



Hotel California: The True-Life Adventures of Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young, Mitchell, Taylor, Browne, Ronstadt, Geffen, the Eagles, and Their Many Friends

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"Hoskyns brings a genuine love as well as an outsider's keen eye to the rise and fall of the California scene. . . This is a riveting story, sensitively told."

—**Anthony DeCurtis, Contributing Editor, *Rolling Stone***

From enduring musical achievements to drug-fueled chaos and bed-hopping antics, the L.A. pop music scene in the sixties and seventies was like no other, and journalist Barney Hoskyns re-creates all the excitement and mayhem. *Hotel California* brings to life the genesis of Crosby, Stills, and Nash at Joni Mitchell's house; the Eagles' backstage fistfights after the success of "Hotel California"; the drama of David Geffen and the other money men who transformed the L.A. music scene; and more.

Hotel California: The True-Life Adventures of Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young, Mitchell, Taylor, Browne, Ronstadt, Geffen, the Eagles, and Their Many Friends Details

Date : Published April 21st 2008 by Wiley (first published 2006)

ISBN :

Author : Barney Hoskyns

Format : Kindle Edition 336 pages

Genre : Music, Nonfiction, Biography, History, Biography Memoir

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Ed says

To quote the author, this book is "an epic tale of songs and sunshine, drugs and denim, genius and greed". Barney Hoskyns takes us on the "rise and fall" trip of the Southern California singer-songwriter movement in pop music in the late 60's to the mid 70's when stadium rock, big money and coke destroyed the music I loved. Very detailed and readable history of this unique musical journey from the pioneering Byrds, Mama's & Pappa's to CSNY, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne to the Eagles. The music they made in Laurel and Topanga Canyon was sublime, laid back and beautiful but would quickly be destroyed by big money, big ego's and big drugs, coke in particular. This book is about the artists, their record labels and the powerful agents who followed the "greed is good" philosophy that became "cool" in the 1980's. Personally, I miss the beauty and simplicity of the music. Barney Hoskyns recreated that time and place in this excellent musical history.

Joab Jackson says

One curious thing I've noticed about cultural history is how many celebrities of an era tend to come from very closely interlocked social circles. This book shows this to be the case with an obscene number of famous and semi-famous counter-cultural west coast music makers of the late 1960s and early 1970s, who collectively dominated radio, FM radio in particular, of the day.

This book draws an amazingly coherent continuum straight through The Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, Frank Zappa, Turtles, Joni Mitchell, Crosby Stills Nash And Young, Randy Newman, Ry Cooder, Van Dyke Parks, Poco, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, the Eagles, Warren Zevon. They all lived in this suburban L.A. enclave, spent time hanging around the L.A. Troubadour folk music club, and many signed with David Geffen's Asylum label (that or the countercultural arty Reprise label, founded by Sinatra).

In addition to mapping out the incestuous coziness of Laurel Canyon, this book also makes the case for how Geffen was instrumental in ushering in the more calculated, and less soulful, time of pop music making, with his roster of CSN, Eagles and Ronstadt making millions on each album, even as their music grew more bland to meet the increasingly rigid confines of album oriented rock radio.

Jeanette says

This has thorough research and does capture the time and place in that part of L.A. to a T.

Deanna says

I was so excited to read this book. I love this era and singer-songwriters are “my people”. However, after finishing the book, I am finding it hard to rate, since I really have mixed feelings about it.

On one hand, the writing is really bad. I almost gave up after the first chapter. Once you get through the whole book, you have no doubt of the author’s credibility, but he needed a real writer to help him create a story that flowed well. It’s full of highly detailed facts that sometimes seem incongruent.

On the other hand, I loved it! I don’t know whether the writing got better, or I just got used to it (and my love of the topic pushed me to continue), but I could picture myself in Laurel Canyon and at the Troubadour during that time (observing from the sidelines...ha, ha). Everyone knows the story of “sex, drugs and rock and roll”, but I didn’t quite know what was happening in this detail. This brings me back to my dilemma...too many details/facts or just the right amount?

