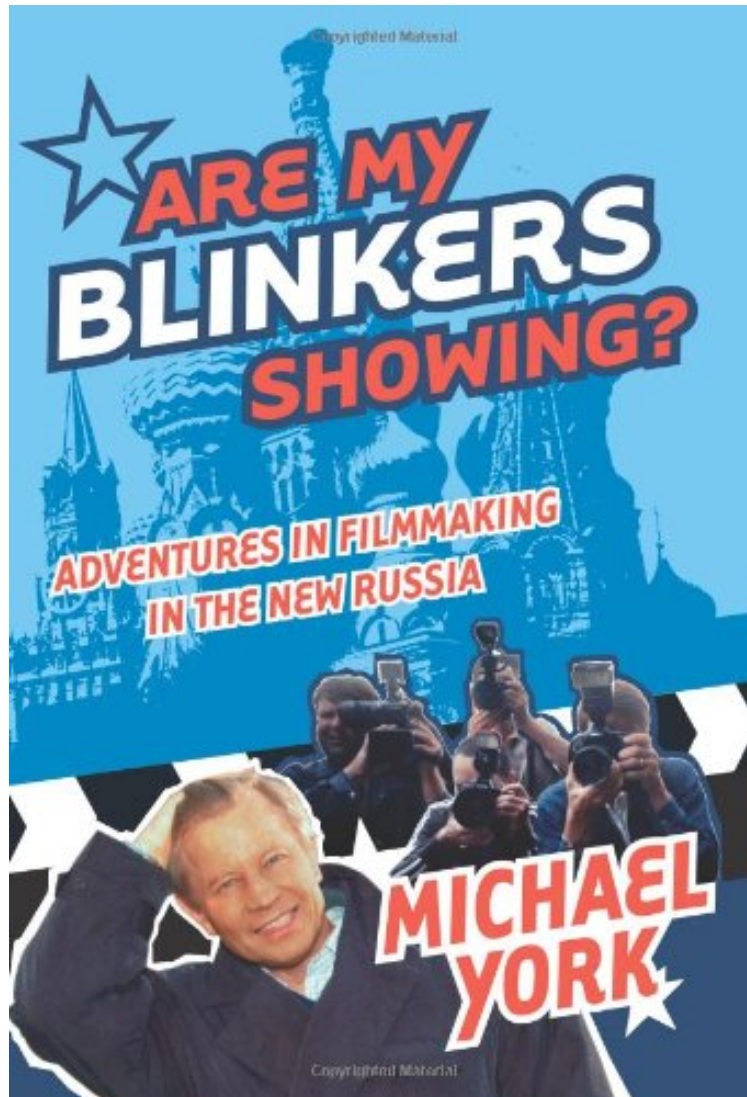


Are My Blinkers Showing?: Adventures in Filmmaking in the New Russia

Michael York

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Michael York : Are My Blinkers Showing?: Adventures in Filmmaking in the New Russia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Are My Blinkers Showing?: Adventures in Filmmaking in the New Russia:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Fine -- But Hardly an AdventureBy A. RossAnyone expecting a rollicking tale of excess and madness revolving around filmmaking in Russia will be sorely let down by veteran actor

