



High on Arrival

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Not long before her fiftieth birthday, *Mackenzie Phillips* walked into Los Angeles International Airport. She was on her way to a reunion for *One Day at a Time*, the hugely popular 70s sitcom on which she once starred as the lovable rebel Julie Cooper.

Within minutes of entering the security checkpoint, Mackenzie was in handcuffs, arrested for possession of cocaine and heroin. Born into rock and roll royalty, flying in Learjets to the Virgin Islands at five, making pot brownies with her father's friends at eleven, Mackenzie grew up in an all-access kingdom of hippie freedom and heroin cool. It was a kingdom over which her father, the legendary *John Phillips* of *The Mamas & the Papas*, presided, often in absentia, as a spellbinding, visionary phantom.

When Mackenzie was a teenager, Hollywood and the world took notice of the charming, talented, precocious child actor after her star-making turn in *American Graffiti*. As a young woman she joined the nonstop party in the hedonistic pleasure dome her father created for himself and his fellow revelers, and a rapt TV audience watched as Julie Cooper wasted away before their eyes. By the time Mackenzie discovered how deep and dark her father's trip was going, it was too late. And as an adult, she has paid dearly for a lifetime of excess, working tirelessly to reconcile a wonderful, terrible past in which she succumbed to the power of addiction and the pull of her magnetic father.

As her astounding, outrageous, and often tender life story unfolds, the actor-musician-mother shares her lifelong battle with personal demons and near-fatal addictions. She overcomes seemingly impossible obstacles again and again and journeys toward redemption and peace. By exposing the shadows and secrets of the past to the light of day, the star who turned up *High on Arrival* has finally come back down to earth - to stay.

High on Arrival Details

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From Reader Review High on Arrival for online ebook

Alex says

I have a mildly sick fascination with the Phillips family. I read both "Papa John" and "California Dreamin' " back when they came out and it didn't take much to get me in line for Mac's book. Not sure why. I am not the age to be an original fan of either the Mamas and the Papas or "One Day at A Time" (et al). I guess I would lump this more under my fascination with dysfunctional families, particularly show biz ones. So... it would have taken more willpower than I have not to dip into Mac's harrowing tale. Maybe there is a 12 Step program for people like me who can't help themselves. (Do I need to pull out the "I got it at the library" excuse?) For the record, I believe Mac's tale of woe. There is no reason any sane person would make up these kinds of accusations, and her depiction of John Phillips' god-like entitlement makes perfect sense; he was a hedonist who thought he was above the law.

But, for this reader, who has already heard a lot about the family, this story feels like a re-tread. It's also a re-tread of numerous junkie/addict memoirs I have read. They all start to run together after a while. I usually spend time marveling at how the authors survive, given that they're often out of their minds and behind the wheel of vehicles. Then there is the amount of toxins they are ingesting. Usually I'm just relieved they have found their way out of this netherworld. If ever there were a strong anti-drug argument, it's stories like these. No one would want to live through this.

Stephanie says

OK, I realize everybody wants to know about the part where Mackenzie and her father, John Phillips, Did It. And while this is an admittedly interesting (albeit horrific) part of the story, it's just a small piece of the crazy puzzle that is the author's life. Written with great humor, compassion and intelligence, I thoroughly enjoyed this memoir. As a recovering addict myself, I can attest to the fact that so much drug and alcohol abuse is a means to dull deep, profound, psychic pain. And Mackenzie Phillips has had that in spades.

It also sounds like she had lots of fun, especially on the glam rock scene. I love her extreme style and applauded her decision to play up her long, lanky frame with platform shoes, skintight jeans and slinky tube tops. Look, I would never trade places with her in a million years, but I do appreciate her giving readers a glimpse into her incredible life. In addition to her wild ways, she seems to place great value on friendships. I also enjoyed reading about her private side...this is a woman who has a deep appreciation for beauty and style (I love her descriptions of her various homes) and has a strong bond with animals, as well as a great feel for music. Her description of her high school in Hollywood had me laughing out loud...MP's got a wonderful sense of the absurd.

