



Books and Podcasts for Your Summer Break

As many of us head off on our summer breaks, business leaders will finally be able to relax with an exciting novel or unwind with an insightful podcast. Criticaleye Community Members share their personal favourites with **Dylan Totton**



With summer upon us, we asked our Criticaleye Community what books and podcasts they would recommend relaxing with as they take a well-earned break. At a time when we could all do with some escapism, their choices encompass laugh-out-loud comedy, a survival story from the Chinese Cultural Revolution and even a business story or two.

We are sure you will find something to inspire and entertain you on this eclectic list.



Benny H. Goh
Cyber Data Centre

Favourite podcast: Definitely [Asian Peace Talks](#), hosted by Kishore Mahbubani. I really enjoyed Episode 4 in particular, where there is an interview with the ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs for Singapore, George Yeo, entitled 'Perceptions of China within the US Body Politic: Facts and Misconceptions'. It was very insightful and thought provoking. The interview puts in perspective some of the misconceptions and realities about what is happening on the ground.

Holiday book: I recommend *Out of the Gobi* by Weijian Shan. It is a story of how the author survived the Cultural Revolution during the Mao period. Disillusioned by the Chinese communist ideology, he managed to get into the University of Berkeley and subsequently rose to be one of the most prominent investment bankers.

The experiences during his time in Gobi were harsh and life changing. Grit and determination, along with the ability to seize opportunities, were the hallmarks

“After the year we’ve just had, I think all of us need a good laugh”

of his success. He is currently based in Hong Kong and is Chair of the Pacific Alliance Group (PAG).

Currently reading: *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*. A quick read, but still a refreshing reminder of what we require daily that will help us get out of bed excited and have a zest for life. Stay active, don't retire and live in the moment.



Rachel Barton
Accenture

Favourite podcast: I definitely recommend that people check out any of WIRED's [‘46 of the best podcasts for curious minds’](#) for eclectic listening. Expanding the mind and giving time and space to new perspectives always helps me be more creative.

Holiday book: I am a bit of a health freak and am interested in reading about wellbeing, nutrition, exercise and mental resilience. I'll always take such

books on vacation because a moment of pause is a good time to reflect and up our game on self-care. I also love socio-economic literature. I read *Not in Your Genes* by Oliver James, which puts forward the argument that the way we turn out physically and mentally is almost entirely because of nurture and not nature. I'd always recommend anything by Malcolm Gladwell.

Currently reading: Right now, I'm reading *Eat to Beat Disease* by Dr William Li, which talks about the role of nutrition in living longer. I'm also reading Agatha Christie's *After the Funeral*. I love a good mystery, so I am working my way through her novels. During lockdown, I found a retailer that sells first edition books and now treat myself to one each month. My next read is already waiting: *Talking to My Daughter: A Brief History of Capitalism*, by Yanis Varoufakis.



Rahul Malhotra
Royal Dutch Shell

Favourite podcast: I personally like the [BBC History Extra](#) podcast. They talk about historical learnings relevant to current issues, such as pandemics, migration and racism. It's fascinating to take a longer-term view on problems that we have faced before.

Holiday book: A business book I would recommend is Hubert Joly's *The Heart of Business*. He was the highly successful CEO of Best Buy and made a massive difference to the lives of not just his shareholders but also his staff and customers. It's a highly relevant story for people trying to pivot their brands and businesses into becoming more purpose driven. ➤



Currently reading: I'm currently reading *The Singapore Story* by Lee Kuan Yew. It's a fantastic recollection of how the resilience of a few people helped change the destiny of an entire nation; from a 'Third World' country 'abandoned' by its bigger neighbour – Malaya – to the First World superpower it is today. I always look for an answer to the question: 'What would I do differently after reading this?' I feel my personal leadership style will change as a result of being enriched by this story and its protagonists.



Gary Kildare
Defence Infrastructure
Organisation

Favourite podcast: I've very much enjoyed the podcast series by US comedian Marc Maron, called [WTF with Marc Maron](#). He has had some fantastic guests. I think it's been important and necessary over the last few months to find some humour and fun in what has been a difficult period for everyone.

