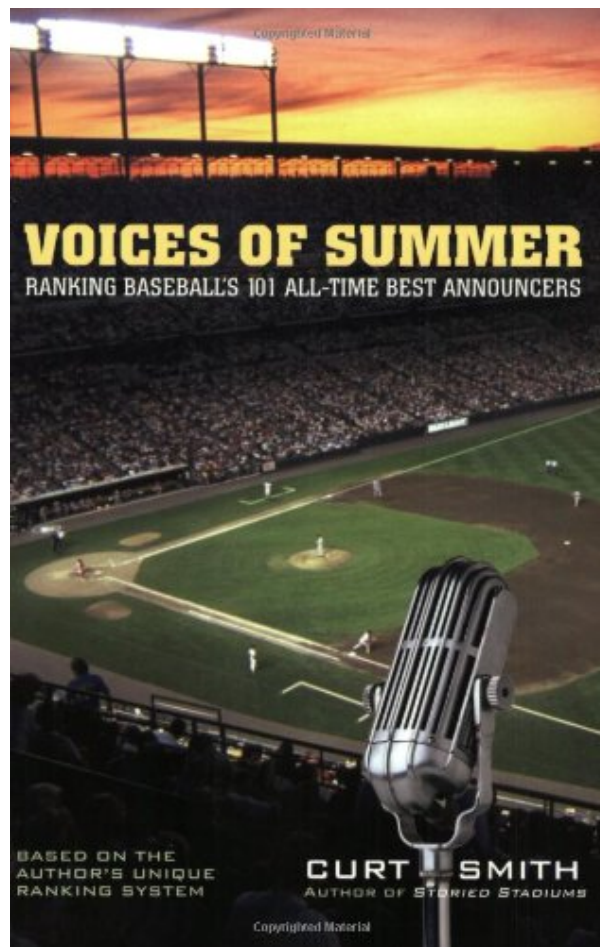
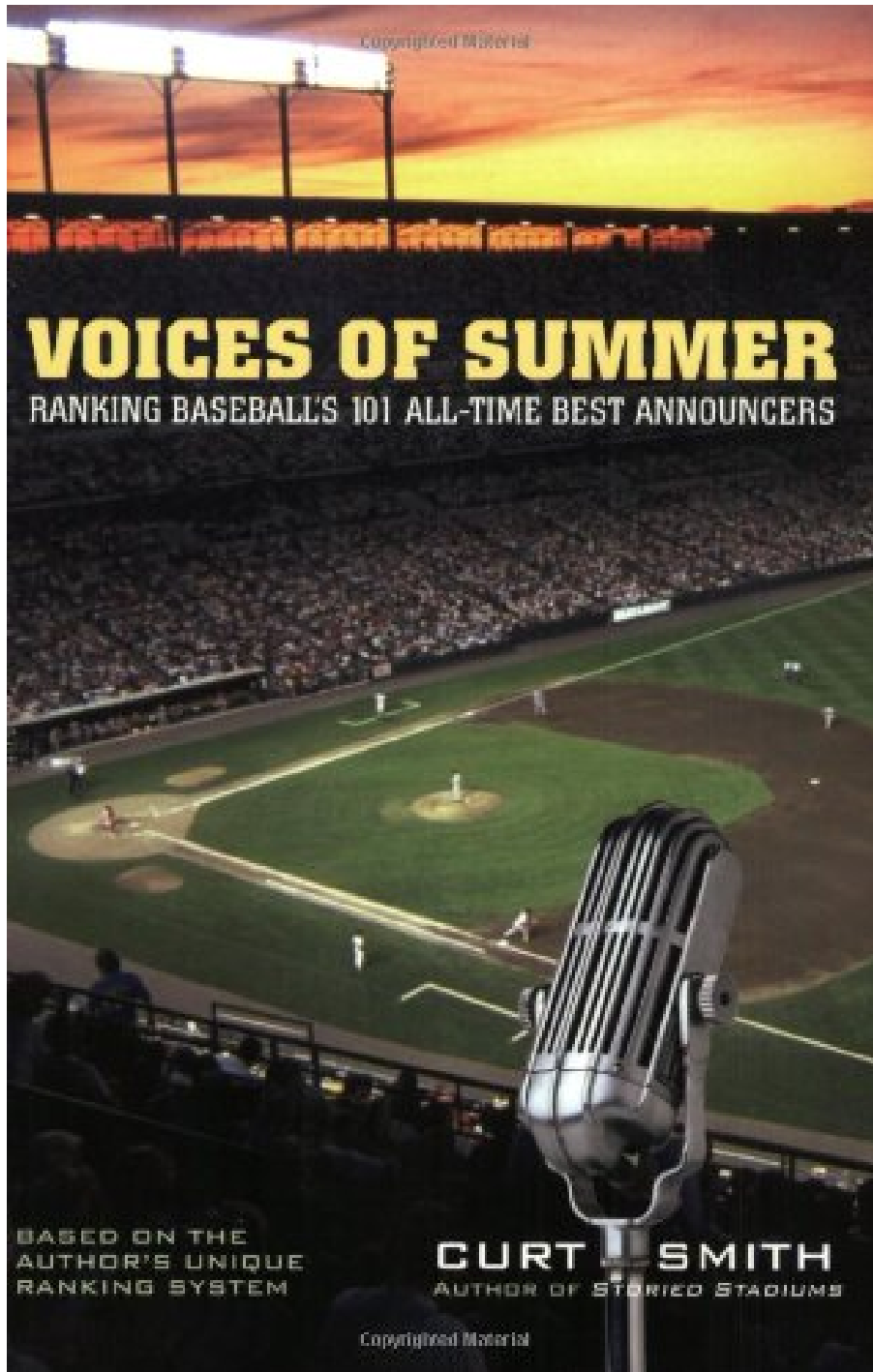


