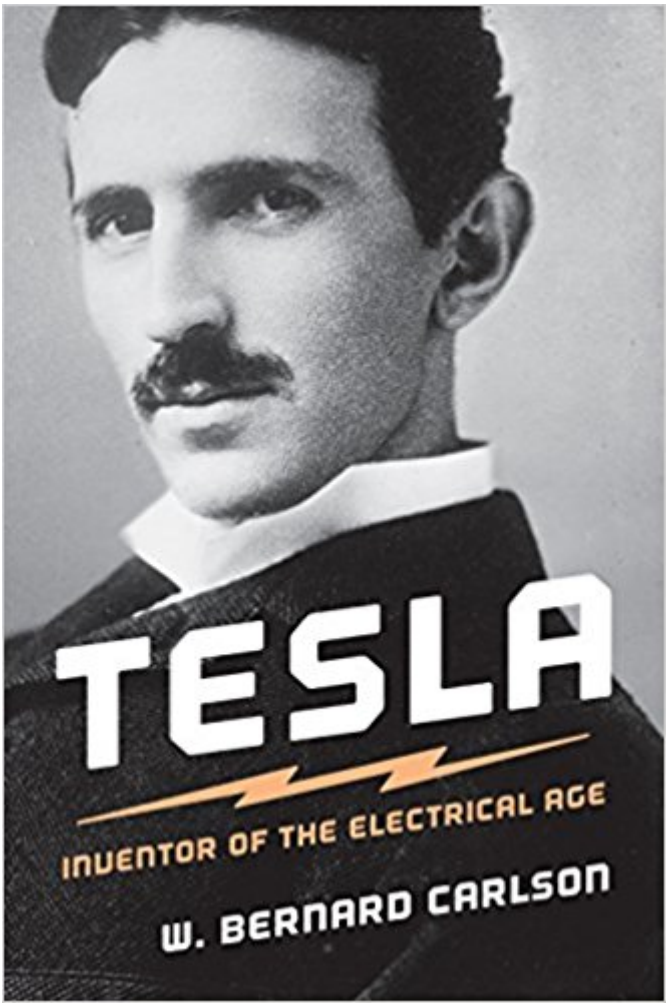
Tesla: Inventor Of The Electrical Age



Synopsis

Nikola Tesla was a major contributor to the electrical revolution that transformed daily life at the turn of the twentieth century. His inventions, patents, and theoretical work formed the basis of modern AC electricity, and contributed to the development of radio and television. Like his competitor Thomas Edison, Tesla was one of America’s first celebrity scientists, enjoying the company of New York high society and dazzling the likes of Mark Twain with his electrical demonstrations. An astute self-promoter and gifted showman, he cultivated a public image of the eccentric genius. Even at the end of his life when he was living in poverty, Tesla still attracted reporters to his annual birthday interview, regaling them with claims that he had invented a particle-beam weapon capable of bringing down enemy aircraft. Plenty of biographies glamorize Tesla and his eccentricities, but until now none has carefully examined what, how, and why he invented. In this groundbreaking book, W. Bernard Carlson demystifies the legendary inventor, placing him within the cultural and technological context of his time, and focusing on his inventions themselves as well as the creation and maintenance of his celebrity. Drawing on original documents from Tesla’s private and public life, Carlson shows how he was an "idealist" inventor who sought the perfect experimental realization of a great idea or principle, and who skillfully sold his inventions to the public through mythmaking and illusion. This major biography sheds new light on Tesla’s visionary approach to invention and the business strategies behind his most important technological breakthroughs.

