



Greetings from Bury Park

Sarfraz Manzoor

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Sarfraz Manzoor was two years old when, in 1974, he emigrated from Pakistan to Britain with his mother, brother, and sister. Sarfraz spent his teenage years in a constant battle, trying to reconcile being both British and Muslim, trying to fit in at school and at home. But it was when his best friend introduced him to the music of Bruce Springsteen that his life changed completely. From the age of sixteen on, after the moment he heard the harmonica and opening lines to “The River,” Springsteen became his personal muse, a lens through which he was able to view the rest of his life. Both a tribute to Springsteen and a story of personal discovery, *Greetings from Bury Park* is a warm, irreverent, and exceptionally perceptive memoir about how music transcends religion and race.

Greetings from Bury Park Details

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Author : Sarfraz Manzoor

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From Reader Review Greetings from Bury Park for online ebook

Chris says

While this book is intriguing because of the seeming incongruity of a Pakistani youth enthralled with the music of Bruce Springsteen, I found Sarfraz Manzoor's efforts to evoke the rapture he felt in Springsteen's lyrics to be the worst part of the book. That spark, that moment of inspiration and motivation that comes in a song is fleeting and comes with the combination of words, music, time, place, and setting. You had to be there and if you weren't, you just have to take the author's word for it.

Manzoor (and a friend) felt trapped in their British/Pakistani existence and found solace in the music of Bruce Springsteen. That, in itself, is nothing to write home (or a book) about.

Manzoor's memoir succeeds in his descriptions of the traditions of a Muslim family carried on resolutely by his father and yet, viewed as increasingly archaic and ill-fitting as Manzoor grows up in contemporary Britain.

This part of the book may comment more so on generational struggles than strictly on cultural clashes. As someone raised Catholic, not Muslim, I could see the two faiths, or perhaps not the faiths, but the elders in the faiths, sharing similar traditions and values that I brought into question as I grew, as Manzoor describes. The descriptions of the author's experience in his family and Muslim community of the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and the London Subway are humanizing. And Springsteen, when the author describes his encounters with him, seems to be a decent, regular guy.

Andrew Smith says

Greetings from Bury Park is a searingly intimate account of growing up as the child of Pakistani immigrants in Britain. In amongst his frank description of the turmoil, pain and confusion surrounding his feelings of disconnection and ambivalence to both cultures, Manzoor manages to inject bursts of laugh-out-loud humour. The book is also a chronicle of the influence of song, in this case the words of Bruce Springsteen, on a young mind. In this — and, surprisingly and reassuringly, many other ways — his story has similarities to any coming-of-age story anywhere. But it is his witty and insightful examination of the way two cultures — his family's Pakistani Muslim and his adoptive country's British — have formed him that is utterly fascinating, particularly to anyone interested in the process of integration. His eventual resolution is heartwarming, and refreshingly optimistic.

matteo says

I have restarted wandering through the biography section of the library, and this is the first result. An autobiography about a Pakistan-born, England-bred, Bruce Springsteen-loving child of the 1970s. It was an interesting look at a perspective that, for the most part, I only see in movies--which does not really count in the same way. Being able to be inside the mind of a real person changes everything, especially when he refers to songs you have heard and events you only know about from history. The writing is smooth, fast, and occasionally hilarious. The family themes resound beyond the culture--his parents and family reminded me a lot of my family. A good, quick read.

Aspry Jones says

I was interested in picking up this book because I'm from Asbury Park and I like Springsteen's music. I didn't really expect much from the piece, so my expectations weren't very high. With that said, I was pretty satisfied by the last page.

It's about a young bloke from London who is torn between his strict Pakistani upbringing and his love for rock music, particularly anything by Bruce Springsteen. Gradually he musters the strength and gumption to tear away from his parents more and more, dressing rebelliously and eventually even flying to America on whims just to see Springsteen concerts. The young man is not only fixated but obsessed and Bruce is often likened to a messiah of sorts. The entire book is about separating oneself from his/her culture for the sake of personal identity. Interesting...

However, what wasn't so interesting was the main character. He came off as a constant complainer, selfishly abandoning his important duties to his family just so that he could indulge in his gluttonous love for self-expression. Seldom did he ever sacrifice himself for those who took care of him, even after the tragic death of his father through circumstance I can well identify with. He was constantly whining about how bad he had it when all the while he was the only person in his family who got to have it his way. His father, God rest his soul, worked his tail off to make enough money in England for his family to migrate over and lead better lives. His sisters, being female, were already done in through cultural demands and thus were expected to shoot low in life's grand plan. His brother, strictly adhering to the beliefs of his upbringing, took on all of the responsibilities that the main character chose to forsake.

My low opinion of the author was set in stone after hearing an interview with him on NPR. He came off as self-centered, overbearing and seemed to talk just to hear his own voice. Then again, that's what this is all about - his own voice. Forget everyone else.

Johari says

I thought it was uneven. The sequence of events did not make sense and for a writer, I expected better.

I didn't think the book was that well thought out of brought anything new to an acculturation/accommodation lifestyle. I am interested in the experience of immigrants in England but I didn't really learn anything new and wasn't fascinated by anything the author wrote. I think he could of done so much more and written it better.

