

Notes on
Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs
Author of book: Chuck Klosterman
Author of Notes: William Gasarch

1 This is Emo 0:01

1. People take their cues on relationships from movies and TV shows.
2. Woody Allen movies made hot women date nerdy guys more of a thing.
3. *When Harry Met Sally* (and other movies) made people think they really do want to sleep with their best friend, and/or they are in love with their best friend. Other movies: Link Here In reality, they really don't.
4. These thoughts even happen to people who never saw these movies.

2 Billy Sim 0:12

1. When Katie (a girl he knows) plays with a Barbie, if you asked Katie why Barbie has four outfits but only 2 pairs of shoes, she will make something up. Maybe Barbie and Britney Spears only had enough money for that. But if she plays SIMS she does NOT color outside the lines.
2. In SIMS the happiness of a character is determined by how much stuff they have. If your character buys a color TV they get 6 happiness points. That's really messed up.

3 What Happens When People Stop Being Polite 0:26

1. Season one of MTV's *Real World* was the only authentic season since they didn't know how to act to get more screen time, or how to act at all. So they really were themselves. Later seasons had people doing things just to get more screen time.

2. RW is obsessed with race and diversity but in a bad way— they want the black characters to only talk about racism, and the gay characters to be really gay. More generally, all of the characters become stereotypes.
3. The people on RW have to pretend that they are not on a TV show. They can't say *you're only saying that so that it will get to the final cut.*

4 Appetite for Replication

The chapter starts talking about a Guns and Roses Tribute band, hence the title of the chapter.

1. The main point is that a tribute band succeeds if they lose their personalities and become the personalities of the band they are tributing. *The goal is not to be someone, its to be someone else.*
2. People in bars would rather see a tribute band pretending to be a band they like than a new band playing new songs.
3. Someone auditioning for a tribute band has to look and sounds like the person he is imitating.

5 George will vs Nick Hornsby

Soccer will never make it in America.

1. Lots of kids play Soccer. But they are only playing it because the alternatives (Softball, Basketball, Football) are worse. In Soccer the scores are low and a kid playing it can go unnoticed.
2. The kids who play Soccer are outcasts who do not do well or even like team sports.
3. Basketball players are tall, Football players are big, but Soccer players look like normal people. And they don't dominate their opposition. Americans want players not like them who dominate. (Not sure this is true since its been said that white Americans like white players.)

6 8 33

The 1980's Celtics-Lakers rivalry was symbolic of a lot of divisions in America.

1. The Celtics had 3 starting white players in a league that was 80% black. The Lakers never had a white player who mattered.
2. The Celtics were decentralized. Chuck says they were like republicans- no need for big government (their Coach). They also playes 1950s-style basketball. The Lakers had a strong coach.

7 Porn

1. Many Porn sites have a category like *Sexy Housewives*
2. Amateur porn as increased A LOT. Why? Take 1986, before the web became capable of such things Did women say: *You know, I would love to have strangers see me naked for free but there is no mechanism for that yet.*
3. The technology has enabled porn, but the reverse is also true: porn has motivated the technology.
4. People seem to want to see gorgeous women on the web (not surprising) but also amateur porn, with ordinary women, which is a bit more surprising.
5. (Chuck claims the following contrast.)
 - (a) If a man in a bar can have his choice of any women in the bar to seen naked he would choose the most attractive women.
 - (b) If a man at a terminal is browsing porn and can have any choice, he will choose someone a bit LESS THAN gorgeous. Someone more normal.

Why? The web took over our lives so fast, from (1) *What is it?* to (2) *I need it to live.* Perhaps people like NORMAL people porn just to hang on to something normal in this social upheaval.

8 The Lady and the Tiger

1. Sylvester Graham invented Grunula (a precursor to Granola) so that people would eat it and their sex-drive (which he thought was evil) would decrease. It was served in some Sanitariums. John Kellogg was a doctor who agreed. He improved it and then his brother William Kellogg wanted to sell it to the public. John objected since (a) this is a science thing and not a profit thing, and (b) George added sugar to it which John thought would increase the sex drive. There was a lawsuit, but George won and we now have sugar-coated cardboard for breakfast.
2. In the 1950's cereals were advertised to kids by having mascots who want the cereal but can't have it (Trix Rabbit, Sonny the cuckoo-for-cocoa puffs, others). Hence kids are COOL and can have the cereal whereas as the mascots are not.
3. How to be cool? Use semioriginal, semielitist things. Obscure things but not to obscure. He suggests a T-shirt with the cast of that awful TV series *AfterMASH*.

