



# Bongwater

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## **Bongwater** Michael Hornburg

Bongwater is a novel that wavers along the solar eclipse of the American Dream, a neo-Beat, grungeoisie love story that has all the authenticity and none of the pretension of its forerunners, a book that will be for the slacker generation of the nineties what Bright Lights, Big City was for the wannabe eighties.

Young, rebellious, and vulnerable, Michael Hornburg's unforgettable characters trace the subtle outlines of a misunderstood generation. Moving from Portland to New York City and back again, and written in precise, startlingly original prose, Bongwater is in the tradition of the Beat classics The Subterraneans and The Dharma Bums.

## **Bongwater Details**

Date : Published May 1st 1996 by Grove Press (first published April 30th 1995)

ISBN : 9780802134561

Author : Michael Hornburg

Format : Paperback 189 pages

Genre : Fiction, Adult Fiction, Young Adult

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## From Reader Review Bongwater for online ebook

### Printable Tire says

At first I was like, "Oh, great. Here I am, a twentysomething unemployed loser sitting in a arty coffee house in Boston reading about a twentysomething unemployed loser sitting in a arty coffeehouse in Portland." But then I realized this guy gets more chicks than me. Does this make the book less interesting? Well, yes, when the plot falls into the predictable foibles of multiple relationships. Also, note to Gen X writers: Please, please stop the fucking cross-chapters of multiple viewpoints in different parts of the country (here it's between Portland and New York City). It's such a stupid shtick to avoid developing the main character. Courtney's story was sometimes interesting (although suffered from the "New York City is a gritty porno salad" cliché) but more care should have been shown to the principal character.

I'm starting to get tired of the same Gen-X novel ingredients: trouble with girls, no direction or employment, life is pointless consumerism and cubicles, drag queens are gross and everywhere, my parents are divorced, something traumatic happened to me in the past but I shrug it off (but I don't really shrug it off and it is inexplicably poster-boy-Freud connected to my very existence), brand names, malls, pop culture reference, babyboomers are naive idiots, The Brady Bunch, there's something beautiful in the way the sun sets over garbage lots, etc. I've yet to read anything by a Gen-X author that matches the insight and morbid hilarity of a Hate comic, and I'm starting to think it's because Peter Bagge had the necessary distance to portray slackers as they really are.

I'd say it's a little better than the Rules of Attraction because it at least has heart, but apply this book only when recommended.

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### Intortetor says

di per se non è un brutto libro: si finisce per provare empatia per i suoi personaggi, per le loro storie, per la loro vita agra. ma questo libro ha un difetto peggiore che esser brutto: è datato. tremendamente datato. l'avessi letto all'uscita, nel '95, avrebbe avuto sicuramente un effetto diverso, forse l'avrei anche amato. ma adesso, nel 2015, lascia un brutto sapore, di vecchio e già digerito. mi ha lasciato lo stesso effetto "schiavi di new york" di tama janovitz, anche se questo sembra più sincero...

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### Joshua Harrison says

I mean it's clearly not something that will inspire people to great things, But the situation these people are in is a very real and a very common one.

I mean i've lived some of the moments in this book and if not there are many things i wouldn't put past people i have lived with.

I don't think this is as much as a character driven story as much as it is about the whole situation... The day to day struggles of the common man in and around the alternative lifestyles(Whichever one you might belong to), We all seem to function together in our own underground world and to me you either get this book or

you don't... It's not meant to grab everyone...it's meant to grab the ones who have been there before.

Good read for people who just grew up around people outside the norm... It's definitely a book for freaks!

Not very long but it makes a good toilet book.

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### **Ramya Patnaik says**

The most interesting characteristic of this book is also the one hurdle that one must cross before learning to appreciate the rich landscape bubbling with animated details, that Hornburg seems to paint- the style in which it is presented. Much like the essence of its subject matter, Bongwater is meant to be approached with an unlearning of reading habits. For those uninitiated in the beat-driven elements that make up the grunge 'ethos'(take that with an entire shaker of salt) it is easy to misread its simplicity for something else. Yet, it quickly proceeds to draw one into a world full of relatable, cleverly narrated emotions with remarkably beautiful writing. It's a light, engaging read, and I thought it was terribly interesting without trying too hard.

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### **Samantha says**

Probably the worse book I've EVER read. Yet I read the entire thing. Ugh.

