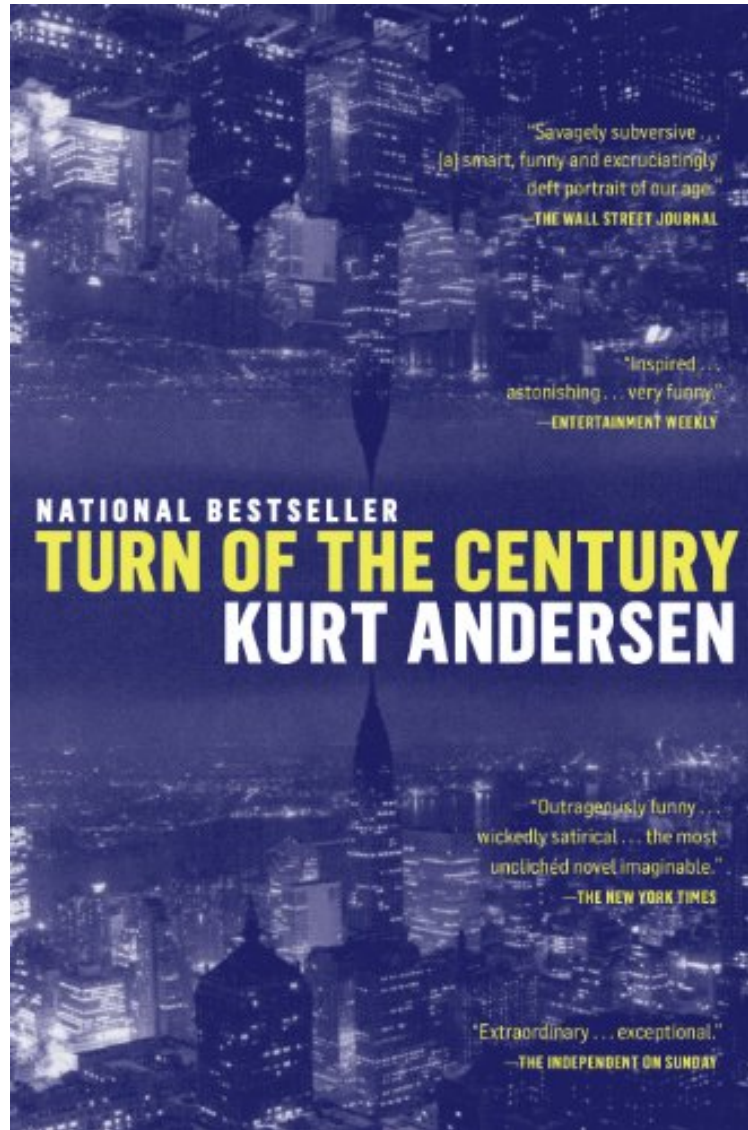


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Turn of the Century: A Novel

Kurt Andersen

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Kurt Andersen : Turn of the Century: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Turn of the Century: A Novel:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. a big messy satire By BosonI can understand why so many people gave up on this book, but I can't help but feel sorry that they did. For me, Kurt Andersen wrote a novel that perfectly reflects the CNN/Fox News sound bite journalism and MTV/YouTube short attention span entertainment that rules our culture today not just with his story, but with the structure of the book. He overloads the reader with information

