



Kurt Cobain

Christopher Sandford

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Here is the first biography to explore, with shocking detail, the drama that formed this troubled, tragic rock star. Neither an apology nor a condemnation, Kurt Cobain presents a vivid insider's view of the life and death of a man who galvanized a generation and gave birth to the "grunge" revolution with his band Nirvana. Sandford portrays the provocative, small-town rebel with the talent of John Lennon, and then shows him at work on concert stages in Seattle, New York, and London. Readers follow the struggles of Cobain's emotional life—his tumultuous relationships with family and his fellow band members, his drug addiction and sexual appetite, his stormy marriage to Courtney Love, and the birth of his daughter, who, as Cobain wrote in his suicide note, "reminds me too much of who I used to be." During his research, Sandford has had access to Cobain's family, his colleagues, his former friends and lovers, and even author William S. Burroughs, whom Cobain considered to be his "greatest influence." The result is a graphic account of the life that led to the day in April 1994 when Cobain turned a shotgun on himself and became a martyr to disaffected youth around the world.

Kurt Cobain Details

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Author : Christopher Sandford

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From Reader Review Kurt Cobain for online ebook

Tifinie says

i really love this book because its better then all the other books about Kurt Cobain. it gives you full life story of his and the band mates life and the fame of nirvana. also the pictures are great of him and the band.

Jaz says

I picked this up at a local charity shop for 50p & it's not even worth that. The quality and veracity of many of the author's sources (especially pertaining to the more salacious content, predictably) are somewhat lacking, especially when you consider how many of the anecdotes related have been refuted over the years. There are probably a hundred muck-racking, shock-horror cash in books about Cobain as bad as this one; it's the nature of the beast, I suppose.

I ended up skim-reading this about a third of the way through, I recommend that you don't even bother doing that - it's not worth my time or yours.

Gary Cannon says

If you are a fan of Cobain or Nirvana I would not recommend this book. If half of what's in this bio is true (and I don't doubt the author) then Cobain may just have been the biggest narcissistic psychopath I have ever heard of....using and discarding friends, beating a child unconscious over a pizza, etc. I've read bios of serial killers that are more sympathetic.

Charles says

propaganda shet.

Tam says

Great insight to kurts life. Although they may not all be 100% accurate, you can glimpse his dark side that took him over the edge.

Mira says

I've now read the book twice. I feel conflicted. The first time was about seven years ago. The only thing I remembered? of the book was the part about Cobain's suicide, and for years I've maintained picture about

Cobain as a rebel hero, based on nothing much though (which is a great example of the glorification of his reputation.)

After re-reading this book, I still see him that way – too. But now his story absorbed me in a totally different way than before. I noticed I didn't like many things about the book – both about the man it's about, an icon to me, and the way the story is written and translated. But it is a great story: heart-wrenching, amusing, relatable, confusing, and angering, among other things. It is a great lesson about life and how strong but frail humans can be at the same time.

Even though re-reading this book changed my image of Kurt Cobain a great deal, in the end, it didn't change what he means to me. On the contrary, it only confirmed that Kurt Cobain's life and art remains a powerful inspiration, a life lesson, and a warning example to me on a deeply personal level.

Perhaps most importantly, though, Cobain's intriguing tragedy remains a reminder that in life, we choose our path and what we make of the building blocks we are given. He couldn't build a lasting happiness out of his, but if I ever make it, he surely will have had a part to play in me finding my way to that point. And his story gives me consolation and faith that I will. Given that I clearly am not the only one, I think he has earned his reputation, in good and bad.

