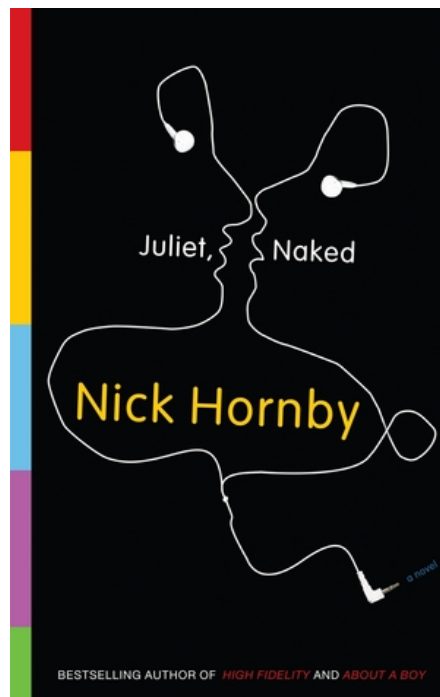




Juliet, Naked

Nick Hornby

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Juliet, Naked

Nick Hornby

Juliet, Naked Nick Hornby

Annie loves Duncan — or thinks she does. Duncan loves Annie, but then, all of a sudden, he doesn't. Duncan really loves Tucker Crowe, a reclusive Dylanish singer-songwriter who stopped making music ten years ago. Annie stops loving Duncan, and starts getting her own life.

In doing so, she initiates an e-mail correspondence with Tucker, and a connection is forged between two lonely people who are looking for more out of what they've got. Tucker's been languishing (and he's unnervingly aware of it), living in rural Pennsylvania with what he sees as his one hope for redemption amid a life of emotional and artistic ruin -- his young son, Jackson. But then there's also the new material he's about to release to the world: an acoustic, stripped-down version of his greatest album, *Juliet* — entitled, *Juliet, Naked*.

What happens when a washed-up musician looks for another chance? And miles away, a restless, childless woman looks for a change? *Juliet, Naked* is a powerfully engrossing, humbly humorous novel about music, love, loneliness, and the struggle to live up to one's promise.

Juliet, Naked Details

Date : Published September 29th 2009 by Riverhead Books (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9781594488870

Author : Nick Hornby

Format : Hardcover 406 pages

Genre : Fiction, Music, Contemporary, Romance

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From Reader Review Juliet, Naked for online ebook

Steve says

If you're familiar with Nick Hornby, or better still, if you've read this book, then the following quiz will test how well your impressions correlate with mine. If you're not familiar with Hornby, but are clued in to my own predilections (a puerile sense of humor among them), this will measure your powers of observation. If you could hardly care less about me or ol' Nick, but can't pass up a chance to test your quiz-taking abilities, you might still enjoy having a go. Eliminating the barmiest choices will take you far.

The book is about Duncan and Annie, who've been in a tepid relationship for 15 years living in a humdrum seaside village in the north of England. She's a museum curator and he's an amateur musicologist obsessed by the reclusive ex-singer-songwriter, Tucker Crowe, whose more limited popularity adds to his value in Duncan's mind. Annie is surprised to find herself in e-contact with Tucker where they share regrets about lost time and the paths they've taken. Interplay ensues. From here, see if you can guess the answers to the quiz questions.

1. If we were to liken this book to a meal it would be
 - a. A packet of crisps – just a snack, really, and not a very healthy one at that.
 - b. A juicy burger with cheddar and a good, though not snooty, bottle of wine – familiar and tasty, substantial but not overdone.
 - c. Poached Scottish Lobster with fennel puree, broad bean panisse and huckleberry emulsion – ultra-refined and highfalutin.
 - d. Hot dogs and apple pie – as American as it gets; decidedly not bangers and mash with spotted dick.
2. A theme in previous Hornby books that was repeated in this one (though not necessarily concluding that it was right) was that
 - a. Arsenal supporters are the salt of the earth and paragons of the English Premiership.
 - b. Lists of favorite things should come in sets of five.
 - c. It's what you like, not what you *are* like that matters.
 - d. Sprees should only ever be polysyllabic.
3. The title refers to
 - a. Shakespeare performed in modern undress.
 - b. The perlustration of a Gordian soul laid bare for us all to behold.
 - c. A sandwich order at Sol's Delicatessen .
 - d. A new Tucker Crowe CD of old demo cuts put out 20 years after his far more polished album called "Juliet"; Duncan over-praised it, having been honored with the first public copy, and Annie panned it for being rough-hewn thus causing a rift.
4. Among rock star stereotypes from Tucker's era, the ones for which he became best known were for
 - a. Green M&Ms before a show to the exclusion of all others.
 - b. Snappy comebacks when requests for "Free Bird" were shouted from the crowd.

