



Clapton: The Autobiography

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With striking intimacy and candor, Eric Clapton tells the story of his eventful and inspiring life in this poignant and honest autobiography. More than a rock star, he is an icon, a living embodiment of the history of rock music. Well known for his reserve in a profession marked by self-promotion, flamboyance, and spin, he now chronicles, for the first time, his remarkable personal and professional journeys.

Born illegitimate in 1945 and raised by his grandparents, Eric never knew his father and, until the age of nine, believed his actual mother to be his sister. In his early teens his solace was the guitar, and his incredible talent would make him a cult hero in the clubs of Britain and inspire devoted fans to scrawl "Clapton is God" on the walls of London's Underground. With the formation of Cream, the world's first supergroup, he became a worldwide superstar, but conflicting personalities tore the band apart within two years. His stints in Blind Faith, in Delaney and Bonnie and Friends, and in Derek and the Dominos were also short-lived but yielded some of the most enduring songs in history, including the classic "Layla."

During the late sixties he played as a guest with Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan, as well as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and longtime friend George Harrison. It was while working with the latter that he fell for George's wife, Pattie Boyd, a seemingly unrequited love that led him to the depths of despair, self-imposed seclusion, and drug addiction. By the early seventies he had overcome his addiction and released the bestselling album 461 Ocean Boulevard, with its massive hit "I Shot the Sheriff." He followed that with the platinum album Slowhand, which included "Wonderful Tonight," the touching love song to Pattie, whom he finally married at the end of 1979. A short time later, however, Eric had replaced heroin with alcohol as his preferred vice, following a pattern of behavior that not only was detrimental to his music but contributed to the eventual breakup of his marriage.

In the eighties he would battle and begin his recovery from alcoholism and become a father. But just as his life was coming together, he was struck by a terrible blow: His beloved four-year-old son, Conor, died in a freak accident. At an earlier time Eric might have coped with this tragedy by fleeing into a world of addiction. But now a much stronger man, he took refuge in music, responding with the achingly beautiful "Tears in Heaven."

Clapton: The Autobiography Details

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Ted says

If you're a total Slowhand freak (and I am) this book is invaluable in that it comes right from the "horse's mouth." I've read a number of EC biographies, and, obviously, the main events of his life story are the same here as they are in the past (Cream still implodes, "Layla" still gets recorded, etc.). In that sense, there isn't much new information as there is the personal perspective and voice of Clapton himself.

Most revealing are the details of his youth growing up. Everyone knows about the illegitimacy issues and the resulting confusion, but there's an added poignancy when you get the details that EC provides himself.

You also get a taste of his experience in Hazeldon that you don't get anywhere else--again, with emotional depth that even an authorized biography can't touch.

Ironically, it's the happiness in EC's life that make the tail end of the book a bit anticlimactic. His apparently happy marriage and family life after a series of traumatic (and sometimes bizarre) relationships and affairs are good news for those of us who wish him well, but don't make for page-turning reading.

For example, about halfway through the book, Clapton recounts the agonizing, epic love triangle among Pattie Boyd, George Harrison, and himself, along with the fall into addiction and the creation of the glorious "Layla" album.

Skip ahead 150 pages, and EC is describing the emotional turmoil that comes with deciding whether or not he (and his bank account) has it in him to purchase his own personal luxury yacht.

I'm glad for Clapton that his major source of soul-searching now is whether he's merely obscenely wealthy, or super-obscenely wealthy, but this isn't the sort of sturm und drang that created Layla.

But it's not fair to critique the man's life for not being sufficiently traumatizing to follow a traditional dramatic arc. He's simply telling it like it is.

The one thing I would have liked more of is some details about his approach to his craft. Musicianship is not a concept covered in any appreciable depth in the book, and that's ultimately what I'm most drawn to in Clapton. But then again, that's what the music itself is for.