9 Being Zack Morris

1. Chuck used to make mixed tapes for a girlfriend which they liked. Since it was audio tape they had to listen to the whole thing and he would make sure it had a theme and an order that made sense. BUT when burning CDs came out he had to switch to that and—anyone listening can play only the songs they like. So no more concept-mixed CDs.
2. Chuck was seeing two women. He burned a CD for one of them which was about their lives and romance and how he felt about her. He then realized that the same CD worked for the other girl as well. They both lied the CD they got and they never found out. (I assume he broke up with both of them later since his relationships seem to always break up—though he was married in 2009 and still is. Two kids.)

In this chapter he talks A LOT about the series *Saved by the Bell*

1. SBTB was about High School students, but later sequels were about college students.
2. It was a terrible show but he and others could relate to it.
3. It was very unrealistic.
4. It had no point to make, or if it did it was an obvious point. For example, Zack Morris (the main character, the reason for the title of this chapter) would get drunk, his friends tell him to NOT drive, he drives and gets into an accident nobody is hurt. But he's such a vapid character that his promise to not do it again, and the lesson learned, don't work.
5. Zack breaks the fourth wall and talks to the audience.
6. The actors all, after the show, tried to break out of their stereotype to avoid being typecast.
7. The Tori Paradox- some characters drop in and out of the series and when they are out they are not talked about, and when they come back in nobody says *where have you been?* Chuck realizes that this is actually REALISTIC when he thinks of his college experience.

10 Sulking with Lisa Loeb on the Ice Planet Hoth

The Ice Planet Hoth is from SW- its where Luke was freezing and Hans cut open and animal to put him into to warm up.

Lisa Loeb was in the movie Reality Bites, a Gen X movie.

Star Wars

1. At one time (probably 1977) Science fiction fans were not part of the mainstream so being a SW fans made you cool. Over time (probably 1990) Science Fiction, or at least SW, became part of the mainstream so being a SW fans is no longer cool.
2. SW was underrated in 1977 but overrated in 1990. Quote from the book which I think is over-the-top *Star Wars changed the social perception*

of what a movie was supposed to be; George Lucas, along with Steven Spielberg, managed to kill the best era of American Film making in less than five years. This is in my mind also nostalgia. Also, having a movie that everyone is talking about is FINE. If they want to say that movies are now more like cartoons and adventure and not high drama about the Human Condition, then this requires a study of how many movies like that (“great movies”) were produced pre-SW and post-SW.

3. Objectively SW is actually a terrible movie. *The Empire Strikes Back* is much better. Note that TESB ends on a DOWNER: Hans Solo is frozen and Luke got his hand chopped off. Chuck seems to think this is a good thing. I don’t think so. Frankly, I liked the first two movies equally. The third one was to cutsey-with the Ewoks (Chuck agrees.) TESB sets the tone for Gen X as its angst-written. I think he reads too much into that one movie.
4. Chuck admits that TESB was the first movie he ever saw so that may bias him. He also thought that ALL movies begin with a long incomprehensible (to an 8 year old) summary of the past movie.
5. Luke is the ultimate gen Xer- he wines, he learned stuff from Yoda that is not relevant for a job (meditation, fighting), how romantic aspiration is to a woman who thinks of him as her brother (which he actually is!), his dad is on him to join the family business, and *Most significant, all the problems in his life can be blamed on the generation that came before him, and specifically on his Father’s view about what to believe (i.e., respect authority, dress conservatively, annihilate innocent planets, etc.)*
6. 8-year olds and SW
 - (a) Objectively, Luke was not cool, Hans Solo was Cool. But an 8-year old does not yet know that the rough bad-boy (Hans) is the cool one.
 - (b) Luke could either join the dark side and be happy and rich but WRONG, or continue the fight with the rebels. ALL 8 years old are with the rebels. They still have ideals. Older people claim they would go with the rebels, but their actions in real life make me wonder.

