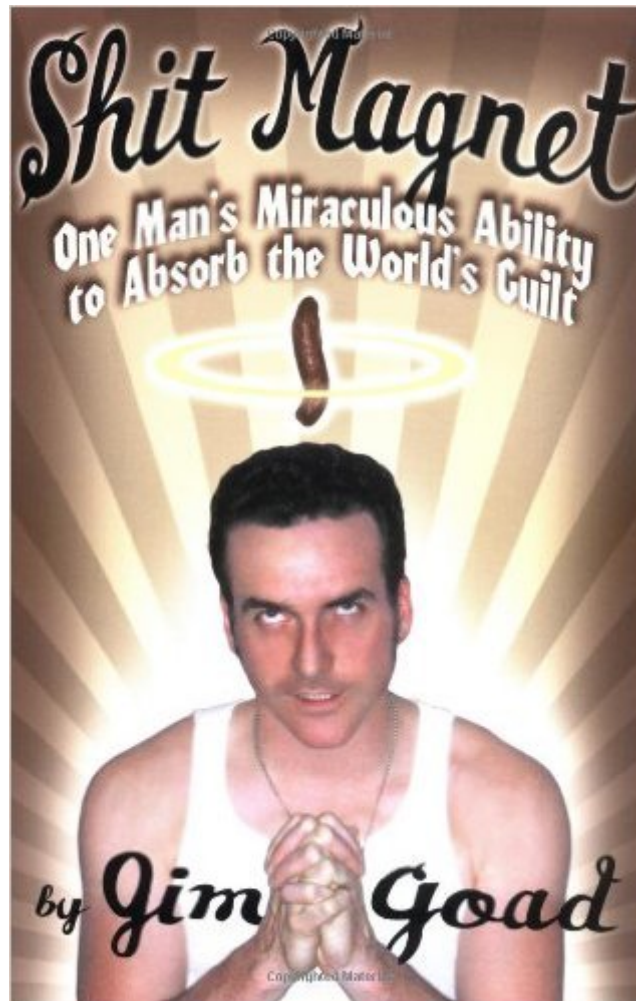


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Shit Magnet: One Man's Miraculous Ability To Absorb The World's Guilt



Synopsis

Jim Goad's prison-bound memoir.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

James Thaddeus Goad is not, in any sense, innocent. He (in reality) singlehandedly produced the "zine" that effectively put paid to the self-referential, pompous, and usually inept zine culture, basically by being so offensive to the status quo that it simply gave up in frustration. He's been a poster boy for dubious judgment, pleading guilty to an offense that anyone else would have went to trial for and won, and served nearly three years. And, yes, he did the deed: he beat the snot out of a female, a mistress who had hit, tormented, and threatened him so badly that he had had a protection order taken out against her (he did, however, continue to have wild sex with her on a daily basis). Goad says-and it's absolutely true-that had he not been a notorious, politically offensive writer, he would probably have received counseling and a small fine for the offense which could have put him away until he was old enough for Social Security. All through the convoluted and often ugly story which this book tells-and quite competently-Goad realizes he's doing the wrong thing, for the wrong reasons, at the wrong time, and in the wrong place. Yet Goad-who is obviously intelligent, driven, physically fit, and obsessively introspective-seems doomed by his own compulsion to follow a path he realizes is going to cause him serious trouble. And, it does. Goad winds up in the Oregon correctional system, one of the few in the country where whites are not a minority, and serves his time without any life-threatening incidents: boredom, frustration, and petty annoyances are the order

of the day, not shankings and rape. But Goad clearly does not belong in prison, and it's clear-not just to Goad, but to any rational observer-that Goad is far more victim than perpetrator here.

Jim Goad is a man I admire... and desperately don't want to become. He's funny. He's poignant. His social criticism is cutting, accurate and iconoclastic. But by his own admission, he is a severely screwed-up individual. This book is his paean to the pitch black comedy psychodrama of his life. In a world where every loser rich boy wishes they were a street-wise badass, Goad is a street-wise badass... and carries all the scars that that life entails. For this reason, this is one of my favorite books of all time. This book succeeds because it gets the tone exactly right. Goad overturns every single rock in his past, but does so without trying to wring sympathy out of the reader. He talks about how his parents beat him, his homosexual dalliances when he was a teenager, and his marital infidelities, leading up to his ill-fated affair with Anne Ryan, the psychotic groupie who got him jailed. But the remarkable thing is that he doesn't try to deflect blame or run from his past. Goad fesses up to his responsibility in these events with wit and vitriol. Like his other writing, this book is a breeze to read, as Goad rattles off sentences like a Satanic street preacher on meth. When I first read this book years ago, I blew through it in one weekend, the book's writing was so fluid and hilarious. My biggest complaint is the tonal shift in Chapter Three, "A Bad Seed Takes Root," which is written from the perspective of a little kid. It's appropriate, given that it's about Goad's twisted youth, but it's a little creepy when contrasted with the rest of the book. As Goad insists on the back cover, this isn't a pure memoir inasmuch as it's about guilt; specifically, the guilt that's resulted in Goad's writing being blamed for triple suicides and White House shootings.

Jim Goad's life and writing career has been one apocalyptic roller coaster ride to hell. This book wasn't intended as an autobiography, but it becomes one early on and Goad evinces such a magnetic personality that it's really hard to put this book down. Goad's writing career began when he published the 'zine called Answer ME! with his then wife Debbie. The zines were an unprecedented exercise in misanthropy that led to underground notoriety. They then put out the fourth edition, entitled 'The Rape Issue' which scared away all the ironic hipster poseurs and got Goad into trouble with the law. This book chronicles his life and the s*** Goad has had to deal with once the wheels of infamy were set into motion. What makes Goad so charismatic is his ability to admit all his flaws and his unflappable wit. The guy unapologetically spills the beans on his life. His abusive, guilt-ridden upbringing, his damaged youth, his marriage to a dim Long Island yenta who eventually drove him into the arms of other women, and sent him into the direction of a psychotic fan named Ann. Here's

a woman so deranged and manipulative and possessive that Goad had to fall for her, being a lover of damaged goods. The book is certainly compelling, though at times redundant, especially when Goad keeps returning, masochistically, into the arms of Anne, admittedly from a fear of being alone. Goad never really paints a pretty picture but neither does he absolve himself, also painting an ugly portrait of himself in the process (the guy was cheating on his wife, with Anne, while she slowly died from cancer).

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