

The Book of Ingenious & Diabolical Puzzles – Review - 1994

Crux Mathematicorum



with
**Mathematical
Mayhem**

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Book Review

"The Book of Ingenious and Diabolical Puzzles", by Jerry Slocum and Jack Botermans, published by Random House, New York, 1994, ISBN 0-8129-2153-4, hardcover, 128+ pages, US\$20.00. Review by Daniel van Vliet, University of Alberta.

This is the third in a series of books on mechanical puzzles authored by the same dynamic duo. For reviews of the earlier volumes, "Puzzles Old and New" and "New Book of Puzzles", see [1] and [2].

The book covers a varied assortment of puzzles from around the world and from different historical periods. From the elegant simplicity of the familiar tangram to the defiant impossibility of five Coke bottles strung together by wooden arrows, readers are sure to be enchanted by the ingenuity and elegance with which they were lovely crafted.

Apart from the tangram mentioned above, the put-together puzzles include the famous pentominoes of Solomon Golomb. Take-apart puzzles feature many old locks, matchboxes, and other familiar household objects. The principal family of interlocking puzzles consists of the burrs, wooden blocks with notches which are to be assembled into crosses. All of the disentanglement puzzles have a strong topological flavour.

The famous Cube of Rubik and its variants head the list of sequential movement puzzles. Dexterity puzzles mostly involve rolling balls into holes by adroit manipulation. The puzzle vessels have holes on the side, and only those who know the secret can drink from them without spilling the liquid. Probably the most amazing of all types of puzzles, the impossible objects also include golf balls and tennis shoes in glass bottles with necks too thin to admit those foreign objects.

Thus the readers are treated to a comprehensive tour of the world's most fascinating puzzles, the famous alongside the obscure. The book contains information on how to make almost all of them, and how to solve a selected subset. The photography is superb. This book belongs to every public library as well as the private ones of all puzzle lovers.

Customer Reviews - Amazon.com

Reviewer: GKulkarni@aol.com (Cleveland, Ohio)

I liked the book very much ..!!, January 13, 1999

If you like puzzles of any type, which you can play with your hands (not crosswords, or pen and pencil variety ...) especially mechanical, or wire or wood puzzles , this is the book for you...many of the puzzles are explained in such great lucid detail and beautiful diagrams, that you can make many of them yourself !! ...especially if most of the original puzzles have long disappeared from the marketplace ...Also in many cases solutions are included for you couch potato puzzle solvers ... also see his earlier books puzzles old and new .(a real classic !!!) and New book of puzzles (pretty good !)

Reviewer: mccormick@usaor.net (Pittsburgh, PA)

A coffee table book for the puzzle enthusiast, Sept. 27, 1997

This book contains high quality photo's of a wide range of types of puzzles. From the wooden interlocking puzzles to Disentanglement string and metal (aka bar puzzles) and even including puzzle vessels, this book is sure to bring a warm feeling to anyone who remembers the puzzles from their cracker jack in the 60's and the ones their grandfather teased them with as youngsters. It is the most comprehensive collection of photos and history of puzzles throughout history that I have ever seen. This book is welcome on my coffee table and is sure to bring back memories to anyone over 40.