



Syrup

Max Barry

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When Scat comes up with the idea for the hottest new soda ever, he's sure he'll retire the next rich, savvy marketing success story. But in the treacherous waters of corporate America there are no sure things--and suddenly Scat has to save not only his idea but his yet-to-be-realized career. With the help of the scarily beautiful and brainy 6, he sets out on a mission to reclaim the fame and fortune that, time and again, eludes him. This brilliantly scathing debut is a hilarious send-up of celebrity, sexual politics, corporate America, and the fleeting status that comes with getting to the table first--before the other guy has you for lunch.

Syrup Details

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Author : Max Barry

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From Reader Review Syrup for online ebook

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

Syrup is the story of the ups and downs (and downs and downs and downs) of a man, Scat, who is desperate to gain fame and fortune. While trying to pitch his idea for a new flavor of Coca Cola, Scat finds himself quickly learning how cutthroat the world of corporate marketing can be and discovering how he may have to conform in order to accomplish his dreams.

So I have read a couple of Maxx Barry's books, and I will say that reading only one will not give you a good grasp on what to expect from any of the others. I feel as though the underlying theme that threads them all together is Barry's scathing sarcasm/sense of humor. In this case, the witty humor was the only thing that really kept me going.

You can tell that it was a debut novel because all of the characters sort of blend together. Even with their separate names I had to keep reminding myself who was who in relation to Scat. The characters that did stand out, I really didn't care for at all. **Now, let me clarify that I realize characters do not have to be likable in order to be well-written.** Some of the best I've read I would gladly push off a cliff if I were forced to interact with them in my real life. But these characters usually have a degree or two of complexity that makes you contemplate their actions, they have some driving force behind why they are unlikable. In this case however, almost everyone was flat out awful, self-centered, and mean just for the sake of being so.

As for Scat's characterization, it was confusing at best. Sometimes he was confident, capable, and reliable and then a few pages later he was bumbling, nearsighted, and hot-tempered. It would have made sense if he had steadily risen from zero to hero, gaining experience and learning from his mistakes, but instead he seemed to quickly oscillate between the two.

I also struggled to stay engaged with this plot. You could argue that Syrup is a character driven novel, but I would say it's really more half and half. So, with the character aspect shot, I was relying on the story to pick up the slack. Unfortunately, I just couldn't invest myself in Scat's success. The pacing was a little jerky, and some plot points seemed to exist solely for the sake of progression.

I really appreciate that Barry uses this novel to shine a light on the despicable and underhanded methods that can be used by those in corporate marketing; working in this type of industry can really desensitize a person and distance them from the audiences they so desperately want to appeal to, and I think Barry captured that truth well. Ultimately though, this was my least favorite of his novels. I would recommend Machine Man or Lexicon over this one if you want to experience that sense of humor I mentioned earlier in a more interesting setting.

Bandit says

I love Max Barry's books. I've read all of them now, but out of chronological order, so this one, his debut novel, I ended up reading just now. So nice to find out that he was this good right out of the gate. Although with a simpler more straight forward plot (which is still quite twisted by regular standards) Syrup has all of Barry's wit, humor and energy. Barry specializes in satires (financial and sociological) and the world is never short of offering subjects to rip into. Here the heroes are younger (as the author himself was and the extra X

in his name on the cover will testify to), but their ambitions and antics are just as wild as Barry's fans are accustomed to. It's an all out marketing campaign extraordinaire, which manages to spoof not only marketing industry and overall commercialism, but also film industry as well, just for the fun of it. It's also a morality tale of ambition, love story and a play by play how to succeed in business guide of sorts. Extremely funny, dynamic, fast paced story with original likable (occasionally in spite of themselves) characters and a very clever plot. Even the cover is funny. Awesome read, particularly impressive for a debut novel. Highly recommended.