- c. Wine and women (to accompany song – accompanying to excess).
- d. Spandex and vomit.

5. Tucker was increasingly self-aware, as which of these quotes would indicate:

- a. "There comes a time when you look into the mirror and you realize that what you see is all that you will ever be. And then you accept it. Or you kill yourself. Or you stop looking in mirrors."
- b. "The truth about autobiographical songs, he realized, was that you had to make the present become the past, somehow: you had to take a feeling or a friend or a woman and turn whatever it was into something that was over, so that you could be definitive about it. You had to put it in a glass case and look at it and think about it until it gave up its meaning, and he'd managed to do that with just about everybody he'd ever met or married or fathered. The truth about life was that nothing ever ended until you died, and even then you just left a whole bunch of unresolved narratives behind you. He'd somehow managed to retain the mental habits of a songwriter long after he'd stopped writing songs, and perhaps it was time to give them up."
- c. "I rock, therefore I am."
- d. "I rocked, therefore I was."

6. Hornby's most appealing traits as a writer stem from his

- a. Labyrinthine structuring and enigmatic presuppositions.
- b. Laconic dialog and ornamental prose .
- c. Dickensian post-modernism and Kafkaesque pastoralism.
- d. Rich character development and flowing, accessible style.

7. Back cover blurbs described Hornby as

- a. Witty, warm and emotionally generous.
- b. Unctuous, otiose, uncouth and unyielding .
- c. Serendipitous, existential and solecistic.
- d. Bald, bawdy and laddishly dissolute.

8. As a minor irritant we get

- a. 289 pages of endnotes.
- b. Wiki entries about Tucker's career which, while clever to have included as a way to list facts, were unrealistically detailed and subjective.
- c. A pesky gnat that, as chaos theory suggests is possible, caused a train crash in Bolton.
- d. Certain GR reviewers who think increasingly in terms of gimmicks.

9. The book seems to suggest that

- a. It's possible to venture too far into the cult of celebrity, especially when the internet brings these people together with mutually reinforcing geekiness.
- b. Regret for time lost can be poignant.
- c. Artistic integrity is a tricky thing once the artist is acclaimed for what he knows to be emotional frauds and egos get stroked.

- d. All of the above.
- e. None of the above.
- f. Some of the above.

10. The book lost a star off its rating in the end because

- a. It should include only one or the other, a zombie or a vampire, not both.
- b. A gun introduced in Act II must necessarily be fired in Act III.
- c. It lost its steam just when it would have been most interesting to see relationships develop and clear messages sent.
- d. "After all, tomorrow is another day" had already been done, and done better.

Answers: (view spoiler)

j says

Pop culture references, check. Rock music obsession, check. A cast of adult males who act like stunted children, check. Yup, this is a Nick Hornby novel, all right. It's also his most entertaining book in quite a while, even if it is a retread of his most successful books (that would be *High Fidelity* and *About a Boy*). But then, I was no fan of *How to Be Good* or *A Long Way Down*, two books in which he tried to do something different. It's not that I love the original formula that much; it just doesn't work for me when he strays from the path.

Anyway, there's a lot of fun stuff here, from a skewering of overenthusiastic art criticism to fake Wikipedia pages, and even though it's pretty clear where the story is going, it's an amusing book. It's also thoughtful; there are passages about the way time can pass without you realizing that your life is passing you by, and suddenly you have wasted a decade in a relationship you knew really didn't have a future but were too listless to get yourself out of. That was... depressing actually. But it made me happy to be in a relationship I think *does* have a future at the same time. Which was... balming. Balmy? Not in a scent way. But the soothing.

One thing I do find annoying any time I read a book about a made-up rock legend is that I can't listen to the made-up songs that are described with such reverence. Because they don't exist. Why don't your stupid fake songs exist, Nick Hornby?

(Exception to the rule: *King Dork*, which included said fake songs at the end of the audiobook version. Dreams shattered; they were very annoying.)

Clif Hostetler says

This novel provides a satirical look at rock fandom practiced to an absurd degree. Or perhaps it's a novel about losers who hide from their vacuous lives by imagining genius artistic talent in a rock star who disappeared years ago from public view. Either way it turned out to be a pretty good story.