George Bradford says

Full Disclosure. Before reading this book, I was not a huge Eric Clapton fan. Sure, I'd enjoyed him in concert a few times and I owned some of his albums. I respected him. But I wasn't all that interested in reading about him. I was more interested in reading what he had to say about George Harrison, Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

In this book, Eric Clapton has plenty to say about all three. But he's got even more to say about a lot of other people, events, places and things. And in doing so, he penned an incredible autobiography.

This an amazing journey narrated by an incredible man. From abject poverty in Ripley, England, Eric Clapton ascended to the top of guitar virtuosity, crashed, burned, won it all, lost it all, rose again, crashed again, somehow survived and then wrote this book.

And this is a brilliantly written book. Clearly it is Clapton's story told by Clapton. And he tells it with great humility and grace.

The story features almost every figure of the blues and rock music as well as contemporary art, design, cinema, fashion and, yes, addiction therapy. All the suspects are here. And Clapton delivers precise insights into each and every one of them. (Including, of course, the narrator himself.)

Eric Clapton reveals the harrowing tale of his alcoholism and the carnage it created in his life (and the lives of those around him). He unloads the sordid details of his personal failings and the costs incurred. (I don't know much about books on addiction and recovery, but I'd bet this is one of the best books under that heading ever written.)

And, even when he's trying to get his act together, cruel fate deals him unimaginable grief and suffering.

Yet, Clapton perseveres and emerges the better for it. He dedicates himself to noble pursuits and stakes everything he has on them. And in doing so he is redeemed.

This is a great book. It's a compelling story told by a genuinely human narrator. And it is very well written. I didn't hesitate to give it five stars.

Louise says

Besides music, Eric Clapton can write prose. I wondered who the ghostwriter was, but towards the end he said he carried the drafts with him on tour. Not only is the book coherent in way many autobiographies are not, it appears to be an honest presentation of his life as he lived it.

Most autobiographers tell little jokes on themselves, but very few of will tell of their deepest disappointments in themselves. Clapton tells how tried to be sober to visit his son but thought of drinking the whole time with him (yes, the son who fell to his death at age 4). He tells how he longed for Patty/Layla while in other relationships (including with her sister) and how in pursuit of her, he got taken in (very strangely so) by a self described seer a continent away. He tells how his perceived (somewhat real, but not complete) rejection by his mother shaped his sexuality for years and specifically how some women rejected him. Most brutally, he tells the story of Alice who was 16 when he became involved with her.

There is insight into the music, the bands he joined and left, his respect for musicianship and craftsmanship. You learn the full story of "Layla" and that "Wonderful Tonight" was written in anger (fooled me!). He has disdain for the music business and the music he feels is written for the market.

Many biographers and autobiographers drop the parent relationship after the first chapter, and might give a death a page or two. Clapton describes the adult relationships (again in brutal honesty) he has with his mother, grandparents, step siblings and uncle. (As an aside, Bobby Darin had a similar childhood, but his mother's ruse lasted into adulthood; Clapton was luckier in that the secrets weren't kept very well.)

This book has not been well received by reviewers. Maybe the honesty is too raw, the treatment of women too objectified (but he wasn't alone: George Harrison was all too ready to swap his wife for a romp with her sister and Mick Jagger would easily hustle the women Clapton brought in his orbit) and the tone too interior. Maybe the ending (about family life and the drudge parts of touring) is dull compared with the rambling early life. Maybe it is his weak defense of/excuse for ("I'm not political") racist comments with no awareness of whose music made him wealthy. Maybe they think he should not have so many houses, cars or finance a boat with just one tour. Maybe they think he should express more grief for the people he hurt. Maybe they are evaluating the disturbing elements of his life and not the book.

This book can be valuable to anyone with an addiction in any phase of recovery and the people who care about them. It is also a primary source on the birth of the music industry. I think it is a 4 star, but I am giving it a 5 because its honesty. It might be able to help others accept their addictions and help reconcile what they did to conserve or deny the addiction. This unique period in musical history and the culture that made the music could use more honest documentation like this.

