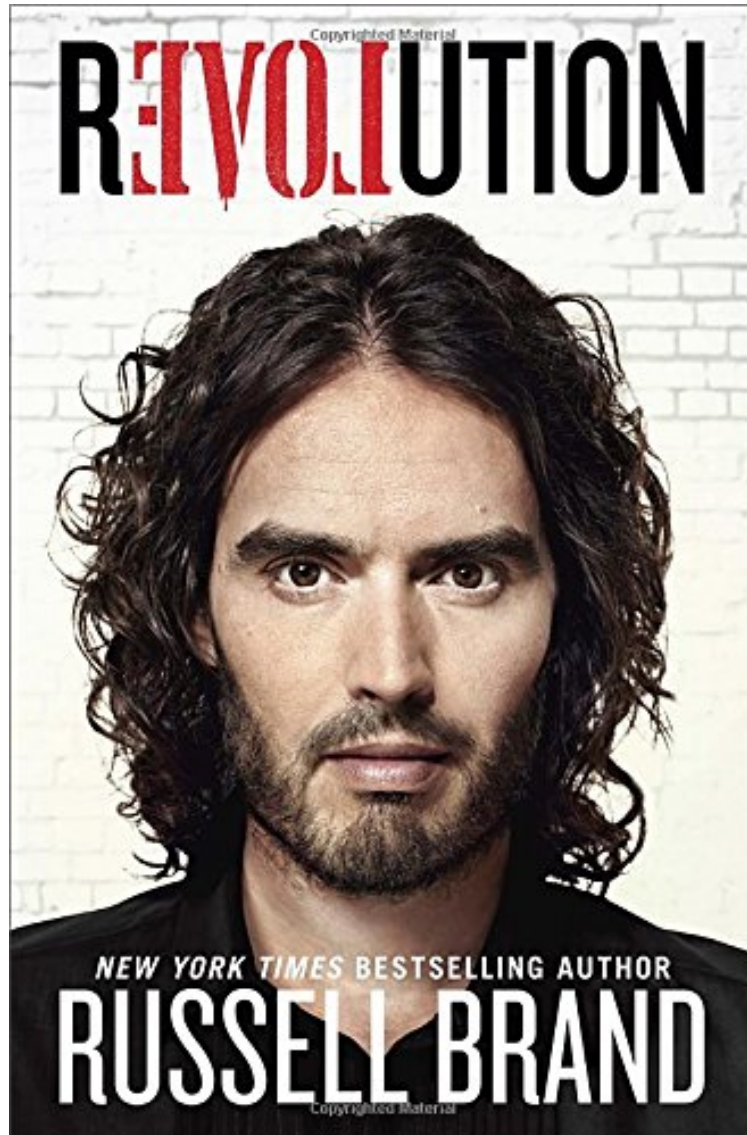


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Russell Brand : Revolution before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolution:

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was inspired as well!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy Richard T. FeltMade me see Mr. Brand in a different light. I wish him well on his new journey.

NATIONAL BESTSELLERWe all know the system isn't working. Our governments are corrupt and the opposing parties pointlessly similar. Our culture is filled with vacuity and pap, and we are told there's nothing we can do: "It's just the way things are." In this book, Russell Brand hilariously lacerates the straw men and paper tigers of our conformist times and presents, with the help of experts as diverse as Thomas Piketty and George Orwell, a vision for a fairer, sexier society that's fun and inclusive. You have been lied to, told there's no alternative, no choice, and that you don't deserve any better. Brand destroys this illusory facade as amusingly and deftly as he annihilates Morning Joe anchors, Fox News fascists, and BBC stalwarts. This book makes revolution not only possible but inevitable and fun.

