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Ted Bundy was America's first celebrity serial killer, and one of the most chilling enigmas in criminal history. Handsome, boyish and well-spoken, a law student with bright political prospects, Bundy was also a predator and sexual deviant who murdered and mutilated at least thirty young women and girls, many of them college coeds but at least two as young as twelve.

The Only Living Witness: The True Story of Serial Sex Killer Ted Bundy Details

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Danie Tanaka says

This book was truly the most anyone has gotten out of Ted Bundy out of his own words about his crimes. I was bored with the rehashing over the victims (no disrespect, I just had read quite a few times before). What really intrigued me were his dialogues with the author. The author and his fellow investigator in 1980 (one year before I was even born) was trying to get Bundy to talk about his victims. They wasted a lot of time by asking questions. Then the author and his investigator about to stop the project realized they were frustrated because Ted Bundy was acting like a 12 year old boy stuck in a grown man's body. And they wondered if maybe that might not be the key to helping him talk. So they started a game of "Lets PRETEND...YOU KNOW WHAT THE KILLER WAS THINKING". In doing that, he opened up for the only time in his life. And through this "game" just like a child he really believed no one would think HE had done these things even though he had details of the crimes he spoke that no one else could possible have!! The only type of person that could believe in such a thing would be a vastly immature juvenile. His revelations into the development of the psychopathic mind were incredible and something that no one else put someone who went through it could describe. After Bundy stopped talking they took their recordings to forensic psychiatrists asking what he thought and if their impressions were accurate--that somehow Ted Bundy stopped maturing at about 12 years old or so. The shrink agreed and told him that this was probably as close to a truthful self portrait in his own words of Ted Bundy that anyone was ever going to get. That made this book startling and compelling. I just wish there was more of that. I know you need to recognize the victims. I'm not a groupie. I'm just trying to understand psychopathology. And Ted Bundy opened up more than most of his kind. And he also did what Mrs. Hahn from the Goodbye Door did. He described his need to kill, his psychopathology as an "entity" inside him. A compulsion that was hard to control and as the record shows he failed to control in society all to often which is why he wished to stay locked up (but not be executed). After his last escape, he truly did feel like he wanted to live behind bars because the control he used to have over his psychopathology had completely dissolved. At it was against women where his violence and murderous rages were prone to strike. I'm not saying he didn't deserve execution or not. That was not my choice to make. And as a woman, I feel safer knowing there is one less person like him no longer in this world to be honest even if there has been plenty to replace him in the ensuing years.

Diane says

Very good book. Stephan spent many hours talking with Ted. Ted refused to talk in the first-person about his crimes, but he was willing to talk about a supposedly fictitious 'someone' who did these things.

Stephan wrote, *"After three days, the first and most important link between us had been forged. Ted was no longer dodging me; he now was going to lead me back along his path to serial murder. He was comfortable behind his veil of fiction. To him, what he'd said already and what he'd soon tell me was not a confession. It couldn't stand the test of admissibility in court, and thus it was outside his definition of guilt. In truth, he was telling me nothing concrete enough to implicate him directly in anything. Yet the narration was to be too seamless, the descriptions too detailed and consistent, for this to be anything but the truth. The hunchback had begun to emerge."*

I was anything but comfortable. As the spring of 1980 wore on, Ted and I were locked together in that stuffy

yellow room. He showed very little recognizable emotion and often paid little attention to me -- for which I was grateful."

Ted - "I think you could make a little more sense out of much of this if you take into account the effect of alcohol. It's important. It's very important as a trigger. When this person drank a good deal, his inhibitions were significantly diminished. He would find that his urge to engage in voyeuristic behavior, or trips to the bookstore, would become more prevalent, more urgent. It was as though the dominant personality was sedated. On every occasion he engaged in such behavior, he was intoxicated."

Ted - "What happened was this entity inside him was not capable of being controlled any longer," Ted went on, "at least not for any considerable period of time. It began to try to justify itself, to create rationalizations for what it was doing. One element that came into play was anger, hostility. But I don't think that was an overriding emotion when he would go out hunting. On most occasions, it was a high degree of anticipation, of excitement, or arousal. It was an adventuristic kind of thing."

The fantasy is always more stimulating than the aftermath of the crime itself. He should have recognized that what really fascinated him was the hunt, the adventure of searching out his victims. And, to a degree, possessing them physically, as one would possess a potted plant, a painting or a Porsche. Owning, as it were, this individual."

5 Stars = Exceptional. It made a significant impact.

Ann says

I remember in grade school, one of my best friends' mom and my mom were very close. Her sister was missing, and I vividly remember the day her mom came by my home, crying, and reciting the story to my mom. They had found her daughter up the canyon, the details were very brutal. After some time, it came to light that she was a victim of Ted Bundy. I had a fear of him when the killings were going on in my area, then to find he had killed a friend, escalated the fear until he was caught. I read this book some years later, and I have to say of all books written on Bundy, this one was the best.

