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Steve Almond

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"Refreshingly irreverent . . . absurdly funny." —The Boston Globe

Steve Almond

Author of the New York Times bestseller *Candyfreak*

Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions

(Not that You Asked)



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#758928 in Books Random House Trade Paperbacks 2008-07-08 2008-07-08 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .70 x 5.20l, .50 #File Name: 0812977599304 pages | File size: 43.Mb

Steve Almond : (Not That You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised (Not That You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Almond Joy (Ouch, that's a bad pun...and I bet I'm not the first to use it, either)By Scott SIn some ways, this book seems a little dated and jaded - Almond takes on some easy targets - the Bush Administration, the shallowness of most bloggers, his own often-ridiculous sex life (join the club!), celebrity culture, reality TV - these are just a few. But there are four elements that, for me, elevate this work beyond the

familiarity of some of the topics it covers:1) Almond is a terrific writer: His prose is snappy and spot-on. He finds the perfect words to describe things you might too have observed but never could have put so artfully. He's often very funny, but always in a smart and honorable way - he deserves the laughs he gets.2) Almond has a great eye: He lives in the same world we do, but he's somehow removed himself enough that he sees it much more clearly than most of us ever could. What's wonderful and generous is that he shares that view with you.3) Almond has had some really interesting things happen to him: Yeah, a lot of people have complained about reality television, but how many were actually the subject of an episode of a reality show? Almond was, and the experiences and insights he shares will make it impossible for you to ever watch an episode of "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" in the same way again (of course, it's devoutly to be wished that you're not watching that show at all, but you get the point). Likewise, many have complained about the Bush Administration, but how many left good jobs to protest its actions, and subsequently were attacked on conservative talk shows for doing so? Almond has, and his story is both hilarious and deeply frightening. In some way, I enjoy his essays in the same way I'd enjoy the story of a mountain climber - I'm not schlepping up that hill, but it's deeply fascinating to read about someone who did.4) Almond has a big heart and strong moral vision: While Almond can be snarky and sarcastic, he's not doing it for the cheap laugh or because he has nothing better to offer. Almond really cares about this planet and the people who live on it. He wants us to be better: fairer, kinder, more loving and more respectful of the interconnectedness of all living beings. What outrages him most is cruelty, selfishness and the squandering of the great gifts we've been given and should share. That's the deeper message of this book, and Almond communicates it in beautiful language without ever sounding preachy or superior. So, five stars for Mr. Almond and this enjoyable and enlightening book of essays. Scott Sherman, author, *First You Fall: A Kevin Connor Mystery* 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Cleverly Hilarious* By litchick This may be the first Steve Almond I've read, but it definitely won't be the last! (I just received "My Life in Heavy Metal" yesterday and I'm starting it tonight.) Steve Almond is smart, funny and entertaining - so much so that I may even go back and read the only piece I skipped, the one about the Red Sox. (Which says loads about his talent, as I loathe sports.) There were parts where I whole-heartedly laughed out loud (Blog Love, How to Write Sex Scenes, How Reality TV Ate My Life, and more!) and I'm a hard-ass. I would so get a beer with Steve. Anytime. Any place. You name it Steve. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Great stories* By TROYWD22 These stories are fast paced, funny, and you want to keep on reading. He's great with words and from political activism to a water source in a hot tub. It's an enjoyment.

In (Not that You Asked), Steve Almond documents a life spent brawling with the idiot kings of modern culture. He squares off against Sean Hannity on national TV, takes on Oprah Winfrey, nearly gets kidnapped by a reality TV crew, and winds up in Boston, where he quickly enrages the entire population of Red Sox Nation. Amid the carnage, he finds time to celebrate his literary hero, the late Kurt Vonnegut. These are essays the Los Angeles Times has called "rich, fearless [and] cutting." Praise for (Not that You Asked) "Refreshingly irreverent . . . absurdly funny." -The Boston Globe "[Almond] scores big in every chapter of this must-have collection. Biting humor, honesty, smarts and heart: Vonnegut himself would have been proud." -Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "Taunting, revealing, irreverent, and earnest." -The New York Times "Steve Almond has created a distinctive voice and literary persona. Pleasure-obsessed, self-deprecating, horny, hilarious and always dedicated to parsing the messy terrain of the human heart." -Forward.com

