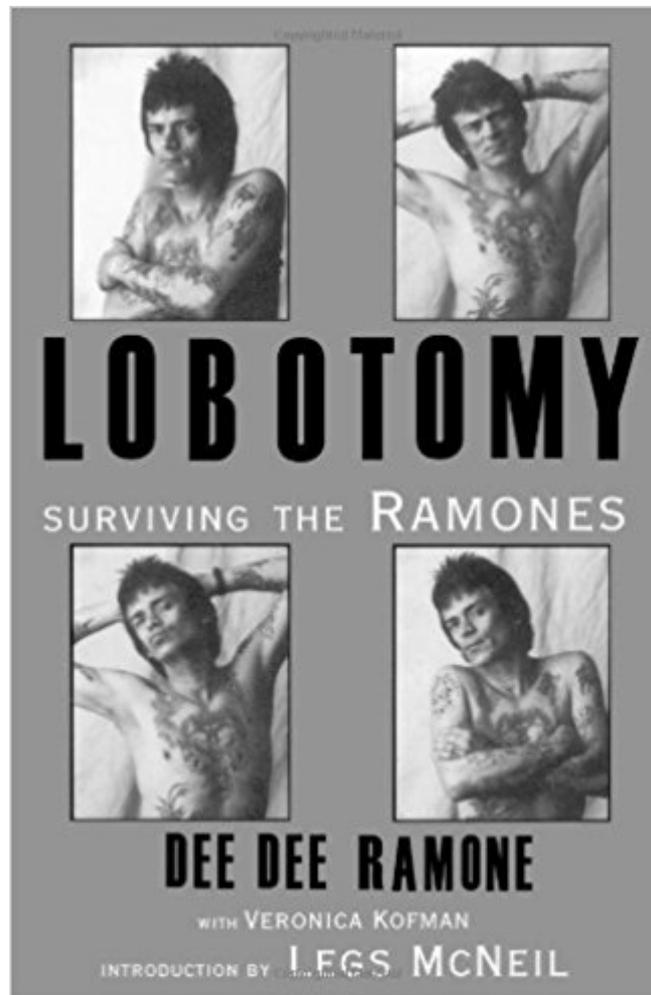


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Lobotomy: Surviving The Ramones



Synopsis

Lobotomy is a lurid and unlikely temperance tract from the underbelly of rock 'n' roll. Taking readers on a wild rollercoaster ride from his crazy childhood in Berlin and Munich to his lonely methadone-soaked stay at a cheap hotel in Earl's Court and newfound peace on the straight and narrow, Dee Dee Ramone catapults readers into the raw world of sex, addiction, and two-minute songs. It isn't pretty. With the velocity of a Ramones song, Lobotomy rockets from nights at CBGB's to the breakup of the Ramones' happy family with an unrelenting backbeat of hate and squalor: his girlfriend ODs; drug buddy Johnny Thunders steals his ode to heroin, "Chinese Rock"; Sid Vicious shoots up using toilet water; and a pistol-wielding Phil Spector holds the band hostage in Beverly Hills. Hey! Ho! Let's go!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title of this book is "Lobotomy: Surviving The Ramones" and that's exactly the tale Dee Dee tells. It's his story; not a Ramones chronology or tell-all. I found it fascinating. Dee Dee writes honestly about his unhappy and lonely childhood, his drug addiction, and his dysfunctional relationships, both with girlfriends and The Ramones (apparently, he had to omit any references to his first wife, Vera, as part of their divorce settlement). He freely admits his own faults and ineptitude (he writes that Johnny had to teach him the bass lines to his own songs) and the book reads like the wistful memories of a man who has finally come to terms with his past and found happiness at last. As much as I love The Ramones, one can't deny the fact that they are quite a dysfunctional family.

Remember Joey and Marky's verbal slugfest on Howard Stern's show? And Johnny's position as Boss Hog? No wonder Dee Dee quit! Sheesh. I enjoyed his dry humor and writing style. Dee Dee rules! He is a true original. For more information on the history of The Ramones and their career, read the excellent "Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk" by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain.

