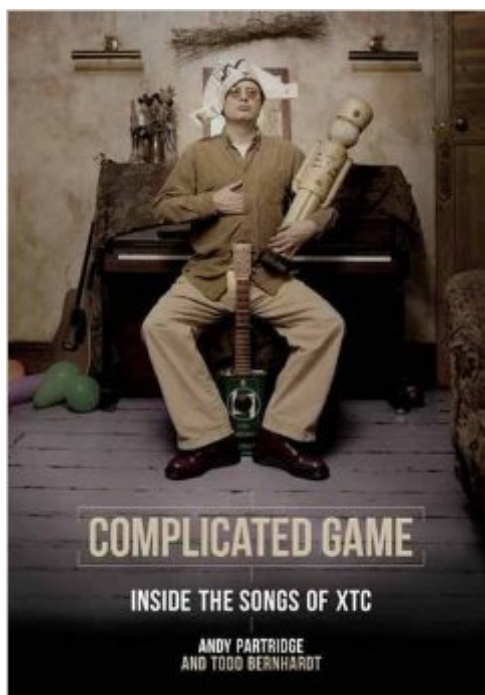


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Complicated Game: Inside The Songs Of XTC



Synopsis

"I like accidents. I like to put myself in the way of musical harm. I like being at the wheel of that musical car, and aiming it at the wall, just to see what shape the car's going to come out. It might come out an interesting shape that would have taken me forever to decide on otherwise." *Complicated Game* offers unique insight into the work of XTC founder Andy Partridge, one of Britain's most original and influential songwriters. It is also an unprecedentedly revealing and instructive guide to how songs and records are made. Developed from a series of interviews conducted over many months, it explores in detail some thirty of Partridge's songs - including such well-known singles as 'Senses Working Overtime' and the controversial 'Dear God' - from throughout XTC's thirty-year career, as well as an extensive interview dedicated solely to the art and craft of songwriting. While the interviews cast new light on the writing of lyrics, the construction of melodies and arrangements, the process of recording, and the workings of the music industry, they are also filled with anecdotes about Partridge, his XTC bandmates, and their adventures around the world - all told with the songwriter's legendary humour. This fascinating book also includes pages from Partridge's songwriting notebooks and reproductions of his original artwork designs; a guided tour of his hometown of Swindon; and a foreword by Steven Wilson, the guitarist, songwriter, and record producer best known as the founder and leader of Porcupine Tree.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Andy Partridge's enthusiasm for discussing his work is infectious, and he never fails to respond to

Todd Bernhardt's questions with some combination of wit and self-effacing reflection and brutal honesty. He denies being too knowledgeable about the technical aspects of music-making and songwriting, but I think he underestimates himself on that. He's a songwriter and musician who thinks deeply about how to convey his ideas in words and music, and his memory of decades gone by serves him well. For me, it's a real page-turner. Great questions from Bernhardt that will satisfy the most hardcore fan, and also an entertaining overview of Partridge's town of Swindon in the introduction by John Morrish. Some cool visuals, too, from Andy's notebook.

Lots of fun to get behind the nooks and crannies of many of the greatest - and densest - pop songs of the past 30 odd years. Left me very much looking forward to Vol. 2, which Andy indicated could be coming if this book does well...and it should if we inhabit anything close to a just world. Hint, hint Andy and Todd, (and Colin too...I would love to learn more about Angry Young Men, Bungalow, Frivolous, Affiliated, The Good Things, etc.) If you are a fan of XTC, this is a must read. And if you are a fan of good music who is only remotely familiar with the XTC catalog, please purchase every one of their records immediately, listen to them 15-20 times sequentially, and then buy this book and read it with the dewy-eyed glee of a archeologist suddenly unearthing multiple manifestations of (at least somewhat) forgotten genius.

A unique insight into the mind of one of the most influential songwriters of the last 40 years. This book takes the form of a conversation between a writer (and uber-fan) and the musician - and delves into the place and time that shaped each of a number of songs written and performed by XTC. A must-have for fans of the band.

If you're an XTC fan or just a fan of the musical producing process, this is an incredible book. The book is incredibly easy to read as it is conducted in a question and answer format. Andy Partridge's friend Todd Bernhardt asks Andy a question (in bold) and Andy comments or answers in a free form reply. Todd seems quite familiar with XTC and Andy and knows which questions to ask Andy and the responses are often quite humorous and/or surprising. It's been a true joy to read this book as it makes Andy and the rest of the band (which Andy often heaps plenty of praise upon) more real to those of us who have never seen them in concert. (Especially important since XTC stopped touring in the early 80s) The only drawback to this book is that it left me wanting more. There are certain songs that I wanted to hear about which Todd and Andy never got to. But who knows? Maybe if this book is popular, they'll get around to writing "Complicated Game, Vol 2" :)

Fun read as Andy Partridge explains how XTC songs came together. Clever and funny he even tells a bit about the actual chord changes and how he came up with them. Covers the whole XTC history, but not every song.

Excellent reading! Get inside Andy Partridge's world and mind throughout the pages of this book. 5 out of 5 stars!

This is not only a great book about Andy Partridge and XTC, it is a book about the process of songwriting and mechanics of recording. There are many incredible stories and a wealth of detail available about the bits and pieces that go into his style of songwriting, it's hard not to come out of with ideas and a new perspective. Done in interview style by the very knowledgeable Todd Bernhardt, this book is made all the better by Todd's experience as a recording artist and songwriter. I highly recommend this book.

I give it 5 stars as Complicated Game accomplishes exactly what it sets out to do -- and more. Through 30 lengthy interviews, each based upon a Partridge-penned song, Andy and Todd Bernhardt touch upon every XTC album and era. I initially hesitated to purchase this, thinking it would contain little information I hadn't already come across in previous interviews. I was swayed by the density of the book (it's almost 400 pages), and I am very satisfied with the purchase. The in-depth analysis of each song's genesis, breakdown of structure, scansion, and recording notes may not appeal much to the casual fan, but are exactly what make this essential to XTC fans or anyone who is interested in songcraft. In fact, the latter may be this work's greatest legacy. Look no further for proof that the "art" of songwriting is nothing that can be taught in a semester course, rather an uneasy mix-up of experimentation, obsession, stream-of-consciousness, economic hardship, dumb luck, psychosis, and divine providence. Andy is typically effervescent, acerbic, and witty, so much so that his rapid-fire associating sometimes catches the interviewer off-guard, or leaves him behind completely. In the end it doesn't matter. No matter how it came about, this is essential reading.

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(Complicated Coloring)
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