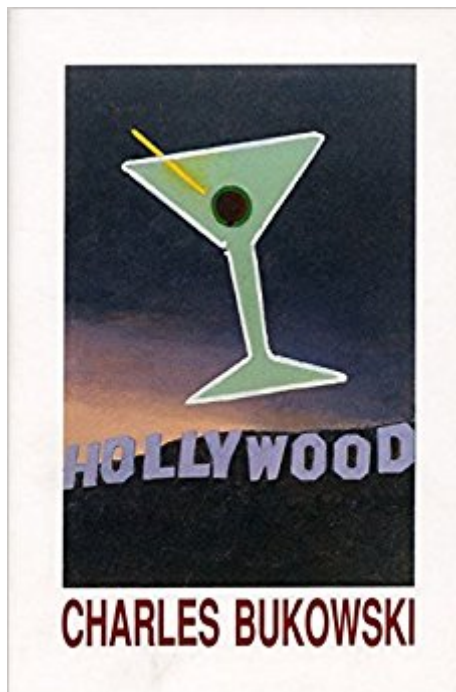


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Hollywood



Synopsis

From iconic tortured artist/everyman Charles Bukowski, Hollywood is the fictionalization of his experience adapting his novel Barfly into a movie by the same name. Henry Chinaski, Bukowski's alter-ego, is pushed to translate a semi-autobiographical book into a screenplay for John Pinchot. He reluctantly agrees, and is thrust into the otherworld called Hollywood, with its parade of eccentric and maddening characters: producers, artists, actors and actresses, film executives and journalists. In this world, the artistry of books and film is lost to the dollar, and Chinaski struggles to keep his footing in the tangle of cons that comprise movie making. Hollywood is Dirty Old Man Bukowski at his most lucid. It overflows with curses, sex, and alcohol. And through it all, or from it all, Bukowski finds flashes of truth about the human condition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bukowski (The Roominghouse Madrigals) has written over 30 books of poetry and fiction in which he uses the persona of the artistic bum with reasonable success. In this flimsy novel, Henry Chinaski is asked to write a screenplay, and thus Bukowski continues his thinly disguised autobiography (Bukowski himself wrote the screenplay for the recent, self-referential Barfly). When all the Hollywood types Chinaski encounters--directors, lawyers, producers, actors, actresses--fit the same drunken-outcast-but-artistic-genius mold, Bukowski seems to have exhausted his resourcefulness. His characters lose their individuality and the novel lacks force and perspective. This book deteriorates into juvenile satire in which familiar, real-life figures appear with the letters of their names shifted slightly: the famous director Jon-Luc Modard, the philosopher Jean-Paul

Sanrah, Frances Ford Lopalla and an obvious Norman Mailer stand-in called Victor Norman.

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In this hilarious roman a clef, Bukowski draws on his experiences while writing the script for the 1987 film Barfly. Henry Chinaski, the author's alter ego in the film, here returns to write--despite misgivings--a Hollywood screenplay, *The Dance of Jim Beam*. The film is based on Chinaski's early life as a barfly and brawler, before he became a famous author. As he and his companion Sarah are caught up in the Hollywood whirlwind, Bukowski satirizes a host of well-known movie personalities. While Bukowski fans will welcome the reappearance of Chinaski, with his penchant for booze, women, and horse racing, film buffs should enjoy the novel for its delightful and irreverent portrayal of Hollywood. Highly recommended.- William Gargan, Brooklyn Coll. Lib., CUNY Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

