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Max Alexander

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Max Alexander : Man Bites Log: The Unlikely Adventures of a City Guy in the Woods before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Man Bites Log: The Unlikely Adventures of a City Guy in the Woods:

7 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Quite Dissapointed in This BookBy RibsBrisket4meI was really

excited when this book arrived. I was looking forward to the trials and tribulations from a family that goes through a major life change. Some of that came through but what ruined this book for me was Mr Alexander's inability to keep his personal political views out of the text. When discussing eating his Guinea Hens in Chapter 50, he proclaims "The French, as many celebrities but few Republicans grasp, were right as usual". He slanders the President in Chapter 55. He also sees fit to dislike airlines (though he flies quite frequently, and he even calls Chef Emeril a "snakeoil" salesman. What we have here is a hypocrite. He hates progress, except when it suits him (his DSL line) and wants to protect nature but never worried about all the trees that died while he was an executive for 2 major American magazines which gave him the money to pursue his so called simple life. I'm not even a Republican, but I did not want to read a political commentary. I can get lots of that crap elsewhere. I feel he only used this book to push his own personal agenda. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. E.B. White reborn indeed! By Grace Hinrichs This is such a delightful book I hardly know where to begin. I'm from Maine, once lived on a farm not far from where Max Alexander now lives, know the small towns along the coast and just inland from there, and I recognize the people he's describing. And contrary to what one earlier reviewer said, he writes about them with both accuracy and respect (when they deserve it of course!) and he catches the rhythm of their speech perfectly. The book is both a collection of essays and the personal story of his decision to move with his wife and two boys from a glitzy life in New York and L.A., when he was entertainment editor of People Magazine and Variety, to a 150 year-old farmhouse in the back country of Maine not far from the coast. Like E. B. White who moved from New York to Brooklin, Maine, 4 or 5 decades earlier, his was a deliberate and conscious choice. He already knew Maine and he liked the simplicity and down-to-earth quality of the life and people there. And like E.B. White, he's a terrific writer. He has the same ability to be involved in the scene--building a sheep shed, burning a blueberry field, taking part in town meetings--while at the same time remaining at a little distance so that what often comes across is bemusement both at himself and at the ways of the world. How anyone can call him arrogant or pompous, as one or two have, is quite beyond me! The book is full of wonderful self-deprecating and wry humor. (And by the way, he wasn't blaming the poor for living in ugly trailers, he was blaming us as a society for not coming up with a better solution to provide simple and comfortable dwelling places for those in need.) Again like E. B. White he writes with the precision of a good carpenter who pounds his nails with a tap and a blow in a regular rhythm. He nails it again and again whether he is describing his neighbors, Elmer's Barn (a junkyard cum antique store), or the Windsor Fair. I've bought five copies --so far-- to give away to friends and family. I promise you'll enjoy this book if you decide to buy it. I couldn't put it down--it's so real! 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. There were signs of progress by the end of the book, but Alexander never quite gets rural Maine. By Suzanne Amara I read this book in an almost steady state of annoyance. Max Alexander writes about moving to a small town in rural Maine to farm. As he admits, this is part of a larger group of books where essentially the same thing is written about--city guy moves to Maine and writes about life there. I might feel very differently about his writing had I not grown up in the part of Maine he writes about. I am NOT a Maine native--I did not live in Maine full time until I was 6. That makes a big difference, and I would never act like a native. So my first hint that this book would annoy me was near the beginning, when he talks about "outsiders" and "summer people" going to Elmer's Barn, a local antique/junk store. This is after he's lived there less than a year. Heck, Max, if you don't get at that point you are still an outsider yourself, I don't know what to think. Then he goes on to insult or backhandedly praise what he calls the "rabble rousers" of town over and over. They don't live off the land. They like snowmobiles. They live in ugly trailers (which he does admit might be affordable housing, but why do they have to be so ugly?) They want a gravel plant in town. They work for MBNA, a credit card service firm that came to the area for a while, instead of at more traditional pursuits. It goes on and on. Essentially, he seems to feel that everyone should live just as he does. Which, it seems, would mean they have a handy second source of income in writing for high level publications and that they regularly call celebrities for interviews. Although he says he gets it, I don't think he does get that most of the people in town that have lived there for generations are just trying to get by and live enjoyable lives. It's telling that at one point his family goes to Sunday River skiing. Most Mainers never ski. They can't afford it. He also hates the idea of cell phone towers in town, but is thrilled when he can get DSL internet. Yeah, we don't want technology unless it is something we personally want. I sound too mean here, and I do think he grows by the end of the book, and starts to see that others in town live valid lives, even if they do vulgar things like live in trailers, eat junk food and ride ATVs. It's also a sign of good writing that the book could get me as upset as it did. And my perspective is probably someone a unique one, in that I do understand both worlds to some extent. You can never quite fit in if you aren't a 3rd or 4th or more generation Mainer. My sister started kindergarten with her class and was with them all the way through high school, but I don't think a person in the class would ever forget her family had not moved to Maine until just before kindergarten started. That's life there. Like it or not. You can't pick and choose--you can't say you never watch TV but then write for TV Guide, as the author did. Or you can, but it makes for a very irritating book.