I reviewed the first edition of this book, "Poison Heart", a couple of years ago and have since revised my opinion a little. We were lucky enough to get Dee Dee to sign our copies last year and he was so friendly and happy to do it, I thought I'd re-read it and give the book another chance. I waited a looong time for this book, and I wish I could say it was 100% worth the wait. Before I thought maybe 70%...now I'd say 96%. Upon first reading, -I couldn't believe that after all those years with the Ramones, Dee Dee didn't have ONE nice or positive memory or thing to say. Don't get me wrong, I liked the book on first reading and love it now. Dee Dee has a great sense of humor, and even at his worst there's something so lovable about the guy. It sounds corny but there really is an innate sweetness under all that drug abuse and New York attitude. It's really just kind of depressing that he seems to have had such a miserable time. I knew he had problems with depression, but not this bad. Even though the Ramones are my favorite band and have been since the later 80's and I read everything I could get my hands on about them- I didn't know Dee Dee's drug problems lasted much longer than "End of the Century". The first edition of the book seems to be a series of wretched stories about being broke, taking drugs, turning tricks, getting beat up, taking more drugs, overdosing, getting beat up or stabbed by insane girlfriends, or out trying to cop drugs. The second edition at least has a more positive ending. Not to sound like a name-dropper (as I said to Iggy Pop the other day...just kidding) but I've spent time with the Ramones and agree that Joey can be moody and Johnny can be crabby and bossy, but that they are also nice people in general and can be fun to be with. I am glad there turned out to be at least ONE show, ONE night when Dee Dee was up there, playing bass and jumping up and down and thought, "Man, this is pretty fun." Obviously there's still some bad feelings left, which is too bad. But then again, think of some of the people you may have worked with years ago who you still don't want to run into again because you're so sick of. And as another reviewer said, see the title of the book. This book is also a very, very effective example of why not to do drugs. You may not want to look at the pictures taken after 1989 if you want to remember him like he was. I do still tend to think, though, that "Please Kill Me" gave you a better idea of the Ramones and the New York punk scene back then, and even of Dee Dee's life. Now that's a solid, satisfying read and includes almost as many of Dee Dee's words

as this autobio does. In both, it's clear he's a great storyteller. Another thing that bugged me when I first read the book was there's absolutely NO mention of his wife of over 10 years, Vera Ramone, who he loved so much he married her in a church and had her name tattooed on his arm. Like she never existed, and I really wanted to hear about their marriage. I since found out that they have some kind of written agreement that he can't write about her, or she asked him not to and they are close enough so he respects her wishes. Anyway, Dee Dee gets some great stories about the punk scene in, is a good sport about the less than shrewd decisions he's made in his life ("Putting out a rap album didn't exactly win me any popularity contests", he writes) and has a great sense of humor. Just wish the book wasn't so short (and that he did an audio version). He said his next book is going to be a horror novel- now that I ****really**** can't wait to read. Dee Dee's much smarter than he sounds...I still think every hardcore Ramones fan should have this in their collection.

Perhaps, the most intriguing aspect of this book is that it's author, Dee Dee Ramone, lived through (and was a contributing part of) a ground breaking movement in rock'n'roll -punk rock- during a time when NY's East Village was a free-for-all of real "sex and drugs and rock'n'roll", a place where anything and everything went down, and new ideas and attitudes were born to blaze permanent trails in rock culture and American culture. While Dee Dee may have been just a bass player in a band (the Ramones!), he lived a life that was (in part) both influenced by and representable of that era. -- Dee Dee's writing style is very simple and often spills onto the page like broken fragmented memories, but he does write from the heart and offers more of a personal story than documentation of the times. In doing so, he exposes himself like a raw nerve and yet also manages to successfully capture an exciting and dangerous mood and era in NY's East Village and rock'n'roll, - (now lost to the urban gentrification and the commercialism of underground rock and art.) Much like the film the Bad Lieutenant, he takes us on his personal journey through the seedy part of life, filled with drug addiction, self hate, and mental breakdowns. And, unintentionally gives us an insight as to who or what our rock stars and heros may actually be. There is a soul behind his voice that reveals the freaks and substance abusers to be victims of their own weaknesses, fears and past lives. Much of Dee Dee's childhood is tragic, it haunts him throughout his life, and provides us with an insight into much of his self destruction. While at times his writing doesn't explain the how's or why's of an event, he does give us enough of his painful personal history and insight into his demons so that we may read between the lines and fill in the blanks - somewhat! Dee Dee was a serious drug addict and often writes as if his memories are charred segments of a post-drug haze. A couple of times he even states he can't remember details. Dee Dee does whine a bit throughout the book and often

fails to see that being a Ramone bestowed him many blessings and privileges (as well as torment and restrictions, which he is all too well aware of). But his failure to see the glass as half full (not half empty) is tolerable, forgivable and understandable as it is in line with aspects of his personality that have beaten him into self destruction, insecurity, and self loathing - which, to his credit (and intelligence), he is very aware of! Many of the stories do leave one wishing he would have gone into more detail or offered more of an explanation, yet this doesn't seem to detract from their interest. This book isn't a history of the Ramones or punk rock. It's the personal story of Dee Dee Ramone, a drug addict and survivor, a man who many may find compelling merely because of his association with the Ramones and punk rock. Yet those two things are so much a part of his existence that anyone interested in either should find his story of some interest. -- I was a bit baffled and disappointed that no real mention was made of his ex-wife, Vera, who had to play some role in his life. (Christ, he married her, right!) Perhaps, this was for legal reasons. Still, I found this book worth the read.

First of all, don't read this if you're looking for literature. Second, don't read this if you're looking for gossip about the band. Finally, do read this if you want insight into a very sad story about an enormous talent who suffered from completely unwarranted low self esteem, and the addictions he used as a coping mechanism. Dee Dee Ramone was the poet of a generation. The saddest part of this story, of course, is that Dee Dee did not survive the Ramones; he was dead 5 years after the first edition of this book was published.

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