



AC/DC: Hell Ain't a Bad Place to Be

Mick Wall

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Mick Wall penetrates the closed world of Aussie rock legends AC/DC.

AC/DC moved to Britain from Sydney in 1975 and soon set up a residency at London's Marquee Club. Their short hair (including the odd mullet), loud rock and attitude chimed well with the lingering pub rock and soon-to-be punk crowd.

They weren't really a band for guitar solos and singer Bon Scott was the original bike-riding, speed-snorting, fighting man. An ex-convict, he lived life fast and short; he died in February 1980, just before Back in Black, their huge-selling album, took off and the second period of AC/DC (with Brian Johnson as lead vocalist) was ushered in. Back in Black has gone on to sell 45 million copies worldwide and as the band have become a global phenomenon so their reclusiveness has increased.

Mick Wall, the don of heavy metal writing, seeks to penetrate the wall around the Young brothers and write the first authoritative, in-depth critical account of AC/DC.

AC/DC: Hell Ain't a Bad Place to Be Details

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Paul Harris says

A lot in this book that's very interesting, spoiled slightly by the author's obvious dislike of Malcolm and Angus Young. Also, it's a bit disturbing when you notice inaccuracies - I don't know enough about all the ins and outs of AC/DC to know if something's wrong, I just like the music, but I did pick up on two mentions of Tears For Fears in the book, when Wall mentions their album Songs From the Chair and single Everyone Wants to Rule the World. Except that should be Songs From the Big Chair and Everybody Wants to Rule the World. When that sort of factual mistake creeps in, it makes you ask, "What else is wrong?"

Sherman Berry says

Loved this book. A predictable comment from a long time fan but to learn more about the highs and lows of the AC/DC story was really interesting. At some points it seemed as if they became successful despite themselves. They left a lot of sacked people in their wake. After *Highway To Hell*, *Back In Black* and *For Those About To Rock*, arguably their best three albums, they sacked the producer!! Great decision boys. Who remembers the subsequent and very average *Flick Of The Switch*?

The author does a great job of recreating what life must have been like in the AC/DC "bubble" without it becoming a boring history lesson. I would recommend this book not just to Acca Dacca fans but fans of rock music in general. An insightful account of an iconic rock band.

Suzan says

A GOOD writer can make any topic interesting. Not being a fan of AC/DC, I wasn't sure how interesting the book would be to me, personally. But Mick Wall is a solid writer who not only knows his stuff but has lived the rock'n'roll lifestyle as a music journalist for more than 25 years. He has access, balance and a raconteur's talent for spinning stories that keep the reader both entertained and wanting more. Sydney's most famous rock band took its skills and management from older brother George's success in The Easybeats and its serious-as-murder clique mentality from its clannish Scottish roots. The Angus and Malcolm Young show is a rollercoaster ride of control, stubbornness, biff, boozing, and trailblazing. The band's incredible rise-and-fall from its initial successes with fellow Glaswegian Bon Scott to comeback with Brian Johnson is a thrill ride of backstabbing, temper tantrums, drug use, groupies, idol worship, music production and too many stranger-than-fiction tales about the long way to the top. Essential reading.

Adrian Pedersen says

Mick Wall is one of those 70s journalist relics who used to think they were bigger stars than the people they wrote about. He was also a great influence on me when I was growing up in the 80s, until I discovered that he's not a very pleasant person. I should probably give this book more stars, because Wall is a truly talented writer. The problem is that you really can't base a biography on interviews with people who don't like the

band. Wall hasn't gotten access to any of the band members, so he's stuck with everyone who's ever been fired from the band. That obviously doesn't make for a happy reading experience.

It's also pretty obvious that Wall doesn't like the band, something I figured out back in 2000 when he wrote a ridiculously spiteful review of their album "Stiff Upper Lip." In this book he uses every version of the word "derivate" without ever explaining what he means by it.

75% of the book is dedicated to the late singer Bon Scott, with the usual conspiracies about his death given way too much print. The last 25% of the book is dedicated to the band with new singer Brian Johnson, the longest era of the band, which Wall obviously doesn't think is worth much.

