

## ★ Dad Bod: Portraits of Pop Culture Papas

**Cian Cruise**

Rare Machines (Jun 7, 2022)

Softcover \$19.99 (240pp)

978-1-4597-4947-4

Cian Cruise's essay collection *Dad Bod* explores pop culture papas with irrepressible verve.

Motivated by his recent fatherhood and relentless curiosity, the book deploys a sharp wit, exuberant irreverence, and keen intellect to examine *The Simpsons*, *Castlevania*, Robin Williams's oeuvre, and other portrayals of fathers that shape social expectations. With analytical rigor, it mines trenchant truths about the parental experience from movies, television shows, and video games.

Whether describing a stringent arthouse film professor, the wonders of seeing life anew through a child's eyes, or the dearth of movies about supporting a partner during pregnancy, the book displays flair. Its are the astute observations of a sophisticated critic, with penetrating insights on cultural phenomena, like how a college newspaper writer's coining of the phrase "dad bod" captured the public imagination overnight, soon becoming the subject of academic studies. It also breaks down how outdated concepts of masculinity, as with the hard men of ancient Sparta, no longer serve the contemporary world.

The book addresses widespread tropes like bumbling sitcom dads, but it also extracts profundity from unlikely subjects, interrogating Rambo movies the way a philosopher would investigate the nature of truth, and applying lessons derived therefrom to the handling of a truculent toddler. It's perceptive enough to prompt one to think anew about familiar properties like *Schitt's Creek*. It tackles all its quirky topics with style and humor, as with chapter titles like "The Good, The Dad and The Ugly."

Expansive and often digressive, *Dad Bod* brims with ideas, asides, footnotes, theories, and history. It shines as a cultural criticism, a memoir, and a parenting guide. Throughout, *Dad Bod* weighs a "culture full of dad bods but bereft of father figures" with cleverness and perspicacity.

JOSEPH S. PETE (July / August 2022)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*