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Wild Tales: A Rock & Roll Life

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Synopsis

From Graham Nashâ ”the legendary musician and founding member of the iconic bands Crosby, Stills & Nash and The Holliesâ ”comes a candid and riveting autobiography that belongs on the reading list of every classic rock fan.Â Graham Nash’s songs defined a generation and helped shape the history of rock and rollâ ”heâ ™s written over 200 songs, including such classic hits as "Carrie Anne," â œOn A Carousel,â • "Simple Man," "Our House," â œMarrakesh Express,â • and "Teach Your Children." From the opening salvos of the British Rock Revolution to the last shudders of Woodstock, he has rocked and rolled wherever music mattered. Now Graham is ready to tell his story: his lower-class childhood in post-war England, his early days in the British Invasion group The Hollies; becoming the lover and muse of Joni Mitchell during the halcyon years, when both produced their most introspective and important work; meeting Stephen Stills and David Crosby and reaching superstardom with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; and his enduring career as a solo musician and political activist.Â Nash has valuable insights into a world and time many think they know from the outside but few have experienced at its epicenter, and equally wonderful anecdotes about the people around him: the Beatles, the Stones, Hendrix, Cass Elliot, Dylan, and other rock luminaries. From London to Laurel Canyon and beyond, Wild Tales is a revealing look back at an extraordinary lifeâ ”with all the highs and the lows; the love, the sex, and the jealousy; the politics; the drugs; the insanityâ ”and the sanityâ ”of a magical era of music.

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Customer Reviews

Here we have a self-proclaimed artistic genius who has conquered the worlds of music, art and

photography, tackling a memoir. After all, how hard can it be? Simply pour out everything you can remember about your childhood and musical career, rearrange it here and there, add some music for e-book readers, and there you are. Don’t allow any competent editing, because that would reduce the size of the book by about half.The first third to half of the book is by far the most interesting, detailing Nash’s childhood in the north of England, a hardscrabble existence punctuated by his father’s incarceration for a year for a minor crime. His childhood friendship with Allan Clarke and the story of their meeting the Everly Brothers is endearing, as is his first unplanned session of singing harmony with David Crosby and Stephen Stills. The latter experience resulted in the birth of CSN and directed Nash’s future career path. It is interesting to read of the origins of some of CSN’s iconic songs, such as Teach Your Children and Our House.Then Nash starts to tell us both less and more than we want to know about the subsequent history of CSN/CSNY. Drug and alcohol abuse by Crosby and Nash, and Neil Young’s pain in the neck personality constantly contributed to drama in the recording studio and on the concert trail, but interestingly, while Nash smoked, snorted, and drank as much as any of them, he was never responsible for any of these problems. He says he could have quit cocaine any time; you see, he doesn’t have an "addictive personality," so drugs were not a problem for him. Along the way, he is an unabashed name dropper--he doesn’t miss mentioning any of the great rock ’n’ roll performers and bands of the day at least once, and many get repeat mentions without advancing the narrative one whit. And does he need to mention every benefit concert performed by CSN/CSNY over the years? You bet, stuff them all in. Nash glibly proclaims that since the No Nukes concerts of the early 80’s, no new nuclear plants have been built in the U.S. Oh, I hadn’t realized that the concerts were the reason for that. There must be about a thousand other reasons that could be cited.Lastly, Nash spits out his no war/environmental philosophies in a bumper sticker style, substituting invective for logic. I am generally in agreement with his views, but not on the basis of the shallow reasoning he presents. Again, the absence of a strong editor is a glaring defect. The last half of the book was a slog, and I had to force myself to finish it. The e-book musical snippets are a nice feature, but Nash overreaches by jamming in far too many of them at the end to further demonstrate his musical genius. I suppose you could argue that more music and fewer words in this memoir would have been a good thing.

Perhaps the most brilliant memoir I’ve ever had the opportunity to read!! Just ordered ten of them to give out as gifts this Christmas.It would seem obvious to even the casual observer that an autobiography of one of the biggest rock stars in history, would probably be a book replete with tales of sex, drugs, and rock and roll; a book laden with stories of decadences and dalliances, and of