About the AuthorRussell Brand is a British comedian, actor, radio host, and author. He has had a number of major film roles including parts in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and *Get Him to the Greek*. His most recent stand-up show was the critically acclaimed *Messiah Complex*, which included his views on Malcolm X, Jesus, Che Guevara, and Gandhi. He was selected by the Dalai Lama to host the Buddhist leader's 2012 youth event in Manchester, England.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.9781101882917|excerptBrand / REVOLUTION1Heroes' JourneyThe first betrayal is in the name. "Lakeside," the giant shopping center, a mall to Americans, and "maul" is right, because these citadels of global brands are not tender lovers, it is not a consensual caress, it's a maul.After a slow, seductive drum roll of propaganda beaten out in already yellowing local rags, Lakeside shopping center landed in the defunct chalk pits of Grays, where I grew up, like a UFO.A magnificent cathedral of glass and steel, adjacent, as the name suggests, to a lake. There was as yet no lake. The lake was, of course, man--made. The name Lakeside, a humdrum tick--tock hymn to mundanity and nature, required the manufacture of the lake its name implied, just to make sense of itself.For me, though, as a teenager, this was no time for semantic pedantry but one of inexplicable rapture. I couldn't wait for Lakeside to descend, to make sense of the as--yet--empty lake, to fill my life as surely as they'd fill that lake, to occupy my mind as surely as they'd occupy that barren land. I couldn't wait to go to Lakeside. The fact that I had no money was no obstacle to my excitement at the oncoming Mardi Gras of consumerism. Lakeside seemed like the answer, that's for sure, but what was the question?What kind of void can there be in the life of a thirteen--year--old boy that requires a shopping center to fill it? Why would a lad growing up in Essex in the eighties have a yearning to shop that would be a more probable endowment of one the gals from *Sex and the City*?Joseph Campbell, the cultural anthropologist who I'll be banging on about a lot in this book, said, "If you want to understand what's most important to a society, don't examine its art or literature, simply look at its biggest buildings." In medieval societies, the biggest buildings were its churches and palaces; using Campbell's method, we can assume these were feudal cultures that revered their leaders and worshipped God. In modern Western cities, the biggest buildings are the banks—bloody great towers that dominate the docklands—and the shopping centers, which architecturally ape the cathedrals they've replaced: domes, spires, eerie celestial calm, fountains for fonts, food courts for pews. If you were to ask the developers of Lakeside or any shopping center what they are offering consumers (formerly known as "people") they'd say, "It's all under one roof"—great, a ceiling, and, more importantly, "choice." Choice is the key. Apparently, then, what excited me as a bulimic Smiths fan and onanist was the possibility of choice, and for anybody to be stimulated by the idea of choice, the precondition must be a lack of choice. Which is a way of saying a lack of power, a lack of freedom.I'm not inferring that we need to revert to a medieval culture, by the way, all bubonic and snaggletoothed with shabbily bandaged hands, chewing on a turnip, genuflecting in a ditch as a baron sweeps by on horseback. If we've learned anything from *Blackadder*, it's that history was a shit--hole.What I believe is that we're only just beginning to understand the incredible capacity of human beings, that we can become something unrecognizable, that we can have true freedom, not some tantalizing emblem forever out of reach. Not weary compromise and nagging fear.I used to believe in the system that I was born into: aspire, acquire, consume, get famous and glamorous, get high and mighty, get paid and laid. I saw what was being offered in wipe--clean magazines and silver screens, and I signed up. I wanted choice, freedom, power, sex, and drugs, and I've used them and they've used me."Why would you be satisfied with the scraps of fame and fortune, of sex and distraction?" asked a fellow recovering drunk that I was chatting to in New Orleans. He was well tanned—in an overly literal way, the way leather is tanned—his skin coarse and lined, his beard gripped his face like a furry fist. His shirt had faded stains and rings, like coffee--cup marks on an old map. He looked like a man who had lived, who'd had long nights and fistfights, but his eyes were as clear as his words."Money, fame—those are the crumbs," he said, brushing the words away with his thick forearm. "I want to be at the banquet." At this last he looked up and smiled. Then he strolled off with brutish majesty to do volunteer work with the plentiful New Orleans homeless. In retrospect, his departure was melodramatic, like a grass in a police drama swanning off after a midnight subterranean confab with his cop handler, maybe grinding out a fag, then leaving—why don't they ever say, "Well, I better be off, then; toodle--oo," like normal people?The most positive thing about being a drug addict is that it calcifies your disillusion; someone else, also a drunk—I'm starting to think I spend too much time listening to these luses—said to me, "Drugs and alcohol are not our problem, reality is our problem; drugs and

