



MVP

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Superstar Gilbert Marcus rapes and kills a young woman in a hotel room during the off-season. That's the prologue. *MVP* is Marcus's life story from conception to his act of incredible violence. Raised an only child - the son of a difficult and demanding father -- Gilbert Marcus, a basketball player with extraordinary skill, is expected to be the greatest. His life is one of both excessive privilege and immutable obligation. He becomes a monster. James Boice is a startling and exciting new voice in fiction, and *MVP* is his ambitious and fascinating debut.

MVP Details

Date : Published May 8th 2007 by Scribner (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9780743292993

Author : James Boice

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Fiction, Literary Fiction, Contemporary

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Megan says

hard for me to agree with the "new paradigm" raves on this one. sometimes I think there's a bit of a generation gap between how a new generation talks and the last generation perceives it -- the prose didn't strike me as particularly revolutionary. i have a hard time with books where I dislike many of the main characters. a personal flaw, perhaps.

Jenine Young says

Excellent book. Although you empathize with some of the characters, you don't particularly like any of them. The shifts in time add another layer without being confusing or overdone. I almost forgot how the book started by the end because I was so wrapped up in what was happening in the storyline right then.

Renee says

This is James Boice's first novel and he masterfully employs a style all his own; unique, edgy and fresh. One does not have to be a fan of the NBA or organized sports to appreciate the well developed characters and their road to entitlement. Some say MVP is based on Kobe Bryant's life; whether it is or isn't, MVP is a gripping tale of a young kid (Gilbert Marcus) who has been groomed for nothing but the NBA his entire life, and what unveils after his arrival.

My only complaint is, at times, the author describes in 20 sentences what could adequately be described in 10. Articles I've read said Boice has done his research and has created a believable voyeuristic tension throughout the story regarding the deviant sexual behaviors of the Gilbert and his teammates.

Jo says

I don't know why this jumped off the shelves at me. I was interested to read a book written by someone so young. I haven't read anything with any substance lately and this filled a void. I liked the way that it jumped around without being spotty. I look forward to more.

Andrew Miller says

James Boice is a fearless young author who thrives on details. Timeline gets a little screwed up without any real markers, but this is someone who clearly understands the human experience, even if it isn't his.

Hilary says

swearing and graphic sex, no thank you

Saratoga says

I thought this book was stunning. Although professional basketball and rough sex are not my ideal topics for reading, I bought this book as it got a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*. I was really blown away by it. James Boice is an extremely talented writer who takes his readers off in unexpected directions at unexpected times. It is unfortunate that many of the mainstream book reviews, i.e., *New York Times*, missed this one (or if they did review it, I never saw it).

Allison says

This is one of those books you read for the artistry of its construction: they vivid yet impersonal style of the language, the POV shifts, the abstract-concreteness of it. This is the kind of book that I imagine my sophomore year Creative Writing Seminar Professor choosing, to go along with all of those stories that were so thought-provoking and had such poignant language, but that I didn't quite "get." Yet what makes Boice's novel unusual is its here-and-now, popular culture subject: the life of a (fictional) professional basketball player.

This subject has probably been done a number of times by a number of authors. I would wager that it has been glorified to the extreme on one end, and written to evoke sympathy bordering on tears on the other. Yet *MVP* does neither of those, or else it does both: it shows the ostentatiousness of a professional athlete's lifestyle and expectations from life, as well as the simplicity of a child's dreams and how difficult it is to live those dreams out. You hate the protagonist even while you are pitying him. In any work of modern art, I find that ambivalence is the key to artistry, and so this is a work of "modern" fiction.

