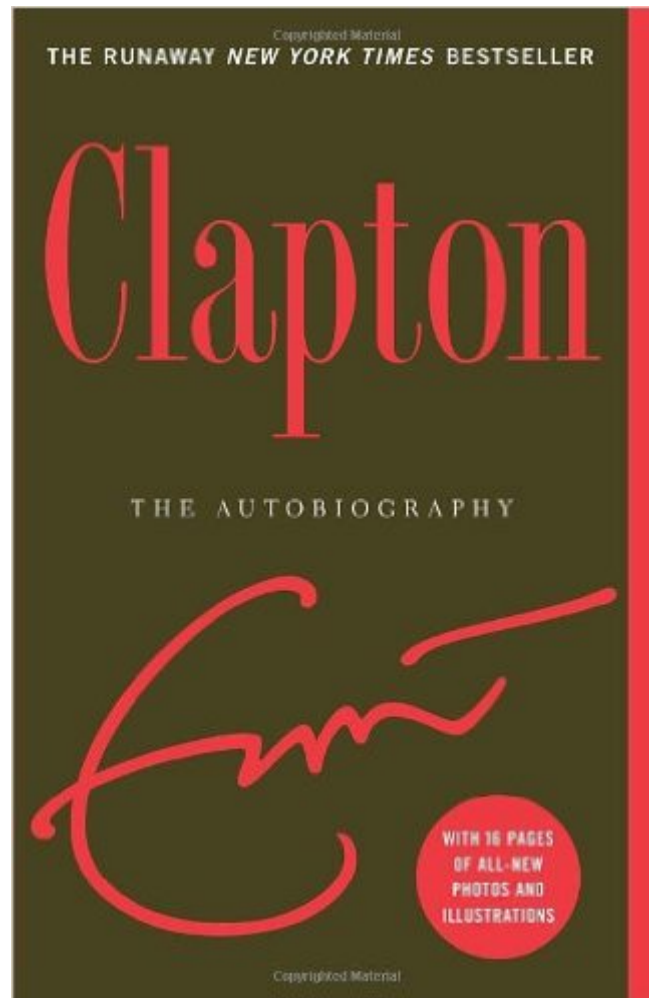


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Clapton: The Autobiography



Synopsis

Eric found a pattern in my behavior that had been repeating itself for years, decades even. Bad choices were my specialty, and if something honest and decent came along, I would shun it or run the other way. •With striking intimacy and candor, Eric Clapton tells the story of his eventful and inspiring life in this poignant and honest autobiography. More than a rock star, he is an icon, a living embodiment of the history of rock music. Well known for his reserve in a profession marked by self-promotion, flamboyance, and spin, he now chronicles, for the first time, his remarkable personal and professional journeys. Born illegitimate in 1945 and raised by his grandparents, Eric never knew his father and, until the age of nine, believed his actual mother to be his sister. In his early teens his solace was the guitar, and his incredible talent would make him a cult hero in the clubs of Britain and inspire devoted fans to scrawl "Clapton is God" on the walls of London's Underground. With the formation of Cream, the world's first supergroup, he became a worldwide superstar, but conflicting personalities tore the band apart within two years. His stints in Blind Faith, in Delaney and Bonnie and Friends, and in Derek and the Dominos were also short-lived but yielded some of the most enduring songs in history, including the classic "Layla." During the late sixties he played as a guest with Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan, as well as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and longtime friend George Harrison. It was while working with the latter that he fell for George's wife, Pattie Boyd, a seemingly unrequited love that led him to the depths of despair, self-imposed seclusion, and drug addiction. By the early seventies he had overcome his addiction and released the bestselling album 461 Ocean Boulevard, with its massive hit "I Shot the Sheriff." He followed that with the platinum album Slowhand, which included "Wonderful Tonight," the touching love song to Pattie, whom he finally married at the end of 1979. A short time later, however, Eric had replaced heroin with alcohol as his preferred vice, following a pattern of behavior that not only was detrimental to his music but contributed to the eventual breakup of his marriage. In the eighties he would battle and begin his recovery from alcoholism and become a father. But just as his life was coming together, he was struck by a terrible blow: His beloved four-year-old son, Conor, died in a freak accident. At an earlier time Eric might have coped with this tragedy by fleeing into a world of addiction. But now a much stronger man, he took refuge in music, responding with the achingly beautiful "Tears in Heaven." Clapton is the powerfully written story of a survivor, a man who has achieved the pinnacle of success despite extraordinary demons. It is one of the most compelling memoirs of our time.

