

Ham: Slices of a Life: True Life Tales

By Sam Harris



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In a collection of personal essays that are “both rip-roaringly funny and sentimental, drawing natural (and justified) comparisons to David Sedaris and David Rakoff” (*Esquire*), longtime recording artist and actor Sam Harris recounts stories of friendship, love, celebrity, and growing up and getting sober.

In sixteen brilliantly observed true stories, Sam Harris emerges as a natural humorist in league with David Sedaris, Chelsea Handler, Carrie Fisher, and Steve Martin, but with a voice uniquely his own. Praised by the *Chicago Sun-Times* for his “manic, witty commentary,” and with a storytelling talent *The New York Times* calls “*New Yorker*– worthy,” he puts a comedic spin on full-disclosure episodes from his own colorful life. In “I Feel, You Feel” he opens for Aretha Franklin during a blizzard. “Promises” is a front-row account of Liza Minnelli’s infamous wedding to “the man whose name shall go unmentioned.” In “The Zoo Story” Harris desperately searches for a common bond with his rough-and-tumble four-year-old son.

What better place to find painfully funny material than in growing up gay, gifted, and ambitious in the heart of the Bible belt? And that’s just the first cut: From partying to parenting, from Sunday school to getting sober, these slices of *Ham* will have you laughing and wiping away salty tears in equal measure with their universal and down-to-earth appeal. After all, there’s a little ham in all of us.



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Editorial Review

Review

"A vividly crafted series of essays...a charmingly candid collection." (Publishers Weekly)

"[Harris] has the writing chops to tell a good tale...entertaining and occasionally moving tales from the wilds of showbiz." (Kirkus)

"Reading singer-actor Harris's essays is like having your smartest gay BFF propped up on your pillow sipping cosmos, regaling you with gossip and his keen wit."
(People)

"The essays in *Ham* are both rip-roaringly funny and sentimental, drawing natural (and justified) comparisons to David Sedaris and David Rakoff." (Esquire)

"The show's title is also the name of Mr. Harris's just-published book of essays and stories. Funny, touching and cheerfully self-deprecating, the show consists of enthusiastic readings from his book with full-tilt renditions of songs....The darker side of Mr. Harris's tale concerns his struggle with his homosexuality, his attempted suicide and his eventual self-acceptance. It is an archetypal coming-out story to which he brought an inspirational spin...every move generates excitement. The word "ham" says it all." (Stephen Holden, The New Yorker (on the musical performance based on Ham))

"With a wry sense of humor, Harris writes about his life through humorous essays. Touching on everything from parenting to show business, he dishes on the ups and downs of his life through a witty lens."
(PopSugar)

"Harris is such a marvelously engaging, clever, storyteller that you'll be enraptured by every word that comes out of his mouth. With a fine eye for detail and actor's expressiveness, Harris paints wonderfully vivid portraits of various episodes of his life. And then there's that still glorious, blow-the-roof-off, remarkable singing." (Theater Pizazz)

"Sixteen short stories of a triumphant, tragic, and most of all, hilarious life in show business make up Sam Harris' new memoir." (Jackie Lyden, NPR)

"This neo-vaudevillian stage persona, Harris has opted to launch *Ham* the only way he knows how: extravagantly, theatrically and, most of all, big...refreshingly self-effacing observations and playful humor."
(The Huffington Post)

"*Ham* is a fabulous and funny, tasty treat; sweet and savory with just right touch of tang." (Broadway World)

"Sam Harris, singer, songwriter, actor, and general multi-hyphenate, puts a comedic spin on episodes from his life...he's up there with David Sedaris and David Rakoff." (The Advocate)

"Harris writes with bouncing-on-your-toes energy, rushing from subject to subject with the occasional lingering moment to ponder things that are important to him. His is an eagerness that's endearing...hilarious...teary. With humor, soul-baring, name-dropping, and just the right mix of

vulnerability, Ham is a definite pleasure to read. If you're looking for a memoir that you can enjoy, embrace this one whole-hog." (Dallas Voice)

"*Ham* is, by turns, harrowing and hilarious, uplifting and soul-shattering, agonizing and liberating." (Oklahoma Magazine)

"*Ham* is honest and heartbreaking, entertaining and devastating all at the same time." (The Steadfast Reader)