alcohol are our solution to that problem.” That’s a very smart way of putting it. The same impulse that made Lakeside seem a good idea to me also made heroin seem like a good idea. That might seem like a radical corollary to offer, but it isn’t. When I was a kid in Grays I was aware of an emptiness, a sadness, a nameless sense of disconnection, so when it was suggested by a local paper, a local politician, a mayor or whatever, that Lakeside might be the answer, I suppose I thought, “Yes, Lakeside might be the answer.” Given that I subsequently went on to become addicted to anything that could be cooked, snorted, or swallowed, it seems Lakeside’s palliative qualities were at best limited. Perhaps I’m an extreme case. But isn’t that all addiction really is, “an extreme case”? Aren’t we all, in one way or another, trying to find a solution to the problem of reality? If I get this job, this girl, this guy, these shoes. If I pass this exam, eat this pizza, drink this booze, go on this holiday. Learn karate, learn yoga. If West Ham stay up, if my dick stays up, if I get more likes on Facebook, more fancy cookbooks, a better kitchen, cure this itchin’, if she stops bitching. Isn’t there always some kind of condition to contentment? Isn’t it always placed in the future, wrapped up in some object, either physical or ideological? I know for me it is, and as an addict that always leads me to excess and then to trouble. Do you feel like that? Are you looking for something? It’s not just me, is it? Do you sometimes feel afraid, self-conscious, lonely, not good enough? I mean, you’re reading this, so you must want to change something. Don’t leave me out on a limb, all vulnerable and exposed. Are you reading this on a yacht, through your Ray-Bans with, I dunno, a pair of glistening Russian sisters and a gob oozing with lobster juice as the sun shines down on you and the sisters smile up at you? And even if you are, -especially if you are, is it working? Behind the salty tang and priapic pang, is it real, is it real, is it like God is holding your hand? I mean, I’ve tried decadence too. I lived in a Hollywood mansion, I went to the Oscars, I hosted big dos. In 2002, at two weeks clean, in a Bury St. Edmunds BB on Christmas Eve, watching TV, perched on a single bed with my mum, both of us with the glum cordiality of an AE waiting room—shell-shocked smiles and no hope—if some twinkling superficial fairy had flown in and said, “You’ll be taking your mum to the Oscars in a few years, don’t worry,” I’d obviously’ve been surprised (I mean, a fairy), but what would’ve been incomprehensible to me would’ve been the voracious addition from the ethereal intruder that “Oh, by the way, you’ll both find the Oscars fucking boring.” Lakeside is a local parish; Hollywood is the Vatican. I wondered how the other parishioners had fared when I went back to Grays recently. I wondered whether Lakeside had delivered for the people I grew up with, the people I left behind, the people I was running from; I wondered if they got their choice, freedom and opportunity. I fare-dodged my way out of Grays on the Fenchurch Street train, which primarily transports commuting city workers from Essex to the City of London. Stopping at Chafford Hundred—the new estate they built opposite the street where I grew up—Purfleet, Lakeside, Rainham, Dagenham Dock, Barking, and Limehouse. I’d hide in the toilet under my gelled quiff, with my own “Out of Order” sign on the door, a cross between Del Boy and Matt Goss, puffing skunk, counting stops. Now I glide in the back of Mick’s Mercedes. Mick would be “my driver” if I employed possessive determiners before people and if he exhibited a modicum of professionalism. Instead, he is my mate, who drives me. It is still, of course, in reality a long way from where I am from—child of a single mum, on benefits, drug addicted—as we journey down the A13 past the disused Ford factory where my nan’s husband, Bert, worked, past the marshes where there was talk of building Euro Disney. I was naturally devastated when they went for Paris instead—I mean, fucking Paris?! Walt must be spinning in his grave, or cryogenic chamber, or wherever the hell it