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Super Pop! Pop Culture Top Ten Lists to Help You Win at Trivia, Survive in the Wild, and Make It through the Holidays

Daniel Harmon
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Super Pop *bursts with titillating pop cultural tidbits and trivia.*

Author Daniel Harmon's intent when he wrote *Super Pop* was to go beyond the usual lists of movies, books, and trivia, that Harmon calls "unsurprising" and create exciting lists that spark the imagination, and "go beyond the old standard and a few new staples." *Super Pop* achieves this with flying colors.

Super Pop is efficiently organized into five parts, each promoting an area of self-improvement. Each part is further divided into about nine lists, making for forty-plus fascinating, fact-filled lists in total. Each list offers the top ten items in that category, with a stimulating synoptic review for each item. Take for example, Part III, titled, "Stop Doing It Wrong" where Harmon offers a slew of humorous, inspirational, and intriguing categories that include: "Be More Responsible." Here Harmon makes us rethink our actions and pay attention to the world around us, with suggestions like the South Korean action-movie, *The Host*, with its "hypnotically beautiful and poignant slow-motion shots of mutant freaks." Harmon's commentary states that this movie is essential when "You can't see how it can possibly be a bad idea to put a bunch of toxic chemicals down the drain." Harmon's sense of facetious humor is evident in his recommendation the movie, *Contagion*: "You know a disease is serious when it kills Gwyneth Paltrow."

Also included in Part III, is the chapter, "Stop Being such a Snob" where Harmon reveals the awful qualities of the titles while recommending them for fulfilling their purpose in providing entertainment. Harmon describes the 1998 movie *Armaggedon* as a "bombastic, and poorly cast blockbuster," but also cheers it: "Shuttle crashes! Aerosmith sings! Things blow up! … This is what movies are all about."

Also appearing in this list is the review of the video game "Angry Birds," which pits birds against pigs. Harmon praises it for its "profoundly entertaining" qualities, but also for the social observation that in spite of more high-tech computer games like "Assassin's Creed III," "our puny human minds" still haven't moved past games that are relatively simple and fun.

Harmon's lists are diverse and educational in their wealth of information. His clear writing and lively descriptions make the narratives flow fast and furious, while his well-researched and creative reviews of each item are quite captivating, as seen in the chapter titled "Cheat On Your Homework," which appears in Part II: "Be Smarter."

Harmon's sincere recommendation for James Baldwin's novel, *Notes of a Native Son* reveals the impact of the writings both in 1950s Greenwich Village because of the prejudice towards blacks and gays; while Harmon's entry for Kenneth Branagh's 1989 movie version of *Henry V*, reveals an enthusiastic appreciation for the movie, as he describes a speech that "rolls off like reveille and wakes us to the thrill of fighting for something we believe in … It's great."

The book's mascot is a caped cartoon superhero with an old TV with antennae, carrying a book in one hand and a microphone in the other. The superhero strikes poses as Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*, Charlie Brown, and a poetic bard, to name a few examples.

Super Pop offers an amusing, remarkable, and absorbing compendium of ingenious lists for an assortment of pop cultural media.

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MAYA FLEISCHMANN (September 23, 2013)

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