

**ACID CASUALS BY NICHOLAS BLINCOE,
SERPENT'S TAIL, £5.99, ISBN 1852427086**

SERPENT'S TAIL ORIGINALLY published Nicholas Blincoe's debut novel in 1995. It was reprinted in 1997, and has now been re-issued with a new 'club mix' style cover in place of the inspired original cover, depicting a scene-of-the-crime type body-outline, in white powder rather than chalk.

Acid Casuals is a terrifically fun novel, excitingly plotted—despite, or in spite, of

what might appear to be a most unlikely hit-job involving a transexual with a penchant for giving blow jobs—and well-paced throughout. It is also genuinely funny in places, and as such, should be read with caution, because laughing out loud on the train can cause people to look at you as if you are the carriage looney. Usually, novels that try to be funny—especially those written by ‘comedians’—are tedious, requiring the reader to wade through so many over-long scenes which are intended to be humorous but feel like limp padding. Blincoe, however, manages to introduce scenes or lines that are genuinely funny, and places them in such a way that the plot never loses its impetus.

Although it’s four years old, it’s still fresh and well worth a read. For those who don’t know, the plot involves the aforementioned transexual, now called Estela, the Manchester club scene, a money laundering operation, a manic VJ (that’s video-jockey) called John Quay (aka Junk) with only one eye (the other one lost to shooting speed), car chases, shoot-outs, some sex and lots of drugs.

The moral, for those of you who like books with a moral, is simple: ‘drugs can make you into the kind of person you need to be.’

Acid Casuals would make a terrific *Budda of Suburbia*-type four-parter on Channel Four, but that is not to be. Instead there is a film planned. As long ago as *Crime Time 9*, the film adaptation of *Acid Casuals* was ‘at the script stage’, written not by Blincoe, but by Mike Hodges [*Who he? Ed.*]—apparently Hodges had got the script as far as a second draft, which Blincoe described as ‘really good.’ However, there’s been no further news on how the film’s shaping up since then, but let’s hope it’s in production. Until then, powder your nose, charge into Waterstones with your piece blazing, and grab a copy of *Acid Casuals*.

Eddie Duggan