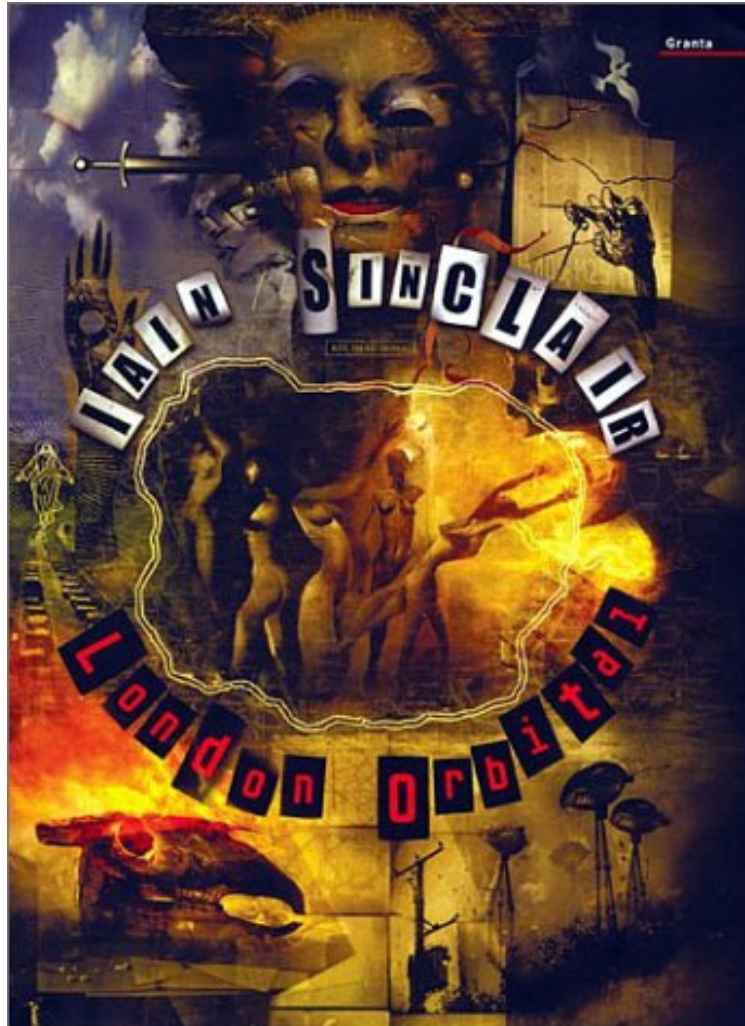


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London Orbital

Iain Sinclair

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Iain Sinclair : London Orbital before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised London Orbital:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must read for all Londoners By JenP The M25 is a roadway that circles around London and it is generally considered to be a road to nowhere. Sinclair decides that he will walk the M25 (or paths next to the M25) through various neighborhoods and passing abandoned buildings, closed mental institutions, polluted neighborhoods, beautiful gardens and estates, and much more. Multiple "characters" accompany the author as he makes the walk around the entire circuit. This was a fascinating book for me but it is clearly not for everyone. Despite the fact that it took me months to finish this book, It's non-fiction and reads like a series of footnotes with some narrative thread loosely connecting the various threads. This typically is not the sort of book I would enjoy,

but I tackled the book as a journey. I printed out maps of the M25 and surrounding neighborhoods and I read slowly looking up pictures of all the locations. I used to live in England up until age 12. We lived in Surrey and Sinclair described many towns I knew and I loved the amount of detail provided. Reading the book in this way over the course of months, made it an enjoyable and fascinating read. I think it will be a more enjoyable book for people who are either from London or have spent significant time in London and surrounding areas. The best way for me to describe this book is to liken it to a museum guided tour where you go from one point to the next with a group of people and stop at various locations to learn a little about each destination point and while on the way you chat with your neighbors about a variety of topics. And the sheer number of literary references are fun to read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Travelogue to end all travelogues By PuroShaggy The concept is simple but the literary execution of is anything but: Walk around England's 120 mile M25 highway (a loop that circles London) and describe all that you see. Throw in some history, philosophy, descriptive geography, conversations with locals, theories about London's secret life, discuss recent crime sprees, contemplate the future, wax endlessly about the Millennium Dome and how much you despise it, and 550 pages later, you have a book. If Iain Sinclair was not such an amazing author, "London Orbital" would be a pretty exhausting affair. Circling London proper by foot, with the accompaniment of friends and comrades with agendas of their own, Sinclair not only discusses the creation of the M25, the geography of the terrain it covers, and the history of the local principalities it passes through, he also manages to tie in any possible connection to the places he visits on his walk, including the histories of: London, England, the automobile, royalty, the manufacturing of chalk, ecstasy (the drug), insane asylums, the literary canon of JG Ballard, rifles, World War II, Churchill, serial killers, and more- much more. Open to any page, read a paragraph or two, and you will learn something you did not know and never thought you needed to know but are now glad you do. Yes, much of it is unfamiliar to me as an American and if there is any fault to Sinclair's approach, it is that he writes it as a Londoner who is familiar with London and assumes the reader is too; this is a minor complaint, however, as Sinclair's prose is so elevated and composed that he could be writing about a fictional world known only to him and the reading would still be as compelling. If you are a fan of travelogues, then this book should please you as it elevates that literary form to a whole other level. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By John Lambert excellent - makes you feel like you're really there - lots of detail. Met my expectations.

