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Baker's groundbreaking novel of simmering rage and justifiable violence follows combative ex-lovers Tim and Pete, thrown together on a bizarre trek from Laguna Beach, Calif., to Los Angeles. Sarcastic, satiric, violent, and exhilarating, "Tim & Pete" is a fiercely imagined, boldly realized vision of the cultural war raging in the hearts of the disenfranchised and in the streets of America.

Tim and Pete Details

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Author : James Robert Baker

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From Reader Review Tim and Pete for online ebook

Ren says

I had really high hopes for this book and Baker. I had heard about the race and violence controversies (which amount to a bunch of PC bullshit if you've read the book). I had read all this stuff about his work being really 'angry' and 'alternative' perhaps for the time it was what I found was that it was all talk: literally.

The book consists mostly of catty/petty/stupid/pornographic dialogue between Tim and Pete, on and again off again boyfriends who can never quite get a long. I'm not sure if we are supposed to sympathize with the uptight, upper middle class insecure Tim or the emotionally indulgent yet passive-aggressive Pete.

The book progresses as P and T wander through LA bitching about AIDS and dishing about Hollywood movies. Every once and a while they talk about campy fantasies about violence. On occasion, Tim talks about his ex-boyfriends, his years of being celibacy and his paranoia about AIDS.

Frankly, I found this book to be insular, petty and tasteless (in the sense that it was bland rather than it being in bad taste).

In the end, I felt it was just an other fluffy book about fags with hot bodies doing 'cool' stuff, oh and there is some stuff about AIDS and race too. And some violence.

Baker gets an A for effort in the history department. His description of post-AIDS L.A. seems pretty spot on as is both haunting and scary. You get somewhat of a sense about how it damaged the gay community and gay men in general. That aspect of the book, the anger and the violence, resonates.

Baker touches on some themes one wants to talk about and makes comparisons between racial violence (the LA riots) and the fictional violence (or lack thereof among gay men in real life). That's cool and all, were the writing better, this novel would be really powerful but the writing is just lackluster. It's not confusing it's just bland.

If you are interested in a charged anecdote about AIDS in LA to read on the John or if you are a film queen and wants all kinds of witty film jokes, I'd suggest Tim and Pete. If you are looking for something with actual literary merit look elsewhere.

Sarah Sammis says

Tim and Pete by James Robert Baker is a short, angry novel about a pair of opposites who are thrown back together after breaking up. Their whirlwind day together leads to trouble and death.

I wanted to like this book. I should have. It's set in areas I know well and like to read books populated by characters like Tim and Pete. What I mean is, I try to avoid slash fiction; it's not my thing. I want to read books populated by real characters with real problems, quirks, flaws and so forth. I appreciate the author's own troubled life and his suicide but a book has to stand on its own and Tim and Pete didn't for me.

Time and Pete has some of the same problems as Sue Grafton's Alphabet Mystery series does. Both are

aimed at Boomers and populated by Boomers. For Tim and Pete that means characters who are straddling both sides of recent gay history, Stonewall, free love, drugs and the early days of AIDs. Though published in 1993, Tim and Pete as characters haven't managed to move on from the darkest days of the 1980s.

Some of their emotional turmoil and reckless behavior can be attributed perhaps to Baker's own troubled life. But frankly there was so much anger in the novel that there were no nuances nor quiet moments to reflect. The anger robs the characters of their dimensionality. Instead of a debate, the novel presents a diatribe.

Gloss says

Death and love, and movies and terrorism, AIDS and bigotry. I love this book like *soup*.

Timothy says

I read this when it first came out, and it so well expressed the hatred I had at that time for what society did to us during the 80s. It wasn't just the right-wingers, it was everyone. President Bush Sr., when asked why the Reagan administration hadn't taken stronger action against AIDS, stated that there was too much of a 'giggle-factor' associated with the disease. And that was one of the nicest things I think I heard from that era. I lived in Southern California in the 80s and my friends were dying faster than I could even keep track of. So when I read other reviews that state this book was extreme or not truly expressive of the era or whatever - BULLSHIT. I can promise you that's EXACTLY how a lot of us felt at that time. I'm still messed up in the head because of what I went through during the AIDS crisis. So many wonderful, amazing people dead, so many beautiful lives ended. I was never insane enough to take action, but I vicariously enjoyed the actions taken by the characters in this book. And I absolutely loved The Living End, as well.

Beatrix M says

Definitely not for the faint of heart, but beautifully written, like a feverish Genet in the last half. A portrait of a moment in time and a political feeling that many have lost.

Blake Fraina says

This is kind of a schizophrenic book. I tried to enjoy it for the romance between two ex-lovers, a filmmaker and a rock musician, who are thrown together and, over the course of one eventful night in L.A., must come to terms with their lingering feelings for one another. Even though, for me, the fate of this love affair was the most engaging aspect of the book, it's obvious that the late author, James Robert Baker, had another agenda in mind. This very black comedy/satire is primarily concerned with communicating the level of rage felt by the gay community against the right wing conservative powers-that-be during the height of the AIDS crisis in the early nineties. Set against, and certainly finding parallels in, post-riot Los Angeles, the story follows the eponymous ex-lovers as they traverse the city looking for one of Pete's fellow AA members who has fallen off the wagon...hard.