If you love the music of the 60’s and 70’s, you’ve got to read this book.

Sluserfive says

This book is a remarkable look at one of the most dramatic, creative, and revolutionary settings in American popular culture: the Los Angeles popular music scene from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Drawing on extraordinarily candid firsthand interviews Barney Hoskyns has conducted over more than three decades, *Hotel California* takes you on an intimate tour—from the Sunset Strip to Laurel Canyon—of the creative and personal lives of the legendary songwriters, superstars, and producers who made the music that everyone listened to.

Diane says

I really enjoyed this book but admittedly I'm pretty fanatical about this time period and the singer-songwriters of the period. This is a pretty comprehensive look at the rise (and sometimes the dramatic fall) of many of the artists that I grew up with. The brilliance of this group is hard to beat and I can't imagine what it must have been like to be surrounded by such a terrific cast of characters. If I have any gripe about the book it was a little lean on the songs themselves and a little heavy on the stories about David Geffen. Still, I was captivated!

Alan Taylor says

"It's not easy when you take someone who's basically right out of puberty and who becomes a millionaire responsible to no one."

Barney Hoskyns's 'Hotel California' is the story of the late '60s rise of country rock and its descent into late '70s AOR; idealism into hedonism; dope smoking, laid back hippies into cokehead, egotistical control freaks. Of course, there are those who were already halfway there even at the Laurel Canyon scene beginnings - Stephen Stills comes off particularly badly - and it would be difficult to make it in music without a strong ego, but Hoskyns's story is largely a tale of innocence and experience.

This is not a primer for California music; the book is almost novelistic and has a huge cast of characters and presupposes the reader's familiarity with many of them, not just the Crosby's, Stills', Nash's and Young's but also the Warren Zevon's and Lowell George's. Hoskyns takes these characters and weaves their individual threads into a complete tapestry of the times, albeit one which becomes badly torn and frayed at the end. He takes us from the idealistic Laurel Canyon community, the singer-songwriters at the Troubadour, an extended family who wrote together and played on each others albums, at time when record companies supported 'artists', to back-stabbing, suspicious superstars who tried to outdo and undermine each other at every turn. And, along the way, the casualties like Gram Parsons and Judee Sill.

I enjoyed the book, and revisiting the music, immensely and would recommend it to anyone with more than a passing interest in the period. It is much more than the subtitle, "The True-life Adventures of Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young, Mitchell, Taylor, Browne, Ronstadt, Geffen, the Eagles, and Their Many Friends", would suggest and I look forward to picking up Hoskyns's "Small Town" which I hope expands on The Band's story in the same way.

Ethan Miller says

Not the deeply satisfying and more sensational reads of "Shakey" or "Long time Gone" but still an interesting read and a broader scope. For those of us who did not live through the late 60's and 70's and did not experience the music happening out of the LA area in a linear way this book puts that in perspective nicely. History has kind of judged and divided these troubadours into our sacred cow artists like Neil Young and Joni Mitchell, the soft rock stadium sell outs like The Eagles and Linda Ronstadt and the burned out and over looked like Graham Parsons and Lowell George. This book puts them all back into the nest of Laurel Canyon and the immensely rich and creative Los Angeles hand to mouth singer songwriter scene together and shows their version of how and why they all went the path they did artistically and professionally later on. Through his interviewing and organized quotes Barney Hoskyns paints a grim picture of success and fame as the soul killer and ghost maker even (and especially) for those like Neil Young that we consider to have weathered fame and fortune well and come out the other side a great artist.

The one tale that took me by surprise and I found to be the most fascinating and startling told in this book was that of David Geffen. A character so shrewd, audacious and aggressively ruthless it kind of takes your breath away. Yet he's one of those characters that seems to be highly magnetic, even after stabbing in the back, chopping off the heads and completely commodifying all those around him. A good airplane read for the avid music fan, perhaps a really good read for those that don't know much about these artists or LA cowboy rock from the early 70s.