This review really doesn't do the book justice, but I do want to stress that it's not all about nodding out and getting abused by her father. I saw it as a survivor's account of being dropped into an incredibly bizarre life and finding a way to sanity...sort of like a modern-day Alice in Wonderland.

I do hope Mackenzie maintains her sobriety, as her drug addiction is so extreme it can only lead to death and despair. She deserves better. Reading her family's cruel refutations made my heart ache for her. I hope she takes comfort in the fact that her story will help countless people who are the victims of incest. It takes a brave person to come forward with this story. I really admire this woman and I'm glad I read her book.

Sabrina Rutter says

I listened to The Mamas & The Papas every once in a while when I was a teenager sitting around my bedroom puffing on a joint enjoying the hippy vibe of the music. I never gave their personal lives any thought at all other than I knew that Cass Elliot had died at a young age. I always thought she died choking on a chicken sandwich, but apparently she died from a heart attack. Not sure where I got the choking story from...

After reading this memoir I'm not sure I will look at the movie stars going in, and out of rehab the same again. I feel really sad for those high paid actors/actresses that are depleting their bank accounts on poison. They hit rock bottom, left with nothing to show of their fortune, and the well has long run dry by the time regret sets in. It's sad when anyone becomes addicted to drugs, but it also disappoints when one has the world on a silver platter and they toss the world off to make room for the coke.

In a way Mackenzie Phillips didn't stand a chance. She had no structure as a child, and both of the adults in her life had substance abuse problems. She was loved, but it takes more than love to raise a child.

There were some pretty heavy revelations in this book, and I mean the shocking kind. I actually had to reread a sentence in this book to make sure I read it correctly because the truth was just so shocking.

I don't want to give away too much in this review, but this is an excellent memoir about drug addiction, and the battle it takes to beat that monster into the ground so you can stay on top of it.

Jeannie says

I just finished this book with tears in my eyes and a big "Wow" in my head. Mackenzie Phillips life story is one of the bravest and most interesting memoirs I've ever had the honor to read. Truly inspiring, she is one amazing woman, there is no "poor, little pitiful me" anywhere in her book, it's told with such amazing candor that it almost leaves me speechless. I'm not sure how to word all this but I know I came away with a deeper understanding of addiction and even learned some things about myself while reading it. I felt her struggles and her pain as I have felt them myself, she put into words things that I cannot. For that I thank her for sharing her story in the hopes that it will help others who struggle with addiction and ghosts from their past. I HIGHLY recommend this memoir to everyone, even those not interested in addiction, I believe everyone could learn something from her story.

Natalia says

Wow, I love a good tell-all, but this reads like a sordid wallow in a really messed up life. The part that left me the most uncomfortable is that she still obviously romanticizes her time as a drug addict. She talks about it kind-of wistfully, as if she misses it.

On top of that, she has a really weird perspective about the people who were in her life at the times she was using. There is a lot of barely-contained bitterness towards her family and friends who wanted to help her, as if she still doesn't truly believe that she ever wanted to quit, and they're responsible for spoiling her good time. On the other hand, when she talks about her dealers and junkie friends, she takes great pains to go on about how great of people they were, other than the drug thing. Because they totally had her best interests at heart when they were giving her cocaine to shoot up while she was trying to leave for rehab.

She has been through treatment in various ways many many times in her life, but it seems like the idea of it really never caught hold for her. Like she quit drugs because she realizes it would kill her and it was hurting her child... but that she didn't really want to, and feels like the whole world is harshing her mellow. Poor her.

Lee Anne says

If all the teen stars of my favorite childhood shows continue to write memoirs, I will continue to read them. Few will top this one, though. Mackenzie Phillips had a drug habit that makes Maureen McCormick's pretty severe cocaine addiction look downright recreational.

