



These People Are Us

George Singleton

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Once you start reading George Singleton's eagerly awaited first book of stories, a strange thing happens: You discover that the characters sound like people you know--people who are trying hard to make sense of modern absurdities.

With a style all his own, Singleton fashions a world that wins our hearts but teases our senses: how to find a black-market sonogram so your pregnant wife won't find out you accidentally taped over the original; how to help your father and everyone else in town fake being hit by a tornado to get emergency government funds; and why not to look for your next wife at your local recycling center.

Step into Singleton's world and you'll see why he is earning a reputation as one of the funniest, wisest, and most surprising Southern writers of his generation--and why he was named one of the "new writers you need to know" by *Book Magazine*.

These People Are Us Details

Date : Published September 16th 2002 by Mariner Books (first published 2001)

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Author : George Singleton

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From Reader Review These People Are Us for online ebook

Marvin says

Complaints that the stories in this collection are all the same are rooted in reality: Every story is told in the first-person by a male narrator. They're all smarter than anyone else around but nonetheless down on their luck. Most with woman troubles and a hangup about religion. Quirky. Etc.

While I'd like to've seen Singleton stretch his legs out further, in some different direction, he nonetheless turns out some gems. At their best the stories surprise with oddness and hopefulness. The characters are witty and sharp. At their lesser moments the stories run the same--only less engagingly so.

Highlights: "Remember Why We're Here," "These People Are Us," "Normal," "Cleft For Me," "Caulk," "The Ruptures and Limits of Absence."

Tallant Burley says

A handful of the short stories are actually funny. But generally speaking the book is poorly written and poorly published (more than once for no reason a line gets split in two). Most of the stories are not funny, though it was advertised it would be, and may only be funny to people wholly familiar with Southern customs and lifestyles as the stories are primarily set in South Carolina

Tony says

The stories that make up George Singleton's first book are all framed by the relationships of couples, married and not, and are all told in the first person by men with names like Spoon, Bose, and Enloe. Sometimes the relationship is the focus of the story, sometimes it's more like a backdrop. Pathetic and proud, heartbreaking and raucous, these characters, and indeed Singleton's writing, always seem to win me over in spite of themselves. This is an excellent introduction to a unique writer and perhaps every citizen of South Carolina.

David says

Reading this was a bit like that scarfing down that jumbo tub of popcorn that you buy at the movies against your better judgement. Enjoyable enough to read, but completely forgettable. And indistinguishable from one another. It felt like reading the same story over and over again.

If you enjoy stories about 40-ish NASCAR fans with women problems, populated by characters ranging from (not-so-endearingly) quirky to outright oddball, you might enjoy this collection. Otherwise, give it a miss.

Zach Salling says

Liked George Singleton's first short story collection. Bizarre and hilarious plots: an entire town faking a tornado disaster to get government funding, a former poet providing mammograms from a van, and my favorite, a bouncer scoping out a sonogram black-market because he recorded a Bonanza episode over his wife's sonogram videotape. Enjoyed the former story, "Outlaw Head and Tail," the most because Singleton sounded most his own with original character and story direction. Though Singleton's plots are interesting, the narrators from every short story often read like the same character. His influences often show up and he blatantly riffed off of Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" in the story (can't recall the title) where the narrator teaches a blind man to shoot pool. Singleton seemed like he was trying to marry the absurdity of Flannery O'Connor with the subtle epiphanies from Raymond Carver and I couldn't hear Singleton out. I enjoyed Singleton's direction in these early stories, but I'd like to read his later works where he hopefully has a more developed voice.

Ryan Lawson says

George Singleton's These People Are Us
Wk.39; Bk.39

No matter how hard and how much I try to explain masculinity in literature, I always come off as sexist. There are male authors out there who epitomize maleness. They represent something only men can feel and they write about that something. You can call it testosterone, machismo, manliness, etc. but, no matter what, the men who fall into this category express something so subtly male that it can only be picked up by other men. This isn't to say that women cannot enjoy the texts or even understand them, but they simply cannot relate on a fundamental level. Much like a man can never fully know what it is to have menstrual cramps or give birth, there are experiences and feelings that only men can have and George Singleton is one of those men who can express them.

A perfect example of this quintessential maleness is in the below quote from one of the stories:

"As soon as Jessie had taken that one-minute-and-you-know-if-you've-really-missed-your-period test in the bathroom, she pulled a Walkman out of the bedroom closet, put in new batteries, and slipped a tape of Mahler's Fourth Symphony in the cassette holder. She pulled the earpieces of the headset as far apart as possible, strapped them around her sides, and put the volume on full blast. Jessie said, 'We're going to have a baby, Ricky.'"

This quote sums up every man's thought when it comes to that fear (or hope, I suppose) of when his wife or girlfriend says that she has missed her period. Deep down, no matter what the woman says, the man is convinced that the woman actually knows whether or not she has missed her period. There is always that voice that says, "C'mon, how could you not feel different!?" Even though the woman is more than likely just as clueless as the man, it is impossible for a man to accept, in his heart of hearts, that the woman may also just not know.

Singleton reminds me of a southern Richard Russo (Russo, of course, being another example of the epitomized male writer). They both write about gut feelings and instincts and they do it so well.

This is the first short-story collection that I have read during my book-a-week campaign and I'm happy that it was the first. Often times, I find myself stuck in collections. I'll skip stories of which I do not become immediately attached. However, Singleton has a way of making all of the stories stand out and breathe. Each story is strong individually but when combined they become something more magical than strong.

I did notice that the voice in each story remained the same, which may be a drawback for some readers. The narrator is not diverse. One gets the sense that Singleton is the protagonist in every story because each narrator has the same quirks as its predecessor. George gives each main character a different name, but the reader will not be fooled. They are all the same person. I actually liked this flaw, but I have a feeling that a lot of folks may not bode well with it.

I just love reading stories that I can relate with through and through, and male or female I think most people can appreciate this book.

Next up:

James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*
Wk.40; Bk.40

Jilly says

I think my love of "half mammals" set up unreasonable expectations. (ref. "It's just me.")

Sarah says

Short stories all told from viewpoint of alcoholic man with relationship issues. A few funny ones and as a flea marketer I enjoyed that several stories included aspects of being a vendor. But many stories boring, unlikeable characters.

Petra says

This is a book of short stories, and unfortunately I got the sensation that I was reading the same story over and over- and it wasn't that good of a story. I didn't finish reading the book.

Angelic says

I thought this book was extremely wordy. It did not have a flow and was work to read.

Dave says

Don't waste your time. Not funny and certainly not remotely "hilarious" as one back-cover critic noted.

Bridgette says

I was extremely disappointed with this book. I usually like reading South Carolina authors, but I can't say that about this one. There is neither separation nor flow between the stories. Each one just drones on and on about NOTHING worth my time.

I am a South Carolinian. I am educated. I have standards. I resent the way this book portrays the people of my state. Yes, there are poor here. Yes, there are the uneducated (sadly, it is their choice). However, that is NOT WHO WE ARE.

That aside, the writing in this book did not capture my attention. I learned nothing and I didn't even get a chuckle out of it. If I could have given this book a negative number of stars I would have. I finished it just so I could give a fair review. It was so unremarkable that I can't recall most of the storylines (that is actually a blessing).

Beth says

Singleton is a funnier, more theater-of-the-absurd version of Raymond Carver, in the sense that his writing has the same rhythmic cadence and his focus is also on men and women and how they can hurt one another without trying to. If you only read one story from this collection, read "Dialectic, Abrasions, the Backs of Heads Again."

Mskarla says

Love him!
