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Notes on a Cowardly Lion: The Biography of Bert Lahr

John Lahr

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John Lahr : Notes on a Cowardly Lion: The Biography of Bert Lahr before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Notes on a Cowardly Lion: The Biography of Bert Lahr:

A son's funny, frank, and "endlessly fascinating" memoir of his father, Wizard of Oz star Bert Lahr (Harpers's Magazine). Bert Lahr, best known for his role as the Cowardly Lion in The Wizard of Oz, made audiences laugh from burlesque stages to vaudeville to Broadway—and impressed them as Estragon in the

American theater debut of *Waiting for Godot*. But reality wasn't always funny for the legendary actor and comedian, or his family. Drawing on personal recollections and the memories of his father's colleagues, a veteran writer for the *New Yorker* and renowned theater critic brilliantly explores both the long and glorious professional career of a Hollywood icon and the experience of growing up with him. Here, in rich detail, is Bert Lahr evolving from a low-comic star to a Ziegfeld Follies sophisticate, hamming it up with the Scarecrow and Tin Man on the set of *The Wizard of Oz*, and garnering rich praise as he performed in Samuel Beckett's masterpiece. But while Lahr could be equally raucous and polished in public, in private he was painfully insecure and self-absorbed, keeping his family at arm's length as he quietly battled his inner demons. "A work of literature, a work of history, a subtle psychological study," *Notes on a Cowardly Lion* is more than one man's quest to understand his father. It is an extraordinary examination of a life on the stage and screen (*Harpers Magazine*). From a writer with an intimate knowledge of the theater and show business world, this is both a "frank and objective" (*The New York Times Book Review*) family memoir that will appeal to readers of *Carrie Fisher's Wishful Drinking* or *Alan Cumming's Not My Father's Son*, and a "book-length love letter. To open it is to enter a life, to participate in a sensibility and, perhaps most important, to laugh. Uproariously" (*Life*).