Gen X: Everything said about Gen Xers—both positive and negative- is completely true.

1. They reject working-class American lifestyle because
 - (a) They were smart enough to realize those values were unsatisfying.
 - (b) They were lazy.
2. They liked Nirvana's *Nevermind* because
 - (a) It was a socio cultural affront to the vapidity of the Reagan-era paradigm.
 - (b) It rocked!
3. They were depressed about the future because
 - (a) They knew there was very little to look forward to.
 - (b) They were obsessed with staring into the eyes of their own self-absorbed sadness.

11 The Awe-Inspiring Beauty of Tom Cruise's Shattered Troll-like Face

1. Chuck was a movie critic who refused to say if you would like a movie or not and refused to summarize the plot. He only cared about ideas.
2. He liked *Vanilla Sky*, *The Matrix*, *Memento*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Waking Life*, *Fight Club*, *Being John Malkovich*, *Donnie Darko*, *eXistenZ* since they asked the question *What is Reality*. Odd that he tell us that he liked these since that's a recommendation. Also odd that he later says movies suck (perhaps mostly suck). (A later point will get into that.) I tried reading the descriptions of those movies on Wikipedia. Most don't really make sense and are too ambiguous for my tastes.
3. Movies that are both GOOD and POPULAR are rare nowadays. He has (false?) nostalgia for an older time and points to *The Godfather*, *The Godfather 2*, *Cool Hand Luke*, *The Last Picture Show*, *Nashville*,

Pulp Fiction (the last one and rather later than the rest) as being in that category.

4. In both *Vanilla Sky* and *The Matrix* people must decide between a terrible real world or a great fantasy world, and they choose the real world. Chuck thinks this is wrong, and I agree. But he appreciates the question. He also says that Science Fiction is *Philosophy for stupid people*.
5. WHY do movies suck now and were good earlier? Two reasons
 - (a) Hollywood went from being director-driven to producer-driven. Hence movies are almost *required* to be bad.
 - (b) A cultural shift. In the 1970's films *validated social evolution*. Jack Nicholson has said that in his movies he *plays characters that do not exist yet*, like anti-heroes. This is hard how since reality is *more transient*. I don't quite know what he means, but I think he means that there is no establishment to rebel against, culturally. Culture is to splintered to have one that you are playing against. Here is a quote *Traditional character models like "The Everyman" and "The Anti-hero" and "The wrongly accused" are no longer useful, because nobody can agree on what these designations are supposed to mean anymore*. In Christopher Nolan's *"Memento"*, *all three of these could be applied to the same person*.

12 Toby over Moby

Country Music

1. People who say *I like every kind of music except Country* are idiots and snobs. They hate country because they hate the south and the Midwest and rural areas.
2. Country music is popular because it relates to real people. Its not pretentious. You can understand the lyrics and they make sense and don't need to be interpreted. Sometimes they are about very particular places like a Tastee-Freeze. A town where your boyfriend proposes to you outside of a Tastee-Freeze is one that is too small to have a Dairy

Queen or a sit-down Ice-Cream place. (Eminem is controversial because when he raps you can actually understand his lyrics. I wonder if Novelty songs get no respect since the lyrics are so important.)

3. Chuck says that music critics (I do not know who he is referring to) under-values lyrics and instead focus on other things. They are wrong for doing so.
4. Toby in the title of the chapter is Toby Keith, a country music star.
5. Moby is a pretentious intellectual he may well be the kind of guy who says he likes all music except country.
6. I remember a scene in the TV show *Wiseguy*, the Music arc, where a black singer tells a white singer (who idolizes him) that he listens and learns from all kinds of music *including Country*. The white singer winces at that.
7. This reminds me of *What's the matter with Kansas?* and books of that type.

