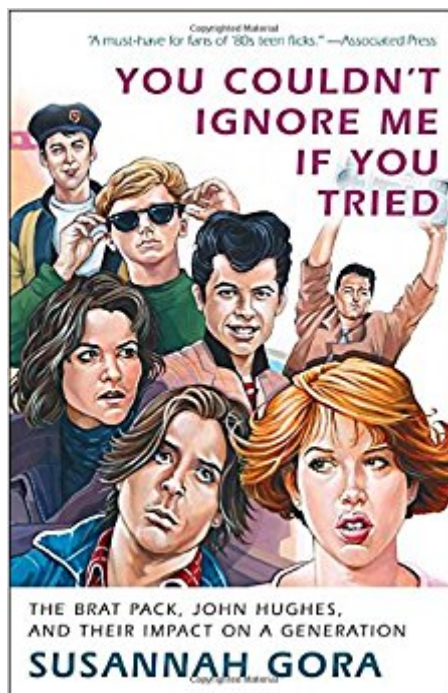




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# You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried: The Brat Pack, John Hughes, And Their Impact On A Generation



## Synopsis

You can quote lines from *Sixteen Candles* (“Last night at the dance my little brother paid a buck to see your underwear”), your iPod playlist includes more than one song by the Psychedelic Furs and Simple Minds, you watch *The Breakfast Club* every time it comes on cable, and you still wish that Andie had ended up with Duckie in *Pretty in Pink*. You’re a bonafide Brat Pack devotee and you’re not alone. The films of the Brat Pack from *Sixteen Candles* to *Say Anything* are some of the most watched, bestselling DVDs of all time. The landscape that the Brat Pack memorialized where outcasts and prom queens fall in love, preppies and burn-outs become buds, and frosted lip gloss, skinny ties, and exuberant optimism made us feel invincible is rich with cultural themes and significance, and has influenced an entire generation who still believe that life always turns out the way it is supposed to. *You Couldn’t Ignore Me If You Tried* takes us back to that era, interviewing key players, such as Molly Ringwald, Anthony Michael Hall, Ally Sheedy, Judd Nelson, Andrew McCarthy, and John Cusack, and mines all the material from the movies to the music to the way the films were made to show how they helped shape our visions for romance, friendship, society, and success. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

The phrase was coined by David Blum in the headline *Hollywood’s Brat Pack*, heralding his cover story for the June 10, 1985, issue of *New York* magazine with its cover photo of Emilio Estevez, Rob Lowe, and Judd Nelson. The label stuck, Gora notes, and extended to describe other actors:

Andrew McCarthy, Demi Moore, Ally Sheedy, Molly Ringwald, and Anthony Michael Hall. A former editor at Premiere, Gora guides the reader through the creation of the teen cinema of the 1980s, described by the American Film Institute as the cultural phenomenon which helped make us what we are today. To recall the era, she interviewed two dozen actors, plus the directors and producers behind the Brat Pack's memorable movies, including *The Breakfast Club*, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Sixteen Candles*, *Pretty in Pink*, *St. Elmo's Fire* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. As Gora sees it, The films changed the way many young people looked at everything from class distinction to friendship, from love and sex to fashion and music. Writer-director John Hughes's ability to capture adolescent angst is highlighted. The 1980s youth films maintain their popularity on TV and DVDs, and Gora gives them near-encyclopedic, comprehensive coverage. (Feb. 9) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Concentrating on the making of such seminal films as *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *St. Elmo's Fire*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, *Say Anything*, *Home Alone*, and, of course, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Gora's celebration of writer-director John Hughes (1950-2009) tends to be exhaustive and often exhausts. Gora cites the New York Times's A. O. Scott on Hughes "he "was our Godard" and Roger Ebert's characterization of him as "the philosopher of adolescence" to orient her essay exploring what she calls cine-sociology, "the concrete sociological impact that movies can have on our lives." She discusses the origin of the sobriquet Brat Pack, offers biographical portraits of Hughes and many of the actors most associated with his movies, discusses the music of the so-called Brat Pack films (it was a crucial factor in their success), and considers how the Brat Pack films changed a generation. Although probably too self-important for its own good, this is still a must for Hughes admirers and students of American pop culture. --June Sawyers --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

