

FIRE ON THE HORIZON: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE GULF OIL DISASTER BY TOM SHRODER, JOHN KONRAD



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Amazon.com Review

Fire on the Horizon is a fascinating look at a little-understood industry and a fast-paced and emotional story of the efforts to save the Deepwater Horizon. The authors' account of the workers' race to save themselves is thrilling and suspenseful, and yet the book is also a sensitive account of the lives forever changed. Miami Herald

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From Publishers Weekly

Konrad, a veteran oil rig captain, teams up with Shroder (Old Souls) to offer a thorough but plodding look at the "little-understood culture of offshore drilling." Starting in Korea with the construction of the Deepwater Horizon in 2000, the authors leapfrog through time and around the globe to explain the history and mechanics of oil rig life and offshore drilling. Profiles of the (mostly) men who work the rigs shed light on the class tensions aboard as well as on the personalities, educations, and customs of this special set of modern-day mariners. Konrad had close friends on the Horizon and the final chapters are an affecting blend of their firsthand accounts of the explosion. The authors suggest that oil rig blowouts are inevitable: while Transocean Ltd., owner of the Horizon and the world's biggest offshore drilling company, does what it can to prevent common safety hazards, the high cost of delays in the offshore oil business (use of the Horizon was costing BP a minute) encourages management to postpone the maintenance of essential equipment. While informative and undeniably important, the book is so bogged down by clunky prose and jargon that it's difficult to mine its message. (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

From Kirkus Reviews

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Past Lives, 1999), veteran oil-rig captain Konrad guides readers through the culture and daily life of offshore drilling on the Deepwater Horizon. Konrad worked seven years for Transocean, the owner of Horizon, which exploded into flames in April 2010, taking 11 lives and leaking more than 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. He comes at the story from the perspective of the people who do the work to get the oil. In so doing, he provides a complementary angle on the event to Carl Safina's *A Sea in Flames* (2011), with its emphasis on corporate malfeasance and the blowout's social and environmental impacts. First, Konrad introduces the Horizon, which, even in its outdated state, was an awesome construction, a floating drilling platform the size of an office park, with computer-controlled dynamic positioning that could keep it over a 20-square-foot target a mile under the surface of the ocean. Konrad writes of the rig with easy familiarity, while comfortably populating it with its maritime and drilling crews and warmly conveying the camaraderie that suffused the platform. Though the author comes from a maritime background, he turns the drilling process into a fine choreography, offering an effective critique of the corporate edicts that jeopardized the safety of the rig's people and the integrity of the exploratory well. The corporate atmosphere was complex, however—one moment finds Transocean working hard to avoid common-hazard injuries, then cutting back on crew just when the aging rig needed them most for preventative maintenance. Konrad's gavel comes down on corporate irresponsibility, and the consequences of the poor, indeed criminal, decision making is palpably, gruesomely expressed as the author screws down his focus to the last few days of the Horizon, concentrating on a few individuals in an absorbing re-creation of the disaster's brewing, mayhem and horror. A lucid investigation into the fatally risky business that caused the blowout, which, by putting human faces on many players, amplifies the ache.

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"A phenomenal feat of journalism. . . . I tore through it like a novel but with the queasy knowledge that the whole damn thing is true." —Sebastian Junger, author of *The Perfect Storm* and *War*

Blending exclusive first-person interviews and penetrating investigative reporting, oil rig captain John Konrad and veteran Washington Post writer Tom Shroder give the definitive, white-knuckled account of the Deepwater Horizon explosion—as well as a riveting insider's view of the byzantine culture of offshore drilling that made the disaster inevitable. As the world continues to cope with the oil spill's grim aftermath—with environmental and economic consequences all the more dire in a region still rebuilding from Hurricane Katrina—Konrad and Schroder's real-time account of the disaster shows us just where things went wrong, and points the way to a safer future for us all.

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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Be better with an ending

By joe-maryland

I liked this book. I loved all the details about how to drill an oil well offshore. It is truly amazing that this works at all. The blow by blow of the accident was great. I would have given it 5 stars if it had an ending. The book ended part way through various hearings and lawsuits. Maybe it is still in court and the author wanted to get the book out, but it seems like a partial draft that just stops.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Great perspective on the untold story

By J. Greene

I really enjoyed reading *Fire on the Horizon*. Especially as events recede from public view, books like this become more important. While there's often just a vague memory of the event in the public consciousness, Konrad tells a compelling of what went wrong and how. I read this in one sitting, and was inspired to do

more research on the events described, which is unusual to me. I'd highly recommend this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Oilfield Drama in Non-Fiction

By Ernie

As a retired oilfield veteran with over 33 years of experience working in "the patch," I was spellbound. Though my offshore experience was limited to a couple of barge jobs in the bays of S TX, the oilfield is a network of similar branches on a single family tree. Having survived more than a few dicey situations onshore, I empathized with most of the players while understanding the conditions and actions - and mistakes - leading to and resulting from the Deepwater Horizon incident.

P.S. While the movie was a good film it most certainly was not a documentary. If you've relied on that source to be informed about the incident, know that about the only resemblance to reality between the incident and the movie is that the well blew out and burned the Deepwater Horizon to a sunken cinder.

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