which he repeats again and again until it finally comes together like the sections of a pointillist painting to present Andersen's very cynical and very funny view of the Information Age. It's like a mirror reflecting a mirror, reflecting a mirror, ad infinitum. I admit it's not an easy read, but if you can dance through it, you'll find a story and point of view that's unusually original, entertaining, and most definitely worthwhile. As for me, I'm off to buy Heyday. 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Truly Inventive Satire By Elizabeth Bronzino Kurt Andersen's got one heck of an imagination. Some of the scenarios he comes up with for the not-so-distant future are just downright neat! I also enjoyed the almost soap-operatic feel of watching George and Lizzie's day to day lives progress, both at the office and in their home. It was interesting to watch how different they were to each other in the world of business and the world of matrimony/family. (Brings to mind the saying, "One never really knows anyone.") I've heard that perhaps the book doesn't appeal to people who live too far outside large urban centers, but I can't see why that would be true. Most of us are attached to the Internet these days, most love "modern conveniences," and most would like to have more money than we do. Seems like that would be enough to make this a book that could appeal to anyone, despite geography. I mean, yes, it might appeal to New Yorkers MORE, but that's because we're reading about our hometown here. I also love Motherless Brooklyn (which takes place in the neighborhood where I grew up), but just because I can recognize what deli Letham's talking about doesn't mean it isn't worthy of its National Book Critic's Circle Award, ya know? In summary, I loved the book. I also loved the end, which a lot of people seem to think was a disappointment. The book might run on a bit long, but for me it was an extremely satisfying read, and one that I've personally recommended -- especially to people who DO like books based in New York. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The View is not Worth the Climb By A Customer After thrilling to the first 100 pages or so, I waited for some semblance of a plot to begin. I'd seen Charlie Rose interview the author, became intrigued, and bought this book in hardcover, breaking one of my cardinal rules. After 400 pages of snide media references and product placements, I gave up, realizing that the characters were too steeped in their cliches to become 3 dimensional, and if any plot were to develop this late in the game, it would not be worth it. All Style, no substance.

A big, sprawling book . . . [Kurt Andersen has] infused it with so much inventive imagination. . . . Should be put in a Manhattan time capsule with the note: This is how we lived at the turn of the century. The New York Times Book Review NATIONAL BESTSELLER In his brash, brilliant first novel, New York Times bestselling author Kurt Andersen casts a penetrating eye on our giddy, media-obsessed era. With a keen sense of irony and a storytellers grace, he weaves a tale that is at once a biting satire and a wickedly incisive portrait of marriage, family, love, and friendship. The millennium is here. Barbie World has opened in Las Vegas. Charles Mansons parole hearing is on live TV. And George and Lizzie are a Manhattan power couple with three kids in private school and take-out from Hiroshima Boy waiting at the door. Lizzie owns a software start-up. George is a TV producer. With cell phones tickling their thighs and gossip buzzing in their ears, their future couldnt be brighter. Until, that is, Lizzie cuts a deal with Georges boss and gets an office twenty-one floors above her husbands. Until all the glitter and the hype threaten to destroy Georges and Lizzies sanity and their marriage. Until the only thing that can save them is a little understanding at a time when everyone is talking but no one hears a thing. Savagely subversive . . . a smart, funny and excruciatingly deft portrait of our age. The Wall Street Journal Inspired . . . astonishing . . . very funny. Entertainment Weekly A big, Tom Wolfeish New York comic novel . . . on the last breath of the century. Elle

.com Everyone will compare Kurt Andersen's scathingly funny first novel to Tom Wolfe's fictional debut, The Bonfire of the Vanities. Like Wolfe, Andersen is a merry terrorist, a status-attuned assassin with liquid nitrogen in his veins, a prose style with the cool purr of an Uzi, and the entire society in his crosshairs. And like the Man in White's protagonist, Sherman McCoy, Andersen's George Mactier is a master of the contemporary universe--not just Manhattan, but decadent post fin-de-sicle Hollywood, the globe-gobbling, infotainment-tainted news media, and cyberspace from Seattle to Silicon Valley to Silicon Alley. Turn of the Century opens in February 2000, in a bizarre world with just a tangy twist of futuristic extrapolation. George has parlayed a Newsweek writing job into a PBS documentary into a \$16,575-a-week job as a producer at the sinister MBC network. His series, NARCS, is a veritable Cuisinart of fact and fiction in which the actors get to participate in real drug busts and get all the best lines, since they're working from scripts. In the most notorious episode, the dealer they arrest turns out to be an Actors Equity member (thanks to Rent), so he gets union scale and a recurring role. As George stumbles into a Wolfesque calamity spiral, his wife, Lizzie Zimbalist, ascends to power. Lizzie is a brilliant software entrepreneur: her "force-feedback technology" alternative-history game can sense players' fear. "If you travel to 1792 Paris, for instance, you are designated a besotted peasant or a frightened aristocrat or an angry sansculotte according to your heart rate, blood pressure, and skin conductance; too many twitches, the wrong sort of palpitation, and you're a marquess (or marchioness) headed for the guillotine." Needless to say, her insights into the year 2000 earn her bigtime interest from George's boss and Microsoft. Lizzie is a character at least as vivid as George, and their hectic family life is uncloying and acutely observed. Andersen's plot (involving Bill Gates's potential death) has more hairy turns than the Hana Highway--read carefully or you'll go off the road. But you're guaranteed a wild ride with amazing characters: an

