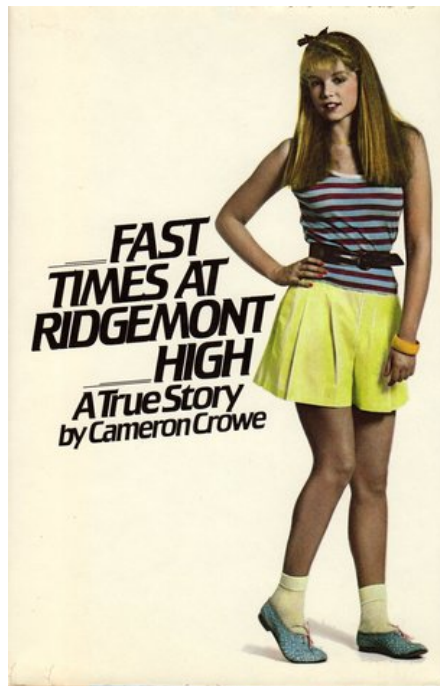




Fast Times At Ridgemont High: A True Story

Cameron Crowe

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Fast Times At Ridgemont High: A True Story Cameron Crowe

This is a true story. In the fall of 1979 Cameron Crowe at 22 years of age walked into the office of Principal William Gray's office and asked permission to attend classes for the full length of the school year to research a book he was to write of his experiences inside the walls of Ridgemont High and Redondo Beach, California. This is the day-by-day journal of horny and wasted semi-blank adults who don't know a thing about their future.

Fast Times At Ridgemont High: A True Story Details

Date : Published September 15th 1981 by Simon & Schuster, Inc. (first published September 1981)

ISBN : 9780671252908

Author : Cameron Crowe

Format : Hardcover 253 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Humor, Media Tie In, Movies

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From Reader Review Fast Times At Ridgmont High: A True Story for online ebook

mark monday says

that part with the bj was funny. ah, high school.

Michelle Morrell says

I think most of us know the iconic movie "Fast Times at Ridgmont High," it means something different for all of us. For me it was the eye-opening allure of kids just a few years older than me in age, but leagues above in sheer LIFE. Jobs and dating, sex and abortions, drugs and alcohol, California and a lot of darn fine music, nothing near my sheltered life in an Alaskan Christian school.

I had no idea this was a book (or technically, a very long Rolling Stone article) first, written by Cameron Crowe. I found out it existed through an article on rare books (this being hard to find) and got it within the week through my local library. The shtick is he went undercover for a year in a real high school, recording the dramas that took place around him, befriending the teens and getting into their inner circle.

I loved how close the movie was to the book, to think that maybe all those experiences and friendships and connections really happened. In retrospect, the writing is quite journalistic, not overly deep, no prose, a reporting of the facts. But the characters are so rich, they more than make up for it. Jeff Spicoli a real person? Yes, please.

Another reviewer said it was like a director's cut with deleted scenes, and I thought that was spot on. Best thing I learned? It took place in Redondo Beach, CA, a place I myself lived as a child (albeit briefly). These, quite possibly, could have been my peers (or at least their older siblings).

As an aside, the physical novel itself was priceless. Well over thirty years old, it felt so. This was a well-read copy held by countless others before me. It had a presence, a history. And at least three people with the naughty habit of writing in a library book, from the faint blue pen that put a notation at the beginning and ending of every sex scene, the strident pen that was SHOCKED at the perv who marked the sex scenes, and the scholar who underlined what he/she thought were the most powerful lines and was thrilled to finally get the book after a long, long hold wait. No E-reader is ever going to compare to the genealogy of readers that left their mark in one battered hardback book.

Lynn Smith says

I enjoyed this book. If I'm not mistaken, it is the first (and I think only) book written by Cameron Crowe. It was made into an iconic movie which is right now celebrating it's 35th anniversary. Crowe (at the time 22), spent a year posing as a high school student in California to write the book. He says by the end of the school year, even the school principal had forgotten he was doing a research project for a book and just treated him like any other student.

The movie closely followed the book, but there were several interesting differences (as there usually are

between book and movie). I won't take the time to point those out here. I can't really say the differences made the movie better or more interesting. I always find it fascinating when I read a book after I've seen the movie to see what differs. One big difference is the movie is (I think) rated R (with nudity and lots of language) while the book is PG with not too much foul language and no really graphic depictions of sex.