In this volume Iain Sinclair sets out to map the vast stretch of urban settlement outside London bounded by the M25. His long journeys - from the Lea Valley to Uxbridge, from Staines to South Mimms - are flanked by the black clouds of smoke from burning carcasses as the foot and mouth panic takes hold. Here he uncovers a history of forgotten villages, suburban utopias and hellish asylums, now transformed into upmarket housing, all the while walking a disappearing landscape, as the countryside is engulfed by commerce.

From Publishers Weekly At first glance, this may appear to be only a book of observations about walking alongside the M-25, the roughly 150-mile highway that encircles London, but it is actually a complex, literary meditation on crime, urban sprawl, the effect of automobiles, British politics, the relationship between history and modernity, and perhaps not least, the importance of good footwear. Sinclair (*Lights Out for the Territory*) writes in a hyper, staccato style that in a single passage can run the gamut from Beat poetry ("Narrative fractured. Verbals didn't stand up. Confessions wouldn't cohere. The motorway was loud with Chinese whispers") to the paranoid, embellished worldview of Hunter S. Thompson ("When dusk fell, villains took to their [borrowed-without-the-owner's-consent] cars. On the cruise. Tooted up with hand guns, machetes, petrol cans, monkey wrenches"). As with Thompson, one gets the sense that Sinclair's hyperbolic descriptions get at the truth better than a more conventional portrayal ever could. Sinclair is an artist with no patience for cheesy development, shopping malls or the very highway on which he walks, slicing past beautiful countryside and abandoned factories alike. The writing is often enjoyable, but at times heavy-handed and replete with references that will escape those not conversant in British culture: "An excuse to sample oysters in Whitstable (Notting Hill prices)," he writes, "to swim at Walberswick (Southwold: the new Hampstead)." The book is both fascinating and exhausting, and readers will find themselves rewarded even if they need to put it down frequently just to stretch their legs. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal British writer Sinclair's earlier works, including *White Chappell*, *Scarlet Tracings*, have been compared to works by William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. In his latest release, Sinclair and several companions take to the road, specifically, the M25. This beltway, which circumscribes London, is considered by some to be the boundary of the city. As he walks the areas through which the M25 travels, the author delves into the past and present of places that may be overlooked in a city so large. Where Sinclair's *Lights Out for the Territory* explored inner London, *London Orbital* looks at the more remote locations once used for, among other things, asylums, hospitals, homes, and vacations from the industrialized city. The book contains both humor and interesting tidbits of history, but to reach these, the reader must wade through dense prose. Recommended only for libraries whose patrons are serious Anglophiles or are fans of the author's previous works. Sheila Kasparek, Mansfield Univ. Lib., PA Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The title of Sinclair's latest refers to London's infamous M25 orbital highway, or bypass, as we might say in

America. Recently voted number one in a poll of "seven horrors of Britain" conducted by BBC Radio program Today, the M25's extremely heavy traffic and stifling pollution make life miserable for drivers. Bucking this trend, Sinclair declares himself "obsessed" with the road and decides to walk the 117-mile route in an effort to, as he says, "come to terms with this beast." He finds that walking the orbital isn't so easy-- time and again, he and his companions meet chain-link fences and impassable plots on the mostly industrial land surrounding the motorway. Sinclair is a witty and capable writer, and his musings on the M25 are characteristically sharp. However, his audience may be somewhat limited; packed (as densely as the M25 at 5 p.m.) with allusions to British history and pop culture, well-read Anglophiles will be delighted, but others may find this slow going. Beth Leistensnider Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved