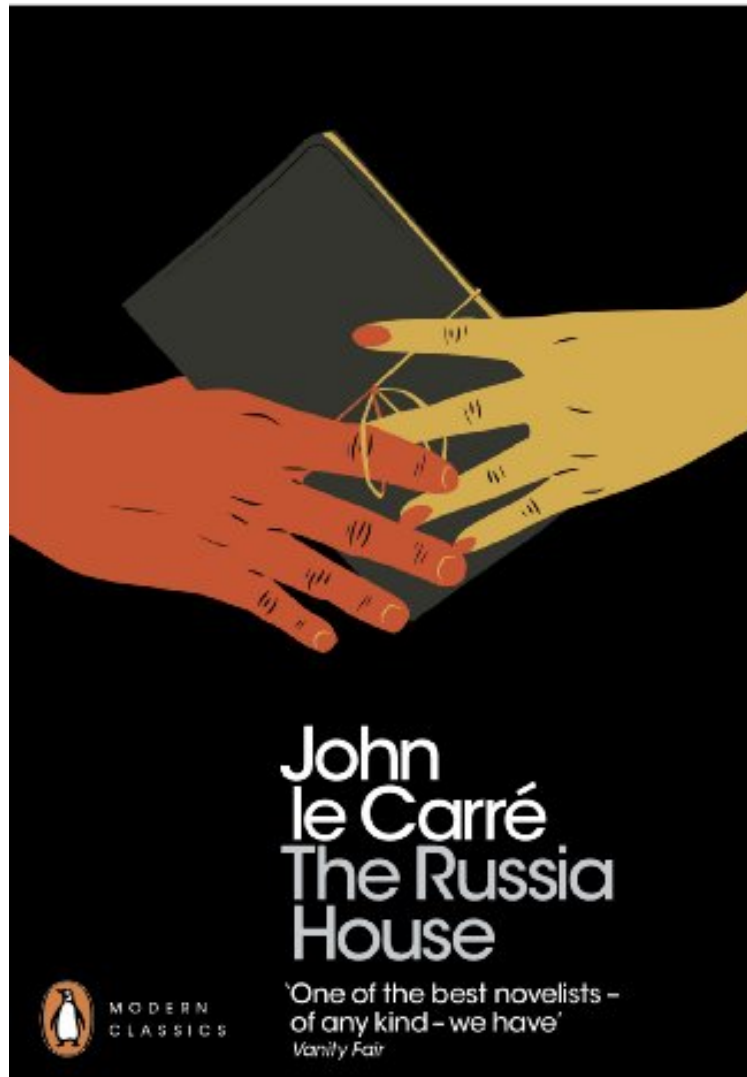


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The Russia House (Penguin Modern Classics)

Von John le Carré

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Von John le Carré : The Russia House (Penguin Modern Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Russia House (Penguin Modern Classics):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Not Le Carre's best.Von Ein KundeAt his best John le Carre transcends the genre. His Quest for Karla trilogy (Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, The Honourable Schoolboy, and Smiley's People) and A Perfect Spy are marvellous novels, with deftly drawn complex characters, and a fine sense of the reasons for betrayal.This, though, is disappointing. It is le Carre's