William says

After reading this I come away with a new perspective on this fellow.

The positives: i) he is obviously a very talented guitarist; ii) he has worked successfully to overcome his many personal demons, and; iii) he has extended a hand to help others overcome their personal demons.

The negative: this fellow seems more than a little self-absorbed and his closing talk about his yacht just about put me over the edge.

Julie Christine says

It wasn't until I started the autobiography that I considered why it appealed to me in the first place. I'm a rather indifferent fan of Clapton's/Cream/Derek & the Dominos, etc- Unplugged is the only album of his that I own. It was more of a curiosity about that era- the hardcore sex, drugs, rock & roll of the 70s- and to read about the experiences of someone who barely made it out alive that compelled me to read. As a child in the 70s, I was watching Mr Rogers when EC was writing Layla and wreaking havoc on his physical and mental health with heroin. But having older brothers meant that rock and roll played a major role in my life- I could sing along to Blue Oyster Cult, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd by the tender age of 8. Almost Famous is one of my favorite movies...

Clapton wrote this memoir at the age of 62, looking back with humility and not a small degree of wonder on a life that brought him fame, piles of cash, lasting friendships and a profound love of the blues and dedication to that musical genre. It also nearly killed him as he battled addictions to heroin, alcohol and doomed relationships.

He's not the most eloquent writer and I felt the most at loose ends when reading about his early days as a musician. He also seemed to keep an emotional distance from most of his personal relationships- particularly those in the 70s. It was more like a reporting of facts than an analysis of his actions and feelings. To be fair, he likely has a hard time recalling most of those years; but for his keeping a journal, most of the 70s and early 80s would be lost in a haze of highs and hangovers. But when addressing his addictions, particularly alcohol, and the process of recovery, his writing becomes quite articulate and almost tender.

His hardly knew his son Conor, who died in a horrible accident in the early 90s, and the depression & recovery that followed Conor's death seems to be the catalyst that created the far more humble and positive person he has become.

It's amazing that anyone could survive what he and so many others did to their bodies, their psyches (clearly, Hendrix, Morrison, Joplin, and many others did not). Makes me grateful for my dull life :) But there's no denying that we lived vicariously through these musicians & the romance of that lifestyle ended with the hyper-commercialism of the modern music industry.

Brendan says

His memoir, just like his life, is seemingly compelling at first and utterly vacuous at the end. Clapton's story starts out with a confusing childhood and then builds a bright flame of artistry on top. This all crumbles as his desire and dependency steer him to the brink self-destruction. But all of the compelling rock n' roll stories that should be in this autobiography are replaced with remorseful and arrogant AA/group-therapy recounts of his misadventures.

As he winds down his story I'm left, as a reader, wondering why am I reading this? The last several chapters read like a digest of his diary: Clapton gets married, clapton has kids, clapton goes on tour, claton gets homesick, clapton sees his kids and is happy, clapton is done with tour, clapton sits around and then goes fishing, clapton writes an autobiography. Who the fuck cares?

Donald says

Eric Clapton, guitar god, has written his autobiography, aptly titled *Clapton, The Autobiography*. It covers his entire life, from his poor upbringing, to the present day as happy family man. He addresses every phase of his personal and professional life, which is amazing in the fact that the book clocks in at only 328 pages. Maybe this is why, as honest as Clapton is, it left me wanting a bit more. For instance, during his drunk periods he admits to being "chauvinistic" to his then-wife Patti, and starting fights with various people, but he never actually gives the details. (Maybe I have to read Patti Boyd's autobiography if I want more.)

The overall read this memoir gives on Clapton's personality is one of obsession. From his love of the blues, to his infatuations with many women, to his desire to work with different musicians, to his abuse of drugs and alcohol. Everything is done full bore, damn the consequences. It took age and years of recovery for

Clapton to mature enough to start a family with his current wife, Melia, and settle into a less destructive lifestyle.

