

(Download free ebook) Pulphead: Essays

Pulphead: Essays

John Jeremiah Sullivan

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#45739 in Books Farrar Straus Giroux 2011-10-25 2011-10-25 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.51 x .4 x 5.061, .65 #File Name: 0374532907369 pages Farrar Straus Giroux | File size: 75.Mb

John Jeremiah Sullivan : Pulphead: Essays before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pulphead: Essays:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Noted in PassingBy Customer Eclectic doesn't begin to describe this collection of essays. Whether it's a trip to Creation (a Christian music festival) or down a cave in Tennessee, Sullivan pulls the reader easily along with plenty of context and, of course, the colorful personalities who really make his compositions sing. Some of the latter, like Michael Jackson or Axl Rose, are easily remembered and, in Pulphead, nicely reconsidered. Other subjects, like Southern School writer Andrew Lytle, whose works were unknown to this

particular deep south English major, come as an introduction and even something of a revelation. Pulphead may sound mushy, but the writing is sharp. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I love this book - great for if you need an easier read, as they are essays. We read it for my book club and we all raved. 10/10 would recommend! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It would make a non-reader like to read. By Max Jenius I'm not a bookworm by any means, but this book was very entertaining. I don't even like essays, in general. On multiple occasions I found myself laughing out loud. Sullivan has a way of expressing himself concisely, yet vividly. There are too many good points to mention in this review. The essays on Axl Rose and a Christian revival are gems that come to mind. I'd recommend this to anyone.

Named A Best Book of 2011 by the New York Times, Time Magazine, the Boston Globe and Entertainment Weekly. A sharp-eyed, uniquely humane tour of America's cultural landscape from high to low to lower than low by the award-winning young star of the literary nonfiction world. In Pulphead, John Jeremiah Sullivan takes us on an exhilarating tour of our popular, unpopular, and at times completely forgotten culture. Simultaneously channeling the gonzo energy of Hunter S. Thompson and the wit and insight of Joan Didion, Sullivan shows us with a laidback, erudite Southern charm that's all his own how we really (no, really) live now. In his native Kentucky, Sullivan introduces us to Constantine Rafinesque, a nineteenth-century polymath genius who concocted a dense, fantastical prehistory of the New World. Back in modern times, Sullivan takes us to the Ozarks for a Christian rock festival; to Florida to meet the alumni and stragglers of MTV's Real World, who've generated their own self-perpetuating economy of minor celebrity; and all across the South on the trail of the blues. He takes us to Indiana to investigate the formative years of Michael Jackson and Axl Rose and then to the Gulf Coast in the wake of Katrina and back again as its residents confront the BP oil spill. Gradually, a unifying narrative emerges, a story about this country that we've never heard told this way. It's like a fun-house hall-of-mirrors tour: Sullivan shows us who we are in ways we've never imagined to be true. Of course we don't know whether to laugh or cry when faced with this reflection; it's our inevitable sob-guffaws that attest to the power of Sullivan's work.

.com Best Books of the Month, November 2011: What a fresh and daring voice. John Jeremiah Sullivan is a dynamic and gutsy writer, a cross between Flannery O'Connor and a decaffeinated Tom Wolfe, with just the right dash of Hunter S. Thompson. In fourteen essays ranging from an Axl Rose profile to an RV trek to a Christian rock festival to the touching story of his brother's near-death electrocution, Sullivan writes funny, beautiful, and very real sentences. The sum of these stories portrays a real America, including the vast land between the coasts. Staying just this side of cynical, Sullivan displays respect for his subjects, no matter how freakish they may seem (see Axl Rose). Put another way: if Tom Waits wrote essays, they might sound like Pulphead. --Neal Thompson Exclusive .com Interview: Though his stories have appeared for a decade in Harper's, GQ, and other magazines, John Jeremiah Sullivan wasn't a recognizable name until Pulphead started landing on year-end best-books lists, including Time, the New York Times, and 's Best Books of 2011. The New Yorker's James Wood compares him to Raymond Carver - "with hints of Emerson and Thoreau." Elsewhere, Sullivan has been called the new Tom Wolfe, David Foster Wallace, or Hunter S. Thompson, or some combination of all three. I prefer to think of him more as the Tom Waits of long-form journalism. Sullivan's sportswriter father was an early and lasting influence. "The stuff he wrote was so weird, when I go back and look at it. It would almost have to be classified as creative non-fiction," Sullivan told me. I asked Sullivan if his father encouraged him to become a writer. "He did the smartest and best thing he could have done for me, which was to take a very coolly distant but encouraging attitude, he said. I think he could tell early on that it's what I was going to do, that I wasn't really suited for much else. After college and a brief lost period in Ireland, Sullivan got an internship at The Oxford American magazine and spent a month in Mississippi, living in a brown-carpeted room at the Ole Miss hotel, with hookers conducting their business nearby. One night, Sullivan told his editor, Marc Smirnoff, about his musician brother's near-death electrocution from a microphone. Smirnoff suggested he write a story about it, giving Sullivan his first professional byline. "It was just one of those things where somebody opens the door and steps aside and says, 'Don't f**k it up'," Sullivan said. "And that piece made a lot of cool things happen for me." Cool things like bylines in Harper's, The Paris Review, and The New York Times Magazine. Over the next decade he honed his reporting skills, his unique voice (personal not cynical, thoughtful not intellectual), and a particular interest in outliers. I asked: do you look for oddballs, or do they find you? "It probably betrays a weakness for grotesques," he said. "And grotesques give you little angles of insight into human nature. There are things they can't help exposing. "Sometimes I take pleasure in writing about people who make it hard for you to see their basic humanity. It gives me a very clear task as a writer to insist on it." Pulphead is filled with hunks of other people's sometimes misshapen humanity. "The things that can happen to people... it just blows your mind." Four more questions for Sullivan: Where do you work? "I used to be one of those people who could write anywhere but for the first time I've become real attached to this corner office in our house that's become sort of a cocoon. I keep it real disgusting so nobody will ever want to come in here. My daughter will show it to friends, almost like you'd show somebody the dungeon." Who are you reading? "It's more about staying in constant contact with writing, always being into some writer. That keeps me inspired and it keeps me

