



Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult & Imitation in American Popular Culture

John Strausbaugh

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A refreshingly clearheaded and taboo-breaking look at race in America reveals our culture as neither Black nor White nor Other, but a mix-a mongrel.

Black Like You is an erudite and entertaining exploration of race relations in American popular culture. Particularly compelling is the author's ability to tackle blackface--a strange, often scandalous, and now taboo entertainment. Although blackface performance came to be denounced as purely racist mockery, and shamefacedly erased from most modern accounts of American cultural history, Strausbaugh shows that, nevertheless, its impact has been deep and longlasting. The influence of blackface can be seen in rock and roll and hip-hop; in vaudeville, Broadway, and drag performances; in Mark Twain and "gangsta lit"; in the earliest filmstrips and Hollywood's 2004 *White Chicks*; on radio and television; in advertising and product marketing; and even in the way Americans speak.

With remarkable common sense and clarity, Strausbaugh candidly illuminates truths about race rarely discussed in public, including:

- American culture neither conforms to knee-jerk racism nor to political correctness. It is neither Black nor White nor Other, but a mix-a mongrel.
- No history is best forgotten-however uncomfortable it may be to remember. The power of blackface to enrage and mortify Americans to this day is reason enough to examine what it still tells us about our culture and ourselves.
- Blackface is still alive. Its impact and derivations- including Black performers in "whiteface"-can be seen all around us.

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