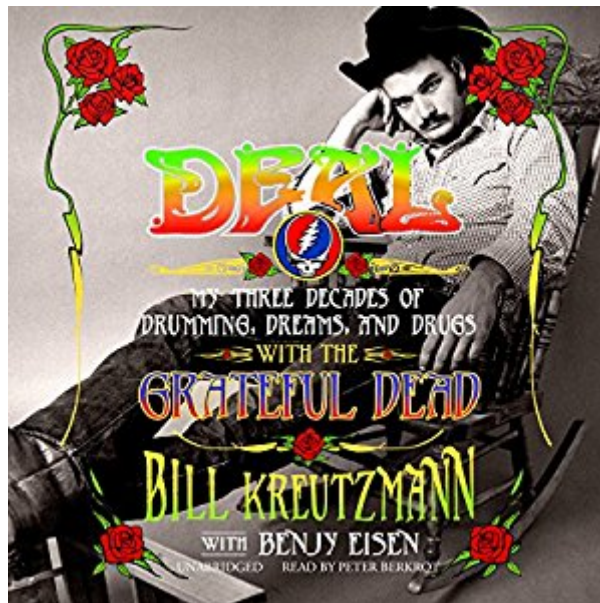




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Deal: My Three Decades Of Drumming, Dreams, And Drugs With The Grateful Dead



Synopsis

On their 50th anniversary comes a groundbreaking rock-and-roll memoir by one of the founding members of the Grateful Dead. The Grateful Dead are perhaps the most legendary American rock band of all time. For 30 years, beginning in the hippie scene of San Francisco in 1965, they were a musical institution, the original jam band that broke new ground in so many ways. From the music to their live-concert sound systems and fan recordings, they were forward-thinking champions of artistic control and outlaw artists who marched to the beat of their own drums. Bill Kreutzmann, one of their founding members and drummer for every one of their over 2,300-odd concerts, has written an unflinching and wild account of playing in the greatest improvisational band of all time.

Everything a rock music fan would expect is here, but what sets this apart is Bill's incredible life of adventure, which was at the heart of the Grateful Dead experience. This was a band that knew no limits, and Bill lived life to the fullest, pushing the boundaries of drugs, drums, and high times, through devastating tragedy and remarkable triumph. But at this book's beating heart is the music - theirs and others. Some of the greatest musicians and concerts were a part of the Grateful Dead's career, from sharing the stage with Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and the Who, to playing in the Acid Tests, the Monterey Pop Festival, Woodstock, and Altamont. Bill's life is a chronicle of American music and pop-culture history, and his epic personal journey is one of sonic discovery and thrilling experiences.