I approached this book with the expectation that I wasn't going to like the book. I figured it was going to be about unhappy people making unwise life decisions as I have found true for some other popular novels. The book was all those things, but I found myself smiling, snickering, and once I even laughed out loud. In other words, humor saved the book and made it an enjoyable read.

In case you're wandering about the title, this book doesn't contain much nakedness. "Juliet, Naked" refers to a CD album that is a followup to another album release about twenty years earlier named "Juliet." The singer has been missing in all the years in between which has allowed his fans to imagine all kinds of things about the missing artist.

It turns out that the ex-girlfriend of the "expert" fan blogger was the only person able to get through to the missing singer. What sweet revenge it was for the jilted girlfriend on her know-it-all conceited ex-boyfriend.

The ending provides a realistic amount of loose ends which is to its credit. There is sufficient sense of positive growth in the book's characters to feel good about the ending.

Donna Radcliff says

When I started this book, I didn't really care for it, but it wasn't so bad that I couldn't finish it. Then, somewhere close to the middle, I suddenly realized I really liked *Juliet, Naked*. I don't know how it happened, but there you go. The three main characters are Annie, a young woman closing in on forty who gave up 15 (and her most fertile) years to Duncan whom she never was really all that in love with anyway. Duncan is a rather boring, nerdy professor and an obsessive devotee to Tucker Crowe, an 80's rock n roller who walked away from his career, and life, after releasing his most well received album *Juliet, Naked*. Now closing in on 60, Tucker has two, soon to be three, ex-wives, too many ex-girlfriends, and 5 kids, of which only one has known him as a real dad. And he doesn't know what to do with any of them.

Connecting through a Tucker Crowe fan-site, Annie and Tucker begin an email relationship that naturally leads them to meet each other when he comes to England. There's a lot of humor, sadness, regrets, anger and bitterness (the anger and bitterness mostly from the ex's and kids).

I ended up rereading the first part of the book with a much better understanding of what Hornby was trying to say. I definitely will read more of his work.

Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says

Well that was... extremely disappointing ?

Brian says

"Juliet, Naked" spoke to me on a personal level at this point in my life, right after the end of a long term relationship. Nick Hornby really nails the emotions of a breakup, and the painful recognition of a stagnant life. So many folks are together because of the presence of a comfortable mundane routine. This novel deftly captures how that can trap you with the wrong person in a manner I have rarely seen so effectively used in modern literature.

This book is about finding what really matters in life. As you get older the knowledge of what that is changes, and most of the novel's characters get to that point in some form or another. There is remarkable characterization in this book. None of the characters are noble, all are a little odd, and they are so darn real. You recognize them, and yourself. Hornby has created people, just normal folks, with the good and bad mixed in together. For example, the character of Duncan, who is a douche, but is still a decent guy. Just really flawed...like most of us!

The text is written in first person, from the alternating viewpoint (primarily) of three characters, with the occasional side trip into the mind of a secondary character thrown in. The device works as we get a well done, well rounded view of both sides of a breakup of a relationship, and also an inside view of a new relationship beginning.

As I have stated, rarely has a book got into my head on such a level. "Juliet, Naked" is well written, nicely plotted, realistic enough to be satisfying, and honest and accurate enough about human nature to be a little unnerving, in a good way. I have read four of Mr. Hornby's novels, and this one is the best of the bunch.

Alexandra says

Wie ich schon mehrmals in einigen Rezensionen erwähnt habe, halte ich Nick Hornby für einen großartigen Starter von Romanen, die wenigsten Autoren können so gut unvermittelt und auch mit ein bisschen beißender Ironie eine Geschichte beginnen, aber auch für einen der schlechtesten Finisher im Literaturbetrieb. Entweder er läßt gleich quasi die Tastatur fallen, oder er vergeißt den ursprünglichen Plot derart nachhaltig, dass es ein Graus ist. So wie es mein Goodreads-Freund Armin formuliert hat, agiert Hornby gleich seinen Figuren, die auch immer alles verpatzen, wobei eine Katastrophe am Ende in einem fiktiven Plot mit fiktiven Figuren ja wesentlich besser und amüsanter ist als ein realer Qualitätsabfall im Werk.

