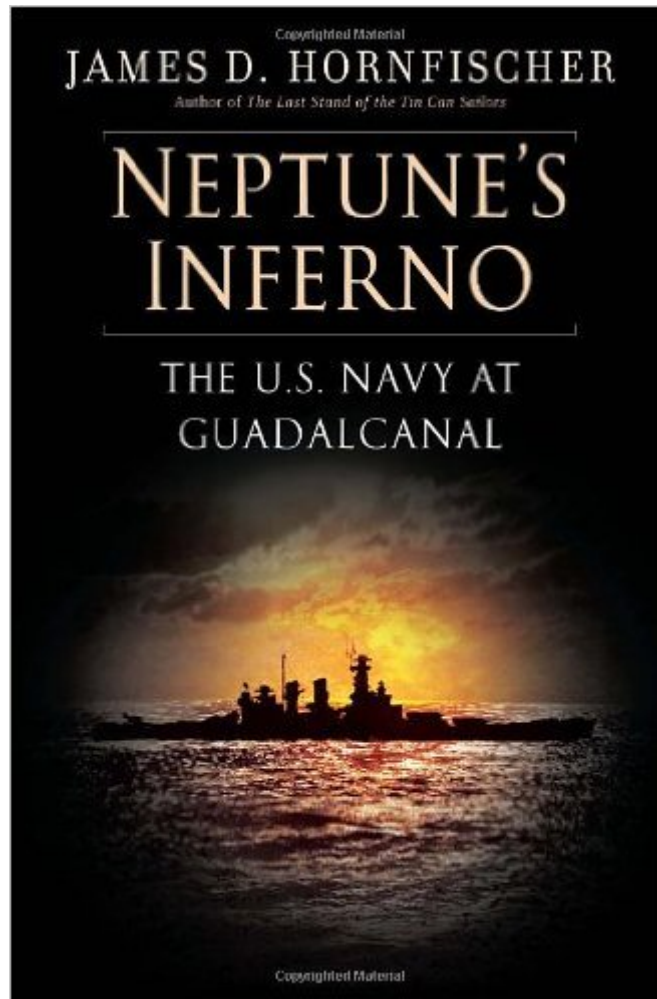# Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy At Guadalcanal

Synopsis

With The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors and Ship of Ghosts, James D. Hornfischer created essential and enduring narratives about Americaâ ™s World War II Navy, works of unique immediacy distinguished by rich portraits of ordinary men in extremis and exclusive new information. Now he does the same for the deadliest, most pivotal naval campaign of the Pacific war: Guadalcanal.Neptuneâ ™s Inferno is at once the most epic and the most intimate account ever written of the contest for control of the seaways of the Solomon Islands, Americaâ ™s first concerted offensive against the Imperial Japanese juggernaut and the true turning point of the Pacific conflict. This grim, protracted campaign has long been heralded as a Marine victory. Now, with his powerful portrait of the Navyâ ™s sacrificeâ "three sailors died at sea for every man lost ashoreâ "Hornfischer tells for the first time the full story of the men who fought in destroyers, cruisers, Â and battleships in the narrow, deadly waters of â œIronbottom Sound.â • Here, in brilliant cinematic detail, are the seven major naval actions that began in August of 1942, a time when the war seemed unwinnable and America fought on a shoestring, with the outcome always in doubt. But at Guadalcanal the U.S. proved it had the implacable will to match the Imperial war machine blow for violent blow. Working from new interviews with survivors, unpublished eyewitness accounts, and newly available documents, Hornfischer paints a vivid picture of the officers and enlisted men who took on the Japanese in Americaâ ™s hour of need: Vice Admiral William â œBullâ • Halsey, who took command of the faltering South Pacific Area from his aloof, overwhelmed predecessor and became a national hero; the brilliant Rear Admiral Norman Scott, who died even as he showed his command how to fight and win; Rear Admiral Daniel Callaghan, the folksy and genteel â œUncle Dan,â • lost in the strobe-lit chaos of his burning flagship; Rear Admiral Willis Lee, who took vengeance two nights later in a legendary showdown with the Japanese battleship Kirishima; the five Sullivan brothers, all killed in the shocking destruction of the Juneau; and many others, all vividly brought to life.The first major work on this essential subject in almost two decades, Neptuneâ ™s Inferno does what all great battle narratives do: It cuts through the smoke and fog to tell the gripping human stories behind the momentous events and critical decisions that altered the course of history and shaped so many lives. This is a thrilling achievement from a master historian at the very top of his game.

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Customer Reviews

The WWII history of Guadalcanal is justifiably focused on the long battle waged ashore by the United States Marine Corps in order to secure an airfield base of operations in the Solomon Islands. In "Neptune's Inferno", James Hornfischer captures the challenges, drama and deadly violence that came in a series of violent engagements between allied (and principally, the US Navy) and Japanese naval forces from August through November, 1942.Hornfischer masterfully balances issues of strategy (as he examines both political influences and senior military decisions in Washington, Pearl Harbor and in theater), tactics (especially training doctrine, communications issues and the introduction of radar technology) and the infinite supply of personal tales of triumph and tragedy that come in any combat situation.While the Battle of Midway in June of 1942 ushered in the era of standoff confrontation between carrier-based aviation units, the naval engagements at Guadalcanal were centered on the proficiency of gun crews. Many of the episodes described in this book take places with opposing ships in close visual range. The results are violent and dramatic, and should cure any reader of the notion that naval warfare is somehow less risky than combat ashore.There are many narrative gems in this book which illuminate the struggles at any level of responsibility. Setting the stage for the post Pearl Harbor responses in the Pacific, Hornfischer writes in the book's opening pages: "Captains were fortunate to find help for their troubles. They were given command of a multitude and saddled with fault for their failings. The bargain they made for their privileged place was the right to be last off the ship if the worst came to pass.

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