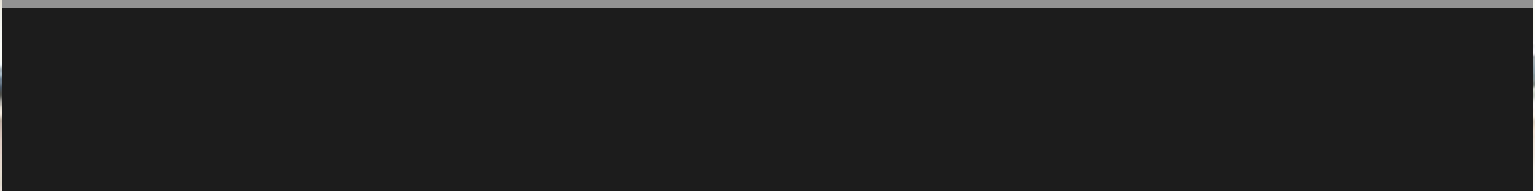
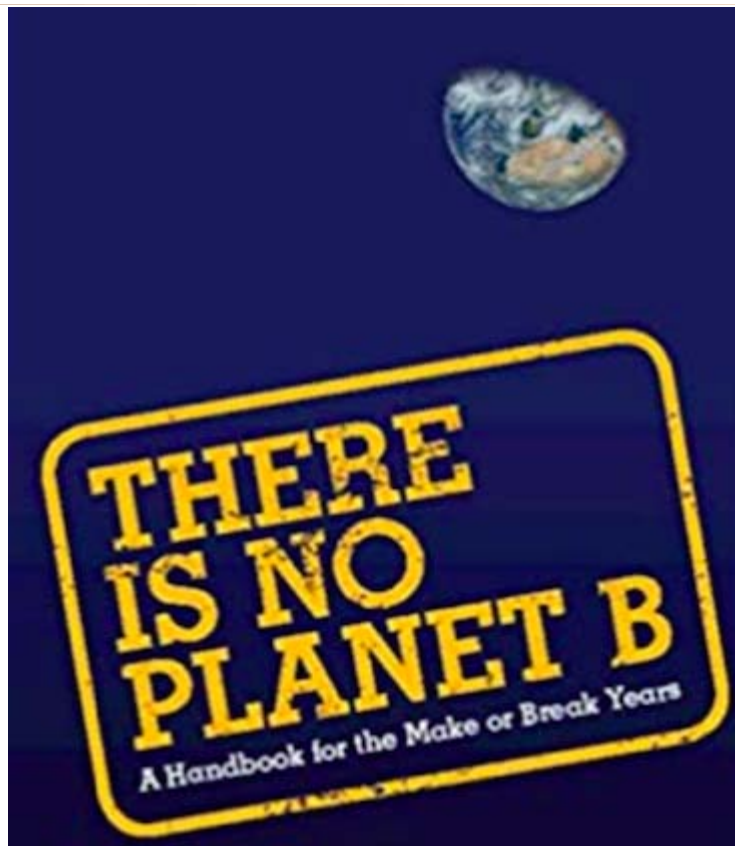


Saturday, April 6, 2019

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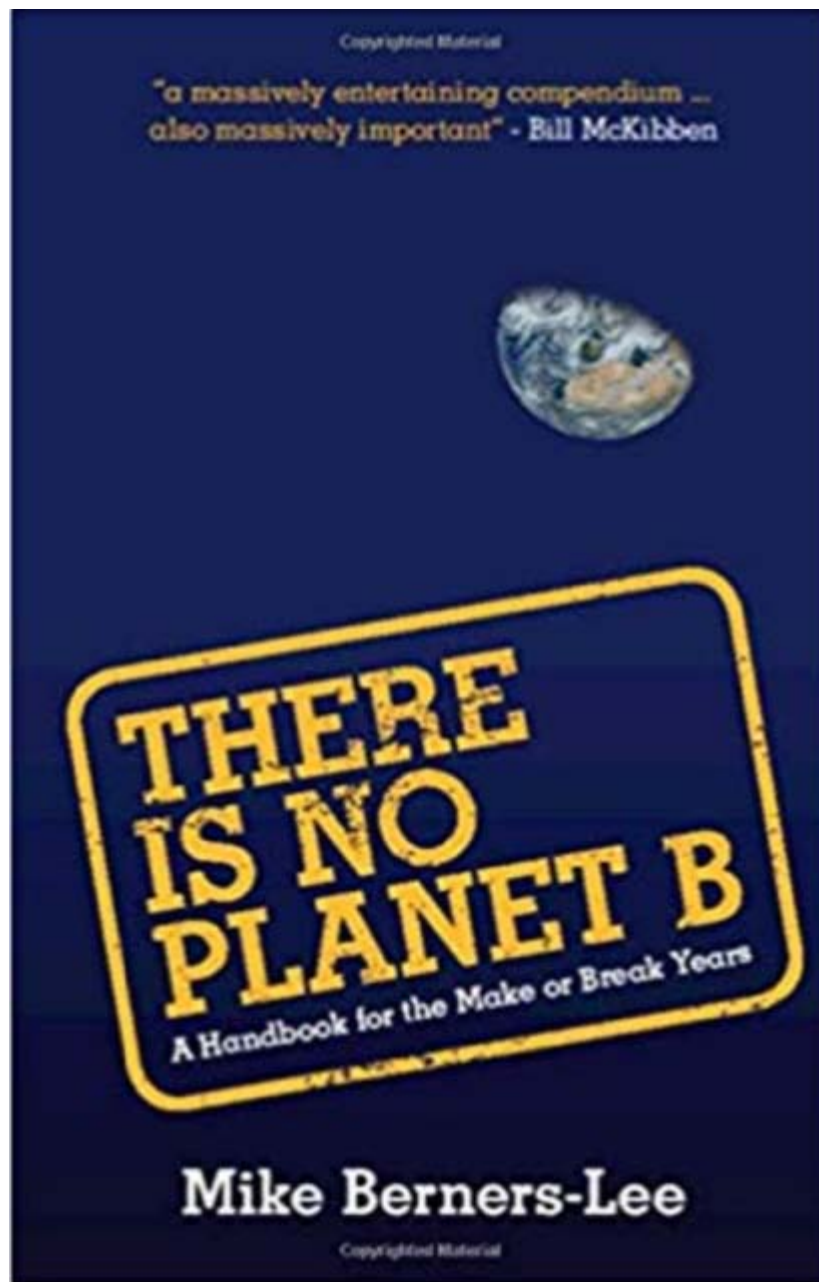
The Climate is Changing and All I Got Was This Lousy Book