The book is now out of print and when you find it, it's pricey. I found a used copy on Amazon which cost \$70, but I only paid \$20 as I used points from my credit card. Since this book is a collectible and out of print, I'll be holding on to this in my collection and passing it down to one of my sons.

Heather Hughes says

Fast Times at Ridgemont High based on fact was written in 1981 about a stealth adult who infiltrated a notorious high school in the next town over and re-lived high school in the context of the more advanced drug and sex norms. Crowe focuses on the coming of age journeys of 18-year-old Brad and his 15-year-old sister Stacy Hamilton. Brad worked to pay off a car, taking increasingly demeaning jobs. Stacy worked to find validation that she is valuable through sex. There are many side characters who contribute to the notion that Ridgemont High students grow up fast: Spicolli is a stoner at constant odds with school, jocks and any establishment; Mike is trying to figure out how to be Stacy's boyfriend, but lets her down regularly.

The heart of the story lies in two estranged siblings working together once they saw the humanity in the other. Stacy warmed to Brad when he helped her hide an abortion and fought guys who spread rumors. The story is comic and characters live large and speak to each other with disrespect and sarcasm, but without the emotional heart it would not be nearly as good.

I loved the adult infiltrating high school device.

Emily says

Such a fun read, made all the better for being a somewhat exclusive experience, as it is out of print and hard to find for an affordable price. I savored the reading process, taking in little bits at a time, which worked well with the book's quickly digested segments that range from a paragraph to a few pages. There are no deep narrative threads to keep track of. The book reads like an extended magazine expose, fitting for a book written by a Rolling Stone journalist. Fans of the movie (as I am) will recognize all the major players (one character in the movie is actually a composite of two from the book), but there is naturally more space to round them out better in the book. The same can be said for the vignettes, and I found it really enjoyable to read the additional adventures and misadventures of this group of students and teachers. This is a fun world to inhabit for a while--with my actual high school years securely behind me--and I'm very happy to own a copy of this hard-to-find gem.

Lynx says

As a lover of the film I was curious to see if Crowe's book differed at all from his screenplay. Pleasantly surprised to say it does. All of the characters get a much richer backstory and have hilarious chapters which have either been somewhat shifted or completely erased from the film. All the main plot points are still there,

but I definitely recommend giving it a read for anyone who wants a fuller experience. It's also quite amazing how even though my high school experience happened 20 years after this book came out, I still found it completely relatable and it brought back some long forgotten memories.

3.5/5

Christopher says

Still my favorite coming-of-age novel after all these years.

I read this in 1981 at age 15 after reading an extended excerpt in *Playboy* magazine (yeah, I read *Playboy* at 15 for the interviews and the book extracts--wink wink). I'll never know exactly why my parents acquired the book--it wasn't a bestseller, to my knowledge, and it was kind of under the radar--but I loved the magazine excerpt, then co-opted the book and read it, and it's been a beloved part of my book collection ever since.

The movie that came of the book, of course, set off a wave of similar coming-of-age movies set in suburban southern California. *Fast Times* is still the best of that bunch.

In the late 70s, Cameron Crowe was already a veteran writer for *Rolling Stone* magazine and a music industry insider in his early 20s. He posed the idea of returning to high school--undercover--to observe some of the social circles and gather material for a writing project. He spent a full school year at Clairemont High School in San Diego and fit right in, gaining the confidence of his fellow students and making friendships.

The novel follows a core of characters between the ages of 15 and 18--sophomore Stacy Hamilton and her worldly best friend, Linda Barrett; Stacy's older brother Brad, a senior; sophomore Mark Ratner and his cocky friend Mike Damone. And then there are various supporting characters: the stoner-surfer Jeff Spicoli (brilliantly portrayed by Sean Penn in the film), and his nemesis, history teacher and *Hawaii Five-O* aficionado Mr. Hand.

I was lucky enough to read the book a year before the movie was made, so it gave me a background of these characters before they hit the silver screen. The novel digs a little deeper into the characters and you get a good sense of what kind of writer Cameron Crowe was, and why he's been so successful with his screenwriting and filmmaking.

