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David Bowie's career as a pioneering artist spanned nearly 50 years and brought him international acclaim. He continues to be cited as a major influence on contemporary artists and designers working across the creative arts.

This book, published to accompany the blockbuster international exhibition launched at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, is the only volume that grants access to Bowie's personal archive of performance costumes, ephemera, and original design artwork by the artist, bringing it together to present a completely new perspective on his creative work and collaborations. The book traces his career from its beginnings in London, through the breakthroughs of *Space Oddity* and *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, and on to his enormous impact on 20th-century avant-garde music and art. Essays by V&A curators on Bowie's London, image, and influence on the fashion world are complemented by Howard Goodall on musicology; Camille Paglia on gender and decadence, and Jon Savage on Bowie's relationship with William Burroughs and his fans. The more than 300 color illustrations include personal and performance photographs, album covers, costumes, original lyric sheets, and much more.

Praise for *David Bowie Is*:

"Perusing *David Bowie Is* (V&A Publishing, distributed by Abrams), the exhibition's catalog, with its procession of poses and costumes and weighty essays tracking the cross-references to pop culture and high art, you get a sense of how much hard work it took to be Mr. Bowie." —*The New York Times*

"The fans of 50 years or those making discoveries in retrospect will be intrigued by the accompanying book *David Bowie Is* that is far more than a fanzine." —*The New York Times*

"Lends context and picks away at Bowie with such insight that it's a rare hagiography with soul." —*Chicago Tribune*

"Combining top-notch articles on the singer/actor's life and work with official images and reproductions of his fashion and associated ephemera, the hefty, mango-colored book is nothing short of a treasure trove of all things Bowie; a one-stop smorgasbord for the eyes whose pictorials chronicle the groundbreaking star from Ziggy Stardust to Thin White Duke to Heathen and every personality in between." —Examiner.com

David Bowie Is... Details

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From Reader Review David Bowie Is... for online ebook

Tosh says

I can't get enough books on David Bowie. This is the official catalog to the Victoria and Albert Museum's retrospective of David Bowie's presence in our culture. The text is good, specifically the one by Jon Savage who tackles the early years of Mr. Bowie, but the real star of the book are the visuals. Detailed photographs of his stage clothing, his notebooks with original hand written lyrics and his storyboards for his videos and film ideas. In essence the ultimate Bowie visual aide. The most interesting thing about the show (which I haven't seen) and this book is that Bowie is a pack-rat of sorts - with respect to his clothing and notes. He's a man who collects his own image and things from his imagery. That I find fascinating!

Christopher says

I can only imagine that this book is the next best thing to actually attending the V&A Bowie Is exhibition, because the love and attention given to this book is nothing short of a religious experience for Bowie fans. I found myself getting misty-eyed as I flipped through the first fifty or so pages of this gorgeous book, mostly because every bit of it - the photographs, the items, the layout design, the "Bowie Is" phrasing concept - feels completely central to the sum of the man's career, iconography and combined personae. If you're a fan, your shrine is incomplete without this gorgeous book.

Gail says

I had the good fortune to attend the David Bowie Is exhibit at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and I picked this book up to take a little piece of the experience home with me. Turns out it's a lot more than that. A really thorough, thoughtful collection of images and thoughts to commemorate the wonderful life and artistry of one of my favorites. Heaven.

Margaret Galbraith says

Being a massive Bowie fan I bought this a couple of years ago and began reading it again after his death in January. It is very large, heavy and expensive book but if you are a fan it is a must for your collection. It's one you can go back to again and again! RIP David.

Amanda says

Having seen the exhibition and read the book - if you don't get to see the exhibition buy the book. It's wonderful and informative, a truly wonderful piece written by people passionate about Bowie. Just buying the book and opening it was a treat but reading it- awesome.

A truly memorable book

Adriana Scarpin says

Guardado entre os meus livros-xodó a partir de hoje, esta edição tem um trabalho visual riquíssimo em fotos, além de ensaios que abordam o papel de Bowie na música, na moda, nas artes, no cinema, na fotografia, além da questão de gênero e fecha com chave de ouro numa mesa redonda de Mark Kermode, Christopher Frayling e Philip Hoare. Não creio que esse trabalho seja apenas indispensável para os fãs de Bowie, mas também para os apreciadores das artes em geral.

Javier Avilés says

El mes que viene a la exposición en Barcelona.
Larga vida, Bowie.

Laurent says

Knap vormgegeven weergave van de rondreizende expo die startte in V&A en die ik zelf onlangs zag in het Groninger Museum. Een tiental essays schetsen een waarachtig en uitgebreid beeld van het popicoon Bowie. Prachtige foto's, zeer veel info en gedetailleerde, uitvoerige noten. De fans kunnen hier hun hart ophalen.

