



## The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones

*Stanley Booth*

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Stanley Booth, a member of the Rolling Stones' inner circle, met the band just a few months before Brian Jones drowned in a swimming pool in 1968. He lived with them throughout their 1969 American tour, staying up all night together listening to blues, talking about music, ingesting drugs, and consorting with groupies. His thrilling account culminates with their final concert at Altamont Speedway—a nightmare of beating, stabbing, and killing that would signal the end of a generation's dreams of peace and freedom. But while this book renders in fine detail the entire history of the Stones, paying special attention to the tragedy of Brian Jones, it is about much more than a writer and a rock band. It has been called—by Harold Brodkey and Robert Stone, among others—the best book ever written about the sixties. In Booth's new afterword, he finally explains why it took him 15 years to write the book, relating an astonishing story of drugs, jails, and disasters.

## The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones Details

Date : Published May 1st 2000 by Chicago Review Press (first published August 1st 1984)

ISBN : 9781556524004

Author : Stanley Booth

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Music, Biography, Nonfiction

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## From Reader Review The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones for online ebook

### Robert Morrow says

The author dominates the book so much you learn very little about the Rolling Stones that you couldn't read in a gossip column. His version of the history of The Stones focuses more on drugs and women than the music, a choice that may sell the book to the public but is hardly a fair assessment of The Stones' contribution to musical history. We hear Mr. Booth whine about his contract, bitch about his life situation and about how many joints he lit, but very little about the subjects of the story. His quotes at the beginning of the chapters are both irrelevant and self-promoting. His elevation of the symbolic importance of Altamont comes across as absurd and pointless. Avoid this book at all costs.

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### Brian says

Brilliantly constructed, explosive, masterful imagery...the best book on rock and roll I have ever read, and I have read far too many books on rock and roll. Covering the Stones at their peak, the chapters alternate and tell two stories in one: the odd chapters build up to Altamont, and the even chapters build up to the death of Brian Jones. The book didn't come out until 1984, and by that point, the culture had so irrevocably changed (and the rebellious relevance of the Rolling Stones) that this book was never given the accolades it deserves. Admiring but never fawning, "The True Adventures..." is the documentary "Cocksucker Blues" with Nabokovian sensuality, and a real taste of how truly dangerous yet driven the Rolling Stones were with their music and their lives. Its literary ambitions put this miles beyond the usual Creepy post-beat raving you've come to expect from the genre. I can't recommend this book enough...even if you don't like the Rolling Stones, it's still a completely engaging story.

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### Jason Coleman says

After years of circling this thing, I have finally read the rock'n'roll book that makes all the rock'n'roll books look faint and puny. No *Almost Famous* feel-good picnics, no *Hammer of the Gods* tabloid sleaze. Some thoughts (we'll be here for awhile):

\* Author Stanley Booth hit the road with the Stones in 1969, and that tour is the central story, but he begins at the beginning. These flashbacks, narrated mostly by Keith Richards and Ian "Stu" Stewart, put us right in the cold, dirty apartments and tour buses of the band's early years and remind us that these blues purists and later jet-setters were *English*. The early gigs were basically a string of riots, played in those decaying pre-war ballrooms. Stu describes a Blackpool show crashed by Glaswegians spending all their dough on drink and looking for a fight—in Germany they call them poison dwarves, Stu tells us. Booth, who has a regional flair himself (Jagger asks where to spend his mid-tour break—Eureka Springs in Arkansas, Booth tells him), appreciates a man who knows his turf.

\* Brian Jones haunts the book. He might have faded badly down the stretch, but we see him as the crucial free-spirit force to set the whole enterprise in motion. In one of his many journalistic coups, Booth spends a surreal afternoon with Brian's parents in their Cheltenham parlor and looks at family photos of their famous,

dead son.

\* Thanksgiving 1969 at producer Jerry Wexler's house on Long Island, with its Magrittes on the wall. Booth rides the train back into town with Wexler's 80-year-old mom (who's disappointed Jerry didn't stick with journalism), sees her into a cab at Penn Station, and walks down the block to Madison Square Garden, where the Stones are about to do the first of the three shows that would be preserved on *Get Yer Ya-Yas Out*. Hendrix shows up backstage; Mick Taylor gives Jimi his right-handed-but-who-cares guitar to play, but Jagger, who still resents Hendrix for once trying to steal Marianne Faithfull from him, doesn't join in—he silently does his mascara in the next dressing room. A drunk Janis Joplin passes through. Jimi sits behind Keith's amp for the actual show. Later they all go to a party, and Mick makes off with Hendrix's favorite groupie, the legendary Devon Wilson. I mean, what a day.