One of Crowe's hallmarks is his compassionate handling of his characters. His characters are multi-dimensional and worth caring about. He depicts realistic relationships between parents and kids, especially--not the stilted, often-frictional relationships so often portrayed. One of my highlights of the novel is when Stacy Hamilton opens up and tells her father a big secret that most kids wouldn't tell their parents, and her dad listens and gives advice without lecturing--showing a level of trust and between her and her dad that is lacking in a lot of fiction. It's scenes like these that give Crowe's characters depth and sets him apart from his peers.

Crowe is also adept at weaving music into the narrative, so it's a very natural part of his storytelling--like Damone cutting school and playing Deep Purple and Rainbow records all day in honor of Ritchie Blackmore's birthday--a scene I wish had been in the movie.

By the end of the novel, the characters are going through the normal end-of-school-year angst--reminiscing about the year behind them, exchanging yearbooks to sign, knowing it's goodbye to one part of their lives together, and not knowing what will happen going forward. It's an exciting and bittersweet time in a

teenager's life, and again Crowe captures these moments with the same sensitivity and authenticity he gives all his writing.

Being a teenager in southern California back in the early 80s, I loved this novel--it spoke to me far more deeply than a cynical novel like *Catcher in the Rye* ever could have. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* was an accurate depiction of the kind of adolescence I had, because those characters were my direct peers. It's a shame the book has been out of print for so long, because I think it should be a classic--and it is, at least to me.

Jeff Bird says

I read this book when it first came on the shelves... oh so many years ago. One of the reasons I found "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" so appealing is that I had just moved from California to the midwest US. As I read through the pages of the book, I found that every character I read about could be a match to someone I went to school with back in Southern California. As crazy as some of the characters may seem in the book, don't be so fooled into thinking the author, Cameron Crowe, embellished to a great degree. I feel this pseudo-authenticity is why I particularly enjoyed the book so much, and why it has stuck with me over the years. I tend to drift more toward nonfiction books and while "Fast Times..." isn't billed as a true-to-life, tell all book, it is most definitely a reflection of life in (some) Southern California High Schools in the 80's (and maybe even now).

Aside from all of its similarities to true high school life, however, "Fast Times..." is an entertaining read. Crowe develops the characters well and builds a solid story around the interactions of the characters. If you are looking for a light, entertaining read, this is a good book to flip through.

Joe Valdez says

As a budding collector of rare books and a super fan of the movie it's based on, acquiring and reading a copy of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* ranks as one of the highlights of my life as a bibliophile. Published in 1981, this is the work of first time novelist/last time novelist Cameron Crowe, who at the age of 22--with seven years journalism experience contributing articles to Creem and Rolling Stone--moved back home with his parents in San Diego and received permission from Clairemont High School to enroll as a student. The time: September 1979. The assignment: gather material for a novel about the kids of the day.

Stacy Hamilton is a sophomore making the awkward push from child to adult as she enters high school. Her brother Brad is a senior who resides at the top of the fast food chain, a well-respected fry cook at Carl's Jr. Stacy's best friend Linda Barrett is a highly regarded sex expert engaged to a slightly older man, having sworn off dating high school boys. Mark Ratner is one of these, a painfully shy junior who falls in love with Stacy. The Rat's best friend is Mike Damone, a transfer student who schools Mark in romance using a surefire technique he calls The Attitude. The joker in the deck is Jeff Spicoli, a surfer who's been stoned since the third grade and walks to the beat of his own drum.

Working as a hostess at Swenson's Ice Cream Parlor in the prestigious Town Center Mall, Stacy has picked up some sex secrets from the twelfth-grade waitresses in the kitchen and pledges to herself that she will not enter high school a virgin. When a veterinarian in his early twenties struts into the diner and asks Stacy for her phone number, she seems on her way to womanhood. Brad devotes himself to Carl's Jr., staffing the restaurant with his buddies and even getting his girlfriend Lisa a job at the drive-thru intercom. Looking to

explore his options as a senior and maybe even meet a girl willing to have sex, Brad considers breaking up. Linda has no such hangups.

