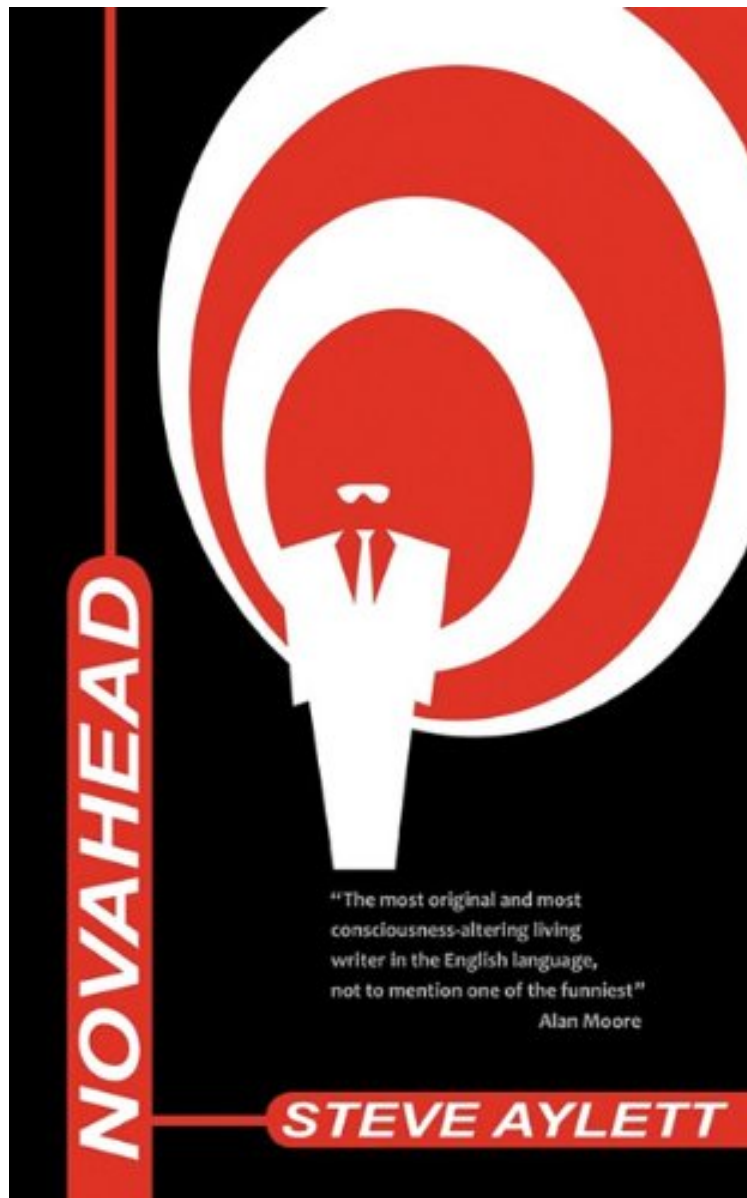


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Novahead

Steve Aylett

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Steve Aylett : Novahead before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Novahead:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Best of the BeerlightBy D. Harlan WilsonI'm consistently disappointed by the lack of attention given to Aylett's canon, especially his Beerlight series, of which, as I understand

it, NOVAHEAD is the last installment. Developed most effectively in ATOM and the Philip K. Dick Award-nominated SLAUGHTERMATIC, NOVAHEAD evolves the Beerlight aesthetic to new and weird literary heights. If ever an author attempted to leave postmodernism in the dust, or at least innovatively tweak the postmodern modality, Aylett is an untouchable touchstone. Every sentence in this novel - in some cases, every word - is an intricate mountain god waiting for the right sort of readership to decode it - and to revel in the process of decoding it. Aylett is truly singular in the contemporary matrix of literature - in mainstream circles, of course, but even in the most idiosyncratic of subcultural circles. At the same time, anybody, readers and writers in equal measure, would profit from a healthy exposure to his extrapolation of reality and lyrical waxing of language and meaning. There is NOBODY like Aylett, and NOVAHEAD is the culmination of his vision. In the absence of this book, you are neither a reader or a writer. You are, simply, there, dangling on the shorthairs of a goatee.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Aylett TranscendentBy CarterAuthor Steve Aylett presents us with an interesting sketch in the development of a young talent, and this youthfulness is indeed the essential quality characterizing much of his output, and he has been prolific. Aylett has published fifteen novels, all of them exhibiting an original flare for invention, iconoclasm (the sort that alienates both readers and publishers), and a careful attention to detail. He is not a fast writer; that is to say, he is an artist, and despite his dubious association with "packaged" avant-garde trademarks--slipstream, pop-surrealism, "bizarro"--of late his work has transcended the epicyclical dialectics that typify (and quite properly marginalize) communities of avant-garde ambition. Aylett's work has in the past been constricted because of the theories and generically-controlled parameters that attend the very idea of the avant-garde. Such adherence to generic formality is to be expected from a young author, moreover an author that remains enduringly young in spirit; and Aylett endures here in all the best ways. But Aylett's talent has been growing, and his long-standing "tendency" to subvert the limitations of his own narratological experiments has borne fruit, especially in three recent novels, where at last Aylett has risen to the occasion of his own genius, and is forcefully advancing ideas and effects that are as hard-hitting as anything in the English language.