Auch bei Juliet, Naked ist es nicht anders. Sprüht die Geschichte zu Beginn vor Ironie und witzigen Beziehungsproblemen mit unerwarteten Wendungen und ist sie bis Seite 250 also hundert Seiten vor dem Ende noch gut und amüsant zu lesen, so strotzt sie nach dem Herzinfarkt (was für eine blöde Idee, es hätte 100 witzigere alternative Plotmöglichkeiten gegeben) nur so vor kitschigen Platitüden. Wie kann man bei einem so rasanten Roman eine derart sinnlose Vollbremsung machen! Fast könnte man meinen, der Geist einer grottenschlechten Bianca Schrifstellerin wäre plötzlich in Nick Hornby gefahren. Für alle, die das nicht kennen - das sind diese dünnen gebundenen Schundheftln, die früher als Frauenliteratur propagiert wurden.

Was für ein kitschiger Scheissdreck am Ende auf diese anfängliche wundervolle Ironie! Dem Herrn Hornby sind schlussendlich sprichwörtlich nicht nur die spitzen Zähne sondern gleich auch die messerscharfe Zunge rausgefallen. Damit der altersheimgerechte schale Brei aus Schmonzette für das gehinamputierte romantikaffine Publikum mit Realitätsverweigerung besser verdaulich ist.

Fazit: 2,5 Sterne aufgerundet auf 3 weil doch 250 Seiten sehr gut und nur 100 schlecht waren.

Semjon says

Es gibt Bücher, die unterhalten einen mäßig. Andere findet man einfach nicht gut. Und einige wenige machen einen richtig wütend, da sie von unterirdischer Qualität sind oder man einfach maßlos enttäuscht wurde. Juliet, naked gehörte definitiv zur letzten Kategorie bei mir. Ich schätze Nick Hornby sehr als Autor, der liebevoll über (seine) Obsessionen schreiben kann. Das meiner Ansicht nach beste Buch über Fußball stammt aus seiner Feder. Fever Pitch. Und auch seine Musikbesessenheit hat er hervorragend in High

Fidelity zu Papier gebracht. Wenn es aber um Beziehungen geht, schwächelt er schon. Von ernste Lebenskrisen würde er besser die Finger weglassen. Daher befanden sich About a Boy, How to be good und vor allem A Long way down bei mir auf dem absteigenden Ast.

Juliet naked fängt gut an, wenn er das Pärchen Duncan und Annie beschreibt, wie sie auf den Spuren des Singer Songwriter Tucker Crowe sich bewegen, der seit 20 Jahren untergetaucht ist. Hätte das Buch Duncans Besessenheit von seinem Lieblingsmusiker und dessen Desinteresse an der Wiedererhaltung von Popularität zum Leitmotiv gehabt, dann wäre aus dem Buch etwas geworden. Stattdessen wird Duncan als der verhaltensauffällige infantile Oberlooser überzeichnet, eine Beziehungskrise mit Annie breit getreten, garniert mit billigen Witzen über midlife crisis und ein Star, der seinen Leben noch weniger im Griff hat als sein treuester Fan, der auf hanebüchene Weise in kürzester Zeit von der Versenkung kommend eine Affäre über den Atlantik hinweg ausgerechnet mit Annie beginnt und dann auf dem Niveau einer 50er Jahre deutschen Filmkomödie den Super-Fan begegnet. Das ist an Kitsch, Trivialität und Niveaulosigkeit kaum zu überbieten. Dialoge, denen ich, würde ich sie im Zug neben mir hören, mit dem sofortigen Kopfhöreraufsetzen begegnen würde. Ehrlich, Nick Hornby, es hätte wirklich schön werden können, warum dieser Klamauk?

Kim says

Why do we read? No, it's not a rhetorical question. It's something that I've been thinking about a lot the last few days. I mean, yeah.. the obvious reasons... to access information, to brush up on our morality, because we've been assigned to. So we can have uh.. passionate discussions, hook up, impress, escape, retreat and regroup. So we don't feel as alone as...As what? That's for you to answer.. not me.

So, Nick Hornby is one of my revered authors. He's a downright O-M-G in my little realm of escapism. Others who live there are Hardy, Greene, Foer, Coupland, Kundera, Zusak and so on.... I may not be the most cultured of folk, but I know what I like and will (quietly) defend it.

Juliet, Naked tore me from my reading rut. Will I lapse back? Perhaps. But, I did have this momentary glimmer and, I guess, that's what life is about, right?

There are 3 main characters in this book. **Annie**, a 39-ish small time museum curator who recently broke up with **Duncan**, a pudgy 40ish school teacher whose whole cultural life revolves around his obsession over **Tucker Crowe**--a Dylan-esque singer who pulled a Salinger in the mid 1980s and left behind one really great break-up album that fans have been pulling apart, analyzing, blogging, sitting-in-the-dark-woe-is-me-ing over for the past 25 years.

Hmmm.

