

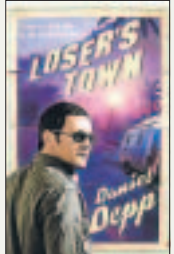
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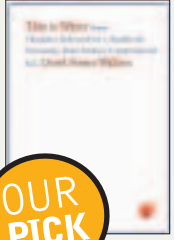
LOSER'S TOWN

Daniel Depp, Simon & Schuster, \$29.95 ★☆☆
Being Johnny Depp's half-brother will probably remain Daniel Depp's main claim to fame. *Loser's Town* feels like an introduction to the seedy characters, whose motivation is never really explained. Gangsters, movie stars and blackmail run thick and fast through this dull tale. Maybe it would work better as a movie, but I can't imagine going to watch it. **AB**



THIS IS WATER

David Foster Wallace, Little, Brown, \$25 ★★★★★
Since his death last September, David Foster Wallace has become quite the pin-up boy for troubled genius. *This Is Water* is the transcript of a speech he gave at a college in 2005. The speech itself is the sort of casual genius that floors you with a dumbfounded, humbled smile, even if the same mind that came up with it was in so much turmoil as to take his own life. It may be easier to read when the paragraphs run on, but in the form of a precious little book, *This Is Water* becomes something you can treasure for years to come. **AF**



OUR PICK

THE ITALIAN WEDDING

Nicky Pellegrino, Hachette, \$32.95 ★★☆☆
The Martinellis have a thriving eatery in London. Patriarch, Beppi, has feuded with a frenemy for decades, but his daughters, Pieta and Addolorata, have never known why. Dotted with recipes, it's a tale that, given its Italian food fixation, is more like a spag bol: unchallenging, easy to swallow and pretty satisfying. But, mamma mia, for all the talk about amore, many of the characters could have done with a dollop more Italian passion and a dash less British reserve. **CG**

