



Pink

Gus Van Sant

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Gus Van Sant goes from auteur to author in an brilliant, inventive, and endlessly entertaining first novel that reads like a Warholian mix of Kurt Vonnegut and Tom Robbins.

In the town of Sasquatch, Oregon, Spunky Davis, middle-aged maker of infomercials, is trying to find his next assignment, finish the screenplay that he hopes will bring him Hollywood glory, and deal with the death of his friend and favorite infomercial presenter, teen idol Felix Arroyo. Enter two young aspiring filmmakers, Jack and Matt, whom Spunky finds strangely familiar--especially as Jack bears an uncanny resemblance to the late Felix. But Jack and Matt are not what they appear to be; they are messengers from a dimension beyond time known as Pink, and they invite Spunky to join them on their voyage of transcendence and recovery.

Using a delirious array of voices signified by different typefaces, a flip cartoon that animates the novel's action, footnotes and line drawings, Gus Van Sant turns the novel into an explosively visual experience, a captivating combination of texture and text. As original and involving as any of Van Sant's films, *Pink* is both a hip, comic deconstruction of our image-obsessed culture and a genuinely tender story on the classic themes of love, time, and loss.

Pink Details

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Yolanda Gorman says

Weird and bizarre are words that don't quite cover this book. It was hard to read at times because of its use of footnotes would be distracting. After a while I did get used to it. There are definitely characters that are based on River Phoenix, Kurt Cobain and Ben Affleck/Matt Damon. There is a lack of cohesion, as the story jumps around a lot. However, I did get used to it and enjoyed the oddness. This book is not for just any kind of reader. It takes the reader through a variety of emotions such as fear, loss, and grief. Reading this was a bizarre ride that at the end of it you just think, WTF.

anotherbennet says

Very crazy but it is Gus Van Sant and a character inspired in River so...I enjoyed.

JOSEPH OLIVER says

If I have to pay for a book I tend to read it to the end. In this case I had to make an exception. The plot is too disjointed to follow and the author is trying out a new format for a novel which doesn't seem to work. I did like the cartoons but then I like illustrations anyway. The endless footnotes as a means of filling in background just wore me out. It was like reading two concurrent novels.

Nice idea but obviously didn't catch on.

Chris Herdt says

I recall enjoying this book and identifying perhaps a little too much with the protagonist's addiction to heavy equipment.

Deirdre says

Nostalgic and shamelessly sentimental in its own unirritating way, "Pink" takes feeling over fact, vibe over memory. A tricky approach, which is almost guaranteed to set a novel apart from any chances of mass market success, actually works wonders for this one. Be it because of Van Sant already being an accomplished artist by the time of publishing, or him not caring about the reception of it to begin with, this book is perfect in its childish indifference to reader's convenience, and that is exactly what makes it work.

It has a bunch of familiar faces (Damon-Affleck powerduo before the big break, Kurt Cobain, River Phoenix), but they are left with different names and put in some ridiculous situations, which liberates the novel from being a memoir and having to follow rules. Free of the pressing fame that names drag behind

them, all characters are stripped to their essence, to what made this particular filmmaker want to write a book about how they were, put his appreciation in words rather than images, because that is how we remember our friends - not by name, but by heart.

Neither fictional nor documental, this novel serves no purpose other than to commemorate some deeply personal yet strangely transcendent feelings one talented man had for a few others he met on his way. It may seem like an empty effort, but that's the thing with celebrities - those memories about them don't only belong to people who were there, but also to anyone who wanted (or still wants) to be. Ironically, it's not about who they were, it's all about how they made us feel, and that is exactly the focus of this book - how it felt for one person (Van Sant, in this case) to be around those people at that time.

In fact, if River Phoenix and Kurt Cobain (not that the book concentrates too much on them, but still) are not your own personal Dead Celebrities - maybe put it down and don't come back to this book for a while, do your reading, watching, listening - introduce yourself to them. Or maybe don't come back at all. It's not a mandatory gathering or enlightenment exercise, it's a relatively private party for those who want to be there and are ready to open themselves to someone else's emotional experience, that is hardly meant to teach anyone anything or tell a cohesive story. "Pink" invites you to come along, but if you're not interested in those already walking the way (and they are not going anywhere, dead or not), maybe choose yourself another journey. They won't mind.

