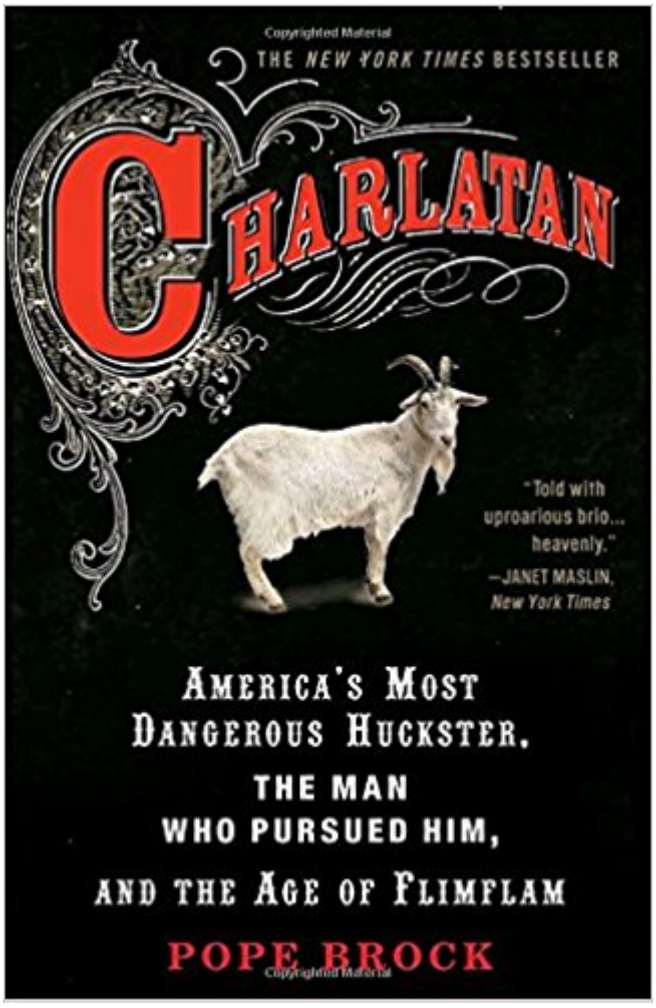
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# Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, The Man Who Pursued Him, And The Age Of Flimflam




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## Synopsis

The inspiration for the 2016 Sundance Film Festival documentary, NUTS!. Ã¢â ¬Å“An extraordinary saga of the most dangerous quack of all time...entrancingÃ¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œUSA Today  In 1917, John R. BrinkleyÃ¢â ¬â œAmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s most brazen con manÃ¢â ¬â œintroduced an outlandish surgical method for restoring fading male virility.  It was all nonsense, but thousands of eager customers quickly made Ã¢â ¬Å“Dr.Ã¢â ¬Â• Brinkley one of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s richest menÃ¢â ¬â œand a national celebrity. The great quack buster Morris Fishbein vowed to put the countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢ s Ã¢â ¬Å“most daring and dangerousÃ¢â ¬Â• charlatan out of business, yet each effort seemed only to spur Brinkley to new heights of ingenuity, and the worlds of advertising, broadcasting, and politics soon proved to be equally fertile grounds for his potent brand of flimflam. Culminating in a decisive courtroom confrontation, Charlatan is a marvelous portrait of a boundlessly audacious rogue on the loose in an America ripe for the bamboozling.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Brinkley, who grew up poor in rural North Carolina but attended Rush Medical College in Chicago, got his start touring as a medicine man hawking miracle tonics and became famous for transplanting goat testicles into impotent men. Brinkley built his own radio station in 1923, hustling his pseudoscience over the airwaves and giving an outlet to astrologers and country music. His nemesis was Dr. Morris Fishbein, the buoyant, compulsively curious editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association whose luminary friends included Sinclair Lewis, Clarence Darrow and H.L. Mencken. Fishbein took aim at Brinkley in JAMA, lay publications and pamphlets distributed by

the thousands. Even after the Kansas State Medical Board yanked his medical license in 1930, Brinkley ran twice for governor of Kansas and almost won. Finally, Brinkley sued Fishbein for libel and lost in a spectacular showdown. Brock (Indiana Gothic) did tremendous research on this rollicking story, but the result is at times unfocused, overwritten and digressive, borrowing just a little too much from the overblown rhetoric of its subject. 8 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW. (Feb. 5) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Reviewers across the board bought what Pope Brock is selling. The author reeled them in with the incredible Brinkley, a quack who was one of a kind yet revealed so much about the era in which he lived. Critics were mesmerized by BrockÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ability to connect BrinkleyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s life to other episodes in American history and fill them with vitality. Yet the true potency of Charlatan derives from BrockÃ¢â ¬â„¢s storytelling skill: many critics spent much of their reviews retelling the highly entertaining tales from the book. Like the work to which it was most often compared, Erik LarsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Devil in the White City (**1/2 May/June 2003), Charlatan will surely prove to be popular with those who love American history as well as with those simply in search of a good yarn.Copyright Ã Â© 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Charlatan was one of the best books I have read in a while, and I strongly recommend it to people who like to read about people from our past and try to ferret out HOW people could be enamored of charlatans then, as they are now. I also loved to see how this man never backed down in how he duped all those around him and even "doubled down" on not just the masses, but even on those closest to him. "Anything for a buck" seemed to be his motto, and the fact that he hurt so many, but people seemed to still support him was dumbfounding. But, when we look at today’s icons, that doesn’t seem all that strange, I guess! They only need willing victims.

