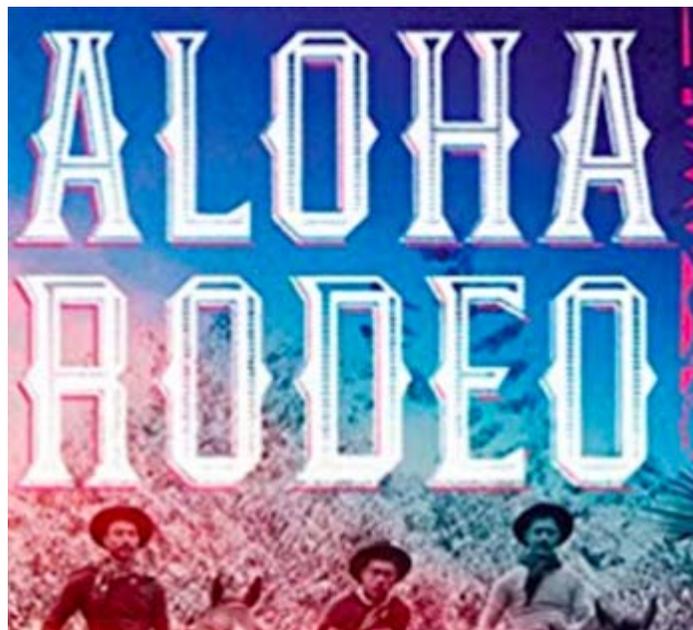


Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Book & Film
GLOBE



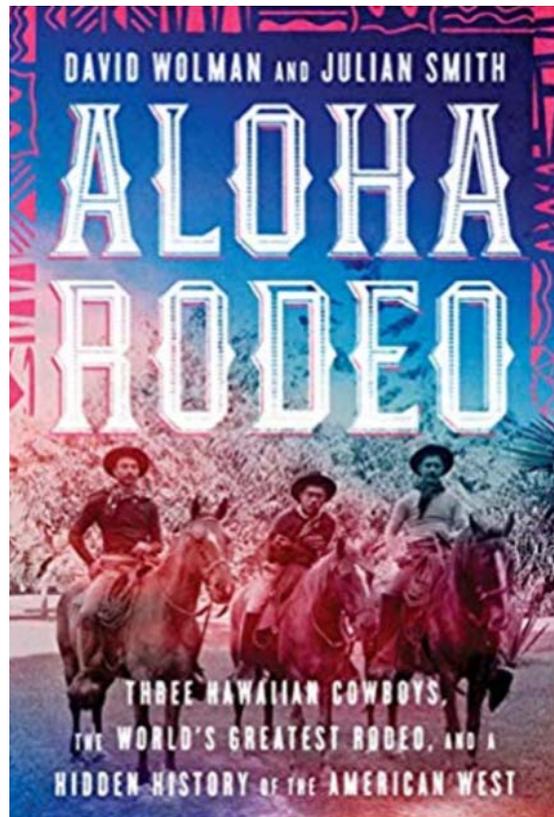
Aloha Rodeo

How Hawaiians Showed up and Showed Off in 1908 at the Biggest Rodeo in the World

June 5, 2019 Michael Giltz

Just as the Wild West was beginning to fade from view, Americans began to celebrate it like never before. Buffalo Bill Cody traveled the world, staging everything from Custer's Last Stand to a stagecoach holdup with actual cowboys and Indians in tow. And rodeos proved increasingly popular as a way to punctuate a Fourth of July celebration and give cowboys a chance to compete for money and blow off a little steam.

Perhaps the biggest rodeo of them all was Cheyenne, Wyoming's Frontier Days celebration. It quickly steamrolled into an attraction that drew people from all over the country. But publicity stunts never hurt, so they urged cowboys from every country in the world to travel to Wyoming and go head-to-head against the best steer-ropers in the world.



No matter who showed up, local boys almost always won the most prestigious events. So in 1908, when some pint-sized Hawaiians arrived from the almost-mythical island of which the U.S. had just seized control, people generally met them with polite curiosity or derision. Who were they kidding?

That's the story of Aloha Rodeo, by David Wolman and Julian Smith, an intriguing anecdote spun out into an amiable, if padded, book. Turns out those Hawaiian paniolo (as they called their own cowboys) were ringers. Hawaiians had been roping and herding cattle in the wild surf and on the dangerous volcanic slopes of Hawaii long before the U.S. even laid claim to the West, much less began cowboy-ing on the plains.

If you'd just picked up cricket last week, you'd hardly expect to best the British, would you? That was the unwitting attitude of the "real" cowboys of Wyoming. Not knowing the long and colorful history of Hawaiians and cattle, the attendees just watched in amazement as the three competitors from the U.S.'s newest territory whupped all comers.