Abigail says

Brilliant.

Joel says

Since I can't go actually see the exhibit, this is second best! Great pictures and narration in here!

Tobin Elliott says

Well, isn't this year starting off well? Third 5-star rating in a row!

This is easily the best book on Bowie I've read. The pictures are wonderful, but more importantly, this feels like the first book that truly examines Bowie's impact on the world. In depth sections on his impact to music, to art, to performance, to fashion, to photography.

Exceptional.

David Bowie is... absolutely worth the read.

1. says

"Will Ziggy, like King Arthur, now remain sleeping forever or will he/she return to save mystic Albion from its enemies? Or will the 'Heroes' be found on the other sides by then? Is Major Tom still drifting? Or has he refocused and reconnected with others to overthrow the London of global capitalism?" - typically cringeworthy paragraph from the section by the curator of the V&A exhibit

"The background blankness is encroaching like a freezing cryogenic wave upon the figure. It's as clinical as an autopsy, with a glob of extracted flesh lodged on the collarbone. This teardrop of phalliform jelly resembles the unidentifiable bits of protoplasm and biomorphic conglomerations that stud the sexualized landscapes of Salvador Dali. Also Surrealist are the inflamed creases of Ziggy's armpits, which look like fresh surgical scars as well as raw female genitalia. Like Prometheus, a rebel hero to the Romantics, he has lost his liver for stealing the fire of the gods. Like the solitary space traveler in 2001, he may be regressing to the embryonic stage to give birth to himself." - typically cringeworthy excerpt by Camille Paglia on the Aladdin Sane cover

Like most books that you pick up for the photos, the text is useless and often extremely stupid (Marsh's article, Paglia's article, Breward's article). The photos are lovely though. I didn't want to buy this because the formatting - the whole 'David Bowie is a, b, c, d, e' idea - seems really tacky and tried to me but I may have to reconsider as I probably will never see the exhibit.

The last article - an interview - is strange in that the participants seem to be real assholes with nothing to contribute. Frayling doesn't think Bowie's music will outlive him, Kermode dismisses Peter Murphy and Suede as being pointless Bowie clones, and then there's Hoare who says that the closest figure to Bowie, culturally speaking, is William Blake. Their discussion of 9/11 is also terrible. And just... - "I was talking to a friend about David Bowie the other day and he said, 'What does he do now? Do you think he has any friends?' I don't think that David Bowie has ever had 'friends.' How could you be 'friends' with David Bowie?" These people seriously need to get a grip. I bet these are the kind of idiots who fell for Bowie's art hoax.

Steven Pilling says

Its a catalogue for the V&A show if we are hones.

You could never read the articles (which are a mixed bag) but the pictures and the choice of material means its a fantastic reminder of the show and almost makes up for missing the show.

Coffee table book yes but a very very good coffee table book

Petergiaquinta says

"More idols than realities."

--David Bowie "Up the Hill Backwards"

Just Walking the Dead...

Music to listen to while reading the review: David Bowie's "Where Are We Now?"

Confession #1: I did not read all the words in this very big, beautiful book.

Confession #2: I had plenty of time to read all of them ten times over because this book is more than a year and a half overdue from the library. I have never done anything like this before, and the librarian is no doubt quite disappointed with me, even though she is a friend. I suspect she suspects I have sold this book on ebay for which many people would most likely pay a lot of money. But no, nothing so venal as that...

Confession #3: I missed the touring exhibition *David Bowie Is* at the Museum of Contemporary Art last year, which is where this beautiful book is from. I waited until the last two weeks of the show and then it was all sold out and I missed the chance of a lifetime. In the U.S., *David Bowie Is* only came to Chicago's MCA, and I was too dumb to get there for it.

Confession #4: I miss David Bowie today. I miss him more than any other of the many public figures who left us in this shitty year 2016. I miss him more than Harper Lee, Muhammad Ali, and Prince, all rolled into one. From my earliest memories of music on the radio, it seems David Bowie was always there. First, there was "Space Oddity" and "Changes" at the swimming pool, then "Diamond Dogs," "Rebel Rebel," "Young Americans" and "Fame" throughout grade school. From *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* to this year's *Blackstar*, Bowie has been an undeniable significant presence in my life, and his absence is still felt now almost a year later.

Near the end of *David Bowie Is...*, the British author Philip Hoare calls Bowie "someone who is responsible for your alternative education, for opening up the world for you," and that's as true for me as it is for him.

It's been almost a year since Bowie died. It's time for me to return this book.

Pustulio says

CH U L A D A
