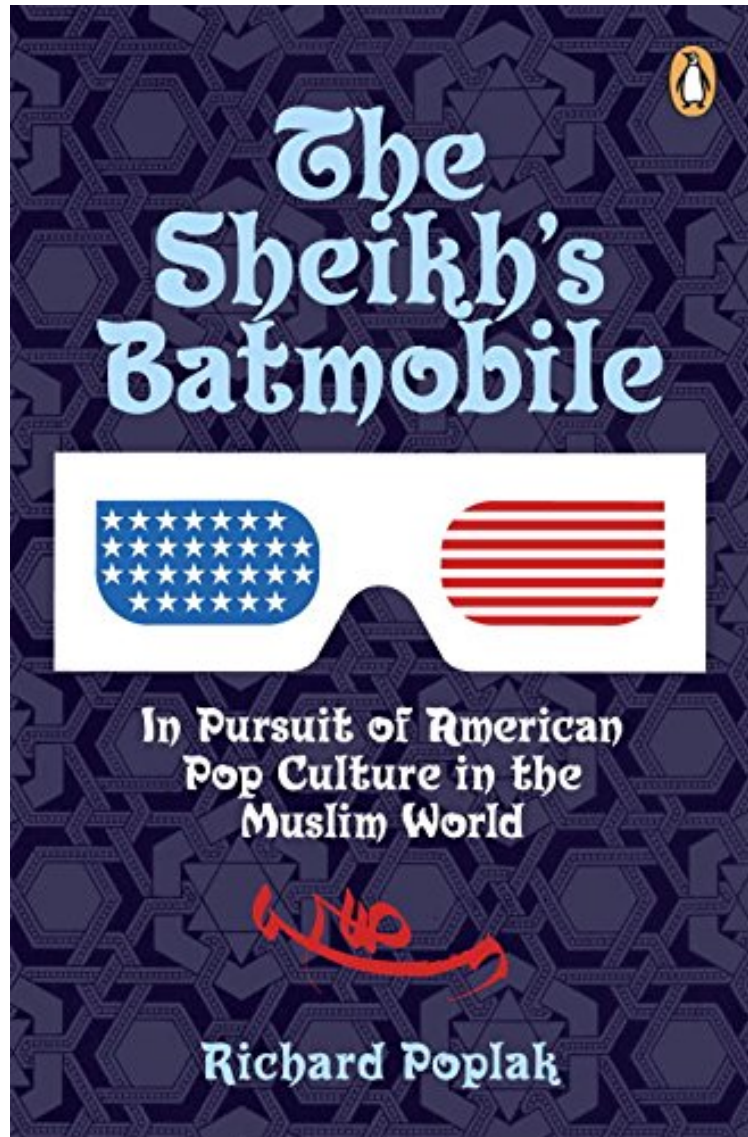


Sheikhs Batmobile: In Pursuit Of American Pop Culture In The Muslim World

Richard Poplak

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#4708495 in Books 2009-03-24 2009-03-24Format: International EditionOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1
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Richard Poplak : Sheikhs Batmobile: In Pursuit Of American Pop Culture In The Muslim World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sheikhs Batmobile: In Pursuit Of American Pop Culture In The Muslim World:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy LouiseI happened to come across Richard Poplak's "The Sheikh's Batmobile" at a local used book store a while back. It wasn't a book I was familiar with but the cover

looked interesting enough and I decided to take the gamble. I'm genuinely glad I did as I found Poplak's writing to be some of the most insightful, nuanced and entertaining commentary on the Islamic world that I've read to date. A pop culture commentator by trade, Poplak visits nearly 20 Muslim-majority countries over the span of two years in the hopes of viewing firsthand how the Western pop culture he loves has found its way to, and uniquely ingrained itself in, the Dar al-Islam. Perhaps Poplak's greatest accomplishment was his ability to humanize those he encountered. He refuses to fall into the easy but tired, Orientalist stereotypes and one-dimensional characters that many Middle East observers, intentionally or otherwise, so often seem to do. Throughout "The Sheikh's Batmobile," from Libya to Indonesia and a lot of places in between, the author finds the similarities that bind us far more than the differences that divide our cultures. In times of such turmoil Poplak's work reads as a refreshing reminder of our common, shared humanity.³ of 3 people found the following review helpful. A little uneven, but ultimately worth while

By Keith Boyea

The Sheikh's Batmobile is part travelogue, part cultural investigation, and part personal exploration. Mr. Poplak visits several Muslim countries searching for the consequences of the hegemony of Western popular culture in the region. I'm not quite sure that's right though: It is almost as if he is exploring how Western popular culture manifests itself in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, the UAE, Indonesia, Iran, Afghanistan, and others (I know I'm missing a few.) The book is often funny, and Mr. Poplak has a penchant for finding the humor and absurdity in the ways in which American popular culture is twisted, changed, and manipulated in the Muslim world. The best chapters are the ones on the Arabic version of the Simpsons and the WWE loving kids in Afghanistan. Some of the chapters are a little less interesting--the death metal scene in Indonesia sticks out as one of these--but the book does a fairly good job of presenting the issue. One scene in particular stuck out for me: The author was discussing the Arabic version of the Simpsons with the producer. The Arabic version scrubbed out some of the social commentary that makes the Simpsons so funny and popular in the United States. The Arabic producer asked the author (I'm paraphrasing here) "Is that all we have, entertainment?" I've been asking myself that question many times since reading it, especially in the face of the upcoming royal wedding, Donald Trump, and the other inanities presented to us as news. It is surprising--I found an insight to our own culture in a book trying to find insights in how our culture impacts Muslim culture.

