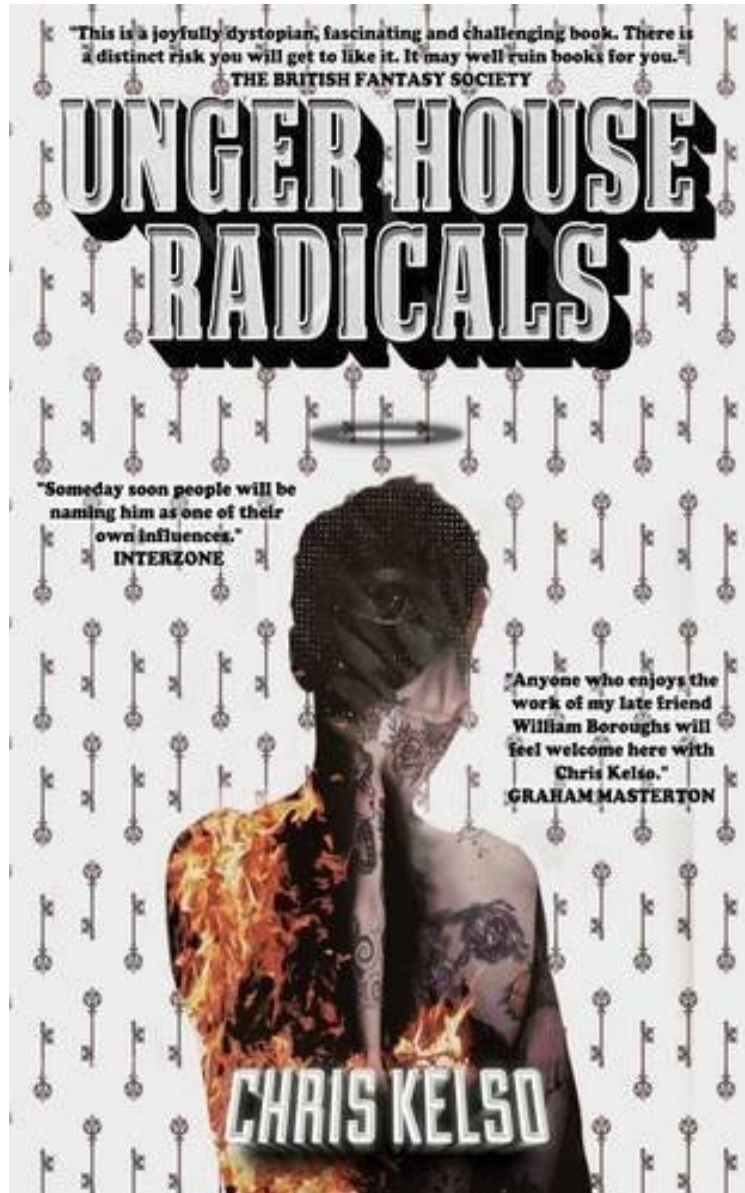


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Unger House Radicals

Chris Kelso

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Chris Kelso : Unger House Radicals before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unger House Radicals:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Winner of Ginger Nuts of Horror's Book of the year 2016By Ginger NutsWriting reviews should be easy, especially after almost seven years of doing it. A varied and widespread reading