David Kudlinski says

Kurt Cobain of Nirvana has been credited as the founder of grunge music and voted as the most significant musician of the 1990s decade by Rolling Stone Magazine. Despite fortune and fame, he committed suicide in April, 1994. The root cause was depression and an undiagnosed mental illness, but there are several contributing causes, including chronic stomach pain and mental deterioration from drug use. By far the most intriguing contributing cause to his depression was the schizophrenic split of his personality between a pure punk music anarchist and an ambitious pop musician who craved stardom and success, which ironically forged the creative blend of grunge. He struggled to reconcile the two personalities without ultimate success. In other words, he couldn't figure out if what he was accomplishing was art on the one hand, or commerce on the other, nor could he make peace with his opposing proclivities. To a practical outsider, this doesn't seem like a big deal. For example, make a pop album one year, then a punk album the next, or some variation on this. However, Kurt obviously felt enormous pressure to keep producing commerce, and Cobain may not have surrounded himself with the most supportive and honest entourage. Because of my interest in rock music, I picked this book on Kurt Cobain by Christopher Sandford. Not knowing better, I assumed this was the definitive biography. Surprisingly, the book starts off as a ruthless and relentless hatchet job on Cobain's reputation, and I almost took the book back to Barnes and Noble for a refund. I read the whole thing, and the book becomes somewhat more balanced towards the end. However, the book is improperly titled and should have been titled, "Kurt Cobain: The Dark Side" or something of that nature to reflect a biased and opinionated treatment of the subject to the purchaser. Cobain arguably had the talent of John Lennon, but also the fortune of being in the right place at the right time. It is laughable that Mr. Sandford expects a teenager of a divorced, dysfunctional family with a history of mental illness and suicide to be a paragon of morality and virtue. The book has some humor in Cobain's misadventures as a rock star, but ends in tragedy, as we all know. Cobain deserves sympathy, as well as blame, for this ill conceived and selfish suicide which disappointed a generation of fans and left a fatherless child and widow. Christopher Sandford and all of us can learn lessons from this story, aside from the obvious failings of Cobain. The question of "Is it art, or is it commerce?" should have had a simple answer to Cobain. "Who cares? I'm doing what I want and what I choose!" That might have helped save Cobain from over-imagined criticism.

Jack says

One of the worst books I've ever read. In short, it is more of an attack on Kurt's character rather than an unbiased portrayal of his legacy. Sandford is highly opinionated and arrogant in his writing, and shows little regard for anything beyond sensationalist viewpoints. I give the book no stars, and would only recommend it to those who would like to read every publication regarding Cobain, despite Sanford's blatant inaccuracies and hostile tone throughout. A prime example of an author who would be better suited writing for the National Enquirer and whom ought to be barred from any sort of honest and accurate publication.

Ally Van Schilt says

Unlike many other Cobain biographies I've read. Now I've been generous in my rating, as I, strangely enough, enjoy biographies which do not glorify their subjects. I like biographies that show the people as flawed, complex individuals (something which there's no doubting Kurt was), not perfect, and not making excuses for them when they're clearly in the wrong. This book certainly did not glorify Kurt. It was an extremely harsh portrayal of him, in fact. And, having read a few other Goodreads reviews of the book, it has rubbed people up the wrong way. Totally understandable - obviously anyone who is reading this book is a fan of Kurt, and to see him portrayed in such a way is hurtful and difficult. I definitely struggled reading some of the accusations made against him. But I do like that it wasn't a typical "poor tortured artist, glory be to him" kind of book. I just think that, given that the book was published in 1995, only a year after his death, it may be just a tad insensitive. The coda at the end of the book was a worthy inclusion which reflects upon this. In summary: a warts and all examination into the person of Kurt Cobain.

Chris says

I learned a lot about Cobain from this book (assuming the author wasn't paid by Courtney Love to drag Kurt's name through the mud). If this really is a true account of Cobain's life, it's one of the most shocking biographies I've ever read.

Nicole Green says

This book is full of sensationalism. That it was written by a journalist makes sense, considering the state of our media today.

There's some good info about Kurt and his music here--and Nirvana more generally--and that's the only reason I didn't give this book one star.

Very little of the author's claims are backed up by actual facts. Most of the info is hearsay from (most likely) disgruntled people. And it's pretty easy to say whatever you want about a dead guy. After all, who's going to contradict you? Take note that this book was written after Cobain's death. Right after it.

The author clearly lets his bias against Cobain show. There's no way you can call this an objective picture of Cobain's life. The book was incredibly hard to get through, it was poorly organized, and it could've been much shorter.

In all, if you can skim through it for the facts (and you'll have to do a lot of skimming), it might be worth the read. Also, if you like sensationalism and Cobain-bashing, it'll be worth the read for you.

Carol Storm says

Really a pretty good book but don't read it if you only want to hear good things about Kurt Cobain. Christopher Sandford is brutally honest about a lot of really obnoxious incidents and events, and also about Cobain's public attitude, which was both unbelievably arrogant and self-pitying.