York's account of his time in Moscow in 2003 acting in a thriller. Which is not to say it's a bad book, but rather that there's little in it that will surprise readers even nominally conversant with filmmaking and/or post-Soviet Russia. York is best known for roles in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cabaret*, *Logan's Run*, and more recently, the *Austin Powers* franchise. He's also the author of several books, and his prose here shows the ease and polish of a natural writer. This slim book (it can be read in well under three hours) is based on the diary he kept while in Moscow for several weeks filming *Moscow Heat* with co-starring with "the Russian Schwarzenegger" and several fourth-tier American actors. The first quarter details all the run up to filming, including how York got the script, the deal, the trip to Moscow and the initial preparations. This also includes plenty of strolls around Moscow with his wife, frequenting the galleries and observing the architectural turmoil. The middle half covers the production, which, for an independent international film is remarkably smooth -- the main problems are excessive product placement and poor location scouting. York dutifully records his various aches and pains, food intake, and the many parties and media events he expected to partake in. Quite frankly, the subtitle smacks of marketing and wishful thinking -- there are no adventures of note. The final quarter of the book covers York's return to Los Angeles, the editing progress, and the marketing buildup to the film's release in Russia and the U.S. There are a few interesting tidbits relating to releasing a film in Russia, but otherwise, the minor foul ups and hassles aren't particularly interesting or illuminating or unique. Throughout the book, York shares his impressions on Russia, a country he's visited a number of times over the last 35 years. In that sense, the book is somewhat more interesting as an amateur travelogue than a film diary. York does his best to weave in the facts and figures of contemporary Russian society and politics, often pulling his punches when it comes to Putin. But none of this will be new to those who have been paying attention to Russian affairs. Indeed, again the subtitle's use of the term "New Russia" and the inside flap's use of "go-go capitalist Russia" are tired cliches -- the "New Russia" of excess and growing split between rich and poor has been around for a decade. At what point does this term lose meaning? But these are presumably the work of the publisher, attempting to spice up interest, and not York. Just be warned that there's not much spice in this rather genteel slight book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.
Russian Dressing
By Kevin Killian
It's a mild book, with sidelights about the new Russia, a scary place in which millionaires have enormous power but the average person on the street has nothing. York should be ashamed of himself for participating in the continuing repression of nearly a billion people. Be that as it may, if it earned him and his attractive wife Pat, a noted photographer, a few rubles and Pat some photo ops, who's to grudge him his holiday in the cold? The movie he was working on three years ago, *MOSCOW HEAT*, is as he says almost a direct homage to an Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle of a decade back, *RED HEAT*, starring an improbable Arnold wannabe of Russia, who is very amusing. You know what the whole *BLINKERS* book remind me of? *THE MUSES ARE HEARD*, by Truman Capote, in which Capote joined a travelling troupe of black American singers who were presenting Gershwin'd folk opera *PORGY AND BESS* in Soviet Russia back in the benighted 50s. York has some of Capote's amusing cosmopolitanisms down, though he's less anxious to offend his hosts, perhaps because they are, after all, threatening enough goombas and plus they might stop the check. But when things go wrong for Michael York, he can always amuse by recalling similar episodes from his long and up and down career, including the worst movie experiences (in Losey's *ACCIDENT* he was forced to wait upside down in a wrecked car for hours while the leading lady stepped on his face) so that whatever happens now, he's been through a lot worse, like the Brazilian director who lit everything, even exteriors, with tear-gas-like *Liquid Smoke*. He can also recall the genuine wit of famous friends, such as Noel Coward, who told him that "television is for being on, not watching," and Graham Greene, who once said that he has been to too many places to be happy. This book is recommended for all who enjoy a well-turned out tour to a devil-infested nation, with some laughs and insight stirred in like vodka.

He was the raging, youthful Tybalt in Franco Zeffirelli's classic film *Romeo and Juliet*. He was a divinely decadent foil to Liza Minnelli's divinely decadent Sally Bowles in Bob Fosse's Oscar-winning *Cabaret*. And he won over an entirely new generation in the *Austin Powers* movies. Now Michael York is off to make the biggest independent film in Russian history--in the capitalist Wild Wild West that is today's Russia. York is co-starring alongside the 300-pound, 6-foot-6-inch Russian bodybuilder Alexander Nevsky (think Arnold Schwarzenegger) in an action film called *Moscow Heat*. With a self-deprecating wit reminiscent of Charles Grodin in *It Would Be So Nice If You Weren't Here*, an eye trained on the imponderables of day-to-day life (especially in faraway places--what on earth did the hotel's laundry list mean by the mysterious men's garment it called "blinkers"?), and with an increasingly alarmed sense of how the new Russia, for all its capitalist trappings, is becoming ever more like the old Russia under an ever more autocratic government, Michael York has crafted a deliciously readable insider's account that transcends genre. There's much here to be found about the actor's craft, much to be found about Russia then and now--but most of all there is the singular pleasure of being in the company of a witty and delightfully articulate observer of people, places, and the remarkable adventure called moviemaking.

"An articulate, delicious memoir." -- New York Post 9/19/2005
"Engaging...An interesting, enlightening memoir." -- Filmbill, May 2006
"Enjoyable to read, and the subject matter is fascinating." -- Entertainment Today 9/16/05
"Possibly

the most earnest, scandal-free celebrity memoir ever written." -- Radar Online, 12/13/05"York is an excellent observer and a great traveler." -- Publishers News August, 2005"York's authorial voice is nearly as engaging as his screen presence...An enjoyable and informative read." -- CHUD.com 9/7/05"York's non-stop anecdotes and foibles are consistently entertaining. He's got a surprisingly hilarious sense of humor." -- Bookgasm.com, 11/23/05"York's writing is gentle and elegant, his observations keen and strangely selfless." -- Los Angeles Times 9/25/05"[A] colorful account...This is clearly a writer who follows world events and politics...[A] highly readable book." -- Glasgow Herald 11/26/05"[An] intelligent and entertaining account...The actor has a good eye for the absurd." -- London Sunday Telegraph, 11/27/05

About the Author Michael York has enjoyed a successful international career for 40 years, creating an impressive body of work on stage, screen, and in the recording studio. York's autobiography, *Accidentally on Purpose* appeared in 1991 and he was the co-author of *A Shakespearean Actor Prepares*. His most recent book was *Dispatches from Armageddon*. Chairman of the California Youth Theatre, he lives in Los Angeles with his wife.