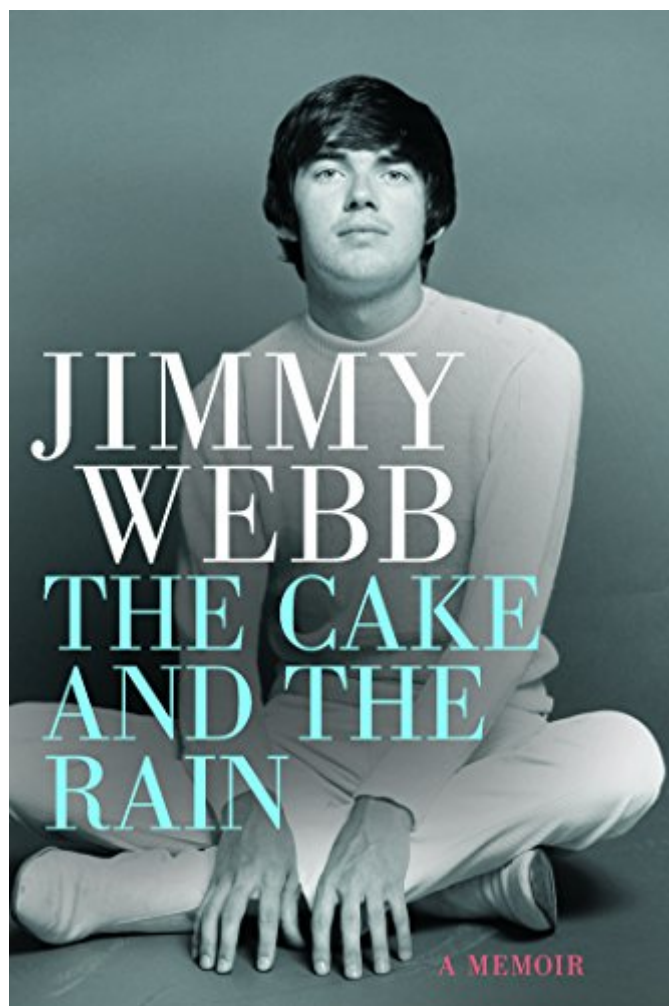


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Jimmy Webb: The Cake And The Rain



Synopsis

Jimmy Webb is America's Songwriter. His deep, complex songs have been recorded by artists ranging from Frank Sinatra to Carly Simon to R.E.M to Art Garfunkel to Donna Summer. He is the youngest man ever inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, the only artist ever to win Grammy awards for music, lyrics and orchestration, and his chart-topping career has, so far, lasted fifty years, most recently including a Kanye West rap and a new classical nocturne. In 1969, Webb was a heavy pot smoker, sexual adventurer, and hopelessly liberal Democrat who hated the war in Vietnam. Four years later, he was living in his gated mansion, lying for John Lennon and stashing hundred dollar bills and cocaine in his house-safe. During this whirlwind of hedonism, in 1973, Webb accidentally over-dosed on what proved to be street-level PCP. When he awoke from his coma, he wasn't even able to recognise a piano... In *The Cake And The Rain*, Webb takes the reader through his life and his choices which led him to this tragic moment. Rich with a sense of time and place, with the voices of characters both lost and celebrated, and with the same youthful spirit which catapulted him into a moneyed and manic world of stardom, this is the sunning memoir of one of the greatest songwriters of all time: a man with unfathomable talent and luck.

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Customer Reviews

I respect Jimmy Webb's work enormously and hoped to like this book more than I did. It's a fairly decent memoir in places but overall it lacks much coherence, I think. The Cake And The Rain covers Webb's life from childhood in an agarian environment with a pastor father who insisted on moving the family around very frequently, through his period of colossal wealth and fame to the point in 1973 where he took a drug overdose, almost died and lost the ability to create music for a time. To his credit Webb is honest and forthright not only about his ability, but also about his mistakes, his young man's hubris and so on, and the book gives a decent picture of the time. The story is, I'm afraid, told in a fractured timescale, with childhood and adolescent episodes intercut with Webb at the height of his fame in the late 60s and early 70s. Frankly, it's an annoying structure which does nothing to help the book. There are some great stories and some very tedious ones, too. Meeting Elvis and Joni Mitchell? I certainly want to hear about that. Long tales and descriptions of over-flashy cars? Not so much. I also think that Webb is a very fine songwriter, but often pretty over-the-top in his prose. Writing of the start of 1970, for example, he says "Now, the seventies waited for the swift hand of fate to write what wonders or horrors?" A little of that goes a very long way with me, and it's often a great deal too rich for my taste. So it's worth a read if you're interested in the times and their music, but it's somewhat heavy going and I can only give this a qualified recommendation. (I received an ARC via NetGalley.)

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