Meghan says

relies on devices to the point of distraction -- from the endless footnotes to the change in typeface denoting a character switch, the flipbook character hidden in the lower corner of the pages rises as the singular steady thread throughout. likely more entertaining text for filmmakers (constant references to method and culture of), leaves the layman... bored.

Becca says

Pink is an interesting vacation into a wilderness of profanity that I can't help feeling grateful for. At times, the reader realizes that nothing makes sense and yet, experiences illumination unlike he or she has ever felt before.

Mcgeevz says

Loved this novel to pieces. Charmingely weird and haphazard; packed with some lovely, original, INNOCENT ideas and writing. Hit-and-miss, surely, but mostly hit.

Most of all, it's probably the most rewarding and kind gift Gus could ever have given his dedicated fans; full of introspect to his kind (...kinds!) of cinema, and surely full of his love for all kinds of cinema at large. Just flipping through it makes me full of admiration and love for him yet again.

I dunno, it's a fucking treat and it personally makes me smile stupidly, in spite of...because of... it's flaws and bumps
yeah

Marina Robbins says

What can I say?? There are times, when even in his films, I continue this love/hate relationship with Gus. Mostly it's love, but recently I wrote a review on the film *Paranoid Park* which wasn't favorable.

This is a first, and possibly last, novel by Van Zant and understandably. It felt as if I was reading a complete list of mindless thoughts and babbling about life from his past, the many boys he longs to bang, and finally a peak into life as a burgeoning film maker. I was completely bored and only found the few illustrations speckled throughout the book interesting.

As a filmmaker, I repeat, it's mostly love.

Robert Hudder says

Finished this days ago. The story was okay. The best part was the way the story was told but unfortunately, I didn't love the rest of the bits like the characters. It may have been trying too hard. The final bits when you get to the time travel parts are a bit flat compared to some of the earlier bits.

That is all.

Lea says

Pink was... cute and subversive and different- but all the things that made it good were also huge distractions. Parts of it were non-sense and parts were beautiful and often they were the same parts.

The self-reverential theme was needed, perhaps, in a story about time travel, and it gave it a depth it would have other-wised lacked, but it also seemed to be a too easy method of explaining away some of the novel's more peculiar idiosyncrasies... for example the characters all having multiple names... interesting... different... and incredibly hard to follow.

I don't think I'd recommend it, but I definitely want to know what you think.

Steev Hise says

A trippy, surreal piece of fiction that is clearly very self-referential to Van Sant's life and world, full of veiled satiric references to real filmmakers and places. The story sort of floats and then falters at the end and never really reaches a release, it just sort of... floats away. But it's an entertaining read while it lasts, very funny, irreverent, and provokes lots of thought about filmmaking, hollywood, Portland, pop culture, middle age, and more.

Andrew says

I read this book very quickly which is a testament to the easy going writing style despite the 'plot' not being easily defined. The novel itself is a trifle bizzare - a cross between Tom Robbins, Douglas Coupland and the movies of Gus Van Sant - but it maintains a momentum that pulls you through despite the ending feeling a little slapdash and the concept of 'Pink' (an alternate dimension) being shoehorned in at the end and only partially developed.

The main character is a infofilm director named Spunky who is grieving the loss of his good friend, Felix, who died way too young. Spunky also courts the attentions of Matt and Jack, aspiring film makers who often seem to be taking him for a ride, mentioning work they are doing without any evidence of it. Spunky is a character where reality is slipping away from him. He has had some success, but not enough. Life is passing him by and the story of Pink is him trying to get back into the stream of it. There are also numerous observations on the nature of reality and filmmaking which were interesting to read.

Overall I found 'Pink' an enjoyable ride.

Clare says

As a fan of Gus Van Sant, River Phoenix, and Kurt Cobain, who all feature in this book under pseudonyms (Spunky, Felix, Blake respectively), this was mandatory reading. The narrative is a bit of a mess but it is still entertaining and beautiful in parts, particularly in the moments in which Spunky is mourning the loss of Felix. Definitely an enjoyable exercise in '90s nostalgia for this reader.

Mark Taylor says

Gus Van Sant uses time travel and multiple dimensions to muddy the autobiographical incidents that run through Pink. Written in a Hemingway-ish style that doesn't get in the way, nor engage, nor stimulate, this novel is mercifully quick to read, and yet, still a waste of time.