One of my favourite chapters of "Hollywood" was the last -- Chapter 46. This is where Chinaski (Bukowski) seems to really begin to think about things and analyze them. Of course with his last line: "And this is it." it is obvious that Bukowski had this all planned from Page 1. Even with said planning, I would say that "Hollywood" is one of his best books. Much of the essence of the book reads like a primer in the manner of "Dick and Jane" make a movie. The repetition of "the movie's on, the movie's off" is overly simplistic. Although other of Bukowski's works have been published posthumously, "Hollywood" is his next to last novel in his lifetime. It comes off feeling like he had already run out of gas. The intent is obvious and clever enough. Bukowski invokes the Masters --most thinly disguised with just different name spellings to "protect the guilty and/or innocent. Jon-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Pauline Kael, Jean-Paul Sartre, et. al. So we have a Franco-American farcical satire of the entire Hollywood scene. This includes the references to Musso & Franks, Werner Herzog, Charles Manson, et. al. Just as Fitzgerald knew his Hollywood, so did Bukowski know his. As anyone might say, Bukowski is no Fitzgerald, but Bukowski can stand in as a contemporary Fitzgerald. The drink, the dissolution, the writer's torment and mental and moral struggles, the insecurity. All the extras, the hangers-on, the flunkies and the props and some of the swag are there, too. The Hollywood press such as it was and or is. Bukowski has covered the waterfront in his murky way, and "Hollywood" can be read simultaneously with "Variety" and "The Hollywood Reporter."

Charles Bukowski's intrepid hero / alter ego Hank Chinaski is back in this funny satire of Tinsel

Town in the late 1980s. Culled from his experience writing the screenplay for the film *Barfly*, Bukowski's *Hollywood* rips into the shallowness of show business. The plot twists are so absurd, the characters so vapid and vain, they must be based on real life. Bukowski's cynical take on movie audiences ("People became so used to seeing s*** on film that they no longer realized it was s***,") versus novel/poetry readers is insightful ("Almost anything upsets or insults a movie audience, while people who read novels and short stories love to be upset and insulted.") The best bits of *Hollywood* happen when Bukowski looks at the role of the writer in the film business. "Who ever photographed the writer? Who applauded?" "It was damn sure just as well: the writer was where he belonged: in some dark corner, watching." Bukowski's portrayal of *Barfly* leads Mickey Rourke and Faye Dunaway as characters Jack Bledsoe and Francine Bower is particularly interesting, especially since he's depicting a fresh-faced Rourke, when the rollercoaster of Rourke's career was cresting the top of its first hill. Like the town it is named after, Bukowski's *Hollywood* is fun, funny, droll, and pathetic. There's a lot of wine drinking, and the love affair between Hank and Sarah "the only two 'normal' characters in the novel" is sincere and sweet. *Hollywood* doesn't pack the emotional wallop of *Ham on Rye*, or the laughs of *Post Office*, but it is still vintage Bukowski, and you can't go wrong with that. As Hank Chianski notes: "Maybe writing was a form of bitching. Some just bitched better than others." Bitch on, Bukowski, you beautiful bastard! -30-

I'm a Bukowski fan, so this may be slanted. I loved *Hollywood*. I've worked in the business and still do to some degree. *Hollywood*, though exaggerated at times, rang true to what I've witnessed and experienced during my time behind the lights. But what really stands out is Bukowski's bits of wisdom that may cause a moment of reflection on the reader's part. He has a way of shining a light on a situation, revealing truth and the absolute bizarreness of the movie business. It's fun to try and figure out who his pseudonyms reference in real life. My advice is to wait until you've finished the book before looking them up. It is a work of fiction based on his experiences making *Barfly*, a favorite movie of mine, as well. *Hollywood* is a fun read filled with the bizarre that first time readers of Bukowski will enjoy.

If you like Hunter S. Thompson, you must also like Charles Bukowski and I like them both. Bukowski is Thompson on alcohol rather than drugs. Like his other "novels", this one reads like a true narrative - in this case of his one foray into movie making. Bukowski's movie, *Barfly*, was what I

remember as a gritty, depressing depiction of true low-lives. Based on my very limited dealings with Hollywood types, he does a great job of describing them and how movies get made in hilarious style. The book is much, much better than the movie about which it is written simply because it is funny rather than sad.

Bukowski is a fascinating writer--and person--and this book that revolves around the movie Barfly is no different. It's got a lot of fun references to the movie. You can google a list of the characters and compare for yourself, if you can't deduce it from the book. Sometimes it is hilarious...and other times not so fun. Really unique and enjoyable read.

This guy is an amazing writer, so glad I finally found him. Funny, inciteful and so interesting as a character.

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