PDF | (Not that You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions

by Steve Almond
How does Steve Almond get himself into so much trouble? Could it be his incessant moralizing? His generally poor posture? The fact that he was raised by a pack of wolves? Frankly, we haven’t got a clue. What we do know is that Almond has a knack for converting his dustups into essays that are both funny and furious. In *(Not that You Asked)*, he squares off against Sean Hannity on national TV, nearly gets arrested for stealing “Sta-Hard” gel from his local pharmacy, and winds up in Boston, where he quickly enrages the entire population of the Red Sox Nation. Almond is, as they say in Yiddish, a tummler.

Almond on personal grooming: “Why, exactly, did I feel it would be ‘sexy’ and ‘hot’ to have my girlfriend wax my chest? I can offer no good answer to this question today. I could offer no good answer at the time.”

On sports: “To be a fan is to live in a condition of willed helplessness. We are (for the most part) men who sit around and watch other men run and leap and sweat and grapple each other. It is a deeply homoerotic pattern of conduct, often interracial in nature, and essentially humiliating.”

On popular culture: “I have never actually owned a TV, a fact I mention whenever possible, in the hopes that it will make me seem noble and possibly lead to oral sex.”

On his literary hero, Kurt Vonnegut: “His books perform the greatest feat of alchemy known to man: the conversion of grief into laughter by means of courageous imagination.”

On religion: “Every year, when Chanukah season rolled around, my brothers and I would make the suburban pilgrimage to the home of our grandparents, where we would ring in the holiday with a big, juicy Chanukah ham.”

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room. Either way, you’ll find Steve Almond savagely entertaining. Not that you asked.

“A pop-culture-saturated intellectual, a kindly grouch, vitriolic Boston Red Sox hater, neurotic new father and Kurt Vonnegut fanatic... [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)

From the Hardcover edition.

Amazon.com Review

(Not that You Asked): Rants, Exploits, and Obsessions is an Amazon 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...

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**Product Description**

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