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Value of 'Student Body Shots' hidden by fat jokes, crass filler

Book review

Jacquelyn Lewis
 Pulse Editor

Recent Columbia University graduate Steve Hofstetter's book, "Student Body Shots: a sarcastic look at the best 4-6 years of your life," is worth a look. But, like college itself, the student will have to dig through mountains of crass, meaningless filler to find its true pearls of wisdom. "Student Body Shots" is supposed to be a hilarious look at college life, but the bulk of the humor must have "shot" right past this reviewer.

Rider Strong, aka Shawn Hunter from the television show "Boy Meets World," wrote the foreword. Strong, Hofstetter's Columbia classmate, gives a surprisingly non-cliché memoir of his own college years thus far. He also (thank goodness) pokes fun at "Boy Meets World" and its squeaky clean rendition of higher education. He reminds us that there's no such thing as a "normal" college experience.

Chapter one starts out strong as well. Hofstetter ticks off a list of educational milestones most traditional college students will relate to right away.

"By the end of college, you will have at least one hook-up that you regret," he writes. "You will make and break a promise to never drink again, and you will waste anywhere between one and two hundred nights playing a number

of bastardized versions of Tetris. You will invent a new recipe using Ramen or macaroni and cheese, familiarize yourself with the intricacies of Instant Messenger, or learn to gamble — or a combination of all three."

Insert smiles and knowing nods here.

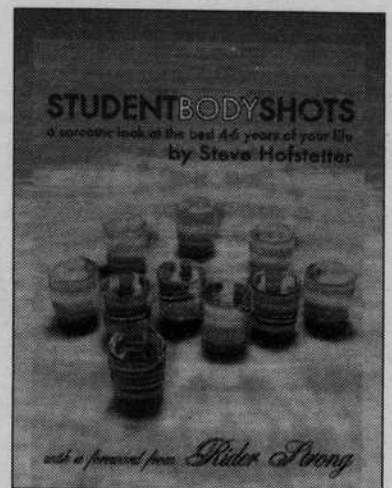
However, those smiles quickly disappear as the reader encounters such gems as, "I saw a huge woman wearing a shirt that said 'USA.' I think she did a pretty good impression."

Ha ha ha. Really funny. Fat jokes — how original. Hofstetter files this knee-slapper under the "Fashion" chapter, but what does this have to do with college? Perhaps the quips about girls in tight clothing (think tube tops and leather pants) pertain to university life more, but they come off like failed stand-up comedy. Worse, they reek of misogyny.

The "Money" chapter almost earns Hofstetter forgiveness for the above. He poses the question, "Why can I spend forty bucks in a bar one night, but refrain from ordering extra cheese because I don't want to blow the fifty cents?"

Now that's more like it. This whole section is smart, funny and true-to-life.

But again, Hofstetter lacks consistency, treating us to the rousing ditty, "Your Fat Friend: A Student Body Shots Song." Hofstetter includes a disclaimer pointing out he's not making fun of all fat people, only fat people with bad personalities — from the



song's tone, fat women with bad personalities. How sensitive. Fat people everywhere surely will rejoice.

And that's where the frustration comes in — the explanation of why this review is just about as wishy-washy as "Student Body Shots" itself. Hofstetter's writing, when he's not making fun of overweight or ugly people (his specialty, it seems), is witty and engaging.

Unfortunately, students who realize there's more to college than hooking up and beer guzzling will miss the few positive things Hofstetter has to offer, because they will likely ditch "Student Body Shots" faster than an 8 a.m. math class.

Contact the Pulse editor at jacquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com.

basic white to further personalize your stationery.

I cut the paper down from 8.5-by-11 inches to a more stationery-appropriate size after it was run off. I stuck with basic rectangular shapes, but you can choose from a plethora of polygons and animal shapes if you so like.

The creative options are as endless as your imagination. The important thing is that you have generated something that is your own, and that you put as much effort into your words as you put into your paper. Your new pen pal will thank you.

Contact the Pulse columnist at nikacarlson@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Living

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thought it would be creepily humorous among friends. OK, so maybe I'm the only one who found

The creative options are as endless as your imagination.

it amusing. The point is, you can use just about anything. For my second attempt, I used a drawing of a sailor tattoo from the 1910s. The more artistically inclined might draw something themselves. I thought about it, but laziness won out in the end.

I taped the images onto blank paper and ran off as many copies as I could afford. Black-and-white copies cost around five cents at most copy centers. Color copies cost 99 cents at Kinko's. You also have the option of selecting colored or textured paper instead of

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