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R.E.M. : Talk About The Passion : An Oral History (Updated Edition)



Synopsis

The voices of nearly sixty R.E.M. insiders' friends, musicians, producers, and industry colleagues' comprise an unusual, unadulterated history of one of rock's most innovative, integrity-driven bands. Besides new photos and an updated discography, the author has added two new chapters that discuss recent events: the making of *Monster* and *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*; drummer Bill Berry's aneurysm and departure from the band; the controversial dismissal of R.E.M.'s manager Jefferson Holt; and much more.

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Customer Reviews

What Sullivan's oral history of alternative music giants R.E.M. ("Losing My Religion") lacks in intimacy, it more than makes up for in personality. Prevented from interviewing band members and their families, Sullivan went after old hometown friends, record-label business associates and members of bands that at one time or another shared a concert bill with Athens, Ga.'s favorite sons. The interviewees who seem distant from the band professionally are often more interesting and revealing in their recollections. Music writer Gina Arnold, folk artist Howard Finster and the band's "road friend" Georgiana Falzarano each offer uniquely personal portraits of the enigmatic band and their significance. That R.E.M.'s mainstream success soured many of their old fans and associates' affection reveals the most obvious flaw of this tack. Objectivity is nowhere to be found here. With the exception of Finster and Dexter Weaver, the Athens restaurateur whose slogan R.E.M. used to title its *Automatic for the People* album, all the interviewees blame the band's fame for a loss in their

individual gains-free backstage passes, prime opening-band slots, employment opportunities. Still, Sullivan provides an engaging study of American popular music. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The enigmatic and influential R.E.M. is now the subject of a fine rock history. The strategy of letting people who know a band well tell its story has been used before but not often as well as Sullivan uses it. His is no shallow, obvious, in-their-own-words portrait. Most of the voices in it belong to longtime R.E.M. associates from Georgia, with only a few music biz pros mixed in. The resulting warm, informative depiction of the band proceeds from its formative years in Athens to its present, perhaps unwanted, megacelebrity status. Chapter titles are those of R.E.M. recordings and constitute a kind of mnemonics for relating the oral history to the band's famous recordings. A detailed discography follows the main text, as does a bibliographic note on where to find the really exhaustive R.E.M. discography--a necessary tool for the dedicated collector in today's world of bootleg recordings and concert tapes. In all, a book to delight the fans and convert the holdouts. Mike Tribby --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you are an REM fan, this book is brilliant reading. Sullivan's writing is impeccable.

This is an interesting book, in a sense. You get to know a lot about a time (1978-1996) and a place (Athens, Georgia), but not so much really about the ostensible subject matter. Nobody from REM, the band members or their manager and lawyer, were interviewed for the book, only excerpts from magazine interviews were used (of course one assumes that she tried to get them). So it's clear that they didn't cooperate, or allow their close associates to do so. This means most of the people who did get interviewed are no longer in the circle (if not all), and some of the bitterness is pretty evident. A lot of jabs at the music, and all of the band members had shots taken at them on a personal level. The "I was there when X happened" syndrome was in full play. It's not a bad book, and if you can get it cheaply enough on the secondary market, and are an REM fan, you should. But know what you're buying.

This is neither a "companion piece" nor a "tell-all" book. Equally, it is not a flimsy paperback stapled and glued together just in time for the band's next big tour. What Denise Sullivan does write (and write well, also) is much closer to an anecdote, a souvenir, a recalled event. She avoids the trite and passionless type of "rock'n'roll" review/expose we have to endure all the time and instead lets

the reader get a glimpse not so much of the band REM, but of the people that REM exerted some influence on, or the people for whom REM mattered. Reading Sullivan's book, I am reminded of how one of my closest friends and I discuss REM -- from memory, from songs, from what has been happening in our lives. This book feels like a friend.

Unlike most "rock-n-roll" books which often pander to the lowest common denominator -- which usually is the author's own personal bias barely hidden in the text and most often the lens through which we are forced to watch the history of the band/singer unfold -- Denise Sullivan gives us something better, and frankly, more fun. "TATP" offers an original and fresh perspective on a very enigmatic yet familiar college - rock - alternative - mainstream - wacky - superstar band. This book is a must-have for both the fan and fanatic. The writing is well-done, the subject matter well-handled. While almost everyone's favorite REM song and/or album may change over time, this remains my favorite book on the band.

You can't get much better than this -- personal accounts of people who actually were there. There is just as much information to be found here as in _It Crawled from the South_. It proceeds chronologically with great detail, and feeds the REM-fact hungry reader just what he/she wants.

This book was excellent. It was great to get a history of what went on by people who actually were there. Recommendwd if you are a fan of Mr. Stipe and Co. or just interested in a the history of great music that shaped a scene.

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