I'm not really great with the whole 'summation' thing in reviews. I tend to write the non-review.. the 'why is it important to me' kind of review. But, I thought I should give you the basics.

I think we also tend to read to find similarities in characters.. sometimes it's about redemption, sometimes it's about association, sometimes it's just to relieve the loneliness.

Annie is on her own after 15 years in a bland, mostly platonic, relationship. Of course she's going to ruminate. How could her life have been different if she didn't waste her time on this guy? Why did he show more passion towards an unknown musician who crapped out one good album and disappeared? Then, comes the biggie... empowerment. She sees where she might have gone wrong, starts to make changes, starts

to — live.

Duncan is drab. He hides behind his computer and exerts all this energy on what happened to the great **Tucker Crowe**. He dissects his albums looking for some sort of epiphany. Hmmm. Epiphanies.

Tucker is a recovering alcoholic who has five kids with four women and thinks he's the biggest bullshit artist alive. I love **Tucker**. I'm sorry, this might be more than you need to know. But, tortured, dysfunctional, messed-up artists are my thing. Epiphanies and all that.

So, these three characters weave in and out of each other's lives like sands through time... I laughed, I cried, I hid in my room and stared at the wall. I guess that's the best book jacket review I can give of this. Does it tell you anything about the book? About me? Meh.

Another question... is the novel dead? I surely hope not. Because even though *Juliet, Naked* or *High Fidelity* isn't life altering or shit like that. It means something to me and maybe to a few others out there.

"What do you do if you think you've wasted fifteen years of your life?" Are you kidding me? I don't know if anyone ever told you, but I'm pretty much the world expert on this particular subject. I mean, obviously I've wasted more than fifteen years, but I'm hoping you'll overlook the extra and look upon me as a kindred spirit anyway. Maybe even your guru.

First of all, you have to get that number down. Make a list of all the good books you've read, movies you've seen, conversations you've had and so on, and give all of these things a temporal value. With a little bit of creative accounting, you should be able to reduce it to ten. I've got mine down to about that now, although I've cheated here and there—I included the whole of my son Jackson's life, for example, and he's been at school and asleep for a lot of the time-wasting years.

I'd like to say that anything that comes in around a decade you can write off for tax purposes, but that isn't actually the way I feel. I'm still pretty sick about what I've lost, but I only admit it to myself late at night, which is probably why I'm not the best sleeper.

What can I tell you?"

--- Tucker Crowe

Trin says

You can really tell that it's been 15 years since Nick Hornby wrote *High Fidelity*, and I mean that in the best possible way. Though I've always liked Hornby's writing—he's funny, he creates rich characters and never caricatures, and he's one of the few writers I can think of who tackles the topics of fannishness and obsession--*High Fidelity*, his first novel--and, according to many of my male friends, his best--has always

bugged me a bit. The attitudes, especially toward women, of Rob and his friends are so condescending and creepy to me, and while the book doesn't actively *endorse* them, it (by which I mean, its author) still seems to let them slide with a shrug and a "what can you do?" I still remember a scene toward the end of the book where one of Rob's friends is introducing his new girlfriend around, with the line [from memory, heavily paraphrased:], "She used to like Simple Minds, but she understands now why that's wrong." I find this to be an entirely accurate depiction of a lot of geeky guys' attitudes toward women, yet I can't stumble across it without Hulking out a little bit.

But 15 years later, you've got *Juliet, Naked*, which explores the darker side of that kind of dude--and doesn't let him get away with it. The dude in question this time is Duncan, who's obsessed with the reclusive and verging-on-forgotten musician Tucker Crowe. Duncan expounds at length on Tucker Crowe internet message boards about his favorite artist, in an "everyone's entitled to their own opinion and yours is wrong" kind of way. Wrong especially, in his mind, is his girlfriend Annie, who disagrees with him about the new bare-bones release of Crowe's last recording--a disagreement that's enough to make both Annie and Duncan realize they maybe aren't in love with each other anymore.

And then Tucker Crowe starts emailing Annie.

What impresses me so much about Hornby is that he understands the internet, and fannishness, and obsession, and regret--and not only that, he captures all of them really well. He understands *people*, and his warm, funny prose easily carries the narrative past some of the more Dickensian plot points. (I know from reading Hornby's *Believer* columns that he's a big fan of Chuck D., so I'm sure he'd be happy to hear that.) This book is a much more mature answer to *High Fidelity*, and I think it's easily my favorite of his novels to date. I really, really liked it--not enough to write thousands of words dissecting its every nuance on the internet, but I think we can all agree that that is ultimately a good thing.

