

**I need to buy some books on jazz. People judge you by your books. I need some books on jazz or Jung or the Dalai Lama maybe. He's pretty hip these days. I need books that make me seem sophisticated and mysterious when new people come to my apartment. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Encyclopedia Of Bodybuilding just doesn't seem to cut it.**

You know what. I don't just need books. I need tomes! I'm not exactly sure how a tome is different from a book but I feel so mature just having used the word tome. I hope tomes come in paperback though, because I hate lugging a hardback tome around New York City.

I did once read Chasin' The Trane, the biography of sax man John Coltrane. See you think I'm cooler already, but dammit I borrowed that book. I guess I could stand beside my pedestrian Tom Clancy collection and verbally remind visitors that I've read books on jazz, but it just doesn't seem to have that big impact you're looking for.

What do you want? I grew up in the suburbs. I read books on war, spies, forensic psychology and the mob. Normally, I don't even think about what's in my bookcase but I'm actually dating someone now, sorry girls, and I knew she was going to check out my books when she got to my apartment for the first time. We walked in and she went straight to the library, which in my multi-use studio apartment is also the kitchen, bedroom, and union hall. Quote from her, "you've got a lot of books with Jewish stars on them." Knowing one's history is important, and like a lot of American Jews, I revel in Israel's heroic soldiers and sneaky spies. I'd volunteer to be Israel's next Our Man In Damascus (yep, read that one about super-spy Elie Cohn by Eli Ben-Hanan) but it'd be a little hard for a 6'3" redhead who burns like a new-born calf to blend in with the swarthy crowd at a Middle East coffee bar.

I actually lost a good Israeli spy book in south Texas on the Greyhound bus from Corpus Christi to San Antonio. Somewhere on the banks of the Rio Grande is a group of Mexicans using the Mossad's methods of infiltration to join America's melting pot. If you read about a bunch of illegal aliens claiming anti-Semitism as the reason for their being sent back to Tijuana, you'll know that my book has turned up.

I've got books on industrial espionage, Northern Ireland's troubles, Gurkhan knife fighters, tons of books by James Michener and Leon Uris, and ONE book--Go Tell It On The Mountain--by James Baldwin. Baldwin, by the way, is black, gay, and a Pulitzer Prize winner. That should make up for all the books on fishing. I haven't actually read the Baldwin book, but it sure looks good on my shelf between W.E.B. Griffin's Secret Warriors and The Hunter's Field Guide. I've bought a lot of these books on-line from Amazon so I know that somewhere, deep in the bowels of the FBI's headquarters in Quantico, VA, I'm on a list of potentially dangerous dorks. (By the way, you can conveniently buy books and coincidentally make me a little money, by using the Amazon portal on my links page.)

I even have a couple of signed books by Michener and one of my heroes, civil rights lawyer Morris Dees. Wait a minute, maybe I should display the books open with a discrete halogen light shining on the signatures and a blinking neon sign above them reading, "I have depth." I'll have to get in touch with the people who display the Declaration of Independence and see how they do it. Tell me that won't impress the chicks.

You know what I don't have on my shelves anymore? Sports biographies. I must have owned them all when I was growing up. Biographies of Billy Martin, Sparky Lyle, Goose Gossage, Ken "The Snake" Stabler, and Jim Bouton's Ball Four. As a teenager, I used to revel in their stories of cheering crowds, game winning plays, and contracting Venereal Disease from groupies. We can look at the lack of current sports bios in one of two ways. Maybe I've grown up, or more likely, maybe I just know how silly I'd look with 26-year old Derek Jeter's autobiography on my nightstand.