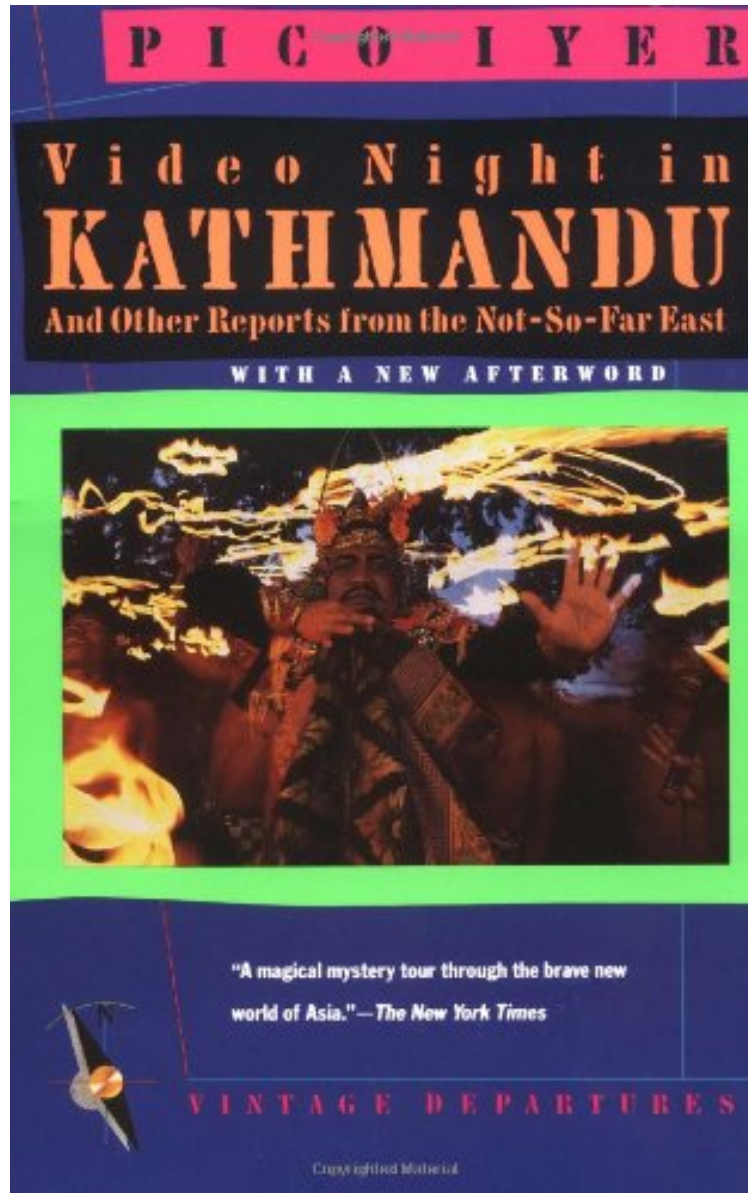


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## Video Night in Kathmandu: And Other Reports from the Not-So-Far East

*Pico Iyer*

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**Pico Iyer : Video Night in Kathmandu: And Other Reports from the Not-So-Far East** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Video Night in Kathmandu: And Other Reports from the Not-So-Far East:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A keeper. One of the best examinations of Japan ever. By a book reader I lived in Japan, as did/does the author. This is the first book that, in my view, clearly explains the Japanese national mindset. It's not all about Japan, though, and the other nations he visits provide grist for more brilliant analysis. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insights from a brilliant analyst By Carrington Ludd A lively, perceptive view of Asia--an astonishingly vast range of countries included--in the mid-1980s, and even more valuable because it contains an epilogue which moves into the twenty-first century. Iyer approaches each country from a different perspective, then ties it all together in his conclusion. I appreciate the open-ended quality of this study, which reflects the breadth of vision and understanding of the author. An endlessly fascinating book! 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. great writing but slightly dated message By Micah Anderson As I was reading, I couldn't help but think Iyer was trying to prove his point too much by rattling away with endless examples of globalism and American influence on Asian countries. Ok, so you can order guacamole in Indonesia. You can eat burgers in Nepal. Kids breakdance in Beijing. There are Philipinos singing Frank Sinatra in karaoke bars in the back alleys of Manila. We get the point. As an expat living in Asia, these things are a given, and in Asia 2010, I am surrounded by American culture everyday. But then I realized my gripe was based on one thing--the year 2010. Video Night in Katmandu on the other hand, was written in 1989, and it was a very different world then. Internet had barely a presence in Asia at that point, and only the rich had mobile phones. Online streaming movies and music were non-existent, and current and reliable world media in countries like China and Burma (or even Thailand, for that matter) was shaky at best. It's amazing to think how much things have changed over the last twenty years due to technology. Actually, it's a bit scary. Overall, the book is a quaint reminder of what once was, but its commentary on American influence in Asia seems to lack the punch it may have once had. That said, Iyer's writing is eloquent, and his cultural insights struck a good balance between humorous and heartfelt; a balance I hope to find in my own travel writing. I particularly enjoyed the Thai and Burma sections, and his final chapter, where he gives updates about some of the characters he met along his travels.

