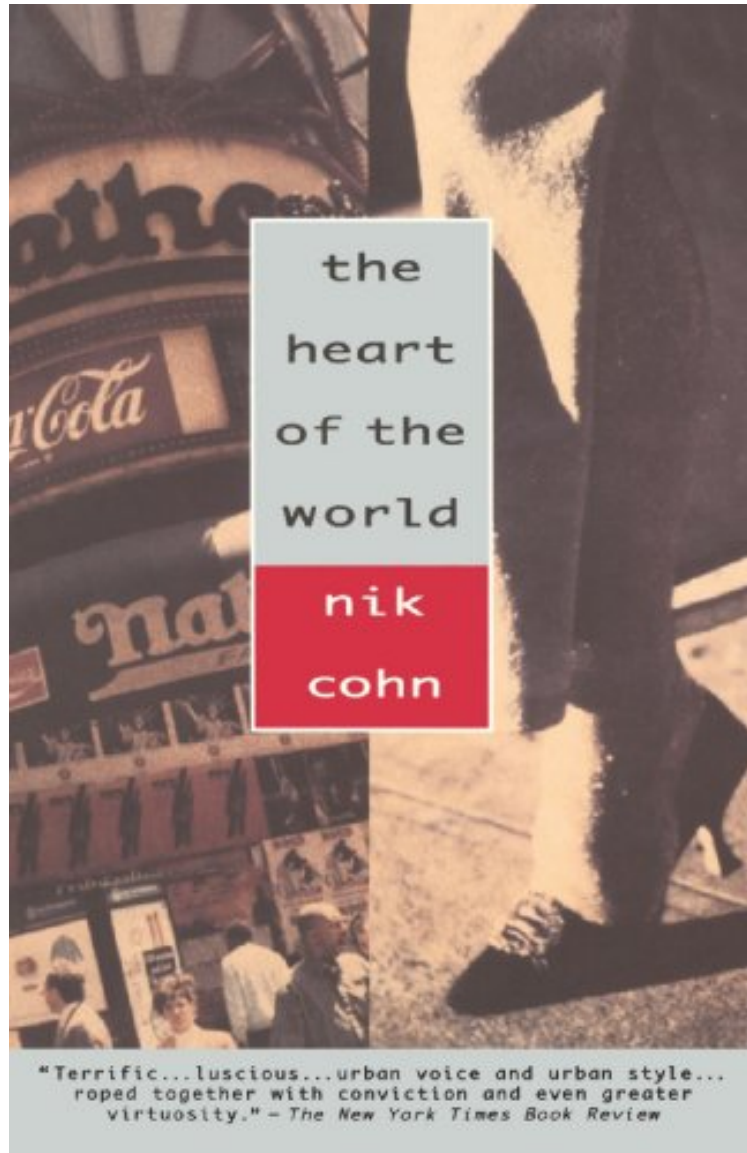


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## The Heart of the World

*Nik Cohn*

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#4110759 in Books Vintage 1993-03-02 1993-03-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .75 x 5.50l, 1.00 #File Name: 0679744371380 pages | File size: 68.Mb

**Nik Cohn : The Heart of the World** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Heart of the World:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Touch of the Neon Wilderness By An admirer of Saul Nik Cohn chronicles an eight month sojourn down 'The Great White Way', the 21 miles of Broadway. He records the "quirks" or characters-odd balls- that make up the street from the gangs and transvestites to the old hands whose Broadway is

dying out and being replaced by realty and business models. Cohn also tells the history of the street as he winds down its ever expanding length as it moved from New York's centre over two centuries and the fables that were created as well as fortunes made and lost-most notably Barnum and his freak shows (or American Museums and Circuses as he'd have it)the so called golden ages, the era of Stanford White and Evelyn Nesbit; the effects of the prohibition era and the City's bankruptcy of the mid 70's all ushering in an endless change.This is Broadway as a living organism; changing and adapting to the times of the City that spawned it. I found this a terrific read, it really recalled Nelson Algren's great Chicago books like 'Neon Wilderness' and 'City on the Make' taking you where the tourist office doesn't want you to go. Cohn's writing history consists of 'Saturday Night Fever' and a number of pop culture books,which- from a literary point of view-I guess doesn't augur well, but after the first chapters you realize what is meant by literary snobbery!The parallels with Damon Runyon and Herbert Asbury are well earned, and this is certain to be revived over the decades under the 'Classic' banner, which I would again say it earns. A little long? Maybe, but always entertaining. Written in 1992, strange to think that Cohn's Broadway no longer exists.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Strangely magnetic...like a car wreck, you can't look awayBy Tommy AcuffEverybody has a sad story, and it seems like Nik Cohn went and found them all. This book does the unique...it puts a name and a story with each of those faces you see on your way to work. There's Sasha Zim...who in a few statements sums up the feeling of the book...New York is a hellpit, but it's my hellpit. Not a happy book in the traditional sense, going into it with the wrong mindframe might leave you in a somewhat sour mood. At times dour, at times saddening, at times depressing--you know that these are real people. Cohn brings out the best in these people. Combined with an awesome ability to paint an image, Cohn characterizes each person to the point that they couldn't have told the story better themselves. The characterizations, though, are at times a little too perfect...mostly good, I did roll my eyes a couple of times. Cohn packs as much meaning into a phrase as is humanly possible. I've not read a person who can turn a phrase like Mr. Cohn. However, it is NOT a quick read. Set aside a long period of time...read it in little bits and digest it. The scope of the tale, like its subject, is just too broad to consume in one sitting.4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. NonsenseBy A CustomerThe Heart of the World is writing in search of a book. And it never comes together. Furthermore, most of characters and anecdotes seem totally fictional (there's really no way of verifying anything), although this is supposed to be nonfiction. Nik Cohn may be a gifted writer, but this so-called book is a disaster.