within the genre should prepare a reviewer for almost anything the genre throws at them, or so I thought. Yes, there has been the odd struggle with a bothersome sentence or a poorly worded paragraph, but in the main, the reviews have come fairly easily. That was until I came upon *Unger House Radicals* by Chris Kelso, it is a book that made me question my abilities both as a reader and as a reviewer. It pushed me to the limit, knocked my confidence for six and cost me close to 12 hours of deep thought just to get the opening paragraph of the review down on paper. It's a book that will prey on my mind for a long time, but is this for good or bad reasons? Did I find the book challenging, or was the book just a challenge? *Unger House Radicals* is, in essence, a simple tale; When aspiring and nihilistic film-maker Vincent Bittacker falls in love with mercurial serial-killer Brandon Swarthy they decide to embark upon a bloody journey to re-define cinema and create their own sub-culture - Ultra-Realism. However, if you have read any of Chris Kelso's previous works, you will know that Chris doesn't like to take the simple approach. He prefers to take the reader on a journey that while never overly pleasant; it will be a journey that the reader will never forget, thanks to a powerful and unique narrative voice. Make no mistakes this is not an easy read, in part due to the in your face descriptions of the atrocities that Bittacker and Swarthy commit. Kelso doesn't mince words here; these sections of the story are grim, gruesome and upsetting. They are designed to shock without any sense of titillation, unlike similar scenes in horror movies where you can get a rush of excitement, *Unger House* beguiles you into feeling dirty and shocked for having read such a thing. Nevertheless, these scenes are vital to the narrative and its constant pushing of your boundaries as a reader. Bittacker, and Swarthy are two of the vilest characters ever committed to a page; I'll leave it to you to decide who is the worst, Bittacker the semi-privileged filmmaker, who despite his belief that he was born evil, is more of a spoiled brat. Or Swarthy, an avatar of depravity and evil, born in the gutter, yet alluring and bewitching to all who meet him. Their story and deeds will become so intertwined that you will have trouble deciding who is the real evil. The narrative itself is a thing of beauty shining out against the grime that is attached to it. A fractured narrative that shifts from person to person, time and space, and narrative perspective, this mix of such things as first person, found letters and police reports could so easily have been a mess, and yet it just works. Kelso has taken the theories of "ultra realism" and applied it to the way he has written this novel. This is a dangerous and ambitious move on the part of the author, and one that works perfectly. There will be times where you are confused as to what exactly is going on. You may even get frustrated with the book at times with its ethereal way in which it is structured, but when you get it when the penny drops, then you will applaud the author for his audacity. This is without a doubt the work of a genius, everything about this book should have had me screaming at the page in anger. And yet I never did, I sat there in awe at the talent on show. There are some big concepts on display here from the sense of identity, the role of a documentary maker and their detachment from what they are documenting, religion, psychology, the nature of evil, the nature of humanity, I won't be so bold as to say I understood everything that the author was saying. But I will say I was hooked from the first page. *Unger House Radicals* is a challenging book, and like all great things, the reward is more than worth the challenge of the reading experience. This is an outstanding book, brutal, unrelenting and mind-bending in its scope.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. ... appreciate the fact that when I read an author like Kelso I need to put expectations to the side

By David Bridges I am learning to appreciate the fact that when I read an author like Kelso I need to put expectations to the side. The first book I read by him was a great dark spaces out sci fi poetry narrative about depression called *The Black Dog Eats The City*. *Unger House Radicals* is a more extreme and violent story written in a blended non linear style. *Unger House* starts off as a straight forward story about a serial killer and a disturbed film maker developing a personal relationship as well as a new style of extreme film that is a type of high art snuff films. The second half of the book spins off into this blend of sci fi and existentialism. Kelso is a great writer and the book is very creative in how the story is told in many different styles. There is straight forward story telling, some poetry, interviews, letters from family members, and even some visuals throughout the book. It all comes together though and makes a complete work of art. If you like your fiction a little bit challenging, and by challenging I mean not written in a traditional format, then check out *Unger House Radicals* (as well as *The Black Dog Eats The City*). Kelso bucks the rules of writing. I would recommend this to fans of Seb Doubinsky or Blake Butler.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Mind-bending

By janiec I just finished reading this book. My head feels like a carousel at full speed. Where was I? I'm dizzy and confused. I'm feeling a bit elated, too. Because this is one cosmic wordstorm. It is a hyper real horror story, an experiment in nihilism and a mind bending philosophical whirlwind. In the beginning, there are Vincent Bittacker and Brandon Swarthy, two of the vilest characters to enter into the world of film-making. Their project is brutal, and the characters seem to merge at times, making the narrative both confusing and deliciously scary. Then things get weird. The scenery veers without a hint of introduction, and the words shift like a manic sandstorm. And we're off! Are you curious? Are you afraid? Good. This is your mind on Kelso. Any questions?

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they decide to embark upon a bloody journey to re-define cinema and create their own sub-culture - Ultra-Realism