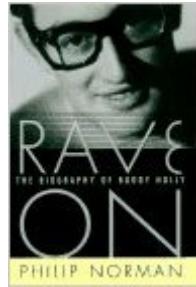


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Rave On: The Biography Of Buddy Holly



Synopsis

Drawing on interviews with almost everyone who ever associated with Holly, including his widow, a biography creates a vivid picture of a young man who took the American music scene by storm and then died suddenly in a tragic plane crash. 25,000 first printing.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (18 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I needed to read this book because all I knew about Buddy Holly, other than a dozen or so evergreen songs, was that movie, "The Buddy Holly Story," which is hardly accurate. Philip Norman gives you a much better sense of what Buddy's brief moment in the spotlight was all about. It was brief, just over a year and a half from the time he and his band, the Crickets, hit the U.S. charts with "That'll Be The Day" in the summer of 1957 to the fateful flight from Mason City, Iowa on February 3, 1959. It's hard to imagine making as much of the time as Buddy Holly did of his, starting a career, a business partnership, and a family, not to mention writing music that revolutionized rock n' roll. Norman gives you a good sense of how Holly did this, in a book that is a clear work of love, not ignoring negative elements of the story but striving to put them in less lurid context. One weakness of the book is that this sometimes gets in the way (Holly's alleged gambling problems, dwelt on in other books, is only mentioned once in passing, while a tale backup Cricket guitarist Niki Sullivan offers up about Holly getting a girl pregnant is thrown up only to be knocked down in backhanded fashion.) But the overwhelming sense one gets from reading "Rave On" is Norman's contention that Buddy had everything going for him except luck. I liked especially the English context of this book. Norman, a British author, pays close attention to Holly and the Crickets' impact on the British music

scene, where he was a bigger sensation than his native land. Occasionally, as when the Crickets visit the U.K.

There's no shortage of books about Buddy Holly. Not knowing where to begin, I dived into Philip Norman's 1996 bio first. Norman is an engaging writer and I had no problem absorbing RAVE ON's 315 pages in the space of two days. Unfortunately, I cannot recommend the book for anyone except casual music fans who don't need or expect anything more than the average rockstar hagiography. Because that's all this book is: nothing more, nothing less. In these pages we learn that Buddy Holly was a perfect being who never did anything wrong. If anything bad happened, or if a record didn't meet expectations, it must have been someone else's fault. Don't get this book expecting to learn much about Lubbock, West Texas, or the region's music scene in the '40s and '50s. In common with most rock writers, Norman has no interest in or knowledge of country music, so the crucial formative years of 1940s-1954 are terribly botched as Norman stumbles through country, bluegrass, and western swing with no compass to guide him, confusing all three and greatly overstating the influence of bluegrass on Holly while understating western swing in the process. Had Norman known anything about the latter, for example, he would have known that western swing groups routinely used drummers, so his statement that Elvis's addition of a drummer to his band in 1955 was "an outrage" to country music fans is ludicrous. The fact that he states in the very next paragraph that Buddy got his drummer from a local western band demonstrates the limits of Norman's historical imagination, a failing that pervades the rest of the book. Facts are given, but context and nuance are often in short supply, or completely distorted. Why did Elvis and rock and roll catch on faster in conservative West Texas than almost anywhere else in America?

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