Phillips has presented the seamier side of the happy hippie Laurel Canyon life (recently the topic of a pretty coffee table book I just skimmed). Five year olds wandering the beach unsupervised; junior high kids taking acid, snorting coke, and learning from their parents how to roll joints. Her father, Papa John Phillips, would go out of town and leave Mackenzie and her brother in the care of whomever was in his house at the time, or strand her at airports, or in London. His live-and-let-live, as long as it feels good, do it lifestyle was ultimately the death of him, and it goes a long way toward explaining the incestuous behavior that has been generating all the media controversy.

Mackenzie has taken some heat for these revelations, including denials from Michelle and Genevieve, her two step-mothers. Chynna and Bijou Phillips, John's other daughters, report no sexual attention from their father, which has fed the belief that Mackenzie is lying, and brought her condemnation--if she knew he was capable of this, why would she let her younger sisters live alone with John? But what the nay-sayers aren't taking into account are the facts that Mackenzie and John were working as peers at the time (touring as a Mamas & Papas reunion act), and more importantly, using drugs as peers also. These two facts excuse nothing, but explain a lot.

I hope that the fuss around this book doesn't endanger Mackenzie Phillips' fragile hold on sobriety. Good for her, for writing this book, which is gross and juicy and depressing and entertaining.

Julie Lovisa says

I'm a sucker for celebrity biographies and memoirs, but wasn't prepared for the raw sucker punch of Mackenzie Phillip's story. Frankly, I'm not sure how she isn't dead yet after reading page after page of the drug abuse, violence, and neglect that shaped her life. From the blackouts during which she slept with her father to her firing from One Day At A Time, her drug habit ruled her -- mind, body, and soul.

High On Arrival begins in her childhood, when she would be unsupervised in her father's (Mamas and Papas John Phillips) mansion, privy to drug orgies and decadence and ends with her holed up in her house shooting up heroin as the cycle repeats itself as she neglects her own son in her desperation for the next high. She manages to kick the habit for stretches, but is always lured back by her addicted body -- even in the end, as she writes how she has finally gone clean for her son, there is a wistful edge that tells the reader how easy it would be for her slip comfortably back into that drug-addled life. One can only hope that after all she's been through, she will continue to stay the course.

Kim says

This was a very disturbing book, and straight off the bat I would say that it's definitely not a book intended for younger readers. It's graphic, it's detailed, and it's the life of a very tormented woman, who surprisingly, has been candid with her story, much to the apparent chagrin of the rest of her estranged family. I'm giving it 4 stars. It was a book that I had trouble reading, because of the disgusting details within, and a book that I couldn't put down, because of the heartwrenching life that was attempting to survive by detailing these experiences. I can't go into a much more descriptive dialogue, without giving things away, but I will say that I do hope that Mackenzie will stay clean for the remainder of her days. 4 stars. Worthy read for those who remember One Day at a Time, who recall watching Ms. Phillips unravel before the public eye (kind of reminds me of our present day Lindsay Lohan, except that I believe M.P. is far more gifted). If you enjoy reading about the psycho-social aspects of drug addiction in children, adolescents, and adults, and all that goes with those topics, then this is a good book for you. If you're a gentle soul who is easily disturbed by the often lurid details of drug addiction, then you might not enjoy this book. I was able to read it in one weekend.

Dawn says

Wow. I think this was definitely the hardest autobiography I have ever read. I can't even really decide what my opinion is on this book. At moments I loved it and at moments I just felt so bad for Mackenzie that I had a hard time getting through the rest of the book. And yes, sometimes I wanted to knock some sense into her.

She had such a horrible childhood, raised by her totally useless father (except to music, he was John Phillips of The Mamas and The Papas) who really didn't care what she did as long as she didn't ruin his high. Other useless characters in this book are Mick Jagger who seduced Mackenzie at age 18 and said something to the effect that he had been "watching and waiting for her" since like age 10. Creeper much? Also, Keith Richards, who drove a car with a juvenile Mackenzie in the backseat at 125 miles per hour.

