

PAUL ZARZYSKI REVIEW EXCERPTS

1. "Though both Mr. Zarzyski and Ms. Van Cleve are from Montana, their very different styles work to capture a chorus of contradictory moods: her luminous black-and-white images seem etched from some archetypal landscape, while his verses bristle with audacity and whimsy. Mr. Zarzyski alternates between bluster and lyricism. For the former, he uses loping metered stanzas and punch-drunk, self-mythologizing bravura.... But he proves equally adept at meditative free verse...."
(The New York Times Book Review, March 16, 1997)
2. "What better metaphor than a bronc to carry the intensity with which Paul Zarzyski lives the language? Poems and broncs are crucibles where a lifetime of yearning and passion distill into something pure. Eight seconds or twenty lines: the great rides, like the great poems, take a lifetime to create and are both ephemeral and lasting, shimmering like some eternal afterimage of sacrifice and desire on the edges of consciousness. They strike sparks off the wild soul we each still have within us and make us believe, once again, in the impossible.... *All This Way For The Short Ride* cuts to the bone and reaches the marrow of pure meaning: the good of things, the bad of things, the interior world where good and bad can't begin to describe things. This book is about rodeo. This book is about life. It will last."
(Teresa Jordan--Foreword to *All This Way For The Short Ride*)
3. "Paul Zarzyski has an instantly recognizable voice, one that, once heard, you'll never forget--and that voice is present on every page of this book. As the title implies, this book is about rodeo; but that's like saying Cibo Matto's music is about food; or, as someone said, that the movie "Chinatown," is about water. Paul's poems are about rodeo, and also about love, loss and affirmation--the stuff that poetry is, and always has been made of."
(Kirk Robertson--Lahontan Valley News/Fallon Eagle Standard)
4. "Any reading of Zarzyski's complex rhymed and free verse, chocked to the brim, bottom, and edges with mind-racing, overlapping images, is going to tell you that this is a cowboy poet with a whole new approach to poetry."
(Dale L. Walker--The Rocky Mountain News)
5. "In the new poetry, the ballad line, if heard at all, is only one ingredient of prosody. The Montana poet and bronc-rider Paul Zarzyski's diction is as rich as his internal rhymes and alliteration are extravagant...."
(Thomas West--The Washington Post, "Book World")
6. "Paul Zarzyski's burly poems are tough, tender, and true--much like the rodeo life he has so thoroughly lived and loved. Again and again we discover in his lines a continuing passion to compete, genuinely balanced by an understanding of and compassion for broncs and the men who ride them. This is Western poetry at its best, painstakingly crafted and full of heart."
(Ralph Beer--Author of *The Blind Corral*)

COMMENTS/REVIEW EXCERPTS (cont'd.):

7. "So it seems likely that Zarzyski sees the world from atop a bucking horse, or from the cab of a pickup truck heading for Billings or Santa Fe, or from a rodeo arena, or from his knees as he storms heaven for a favor. His is a remarkable gift. When I hear him read I think he is the best poet I have ever heard, but then I think what difference does it make...it is the moment and the poem in hand and the reading thereof that matters, and I sit, sobs rising in my throat, my mind expanding to absorb what this bard meters out, and I am made new again."
(Joan Hoffman--Clearwater Record-Ewing News, Clearwater, NE)
8. "The thing is, it isn't just the English teachers in Tony Lamas who like Zarzyski's unconventional verse. Even the weathered cowpokes of 60-some summers appreciate it."
(Lin Anderson--Gannett News Service)
9. "If pit bulls were poets, they'd write like Paul Zarzyski. Tenacious, he shakes the hell out of personal experience and spits out bits of bone and flesh...."
(Gennie Nord--The Missoulian, Missoula, MT)
10. "Zarzyski's poems cover terrains as near as the woodstove and as far away as Nazi-occupied Poland and the human steppes of modern South Africa, with no trouble feeling at either extreme."
(Trudy Wischemann--South Valley Arts)
11. "Roughstock Sonnets is the best book on rodeo since the invention of horseback."
(William Kittredge--Author of *Hole In The Sky*)
12. "Zarzyski's performance style comes on like a rodeo Ferlinghetti, his declamatory whiplash imagery packing in the grief of a passing life style, and lives, almost painlessly. Poem after poem deals with beat-up old riders, dying retired horses, the 8-second rides that vanish into eternity--rodeo as a metaphor for any life, cut through with intuitive folk-ideogrammic imageries and C&W rhythms.
(Scott Preston--Small Press Review)
13. "In prose literature there are labels such as "Kafka-esque" and "Hemingway-esque." In cowboy poetry there is, or ought to be, "Zarzyski-esque." No other "-esques" come close."
(Jesse Mullins--American Cowboy magazine)
14. "There are lots of good rodeo hands in this old world and a fair number of good poets. To find a man who is both is as rare as a wet summer in eastern Montana. Paul Zarzyski knows the jerk of the bareback riggin' and the surge and flow of classic narrative poetry in the Masfield tradition. He is a rare talent...."
(Ian Tyson--Cowboy Song Writer and Singer)

COMMENTS/REVIEW EXCERPTS (cont'd.):

15. "Not since Richard Hugo has anyone managed to capture the sad, lonely, and beautiful landscapes of Montana with such vividness and compassion."
(Thom Tamaro--Library Journal)
16. "Zarzyski's first love is riding broncs. His second love is the precise use of the English language. While his poem Ain't No Life After Rodeo is heartfelt, his depth of respect for words is bottomless."
(Jim Gransbery--The Billings Gazette, Billings, MT)
17. "Paul Zarzyski's cowboy poetry is like no other in its richness of language.... His evocations of dust and broncs and (sometimes) death are forged from the metals of fantastic humor, wrenching pathos, and clear-eyed understanding--with no slag of sentimentality in the alloy. And he smiths his "Roughstock Sonnets" (the title of this latest book) with all the vitality of his own vibrant being."
(Keith Reierstad--Aims Community College, Greeley, CO)
18. "Paul Zarzyski is a man of many hats--fisherman, bronc rider, son, worker, lover. From the white heat of his rodeo arenas to the calm lakes and clear streams of all our lives, this poet captures experience the way a bear goes after salmon--with confidence and patience, with intensity and purpose. But don't be fooled. The Make-Up Of Ice is a celebration of men and women, a moving chronicle of the human spirit. Zarzyski is a serious poet whose unique world becomes our world. It's a good clean ride."
(James Welch--Author of *Fools Crow*)
19. "If you like good food and good talk around a kitchen table (say it's Polish or Italian food, say the stories you hear take wonderful turns, bringing back people and things you almost lost--and say you fall asleep that night feeling that the world, rough as it is, is surprising and lovely), you will like very much, I think, Paul Zarzyski's poems. They don't fake anything."
(Gary Gildner--Author of *The Warsaw Sparks*)
20. "Alive to all the senses, these richly textured poems pulse with a force that is at once muscular and tender, urgent and timeless. Paul Zarzyski listens to the heartbeat of creation. What he hears, in the rhythm of the land, the wonder and pain of human experience, is the 'sweet music' of all our lives. Imbued with wisdom, wit, humanity, and grace, *Wolf Tracks on the Welcome Mat* is a moving paean to 'the glorious commotion of it all.'"
(Anne Heath Widmark--Author of *Between Earth & Sky, Poets of the Cowboy West*)
21. "Paul Zarzyski's poems will break your heart--and then turn right around and mend it. He looks pain squarely in the eye, takes its measure, and counters it with tenderness and wisdom, all in language that should be set to music. Books like this are the reason poetry exists."
(Ed McClanahan--Author of *The Natural Man*)