is they keep his brilliant Nazi corpse. The reason for this trip down memory lane—or memory pain as I tend to call it, because my past is soaked in misery and rejection; it rejected me, then I rejected it—is that my schoolfriend Sam asked me to open a Mind shop. Mind is the a mental-health charity that he works for, and I, with my history of mental illness, plus the fact that he’s a mate and the irresistible pun “open your Mind (shop), man,” feel it’s worth risking a visit to the scene of the crime. The crime of being born, which is the manner I regarded my birth as a troubled and troubling adolescent. Grays wasn’t great when I grew up, but a lot of that might’ve been because I was looking at it from inside my head and I reckon I could’ve been reared in Tuscany and rendered it a tragedy, the way my nut operated. I had a tendency for misery. What Grays is and was—and as the name suggests, aside from my self-aggrandizing melancholy—is a normal town. You could say a normal, suburban, Essex town; you could say a normal British town, or a normal northern European town, or even a normal town in a secular, Western democracy. When I was a kid, that meant the town center, where I was due to “open your Mind, man”, had a market, chain stores, and local businesses. People did their shopping there, hung out—you know, normal stuff. When I disembarked from my tinted capsule of privilege, I was shocked to see how much Grays has changed. I mean, we’re not describing the sacking of Rome here, not the desecration of the sacred treasures of a glorious city--state, it was always a bit of a dump, but the chain stores were gone, the local businesses were gone, and the market had shut down. Now there were pound shops, betting shops, charity shops, and off-licenses. The people of the town I’d left twenty years ago were different: More of them were drunk; more of them were visibly undernourished—more than that, though, I could feel that there was a despondency among the fifty or so folk assembled with listless anticipation around the barrier outside the Mind shop. The more callous among you might say that was as a result of my impending visit, you swines, but it wasn’t that. Something had been taken from them, and I could feel its absence. More shocking though than this sad deterioration is that Grays, this lesser, depleted Grays with its food banks, Wonga loans, and escalating addiction problem, is still normal. This is happening everywhere. The richest 1 percent of British people have as much as the

poorest 55 percent. Some people like me were in the 55 percent and are now in the 1 percent, but, mostly, normal people are getting poorer. Globally it's worse. Oxfam say a bus with the eighty--five richest people in the world on it would contain more wealth than the collective assets of half the earth's population—that's three and a half billion people. Though I can't imagine they'd be getting on a bus with that kind of money or be hanging out together, I bet there'd be a lot of tension, jealousy, and petty bickering on that bus: "My corporation is bigger than your corporation." "Yeah? I've got my own media network!" "YEAH!? I've got an elite organization that controls global politics." "Stop this bus. I want to return to my subaquatic palace with my half--fish brides and sing a song about the supremacy of marine life." The last example might be from the Disney film *The Little Mermaid*. Walt's frozen noggin is definitely on that bus. In America, a country that, let's face it, has really run with this whole capitalism thing, the six heirs to the Walmart fortune have more wealth than the poorest 30 percent of Americans. There's six of them! They can't even form a football team, how are they going to stop a revolution when we act on the unfairness of that statistic? Unless the entire system is rigged to maneuver wealth to an elite group of people, then ensure that it remains there. What you just read is crazy. Insane. Unbelievable but true. As real as your hands that are holding this book (Kindle/tablet/? intra--neural--brain hologram, if it's really far in the future), that information is as real as the breath that you are inhaling. Six people whose dad was "good at supermarkets" have more money than hundreds of millions of struggling Americans. A bus full of plutocrats, royals, and oligarchs have as much money as every refugee, war child, and potbellied, rough--sleeping person on the planet. You can hear that is crazy, you can see that it's wrong, you feel that this is beyond disturbing. We're told there's nothing we can do about it, that this is "the way things are." Naturally, of course, that verdict emanates from the elite institutions, organizations, and individuals that benefit from things being "the way they are." More important, perhaps, than this galling inequality is the