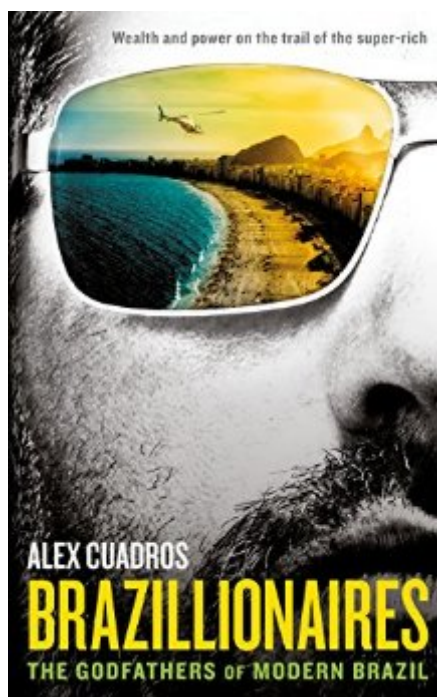


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Brazillionaires: The Godfathers Of Modern Brazil



Synopsis

Wealth and power on the trail of the super-rich In 2012, Brazilian tycoon Eike Batista was the eighth richest man in the world, his \$30bn fortune built on Brazil's incredible natural resources. By the middle of 2013 he had lost it all, engulfed in scandal. *Brazillionaires* is a fast-paced account of Batista's rise and fall: a story of helicopter flights, beach-front penthouses and high-speed car crashes. Along the way, it tells the parallel story of Brazil itself, a country caught in the cycle of boom and bust, renewed hope and dashed promise; a country where the hyper-rich are at the heart of the economy - and where their wealth can buy immense political power. Stefan Zweig said in 1941 that Brazil was the country of the future; Brazilians joke that it always will be. Today, rampant corruption and endemic inequality threaten to derail the new Brazilian Dream. The *brazillionaires* are the key to understanding that dream; through them *Brazillionaires* tells the story of their country's past, present and future.

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Customer Reviews

This compelling chronicle of Brazil's ultra-rich, and the wide and growing gap that separates them from the vast majority of their fellow citizens -- who may possess flat-screen TVs and smartphones

but many of whom may not yet have indoor plumbing and who struggle for hours to get to work through notoriously crowded city streets while the billionaires commute via helicopter -- couldn't possibly be more timely. I began reading it almost literally as the country's president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached, and finished it only weeks before the Rio Olympics are scheduled to begin, in spite of calls for them to be moved because of the Zika virus. For Alex Cuadros, Brazil and its billionaires serves as a kind of microcosm of how the world's wealthiest citizens end up that way, and how they explain their success (or rationalize it) in a world where it's increasingly unlikely that few of their fellow citizens will ever be able to emulate their achievements. As a Bloomberg news correspondent, he ended up on the "billionaire beat" in Brazil, responsible for unearthing secretive billionaires and putting them on the news organization's "rich list", and the first part of the book is dedicated to exploring some of those individuals' stories -- who they are, and the way they built their fortunes, often by playing nicely (i.e. corruptly) with Brazil's leaders. He does an excellent job of letting many of these individuals damn themselves in their own words, too -- always the best way to do this. (It's particularly telling when a billionaire ponderously declares that he feels a sense of responsibility for guiding a country and its citizens... regardless of whether those citizens wish him to do so...

• *Brazillionaires* • by Alex Cuadros offers a superb narrative and analysis of wealth, power and corruption in the Americas. Mr. Cuadros is a talented Bloomberg journalist who has parlayed his years interviewing and reporting in Brazil on its billionaire class into this outstanding book. Anyone interested in an articulate, nuanced and clear-eyed assessment of the costs imposed on society by the One Percent should read this book. Mr. Cuadros artfully frames the discussion around the notorious vehicular manslaughter case involving Thor Batista, the privileged son of Brazil's richest man, Eike Batista. As Thor's case is revealed in bites throughout the text, we gain perspective about the consequences of extreme economic, political and social inequality in contemporary Brazil. In fact, the rise and fall of Eike during this same time period stimulates the author's thoughtful critique of crony capitalism including the lost opportunity to lift up the lives of ordinary Brazilians. To his credit, Mr. Cuadros recognizes that the picture is larger than Brazil. Yes, Brazil has unique attributes in how its deeply divided society functions; with the recent World Cup and 2016 Olympics serving as poster children for how its corrupt political/economic machine sacrifices social progress for the benefit of the well-connected. However, Brazil's rise of financialization, its Leftist party's cozy relationship with capital and its people's popular yearning for riches and fame might just as easily apply to a discussion about the United States,

might it not? On that point, I believe the important takeaway from this book is that we should suspend our disbelief about the wealthy who merely own but do not contribute much, if anything, to the collective good. Mr.

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