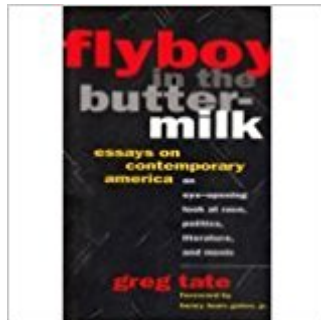




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Flyboy In The Buttermilk: Essays On Contemporary America



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Customer Reviews

This collection of 40 essays on music, literature, art and politics confirms Tate's role as a chief progenitor of a New Black Aesthetic, what Gates calls "a body of creativity unfettered by the constraints of a nationalist party line." Consistently interesting, often brilliant, Tate--a staff writer for the Village Voice --modulates funkadelic street argot with a fierce intellect, taking on subjects as diverse as Miles Davis, artist Jean-Michel Basquiat and Lee Atwater's embrace of black music. Reviewing the rap group Public Enemy, he observes, "To know PE is to love the agitprop (and artful noise) and to worry over the whack OK w-out comma?/no comma/pk retarded philosophy they espouse." Some music essays and a foray into hermeneutics may be heavy going for the uninitiated, but Tate skillfully enlivens writers like black SF fabulist Samuel Delany, and deftly criticizes essentialist curators who deny the "ambiguity and complexity" of black visual art. The political pieces cut to the bone, sparing neither a white power structure that devalues black life nor blacks who cry racism to excuse sexism; too many blacks, he says, "get more upset over being disrespected than they do over being disempowered." Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The latest entry in the Rock Bowl Parade of pop music/culture critic readers features the most strident voice and is, alternately, the best and worst of the lot. Village Voice columnist Tate distinguishes his work from the floats of Stanley Booth (Rhythm Oil , LJ 2/15/92), Chet Flippo (

Everybody Was Kung Fu Dancing , LJ 10/15/91), and Kurt Loder (Bat Chain Puller , LJ 10/15/90) by his contextual and academic analysis of black music, popular culture, and politics and through his perspective as a black writer. The essays, dating from 1982-91, are divided into three sections: a large one on music and two smaller ones on art and literature and on New York City politics. In a form-follows-function approach, Tate's prose is a discordant juxtaposition of hip-hop new-jackhammer slang with a thick, academia-inspired effusiveness rife with semiotic and aesthetic overlays. Devotees of the pop culture intelligentsia will probably get off on Tate, but others might just want to wave.- Barry X. Miller, Austin P.L., Tex.Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Great!

Pretty good insight.

By now it's a critical "classic" of eighties and some nineties art, music, culture mostly emanating from the New York, east coast diaspora of African-American culture and other dilated peoples... he brilliantly lays down thoughts and ideas like a musician lays down tracks of sounds... he hits all the right notes and grooves intellectually and beyond.

A classic and a must read

I first heard of Greg Tate back when he was writing for VIBE Magazine. I was impressed with his surreal and at the same time politically urban views. Greg Tate is a voice for the so-called "BOHO" or Black Bohemian Arts Movement, an underground urban culture which includes Black intellectuals who push the envelope of what traditional Black customs should be. Greg Tate interviews the musical genius George Clinton of Parliament/Funkadelic, science fiction, jazz innovators, unknown but gifted Black filmmakers, an essay about the legendary Rastafarian/Hardcore band Bad Brains, Amiri Baraka, and much more. Greg Tate's writing style is like a cross between Amiri Baraka and Tim Leary. He has been a major influence on my writing. His ideas are so far out there that the mainstream Black intellectual community (who most still have the negroe mentality) won't accept them. Me personally, I have the same dilemma, because the mainstream says a Black man should only write about Hip-Hop, 'hood stories, the "Negroe" Rights Movement, and slavery instead of science fiction, classical music, and a variety of other subjects. To the average Black mind; Black culture is confined to UPN/WB sitcoms, SoulTrain, goin' to church on Sunday, sittin' in the beauty

shop, basketball, and eatin' grits. But Greg Tate says we are a colorful people who have a lot of potential and have no limitations. Only through art can we fully grow. Greg Tate is a gifted writer who deserves credit.

FLYBOY IN THE BUTTERMILK is a major work within the too-often overlooked world of African-American cultural theory and writing. Tate, first famous as a contributor to 'Village Voice' and 'Vibe' magazines, emerges here with a complex aesthetic sensibility that very much pushes the limits of African-American pop culture, and traditional culture, in the interest of advancing a new urban avant-garde. In this Tate's goals are perhaps narrow and not as proletarian as some would like (he narrows the focus to music and literature), but his ideas are challenging in constructive fashion and his extremely rigorous blend of wide-ranging erudition (everything from Public Enemy, Miles Davis, William Gibson's cyberpunk and the sonic tapestries of My Bloody Valentine are all part of a seamless cultural landscape, as seen through Tate's eyes) and street-culture interests will keep any reader engaged and thinking in critical (in the best sense of the term) fashion. This book's publication in 1992 is in some senses unfortunate - one would wonder what Tate thinks of the subsequent dope-and-guns fixations of hip-hop, or the glittery party vibe that emerged afterwards, all the intellectual antithesis of everything posited in this book; the cultural and political challenges thrown down in hip-hop 1988-92 (roughly) would seem to be long-dead. Tate's style is an urban reworking of what used to be called gonzo journalism - the variety of wildly personal, slangy, intellectually dense but stylishly raw writing initially associated with the likes of Lester Bangs and Hunter Thompson, it works very, very well here, and Tate (as probably the foremost African-American writer working within a similar style) has breathed new life into the previously moribund style. I doubt we'll be seeing his writing in the staid likes of 'Ebony' anytime soon, but such is life. -David Alston

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