I give Clapton credit for being so forthcoming in his text, and admitting to faults and mistakes that most people would choose to keep hidden. Possibly being such a public figure for so long didn't really give him an option here; other people have and will write books, and some of the stories are already legend. But, still, I was almost embarrassed reading some of his adventures. Especially one in particular, that involved a strange woman who preyed on his vulnerability by claiming she could help him win back Patti with different spells. The situation gets way out of hand.

Maybe it was just a case of fighting a tight deadline, but I feel this book could have benefited with a stronger editor to guide the text. The writing was good (Clapton wrote it himself), but someone really needed to just step in a few places and ask for more here, and here, and here. John Lennon's murder wasn't even mentioned. Surely this must have affected Clapton in some way, even if it was just to concern himself with his own safety. Not to mention Clapton's friendship with George Harrison. Didn't he discuss this with Harrison, or call and console him about the death of his Beatle brother?

Despite my few problems with the book, I really found it to be a quick read and a real page turner. It allowed me, the reader, to get an intimate glimpse into the life and mind of one of the most successful artists of the last 40 years. And the glimpse isn't always a pretty picture.

Jason Koivu says

It seems as if Eric Clapton wrote this tell-all autobiography in an attempt to debunk the oft-heard graffiti-fied slogan "Clapton is God". If so, mission accomplished.

I've loved his music since I can remember, but I never really considered what he was like as a person. Turns out that he's an average joe, who can sometimes be a bit of a dick...like most average joes. He's got his reasons: illegitimacy, abandonment and a bevy of the usual childhood dramas. Clapton lays them out fairly generously and you have to give him credit for owning up to his less than stellar side.

Clapton will always hold a place in my heart for the work he did in the '60s with such legendary bands as the Yardbirds, Cream, Blind Faith, Derek and the Dominos, John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, and this is why I really read this book.

I would've been oh-so happy to read an entire book dedicated to his work during those years, but this is not it. And that's understandable. This is after all an autobiography about his entire life thus far and it's always best if those don't bog down in any one era of a person's life.

But considering the work he did in the '60s and how huge a rockstar Clapton is now, can you even imagine the level he'd be on if he didn't waste the greater part of the 70s and 80s drinking and doing drugs? I mean, this guy had serious addiction problems and once the book moves on to discuss that portion of his life it turns

almost entirely into a broken record, revolving around and around, detailing year after year how fucked up he was on coke and heroine. Then, once he finally kicked drugs, it became all about the booze. How he managed to live through the '70s and '80s, never mind actually put out albums and perform, is beyond me. By all rights the man should be dead after all the shit he's ingested.

I was fairly sure going in that I wasn't going to enjoy the book after he was done discussing his career in the '60s, but I read on and I don't regret it. It's a decently written book laid out with a linear timeline, so it's generally easy to follow.

Clapton knows quite a few famous and influential people, who get mentioned herein. He also seems to name just about every person whomever ever came into his life. Hell, his local pub landlord even gets a mention! It's nice that he shows his appreciation, however, it does bog down the story a little at times.

Clapton bravely tackles an embarrassing aspect of his life, his unfortunate racist comments, which he might have glossed over and I'd be none the wiser. He also touches upon the death of his child (which I do remember quite vividly) and his efforts to sober up, so for those who need to see a dose of humble repentance and redemption, you get a measure of it here.

All in all, this is a decent book for those looking to learn more about its author beyond just the music.

Pete daPixie says

'The Autobiography' from Eric Clapton, published in 2007, is perhaps a book I would never have read were it not for the fact that my better half picked this up for me at a local car boot sale. As expected E.C. fills the pages with the usual sixties excess of alcohol, sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. The family name is actually Clapp. Fortunately this was changed, otherwise that 60's graffiti would have been 'Clapp is God' which thankfully we were spared.