Jason Coleman says

I understand why it frustrates some people, but this is a decent book. The author has done a ton of research: if you were in Laurel Canyon in 1968-71 and Hoskyns didn't interview you, it probably means you are dead. He has digested the music itself and, in addition to all the milestones, champions several obscure works. His quick portraits are instinctive and convincing. And I like the trajectory he depicts: beginning with a truly vital scene that included the Byrds, Burritos, and Buffalo Springfield, the story moves from the hippie days in the Canyon, when it was about good weed and tail and you slept on someone's couch, to the hard and aloof multi-platinum era, when creativity gave way to cocaine and albums whose productions were as bloated as *Cleopatra*. "The world stopped looking to musicians for answers and instead started to live

vicariously through their heroes' hedonism," Hoskyns writes—a withering observation.

There are a couple problems here, though. First, Hoskyns has simply taken on too many stories. As if it weren't a tall enough order to treat Joni Mitchell, the Eagles, and CSN&Y (and all its offshoots) in a single book, the author also feels obliged to keep up with James Taylor, Jackson Browne, Tom Waits (one of the few native Californians here), Linda Ronstadt, Lowell George, et al, and to salvage the reps of forgotten artists like Judee Sill, Gene Clark, and Jimmy Webb. By the time Gram Parsons shows up, dragging his whole Nudie suits/funeral pyre myth along with him, the book has become hopelessly over-committed. And we haven't even gotten to Fleetwood Mac and Warren Zevon yet. On top of this there is the whole behind-the-scenes component: Doug Weston's Troubadour club down on Santa Monica Boulevard; the Reprise guys and their "Burbank sound"; David Geffen and the rise of Asylum; Irving Azoff, who stole the Eagles from Geffen and oversaw all those all those records with the horrible Boyd Elder cow skulls on them. You see what I mean, it all gets mighty complicated. The book could sorely use a family-tree diagram to sort out all of the players. (While they're at it, we could use another diagram just to sort out everyone Joni Mitchell and J.D. Souther had sex with.)

There are no real hatchet jobs here; several people (Browne, Souther, Geffen, Stills, Crosby, Henley and Frey of the Eagles) are awfully hard to like, but I'm not sure that could be helped. What isn't all right is the way the music itself becomes hard to like. Which brings us to the second serious problem: the deterioration that Hoskyns traces is all too true. In the end it simply isn't a terribly vibrant scene he's writing about—it's the death of the rock'n'roll spirit and the victory of pure product. Not very heroic stuff. As one onlooker remarks in the midst of so much success, "I didn't think it was good poetry, and I didn't think it was good show business."

Curious thing: while the photo gallery here is unusually good—I particularly enjoy all the shots of people lighting Glenn Frey's cigarettes—the cover art is weirdly bush league; it looks like it belongs on something like *Bob Stroud's Mellow Guitar for Intermediate Players*. (I made up Bob Stroud, so don't go looking.)

Suzie says

Hoskyn's book, in the edition that I have is subtitled "Singer Songwriters and Cocaine Cowboys in the L.A. Canyons, 1967-1976." This book covers the intersection of both subtitles. It centers on the Laurel Canyon scene in L.A. in the 60s and early 70s. There is a lot on CSNY and the Eagles, and Jackson Browne, and lesser but still fairly decent chunks on Joni Mitchell, David Geffen/Elliot Roberts/Asylum, the Troubadour, The Roxy, Buffalo Springfield, and Gene Clark. Honestly, I am still not sure if Joni Mitchell gets mentioned more or less than cocaine, and I am VERY sure that Cameron Crowe is mentioned more times than Linda Ronstadt is. Ronstadt, James Taylor, Carole King, Tom Waits, Randy Newman, Bonnie Raitt, Lee Hazlewood, and the Mamas and the Papas are covered, but not in any great detail.

This book was mostly helpful to me as an insight into which obscure albums from the period on Asylum I should be checking out. I also now know why Bob Boilen is so label-centric, and why Charles Manson chose Roman Polanski's house. Most of the people I'm interested in are not covered in any more detail than they are on their Wikipedia entries.

