



The Essential McLuhan

By Eric McLuhan

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Marshall McLuhan's insights are fresher and more applicable today than when he first announced them to a startled world. A whole new generation is turning to his work to understand a global village made real by the information superhighway and the overwhelming challenge of electronic transformation. "Before anyone could perceive the electric form of the information revolution, McLuhan was publishing brilliant explanations of the perceptual changes being experienced by the users of mass media. He seemed futuristic to some and an enemy of print and literacy to others. He was, in reality, a deeply literate man of astonishing prescience. Tom Wolfe suggested aloud that McLuhan's work was as important culturally as that of Darwin or Freud. Agreement and scoffing ensued. Increasingly Wolfe's wonder seems justified." From the Introduction Here in one volume, are McLuhan's key ideas, drawn from his books, articles, correspondence, and published speeches. This book is the essential archive of his constantly surprising vision.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Given the profound influence that the writings and teachings of Marshall McLuhan have had in the Information Age, it is surprising how few people have read anything more than context-free excerpts printed in indecipherable day-glo fonts over a background guaranteed to induce vertigo. But once you actually get around to reading McLuhan's ideas about the Global Village, the history of print, and the rise of digital media, you realize that behind the hype he did indeed make many substantive and influential contributions.

Surprisingly, most of McLuhan's seminal books are still out of print (as of 1996). Luckily, this collection of articles and excerpts from his most important books is a comprehensive and accessible overview of the musings of the "Patron Saint of the Digerati". It includes substantial passages from my favorite McLuhan book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (a brilliantly provocative academic treatise about the history and consequences of writing and printing), as well as many articles and interviews you wouldn't find in any of his previously published books anyway.

The main weaknesses of this volume are that it does not include excerpts from the hyper-kinetic and image-packed "The Medium is the Massage" -- his main contribution to pop culture of the late '60s -- and that the sources of each passage are noted only in an appendix. It would have been nice if sources were noted at the beginning or end of each linear text, and I hope this is addressed in future editions. Other than these minor editorial quibbles, this book is highly recommended.

About the Author

Eric McLuhan, Ph.D., is the author of *Laws of Media* and *The City as Classroom* (both with Marshall McLuhan) and a forthcoming book on James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. He has taught at the University of Toronto, York University, Wisconsin State University, and other colleges.

Frank Zingrone, Ph.D., is professor of communication at York University in Toronto. He has also taught at MIT and SUNY (Buffalo). He is an information scientist, poet, former associate editor of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* and a widely published media investigator.

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