Sandford's problem is not so much that he's biased against Kurt Cobain, but that he never makes up his mind. One minute he says "Cobain could never acknowledge his addiction" the next he says "Cobain was ashamed of his addiction." One minute he says "Cobain was totally indifferent to success" the next he says "Cobain was driven and ambitious." I mean, some contradiction exist in everyone, but this author never resolves any of the contradictions and never really reaches any type of understanding.

Another interesting problem is the way drugs are discussed. Sandford makes it clear that everyone in Kurt Cobain's life knew that he was a heroin addict, and that they knew this for at least two or three years before he died. But there's no explanation of why there was no intervention, or even a public confrontation with the man himself. And this is not just about weakness or lack of compassion. You have to wonder how so many people let so much money slip through their hands. Kurt Cobain alive meant millions of dollars for his band mates, his record label, his management, his wife, etc. Kurt Cobain dead meant ruin for everyone. Why none of these different groups were never able to get together and stage an intervention is never discussed.

Everyone's heard the famous anecdote where Kurt Cobain's mother lectured him on all the rock stars who died at 27 and how she urged him "not to join that stupid club." This was a tragedy that everyone saw coming, but no-one did anything to prevent it.

Related to this, there's a larger social point. A rap legend like Snoop Dog could spend four years in jail for selling a relatively small amount of crack cocaine on the street. But Kurt Cobain was buying heroin and shooting up openly for months, for years, and everyone turned a blind eye. It's a great thing to be white in America! Sandford doesn't comment on this side of the tragedy. Overall, the writing on the music is much better than the writing on the man. My favorite sentence in the whole book was when Sandford describes IN UTERO as "one long scream of horrified despair at the ugliness of life outside the womb."

Dane Cobain says

This is one of the many books that I read as a kid on the subject of Kurt Cobain, but it's also one of the better ones. Sandford, who's also written biographies of Steve McQueen, Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Paul McCartney, Keith Richards, Bruce Springsteen and Roman Polanski, is the perfect man for the job – he's thorough with his research and he writes fluidly. I can't speak for any of his other work, but here you get the impression that he's allowed himself and his writing to take a back seat – the focus is entirely on his subject, which is as it should be.

In fact, at 414 pages and with tiny print, I find it hard to think of another Kurt Cobain biography which is able to beat this based on the sheer quantity of information alone. Sandford could almost have managed to get two books out of it, and he must've struggled when preparing the final manuscript to decide where to draw the line. Of course, Cobain had a more interesting life than most, and so even in his 27 short years, he provided plenty of source material for Sandford to take advantage of.

Now, this book isn't for everybody, but if you're a Kurt Cobain fan or if you're just a lover of grunge in general, then you're sure to enjoy it. You'll also enjoy it if you just have a thing for biographies, and, like most of them, this one includes some photographs to help you to visualise what was happening. Cobain died when I was five, and so they helped me to imagine what it might have been like to be a rock star whilst I was wandering around in nappies.

It also includes a bunch of appendices that music aficionados might find interesting, such as chronologies and indexes. And I guess that's one of the good things about this book – depending upon how deep you want to get, you can use it many ways. You can read through it, like the narrative of the musician's life, or you can use the various appendices to look up specific information. It's pretty rare to see that in biographies of celebrities – sure, maybe you get an index, but they're rarely this well-researched. That's kind of why I like it – it's the definitive story of what happened between Cobain's birth to his death.

Gabrielle Taylor says

My first reaction was the sources he was quoting. A delivery boy that delivered to his house once? Really? And an aunt that was married into the family and divorced from the family before Kirt was like five or something? Could have cut the book by half without all the repetitiveness.

Rob says

makes albert goldman look like james boswell. this is a shit biography that goes the extra mile - not only is it bad biography, it's mean-spirited trash. bravo.

Chris says

I thought the author did a good job summarizing Cobain's life even though there were some confusing throughout the book. Many people feel the author did not do a good job expressing Cobain's emotions but I though he did a good job showing Cobain's actions and what caused them. I think that the reader did a good job with character development although I didn't like how they described Cobain's death in the beginning because it made me not want to read the book because I knew how and why he killed himself. In contrast I think that author did not do a good job with gripping the plot because at times it was hard to understand the emotions Cobain was feeling.

Vikash (kashivology.wordpress.com) says

GRUDGE IS DEAD.

There is a picture in this book, ‘Kurt Cobain’, where Nirvana’s Lead man Kurt Cobain is seen sporting a T-shirt with a caption “Grunge Is Dead”, because the “Father of Grunge” had it on before his inevitable death, Christopher Sandford, the author, says it was premature(like his child he is holding in the picture). I think it was Kurt Cobain’s presentiment, or was it?

