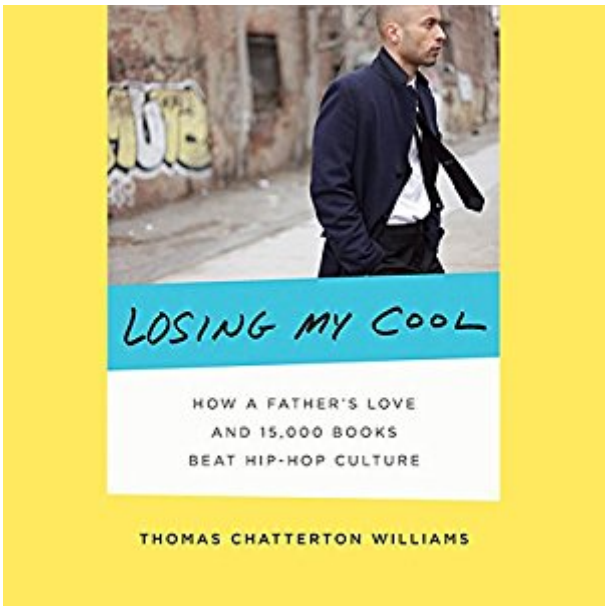
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Losing My Cool



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Synopsis

A pitch-perfect account of how hip-hop culture drew in the author and how his father drew him out again-with love, perseverance, and fifteen thousand books. Into Williams's childhood home-a one-story ranch house-his father crammed more books than the local library could hold. "Pappy" used some of these volumes to run an academic prep service; the rest he used in his unending pursuit of wisdom. His son's pursuits were quite different-"money, hoes, and clothes." The teenage Williams wore Medusa- faced Versace sunglasses and a hefty gold medallion, dumbed down and thugged up his speech, and did whatever else he could to fit into the intoxicating hip-hop culture that surrounded him. Like all his friends, he knew exactly where he was the day Biggie Smalls died, he could recite the lyrics to any Nas or Tupac song, and he kept his woman in line, with force if necessary. But Pappy, who grew up in the segregated South and hid in closets so he could read Aesop and Plato, had a different destiny in mind for his son. For years, Williams managed to juggle two disparate lifestyles- "keeping it real" in his friends' eyes and studying for the SATs under his father's strict tutelage. As college approached and the stakes of the thug lifestyle escalated, the revolving door between Williams's street life and home life threatened to spin out of control. Ultimately, Williams would have to decide between hip-hop and his future. Would he choose "street dreams" or a radically different dream- the one Martin Luther King spoke of or the one Pappy held out to him now? Williams is the first of his generation to measure the seductive power of hip-hop against its restrictive worldview, which ultimately leaves those who live it powerless. Losing My Cool portrays the allure and the danger of hip-hop culture like no book has before. Even more remarkably, Williams evokes the subtle salvation that literature offers and recounts with breathtaking clarity a burgeoning bond between father and son. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition
Listening Length: 5 hoursÃ Â andÃ Â 27 minutes
Program Type: Audiobook
Version: Unabridged
Publisher: Penguin Audio
Audible.com Release Date: April 29, 2010
Language: English
ASIN: B003JUOUD6

Best Sellers Rank: #42 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rap & Hip-Hop #64 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Rap #91 inÃ Â Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Music

Customer Reviews

In this deeply personal and courageous book, Thomas Chatterton Williams seems to me to circle around one question:What is the good life, and how does one live it?Posed like that, however, the question is incomplete. It might be better posed like this:What is the good life (for a black person), and how does one live it?And, importantly, is it different than for people from different racial backgrounds?I don’t think Williams offers a definitive answer to the first questionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •perhaps because there isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t one.I think IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m reading him accurately if I say thatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •for him, as a black manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •the approach to the good life is through careful examination of oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s self, oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s circumstances, and oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s attitudes towards the two.In short, through philosophy.In response to the second question, I read him as saying that philosophy can be as valuable for black people as it can be for anyone else.I am white. Philosophy as Chatterton presents it (and Socrates would have recognized it) has been a cornerstone of my lifeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •when IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve practiced it, IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve done well; when I havenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t, I have not.IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m honored to share the life of the mind with someone who has worked as hard for it as Williams has, and am grateful to him for sharing the story of how he came to value it. I highly recommend it to anyone who is struggling to understand which intellectual projects are provincial and which may be universal.

I can’t explain how articulate and expressive this book is. After reading "Great Negros", "Brainwashed’, and "High Price: A Neuroscientist Journey...", I didn’t think I would find anything close. It amazes me the insight and correlating path of choices we face in this society. A definite must read for all but especially for young black men or those raising/teaching young black men. As a teacher, I see those decisions constantly and have wondered how to stop the vicious cycle of respect at all cost, hip hop Biblism, and our lack of future. It is definitely a must read to forge your own path regardless of the lack of perceived "power" in society and the cost of neglecting to step out of the BET box.

Another in the growing genre of those who made good. But the author writes with uniquely

appealing modesty, humor, and wisdom and with wonderful literary style. I am recommending this to almost anyone!

This was a good memoir from the hip-hop generation, an insider -- from the street side. As an older person, I learned a lot about that culture. I have observed it, but now I have a better handle on it's range and it's appeal. Here is a kid, who in another generation would not have hung out with these people. But America being America, he is attracted to it's popularity, it's showmanship, it's seduction. Young kids are so into the bling, bling of it, that other aspects of their lives and their humanity play second fiddle. Each generation has it's attraction. Thank you Thomas Chatterton Williams for introducing me to your version of growing up in the hip-hop generation. Thanks to your father and mother for standing strong through it all. We lose too many. Love saves another.

Self-righteous and lacking a true understanding that his choices/opinions are his. There is a fundamental inability to truly stand in the shoes of others, their choices, good and bad and ultimately the meaning of his family's ability to insulate him from many of his foolish/youthful decisions.

I thought it was a good book. It really brings to light how easily influenced human beings are. It is definitely very difficult to be different from everyone around you. Even with that difficulty this is an account of a young man that was still able to overcome. It also speaks to how important a strong family unit is.I found it to be pretty easy reading and interesting enough to keep me turning the pages. I could personally picture the locations and music described in the text. This book took me back to my own youth. I would recommend this book.

Insightful and piercing critique and observation of a segment of African-American culture/experience. Well written. I highly recommend this book. I could relate on many levels.

I have to say this was probably a unique experience that I had but Thomas' father reminded me a lot of my own. I really enjoyed the book and have recommended it to many of my friends and family. I plan on suggesting it to my children when they are old enough.

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