As Eric recounts his rise to rock music icon, from Yardbird to John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Cream, Blind Faith, Derek and the Dominoes and all the way to 461 Ocean Boulevard, the dedicated fan or casual reader will struggle to gain empathy or warm to this man. Clapton's autobiography grows into a full, frank and honest confessional of his struggle with life in the fast lane. A serial adulterer, heavy heroin use and after almost forty years of the booze, a full blown alcoholic.

Thankfully, this book really takes off when this man is on his knees. After rehab, relapse and more rehab, the demons and Eric's dark night of the soul are overcome. Recounted with a searing psychological analysis, the man's career and life are resurrected. Perhaps after reading this, that old sixties graffiti 'Clapton is God' is still misworship. However, there is no doubt, (and at the time of reading this, he is still on the road with a World Tour), funding his Crossroads rehab charity, with a settled and happy family life, he has found his soul and sobriety.

Well done Eric!

East Bay J says

I got into Eric Clapton because of The Yardbirds, who I got into because of Jimmy Page. Now, the story is that Clapton left The Yardbirds because they were "going pop" and he was a "blues purist." This bore out with his next band, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Then he started Cream, which was a little bluesy.

Sometimes. Blind Faith, same story. Then Clapton made *461 Ocean Boulevard* followed by, I don't know, *too many* tepid, mediocre, middle of the road albums, sometimes scoring a... that's right... pop hit. But the "blues purist" angle was pretty much out the window until the 90's. When his music was bluesy, it tended to follow what I think of as prescribed, by the numbers, modernized Chicago blues nonsense. This isn't to say *Me And Mr. Johnson* isn't a cool record or that there weren't good songs. It's more like Clapton's full of it.

Clapton's autobiography is a study in ego, arrogance, self absorption and self destruction. It comes off as Clapton apologizing for all the bad decisions and ruined lives he left behind him but it's a very insincere apology. It's like this guy really doesn't *feel* much. His childhood goes a long way towards explaining this but, geez louise.

The sharp contrast to this is when Clapton talks about his son's death and how this instigated him to become a better father to his other children. The boy's death was so tragic, senseless and horrible.

Clapton also talks about his rehab journey, setting up the Crossroads Foundation, helping friends kick their habits and so forth. I know he's a compassionate person, but it just doesn't come across in this book. And the way he talks about fashion, buying Ferraris and yachts, traveling, he comes off like a snob.

I was disappointed that he didn't talk more about the music and musicians from The Yardbirds, Cream, even Blind Faith or Derek & The Dominoes. Hey, Eric! You're a guitar player! It's nice you were a junkie and a father and a business man and whatever but you wouldn't even be Eric Clapton without the music. Imagine, a musician thinking they were interesting! What a laugh!

I kid, I kid.

***TUDOR^QUEEN* says**

Because of Clapton's connection to the Beatles via his close friend George Harrison, I was intrigued to read his autobiography. As we all know, he wooed Pattie Boyd Harrison away from George and later married her. I read Pattie Harrison's autobiography "Wonderful Tonight" which came out at almost the same time as Eric's.

Although I am not a fan of Clapton's music, I found his life story very interesting and even inspiring. His writing style was wonderful as it was as though he was truly speaking to the reader. He penned this himself, and it shows. He was honest throughout with his addictions, failed relationships, and the tragedy of losing his son Conor. This is a book with a happy ending, and that's where the inspiring part comes in. I came away from this book with hefty respect for this man. He triumphed over drug and alcohol addictions and began really living life as a result. Today his is happily married with four children and loving the normal life. Well done!

Gretchen says

If you're a music fan -- this book is fab. But, if you're interested in Eric Clapton's life, it's a little drab. You feel so sad for him as he chronicles his life spent in a haze of drugs and sex, even sacrificing for his music, but more than that, I was a little creeped out and even angry about his lack of respect for the poor women in

his life -- especially Patti Boyd, the "love of his life." By his own admission, he lacked maturity, but after a while, you think, come on, you're a rock star with lots and lots of money, the whole world is at your feet -- pick it up! Finally he does, but the wasted time is almost sickening to witness.