Jill Hutchinson says

I wonder how many books have been written about serial killer, Ted Bundy?.....I was lucky enough to choose this one as it contains interviews with Bundy which are very revealing about his persona. He killed approximately 30 young women but refused to admit it even when a deal for him to escape the death penalty was offered by the State if he would confess. But, Bundy thought he was smarter than the legal system and although he attended law school for a short time, was not a good student, another thing he would not admit. He even took the role of his own defense attorney for a while but that did not work out. So he played to the press, to the court, to the jury and especially the media. He simply wanted to be famous.....but famous only as a man who was used by a legal system that needed a scapegoat for the string of murders. But then became quite miffed when Gary Ridgeway, the Green River Killer's victim count exceeded his (even though he declared he didn't kill anyone). He actually spoke with investigators regarding the Green River killings as an "expert". An interesting look at a man who was so separated from the reality of his crimes that he only acknowledged them on the eve of his execution. He has gotten credit over the years for being a clever,

extremely intelligent criminal but this book refutes that image. He was a twisted, evil man who was lucky to escape justice as long as he did. Disturbing.

Kaelie says

A chilling, well-written and surprisingly unsensationalized account of Ted Bundy's murders and police efforts to find him. The authors do not dwell on the tabloid aspects of his crimes, but spend time examining Bundy's psychological make up and speculating on whether he was just lucky, or whether he was in actuality an almost-flawless killing machine. They made the point that the police never caught Bundy until he allowed himself to be caught, which was interesting.

Lisa says

Warning - do not read this book during an unexpectedly warm period of weather as you will end up sweating and gasping in bed all night due to your insistence at making sure the house is completely sealed up, and what will turn out to be the sound of your cat in the kitchen will have your heart nearly stopping every five minutes in fear that it's actually someone breaking into your house.

A well written, compelling and completely terrifying look at the life and crimes of Ted Bundy, one of the world's most notorious serial killers, the authors could have been forgiven had they gone down the tabloid route - after all, a case where the killer represents himself in court and gets to interrogate his own surviving victims is pretty sensational in itself, before you add in the jailbreaks and the horror of his crimes, but instead they chose the far more interesting path and focus on the personality and 'psychopathology' of the killer - sometimes in his own words (which had a lot to do with my not being able to sleep afterwards).

Bundy managed to escape from jail twice in the course of his murderous career - leading to the infamous Chi Omega killings - and one of the things this book really brought home to me was how each time he was caught it was largely due to his own blundering (seeming like he almost wanted to get caught) rather than due to any brilliant deductions on the part of the police. In fact, Ted's name had come up many times in the early course of the investigations and was never followed up. This, and Bundy's assertion (amongst others) that "there are a lot of people who are not in prison, a *lot* of people who are not in prison, who were *far* more successful than I" went a long way towards giving me a serious case of the wiggles.

Essential reading for true crime junkies - but make sure you have someone to stay with you for a while afterwards!

Tiger Gray says

Everyone who studies or reads a lot of true crime has their pet case, the one they feel compelled to research to the point of obsession. For me that case is Ted Bundy's. I feel that unlike Charles Manson, he made an entire country question everything they thought they knew about dangerous criminals. At least for the privileged sections of U.S. society, so sure they were safe in their enclaves, Ted Bundy took their innocence

and changed investigative technique forever.

Since I have read nearly every book on Ted Bundy out there, some interesting quirks become apparent in this one. There are at least three insults aimed directly at Ann Rule, author of *The Stranger Beside Me: Ted Bundy The Shocking Inside Story*. I would dearly love to know what that enmity is about, as the authors describe her as gullible, unreasonable, and essentially shrewish. Of course I'll probably never get the story there but I feel that their dislike isn't really warranted. Her book about Bundy is excellent and personal; it's not meant as a journalistic tome, not really.

As to the content of the book it's very good, incorporating as it does interviews with the man himself. The other books I have read skimp on the horror, but through these talks with Bundy this novel doesn't shy away: Denise Naslund and Janice Ott were likely raped and killed together, one being forced to watch as the other one was murdered. Julie Cunningham was allowed to believe she could escape, only to be chased down by Bundy so he could rape and strangle her. He kept Kathy Parks alive and conscious for an hours long drive in the back of his VW. This information is not for the faint of heart.