This book I read on the recommendation of another book about Dr. Brinkley "Making Them Believe: How One of America’s Legendary Rogues Marketed ’’The Goat Testicles Solution’’ and Made Millions".Read just the intro to the other book and decided "Charlatan" should be read first. Really glad I did.Dr. Brinkley’s actions seem unbelievable today, even as I wonder what medical treatments of today will be tomorrow’s goat gland operation.The best of the book is Brinkley’s masterful use of all current "media" and new methods which he pioneered and perfected.The author has a clear bias

or better said, respect for his own theme, which colors the writing in a useful way. The reader can hold his own judgment even as Brock inserts his own feelings and aversion for quacks.It is a must read for anyone in sales facing the temptation to tell folks what they want, rather than what's good for them or in this case the truth. The book is filled with interesting facts and real events. Like being led along a train wreck where the best or worst is still yet to come.

The central figure was the charlatan but he was hardly the only one. Society has hardly changed since the book was written. The charlatans of today simply operate in different spheres. Among revelations in the book were the birth of marketing and radio broadcasting. The corruption of politicians existed in Biblical times and that chain continued throughout history, including the period covered by the book. Music, political campaigns and medical advice were all popular fodder for the masses via the new medium of radio which in its embryonic commercial stages was nearly regulation-free. Even when radio became regulated, charlatans found an easy way to get around the regulations, a general free for all.It was an often humorous read, sometimes a challenge to the imagination but allegedly fact-based.

I wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t quite sure what I was expecting when I bought Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam, but the topic caught my attention. I have to say that I loved it. It was a narrative type of non-fiction that I like to read and Pope Brock can tell an intriguing story.Of course, he also found a great subject to write about, which is half of the battle.In the early 20th century, confidence man John Brinkley came up with his ultimate money-making scheme. He would use surgery and goat testicles to restore male virility. It makes most men cringe nowadays, but think about some of the odd things we still do to maintain our youth that involved surgery.Brinkley also developed a sideline of selling potions and pills that turned out not to contain what they claimed to contain. This sort of thing was going on before Brinkley with snake oil salesmen and still continues today.I found myself reading the book and thinking how could people fall for this, but then I thought about the modern equivalents and wondered how many times IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve been taken in without knowing it.Brinkley made a fortune off his quack theories and inspired a lot of copycat ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“doctors.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• He also left behind dozens of dead and maimed people, all the while claiming success.So, if Brinkley was the antagonist, the protagonist would be Morris Fishbein, the editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association. IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m not sure about other readers, but I just didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t like Fishbein. I actually found myself hoping that he would fail in his efforts to

destroy Brinkley. On the other hand, I found myself cheering for Brinkley at times because he wouldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t be stopped. He kept reinventing himself to work around the restrictions that were thrown at him. I admired that even though I hated what he was doing.IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve seen a few movies and read some books lately where I didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t like either the protagonist or antagonist. Who do you root for then?Besides his gross medical malpractice, Brinkley also had an impact on politics, radio, and country music.One reason why Brinkley was successful with his scams was because he was a master marketer. His initial marketing efforts dealt with newspaper advertising and direct mail. He recognized the marketing potential of the new media of the day, radio, and made the most of it.When the government started to crack down on how the airwaves were used, Brinkley moved south of the border and opened a radio station in Mexico that eventually broadcast more than a million watts. Not only was this more powerful than his Oklahoma radio station had been, it was more powerful than all of the U.S. radio stations combined.Besides pitches for his products and surgeries, Brinkley also presented entertainment. Many of the performers he chose went on to become pioneers in country music.When Fishbein started to have an impact on BrinkleyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s goat gland empire, he used his radio popularity to move into politics and very nearly became elected governor of Oklahoma as a third-party candidate.I found Charlatan to be a fascinating story. I kept guessing at what Brinkley would do next to outwit Fishbein and his other detractors.

I thought this was a well written, very well researched, and quite interesting book about a person and topic I previously knew nothing about. The scope of the sham goes far beyond just making money lying to people about the efficacy of goat gland implants, but to the long term impact this guy and his contemporaries had on our society (including things like country music!).I really enjoyed Charlatan.

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