I had an intuition about it like the one Kurt had after so much of drugs, sex, violence and Grunge and grudge in his life and therefore in the book.

The grudge he had against everything and everyone, against friends and enemies and his own self died with him.

‘Nevermind’ to remind you this and all of Kurt’s exploits, habits, self reverence and self torture and Punk there remain his songs and this book, ‘Kurt Cobain’, a biography of the book’s namesake written by Christopher Sandford.

Christopher Sandford relies on first hand interviews and myriad anecdotes of people associated with Kurt to build his story.

‘Kurt Cobain’ is a dark fairy tale of a self proclaimed Rock star, Nirvana’s vocalist and guitarist, who changed the masses and the path of masses by being one of them yet not connecting with. It surprises, astonishes and shocks you from the very beginning and you know you are reading a gray story.

Mr. Sandford at times treats the revered ‘Punk star’ with contempt and hence biases the coin. May be Christopher did not interview the protagonist’s fans extensively or did not have the energy to do so.

‘Kurt Cobain’ is a good book as one sided story of the paranoid musician. Written nicely with treatment of satires at places it is a good one time read.

Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain’s music is good and for his life study keep another book ready at hand after reading this.

Without any presentiment or intuition and totally after reading ‘Kurt Cobain’ I title my review “Grudge is Dead”.

My rating 2.5/5.

Saptashwa says

The author should stick to sticking his tiny finger up his ass and smelling it periodically instead of trying to write about greats he has no fuckin' knowledge of!!!!!!!!!!!!

Jamie Tirion says

The description of Kurt Cobain in this book is absolute bullshit. Read this text by Jack Endino, who recorded with Kurt loads of times:

recently someone sent me a photocopy of just two (!) pages (106 and 107) from Chris Sandford’s book on Nirvana, entitled “Kurt Cobain”. In it he describes the sessions for Bleach from the point of view of “Endino’s engineer” and even an unnamed “second source at Reciprocal”; he describes Kurt putting lit

matches in his mouth, spraying antiperspirant down his throat, pouring beer on the mixing board, taking “fistfuls of pills”, etc, etc. Let me fucking set this straight: this is pure fiction! In all the times I worked with Kurt I never even saw him drink a beer in the studio. His pre-Nevermind times in the studio with me were utterly normal; the band was there to work. They didn’t have enough money to fuck around. And in my entire career no one has ever poured beer (or anything else) on the board. Further, there were NO assistants or “other sources” to witness any of the goings-on at Reciprocal except for me, the band and one or two of their friends, for the simple reason that the 3 producer/engineers there (me, Chris Hanzsek, and Rich Hinklin) always worked separately, equally and alone. There were no other employees, no staff, no runners, no front office. We never had assistants or interns, paid or free, until 1992 or so when Phil Ek, fresh out of recording school, sat in with me for a few sessions. (This was after the studio had turned into “Word Of Mouth Productions” for a couple years. It was not “Reciprocal” anymore.) I mean, an assistant? The control room was so small you couldn’t even fit all the band members in it. So: either this guy made all this up (can’t really see why he would want to) or better yet, someone else decided to take the gullible journalist for a ride, figuratively speaking. (It’s even possible that someone in the band’s own entourage fed the guy this bullshit with the band’s secret approval; these are the sort of unbelievable stories Kurt just might have encouraged as media pranks. I doubt this, but I’m trying like hell to give this guy the benefit of the doubt.) I haven’t read the rest of the book yet ’cause I don’t want to spend the cash, but I hope for Kurt’s (and his daughter’s) sake that the rest of it isn’t like those two pages I got. (Later note: It is. I’ve since read it. The whole book is full of equally outlandish nonsense. Sigh. OK, now extrapolate from how 100% fictional the two pages I know about are...) Seeing this kind of fiction printed about Kurt really bums me out.

Carson hall says

The way this book is written, one would think Kurt was Satan himself. The author obviously doesn’t like Kurt and wants to twist his life and his actions around to make him look like an egotistical fool.

I don’t know what is true in here and what isn’t, but much of it goes against everything I have seen about Kurt since I have been interested in him.

There are also certain events portrayed where I believe the author completely misunderstood Kurts intentions.
