

The bastard sons of William Burroughs and Dr Seuss, underground lit cult the Bizarros are picking up where the cyberpunks left off.

Ohio-based writer D. Harlan Wilson has never been championed by Oprah, nor made Richard and Judy's Book Club list, but a serious buzz is beginning to build around his work. Since 2001, he has been honing his prose on genre-shredding short stories and novels such as *The Kafka Effekt* and *Pseudo-City*, releasing them through a sub-underground of alt-lit websites and micro-publishers like Raw Dog Screaming Press. Luridly transgressive and relentlessly violent, his fourth novel *Dr. Identity* is a brutally satirical piece of neo-pulp science-fiction that takes pot shots at, well, everything.

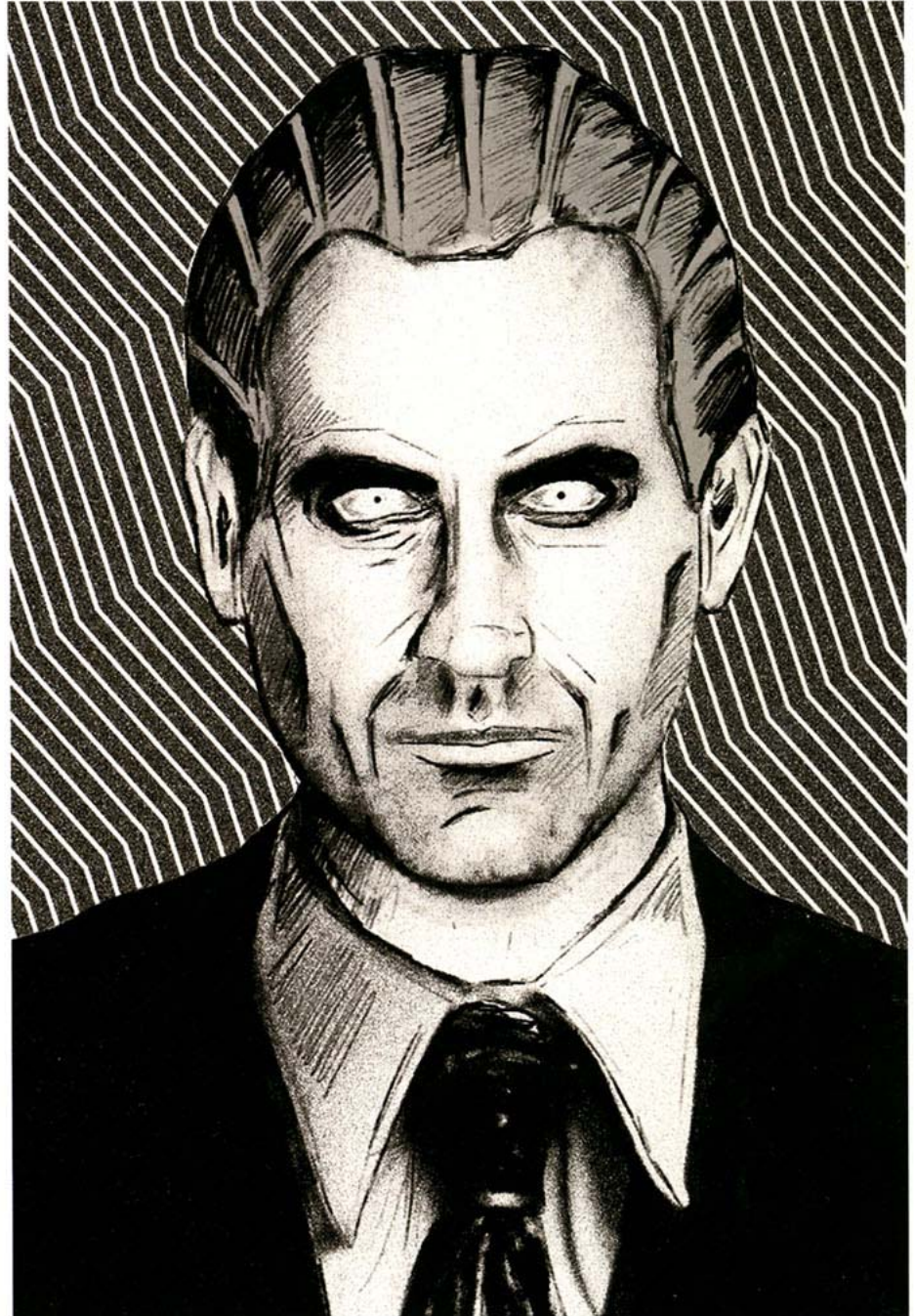
Stylistically, Wilson is a restless sonofabitch, juggling genres and remixing textures just like the bastard post-modernist son of Bill Burroughs and Dr. Seuss. In *Dr. Identity*, his meditations on individuality and the authenticity of the self re-explore terrain originally mapped out by Philip K Dick. But Wilson is far more twisted and media literate than PKD; he populates his nightmarish Bliptown with murderous android duplicates, or "Gängers", then craftily promotes his book by appearing on *Second Life* as a digital copy of himself and reading extracts from it. Irony aside, *Dr. Identity* is a ferocious assault on the post-millennial mediascape – an absurdist, steroid-bloated satire of a society hooked on fast food and celebrity.

Wilson is an outrider for a loosely affiliated group of envelope-pushing experimentalists whose ranks include Carlton Mellick III, Bradley Sands, Steve Aylett, and John Lawson. Nicknamed the Bizarros, they are more like a literary street gang than a fully-fledged movement, with each member afflicted by his own peculiar set of stylistic tropes and tics.

Wilson sees himself primarily as an irrealist, whose writing is driven by dream logic, rather than the physical laws of reality. Of the other Bizarro authors, he says, "Each has their own niche, style and themes within a broader spectrum of off-beat writing that employs elements of sci-fi, fantasy and/or horror."

Wilson is jazzed by the idea that the Bizarros might be logical descendants of the 80s cyberpunk scene – "That's a hard act to follow," he laughs. "In my view, the cyberpunk authors – Gibson, Sterling, Rucker, and the rest – produced some of the best writing of the 20th century. The notion that Bizarro is an extension of that thrills me. The world has seen the actualisation of so many cyberpunk themes... science-fiction has become reality. But if we're post-cyberpunks, then what does that make us – realists? Post-realists? Perhaps all of those things... whatever they mean."

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THE BIZARRO BRAT-PACK

Carlton Mellick III: prolific avant-punk author whose back catalogue includes *Haunted Vagina* and *Ocean of Lard*. A recent story appeared in *Perverted by Language*, an anthology inspired by Mark E. Smith song titles.

John Edward Lawson: former industrial/noise musician turned arch splatter-lit poet, and editor-in-chief of Raw Dog Screaming Press. His hobbies include drinking black absinthe from a Tibetan monk's skull.

Steve Aylett: Über-cool Brit-born novelist, satirist, and creator of deranged comic-books like *The Caterer*, which is attributed to fictional writer Jeff Lint. Mate of acclaimed comic-writer Alan Moore.