irreverent investor inspired by James Cramer, a hilarious MBC toady, Timothy Featherstone--who's as marvelous a creation as Tony Curtis in *The Sweet Smell of Success*--and worlds' worth of social caricatures. Kurt Andersen has an uncanny ear for the way we talk now and *Turn of the Century* is sharp, knowing, and subversive. Let's all pray that it isn't prescient as well. --Tim Appelo

From Publishers Weekly

A blockbuster fiction debut for media insider Anderson (formerly editor-in-chief of *New York* magazine, co-founder of *Spy*), this brilliantly conceived, keenly incisive social satire draws fresh humor out of the overhyped territory of millennial madness. Beginning his myopically futuristic novel on February 28, 2000, Anderson employs a future-present tense in which he mischievously tweaks current attitudes regarding marriage, friendship, the mass media, Wall Street and the computer industry, just to name a handful of his numerous targets. With ferocious energy, he also captures the essence of New York, Las Vegas, L.A. (its permanent sunniness, annoying and even slightly scary after a while, like a clown's painted-on-smile) and Seattle (... like a gawky guy with a great body who's bald and stammers and wears dorky clothes). These are not new topics for mockery, but Anderson's eye is fresh and his irony carries a potent sting. George Mactier, executive producer of a controversial TV series called *NARCS*, and his wife, Lizzie Zimbalist, owner of a computer software company, serve as Anderson's 21st-century poster couple. They are self-conscious enough to recognize the embedded ironies in their fast-paced, high-profile lifestyle (Lizzie voted reluctantly for Giuliani twice, but spent election day giving a five-dollar bill to anyone who happened to ask for money, as penance). Their already troubled marriage is being vaporized by the hysterical pace of their respective professional lives. The couple have three cyber-precocious children (Lizzie e-mails her sons bedroom from the kitchen to announce dinner), as well as a host of eccentric friends (Ben Gould is a multimillionaire investor whose latest venture is a Vegas theme park called *BarbieWorld*) and colleagues (Harold Mose, the egomaniacal owner of the *MBC Network*, becomes both George and Lizzie's boss). The convoluted plot boldly defies summary, but it ultimately achieves a mad convergence highlighted by an intricate, hilarious plan to manipulate Microsoft's stock by virtually killing Bill Gates. Anderson employs a biting topical humor that is always exaggerated, yet seldom actually seems inconceivable (the cover story in *Teen Nation*, an offshoot of the *Nation* magazine, is headlined: *Jimmy Smits and Jennifer Lopez in Mexico: This Revolution Will Be Televised*). Cell phones and computers are ubiquitous, but the vaunted Information Age is illusory at best. The characters are constantly thrown off kilter by disinformation, missed information and miscommunication. Yet while the tone is hyperbolic and beyond the cutting edge, the core issues are curiously old-fashioned: love, ethics, friendship, even happiness. Anderson brilliantly sustains the comic pace throughout the lengthy narrative, though his ultimate message may be disappointing to millennial idealists: The future ain't what it used to be. Major ad/promo; first serial to the *New Yorker*; BOMC selection; author tour. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

It's the year 2000, and millennial hype continues. Successful television producer George Mactier and his wife, Lizzie Zimbalist, owner of a software design firm that's being courted by Microsoft, are living in style in New York City, with limos, private schools, and vacations in the Caribbean. But life at the turn of the century is not all easy money. George's new show has too strong a tendency to blur the line between fiction and reality for his media mogul boss, Mose, who keeps calling Lizzie for consultations. While the tension between George's and Lizzie's careers and their marriage is interesting, the high point of the book is the amazing and amusing catalog of references to modern culture. Andersen, former editor of *New York* magazine and cofounder of *Spy*, inserts real people, places, and events into a barrage of images that includes Bill Gates, L.A., the NASDAQ, interspecies organ transplants, and the Beanie Baby craze, making the Eighties seem peaceful by comparison. Recommended for all fiction collections. --A

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