

Hong Kong On Air

FICTION by Muhammad Cohen

As the Hong Kong handover boom fizzles into the Asian economic bust, a young American couple's marriage and careers tumble into a maze of television news, betrayal, high finance, and cheap lingerie.

TV news veteran Cohen's engaging, often hilarious novel captures the mood ahead of the 1997 handover when Hong Kong reigned as the centre of the universe, a multicultural melting pot bubbling with pure gold. As the Asian crisis abruptly ends the party, mainland China emerges, eclipsing Hong Kong. For everyone whose job or business falls under China's lengthening economic shadow, *Hong Kong On Air* presents a fresh angle on how it all began.

For TV producer Laura Wellesley, the morning show at Franklin Global Networks Asia means going to bed before dark and swallowing the first rule of broadcast news: the anchor is always right, especially when it's American-born Chinese egomaniac Deng Jiang Mao. For Laura's husband Jeff, the production line for his Golden Beauties lingerie runs through a

cagey mother minding their stores on Long Island, cookie tins stuffed with cash smuggled over the border, and hot tubs in Hong Kong's Jewish Community Club and mainland brothels. Cut out of his own multi-million dollar deal, Jeff's consolation prize is Yogi, a Japanese banker with a yen for "Jew food" and men raised on it.

During Hong Kong's pre-handover boom, FGN Asia becomes a hit, a star is born, and mistakes are easy to overlook. But the economic crisis ripens relationships for treachery, creates opportunities for revenge, and moves China centre stage, triggering a great leap forward for some, a long march to failure for others.

Reviews

"...an often comic romp through the frenetic world of television news at the time of Hong Kong's handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997." – **Asia Times**

"Muhammad Cohen's novel *Hong Kong On Air* pierces the crazy world of morning television... His book at times is hilarious." – **South China Morning Post**

"...takes the reader along for an exciting ride of betrayal, high finance and cheap lingerie, while also giving the reader an insider's look at what really goes on behind the newsroom's closed doors." – **Jakarta Post**

"*Hong Kong On Air* captures the soaring pulse of Hong Kong ahead of the handover and China's rise from the crash that followed. It reveals timeless truths about television news as seen from the hot seats on both sides of the camera." – **Lorraine Hahn**, broadcast journalist



"...a truly hilarious satirical novel that reveals many of the mysteries taking place behind the set in the fast-paced world of television reporting." – **Jewish Times Asia**

"Go out and buy this book for a fun read, for the sex, for the characters, for the cynicism, for the language, for Asia or for journalism. Or take one from column A and one from column B. But read the book." – **Aaron C. Brown's Amazon blog**

"Cohen mercilessly and cannily nails many of the cultural foibles of both expats and local Hong Kongers." – **Macau Business**

"*Hong Kong On Air* is a great way to remember what life was like when our fair city was the centre of the universe, and see that while some things have changed, Hong Kong's uniqueness hasn't." – **HK Magazine**

"It's a book that manages to encapsulate everything that was Hong Kong during that crucial time, and immediately afterwards, in the case of the Asian economic crisis." – **Macau Daily Times**

"The mishaps, betrayals, coincidences and other twists and turns add up to an often-raucous comedy of errors, including much of good, laugh-out-loud standard." – **Hemlock's Diary**

"Cohen's tale about the chaos in the lives of players during Hong Kong's handover in 1997 brought back many memories to an old hat TV anchor like myself, who lived through that moment in history... it's uncanny how much of my own dysfunctional life I saw in his prose." – **Bernard Lo**, Hong Kong news presenter

"A witty, clever and all-too-accurate peek at personalities in a (barely) functional television station." – **James Chau**, television news anchor

About the Author

New Yorker Muhammad Cohen moved to Hong Kong for six months in 1995 to assist the startup of CNBC Asia. He stayed and became a permanent resident in 2004. His writing on Hong Kong and the region has appeared in *Time*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, the *International Herald Tribune* and *Asia Times*. Cohen is also co-author of the *Lonely Planet Guide to Borneo*. Before Hong Kong, he was a TV news producer at CNN in Washington, a sports writer and a US diplomat in Africa.

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Further Information

Pete Spurrier at Blacksmith Books, Hong Kong: (+852) 2877 7899 – pete@blacksmithbooks.com