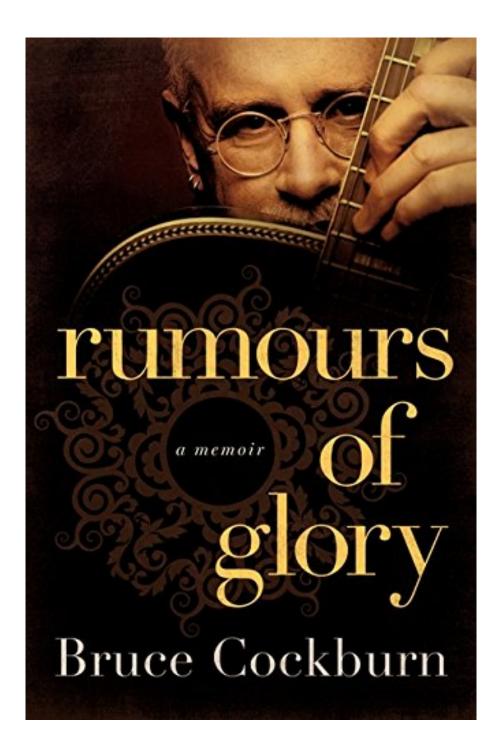


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Review

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Following the success of I'm Your Man and Just Kids, legendary Canadian singer and songwriter Bruce Cockburn delivers his long-awaited memoir—a chronicle of faith, fear, and activism that is also a lively cultural and musical tour through the late twentieth century.

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Most helpful customer reviews

18 of 20 people found the following review helpful.
Precious Gift to Bruce's Fans
By P. Hamm
Disclaimer: I believe there are two kinds of people in the world. Those who recognize that Bruce is the greatest songwriter in the history of popular folk/rock music, and those who just haven't heard enough of him yet. So, you know I'm an uber-fan. I have everything he's ever recorded (in some cases multiple copies on vinyl and CD), and have seen him live more than any other artist. (Bruce, my brothers and I are the ones who always shout out for the really weird songs whenever you're in DC. We've made you laugh at us more than once. Sorry for ruining your concentration, at least we didn't do that crap at the National Cathedral in 06.)

Bruce memoir is not one he needed to write. Rabid fans like me (I've been listing him as a favorite songwriter for just over 30 years, having discovered him through the 1981 US Greatest Hits collection "Resume") are going to buy his music and see his concerts and even learn to sing and play his songs as long as we are blessed to have him crank them out.

Bruce takes us through all of the political, societal, personal and spiritual highways and byways that have informed his songwriting, activism and life over the years, and the ride is worth it. The story is impossible to put down (I read it in 3 or 4 sittings over 4 days), engaging and sometimes even humorous.

We get a lot of great answers to questions about his writing (like the identity of the person who actually put that bullet hole in that wall... although I'd like to know if Bruce actually sent the pictures he took... Bruce, I know you're reading... spill the beans... did ya?), and a lot of insight into both his highs and lows, his successes and failures and failings. Totally honestly, he paints a picture of a remarkably flawed man, but by the end of the book I liked him even more than I did at the beginning.

The political landscape, as Bruce sees it, is outlined graphically and with great detail, and I appreciated being informed on more than a few things I wasn't aware of, but for me, the spiritual insights were worth the price of the book alone. I know Bruce hesitates to call himself a Christian right now, but the love that God (through Christ) put in this man to give him the boldness to speak and write about the issues he's faced, not to mention the guts to visit places I would not think I would be brave enough to, still speak of a man whose spirit is very much in line with Christ. (Bruce, we are not all right-leaning capitalist republican immigrant-hating bastards, I promise you).

When I was a very young Christian, there was a very short list of prominent songwriters and authors who kept me from becoming a mindless american fundamentalist. Bruce is at the top of that list. He has made more truly great albums than anyone else I'm aware of, and his fan list reads like a who's who of great artists in their own right.

Those who are looking for detailed musical info about Bruce's unique (and incredible) playing style won't find that here. There's only SO much room for details in this book!