"The history of Broadway has been written before, but never better. . . . The verbal energy that pours off these pages is enough to transform the hell of...Times Square into a rough-hewn heaven, neon lit and open all night. . . . The only thing wrong with this book is it isn't longer." Newsweek Nik Cohn ushers readers along the street he calls "The Heart of the World." producing a book that is a resplendent pageant of New York's high and lowlife. Among the characters we meet are a golden-tongued cab driver who calls himself a "collector of farces"; a pickpocket with the terrifying gift of impersonating his marks; a heartbreakingly beautiful Dominican transvestite named Lush Life; strippers; pseudo-prophets; and a disgraced political veteran of the days when the graft was still honest. Conducted by a writer with the manic energy of a sideshow barker and the full-blooded lyricism of a raucous poet, this is a bebop odyssey along the Great White Way that reaches in implication far beyond the streets of New York to document the ever-evolving mixtures that make up America itself. "A lovely, bracing book, full to bursting with juicy, tasty, rancid life. While making its bawdy way through crowded spaces . . . it also travels through modern times . . . wondrous." USA TODAY

From Publishers WeeklySometimes glistening, sometimes disappointing, this tour of Broadway from the Battery to Times Square by British journalist Cohn tells the story of the Great White Way through the lives of various eccentric denizens. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalThis is a compelling and highly original journey up Broadway from the Battery to Times Square. The title comes from an old song about this famous street of broken dreams and promises. Two of Broadway's unique inhabitants--a punk Soviet emigre and a cross-dressing hooker serve as guides. Along the way we encounter many other unforgettable characters from the past and present. Images of the days of P.T. Barnum and the Flora Dora Sextette are juxtaposed with the harsh realities of today's drug pushers and porno merchants. All elements combine to make this a fascinating reading experience. Recommended for larger public and academic collections. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 10/1/91.-Howard E. Miller, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Missouri Lib., St. LouisCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Kirkus sMoody, sweet-spirited survey of lowlifes, castoffs, and misfits along Broadway, from Battery Park to Times Square. Cohn (King Death, 1975; Rock from the Beginning, 1969) embraces everybody, standing up for thieves, transvestites, and grotesques with hearts of gold. In Battery Park, his Virgil is 20-year-old, drum-playing Sasha Zim from Moscow, a cabdriver in "bomber jacket and Hawaiian shirt, jogging pants, lumberjack boots, a buffalo-head Western belt and a small silver crucifix," who learned English from daytime soap operas and says things such as, "In taxi is university of all mankind, what you don't know won't hurt you, what you do is killing you dead. Whole world is going Helen Handbasket." Sasha introduces Cohn to a Hispanic team of "Liberty Boosters," pickpockets of the Liberty Bay ferry, one of whom is Stoney, who has "the rapture" (epileptic attacks during which God speaks to him) and to whom wallets leap if he merely "consents to receive" them. Moving into an eight-by-ten-foot room in Times Square's walk-

up Moose Hotel, Cohn meets his young, dope-taking alcoholic transvestite neighbor, Lush Life, a vision in Passion Pink nail polish who left home at 15 and forever abandoned her real name of Geraldo Cruz. Cohn gives us much background on P.T. Barnum and his famed museum of freaks, on Hubert's Museum and Flea Circus in Times Square, on the Gilded Age and Evelyn Nesbit and Stanford White, on the sins of Robert Moses (whose rebuilding plans for the city, Cohn says, cast whole populations into the street), on the sex shops and the Metropole jazz bar (now gone topless) and McSorley's men-only saloon (now letting in women), and on Times Square's Chess and Checkers Club. He ends on chords that can only be called ashen. Striving like Whitman, not cynical, but at last quite desolate. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.