Teresa says

All night I was going back and forth in my head as to whether to give this 4 or 5 stars, and as I couldn't think of a reason not to give it 5, I decided to do so. I really enjoyed this character-driven book. Hornby has a warm and generous talent for creating honest, flawed, likable characters. (And for those who might think Hornby can only create male characters, he's created a female protagonist here (Annie) that is as good as the main character (Katie) in *How to Be Good*.) Along with Hornby's fun, witty (and sometimes sarcastic) humor, the book is also sprinkled with meditations on the internet, on parenthood, on the nature of art and talent and writing, making it all that much richer.

Patrick says

It's funny, writing a review of this book, because in many ways, I'm Duncan, the obsessed fan who puts the book's plot into motion. Nick Hornby is something of a hero of mine. I read a lot as a kid, but sort of got away from it as I got older, as it seems so many people do these days. But then I read 'High Fidelity' and it's like something lit up inside me. I immediately devoured everything I could by Hornby (which, at the time, wasn't much--'About a Boy' and 'Fever Pitch'), and then moved onto authors that Hornby seemed to admire, most notably Dave Eggers (whose 'A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius' further changed me). When I finally met Mr. Hornby, years later, I was utterly speechless. I wanted to explain--eloquently, of course--the ways in which he'd changed my life. By reading more, writing more, thinking more...I became a more well-rounded person because of him. But how do you fit that into 30 seconds of a book

signing? And do you even want to? It's never good to meet your heroes—either they end up disappointing you, or you end up disappointing them. But that knowledge doesn't put to rest the urge to tell them everything they mean to you.

So I'm well-aware that the character of Duncan is a critique of Hornby's own basest impulses—as an avid music-lover, he's no doubt been in the position of the crazed fan more than once in his day—but I'm also keenly aware that it is a critique of people like me as well—the once great fans of Hornby who now come onto the internet to poke holes in their hero's continued quest to make a living. It's a little turnabout as fair play—how can you criticize this book without sounding like the snivel-y, whining fanboy who is the book's biggest joke?

But I really don't have any great criticisms of this book. It's been said that Nick Hornby is 'chick-lit for men.' And I think there is some truth to that. He's certainly not Salman Rushdie or Upton Sinclair, writing about controversial topics aimed to bring about greater good for society. He's simply a perceptive guy who has a talent for picking up on the little quirks that make life and pop-culture so interesting. And that's all I really want from his books—I like smiling in recognition at my own quirks and flaws, and those of the world around me. Hornby's world—Atlantic Ocean dividing them aside—is the world I inhabit. And I appreciate being surrounded by like-minded people, even if it's only on a page.

The greatest of these little truths that Hornby revealed in this book was the synthesis of art, and musical art in particular. I once wrote an essay for myself about an ex-girlfriend I had in college. Our relationship was a mess through and through—we were constantly breaking up and getting back together, and cheating on each other and breaking up again...it was a typical college relationship, in other words. And I remember, one summer day, when we were broken up, I was listening to a song that made me think of her. It was a playfully wistful song about longing for a lost love called '*Maybe in an Alternate Dimension*' by a band called Ozma. And as I listened to this song and sang along, picturing my (ex) girlfriend and I being together again, I smiled. Not because I wanted her back, but because I recognized, even then, the ridiculousness of singing a song of wistful longing for that particular girl. She wasn't the one. I knew that. She wasn't worthy of songs of wistful longing. She was just the girl that I was dating then, and that's all she'd ever be. I had even tried to write a song for her when I still played with my band, but they all came out wrong—angry, resentful. She wasn't the type of girl who you wrote love songs about.

So that made me think of the original subject of the song, the one who had inspired the singer of Ozma to write the song in the first place. Was she so special? Did she deserve to have a wistful love song written about her, by anyone? Maybe...but I'm willing to bet it wasn't all peaches and sunshine. Because it never is. Songs—love songs, songs of wistful longing, breakup songs—they all exist in a vacuum. They're almost never about a real person so much as an idealized version of a real person, or an idealized version of a fucked up relationship. Maybe the singer is singing about how much he loves the girl, and where did he go wrong and all that, but odds are he knew exactly where he went wrong—by sleeping with a groupie in the back of a tour bus. But nobody wants to sing along to that.