I found LINT, the first of these new novels, "interesting." LINT is an inventive, convincing and entertaining hallucination, but towards the end of the novel, when Aylett moves from the mode of faux literary biography into fictive verisimilitude, the attenuated narrative does not match the exuberance of the first nine-tenths of the novel. In LINT, Aylett presents the literary biography of Aylett's gamboling alter ego. Jeff Lint is a stock (and in many ways unremarkable) trickster figure built around the dubious persona of a 1960s science fiction writer possessing auto-destructive tendencies that surpass the sophomoric world view such tendencies usually suggest. Although the figure of Lint remains, and intentionally so, a failure, the biography of Lint does in fact represent an aesthetic we are familiar with, particularly in America, which of course has been deeply influenced by the pre-modern influences of Calvinism. In Aylett, the careful reader will detect a faint, but then very familiar--and very cold--echo of the radical Protestant heresies of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Think Milton in Book X of PARADISE LOST. Think Blake in THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL. Think Mark Twain in his LETTERS TO THE EARTH. In many ways, this radical aesthetic not only anticipates the bleak landscapes of the Existentialists, but indeed outstrips them. Following the sudden washout that concludes LINT, I was very favorably impressed with the sequel, AND YOUR POINT IS? In LINT, Aylett is describing some interesting phenomena, but in AND YOUR POINT IS? Aylett is making interesting phenomena happen. AND YOUR POINT IS? represents the blooming, I believe, of Aylett's mature talent. Indeed, in this novel Aylett shows himself to be a great talent. And this brings us to NOVAHEAD, Aylett's newest work, which combines tireless exuberance and invention contained inside the architecture of a tightly-controlled composition. Although larded with great promise, LINT and AND YOUR POINT IS? remain meta-narratives. They are parodies of literary biography and criticism, and they are not fictions. While such postmodern contraptions can be (and in Aylett's case are) remarkable pieces of work, they do not give us representations of the world; that is, they are experiments rather working models. They are systems of artifice rather than creations of art. But now NOVAHEAD marks Aylett's emigration from his pop-surrealist background to the illuminated space of enchanted literary expression. NOVAHEAD is a work of art to contend with. While there remains in this story sensationalized dystopian elements as familiar to us as the names of Zamyatin, Capek, and Ballard, in NOVAHEAD Aylett's vision is carefully (indeed scrupulously) centered upon a psycho-sociological exposition of the nature of language. Compare a clinical psychiatrist of the stature of Donald Cameron, at one moment attending to his heroic experiments at McGill University, then suddenly and miraculously transported to the tunnels of a supercollider, where a group of theoretical physicists are conferring over the nature of subatomic particles, and whose abstruse conversation naturally produces startling and remarkable effects upon Cameron's accelerated psyche. Aylett's precisely-constructed grammatical formulations neatly upset the routine epistemologies that dominate our beliefs, and so expose the mundane semantic customs and habits that prevent us from seeing things in the "larger" way that this novel--and the maturity of experience--makes possible. NOVAHEAD can be compared to Michael Moorcock's A CURE FOR CANCER, which is certainly our finest pre-postmodern instance of this kind of writing, in which the "offhand" literary gesture and the aesthetics of cheap literature and even cheaper catharsis can be transformed into a vibrant satirical landscape. Indeed, NOVAHEAD represents an idiosyncratic species of writing that doesn't merely drive such epistemological subversions, but which goes still further and creates an ecstatic point-of-departure. Thus, in

NOVAHEAD, and notwithstanding its youth-cult DNA--like a discarded pupa husk lying nearby a pulsating Cicada uncurling its wet and shivering wings--there is such a carefully considered attention to the nuanced relationships amongst grammar, logic, perception, and the linguistic architectures of human identity and human society, that the work is not a mere postmodern squib, but instead represents the artistic expression of a profound analytic sensibility. George Carlin and William S. Burroughs certainly come to mind, but then so too does John Ashbery and Ludwig Wittgenstein. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wacky!!!By J. L. PerezI found this looking for books that fall under the heading of "bizzaro", so I knew it wasn't going to be a conventional read. This was my first "bizzaro" book. In some ways the story compares to those by William Gibson, but this is way stranger. For instance, the passage where the main character deploys a talking reconnaissance swan named "Strobe Talbot" manufactured by a company called Garuda... Overall I enjoyed the story, but it's kind of an extended gag, hyper and crazed. If it had been longer it would have started to grate. Not sure if I will be reading any more "bizzaro" books, but if your looking for something different, this is certainly that.

About to quit the failed experiment of civilisation, fake detective Taffy Atom is detained by one last case - a boy with a bomb in his mind. But what's the trigger? Pursued by cops, mobsters, mercenaries and a mechanical swan, Atom carries the bomb and trigger through Beerlight City, the single holdout of creative mischief in a world overtaken by the trend-led Fadlands. By the relentless principles of gun karma Aylett's final Beerlight book lands you in the Delayed Reaction Bar and fixes you a glass of antifreeze with everything in it. Listen to your heart. It will not stop slowly. "The most original and most consciousness-altering living writer in the English language, not to mention one of the funniest. In NOVAHEAD Aylett delivers his most searing work to date and comes up with noir fiction so black it's fluorescent" - Alan Moore. Steve Aylett has been described as "utterly original" (SFX), "an unstoppable master of space and time" (Asimov's), "the most original voice in the literary scene" (Michael Moorcock) and "the coolest writer alive today" (Starburst). "Aylett has made a career out of redefining the boundaries of science fiction - and sanity." - Barnes Noble Spotlight Feature.