Rant (Limited Edition): An Oral Biography of Buster Casey by Chuck Palahniuk

Ravin About Rant

The Rant Limited Edition is specially packaged in a one-piece preprinted case, printed black, with the title created in spot gloss; a 4-color slipcase that matches the original jacket of the trade book; a 1/8 ribbon marker; a signed tip-in sheet, speckled edges; and an exclusive 1300-word Automotive Afterword entitled Recipes for Disasters which is not available in print anywhere but only in this limited edition.

“Like most people I didn’t meet Rant Casey until after he was dead. That’s how it works for most celebrities: After they croak, their circle of friends just explodes…”

Rant is the mind-bending new novel from Chuck Palahniuk, the literary provocateur responsible for such books as the generation-defining classic Fight Club and the pedal-to-the-metal horrorfest Haunted. It takes the form of an oral history of one Buster “Rant” Casey, who may or may not be the most efficient serial killer of our time.

“What ‘Typhoid Mary’ Mallon was to typhoid, what Gaetan Dugas was to AIDS, and Liu Jian Lun was to SARS, Buster Casey would become for rabies.”
A high-school rebel who always wins (and a childhood murderer?), Rant Casey escapes from his small hometown of Middleton for the big city. He becomes the leader of an urban demolition derby called Party Crashing. On appointed nights participants recognize each other by such designated car markings as “Just Married” toothpaste graffiti and then stalk and crash into each other. Rant Casey will die a spectacular highway death after which his friends gather testimony needed to build an oral history of his short, violent life. Their collected anecdotes explore the possibility that his saliva caused a silent urban plague of rabies and that he found a way to escape the prison house of linear time...

“The future you have, tomorrow, won’t be the same future you had, yesterday.”

–Rant Casey

Expect hilarity, horror, and blazing insight into the desperate and surreal contemporary human condition as only Chuck Palahniuk can deliver it. He’s the postmillennial Jonathan Swift, the visionary to watch to learn what’s—uh-oh—coming next.

My Personal Review:
I’ve heard it said that there are no new ideas left in the world. The proliferation of movie remakes, regurgitated pop music, and Danielle Steele novels certainly add to this argument. Even in Rant, Palahniuk’s latest novel, you won’t see anything that hasn’t already been covered by Sartre, Camus, or The Terminator. The thing about Palahniuk (and other brilliant writers like David Mitchell, Craig Clevenger, and Jonathan Lethem) is that while the message may not be all that new, the manner in which it is told is nothing short of stunning.

If you’re paying close enough attention, Palahniuk gives away almost the entire story in the first four pages, and he drops plenty of hints along the way for those who still haven’t caught on. Rant is about, alternately, an underground cult of car crashers, a rabies epidemic, the true essence of religion, and a guy named Buster Casey who is addicted to spider bites. Like his other novels, Palahniuk employs an encyclopedic knowledge of the macabre. His spare, punching prose ties together a medley of ideas and facts until what you’re left with is a dizzying collage that is so kaleidoscopic, it’ll probably take you three reads just to get half of what he’s saying.

And he says a lot, in spite of the low page count. Some of Rant, in fact, might feel rewarmed to the hardcore Palahniuk fan. A character named Echo Lawrence makes her money by exploiting the same weaknesses
manipulated by Chokes Victor Mancini. Busters physical immolations recall Shannon McFarlands reality-enhancing disfigurement from Invisible Monsters. And the whole idea of Party Crashing (an underground cult of Nighttimers who get their kicks by intentionally hunting down and wrecking into each other) is an obvious off-shoot of Fight Clubs nihilistic pugilism (an observation that is actually made by Palahniuk himself, three-quarters through the book).

While those past books were great in their own ways (although Choke was a bit more mainstream than usual), they were also all pretty single-minded of purpose. In Rant, Palahniuks blistering pen stabs into several themes -- population control, theistic iconography, segregation, and (of course) life as a diversion from reality, the theft of existence by a society that is happier with blunted and denuded entertainments than with the raw, sometimes poisonous, bite of true, fully aware experience. Most Eastern philosophies are all about achieving true consciousness through an elevation of the mind; Palahniuk wants the same thing, but his methods of transcendence involve far more noise, chaos, and pain.

If it sounds confusing, it is, but the real brilliance (and -- believe it or not -- beauty) of Rant is how all of these themes dissolve into one another. There is no clutter here, in spite of the density of the words. The fact that the book is arranged in the form of an oral biography -- told exclusively through snippets of interviews and recorded information -- only adds to the storys web-like framework, highlights each dark, glistening strand.

Rant is a lot of things. It is part Strange Days, part Perfume, and part Cronenbergs Crash. It is half a condemnation of a spirit-deadening world, and half a celebration of it. Its morbid, grotesque, unsettling, evocative, and sometimes just plain hilarious.

Its Palahniuk. What more can I say?

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