What happens to our pop culture when it meets another culture head-on especially one that according to some is completely at odds with our own? In *The Sheikh's Batmobile*, pop-cultural commentator Richard Poplak sets out on an unusual two-year odyssey. His mission is to see what becomes of his, and North America's, obsessions: pop songs and sitcoms, Hollywood movies and shoot-em-up video games, muscle cars and punk music when they make their way into the Muslim world. Over the course of his journey, Poplak is body slammed by WWE fans in Afghanistan, hangs out with hip-hop artists in Palestine, head bangs to heavy metal in Cairo, discovers a world of extreme makeovers in Beirut, bowls with the chief of police in small-town Kazakhstan, and encounters a mysterious Texan building rocket-propelled batmobiles for a clientele of sheikhs. With uproarious humor and keen cultural insight, Poplak asks some vital questions: How is American pop culture consumed and reinterpreted in the Islamic world? What does that say about how we are viewed by young Muslims? And can Homer Simpson bridge the differences that are tearing our world apart?

Praise for *The Sheikh's Batmobile* "With insight, humor, and compassion, *The Sheikh's Batmobile* puts a nail in the coffin of 'Clash of Civilizations' theory. The author and subjects are equally human. If you see Ayaan Hirsi Ali, throw this book at her." Michael Muhammad Knight, author of *The Taqwa Core* and *Journey to the End of Islam*

Poplaks expertly-researched and beautifully-written book is one of the most important documents of the post-9/11 world. The National Post I would read Poplak if he wrote about watching paint dry. He is a gifted addition to the exploding and increasingly sloppy literary non-fiction genre. Dark, funny, self-deprecating and poetic, Poplak is a punk Graham Greene both exploiting and being exploited by the cultures he inhabits. The Globe and Mail A heroic feat of research, analysis, and on-the-ground reportage . . . At the very least, *The Sheikh's Batmobile* should shatter the Western stereotype of the Muslim world as repressive and stagnant. Quill and Quire Poplak avoids making easy connections . . . his de-embedded journalism is always open-minded and captures the uncanny perfectly. Eye Weekly Humorous, astute and vivid . . . *The Sheikh's Batmobile* will leave you itching to travel, giggling and glued to YouTube, looking up references. The book is less about how Muslims view Americans as it is about discovering a shared lexicon between two cultures. Poplaks view of popculture is nuanced, as it emerges as a mutating entity crossing national and ideological boundaries. The Coast This is a great book and despite its lighthearted title and subject matter its a serious book. Its an important book too, because it promotes understanding and leaves the reader with hope that at a human level, and at a creative level, the kids are all right. Winnipeg Free Press If . . . youre willing to join the author on his irreverent excursions to dictators palaces, blaring Egyptian heavy metal sessions, concerts preempted by Kalashnikov fire, and secret Batmobile laboratories (yes, the book does live up to its name), then you will doubtlessly ease right into Poplaks narrative . . . The book is not a magnifying glass searching for Western brushstrokes on an Islamic canvas, but rather a kaleidoscope that bounces the reader's assumptions and expectations off the colorful mirrors of zestful narrative and impressive legwork. Wiretap Magazine A fast-paced and culturally savvy look at a section of the

Muslim population underrepresented, if not entirely ignored, by Western media. Open Book: Toronto In the riotous, fearless, and very funny tradition of Hunter S. Thompson and Jon Ronson, Richard Poplak takes us through the looking glass and into an upside down, funhouse mirror pop culture universe where Homer Simpson drinks juice out of a beer can, batmobiles are custom-designed in a desert lair and Islamic children spontaneously recreate the video for Lionel Richies Hello. In the process, Poplak gives us a mantra that unites the West and the East, the secular and the sacred: Fuck you, Shrek, you big green motherfucker. Nathan Rabin, Head Writer, The A.V Club, author, The Big Rewind and My Year of Flops Whether dissecting Indonesian punk bands or the eternal wisdom of Magnum, P.I., Poplak is everything you want in a cultural interpreter funny, frank and utterly incapable of spewing mass market pabulum. Poplak gets beyond the cheap, superficial observations lesser writers bring to his subject, revealing himself as a genuine thinker who delivers original insight and laughs in every chapter. Chuck Thompson, author of Smile When Youre Lying: Confessions of a Rogue Travel Writer