One problem for the book? Like the cowboys of legend, the Hawaiian competitors Ikua Purdy, Jack Low and Archie Ka'au'a were men of few words. We hear precious few accountings of the events at hand from them. When they do speak, they do so tersely and unremarkably. Worse, in terms of drama, the competition itself lacked suspense and ended quickly. They came, they mostly won, and then they went home.

Wolman and Smith do honorable work filling out the story. They give a detailed history of cattle on the island of Hawaii and the history of rodeos in the U.S. But when they describe the train route the Hawaiians took, and detail seemingly every sight they might have seen along the way, you sense their urgent need to turn an interesting tale into a book-length work.

Perhaps we need to embrace the nonfiction novella, that rarely-used option for stories longer than a magazine article but shorter than a 300-page book. Barring that, it would have been better if the authors took a cue from their taciturn heroes and wrote a long Aloha Rodeo article that left us hankering for more, rather than a book that squeezes out every angle from a fascinating but brief event. Real cowboys get the job done quickly and then slip away.

(William Morrow; May 28, 2019)

Tags: Aloha Rodeo, David Wolman, Julian Smith

← Ali! Ali! Ali!

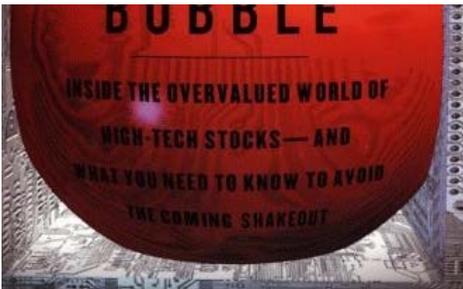
Long Live Brock →

Michael Giltz



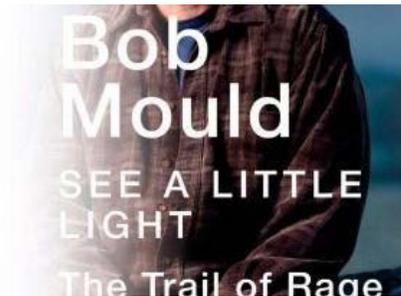
Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in New York City covering all areas of entertainment, politics, sports and more. He has written extensively for the New York Post, New York Daily News, New York Magazine, The Advocate, Out, Huffington Post, Premiere Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, BookFilter, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times. He co-hosts the long-running podcast Showbiz Sandbox.

You May Also Like



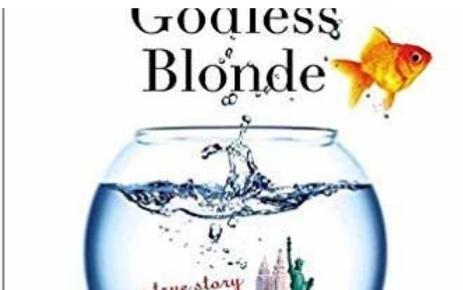
A Nation of Greater Fools?

November 3, 1999



Bob Mould Fucking Rules. And So Does His Memoir.

June 25, 2011



A Charming, Frequently Hilarious Memoir

January 16, 2013

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

Name *

Email *

Website



Subscribe to our mailing list

Social

Twitter

Facebook

Recent Posts

Tales of the Kinda Shitty

Drug Dorks of Germany

A Porpoise-Driven Life

The French New Wave at 60

Men In Blech

Recent Comments

Ken Kurson **on** Tales of the Kinda Shitty

Morgan Thomas **on** Is Molly Ringwald a Good Translator?

Neal Pollack **on** The Plot Against Having Sex With Old Philip Roth

Lesje Drinn **on** The Plot Against Having Sex With Old Philip Roth

Whatever, Black Mirror, Technology is Awesome! – Book and Film Globe – sky news hub **on** ‘Avengers: Endgame’

Archives

June 2019
May 2019
April 2019
March 2019
February 2019
January 2019
December 2018
November 2018
October 2018
September 2018
August 2018
July 2018
May 2017
February 2016
May 2015
February 2015
January 2015
December 2014
November 2014
March 2014
December 2013
September 2013
April 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
July 2012
November 2011
September 2011
June 2011
May 2011

March 2011

May 2001

March 2001

October 2000

August 2000

July 2000

June 2000

February 2000

January 2000

December 1999

November 1999

October 1999

September 1999

August 1999

July 1999

June 1999

May 1999

April 1999

March 1999

February 1999

September 1998

June 1998

May 1998

April 1998

February 1998

October 1997

September 1997

August 1997

June 1997

May 1997

April 1997

March 1997

February 1997

January 1997

November 1996

September 1996

August 1996

June 1996

May 1996

April 1996

February 1996

January 1996

October 1995

August 1995

February 1995

January 1995

Editor: Neal Pollack | General Manager, Advertising: Kevin Sanders – 201-724-0340

Sea of Reeds
MEDIA

Book and Film Globe California Globe Fine Art Globe Modern Consensus New Jersey Globe
Rock and Roll Globe

[About Us](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Advertise with us](#) |

© 2019 Book and Film Globe