\* The band goes to Muscle Shoals and records a few songs that will end up on *Sticky Fingers* two years later. Original title of "Brown Sugar": "Black Pussy."

\* Some might stiffen at Booth's nonchalance about the balling, as well as his own infidelities. But he is a Southern gentlemen, and not even deep down, and he instinctively (as opposed to politically) respects women. There is a prescient sizing-up of (opening act) Ike Turner as the devil to Tina's angel, years before the abuse stuff came out.

\* Even rock stars have to eat. Someone brings Chinese takeout; no utensils, so you eat it with popsicle sticks. Or you want to eat at four in the morning; too late for room service, so you bribe the bellman to find some cheeseburgers, but you just snorted two lines of H, so you're too tired and nauseous to eat the burgers when they arrive. In food vs. drugs, drugs win every time. Over the course of the book, their tour manager loses 21 pounds.

\* Charlie Watts, "the world's politest man."

\* Eight hours late to their Palm Beach gig. Almost dawn when they get there, cold; they go on anyway. Afterwards, cocaine and breakfast. On the flight back later that day, the little prop plane needs a repair; Jagger and Booth, in these pre-9/11 days, disembark, wander down the tarmac and lie in the landing-field grass.

\* I don't believe in the romance of misery or debauchery as essential to creativity—Dostoevsky settled down to write all his big novels once his sane, second wife cultivated some damn peace and quiet for him—but standing in the shower one morning during my long month of living with this book (I'm a slow reader), it occurred to me that the Stones' art could only be the product of living outside the pale. As Robert Stone said, it was a hard music for a time of hard living. You stagger out of this music. Each chapter has its own epigraph, clearly a labor of love for Booth. Favorites are a series of quotes on the agony and ecstasy of jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden and a priceless discussion where Jerry Lee Lewis insists to Sam Phillips that, oh yes, they *are* playing the devil's music.

\* Like *Gimme Shelter* filmmakers the Maysles brothers (who float in and out of the book), Booth "lucked" into the big ending for his book with a front-row seat at Altamont. They all know it's bad the minute they arrive. Hell's Angels are not just taking LSD but smearing it on their faces. Bad omen: even a 2-year-old (parents undetermined) in the Stones's trailer tells Keith, twice, she's going to "beat him up." What impresses Booth the most about the Gomorrah-esque crowd is its speed, the way it opens and closes in a shot: "I had no idea people in a crowd could move so fast. . . . [Jagger, who attempts to appeal to them] was offering the social contract to a twister of flailing dark shapes."

\* One of the running gags in the book is Booth's difficulties producing the publisher's contract to prove he belongs on the tour. A harbinger, as the book would take fifteen long years to materialize. As he explains in a lengthy (and disconcertingly bitter) afterward, Booth went off the rails with the drugs and depression (complaints include an "LSD-induced back injury"). The first wife—the intriguingly named Christopher who works for the long-gone, possibly fictitious Omega Airlines and strikes us as a bit of a saint, but a fun saint—was obviously a casualty. Booth mentions that he was also along on the 1972 tour, but that it was "an ugly scene full of amyl nitrate, Quaaludes, tequila sunrises, cocaine, heroin, and too many pistoleros, and it left me with more material than I could ever use," an enticing quote if ever there was one. He made little money off this masterpiece—after paying back the advance he may have actually lost money on it—but seems to be proud of its rep out there. He never wrote another book of anywhere near this one's stature. One senses Booth has had a tough life. That knowledge affects the way you look at him in *Gimme Shelter*, dancing around with Mick and Keith in the Holiday Inn to the hot-off-the-presses "Brown Sugar." Yeah, that funny little guy, if you've seen the movie, is Stanley Booth.

\* Brian Jones had just completed months of dental work in early 1969, so he had perfect teeth when he died.

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### **Ethan Russell says**

There is not, nor will there ever be, another book on The Rolling Stones that you can read five or even ten times and be rewarded, every time. I know whereof I speak.

