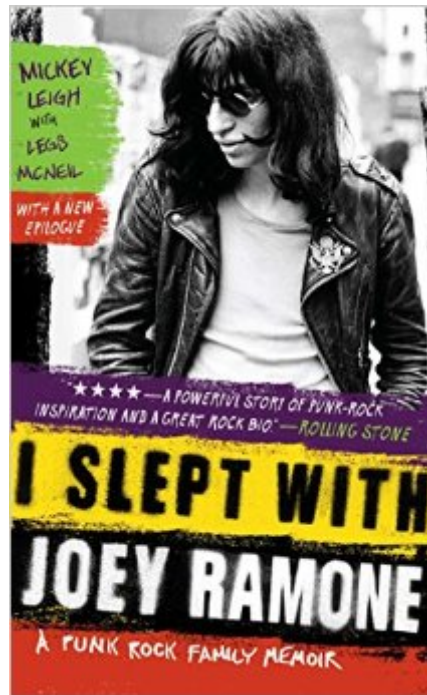


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I Slept With Joey Ramone: A Punk Rock Family Memoir



Synopsis

“A powerful story of punk-rock inspiration and a great rock bio” (Rolling Stone), now in paperback. When the Ramones recorded their debut album in 1976, it heralded the true birth of punk rock. Unforgettable front man Joey Ramone gave voice to the disaffected youth of the seventies and eighties, and the band influenced the counterculture for decades to come. With honesty, humor, and grace, Joey’s brother, Mickey Leigh, shares a fascinating, intimate look at the turbulent life of one of America’s greatest—and unlikeliest—music icons. While the music lives on for new generations to discover, *I Slept with Joey Ramone* is the enduring portrait of a man who struggled to find his voice and of the brother who loved him.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I will preface this review by saying I am not what you would call a huge Ramones fan. I know their music well and appreciate their tremendous influence on subsequent acts but I am by no means a fanatic. As such, this is the first full-length book I have read on the band or a member of the band, though I know there is much out there. One of the main reasons I decided to read this book was to hear firsthand of their role in the birth of punk in the '70s. I had read Legs McNeil's book on the history of punk and seen many documentaries that highlight the Ramones importance in this respect. I, however, came to know the Ramones long after the release of *Rock 'n' Roll High School* and mediocre record after mediocre record. I wanted to experience and learn about the impact the early Ramones had on the music scene and the lasting influence of that impact. Mickey Leigh (and co-author Legs McNeil) do not disappoint in this respect. They do an excellent job of

capturing the excitement of how Joey Ramone and his band built on the sound of the New York Dolls and Iggy and the Stooges to become the first true punk band. However, many before them have done this well. One reason why I enjoy reading biographies of musicians is to get insight into the musician in their formative years, to find out what it is that inspired them. That is the second reason I decided to read this book. I figured Joey Ramone's brother could provide unique insight into what made Joey Ramone and the Ramones who they were. Again, here he did not disappoint. In fact, I would argue that the strongest part of this book are the scenes of Joey and Mickey (their names were actually Jeffrey and Mitchell Hyman then) growing up in the Forest Hills area of Queens.

I was in the music scene at the time much of this book takes place, but far removed from the New York scene. As a result I've met many of the people in Mitch's book, but wouldn't push the envelope by calling them close personal friends. It was a time when all of us spent a lot of time frying our brains and convincing ourselves that what we were doing really mattered. Mitch captures that atmosphere well in the first half of the book but seems to lose touch with the realities of it as his story progresses. I was both eager and a bit fearful as I approached this book because I didn't know Mickey's motives. I watched Richard Carpenter, for example, spend years trying to make a buck off of his sister Karen's death - even going so far as to change up lyrics and sing songs like, "She'd only just begun.... to live." I hoped that Mickey hadn't started down that sickening path. The good news is that for the most part, he never gives the reader a sense that this is an attempt to bankroll his brother's notoriety. The bad news is that he does waste a lot of time trying to rewrite history in order to paint himself in a better light - at the expense of Joey's (Jeff's) reputation. I saw the Ramones a number of times and in fact was backstage (if you could call the open area a "backstage" at all) at the show he mentions at Frolics up in Salisbury, Mass. The tension between Johnny and Joey was obvious and their respective entourages quickly separated into camps on opposite sides of the room. The problem with this book is that while it is very detailed and honest about some aspects of the band, there are huge gaps and outright falsehoods as well. The first half of the book does a great job in describing how the core band came together.

*The Crowgrl has a confession to make - I've always had a huge crush on Joey Ramone. I've always loved The Ramones' music, and even have collectibles such as The Ramones shot glasses and there's a Joey Ramone doll in my office.. Hearing Joey's distinct voice from the CD speakers or even unexpectedly on the radio always brings a smile to my face. I've been lucky enough to cross

paths with the Ramones many times in my journalistic career. I've interviewed Joey, Johnny, and Marky for outlets I've worked for including Performance Magazine, Amusement Business Magazine, and, Marky for The Crowgrl's Perch. I did a story on the first Joey Ramone Birthday Bash for Amusement Business in 2001. And I was at the show at the Bayou in Washington, DC, that was mentioned in the book - the Ramones opened for Blue Oyster Cult...BOC have been like brothers to me since my radio days when I first got into this industry, and they were the ones who introduced me to the raw brilliance of the Ramones! So, of course, I couldn't wait to get my hands on a copy of the book *I Slept With Joey Ramone* written by the person who probably knew Joey best - his younger brother Mickey Leigh (along with the brothers' long time friend Legs McNeil.) (Touchstone Books/Simon & Schuster) And I was NOT disappointed! Mickey bares his soul to give us the clearest portrait ever of this great musical icon! This dynamic book is an intimate look at the triumphs and tragedies that defined the lives of both brothers. In reality, this is actually Mickey's biography although his brother plays a huge part in it. But it does show how Joey ultimately triumphed over overwhelming obstacles to become an icon that defined the Punk genre of music. It's an incredibly inspiring story!

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