If I were to fault this book at all, I'd like about a chapter more of where he's at in life now, but perhaps that is too close to be easy to write about. I'd also love chapter names so I could go back and find passages while I'm listening to, say, "The Charity of Night" and want to read again about where he was then, or "In the Falling Dark". I suspect the book will make more sense and appeal to Bruce's legions of fans than those who aren't, so... what are you waiting for... get the box set, too and you can listen your way through a whole new perspective on the last few decades of politics, religion and culture.

So thankful for this book. It will be a true rarity. A musician biography I will read more than once.

Thank you, Bruce! for this book, for dozens of albums of incisive and amazing songwriting and music, and for caring about your fellow man and making us want to do that, too.

17 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

A surprising disappointment for a Cockburn fanatic

By Goatboy

Like others here I own a copy of every Bruce Cockburn album in at least one format, plus all the Colin Linden, Hugh Marsh, Jonatha Brooke etc. curiosities he appears on, even the "Kick at the Darkness" tribute. Unlike others here, though, I was disappointed in "Rumours of Glory," because I think there was not much (or enough) memoir in it. It's as if Bruce was hiding behind the full-lyric song interludes and the journalistically crafted sections that excerpt big chunks of UN reports or Washington Post articles about whatever geopolitical topic, like the Sanctuary Movement (which I was involved in, so I am not reacting here on political grounds.) I am grateful for the book, and read it in three days, but I don't feel like I learned enough about Bruce Cockburn--the artist who has influenced my life probably more than any other artist in

any medium, including literature. I feel I've been given a gift every time I can figure out one of his songs on guitar or charango (yes, my father bought me one, so I could learn to play "Santiago Dawn;" BTW, there's not a lot of detail about musicianship in the book either.) By the way, is there any truth to the rumor that he broke up Ani Di Franco's marriage? He touches a bit on their relationship over discussion of "Birmingham Shadows" but is gallantly vague about their whole connection, whatever it was. There are some beautiful passages about "the Divine," his post-Christian way of describing God. I wonder what he thought about all the shout-outs he got in the Christian book "The Shack" (which I cannot recommend, even to Cockburnheads on the Christian spectrum). It should be said this is not a negative review, and I totally encourage anybody to buy the book, I just wish Bruce had put more Bruce inside; I don't think "Rumours of Glory" totally works as memoir.

18 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Ask 5 Bruce Cockburn fans to name their favorite of his records and you will likely get 5 ...

By Westcliffe Photography

Ask 5 Bruce Cockburn fans to name their favorite of his records and you will likely get 5 different answers. One could argue that in Rumours of Glory Bruce describes three different releases as potentially "his best." One would expect reviews of this memoir to be similarly of a uniquely personal nature. That being said ...

The core of this book is made of truths that will never be read by the people that would benefit the most from doing so. Such is the frustration of speaking out against the economic and political monsters that continue to gather momentum as our planet is consumed at an alarming rate. Bruce Cockburn's world travels reveal different chapters of a theme that has remained very much the same through the decades. The details of his experiences during the trips that were the source for so many songs can be upsetting and provoking of serious anger, though for those that have heard the songs, not at all surpising. For those that have not heard the songs, it's not clear how much interest much of

Rumours of Glory will hold though the largest parts of the book's foundation can be considered "universal." Bruce shares his views on "The Divine" speaking to each of us in a very personal way. The differences between religion and spirituality have never been more eloquently stated. I found some interesting inconsistencies on this subject that another reader may or may not notice ... but that is not surprising if one agrees with the premise that each of us has a unique relationship with God, that religion falters when it attempts to pretend these inconsistencies do not exist.

With a couple of exceptions, Bruce does not specifically address the "meaning" of his lyrics, preferring to share the circumstances under which the songs were born. Also, while this is certainly not a "tell all" style of memoir, Bruce Cockburn is painfully frank in sharing his shortcomings past and present ... this was a bit of a surprise. Finally, another element not addressed here is any meaningful discussion of his guitar style though the roots of his musical tastes are shared in abundance.

I enjoyed reading Rumours of Glory and will pay it the highest compliment by saying I will read it again one day soon.

See all 45 customer reviews...

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