Mohawk hair-cuts in Bali, yuppies in Hong Kong and Rambo rip-offs in the movie houses of Bombay are just a few of the jarring images that Iyer brings back from the Far East.

.com Only in India would the American film Rambo be remade with the title role played by a woman--in a sari, no less! Only in Hong Kong would a man at a cocktail party pick up a woman with the line "What do you think of the dollar?" And only in Video Night in Kathmandu will you find detailed, unsettling portraits of a Far East in flux as experienced by Pico Iyer, a travel writer beyond compare. Tibet, China, India, and Thailand--these are among the objects of Iyer's wanderlust, the subjects of 11 essays chronicling his travels. In India, he explores the lucrative Bombay film business: "The process of turning an American movie into an Indian one was not very difficult ... but it did require a few changes.... the Indian hero had to be domesticated, supplied with a father, a mother, and a clutch of family complications." As one film director told him, " ... for example, Rambo must be given a sister who was raped." In Bangkok he finds the sex trade is well nigh impossible to avoid: " ... by the time a third official government tout approached me with the novel invitation: 'My friend. You no like birdwatching?' I was inclined to suspect that ornithology was not among his interests." Pico Iyer is more than just a travel writer. For four years, he wrote about world affairs for Time, and he brings to these brilliant, comical, and poignant essays his extensive knowledge of politics and culture as well as a journalist's eye for the telling details. Video Night in Kathmandu provides both a stark, unsettling view of modern Asia and an exploration of the ambivalent attitudes Asians hold toward the West. From Publishers Weekly In 1985, Iyer, a British freelance writer, crisscrossed eastern Asia to view the spread of America's pop-cultural imperialism through 10 of the world's oldest civilizations. With serendipity as his guide, he spent only a few weeks in each country, and most of his intelligence came by chance. Nevertheless, this traveler's casual observations make a book of warmth, charm and sensibility, and anyone intending to visit the Orient will greatly benefit from his arresting descriptions and shrewd assessments: Bangkok is a mixture of "pizzas, pizzazz and all the glitzy razzmatazz of the American Dream, California style." China displays "the get-rich-quick politics of the Cultureless Revolution." Money-mad Hong Kong is "the largest metropolis in the world without a museum." Despite its "impatience of limitations," Japan is obsessed by baseball and Disneyland. Tibet is "the latest way station of the Denim Route." The people of the Philippines, "masters of Asia's hospitality business," are the most depressing and desperate. One word characterizes Singapore: "McCity." In the end, it is poor, shabby Burma, "the dotty eccentric of Asia, the queer maiden aunt who lives alone" that has the most appeal. If the image abroad of America is "perplexingly double-edged" the responses it provokes are "appropriately forked-tongued," and, in the last chapter, "The Empire Strikes Back," Iyer begins to suspect that every Asian culture he visited is probably "too deep, too canny or too self-possessed to be turned by passing trade winds from the west." Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In the past we traveled to see the exotic; today we find the familiar. Rambo movies and rock music pollute Asian cultures. How pervasive, and deep, is Western influence in Asia? Through chapters built around expatriate life in Hong Kong, the sex scene in Thailand, the mock paradise of Bali, popular movies in India, and

baseball in Japan, we clearly see the collision of cultures. Iyer is well-matched to his subject: British born and educated, of Indian parents, and a resident of the United States and reporter for Time . He has a fine turn of phrase and an eye for the incongruous, but beneath this lively account is a provocative book that belongs in academic as well as public libraries. Harold M. Otness, Southern Oregon State Coll. Lib., AshlandCopyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.