Ethan Russell

posted: 10/25/2012

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### **Connie Curtis says**

Way, way too long! He talked about the same things over and over again. How much drugs, sex, and rock and roll do you need to repeat to get the message across? Not a whole lot of new info, really, but hardcore Stones fans might like it.

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### **Still says**

This is the most important book about The Rolling Stones ever published.

It covers a period of time when the band was still relevant and the 1960s were reeling to an end. Stanley Booth is a truly great scribe and his profiles of personalities -those famous and those obscure- are incomparable.

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## **Joe fortune says**

Stanley Booth's writing is fascinatingly poetic, yet well researched, journalistic.

This is the type of journalism that people like Hunter S. Thompson subscribed to, but most professors used to frown upon. I refer to the kind where the author becomes part of the subject and really can't say he's objective.

You might not need to be a fan of the band to enjoy it, but if you are then there's nothing better. The portions about Keith Richards, Brian Jones and Gram Parsons(not a Stone) are great.

It alternates by chapters between the pubescent early days of the formation of the Stones and the even juicier period leading up to the disaster at the Altamont Speedway.

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## **Steve says**

The Rolling Stones are very press savvy and have been for most of their career. Jagger especially, has always been good at managing his public persona and giving the media titillation rather than depth. Even co-joined twin Keef often remarks in interviews that Mick is a very guarded and calculating guy, even to those close to him. Keith himself is another master of the machine and has helped build his reputation as much on his well-documented brushes with the law and pushing the boundaries of self-inflicted abuse as on his manipulation of the media. So then, Stanley Booth is given the opportunity to hang out with the band on their 1969 American tour and we are given what Booth got; an insider's view of the band, albeit with all the distance, control, and double-talk that Jagger, Richards, Watts, et al have mastered over the years.

Many have complained that this book doesn't offer enough exploration of the mechanisms that make these gentlemen tick, but that's the point. No writer can. The closest chance we have had is when Bill Wyman wrote his autobiography, but he cleverly (did these guys sign some blood-contract to not kiss and tell?) avoided gossip and back-stabbing and stuck, rather painstakingly, to just the facts. The bottom line is that a book about the Stones that will reveal what has heretofore been kept closely guarded is unlikely. Keith's upcoming autobiography will doubtlessly be full of his own increasingly inflated tales, much to Richards' delight as yet another book will emerge, chock-full of his tongue-in-cheek mischief and misdirection.

Wisely then, Booth decides to write about what he does know - his own history that took place when he was with the Stones, and that is what makes this book so unique. It isn't a fawning piece of hero worship nor is it a nasty tell-all. The author delves largely into his mission to write the book and co-joins the difficulties therein with the tour itself, which needs no additional embellishments since the drama coming out of that tour is legendary. The simultaneous back-story of Brian Jones that arcs above the tour's increasing chaos is brilliantly done so that the two paths tragically meet and we are left with a thoughtful analysis of what has made and will continue to make the Rolling Stones the Greatest Rock and Roll Band in the World. Booth is a fan of the band and we get his excitement about the shows and the adrenalin rush that surely buzzed through the band and out to all who were close enough to the maelstrom. Conversely, we also get the reality of the day-to-day drudgery and business that revealed that life on the road isn't all spotlights and ovations. To repeat, you get what Stanley Booth got; the view from someone on the wings who witnessed first-hand a historic tour and one of the high points in the long history of this band. My only wish is that Booth, or someone like him, could've done the same thing with the 1972 tour. Alas, by that time, already wiser and scarred from Altamont and the subsequent and well-deserved fall-out, the band cocooned itself even more and the one book that did emerge (STP) was less sympathetic and more cynical, just like the band had

become.

In this genre, overflowing with garbage and uninspiring vanity pieces, Stanley Booth's book stands out for its honesty and professionalism. While I admit that I have only read a handful, it is still the best one I've ever read of not only the band, but rock and roll in general.

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### **Greta says**

I liked this book, but feel that it is over rated. This may be due my expectations which hoped for more insights into the Stones themselves. This book read more like a concert report to me, and I expected more. The author's use of heavy and intellectually artistic quotes from music and literature to start off chapters annoyed me. I felt that the quotes were meaningful moments that attempted to flesh out and even mask the surface and boring material in the chapters. Take these interesting quotes out...and it leaves a hole in the book that can't be replaced because these interesting, deep moments don't really materialize (in regular fashion) with the Stones. Some of the most interesting personal material came in stories about the author's (not the stones) life. I did enjoy the book! It's just, man... I know that there has got to be much, much more to the "true adventures" of the rolling stones than what was in this book.

