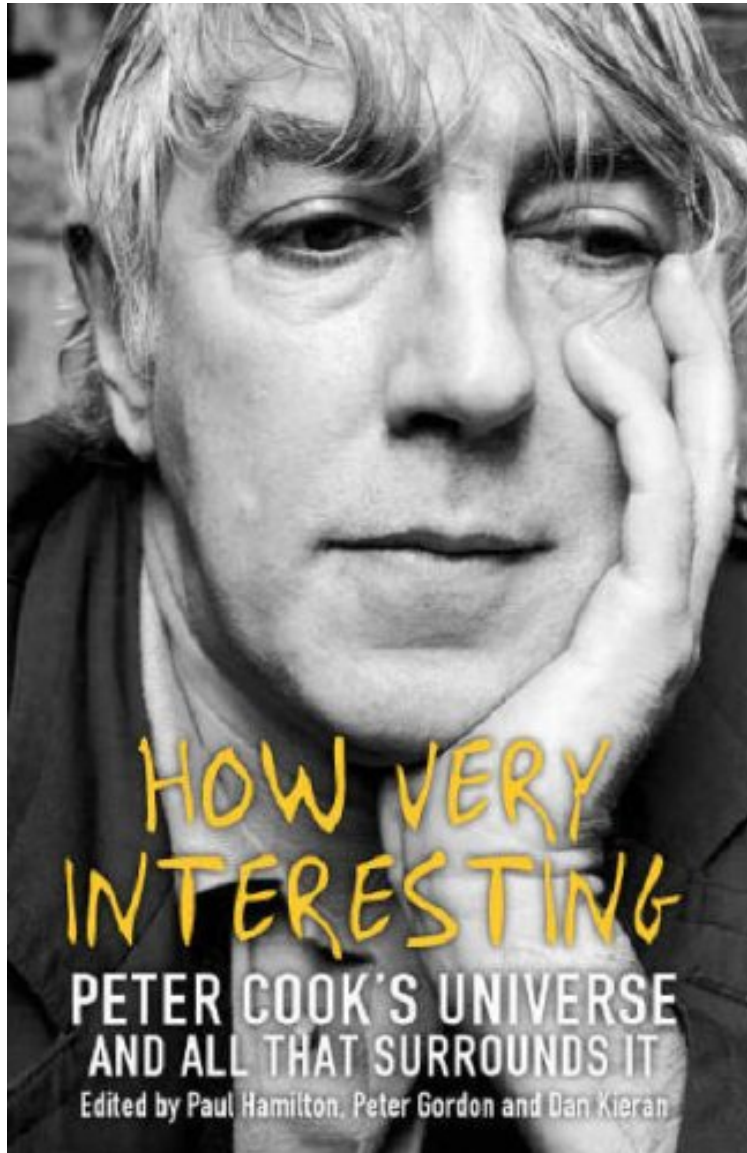


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How Very Interesting!: Peter Cook's Universe And All That Surrounds It

PAUL; GORDON, PETER KIERAN, DAN (editors) HAMILTON
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5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Only Book on Peter Cook that You NeedBy K. A. LaityFrom

UP AGAINST THE WALL #4 (2006):HOW VERY INTERESTING:PETER COOK'S UNIVERSE AND ALL THAT SURROUNDS ITBy K. A. LaityIf, like me, you agree with Stephen Fry's assessment that Peter Cook was indeed "the funniest man to ever draw breath," then you'll welcome the publication of this tome from the folks at the Establishment, the Peter Cook Appreciation Society (stabbers.org) who for a time were responsible for the dead tree periodical Publish and Bedazzled (AKA Pub Bed). While the bonanza of materials to surface in the last couple years is rich--from Harry Thompson's lively if flawed biography to the comprehensive collections of writings and remembrances put together by third wife Lin and most recently, the memoir of first wife Wendy--this book is the only one that comes from the same point of view as most readers of the above tomes. I mean fans, of course. And when it comes to PC, "fans" is almost always short for fanatics. My own chicken-and-egg story of fandom is hard to sort. There was suddenly this period where I was deluged with British comedy in the unlikeliest of spots: mid-Michigan. At the age of 14 or so, Britcom hit me with a resounding splat from which I have never recovered. When I should have been falling for the latest teen idol, I was instead consumed with a passion for the Pythons, the Goons and the Goodies (which explains a lot about my life's trajectory since then). I can't sort out that mad rush of comic immersion, but I think the first bit of Peter Cook was A POKE IN THE EYE WITH A SHARP STICK (yeah, on vinyl--so what, I'm old), the early Amnesty International benefit concert. But it doesn't matter because, viper-like, I devoured everything I could get my greedy little paws on and forever warped my outlook on life. Consequently, I have sucked the marrow from every PC book that's come out in the last couple of years, and thank the gods, the Internet has put me in touch with PC fans around the world so I've finally seen just about everything that exists (except for the complete Fairy Cobbler sketch, so if you have a copy...). You'd think I'd be gagging on it by now, that one more book would put me over the edge, but no--I couldn't be more pleased to have Messrs. Hamilton, Gordon and Kieran's volume in part, because it does come from that fan point of view. Although that can make it a trifle uneven. The interviews almost entirely depend upon the state of mind of the interviewee at the moment which likewise ranges from insightful and intelligent to belligerently beery. But unlike the encomia of SOMETHING LIKE FIRE or the biographies and memoirs that use Cook as a canvas upon which to paint their pet theories or pet peeves, HOW VERY INTERESTING captures the fleeting moments of those who worked with, trod near or found the same fascination with Cook. They include folks like the always-brilliant Eleanor Bron and Chris Morris, long-time friends like John Fortune and John Bassett and the Private Eye crew. The discussions (it is mostly interviews) range far beyond Cook and his oeuvre but trample through all manner of comedy and performance. The tone veers from light-hearted to hilarious, from fawning to cynical--but it's the perfect book for leaving close to hand so you can pick it up at odd moments and laugh your ass off or chuckle knowingly as the case may be. Besides, you don't even need the Latin for it.