And that's what Tucker Crowe represents in '*Juliet, Naked*.' He's an artist who becomes self-aware enough to realize what a fraud he is. He sees hundreds of people singing along to songs he wrote about a girl he really didn't even like all that much, and it's too much for him. I don't know that any rock star would really feel that way, but it's certainly how we'd like to see them, and that's why Nick Hornby is so great. He just gets it. He gets me, even though we've only had one awkward, stilted 30 second conversation. And you could make the argument that maybe this book tied together a little too nicely, and you could maybe nitpick that some of the characters were thinly sketched. But I don't care. I enjoyed the heck out of it. So you can say what you want about this book, or Nick Hornby as an author, but I love his books, and this was his best in a while. He just gets it. He really does.

James Thane says

Nick Hornby has written a number of very good novels focusing on music and the sometimes geeky males who become obsessed with it to the point where they never really escape their adolescence. In consequence, their romantic lives are usually a mess as well.

Enter Duncan, an undistinguished British college professor in a small, backwater seaside town. Duncan, who teaches his students how to properly understand the significance of American television programs like "The Wire," has devoted much of his life to the study of Tucker Crowe, an obscure American singer-songwriter who abruptly disappeared from view twenty years ago and who has not been heard from since. Duncan and a small handful of other Crowe addicts spend hours on the Internet, deconstructing Crowe's songs, speculating about what might have become of him, and tracking every rumor about the man. In their spare time, they tour various sites associated with Crowe, most notably the restroom in a Minneapolis bar where, legend has it, some unexplained catastrophic event led Crowe to abandon his fans and his career.

Annie, a museum curator has been living with Duncan for fifteen years. She has patiently endured Duncan's slavish devotion to Crowe, but her relationship with Duncan has left her unfulfilled for a good long time, and only inertia has prevented her from moving on. Then, apparently out of nowhere Duncan receives in the mail a demo version of Crowe's most famous album, "Juliet." The new album is called "Juliet, Naked." Duncan is apparently the first of Crowe's fanatic fans to hear the CD, and, overcome by the honor, he posts a breathless review to the web, pronouncing the record brilliant.

Annie feels differently about it and joins the online discussion about Crowe for the first time with a review describing what she feels are the record's shortcomings. This provokes a serious crisis in Annie and Duncan's relationship because she has dared to dissent from his "expert" point of view and because, in Duncan's view, she is too short-sighted to recognize a work of genius. It doesn't help that Annie opened the CD addressed to Duncan and listened to it before he could.

The disagreement about "Juliet, Naked" finally calls into question the whole nature of the relationship between Annie and Duncan. Things then take another unexpected turn when the artist himself breaks twenty years of silence and sends Annie an e-mail message agreeing with her assessment of the CD. Thus begins a long-distance e-mail flirtation between Annie and Tucker Crowe.

As is always the case, Hornby's characters, even the lesser ones, are all very well-drawn, and the story is very engaging and often hilarious. It will appeal to practically anyone who has enjoyed Hornby's previous books, to people who love music and musicians perhaps a bit too obsessively, and to the significant others who find themselves in relationships with such people.

Jayson says

(B) 75% | More than Satisfactory

Notes: Well written but lacks vigor, excitement and soul. Characters change, but so predictably as to garner very little effect.

Tony Mac says

The first half of this book is Hornby at his best – creating interesting, believable characters and exploring the dynamics of relationships with his usual ear for dialogue and understanding of people’s often highly personal obsessions and motivations.

Surprisingly however, once all the characters are properly introduced and the scenario established, the author seems to lose his way. When the story should be gearing towards a climax with the central characters finally coming together its as if Hornby doesn't seem to know what to do with them. As such, the story rather peters out into a series of mild encounters and predictable, half-baked resolutions. You get the feeling Hornby is deliberately trying to avoid the overly-dramatic, but in doing so he ends up delivering no kind of satisfying outcome at all.

Ultimately its hard to see what the point of the novel actually is, except the rather patronising one - driven home with sermon-like zeal by the author - that all adult lives are eventually of little value unless at some point they involve raising children ('raise' being the operative word here – Hornby clearly has little respect for absentee fathers).

All in all a book that starts well but ends up lacking a proper story arc and fails to deliver.

Kaloyana says

[illegible]

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Oystergirl says

I am not much of a reviewer. My reviews tend to entail saying “That was awesome” or “That was ok”. I’m pretty good at rating things, x out of 5 stars or whatever. Unless there’s some ambivalence or caveat, which there often is. I guess I’m not so good at rating things.

When I do come across something I loved and want to share, I tend to cite quotes and passages as a way to tell people why they need to read/watch the intended work. Because I prize comedy above all else, funny, stand-alone, microcosmic passages are often enough.