I really don't know anything about this family as I am not a fan of The Mamas and The Papas (I like one song, total, and I don't much care for that one now either) and I never watched "One Day at a Time." I did like Wilson Phillips (Mackenzie's sister Chynna was a member of this group), though.

Essentially, Mackenzie was raised in a drug filled home. And by "drug filled," I mean hypodermic needles all over the floor and pills and cocaine stashed everywhere. I feel so bad that she was raised in this environment. Part of me feels that she had no choice but to grow up and be an addict herself, since that was all she ever saw or knew. Mackenzie did end up cleaning up her act a couple of times. She was even sober for like 15 years one time. I think she is sober now, too.

Mackenzie also had an incestuous relationship with her father for many years. At some points she calls it consensual and at others she calls it rape. Whatever it was, it was wrong and her dad was sick. At one point, she even aborted a fetus that could have been his. Gosh. How do you even wrap your head around that? Several of her family members have called her a liar since she made this allegation public and publicly disowned her. Michelle Phillips is one of the people publicly calling her a liar. Michelle Phillips was part of the scene when Mackenzie was given drugs at such a young age so I think she should just shut up. I believe

Mackenzie. This book paints Mackenzie in a horrible light and I can't see what she would stand to gain from it, so I can't see why she would lie.

I hope that by writing this memoir, she finds some kind of peace.

Heather says

Ugh. I love celebrity/my life sucked memoirs. And I was totally chomping at the bit to read this one. It was a months-long exercise in self control to not drop the \$20 on it at the book store before the library produced it for me.

But I prevailed and boy am I happy I did because I would be pretty sad had I dropped \$20 on this thing.

Here is the deal: MacKenzie Phillips had an insane life. But it appears as though it was so insane she couldn't write about it coherently. Which I guess might be what happens if you spend the better part of your existence shooting coke?

Also, seriously, who actually shoots coke? Jeez.

The thing about this is, you sort of know the whole family is fucked up and in a world of drugs and excess. And you are excited to read her memoir and hear about it from the inside. And it was crazy. I mean, she did more drugs than are humanly imaginable and her father had sex with her and she was raped and kidnapped and good lord knows what else. And yet, she managed to make it a boring read.

So boring that I was skimming for the good bits. She basically just likes to yap yap yap, not telling stories, rationalizing and good lord knows what. I'm sure she's a nice person and ridiculously serious kudos to her for cleaning herself up in light of her insane upbringing, but this book just shows how important it is to also be a good writer.

In short, her publishers should have gotten her a ghost writer. At least for my personal joy.

But they didn't, so the book is all I shot this and then I smoked that and then party this and party that and it jumps back and forth and all over the place in time and nothing builds on anything else. Maybe she should have read Russel Brand's memoir to learn how to write a celeb addiction story.

Disappointing.

Mary says

Wow. This memoir was hard to read and hard to put down. Whatever may be going on in Ms. Phillips's life at the moment, or whatever may have motivated her to write this, I really felt like she was trying very hard to be truthful. I grew up during the same era and though my life wasn't the least bit like hers, some of her experiences and feelings really resonated with me. I wish her all the best in her recovery and hope that she can stay sober.

ETA: I've read a couple of GR reviews that take issue with the fact that John Phillips received a liver transplant despite his reckless drug abuse, and with the fact that he continued to use alcohol (and probably other drugs) after his transplant. As a transplant nurse I would like to mention that there are guidelines in place for transplantation and that the available organs go to the sickest patients, there is no second-guessing or morality involved. It's not an ideal situation--I've seen organs given to patients who have tested positive for drugs when they come in for transplant, and I've seen patients resume their drinking/drugging behavior after transplant. It's very rare but unfortunately it does happen. As it stands now in the US patients cannot be denied transplant because of their personality defects. There are simply not enough organs available, so the sickest patients are at the top of the list regardless of how they got there or what the indications might be for their behavior post-operatively.