I love music, I love documentaries about music, and I love watching episodes of 'Classic Albums', even for artists that I despise. Honestly this book is not that interesting. You should read this book if you are big on Browne, the Eagles, or any member of CSNY. If you really need to make a mixtape (or playlist) about Los

Angeles, there is a nice appendix of period songs about L.A. If you want to look at the neat chart Hoskyns made showing how everyone in that scene was interrelated, that's also worth doing. But if you are not interested in any of the above items, skip it. Hoskyns has written another book on the L.A. music scene called *Waiting for the Sun* which covers from the postwar period to the nineties, and it's apparently much better than this one is. I would check that out instead.

Dan Pike says

I was disappointed with Barney Hoskyns' account of the lives of the primary musicians credited with establishing the Country Rock sound that was so popular in the late 1960's and throughout the 1970's...The author relies far too much on old interviews of the central characters, making Neil Young, Don Henley, Glen Frey, Jackson Browne, and many others seem flat and one-dimensional...Too much space is devoted to entertainment mogul David Geffen and his rise to power, which in Hoskyns' hands is about as exciting as a business resume...What could have been a intriguing and colorful account of a very important time in modern American music history, never captures the true essence of the time or the lives of the musicians involved...This is a fatal flaw that makes for tedious page-turning and an overall boring read.

PennsyLady (Bev) says

The time: mid 60's to late 70's

The place: Los Angeles, California, specifically the Laurel Canyon (and beyond) music scene.

Barney Hoskyns is a writer, editor and British music critic, who ushers us through a rise and fall era in the California musical scene.

Behind the songs we loved, we're given an informative look at a myriad of relationships (both professional and personal).

We're given snapshots of the singer/songwriters with their backgrounds, their personalities, their genius, their quirks.

In an era of decadence and discovery, Hoskyns proposes that "two things had effectively killed the sixties hippie dream"

One was cocaine; the other was big money.

One reviewer call it "an epic tale of songs and sunshine, genius and greed. "

You'll also find list of the albums referred to in the book, suggested readings and numerous interview notes.

This is another Hoskyns offering that proves he has a keen eye for the musical scene.

4.5?????

Melody says

Certainly full of interesting facts, but suffers from too many of them. The cast of characters is huge and unwieldy, with many people doing what I felt were unnecessary walk-ons. The writing was magazine-like with extra trivia shoehorned in. I enjoyed parts of it very much, especially how songs came to be written. On the whole, though, I can't recommend it to anyone but the stone Laurel Canyon junkie.

Rory says

Um, this was not good. No real insight OR fun gossip, and no real sense of *why* these artists mattered. I love me some classic rock, and I'm interested in how folk music fed into pop to truly help define what "rock" became in the 1970s...but this was just an unfocused, boring mess.

Suvi says

In my quests to become more educated about music (I know what I like, but I don't listen to music everyday and it's not my lifeblood, let alone that I would know albums by heart or be able to talk about music in detail and with conviction) and to find some good books about L.A. or other tropical palm tree-ish places for this incredible period of unusual heatwave, I thought *Hotel California* would combine these two in perfect union.

Turns out I might have made a poor choice, because I'm none the wiser about the Laurel Canyon era. Strings of names, dates, record company hijinks. Many people are only mentioned once or twice after which they never return and the endless short quotes aren't always insightful or bring anything interesting to the mix. Instead of writing a coherent and engaging narrative that would examine the connections and, above all, the influence of Laurel Canyon's singer-songwriters on music, Hoskyns reduces his superficial story to a 200-page-long magazine article (makes sense considering his background in the business but doesn't make one any less annoyed).

In general, too many players splashed around is a bad idea, but when you add all the other padding such as irrelevant details and the general disjointed way of juggling with all the incredible amount of information, trying to keep up with all the connections and the fragmented timeline just made my head swirl. Now I'm wondering whether I should even try Hoskyns' *Waiting for the Sun*.
