



Innocent When You Dream: The Tom Waits Reader

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Over the past three decades, Tom Waits has achieved the kind of top-shelf cult status most artists only dream about. In his varied career, he has acted alongside Jack Nicholson, Meryl Streep, and Lily Tomlin; his songs have been covered by artists as diverse as Bruce Springsteen, Sarah McLachlan, the Eagles, and the Ramones; he's won two Grammys, a Golden Globe, and been nominated for an Oscar; he's coined unforgettable phrases like "better a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy" and "champagne for my real friends, real pain for my sham friends"; and he's made anyone who's ever listened to his music just that much cooler. Here is Tom Waits in all his mischievous splendor. From a New Yorker "Talk of the Town" in 1976 to an interview by Terry Gilliam in 1999; from album reviews by Luc Sante and David Fricke to conversations with Elvis Costello and Roberto Benigni; from a recent profile in GQ to "20 Questions" in Playboy and reviews of Waits's acclaimed new album, *Real Gone*, this is the must-have book for every fan of the artist Beck has described as a "luminary," and for music fans everywhere.

Innocent When You Dream: The Tom Waits Reader Details

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Konstantinos says

? αλλι?ς διαφορα κομμ?τια της βιογραφ?ας του μυστηρι?δους και εκκεντρικο? αυτο? καλλιτ?χνη που εκτυλ?σσονται μ?σα απ? ?ρθα ? συζητ?σεις του με δι?φορους καλλιτ?χνες και δημοσιογρ?φους σε εκπομπ?ς, καφ? κλπ ?τσι ?πως θ?λει ο ?διος να μαθευτο?ν μ?σα απ? τη δικ? του επιβ?λλουσα μυθοπλασ?α...

Αν ?ταν ?τσι, τ?σο εναλλακτικ? δοσμ?νες οι βιογραφ?ες, σ?γουρα θα ε?χα διαβ?σει πολλ?ς, ?μως εδ? μιλ?με και για ?ναν ενδιαφ?ρον ?νθρωπο, π?ρα απ? λατρευ?νο καλλιτ?χνη!!

adder_r says

THE VOICE OF TOM WAITS

A scabrous rasp,
like shattering glass,
bumping-along-the-bottom voice
that haunted million hangovers.

A voice found in an ashtray,
clattering from an unkempt, gravel throat,
a rough grit of sandpaper,
a barking dog at best.

Lupine howl and frogman croak,
a worn-out shoe of a voice
that sounds like he was born old,
born smoking.

A devil-horned carnival barker,
three-pack-a-day Romeo wheezing,
that yelps and screams and croons
and pleads and threatens.

Clashing vocal overtones surrounding a note,
the way a clot forms around a gash
from the shock of first hearing it.

Heartsick, lonely and confiding,
gravelly, raspy, and whisky-warped,
tender, melancholy, and in love.

Tom Waits has a voice
that could guide ships through dense fog.

PERSONAL NOTE

I read this book in a movie-themed hotel room in San Francisco. I had the window open and there were ripe hobos partying outside in the heatwave. I was drinking white wine and eating turkey jerky in my pants. Ah, conference life.

Gusmenary says

Y'know when you really want to be someone really really bad, but you know that your existence is probably much more enjoyable and that by choosing to be them you'd be shortening your life by at the very least, like, thirty years so you sort of downgrade yourself to wanting to be best friends with them, but not like ordinary best friends but more like brothers that share all their awesome secrets and have some sort of twin language, but then you realize that your age difference and complete lack of anything in common will probably negate that but you don't care cause I WILL SOMEDAY BE TOM WAITS. It's kinda like that.

Mariana says

I would love, love, love it if Tom wrote some kind of autobiography or something, but as that is extremely unlikely I have to make do with reading other people's, usually journalists', descriptions (the ubiquitous gravelly-voiced, dressed as a hobo description in almost every opening paragraph started to grate after a while). This means battling with writing styles and egos that cannot match the man himself. A few of the articles were really enjoyable, one in particular for GQ by Elizabeth Gilbert stood out for me, some of them were repetitive and banal and some of them just didn't seem to tie in at all with the picture I have created by listening obsessively to his music over the years.

Interesting overall. 3.5 stars.

Andy says

There are three phases of Tom Waits career: in the Seventies he was the Hollywood hipster-beatnik of Asylum Records fame, in the Eighties he was the junkyard dog of hobo blues, and in the Nineties and thereafter he was the carnival barker/German cabaret ringmaster of dense sounds.

The best part of the book is where it goes far beneath the layer of Waits' tall tales and exposes his lonely childhood in search of a surrogate father after losing his at age 11. The segments where he discusses his wife Kathleen are equally touching.

This collection of articles and interviews captures every phase of his wild years equally. I have to confess after I read this I went out and bought Blood Money and Bad As Me, so if you don't think music bios are the best advertising, well think again.