Somehow all roads at Ridgemont High led to Linda Barrett. Everyone knew her. She left an indelible mark on most students who came into contact with her. She was chronically exuberant, usually in a relentlessly good mood. She knew how to dress, and she knew how to walk.

Even as far back as grade school, other girls came to Linda Barrett for counseling. Her mother was a nurse at University Hospital, and somehow Linda knew all the facts of life before any other kid her age in Ridgemont.

Linda's view of sex was, basically, that everyone had blown it way out of proportion. "A lot of girls use sex," she had told Stacy Hamilton long ago. "They use sex to get a guy closer. To really nail him down or something. To say, 'I had sex with you, you owe me something.' Well, that's terrible. They're not having sex to have sex. They're having sex to use it as something. I'd hate myself if I did that."

No doubt about it. Linda Barrett was an authority. While the other girls were just abandoning their tricycles, Linda was underlining and memorizing all the sex scenes from Shogun. Some had Seventeen magazine in their lockers; she had The Hite Report.

The Rat confides to Mike Damone that he's in love with a girl working in the A.S.B. office at school. Too awkward to introduce himself, Mark is schooled by his buddy on projecting a winning nonchalance Damone dubs The Attitude. Adopting a bare minimum of the rules, by Christmas break, The Rat works up the nerve to ask his dream girl for her phone number, which Stacy Hamilton easily provides him. Stacy has recently given up having her phone calls returned by The Vet after having sex with him in a baseball dugout. She finds The Rat sweet and funny, but his timidity stalls any romance. Stacy takes notice of Damone.

Brad suffers a setback when Carl's Jr. assistant manager Dennis Taylor conspires to force Brad from his lofty position. He takes a step down in prestige to the fryer at Jack In The Box. Working the morning shift, Brad is done in by the restaurant's 100% Guaranteed Breakfast and an irate businessman who Brad loses his cool with. Needing money, he suffers the indignity of taking work at the last restaurant in Ridgemont with a fryer: Captain Hook's Fish 'n Chips. School remains an inconvenience and the thought of college makes Brad nervous, weary of adults who seem to think he's having the time of his life and needs to get serious.

Unburdened by the pursuit of money or sex is Jeff Spicoli, whose simple goals are "to wake up to a decent buzz and six-to eight foot breakers in good shape." Spicoli lacks even the discipline for friends, playing pinball at the mall but mostly living in his own universe. He meets his match with another who seems to aspire to a higher calling, hard nosed U.S. history instructor Mr. Hand. Arnold Hand, who models himself on Steve McGarrett of *Hawaii 5-0*, refuses to prescribe to the contract system of grading or letting his pupils coast. Mr. Hand draws grudging admiration from students as a teacher who actually cares about his job. Mr. Hand lives to combat truancy.

Mr. Hand's other favorite activity was hailing the virtues of the three bell system. At Ridgemont, the short first bell meant a student had three minutes to prepare for the end of class. The long second bell dismissed the class. Then there were exactly seven minutes--and Mr. Hand claimed that he personally fought the Education Center for those seven minutes--before the third and last attendance bell. If you did not have the ability to obey the three bell system, Hand would say, then it was Aloha Time for you. You simply would not function in life.

"And functioning in life," Hand said grandly on that first morning, "is the hidden postulate of education."

Fast Times at Ridgemont High as a novel lives up to the legend of its remarkable backstory (due to security

concerns, the days when an adult rock journalist could enroll in a U.S. public school as a student are probably over) and the classic movie that was released less than a year after its publication, adapted by Cameron Crowe and directed by Amy Heckerling in the first screen credit for either. The book bares no higher literary ambition, written plainly and tersely in what today would be labeled Young Adult prose but actually has more in common with unadorned, journalistic writing. Crowe seems to be taking notes.

"Okay," said Damone. "Pay attention."

The Rat nodded, always the student, as they passed Tower Records. Damone stopped in front of a life-sized cardboard cutout of Deborah Harry, the alluring singer from the group Blondie. She was just about his size.

Damone turned to The Rat. "First of all, Rat, you never let on how much you like a girl." He turned back to the cardboard cutout of Deborah Harry to demonstrate. "Oh," he said disinterestedly, "hi." He turned to The Rat.

