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Springsteen: Point Blank



Synopsis

Pop gave him the licence to be dirty, sweaty and loud, the licence to get even, to make the real world vanish. In 1958 a young boy was watching television with his mother when on came Elvis Presley. Turning to his mother he said, 'I wanna be just like that.' The boy was called Bruce Springsteen, and his fate had just been determined. Soon after his mother would buy him his first guitar, and his journey would begin. A loner with a distaste for formal education, music was not merely a hobby but what he did, yet in 1975 it had reached make-or-break point. 'Born to Run' was the title of this, Springsteen's third, album and it made him. Becoming one of the world's bestselling artists, Springsteen has won numerous awards in the course of his career, from Grammys and Golden Globes to an Academy Award. As with so many artists people responded to Springsteen's legend, and in time the line between the man and the myth became blurred. In Springsteen: Point Blank Christopher Sandford re-establishes the line and paints the definitive picture of the ordinary yet gifted Jerseyan who came to be known as 'the Boss'. Praise for Christopher Sandford: 'A more thorough and current account than the best existing life so far' - Robert Sandall, Sunday Times 'Rigorously researched and thoroughly readable' - Q 'Very well written, critical and thoroughly researched' - Guardian Christopher Sandford is the critically acclaimed author of nineteen biographies, including Clapton: Edge of Darkness. Before this he enjoyed careers in public relations and cricket and music journalism, with articles appearing in the Seattle Times, Rolling Stone, the Spectator and The Observer amongst others, as well writing fiction.

Book Information

File Size: 3600 KB

Print Length: 417 pages

Publisher: Endeavour Press (September 8, 2016)

Publication Date: September 8, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01LW6NLLX

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #83,991 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #19 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Songbooks > Blank Sheet Music #19 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Music > History & Criticism #72 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Art & Literature

Customer Reviews

This is a well-written, if over-analyzed, portrait of Springsteen. Sandford, who's clearly a fan, writes about Springsteen's childhood and his rise as a rock star that turns into rock icon -- but he tries to do so with the objective of portraying Springsteen in more human terms instead of just feeding the myth-making machine as so many other authors have done. This means that at times Springsteen does not come off as squeaky-clean or saintly as some of the more hard-core fanatics want so desperately to believe. Sandford balances the musical (reviewing and analyzing Springsteen's albums and songs, Springsteen's coping with the problems and pressures and eventually coming to terms with being a star, etc.) with the personal (his relationships with women, his marriage with Phillips, his sometimes contradictory nature, his selfless giving to various charities and so on). Sandford also shows how Springsteen evolved from somebody who never read a book and didn't know anything about politics to somebody who now reads the classics and is much more politically aware. Sandford is also not afraid to criticize, or at least point out certain contradictions concerning Springsteen's behavior -- one example being that early in his career, Springsteen vowed to never play stadiums and had imposed a ban on T-shirt or merchandising in his name. By the time of the Born in the U.S.A. tour, however, he was playing huge stadiums and selling plenty of merchandise, courtesy of Jon Landau. However, this book is no sordid tell-all, nor is it a hatchet job to try to bring Springsteen down -- Sandford usually goes on to defend Springsteen, or at least to explain the reasons for why Springsteen did what he did.

I've been an avid and captive listener of Bruce Springsteen's music for about three decades. That said, I'm not above reading a juicy/tell-all tome such as this one that Sandford strived to create. The problem is, he just doesn't do it well (mercy, he makes Angela Bowie's tell-all book, BACKSTAGE PASSES; LIFE ON THE WILD SIDE WITH DAVID BOWIE, seem like a masterpiece by comparison). Being pretty well-grounded and centered as an adult in my forties, I'm a bit beyond the need to have heroes (though I'll be the first to admit that Springsteen was something of a hero to me back when I was in my teens, back in the days when I still was dumb and innocent enough to have

heroes in the form of rock stars). So, this book could have revealed that Springsteen spent a chunk of his life slumming around the most seedy places in Time Square...and it really wouldn't diminish the admiration that I have for the fine canon of songs & performances that he's given the world). So, no, there was no offense taken...nor were my sensibilities shattered... by some of the rumors and theories that Sandford tries to put forth in his book. The problem with Sandford's book is that it's poorly written. I mean, the writing is downright bad. So bad that I'm surprised an editor didn't demand a complete overhaul of this book before allowing it to go to print. This book is laden with vague/obtuse sentences, along with some of the most awkward paragraph constructions that I've ever tried to wade my way through. To make matters even worse, Sandford clearly has an agenda...and damned if he'll let facts get in the way of his agenda. There's certainly no crime when one tries to take a few feet off of a pedestal.

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