



Tales From The (Once) Hip

Bret Easton Ellis reprises his gory days in *'The Informers'*

HALFWAY INTO it, and battling a fierce case of exhaustion I might have diagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome had I not experienced the same symptoms reading his stuff before, I finally figured out the best way to finish **THE INFORMERS** (Knopf, \$22), the fourth novel by the willfully enervating Bret Easton Ellis: Do 10 pages, take a nap. Do another 10, watch a *Mary Tyler Moore* rerun. Finish a chapter, celebrate with a Snickers bar.

Don't, for God's sake, touch any alcohol, not if you want to make it to the end of this soul-dead collection of poorly drawn sketches stitched together as a novel. Do remember that Ellis' work does not represent the state of hip fiction today. In fact, in the broad publishing picture, it barely represented hipitude nine years ago, when *Less Than Zero* put the now 30-year-old writer on the nightclub map with his scenes of rich, zombied young people in Los Angeles, circa 1984. Ellis' oeuvre has always seemed to me like the notes written on a napkin after a hard, glittery night of partying: a few cool phrases, a lot of blurry pictures, some nasty, dirty stains, nothing with staying power. You think, you had to be there, and then you remember even when you were there, it was awful.

So is *The Informers*, which is about rich, zombied young people in Los Ange-

REAL TORTURE: Ellis' zombie-filled new novel, minus *American Psycho*, equals *Zero*

les, circa 1984. Their stories are told as monologues. Sometimes their stories overlap: An estranged father and son go on a sad vacation to Hawaii; a drug-de-ranged rock musician who likes to torture groupies is carted around by his roadies; a young woman writes a series of letters to an unresponsive boyfriend back East, charting her dissolution from a wholesome, lively person to a shallow, self-involved nitwit ("A friend of Carlos' was found dead in a garbage can in Studio City. He had been shot in the head and skinned. How awful, huh?"); a vampire looks for fresh blood.

Vampire? Oh, right (yawn): This is the same author who made big, controversial noise three years ago with *American Psycho*, a nasty party trick of a book about a rich, zombied young man (in Manhattan! A variation!) who defines himself by the brand names he consumes and who loves to torture and murder between restaurant meals. *American Psycho* was a hateful creation, but it was...novel. *The Informers* is hateful and even the inclusion of blood-sucking doesn't get the pulse up:

"Are you like..." She stops smiling.

"Like, a..." She doesn't finish.

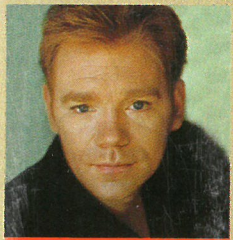
"A vampire?" I suggest, grinning.

"No—an agent," she asks seriously.

That's high Ellis spirits.

There's something terribly, terribly wrong here: with storytelling, with things shaped like books that are written—and published—like this, with poor, tired Bret Easton Ellis, who is either trapped in a prison of his own highly hyped invention or else seriously out of gas. In his dark, sclerotic heart, it's always 1984, it's always Los Angeles, and it's always just too damn much trouble to care about anything. Fast drugs, fast cars, and fast bored, boring sex are always available. Young people have names like Dirk and Griffin and Mona. "I walk away from Mona," one of the undead recounts. "I know what the word gone means. I know what the word dead means. You deal with it, you mellow out, you head back to town."

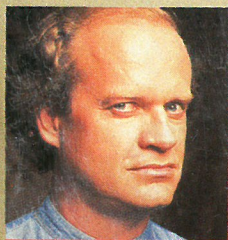
I head back to planet Earth for another Snickers bar. This book has left me bushed. **F** —Lisa Schwarzbaum



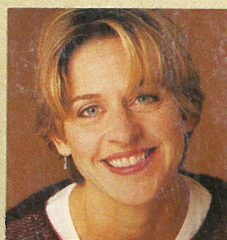
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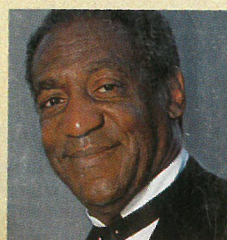
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ANTIQUE FORD

NOW A MAN in Hollywood, *Clear and Present Danger's* Harrison Ford, is dealing with the same problem that women have been dealing with for years: being considered too old for a part (#236, Aug. 19). Ford should take a look in the mirror and realize he is not Han Solo anymore. Why is it virility if a man who is 50-plus years old plays a character written to be in his late 20s, early 30s, but if a woman of the same age does the exact same thing she is thought to be recapturing her youth?

CARA M. TABOR
Asheville, N.C.

IF I WERE an author and my book was being made into a movie, I'd be thankful if Harrison Ford even looked at the script, let alone starred in it. Mr. Clancy, get some perspective.

JENNIFER TAYLOR
Carthage, N.C.

THANK YOU for distinguishing the two sides of Tom Clancy: the sophisticated and flawless man of words and the self-centered glutton he exposes himself as much too often. Clancy should become more involved with adaptations of his work instead of waiting until *after* the paycheck arrives before bickering.

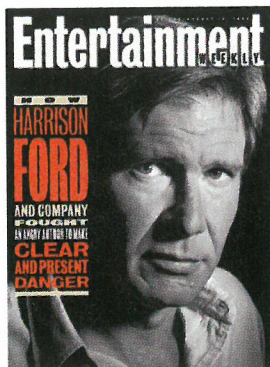
CHRISTOPHER M. SUTTER
Addison, Ill.

WHAT TOM CLANCY fails to realize is that there are millions of us who would go and watch Harrison Ford read the phone book!

JULIE FAREL
Englishtown, N.J.

CARUSO'S SOLO

WHO DOES David Caruso think he is, reportedly demanding \$100,000 per episode for the upcoming season of *NYPD Blue*? I've seen the show several times and fail to see his "sex symbol" appeal. Let's face it, before *NYPD Blue* he



was an unknown actor. Caruso should consider himself lucky to be working.

MARY SHAFER
North Olmsted, Ohio

I BELIEVE David Caruso is one of the few actors who can make the transition from TV to film. He is the most intense, complicated, and powerful Method actor since Marlon Brando in his heyday, and I wish him the best of luck.

JEREMIAH KIPP
New York City

C WHAT IT GETS YA

I WAS QUITE shocked to see that *The Kids in the Hall* received a C while its amazingly bad MTV clone, *The State*, earned a B+. Gimme a break!! For five years *The Kids* has served up original characters and sketches that rely on imagination and wit, while *The State* has managed only to baffle me with its lack of any sort of freshness or creativity.

MATTHEW STERLING
Franklin, Tenn.

HIP STIR

ONCE AGAIN a reviewer has overlooked the technical and literary genius of one of the brightest authors of our time, Bret Easton Ellis, whose work *does* represent the state of hip fiction today. I'll wager Lisa Schwarzbaum thinks Douglas Coupland is hip.

JAIME CLARKE
Phoenix

CORRECTION: *Barbra Streisand's recent tour consisted of 26 concerts, not 16, as we wrote. We regret the error.*

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