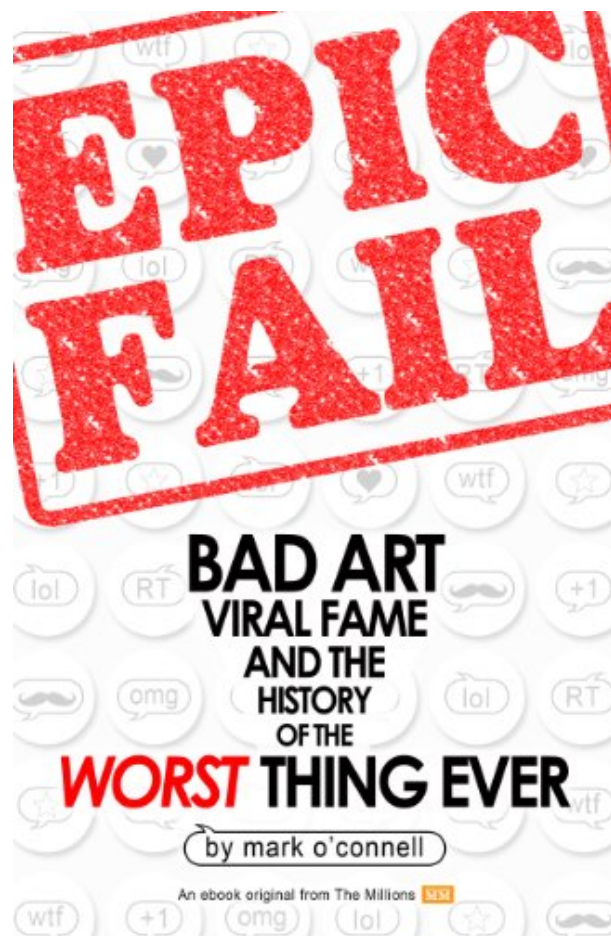
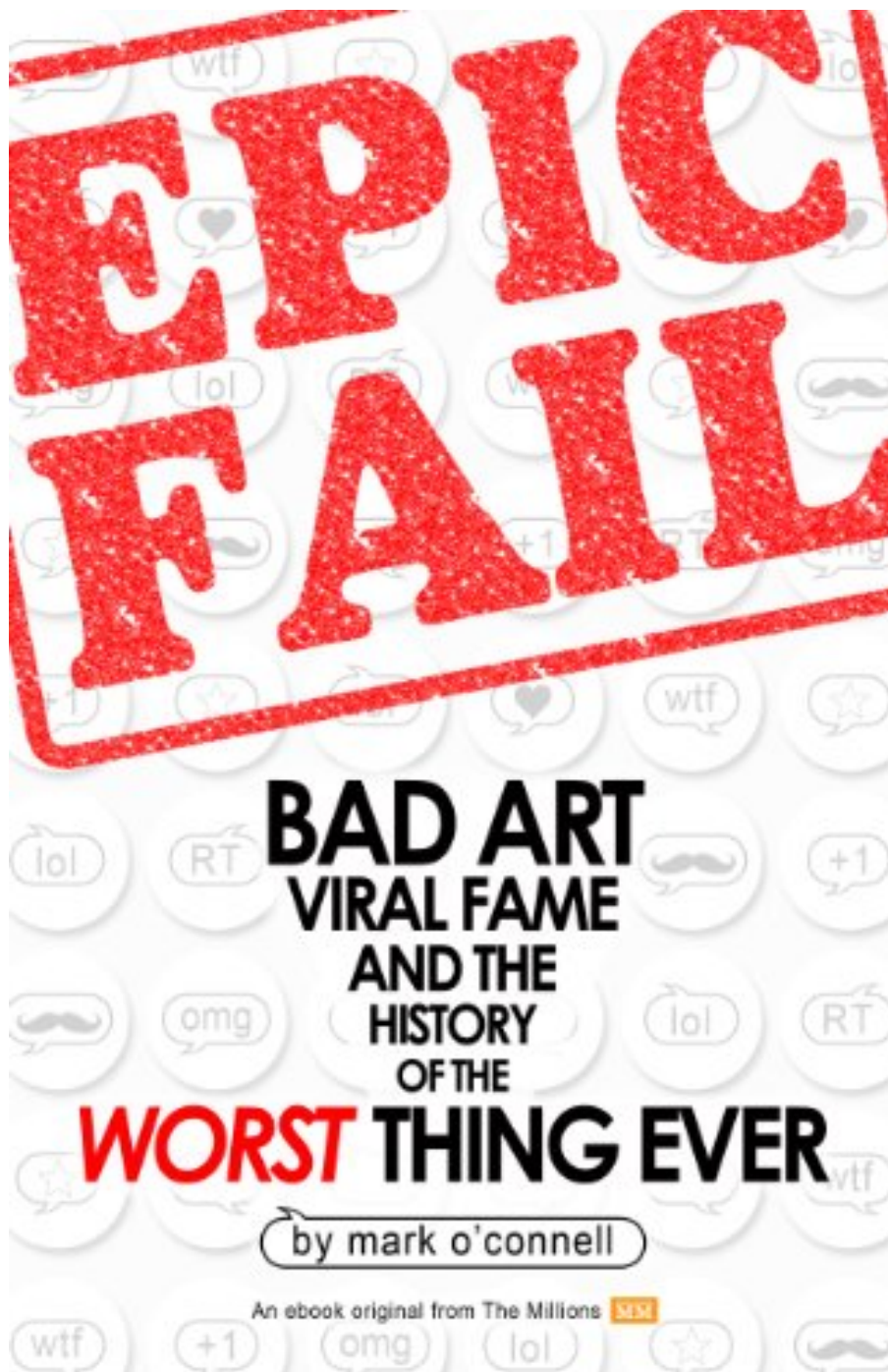