Double Standards

1. Chuck claims that more people say *It's unfair that guys who have lots of sex are studs whereas girls who have lots of sex are sluts* then actually call such guys studs or girls sluts. For the people he hangs out with (and also me) I am sure this is true. But there ARE people out there who still have the double standard.
2. Chuck thinks that the way we've gotten rid of the double standard is not good: *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal* have the message that we should ALL be having a lot of sex. I think there is the question of reflecting the culture already there vs creating a culture.

13 This is Zodiac Speaking

Chuck is interested (obsessed?) with serial killers and knows THREE people who have had contact with one.

- 1) *Mike Brae* This is the least interesting. A friend of Chucks named Sarah danced at a bar with a guy who was known as *Cowboy Mike*. Mike wanted

to take her elsewhere, but she declined. Mike was Mike Braae. He was later convicted of one rape-and-murder charges though he is a suspect in 3 others. He also was at one time on trial for attempted murder for shooting a women in the head, but was a mistrial since the victim couldn't testify due to her brain injury. ANYWAY, Sarah COULD HAVE been a victim, but wasn't. And she didn't know him at all. Still, was later shaken up when she found out who he was. This encounter intrigues Chuck since he was there also!

Mike Braae is not on Wikipedia but he is on Murderpedia (which I didn't know existed until I wrote this).

2) *John Wayne Gacy* Chuck met Eric Nuzman at a New Years eve party and found out that Eric knew John Wayn Gacy. Eric did not want to talk about JWG at the party but agreed to do so later, and DID follow through. Eric got to know JWG since Erik is in an anticensorship group and JWG was being barred from selling paintings he had done. Odd- JWG was the ONLY inmate in Illinois who was so barred. Eric contacted JWG. JWG is VERY PICKY on who he will be penpals with (very odd for someone in Jail). JWG demands that anyone who wants to be his penpal answer on paper 52 questions about artistic affinities, political ideologies, and personal values. Eric did all of this and made the cut! But what did they write and talk about (by phone)? HBO movies. Normal stuff. Also, Eric bought one of JWG's paintings. Eric doesn't talk or even think much about JWG's rapes and murders. He is not in denial, he feels sorry for JWG- upbringing (drunk father who abused him). Also, Eric says that JWG just isn't that smart, isn't that methodically planning, which somehow makes him less evil. When he was executed, Eric felt bad

JWG does have a Wikipedia page. He killed 33 young men and boys. He was

3) *Jeffrey Dahmer* Chuck met John Backderf (nicknamed Derf) when they both worked a a newspaper. Derf is a comic book artist. Derf knew Jeffery Dahmer in high school. He did a comic book called *My Friend Dahmer* which is not quite right since Dahmer had no friends in High School. The comic book was 26 pages long and was Derf's memories of Dahmer, called simply *Jeff* in the comic book. Dahmer was picked on in HS but didn't really respond to it at all. Or you could say his later (a month after graduation) killed for the first time. Derf thinks that all the signs that Dahmer might do this were there, and if some adult had intervened then Dahmer might not

have. Derf feels sorry for Dahmer. The comic book humanizes Dahmer but Derf draws the line at murder and does not like him. Derf is glad he knew Dahmer as it makes his (Derf's) life a bit more interesting.

Jefferey Dahmer does have a Wikipedia page. For Jeff killing was a sexual thing- he was a repressed homosexual (not sure how the eating part comes into that). He killed 17 people.

More on Serial Killers:

1. In fourth grade Chuck was told (1) don't pick up hitchhikers since they are (NOTE- not *could be* but *are*) perverted serial killers, and (2) don't hitchhike since they only people who will pick you up are perverted serial killer. This circularity got him interested in the topic.
2. Experts say that serial killers come in four categories:
 - (a) *Mission-oriented*: kill specific people to make society better. Jack the Ripper killed prostitutes, and that might have been why.
 - (b) *Visionary motive*: imagine voices in their head telling them to kill.
 - (c) *Thrill-oriented*: they find the process of murder exciting.
 - (d) *Lust killers*: they get a sexual thrill out of doing it.
 - (e) America is the most celebrity-driven culture. Being a serial killer makes you a celebrity. America has far more cereal killers (per capita) than any other country. Connection?

14 All I Know is What I Read in the Papers

(This is Chuck's view though I prob agree with it.)

