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Keva McCluskey craves success. Other bands are making it big and now his worst enemy is on MTV. Without being recognised among the great songwriters of our time, Keva feels he cannot confront his horrific past. That's why he formed the Grams.

James Love wants all the sex, cocaine and groupies that fame can bring him. That's why he joined the Grams.

Guy de Burnet wants to sell records the ethical way. That's why he formed a record label which prizes morality as highly as platinum discs. When he signs the Grams, it can only end in tears.

Powder Details

Date : Published May 25th 2000 by Vintage (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9780099289968

Author : Kevin Sampson

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Fiction, Music, Literature, 20th Century

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From Reader Review Powder for online ebook

Godzilla says

A very readable foray into the world of the music industry, with the rise and fall of one group charted in a book that feels part documentary, part memoir and part work of fiction.

The characters are well painted, and of course adhere to stereotypes, as this is fiction we're dealing with.

I ended up thinking that Mr Sampson must have been in some VERY strange situations!

I've read plenty of rock bios, but none have the background and inside info that this novel has.

As the blurb says: one for every aspiring band to read, digest and ruminate on....

Cynical J says

haven't read all of Kevins books but up to now this is my favourite by far, maybe because of the music connection. Kevin was the manager of the Farm and i hoped that some of this book was between the lines of real and fiction, great book about a rock band smashing the world.

Martin says

Its been a while since I read this, but I remember loving it. Its the story of a band from the beginning, going through to buckling under the pressure of success.

Kyle Fletcher says

A slow starter with an addictive central story that eventually fades into not much of anything.

The writing style was very frustrating at times but in the end it was definitely enjoyable, not sure I would read it again or recommend anyone else does.

Shane says

I hate saying something sucks. Someone worked really hard to make this. It was bad and I don't recommend it.

CS says

One book has to be the worst book you've ever read. This is it.

Unlikely scenarios and dialogue.

Irvine Welsh made grit and grime an enjoyable and even funny read.

Samson just makes it cringeworthy.

It has the feel of a 15 year olds daydreaming whilst on dinner time detention.

This has been made into a film. Wow.

Sampson must be chuckling to himself.

Gillian Hannam says

took a while to get into this one but i really enjoyed it. all about the music biz. finished it a long time ago, might have a re-read!

Rob says

A fascinating time capsule. For me, living as I did at the time with an employee of Music Week magazine and conducting much of my socialising in and around Farringdon and Camden Town, it's a spot on evocation of the late nineties and the excess that followed in the wake of Britpop. Sampson's grasp of how the music industry works is uncanny and the book's best bits deal with the wheeler dealing of the whole shebang. He also does a good job in persuading us that the fictional band represented, the Grams, are really very good indeed despite suspicions that they may be akin to a Cast or Ocean Colour Scene.

But it's not on the level of previous music industry novels such as Iain Banks' *Espedair Street* or John Niven's scabrous *Kill Your Friends*. Lad Mag culture hasn't gone away - Top Gear and Channel 5's *Football League Tonight* are evidence of that - the details provide a portrait of an era where some of the advances in sexual equality gained from the sixties and seventies were rolled back - a world where Chris Evans, Liam Gallagher and Jonathan Ross thrived. Sampson does take a dim view of such antics but revels in them nonetheless.

Emma says

fascinating for someone who knows marginally more about the subject matter than the music industry - and an easy but reasonable satisfying read.

Old-Barbarossa says

Anyone who has ever been in or near a band will recognise something here.

Lara says

Loved this book.

The story can be a little difficult to get into and the head jumps can be confusing but totally worth persevering. I originally gave this book 5 stars but downgraded it to 4 after I finished it. The ending was good but I felt the writer could have pushed it harder, although the implied subtlety was nice.

I would recommend this to most music fans and those who like contemporary work.

Michael Bohli says

Mit "Powder" werden so manch romantische Träumereien wohl zerplatzen - denn die Aufstiegsgeschichte einer fiktiven, englischen Band in den Neunzigern ist alles andere als wunderschön und friedlich. Kevin Sampson bietet uns nämlich einen sehr akkuraten Einblick in das Musikbusiness, zumindest eine Momentaufnahme aus der Zeit, als mit Platten und Bands noch tonnenweise Geld gemacht wurde. Es wird seitenweise gestritten, gefeiert, gef*ckt und vor allem getrunken.

