

Over There



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"It is safe to write accurately only about the nuts and the bums." -Joseph Mitchell
Entering the Hotel Intercontinental in Amman, Jordan, is like entering an African safari lodge. You're just as likely to get into an argument over double-parking in the heart of Baghdad as you are on the streets of middle America. Seven hundred dollars in "assurances" might get you a room without a desk, bed, sink, toilet, carpet, lights, or even running water. And if you can't get a good quote through friendly conversation, swilling beer and trading insults generally helps. These lessons, among others, are known to every seasoned correspondent. It takes an amateur, however, to take it all in-and truly appreciate how news stories get out from the war zone and onto the front page of The New York Times . In the spring of 2003, metro desk reporter Alan Feuer was sent to the Middle East to cover the U.S. invasion of Iraq. He was not alone: not only were forty correspondents from the Times dispatched, but hundreds of reporters from around the globe planned on locking step with the military, multitudes more following in their wake. This media swarm, along with the local opportunists, profiteers (zee Internet, anyone?), and "media fixers," are detailed here to brilliant, uncommonly funny effect. Feuer shows to what extent improv, dirty jokes, slang, drinks, sarcasm, finger-pointing, more drinks, cheekiness, and notes taken down on missing pads have to do with the news we get. He also offers a profoundly fascinating-and morally

serious-examination of one's responsibility to the truth, to one's country, and to the fear, pride, and ambivalence that inform every conflict, military or otherwise. Over There tells it all with a candor bordering on recklessness, and marks the debut of a major new literary voice. "There is 'going to war' and going to war. Between the two exists an experiential chasm. Some journalists, in their inevitable accounts of 'going to war,' have blurred what, exactly, this difference is. But Alan Feuer understands the difference; indeed, this gripping, wonderful, and morbidly hilarious book is about that difference. One imagines it required real courage to write a charming, funny book about a charmless, tragic war, and genuine moral vision to do so without one speck of bullshit." -Tom Bissell, author of Chasing the Sea and God Lives in St. Petersburg
"There will likely be dozens, if not hundreds, of memoirs written by reporters who covered the war in Iraq. It's a safe bet though that this one will stand apart from most of the rest. . . . This is one war memoir that demands to be read." - Booklist "Engaging . . . memorable. . . Feuer's first book helps us understand how the image of war is crafted, and for that alone it is welcome." - Kirkus Reviews "A perceptive insider's account . . . It's also a trenchant, at times self-lacerating critique of the media itself and its shallowness and isolation . . . [written with] novelistic density and introspection." - Publishers Weekly

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