Jason Edwards says

I read *Syrup* a few weeks ago, so this review might be a bit vague. Short version: I liked it. I read *Jennifer Government* years ago, *Company* before realizing it was also by Max Barry, and jumped on *Machine Man* as soon as I saw it on the shelves. I liked them all, for different reasons, and so when I came across *Syrup* in a used book store, buying it was a no brainer.

I read the book as a "break" from trying to plow through this year's Booker Prize long list. So, right there, I'm calling out *Syrup* as "light" reading. My apologies, to readers and Mr. Barry alike. I do not mean to insult or denigrate. But this is certainly a younger Barry writing, a more eager, maybe even less serious Barry. Which is not to say later works are more "serious." Just that the wit in his later books is a little more world-wise, while the events in *Syrup* are little more farcical.

However, rest assured this is still a work written by a gifted hand. *Syrup* reads easy, flows smoothly, and like a roller coaster either makes you scream or guts you with anticipation. It's a fun story, silly in places, outright absurd in others.

I'm not sure if I can be objective and judge the book on its own without considering Barry's other works or the order in which he wrote them. (I did, after all, pick this up just cause I liked his other stuff). But I'll tell you this: I just found out they're shooting a film version of *Syrup*, and I can guarantee you it won't do justice to Barry's tone or style. The film could be quite good though, based on the story alone. There's your review.

Kelsey says

Max Barry is great, and *Syrup* is great too. It covers a lot of the same themes as *Machine Man* and *Jennifer Government* (*Company* is still on my to-read list), but it's still entertaining, funny, and thought-provoking so definitely worth a shot.

Unlike *Machine Man* and *Jennifer Government*, *Syrup* isn't science fiction: The book is about a young, ambitious marketing guy named Scat and his attempts to strike it rich, which end up leading to complicated entanglements with the Coca-Cola Corporation and an enigmatic, beautiful executive named 6.

Syrup is a quick read; it's super-hip and witty and definitely a page-turner, but that doesn't mean it's all fluff. I might compare Barry to Cory Doctorow in that there's definitely an agenda behind his writing, but the writing itself is so damn entertaining that you end up not really minding the message. And actually I kind of

appreciate the way the political statements in Barry and Doctorow's work tend to challenge the status quo and make you think about things (advertising messages, internet security, government authority, etc.) you might have taken for granted before.

One of the main themes in Barry's writing is that the corporate world is a terrible, evil, twisted, corrupt place, but he always manages to get his point across without coming off as heavy-handed or bitter or anything. This is probably because he usually focuses on fairly innocent, naive characters who just sort of happen to find themselves in the middle of giant evil corporations' diabolical plots, rather than on the corporate masterminds who make the whole system tick.

I definitely recommend all of Barry's work, probably starting with this one if only because according to IMDb the movie version of *Syrup* is supposed to come out before the end of the year, and if you read the book first you can condescendingly tell everyone how much better than the movie it is.

But seriously though please don't actually do that. Unless you are trying to be a douchebag, in which case maybe you just need to take a long, hard look at your life and your choices. Or, as Max Barry might suggest, get a job in marketing.

Kelly says

I started reading *Syrup* last night and, after thirty minutes, I had to tear myself away. I wanted an early night. Today, all the STUFF I needed that early night for sat untended as I settled into a cosy corner of the couch and finished the entire book. I took one break for food.

Luckily, at three hundred odd pages, *Syrup* is not a long book. In fact, it's just the right length (for an indulgent morning on the couch), which is refreshing. I'm all for reading an epic trilogy, but sometimes you just need to get to the end of a story to see what's happening and, without cheating and flipping to the last page, the only way is to forsake life and read.

Syrup is the tale of a rather engaging young man from Iowa who lands in California and dreams of making it big. He wants to be famous and he actually has the wherewithal to achieve his dream; but first, he has to survive being utterly squashed by conniving and ruthless denizens of Corporate America.