"Two. You always call the shots." He looked back at Deborah Harry. "You and me are going to the Charthouse, and then you're coming with me to the movies."

"Three. Act like wherever you are, that's the place to be." He returned to Debbie. "Will you quit telling me this is the most fun you've ever had."

"Four. When ordering food, find out what she wants, and then order for both of you. It's a classy move." To Debbie. "The lady will have ..."

"Five. And this is most important. When you get down to making out, whenever possible put on the first side of Led Zeppelin IV." He turned to Deborah Harry one last time. "Why don't you put this tape on?" Damone put his arm around the cutout. "It sounds great in the back of my van ... why don't we listen from there?"

Through it all, Deborah Harry looked back with the same intrigued cardboard smile.

"See what I mean?" said Damone. "That is how you talk to a girl. Voila. You can't miss."

"Gee," said The Rat after a long while. "Why can't I just be myself?"

"Later you can be yourself," said Damone. "What you want is for her to decide she likes you, no matter what. You know what else is good if you're not a totally popular guy? This has worked for me. You just kind of mention to the girl that you don't have a lot of friends in high school, that most of the people are worthless, but you like her. That makes her feel special. And you still have The Attitude."

Along with rudimentary text, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* shares another feature common to contemporary Young Adult fiction: challenging subject matter. Sex, drug use, abortion, racial identity, suicide and anxiety come to mind. Crowe finds a superb balance depicting both the frivolity of growing up--with pranks, school functions and part time jobs--and the dangerous side. The chapters dealing with Stacy having sex and later, having an abortion and dealing with its aftermath, are even more detailed and powerful than they are in the movie. Stacy's education was by far my favorite part of the novel.

Crowe, writer-director of *Say Anything...*, *Jerry Maguire* and *Almost Famous*, has always been eager to share his rock music collection with audiences and in his novel, programs a set list (strongly favoring arena rock over punk or New Wave.) The nostalgia drug may not have an affect on those who came before or after Generation X, or who don't remember passing (handwritten) notes between classes and how essential car ownership once was to teenagers, at least on the West Coast. For a trip to a world of adolescence before personal computers, this is one potent journey, if you can find it.

Fast Times at Ridgmont High has been out of print since the 1980s. I purchased a used paperback through a dealer on Amazon for \$75 which came partially unglued from the spine as I was finishing this review. According to Crowe, who the rights have reverted back to, he's turned down offers to reprint it, preferring instead to keep the novel more of a premium experience for the fans as opposed to reissuing it to the masses. Whether true or not, rarity definitely added to my enjoyment of the novel, which feels like an old magazine or yearbook, something I opened up trunks in a dusty attic to acquire, coasting back through my fading memories with.

Tiny Pants says

So when I stumbled across this book, I didn't realize that it's pretty rare -- just knew that I had always wanted to read it. No idea why it's out of print, given that a) Cameron Crowe's only gotten more famous b) people have nostalgia for everything from the late 1970s/early 1980s and c) anything with teenagers in it seems to sell.

Anyway. I've always enjoyed this movie, but the book is a tremendous improvement. A few of the characters in the movie's parts are cut down considerably, and/or simplified, so they feel more real in the book (oh wait, and they ARE REAL, as the preface makes clear). Having more of the story also explains parts of the movie that make less sense (why would Linda be friends with Stacy in the first place?). A broad range of minor characters gives it more texture. One of the most interesting things is that the movie appears to contain virtually no dialogue that is not included in the book, and until it has to wrap up with a Hollywood ending, almost no scenes that are not from the book.

Another reason I liked the book better/was surprised it's out of print/am now worried they'll try to remake the movie/realize thinking about it more they definitely won't: The kids are a lot wilder in the book. Way more sex, and LOTS of drugs -- anyone who thinks today's thirteen-year-olds *just* discovered all this stuff and that kids were way more naive 30 years ago is in for a shock. What interested me though is that the girls are way more into this stuff than the boys -- they're light-years ahead of the male characters in terms of what they're up to, but also in terms of maturity and how they handle it all. This makes some aspects of the book more poignant, and others more surprising. Comparing it to the movie, it's interesting to see how they reverted to traditional gender roles (naive girls and manipulative boys) for the Hollywood version.