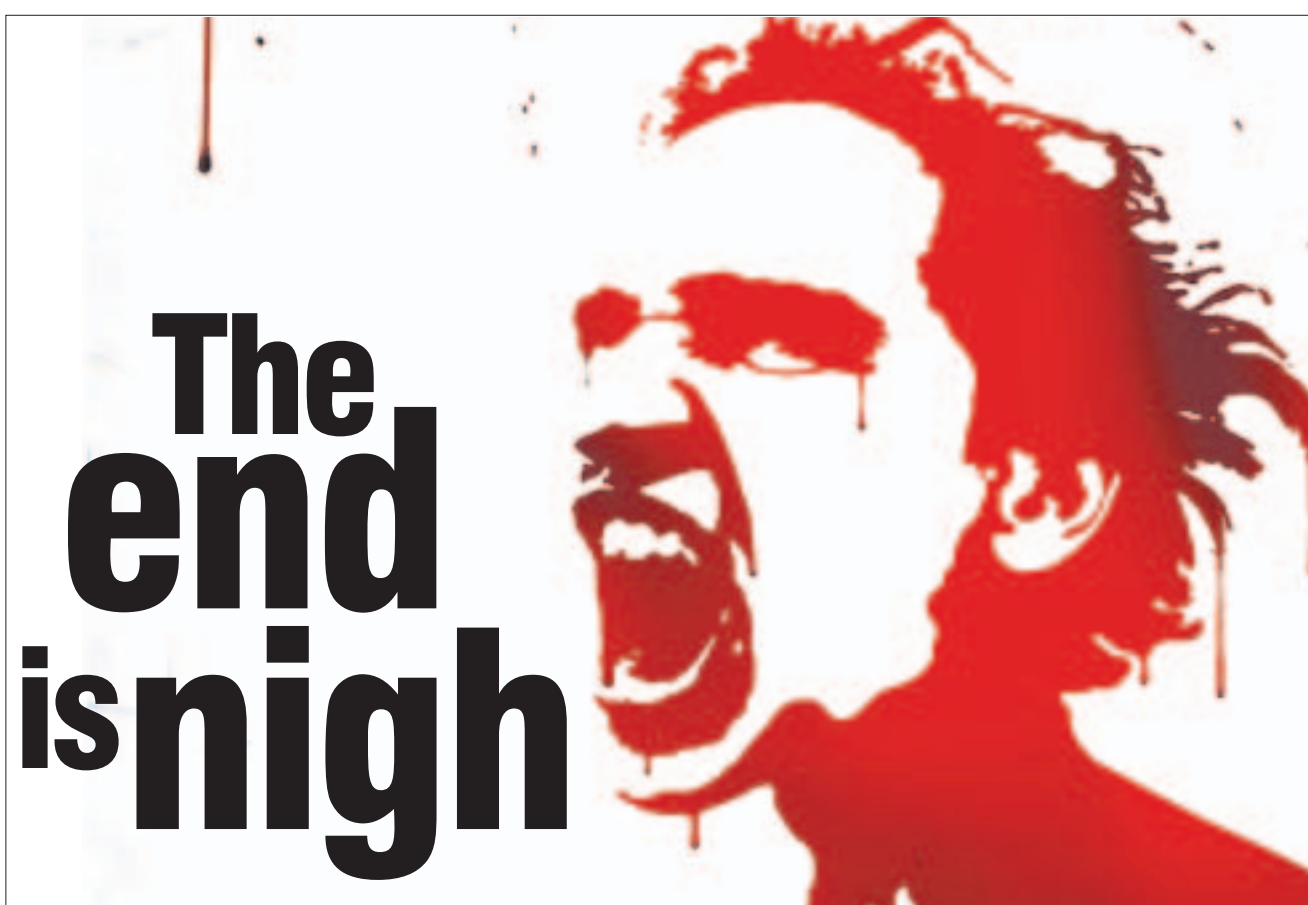


THE WOLVERINE FILES

Mike W. Barr, Simon & Schuster, \$49.95 ★★★
So you've seen the movie and you want to learn more about everyone's favourite berserker rampaging mutant? This book, a dossier containing "top secret S.H.I.E.L.D files about Logan's comic book history and all his friends and foes" is a good primer. It's got hundreds of beautiful illustrations and tonnes of info that will enhance your movie experience. But for \$50, why not just buy the essential Wolverine comic books instead? Trust me. You would have a more fulfilling experience than reading this book. **GA**



■ **Reviews by Anna Brain, Alex Fregon, Caz Garvey and Gavin Aung Than.**



The end is nigh

David Moody's work blends the mundane and bizarre, he tells **ANDY MURDOCH**

There's something worryingly familiar about David Moody's apocalyptic horror novel *Hater*. Most of us will never witness the violence that starts on page 1 and peppers the story. But as for the main character's near-psychotic frustration with work life, home life, the daily commute, giggling, pubbing... It could be any one of us. "The character in the book is exactly where I was a few years ago," Moody says. "I've done my years in faceless processing centres and I've been browbeaten by a supervisor who's being beaten by their manager who's being beaten by their manager. "I think 90 per cent of the working population feels like that from time to time. "What I wanted to do with *Hater* was put some incredibly ordinary people in this incredibly bizarre situation. "I think by rooting things firmly in reality it makes it easier for people to identify with what's going on and with what the character's going through." Despite the novel's title, what seems to motivate the violence of the "haters" is not hatred but fear. "They're two sides of the same sword," Moody says. "Fear and hate go hand in hand, they drive the other one on. "I think there's a hell of a lot of fear around, but quite often people's natural reaction to it is to hate, is to defend themselves, and that's what the book is about. "There is no bad guy, really, because everybody's as bad as each other." Moody cites 20th-century sci-fi novelist John Wyndham as a major influence. Best known for *The Day of the Triffids* – turned into a cracking TV series in the '80s and being remade by the BBC this year – Wyndham is dismissed by many these days as being dated and irrelevant. Moody begs to differ. "I think he's hugely important," he says. "The Day of the Triffids is a

RAPID FIRE

Reading now: *Earth Abides*, a science fiction novel by George R. Stewart. I've just finished John Christopher's Tripod Trilogy.
Favourite sci-fi novel: *War of the Worlds* (H.G. Wells).
Favourite zombie film: *Night of the Living Dead*, the original.
Favourite author: John Wyndham.

Book you couldn't finish: I'm not sure how I'm going to get on with *Earth Abides*.
Books that inspired you to write: *The Day of the Triffids* and *War of the Worlds*.
Three writers you'd like to have a drink with: Wyndham, Wells and James Herbert. I got completely freaked out by *The Rats* books when I was younger.

landmark novel for me and it's one that I've been back to time and time again. "There was nothing like it before and there's been nothing like it since. "People used to describe his work as 'cosy catastrophes', and really that's what I try and do – incredible things going on, earth-shattering events, but seen through the eyes of the ordinary man." Like all "end of civilisation as we know it" stories – most of Wyndham's books included – the subtext of *Hater* implies society today is on a knife-edge. "These are pretty grim times that we're in and the reason for most of the grimness is man," Moody says. "We're screwing up the environment, we're screwing up the finances, we seem to be screwing up everything. That's driven by hate and fear and also by greed. "I don't think it's hopeless, I just want to paint the worst-case scenario and if it makes somebody think, that's great. "We seem to trundle along through the day-to-day assuming that everything that's here today is going to be here tomorrow. And that's not always going to be the case." ■ **Hater** (Victor Gollancz, \$29.95) is out now.

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