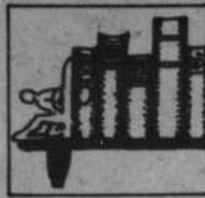


WRITINGS

Flippo's 'Serious Moonlight' flops

"David Bowie, Serious Moonlight"
By Chet Flippo
Dolphin & Doubleday Inc.
257 pages



"What I mean to say... is this tour was hot shit. As in Hot Shit. Nobody but the Stones could come close to Bowie before. This time, he left them in the shade," Chet Flippo, ace Rolling Stone writer writes in "David Bowie, Serious Moonlight." Perhaps never before has anyone so simply or tactlessly crowned a singer the king of rock'n'roll.

And it is because of Flippo's contrived prose, which amounts to nothing more than an extended magazine article, that "Serious Moonlight" suffers.

Graphically and pictorially, the paperback book is stunning. Whether or not you have ever appreciated David Bowie's music, you will enjoy perusing Denis O'Regan's concert and backstage photos of Bowie in his finest togs.

However, every page of this book works to show Bowie as aloof, sainted, blond and discreetly cool.

In each full-color frame, Bowie's golden head pierces through his surroundings like a haloed, benevolent ethereal being. Mick Jagger, Grace Jones,

Micheal Jackson and Bette Midler come backstage to pay tribute. Bowie dines on sushi and sleeps in luxurious suites and satin sheets. He is mystical, yet fascinated with things Oriental. His world is portrayed as surreal, a princely dream. That is unsettling.

The overriding effect of the entire book is to raise Bowie to some sort of rock'n'roll demi-god status. Flippo portrays Bowie's fans as adidas-footed automatons clamoring uncontrollably for front row seats. O'Regan's photos of possessed fans from Singapore to Paris defenestrate the premise.

Following a five year absence from all touring and on the heels of his rousingly successful 1983 album "Let's Dance," Bowie decides to return to the stage. This time he is sans any single persona, adopting instead several zoot suit outfits designed by a cinema costumer.

There may be some value in Flippo's writing to the hardcore Bowie fan. But to the rest of us the account is dry and contrived.

Only O'Regan's photography saves "Serious Moonlight" from becoming a total write-off.
Hank Trotter

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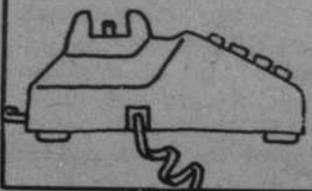


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