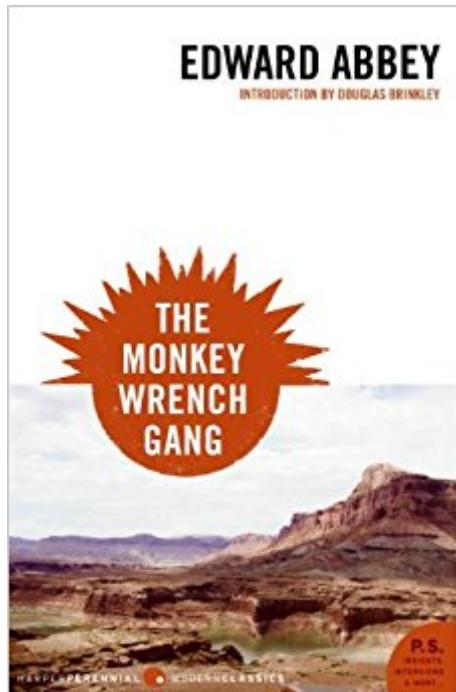


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The Monkey Wrench Gang (P.S.)



Synopsis

Ex-Green Beret George Hayduke has returned from war to find his beloved southwestern desert threatened by industrial development. Joining with Bronx exile and feminist saboteur Bonnie Abzug, wilderness guide and outcast Mormon Seldom Seen Smith, and libertarian billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., Hayduke is ready to fight the power taking on the strip miners, clear-cutters, and the highway, dam, and bridge builders who are threatening the natural habitat. The Monkey Wrench Gang is on the move and peaceful coexistence be damned!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ed Abbey called The Monkey Wrench Gang, his 1975 novel, a "comic extravaganza." Some readers have remarked that the book is more a comic book than a real novel, and it's true that reading this incendiary call to protect the American wilderness requires more than a little of the old willing suspension of disbelief. The story centers on Vietnam veteran George Washington Hayduke III, who returns to the desert to find his beloved canyons and rivers threatened by industrial development. On a rafting trip down the Colorado River, Hayduke joins forces with feminist saboteur Bonnie Abzug, wilderness guide Seldom Seen Smith, and billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., and together they wander off to wage war on the big yellow machines, on dam builders and road builders and strip miners. As they do, his characters voice Abbey's concerns about wilderness preservation ("Hell of a place to lose a cow," Smith thinks to himself while roaming through the canyonlands of southern Utah. "Hell of a place to lose your heart. Hell of a place... to lose. Period").

Moving from one improbable situation to the next, packing more adventure into the space of a few weeks than most real people do in a lifetime, the motley gang puts fear into the hearts of their enemies, laughing all the while. It's comic, yes, and required reading for anyone who has come to love the desert. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Mixes comedy and chaos with enough chase sequences to leave you hungering for more. --San Francisco Chronicle Written over 40 years ago, it still provide the readers with comico-politico releaf, without having to resort to action to express their dislike or certain environmentally damaging policies. --Gilberto d'Urso

The Monkey Wrench Gang holds up well; is still entertaining and thought provoking. All of the characters are flawed, but that may be the point. Those of us who fit well into society are seldom eager to risk our comfortable lives in the service of a greater good. Those of us who are marginalized, however, have less to lose and may be more likely to make political statements and take political actions. The adventures of George Hayduke, Doc Savis, Bonnie Abzug and Seldom Seen Smith as they attempt to fight back against development and the destruction of the West by destroying bulldozers, dams and the egos of their pursuers are cartoonishly entertaining. Today, the idea of an environmentalist throwing a beer can out of a car window seems more than a little odd. In 1975, however, Abby seemed to be combining the mythic image of the Marlborough man with some new age sensitivity to the environment to create characters who both entertain and enlighten and have held up well for 40 years. If you are looking for a light read to entertain you on a flight or at the beach, and have missed it in the past, The Monkey Wrench Gang is a great choice. It is also worth reading to get some historical knowledge and understand where Earth First got some of their ideas. So enjoy the humor, the descriptions of the West and your trip back in time with one of the books that inspired the environmental movement.

