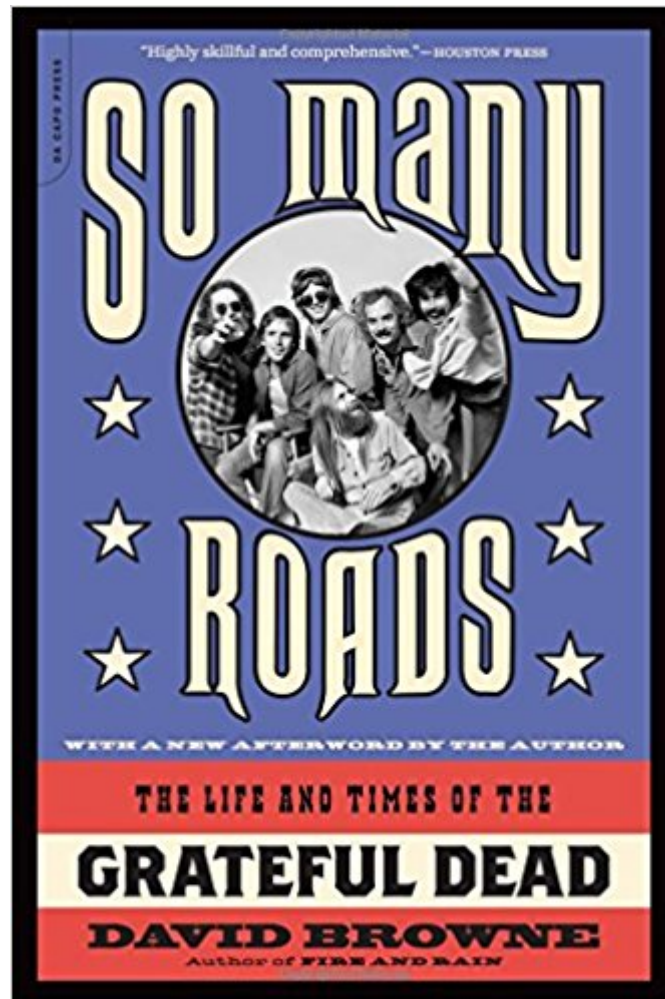


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So Many Roads: The Life And Times Of The Grateful Dead



Synopsis

More than five decades after they first came together and changed the sound of rock 'n' roll, the Grateful Dead remain one of rock's most beloved bands—a musical and cultural phenomenon that spans generations and paved the way for everything from the world of jam bands and the idea of independently released music to social networking. First published in time for the band's 50th anniversary, *So Many Roads* is unlike any other book on the Dead; it is, in the words of Eric Alterman in the Huffington Post, "the best narrative I've ever come across" of the Dead. Drawing on new interviews with surviving members and those in their inner circle—along with access to the group's extensive archives and his own research from years of covering the group—longtime music journalist and Rolling Stone contributing editor David Browne does more than merely delve into the Dead's saga. By way of an altogether unique structure—each chapter centered on a significant or pivotal day in their story—he lends this epic musical and cultural story a you-are-there feel. The result is a remarkably detailed and cinematic book that paints a strikingly fresh portrait of one of rock's most enduring institutions and sheds new light—for fans and newcomers alike—on the band's music, dynamics, and internal struggles. With a new afterword by the author

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Customer Reviews

The first thing to note about *So Many Roads* is how deeply reported it is. After contacting David Lemieux about this project, David Browne had access to the Dead's remaining members and inner

circle. He didn't squander the opportunity. In this book, he brings forward a great deal of new material based on those interviews, and he contextualizes it in new and interesting ways. (For example, his interviews with Barbara Meier show how the Cuban missile crisis provided the backdrop for Jerry Garcia's "live for the moment" lifestyle.) Even aficionados will find plenty of new insights into the band and its experience. Browne also chose a unique way to structure his book. Instead of offering a continuous narrative, which has been done many times before, he selected seventeen days that were either turning points for the band or somehow illustrated its development. He then back-filled important information to ensure the coverage was adequate. So, for example, his seventeen days don't include the one Jerry Garcia died, but he makes sure readers know about that event and its key details. That structure allows him to bring certain moments into sharp focus without sacrificing a broader view of the band's history. The coverage is fairly evenly distributed over the band's three decades, but most of what I learned about the Dead from this book was set in the 1980s and 1990s. Browne doesn't shrink from the challenge of Garcia's health problems, including the details of his addiction, during this period, but he never lets that topic hijack the narrative. His musical acumen (he writes for Rolling Stone) also informs the book throughout. I relished this book and recommend it highly.

