

Scheiber, Noam. *The escape artists: how Obama's team fumbled the recovery.* Simon & Schuster, 2012 (c2011). 351p index ISBN 9781439172407, \$28.00; ISBN 9781439172421 e-book, contact publisher for price.

Employing titillating chapter titles such as "The Operator," "The Fallacy," "Bait and Switch," "The Purist," "The Rogue," and "Snookered," Scheiber reveals his pedigree--that of reporter-journalist-editor--and implicitly his stock-in-trade approach to the task at hand: chronicling the three-year period of the financial crisis and government actions as seen through the eyes of President Obama's political and economic advisers. The dramatis personae and their egos are all here--David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel, as well as House Republicans, on the political front, and the economic brain trust of Geithner, Orszag, Romer, Rubin, Sperling, and Summers. Toss in the now-familiar institutions and acronyms Wall Street, AIG, derivatives, Goldman Sachs, hedge funds, Lehman Brothers, and TARP, plus the jockeying, infighting, and mistakes within the administration that dogged responses and recovery efforts. This well-written, engaging, but arguably discouraging account of public policy at its worst, is complemented by 30 pages of endnotes and a 20-page index. *The Escape Artists'* insider perspectives on contemporary fiscal matters invites comparison with David Wessel's *In Fed We Trust* (CH, Feb'10, 47-3297) on the monetary side of the ledger, and Bob Woodward's *Obama's Wars* (2010) on the international stage. Summing Up: Recommended. All collections and readership levels. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago