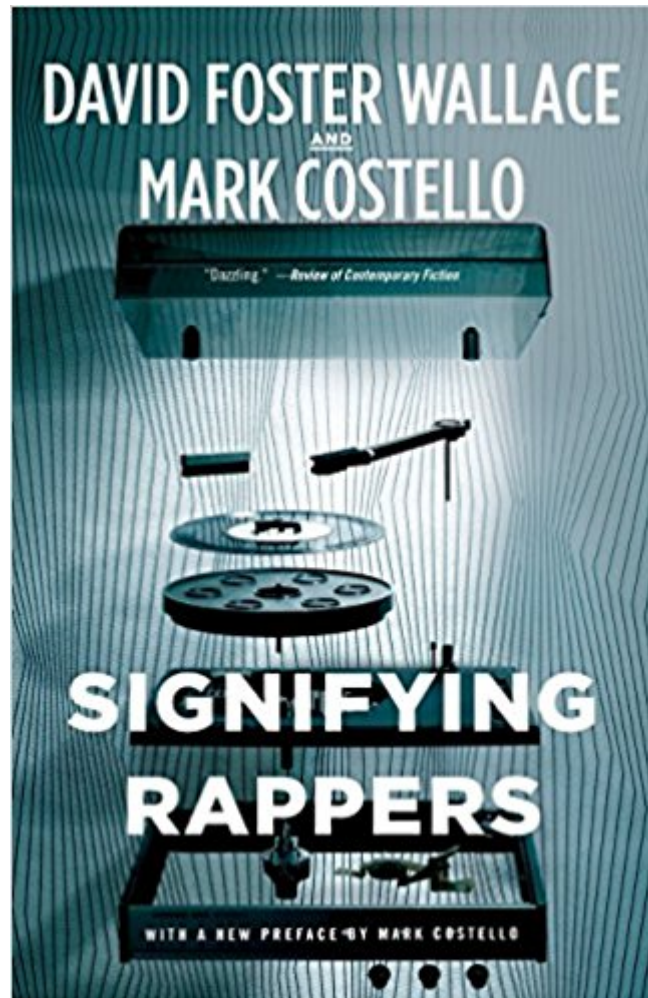




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Signifying Rappers



Synopsis

Finally back in print--David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello's exuberant exploration of rap music and culture. Living together in Cambridge in 1989, David Foster Wallace and longtime friend Mark Costello discovered that they shared "an uncomfortable, somewhat furtive, and distinctively white enthusiasm for a certain music called rap/hip-hop." The book they wrote together, set against the legendary Boston music scene, mapped the bipolarities of rap and pop, rebellion and acceptance, glitz and gangsterdom. Signifying Rappers issued a fan's challenge to the giants of rock writing, Greil Marcus, Robert Palmer, and Lester Bangs: Could the new street beats of 1989 set us free, as rock had always promised? Back in print at last, Signifying Rappers is a rare record of a city and a summer by two great thinkers, writers, and friends. With a new foreword by Mark Costello on his experience writing with David Foster Wallace, this rerelease cannot be missed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

ACCLAIM FOR DAVID FOSTER WALLACE:"The Best Mind of His Generation" —A.O. Scott, The New York Times"A prose magician, Mr. Wallace was capable of writing...about subjects from tennis to politics to lobsters, from the horrors of drug withdrawal to the small terrors of life aboard a luxury cruise ship, with humor and fervor and verve. At his best he could write funny, write sad, write sardonic and write serious. He could map the infinite and infinitesimal, the mythic and mundane. He could conjure up an absurd future...while conveying the inroads the absurd has already made in a country where old television shows are a national touchstone and asinine advertisements wallpaper

our lives." — Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

David Foster Wallace was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1962 and raised in Illinois, where he was a regionally ranked junior tennis player. He received bachelor of arts degrees in philosophy and English from Amherst College and wrote what would become his first novel, *The Broom of the System*, as his senior English thesis. He received a masters of fine arts from University of Arizona in 1987 and briefly pursued graduate work in philosophy at Harvard University. His second novel, *Infinite Jest*, was published in 1996. Wallace taught creative writing at Emerson College, Illinois State University, and Pomona College, and published the story collections *Girl with Curious Hair*, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *Oblivion*, the essay collections *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, and *Consider the Lobster*. He was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, a Lannan Literary Award, and a Whiting Writers' Award, and was appointed to the Usage Panel for *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. He died in 2008. His last novel, *The Pale King*, was published in 2011.

Wallace and Costello, a matching I had no idea even existed until seeing this book pop up among DFW's other works after ordering *Pale King*, wrote a great lil book of open-ended arguments and riff off of each other's love for hip-hop in the late 1980's. Learned a lot about Schooly D, and plenty of cleverly written anecdotes are bound within these pages. Great little argument by Costello regarding the sampling of the theme song for "I Dream of Geannie" in a Public Enemy (I think it was them? Now I can't remember if it was them or DJ Jazzy Jeff. Probably neither) song and how this doesn't show any barriers are being broken down between opposite communities i.e. Black people cherry picking theme songs from sitcoms intended for a primarily white audience to show how they aren't particularly different in finding their tastes, but rather is an example of how alien these communities are to one another. Either way, great read, and fascinating if you're into dense prose on the subject of hip-hop across the nation in the late 80's. Enjoy!

Great pointed, thought out and still timely given today's political and socioeconomic climate. Get past the self deprecating and the vocab and it's really a fresh look at it with a novel tone

Oddly prescient. The text is a little tortured, especially as DFW is attempting to wrap his gift for deep insight and reconcile it with a sentence structure he would later master, but it's a worthwhile read. Especially when you realize how little things have changed over the years; this could be a 3.3 1/3

book spanning a genre published in 2015.

DFW and MC have intellectually and eloquently started a needed discussion on the necessity and purpose of rap and hip-hop. It goes off on tangents sometimes, but they are colorful ones to be sure.

A very fascinating read. Its great to read anything by David Foster Wallace and this is no exception. I particularly enjoyed the extended introduction by co-writer Mark Costello which provided excellent insight to the two writers' lives at the time of writing this as well as their process.

Not a masterpiece by any means but still a worthwhile read. The authors give us a glimpse into the world of rap when it was entering it's heyday. Gives you an insightful (yet always) an outsiders point of view. Interesting read.

I have read the other reviews on this book and they are overwhelmingly positive. So I am not sure what it is that I am missing. This is my first introduction to David Foster Wallace and his writing style, so I am not sure if this book is typical of his work or not. Perhaps it is an acquired taste? Maybe his other works are different? Let me first state that I am a huge fan of hip-hop and rap and as such was excited to get this book and read more about the genre and its origins. As a West Coast teen in the late 80's N.W.A. and Ice-T were constantly playing on my Walkman. So I am definitely a fan of the music and genre as a whole. The book: I am not sure how to express my disappointment with this book. I do not have the words to properly convey how horrible the reading experience was for me. I recognize that the co-author Costello openly admits that his book is a collection of essays by DFW and they put the book together after the fact, so that may contribute to the challenges I had with this book. But the material reads like a sociologist's jumble of field notes and observations. The thoughts are rarely coherent or build one upon the next. The writing style is frantic and just overwhelmingly long-winded. I am not an English or Literature teacher, so I am not an expert when it comes to syntax, grammar, punctuation, and proper writing conventions but it does not take a scholar to recognize that this book is a mess. There are run-on sentences that go on and on full of circular reasoning that just muddy the waters and confuse the topic at hand. The author often diverges off of the topic to bring in other elements in order to prove a point or offer background on the social climate of the time. The stories themselves are fine, but they are too long and presented in a way that detract from the main topic: RAP. As one other reviewer wrote, there are paragraphs upon

paragraphs about an I Dream of Jeannie sequence during the race riots in Tampa. The story just goes on and on and the author writes his own fantasy episode reflecting the attitudes and mindset of the black population in Florida. The sequence is just too long and goes beyond the point of adding relevant information. There are several other instances that the author brings in stories to establish a point, but the stories just go on and on and fill pages for the sake of filling pages. I get it, Rap music was not born in a vacuum. In order to truly understand early Rap we need to understand what these artists were facing in society and the challenges they dealt with. The angst of social injustices of those times, the lack of Punk Rock's ability to properly express or represent the plight of the Black Man... That is essential to understanding the story line and evolution of Rap, but the author does such a poor job of weaving these stories seamlessly into the book. This is my biggest challenge with this book. There is no unifying story here. There is nothing that ties one chapter to the next. There is no progression or building of an actual story. When I finished, I did not feel as though I read a book, but rather spent 3 days trudging through the ramblings of Rap fan, not the work of an esteemed author.

Heard SINGIFYING RAPPERS (Hachette Audio), written by David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello and narrated by Robert Petkoff. It is a rerelease of the same 1990 book by the authors, updated with a new foreword by Costello on his experience writing with Wallace. The authors based much of their work, which is actually a longish essay, on their experiences hanging out with owners of a small rap company in Boston. They claim to be the first whites to appreciate its political radicalness and artistic value, calling rap "quite possibly the most important stuff happening in American poetry today." SIGNIFYING RAPPERS might well now be considered to be outdated, but that's not the case if you view it as history lesson of a movement that has survived all these years. If you're a fan of this type music, definitely read this book. Others will probably find it not all that interesting.

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