



Ham: Slices of a Life: Essays and Stories

By Sam Harris

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Ham: Slices of a Life: Essays and Stories By Sam Harris

For fans of David Sedaris and Chelsea Handler, these stories and essays about friendship, celebrity, growing up and getting sober will have you laughing and crying in equal measure.

ham (noun) [hæm]

1 the hind leg of a hog, salted, smoked, and cured

2 second son of Noah

3 somebody who performs in an exaggerated showy style

-always hamming it up

Just when you thought you knew everything about ham, you discover that ham is also:

4 a reason to laugh about everyday life, and

5 an irresistible collection of humorous essays from a man who was born to entertain us.

In sixteen brilliantly observed true stories, Sam Harris emerges as a natural humorist in league with David Sedaris, Chelsea Handler, Carrie Fisher, and Steve Martin, but with a voice uniquely his own. Praised by the Chicago Sun-Times for his “manic, witty commentary,” and with a storytelling talent the New York Times calls “New Yorker–worthy,” he puts a comedic spin on full-disclosure episodes from his own colorful life. What better place to find painfully funny material than in growing up gay, gifted, and ambitious in the heart of the Bible belt? And that’s just the first cut: From partying to parenting, from Sunday school to getting sober, these slices of Ham will have you laughing and wiping away salty tears in equal measure with their universal and down-to-earth appeal. After all, there’s a little ham in all of us.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A vividly crafted series of essays...a charmingly candid collection." (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

"Reading singer-actor Harris's essays is like having your smartest gay BFF propped up on your pillow sipping cosmos, regaling you with gossip and his keen wit."
(People)

"The essays in *Ham* are both rip-roaringly funny and sentimental, drawing natural (and justified) comparisons to David Sedaris and David Rakoff." (Esquire)

"The show's title is also the name of Mr. Harris's just-published book of essays and stories. Funny, touching and cheerfully self-deprecating, the show consists of enthusiastic readings from his book with full-tilt renditions of songs....The darker side of Mr. Harris's tale concerns his struggle with his homosexuality, his attempted suicide and his eventual self-acceptance. It is an archetypal coming-out story to which he brought an inspirational spin...every move generates excitement. The word "ham" says it all." (Stephen Holden, The New Yorker (on the musical performance based on *Ham*))

"[Harris] has the writing chops to tell a good tale...entertaining and occasionally moving tales from the wilds of showbiz." (Kirkus)

"With a wry sense of humor, Harris writes about his life through humorous essays. Touching on everything from parenting to show business, he dishes on the ups and downs of his life through a witty lens."
(PopSugar)

"Harris is such a marvelously engaging, clever, storyteller that you'll be enraptured by every word that comes out of his mouth. With a fine eye for detail and actor's expressiveness, Harris paints wonderfully vivid portraits of various episodes of his life. And then there's that still glorious, blow-the-roof-off, remarkable singing." (Theater Pizazz)

"Sixteen short stories of a triumphant, tragic, and most of all, hilarious life in show business make up Sam Harris' new memoir." (Jackie Lyden, NPR)

"This neo-vaudevillian stage persona, Harris has opted to launch *Ham* the only way he knows how: extravagantly, theatrically and, most of all, big...refreshingly self-effacing observations and playful humor."
(The Huffington Post)

"*Ham* is a fabulous and funny, tasty treat; sweet and savory with just right touch of tang." (Broadway World)

"Sam Harris, singer, songwriter, actor, and general multi-hyphenate, puts a comedic spin on episodes from his life...he's up there with David Sedaris and David Rakoff." (The Advocate)

"Harris writes with bouncing-on-your-toes energy, rushing from subject to subject with the occasional lingering moment to ponder things that are important to him. His is an eagerness that's endearing....hilarious...teary. With humor, soul-baring, name-dropping, and just the right mix of

vulnerability, *Ham* is a definite pleasure to read. If you're looking for a memoir that you can enjoy, embrace this one whole-hog." (Dallas Voice)

"*Ham* is, by turns, harrowing and hilarious, uplifting and soul-shattering, agonizing and liberating." (Oklahoma Magazine)

"*Ham* is honest and heartbreaking, entertaining and devastating all at the same time." (The Steadfast Reader)

"*Ham* is humorous, soul baring, name dropping, and just the right mix of vulnerability and snarkiness." (Washington Blade)

