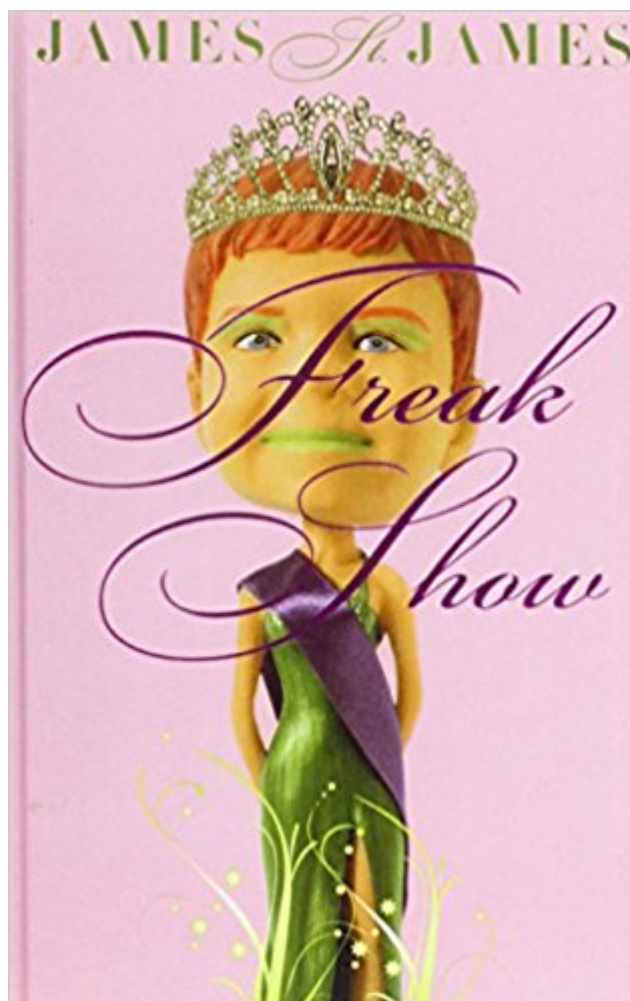


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Freak Show



Synopsis

Soon to be a major motion picture with Bette Midler, Laverne Cox, and Abigail Breslin "Freak Show has it all. It's hilarious, sad, sexy, and glamorous" -- "just the way life should be." -- Perez Hilton "Gutsy, funny, over-the-top Billy Bloom is a profile in courage." -- The Washington Post Meet Billy Bloom, new student at the ultra-white, ultra-rich, ultra-conservative Dwight D. Eisenhower Academy and drag queen extraordinaire. Actually, "drag queen" does not begin to describe Billy and his fabulousness. Any way you slice it, Billy is not a typical seventeen-year-old, and the Bible Belles, Aberzombies, and Football Heroes at the academy have never seen anyone quite like him before. But thanks to the help and support of one good friend, Billy's able to take a stand for outcasts and underdogs everywhere in his own outrageous, over-the-top, sad, funny, brilliant, and unique way. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up "Teenage drag queen Billy Bloom explodes onto the conservative scene at Eisenhower Academy, where he finds love and a band of blond sadists. St. James tells the oldest story in the book, the one where an outcast seeks the homecoming crown, only this time a queen wants to be Queen. Billy's bold, bawdy narration makes Freak Show not only cohesive but also immensely entertaining. Readers will relish his conversational voice, naughty humor, celebrity put-downs, unabashed exuberance, and ALL CAPS expletives. Beneath the sequins, feathers, and foundation, Billy nurses an ardent desire for acceptance. Teens will quickly identify with his worries and needs, even as he dons lip gloss and a beehive wig. Billy shirks labels

