



Why you need BookTube in your life

FARAH MASUD

Are you completely, irrevocably, head over heels in love with books? Do you gush over every nook and cranny of a beautiful book? Do you find yourself talking about your favourite books for hours on end until your friends either slowly walk away or suggest that you get help? Do not despair; you are most definitely not the only one.

Growing up, I too barely had friends who loved reading and discussing books as much as I did. This upset me for a long time, until I came across what was then just a small community of young YouTubers making videos where they reviewed and recommended mostly young adult novels. They satisfied my thirst for literary discussions and ignited a new found enthusiasm for reading.

Over the years, this YouTube subculture has become much bigger and better, with people of different ages and races talking about books from a variety of genres. The community is now referred to as BookTube. So if you're interested in joining the community, here's a little guide for you:

REVIEWS & RECOMMENDATIONS

These are the most popular types of videos on BookTube. Sometimes the reviews and recommendations are based on books that the BookTuber has recently read. Other times, they might be based on the monthly or yearly wrap-ups. The wrap-ups are basically videos where BookTubers review books that they have read over a certain period of time and recommend their favourites. They often make specific recommendation videos like "favourite classics", "reading poetry: where to start" and so on. These can be very interesting to watch if you want to be introduced to books that you might have never heard of otherwise.

BOOK HAULS & BOOKSHELF TOURS

Now these videos might come off as slightly obnoxious for most of us who do not have the access or the luxury to buy books on a regular basis and struggle to make our bookshelves look half decent. However, from a completely aesthetic point of view, it is difficult not to be mesmerised by beautiful editions of one's favourite novels or bookshelves arranged by the colours of the rainbow.

BOOK TAGS

These are fun videos featuring books. Some are downright silly while others are intellectually engaging - starting from the Domino Challenge where books are arranged intricately in the form of dominoes, to the Tower Challenge where one has to build towers out of books. BookTubers host these challenges by engaging their audience through giveaways or tag other BookTubers. You could even try some of these on your own or with fellow bookworms. For example, the "First Sentence Challenge" is a game you can play in a group. One person reads out the first lines of his/her chosen books while the other blindfolded members have to guess which books have been read out, and whoever guesses right earns a point. Other tags like the Book Sacrifice Tag, Guess that Character, and Rapid Fire tags are just as entertaining.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussion videos are my personal favourite. In these videos, BookTubers talk deeply and passionately about various literary topics. This is where I first learned about the importance of separating a book from its author and also how hard it is not to do so. I learned about fanfiction and how it is not necessarily an abomination to the original story. BookTube has exposed me to debates on topics such as ebook vs physical books, book-to-movie adaptations, rating books, over-analysing books, literary cannons, etc.

These are just some of the countless bookish videos you will find on BookTube. If I have made a convincing case for you to start following the community, here are a few channels you might want to begin with:

- Ariel Bissett
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ArielBissett>
- Jen Campbell
<https://www.youtube.com/user/jenvcampbell>
- Peruse Project
<https://www.youtube.com/user/PeruseProject>
- Booksandquills
<https://www.youtube.com/user/booksandquills>

I thought I should write a little bit about each of them, but I'd rather you found out for yourself. Happy BookTubing!

Farah Masud is a humanbean and that is all you need to know about her. Please don't try to contact her anywhere, especially not in person.

ALBUM REVIEW

Villains: QotSA's seventh from heaven

AZMIN AZRAN

I'm one of those people who could listen to Josh Homme scratch a chalk board with his nails and then go, "This is the sort of innovation that makes Joshua a musical genius." I am a fan, and I'll try my best to curb my excitement as I write about Queens of the Stone Age's new album "Villains", which is so good I cried on my first listen.

I didn't actually cry but this is going to be a positive review. "...Like Clockwork" came out in 2013 with its dark and heavy tunes, and QotSA did an excellent job capturing that mood on that record. But those expecting something similar would be the ones who were clamouring that the band had "gone pop" when the first single from the album, *The Way You Used to Do* came out. It's a dance number, and it's done exactly the way you'd expect Queens to do a dance number: a retro stomp with bouncing riffs and Michael Schuman killing it on the bass. The second pre released single, *The Evil Has Landed*, was far better received because it sounded "more like QotSA" than the first one. Yet, if you aren't one to indulge in some impromptu hip-shaking, you'll at least feel your head bobbing sideways on this track.

The opening track on the album, *Feet Don't Fail Me*, features Josh Homme singing the line "I was born in the desert, May 17 in '73", and this track does a decent job of announcing The Ginger Elvis musically. It starts slow with a synthesiser intro, and picks up the tempo gradually, leaving you with the familiar aftertaste of a fast paced riff that thumps on your eardrums.

The album slows down for the first time on its third track, *Domesticated Animals*. The band plays around with the riff threatening to reach a crescendo until it eventually does.

Homme brings his A-game in writing as he mocks the weak willed human, making it one of the better songs on this record.

Fortress, the fourth track on Villains, is a melody. It's a hauntingly beautiful track that warns of the darkness life has the tendency to dish up, and will make you dig deeper with every listen. *Hideaway* and *Un-reborn Again* follow up with similar tempos later on in the album.

'Head Like a Haunted House' is a song that reminded me of The Dead Kennedys' "Holiday in Cambodia." Funky and dry in the first half, Troy van Leeuwen and Josh Homme spice up things up on the guitars in the second of the song to make the situation wetter.

The last track on the record, *Villains of Circumstance*, is the sort of QotSA song that almost makes you proud to be a fan. It's a love song, it'll haunt you (in a good way), and it slows down and picks up just at the right time to take you on a journey that'll help you come to terms with your interpretation of the music. As Josh Homme sings "I'll be forever yours/Always, evermore, and on and on", you let go a sigh of many meanings, the album comes to an end, and you're compelled to hit repeat once more.

Overall, the album is excellent, with a couple of tracks in the middle that maybe you'll want to skip over on the first listen. But like most songs these guys serve up, it grows on you with every listen, and by the end of the year, Villains may well turn out to be one of your favourite albums of 2017.

Azmin Azran is what you would find if you took a bunch of human beings and made a new one out of their median characteristics. He's so average he's a mathematical anomaly. Send money at azminazran@gmail.com

