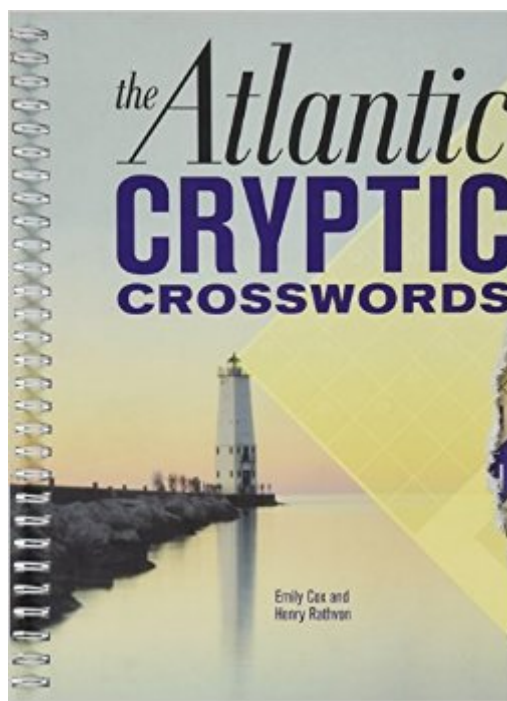


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The Atlantic Cryptic Crosswords



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Customer Reviews

I have been doing cryptic crosswords for more than twenty years. I LOVE those things! Cox and Rathvon are undeniably the top in their field. I pre-ordered this volume way before it came out, and got utterly hooked when it arrived. I am very busy, and I tried to ration the 60 puzzles to evenings at home, after work, after travels, so that I could spread out and savor the fun . . . still, I finished the book in less than 2 months. There is not a single disappointment in this collection. Every puzzle is devious in its own way. I like them HARD, as difficult as possible. I want them to take many days to finish, and if you do too, then this is the PERFECT book for you! All of the clues are tricky, some even sinfully misleading, but they are all fair. I often found myself laughing out loud at the surface meaning, which really shouldn't matter too much, once you have a feel for how to attack such clues, but nonetheless adds a level of enjoyment to the solving, a kind of "Wow, that is beautiful! How did they think of that?" The puzzles are all works of art in their own way and can be enjoyed for the sheer aesthetics of the construction, for the elegant mental gymnastics it must have taken to invent them. Puzzles #20 and #53 were the hardest for me, especially #53, which I had to erase TWICE to start all over. If you like tackling problems that seem intractable, and need to know that they are indeed honest and solvable, with hard work and patience, then this is the book for you. In most cases, merely cracking the cryptic clues is just the first step -- discerning where or how to place them makes it even MORE fun! It must have been a Herculean . . . almost Sisyphean . . . effort for Cox and Rathvon to produce such ingenious, flawless works.

I must respectfully disagree with any who think Rathvon and Cox were wasting their time constructing these elaborate puzzles. These are variety cryptics, a scarce commodity in the world today. Regular crosswords are available in an essentially limitless supply. Cryptic crosswords with no extra twist are less common, but there still seem to be plenty. But there are few enough variety cryptics available that, except for this latest volume, I've worked essentially all that are in print or are available on the Internet (and I'm sure I'm far from alone in this respect). I didn't buy this when it first came out, because I'd worked the authors' previous two collections of Atlantic puzzles, I'd been an Atlantic subscriber for several years, and after I canceled my subscription when the Puzzler was dropped from the Atlantic-on-paper, I'd faithfully worked all the puzzles posted on Atlantic-online, so I figured there'd be nothing new for me in this collection. Still, I couldn't resist peeking inside the cover while browsing in a local brick-and-mortar store, and I was pleased to read the authors' claim that this new collection contains few puzzles that were previously collected in book form, and none that have been posted online. It sounds like most of these will be new to me, and maybe I'm forgetful enough that any that I *have* worked before will *seem* like new! (So far, this appears to be true.) Thanks, Emily and Henry. Keep up the good work!

I always buy cryptic crossword books (at least the American style) as soon as I see them. I probably have a big enough collection to keep me going for years, even without on-line ones. I usually switch off books for a bit of variety. But in this case, I started with the first puzzle and couldn't help myself. I just kept going. Like another poster, I wanted to "ration" them but no use - These are just too good. They are the perfect combination of tough nut, but not uncrackable, as some of the British collections are. (I still dip into the Brit books now and then but when you look up the answer and still don't get it, it's just not fun anymore.)

I've done many of Cox and Rathvon's cryptics published in the Atlantic over the last couple years, but I hadn't done the older ones despite the availability of some previous book collections. I snapped up this book as soon as it was published and it immediately displaced all the other crossword books in my house. Every single one of these cryptics is a meaty challenge. Some are quicker to yield (which means they only take several times as long as a tough Saturday New York Times crossword), while others require far more mental effort (tasty, tasty mental effort). If you are new to cryptics, this is not the book for you. Cryptics beginners would do better with something like Fraser Simpson's 101 Cryptic Crosswords: From the New Yorker. But more experienced fans of

cryptics will relish Cox and Rathvon's creative twists on the format, their spot-on clues, and the way they make our brains work harder.

I've played around with a lot of puzzle books over the years and this is the best book I've ever had the pleasure to complete. The puzzles are hard, but amazingly 100% fair. There are some cryptic crosswords that take liberties with the rules, but at no point in this book did that happen. Everything was consistent, albeit difficult. Also, I didn't find a single typographical error or other mistake in the book. The puzzle instructions were precise and every word was meaningful and necessary. On top of a good cryptic crossword, each puzzle has a meta-puzzle that requires solving. These meta-puzzles were creative and some of them made my jaw drop when thinking about how hard it must have been to create the meta-puzzle. I would not recommend it for the novice cryptic crossword solver. I believe that the negative reviews on this book are caused by a lack of familiarity of how these puzzles work. Not knowing how to solve a standard cryptic crossword would make these puzzles almost impossible to solve. If you like cryptic crosswords, you owe it to yourself to check this book out. It took me almost 6 months of relatively steady work to solve every puzzle in the book and I wish there were more of them. Kudos to Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon for a masterpiece of a puzzle book!

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