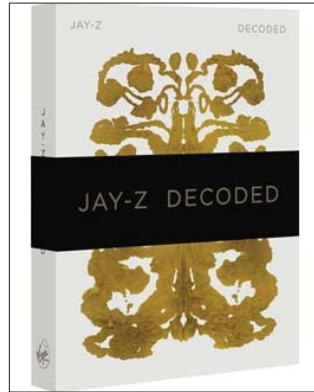


Book Review: Jay-Z's memoir 'Decoded'

By Ali Breland of The Daily Texan
via UWIRE

From even before its release, rapper Jay-Z made it apparent that his new memoir, "Decoded" was going to be an ambitious piece of work through its extremely unique marketing campaign. HiphopDX, reported that in efforts to create buzz about the book, excerpts were to be featured in random places ranging from the bottom of hotel pools, to the sides of buildings, to subways, to pool tables. In typical Jay-Z fashion, the product ends up living up to the hype.



Decoded itself reads more uniquely than most memoirs. Jay-Z still maintains a focus on his own story, but instead of keeping his narrative singular, Decoded comes off as several things: a social statement, a chronicling of hip-hop's rise, and, of course, the personal recollections. The unique variance of styles and intentions woven throughout.

In that fashion of jumping from tangent to tangent to create an interwoven story line, Jay-Z also he even admits to being non-linear and instead prefers to jump around in his story telling, creating whatever image he desires as the product of the chopped up elements he puts into his work, creating a beautiful flowing output.

The story starts of illustrating the days of a nine-year-old in the Marcy Houses housing project in Brooklyn, a little section of Brooklyn, discovering the magical burgeoning world of hip hop and rapping that was developing on the streets of New York. Very quickly, though, crack cocaine made it's infiltration into his community and it wasn't long before he, like everyone that surrounded him was hustlin' and dealing coke to get by.

"I went straight," he said, "[I] stopped selling drugs — but I also didn't accept the false choice between poverty and breaking the law."

So often celebrities write in their memoirs of vice's they often get over for the sake of their career. It can be minor like in Kelly Slater's scenario, junk food, or extreme like Anthony Kiedis's longstanding addiction to heroine. Jay-Z's main vice oddly enough was hustling. Throughout much of the early portion of his life he sold drugs, something that would scar him and strengthen him for the years to come.

He wrote about the intensity and harrowing experiencing of having friends die and constantly watching your back to the point of near mental breakdown and paranoia and how despite that, he was consumed by the lifestyle. There was always the hopes of achieving something better. As he illustrates, though, hustling is an integral part of street culture and often a problem that often is overlooked or severely mishandled.

Though an interesting part of the book, this where Jay-Z crosses over into messy territory. Throughout the book, his arguments range from racism amongst police, to government policies designed to perpetuate social disparities amongst difference races of people in America, with the word "nigger" spattered throughout. While these arguments are all interesting, philosophically engaging, and sound, some, especially the latter feature concrete warrants.

In this sense, Decoded has the opportunity to be much more intellectually fulfilling but blows it as Jay-Z makes overarching statements about the state of things in the government in comparison with the "hood," without concrete evidence. Despite this he does provide an interesting springboard

Turkey Spinach Pinwheels

from Chef Boy-ar-Dave

Average Cost of Meal: \$8 - \$10

Time of Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 0 minutes

Serving Size: 5

Ingredients:

5 Flour Tortillas

10 Slices of Turkey Breast

1 Bag of Spinach

1 8 oz. Cream Cheese

1 Cup of Yogurt

Instructions:

- Mix in a medium sized bowl the cream cheese with the yogurt.
- Spread the creamy mixture evenly onto each tortilla.
- Put an even amount of turkey into each tortilla.
- Put an even amount of spinach into each tortilla.
- Roll up the tortilla as tightly as possible and refrigerate for 10 minutes.
- Slice into one inch pieces and serve.

of social and political ideas that the reader can assess in their own time, he's simply and perhaps unnecessarily passing the work of research to the reader though.

Jay-Z also makes compelling points outside intense controversy. Towards the end, he starts to break himself down theologically and philosophically on a deeper level than anywhere else in the book, making an already entertaining and insightful read, into something even more.

"Decoded" also features lyrical breakdowns at the end of every chapter, in which he describes many different aspects, inspirations, and motivations behind his words and the poetry he creates with them. While usually intriguing and unique, the breakdowns can become burdensome and annoying as they break the flow of the narrative.

Ultimately the experience is subjective and up to the reader in that sense. "Decoded" is in many ways just that — a look inside Jay-Z's head and the world he lives in and has lived in decoded, and made sense of, for anyone to take a look at.