From "Anthem of the Sun" onwards, I've been content to consider myself a Deadhead (meaning, I'd see them whenever the opportunity presented, and though I didn't trail them, their music and even elements of their existence planted themselves firmly within my passionate musical ticker). How many bands were this unique, handily incorporating so many musical styles, and brave enough to allow even their worst moments to circulate freely amongst their congregation? They've often been misunderstood, and even unfairly insulted; a well known conspirator of one of the boss-iest scripted images of a famed musician ever had the incredible audacity to label them "nostalgia mongers". You cannot be nostalgia, when you simply are being who you are, and virtually from the moment of their inception, and often to their detriment, the members of this band were true to themselves and their music. It's as simple as that! David Browne's supremely well written and presented history of the band is the one I'd been hoping for. Rather than offer up a straight chronology, or bathe in the many myths surrounding the band, he humanizes the members, and gives us a true picture of who they are and what it was and is like to be them. It's not always pretty, but it's real, and the "carousel" style via which he darts back and forth events relating to specific and meaningful days in their history makes it a great read, and in fact, makes you wish it were even longer than the fun 400+ pages it is. I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to immerse myself in an advance

copy of this work. Even without the many great photos that I've seen that will appear in the commercial volume, it's a book I'll treasure as much as the music of the band. "So Many Roads" took this enthusiastic reader on a wonderful and informative trip with one of the most truly original and innovative bands ever!!

"When the music played, everything made sense. When the music stopped, things started getting weird." Mickey Hart. "For all the field-of-flowers beauty of their music, the world of the Dead was unsentimental and demanding; to survive, one had to adapt and hold on tight." Public image versus reality of being in the band. "How did they get together and relate to each other? They really worked on it. They wanted it badly. They were glued to the enterprise." Carolyn "Mountain Girl" Adams. "The women did the cooking and the cleaning. All we had to do was get high and play music. It was like paradise." Phil Lesh, 1967. "When one of the women who crashed at their home woke up in the middle of the night and saw Pigpen in her doorway, she needn't have worried; he came over and put an extra blanket on her." Public image versus private life of the band members. "We'll be with you just as soon as Pig finishes polishing his organ." Bob Weir. As Deadheads know, this is the 50th anniversary of The Dead. So we can expect to see a number of books coming our way in the coming weeks/months. But an early contender for one of the better books is this good read from David Browne (author of the book "Fire And Rain" among others) who has written about music (and The Dead) for many years. It's great that is selling this book before the "official" release date, so fans won't have to wait any longer. Yes, I know, what else is there to say about The Dead? Well, not a whole lot if the band is approached from the same angle as previous authors. But Browne has looked at the effects on the band/individual band members from various important points and/or a particular event/time in the band's life during the life of the band. Each chapter is connected to something that gives way to some insight into the band and their music. Plus, he's wisely connected things chronologically, beginning in the early '60s and up through the '80s, towards the end times for the band, and the necessity of coming to grips with life after Garcia's death. Some information will not be new to long time readers about The Dead (like me), but Browne has a way of weaving things we already know with his own angle that puts a fresh, interesting shine on the band and the era. After so many books about The Dead, it's the smaller details that make this book the most interesting--whether it's inside the band's house in Haight-Ashbury, on stage, the legendary "Wall of Sound", the Europe '72 tour, in the studio, the "Touch Of Grey" video, personal band interplay, or whatever--this book gets readers close to the band thanks to Browne. He pulls no punches when writing about the band or individual members--no matter if it's good/not so good/not so bad/bad."I

stink, therefore I am." Band In-joke, 1984, about Garcia's personal hygiene and concern for his general well-being."Everybody's walking around stoned, and the chicks are naked. Topless women. Horses. It was unbelievable." DJ Mike Belardo, KMPX , S.F., on his visit to Mickey Hart's ranch, 1970."I'd bend my arm and hear my shirt." Rock Scully after ingesting a small amount of mescaline sulfate, 1965."The band happily stumbled their way down to the stage..the Dead just stood there, gazing up at a screen and giggling in a nitrous haze. To make his guitar sound like it too was laughing, Garcia began stroking the strings." Effects of pre-concert sharing of nitrous oxide courtesy of the Hell's Angels, 1970."You're just phoning it in." Bruce Hornsby to Jerry Garcia. "You don't understand twenty-five years of burnout, man." Garcia to Hornsby, 1991, after a lackluster live set.

Browne has interviewed a pretty fair cross section of folks who were there at the time in some capacity--friends, family, employees, hangers-on, and so on, and new interviews with surviving band members. Plus he's drawn on his own cache of information and the band's (deep) archives (helped by Dead archivist David Lemieux), put together from over the years, along with already existing information to weave his own slant on the band and their music, with no strings attached by anyone connected with the band, to the final version. The lay out of the book, plus Browne's easy to read style of writing and his putting everything into some kind of order, makes for not only an interesting and informative read, but (especially if you're a Deadhead) a book that's also fun to read. Plus, Browne has wisely included an Index, which a book of this type needs if you want to find something in a hurry. And Browne has added a Bibliography of selected reading for more information if needed. There's a b&w photograph at the head of each chapter that relates to that particular period, some which will be familiar to fans.If you have a love for The Dead--no matter if you're relatively new and missed a lot of their whole scene, or you've been around even before the first use of the term "Deadhead" (like I was lucky enough to be)--this is a worthwhile addition to your (no doubt already cramped) Dead bookshelf."Lesh would often imagine the dust from Owsley's hand-pressed Blue Cheer acid drifting down through the ceiling and infusing the music they were making in the living room." "The Acid Test was the prototype for our whole basic trip." Jerry Garcia."We're gonna be archetypes." Jerry Garcia to Jorma Kaukonen before the Dead had made their first record yet.

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