I decided to read Monkey Wrench Gang because one book of Edward Abbey's or another was always sitting at my late father's bedside table. My Dad tended to read existential, philosophical novels and was a big fan of Hemingway and Camus. Clearly I had the wrong idea of what Abbey was about. The Monkey Wrench Gang does occasionally wax philosophically, but only in the midst of one character whining or thinking about the bourgeois influence of sanitized American adulthood on the natural environment. Most of Abbey's energy in Monkey Wrench Gang is spent having a good time - following a troupe of 4 troublemakers each shaking off their own shackles of

middle-aged boredom to help fight for environmental freedom. But what I found I liked most about Abbey was that, if that was his plot, it's devoid of any sentimentality, any politeness, and even just the occasional whiff of sympathy, even for the characters we care about. At its center, George Hayduke, the beer-guzzling sorta-traumatised vet who never met a can of cheap beer he didn't like, is so fun to watch not because of his drive, but because his drive to clean up the environment seems to come from nothing more than his hatred of anything besides open land, and even then, he'd never be able to put that into words. For a 400+ page book, Abbey's narrative never slags - there's always a race, a crime, or a good yelling match keeping the book moving. And then there's that philosophical sense, which shows up in asides throughout the book, making Abbey's writing a lot like a Vonnegut or Tom Robbins - prone to smart observations that make you like the writer even more than you thought you already did. Take this observation, on women going to bed before men while camping: "The ladies first. Not because they were the weaker sex - they were not - but simply because they had more sense. Men on an outing feel obliged to stay up drinking to the vile and bilious end, jabbering, mumbling, and maundering through the blear, to end up finally on hands and knees, puking on innocent sand and befouling God's sweet earth. The manly tradition."

Observations like that show how punchy Abbey can be in making a point, even if his point is that civilized westerners, to the environment and beyond, have been pretty annoying.

I burn through a good four audio books per month. As avid listener can tell you, in this format the narrator (reader) can make or break the book. With that said, here is my review: So was looking for a few audio books and it suddenly hit me - I wonder if anyone has put some Edward Abbey books on tape yet? It had been years since I looked and could never find one. There is was; his classic ; The Monkey Wrench Gang. I immediately ordered it and it was here in a few days. I have listened to the first few chapters. My review is two pronged: the first is that this book is a the holy grail for Edward Abbey fans, yet due to the political climate today, it is harder to embrace the characters than in 1977ish when I first read the book. I had memories of this exciting novel of loveable rebel rousers who were raging against the machine, saving the desert from wanton development etc. However, I can't go back to the 20 year old I was when I first read and loved this book. The reality is they are eco-terrorists and would wind up in Gitmo today. The sad reality is this book was perfect for the times, but would never even be published today. So for existing fans of the book, one has to treat it as you would any other classic and accept that it was written when times were different and most importantly it is a work of fiction, as Abbey himself was compelled to say many times prior to his death. You have to just accept the premise was right for the times, similar to watching a classic old

movie. This goes with the territory when listening to a 40 year old story. For example, try watching a old Burt Reynolds move with his curly top perm and fu-manchu mustache- what looked like macho tough guy kicking ass in 1976, looks more like a Saturday Night Live comedy skit today- well, enough on that. The second prong is that for me, the reader is an acquired taste. I would have liked to hear a bit younger reader and a little less monotone approach. However, Edward Abbey spoke in a similar fashion so for the purist, I suppose it is very close to a book that is read by the author. I always imagined a more upbeat voice, but when I saw him speak once in Scottsdale AZ, I remember being surprised at his deadpan tempo. I am sure by the end of the book I will be used to the reader. Regardless, I will be purchasing Desert Solitaire which is another great Abbey book which saw is also on audio now, with the same reader I assume. I appreciate the Abbey family who apparently are making sure his books get to audio- given the choice between this and no audio book at all- I'll take it.

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