"*Ham* is humorous, soul baring, name dropping, and just the right mix of vulnerability and snarkiness." (Washington Blade)

"*Ham* is a dishy celebrity memoir combined with profoundly harder things like 9/11, alcoholism, suicide attempts, coming out, marriage and parenting. There is as much hilarity in the book--he knows how to make people laugh, especially at him. He really opens up, showing us his struggles, and has far deeper dimensions that I wasn't expecting when I picked up this book. He's clearly added writing into his stable of talents, and I am hoping folks will give this book a try." (The Tattered Cover)

"*Ham* is a collection of heartfelt, sharply funny memoirs. At a time when other essayists in the style of David Sedaris and Augusten Burroughs seem to have scraped the bottom of their autobiographical barrels, Harris arrives with great observational writing chops and a deep well of material to draw upon." (Passport Magazine)

"Harris is wry, witty, bitchy, pensive, inspirational, and laugh-out-loud funny in this winning collection of essays." (Courier-Journal-Gannett Press)

About the Author

Sam Harris's diversified career has run the gamut from singer and songwriter to actor on Broadway, film, and television to writer, director, and producer. His now legendary performances on TV's *Star Search* led to a multi-million selling recording career. Sam has nine studio CDs to his credit, is a Tony-nominated Broadway star (*The Life, Grease, The Producers*), was a series regular on the CBS series *The Class*, and is the creator of the TBS television series *Down to Earth*, among others. Sam lives in Los Angeles with his husband, Danny, and their child, Cooper.

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Ham: Slices of a Life

1. Unwrapped

When I was nineteen years old, while helping my aunt Betty reorganize her kitchen cabinets, I discovered a beaten and worn plastic Mary Poppins cup and saucer marooned in the back corner of an ignored shelf. They were issued in 1964, the year of the movie's release. My aunt told me they'd been intended for me when I was little, but my father had returned them to her because I was "too obsessed with Mary Poppins and singing and dancing."

In the next room, my dad, uncle, brother, and all four boy cousins could be heard yelling in that guttural, grunting Cro-Magnon caterwauling exclusively reserved for watching football games on television and killing wild pigs on a hunt. I marched into the living room and presented the cup and saucer with

outstretched arms.

“Do you remember these?” I said, my confrontational passion unbecoming some battered old plastic children’s dishes.

They all stared at me, confused, as if I’d just asked for an honest opinion about the chances of a fashion comeback for the ascot.

“Uh, no, son,” said my father. “Ask your mother.”

The Cowboys scored another touchdown and the room erupted as they hug-slapped and adjusted their crotches. My father loved the Cowboys and could recount the great plays of the last twenty years. But he had no memory of banning the Mary Poppins treasures.

Cue home movie: Christmas 1964.

I am three years old. My mother is operating the camera. It is in grainy, Super 8 color, and there is no sound. A toy army tank and various toy guns are strewn about and a mini-rifle is propped against the wall. Plastic grenades litter the floor. GI Joe lies in a coffinlike cellophane-covered box. It is a battlefield of unwrapped but unattended boy toys around the base of our silver aluminum Christmas tree, which is bobbed with shiny red and green Woolworth balls, reflecting the muted shades of an electric color wheel. I open a new wool coat, charcoal with a spattering of white, knee length, with large lapels and giant black buttons. Now this is a present!

I eagerly put it on and model it full-tilt. I am overtaken with euphoria and begin to dance. The camera pans to capture the delight of each of my three grandparents, until it lands on my father, whose young, handsome face steams with displeasure and perhaps a touch of anger. His posture reflects a just released sigh of defeat. The camera pans back to me, still dancing. I look to my father and take in his reaction. For a split second I lose my timing.

Then I take a big breath, turn back at the camera, smile, and . . . just dance harder.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary James:

Here thing why this kind of Ham: Slices of a Life: True Life Tales are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all reading a book is good but it really depends in the content from it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. Ham: Slices of a Life: True Life Tales giving you information deeper including different ways, you can find any book out there but there is no e-book that similar with Ham: Slices of a Life: True Life Tales. It gives you thrill studying journey, its open up your current eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in recreation area, café, or even in your technique home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the branded book maybe the form of Ham: Slices of a Life: True Life Tales in e-book can be your option.

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