With that in mind, the authors apparently think nothing of first describing how Kim Leach, a twelve year old girl, was found: her body on all fours and slumped over, strongly implying Ted was raping her from behind when he slit her throat with a hunting knife, and then during the trial for her murder, providing wedding rings so Ted could marry his sweetheart, Carole Ann Boone, on the strand. In the entire time I've been studying this case, I've often found that move the most repulsive, that these people could twist the only justice Kim would ever receive for their little tawdry spectacle. And Aynesworth and Michaud apparently thought nothing of contributing to it. People insult Ann Rule for sending him commissary money, but I find that far more reasonable than buying this scumbag wedding rings so he could pervert Kim's trial and visit indignity on her and her family one last time.

The authors likewise cement their status in my mind as questionable people when they refer to Ted's compulsion to kill as "the hunchback." Surely there were less loaded terms to use; even Ted calls it his "entity" or "his problem." Or they could have simply referred to it as a demon, a spirit, whatever, without contributing to the notion that physical disfigurement leads to disfigurement of the soul. He then goes on to use the word "prudes" to describe some of the victims. I can only think of poor Susan Rancourt when the authors use this, a studious, responsible girl who took care of herself and showed respect to her parents. So this brilliant, kind girl was snatched away, subjected to incomprehensible torture, murdered, and then dumped in a special spot so Ted could come back and rape her corpse, but the best descriptor the author can think of to describe her and girls like her is "prude."

That said if you are fascinated by Bundy then you can't miss out on this book. It had details I didn't know despite reading several books on this subject. It includes large sections in Ted's own words, and it's a look into his stunted psyche that isn't to be missed:

"I mean, there are so many people. It shouldn't be a problem. What's one less person on the face of the earth, anyway?""

"...and the grounds where you kill them or leave them become sacred to you, and you will always be drawn back to them."

Ted: "With reference to, to, uh, oh, what's her name?"

HA: "I think it's Parks."

Ted: "Parks. Terrible with names. And faces..."

"I need some goddamn special attention! I demand it!"

"Guilt. It's this mechanism we use to control people. It's an illusion."

Erin says

Ted Bundy is all the rage these days, between a Netflix doc and a movie starring Zac Efron(which was filmed about 15 minutes from my house). Good Ole Teddy Bundy is making a comeback.

But Why?

I love True Crime and the biggest category of TC is Serial Killers. John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer, BTK, and the latest member The Golden State Killer. Of all the serial killers in modern times(Jack the Ripper is obviously the GOAT) Ted Bundy may be the most famous serial killer. Before reading this book I didn't know much about him but while reading this book I Googled news articles about him and everyone seemed to paint the same picture. They all said Bundy was clean cut, polite, charming and highly intelligent.

I hate to burst the bubble but Nah Son!

Bundy was awkward, immature, and not very bright. He failed at everything he ever did. He barely graduated High School, he flunked out of several colleges, and he wasn't even good at being a serial killer. The fact that he was able to kill for so long had less to do with his Great Intelligence than it did police incompetence.

Bundy was executed 30 years ago on January 24, 1989, its estimated that Bundy killed between 18-40 young women and 1 little girl. Kimberly Leach was 12 years old and in 7th grade when she was kidnapped, brutally raped, and killed. She is also the one victim Bundy never wanted to discuss. He became visibly uncomfortable when she was mentioned.

Why?

Because she didn't fit the image he had created as a handsome, charming, and appealing celebrity. Its an image that the media ate up and still seems to believe. Ted Bundy wasn't and isn't a sex symbol. Ted Bundy isn't a some cool guy. He was a violent sexual sadist, who brutally raped, tortured and killed dozens of women. And he had no remorse.

Don't get me wrong I "enjoyed" the book and I will be watching the Netflix doc and maybe the movie. Bundy was and continues to be a fascinating "person" but he shouldn't be treated like a celebrity.

Maede says

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The Stranger Beside Me: Ted Bundy The Shocking Inside Story

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Bro_Pair ??? says

I blame Truman Capote for the predicament an honest true crime writer faces today. Sure, you could hew to the truly trashy low road, like any number of authors did in recounting the strange case of Ted Bundy, but the quality of most of those books seems plodding at best. You could shoot also for the high road, the "literary" true crime story, but in many respects, this is even more aggrieving; "The Executioner's Song," while good, is 1,000 pages long, and unnecessarily so, "In Cold Blood" seems mostly like the fabrication of a big city grifter, and the recent and much beloved "Serial" podcast is a formless, lifeless shaggy dog whose doleful subject is probably completely guilty as charged. So what to do?

Well, the answer is to write something like this book. It would make sense that the best book on Bundy would be by two journalists. But what grace the story is told with! Structurally, it is brilliantly plotted -- the revelations of Bundy's life, cutting back and forth to his jailhouse perdition, his escapes, his hunting, his pursuit, his final explosion. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say I can't recall reading a true crime book more insightful into the nature and thoughts of a psychopath -- "The Killer Inside Me" by Jim Thompson being a fictive equal. Great book; but it will stick with you.