It seemed more like a draft than a final copy.

Diane Wilkes says

I'm not sure I'd have given this five stars if I weren't also a Bruce freak, but I would still esteem it highly. Manzoor captures what it is to be in that place from adolescent to adult, all confusion, passion, insecurity and the glimmerings of independence, interdependence and the maturity to recognize which is which. But his story is also that of an immigrant in a strange land, and what that's like in both the giving and receiving aspect. His narrative voice is honest and vulnerable.

Each chapter shares a title with a Springsteen song, and Manzoor's immersion in all things Springsteen is threaded deeply into both the plot, but also the tapestry of his telling. Since Springsteen's lyrics also opened me to new ways of seeing and experiencing the world, almost everything the author shares is something I've also felt on a very deep level. Reading the book was like one big "YES" for me.

Dulguun says

I loved this book. It was truly an authentic memoir. This book gives a true insight to how other people live differently, and are brought up differently because of their culture, family and traditions. Sarfraz's life story beautifully captures how two different cultures collide and conflict, and then raises the issue of cultural identity and struggle. It is interesting to read, and definitely has become one of my favorite.

Samra Muslim says

Enjoyed it - because it shows the inner workings on the mind of the young Pakistani Muslim and additionally the reader realizes that no matter what our caste, creed or color is - inside we are the same (with similiar values and tastes!!). Very relatable to read was the writer's background story of the dad and the family dynamics which again very similiar for us Pakistani's who all have atleast on close family member (aunt/uncle/cousin/sibling/etc) with a similar story ... !

Terri Somers says

I'm so glad I found this book! Browsing around Borders' new arrivals table one day, I happened upon Greetings From Bury Park. It had obviously been misplaced. But how could I NOT pick it up - here I am native of the Jersey Shore living in San Diego and there, sitting before me, is this book with a drawing of a famous Jersey Shore landmark and a title that aludes to a town, an album and an artist that I know so well. When I saw it was written by a Pakistani journalist who found meaning in Springsteen, how could I NOT buy it. I'm a journalist and I, too, find great meaning in Springsteen's lyrics. Lucky for me Manzoor is a good writer. And his personal tale of being an immigrant torn between two cultures is told in such a way that it even resonates with this white chick who lived in the same state for more than half her life. Manzoor writes extensively of his strained relationship with his father. And it is not until after his father's death that Manzoor begin to really understand and appreciate his father. This son's revelations and emotions about his relationship with his deceased father resonated with this female reader as well. And then there's the Springsteen anecdotes - priceless!

Rosie Hughes says

Loved this book charting the author's early life and search for identity. I grew up at a similar time in the same area and loved the references to local places. Can't wait to meet the author at the Ampthill LitFest on Saturday!

Ambar says

I am bit disappointed with the flow of story telling of this book. From chapter to chapter just like jumping in trampoline. Back forward then throw me to somewhere else. No surprises or interesting view apart from being exploring Bruce Springsteen lyric. It should be lot better.

Can not be compare with Monica Ali Brick Lane.

Review in Bahasa Indonesia is here :
<http://ambarbriastuti.multiply.com/jo...>

Alan says

What a lovely uplifting book.

A young Pakistani boy brought to the UK along with the rest of his family as a very young boy to join his father who had been in the UK for 11 years. It's a story of the clash of cultures of a young Muslim boy trying to fit in without betraying his families honour. Of his Sister's dashed hopes of going to higher education because of their fathers traditional (backward?) thinking on how Muslim women should be treated. Of the authors distancing from his family and the freedom that a love of western music brought him. Of growing up different but trying to fit in without losing his roots. And of finally realising that for all the unfairness of his fathers treatment as he tried to keep his family together as good Muslims. He did it to help his family have better opportunities than he had. And finally of the realisation that just because he was a Muslim, he was also British and thankful for the opportunities the country had given him and his family, at the same time sad that so many of his fellow British Pakistani's hated the country and wanted to bring it down because of some misguided beliefs. A very well written and enjoyable book. A book of hope that one day we can all live together and accept others beliefs and cultures without the need for name calling and hatred.

Nina says

I think the thing that separates this from other memoirs of similar perspectives is the obsession with Bruce Springsteen but, unfortunately, that part of the memoir didn't really do much for me personally. Maybe if I were a fan of "the boss" myself. I still think memoirs like this are valuable and it helped me see the perspective of British Pakistanis that I, as a Slovenia-to-US immigrant, definitely don't have.

Mary says

Okay, I'll admit it. I was suckered into reading this because I wanted to know about the impact of Bruce Springsteen on this Pakistani living in England -- in Bury Park, no less!

So many others have written about the immigrant's experience so much more eloquently and with more insight. The writing was uneven, the observations too simple.

Maybe I should give this another star because I was able to get this for half price at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum book store. BTW, anyone who gets the chance should invest an hour in one of the

museum's tours.

Manatee says

Even though I thought the author could have done a better job of showing and not telling about some of the family conflicts, I did really enjoy this book. I loved the way that he described family dynamics and the contrast between Pakistani-Brit culture and mainstream Brit culture. I thought it was ironic that he fantasized about coming to the USA and that my sister fantasizes about going to Brick Lane and Curry Mile.