Aside from Scat himself, what I loved about this novel was the writing. It grabbed me from the very first page. It felt sophisticated and clever, but not inaccessible. Scat's 'voice' is extremely clear and very personable. Regardless of the author's age at the time of writing, Scat felt 23. I really enjoyed the way the story was presented too, the varying chapter lengths and the way the story was broken up by exposition in the guise of chapter titles. The little lessons on marketing were not at all distracting and, combined with the typography, helped define the message of the book: perception versus reality. The story was funny, but not hilarious. I don't think it needed to be. Scat could laugh at himself and the author could also laugh at his creation, which kept the novel grounded and lent a feeling of realism, despite the Hollywood-like circus unraveling from page to page.

I found the ending very satisfying. In fact, one of my favourite lines in the book comes close to the end. Sneaky Pete asks Scat, "Haven't you learned anything?" Regardless of whether Scat has or not, when Sneaky Pete asked this question, I had one of those goofy grins on my face. You'll have to read the book

yourself to find out why.

I picked up this novel in order to read it before the movie comes out. Having read it, I cannot wait to see how the story unfolds on the big screen. I am a fan of Kellan Lutz and, while I would like to see him in the role of the endearing young Scat, I am equally eager to see him play someone sneaky. I am also eager to hear author Maxx Barry talk about the film and to read more of his novels.

Madara says

It was just too much.

Tr?s idejas samestas kop? un beig?s samiks?tas par lekcijas cien?gu (m?rketinga paraugstunda ar pacelt?m uzac?m) happy-ending love story.

K?p?c.

Drew says

Syrup is another extremely quick read and a fabulous first book by Maxx Barry. He reverted to using “Max” as his first name for this other two books: Jennifer Government and Company. This book covers the story of Scat, a marketing graduate living in LA who believes in finding a million dollar idea, and 6, the woman of his dreams, and at times, nightmares. The novel propels you through the advertising and marketing hallways of Coca-Cola LA, Hollywood movies, and young people looking to make it big, make a friend, and have a good time. The plot is rich in sarcasm, romance, treachery, and flat-out humor. It’s also a page turner and I found myself urging my eyelids to stay open as I read another section before bed each night.

I think this is a fantastic first novel and its pace and format explain why Jennifer Government, his second novel, had the same format and style. But, I didn’t like his second novel as much, for while it had the fast pace and snarky commentary, it never developed the characters like they are fleshed out in Syrup. Company, his third novel, gets back to the mastery of character development that he had in Syrup. I read his novels in a weird order, first his second, then his third, then his first one. I highly recommend Syrup and Company, and if you want to read everything he’s got out there now, delve into Jennifer Government.

Ida says

I loved this book. Its fast paced, light but well written read.

The book is about a creative marketing grad who landed an ironic drink idea which not incidentally named Fukk that grounded his experience in the real dog eat dog corporate world.

I loved the character Sneaky Pete, that his chosen name escaped everyone and how his viciousness carried so much weight without burdening the book.

The main character Scat was so central that everyone in my opinion became background noises with not so much emotions to be explored but ultimately fits in fluidly in the plot. Because of this, I could not relate too well with the female character 6 (maybe she's like that character 13 in House?).

I really enjoyed this book and was biting my nails throughout as I found myself rooting for Scat to beat that oh so obvious-its just business- Sneaky Peat.

Like Coke, '1 part faintly repulsive black syrup, 7 parts water and 42 parts marketing', I bought the book because of the cover (;p) and drank it whole.

Perception is reality Scat!

Sarah says

Maxx Barry's Syrup is an absolutely HILARIOUS satire about marketing and Corporate America. Barry's first novel is so sarcastic and unique that readers won't help but love it!

Scat is a young twenty-something man who develops a new brand of soda called Fukk. While preparing to have it officially branded and presented to a massive corporation leading in soda products, his roommate Sneaky Pete steals his invention and tries to pass it off as his own.

Coming to Scat's rescue to help him undermine the competition is 6. Yes, that's the woman's name, the number '6'. Scat and 6 have a developing relationship in terms of romanticism, but throughout the book she informs him she's a lesbian, which I suspect is to keep Scat's focus on the important mission at hand versus love.