Metatron says

Excellent book.

It's bizarre to admit, but while reading this book it's as if I felt close to Ted. I can almost feel sympathy for him. What if he was a tormented soul? He knew he was evil, but maybe deep down he had a dab of good in him. If you notice, the police and FBI didn't do a good job on capturing him. Ted simply made a stupid mistake, or got pulled over for driving too fast and they'd take him to the station after seeing his burglary tools. They had an extremely difficult time by trying to connect him with the killings, and it's as if Ted didn't want to die, but he didn't want to cause more harm/grief either and he knew he was a danger to society. He got caught by his own exploits that sometimes seemed intentional, and when asked about the Chi Omega killings, if he committed them, he simply said: "Look for it. The evidence is right there!"

Ted was a true puzzle. The shameful thing about him dying is that we'll never be able to solve that puzzle. It startles me how someone so very attractive, so charming, so seemingly nice, intelligent and with so much future ahead could turn into such a repulsive being. He said he had a good childhood. He was socially awkward in school, but aren't we all at one point? He had a decent life, so trying to understand why he killed is senseless, because maybe there isn't even a reason as to why he killed. Maybe he just liked it. He just liked and enjoyed it as a hobby as I'd enjoy playing video-games or sleeping on a rainy day. Reading a good book, drinking coffee and petting my dog are my pleasures; murdering were his. Having pleasures or liking them does not mean they are right, however. I'm clarifying that.

All in all, I believe Michaud did an excellent job on writing this book. It truly gives you some insight as to how Ted was. He (Michaud) describes the occurrences very well and realistically; all with a touch of suspense and dilemma, keeping it highly interesting.

Ted was a very intelligent man, and the special thing about him is that he saw things so very differently from the rest of us. How would I enjoy to speak with him.

Shacoria says

This book is really interesting. It was very intense at times and it was heartbreaking to hear about the way Ted murdered these women and it was especially sad to hear how he murdered a 12 year old little girl. On the other hand it was fascinating to read things from Ted's point of view. I'm really glad that the author didn't try to present Ted as some sort of likable character, because when you look at all the pain he inflicted it is impossible to have any sort of sympathy for him. One thing I will say is that I found the title of this book a bit misleading. The title makes it sound as though the book will be written about one of the people who survived an attack by Ted, but it is actually more about Ted than anyone else.

Mara says

Read this right after The Last Victim, and decided I needed a break from true crime... When Ted Bundy starts to come off as a quotidian character you know you've reached criminology saturation...

Greg Carmichael says

Like a lot of people, when it comes to serial killers, I find Ted Bundy to be most fascinating. When I consider Jeffery Dahmer or John Wayne Gacy, it doesn't seem to be too far of a stretch to believe that they could commit such horrific crimes. After all, they *look* like murderers, right? But with Bundy, the image the public got was just the opposite. Intelligent, eloquent, witty and handsome, he seemed like anything but a predator.

The most interesting thing about this book was that it revealed Bundy to be much more of an "ordinary" serial killer than he appeared to be. We got the charming image for two reasons—first, Bundy, unlike most of us, performed best in custody and under pressure. He loved the camera, the attention and verbally sparring with authority. Second, the media chose to perpetuate this image alone because it made for a great story despite the fact that it was only part of the picture. Hence, Bundy became a celebrity with the ironic twist that many of his adoring young fans were the very type upon whom he would have preyed. Yet as a free man, the real Bundy emerged. In the midst of his killing sprees he revealed a side that was depressed, confused, and angry. Witnesses who narrowly averted his grasp describe him as anything but charming and intelligent—instead he came across as creepy and obsessive.

I admit that with a subject like this, I tend to be satisfied with the A&E Biography version of the tale. I don't need to know every detail about every victim and trial—just give me some insight into the man and I'm content. At over 300 pages, the subject got a little tedious for me after a while, but that is probably a matter of my taste over any fault of the book. For those who are interested, the writing is excellent. The style doesn't suffer the usual reporter-turned-author shortcomings and while it is adequately descriptive it is not gratuitously graphic. Another thing that kept me interested more than most books like this was varied format—Michaud and Aynesworth rely on research, court testimony and interviews with Bundy himself to draw a complete picture of a man who was just as flawed as any other psychopath.

Charlotte says

This was the first Ted Bundy book I read out of 3 so far and I think it's my favorite one. It's detailed but not graphic about his crimes and the authors have a good cop/bad cop thing going which is cool. This book really allows you to get into the mind of a infamous serial killer.