"*Ham* is a dishy celebrity memoir combined with profoundly harder things like 9/11, alcoholism, suicide attempts, coming out, marriage and parenting. There is as much hilarity in the book--he knows how to make people laugh, especially at him. He really opens up, showing us his struggles, and has far deeper dimensions that I wasn't expecting when I picked up this book. He's clearly added writing into his stable of talents, and I am hoping folks will give this book a try." (The Tattered Cover)

"*Ham* is a collection of heartfelt, sharply funny memoirs. At a time when other essayists in the style of David Sedaris and Augusten Burroughs seem to have scraped the bottom of their autobiographical barrels, Harris arrives with great observational writing chops and a deep well of material to draw upon." (Passport Magazine)

"Harris is wry, witty, bitchy, pensive, inspirational, and laugh-out-loud funny in this winning collection of essays." (Courier-Journal-Gannett Press)

About the Author

Sam Harris's diversified career has run the gamut from singer and songwriter to actor on Broadway, film, and television to writer, director, and producer. His now legendary performances on TV's *Star Search* led to a multi-million selling recording career. Sam has nine studio CDs to his credit and has toured the world in concert, played The White House, Carnegie Hall, with the Boston Pops and with Cyndi Lauper's *True Colors* tour. He is also a Tony nominated Broadway star, (*The Life*, *Grease*, *The Producers*) and starred in numerous off-Broadway productions including *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, *Hair*, *Pippin*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cabaret*, *The Jazz Singer* and *The First Wives Club*. Sam was a series regular on the CBS series, *The Class*, and has appeared on numerous television shows as an actor and also a popular talk show guest on everything from Leno to Oprah to Fallon. Behind the scenes, he created and co-wrote the TBS television series, *Down to Earth*, the musical *Hurry! Hurry! Hollywood!*, and *Liza's Back at the Palace*, (which won the Tony Award), co-produced the television special *Love Letter to New York*, and wrote and directed the concert event *New York's Finest*. He now adds author to his long list of accomplishments with the release of his first book: *Ham: Slices of a Life*, a collection of essays and stories published by Simon & Schuster. Sam lives in Los Angeles with his husband, Danny, and their child, Cooper. For more information, please visit: SamHarris.com and [Facebook.com/SamFans](https://www.facebook.com/SamFans).

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Ham: Slices of a Life

1. Unwrapped

When I was nineteen years old, while helping my aunt Betty reorganize her kitchen cabinets, I discovered a beaten and worn plastic Mary Poppins cup and saucer marooned in the back corner of an ignored shelf. They were issued in 1964, the year of the movie's release. My aunt told me they'd been intended for me when I was little, but my father had returned them to her because I was "too obsessed with Mary Poppins and singing and dancing."

In the next room, my dad, uncle, brother, and all four boy cousins could be heard yelling in that guttural, grunting Cro-Magnon caterwauling exclusively reserved for watching football games on television and killing wild pigs on a hunt. I marched into the living room and presented the cup and saucer with outstretched arms.

"Do you remember these?" I said, my confrontational passion unbecoming some battered old plastic children's dishes.

They all stared at me, confused, as if I'd just asked for an honest opinion about the chances of a fashion comeback for the ascot.

"Uh, no, son," said my father. "Ask your mother."

The Cowboys scored another touchdown and the room erupted as they hug-slapped and adjusted their crotches. My father loved the Cowboys and could recount the great plays of the last twenty years. But he had no memory of banning the Mary Poppins treasures.

Cue home movie: Christmas 1964.

I am three years old. My mother is operating the camera. It is in grainy, Super 8 color, and there is no sound. A toy army tank and various toy guns are strewn about and a mini-rifle is propped against the wall. Plastic grenades litter the floor. GI Joe lies in a coffinlike cellophane-covered box. It is a battlefield of unwrapped but unattended boy toys around the base of our silver aluminum Christmas tree, which is bobbed with shiny red and green Woolworth balls, reflecting the muted shades of an electric color wheel. I open a new wool coat, charcoal with a spattering of white, knee length, with large lapels and giant black buttons. Now this is a present!

I eagerly put it on and model it full-tilt. I am overtaken with euphoria and begin to dance. The camera pans to capture the delight of each of my three grandparents, until it lands on my father, whose young, handsome face steams with displeasure and perhaps a touch of anger. His posture reflects a just released sigh of defeat. The camera pans back to me, still dancing. I look to my father and take in his reaction. For a split second I lose my timing.

Then I take a big breath, turn back at the camera, smile, and . . . just dance harder.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Gillon:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book entitled

Ham: Slices of a Life: Essays and Stories? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have various other opinion?

Josette Roscoe:

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Joy Hutchinson:

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Jeffrey Baptiste:

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