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Man Bites Murdoch

Bruce Guthrie
 Melbourne University Press
 Reviewed by David Knight

Who wants to be a newspaper editor? After reading former *Herald Sun* editor Bruce Guthrie's account of his sacking from the News Limited paper – not many and certainly not Guthrie because only a tiny helping of the Australian media smorgasbord escapes his poisoned pen in this brutally honest, amusing and heart-pumping account of his four-decade career in print media. *Man Bites Murdoch* may seem like a wounded vendetta on the media billionaire Rupert Murdoch and his Australian lieutenants but it's a must-read biography and inside look at the downfall of newspapers, as corporate partnerships and the search for immediate profits taint true journalism. Bookended by the events leading up to his surprise dumping and the court case that followed (Guthrie sued for breach of contract and won), *Man Bites Murdoch* is part autobiography, part comment on the downfall of journalism and part fly-on-the-wall account of some of the most gobsmackingly unbelievable stories that happen in the testosterone-driven world of Australian print media, which at times resembles a bogan version of *Mad Men*. Guthrie excels as a story-teller in the longer format, as he recounts his childhood in the working class area of Broadmeadows to his media rise from eager copy boy at *The Herald* to editor of the largest selling Australian daily, which along the way included stints as editor of Fairfax's broadsheet daily *The Age*, its weekly cousin *The Sunday Age*, *Who Weekly* and sub-editor for *Who's* American parent *People*. Detailing some of his infamous battles against heavyweight politicians such as Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett (when Guthrie was editor of

The Age), as well as a colourful telephone exchange with former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, *Man Bites Murdoch* also showcases the media's dysfunctional relationships with this country's corporate and political powerbrokers. Guthrie's two-finger salute to News joins Paul Barry's *The Rise And Rise Of Kerry Packer*, as a must-read title on the bizarre, fascinating and 60s throwback worlds that are the boardrooms of Australian media.

