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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ HUMOR NONFICTION

Be a Man: The Plaid Manifesto

Joshua Wisenbaker
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Joshua Wisenbaker's irreverent instructional guide on manhood can be categorized with books like Adam Carolla's *In Fifty Years We'll All Be Chicks: And Other Complaints From an Angry Middle-Aged White Guy*. A TV and radio personality, Carolla has spent years honing his comedic craft, telling real-life anecdotes to round out his rants, while Wisenbaker tells his readers how to be men and insults them for not being manly enough.

He aims to help men regain dominion lost to "some sort of quasi-girlie-boy-douche lifestyle." His book begins with this: "In the following pages you will no doubt be shocked to find out that you are a man child, but persevere to the end and you will have the tools to break out of the pansy mold to become a MAN."

The first chapter "The Great Outdoors," notes that "Fishing is so awesome that Jesus fished in the Bible" and tells men that hiking is the "light beer" of mountain climbing, suggesting that a hike is a way to get rid of a despised boss. The book's subtitle is referenced later in the fourth chapter, "General Rules": "Wearing flannel is mandatory. Notice the word, 'man' in mandatory. It is what makes a man."

The author employs some unusual vocabulary (varmints, nads, sexatary) and throws in plenty of insults directed at readers (pansy, assrag, fool) and uses "hippie" as a pejorative term. Since unmanly readers are not spared, women are certainly not put on pedestals in this book, but the author does say that a man should know how to please a woman.

The book is aimed at and may appeal to a certain population; it is certainly not for general audiences. Dissatisfaction with the pervasiveness of political correctness is understandable. However, a book that devalues women, argues that telling dirty and racist jokes is a part of being a man, and theorizes that God is "the ultimate racist" is not attempting to reach the masses. The book is based on one man's opinions, so those whose own views align with those of Wisenbaker may find it entertaining. Readers who oppose the author's views will find that the writing is not strong enough to help them get past their objections to the opinions presented.

The seventh chapter outlines rules that are much more serious and heartfelt than anything else in the book: Men stand-up for what they believe, do not lie, do what they say they will, and finish what they start. These principles are a little at odds with the flippant tone found elsewhere in *Be a Man: The Plaid Manifesto*, but they do serve to let readers know that the author is not completely crass.

JADA BRADLEY (June 6, 2011)

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