Max Alexander had been the executive editor of Variety and was the senior editor at People magazine in charge of all Hollywood coverage, when he decided one day that the glitz of Tinseltown and the glamour of New York didn't quite hold the allure they once had. So Alexander turned down yet another fancy magazine job, and family in tow, moved to

a farmhouse in rural Maine, where he suddenly found himself forced to confront neighbors who “speak slowly but are hard to understand, and drive slower but are impossible to pass.” In the course of this both sobering and hilarious how-not-to, Alexander covers the gamut, from doing his best to avoid burning down the barn, and occasional intrusions from his previous life, to what E.B. White calls the “basic satisfaction of farming”—manure. Approaching what passes for small-town life in rural New England with the gusto and nose for a scoop of a seasoned Hollywood reporter, Alexander puts a new spin on the tradition launched by Thoreau’s reportage from Walden. *Man Bites Log* is an essential collection for readers of back-to-the-land literature, and anyone convinced that *la dolce vita* can be found in a pile of dung.

From Publishers Weekly A hotshot entertainment editor (at *Variety* and later *People*) chucks corner offices in New York and L.A. and phone calls from Warren Beatty to burn brush and butcher pigs in Maine and lives to tell about it. City slicker-in-the-woods has been done before, as Alexander readily admits, but it's done here with honesty, charm and a good dose of self-deprecation. In short essays originally published in the *Portland Phoenix*, Alexander tells how, in the late 1990s, he moved to Maine with his family to get away from "the frayed excess" of city life; he ended up, as the local plumber put it, in "a real shit sandwich" of a house on 150 semiwooded acres. While Alexander continues freelance writing, he also dedicates himself to becoming a small-time farmer. Not surprisingly, the local residents—hardworking, taciturn and thrifty ("When folks in my town heard that a teaspoonful of anthrax could wipe out the whole state, they appreciated its frugality")—are the heroes of the book, teaching Alexander what he needs to know. Alexander, in turn, does his part by running for selectman, which reinforces his "sense of place." This is a wise, enjoyable chronicle of the search for a meaningful life: "to both fight and surrender in the same moment. It's as good a recipe as any for living well." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "These well-turned vignettes of a transplanted cityman...have an enduring simplicity and allure." -- Kirkus
The characters are solid and appealing, and readers will enjoy getting to know them. -- *Library Journal*
The new voice of a new generation fleeing skyscrapers. "Man Bites Log" is as honest as it is thoughtful. -- *The (Portland) Maine Sunday Telegram*
About the Author Max Alexander is an author, journalist, onetime farmer and failed politician. Failure is in fact a central theme in his books, which have been called "how-not-tos," although many of his subjects refuse to cooperate and actually make something of themselves, against all odds. His latest book, "Bright Lights, No City," chronicles a three-year adventure in the West African country of Ghana, where his entrepreneur brother has been attempting to launch a new for-profit business providing innovative goods and services to low-income customers. Alexander is a former senior editor at *People* magazine in New York and, before that, the executive editor of *Variety* and *Daily Variety*, the showbiz trade publications, in Los Angeles. His writing—on topics ranging from crime to adventure—appears in dozens of publications including *Smithsonian*, *Saveur*, *Prevention*, *This Old House* and *The New York Times*. In addition, Alexander has edited books by such notable authors as George Plimpton and film critic David Thomson. He is currently working on a book about China. He lives with his wife and two sons in an 1816 center-chimney Cape in midcoast Maine.