



Bunch of Amateurs: A Search for the American Character

Jack Hitt

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WHAT IS IT THAT DRIVES THE SUCCESS OF AMERICA AND THE IDENTITY OF ITS PEOPLE? ACCLAIMED WRITER AND CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TO *THIS AMERICAN LIFE* JACK HITT THINKS IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE ALL A BUNCH OF AMATEURS.

America's self-invented tinkerers are back at it in their metaphorical garages—fiddling with everything from solar-powered cars to space elevators. In *Bunch of Amateurs*, Jack Hitt visits a number of different garages and has written a fascinating book that looks at America's current batch of amateurs and their pursuits. From a tattooed young woman in the Bay Area trying to splice a fish's glow-in-the-dark gene into common yogurt (all done in her kitchen using salad spinners) to a space fanatic on the brink of developing the next generation of telescopes from his mobile home, Hitt not only tells the stories of people in the grip of a passion but argues that America's history is bound up in a cycle of amateur surges.

Beginning with Ben Franklin's kite and leading all the way to the current TV hit *American Idol*, Hitt argues that the nation's

love of self-invented obsessives has always driven the country to rediscover the true heart of the American dream. Amateur pursuits are typically lamented as a world that just passed until a Sergey Brin or Mark Zuckerberg steps out of his garage (or dorm room) with the rare but crucial success story. In *Bunch of Amateurs*, Hitt argues that America is now poised to pioneer at another frontier that will lead, one more time, to the newest version of the American dream.

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