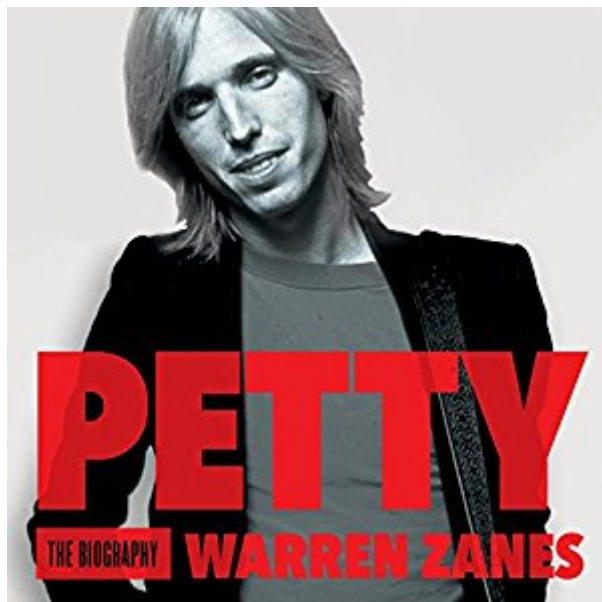


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Petty: The Biography



Synopsis

An exhilarating and intimate account of the life of music legend Tom Petty by an accomplished writer and musician who toured with Petty. No one other than Warren Zanes, rocker and writer and friend, could author a book about Tom Petty that is as honest and evocative of Petty's music and the remarkable rock and roll history he and his band helped to write. Born in Gainesville, Florida, with more than a little hillbilly in his blood, Tom Petty was a Southern shit kicker, a kid without a whole lot of promise. Rock and roll made it otherwise. From meeting Elvis to seeing the Beatles on Ed Sullivan to producing Del Shannon; backing Bob Dylan; putting together a band with George Harrison, Dylan, Roy Orbison and Jeff Lynne; making records with Johnny Cash; and sending well more than a dozen of his own celebrated recordings high onto the charts, Tom Petty's story has all the drama of a rock and roll epic. Now in his mid-60s, still making records and still touring, Petty, known for his reclusive style, has shared with Warren Zanes his insights and arguments, his regrets and lasting ambitions, and the details of his life on and off the stage. This is an audiobook for those who know and love the songs, from "American Girl" and "Refugee" to "Free Fallin'" and "Mary Jane's Last Dance", and for those who want to see the classic rock and roll era embodied in one man's remarkable story. Dark and mysterious, Petty manages to come back again and again, showing us what the music can do and where it can take us. BONUS AUDIO: In an exclusive Audible interview, author and narrator Warren Zanes discusses the cultural significance behind rock biographies, how great records continue to reveal new things over time, and the enduring and "authentic rock-and-roll cool" that is Tom Petty.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 14 hours

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: December 15, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B017OD6XTM

Best Sellers Rank: #71 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Music #130

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Artists, Writers & Musicians #231

Customer Reviews

I'll risk sounding like a loser and just admit that I wasn't super into Tom Petty before reading this book. Sure, I know (and enjoy) his big hits like anyone else, but not much beyond that. I basically started this book with a clean slate, more curious than anything else, and really just looking to learn. Well, after finishing the biography, I can say with all honesty that I am now a legitimate Tom Petty fan. I have enormous respect for the man. I really had no idea he had been through so much. I never knew his father used to beat the sh*t out of him for years--but then turned around and mooched off of his son's success for the rest of his life. It never registered for me how hard Petty worked to get where he is. Truly, his work ethic is admirable. While it seems that his family life suffered for it, I am still a bit in awe that he has remained so focused and determined to succeed after decades in the business. It's respectable. And yet, despite the fact that he has been so successful, he's also surprisingly humble. He says many times that he was never in it for the money. He always dreamed of living comfortably, sure--paying rent on time, etc., etc.--but he never got sidetracked by a huge payday. His heart was always in the music. That became even more obvious to me when I went back and really listened to his music. While reading the book, I played most of the tracks author Zanes highlighted in the book. And I felt like I heard something new in these songs. I noticed the layers to the lyrics and the creativity in the sounds of American Girl, Listen to Her Heart, Insider, You Don't Know How It Feels, and others. It was just crazy to me how much I got out of these songs after I knew a bit more about the artist. One last thing...

Tom Petty has been part of the soundtrack of my entire adulthood and I even have several of his recordsâ "not something I can claim about a lot of other artists who came up around the same time. So, yeah, I was pleased to have the opportunity to read a current biography of the man and his band. The Heartbreakers are, in fact, a huge part of the narrative, especially long-time drummer Stan Lynch; we hear a lot from Lynch, it seems to me as much as all the other Heartbreakers past and present put together. Only Petty gets more inches, and a fair number of them are about Lynch. Very interesting and informative in its way, but it does make things a bit one-note at times. Fortunately, Zanes, shakes himself out of this track and explores other territory often enough to satisfy the casual reader. Petty's background gets extensive coverage, as well as his state of mind at many points in his long career. That the man is rather reclusive and somewhat closed off you gather pretty quickly, and it's worth understanding this in order to have some genuine insight

into his songs. And it's rather a marvel a man like that has kept a band like the Heartbreakers more or less intact for four decades. It wasn't without considerable effort and more than a few missteps, but you do get a pretty good idea that, for stalwarts Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench at least, there really was and is no better band going. A few things, sadly, drop through the cracks. Howie Epstein is perhaps the most egregious, but that may be due partly to Epstein no longer being around to speak for himself. Another is the Traveling Wilburys; they get a fair amount of mention, but we get next to nothing about how Petty worked with those guys.

Many famous males had hard scrabble upbringings. Some became simply survivors, some infamous criminals, and some used it to propel them to greatness. In that later group Tom Petty is a bonafide top-shelf member. He's not only an American success story, but his band's music has enriched an entire world. Most of us simply know him as that shaggy haired bearded guy whose songs such as "I Won't Back Down" connect so deep they get adopted as mantras. They get inside you giving you a rare pleasure the best art innately does. Want to know from whence Petty, and his muse, evolved? You may have heard random pieces and now you can get a compact linear, quite factual, enlightenment. Tom Petty didn't come out of a vacuum or an "Ozzie & Harriet" storybook world. You'll learn he was different from the start in a family that endured hard knocks, and a father who dished out plenty of his own. Tom was different from birth and in the exact time in which he came into the world many things were changing more rapidly than ever before. Tom believes he was socialized, largely, by TV, a medium finally coming into its own shaping a generation. That Tom is "different" looms large. As the oldest son he was expected to be the epitome of a first-born male and, specifically, an All-American outdoorsman, athlete, and scholar. He was none of those, Tom was singular in his household (he had a brother). He wasn't interested in traditional male things such as hunting, sports, or even school. He felt like a fish out of water and what he connected with on TV was the hip and cool 60s in which he was being shaped. It kind of came to a critical mass: meeting Elvis Presley and, later, cementing it by The Beatles first appearance on Ed Sullivan. A template was found.

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