There is nothing here that fans of the band or hard rock and heavy metal hasn't picked up already. I guess we have to wait for a biographer the band will actually talk to.

Bjorn says

There's a certain symmetry to the fact that this book, much like any given AC/DC concert, pretty much acknowledges that the band stopped being interesting with the release of *Back In Black* and only fleetingly mentions that they kept touring and putting out records after that. Apart from a lot of detail about everything that happened before 1983, your main impression will be that Mick Wall *really* doesn't like that the Young brothers won't talk to him. That said, if all you're looking for is a straight-up biography of the band, no frills, no fills, just straight-ahead 4/4 details about Bon Scott drinking himself to death and the band occasionally recording an album, it'll do.

Maria says

oh for a book that wasn't really all about Bon Scott this and Angus Young that and that would also tell the real truth as to why Phil Rudd had to take a break from the band before it killed him. Mick Wall fails to be inclusive and non biased like so many before him.

Michael says

I respect the author's choice to tell the good and the bad instead of trying to paint a portrait of the band as a do-no-wrong perfect group. He tells of the members' drug and alcohol abuse, bad attitudes, and misfortunes in addition to their importance of music. It's a must read for fans of the band and rock music. He conducts interviews and touches on their entire discography (up to Black Ice which had been released around the same time.)

Nathan says

What did I think? Brilliant. I first picked up this book in an airport bookshop, and after reading a couple of pages knew I was definitely going to enjoy the rest - and I did. I felt throughout the book that it was unbiased

and level-headed. Very informative, amusing, and written in a relaxed and informal way that keeps everything fresh and interesting. I've learned a lot from it and I look forward to reading some of Mick Wall's other titles.

Martina says

Jesus Christ this one was so slow. Turned out that the author hasn't even spoken to the band when writing this book. Therefore it's hard to know what is true and what is not. It was fairly interesting at times but I feel like it was too much rambling. You could've easily shorted this book down if you wanted to.

Tom Gase says

Not bad. I was a little worried about this book. I read the author's book on Metallica and it was great so I ordered two books by the author, one on the Foo Fighters and then this one. The Foo Fighters book was pretty terrible, so I was worried about this book being the same. It starts off real slow, I mean real slow. I don't need to read over 100 pages on the family of the Young's before their first album came out. Way too much overkill there. A good portion of the book is then spent on the years 1975-1980 so it focuses on the Bon Scott era a lot more, even if that era was a lot shorter. The book does talk a lot about the transition from Scott to new singer Brian Johnson after Scott sadly died, and I enjoyed reading about the making of Back in Black, which is a great album. I didn't know it was the second biggest selling album of all time!!! Only second to Thriller by Michael Jackson. Sadly it seems the band could never get even close to as good as that again and the last 120 pages or so are on the 1980s/1990s and last decade and a few flops of albums, besides Razor's Edge which came out around 1991. I started reading this book about a week after Malcolm Young died, and you learn that it was Malcom, not Angus or Bon Scott or Brian Johnson, that really ran this band. In summary, this book takes way too long to get going, but once it does it was an entertaining read.

Karl says

Overall, for not having direct access to the AC/DC camp, Wall does a pretty good job of delving deep into the history of the early, rough and tumble beginnings of the band. However, the first three quarters of the book is the band with Bon Scott. Once his tragic death occurs (and with that death - Wall raises more questions than answers - which is a good thing) the next thirty years of the band are rushed through the last quarter. While there is more known about the band during this time, I feel as though the book was more negative in this section and therefore it was rather dismissive. That being said, Wall still does a great job capturing the feel and the angst of the bands formative years and especially Bon Scott. I will still keep my copy that I bought and read it again.

Marcos Junior says

Enquanto Bon Scott estava vivo, a biografia fazia uma radiografia muito interessante da banda, uma das mais profissionais e trabalhadoras do rock. Uma pena que proporcionalmente Mick tenha dado pouco destaque para os trinta anos seguintes, mostrando má vontade com o pobre Brian Johnson e muito ressentimento com

os irmãos Young, particolarmente Malcom. Ficou meio que uma ode ao Bon Scott. Mick Wall se perdeu na segunda metade do livro e teria sido melhor se tivesse escrito um libro sobre o período de Bon na banda, com um epílogo sobre o que viria depois.

