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The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics



Synopsis

Celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the most popular and enduring band ever: "Even the most hardcore Deadheads will be impressed by this obsessively complete look at the Grateful Dead's lyrics" • (Publishers Weekly). The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics is an authoritative text, providing standard versions of all the original songs you thought you knew forwards and backwards. These are some of the best-loved songs in the modern American songbook. They are hummed and spoken among thousands as counterculture code and recorded by musicians of all stripes for their inimitable singability and obscure accessibility. How do they do all this? To provide a context for this formidable body of work, of which his part is primary, Robert Hunter has written a foreword that goes to the heart of the matter. And the annotations on sources provide a gloss on the lyrics, which goes to the roots of Western culture as they are incorporated into them. An avid Grateful Dead concertgoer for more than two decades, David Dodd is a librarian who brings to the work a detective's love of following a clue as far as it will take him. Including essays by Dead lyricists Robert Hunter and John Perry and Jim Carpenter's original illustrations, whimsical elements in the lyrics are brought to light, showcasing the American legend that is present in so many songs. A gorgeous keepsake edition of the Dead's official annotated lyrics, The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics is an absolute must-have for the fiftieth anniversary "you won't think of this cultural icon the same way again. In fact, founding band member Bob Weir said: "This book is great. Now I'll never have to explain myself."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A book seriously marred by cut and paste journalism. Magnificent in places, this 2005 book (or 2015 re-issue) does deliver its basic promise: lots of lyrics, plenty of annotations. It rises above that basic bar to occasional dramatic excellence, as in a four-page essay by John Barlow on "Cassidy". It gives helpful facts without which one is not likely to understand a song. Example: "Bertha" was inspired by an electric fan nicknamed Bertha in the Dead's office that would walk itself across the floor when running. "running, running, running". Who would have guessed? On the downside, there are some annotations of little value. And other places where literal thinkers could use exposition of poetic fancy. The useless annotations are mostly mindless cut-and-paste entries. For example, note 4 on "Friend of the Devil" explains Utah, but adds nothing to our understanding of the lyrics. True, Utah was the 45th to unite with the other states. That's not useful information. Utah could have been one the original 13, or the last one to become one of the United States. That it was 45th does not help us understand "spent the night in Utah". It could have been worse. The note could have also told us Utah has four letters, the third of which is the first letter of the alphabet. I had hoped the annotations would include many expositions. There are few. The song "Ripple" is a fine addition to the age long discussion of primal causation. It offers "I don't know" in answer to the question "How did the universe get here?" The haiku chorus leads us to ponder how there could be a ripple, how could there be a universe, a planet, humanity (and nuthatches that fly off for the winter)?

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