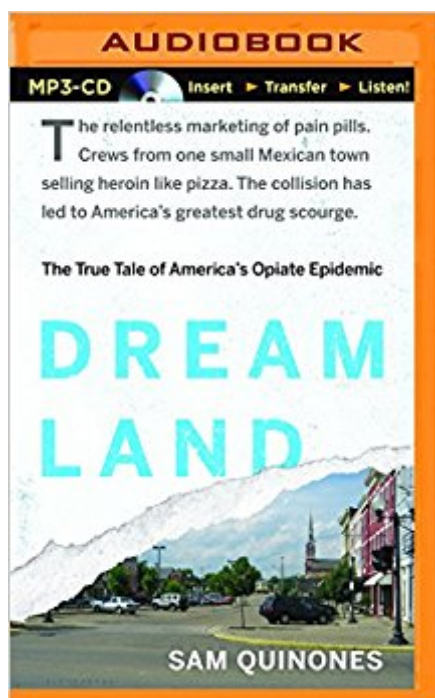


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Dreamland: The True Tale Of America's Opiate Epidemic



Synopsis

In 1929, in the blue-collar city of Portsmouth, Ohio, a company built a swimming pool the size of a football field; named Dreamland, it became the vital center of the community. Now, addiction has devastated Portsmouth, as it has hundreds of small rural towns and suburbs across America—addiction like no other the country has ever faced. How that happened is the riveting story of Dreamland. With a great reporter's narrative skill and the storytelling ability of a novelist, acclaimed journalist Sam Quinones weaves together two classic tales of capitalism run amok whose unintentional collision has been catastrophic. The unfettered prescribing of pain medications during the 1990s reached its peak in Purdue Pharma's campaign to market OxyContin, its new, expensive—and extremely addictive—miracle painkiller. Meanwhile a massive influx of black tar heroin—cheap, potent, and originating from one small county on Mexico's west coast, independent of any drug cartel—assaulted small towns and midsized cities across the country, driven by a brilliant, almost unbeatable marketing and distribution system. Together these phenomena continue to lay waste to communities from Tennessee to Oregon, Indiana to New Mexico. Introducing a memorable cast of characters—pharma pioneers, young Mexican entrepreneurs, narcotics investigators, survivors, and parents—Quinones shows how these tales fit together. Dreamland is a revelatory account of the corrosive threat facing America and its heartland.

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of April 2015: The rise of OxyContin addiction and subsequent heroin use has been much in the news lately as we try to make sense of what is happening in suburban and small town

America. Sam Quinones's *Dreamland* takes a multifaceted approach to the subject, profiling people from all walks of life, ranging from citizens of impoverished Mexican ranchos to young affluent white athletes, all cogs in the wheel of the latest drug epidemic. Unlike the crack cocaine phenomenon of the 1980s, today's widespread opiate addiction has roots in the prescription pads of certified physicians and the marketing machine of Big Pharma. When the addict, forced by availability and economics, transitions to heroin he is met by a new breed of entrepreneurial drug dealers who are only too happy to take calls and make deliveries. The changing landscape of small town America, along with science, opportunity, shame, and of course greed, all play a role here and to see the puzzle come together, one comprehensible piece at a time, is as fascinating as it is unsettling.-- Seira Wilson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Does what *Fast Food Nation* did for fast food to Black Tar Heroin and oxycodone . . . A stunning journalistic journey that follows the history and narrative trajectories that lead to this entirely new style of cultivating drug addiction . . . I just love this book." - Marc Maron
• The most original writer on Mexico and the border out there.
• San Francisco Chronicle Book Review
• Over the last 15 years, he has filed the best dispatches about Mexican migration and its effects on the United States and Mexico, bar none.
• Los Angeles Times Book Review
• Journalist Quinones weaves an extraordinary story, including the personal journeys of the addicted, the drug traffickers, law enforcement, and scores of families affected by the scourge, as he details the social, economic, and political forces that eventually destroyed communities in the American heartland and continues to have a resounding impact.
• starred review, Booklist
• Quinones' research ensures that there is something legitimately interesting (and frequently horrifying) on every page. A-
• Entertainment Weekly
• [A] compelling examination . . . a driven and important narrative.
• Wall Street Journal
• In *Dreamland*, former Los Angeles Times reporter Sam Quinones deftly recounts how a flood of prescription pain meds, along with black tar heroin from Nayarit, Mexico, transformed the once-vital blue-collar city of Portsmouth, Ohio, and other American communities into heartlands of addiction. With prose direct yet empathic, he interweaves the stories of Mexican entrepreneurs, narcotics agents, and small-town folks whose lives were upended by the deluge of drugs, leaving them shaking their heads, wondering how they could possibly have resisted.
• Mother Jones
• Smack is back in the news as heroin use spikes and busts pile up at the border, making *Dreamland* a timely book. Veteran journalist and storyteller Sam Quinones provides investigative reporting to explain the latest surge. But he also goes way deeper; he tells the social and human stories at the heart of the opiate trade and how it

