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Recently Reviewed

Stuff White People Like

(Random; 211 Pgs.; \$14)

By DIANE GARRETT

Christian Lander

Anyone who reads "Stuff White People Like" without perusing the blog it is based upon first, might well wonder what all the fuss is about. Stripped of the blog's media riffs, hyperlinks and swiped photos -- its very blogginess -- the tome must rely on the wit and insight of its "research findings," and there's not much of that. Rushed out on the cheap, this insta-book lacks the limited charm of a blog sensation that has racked up 33 million hits and counting.

Internet copywriter Christian Lander launched the blog in January after puzzling over the fact more white folk weren't watching "The Wire" in an IM exchange with pal Myles Valentin. Inspired by their musings about the supposed habits and preferences of the pale-skinned, he started furiously posting; Valentin occasionally weighed in on subjects such as Asian Girls and Public Radio. They never bothered to develop their conceit further: The satire is apparently aimed at a certain hipster subset, but there is no taxonomy or telling detail, as in faux anthropological tomes such as "The Preppy Handbook."

Instead, there are plenty of broad generalizations. This defect is more glaring in the book; links to newspaper articles and other postings broadened the blog's appeal and amusement value, obscuring the weak satire. Lander upped the entries for the tome, but volume doesn't make up for pallid insights.

To make matters worse, some of the entries have been rewritten to ill effect, in certain cases because Valentin wrote the originals, in others to excise sticky brand references. (For example, a "Juno" post, complete with droll photo of Jamie Lynn Spears and her b.f., is nowhere to be found.)

The book's graphics also fall short: Bland black-and-white clip art replaces the blog's photo grabs, which at best are mildly funny and at worst visually interesting. Thus a Barack Obama entry with doctored "Friends" promo art gets a dull "President 2008" campaign button; the punchline is not nearly as trenchant without the reference to a show that came under fire as lily white. The book's charts look equally uninspired, with limited comedic payoff.

Lander and his editors would have been better served taking more time to hone his musings and adapt the blog for book form. The title's certainly catchy enough, and others before have mined this territory for yuks. If nothing else, "Stuff White People Like" reminds us how tricky satire can be.

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