VOICES OF SUMMER: RANKING BASEBALL'S 101 ALL-TIME BEST ANNOUNCERS BY CURT SMITH



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From Booklist

If anything arouses baseball fans more than the teams they follow, it is the announcers who call--indeed, embody--the games those teams play. Smith, longtime sports--broadcasting historian, certainly understands this notion as he offers his provocative selection of the top 101 baseball announcers of all time, from the pioneers of the 1920s (Graham McNamee) to today's best (Jon Miller, Skip Caray, Tim McCarver). Each entry lists (and judges) a broadcaster's longevity, continuity, awards, fan popularity, use of language, quality of voice, and knowledge--ending with a point total and ranking. Most impressive is Smith's encyclopedic yet readable essay on each broadcaster, many of whom he seems to have known personally. His top pick, Dodger announcer Vin Scully, may be beyond argument; everyone else is fair game. Readers will probably agree with many of Smith's picks--Red Barber, Harry Caray, and Mel Allen near the top--while finding other selections, well . . . ludicrous: Jack Brickhouse, God rest him, higher than ESPN's Jon Miller or Seattle's Dave Niehaus? Of course, that's the fun of it. A must for the baseball collection. Alan Moores
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Review

"Smith re-creates the color and humor of the game as though making conversation during a rain delay ... [and] provides the baseball fanatic with entertainment and sufficient information to help him come out ahead of the resident experts at the local sports bar."

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Russ Hodges's frantic pronouncement at Bobby Thomson's "Shot Heard 'Round the World": "The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!" and Jack Buck's incredulous remark after Kirk Gibson's heroic home run in the 1988 World Series: "I don't believe what I just saw!" are just a couple examples. The sometimes downright hysterical commentaries of broadcasters very often become more memorable than even the games they describe. Though countless studies have weighed the merits of our great players, none has assessed the virtues of the men who turn diving catches and soaring home runs into the stuff of myth. In *The Voices of Summer*, Curt Smith has compiled a list of 101 classic announcers—from national celebrities to local favorites, overlooked giants to upcoming stars—in search of the greatest baseball broadcaster of all time. From the poetic reflections of Dick Enberg to the Falstaffian frenzy of Harry Caray, Smith answers the timeless questions: Was Mel Allen better than Ernie Harwell? Does Joe Buck compare to his legendary dad? Which of today's young broadcasters really matches the all-time greats? Irreverent, authoritative, and uncommonly addictive, this book will be the definitive guide to baseball announcing for any and all baseball fans.

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Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Absolutely Awful!!

By N. Corzine

Because there is really nothing like it, Smith's 'Voices of the Game' works despite the author's continual self-indulgence. The stories remain compelling even when the author is offering prose that is, at most times, numbing. Smith is the authorial version of a speaker in love with the sound of his own voice.

Like his dreary MLB Blog, Smith's 'Voices of Summer' is nothing but bits and pieces of fluffy rambling rehashed, regurgitated, and spun over and over and over again. The ratings system, which Smith seems to be quite proud of, is not really all that impressive and appears to offer a weak excuse for Smith to tell readers all about his favorites. Granted, I wasn't looking for objectivity here, but why bother...just rate the voices and give us your opinion.

Unfortunately, Smith's opinions are mostly incoherent blurbs in which the author mixes odd bits of old books with choppy sentences that pretend to grand eloquence. What should have been a pleasant book about a very pleasant subject was, all too often, a painful and sickening experience. Sickening? Yes. Sickening. I wanted my money back less than halfway through.

I gave it one star, which was being generous since I ended up loathing this book. Worse, it actually makes the failings of 'Voices of the Game' more telling.

