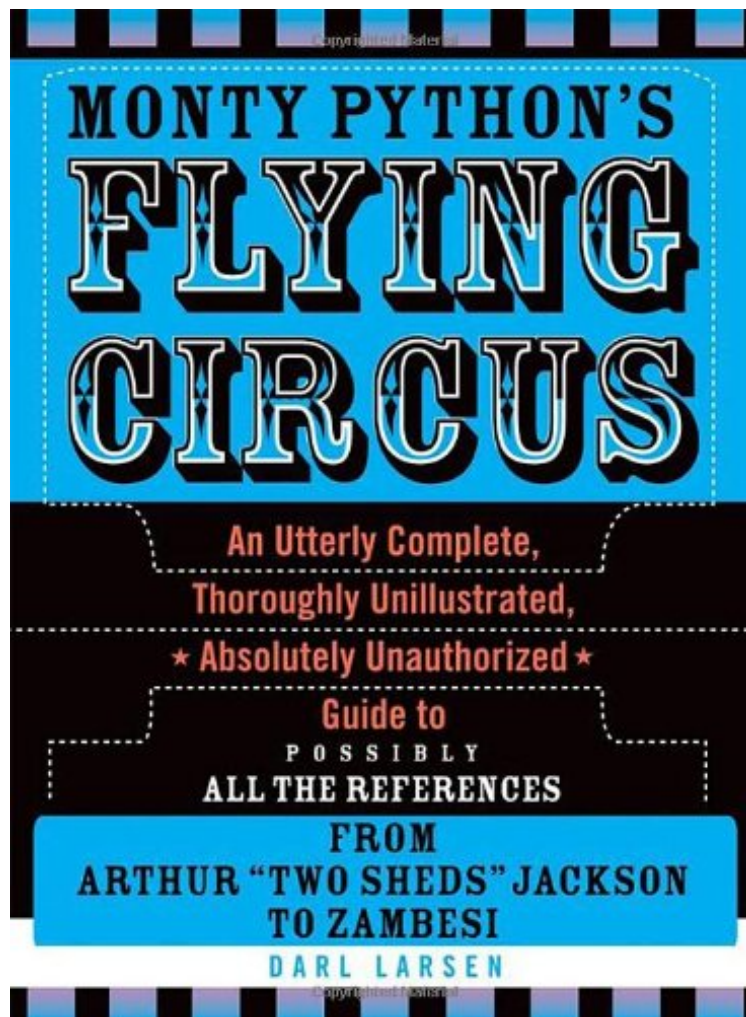


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Monty Python's Flying Circus: An Utterly Complete, Thoroughly Unillustrated, Absolutely Unauthorized Guide to Possibly All the References From Arthur "Two Sheds" Jackson to Zambesi

Darl Larsen

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Darl Larsen : Monty Python's Flying Circus: An Utterly Complete, Thoroughly Unillustrated, Absolutely Unauthorized Guide to Possibly All the References From Arthur "Two Sheds" Jackson to Zambesi before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Monty Python's Flying Circus: An Utterly Complete, Thoroughly Unillustrated, Absolutely Unauthorized Guide to Possibly All the References From Arthur "Two Sheds" Jackson to Zambesi:

19 of 20 people found the following review helpful. One Catastrophic Flaw By Marc J. Brown This book, per the title, purports to be a "guide," not an "encyclopedia." I had mulled over this purchase for many months, balking at the hefty price tag, but finally decided to buy it for myself as a holiday gift. I was encouraged by the knowledge that this guide split its references up by episode. The idea I had in mind was to revisit each episode of Monty Python's Flying Circus in turn, using this book in its titular capacity as a guide for the kind of topical and elaborative information it promised to provide. The information is certainly there. Here is the problem: The author elected to provide each episode's list of references in alphabetical order, rather than chronological. Consider this for a moment. In this book, each episode is allowed, on average, ten pages full of references and tidbits of information. Episode 1 is twenty pages long, with over 140 entries. If the scope of this disaster is not already apparent, then let me offer the titles of some of the entries for episode 1: "Awful," "caption," "Gilliam's wonderfully visual mind," "Man," "squawk," and even "Episode 1." All of these entries are dutifully arranged in alphabetical order. It is easy to see how hopeless this system is. The only contextual relevance each entry retains is its association with the single episode in question, and therefore the only possible use any of the entries can serve is to someone who has recently watched the full episode and remembers every last detail, especially including the various obscurities which this book was meant to help with. How else could one be expected to make use of episode 1's entry on "Miro," for example? Let's consider what purpose was meant to be served by using the contextually bankrupt alphabet as an organizational tool. There is only one answer: Reference. So the author was seeking to make it easy for the reader to find specific items, per specific episode. It is undeniably a good idea to permit some means of reference in a book such as this. However, it doesn't need to be pointed out that for such specific cases, an index at the back of the book suffices nicely, and indeed, this book has such an index. Meanwhile, how does one justify entries such as "Episode 1" or "Gilliam's wonderfully visual mind" in terms of reference? Such entries only make sense as contextual information, to be presented, one would hope, within a chronology, at appropriate moments, e.g. with "Episode 1" near the very beginning of the list, and "Gilliam's wonderfully visual mind" at around the point in the episode, relative to the other entries, when we first witness Terry Gilliam's handiwork. As impressed as I am with how thorough and erudite the actual entries are, I must stress how deeply disappointing it is that I cannot use this rather pricey book in its intended capacity as a guide to the television series. I have tried. Too much time was spent wondering whether or not there might be something I could look up - and indeed being confounded by the entries' titles themselves. For example, "Man" is in fact an entry providing information on "the 'It's' Man," and I completely overlooked this entry until the episode was over and I read the entire chapter to see what I missed. Can one imagine how much more useful that entry would have been had it been placed near the front of the chapter (as the 'It's' Man appears at the very beginning of episode 1), perhaps even with a timecode helper (00h 00m 00s)? I recommend that this book be updated to present all information chronologically. The index already exists. If the author had some purpose beyond reference for organizing everything alphabetically, I submit that the advantages of chronological order far outweigh whatever nebulous intent was behind the redundant and confounding structure the book currently uses, and would make the book very accessible and useful, which it currently is not.