Other zany character names are California and @ (yes, the @ symbol), which only adds to Syrup's irresistible charm. Syrup is also interesting because readers will learn marketing and strategy tidbits, for anyone still trying to get ahead and climb the corporate ladder in this day and age. Although Syrup was written in 1999, the book is timeless and not as time-sensitive as one might think, given all the changes in the world since 1999.

The chapters in Syrup are extremely short and sometimes only a page long, which makes for a fast-paced, goofy yet fun, read.

I loved Syrup and highly recommend it!

Jess says

I don't know if it's the fact that this book is too naive for me or I just missed out on how it's supposed to be "sharp" and "sarcastically funny", but either way I thought this book was pretty dumb. As a previous reviewer commented, "I like reading stories about somewhat realistic people doing somewhat realistic things". I stopped falling for the lame hype of downtown LA and the corporate world a long time ago, and Syrup doesn't even do the glittering, star-studded streets justice in this novel. The characters are extremely under-developed and unmotivated. In fact, they aren't even likeable or unlikeable - they just exist. The plot is completely unstructured, the only benefit being that you never know what's going to happen next. The downside being that what happens is usually stupid, unrealistic and uninteresting. The writing is incredibly juvenile, and conversations are dull. At least the formatting of the chapters and scenes is cool, and the marketing case studies cropping up all over the place are a nice touch. But overall, this book really lacked in

substance.

Susie says

I gave this book 3/5 stars on InsatiableBooksluts.com.

Review excerpt:

"Meh.

Syrup is a big meh.

Max Barry himself said in a pretty good interview that, if he had it to do over again, he would rewrite the last third of the book. The last third of the book was the part I actually enjoyed the most—it was the first two-thirds that dragged. The story follows a fellow who calls himself Scat. By page 34, he's met the love of his life (a self-described lesbian named 6), has made a sh**load of cash on a fabulous idea that he wanted to sell to Coca-Cola, and has subsequently been screwed out of that shitload of cash. One could easily pace that action out over twice as many pages, and when I got through the sequence I felt like I had been on a crazy roller coaster that went too fast and stopped abruptly at the height of its momentum. The plot then chased its tail for awhile until about page 143, when it finally got to a point where I could sink in my teeth. I wouldn't have minded the jerkiness of the exposition so much if the book hadn't then skipped like a scratched record for the next hundred-odd pages. (Lookit me overusing similes and metaphors! In fact, I'll use another one: it reminded me of those drivers who go 90 mph to pass you, only to have to slow back down two car-lengths ahead because traffic is thick and there's nowhere to f**king go. In related news, I hate a**holes like that.)"

Read the full review at our site.

Lois says

WHAT SYRUP AND A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE HAVE IN COMMON:

1. Unusual narrative structure. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, it takes a while to get used to the way it jumps from storyline to storyline and character to character; likewise for *Syrup*'s structure of short, snappy, titled scenes that sit within the broader chapter structure. Both work - they're just a bit different to the usual.
2. Silly names. In *A Song of Ice and Fire* it's high-falutin fantasy names like 'Tyrion' and 'Varys' and 'Cersei' and 'Denaerys'; in *Syrup* it's hip, postmodern, 90s names like 'Scat' (always makes me think of 'scatological' - an unfortunate association I think the character should have considered before choosing his name!), 'Sneaky Pete', '6', '@' (yes, I'm serious), California, and of course the unforgettable 'Babe-A-Licious'.
3. Incredible tension and lots and lots of treachery, which results in an atmosphere of constant distrust and dread, with characters spinning elaborate yet justified conspiracy theories.
4. Characters you can really get to like in spite of all the silly names and paranoia, as well as treacherous characters you just love to hate!
5. A tendency of beating the characters you like relentlessly into the ground with big pointy sticks, then burying them under piles of shit. (Seriously, I know shit happens, but the characters in these books seem to get way more than their fair share.)