NEWS IS NOT BIASED, ITS JUST STUPID

Americans complain that the media is biased. They point to either the fact that most journalists are liberals (true) or that most people who own newspapers are conservatives (true). And NO, they don't cancel out. The truth is that news is arbitrary.

A reporter needs a quote from some expert, so he calls 10 experts. The first one who calls him back, THATS the story. So its more arbitrary than biased.

Also, reporters are the opposite of biased: they struggle to make sure that all sides are represented. This makes it more biased, like presenting a flat-earther and a round-earther as equals in a debate.

Some people think FOX news is better because you KNOW their bias. Not true- they will distort facts and lie to support their bias. Knowing their bias does not help that.

SPORTS REPORTING

Sports reporters begin their career because they love sports. They end up hating it since athletes don't really have anything interesting to say, so questions asked are vapid and so are answers. Plus you get to see the underbelly of sports. As it's been said, never meet your heroes.

CELEBRITY NEWS

The problem with celebrity profiles is that the celeb is lying and the reporter is guessing. Too much interpolation, exaggeration, trying to make a point about the celeb that might not be true or is too polished.

SHORT ATTENTION SPAN

TV news was a threat to newspapers so they began trying to be like TV- nice graphics, shorter stories, easy to digest sound bytes (they should have done what TV cannot do- longer, more serious stories, like The Economist).

15 I, Rock Chump

The *Experience Music Project* is a conference of academics studying Rock and Roll. Also some Rock and Roll reporters, and even some groups.

1. Nobody drank. Really!
2. People were up by 8:00AM for the first talk. Chuck says: *what kind of rock and roller gets up before noon?* He then notes that these people STUDY rock and roll, so they are not really Rock and Rollers.
3. Talk were obscure and incomprehensible. So was normal conversation

16 How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found

This begins by being about the Left Behind series (hence the title) but is about religion in general.

1. 40% of the NFL players claim to be born again. Chuck thinks that about 40% of the NFL players *spend the entire off season snorting cocaine off of the thighs of Cuban prostitutes and murdering their ex-girlfriends.*
2. For some players, being Born Again helps their game for real (Kurt Warner is one). And for some Chuck thinks that what happens on the fields shows God IS involved, though Chuck wonders why God cares who wins a football game.

A contrast of the Left Behind movie and the actor who played the main role.

1. In the movie Buck Williams goes from being a normal person to being someone who wants to convince people that there is no future unless we prepare for the political incarnation of Satan. Note that the rapture HAS happened so this is not crazy.
2. In real life the actor who played Buck Williams, Kirk Cameron, long before the movie was made went from being a normal person (Teen actor so ...) to being a born again Christian who really believes that the idea of 100 million true Christians being taken up into heaven is realistic. And he wants to convert people to Christianity. Similar to Buck Williams, except that the rapture hasn't happened so perhaps crazy.
3. In the book children under 5 get raptured. Chuck thinks this is silly—kids aren't that good.
4. One problem with the book and movie: To become a Christian you need to take a LEAP of faith. But if it took seeing the rapture to become a Christian, that's not a leap. That's based on reason.
5. *Left Behind: The Movie* had the following strategy: The DVD was released first with a coupon for a matinee price when it came out. Also, you were supposed to TELL all of your friends to see this IMPORTANT movie. It grossed around 4,000,000 which barely covered expenses, so perhaps this did not work.

Thoughts on Being Born Again (Chuck is not)

1. Atheists who say that being a born again Christian would *make everything so simple* are snobs who are looking down on those people and presuppose they are stupid.
2. Its appealing to be a born again Christian since you have a definite direction in life. Things really matter.
3. Even more positive: *They are probably the only people openly fighting against America's insipid Oprah Culture—the pervasive belief system that insists everyone's perspective is valid and that no one can be judged.* By contrast, Born Again Christians judge and want to be judged.
4. Born Again's are good because they have a relation with God. If you are good but not because you have a relation with God then it seems weird that that does not count.
5. Motive Matters. Osama bin Laden really thought he was doing God's will. What if Chuck K lies to a girl so he can sleep with her? That is less evil than 9-11, but has worse motives.