.com (Not that You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions is an Significant Seven selection for October 2007 An Exclusive Essay from Author Steve Almond Steve Almond is obsessed. He first offered the world a peek into his fixations in *My Life in Heavy Metal*, a collection of short stories throbbing with hookups, drunken kisses, failed passes, souring relationships, and, naturally, heavy metal. But Almond forever chewed the hard chocolate shell from his creamy inner obsessive with 2004's *Candyfreak: A Journey through the Chocolate Underbelly of America*--a sort of *On the Road* for the sugar set, documenting an epic journey through America's confectionary highways and backroads. Almond is back with (Not that You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions, a collection of autobiographical pieces covering topics as diverse as Oprah Winfrey, Kurt Vonnegut, sexual failure, and the many varieties of shame. We asked Almond just what it is about obsession that drives his work, as well as its intrinsic value in all art--low and high. --Jon Foro *The Obsession Engine* Why House of Rock with Bret Michaels could be your next novel. Or not. By Steve Almond A close friend of mine - who may or may not be my wife - recently fell in love with the VH-1 reality series House of Rock. For those of you who are not hip to its charms, HoR stars Bret Michaels, the former lead singer of Poison, and a gaggle of women vying to become his soul mate. I hope you will not be shocked to learn that several of these potential soul mates are strippers. Nor do all of them appear to be virgins. My friend insists that her interest in the program is purely anthropological. But I happen to know that she spent a good portion of her adolescence listening to Eighties hair metal bands and dreaming about bedding dudes like Bret Michaels and even working, briefly, as a waitress in a topless bar. She comes by her obsession naturally, is my point. The longer I read and write, the more I come to view obsession as the essential engine of literature. I am not suggesting that my wife, er, friend should write a novel about House of Rock. (The series is, by her own description, a kind of pulp novel already--

histrionic, predictable, crushingly squalid.) What I'm suggesting is that her allegiance to the program identifies essential fears and desires within her, ones which embarrass her quite robustly and therefore belong in the novel she hopes to write. To take this a step further: I'm not interested in writing that isn't obsessive. Who is? We're all drama queens in the end. We all come to stories with two basic questions: Who do I care about? And What do they care about? As long as our hero, or heroine, cares deeply about something (i.e. is obsessed), and as long as they're willing to tell us their own twisted version of the truth, we'll come along for the ride. Don't believe me? Let me call to the stand my star witness, Humbert Humbert. Read more... From Publishers Weekly

This collection of essays on everything from Oprah's Book Club to the joy of being a new father displays all the qualities that have made Almond's short stories (*The Evil B.B. Chow*) and nonfiction (*Candyfreak*) entertaining. The wicked humor of *Dear Oprah* features an in-your-face attack on the Savior of Publishing and her book club, followed by equally obsequious apologies, including a gift of trust to her of his baby daughter. A section titled *About My Sexual Failure (Not That You Asked)* offers brutally honest dissections of his sexual obsessions as well as those of past girlfriends, including chest waxing, fake breasts and masturbating in the family pool. *Demagogue Days* is a hilarious look at Almond's experience with Fox News that displays an abiding disgust at current arbiters of cultural and political life in America as well as an enduring empathy for the underdog. But best of all is a beautiful and angry essay on *The Failed Prophecy of Kurt Vonnegut (and How It Saved My Life)*, a look at Vonnegut's career-long concern over whether mankind would survive its own despicable conduct that serves as a summation of Almond's personal and literary ethos. (Sept.)

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About the Author Steve Almond has been a writer and editor for over 20 years. He is the author of the essay collection (*Not that You Asked*): *Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions*; the story collections *My Life in Heavy Metal* and *The Evil B.B. Chow*; the nonfiction book *Candyfreak*; and the novel *Which Brings Me to You*, cowritten with Julianna Baggott. Originally from Pennsylvania, he lives outside Boston with his wife and two children, and listens to rock and roll at all hours.