First, I am puzzled by the reviews that say that this book is "about the 'Brat Pack'." Although that was a theme that understandably came around three or four times through the book because it can't be ignored (and actually put in the title for book-selling juice), this was actually about the planet called John Hughes and everything that was in its orbit during his career. This is a worthwhile topic because the guy was a prolific, quirky, enigmatic genius who influenced a lot of people for the better part of 30 years. Because everything revolves around the John Hughes era (and his life), it has a

beginning and an end. The average writer could have taken the easy, strictly chronological approach. But in this book, we often come back to the same information about the subject actors' lives four or five times, just with different words. At first, you wonder if there is an organization issue, but Gora is really just taking a circuitous route which, for our enjoyment, may have roads that intersect each other several times. There is a bit of a "gushing" tone throughout, and the idea that every actor is brilliant and should have a mantle full of Oscars (not exactly her words but you'll see) seems a little hard to take. But really the book is about love for the era and the people who meant a lot. So just feel the love and you'll blow through this, feeling enriched and moved.

I was in high school in the 1980s, and of course saw all of the John Hughes "Brat Pack" films. Recently, I've been re-watching some of them, and I got curious about how they were made, their legacy, and what happened to some of the stars. This book is a very fun, fast read, with loads of details about the making of each film. I wouldn't recommend it for hard core film buffs who want to know all the nitty gritty of film making, but there was enough information about film making to interest a regular movie-goer like me. For example, Hughes directed sitting or standing near his actors, rather than watching the film unfold on a monitor several feet away. He also took a lot of advice and suggestions from his actors, like when Ally Sheedy suggested that her sandwich in *The Breakfast Club* be made of Captain Crunch, so she could be loud and angry even while eating. There's very little here about what became of the actors after their star-making turns in Hughes films, but lots of interviews with them showing how they now feel about having worked with him, and what made him special as a writer and director. The chapter on the coining of the term "Brat Pack" and the subsequent strain it put on those relationships was fascinating. The two criticisms I would have are (1) it's really quite fawning. Anyone who gets annoyed at the thought that Hughes single-handedly shaped a generation, or who doesn't think that every single thing about every single Hughes film is groundbreaking and special, may not like this book. Except for *Say Anything*, there is little mention of other contemporary directors or films and (2) the inclusion of a chapter on *Say Anything*, which I cannot figure out, as Hughes had nothing to do with that film. I loved *Say Anything*, but it is a Cameron Crowe film. Why is it in this book? This is a very interesting and fun read, much like a NYT Sunday Magazine or Vanity Fair article, and if you are interested in John Hughes and his films, I highly recommend it.

Since there are no more John Hughes films this is another way to enjoy some of his great films. This is written for folks that already love the movies the book discusses, but a lot of this material is

included among the extras in the "Flashback" issues of these films. Still, this is an entertaining way to enjoy the material and there's some bits of history here that are not in the video "extras." This is definitely not an academic work but it's a fun read for those who love these movies.

"You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried" by Susannah Gora is at once a social history, a fan magazine tribute, and a nostalgic look at pop culture of the 1980's Generation X as influenced and shaped by the films of John Hughes. This is not a scholarly analysis of the films of this era. For nostalgia alone, however, it is worth the read. For those concerned that the author's sources seem a bit sophomoric (i. e., a number of quotes culled from popular entertainment magazines from the era): in her defense, I find the time and effort she put into encapsulating the information from such articles impressive. Ms. Gore furthered researched by interviewing many actors and behind the scenes personalities. Ms. Gora's research, while not scholarly, is impressive. She has distilled interviews and reviews of the movies of the Hughes influence into a fun read. To be sure, anyone could find most Ms. Gora's sources on his or her own. Who really has the time? Ms. Gora has taken the time to comb through information, presenting a chronological film by film, subject by subject cohesive format. This is a well-written book that does not talk down to its audience. While I found myself wanting a little more substance, there were from time to time some insights into the movies of the Hughes catalog that I did not consider before. Nonetheless, I did not purchase this book with the expectation of anything more than a look back at an era when "each one of us [was] a brain, and an athlete, and a basketcase, a princess, and a criminal."

I loooved this book. I bought it because I'm a huge fan of 80s teen movies and figured why not get an inside look. I had no clue just how much of an inside look I would get from this! I really recommend it for people who love the "Brat pack" movies (even though now I think I should stop using that term after reading about all the trouble it caused) or anyone who loves getting an inside look at the drama/process of how these movies were made. Definitely a good read!P.S. Be warned, it may slightly change your view of John Hughes as a person if you weren't already aware of his...ahem antics. I certainly wasn't so some of what was said in this book came as a surprise to me.

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