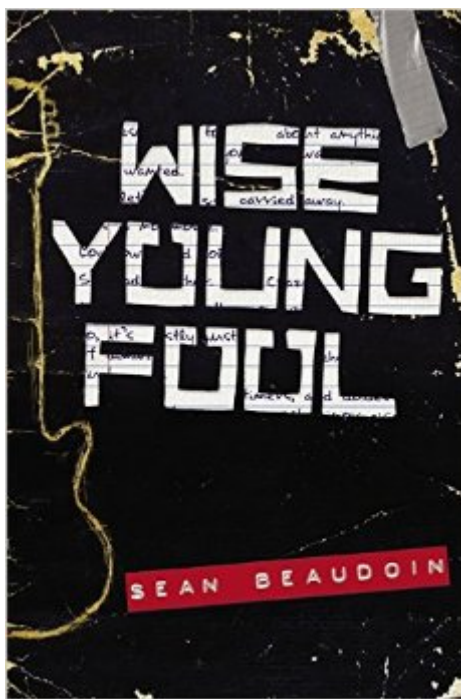


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Wise Young Fool



Synopsis

You want ninety? Fine, I'll give you ninety. I'll give them to you coming and going. Teen rocker Ritchie Sudden is pretty sure his life has just jumped the shark. Except he hates being called a teen, his band doesn't play rock, and "jumping the shark" is yet another dumb cliché. Part of Ritchie wants to drop everything and walk away. Especially the part that's serving ninety days in a juvenile detention center. Telling the story of the year leading up to his arrest, Ritchie grabs readers by the throat before (politely) inviting them along for the (max-speed) ride.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (20 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I've read every one of Sean Beaudoin's books and really enjoyed all four, but *Wise Young Fool*, his fifth novel, is truly his best. The prose is fluid, the hilarity is constant, and the characters are memorable. We all knew somebody like Ritchie Sudden, and he strides and slouches through the book with the exact attitude that teenagers wear like a coat - somehow admirable and infuriating every step of the way. As someone who teaches high school kids, I can attest that they smell a fake a mile away. This book passes the sniff test. The language can be foul but it is always real and always hilarious. Kids drink, hook up, swear up a storm, and do stupid stuff . . . because that's exactly what kids at that age do . . . well, most of them do, but why would you want to read a book about the boring ones who follow all the rules? As for the music, it is evident to any musician that Beaudoin not only knows his rock history, but he has spent some time behind a guitar as well. There are no bent notes or dropped picks or moments of pretending. Anyone who has been in a band -

particularly a teenage punk band - will relish the excitement and anticipation that the author generates. Add in family drama and the squalid sorrow of our juvenile justice system and you have a book that rocks you on a number of levels. Oh, did I mention that it's fun and funny as hell too? This is an exceptionally good book - not just insightful and smart, but a great read. How often does that happen? Highly, highly recommended.

Man, I just laughed my butt off all the way through this. Every single page has some smart observation or clever reference or rude comment that kept making me bust up. I'd read the stuff out loud to my friends and they kept being like "okay, let's hear another one." But that would get tiring if that's all it was. This book deals in a totally real way with fighting, sex, friendship...a lot of teen guy stuff. But girl stuff, too. None of the girls are doormats like in a lot of guy books. They're totally there, holding their own. There is no pretending in this book, it's all sweat, going down to the mat, tattoos and guitars and distortion. But also just goofing around with friends, trying to talk to a girl at a party, wondering if you're cool enough. It's like someone's real diary. Which (spoiler) maybe it is. I was totally pissed when it ended, I wanted another hundred pages more!

I hate books about bands. They never get the music parts right. It's like movies where someone supposedly plays guitar but you can tell the actor has never picked up a Strat in his life. Not Wise Young Fool! I swear, this may be the only book I've ever read where you can practically taste the distortion. It's frickin' real! So are the characters, who feel like they walked out of my extended family and sat down next to me. This book really captures what it feels like to be an angry teenager starting his first band. Beaudoin really knows how to nail the mood and attitudes of that age. It's like I was reading a novel about my own life. It's also funny as hell, loud and hard and just like standing in crowd at a show. Even the love story part refuses to be fake. Sorta genius really. Best thing I've read all year.

I've read and enjoyed all of Sean Beaudoin's books. I haven't been a young adult for half a century - and the fact that I've read all these novels as novels says a great deal about Beaudoin's abilities. Before Wise Young Fool, my favorite was Going Nowhere Faster. Wise Young Fool is my favorite sort of novel: on the surface, it seems simple, but in fact it's complex and subtle. Every time I thought Beaudoin might send the action in a predictable direction, he didn't. Every time I realized that I was getting to a place where he might have taken an easy way out, he didn't. For example, in lesser hands the Looper character would be a stereotype - as would her relationship with both

Ritchie and his mother. Check out Chapter 59, which is a little masterpiece. There's a lot going on in this novel, and it's all good.

"Wise Young Fool" had an intriguing narrative structure. Readers bounced back and forth between Ritchie's experience in Juvie and the events in his life that led up to his incarceration. The interweaving narratives added tension to each narrative, making what would perhaps otherwise be a well-rendered, amusing tale of a teen trying to get the girl and build a band to win a Rock and Roll showdown into a high-stakes page-turner, where, at times, readers feared for Ritchie's life as he struggled to stay safe in jail. Ritchie's voice is colorful, funny, and at times, yes, as wise as it is foolish (which is the point).

I bought this for the cover, know what I mean. All black, like a ripped old journal or whatever, and a guitar on the side. My sort of crap. It's way different than the usual debutantes and vampires and such so I thought I'd get into it. Original cover probably means original book, no? Not all the time, but in this case, yes. A big yes. I haven't read many books like this before. Or maybe any. 1. Out-loud funny. 2. Handles music well. 3. Handles "Big issue" stuff like Sex, Family, Death, Incarceration straight on, like a car crash. Like a great song, metal or punk or hip-hop. 4. Love the characters. Ritchie is a wiseass who is totally oblivious to how he comes across, but sure finds out. 5. Love how Adults are handled. In most YA they're either ridiculously bad or sugar-sweet. These adults are just like the ones I had--a mix of good, bad, and strange. The best adult in the whole book is Ritchie's Mom's girlfriend, who is no prop, she's also one of the most interesting characters. Basically, every sophomore in high school in America should read this book. To laugh, but also to wise up, you know? See what not to do. And how not to do it, cause you get to stand back and watch someone be a Fool for 300 pgs, right in front of you. Totally entertaining, really original. I'm keeping this one close to my heart.

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