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Ellison, John Eric
DESCENDING CIRCLES:
Ascending Earth
Lulu.com (228 pp.)
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A bizarre mix of science fiction and folklore combine with the quirky characterizations of a Kurt Vonnegut novel in this intriguing story of a Seattle-based cult.

Ellison, who has updated the 2002 edition of his novel for release, displays a talent for setting in the opening pages of this sprawling narrative. Ordinary youngish bachelor Mel happens upon a strange convention focused on supernatural activities ranging from telekinesis to time travel. While it seems that Mel is fairly ordinary—a normal guy who has stumbled into extraordinary people—he is strangely drawn to them, particularly due to the charms of a pretty woman named Jenny. Mel becomes immersed in the cult's diverse chatter, and everything—including his background as a descendent of the Native-American Nez Perce tribe and other cult members' out-of-body-experiences—builds to a fantastic, strange crescendo of unpredictable events. Rather than use Mel's perspective for the entire novel, Ellison shifts the narrative among several characters, including some particularly weird ones. By demonstrating sympathy for the cult members and Mel himself, the author suggests that he sincerely believes much of the novel's outlandish conceits. It is a compelling read; Ellison seems like a fascinating individual as well as a decent storyteller.

A fresh take on the tired realm of cult fantasy.



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