



Hardcore Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle

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If Steve Earle weren't a living, breathing person, he'd be a character in a blues song -- a raucous ballad about a gifted rebel who drank too much, lost most of his women in a blizzard of crack and cocaine addiction, and always came out on the wrong side of the law. Somewhere in the midst of all this, he also managed to weld rock to country, the Beatles to Springsteen, and bluegrass to punk, establishing himself among the most thoroughly original and politically astute musicians of his generation. Granted unrestricted access to Steve and his family and friends, Lauren St John has given us a sometimes shocking, often moving, and completely unvarnished biography of one of America's most talismanic sons.

Hardcore Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle Details

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From Reader Review Hardcore Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle for online ebook

Brian says

This biography is well-researched, full of detail, and well-written. Lauren St. John does her best to keep up with the frenetic pace of Earle's life, and she does a good job capturing the energy of Earle's life and music.

However - like many music biographies - this book could definitely have used a stronger editorial hand. In addition to numerous copyediting problems (random typos, alternate spellings, and several pages where paragraphs are not indented), the chapter breakdown doesn't seem to make much sense. Many of the chapters drag on, and don't seem to make up any meaningful division of content or theme. Some material is repeated, and it's sometimes hard to keep track of the timeline of events - especially in the early chapters. Finally, there are numerous characters introduced, then dropped until they're brought back in by first name several pages later. I almost had to make a chart to keep track of the characters.

That said, this is a fantastic introduction to the life of a living American legend, and arguably the most talented songwriter of his generation.

(Edited 6/4: Corrected my typo, underscoring my point about the need for good editing -bmk)

Krystal says

This book is an adventure and roller coaster ride, never a dull moment. You learn so much about who Steve Earle is through interviews with his family, friends and ex wives. He is all about family, and stops everything to be there for them when needed, got a groupie pregnant, had many lovers while married(no surprise, really)he loves children, but during his darkest point in his life he and fourth wife who he married twice had an abortion. His crazy wild marriages, especially to his second wife was a trip to read about.(Nutso!) And you feel really sorry for his first wife. His third wife who is his son Justin Townes Earle's mother seems like a very sweet woman. Steve had a bit of a crush on Emmylou Harris and she reminded him of her. If you're also a fan of JTE's music you'll get to know a bit more about him and his childhood. The book starts off light hearted about Steve's childhood and quickly gets darker and then when you think it can't get any darker, it takes you into the pits of hell that was Steve's life before getting clean. We all know he had a drug problem and that it was bad, but here you really see how so much worse it was than you can ever imagine, and leaves you wondering how he survived. Family and everyone interviewed for the book was extremely honest about the horrors, and it's very sad. This man went through a lot and put everyone he cared about through a lot. You get to understand why he has been married so many times, he could be very charming and very mean. I can't wait to get my hands on a copy of Steve's memoir "I can't remember if we said goodbye" i'm sure we'll get to see who he is on the inside and how he felt and deals with the things he's done and the life he lived.

Charlie says

I'm not generally a fan of music biographies but I really enjoyed this one. It's a fairly quick read and the story rolls along at a good pace. A must for Steve Earle fans. I really enjoyed reading it while listening to his back

catalogue. Really gives you a sense of the breadth and depth of his talent.

Tracy says

I'm a huge fan of Steve Earle's music, so I got his biography as soon as I heard about it. It's always great to read a detailed account of the life of an artist I really like. His music and opinions reflect the struggles he's faced, and the book makes me appreciate his songs even more. He's a bad-ass romantic. And he guest stars on the Wire (best show of all time), so the man's practically a god in my opinion.

D.B. Pacini says

SKILLED AUTHOR: I've read unauthorized accounts of the astonishing personal and incredible musical story of Steve Earle's life. I was particularly interested in reading this book because author Lauren St John was granted unrestricted and candid access to information by Steve Earle and his acquaintances. I imagined that such a book would be worth reading. It definitely was. St John did a fabulous and comprehensive job. If you know anything at all about Steve Earle you appreciate that being comprehensive about him is no small feat.