The last reason I really enjoyed this book is more personal -- I didn't realize it at the time, but it turns out when I first moved to San Diego I lived down the street from "Ridgmont High" (and even nearer to a couple of the fast-food establishments where Brad Hamilton worked). Though Crowe tries to throw readers off with his broader geography of California, his description of the area is extremely specific right down to the Del Taco nearest the school.

Though obviously he's a journalist and not an ethnographer, it would have been interesting to see a bit more of Crowe in the book -- he explains how he did what was more or less participant observation in the preface to the book, but then he doesn't appear anywhere else within the text. We never see characters react to him, so it's never clear what events he witnessed firsthand and which he heard about later (some are obvious, but for others who knows). In any event, that's not even a complaint, just would make the book even more interesting. As it is, it reads like a completely clear-eyed, virtually unembellished story of high school life. I wonder what the real people behind those characters think of it now.

Robert says

Everything that you loved about the movie, along with the extra depth of character that film cannot capture. Most surprising is the retrospective look at how greatly the emphasis of education and societal standards have changed since the early 1980's. Whether the change is for the better or not...

Ryan says

Might have been better if the movie wasn't a classic and I hadn't seen it a hundred times.

Realini says

Fast Times at Ridgemont High, written by Cameron Crowe

This will be an attempt to look at Fast Times at Ridgemont High using a Positive Psychology lens... Therefore, it should be a take...

Through a Glass...Brightly

Cameron Crowe has awed me with his Almost Famous, a motion picture for which he wrote the script and directed

He wrote the screenplay for Fast Times at Ridgemont High, Jerry Maguire and the less astounding...We Bought a Zoo

The stars of Fast Times contribute as well to the success of this comedy that has been included on some Best Humor lists...

Sean Penn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Judge Reinhold, Forest Whitaker, Ray Walston and the rest of the cast are very good in this film

Sean Penn is the main character, although he does not have much more screen time than the others do. Jeff Spicoli is smoking marijuana or some other drug for most of the narrative and this makes him rather slow.

Humor is very important in Positive Psychology and in fact, it is a Character Strength, figured in The Martin Seligman chart, available on the internet

Spicoli is one of the main funny elements in the story, with his confused apparitions and relaxed attitude... Well, too relaxed approach.

In school, he is always late and this annoys his history teacher, Mr. Hand who insists that Spicoli is wasting his time...

- Well, we are here, you are here
- Yes...
- This means it is...our time!

Jeff Spicoli has a point there, although his Persistence is not one of the Character Strengths, not in the way he uses it.

This naughty student comes to history class without a shirt on and he pushes his Creativity to invent wrong events.

At one point, during the same history class, a man comes to the door of the room to knock and disturb...

- Who are you?
- I am the pizza guy
- Who ordered the salami with cheese
- It's over here...says Spicoli

Only the history teacher also has Open Mindedness and Perspective in this occasion and invites the class to eat the slices.

Outside class, Jeff Spicoli gets involved in other incidents, one of which is dangerous as it involves driving.

The young man is driving recklessly, while under the influence of drugs, and at one turn he provokes an accident.

Stacy Hamilton is another one of the main personages and she is in the process of discovering her sexuality.

As she has sex with an arrogant teenager, the girl becomes pregnant and decides to have an abortion. The cost is \$ 150, which was the equivalent of a few thousand dollars in today's money...I guess.

Mike Damone, the pretentious, selfish male does not contribute to the sum and does not even show up. Notwithstanding the fact that he promised both to pay half the cost and to drive Stacy, he does neither.

The comedy is good.

However, I would not include it among the very best.

Patrick says

It's like watching the movie with *lots* of deleted scenes. Cameron Crowe, why won't you issue a new printing of this hilarious gem?!

sj says

Originally posted here.

If you're me, you go into a book like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* thinking "Awwwww, yesssss. I can't wait to see THAT LINE in the original context!"

Because this is a book that (apparently, just like me) you've seen the movie, but have been UNABLE to find a copy to read.

[sidenote: What is up with everything I really want to read being out of print lately? I ONLY HAVE SO MUCH TO SPEND ON BOOKS AND RESELLERS ARE KILLING ME, MAN!]