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### **GloriaGloom says**

Sono sicuro che Stanley Booth avrebbe voluto intitolare questo libro "Volevo essere Truman Capote - o in seconda battuta Tom Wolfe- invece sono nato con qualche anno di ritardo e mi tocca correre dietro a questi cinque stronzi", e sì, perchè il pennino del buon Booth è intinto in quell'inchiostro profumato di new journalism - che insieme al jazz e al burro d'arachidi è l'unica cultura originale d'oltreoceano - che riesce a dare odore di nuovo persino a storie che si son sentite mille e mille volte - in fondo la materia è fragile: uno scrittore "confederato" in bolletta innamorato di Faulkner e del suono di Memphis (e con un debole per dipendenze tossiche e groupie) alla ricerca di un qualche anticipo sulla pubblicazione si unisce ai Rolling Stones nel loro tour di conquista dell'America in una delle loro annate migliori, il '69 - e a imbastire, non senza difficoltà - gli ci son voluti quindici anni per rimettere insieme migliaia di appunti e a cacciar via le malefiche scorie Jagger/Richards - uno dei cinque libri più belli intorno alle più popolari delle arti del secondo 900. In queste cose è sempre lo sguardo che conta e qui lo sguardo fatto di camere di albergo, interni di macchine, sale da musica, ristoranti, sale prove, come una cinepresa che aspira all'indifferenza della documentazione ma non riesce a scansare la malefica empatia - siamo dalle parti del Cocksucker Blues di Robert Frank di pochi anni dopo o per restare nel campo delle parole dei dylaniani "Diari del Rolling Thunder" di Sam Shepard (un altro dei cinque libri imperdibili) - quasi che a contare non siano gli show ma i tempi morti, le attese, la presa di possesso da parte degli eroi mitologi dei luoghi della quotidianità che da poveri oggetti d'uso toccati dalla mano degli Dei di una religione laica diventano caverne sacre e un po' sinistre. E' anche un libro che restituisce intatatta quell'atmosfera naif di quando il rock era un giovanotto ingenuo seduto in mezzo a quell'elastico teso tra business e comunicazione tra industria e movement. Che poi si voglia vedere nelle violenze di Altamont che chiusero quel tour chissà quale simbologia della fine, è, a mio parere, solo chiacchiericcio da moralisti americani che han bisogno di leggere segni nel cielo per giustificare ogni rinascita in peggio (e quali emissari migliori di una compagine di tossici e sex addict come gli inglesi Rolling Stones?) che sia l'assassino di Kennedy o le torri sbriciolate poco importa. In mezzo a questo bailamme di tensione emotiva Booth infila, a dividere i capitoli in presa diretta, la storia del Grande Assente, quel Brian Jones affogato l'anno prima in piscina ma morto per troppa esposizione ai crudeli effluvi

Jagger/Richards, e l'ho letta come una vendetta a freddo dell'autore, una sorta di risarcimento per quel tot di vita che quel tour gli ha roscicchiato via.

E' un libro d'archeologia questo, sarebbe impossibile da scriversi oggi: immaginatevi un povero scribacchino in bolletta costretto a seguire che so i Radiohead in tour, passerebbe le sere a fare raccolta differenziata, a mangiare tofu, a intrattenersi con groupie che regalano libri di Murakami e fanno sesso con la maglietta di Emergency addosso e a subire i malefici influssi del si minore (che è certamente più pericoloso di una dipendenza da eroina).

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## Aberjhani says

### On Stanley Booth: Rolling with the Stones on Waves of the Times

This is less a formal review of Stanley Booth's now-classic book, *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones*, than it is a statement of appreciation for the same. In fact, I can state at this time that my biggest criticism of the title, or at least of the edition I own, is that it lacks an index. Having become the modern essential reference text on the Rolling Stones that it is, a reader can only hope that someone plans to publish an edition that contains one. But for the time being I'll say this—

If you could arrange a chat over a cup of coffee or tea with a literary journalist from any given period —such as Ralph Ellison, Truman Capote, Joan Didion, or Tom Wolfe—about how they accomplished what they have as literary journalists, one thing might soon become clear: a huge part of getting the job done was allowing whatever situation they were covering to swallow them whole. As in mind, body, soul, and the bits and pieces of dreams and nightmares that held their lives together. Apply that concept to the reality of Stanley Booth making his way through the giant waves of counterculture rebellion that swept over the 1960s and a profound mosaic of imagery emerges.