For a former presidential speech writer, Smith is a pretentious and overly wordy author who, frankly, just isn't that good. This book was a sham and one wonders what he can offer in an upcoming biography of Mel Allen that others - more talented by far - have not already offered.

Bottom line. Avoid this stinker and, if you have to read Smith, pick up 'Voices of the Game' because everything in this book is there in a more coherent and interesting format.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Smith writes. Reader reads. Headache starts.

By Patrick

Baseball on the radio is truly a beautiful thing. As a child I use to lay in bed at night and fall asleep listening to Dodger games. Vin Scully painted vivid pictures of not only the action on the field, but the atmosphere in the stadium. Even today, as an adult, I find it more enjoyable to listen to Giants and A's games on the radio, because Jon Miller and Bill King are great announcers. With that backdrop you can imagine how excited I was to recently receive this book as a birthday present, and how disappointed I was after reading it.

Curt Smith writes in a style that at best could be described as eclectic, and at worst ragtag. Everything is written in a disjointed, stream of consciousness format that leaves the reader confused and reaching for the Tylenol.

Reading this book reminded of the first time I read Shakespeare (9th grade/"A Midsummer Nights Dream"). I wanted to enjoy the writing, but was at times thoroughly frustrated by the text. Part of me wanted to cry,

the other scream at the top of my lungs.

Despite my love of baseball, and my fondness for radio announcers, I could not recommend this book.

12 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Poorly Written Subjectivism

By Eric Paddon

Curt Smith knows a lot about the history of baseball broadcasting, but the pity of it is that he has no idea of how to translate that knowledge into a great book. "Voices Of The Game" written in 1987 and revised in 1992 was undermined by his very bad, disjointed writing style, and compounded by his annoying intrusion of his subjective personal opinions about the merits or lack thereof in certain baseball broadcasters. I have never forgiven Smith for his obnoxious dismissal of the work of Yankees broadcaster Frank Messer (1968-1985) in a single phrase calling him "dull as a greasepocked pan", and his refusal to understand that for Yankee fans of that era, it wasn't Phil Rizzuto or Rizzuto and Bill White, it was Rizzuto, MESSER and White who made listening to Yankee baseball in the 70s and early 80s great. Messer might not have been Smith's cup of tea as a broadcaster, but his career at least merited some acknowledgment if this was to be a truly objective chronicle of baseball broadcasting because there were plenty of people out there who wouldn't share Smith's view on that point (just as I am a person who absolutely despises Jon Miller's broadcasting, an announcer Smith will never hesitate to gush endlessly about, but I would never let my feelings prevent me from acknowledging the following that Miller does have with others).

I mention these prefatory remarks to note that in this new book, Smith's writing has become more shallow and his focus even more so. Now we are getting profiles of 101 great announcers, in profiles that are mostly verbatim rehashes of what we saw in "Voices Of The Game" only more disjointed and even less coherent. To his credit, Smith has evidently made peace with some of the announcers whose work he ripped in the past like Gary Thorne of the Mets, Monte Moore of Oakland etc. and I even applaud the fact that he's willing to acknowledge that John Sterling has a following among Yankee fans despite the shrill blastings he gets from New York media critics. But I'm sorry, you can not include Phil Rizzuto and Bill White on this list and leave Messer out (And include Hawk Harrelson for God's sake????). A more competent baseball writer, Bruce Markusen, has noted how Messer's low-key approach of competent professionalism was the perfect tonic in the Yankee booth to the witty exchanges of Rizzuto and White. Nine innings of Rizzuto and White would have been overkill, but with Messer in the mix, the blend was perfect. Yankee broadcasting went into a tailspin after Messer was dismissed in 1985 and it took seven years for them to land on their feet with the arrival of the John Sterling-Michael Kay tandem.

Smith also is not someone who aggressively does his homework on baseball's broadcasting past, but seems content to just recycle his 20 year old notes, because in addition to rehashing almost verbatim comments from his 20 year old book, he's amazingly still repeating a goof from "Voices Of The Game" that should have been corrected long ago. On page 230, in his profile of Giants broadcaster Lon Simmons, Smith quotes verbatim the famous NBC Radio call of Willie McCovey's liner to Bobby Richardson ending Game 7 of the 1962 World Series. The only problem though, is that call was made by George Kell, not Simmons (Simmons, contrary to the profile listing, was never part of the NBC Radio crew for the 62 WS. All of the games were called by Kell and Joe Garagiola).

Someone else needs to rescue the history of baseball broadcasting from what Curt Smith has done and write a better book (something similar to David Halberstam's 1999 "Sports On New York Radio"). It will be a pity if our long-term reference works on baseball broadcasting will have to consist of Smith's badly written subjective opinions that muddle up so much of the meaningful information there is for us to learn about.

See all 13 customer reviews...

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