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### **Ross says**

Yes, it's book about slackers and drug users, but dang it, I liked it. The storyline switches between a first-person narrator, David, in Portland and a third-person storyline, centering around Courtney, in New York. The stories eventually converge, and although the plot line is not exactly Pulitzer-prize worthy, there is something so earnest about the two protagonists that you can't help but like it. I would definitely recommend to fans of Douglas Coupland.

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### **Renay says**

although a quick read - picked up and finished within a day - i found this story to be a poor excuse for bad language and try - hard drug and sex antics written between the covers of a book.  
the story lacked imagination and in fact a plot, despite havings the makings for both.  
set in slums, with slummers for characters, and written in slummy language, i wouldn't bother wasting my time to recommend the book to anyone, nor bother to read it again, i could slum away my time in a better fashion than even this book suggests.

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## **Ron says**

I love books about sex, drugs and rock and roll. That said, the great books of this cultish little sub genre are few and far between, especially once we get to tales of the 90s. This is one of the truly bad ones, extremely poorly written and offering nothing in the way of memorable characters that we can care about or any resolution to their conflicts. A near complete waste of time, but for a halfway decent depiction of some of the places.

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## **Megan says**

This is absolutely not the kind of book to be rated up with Faulkner, Stein, Bronte, or \_\_\_\_\_ (name your favorite author). This book actually came at the perfect time for me. I had just finished reading *State of Fear* by Crichton and needed a fast, easy read. And what I got was this dirty, grungy book - and I loved it. In my younger years (wow, I'm not old yet and here I am talking like a grandma) I was definitely a fan of the grunge era. And this book was just what I imagined it to be.

A more detailed, in-depth review to come. Once it's published, I'll link to my blog here.

**\*\*EDIT\*\*** my blog post: <http://unkomminsense.wordpress.com/20...>

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## **Bonnie Morse says**

Not as bad as some of the other reviewers think, imo, but not a great work by any means. It had a pleasant familiarity because Portland was my party town during that time, but while I went to the same clubs, I never met these people. Bongwater is a despair ridden novel of the terminal boredom and manufactured drama that some people prefer to actual lives. It's not badly written, but suicide through boredom is in itself boring. Actual people who do nothing but leach and bitch are bad enough without having to read about fake ones.

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## **Rem777 says**

Well written quick read although If I didnt live in nw/n portland I probably wouldnt have liked this as much as I did. Its pretty spot on as far as time, place, (typical) people in the area go. Except almost all the places mentioned arent around anymore which is pretty shitty cause those are the seedy sort of places that made portland what its known for..good or bad. Kind of concerned about the film though, not too sure how well id like to see andy dick and jack black in my neck of the woods...

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## **Jimmy says**

Of course I saw the film before I read the book. I was surprised by the fact that the book was capable of being more aimless than the film. It's really terrible. I can hardly think of a more extreme example of some schmuck writing a novel lamenting his own sad bastard existence. Oh wait, this isn't a book, but the film

Garden State draws a pretty close artistic comparison. Also, the book is just swelling with myriad gen-x cliches, which is ironic because Hornburg seemed to have a bone to pick with the homogenization of the subculture that he tyrannically claims some vague proprietorship over. Michael Hornburg is a stupid asshole. I suppose writing the novel was cathartic for him though; he's probably never seen that much action. If Stephen Baldwin were to write a secular account of his experience in acting in the film Bio-dome, then I would probably rather have read that.

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### **Laura C says**

Boring...only read the first three chapters

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### **Endless Warner says**

I've read this book four times through and will pick it up when I'm feeling a little lost in life. It's not a book for everyone, but it's a book for people who get it. It's set in the 90s in Portland and NYC and I'm the characters' age in 2000s LA, but I know all these characters, I am these characters. If you're a part of the indie crowd of have been lost in life, I think you'll appreciate this book.

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### **Alexandria Wagner says**

I hated this book. The plot was aimless. There are entire pages that are just passages describing the names of the streets and descriptions that are completely pointless. There's not a single character in this book that is fully formed and I found it impossible to care about any of them. But the biggest problem I had was with the dialogue. All the conversations the characters have are awkward and do nothing to contribute to the story whatsoever. This book's only redeeming quality is that it's less than 200 pages.

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