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Customer Reviews

Imagine this--some old hippie has just bought the house next door to yours. It turns out to be Billy Kreutzmann from the Grateful Dead. The two of you become best friends, and Billy tells you all the intimate details of his entire life, stuff he's never been able to tell ANYBODY before. You get to hear everything. He shares tales about his childhood, how his dad sold Jerry his banjo, years before Billy ever knew Jerry himself, about losing his virginity, and how he fell in love with drumming. You're privy to all the biggest secrets, which nobody knows except you, Billy, and the other band members. You find out that Mickey didn't leave the Dead because he was embarrassed his father stole all their money. Actually, Billy divulges that the band fired him for being too strung out on heroin to drum properly. And when Mickey wanted to rejoin the Dead, Billy didn't want him brought back. He loved the freedom of being the only drummer. Of course you'd be shocked. Imagine your new best friend and neighbor confiding in you, that the Grateful Dead were into drugs. Geez, d'ya think? No, we're not talking about LSD and pot, we're talking about heroin, pills and coke. Billy says how he liked Donna as a person, but as far as her vocal harmonizing, Billy didn't think she belonged in the band. Most deadheads are aware of the basic history of the Dead, since so much had been written, for example Rock Scully's book (Living with the Dead). But Billy's book provides a first hand perspective. Billy lived in the various communes, with the other band members and their extended family, culminating in the famous 710 Haight street house. He doesn't hold back about anyone in the Dead. He tells the story how Pigpen and Janis Joplin were caught shagging each other on the Festival Express Train. Janis forgot to close the window blinds. You get the dirty details about Altamont, Woodstock, Monterey Pop, and the Human Be-in. (The Dead always blew the big gigs.) Of course, there's all the crazy rock god hotel destruction stories from the 70s, when they'd be all wired after a show, and would blow off steam by shooting fireworks. Or how Bobby thought it was funny, to pull out a snub nosed .38 revolver in an airport and start shooting it. (It was only a cap gun, but he did get arrested.) Billy tells you about the ugly fights between Keith and Donna, and how the two of them destroyed two cars, during an impromptu demolition derby in the hotel parking lot. Billy talks about the Europe 72 tour, and his favorite Grateful Dead gig of all time, performing before the Egyptian pyramids in 1978, surrounded by Bedouins on camels. Or imagine your surprised when Billy relates his crazy times with John Belushi, and their coke fueled parties. Ever hear of Rolling Thunder, the American Indian that Billy and his old lady lived with, in the desert? Its the part of the tale, where Billy confides his feelings on spirituality. He tells how the Dead almost broke up in 1974, from sheer exhaustion. How the band tried to fund their own record company, and lost money. How Jerry overspent on the Grateful Dead movie, and lost money. How signing with Arista, led to their MTV hit "Touch of Grey", and made them LOTS of money. Billy lets you know how much he hated

the cover of GO TO HEAVEN, and detested their last studio album, BUILT TO LAST. And how the band never were able to record their last album of new material. Fate intervened. Oh sure, you can bet Billy opens up with you, about all the dark days. You're shocked that Billy could trust you so much, to reveal so much. ("I've been much more open in this book than I ever was between my bandmates." pg 321) You're shocked, to say the least, how much he's been through. Not just the five wives, but how his oldest daughter disowned him. Or the two rehab experiences he had. Sure, Billy was upset when Pigpen died, or Janis, or when Keith died in that car crash, after leaving the band. However, when Billy confesses how his therapist told him to stop enabling his mother's drug habits, even tho she said she'd kill herself if he didn't keep the money flowing, and then when she did exactly that, you can just feel the heartbreak. Or how upset Billy was, when Brent O.D.ed from speedballs, right before he intended to clean up. But the darkest days in Billy's life, he tells you, all happened in 1995. "The worst year of my life", he bemoans repeatedly. Jerry had his fatal heart attack, the band imploded, his dad died, his girlfriend Pamela had lung cancer, and his drinking and drugging became uncontrollable. Of all the stories Billy shares, the breakup of the Dead was his saddest, in many ways. Maybe because it meant so much to him, and the death took so long to occur. The scene became toxic, sometime between Jerry's diabetic coma, and Brent death. Everybody in the band had become strangers to each other. It was a job, not a shamanistic cosmic journey. Jerry's playing had lost its spark, as his heroin use became so severe, that he's nod off during a solo, and had to be reminded what song he was playing. Or what the lyrics were. The Grateful Dead might have been headlining stadiums, but their playing had become so shabby, that Bruce Hornsby refused to play with them anymore. Even the audience behavior had become toxic by '95. Something had to give. After Jerry died, Billy couldn't even face playing the drums. Finally, as Billy gets you up to date with his life today, he cheers you up, by telling you about how he got his life turned around. The second rehab worked. He learned to love drumming again, and could once more listen to the Grateful Dead music, and play with his former band mates. Billy divorced his fourth wife, whom he never loved, and married his soul mate. They live in a beautiful home in Hawaii. Billy finishes his story on a note of hope. Of course, we aren't ever going to meet Billy Kreutzmann, or hang out with him for months on end, earning his trust, so he tells us his life's intimate details. However, out of the great love Billy has for the Deadhead community, he made the decision to trust his readers, with these amazing stories about his life, and his band. Even tho I never read Lesh's bio, I read other books on the Dead, so I know that DEAL breaks a lot of previously uncovered ground. Consider reading this, with a copy of a picture book like "Grateful Dead Family Album", to help visualize the colorful cast of characters that Billy calls friends. Pull out