Carmen says

Wow. I'm not familiar with Clapton or his music. This book made him seem like a very selfish, inconsiderate individual. But it wasn't too boring. His struggles with heroin and alcohol were the most interesting. I don't really believe he loved/loves any woman...only himself. It's surprising that he comes off as so badly in his own words...I don't think he even realizes how unsympathetic a character he makes himself.

Negativni says

Najviše volim slušati klasični rock od 1965. do 1975. godine i to britanske bendove koji su napravili revoluciju i ponovno "izmislili" *blues rock*. Clapton je tu bio bitan igra?, a i jedan je od najboljih gitarista svih vremena. Nisam ga puno slušao, ali volim Cream i odličan mi je John Mayallov album Blues Breakers na kojem je svirao. Mislio sam da ću ga poželjeti više slušati dok budem čitao ovu autobiografiju - većinom tako bude kada čitam o nekom bendu ili glazbeniku - ali on piše tako suhoparno i ravnodušno da mi se činilo da čitam o nekoj kolekciji poštanskih markica, a ne o zanimljivoj glazbi.

Općenito je reportažni stil pisanja i to dosta loš, pa mi se čini da je ovo stvarno napisao sam bez pomoći neimenovanog profesionalnog pisca. Ta neispoliranost proze i sirovost čak daje i neku draž - pogotovu kada se ne štedi i ide u detalje u opisu svog problema s alkoholom koji ga je pratio gotovo cijeli život. U poznim godinama kada se više nije mogao nositi s problemom ovisnosti pronašao je Boga. Sad je mirniji, ne muči ga više krivnja, konačno može živjeti sa samim sobom i stvarima koje je napravio pod uticajem raznih opijata.

Ova knjiga je nekakva njegova poduža ispovijest i čini mi se da je to jedini razlog zašto ju je napisao, ne da bi nekom novom približio svoju glazbu ili da bi se prikazao u boljem svjetlu. Što je i pošteno te se slaže s njegovom glazbenom filozofijom; unatoč eksperimentiranju i virtuoznosti, on je oduvijek želio svirati samo sirovi izvorni blues.

Nisam nešto posebno uživao u čitanju ove autobiografije niti sam saznao nešto novo o Claptonu što bi me zanimalo, ali fanovima bi ovo moglo biti zanimljivije jer je, kako reko, ovo izvorni Clapton.

Max Fetter says

Eric Clapton's attempt at writing an interesting account of his life was pretty much a failure.

I read the book because I am a Clapton fan (though not a huge one), because I had read another rock star's (Anthony Kiedis) drug-related biography and thoroughly enjoyed it, and because my mom got it for me so I felt obligated to do so. From beginning to end, I found rare interest in anything the knight had to record

about himself. Unfortunately, I am writing this well over a year after reading it, but I can fairly attest to the repetitiveness of his writing. What I enjoyed most was hearing about his influences and all the great blues musicians that got him started. After that, hearing about his infidelity, drug-abuse, and how he treated his friends and family made me really despise the man. It was dreadful to hear about his son's tragic death, however with such a sad story, he could have presented a truly poignant piece...but he let that opportunity to get the reader more involved in his life slip away. The way he portrayed his life basically seemed cold, distant, and an overall let-down. He did seem to have an interesting life, but I believe he should have let someone write it for him.

(Editing this review in 2016 to add that it wasn't his drug abuse itself that made me despise him, but it in relation to how he treated the people that loved him. Having an affair with one of his best friend's wives (George Harrison's) and writing a song about her (Layla) while they were still married is one of the things I remember best. Since having read the book, I've also discovered how bigoted he is toward foreigners to the UK or Brits that he (mis)judges for their heritage alone. He is even more despicable to me now, and it stands out as especially ironic that he was so influenced by black musicians, many of whom he called friends.)