first post glasnost fiction, and in feeling for new subject matter his novels have seemed a little weaker, until finding new form with his most recent novel, *Single and Single*. The novel focuses on Barley Blair, a drunken book publisher from a small publishing house in London. Having applied for a place in the secret service some years before, Blair becomes a reluctant spy as a book with observations on Soviet military capability is handed over for Blair at an audio book convention. The novel is narrated by a wily lawyer advising the British secret service. There are some weak points in the novel. For this reader le Carre has never convinced when drawing female characters (even the estimable Lady Ann Smiley remains a cipher from le Carre's first novel to *Smiley's People*). Nor is le Carre convincing when writing about love, and here one of the pivotal characters is Katya, a Muscovite with children. She is better drawn than many of le Carre's female characters (perhaps the first person male narrative strangely helps in this regard), but she remains something of a blank canvas. Her relationship with Blair is never convincing, and sadly this taints the inevitability of the final chapters. There are the usual le Carre virtues. He has a mastery of novel openings (Witness the first chapters of *Tinker Tailor* and *Single and Single* for example) and this is no exception. In attendance at an audio book fair in Moscow a Polish emigre is approached and handed the crucial papers for Blair. How this is done, and how he deals with it, are handled wonderfully. Each detail making the situation credible. Le Carre's own style is again wonderful. His prose has a fluidity that is very readable. Le Carre also has astute observations on the relationship between the superpowers at the time of Gorbachev's restructuring, and - from the backdrop of the Smiley novels - the relationship between the United States and United Kingdom secret services. It is ironic that in a novel billed as a love story the most convincing relationships are those between institutions. If you enjoy the novel try to get hold off the BBC audio dramatisation starring Tom Baker as Barley Blair. The other le Carre novels mentioned in this review are more rewarding than *The Russia House*, but it is still an enjoyable, albeit disappointing, read. 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Absolutely Fantastic Von R. Aamer John Le Carre has the gift of storytelling. To me, he is the best espionage writer alive today. Most of the espionage writers put all the emphasis on the events whereas the main theme of Le Carre's books has always been characters. Le Carre does not write breakneck thrillers. He writes characters, lively and human. And that's why when you read a Le Carre book, a year down the road, you can't recall the story but you can easily recall the characters of the story. He is the creator of many memorable characters and Barley Blair is one of them. Barley is not a hero, not even a patriot. He is a careless publisher, a jazz player and a chess fan. He is not a spy. He is pushed into the espionage game because of his drunken exchange of thoughts with a Russian scientist, another of Le Carre's memorable characters. Barley has reluctantly agreed to play the part of a courier and agent-runner by British spymasters and on his arrival in Moscow, he falls in love with a girl, who very much like Barley himself, is pushed into the spy game. Barley soon reaches a point where he has to decide whom to betray. The girl he loves or his country. To me, that is the climax of the novel, the classical dilemma. And dilemma it is. Here is Barley Blair, the main character, forming one part of the triangle, who is not a spy, doesn't even want to be one. The second part of triangle is Goethe, the Russian scientist, who wants to tell something to the world but not through the spies. And the third part is Katya, loved by both Goethe and Barley, who doesn't even know what is she doing and where does she fit in the whole scheme of things. And in the background are the spymasters of UK and USA who think they have all the strings in their hands but have totally ignored the fact that human nature is an essential part of all the espionage equations. You've got to read the novel to know the whole thing. And if you are into serious fiction, you must read "*The Russia House*". 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Bang on target Von Paul A. Asoyan (paasoyan@yahoo.com) Although some elements of this book may not seem overly realistic to the more discerning specialists of espionage, the general story line is believable. Being a native of Moscow, I enjoyed the masterful, if oversimplified, descriptions of things Russian. Le Carre diction is particularly pleasing -- his mastery of the English language is superb. The text flows easily; it is hard to put the book down. I highly recommend the book to anybody who wants to get a sense of intelligence operations, the difference between US and British approach to espionage and what Russia was like in the 1990s. Additionally, readers will enjoy Le Carre's masterful command of English -- "an example to us all," as one of his heroes points out. I love this book!

Kurzbeschreibung Barley Blair is not a Service man: he is a small-time publisher, a self-destructive soul whose only loves are whisky and jazz. But it was Barley who, one drunken night at a dacha in Peredelkino during the Moscow Book Fair, was befriended by a high-ranking Soviet scientist who could be the greatest asset to the West since perestroika began, and made a promise. Nearly a year later, his drunken promise returns to haunt him. A reluctant Barley is quickly trained by British Intelligence and sent to Moscow to liaise with a go-between, the beautiful Katya. Both are lonely and disillusioned. Each is increasingly certain that if the human race is to have any future, all must betray their countries ... In his first post-glasnost spy novel, le Carr captures the effect of a slow and uncertain thaw on ordinary people and on the shadowy puppet-masters who command them. Contains a foreword and afterword by the author. From Publishers Weekly A dissident Soviet physicist asks a down-at-the-heels, jazz-loving London publisher to issue his insider's study of the chaotic state of Soviet defense. "The master of the spy novel has discovered perestroika

, and the genre may never be the same again," observed PW . Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal A mysterious manuscript purporting to prove the Soviet defense system is unworkable is smuggled out of Moscow. It was intended for a flaky English publisher, a womanizing saxophone-playing boozier, but the smuggler has turned it over to British intelligence. In order to prove its authenticity, they recruit the publisher as an amateur spy and send him to Moscow to reestablish contact with the author. But the "truth" Barley Blair finds there is love and a purpose for his shambles of a life. As always with le Carre, this is a compelling spy story, a marvelous entertainment that is also as intelligent, witty, and brooding as many more self-consciously and less satisfying literary novels. It may not be the equal of The Quest for Karla trilogy or of A Perfect Spy but it bears all the marks of a master, of the man who has both redefined and reanimated the espionage genre. BOMC main selection.- Charles Michaud, Turner Free Lib., Randolph, Mass. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.