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Porcelain: A Memoir



Synopsis

From one of the most interesting and iconic musicians of our time, a piercingly tender, funny, and harrowing account of the path from suburban poverty and alienation to a life of beauty, squalor and unlikely success out of the NYC club scene of the late '80s and '90s. There were many reasons Moby was never going to make it as a DJ and musician in the New York club scene. This was the New York of Palladium; of Mars, Limelight, and Twilo; of unchecked, drug-fueled hedonism in pumping clubs where dance music was still largely underground, popular chiefly among working-class African Americans and Latinos. And then there was Moby—•not just a poor, skinny white kid from Connecticut, but a devout Christian, a vegan, and a teetotaler. He would learn what it was to be spat on, to live on almost nothing. But it was perhaps the last good time for an artist to live on nothing in New York City: the age of AIDS and crack but also of a defiantly festive cultural underworld. Not without drama, he found his way. But success was not uncomplicated; it led to wretched, if in hindsight sometimes hilarious, excess and proved all too fleeting. And so by the end of the decade, Moby contemplated an end in his career and elsewhere in his life, and put that emotion into what he assumed would be his swan song, his good-bye to all that, the album that would in fact be the beginning of an astonishing new phase: the multimillion-selling *Play*. • At once bighearted and remorseless in its excavation of a lost world, *Porcelain* is both a chronicle of a city and a time and a deeply intimate exploration of finding one's place during the most gloriously anxious period in life, when you're on your own, betting on yourself, but have no idea how the story ends, and so you live with the honest dread that you're one false step from being thrown out on your face. Moby's voice resonates with honesty, wit, and, above all, an unshakable passion for his music that steered him through some very rough seas. • *Porcelain* is about making it, losing it, loving it, and hating it. It's about finding your people, your place, thinking you've lost them both, and then, somehow, when you think it's over, from a place of well-earned despair, creating a masterpiece. As a portrait of the young artist, *Porcelain* is a masterpiece in its own right, fit for the short shelf of musicians' memoirs that capture not just a scene but an age, and something timeless about the human condition. Push play. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

“A lovingly composed new memoir that tracks his journey from living in an abandoned factory in Connecticut to playing the hottest clubs in New York and Europe. Porcelain reads like an intimate meditation on the various contradictions Moby has resolved over the course of his 50 years: his Christian faith vs. his hedonistic streak; his hunger for stardom vs. his retiring nature; his respect for ambition vs. his deep belief in luck. The book is also a tender ode to a vanished New York City. Los Angeles Times “As much a portrait of downtown Manhattan in the late 80s and 90s as it is an iconoclastic artist’s coming-of-age story, this raucous, candid memoir will fascinate the electronic musician and many fans. People “Porcelain vividly evokes a certain place and time—specifically, New York in the 90s. It simultaneously presents a portrait of its author that’s withering in the extreme. At the same time, it offers a perfect freeze-frame of downtown New York in the Dinkins to early Giuliani years, when far more of the cherished stench of 70s and 80s city lingered than some may remember. New York Observer “Riveting. Rolling Stone “Rock memoirs rarely live up to expectations, but Porcelain is an exception. It ranks with Kim Gordon’s *Girl in a Band* and a handful of others in recent years as a particularly incisive look at not just a life in music, but at the cultural and social circumstances that helped shape it. It is by turns self-deprecating, hilarious and moving. Chicago Tribune “Moby’s Porcelain is a buoyant coming-of-age story set in the filthy, dangerous New York City of the 1990s that the musician and DJ adored. Funny, bighearted and raw. San Francisco Chronicle “Entertainingly gritty A distinctive addition to the recent spate of well-written memoirs by contemporary musicians, a list that would include the likes of Elvis Costello,

Patti Smith, and Carrie Brownstein. *Kirkus Reviews* “A love letter to chaotic 1990s New York | Moby, whose prose is honest, self-deprecating, and full of mordant wit, and when music is playing, it shines with exhilarating emotion. *Publishers Weekly*, starred “Ten years of Moby’s life, mostly in the decrepit, dangerous, much-loved New York City of the 1990s, a life comically overcrowded, filthy, alcohol-fuelled, vegan, unbelievably noisy, full of spit and semen and some sort of Christianity; and often, suddenly, moving. The writing is terrific, enlivened by a bewildered deadpan humor that makes crazy sense of it all. His ancestor Herman Melville would, I think, be simultaneously revolted and proud. *Salman Rushdie* “Full disclosure: Moby is a friend of mine, yet I had no idea that he was such a brilliant writer and storyteller. Porcelain, to me, is a classic and beautifully told bildungsroman • a young man comes to the city to find himself. And Moby tells this tale of his youth • his search for meaning and music • with gorgeous clarity, comedy, and compassion. Porcelain also serves as a history of downtown New York of a certain time, a New York that doesn’t really exist anymore, but I was very happy to reencounter it here through Moby’s particular and fascinating lens. *Jonathan Ames*, author of *Wake Up, Sir!* “This is one of the funniest and most accessible books you’ll ever read about an erstwhile Christian/alcoholic vegan electronic music maker. Throughout the adventures and misadventures, Danish music festivals and Barbadian disasters, Moby manages to stay wide-eyed, grateful and amazed, which itself is a real gift to the reader: we feel welcome in • or just as out of place as he feels • in the world of rock and raves and clubs. He remakes the music world into the form it should be: nonexclusive, unpretentious, less about division and stratification, and more about radical inclusion. Music shouldn’t exist any other way. *Dave Eggers* “Raw, honest, cruel and funny, Moby’s beautifully-written memoir is a pure act of bravery. He allows us to ride on his shoulder as he chases a dream through New York nightlife and the European club scene, his self-deprecating humor and unguarded nature lulling us into believing the ride will be breezy and the landing soft. Only when he starts plummeting to earth do we realize that we’ve left his shoulder and climbed into his head, where self-deprecation reveals itself as self-loathing that is chasing self-destruction. It’s a dark place with jagged edges • not the spot to ride out this kind of fall, and Moby hides not one shard of it from us. But, in perhaps in an even greater act of bravery, he also never hides behind cynicism, or distances himself from the hope, and even innocence, of his dreams. I wish my writing could be even half as honest. *Paul Haggis* “Honest, funny, and sometimes raw, Porcelain is an intimate look at a life in motion. It proves that Moby writes like he plays music • with

passion and precision and heart. — Susan Orlean From the Hardcover edition.

