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A Dog Year: Twelve Months, Four Dogs, and Me

By Jon Katz



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Sometimes, change comes on four legs.

In his popular and widely praised **Running to the Mountain**, Jon Katz wrote of the strength and support he found in the massive forms of his two yellow Labrador retrievers, Julius and Stanley. When the Labs were six and seven, a breeder who'd read his book contacted Katz to say she had a dog that was meant for him—a two-year-old border collie named Devon, well bred but high-strung and homeless. Katz already had a full canine complement—but, as he writes, “Change loves me. . . . It comes in all forms. . . . Sometimes, change comes on four legs.” Shortly thereafter he brought Devon home. **A Dog Year** shows how a man discovered much about himself through one dog (and then another), whose temperament seemed as different from his own as day from night. It is a story of trust and understanding, of life and death, of continuity and change. It is by turns insightful, hilarious, and deeply moving.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The story line of Katz's latest book can be summed up very simply two dogs die and two new ones join the family but its charm comes from an intricate blend of witty anecdote and touching reflection. Katz (*Geeks, Virtuous Reality*) has shared his affection for years with two low-maintenance Labs, whose "chosen work was to reflect on the state of the world, lick neighborhood kids, and accompany [him] through midlife." So it is somewhat surprising that he next adopts a frenetic and demanding border collie he occasionally refers to as "Helldog." His life turned upside down; his writing schedule disrupted, he learns to center his life around a dog's needs rather than vice versa. After adopting the homeless Devon, Katz adopts his second border collie, Homer, because Oprah Winfrey urges him to. (He appears on her show for his book about his Labs, *Running to the Mountain*.) He's fallen in love with the breed's intelligence and curiosity. In fact, both breeds seem to touch something in his soul the Lab his centered, peaceful side; the border collie his troubled side. Over the course of the year, Katz reflects on the importance of devotion to and understanding of any animal taken into the home; ways to live peacefully with border collies; and even the problems of midlife crisis. "Once in a great while," he muses, "the right person is fortunate enough to get the right dog, to have time to take care of it, to connect with it in a profound way."

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-Katz's smooth, flowing writing style and engaging manner of describing the personalities of his four dogs will captivate even reluctant readers. That he unobtrusively conveys lessons about dignity, discipline, and trust along the way is a bonus. In the opening pages, the family has two golden Labrador retrievers (Julius and Stanley) of tranquil and stately demeanor who have meshed perfectly into the rhythms of the author's daily writing routine and are beloved by neighbors in their suburban NJ locale. Then, he takes in Devon, a high-strung, two-year-old Border collie "with emotional issues." Surmounting the challenges presented by this beautiful and intelligent (but willful and anxious) animal, bonding with him and restoring equilibrium, fill many an entertaining chapter as the author cajoles Devon into accepting his new owner as the alpha male in the pack. Further adjustments are necessary as illness prematurely claims the lives of both Labs, and a Border collie puppy, Homer, is introduced into the household. In final chapters, wanting to satisfy the collies' native instincts as working dogs, Katz seeks out a training opportunity for them to experience herding sheep, and is rewarded by appreciation for their aptitude and high-energy intensity on the job. Throughout the story, adventures are touching, humorous, and winsome.

Lynn Nutwell, Fairfax City Regional Library, VA

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From Library Journal

After mentoring a troubled teen, as recounted in *Geeks*, journalist Katz describes another kind of mentoring process: his adoption of Devon, a broken-spirited two-year-old border collie. A breeder who had read Katz's account about his two yellow Labs (*Running to the Mountains*) suggested that the author take the dog. From Devon's frenzied entrance into Katz's life, escaping from the confines of his crate into a busy airport, to his exultant, trusting leap into Katz's arms one year later, this memoir is warm and heartfelt. Although it lacks the searing intensity of Elizabeth Rose's *For the Love of a Dog* (LJ 7/01), there are the moving anecdotes about Devon's stunning intelligence: "When [Devon] found a loose slat, he wiggled his nose furiously, pushing the wood to one side. He squeezed through the narrow opening and then here's the scary part turned

around and pushed the slat back into position." Katz's style and vocabulary are flowing and accessible, and sure to appeal to canine fans. For all public libraries. Cleo Pappas, Lisle Lib. Dist., IL
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melinda Kendall:

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Tyrone Smith:

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