



Peep Show

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David Arbus will be graduating from high school in the spring of 1975. His divorced parents offer two options: embrace his mother's Hasidic sect or go into his father's line of work, running a porn theater in the heart of New York's Times Square. He joins the family business. What else would a healthy seventeen-year-old with an interest in photography do? But he didn't think it would mean giving up his mother and sister altogether.

Peep Show is the bittersweet story of a young man torn between a mother trying to erase her past and a father struggling to maintain his dignity in a less-than-savory business. As David peeps through the spaces in the screen that divides the men and the women in Hasidic homes, we can't help but think of his father's Imperial Theatre, where other men are looking at other women through the peepholes.

As entertaining as it is moving, *Peep Show* looks at the elaborate ensembles, rituals, assumed names, and fierce loyalties of two secret worlds, stripping away the curtains of both.

Peep Show Details

Date : Published June 1st 2010 by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (first published 2010)

ISBN : 9781565125087

Author : Joshua Braff

Format : Paperback 263 pages

Genre : Fiction, Religion, Pornography

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From Reader Review Peep Show for online ebook

Ethel Margaret says

See my full review at [StyleSubstanceSoul](#):

The story spans a few pivotal years of David's turbulent coming of age. David's newly-Hasidic mother disowns him, catapulting him into Times Square's sex industry as it is on the brink of a new era.

Neil says

My first reaction to this book was that it was gimmicky, a lame attempt to mix Hasidic Jews and New York peep shows for some cheap culture clash laughs and shock value.

As I read though, I was pleasantly surprised. Braff is actually quite restrained and doesn't go for anything unearned here. It's the story of David Arbus, just out of high school, who is caught in a tug of war between his father, who is a partner in a New York City burlesque house that is converting to peep shows, sex toys, and pornography production (albeit against the father's will), and his mother who has converted to the Hasidic lifestyle and is trying to take David and his sister with her. Both parents want the children with them, and the kids want to be involved with both parents, but not the respective ways of life that such involvement may require.

While there is some graphic content, it's mostly depressing, not titillating. Those who love writers like Chuck Palahniuk or even edgier fare probably won't like it, but those who like well constructed family and coming-of-age tales will.

I quite enjoyed this, zipping through it quickly. One star off for an ending that seemed a bit rushed, but if you've ever felt torn between a love for your family and some of the culture that your family embraces, this novel will really appeal to you.

Josh says

This book contains two disparate topics blended to create a portrait of a family demolished by religion and sex. On one side of the divide is a mother who after a miscarriage has retreated into the closed and suspicious world of the Jewish Ultra-Orthodox, while her ex-husband runs a burlesque club that is slowly evolving into a full pornography studio/emporium. Caught in the middle, as so often happens, are two children being forced to choose sides and struggling to figure their place for themselves.

I found this book a sad tale about two parents who are trying to do what's right for themselves and hoping they are doing the same for their children but failing miserably as they use their children as pawns and further divide a family.

Joshua Braff has set this story in the 1970s and has done a marvelous job of capturing the era, especially that of Times Square as it reacted to the ever-growing sex trade industry. Braff does not shy away from the

seedier aspects of this world and is not afraid about being sexually blunt in his writing. None of it comes off as purient, but a matter-of-fact description of this world that was trying to change with the advent of video recording and the sexual mores of the 1970s. Braff has also done wonders in revealing the closed world of the Ultra-Orthodox. Throughout the book are detailed passages of Jewish life and customs. He writes about this fascinating world and also allows his characters to struggle with their views of it and how it is affecting their individual lives.

I really liked this book, but it was in no way a happy tale. Be prepared to be sad.

Danielle Dobkowski says

This book, while pretty funny, isn't as funny as his first novel. I really did enjoy it though. the characters stuck with me all though the book, the main character was just a boy trying to fit in somewhere with his religion and family. Some of the things he was struggling with i could relate to. This book in my opinion is definitely not for a younger audience as it does have some sexual things scattered throughout. I wish his books would have a more complete ending to them, but he is still a great author. It will have you laughing and crying by the end.

Gary Garth McCann says

I've read three novels by Joshua Braff and like each. Two--including this one--are about growing up in an orthodox Jewish household with one parent fanatical--the mother here--and one not. The father in Peep Show runs a Times Square porno theater. In this book, as in the author's The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green, the protagonist is a teenage boy who tries his damndest to not cause hurt to either of his arguing parents. Braff writes compelling character studies.