Along the way they meet a recovering alcoholic movie star, a reactionary Republican congressman, a pair of feuding, mismatched lesbian lovers, an AIDS sufferer newly converted to Christianity and ready to renounce his "sinful" ways and, most significantly, a band of artists-cum-terrorists plotting to bomb the La Jolla church attended by a popular Republican ex-President.

I very much enjoyed this book on one level because, as with all my favourite LGBT books, the two leads aren't mincing stereotypes. Both are attractive, complicated, unique individuals. Plus, as a rock music and film lover, the glimpses into their respective careers was definitely cool. And, with the exception of a few lengthy, didactic speeches, the copious dialogue is convincingly written.

On the downside, I found most of the secondary and minor characters (although not necessarily poorly drawn or wooden) were not fully realized individuals, but merely props used to justify the author's anger against particular societal ills. I was also majorly turned off by the violence. Although most of the violence doesn't actually happen on the page, it's still omnipresent - in the bitter, angry lyrics of Pete's songs, in the deliberately offensive, provocative artwork of the radical queer terrorists (who also orchestrate a wholesale massacre on a conference of conservative bigwigs that takes place sometime shortly after the book's denouement) and in the elaborate gore-filled revenge fantasies shared by the two leads as they drive through bombed out L.A. While I certainly agree with the book's politics, most of this stuff, played for laughs, struck me as nothing more than impotent bombast.

My recommendation - read *Tim and Pete* for the love story. If you're anything like me, you can stop in the middle of Chapter Ten and have your happy ending without the huge side order of implied and impending violence.

Epiphani says

Damn I wish I had been born earlier sometimes. Like while reading this book.

Funny how many times lately I've wondered what the third option is when I don't want to believe violence is the answer to the violence committed against people like in this book, or people like me, and yet being peaceful has not stopped us dying.

This book makes me question that again...as well as the true impact that what an artist creates to express their pain and anger might have on someone who's also angry and hurting and reading/watching/hearing what they created.

If only I had the kind of mind that could answer my questions.

Nicolas Chinardet says

This book was not quite what I was expecting. This is in fact an AIDS novel with a difference.

While it deals with the emotional hurt experienced by individuals and the repercussions of the disease on relationships, this urban "road-movie" set in the course of 36hrs (with a lot of flashbacks) has another, uncommon angle: that of anger. Anger at the injustice of the disease and anger at the response and lack thereof from right-wing political figures.

I liked how Baker portrayed the way Tim and Pete relate to each other (although they are perhaps even more flawed than they first appear and less sympathetic) and there is a number of quite colourful secondary characters along the road. What I could have done without perhaps was the protagonists' violent in-jokes. I get that this is a way to show their intimacy but there were lots of them throughout the book, all more or less in the same vein. My issue however is not directly with the violence of those jokes itself. I'm not against dark humour but for me to enjoy jokes they have to be funny. These aren't. They aren't even amusing most of the time, even though the characters appear to find them to be hilarious indeed.

There is also the wider question of radicalisation. In a way, 20 years after publication, this has become topical again but while the theme takes up a large section of the book, I felt the moral and ethical repercussions of militant violence weren't explored properly. The anger experienced by most of the characters, at the rampant homophobia and more specifically at the response (social and political) to the AIDS epidemic, is quite understandable but Baker never really seems to give us the tools (or the fruit of his reflection on the subject) to decide whether violent action should be justified or not (I'll stick to my view before reading the book: As tempting as it might seem, it shouldn't be).

Other than that the book is well written and the plot engrossing within its enclosed little world. It is however also a little unsettling. Don't expect too much of the love story the title might suggest, though.

William says

Possibly a period piece at this point, but one of the best things the late James Robert Baker ever wrote, "Tim and Pete" belongs to the early 90s new queer cultural movement that also produced Gregg Araki's film "The Living End." 24 hours pass in the lives of Tim and Pete, a currently on-the-outs couple (one's a punk rocker; one's a film historian) who somehow become embroiled with a plot to kill the President, various L.A. dissidents, traffic jams, apocalyptic queer terrorists and who might--just might, if they can navigate it all--get back together. This was a toned-down version of the author's earlier "Adrenaline," written under the pen names James Dillinger.

Scott says

The best part of this book was the romance between the title characters. The author excels at portraying a relationship that has ended, but the love between the former lovers refuses to die. The big distraction was the extremist political craziness that is involved as the story progresses. The novel starts really falling apart toward the end, and the ending is really a cop-out.