Simon Sweetman says

Mick Wall is a very good writer, he tells a story well - pulls you in, includes you. And he has a knack for dealing with big, big rock bands - because he's met them all, hung with them all, parted with them, got to know them. He is good at reaching beyond hagiography. Here he puts together a nice case for what AC/DC did well. And what they they simply went on to do often.

Ciro Andreotti says

Dall'emigrazione dalla natia Scozia a quella che è diventata l'isola felice sia per la famiglia Young che per il 'fu' Bon Scott, sino all'arrivo del nuovo vocalist Brian Johnson. Molta vita vissuta, morte a sufficienza, molto rock e tanti chilometri percorsi per un gruppo che dopo oltre quarant'anni ancora pensa che sia molto lunga la strada da percorrere per arrivare al successo.

Vivere all'ombra di un fratello maggiore con la bravura di un settimo Beatles, fermo restando che il quinto e il sesto fossero rispettivamente Pete e George Best, non è stato sicuramente facile per i fratelli Malcolm e Angus Young, non prima almeno di fondare il loro gruppo e dell'arrivo del loro primo vocalist: Dave Evans, in seguito sostituito da Ronald "Bon" Scott.

Mick Wall ci getta letteralmente in un'ampolla musicale fatta di sogni, di dubbi, di tanto sudore, di miriadi di lacrime e di risse; lo fa a completa insaputa o quasi degli stessi protagonisti, si perché in una postilla a inizio testo lo stesso giornalista-scrittore denuncia le difficoltà nell'avvicinarsi all'entourage della famiglia Young; non per questo però il prodotto finale ne risente minimamente.

Il libro infatti è una piacevole cavalcata non troppo epica fra gli anfratti di vite rubate a vite comuni, prossime a diventare esistenze fatte di lavoro duro, ma sin da subito pronte per virare allo studio della chitarra e del basso elettrico per dedicarsi completamente alla ricerca di un successo che non ha tardato ad arrivare, per buona pace di milioni di fans che ancora oggi assediano i concerti degli australo-scozzesi AC/DC.

La Edizioni BD riesce a pubblicare l'ennesimo successo di una lista piena di bio-rock per intenditori. Mick Wall nel frattempo si tramuta, dopo questa ulteriore prova, nell'biografo più o meno ufficiale e di maggior successo dell'orbe, questo dopo aver già impalmato anche le vite di vecchi draghi quali Iron Maiden, Metallica e Ozzy Osbourne.

Quest'ultima prova conferma, come se ve ne fosse necessità, quel che di buono si conosceva dello scrittore inglese, ovvero che si tratta di un autore capace di farti leggere in un semplice soffio oltre quattrocento pagine senza mai annoiarti. Quattrocento pagine dense di aneddoti, di storia di vita, di problemi anche insospettabili; magari narrando avvenimenti banali e noti ma sempre con una grande maestria linguistica, in grado di catturare l'attenzione di chiunque sia un appassionato del metallo più duro e anche di coloro che possano appassionarsi a una storia fatta di sudore e molti riff di chitarra.

Marc Diepstraten says

I am an AC/DC fan since 1978. Bon Scott was someone I looked up to. What persona, what voice, the ultimate frontman, after all this years I still think so. I have read many a story through the years about the guys so it sounds familiar. This tells the story from the very early beginning up to Fly on the Wall. After that it peters out and the last 10 years until 2013 are done in a few pages. There is no source in the current camp, other than the members who got fired or left. So of course it is very one sided, but not necessarily untrue. At times the book is very angry and frustrated.

The Youngs come off as ruthless, ferocious, uncompromising and frankly dicks. Don't get too close to your heroes, they may turn out not so pleasant.

I would recommend this book only to diehard fans, and diehards of the old AC/DC who want to know the story.

I miss Bon, nothing against Brian, but Bon was the coolest fucker. Out there every night giving it all. I'll put some Powerage on, still a favourite.