fact that we have a limited amount of time to resolve it. The same interests that benefit from this—for brevity I'm going to say "system"—need, in order to maintain it, to deplete the earth's resources so rapidly, violently, and irresponsibly that our planet's ability to support human life is being threatened. This is also pretty fucked up. I mean, if someone said they had a socio-economic system that creates a hugely wealthy elite at the cost of everyone else but it was ecologically sound, we'd tell them to fuck off. What we've got is one that is systematically inflating the wealth of the elite, rapidly suffocating everybody else, and it's destroying the planet that we all live on. I know you already know this. I know. We all know. But it's so absurd—psychopathic, in fact—that we obviously need to reiterate it. These elites, these loonies on the diamond--encrusted fun bus, they live on the planet with us, they're basically the same as us. So they're in trouble too—unless this bus is equipped for space travel and they plan to wait until the earth is a scorched husk, then blast off to a moon base. As I perused the new shelves bearing secondhand goods in a charity shop in the run--down town where I'm from, I thought about this stuff. The hymen ribbon that I'm supposed to cut is slung unsliced across the door. The volunteers have half--empty glasses of supermarché champagne, collectively willing it to be a good day. Two uncomfortable certainties, though, loiter like bailiffs manacled the bonhomie: 1) taking care of mentally ill people is not the job of a charity but the state; and 2) this charity shop isn't going to fucking work anyway. We already have charity shops. One of the few areas in which we are well catered for is charity shops; they're cropping up everywhere, like zombies rising from the graves of the dead proper shops. We keep our chins up as we plod through the ritual; scissors come out, applause, people bowl in, mill about, pick up a tragic jumper, weigh up a porcelain duchess in the palm of the hand. A councillor says something, a mentally ill person on the long road to sanity says something, I say something—I'm a few paces further down the road. A church--fete--type lady rosily thrusts a pair of women's jeans at me: "These'll do for you, Russell." I buy them and we laugh. Really, though, I'd like to scratch the record off, to rake the needle across the grooves and say, "What the fuck are we all doing?" What gravity is this that holds us down, who installed this low, suffocating sky? I get that feeling a lot, like I want to peer round the corner of reality, to scratch the record off, to say I know there's something else, I know it. I know this isn't the best use of our time here. "There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in," sang Leonard Cohen. You can see it; just behind reality, there is a light, you can feel it. Just behind your thoughts there is a silence. He knew the answer was there, that's why he became a Buddhist and fucked off to live in them mountains. Either that or it was because his management nicked all his money. I was particularly attuned to these ideas whilst frolicking in indigenous poverty because I was guest--editing a British political magazine called the *New Statesman*. They'd asked me what the theme of the issue would be. "Revolution," I said. So Jemima Khan, who is the editor, pulled together a variety of journalists, philosophers, and activists to contribute on aspects of the subject. Naomi Klein's article described an ecological conference where the requirement for radical action was spelled out. Brad Werner, a complex--systems researcher (which sounds like a job that would be hard to monitor for a supervisor—"Oy, Werner, are you researching that complex system or are you dickin' around on your phone?") speaking at last year's American Geophysical Union (which surely must use pornography on the invitation to have any hope of luring trade), said that our planet is fucked. He researched our complex system—the earth, I suppose, is a complex system—and concluded that we, the people who live on it, are fucked. I'm not even joking: His lecture was titled "Is Earth Fucked?" so the American Geophysical Union isn't as square as its name implies. They do swear words and everything. What Brad Werner said, though, is that the capitalist system is so rapacious in its consumption of earth's resources and the measures that have thus far been imposed so

