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David Rieff

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David Rieff : Los Angeles before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Los Angeles:

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Los Angeles by David Rieff - recommendedBy Elskling47As a native Southern Californian, I started this book with a good degree of scepticism; I finished it thinking it was one of the most engaging, clearly written books on SoCal I had read in years. If you want to understand LA, and its place in the state, and the world, this is an accessible and enjoyable introduction. LA came alive for Rieff in ways that he didn't always immediately understand or anticipate; he translates his own discovery by weaving LA history, anecdotes, and beautiful word pictures together in a clear, engaging style. You may want to read other books on LA after this - and that can only be a good thing. Rieff will encourage you to ask more questions about LA, and what its development means for the future of urban development in America.14 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Very DisappointingBy Steve PapkinIf you are looking a work on the rich diversity of Los Angeles, "Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World" is not it. If you are looking a thoughtful discussion of the challenges facing Southern California, "Capital" is again lacking.David Rieff spent several months in Southern California in the early 1990s, and the only thing he learned was that there was a higher percentage of Hispanics and Asians than in other parts of the country. Not a particularly deep insight. One hour spent driving along Wilshire Blvd. from downtown LA to the Pacific Ocean would have told him as much.Rieff's conclusion -- "We must love one another or die" -- is extremely weak. Perhaps Los Angeles simply defeated him. He was intellectually and emotionally ill-equipped the diversity he experienced. It is a little surprising how much recent immigration shocked Rieff in the early 1990s. While changing demographics may have been more apparent in LA than elsewhere, one has to wonder to what extent Rieff, a New York intellectual, knew

his own backyard. Did he ever venture to the outer boroughs of New York City? If he did, he would have learned that new immigrants were transforming more than just Los Angeles. For example, while Rieff was writing "Capital", Main Street, Queens (little more than a long fly ball from Shea Stadium) was almost exclusively Indian and Chinese. I also got the feeling that Rieff's exposure to Los Angeles was limited to the living rooms of affluent Westside whites and the barrio of East Los Angeles. I doubt he visited any predominantly black or Asian-areas, much less most of the heavily white areas. If he did, he failed to share it with his readers. Finally, not only is Rieff lacking in substance but also in style. Much of his prose is turgid and convoluted. His overly dense style and constant repetition turn reading "Capital" into a chore after about 150 pages. 4 of 8 people found the following review helpful. OUCH! By OGaugeMajor disappointment. Incomprehensible and out of date. PLEASE. No more editions.

In "Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World," David Rieff looks at a city that was long the epitome of the American Dream and is now, for many, the emblem of the American urban nightmare. Writing before the riots of 1992, Rieff found not a city of dreams but a city of bitter contradictions. A city that, like the United States itself, was being transformed by immigrants and refugees from Latin America and East Asia from an extension of Europe to a diverse patchwork of the peoples of the world. This is an L.A. that has never been described before, "a brilliant and disturbing examination," as Joan Didion called it, "of the America we have not yet faced."

From Publishers Weekly This devastating analysis of L.A. as crucible of the 21st century delineates the city where "people and their things are hard to tell apart." Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sAmbitious in both style and substance, Rieff's second major book on a US metropolis (Going to Miami, 1987) attempts to resolve the contradictions of L.A. by proclaiming it the Third World's capital. It's a hard sell, but Rieff does create a memorable sermon on the myopia afflicting the middle and upper classes in southern California, who seem desperately unaware of their city's decline. This is a book about gardeners, real estate, and cars: in other words, about immigration, diminishing expectations, and social and cultural gridlock. The author, a full-blown intellectual of the New York-Paris axis, has his cosmopolitan way with that most rigorous and decadent of places. He seems to mean his book to be both serious and droll, as well as a stylistic tour de force, and he comes close on all three aims. But this is also an exercise in aggravation. There's Rieff's overdependence on his "good friend Allegra," a BMW-driving Everywoman, plus his unfortunate penchant of condescending to the Third World help ("...when the conversation turned, as it did so often in bourgeois America in 1989 and 1990, to the collapse of the Soviet empire, I would slip into the kitchen and talk to the maid...[where] the Rosa or Maria...in question would tell me stories about home"). Lapsing into a faux-L.A. tone, at times the author achieves the very banality he seeks to parody. Another flaw is an indistinct focus-- he makes sweeping statements about the City of Los Angeles (where "most whites had long ago abandoned the public schools") that simply aren't true of the much larger Los Angeles County. Yet there's much to be grateful for as well: an ambitious prose style, a thorough historical buildup that does justice to L.A.'s elusive yet crucial spirit, and a knack for the telling statistic or detail. A big book that justifies the attention Rieff has drawn, without quite earning the laurels predicted of him. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. From the Back Cover In "Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World," David Rieff looks at a city that was long the epitome of the American Dream and is now, for many, the emblem of the American urban nightmare. Writing before the riots of 1992, Rieff found not a city of dreams but a city of bitter contradictions. A city that, like the United States itself, was being transformed by immigrants and refugees from Latin America and East Asia from an extension of Europe to a diverse patchwork of the peoples of the world. This is an L.A. that has never been described before, "a brilliant and disturbing examination," as Joan Didion called it, "of the America we have not yet faced."