tortures the souls of America and Mexico. • • • Ioan Grillo, author of *EL NARCO* • • • Dreamland spreads out like a transnational episode of *The Wire*, alternately maddening, thrilling, depressing, and with writing as sharp and insightful as a razor blade. You cannot understand our drug war and Mexican immigration to the United States without reading this book. • • • Gustavo Arellano, syndicated columnist *Ask a Mexican!* • • • Quinones is a veteran journalist and expert storyteller long steeped in the demi-monde of Mexican-American bordercrossings. *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic* is an intricate jigsaw puzzle piecing together his findings from intensive investigation of the unprecedented spread of heroin addiction throughout the United States over the past two decades . . . Dreamland offers an eye-opening, enlightening and mesmerizing account of one of the most important stories of the last few decades . . . Quinones is a master storyteller, with a knack of bringing hundreds of characters to life . . . Dreamland stands as a model of meticulous investigative reporting providing important insights not only the current opiate epidemic but also into the sometimes negative symbiosis between our country and our neighbors to the south. • • • *New York Journal of Books* "Quinones recounts individual tales--from junkies in Portland, Ore., to pill mills in Appalachia to entrepreneurial heroin traffickers from small-town Mexico--to describe a • • • catastrophic synergy • • • in which over-prescription of opioid painkillers begets addicts, many of whom then turn to heroin, which is cheaper and just as ubiquitous." • • • *Best Books of 2015, Boston Globe* • • • Unflinching . . . compellingly investigated. • • • *Kirkus* "The path of heroin from America's urban slums to its trim suburban subdivisions is traced by a Los Angeles Times reporter. Quinones's deeply researched and readable book says well-heeled addicts got hooked first on pain-killing medications like OxyContin--but then switched to much cheaper Mexican heroin, feeding a problem across the nation." • • • *Best Books of 2015, St. Louis Dispatch* • • • Fascinating . . . a harrowing, eye-opening look at two sides of the same coin, the legal and illegal faces of addictive painkillers and their insidious power. • • • *Publishers Weekly* • • • A haunting tale of opiate abuse in the heartland . . . Using expert storytelling and exhaustive detail, Quinones chronicles the perfect storm of circumstances that cleared the way for the Mexican narcotic to infiltrate our small and midsize communities over the last two decades. • • • *Kansas City Star* • • • Fascinating. • • • *Salon* "You won't find this story told better anywhere else, from the economic hollowing-out of the middle class to the greedy and reckless marketing of pharmaceutical opiates to the remarkable entrepreneurial industry of the residents of the obscure Mexican state of Nayarit . . . Dreamland--true crime, sociology, and exposé--illuminates a catastrophe unfolding all around us, right now." • • • *Laura Miller's 10 Favorite Books of 2015, Slate* • • • The must-read book about America's heroin crisis . . . Quinones combines thorough research with superlative narrative

skills to produce a horrifying but compulsively readable book about opiate addiction . . . a book that every American should read. And I state that without reservation . . . This book is as much of a page-turner as a good mystery, as well as being thoroughly and disturbingly illuminating about a national crisis.