Holiday book: I was fortunate to get a few days' break immediately after the lockdown lifted in Perthshire, so being able to drive over the River Forth on the Queensferry Crossing felt a bit special after months of being at home. I packed a paperback my daughter had given me by Peter May called *Lockdown*. Apparently, he wrote the book some time ago, but the publishers decided not to print it because the circumstances were too daft and extreme to contemplate. You probably guessed... it's about a pandemic. An easy two-day read, with a glass or two of wine.

Currently listening: I was recently surprised with a new cockapoo puppy, courtesy of my wife and daughter who

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were apparently in cahoots for months to find the right breeder. I now get even more chance to listen to some podcasts when I am walking the dog. Two particular favourites of mine are, [WeCrashed](#), an analysis of the rise and fall of WeWork's business model, and also [Grounded](#) with Louis Theroux, which is always excellent.



Aimie Chapple
Capita plc

Favourite podcast: I recently completed a diploma in naturopathic nutrition. What we eat makes a definite difference to our state of mind, performance and wellbeing. Dr. Mark Hyman is a functional medicine doctor with the Cleveland Clinic and his podcast, [The Doctor's Farmacy](#), provides me with all sorts of practical insights on how to ensure I have energy, tackle [nutrient]

deficiencies, balance hormones and ensure that my brain and body are primed to support me in everything I do.

Holiday book: *Defining You* by Fiona Murden. This book is like having a coach to rethink your leadership, in a really engaging way. Partly, I recommend the book because I know Fiona personally and she has provided some really interesting insights in my experiences with her. Now she is bottling that in her books, bringing a sense of democracy to what is some pretty sophisticated coaching. I have used it with a number of my mentees over the past few years and it has led to some good personal insights as well as some great conversations about aspirations and intention with our teams.

Currently reading: Right now, I am reading *The Body Keeps Score* by Bessel van der Kolk. It is a fascinating book about how the human body deals with trauma, how that plays out in society and what individuals can do to address their own trauma. You can see why many social injustices play out the way they do based on this evidence, both in terms of socio-economic dysfunction but also in education, work and communities.



Jerzy Nagorski
Criticaleye

Favourite podcast: After the year we've just had, I think all of us need a good laugh. The comedian Frank Skinner is on a mission to get the British people interested in poetry again, and I definitely recommend his [Poetry Podcast](#). I also thoroughly enjoy Geoff Lloyd & Annabel Port's podcast [Adrift](#), as well as Charlie Higson's [Charlie Higson & Friends](#), where he chats with Paul Whitehouse, >



Arabella Weir, Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer about their personal musical journeys and plays some of their favourite classical pieces.

Holiday book: I've recently revisited *On the Brink* by Henry M. Paulson, former US Treasury Secretary and, before that, CEO of Goldman Sachs. Managing through a crisis is obviously a key theme that we've been discussing within the Criticaleye community over the last year. In this book, Paulson shares his own experiences of managing through the financial crisis of 2008 and reflects on his personal resilience, how it was tested and how he responded as a leader.

Currently reading: With two young children, I don't always have a huge amount of free time for reading. Over the summer, I'm looking forward to dipping into one of the biographies of Gaetano Donizetti, a hugely important composer

whose work I often performed in my former life as a baritone singer. As well as writing wonderful music, Donizetti was very much in tune with the public – his customers – and understanding shifts in their behaviours, what would sell at the box office and which artists would be the biggest draw. I've always believed that business and the arts have a lot to learn from each other and Donizetti is a great example of this.

Plus, a bonus suggestion from Criticaleye

A final 'don't miss' for your podcast list is Criticaleye's own [Leadership with New Horizons](#) series. In the latest episode, Criticaleye's CEO, **Matthew Blagg**, discusses the big topics raised at our recent CEO Retreat, including Board dynamics, the changing customer and agility. It is the perfect listen when soaking up those rays on the beach! ■

Featuring Commentary From:



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CRITICALEYE PODCASTS

LEADERSHIP WITH NEW HORIZONS

The Leadership with New Horizons podcast series dives into the important themes for business leaders in 2021.

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