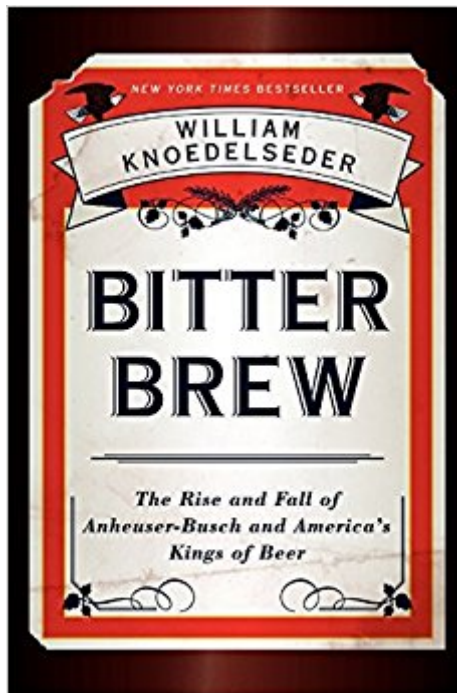


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Bitter Brew: The Rise And Fall Of Anheuser-Busch And America's Kings Of Beer



Synopsis

â œBitter Brew deftly chronicles the contentious succession of kings in a uniquely American dynasty. Youâ™ll never crack open a six again without thinking of this book.â•â”John Sayles, Director of Eight Men Out and author of A Moment in the SunThe creators of Budweiser and Michelob beers, the Anheuser-Busch company is one of the wealthiest, most colorful and enduring family dynasties in the history of American commerce. In Bitter Brew, critically acclaimed journalist William Knoedelseder tells the riveting, often scandalous saga of the rise and fall of the dysfunctional Busch familyâ”an epic tale of prosperity, profligacy, hubris, and the dark consequences of success that spans three centuries, from the open salvos of the Civil War to the present day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wow - I never thought I would say a book about Anheuser-Busch brewing history would be a page turner but I'm happily wrong. The story hits on all cylinders in my opinion. Yes, it's a story filled with scandal about a really colorful family. But it's more than that. It talks to what I think is wrong with today's corporate culture as well. How businesses in this country started out good but have become corrupted over the years. Through the good and bad, the Busch family played a major part in the American business landscape. It was great to see the whole story unfold and tough to see the kingdom come down in the end. Bill does a great job of setting the table and keeping your interest throughout the book. I'm not kidding when I say you won't want to put this down.

Excellent book, with far more sources than the earlier *DETHRONING THE KING* (see my review), which better covered the financial aspects. Say what you want about the arrogance of the Busch family. August III accomplished pretty much everything he set out to do when he took control from his aging and out-of-touch father, August Bush, Jr., in 1974; fighting off the Phillip-Morris/Miller challenge, and achieving a U.S. market-share-growth from the low 20% to over 50%. August III didn't take prisoners. We all knew success was richly-rewarded, but one screw-up and we were out. Anyone who didn't know Anheuser-Busch Co. was dominated by a locker-room mentality simply wasn't paying attention. For all his bullying, August demanded as much of himself as any of his executives. In doing so his unrelenting focus on the U.S. market blinded him to the worldwide changes, just as August, Jr., "Gussie," had lost touch with changes in his time. What August III did to Denny Long and Jetty Ritter was unforgivable. Denny's story alone would be far more interesting. August IV was a self-indulgent, drug-abusing, world-class screw-up - a Midas in reverse. I believe August III came to appreciate both his son's shortcomings and his company's vulnerabilities far too late to do anything about it, held out for the highest price, and cashed in his chips. The greater story is one of arrogance; arrogance of wealth, arrogance from political-power. The Founders hoped in their drafting of a Constitution and Bill of Rights to place limits on excessive political power. While the record of the U.S. is far from perfect, we haven't experienced many of the excesses of the larger world; in which government-genocides murdered over 165-million unarmed civilians in the 20th century alone - 5-times more than the deaths of all armed-combatants in all the wars of that century. As for the power of wealth, the free market as defined by Adam Smith, et al, to the extent we permit it to fairly function, does not eliminate excessive power. But at least it limits excesses in the long run. The Busch family ran a great game for five generations. But they abused their power and it brought U.S. ownership to an end. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

More a biography of the Busch family than it is a book about their beer empire, it was compelling nonetheless, with sons conspiring against fathers, orgies, and the final, tragic and sad collapse of the empire when their drug-addict CEO, after having pushed his dad out of the way, let the company fall out of Busch hands for the first time in 150 years. As a longtime beer geek I enjoyed this more than I expected. I should have disliked it, largely because I expected to be reading about the beer industry and instead ended up reading about a quirky, unusual family. Didn't matter, though, because their story was so compelling I didn't CARE that my expectations were thrown off. If you want a book on the beer industry, this one is fairly light (though there is some worthwhile material

here), but if you want a book on the rise and fall of American royalty, this is it.

I live in the metropolitan St. Louis area and the Busch family is part of the culture and history here. I found this book to be intriguing and a bit sad as well. Money really cannot buy you happiness and this book tells the family's tragic story. Well written and engrossing. I literally could not put it down.

Meh. Non-fiction isn't usually my style, so take my review with a grain of salt. I found the book to be very confusing (most of the people have the name August- "Auggie", "Gussie", "three sticks" - I was having a hard time following. An interesting read for anyone who is familiar with STL. I found it fun to read and know the places they were talking about (having been there). This book was decent, though not the page turner that I usually enjoy.

This is an entertaining, almost page-turning, look at the Anheuser Busch beer company, its history, and the Busch family members who ran the company, dealt with prohibition and the return from prohibition. Also touched on were the impact of Anheuser Busch on the city of St Louis and even a bit about the company's ownership of the St Louis Cardinals baseball team. The Busch family members who ran the brewing company were quite colorful, particularly Gussie Busch, making this quite an interesting book. Not dry at all. Loved it!!

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