- Christian Science Monitor "A gripping read and hard-hitting account of a ubiquitous plague that has flown under the radar."
- Portland Business Journal "Quinones's absorbing narrative is deep in research, on-site reporting, personal interviews and insight. Spanning the central U.S. and crossing the Mexican border, Dreamland adroitly unsnarls the tangled business that feeds a growing lust for chemical euphoria and relief."
- Shelf Awareness "Every so often I read a work of narrative nonfiction that makes me want to get up and preach: Read this true story! Such is Sam Quinones's astonishing work of reporting and writing, Dreamland: the True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic."
- Seattle Times "Everybody should read this book. Everybody."
- Rod Dreher, The American Conservative "An important frame of reference for understanding America's opiate epidemic."
- Portland Press Herald "[A] powerful investigation into the explosion of heroin abuse in suburban America that combines skillful reporting and strong research with a superb narrative."
- The Spectator --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This was a thoroughly researched book and I enjoyed Mr. Quinones's writing style. I was able to get clear mental pictures of the places and people he describes. I had no idea of the heroin trade and while I was aware that heroin addiction had spread to the heartland alarmingly, the complex system of the cartels was certainly eye opening. I also was vaguely aware of the 'pill mills' going on in Florida and other states primarily in the eastern part of the US, after reading this book I can say I not only know but am alarmed at how easy it was to get a Medicaid card and rake in big bucks selling Oxycontin on taxpayer money. I also agree that Big Pharma hid the dangers of Oxycontin and went ahead with a big push to doctors to prescribe it. On the other side of the coin, I have suffered from Fibromyalgia for sixteen years and the premise that pain can be controlled solely by physical therapy, nutrition, counseling, acupuncture without medication is bunk. It might help in the short run, but at the end of the day you are still in pain. Only those who have chronic pain can fully understand what others in chronic pain are going through. I do not take Oxycontin because when it was given to me as a trial I recognized its potential to be a problem, I had the unwanted and unneeded euphoria and after it wears off the pain is +1000 than what it was before. I chose to stick with my regular medication, tramadol. As much as I definitely agree that the wild and irresponsible prescribing of opioids needed some strong checking, unless you have lived a day in the life of someone who is in terrible pain, denying pain control is a cruelty in my humble opinion. Not everyone who needs pain

medications is taking them for recreational fun. If Big Pharma or pain doctors came out with something that could ease pain that has no interest to those merely looking for a buzz, believe me a lot of us would gladly use it.

Somewhat scattered writing, but the subject and facts were eye opening and sobering. I read *Hillbilly Elegy* and *American Pain*, and am amazed at the opiate problems that we have, and a good part of it from a small area of Mexico, centered on the upper middle class, and often young people. The Purdue Frederick group should be shut down. Having been a Pharmaceutical Rep 50 years ago for 7 years, and the national sales trainer, we would not, nor could not, make the physicians buy into the skimpy fact pattern that Purdue laid on them. The medical community has changed dramatically, and it is changing even more, as hospitals absorb private practices with furnishing the malpractice insurance, and the doctors incentivized to produce income for the hospital. Hospital CEO's will always outperform bureaucrats, as will smart practice managers.

Dreamland is a well-researched, well-presented exploration of the reality of drug use and the drug economy in America. Thorough and expansive, the book is engaging, but ultimately repetitive. Multiple references to the "morphine molecule" do not enhance the prose and "refresher" explanations about the role of ranchos from Xalisco Mexico in the drug economy and Purdue's intentional misleading PR related to oxycontin every 10 - 20 pages do not give the reader enough credit for following a narrative that has already been well laid out.

Excellent book!! Very, very readable and well-explained. And it was absolutely an eye-opener!! I'm an RN for 40 years, and I had NO IDEA what's happening with heroin - or rather HOW it happened! I know it's a huge problem in every US city, including my Seattle, AND my own daughter has been caught in its vicious web. What Quinones writes, about how Purdue pushed oxycontin is another eye-opener. And as the spouse of someone who has severe chronic pain, I DO feel there is a place, and a need for long-acting narcotics, without having to jump through a ton of hoops. Unfortunately, the way it has been abused, and the way it has become a gateway to heroin, makes it difficult for the relatively small group of people who suffer chronic pain. Quinones has done an amazing job with a complex subject that required tons of research, and he has presented an objective picture.

This is a fascinating book made more interesting by the fact that we lived within 20 miles of Portsmouth OH for 6 years. A well written book that is hard to put down and is a sad comment on

life in this country. I have to admit that since I only had a short available to me when it first came, I have not yet finished the book but I zeroed in on Portsmouth having heard that it was a pill-mill town with 9 or so "pain- control centers" which translates to providers putting aside their ethics and dragging sometimes innocent victims into a downward spiral. As someone who has a DEA license it was an eye opener and disconcerting. We would all like to think that if we can help people in pain then we should. These providers may have started out with that in mind but then set aside their sense of right and wrong. Portsmouth has been severely economically challenged for a long time and this is like salt in a wound. Another great book that is an easy read (meaning it keeps your attention) is Methland. Another example of what appeared to be a harmless drug gone horribly wrong. In our small town our drug unit is actively fighting to control prescription drug abuse and the distribution of heroin especially black tar heroin. Drug dealers converge on small towns (as the author states) because of available money, less competition, and possibly fewer legal consequences. This is a true epidemic that can destroy traditional small town cultures with devastating results. Hard to put down this book.

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