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EPIC FAIL: BAD ART, VIRAL FAME, AND THE HISTORY OF THE WORST THING EVER (KINDLE SINGLE) BY MARK O'CONNELL PDF

It clutters our inboxes. It fills our Facebook feeds. It keeps afloat a whole armada of late-night comedians, YouTube auteurs, and twitter wits ... an endless stream of "Worst Things Ever." Recall, if you will, Rebecca Black's chart-topping disasterpiece, "Friday." Or The Room, Tommy Wiseau's cinematic tragedy turned cult farce. Or the devout Spanish septuagenarian who produced an infamously botched, and now stunningly ubiquitous, retouching of a 19th-century fresco of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Internet era has fueled an obsession with these and other acts of cultural cluelessness. Hardly a week goes by, it seems, without some new aesthetic travesty spreading across the globe in the form of ones and zeros, spawning countless remixes and riffs, like the world's biggest inside joke. And once more the cry goes up: Fail! Epic Fail!

But what, exactly, draws us to these futile attempts at making songs, movies, and art? What are the essential ingredients that render a ridiculous failure sublime? More important, what does our seemingly insatiable appetite for the "succès d'incompétence" say about our aesthetic impulses? Our ethical ones? Is our laughter all in good fun or is something more sinister at work?

In this original e-book from the online magazine The Millions, Mark O'Connell, one of our funniest and most adroit young literary critics, sets out to answer these questions. He uncovers the historical context for our affinity for terrible art, tracing it back to Shakespeare and discovering the early-20th-century novelist who was dinner-party fodder for C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. He tracks the ascendancy of a once esoteric phenomenon into the mainstream, where "what Marshall McLuhan famously referred to as the Global Village now anoints a new Global Village Idiot every other week." He offers in-depth accounts of Rebecca Black, Tommy Wiseau, and the "Monkey Jesus"... and he probes the roots of his own obsession with terrible art. In this charming and insightful investigation into why we laugh, O'Connell not only spins a good tale, but he emerges as our leading analyst of the "so bad it's good" phenomenon. And his discoveries may make you think twice the next time someone passes along a link to the latest, greatest "Epic Fail."

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- Format: Kindle eBook

Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Internet 101

By Laurenzi

I bought this book because a link to it showed up on my Twitter feed, it sounded like an interesting subject, and I enjoyed the sample excerpt. Remarkably, it appears to be the first proper exploration of the cultural phenomenon that is the Epic Fail. I'm like, WTF?

Anyway, this brief ebook far exceeded my expectations, offering a very thoughtful and articulate analysis of a particular category of hubris, and of its often cruel aftermath. The author builds each chapter around a particular exemplum of Epic Failure, drawing not only on the internet, but also the cultural oddities of yesteryear, and events from his own past. Though eclectic, occasionally anecdotal, and often very, very funny, the book never feels scattered or unserious. Thought-provoking read.

Hopefully this book will one day be on a required reading list for people applying to be allowed to use the internet.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Intelligent cultural critique intelligently written

By Jake Bouma

With "Epic Fail," Mark O'Connell has rocketed to the top (or near-top) of my Authors To Watch list. Although he has written for various outlets including The Millions, Slate, The Guardian, etc., this was the first longform piece of his I've read, and I was completely dazzled.

"Epic Fail" is intelligent cultural critique intelligently written. Like others, I read (rather, devoured) it in one sitting; I was frequently nodding in agreement and even more frequently making notes in order to preserve O'Connell's fresh insights and adroit prose. I normally hesitate to bestow five-star reviews, but for my part "Epic Fail" is a no-brainer. I've already recommended the essay both publicly and privately.

To those who wish it had more of a "conclusion" or final chapter: I found that each chapter contained its own conclusions and that the piece as a whole stands on its own without need for a summation. Even those chapters that end on an ambiguous note are done so (in my opinion) intentionally -- requiring the reader to wrestle with the questions and come to his or her own conclusions.

Do not be fooled; although it may look like it, this is not brainless BuzzFeed-lit. "Epic Fail" is an engaging and erudite discourse in pop clothing.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A Scholarly Analysis of the Essence of Badness

By Frank McEvoy

Well, I loved the books "Star-Spangled Kitsch" and "The Incomplete Book of Failures," too. O'Connell nails the topic of why awful writers, artists, musicians, and film makers are so compelling and, in their own perverse way, eternal. I mean, Amanda Ros and Julia A. Moore are perennial favorites of mine (I gave their books out for Christmas 2013 (repeatedly)). In some ways, the author discusses the nature of creativity and the artists' perspectives. When I circulated my first screenplay, which actually got some attention in Hollywood, I honestly did not know if it was any good. Julia and Amanda had no such doubts about their work. (Julia A. Moore (aka "The Sweet Singer of Michigan") had revenge on her critics: "The editors that have spoken against my work have went beyond reason." (Take that!))

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