FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Dog's Life: The Magazine For Today's Dog
Heidi A. Ott
Riverbank Press
978-0-9728991-0-9
(September 28, 2004)

To smell, taste, or chew this publication, the mind keeps retrieving the word “clever.” The author, using a glossy periodical format, parodies the style and contents of elite monthly journals. There are selections ranging from Afghan Landers to a Playdate of the Month, accompanied by more than 200 photographs of dogs. With tongue lolling far out of cheek, there is lickingly wet amusement for the canine crowd.

The first article, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Beggars,” schmoozes the way to five additional light-hearted stories for the wet-nose set that warmly endear and never offend. Interspersed are full-page advertisements that mimic familiar ads-for Master’s Card, Bark-A-Lounger, and many more. But do not pass over the smaller inserts. What dog would not want the latest car chaser videos?

“If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.” This quotation from Harry Truman is a good introduction to the feature article “All the Presidents’ Dogs,” which goes back as far as Warren G. Harding and a photograph of his dog, Laddie Boy. This report points to the importance that dogs enjoy in many families, and is the closest to serious journalism that the author allows. What may be only trivial matters to the human reader acquire a more playful bounce from the canine viewpoint.

Most pet people fail to understand that pets are only animals, and so they perceive human characteristics in their animals. This weakness is mined to the fullest by Ott, who is owned by a Labrador retriever named Boo. (Boo also claims the management position of alpha editor for the book.) Ott worked for thirteen years as a marine biologist for California’s Department of Fish and Game, which increased her sense of the absurd. She now spends her time writing humor and photographing dogs.

Although lampooning magazines is not an original concept, the creativity and craftsmanship here are excavated nuggets of distinctive treasure. The durability of the cover should allow for many readings before it becomes dog tired. There is great novelty in the concept of a book for canine readers and no shortage of available material to create a sequel.

One can easily envision this as the beginning of a series, with someday a copy in every veterinary clinic waiting area and on coffee tables of dog-lovers everywhere. It is difficult to kibble with so mutts fun.

David Zimmerman