Book Information

Paperback: 345 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; 8th printing edition (May 27, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 076792536X

ISBN-13: 978-0767925365

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (931 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #43,844 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Japanese](#) #140 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rock](#) #576 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International](#)

Customer Reviews

I love biographies, especially of celebrities, having read them all my life. As I have gotten older, though, my attention span wanes, and I read less and less. This book, *Clapton: The Autobiography*, is an exceptional one, and as a pseudo musician (I can play several instruments, but I certainly wouldn't say I play any well), the prospect of reading about Eric Clapton, from the source, so-to-speak, was a prospect that excited me. I feel blessed that one can pre-order a book and have it on one's doorstep the day it hits the streets, as was the case with this book and the accompanying CD. First of all, this is an exceptional book, but unlike some biographies, and fewer autobiographies, it is not one that would be a "page turner" for everyone because it is not full of cute anecdotes that make for sharing stories around the water cooler the next day. A case in point is the time when Eric first met Jimi Hendrix. Chas Chandler of the Animals was trying to develop a career as a promoter and came across Hendrix in New York. Promising him a chance to meet Eric Clapton, he took Jimi to London. After meeting several musicians (Eric Burton, Andy Summers, et. al.), Chas took Jimi to hear Cream play. Backstage, Chas introduced Jimi, and they asked if Jimi could sit in with them for a few numbers, which seemed kind of ballsey. In *CLAPTON*, Eric writes that Jimi played Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" in true Hendrix fashion playing "the guitar with his teeth, behind his head, lying on the floor, doing the splits, the whole business. It was amazing..... They (the crowd) loved it, and I loved it, too, but I remember thinking that here was a force to be reckoned with.

I read this book and Pattie Boyd's memoir side-by-side. When I first read Clapton's dazzling love letters to Boyd (printed in her book), I thought wouldn't it be great if Derek and Layla got back

together? I soon realized perhaps not. "Cruel and vicious" is how Clapton describes himself upon throwing Boyd out of their house for refusing to sleep with him after she learned his mistress was pregnant. "Cruel and vicious" pretty much sums up this book and the man behind it. Every attractive woman who gets near Clapton goes from innamorata to enemy in a heartbeat. He threatens to become a heroin addict when Boyd refuses to leave her husband, but once he wins her, he berates her. When a supermodel romances Clapton for the express purpose of meeting fellow reprobate Mick Jagger, and the inevitable happens, Clapton is reduced to plotting murder. Every predictable action is met with Clapton's predictably insane reaction. Clapton is attracted mostly to women as ruthless or vapid as he is, guaranteeing disappointment. The prime exception is Boyd, the indisputable love of Clapton's life. Boyd was a compassionate but insecure woman, and she was also married to close friend George Harrison, which is why Clapton wanted her. Clapton resents Boyd for resisting his pleas to run off with him. When she does, he resents her even more because he realizes he's not good enough for her. He demands Boyd join him on his drinking binges and then resents her for that. He resents her for pushing him into rehab. He resents her for being infertile. He resents her most of all when she divorces him and slips out of his control forever.

I am a guitarist and long-time admirer of Eric Clapton. I've followed his career and life for four decades. I was really looking forward to this autobiography. Sadly, the book has many flaws in its writing and production, but beyond that, I fear that it reveals a terribly shallow and self-centered man. The opening chapters are interesting, although very little new information is provided for any one who has read at all about the music scene of the 60's and 70's. As the book progresses, it moves into a second stage which is, frankly, rather boring. Like much of Clapton's music from this era, it lacks focus and tends to ramble. However, it's the last third of the book that I find most disturbing. I'm not only very familiar with the guitar, but also addiction and recovery. To those familiar with 12-step programs, Clapton's almost complete disregard of his commitment to anonymity, and lack of true humility, is shocking and a red flag to anyone who knows about recovery. This guy may not be drinking or drugging anymore, but is clearly selective as to which parts of the program he cares to follow. An argument can be made that he needed to tell the story of his recovery, but this could have been done in a much more careful way -as many before him have done. Reading this book, I for the first time now truly understand why the rule of anonymity is so important in recovery. If the program that made Clapton "sober" produced the kind of man that is revealed in the last chapters of this book, then many people may decide to not try that route for themselves.

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