(he calls himself a "Gender Obscurist"), and this book also refuses to be defined by sexuality. Yes, Billy falls for another boy, and yes, they do kiss. Teens will find this romance fresh and fun, but they will also enjoy exploring complicated issues of empowerment, bigotry, self-esteem, and fear. Freak Show visits these difficult regions of adolescence with gracious candor and humor. More buoyant than weighty, this book flows as a fast-paced, snarky story of high school horrors. Mature readers will love St. James's playful rendition of a conventional American tale. —Shelley Huntington, New York Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Readers will relish his conversational voice, naughty humor, celebrity put-downs, unabashed exuberance, and ALL CAPS expletives. —School Library Journal, starred review
In Billy Bloom, St. James has created an archetypal hero for outsiders and freaks. —Publishers Weekly, starred review
--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Billy Bloom may just be the most frustrating character in the history of LGBT/YA novels. And yet, how could I not love him? Billy is rich and oblivious. And extremely nelly. And a drag queen. At seventeen. Having been suddenly shipped to southern Florida by his crazy mother to stay with his grouchy, disapproving father in the family's ancestral mansion, Billy suddenly finds himself in a snooty private school full of blond conformists and jocks. Not the least of whom is Flip Kelly. Football star. Blond, blue-eyed. The whole nine yards. But this arch, funny, harrowing and ultimately moving novel is really not about a gay teenager into extreme drag; it's about agency. James St. James (irritating, assuredly fake name, but OK, I'll just take a deep breath) has taken a standard LGBT/YA story about a sissy boy falling for a big gentle jock and turned it inside out. Billy is clueless, but he's also fierce. He is narcissistic but also kind. He is so oblivious he refers to the one girl in school who's nice to him as Blah Blah Blah, until he finally learns her name: This is simply one step in Billy's gradual apotheosis into self-awareness. "The choice is yours." There is violence and teenage meanness of the worst sort in this book. But, as in other YA books, there is redemption and the genuine love of a few good people who literally save Billy's life. But, in the end, it is Billy who takes charge of his own destiny. "These moments are going to keep coming, and it's how you react to them that defines you." "But God, I asked, trembling, 'how do I bring reason to the anger and chaos, when its reasons are

hidden from me? And God said: "You forgive." Inside the chaotic silliness that is Billy Bloom's world, there is a powerful soul. It is about survival, not just to survive, but to make the world better with your own insane courage. Really pretty remarkable.

If you have grown up gay, or different in any way from the typical you will connect with the very essence of what Billy Bloom stands for- universal acceptance and respect. He makes his point creatively and assertively with a never say die attitude. Bravo, Billy!

Frankly, I fail to see why this book got so many 5 star reviews. Giving it 3 stars already feels charitable. The writing style just didn't do it for me. The first half was too long winded and boring, although the book did pick up a bit near the end. The ALL CAPS shouting in nearly every paragraph made me feel at times as if I was reading the gossip section of a tabloid, as was the general lack of depth and character development. If you think you'll like this, I can only recommend to get a sample first.

Freak Show is quite simply one of the most charming books about teenage life available on the market today. After the glitter blood bath that was Party Monster I found myself hungering for more of St James's writings and was surprised to discover that his only other published work to date was a book for teens. Somewhat dubious about his ability to write for a younger audience I plunged head first into the fray and discovered much to my delight that not only can he write a book aimed at high schoolers but that he can also manage to keep it interesting as well. Billy Bloom essentially functions as a younger version of James who also experienced growing up in rural America as a queer teen. After moving out into the boonies of Florida to be with his dad after his pill popping alcoholic mother has a bout of what I can only describe as jealousy at discovering her teenage son looks better in her Louboutins than she does. Needless to say the move doesn't come easy for anyone - after a brief stint at trying and failing miserably to behave like all the rest of the kids Billy finally comes to the conclusion that to be himself as outrageously as possible is the only way he can live life to the fullest that leads to near deadly consequences. Equal parts serious social commentary and laugh out loud outrageous antics Freak Show manages to touch upon all the important issues facing teens today about social acceptance and the long term effects of bullying without being boring. The writing is absolutely witty and moves along at silver bullet type speed levels. Oh and have I mentioned St James's ability to reach deep into the depths of anyone's gawky teenage past and expose the most

painfully forgotten parts? One scene where a poor geeky girl is called upon to design a float that ends up being decorated with colored pencil flyers and beanie babies arranged in a heart shape made me laugh out loud till I thought my sides would split since it was something, quite sadly, out of a page of my own collective high school past. So what are you still sitting there for? Go out and read this now. Shoo!

I loved this book! But I gotta say, not from the beginning. At first I hated the way it was written, and considered taking it off my list (of books, I have to read - in order), but then I looked at some pages further into the novel, and I just wanted to read it. And suddenly I couldn't put it down! I started liking Billy, and I really liked BlahBlahBlah, and thought it was amazing to just not really give a character a name, or at least not right away. The story has definitely changed me, and I feel proud, when I read it. And the way the people treat Billy in most of the book, hurt me to read. Especially because us non-straight-people have it so easy in Denmark compared to that anyway! Since I finished the book, I began with another one, and I only read two pages. Cuz it's just not the same, it's not FREAK SHOW! So I think it will take a while for me to enjoy other books. I definitely need to read other of James St. James's books, cuz he knows how to tell a good story and make it seem real. I cried several times, while reading, but at the end, I couldn't, and I hated that, cuz I really wanted to cry. First because of the ending, which was very touching, and second, because it was over.

as expected

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