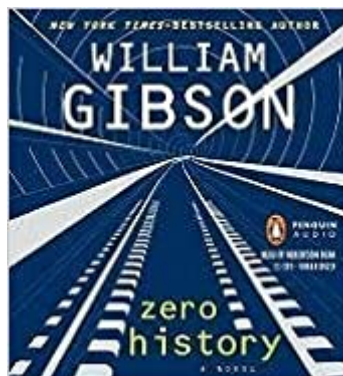


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# Zero History



## Synopsis

Unabridged, 9 CDs, 11 hours Read by TBA William Gibson's first new novel since Spook Country.

## Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Penguin Audio; Unabridged edition (September 7, 2010)

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Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 208 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,777,581 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > \( G \) > Gibson, William](#) #1620 in [Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction](#) #1918 in [Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy](#)

## Customer Reviews

Another smartly scouted roadmap of alternate routes through today's global culture, applauded the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and the other critics agreed. Gibson leads readers on a wild adventure that encompasses fashion, the military-industrial complex, viral marketing, behavioral anthropology, addiction, and even base jumping, weaving all of these distinctive threads into a satisfyingly cohesive whole. A couple reviewers cited some implausible plot twists and exaggerated characters, but most praised Gibson's increased focus on his characters, his razor-sharp prose, and his incisive observations on modern culture. Hailed as the funniest and lightest of Gibson's books to date, Zero History stands well alone, but readers already familiar with the series' previous titles will find this last installment much more rewarding. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

After a gig investigating [“locative art”](#) for the [“overly wealthy and dangerously curious”](#) Hubertus Bigend, founder of the trend-forecasting firm Blue Ant (Spook Country, 2007), Hollis Henry finds herself once again under Bigend's employ. This time she is hired to discover the identity of the designer of a secret brand of clothing called Gabriel Hounds, whom Bigend hopes to enlist in his bid to get into the design, contracting, and manufacture of U.S. military clothing (and its inevitable spin-off into the mainstream consumer market). Military

contracting, according to Bigend, is essentially recession proof. Meanwhile, the translator and cryptologist Milgrim (also returning from Spook Country), a former Ativan addict (now in recovery on Bigend's dime) with "zero history" (being off the grid, he has no credit or address history), is asked to assist Hollis in her investigation. What begins as a seemingly innocent apparel-related project takes on more sinister overtones when the two are followed from London to Paris by a competitor with shady dealings in the arms trade and a personal ax to grind with Milgrim. Gibson, who made a name with *Neuromancer* (1984) and other speculative takes on new technologies, returns to his familiar concerns with hacker culture, surveillance, paranoia, and viral marketing, with occasional digressions into the semiotics of fashion and celebrity and references to cosplay, base jumping, and the Festo AirPenguin (look it up). --Ben Segedin --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Easily the worst part of this book is the character's stubborn refusal to be even slightly pleased with anything. The characters come across as nothing more than wealthy hipsters traipsing about London and Paris with unlimited bank accounts. Even without financial stress or the real drive to get \*anything\* done, they still seem deeply unhappy with just about everything. By the end of the book it's pretty grating.

Don't give out 5 stars for published reviews, but this was close. Starts out slow, building, building and then the last quarter accelerates rapidly and the chase is afoot as they say. Rereading it for the 'nth time I am still moved by the grace and beauty of Gibson's writing. Along with a very few other gifted authors like Le Carre he shows what the English language is capable of in the right hands. Possibly the best book Gibson has written and possibly the best book I have read. Ready to read it again.

His style is one of a kind. He has a unique way of immersing the reader in the worlds he creates. These worlds feel uniquely real and poignant. Gibson always has something relevant to say about our culture, and always leaves you thinking.

No spoilers here, except what you get from my title: I thought the book was decent entertainment, until the end, which made me want to howl. Gibson has followed a somewhat unusual arc as a writer: from *Neuromancer*, a ground-breaking work of fantasy and science fiction, to the current Bigend Trilogy, which take place in the same world that the reader lives in -- although not, in most cases, the same strata of that world. While the characters and plot of "Pattern Recognition" are a bit

fantastic, the events of "Spook Country" are utterly plausible; the characters unusual, but not unusually unusual. This doesn't make them boring or uninteresting, but rather makes them more engaging, at least to me. "Zero History" starts out in this direction, but then reaches back into a science fiction ploy in order to resolve a difficult situation near the end of the plot. In the last few pages, it gets even weirder, with Bigend revealing -- for absolutely no purpose related to the plot, but perhaps as a lead-in to the next novel, something absolutely astonishing that would fit in perfectly with Neuromancer, but simply seems a mix of unnecessary and improbable. I said I wasn't going to spoil the ending, and I won't, but I will just say that it all seems to fall apart at that point. Bigend, who is a master of secrets, tells his ultimate secret -- not under duress, or to answer some other need, but as a silly boast. There's no need for it. It is a supremely stupid thing for someone who doesn't do stupid things to do. Let's just say that if there is a fourth book in this series, at the end we find out whether Bigend is the ancestor of Ashpool or Tessier, because that's where this is going. And I find this a disappointing regression.

I discovered WG some 25 years ago while studying in NYC through a 100-best-sf-novels book. I read Neuromancer and became a Gibson fan overnight. After the first superb trilogy (Neuro plus Mona Lisa Overdrive and Count Zero), my fanaticism declined with Idoru and the other members of the second trilogy (my preferred one was Virtual Light); but when Pattern Recognition appeared it bloomed again to a climax. I simply loved that novel. I lived two years in pre-11S NYC (my favourite city, period) but have not been able to go back there after the event. Within that context, among other things that novel made me feel what the world was after the fall of the towers, besides showing perhaps better than ever Gibson's razor-sharp, powerful prose and style. Again, with Spook Country I drifted away... I simply didn't get it and didn't have any fun with it; for the first time, I almost did not finish a Gibson book. So I began reading Zero History with some misgivings. I just finished it, and surely am still digesting it, but I can already say one thing: even if I didn't get it either, at least not completely, this time I loved it... Again, perhaps for the first time ever with this author, I didn't CARE about "getting" it or not, because Gibson's style was so pure and perfect that just reading the mere sequence of words and sentences was so much fun! And the story itself, what I was able to get being a non-native speaker, was fun, though perhaps too light and even incoherent for what Gibson normally does. I can think of a few writers somehow close to Gibson that can do that to me (i.e. read for the pure joy and beauty contained in the sequence, even without wholly understanding the underlying ideas or connotations): the superb China Miéville and my all-time favourite: Gene Wolfe. Let's see what Gibson has for us in his new trilogy. I am gonna miss Hollis

Henry...

Gibson brings the reader back to the complex relationships and behaviors of some of his most memorable characters. The settings and activities are fascinating and seductive. Nothing is obvious as the complex story unfolds and the role of modern technology is simply an extension of subtle individual actions and reactions. For patient and thoughtful readers of the new interconnected world in which we live.

William Gibson's books are always full of surprising characters, some of which appear in more than one novel, so there's a kind of continuity between books, makes the character development long term, you want to keep reading the next book to see which characters reappear, disappear or develop more. This one wasn't my favorite but is still a decent story!

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