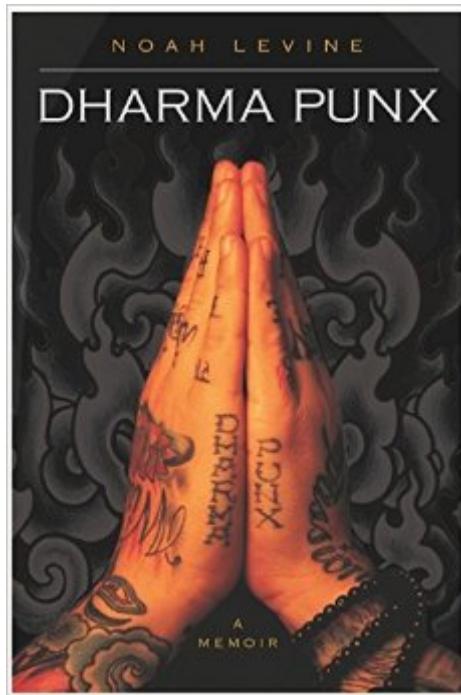


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Dharma Punx



Synopsis

Fueled by the music of revolution, anger, fear, and despair, we dyed our hair or shaved our heads ... Eating acid like it was candy and chasing speed with cheap vodka, smoking truckloads of weed, all in a vain attempt to get numb and stay numb. This is the story of a young man and a generation of angry youths who rebelled against their parents and the unfulfilled promise of the sixties. As with many self-destructive kids, Noah Levine's search for meaning led him first to punk rock, drugs, drinking, and dissatisfaction. But the search didn't end there. Having clearly seen the uselessness of drugs and violence, Noah looked for positive ways to channel his rebellion against what he saw as the lies of society. Fueled by his anger at so much injustice and suffering, Levine now uses that energy and the practice of Buddhism to awaken his natural wisdom and compassion. While Levine comes to embrace the same spiritual tradition as his father, bestselling author Stephen Levine, he finds his most authentic expression in connecting the seemingly opposed worlds of punk and Buddhism. As Noah Levine delved deeper into Buddhism, he chose not to reject the punk scene, instead integrating the two worlds as a catalyst for transformation. Ultimately, this is an inspiring story about maturing, and how a hostile and lost generation is finally finding its footing. This provocative report takes us deep inside the punk scene and moves from anger, rebellion, and self-destruction, to health, service to others, and genuine spiritual growth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Noah Levine supposedly set out to write a book about bringing Buddhism to street punks; instead he wrote 249 pages of self-congratulatory autobiography. Like many autobiographies, this one fails

to portray an accurate image of the subject. When writing about one's self, most of us tend to include our accomplishments rather than our negative impacts on life; Levine is no exception. The first few chapters are only moderately inspiring. Levine takes us through the dysfunctional, privileged upbringing of a child born to hippies. Instead of teaching young, bratty Levine right from wrong, his parents took the approach of allowing him to run wild in an attempt to "find his own way." This led to a life of crime, heavy drug use, dropping out of high school, and violence. Instead of enlightening the reader as to what Levine and his friends were so dissatisfied with, Levine regales adventures he and his friends had breaking into the homes of their rather well off families in order to obtain money for drugs. Levine's famous father, Stephen Levine, often comes to Noah's rescue, showing the reader how easy it is to be a criminal, broke punk, when your father has influence and money. Once the younger Levine discovers meditation while in juvenile hall, the reader is misled into believing that he will start down a path of righteousness. While Levine clearly believes that, nothing could be further from the truth. Noah spends the rest of the book boasting of his various spiritual accomplishments, claiming that because he has apologized and made amends for all his youthful trespasses, that he is forgiven and free of that karma. He focuses entirely upon every self-gratifying situation, and avoids or gives little attention to the times when he acted like a blatant jerk.

I try to give a balanced, in-depth review. A dropout at fifteen, and by nearly thirty a grown-up, Noah Levine shares his troubled journey. The son of a prominent American Buddhist teacher, Noah was raised in Taos and Santa Cruz, two not-exactly hardscrabble countercultural enclaves. Still, he seems to have spent little time with his father and stepmother, and early on became alienated from his mother and stepfather, turning to drugs by the age of ten or so, and then integrating hardcore (and then Straight Edge) punk and skating, tagging and panhandling, stealing and crack, into his lifestyle spent on the streets. He rails for much of his upbringing against hippie idealism and spiritual messages, but as the title indicates, he manages to survive stints in juvenile hall, twelve-step programs, and among many rebels in the Reagan-Bush-Clinton years who wind up in prison and/or dead. He tells the story with lots of did-this, done-that detail for the first half of his narrative. He tends to fill pages with who he hung out with and what happened next which may be interesting if you were there with him, or were listening to his anecdotes now and then, but after a few chapters of similar-sounding mishaps, travels, parties, girlfriends, and concerts, it blurs as much for a reader as it must have for Noah back then. I sympathized with his torment, but it played like a long episode of MTV's "Behind the Music"--by a fanHalfway, the narrative lightens and widens. A solo camping trip

to Big Basin park to see the redwoods he loved sounds predictable. But, the emotion invested in his sight of a deer, and the feelings evoked, demonstrate movingly, in his entrapment in temptations, how estranged from nature he has become.

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