Of course, there's some minor differences. Like the setting - corporate America (specifically, Coke) instead of a medieval-esque fantasy world - and the pictures (Syrup has soda bubbles decorating its pages rather than maps of fictional lands). Then there's the ending - somehow I don't see A Song of Ice and Fire ending with quite such a HEA. And, of course, Syrup is sadly lacking in incest, swordplay, dragons and the like - although it does include a smattering of handy marketing tips for anyone inspired to follow in Scat's obstacle-ridden path.

Like I said, though, the rest is pretty similar. Especially the backstabbing. If you've read A Song of Ice and Fire, you wouldn't think it was possible, but never underestimate the evils of fictionalised corporate America. Oh, the treachery! *faint*

Tfitoby says

A scathing satire of the marketing and film industry that is more generic and stupid than biting and hilarious.

Syrup is the debut novel from Max Barry published in 1999 and made in to a feature movie in 2013. Scat is a young, hip, marketing graduate who has a million dollar idea stolen from him by his best friend, an event which catapults him in to a game of cat and mouse one-upmanship with the help of sexy Coca Cola executive 6. It has been marketed as a brilliant send up of celebrity, sexual politics and the lengths this generation of young people are willing to go to to get ahead in their career.

What you actually get is a light and fluffy read that Ben Elton might have written in his spare time and considered beneath his intellect to actually publish. Max Barry comes across as trying hard to be a clever and witty version of Bret Easton Ellis, Jay McInerney or Douglas Coupland except his work has none of the substance, style or class you might expect from them at their worst let alone their best. His characters are flat and uninteresting caricatures of people and beyond the surface joke of "hey isn't the marketing industry stupid and terrible" they have nothing to say about anything.

The very best thing about this book is that it was a very quick read, and once you get past your natural inclination to abandon ship at regular intervals it's an easy read. In a lot of instances that might be considered a compliment but in this case it is because there is no depth and nothing to actually bother your mind beyond papercuts.

Joe Robles says

Favorite quotes:

This describes the woman I'm attracted to: "...the girls who fight life every step of the way so by the time they're twenty they're funny and smart and cynical and utterly, utterly desirable.

That's what I like."

This describes my business philosophy: "You can stomp around and complain that the rules aren't fair, or you can grow up and start playing the game.

I'm a fan of Max Barry, I've read two of his other books and they were both great satires. This one is a satire of the marketing/advertising industry. In it a cola is launched because it sounds cool and the flavor is developed later. A movie is green-lit for the sole purpose of selling Coke. This would be funny if Transformers and Battleship were real movies.

Ultimately, it's actually about a guy named Scat who is really naive about how business works and is shown reality one too many times. You really identify with him, because you would make those same mistakes. Not knowing how business works you wouldn't expect your friend to trademark your idea right out from under you.

Also a great little romance that would be a great romantic comedy, preferably an indie comedy.

Jo says

Syrup is the story of Scat, a recent marketing graduate, and his introduction into the fast-paced, backstabbing world of corporate corruption. I mean, marketing. His easy road to world-domination (or, at least, fame and fortune) is blocked by two other marketing graduates: 6, the smart, sexy, and completely ruthless love of Scat's life, and Sneaky Pete, a man who is so cool he doesn't even need to speak to be successful.

Each chapter of the book is divided into small sections, each with a title and purpose. These reminded me of short ad-spots, which added to the marketing feel of the book (although I don't actually know if that was the intention). I read the entire novel in a day and a half. When I wasn't reading, I was thinking about the book.

It's fair to say that I had very high expectations before I started reading Syrup. It's also fair to say that those expectations were not only met, but exceeded. The characters are amazing, the plot is fantastically cynical, and I laughed out loud more than once while reading it. I then proceeded to rave about it to anyone who would listen, which immediately inspired me to read it a second time.

Absolutely awesome.