For one, there is the ambitious writer with a distinct literary sensibility born and bred in Waycross, Georgia (where the late great Ossie Davis attended high school) lobbying in England, California, and elsewhere for a contract to write the book now known as *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones* with their “full and exclusive cooperation.” There is the artist determined to maintain focus on his work —taking detailed notes on everything from the style of Keith Richards’ jacket and the impact of Mick Jagger’s toothache on a rehearsal to the polish on B.B. King’s custom-made Gibson guitar and the nearly overwhelming heat generated by Tina Turner’s on-stage sensuality.

Beyond simply noting such observances is an enviable talent for transforming them into transcendent poetry, as with this snapshot of Mick Jagger at the L.A. Forum in 1969 just before he goes onstage: “In the backstage doorway Jagger was standing, dressed in black trousers with silver buttons down the legs, black scoop-neck jersey with white Leo glyph on chest, wide metal-studded black belt, long red flowing scarf, on his head an Uncle Sam hat, his eyes wide and dark, looking like a bullfighter standing in the sun just inside the door of the arena, seeing nothing but the path he walks, toreros and banderilleros beside and behind him, to his fate.”

Along the same lines, Booth writes like something of a natural seer when interpreting certain moments that might be described as the philosophical nuances of the psychedelic times: “It is possible that to know the essence of this moment you would have to be part of the most Damoclean time yet seen on earth... to have come to this music in the innocence of youth because of its humanity... to follow it steadfastly through all

manner of troubles, and to have found yourself in a huge dark saucer-mushroom, doing it again, playing for survival, for your life. You had to be there."

That he was there and allowed the powerful uproar of the 1960s, as set to the music of the Rolling Stones, to swallow him whole in order to deliver an enduring first-hand account of it, is a major part of what makes Booth's work the titanic achievement that it is. The 1960s laid the groundwork for the end of one era and the beginning of another. By the time Booth hit the road to tag along with the Stones on tour during the latter part of the decade, scenes like those of the recent beatings and pepper-sprayings experienced by Occupy Wall Street protesters were fairly common in the U.S. and elsewhere. So was a seemingly ceaseless flow of marijuana, cocaine, LSD, and other drugs that everyone knew were illegal but which many consumed to sedate themselves from the brutalities of the times (NOTE: Please DO NOT interpret that last statement as an endorsement for the use of hard drugs).

With a string of well-known assassinations, racial tension that boiled over into actual physical clashes, war, and a serious push to reestablish the tenets of sexual expressiveness, the world vibrated from one day to the next between frequencies of barely-contained anarchy and imploding chaos. To place oneself in the burning thick of it all, open-eyed and armed only with a pen, a pad, a Georgia boy's swamp-grown bravado, and hopes for future literary vindication as Booth did, is every bit as admirable as so many have already said. To have accomplished what he set out to, at a cost much greater than most would ever consider paying in 2012, is the kind of marvel described sometimes as a miracle.

by Aberjhani  
5 January, 2012

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### **Tony Funches says**

Not ONLY Excellent, but also qualifies as an Anthropological Chronicle ... albeit a tad WARPED, which is NOTHING compared to the '72 STP Bacchanalia we all endured & participated in ... myself, Stanley & Ethan; a writer, a photographer & myself as a "Minister Without Portfolio" ...  
ANY "Fan" of Modern Music has to add this book to their library. I have.