The Grams schaffen als Gruppe mit ihrer Musik zwar den Nerv der Zeit zu treffen, doch der Alltag als berühmte Rock-Band ist kein einfacher. Vor allem, wenn der grösste Feind die eigenen Egos sind. Und somit verlieren sich die Charaktere immer mehr in einem Strudel aus Gier und Orientierungslosigkeit. Was leider auch etwas auf den Roman zutrifft - den selten konnte mich das Werk wirklich packen. Viele Figuren und ständig wechselnde Szenen verhindern einen guten Fluss, Kevin Sampson hätte das Buch wohl um einiges kürzen können. Unterhaltsam ist "Powder" aber, besonders für jemanden, der gerne über Bands und Musik liest.

Marsha says

It's been years since I read this, but I really liked it at the time. Wonder if I'll feel the same way now?

Getoldsen says

Wheeler Finlay is the unlikely hero of this tale of boom to bust for a group of Liverpool musicians, not as enjoyable as when I first read it 15 years ago

Celeste Goh says

Eddy loaned me this number some time back that threw my reading list off course a bit. (Some time ago, because I am a painstakingly slow reader, and would only read on weekend mornings over a cup of tea). I suppose, it was because back then I was talking to him about potential offers in managing certain local bands, when it inspired him to pull this old one off his shelves for me to read.

A novel from the late 90s, Powder revolves around an up and coming fictional band from Liverpool, The Grams, consisting of band members lead vocalist Keva McCluskey, star-powered guitarist Hector Lovett, or more famously known as James Love, and the seemingly tag-along bassist Beano, and drummer, Tony Snow.

It speaks of the band's rise to fame. From that period before everything goes into motion, that phase that aches to want to be famous already after years of hardwork, the teeth gritting competition with their arch nemesis Sensira, who seemed to have chanced upon fame so effortlessly. We all know how that feels, giving your all into something you're passionate about, yet someone else seems to beat you to it in reaping the rewards, as if without lifting a finger.

To that crucial moment before all hell breaks loose – in a good way, for a band. It is like handling a malnutrition baby born before its time. Every move you make then is important, because it sets your band out on how you want to be perceived by the public. The magazines you decide to be in, which magazine to prioritise because of its readership or its impact they have on the music industry, and in what kind of formats – a front cover feature, or a mere writeup, or a puny review. Which media you decide to be heard in – the all-or-nothing big guns of the mainstream, or the slow-but-eventual rise via the indie stations, and which record stores to hit it hot and when to hit them best. Not to mention, which song you choose to be the debut single, and how you would go about with the music video that would leave an everlasting impact, long after your band's name has gone to the shits. And which venues to go for on tour, the big bang arenas and risk a loose crowd, or a lesser known cabaret hall packed to the brim, with the band feeding off the fans' energy.

I suppose it has something to do with me being a writer, but the most interesting bit for me was when they decide if they should accept a potentially useful exclusive front cover story on Mojo Magazine. The battle between the press publicist manager Todd, and publicist Hannah, and how each has their own years of experience and point of views for argument on whether or not to take the offer. Accepting it would be obvious. It's an exclusive, it's a front cover, which budding band wouldn't want that? But that would also mean closing doors for a lot more music magazines out there, most especially Britain's hottest and still music magazine, NME. It may seem glamorous at that point, but you might risk the chance of many more cover opportunities in the future.

Whilst the local magazine industry does not run as such that bands have to decide on such priorities, it still amazed me, when I read it, how something seemingly so fickle can be of such importance for a band about to hit stardom. One can only imagine how muddy the future for the band would look back then, not knowing which path holds the key to a clean eventual success.

Powder shows for a band how not to get in over your head at the beginning, and throughout really, and just saying 'yes' to everything that falls on your lap. Under the management of Wheezer Finlay, a.k.a The Wheeze, he knows where the line is, and he knows how to balance them well. How to walk away from a

front cover, though the offer seems everything in their right mind appealing, and how to walk off from an important gig, when the people there don't deem you worthy enough to even be there. He knows The Grams' worth, and he dangles them on a string above the public, not low enough to sell themselves short, yet high enough so to have everyone craving for them left, right and centre.

Like every music-related story goes, Powder has the usual elements of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Thrown in the mix is the impending doom of time, mostly to do with the lead vocalist Keva McCluskey. Well aware that his clock is ticking away, Keva decided it was all or nothing for The Grams. Fuelled by some sort of a quarter-life crisis, he put all his faith in this giant leap, in hopes that it will help him find meaning in life again, but thread the dangerous expectation he puts in it, that it all may somehow blow up in his face, despite the heart and soul he invested in it.

Dramatism aside, Powder holds the key to everything someone needs to know when it comes to anything to do with a band, be it a manager, a record label, a publicist, and even the band themselves. How whatever you can dream of, can come true with the right sort of people involved and what sort of people you associate yourself with. How whatever you can dream of, can come true in a blink of an eye, and how it can also fall apart, at another whisk of the eyelash.