I wish I could find an English teacher or school board willing to try teaching this book to kids in inner-city high schools. *Catcher in the Rye* and *The Great Gatsby* are great and certainly well written, but this would probably be my choice of material to teach because not only would there be good writing to model and interesting themes to pursue, but the kids might actually find something in this novel they can relate to. Even I, a suburban white girl, found something to relate to in Gilbert's struggles for selfhood and self-ownership, and the fact that I can imagine many of my former jerk-off classmates actually becoming interested within the first chapter makes me keen to try my theory. However, my efforts would probably end in *MVP* landing on the banned book list and me landing out the door on my tush. Sex and drug use is not skirted in this novel, nor should it be for the subject it is addressing and the stare-in-the-face manner it uses to tackle that subject. I believe high school juniors and seniors would be up to the task of facing these references and descriptions, with which they are most likely already familiar. Sadly for me—and for most high schoolers out there—school administrations will never agree.

Tim says

The NBA Finals reminded me of how good this book is... Boice, who published this at 25, uses the life of

Kobe Bryant as the jumping off point for a story about success, corruption, and not knowing what you want. The book has lots of sharp elbows, but compassion for the people great and small who cross paths with Gilbert "Animal" Marcus. I would call this the male version of Joyce Carol Oates' "Blonde," which takes a similar fictionalized approach to the life of Marilyn Monroe. It's the last book I just couldn't stop reading.

Evan says

This covers some of the same ground as "American Psycho" and "I Am Charlotte Simmons," but with more heart and pathos than either. The cultural button-pushing is much less cynical, and the hero is more neurotic, more unique, and thus somewhat more sympathetic. I especially liked the way Boice cut away from an otherwise nearly obsessive focus on the main character to focus intently, for a paragraph or two, on the lives of those affected by him and the repercussions of his actions ... especially at the book's climax, so that the protagonist and his victim compete for the narrative. The same basic technique was one of the strong points of the movie "Y Tu Mama Tambien," but Boice uses it more subtly and more effectively.

Stephanie Arani says

James Boice is a very talented author. His style is enigmatic and interesting. I especially liked the interweaving of the lives Gilbert had an impact on tangentially.

However, overall, I feel that this plot was somewhat 'been there done that.' We all know that professional athletes are often afforded too much privilege to the point that they cannot accept responsibility for the damage they caused. But overall, it was interesting and I enjoyed the book.

Matt says

Riffing off a Kobe Bryant template, James Boice tells the story of an exceptional groomed from birth to become the next Darren Dickinson (for some reason Scribner's counsel weren't cool with the MJ handle). Starting with his conception, the story selectively travels from his youth (and daily regiment of wind sprints, wheatgrass shots & coffee enemas) to a post-prime off-season mishap in a Las Vegas hotel room that ends with a single-white-nude-dead-female.

Boice's dialogue is spot-on, and has a wicked sense of humor. I look forward to his future work.

Taylor Evans says

MVP is a chilling examination of the private and public worlds of professional basketball superstar Gilbert Animal Marcus. The most disturbing aspect of Marcus is not his ultimate act of senseless violence, which frames the novel. The childish self-indulgent nature of Marcus, his inability to develop into anything resembling a real man, is what is most disturbing. The final two paragraphs of the novel, which mention the nightly routine of Marcus examining his youthful face in the mirror, summarize this idea. The ultimate reflection being that Gilbert Animal Marcus is simply an overgrown child.

Emily says

The first chapter was published as an Esquire short story and is fantastic... It's a fictionalized account of a Kobe Bryant-like Las Vegas hotel room situation, and it goes fast and has a relentless language style which furthers the internal nature of the narrative.

But overall the book doesn't pan out and disappointed me - everything happens in the first 8 pages and the other couple hundred are spent on a prolonged character study of a man who is capable of the best in basketball and the worst in human behaviour. This is well-worn territory and what's missing is the post-crime aftermath, how people around him dealt with it, how it was excused, and how he got back on top.

Paula says

This really was a fascinating book. I hated pretty much every character in it for one reason or another, but I couldn't stop reading it. I had to find out what happened. However, it felt rather incomplete to me. The ending is really abrupt and maybe I'm just slow... but I don't get it...