Kevin says

David Arbus is a 17-year-old guy in 1975 who is dealing with something that far too many kids have to deal with, the divorce of his parents. As he nears the end of his days in high school, not only must he deal with deciding what he wants to do with his life, but he must carefully navigate the choppy waters that define his relationship with his recently converted Hasidic Jew mother and his Times Square peepshow-owning father. Being a budding photographer and one who has never been particularly religious, he finds himself leaning more toward identifying with his father. The problem, though, is that this decision alienates him from his mother as well as from the sister he loves dearly but who is also studying to become a Hasid. As he delves deeper into the world of pornography, his relationship with his mother and sister and even his own father becomes strange and strained. And all this at a time when he could really use his family to help him understand his past and figure out his future.

One of the first questions people ask me when they see me reading this book and find out what it is about is "are you Jewish?" No, I'm not. Not a shred of Jewish heritage in me that I'm aware of. Nor do I work in the porn industry, nor do I have divorced parents, nor do I have a particularly strained relationship with my

family. Despite all this, I still find it all too easy to relate to Joshua Braff's characters. They are some of the most honest and well-crafted protagonists I've read in a novel. They are far from perfect, in fact, they are actually quite flawed. But that's what makes them real. They're the perfect "any man" that you'd find out on any street in any city. They're the best friend you grew up next to. They're the guy who had a locker next to you. They're your college roommate or a coworker. And this is what makes Braff's books so utterly readable. I saw so much of myself in David Arbus despite our obvious differences that relating to him and wanting to read his story was no problem whatsoever.

Emily says

Another one of those novels that is supposedly alternately hilarious and disturbing, but this one was heavily weighted to disturbing. Despite that, somewhat poignant as well. Told through the eyes of a teenaged boy who desperately wants his father's approval, even if it means sinking into the underworld.

Thematically similar to Josh Braff's debut, "The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green", but without as much warmth.

Brandy says

David is on the brink of adulthood and straddling his parents' worlds--his mother has recently converted to Orthodox Judaism and his dad owns and runs a burlesque theatre. The worlds are a little cartoonishly drawn--Mom is completely rigid and inflexible, not allowing David's sister to see their father and sweeping her into the orthodox world as well; Dad is unwilling to update his theater to include peep shows and porn-making that will keep the business profitable. Admirably, Dad's main motivation isn't for keeping the theater afloat but for regaining access to his daughter, whom he misses terribly. David, too, misses his sister and is deeply hurt by his mother's rejection of him (as he won't convert).

Setting the book against a fledgling adult shop makes it easy to say "this person is an unfit parent" while highlighting that the porn shop owner is actually the more caring parent, but such a decision seems lazy. This could have been a stronger novel if Braff had focused on the family dynamic without using the shorthand of "EWWW PORN."

Tara says

I ended up enjoying reading this book, but it really wasn't that great... I guess I wanted it to be hilarious like his first novel and it sure wasn't. Braff's writing also feels unfinished/disjointed in a weird way, like you're reading along and all of a sudden you think "wait, he's in the garage now? how'd he get down there?" so you go back a few paragraphs and see if you missed something, but it turns out, it just wasn't explained very well. Also I felt the book just like... jumped into things too fast, and I wasn't ready for the crazy emotional outbursts that we started right off with. I kind of wished the book had been 100 pages longer... it just needed more development I think.

That said, in the end I enjoyed it and cared about the characters...

Douglas Castagna says

Well written and bittersweet. I found though, in the end, I really did not care about David or his plight. I liked the writing, and the plot, and a lot of the humor that was interjected into the story, but when it all came down to it, I did not like the protagonist all that much. That being said, the writing was so good, that I wanted to read it through, and I found myself enjoying much of what I read.

Lynnie says

I really enjoyed reading this book. For me, it's always about the characters & you couldn't help but root for the characters in this one- two completely opposite worlds, Hasidism & the porn industry, pull apart one family. How they all react to these two extremes throughout the book is what grabs you & makes you keep reading. Both worlds are drawn with respect which makes it infinitely more interesting. A lesser writer would have made either or both into a caricature & Braff resists that throughout. A great read!

Gregory says

I want to give this book four stars but somehow just can't. It is definitely a good read giving me a glimpse into two worlds I knew little or nothing about. Worth your time with some laughter and some sadness.

Jennifer says

Liked the narrator/protagonist of David Arbus and his struggle with wanting to be loved and would rate this book a bit higher than the "average" 3 stars. David (based on a real person) was tragically human with a deep love for family that wasn't always reciprocated. I did think the ending was unresolved somewhat and left the reader hanging as to what the future holds especially after what happened with his dad. After reading this I'd be interested in reading more of Braff's stuff.

Sarahanne says

This was a beautifully written book. I found myself very caught up in the story, the characters, and the two worlds described. I wish the book had a couple more chapters. - one at the beginning and one at the end. It would have been interesting watching the family get to this point. I also can't imagine what happens next.

Sarah Anne says

This book was definitely intriguing, but didn't delve too deeply into the fascinating Hasidic culture. I

certainly learned a lot about the burlesque and strip club industry in 1970s NYC though.