Kiko says

Me encuentro, sin considerarme ni mucho menos un seguidor de Tom Waits, leyendo con ávido placer este elegante Conversaciones, entrevistas y opiniones (Global Rhythm, 2007), que incluye un prólogo del orondo

Frank Black (Pixies) y ha sido traducido al castellano por Ignacio Juliá (codirector de la revista Ruta 66). Estructurado en tres bloques principales, Mac Montandon ha reunido diferentes textos publicados en multitud de medios mundiales –la representación española recae sobre El País de las tentaciones- desde los años setenta y hasta el lanzamiento de Real gone (Anti, 2004).

En ellos se intenta profundizar en la figura de Waits a través de críticas de discos, charlas en lugares descuajaringados o crónicas llenas de pianos borrachos –él no- e instrumentos imaginados –su segunda y más extensa parte-. Cada autor intenta, a su manera, un acercamiento a su obra, al aspecto de su voz colmada de bourbon o a la misteriosa figura de Kathleen Brennan, su esposa, quien posee “las cuatro virtudes: belleza, brillantez, valentía y cerebro”, y a la que podemos tachar de culpable del giro estilístico y vital de Waits tras Swordfishtrombones (Island, 1983).

También hay palabras para su faceta cinematográfica, conversaciones con Jim Jarmusch y Elvis Costello, constantes referencias a sus autores favoritos, como Jack Kerouac o Charles Bukowski –cuyo poema Nirvana sirve para cerrar esta antología-, y una ristra importante de frases para el recuerdo más allá de las que podemos encontrar en sus temas. Canciones que sirvieron para que la revista Rolling Stone lo retratara hace unos años como “el cronista de los grotescos perdedores del submundo sórdido”, y algún iluminado sentenciara que Waits “sería el Springsteen de Estados Unidos si ésta fuera una tierra desahuciada y extraña llena de monstruos de circo”.

Juju says

In the absence of an autobiography or a novel from ol' Tom A'Bedlam this book collects articles and interviews that span his career from Closing Time in '73 to Real Gone in '04. Far from being a collection of facts, this is a trip through Tom's World... maybe a trip down the stairs. Told by someone who is a story himself, it's like being kidnapped and taken onboard a pirate ship made from old 1950's cars and falling in with a crew who don't loot for gold,... they're looking for junk, old musical instruments, out of the way Cuban-Chinese restaurants, thrift store clothes and stories, mostly stories.

The interview with Jim Jarmusch is worth the price of admission alone.

Carol says

This book is an anthology of articles and interviews spanning Tom Waits' career up until about 2004, when Real Gone was released. I am a huge fan of Tom Waits, so I really enjoyed this book. Montandon did a good job of choosing material; many of the articles offered good insights and the interviews gave an entertaining and informative impression of Waits' character and personality. Although there was some good information about Waits' music-making and artistic themes, the majority of the material was written for general interest publications, so there is not a lot of in-depth analysis. There was also the slight failing of a lot of repetition; this, however, is more a pitfall of the type of book this is rather than a fault of the editor or featured writers.

Herzog says

This is now dated (the last article from 2004) and repetitious. Anthologies like this don't usually work for

me. Mostly it's Tom spinning his yarns with a couple of insightful reviews. Put down this book, put on Real Gone.

Andrei Alupului says

If you like Tom Waits and you need something to read on the toilet, a book of interviews with Tom Waits is pretty okay for that.

Hannah Eiseman-Renyard says

Musical one-off and self-styled blues hobo Tom Waits shoots the breeze

Chances are if you're willing to pick up and read this book, you already love Tom Waits, and are curious enough about his persona to want to learn more. To know more fully about the man who evokes a subterranean bohemia with songs such as 'The Piano Has Been Drinking (not me)' and 'Bad Liver and a Broken Heart.' However, given that Waits has compared speaking to the press as 'a bit like talking to a cop' – it's perhaps no great surprise that the autobiographical details are a little thin on the ground.

This book features pieces from CREEM, Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, NME, Playboy, GQ, and The Onion to name but a few. The collection does two parallel things: on the one hand it charts the career of a pretty amazing musician, on the other hand - it sells the *idea* of Tom Waits - a slice of Americana which the waitress probably dropped on the diner floor but still served it up, anyway.

Most of the articles begin with the palpable glee of the journalist rubbing their eager little hands together, trying to work out where to start describing this man. One writer in this collection described trying to keep up with Waits in conversation as like trying to go for a walk with someone who happens to be evading assassins. Most of the pieces end with the audience only a fraction wiser about what actually makes the man tick, but with some pretty unlikely images, interesting facts and brilliant witticisms wandering around their minds instead. "People who can't cope with drugs turn to reality," "Fire is just the sun unwinding itself from the wood," "She's a diamond in the rough that wants to stay coal," - to name but three which have stuck with me.

