

Headhunters

John King

Headhunters is the story of five friends. Carter USM is a live wire who lives on the edge and tries not to think too much; Mango can't stop thinking, has made money but is weighed down by family tragedy; Harry is a beer-lover and dreamer; Balti is his drinking partner, out of work and hoping for a fresh start; while Will is the quiet romantic, a voice of reason as the lives of the others become increasingly chaotic and veer towards disaster.

Headhunters is also a story of London. The novel is rooted in its streets, workplaces, pubs and music, but a parallel society exists, where the planet's wealthy are able to buy and sell whatever they like. This is a world from which the Londoners of this novel are excluded, resentment too often directed against their own kind. The Unity is the boys' local pub and it is here that they form a tongue-in-cheek Sex Division to celebrate a new year. Based on the idea of a football league, the most Woman can offer Man is four points—unless she leaves her handbag unattended.

Carter is the Unstoppable Sex Machine and soon leads the table, while Mango breaks the rules and buys success. Harry and Balti are overweight and hard up, know they have little to offer apart from their personalities, turn to cold lager and hot curries instead of sex. Will falls in loves and retires. Recognition of the affinities between the sexes soon becomes clear. Background is more important than gender.

Headhunters mixes humor and longing as the real feelings of these men break through, moving beyond expectations. A missing brother, prophetic visions, genuine romance and a tit-for-tat confrontation draw the characters out into the open—revealing the individuals behind the words and their craving for respect. Events run out of control, but several happy endings seem possible.

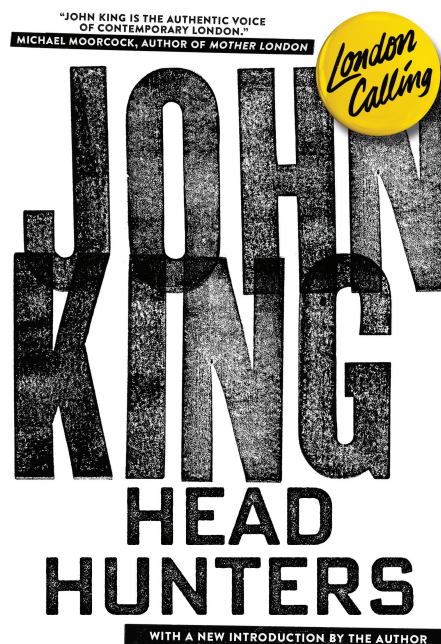
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John King is the author of seven novels to date. His first book, *The Football Factory*, was an instant word-of-mouth success and was later turned into a high-profile film. Sales in the UK now top a quarter of a million copies. The novels *Headhunters*, *England Away*, *Human Punk*, *White Trash*, *The Prison House*, and *Skinheads* followed. King's writing reflects his interests—social history, music, literature, drinking, travel, soccer and non-party politics. Before becoming an author King worked at a variety of jobs and spent two years travelling around the world in the late 1980s. He has long been associated with fanzines, writing for various titles over the years and running *Two Sevens* in the early 1990s. He currently publishes and edits *Verbal*, a fiction-based publication. Other interests include a regular Human Punk night at London's legendary 100 Club. He lives in London.

ACCOLADES

"John King is the authentic voice of contemporary London."
—Michael Moorcock

"John King's achievement since his debut has been enormous: creating a modern, proletarian English literature at once genuinely modern, genuinely proletarian, genuinely literature."
—Charles Shaar Murray



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