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Customer Reviews

Many self-described "Tesla Biographers" have taken a shot at writing a book that would be considered comprehensive and worthy of filling in the gaps of this infamous man’s life, but none have done so as well as W. Bernard Carlson.If you are expecting a light, fluff-filled read about this important inventor, please look elsewhere. This book is intelligent, articulate and technical. If your desire is to make sense of the how and why Tesla ended up where he did by the end of his life, this book will not only elaborate on common knowledge of the subject, but will open your eyes to the unfortunate truth of this genius and his fall from grace, society and his descent into poverty.What I found fascinating about this book, was that rather than giving in to the previous biographer’s desire to make Tesla look like a superhuman celebrity with an external muse that produced his creativity, this book shows the rise to fame through his eyes. His inventions are detailed and his numerous ideas and contributions to science and the field of electrical engineering is presented brilliantly. Rather than going from chapter to chapter saying "and then he did this and then he did that" this work has a very natural progression. Frequently using Tesla’s own words to describe his creative process, Tesla: Inventor of the Electrical Age gives a much more in depth view of his life.I had always thought of Tesla as having been someone who looked within himself to answer the great questions of life, and this book seems to agree with that notion. As someone who is also rather introspective, I appreciated the idea that Tesla turned to his own mind for answers and created his own circumstances for his early success.If you are the type of history buff that will get lost in an old black and white photo for minutes at a time, marveling at how things have changed, this author has you covered. There are plenty of photos and diagrams in this book of Tesla, his inventions and his previous places of employment. I was intensely drawn to the photo of Edison’s Machine Works and the photo of the inside of the machine shop at Wardenclyffe.Rather than viewing Nikola Tesla in a celebratory way, this book takes a neutral and impartial stand of the inventor, neither praising nor degrading him for his work nor his decisions. The author has researched and presented material that tells the story of a man from humble beginnings who did many great things, and made some choices that were most regrettable in terms of his own preservation.After reading this, my opinion is pretty simple. I believe Tesla would be proud of this biography. Perhaps just as proud of this as he

would be of the unit of measurement named after him.While Tesla may not be the household name that Edison has turned out to be, for any serious scholar of the age of invention, he will always be an important contributor to many things that we take for granted as every day convenience today.I feel this is an important book and one that should be shared with the younger generation. Teachers, parents and anyone who is interested in the history of invention and pioneers of their time would benefit from this book. I thank the author for the hard work and dedication they have shown in writing this.This review is based on a digital ARC from the publisher.

This is the first truly scholarly biography of one of our most fascinating and controversial inventors. Carlson manages to tell the story clearly and fairly. He also analyses Tesla's inventions and theories very accurately. A must read for anyone interested in this great inventor and his work.

Finally, here's a full-scale, believable biography of Tesla without the new-age and false-science crap encountered in so many other writings on this man. Most statements of fact are footnoted and plenty of Tesla's actual patent diagrams are presented. While some have criticized this book as overly technical, for me it wasn't nearly technical enough (I was an electronics professional in my working years). Instead, the author focuses on Tesla's mental processes as an inventor and how his quirky personality and showmanship influenced his work, successes and failures. Would Tesla's wireless electrical power scheme have worked? The author doesn't clearly answer this question. The list of references and sources would be valuable for anyone who seeks to further investigate Tesla's inventions and his long and still mysterious life.

CarlsonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Tesla book is a great read. Tesla books tend to deify the man. CarlsonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Tesla book makes a more objective assessment of Tesla and his accomplishments. Although I like placing Tesla on a high pedestal (certainly way above Edison (ruthless) and Marconi (hack)), Carlson offers a fresh perspective and a balanced view, in a well researched and footnoted book. Carlson provides a lot of detail about Tesla's business dealings and cogent explanations for why many of his visions were never realized, and makes a valiant attempt to explain the technology for a non-technical audience. Carlson also provides the best explanation I have seen for the U.S. GovernmentÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s involvement with TeslaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s papers after his death. I would have liked to see more about TeslaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s deal with the SovietÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s in the 1930s (p. 388), but that information is probably unattainable (someone should write THAT book). Great job!

I loved this book. Many of the Electronics/Electrical professional think the books is short on technical details and many of the new age mystics, conspiracy enthusiasts think the book is to dry and confusing. That is a good indication that the author got the balance correct. I thought the author did a fabulous job in balancing the story. The really difficult part of understanding the genius of Tesla is trying to keep an 1890's mindset while reading what is taking place.And - the author did not imply that Tesla was a homosexual. He merely stated that some thought that he might have been, and followed that by stating that there is no firm evidence that he was. So to me, that's just part of the story. I am very sensitive to modern liberal jingoism in books and I never got that impression here. An excellent book about a truly incredible personality. Thank you Bernard Carlson!

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