March 5, 2019 Michael Giltz

Mike Berners-Lee is an expert on carbon footprints but also a generalist and a magpie of information, especially when it comes to climate change. He's here to tell you—quite correctly—that climate change is a MASSIVE problem that poses an existential threat to life as we know it.

But he also wants to say, a la Douglas Adams, DON'T PANIC. You can do lots of little things in your daily life to “make a difference.” Acting in small ways adds up and changes your thinking. It reminds you, and everyone around you, about the crisis we face.

With that in mind, Berners-Lee (the brother of Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the World Wide Web and I assume lords it over Mike at every family dinner) has delivered his new work, a paperback and e-book release cheekily titled *There Is No Planet B*. With the time remaining before irreversible disaster, a stage-left exit via Tesla Rocket to Alpha Centauri or parts unknown isn't going to happen. You go to war with the planet you have, so to speak. So we must act. Hence the subtitle: “A Handbook For The Make Or Break Years.”



This topic proves to be so massive that it positively swamps Berners-Lee. Through his semi-panicked lens, to tackle climate change, you must tackle food and transportation and our consumerist society and inequality and global politics and much more. Planet B rushes through complex topics, pivots to solutions and then offers up a call to action on each issue for everyone from countries to corporations, right down to you and me in our daily lives.

It's an impossible task, really, and easy to mock. For example, Berners-Lee says that when considering a purchase of seafood you should get to know your local fishmonger and brightly ask them, "What are the environmental and ethical issues to consider with this particular type of fish?" As a British person, he actually knows his fishmonger.

At the other end of the spectrum, he blithely tosses off the idea that a business that exists primarily to make a profit is unhelpful. He argues for a Universal Basic Income, calls for an end to hunger, and admits reaching a worldwide deal to effectively fight climate change. This will require richer countries to learn to share with

poorer countries. He demands “a sense of international fair play the world has never yet known.” Suddenly, I’m the one panicking.

Berners-Lee ping-pongs from the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution to wasteful packaging of take-out food. He covers intrinsic and extrinsic values while also discussing the problems facing journalists, the meaning of truth, and the carbon cost of shipping food by boat versus growing it in a local greenhouse.

In short, he tosses every stray thought he’s ever had connected to global warming into the Planet B mix. I couldn’t decide whether I should be recycling, storming the barricades, or, more likely, building the barricades with recyclable material and then storming them.

I agree with most every word he says, appreciate the effort and even learned a little here and there. But I’m certain this will overwhelm and confuse the casual reader and be far too vague for the informed reader. I fear this book isn’t worth the carbon footprint it will cost to print and ship, even in paperback. And that’s the inconvenient truth.

(Cambridge University Press, February 26, 2019)

Tags: climate change, global warming, Mike Berners-Lee, Planet B

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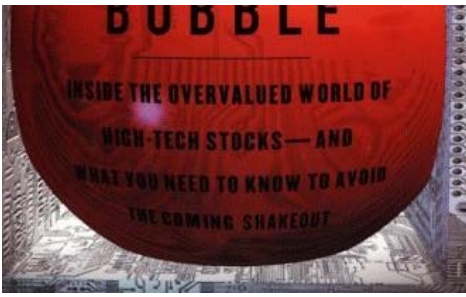
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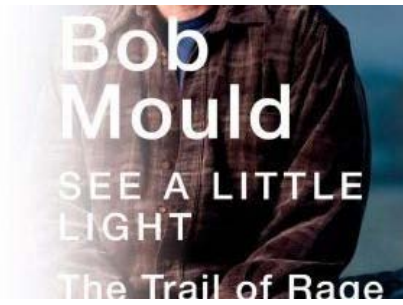
Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in New York City covering all areas of entertainment, politics, sports and more. He has written extensively for the New York Post, New York Daily News, New York Magazine, The Advocate, Out, Huffington Post, Premiere Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, BookFilter,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

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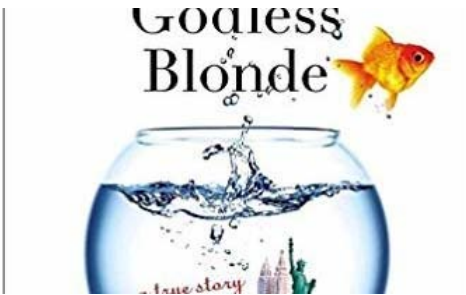
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