My little rant here has a moral--Donate Life! Be an organ donor.

Patricia says

Just when I might start thinking that I'm a bad parent or spouse, something like this book comes along to put a different perspective on things. Normally, if I give a book four stars, it means I recommend the book. Three stars would mean I like it but don't necessarily recommend it. I've debated back and forth what to give this book. I'm not sure I feel comfortable recommending it but the writing and story certainly are compelling and deserving of four or five stars. It is oftentimes downright depressing and sad. It is certainly a window on a world of addiction, hedonism, fame, self-deception, selfishness, anger, incest, and other associated negative issues. It is very candid and direct and often confronts very troubling topics. There is language in the book that some will find offensive but it is not out of context. It is also a book about one woman's struggle amidst all these things to find love, direction, and meaning. After reading the book, I am certainly pulling for Mackenzie Phillips to continue to stay clean, almost against all odds.

Yvonne says

What a story this is. Mackenzie Phillips is the daughter of John Phillips, lead singer of The Mamas & the Papas. She is, also, a star in her own right on the hit TV sitcom "One Day At A Time". I was a huge fan of both and still am.

Mackenzie narrates this herself which makes it all that much more heartbreaking. She starts from the beginning of her life until now. The things she endured growing up in the limelight is truly horrific. Some of it is the fault of the family and friends around her and some is her own fault. She acknowledges this. She doesn't hide the truth. She's quite honest as she tells her story. I'm just sad that anyone had to go through such a tortured life. I do hope she has settled down now and can live her life in peace.

Laurel-Rain says

"She's just fourteen
Little movie star queen...

She's always too high on arrival
She runs on her high platform heels

She falls flat on her face
She knows how life feels
And she's just fourteen."

This excerpt from a John Phillips song sums up, in many ways, the journey of Mackenzie Phillips, from the star studded circle of celebrities who were an entourage in her father's life and hers by extension to the near-death experiences that punctuated her existence.

In these settings and with drugs and a life of no rules as her constant companions, it is no surprise that she took to drugs like a "duck takes to water."

The surprising part of this celebrity memoir is the in-depth soul-searching Ms. Phillips has had to do in order to earn and maintain her sobriety. With many slips and relapses behind her, some of which were quite public, she has fiercely sought the answers that would eventually win for her the right to a "normal" life.

Admitting the incestuous relationship between herself and her father took guts. And acknowledging her "complicity" could not have been easy either. It would have been so much simpler to lay all the blame on the "abuser," although in my opinion, he, as the person in the "power" position in the relationship should bear the brunt of responsibility. Nevertheless, the role drugs played was significant.

Overcoming addiction is a day-to-day battle that will consume the rest of her life, but her story ends on a positive note, as she talks about the strengths she has finally discovered within herself.

A completely forthright, heart-wrenching and perilous story that should help others suffering the same fate, "High On Arrival" is a memorable and courageous tribute to an embattled life.

Kay says

There is no way I could rank this book with stars. It was a horrible- sickening- tragic book to read. I would read one chapter and feel physically sick and lay it down to come back to it in a few minutes. If only 1/3 of this book is true, it still will make for one of the worst childhoods around. I always liked the Mamas and Papas and loved their music so even though I was never a Mackenzie Phillip's fan I wanted to read it. If there is a group out there for sterilization, they need to make John Phillips their poster boy!! He was the most self absorbed disgusting person with the only good quality being his musical ability. His parenting skills were absolutely nil-- example the first time she was arrested for drugs, he said, "Well it's about time. You are now a real Phillips". [or something similar - I refuse to pick up the book again to find the exact quote.

I understand the path she took because she had no higher examples. When a child is taking drugs at 11 years old and her father is supplying a lot of them you don't expect a happy ending. But it was terribly sad that after being clean for many years she would began using again. There may not be any hope for her at all, but I wish her the best in the future.
