

# Candyfreak: A Journey through the Chocolate Underbelly of America

Steve Almond

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"I got a real sugar rush and cluster headache reading this bittersweet book by Steve Almond-joy, the sugar daddy himself. I won't sugar coat it—this book is one sweet treat."

—AMY SEDARIS



"Steve Almond is the Dave Eggers of food writing."

— JOHN THORNE

**by Steve Almond**

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**Steve Almond : Candyfreak: A Journey through the Chocolate Underbelly of America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Candyfreak: A Journey through the Chocolate Underbelly of America:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. You can imagine my total joy..By Sue JI didn't set out to read this book in particular, but last week, Garageman called me to his office (i.e. the garage) to listen to an interview on sports talk. You can imagine my total joy...an interview about sports. Woo! As I listened to this very articulate and entertaining man talk about the book he had just written on football and why he both loves and loathes it, I became entranced. I decided to find his name (Garageman couldn't remember) and the book (he couldn't remember that either. At the end of the program, he did remember that maybe the guys last name was Allman and 10 years ago or so, he wrote about all about candy, and his trip across America to small, family owned and run manufacturers, and how the big three were slowing killing them off.Eureka! I had that book! I started reading it years ago, and for some

reason never finished, so I did a little research and dug it out. (I also purchased *Against Football: One Fan's Reluctant Manifesto* for later.) Candyfreak made me squeal with delight, shake my head yes in knowing empathy, and made my stomach pine and mouth water for all those pieces of sugary goodness that were mostly regional, and that are long gone, or very hard to find. It delves into the disgusting practices of the big three and how they pay retailers huge fees to stock only their goods, pricing mom and pop manufacturers out. It led to discussions between Garageman and I about the lack of new candy and limited twists on the old, how pathetic they are, but at least it's something new. I was thrilled to find my favorite hometown candy with its own chapter - Valomilk, and to this day it pisses me off greatly, that in order to buy a hometown made candy, I have to go to Cracker Barrel because of the stocking fees charged by grocery stores and encouraged by the big three. I buy them by the box, and hide them in the freezer. No one in my family knows this, and if you tell them I will have to kill you. I admit, for a long, long time, I was an MM freak, but the minute I started watching NASCAR and saw that Mars sponsored a driver who must remain nameless in my household, I banned all Mars candy from crossing my threshold. I still allow Nestle and Hershey, but no Mars products, since I protest not with signs and marches, but by withholding my dollars. Anyway, back to the book. It made me long for the days of Mary Janes, rock candy, root beer barrels, peanut clusters, buttons, wax fingers, and all those wonderful penny delights of my childhood. I enjoyed his trip across the country and envied his ability to sneak a piece of candy off a production line. Thanks to Mr. Almond's Freak Appendix, I now have websites to connect with certain candy fetishes, and I recently found The Vermont Country Store, who sells many of these same delights. I'd give the book five thumbs up, but he said nicer things about other candy makers than he did Russell Sifers who makes Valomilks. In my book, that makes Mr. Almond slightly suspicious. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fun adventure in candy history By L Shock This was a fun book to read and had some great insight into the candy businesses of old and now, (NOT boringly technical or detailed). After reading it we noticed some very old brands in the stores that we hadn't noticed before. It was also fun to see some of our old favorites mentioned, to learn how some of the candy bars got their names, and to 'go along' on a few factory tours where not everything goes as planned. We will now enjoy watching for some of the hard to find gems out there. We recommend it for anyone curious about that industry's beginnings and what the future holds for these family-owned older companies, anyone with an interest in the search for old brands (that could be a fun vacation), or just some entertaining, light reading. Liked the sources in the back for finding the candy that is still available online. But, Steve, honestly, who likes Big Hunk better than a Look Bar, (a Big Hunk covered in dark chocolate), which was barely noted ;) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Candy: Better To Eat It Than Read It By Mr. Bassman A bittersweet chronicle of the ill fated independent candy bar industry. The author does a fine job recounting joyous memories of long departed, or forgotten, delectable confectionary treats but casts heavy notes of gloom on the future prospects of cottage-industry salvation, or rebirth, to this once glorious enterprise. A toothsome tale for reading, none the less.

Perhaps you remember the whipped splendor of the Choco-Lite, or the luscious Caravelle bar, or maybe the sublime and perfectly balanced Hershey's Cookies 'n Mint. The Marathon, an inimitable rope of caramel covered in chocolate. Oompahs. Bit-O-Choc. The Kit Kat Dark. Steve Almond certainly does. In fact, he was so obsessed by the inexplicable disappearance of these bars—where'd they go?—that he embarked on a nationwide journey to uncover the truth about the candy business. There, he found an industry ruled by huge conglomerates, where the little guys, the last remaining link to the glorious boom years of the candy bar in America, struggle to survive. Visiting the candy factories that produce the Twin Bing, the Idaho Spud, the Goo Goo Cluster, the Valomilk, and a dozen other quirky bars, Almond finds that the world of candy is no longer a sweet haven. Today's precious few regional candy makers mount daily battles against corporate greed, paranoia, and that good old American compulsion: crushing the little guy. Part candy porn, part candy polemic, part social history, part confession, Candyfreak explores the role candy plays in our lives as both source of pleasure and escape from pain. By turns ecstatic, comic, and bittersweet, Candyfreak is the story of how Steve Almond grew up on candy—and how, for better and worse, candy has grown up, too.