Michelle Arthington says

This was a hard slog through Steve's early years and drug years. I am waiting for the day when he writes his own autobiography, as the writing/editing was not close to par. I learned some things about one of my favorite singer/songwriters during the course of this book, including many stones which I wish had been left unturned.

I was there at the Backstage in Seattle during the final "Train A'Comin'" show. I have been to one of his incredibly honest book signings, and we have chatted after shows, and even at the Nashville airport. He is a survivor, and an incredibly talented human being. Rock on, Steve Earle.

Mark Goddard says

Great Bio from one of America's great songwriters. Hard to put down.

Holly says

I love Steve Earle, and this biography goes into the life events happening around each album, which is terrific. However, there were so many drugs and guns and booze, etc. that it made me decide not to read any more biographies about druggies, as I always can't help but put myself in the protagonist's shoes and this was almost too much. Goes to how well-deserved the subtitle really is. Thankfully, this artist has been clean for many years and will hopefully be around a while longer.

Peter Swanson says

"If Steve Earle weren't a living, breathing person, he'd be a character in a blues song -- a raucous ballad about a gifted rebel who drank too much, lost most of his women in a blizzard of crack and cocaine addiction, and always came out on the wrong side of the law. Somewhere in the midst of all this, he also managed to weld rock to country, the Beatles to Springsteen, and bluegrass to punk, establishing himself among the most thoroughly original and politically astute musicians of his generation. Granted unrestricted access to Steve and his family and friends, Lauren St John has given us a sometimes shocking, often moving, and completely unvarnished biography of one of America's most talismanic sons."

Noah says

Steve Motherfuckin' Earle, y'all. Bow down to my favorite socialist cowboy.

Vic says

Good story about one of my favorite singer/songwriters. As I've found with most books about musicians with addictions(Eric Clapton, Warren Zevon), they're real assholes. Until they recover.

However, this book desperately needed an editor. Misused words, misnamed Nashville landmarks(Lime Balls, instead of Linebaugh's.... jeez...)... and these are just some that I caught.

Alissa says

Crazy stories from a crazy life that's somehow still goin'. Noteable quote:

"She could match me drink for drink and suck the chrome off a trailer hitch, and I was twenty-one years old, how the hell was I supposed to know it wasn't love?"

Eric says

I generally don't bother with writing reviews - I just rate the books and move on - but I felt like I had to say something about Hardcore Troubadour. Steve Earle has got an incredible story, but I'm not certain Lauren St. John was the voice to tell it. An English writer of children's animal stories somehow doesn't capture what, in my mind, Steve Earle is all about.

St. John's writing is awkward at times and at other times veers into the strange, such as when she quotes Earle as using the word "bonnet" in reference to a car hood. I obviously don't know Steve Earle, but I have lived in Texas and my guess is that he has never in his life used the word bonnet in the context of an

automobile. St. John also annoyingly refers several times to the band Tesla as Tessler and spells Steven Tyler's first name as "Stephen." Whether this is sloppy proofreading or an overall lack of familiarity with her broader subject is a question I was left asking.

I very recently read Rocks, Joe Perry's autobiography, and I think Earle could have benefited from writing his story his way guided by a co- (or ghost-) writer. I realize Hardcore Troubadour is 10 years old now, but my hope is that at some point Steve Earle will write his own story in his own, truer, voice.

Dayva says

If only this book never ended! So good, but, so much has happened since. Really loved it!

Lulu says

An interesting book, plainly written and with great access. I am a bit of a fan, but enjoyed it predominantly for the overall interest and background on marvellous musicians such as Townes Van Zandt, Earle's mentor and friend. A good read and good learning for anyone interested in country, Americana and roots. Lacks the epic mood music of some other biographies of similar characters, (Nick Tosches is one of my fav authors) but the subject matter has so much to offer that there is plenty to enjoy.