By the end of this book, having read various interviews spanning thirty years - the only thing you have to go on to work out if any given story is true or not is the frequency with which Waits tells the story. Was he born in a taxicab? Has he met the Marlboro Man's mother? Does he actually know all the regulars of the latest dive he's invited the interviewer to? It's impossible to tell what's invented and what's real, but what you miss in concrete fact is amply made up for in Waits' enthusiasm, wit and oddball take on the world. Describing the world as he sees it: scenes of smokey bars, petty crooks, 'warm beer and cold women.'

Waits is by turns tragic, dazzling, hilarious and often oddly tender - the beatnik spirit of Burroughs and Kerouac reborn, and still snarling at suburbia. The writers gathered for this collection are pretty damn good too - and there's a very interesting key change when the interviewer is someone like Jim Jarmusch who Waits has frequently worked with.

The only downside I'd say to this book is that my attention seriously started to flag about two thirds in. It's a

lot of interviews going over the same territory - and even with a Class-A Bullshitter like Waits to navigate around the journalists' questions - it's inevitably going to drag at some point.

What Waits lets journalists in on is more of a character concept, and he does his best to keep him away from all nameable homelife facts such as anything about his wife, kids, where he lives - or even where he's been in the seven year gap since his last album ("traffic school.") That said, his character concept of the mad old blues hobo is pretty incredible, and well worth reading about.

Some absolute Beat beauts (if a little repetitive.) Welcome to his world. It won't take you anywhere, but it's worth the ride.

Jade Lopert says

Warning: The following review is written by a huge Tom Waits fan, so that colors everything.

The Tom Waits mythos is huge. Part of the sheer size of it has everything to do with the man himself. He has a flair for story telling, not only in his songs, but also in telling his personal history. Waits is very content to spin stories to make sure that people don't know too much about him.

Innocent When You Dream is a collection of interviews and reviews of albums and shows from the beginning of his career to the late 90's/early 00's. Here we see the man vacillate between being charming and curmudgeon-y. We see the tales sprinkled with just enough truth to keep everyone guessing. It's fascinating when it isn't a bit repetitive. Unfortunately interviews that are close in time to each other end up sharing much of the same quotes and tidbits. It's the nature of the thing, but it does make it occasionally feel like you're suffering from a bit of déjà vu. Even with that, though, this is pretty much a must read for any fan. Even if you're not a fan, a peek into his brain and his process is a fascinating thing.

But mostly you're only going to be interested if you're a fan.

York says

Uy! Este libro me lo encontré en mi primer visita al Sótano de Guadalajara, y cuando lo vi me le lancé encima como si todos en la librerías estuvieran dispuestos a matar por él.

Pues yo sí!

Después de Bob Dylan... Tom Waits es uno de los músicos que más admiro... Annie lo definió lindo el otro día: Waits es un genio intensamente desgarrador.

Y me moría de curiosidad por saber de dónde demonios salió este tipo.

Hay muchas entrevistas, algunas crónicas donde se asoman de forma cotidiana los destellos de su genialidad. La historia sobre Hold On y Take it Me valen todo el bendito libro. Dejé de dormir por leer esto y fue una de las lecturas más felices que he tenido en mi vida.

Por más mamón que suene: Creo que Tom Waits es el San Pedro en ese olimpo de genios musicales.

RandomAnthony says

Can the author of this book really be called an author? He just gathers all the articles and interviews he can find associated with Mr. Waits and puts them in a book. Oh well, I thank him for his efforts anyway. The interviews are better than the articles...too often people describing Tom Waits try to SOUND like Tom Waits, and they can't pull it off. Put the microphone in front of Mr. Waits and keep your mouth shut and you've got all the story you need. Fun to read.

Philip Costea says

I can't remember the first time I heard Tom, but I remember when I first heard him I thought, "Man, this guy's wild!" and since then I haven't heard or seen of anyone as creative or interesting. Assorted descriptions of his voice are as follows: gravelly, raspy, whiskey-warped, sounds like he was born old, born smoking, a cherry bomb and a clown...a voice found at the bottom of an ashtray.

This book is a collection of interviews, reviews, and there's a bit too much repetition in questions and answers (almost as if some of these journalists were very repetitive in their questions or Tom just wised up and answered the same way). Starts with some "ok" writing about the beginning of his career, but there's not enough substance until you get to Robert Wilonsky's piece and Elizabeth Gilbert's interview. Wilonsky knows what he's talking about and it's creative and accurate. Gilbert approaches him from a much more tender, and personal place. Either way, I recommend this for fans just like me. I need to listen to him when I feel the need to be creative in anything I'm doing at the moment. True poet!
