

Damien Barr, writer

John Lahr's *Joyride* (WW Norton, £19.75) is a classic of theatre criticism and human observation.

Celebrity has debased acting so much. Nevertheless Lahr, who was born to Broadway royalty, is fascinated by these "athletes

of the spirit" and we are

too. Polly Samson's *The*

Kindness (Bloomsbury, £14.99) is a dark, twisting thriller of the emotions

which shows how one

secret can affect many

lives. Sue Perkins

could easily

have packed

Spectacles

(Penguin, £20)

with Mary Berry

stories and recipes

and got away with

it. Instead she

shows herself in

brilliant unsparing

detail.