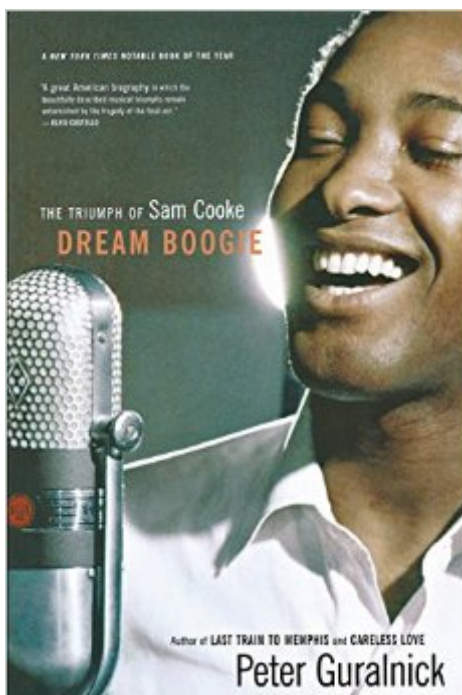


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Dream Boogie: The Triumph Of Sam Cooke



Synopsis

One of the most influential singers and songwriters of all time, Sam Cooke was among the first to blend gospel music and secular themes--the early foundation of soul music. He was the opposite of Elvis: a black performer who appealed to white audiences, who wrote his own songs, who controlled his own business destiny. No biography has previously been written that fully captures Sam Cooke's accomplishments, the importance of his contribution to American music, the drama that accompanied his rise in the early days of the civil rights movement, and the mystery that surrounds his death. Bestselling author Peter Guralnick tells this moving and significant story, from Cooke's childhood as a choirboy to an adulthood when he was anything but. With appearances by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, James Brown, Harry Belafonte, Aretha Franklin, Fidel Castro, The Beatles, Sonny and Cher, Bob Dylan, and other central figures of this explosive era, *DREAM BOOGIE* is a compelling depiction of one man striving to achieve his vision despite all obstacles--and an epic portrait of America during the turbulent and hopeful 1950s and 1960s. The triumph of the book is the vividness with which Peter Guralnick conveys the astonishing richness of the black America of this era--the drama, force, and feeling of the story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I think some of the previous reviewers missed the point a little bit. Dream Boogie is an intelligent read that leaves no stone unturned in chronicling Sam Cooke's entire life and career. Every session, every tour, and every release is discussed, and if you're a fan of the man's music, as opposed to

simply being attracted to the sensational elements of his life that have been beaten into the ground over the past 40+ years, you will enjoy this book immensely. Guralnick is clearly a student of Cooke's music, and provides context and details about that music that had never been revealed prior to the release of the book. If you want to find out what Sam Cooke's innermost thoughts and feelings were, you are going to be disappointed, because as the book makes pains to reveal, Cooke had demons that he never fully revealed to even his closest friends or family. Everyone of interest that was ever associated with Cooke was interviewed in a thorough fashion by Guralnick (who, by the way, also interviewed Cooke himself prior to his death), and if none of them could crack Cooke's complex nature, you can hardly expect Guralnick to do so either. My one minor quarrel with the book is that Guralnick, after going to tremendous lengths to introduce us to Cooke inner-circle figures like Bobby Womack, J.W. Alexander, and Allen Klein, doesn't quite tie up all the loose ends associated with these people that followed Cooke's demise. For instance, I thought Guralnick could have told us that Womack went on to achieve significant solo success, or that he divorced Cooke's ex-wife in 1970, that Alexander passed away in 1996, etc. But these are just tangential facts. The facts that most readers should want, aka the ones involving Sam Cooke, are all here. Recommended.

Although 'Dream Boogie' is long and exhaustive with research, it dwells on details and the reader is apt to miss out on the full picture as Guralnick has. It lacks the emotional depth of other biographies and is padded with cultural touchstones that did not directly affect Sam Cooke, but are not mainstream enough to take us there. It is also fraught with inaccuracies and inconsistencies - for example, late in his career Sam played at Comiskey Park, not Wrigley Field, and after being told that his wife had her tubes tied, we learn that after his death she has another child with his protegee Bobby Womack, but no mention of surgery is made. Despite the fascinating life (and death) of Sam Cooke, Peter Guralnick dropped the ball; he is more a researcher than a writer and does better capturing the letter than the spirit of the story. He gives inordinate ink to the adventures and accounts of groupies and minor hangers-on than more prominent sources (such as Muhammad Ali and James Brown) who are also still alive. One oft-repeated tale is that of the joyously drunken recording of 'Bring it on Home to Me,' famously recounted in Daniel Wolff's superior Sam Cooke biography 'You Send Me.' In 'Dream Boogie,' there is no mention of the excitement and electricity surrounding this recording session. Although Guralnick might have wanted to avoid repeating the story in favor of original research, he misses out on the heart and soul of what Sam Cooke was all about.

This book was exhausting - and I am an avid reader. I labored to get thru it. Instead of focusing on WHO Sam was, the book is littered with technical details of his songs, publishing, recording sessions, tours, and the like. The only personality in this book is Barbara - her story was interwoven throughout the book, like a secondary plot. To be honest - it kept me reading, she did not sugarcoat at ALL. There were some input from Sam's family, JW Alexander, Bobby Womack and later Allen Klein - but it was not as consistent to me. There were instances in this book, where I thought the author was not objective in his writing. Times where I had to go back over a paragraph to see if he was quoting someone, or if that was his personal opinion. Also like another poster mentioned, there were details about his relationship with Allen Klein that were left out. This book left me with more questions than answers, and I too would have wanted to know what became of his family, years later. What of the "outside" children? What about his daughters? Are they getting any money at all from Sam's work? If you want a good read about Mr Cooke, I will suggest "You Send Me, The Life and Times of Sam Cooke" by Daniel Wolff. That book will have you feeling like you were there, and not like an outsider looking in, as in this book.

I've always had a need to dig deeper and find out more about those who have made an impact on me. I long to know what made them click. I adore Sam Cooke and knew little about him. I was hoping that this book would provide insight on the life of this man whose voice I love. I am sorely disappointed with this book. The only thing preventing me from putting it down (unfortunately, I'm still in the middle of it) is sheer stubbornness and the hope that it will redeem itself soon. I've probably skipped more pages than I've read. It's a pity that Sam isn't here to tell his own tale. It seems as if the author was able to locate everyone else who ever came in contact with him and allowed them to include their thoughts and opinions, whether the observation was pertinent to the story or not. I believe that many passages could simply have been omitted. And that if they were, the book would have been a far better (and shorter) read.

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