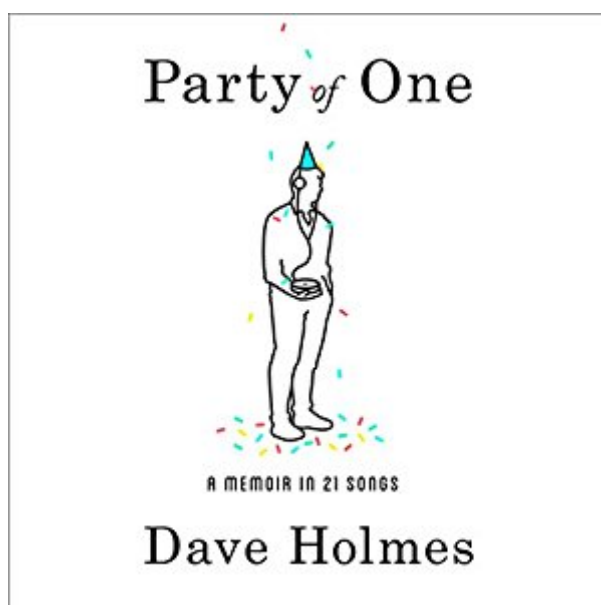


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Party Of One: A Memoir In 21 Songs



Synopsis

From former MTV VJ Dave Holmes, the hilarious memoir of a perpetual outsider fumbling toward self-acceptance, with the music of the '80s, '90s, and today as his soundtrack. Dave Holmes has spent his life on the periphery, nose pressed hopefully against the glass, wanting just one thing: to get inside. Growing up, he was the artsy son in the sporty family. At his all-boys high school and Catholic college, he was the closeted gay kid surrounded by crush-worthy straight guys. And in his 20s, in the middle of a disastrous career in advertising, he accidentally became an MTV VJ overnight when he finished second, naturally, in the Wanna Be a VJ contest, opening the door to fame, fortune, and celebrity - you know, almost. In *Party of One*, Holmes tells the hilariously painful and painfully hilarious tales - in the vein of Rob Sheffield, Andy Cohen, and Paul Feig - of an outsider desperate to get in, of a misfit constantly changing shape, of a music geek who finally learns to accept himself. Structured around a mix of hits and deep cuts from the last four decades - from Bruce Springsteen's "Hungry Heart" and En Vogue's "Free Your Mind" to LCD Soundsystem's "Losing My Edge" and Bleachers' "I Wanna Get Better" - and punctuated with interludes like "So You've Had Your Heart Broken in the 1990s: A Playlist" and "Notes on (Jesse) Camp", this book is for anyone who's ever felt like a square peg, especially those who have found their place in the world around a band, an album, or a song. It's a laugh-out-loud funny, deeply nostalgic story about never fitting in, never giving up, and letting good music guide the way.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 23 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: June 28, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01HIN3TEU

Best Sellers Rank: #49 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Pop #61

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Music #84 in Books > Biographies &

Memoirs > Specific Groups > LGBT

Customer Reviews

I grew up watching Dave Holmes, Carson Daley, and, yes, crazy Jesse Camp on MTV in the 90s. My little sister and I would come home from school and immediately flip on the TV to watch TRL (even though our parents specifically told us not to). Every song that Holmes mentions in this book, every artist he refers to, I am not only familiar with, but I also have some sort of emotional attachment to (good or bad). In other words, this book was basically written for me! I AM the target audience. Party of One should be my jam! But, weirdly, it just isn't. God, this book bored me. Even though there was the potential for something really good here, most of these stories fall flat. Holmes stays so light and chipper about everything that it's hard to connect with him--which is weird, because he does touch on some intense personal topics. He talks about struggling to fit in for most of his life, but he never really expands on that. He even talks about struggling to be gay in a family that does not approve of homosexuality, but even those moments--which should have been heartfelt and emotionally gripping (I mean, really, how can they NOT be?)--were kind of tedious. There's something about the way he talks about the experiences from his past. He speaks the words and strings the thoughts together...but he never really SAYS anything--at least not anything that feels meaningful. Throughout the whole book, I could tell there were places emotionally that he wasn't willing to go. Like it was more important that he come across as a carefree, jokey, nothing-phases-me! sort of guy. I don't know. It just struck me as inauthentic. But I should add that there were some good moments, too. Like other reviewers, I really liked the brief Interlude sections peppered throughout.

There is this thing about some people, who find that the best way to explain life is through a song. These people tend to be a weird minority and their work can be difficult to translate for those readers who do not know the lingua franca. In the vein of Rob Sheffield's "Love is a Mix Tape," and "Turn Around Bright Eyes," Dave Holmes enters the fray with a deeply personal memoir with its own soundtrack. "Party of One" is Holmes' coming of age/coming out/coming to grips memoir of a man who died to fit into a life for which he was made to stand out. Each chapter is a "song" and there are 21 such chapters. And because every good CD has a bonus track, so too does Holmes. The soundtrack of the book comes mostly from the 80s, 90s and 00s and it requires to have an extensive and peripatetic taste in music. This musical taste and knowledge is imperative because, although Holmes says much with his prose, he says so much more with his choice of songs and the musical allusions he makes. Holmes tells the stories of his life, from grammar school, to high school, to college, to working a job he hated, to getting the job of his dreams, to having human voices wake him from that dream, to moving on. He keeps the time with the corresponding musical references. I

have to confess that reading the book revealed an error in my memory. In picking up the book, I thought, "Oh hey, the guy who was on MTV who won the 'Who Wants to be a VJ contest." Turns out he came in second in that contest to a guy (Jesse Camp) I totally forgot about until picking up the book. I now remember thinking at the time, Jesse was the gimmick guy and Dave Holmes won that contest for real -- why else would he be on MTV? The real story was a lot different than what I imagined.

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