In 1969, the BBC aired the first episode of a new comedy series titled Monty Python's Flying Circus, and the rest, as they say, is history. An instant success, the show ran until 1974, producing a total of 45 episodes. Despite the show's very English humor and allusions to many things British, the series developed a cult following outside the U.K., particularly in the United States. Known for its outrageous humor, occasionally controversial content, and often silly spirit, Monty Python's Flying Circus poked fun at nearly all institutions domestic or foreign, grand or intimate, sacred or not. Indeed, many of the allusions and references in the program were uniquely British and routinely obscure, and therefore, not always understood or even noticed outside the British Isles. This exhaustive reference identifies and explains the plethora of cultural, historical, and topical allusions of this landmark series. In this resource, virtually every allusion and reference that appeared in an episode whether stated by a character, depicted in the mise-en-scene, or mentioned in the printed script is identified and explained. Organized chronologically by episode, each entry is listed alphabetically, indicates what sketch it appeared in, and is cross-referenced between episodes. Entries cover literary and metaphoric allusions, symbolisms, names, peoples, and places; as well as the myriad social, cultural, and historical elements (photos, songs, slogans, caricatures) that populate and inform these episodes. Entries include: "Arabella Plunkett" Group of famous characters from famous paintings Hell's Grannies HRH The Dummy Princess Margaret "Kandinsky" "On the Dad's Liver Bachelors at Large" Raymond Baxter type Scun "Spanish Inquisition" "Third Parachute Brigade Amateur Dramatic Society" "total cashectomy" "Two-Sheds" "Umbonga's hostile opening" "Vicar sitting thin and unhappy in a pot" "What's all this then?"

From Booklist Monty Python enthusiasts will appreciate this companion to Monty Python's Flying Circus. Author Larsen has created a sort of concordance that provides glosses on all of the allusions and topical references that appear in the taped episodes as well as the stage directions and scene descriptions in the printed scripts. Arrangement is by episode, from 1 to 44; and terms, spoken phrases, or names for each episode are alphabetically arranged. Quotations appear in quote marks, while other kinds of terms are italicized. The abbreviation PSC (printed script

commentary) identifies terms that come directly from the printed scripts. When relevant, Larsen provides the name of the sketch with which the terms is associated and the folder number from the BBC's Written Archive Collection. The volume concludes with a bibliography, a general index, and an Index of Monty Python's Flying Circus Extras and Walk-Ons (As Scheduled). Although casual fans will enjoy browsing through the book, it is really designed for well-versed readers. Except in the form of brief entries in each episode chapter (for example, the entry for Episode 13 in the Episode 13 chapter), no background information or summaries are provided because, as explained in the introduction, it is assumed the reader has seen the episode in question. The index also demands a certain level of knowledge, because it has no cross-references, so readers will need to know to look under Dead Parrot rather than parrot. A sketch index would have been useful, especially because not all sketches appear as entries in the index. For serious fans and comprehensive television collections. --Mary Ellen Quinn By assembling his massive guide to every TV episode of the seminal British cult favorite Monty Python's Flying Circus, Professor Darl Larsen gives casual admirers who only know the Pythons from the musical Spamalot or more famous sketches a much larger perspective.... Blessed with an academic's attention to detail and a fan's enthusiasm for the troupe's comic achievements, Larsen hopes his comprehensive study will delight fans new and old. (Kirkus, September 2008) Monty Python enthusiasts will appreciate this companion to Monty Python's Flying Circus.... Casual fans will enjoy browsing through the book. (Booklist, January 2009) Larsen is a devoted fan who exhaustively analyzes the series without ever obscuring its unique brand of humor.... This one-of-a-kind homage to Monty Python, meticulously researched and well written throughout, deserves a place in all popular culture collections. (Library Journal, Starred, February 2009) Darl Larsen is well versed in his material.... Well documented and comprehensive, if not exhaustive, this is an informative and entertaining deconstruction of all things Flying Circus. (Salem Press) This book provides not just a simple explanation of who the frequently referenced Reginald Maulding was, but also what made him such an attractive target for the show's humor.... This book likely will interest libraries supporting television and popular culture studies. Recommended. (CHOICE, December 2008) About the Author Darl Larsen is professor of theatre and media arts at Brigham Young University, where he teaches film and popular culture studies. He is the author of Monty Python, Shakespeare and English Renaissance Drama.