Moby is a singer-songwriter, musician, DJ, and photographer. His records have sold 20 million records worldwide. AllMusic called him "one of the most important dance music figures of the early '90s." He lives in Los Angeles.

Achingly sublime one moment; gritty, messy and raw the next. When Moby leaves us an unfinished piece at the end, it's because he himself — like his music — is an evolving work in progress. Up to that point, we are introduced to a young man who continually [and hilariously] begs forgiveness of every sin of the flesh by an easily offended ticked-off Christian God who made him annoyingly imperfect. Next we meet a DJ who learns to navigate New York at its most artistically creative, and at its most devastating due to the AIDS crisis. Seems there's always a homeless guy, a street hustler, a poor dog and rich symbolism lurking in the background of almost every scene. Moby wants to belong but is cursed with acute self awareness of being different. Some may say those differences separate the artist on stage from the rest of us, even if Moby is a self-deprecating, funny, and somewhat reluctant artist — he does seem blessed both in music and now in storytelling by the very god he feared he may have offended at the start.

If you're reading this, chances are you've heard some of Moby's music. Most people probably recognize him by his best selling album "Play". I'm personally a pretty big fan of his so I pre-ordered this book with disregard as to whether or not Mr. Moby could string two sentences together. Wow, what a wonderful surprise. It's a well written snippet into 10 years of this man's life that helped make him the amazing artist that he is today. Using mostly NYC as the backdrop, you get to relive so many moments out of his life that are at times seem almost too crazy to be true. Some of the stories are humorous. Some are dark. Others are sad. While some are poignant and really show a side of him I never thought I'd learn about. Some of my favorite chapters involve his stories of how he created his most iconic songs ("Go", "Feelin' So Real" etc.). Really fascinating stuff. Even if you aren't a fan of Moby, I'd still recommend this as a good read. Thank you Moby for writing this and sharing with us a piece of your life.

Your brilliant music was the soundtrack to our lives when you wrote those songs and now us kindred spirits have been reached again. In the 90's I had an octopus tank. The octopus would come out from under his rock and dance on the sand under the black light to your music and also to

Rhapsody in Blue...I kid you not... and I'm sure many of us have danced and cried and many other things to your music ..it stands the test of time...like your book will...both reach our hearts and souls across this vast world...and yes, it does make us happy and so much more and the kindred spirits that read this will know exactly what i mean.:) and we await the sequel ;) thank you for coming "out from under the porch"...it gives us courage to do the same & you are loved ..collectively by all your fans..we r here. Thank you Moby for writing this book for so many reasons.

I bought this as a gift for my wife, because she likes Moby. She said that after reading it, she liked Moby less. Make of that, what you will.

Moby's musical genius is well known, but now his talent for crisp, raw, often spit-up-your-beer funny writing is revealed. For those of us who remember the gritty New York club scene of the 1980s and 1990s, Porcelain is an aching look back to that lost world, which Moby describes as both terrifying and perfect. If you weren't there, you'll be transported. Moby is kind to those who spit on him, curse at him or threaten him, and heartbreakingly honest about his struggles with alcohol, anxiety and panic attacks. We are all beneficiaries of his survival and triumph. We Are All Made of Stars, dear Moby, including you.

Moby is probably the most unassuming pop/rock star you might ever meet. To date, he is his own PR spokesperson who handles his own social networks and blogs all by himself, without any corporate / label filters – that's a rarity in a world of prefab pop stars controlled by big entertainment conglomerates. The artist and the person are never far apart. But there was a time where Moby could have just faded into oblivion in the 90's – that's where this book focuses on: Moby's own anecdotal life and musical memories mainly set between the late 1980s with his first DJ gigs, and up to the late '90s right before striking it big with his supposedly 'last' album, Play. We get to read in full, raw details, about his lifetime living on an abandoned factory in Connecticut, on drug- and crime-ridden late 80's New York, his early becoming of a vegan, his odd relationships with Christianity, his own family, alcohol and girlfriends, and his personal struggles to make it in the music business, along with many moments that verge on the funny and surreal, in his usual, often self-deprecating yet lighthearted narrative. If you are already a Moby fan and follow him on social networks, this book will fit hand in glove, making a pleasant read and feeling deep sympathy for the man, or sadness, or both at the same time, while encouraging you to rediscover his music – this time with new ears. This book will undoubtedly

appeal to anyone who lived through the rave/techno scene of the 1990s as a partygoer or just as a fan of the music, to which Moby of course contributed many anthems that keep being popular to this day.

Good read. Like most, I know Moby from his electronic music and success with movie scores. After reading his memoir I have gained a much deeper understanding and appreciation for the man and the events behind that music. Having grown up in New York and gone to NYU, I'm pretty familiar with the down town areas he describes throughout the course of the book. I think his imagery of those areas at that time in the cultural history of the city is about as accurate and vivid as it gets. His descriptions and stories about family and friends is amusing but also gets quite emotional at times, particularly toward the end as he describes his relationship with his mother. Overall well written and very enjoyable. Last note; he is related to Herman Melville and so felt compelled to do his own writing. I think it was a good call on his part.

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