feeling like, when I sit down to write, it's part of a preexisting and ongoing conversation. It's not the scary void that people talk about of the white page. I do everything I can to cancel out that feeling." You're a fan of bourbon can you write drunk? - "Drinking and smoking for me are useful for getting over humps. For cracking things open. But if I try to do it in a sustained way, it gets kind of sloppy and pudding-headed. So I have to introduce it into the process at the right moments (Bourbon) gives you a little bit of that what-the-f**k feeling." Do you think of yourself as a southern writer? "I'm not an authentic southerner by anyone's definition, and I don't self-identify as a southern writer I'm interested in regionalism. The fact that I sort of grew up back and forth between the Midwest and the South, it sensitized me to the differences early on. I'm interested in the psycho-geography of regionalism, and how it gives shape to people's personalities. Sullivan seems able to do almost anything, to work in any register, and not just within a single piece but often in the span of a single paragraph. Pulphead is the best, and most important, collection of magazine writing since Wallace's *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. Sullivan's writing is a bizarrely coherent, novel, and generous pastiche of the biblical, the demotic, the regionally gusty and the erudite. *New York Times Book Review* [Pulphead is] a big and sustaining pile of--as I've heard it put about certain people's fried chicken--crunchy goodness . . . What's impressive about Pulphead is the way these disparate essays cohere into a memoirlike whole. The putty that binds them together is Mr. Sullivan's steady and unhurried voice. Reading him, I felt the way Mr. Sullivan does while listening to a Bunny Wailer song called *Let Him Go*. That is, I felt like a puck on an air-hockey table that's been switched on.' Like well-made songs, his essays don't just have strong verses and choruses but bridges, too, unexpected bits that make subtle harmonic connections . . . The book has its grotesques, for sure. But they are genuine and appear here in a way that put me in mind of one of Flannery O'Connor's indelible utterances. Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks,' O'Connor said, 'I say it is because we are still able to recognize one.' *New York Times*" [Sullivan] seems to have in abundance the storytellers' gifts: he is a fierce noticer, is undauntedly curious, is porous to gossip, and has a memory of childlike tenacity . . . Unlike Tom Wolfe or Joan Didion, who bring their famous styles along with them like well-set, just-done hair, Sullivan lets his subjects muss and alter his prose; he works like a novelist." James Wood, *New Yorker* Sullivan's essays have won two National Magazine Awards, and here his omnivorous intellect analyzes Michael Jackson, Christian rock, post-Katrina New Orleans, Axl Rose and the obscure 19th century naturalist Constantine Rafinesque. His compulsive honesty and wildly intelligent prose recall the work of American masters of New Journalism like Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe. Time Sullivan's essays stay with you, like good short stories--and like accomplished short fiction, they often will, over time, reveal a fuller meaning . . . Whether he ponders the legacy of a long-dead French scientist or the unlikely cultural trajectory of Christian rock, Sullivan imbues his narrative subjects with a broader urgency reminiscent of other great practitioners of the essay-profile, such as *New Yorker* writers Joseph Mitchell and A. J. Liebling or Gay Talese during his '60s *Esquire* heyday . . . [Pulphead] reinforces [Sullivan's] standing as among the best of his generation's essayists. Bookforum One ascendant talent who deserves to be widely read and encouraged is John Jeremiah Sullivan . . . Pulphead is one of the most involving collections of essays to appear in many a year. Larry McMurtry, *Harper's Magazine* [The essays in Pulphead are] among the liveliest magazine features written by anyone in the past 10 years . . . What they have in common, though, whether low or high of brow, is their author's essential curiosity about the world, his eye for the perfect detail, and his great good humor in revealing both his subjects' and his own foibles . . . a collection that shows why Sullivan might be the best magazine writer around. NPR Each beautifully crafted essay in John Jeremiah Sullivan's collection Pulphead is a self-contained world Sullivan's masterful essays invite an honest confrontation with reality, especially when considered in light of one another. Pulphead compels its readers to consider each as an equal sum in the bizarre arithmetic of American identity . . . [Sullivan is] as red-hot a writer as they come. BookPage The age-old strangeness of American pop culture gets dissected with hilarious and revelatory precision Sullivan writes an extraordinary prose that's stuffed with off-beat insight gleaned from rapt, appalled observations and suffused with a hang-dog charm. The result is an arresting take on the American imagination. *Publishers Weekly* (starred review) About the Author John Jeremiah Sullivan is a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine* and the southern editor of *The Paris*. He writes for *GQ*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Oxford American*, and is the author of *Blood Horses*. Sullivan lives in Wilmington, North Carolina.