



The Life of a Song: The fascinating stories behind 50 of the world's best-loved songs

David Cheal (Editor), Jan Dalley (Editor)

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Who knew that Paul McCartney originally referred to Yesterday as 'Scrambled Eggs' because he couldn't think of any lyrics for his heart-breaking tune? Or that Patti LaBelle didn't know what 'Voulez-vous couches avec moi ce soir?' actually meant?

These and countless other fascinating back stories of some of our best-known and best-loved songs fill this book, a collection of the highly successful weekly The Life of a Song columns that appear in the FT Weekend every Saturday.

Each 600-word piece gives a mini-biography of a single song, from its earliest form (often a spiritual, or a jazz number), through the various covers and changes, often morphing from one genre to another, always focusing on the 'biography' of the song itself while including the many famous artists who have performed or recorded it.

The selection covers a wide spectrum of the songs we all know and love - rock, pop, folk, jazz and more. Each piece is pithy, sparkily written, knowledgeable, entertaining, full of anecdotes and surprises. They combine deep musical knowledge with the vivid background of the performers and musicians, and of course the often intriguing social and political background against which the songs were created.

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Details

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From Reader Review The Life of a Song: The fascinating stories behind 50 of the world's best-loved songs for online ebook

Jo says

Very entertaining book telling the stories behind some popular songs.

Deke says

The upside: good, interesting song choices (if a couple I didn't know... and this is my livelihood). The downside: each essay is a bit like a glorified, well written wikipedia article. In sum total, worth a browse at the library but maybe not a purchase in hardcover.

Michelle says

I won this book through a Goodreads Giveaway.

I love music, analyzing lyrics, and learning about how popular things "came to be," so I figured this book would be right up my alley. To a very limited extent, this book delivers; however, each reprinted column is too short to give much detail and insight. The entries are also fairly repetitive in structure: discussion of the artist, climate in which the song was produced, a couple details about how it was recorded, and who did covers to varying levels of success. I didn't feel like I was being let in on any "fascinating stories" or learning about not-well-known details.

Overall, this would be a great book for a dentist/doctors office, where someone can read a little, put it down without guilt, and completely forget everything they read the moment they leave the room.

Heather says

I won this book through a Goodreads giveaway. This book was quite an education, on a broad scope. I enjoy music, but I don't really know a lot about the history of popular-style music. This book was a great peak into the background of dozens of songs. Have a device with YouTube handy when you read this book! I really appreciated each song more when I used YouTube to look up the recordings mentioned in each article and listened to them. And most of the articles also mention significant covers of the songs, too, so I would stop and check some of those out, as well.

G

Amanda-Has-A-Bookcase says

From Britney Spears to Phil Collins & many more in between this book offers a small glimpse into what went behind some of our most recognizable songs. Short quick paragraphs giving a small tid bit of

information with black & white photos sprinkled throughout this is a cute “gift” type book for any music fan. Thank you Goodreads for my copy!

Shannon says

It was okay, I wished the pieces about each song were expanded on or a little longer. Not a bad read, but it's not necessarily a book I'd sit down for a long time reading. The information for each song is very short, and reads more like short tidbits about the songs' creations/inspirations.

Tena says

Do you remember back in junior high when you had to do an research report so you used the card catalog to pick the first three on the list hoping you get enough from those sources that you don't have to go back to find more? But then you start flipping through one and you actually WANT TO READ it? THIS is one of THOSE! This book is printed using the old style standard grey photos along with grey "fading newsprint ink" text forcing it to look like an old school library book! This was a surprising little collector's gem. My thanks to Giuliana Caranante for sponsoring the GOODREADS giveaway that I won this in.

Becky Hodson says

This book contains the stories behind some fantastic songs.

I love the way the book has been put together; it is well written, clear, concise and interesting. There are some lovely anecdotes concerning not only the song, but the artist who wrote/performed them. I love that, unlike many books about music, it crosses music genres and touches on songs from almost about every area of music.

As you would imagine with this, it isn't a book that requires reading from start to finish, but rather something you can dip in and out of whenever you like. A great buy for anyone interested in facts, music and musicians.

I absolutely love music - I can't even sleep without music on - so this was a fantastic book to receive through the post. My husband, who isn't a big reader, also found this book fascinating. We both enjoyed it and will doubtless be picking it up to flick back through from time to time.

Claire Mcneal says

I won this book on Good reads giveaway.

A fascinating book looking at 50 of the world's best-loved songs. Very interesting, giving insight to the songs, who wrote the song and who has covered them. I really enjoyed finding out what and who inspired other singer-songwriters.

I wanted a bit more information on some of the songs.

A great coffee table read.

Donna says

This really is a great book for anyone who enjoys music. The authors have included 50 songs that cover all genres. The stories about the songs and the songwriters are interesting. I enjoyed reading this book because I love music