living life to the excess. Well don’t worry, Nash pulled no punches here, and those stories all there for the taking but that’s NOT what this book is about. Wild Tales is about so much more than that. In the end, it is about the music transcending all else, about people, about family, and most of all about LOVE, FRIENDSHIP and LOYALTY. I picked up the book and was literally transfixed for hour after hour, unable to put it down until I got to the last of it’s 360 pages before starting again from the beginning. I laughed, and I cried, over and over again, learning as much about love as I learned about loss. The stories were just so mesmerizing, and seemed to flow so naturally, that for that one brief moment I was transported back in time and witnessing first hand the seemingly cathartic retelling of the most amazing events in musical history cloaked in the wrapper of a life lived with honor, integrity, caring and commitment, by someone who may well have been one of the few islands of saneness in a generation where sanity was hard to come by.Interspersed with stories of love triumphing over all, we are taken to the places all of us may wish we could have been, as Nash lays down a historical record for us, and for future generations, of glimpses into musical history, many of which had never before been documented. We learn how with the support of his parents, a young man growing up in abject poverty, wasn’t allowed to fall into the trap of many of his peers, working in the mills or the mines, and was instead allowed to pursue his passion for music."When I was back in England, I went to visit my mother, whose health had been in a steady decline. " "...I’d been carrying around a question for 25 years that my mother could only answer with some serious reflection. I wanted to know why all of my friends had been forced to get a real job when they turned 16, and I’d never gotten that pressure, especially from my mom." Because, Graham," she said, "you are living the life I wanted for myself." She said, "Believe it or not, I thought I had a pretty nice voice and wanted to be on stage, to be a singer like you. I thought I had something to offer with my talent. But World War II came and I married and had three kids - and the dream was over for me. So you are doing what I wanted to do.""A few years later, after my mother had passed, I found myself describing this conversation one night while Crosby and I were playing Carnegie Hall." "My mother wanted to be on the stage," I said, "and I thought how great it would be if she had made it to Carnegie Hall. As I spoke, I reached into my right-hand pocket, into which I had slipped a few of my mothers ashes, and I started to sprinkle them on the stage." "Mom, you finally made it!"We learn about the lifelong relationship Nash would have with artists such as the Stones, Eric Clapton, Mama Cass, The Everly Brothers, and of course, the Beatles."On Sunday morning, June 25, 1967, I was awakened by a phone call at my house in Kynance Mews...not my favorite way of waking up, but still I sleepily answered it. It was Paul McCartney, and I was awake immediately. Paul invited me down to Abbey Road, where he and the boys were about to put on a live show for the whole world.

Using the new Telstar satellite, and the BBC, the Beatles were going to be singing a song (All You Need is Love) representing the best that Britain had to offer." It was going to be the first worldwide television show - broadcast to some 400 million people."The most amazing tales however were those that transcended music itself, and really just spoke to the true meaning of friendship. We learn how Nash's love for his musical partner David Crosby, would lead to his spear-heading an intervention to save him from the drugs that took so many others, way too young. How when David seemed to have lost it all, Graham stepped in and bought up his publishing rights, to protect them from creditors, and how he took his dear friend, despondent and nearly suicidal over the death of Christine Hinton, and got him away from the madness and out onto the open seas in David's boat, The Mayan, an effort that no doubt saved his life.Of course we are told of the workings of the inner of the music industry, from the forming, dissolving, and re-forming of all the best bands in history, to David Geffen being thrown in a pool, to how Nash agreed to listen to the 15 year old son their managers neighbor, who begged to have them listen to the songs he had written, and how he and Hollies co-founder Allan Clarke sat there transfixed as this little kid, Michael Gouldman, belted out "...Bus stop, wet day, she's there I say, Please share my umbrella" and "Look through, any window, yeah, what do you see...." He wasn't done, of course, and went on to write "For Your Love," and "Heart Full of Soul" for the Yardbirds, and ultimately form a band we know as 10cc.While I found myself spellbound reading the tales of the visionary Ahmet Ertegen, the often confusing relationship with Neil Young, and of course knowing at last just what some of my favorite songs are really about, my personal favorites are those glimpses into the two loves of his life, Joni Mitchell, and of course his amazing wife Susan, who he describes eloquently as one of the most amazing people in the world. Pouring his feelings out onto the page, you can feel just how deeply and passionately Nash truly cares about the people who are special to him. Whether he's talking about his pride in his three wonderful children, his love of his new grand-daughter Stellar Joy, his musical partners, his friends, or just his fellow members of the human race, he is truly one who lays it all out on the table and is willing to give of himself to enrich the lives of all he touches.As Rock and Roll memoirs go, Wild Tales is sure to be an instant classic, and a must have addition to any rock and roll fans library. More than that, however, it's a mesmerizing read presented by a true man of the world, who teaches us about how friendship and love transcends music, and that the secret to thriving in a tumultuous world, is in letting your passions guide you, and giving back to those around you at each and every turn.

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