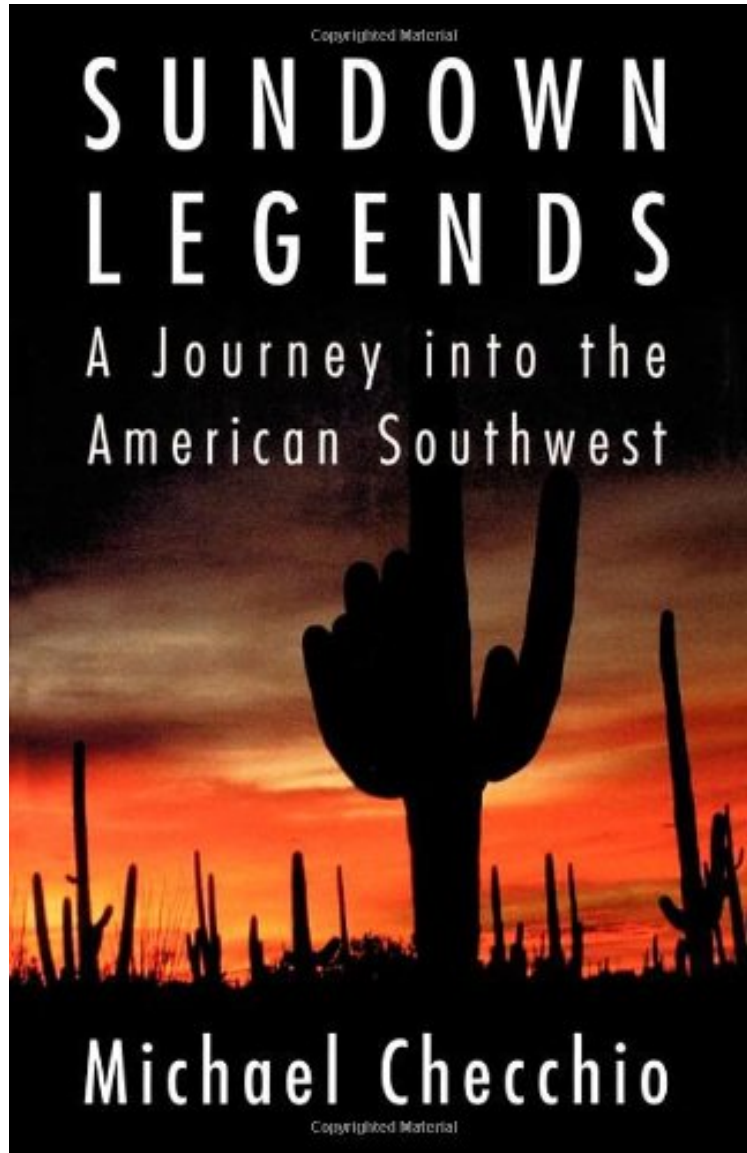


[Download free ebook] Sundown Legends: A Journey into the American Southwest

Sundown Legends: A Journey into the American Southwest

Michael Checchio

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Michael Checchio : Sundown Legends: A Journey into the American Southwest before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sundown Legends: A Journey into the American Southwest:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Made it feel great By Jo Harmon The writer was great. He made you feel like you went right along with him on this journey. great book for anyone wanting to hike these trails and wonderful places
1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A masterful writer By A Customer Michael

Checchio is one of the nation's best writers about nature. This volume is, in fact, a concise and beautiful evocation of the Southwest, full of paradox. In a passage about the San Juan River in New Mexico, for instance, Checchio describes how a well-intentioned environmental approach -- catch-and-release -- can produce bizarre results: huge, docile trout that give up virtually without a fight. That might be a metaphor for what is happening to much of the Southwest. And yet, Checchio evokes the beauty and timelessness of the place. This is a wonderful book.

4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A masterful writer

By A Customer Michael Checchio is one of the nation's best writers about nature. This volume is, in fact, a concise and beautiful evocation of the Southwest, full of paradox. In a passage about the San Juan River in New Mexico, for instance, Checchio describes how a well-intentioned environmental approach -- catch-and-release -- can produce bizarre results: huge, docile trout that give up virtually without a fight. That might be a metaphor for what is happening to much of the Southwest. And yet, Checchio evokes the beauty and timelessness of the place. This is a wonderful book.

