

Non-Fiction Roundup at the Nichols Library

Here's a roundup of new and interesting reports from the real world at the Nichols Library in Center Harbor. Read about a brilliant inventor who was also a killer. Get down on the ground in Afghanistan. Find out how music works. Take a peek at the science of making predictions. Read up on an historic figure or enjoy a lively memoir. Or tackle one of the big questions.

The Inventor and the Tycoon by Edward Ball. Edward Muybridge invented stop-motion photography, anticipating and making possible motion pictures. He and his patron, tycoon Leland Stanford, (who was obsessed with finding out if horse's hooves ever left the ground at the same time) launched the age of visual media. But Muybridge was also a murderer who killed coolly and meticulously, and his trial is one of the early instances of a media sensation. Says USA Today, "this story has all the elements of a fascinating HBO drama."

The Outpost : an untold story of American valor by Jake Tapper. In 2009, , Combat Outpost Keating was attacked by Taliban insurgents and nearly destroyed. A Pentagon investigation later concluded that the outpost, located on vulnerable terrain just 14 miles from the Pakistani border, should not have been there in the first place. ABC News war correspondent Tapper spent two years chronicling the mission and lives of the troops based there. *Business Week* called *The Outpost* a "seminal work of documentary journalism."

How music works. David Byrne. In this wide-ranging, occasionally autobiographical analysis of the evolution and inner workings of the music industry, Byrne explores his own deep curiosity about the "patterns in how music is written, recorded, distributed, and received." He is an opinionated and well-educated tour guide, and the resulting essays--on topics from rockers' clothes to the role of the turntable, concert stages to recording studios--will give you an entirely new perspective on the complex journey a song takes from conception to your iPod.

The Signal and the Noise by Nate Silver. In this ramble through the art of forecasting, the author shows what happens when Big Data meets human nature. From baseball to weather to earthquake prediction and economic trends, Silver shows how predictions go bad thanks to biases, vested interests, and overconfidence. But he also shows where sophisticated forecasters have gotten it right. This is a "timely and readable reminder that statistics are only as good as the people who wield them (Darryl Campbell)."

History buffs should know by now that the library has terrific new biographies of Churchill, Lincoln Jefferson and Eisenhower on hand. Just ask at the front desk. Also, coming this spring is *Guns at Last Light*, the third volume of Rick Atkinson's epic and humane 'Liberation trilogy,' which follows the G.I.'s from Normandy to the Bulge to Belsen. If you missed the first two volumes, *Army at Dawn* (North Africa) and *The Day of Battle* (Italy), this would be a good time to do some catch up reading.

Made for You and me: going broke, finding home by Caitlin Shetterly is riches to rags stories in which a couple heads for the West Coast looking for a taste of the good life. Instead, they go bust. The ensuing scuffle for work, complicated by an unexpected pregnancy, ends in a reverse pilgrimage back to their mother's small saltbox house in Maine. *Made for you* offers a very personal look at what the recent economic downturn looked like for a pair of middle class Americans. On a lighter note, *Can I get an Amen?* By Sarah Healy tells what happens when a refugee from a born-again household moves back in with her parents.

Moving from miniature frame to the big picture, *why does the world exist?* asks why there is something rather than nothing. Author Jim Holt, our "witty" and "generous" guide, takes on the role of cosmological detective. His interview subjects range from a cranky Oxford philosopher to a Physics Nobel Laureate to a French Buddhist monk. The result is a brilliant synthesis of cosmology, mathematics, and physics. Says Kathryn Schultz, "the pleasure of this book is watching the match: the staggeringly inventive human mind slamming its fantastic conjectures over the net, the universe coolly returning every serve."