



Nick Drake: The Biography

By Patrick Humphries

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Nick Drake was barely 26 years old when he died in 1974. The British singer-songwriter made only three albums during his short life time: "Five Leaves Left", "Bryter Layer" and "Pink Moon". All are now recognized as classics. Since his death, Nick has been cited as a seminal influence by stars as diverse as REM, Elton John, Paul Weller, Jackson Brown, Everything But the Girl, Tom Verlaine and Matt Johnson of The The. This biography includes extensive interviews with friends, colleagues and musicians who knew and worked with Nick. It provides an insight into the life and work of Nick Drake, and also the music scene of the 1960s that formed his backdrop. The author's lifelong appreciations of and interest in Nick Drake were further fuelled when he discovered that his uncle Dr James Lusk actually delivered Nick into the world and remained a friend of the Drake family. In the book, he draws on a long letter from Nick's father to Dr Lusk, in which he describes how Nick's mother, discovered Nick's body during the morning of 25 November 1974, following an accidental overdose of prescribed drugs.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

English singer/songwriter Nick Drake was a nearly unknown cult figure when he died from an overdose of antidepressants in 1974, but the number of his admirers has grown steadily ever since. Musicians in particular are drawn to his delicate, melancholy folk tunes and to the legend of his depressive isolation and suicide at age 26. Humphries, Drake's first biographer, faced difficult working conditions without the cooperation of Drake's producer, Joe Boyd, or of Drake's family, and without even permission to quote Drake's lyrics. Still, he has done his legwork, although exact causes of Drake's decline remain unclear. Interviews with schoolboy chums reveal that, far from being withdrawn, Drake engaged in normal boyish hijinks. And although he was frustrated by his lack of success, it appears that Drake was doomed to obscurity by his own refusal to allow Island records to promote him, rather than by the indifference of the music world. Furthermore, although Drake certainly was drawn into the drug culture surrounding the London music scene of the late '60s, his involvement was apparently not enough to explain his downfall. Though a skillful and engaging writer, Humphries tends to go overboard with setting the scene: he manages to discuss the sinking of the Titanic, the British role in Burma and the Brontes before getting to Drake's birth. Although unable to solve the mystery of his death, Humphries does manage to make the singer seem more human, albeit at the expense of Drake's romantic myth. Photos.

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Carlos McNerney:

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