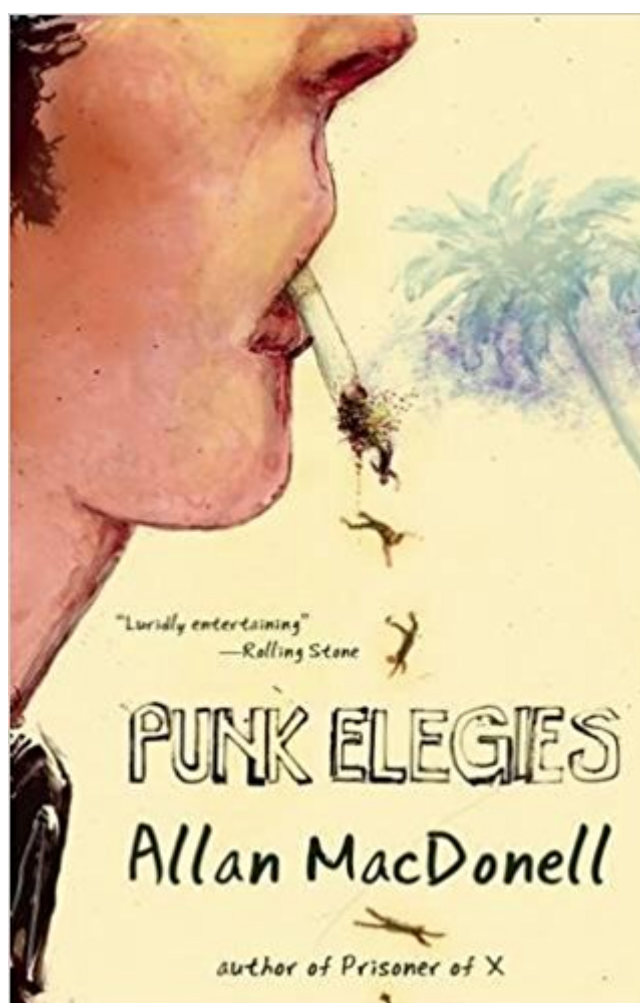


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Punk Elegies: True Tales Of Death Trip Kids, Wrongful Sex, And Trial By Angel Dust



Synopsis

Punk Elegies arrives like a chemically unstable mixture of Richard Yates and Damon Runyon. Set along Hollywood Boulevard at the birth of punk and the death of the seventies, the thirty-three melancholic, comic laments of Punk Elegies are a mesmerizing concoction of delusion and revelation. A cultural moment, a marriage, and one young man's mind and soul spiral through a series of boundless possibilities and arrive at a harrowing finality. In the end, on the spin cycle of destiny, MacDonell circles alone, naked and bewildered in the labyrinth of a pre-AIDS bathhouse inferno. The first sunrise of the rest of his life dares him to step outside.

Book Information

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Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Punk

Customer Reviews

"Set in the glittering ruins of late 1970s Hollywood, MacDonell's coming-of-age tale tracks the rise and folly of L.A. punk. Searing, comic and self-immolating, Elegies ultimately becomes a love letter to lost time."—Evan Wright, Generation Kill and Hella Nation

Allan MacDonell is the author of Prisoner of X: 20 Years in the Hole at Hustler Magazine and was a defining voice of the groundbreaking punk periodical Slash magazine. While writing for Slash, he also co-invented slam-dancing. MacDonell lives in Los Angeles.

Come for the sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll (each of which alternates in order of prominence throughout), leave feeling devastated, elated, and inspired by Allan MacDonell's shockingly

beautiful way with a word. PUNK ELEGIES is a plunge into a genuine only-in- Los-Angeles moment and movement, rendered vivid, indelible, and universal by the author's power to varyingly evoke and provoke. It is much more than, as a phrase that dominates an early stretch of PUNK ELEGIES, "pretty great."

dark and deep inside the la punk scene in the early 80's

Great read!