When I was a senior in high school, I'd just moved from NW Montana to SoCal. Most of my friends at my new school were ALSO new there. That was how I knew J. and his little brother C. J. and I had photography together my second semester, but after going to his house a few times after school, I realized that C. and I had a lot more in common.

He showed up one day in a Beastie Boys tee shirt that made me laugh.

And then he thought I was laughing at him for liking the Beastie Boys! When I tried to explain that I was laughing at the back of the shirt, he gave a bit of a giggle himself and said he thought it was funny getting away with a masturbation joke at school.

It was then that I realized that he had no idea where that line had come from, or WHOSE VAN THAT WAS, so I made him watch *Fast Times* with me that same day.

He loved it. Of course he did. He was a 90s Spicoli (but with skating instead of surfing). I sat next to him and mouthed the words to the ENTIRE MOVIE because...when I love something unabashedly, I read/watch/listen to it over and over and over again - it's a thing I have, I don't know. Shut up.

Anyway.

At that point in my life, I'd already seen this movie more times than I could count, and had already been searching for the book for at least five years. This was one that I first saw at a very young age with my dad, and he and I were already quoting it at each other before I was 10. Don't judge, my dad's awesome.

The book was NOWHERE. I tried all kinds of interlibrary loans and searching every bookstore I EVER went to, but I couldn't manage to get my hands on it (younger readers, this was way before amazon and even THE INTERNET were household things).

So, when I started to read Cameron Crowe's 'true story' yesterday, it was after 20 years of looking for a copy of the damn thing. I hoped I wouldn't be disappointed. You know, like - the movie is this ICONIC piece of the 80s for me and I just didn't want to learn that it was SHIT compared to the book.

Luckily, that did not turn out to be the case.

Fast Times at Ridgemont High (the film) is probably the most faithful book-to-film adaptation I've ever seen.

Yes, there's more.

Yes, there are characters that don't appear in the movie, and some characters have been condensed/compressed/combined into one, BUT the dialogue is effing SPOT ON.

Seriously, the only thing I was expecting to read (while the movie/soundtrack were playing in my head) that I didn't find is the title of today's post. The scene below is one of my favourite in the entire movie, and while it happened, the lines here weren't in the book at all.

(Relax, all right?)

BUT! It was kind of no big because I was having such a FANTASTIC time with the rest of it.

Is this a book I'd recommend to everyone? HELL, NO! Is it, however, a book I'd recommend to major fans

of the movie? HELL, YES.

Let me tell you why.

There's an introduction by the author saying that he'd been an actual journalist from a young age (Seriously, he was young. See *Almost Famous* for more information.), and that when he was 22 he approached the principal of Ridgemont High with the idea of going to school for a year as a senior, and writing about the experience. This book was what came out of it. So, we're supposed to believe that it's all a true story, but it doesn't really come across as one. It reads like a FICTIONALIZED ACCOUNT of what happened that year, because without being psychic, there's no way that all of the details could have been filled in like they were.

[ahem]

Maybe this stuff is true, but if so, the details were filled in by Mr Crowe, because there's no way he could have known what SHIRT someone was wearing during a [ahem] private fantasy. I don't care WHO YOU ARE, no one is going to tell you that ish.

So. Here's how you go into reading *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

*You are already a fan of the movie.

*You do not expect a whole lot more than just a series of DVD extras.

*You pretend that this is a novel, and not a 'true story.'

*You try to pretend that Spicoli was never played by Sean Penn because the real Spicoli is much younger than that, and nowhere near as awesome.

*You (other than the scene mentioned above) are giddy with anticipation for reading MOAR INFORMATION about your favourite scenes that are coming up.

Finally - and this only has a bit to bear on the subject at hand, really, so feel free to skip to the comments section - I mentioned in an email to Amy today (and talked about it a little bit on Em's blog a few months ago) that it's kind of sad that we don't have more books and movies today that discussed abortion in as frank a manner as this one does. Today, we only get right or left-wing political bullshit. Maybe we haven't progressed as far as we've thought in the last 30 years? I don't know.

Then the conversation with Amy turned to her giving me messages from her dad about the next season of Survivor, so that has nothing to do with anything here.

TL;DR

Only read it if you already liked the movie. Otherwise it'll probably drive you crazy.