Standing atop the wall of California, Michael Checchio decided to head out for Saline and Death Valley, the canyonlands of Arizona and Utah and the uplands of New Mexico. He would re-visit old haunts and explore new ones--and in so doing rediscover a world he thought he already knew. In *Sundown Legends*, Checchio offers up the American Southwest as a spiritual repository and source of inspiration. On his travels he talked to individuals whose imaginations have been shaped by the power of this desert landscape, including Ken Sleight, the Utah wilderness outfitter, who was the inspiration for a character in *THE MONKEY WRENCH GANG* and novelist John Nichols, author of the *MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR*, who wandered into Taos in the late sixties and found a place to make his stand. Like Michael Wallis, Michael Checchio is a powerfully gifted writer who has created an intimate and lasting portrait of one of our last remaining wild places.

From *Publishers Weekly* Throughout this account of a monthlong tour of the American Southwest, Checchio (*A Clean, Well-Lighted Stream*) seems stuck in a bad mood. He sets out from San Francisco in a rented Chevy Blazer to explore the deserts and canyons of Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. His tour covers so much ground so quickly that it ends up feeling like a one-night stand with the vast landscape; just for starters he bombs across the Mojave (which he describes as the "Big Nothing"), peeks over the North Rim of the Grand Canyon and gets a flat changed in Zion National Park. Checchio's descriptions of the land feel similarly hurried, and his comments can be hostile and insensitive, especially when it comes to people. He spends too much time harping about other tourists' bad habits, the worst of which seems to be their decision to visit the same sites he's visiting. In fact, no one but historical figures and writers he respects survive his judgment unscathed. For example, he flippantly equates artists in Santa Fe with sex offenders, reduces Congress and the Bureau of Land Management to a group of wilderness haters, declares that Americans "are monolingual, and proud of it" and blithely stereotypes Native Americans. At times Checchio attempts to capture the power of the desert around him, but he always seems to give up, leaving readers with an exasperating ride through a landscape that deserves, and has gotten, much better treatment. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From *Library Journal* Joining a long list of writers who have felt an affinity for America's Southwest, Checchio (*A Clean, Well-Lighted Stream*) meanders from attempts at lyrical prose to ethnically insensitive comments as he travels from California's Mojave desert to the canyon lands of Utah and Arizona and on to New Mexico's high plateau. He purports to be a wilderness lover yet travels in a rented Chevy Blazer. His glib remarks about the lack of black American visitors to "the great national parks of the West" is capped with, "Perhaps that would come in time, like an interest in tennis and golf." Native Americans encountered by Checchio don't fare much better: "I enjoyed watching the cashier and waiters performing different chores at different times with seemingly little in the way of what you would recognize as a system. Was this the ultimate cultural divide between whites and Indians--not race but efficiency?" Though he sprinkles historical anecdotes throughout and offers interesting interviews with Southwestern writers John Nichols and Max Evans, others, such as Alex Shoumatoff in *Legends of the American Desert* (LJ 8/97) and Henry Shukman in *Savage Pilgrims on the Road to Santa Fe* (LJ 4/1/97), have written about the mystical pull of the Southwest with far more grace and insight than Checchio manages. Not recommended.--Janet N. Ross, Washoe Cty. Lib. Syst., Sparks, NV Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From *Kirkus* sA listless memoir recounting ho-hum journeys into places hot, dry, and deep. Checchio sets out from his San Francisco home to catch a few of the desert's good vibes, listen to the coyotes howl, and "observe the moon rising over the Joshua trees." Crisscrossing the Four Corners region, with stops at the Grand Canyon and Arches National Park, he resolutely avoids back roads and their promise of adventure, complaining all the while at how crowded the national parks have gotten, how spiritually empty Las Vegas is, and how bad road food is especially on Indian reservations. The narrative comes alive only toward the end of the book, when Checchio, a frequent contributor to hook and bullet magazines, writes spiritedly of fly-fishing in the mountain streams of New Mexico, comparing notes with such locally eminent fishers as the novelist John Nichols. For the most part, however, Checchio contents himself with offering unsurprising sketches of the Southwest's better-known places, paraphrasing liberally (with attribution) from histories of the region and biographies of some of its colorful characters, and committing more than a few errors of fact large and small along the

way. Ultimately he turns in a travelogue of the sort you'd put on a postcard to a relative in Weehawken or Akron: of the Grand Canyon, for instance, he writes, unimaginatively, "I stared dumbfounded into it. And although I looked and gaped, I could not fully take it all in or even begin to comprehend it." That may be true, but it is the writer's job to comprehend his or her subject. Checchio's book will add nothing to any real or would-be desert rat's store of knowledge. It's likely instead to leave readers dumbfounded too. -- Copyright 2000, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.