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### **Ben Winch says**

Reading about the Stones makes me feel like the hero of the French comedy *Brice de Nice*, a 30-something surfer who hangs around his waveless bay on the Mediterranean watching *Point Break* and waiting for the perfect swell. Watching whoever is the latest craze on MTV doesn't help either; the man-made swells that power those 'stars' are less awe-inspiring than sad, conjuring visions of a time when things were different, picking away at the wound. What the Stones did was to ride an uncontrollable wave from out of an unknown ocean, and any book about them that claims to be more than a litany, a homage or just plain gossip should surely lead us to a greater understanding of the nature of that wave and that ocean. Stanley Booth comprehends this challenge, but ultimately does little more than describe (or suggest) the feeling at the centre - the sense of time standing still as the wave curls around you. Yeah, he was there; he took the drugs and watched the days/months/years slip away. But in a way his book feels like a purgatory, because what *point* in living that life without the release of being able to jump on stage or write a song or record it now and

then? He's not quite a Stone but not a civilian, not entirely in the wave but unable to step out of it and see it from a distance. And ultimately maybe he too has something of Brice de Nice about him - a man waiting for a revelation that can never happen. Listen...

Mark Twain said if you wrote well enough your work would last 'forever - and by forever I mean thirty years.' *The True Adventures*, first published in the United States in 1984, has lasted slightly more than one half of forever. Whatever they are now, or may be in the future, the Rolling Stones, when they were young, put themselves in jeopardy many times because of who they were, what they were, how they lived, what they believed. During portions of those years, I was with them. Some people survived that era and some didn't. *The True Adventures* is the story of those days, when the world was younger, and meanings were, or seemed for a time to be, clearer. Almost forever ago.

I mean, wow, that's sad, right? 'Almost forever ago' - I feel that, I really do. And the guy can write, no question. But what does it amount to, this half-remembered transcript of a time when meanings 'seemed for a time to be' clearer? Not much, it seems - and I'm sorry, sorry for this kid who follows around a rock band as if he might find in them the substance necessary to animate his writing, sorry for the older man who looks back on it and wonders what has slipped through his fingers. Music writers, it seems likely, are often frustrated 'literary' writers. That Greil Marcus and Peter Guralnick (who supposedly called Booth's book 'The one authentic masterpiece of rock 'n' roll writing'(!)) should so revere this piece of autobiography-with-scenery-by-the-Stones perhaps says more about their own aspirations to something 'beyond' rock 'n' roll writing than about the value of this book to people who care about rock 'n' roll. Yeah, there's a neat summation of the Stones' careers up to 1969, a couple of vivid descriptions of gigs and a good few pages on the recording of 'You Gotta Move', 'Brown Sugar' and 'Wild Horses' at Muscle Shoals - but taken together that adds up to about a third of the bulk of this monster. I want to like this; I want to believe there's more to it than the realisation that what had seemed so simple and obvious on the drugs is no longer comprehensible; but after 600 pages of nameless dread and no revelation I don't think I can. Stones fans, read it, by all means, but don't expect any great insight. No matter what he says, Stanley Booth was too busy partying to comprehend what 'really' happened.

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### **Mark Warren says**

Booth's stories about being on the road with Stones in the 60's and especially during the 69 tour were great. This book however was very frustrating at times. The author opens each chapter with a selection (usually long) from an historical piece of literature that doesn't seem to have any relevance to the Stones or their tour. Additionally the author jumps back and forth from chapter to chapter between the 69 tour and previous tours without giving any indication of the year which made it confusing at times.

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### **Dante says**

I had the good fortune of finding this paperback in the Used Books for Sale section of the Evanston Public Library, shortly after getting my first-ever root canal at my dentist, whose office is across the street from the library. I paid a whopping 25¢ (maybe 50¢ - not much, in any case...) for it, and in terms of cost/benefit

analysis, it might be the best book I've ever paid for. No less an authority than Peter Guralnick -- who wrote the definitive (two-part) biography of Elvis Presley (*Last Train to Memphis* and *Careless Love* -- calls this book "a masterpiece," and I agree.

Though it wasn't published until the mid-1980s, this book focuses on the Stones 1969 tour, with some background exploration of the Stones history through the years leading up to Altamont. Stanley Booth was "embedded" with the Stones for the tour and had exclusive access to them for this book -- access which the Stones probably never granted to another writer again. Booth hangs out with the Stones, eats, drinks, sleeps, gets high with them, and provides an incredible insider's perspective on the Stones and the 1960s. Along with Keith Richards's *Life*, which I read in 2011, this book should be required reading for all Stones fans, especially those born after this book was published (1984) and wonder how it could be that the greatest hits/tribute band led by Mick & Keith these days was once actually considered "dangerous."

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