MARK RANKS TOM WOLFE'S TOP TEN BOOKS AND ESSAYS

10. The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test

9. A Man In Full

8. From Bauhaus To Our House

7. The New Journalism

6. The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamlined Baby

5. The Painted Word

4. The Right Stuff

3. The Me Decade

2. Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing The Flak Catchers

1. The Bonfire Of The Vanities

NOTES:

I consider The Bonfire Of The Vanities the greatest American novel of the post-World War II era, or at least the best one I ever read. Radical Chic is, I believe, the greatest piece of social journalism of my lifetime as he exposed the pretentious pose and sanctimony of effete liberals like Leonard Bernstein trying to "get down" with the Black Panthers.   It's as relevant today as when he wrote it nearly a half-century ago.   The Me Decade invented a phrase that lasts to this day and is the defining book about the self-indulgent seventies. The Right Stuff is not only the definitive account of the amazing American space program of the 1960s; it is an astonishing example of open-minded in-depth reporting and proves Wolfe is the great social observer of the last century of American life. The Painted Word is his mockery of the elevation of third rate crap into contemporary art. Kandy-Kolored forever changed American writing by throwing all rules of grammar, punctuation and style out the window as we were introduced to the amazing California car culture of the 1960s. The New Journalism is a great collection of the best writing of the era, most of which was inspired by him and linguistic rule-breaking and use of fiction tools in writing non-fiction. From Bauhaus To Our House is great social commentary on how architecture essentially makes our world look the way it does. A Man In Full, I think, was Wolfe writing about himself coping with depression (but I could be wrong). The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test was Wolfe's first big article and was the first real look at the burgeoning LSD and hippie counter-culture. It stands up now as an astonishing piece of historical writing, albeit written in real time.