This ain't rock and roll, it's cultural anthropology! Or so Bowie would have said if he read McDonnell's book. The author captures a weird time and paints an accurate picture. The playing field shifted from stadium rock to the underground flow of punk. The outsiders were taking over, but those outsiders were already wired in. And cool. MacDonell wasn't. The LA punk scene had an aesthetic, and McDonell was, in many ways, far removed from it. He was a dooper/alcoholic, razor's edge stumbler from the decidedly uncool San Gabriel Valley who somehow managed to overcome that provincial pedigree and get down to the real nitty-gritty. Sure, everybody on the scene came from somewhere else, but the SGV "the 626" is a world apart. While McDonell's contemporaries were still digging Bad Company and Led Zeppelin and believing rock perfection had been made "our tour guide was on the front lines of a whole new, transformative thing. That he came out the other side relatively intact "and not some sad, stunted chump "is a head-scratcher. But he did. Punk rockers, music fans, cultural examiners, and anyone willing to purchase a ring-side seat to a cultural revolution should cough up the price of admission and read this book. Nobody ever got closer to this unique slice of time in Los Angeles history. And there's music stuff too.

Read it in one sitting, over three meals, open next to my plate with pieces of breakfast, lunch, and dinner dropping onto the pages. In the background, it's a hey-day, golden-era memoir of music and culture that'll never return, giving late 1970's Los Angeles its grimy, seedy due. In the foreground, it's a man opening a vein to tell his story, rich and vivid and achingly human. Chapters read like scenes, people, events, triumphs and regrets blowing past and leaving scars, the way memories stick.

Time and space is nothing if not personal and unique. Allan MacDonell came about as close to the

bull's-eye of a certain time and space, the birth of Los Angeles punk rock in the mid-to-late 1970s, and still he was just a bit off. In his wandering portrait of less an era than a person, that being himself, PUNK ELEGIES: TRUE TALES OF DEATH TRIP KIDS, WRONGFUL SEX, AND TRAIL BY ANGEL DUST, he delivers on the lurid tease of the book's subtitle. His stories are full of abuse, which could get tiresome if not for his sardonic humor, a dark star at the center of a darker existence. For the most part he sidetracks the storied "events" and "personalities," focusing on the less successful, marginalized characters who deserve their own books but will have to settle for MacDonell's until that wrong is righted. He gives a man-in-the-gutter view of what it was like to devote one's life to nothing. That's not fair, but MacDonell is the picture of indifference. He mocks fandom, though comes across as a more rarified fan; can't be bothered to be in a band, though his appreciation of music is visceral; distances himself with a sharp comedic slant, though flirts with the intimacy of its dramatic twin, tragedy. What can you say? MacDonell is a complicated guy. He's also a fine guide who makes you feel lucky to call him friend, even though you know outside the printed page he'd never tolerate you. That's okay. It's what time and space is for, perspective. MacDonell doesn't say it, but you sense he's a different man now. The book is too honest to end with an epiphany, but you do feel by the final pages as if the wheels have gone off the ride. It's a testament to MacDonell's talents that you hope the crash wasn't too hard.

Enough with junkie memoirs, big deal you were loaded and a bunch of untoward things happened and then you survived, or not, big whoop-di-do says I. This is not that junkie memoir though there are plenty o'drugs and drink, I mean plenty of substance partaking, I mean non-stop intake. MacDonell, although detailing a time and a place, is genius by making this look back concern itself more with his humanity, his wife, his need or fear of belonging, of permanence and other existential heavy lifting. Of course all this is done with spot on prose, hilarious and harrowing by turns, clear eyed and blurry eyed at the same time. For myself personally it is also a valuable look into how the proceeding punkers viewed my ilk, the second generation, I was in very early but Mr. MacDonell was there driving the nails in the floor of this incredible time in culture- Los Angeles, crime, hookers, music. Germs, X, Weirdos, Screamers, Go-Go's, Slash Magazine, the Masque, all represented in brilliant detail as it really was. My only fear was when at one point Mr. MacDonell goes to The Whiskey A-Go-Go to see the debut of the English band The Jam, I was ready for a provincial dissing of this band who I adore, but glory be, as with everything else MacDonell is solid gold in his support of Paul, Bruce and John. You add John Doe, who I coincidentally ran into this very morning outside my office on Hollywood Blvd., getting punched up by a lunk head Val behind the old Licorice

Pizza on Sunset Blvd. and my friends, if you have even the slightest inclination toward these topics, a grand time in Mr. Wizard's time machine can be had by all. So if you think you got a junkie memoir to write do us all a favor and stop now, it's been done. Thankfully Mr. MacDonell realized this before he wrote word one and we are all lucky for his prescience

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