Not always, though. Like right now. I am faced with a dilemma. I have just read an amazing book by a writer who apparently only writes amazing things that I think everyone should read. And in this case, stand-alone passages won’t do, because it’s the intricacies of the text, all the things in it that interlace, that create its best moments.

On several occasions while reading Nick Hornby’s new novel, “Juliet, Naked”, I was compelled to stop reading and laugh “with inappropriate volume and vigor, and at preposterous length” (as a character in the book once did). Sometimes I had to put the book down for fear of laughing it out of my grasp. Then I would pause, compose myself, read the bit again, and laugh again, slightly less vigorously. Then I would continue reading.

It was these moments, these moments of sheer beauty, that I wanted to share, that I want everyone to experience. But the thing is, they cannot be captured, explained outside of their context. These moments are developed upon and developed upon throughout the course of the story, so subtly you don’t notice until you’re dropping the book from laughing. These moments are so joyously experienced because of everything else that you read up to that point.

So you see, a mere passage would invariably fail in trying to convince you—yes YOU—why you need to read this book. There are passages that stand on their own just fine, of course; e.g.:

"He put the hot dogs in the shopping cart and then took them out again. What percentage of smart girls were

vegetarian? It couldn't be as high as fifty, right? So the chances were that she ate meat. He put them back in the cart. The trouble was that even young female carnivores wouldn't eat red meat. Well, hot dogs were pinky orange. Did pinky orange count as red? He was pretty sure the strange hue was chemical rather than sanguine. Vegetarians could eat chemicals, right?"

I guess I should qualify, for those of you who don't prize comedy above all else, that this was not your average mere laughing at a joke kind of laughter, nor was laughter my only physical/verbal/visceral response to the novel. It is the kind of laughter and response you are rewarded with when you let a writer take you down a path they made, and you follow them unquestioningly, and you might get lost, but you trust them, and they show you so many things about art and life and humanity that are funny and absurd and beautiful and obnoxious and real. And they pull you along, and you follow, and you listen to every word they say and look at every sight they point out, until they have you wrapped around their fingers and their brains and their pens. You lose your will you follow them so strong, and then it all pays off, because they show you the most artsy and alive and human thing you can imagine. And you laugh, you laugh a whole lot, and any nervousness about following them is gone, because you've been rewarded, and your soul pulses in a rush of ripe elan, and you love it, and you love it, and you keep following, because you know they'll give you even more. And they do.

That is why you—yes, YOU—should read Juliet, Naked by Nick Hornby. It's Not A Book; It's An Experience. 5 out of 5 stars.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Annie, Duncan and Tucker find themselves in a strange love triangle. Annie and Duncan have been a couple for 15 years, but Duncan's obsession with former rock star Tucker Crowe has always been an issue. Now after years of being a recluse, an acoustic version of Tucker's famous album "Juliet" has been released, fanning the flames of Duncan's fanboy web postings - and making Annie question their relationship more than ever. Add in Tucker emailing Annie and this threesome just got a little more complicated.

Oh Nick Hornby, I adore you, but this was not one of your best books. The story was just a little flat, the humor a little thin. Although the last few pages give a smidge of redemption, it was just a little too little too late. Annie, Duncan and Tucker were just all too whiny for my liking (and this is coming from the girl who LOVED the story about a group of suicidals by the same author). To use the British vernacular, they were all three kind of wankers.

Jodi says

Nick Hornby is at his best when he writes about music. He has that inexplicable ability to convey what music means in a way that seems incredibly personal to him and yet universal at the same time. He's so good when he writes about music that it often seems like he's the first one to express that thought in such a wonderful way. He's not so good at writing about relationships, which is why Juliet, Naked is about 50% great, 50% total crap, and 100% frustrating.

First of all, if this book were written by Nicolette Hornby it'd have a pink cover and there'd be some shoes and probably a shopping bag featured prominently. This is what I like to call "dick lit" which is really just chick lit written by a man. Instead of being about shopping, fucked up women who want a man, and the men they chase, it's about rock & roll, fucked up men with commitment problems, and the women who want

them despite all that.

More >>

Michael says

I went into this book thinking "Who would Hugh Grant play in the movie adaptation" and who would play all the other characters. I've settled on Emily Blunt for Annie, Hugh Grant as Duncan and Tucker Crowe to be played by Jeff Bridges. Needless to say, I had a lot of fun reading this book; it just fitted so well as an English Rom-Com and I enjoyed every minute of this book. There is no great depth to this book but it was a pleasure to read.