your Dead collection, and play it in the back round, as you read. Maybe put the book down from time to time, if you're able, to reacquaint yourself with the Egypt 78 movie, the Winterland movie, Festival Express, and the recently released Veneta Oregon concert from 1972. At certain spots in the narrative, Billy says that this or that event, can be found on Utoob. The book accomplished more than just revitalizing my love of the Grateful Dead, or feeding my appetite for war stories from the heyday of hippiedom. I really got to know Billy Kreutzmann. It brought me insight to a band, that I've always loved. When a book can not only teach you about an era and a band, but also share the life wisdom of a revolutionary figure in American culture, then that's a book that matters. Kreutzmann's DEAL is the real deal.

I've been a huge Grateful Dead fan for most of my adult life. I saw them about a dozen times and have most of their CDs. I was drawn to their live improvised music style and how they believe the music is what is most important. "We used to play for silver now we play for life." For me the band has always been a celebration of the culture of the 1960's with hippies and psychedelics, and really good live "happy" music. The book is a quick easy read. Kreutzmann discusses the different time periods of the Grateful Dead. The 1960's were happy times and it was the psychedelic era of acid and marijuana. That was when that special band chemistry really gelled. The 1970's were a turn in a different direction with destructive drugs like cocaine and heroin. Then the 1980's and early 1990's were out of control. He points out that the last 15 years of the GD were the band's least favorite because they weren't connecting musically and at that point it just became a huge business. Since he can afford beach front property in Hawaii it must have been a real big business. I did not realize that during most of their live performances Kreutzmann was either tripping on psychedelics, stoned on pot, high on cocaine, or high on opiates. And I can only assume that the rest of the band may also fall into this category. Somehow over the years I convinced myself that they used drugs recreationally after work, not during work. He definitely restates through out the book that it was irresponsible constant drug use that killed members of the band and many of his friends. He makes it clear that the over drug use ultimately destroyed the Grateful Dead. I don't think humans are supposed to live their entire lives hiding under the influence of substances. There is a lot of candid discussion of his constant drug use with a recurring theme of "don't try this at home." Bill lays it out clearly that his life has been mostly about playing drums in rock and roll bands. Being a responsible citizen was not in his plan. He left a broken home when he was 16 years old. He never finished high school. He had no real musical training but learned to play by

ear. He was an absentee father. He has been married five times. And he has fathered children who he does not know. We like him for what he contributed musically to the band, not for his character. His writing style jumps around chronologically through out the book. And since this is an autobiography and not a text book, I'm not sure why there is a 25 page index in the back of the book. Overall I would have appreciated more details on the daily experience of being in the Grateful Dead and less fluff filler material. Reading this book will influence your current beliefs on what you think the Grateful Dead was and what they really were. Sometimes things are better left alone and not uncovered.

I've read several books about the Dead, as they are such a fascinating story--long, strange trip! My only gripe with Bill (despite being one of my favorites, and easily most underrated drummer of all time) is that he strayed off the Dead too much. I liked his insider stories of the band, their music, etc., but lost interest quickly with his stories of he and his wife(s), of him hanging out with Native Americans, etc.. Just my take--sorry, Billy! Definitely a good read, and highly recommended for Dead fans, especially fans of drumming (as Bill will offer insights to the craft, as it applies to the Grateful Dead's music, live performances, etc.)

Reading this book is like sitting in a room with Bill Kreutzmann as you throw back a few drinks together and he tells you stories from his past. It's such a personal, intimate account of his life and years with the Grateful Dead. This book isn't made up of quotes from many people sewn together into a story like many biographies are - not that there's anything wrong with that. It's just good ol' Bill telling you story after story - both funny, heartwarming, and tragic. I loved reading it, I think it took me a week to read this fairly large book (I bought the paperback right when it came out). I'm sure in a few years I'll read it again. Thanks for such an enjoyable read, Bill & Benjy!

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