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I Wear The Black Hat: Grappling With Villains (Real And Imagined)



Synopsis

From New York Times best-selling author, "one of America's top cultural critics" (Entertainment Weekly), and "The Ethicist" for The New York Times Magazine, comes a new book of all original pieces on villains and villainy. Chuck Klosterman has walked into the darkness. As a boy, he related to the cultural figures who represented goodness - but as an adult, he found himself unconsciously aligning with their enemies. This was not because he necessarily liked what they were doing; it was because they were doing it on purpose (and they were doing it better). They wanted to be evil. And what, exactly, was that supposed to mean? When we classify someone as a bad person, what are we really saying (and why are we so obsessed with saying it)? In *I Wear the Black Hat*, Klosterman questions the very nature of how modern people understand the concept of villainy. What was so Machiavellian about Machiavelli? Why don't we see Batman the same way we see Bernhard Goetz? Who's more worthy of our vitriol - Bill Clinton or Don Henley? What was O.J. Simpson's second-worst decision? And why is Klosterman still obsessed with some kid he knew for one week in 1985? Masterfully blending cultural analysis with self-interrogation and limitless imagination, *I Wear the Black Hat* delivers perceptive observations on the complexity of the anti-hero (seemingly the only kind of hero America still creates). *I Wear the Black Hat* is the rare example of serious criticism that's instantly accessible and really, really funny. Klosterman is the only writer doing whatever it is he's doing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading Klosterman's book I found myself thinking about the old adage about opinions, that

everyone has one and well you know the rest. As a new Klosterman reader perhaps I came to the book expecting the wrong thing. I expected a cogent thoughtful treatise on what causes us to identify some people or characters as villainous while giving others the pass. And while Klosterman starts off his first chapter in this direction with a discussion of why Machiavelli is widely reviled, he quickly disassembles into some serious navel gazing. Klosterman opens his second chapter with an extended discussion of bands he has disliked. I'll admit that I didn't care much about Klosterman's taste in music, however the discussion might have been justified had it fed some larger reasoned conclusion. However, even after re-reading his discussion twice I could not make out exactly what his larger point was. While he wrote in exacting detail about his personal taste he definitely phoned it in when it came to drawing conclusions. From there Klosterman launched into a discussion of why some misogynist music from decades passed has come to be thought of as mostly harmless while a similarly sexist comedian is still reviled. Again Klosterman doesn't draw any strongly reasoned conclusions, and it's even the conclusions that he does draw seem suspect given that he offers up no support other than his own opinions and no additional examples beyond the two he has discussed. And to be honest even though Klosterman was clearly working to paint his sexist comedian as a sympathetic victim of political correctness, it was difficult to find much to sympathize about a man who made millions calling women dirty names on stage.

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