The novel is definitely gritty in its portrayal of the early 90's gay culture that was devastated by the AIDS virus and the fear of the unknown. I grew up in a time when the AIDS virus was "relatively" understood, but the idea of not knowing how and what was transmitting the virus is really awful. The paranoia and fear must have been palpable.

Jody Scott says

I first read Tim and Pete by James Robert Baker shortly after it was first published in 1992. I liked it very

much then and I like it perhaps more now on second reading.

I was inspired to reread it because I am rereading all of Jody's novels as I scan them to safeguard from any possible loss (we had a wildfire evacuation here last September and it was scary to think that the bulk of her writing could have been lost forever), and prep manuscripts for upcoming publication. One of Jody's novels reminded me of Tim and Pete, and in another amusing coincidence, the servo-robots in her soon-to-be published SF satire Devil May Care are Nancy Reagans (see below).

Like much good satirical writing, Tim and Pete is fueled by a righteous anger at the hatred and discrimination experienced by gay men in the aftermath of AIDS, and skewers the hypocrisies of American society in a riproaring 24 hour odyssey through LA's gay underbelly.

'Not all fags are nelly pacifists' warn the PWA anarchists intent on blowing up Ronald and Nancy Reagan. They're damn mad and they aren't gonna take it anymore!

But lest you think this is a heavy read, it most decidedly is not! Tim and Pete are likable well-drawn protagonists, Baker is a superb writer, and the novel is funny as hell! Provided you dig black humor of course.

Through the art and music scene of the day; through swanky Santa Monica and the riot-ravaged South Central; hidden backroads off Mulholland Drive and memory-haunted crumbling bath houses, Tim And Pete is an iconoclast's tour-guide love letter to the city and the times that I happily let seduce me. I recommend you do the same.

-Mary Whealen

mark monday says

oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!
oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!
oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!
oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!
oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!
oh no she didn't!
oh yes she did!

that's a pretty good encapsulation of this novel, except throw in some bullshit attempts at being topical and controversial with some callow AIDS & post-L.A. Riots type commentary. yawneroo! please, if you're going to be political, try to be intelligent first. i would rather just jack off to old Marky Mark videos than be forced to read another lame gay book like this one.

okay, one extra star For Trying To Say Something About The State Of The Gay Community.

okay, one star removed for reminding me of Gregg Araki's horrid, smarmy, woman-hating film The Living End. two pieces of trashiness all done up in Bitingly Satiric and Surprisingly (yet Unconvincingly) Violent Drag. exhibits A & B in the 90s Wing of the Gay Museum of Horrors.

Joe says

Tim and Pete is seriously dated by today's standards and a bit extreme in the message Baker is trying to get across (as a result this novel essentially ended not only his writing career but also his life). I was 23 when this came out (I also "came out" around the same time) and it was very relevant to the gay zeitgeist of the time. I had never read anything like it and it became an instant favorite (and still is).

Upon re-reading it, what I love the most about this novel is the never ending barrage of pop culture references, the breakneck pacing, and the breezy writing. There's also some pretty graphic sex in places but it's more gross than sexy in my opinion. Yet, at its core, it's a simple love story:

A year has passed since Tim and Pete broke up. Through a weird stroke of luck Tim, still carrying a torch for Pete and abstaining from sex due to the relatively new disease AIDS, is stranded in Venice Beach and runs into Pete. Reluctantly, Pete agrees to give Tim a ride home but first they have to stop at his mother's house. From that point on they embark on a 24 hour adventure navigating punk rockers, man-hating lesbians, the aftermath of the Watts riots, evil politicians, a deserted bathhouse, and a gang of gay militant meth head artists who will stop at nothing to make a point. Along the way Tim and Pete realize they still have feelings for each other.

Tim and Pete, like most of Baker's other novels, reads like it would make a great movie. I would highly recommend to anyone looking for a quick, over-the-top, mindless read.

Jess says

This book reads like a guide of how to be a hip Cali queer in the 80s. But beneath the catty calls & pop culture references is a documented account of life where paranoia comes head to head with lust & love. This book is also hot in a gritty trashy way that I enjoy.

Stuart says

James Robert Baker's novel was controversial when it came out in the 1990s, but today it reads almost like a sweet little love story about two flawed, angry, petty, volatile, but ultimately human gay men who re-find each other after a year apart attempting to get over a six month love affair that changed their lives. Tim and Pete argue, make out, smoke cigarettes, and reminisce while going on a trek around Los Angeles to find a missing speed junkie from Pete's support group. In the process they become involved with a gang of gay terrorists out to kill conservative Republicans and the book transcends from pulp to political manifesto as it contemplates when, if ever, an act of violence becomes necessary to save the world for the side of good. Deeply unsettling, very romantic, Baker's novel is certainly readable, if not for the faint of stomach, and he captures a decade of transition and torment for gay male Americans right at the turning tide of the AIDS crisis. That it reads as authentic is indisputable, but for exactly that reason it's not for everyone (though maybe required reading for gay men of a certain age, and those too young to understand just how bad it was).