ineffectual, that the only hope we have of saving the planet is for action to come from outside of the system. They are not going to do anything to prevent ecological meltdown; it contravenes their ideology, so change has to be imposed from the outside. That means by us. All that Kyoto stuff—reduce carbon emissions by “x” by year “y”—is not worth a wank in a windsock. It’s a bullshit gesture, the equivalent of the salad they sell in McDonald’s. Too little, too late. It’s like giving Fred West a detention. We know we can’t trust these fuckers to behave properly. Look at the tobacco industry: They knew they were killing their customers for decades before they coughed up the carcinogenic truth; they’d be blagging us to this day if they thought they could get away with it. You can bet we’ll go on a similar journey with mobile phones. That hot tingle in your ear is not a sign that all is hunky-dory on the lughole front. James Lovelock, the bloke who came up with Gaia theory, that the earth is one symbiotic, interrelated organism where harmonious life forms support or regulate each other, says we shouldn’t bother with recycling, wind turbines, and Priuses. It’s all a lot of bollocks, he says—not literally, though he might’ve if he’d been at that crazy, hang-loose festival of cursing, the American Geophysical Union. Now, I don’t reckon Lovelock is saying sit back and enjoy the apocalypse, I think he’s saying we require radical action fast and that radical action will not come from the very interests that created and benefit from things being the way they are. The one place we cannot look for change is to the occupants of the bejeweled bus. They are the problem, we are the solution, so we have to look inside ourselves. I left Grays in luxury this time, climbing back into the cradle of Mick’s car. A Mercedes. The anesthetic of privilege, the prison of comfort. People want departing photographs and autographs, more scraps, more crumbs. A bloke around my age, clutching a baton of super-strength cider, puts his arm round me. I used to drink White Lightning. I am mugged by his breath as our eyes momentarily meet. I shut the door on my past and the present. I was a little winded by what I’d seen. Going back to the place where you are from is always fraught, memories scattered like broken glass on every pavement, be careful where you tread. I meditated, feeling a little guilty that I have the space to. A space for peace, to which everyone is entitled. “It’s alright for you in the back of a car that Hitler used to ride in,” I imagined that drunk bloke saying. I’d have to point out that it wasn’t literally Hitler’s car, that would be a spooky heirloom, but it is all right for me. I do have a life where I can make time to meditate, eat well, do yoga, exercise, reflect, relax. That’s what money buys you. Is it possible for everyone to have that life? Is it possible for anyone to be happy when such rudimentary things are exclusive? They tell you that you ought eat five fruit and veg a day, then seven; I read somewhere once that you should eat as much as ten, face in a trough all day long, chowing on kale. The way these conclusions are reached is that scientists look at a huge batch of data and observe the correlation between the consumption of fruit and veg and longevity. They then conclude that you, as an individual, should eat more fruit and veg. The onus is on you; you are responsible for what you eat. Of course, other conclusions could be drawn from this data. The same people that live these long lives and eat all this fruit and veg are also, in the main, wealthy; they have good jobs, regular holidays, exercise, and avoid the incessant stress of poverty. Another, more truthful, more frightening conclusion we could reach then is that we should have a society where the resources enjoyed by the fruit-gobbling elite are shared around and the privileges, including the fruit and veg, enjoyed by everybody. With this conclusion the obligation is not on you as an individual to obediently skip down to Waitrose and buy more celery, it is on you as a member of society to fight for a fairer system where more people have access to resources. Jemima Khan calls. “I think it’s really interesting that you’ve never voted,” she says. “You should definitely write about that in your article.” I agree, as is to become the custom. “Also, you should talk about that tomorrow when you do Newsnight with Paxman.” Once more I consent. The idea that voting is pointless, democracy a façade, and that no one is representing ordinary people is more resonant than ever as I leave my ordinary town behind. Amidst the guilt and anger I feel in the back of the Führer-mobile, there is hope. Whilst it’s clear that on an individual, communal, and global level that radical change is necessary, I feel a powerful, transcendent optimism. I know change is possible, I know there is an alternative, because I live a completely different life to the one I was born with. I also know that the solution is not fame or money or any transient adornment of the individual. The only revolution that can really change the world is the one in your own consciousness, and mine has already begun.