



Anyone Who Had a Heart: My Life and Music

Burt Bacharach

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In his memoir *Anyone Who Had a Heart*, Burt Bacharach, one of the greatest songwriters of all time, offers a frank and riveting account of his unparalleled life.

From his tumultuous marriages and the tragic suicide of his daughter, to his collaborations with Hal David, Carole Bayer Sager, Neil Diamond, Elvis Costello, and others, Bacharach details his long-lasting success as well as the never-before-told stories behind the hits.

Candid and emotional, and with 16 pages of color photographs, *Anyone Who Had a Heart: My Life and Music* is Burt Bacharach in his own words—a powerful and personal look at the award-winning songwriter and composer.

Anyone Who Had a Heart: My Life and Music Details

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From Reader Review Anyone Who Had a Heart: My Life and Music for online ebook

False says

Not even a discography in the back... a list of hit records...nuthin'. A few of his ex-wives have been quoted as saying, "Burt only cares about Burt...and his money." I would say that's on target. A very sad tale surrounding his daughter with Angie Dickinson. Still. Some wonderful music. A wag said, "Who remembers the lyrics to a song (Hal David.) Seriously. Uh. Me. Mr. David was wonderful. He was short-changed in that pairing.

Sarah says

I grew up playing Bacharach & Hal David songs on the piano, so I was eager to read the autobiography. I really enjoyed reading the parts about his creative process and how he got songs made/recorded. His friendship with Marlene Dietrich was also interesting. It was enjoyable to read interviews about specific time periods from others who were there (i.e., Dionne Warwick) which added perspective.

Seth says

My reaction to this book is mixed. I applaud the honesty; he includes details that put him in an unflattering light and show how self-centered he has been. At the same time, he doesn't seem self-aware *enough* somehow, and the book ends up feeling shallower than it should. I admire the inclusion of other voices in this autobiography, particularly those of his ex-wives, but learning that these quotes come from other sources rather than from interviews for this book is also a bit disappointing. The parts about his late daughter are heartbreaking.

Ward says

Some good anecdotes but there's something about the writing that still feels distant and impersonal-not enough depth in what was being said. Maybe that's just the way Burt Bacharach is? (Or it's the fault of the co-writer?) It was still worthwhile to read for his comments regarding how he writes music and his experiences in the recording studio.

Mediaman says

This oddly-structured book ends up being an interesting read about a not-very-nice guy. It's actually more of an oral history, with Bacharach's self-congratulatory sections the least interesting portions. What makes the book worth reading are the comments quoted in full paragraphs from others in his life, including his ex-wives who expose how incredibly self-centered the composer is.

This is not a book that makes the songwriter look good, because it uncovers his numerous affairs, cheating on his wives, ignoring his children, and his "problem" with taking drugs. Bacharach always describes things in the most positive terms, so he doesn't apologize for the adultery nor for abandoning his children nor for being an addict (which he never admits). He just glibly tosses aside that he does dope, can't go to sleep without medication, didn't know what to do with his children, is hooked on horse racing, and fell in love with women the first time he'd see them even though he was married. There are also a number of lawsuits and collaborator break-ups that he never resolves in the book, but it's obvious that this guy is full of himself and others had a difficult time working with him.

There are also some grenades thrown at others. Bacharach and the other voices in the book take well-deserved slams at Dionne Warwick, try to diminish the credit Hal David receives for the compositions, and at points turn the book into an anti-Bush, pro-Obama political rant.

While it's entertaining, the longer the book goes the less you like the composer. His worst quality appears to be his inability to father his children, not accepting the fact that he needs to be there instead of flying all over the world or staying up all night in recording sessions. One of the saddest quotes is when his third wife says that though Bacharach was a lousy husband he was a great father because "there wasn't as single night when, wherever Burt was, he didn't call him (his son) to say good night." Wow--a couple minutes on the phone each night with his boy--that's quite a parent!

Which leads to the most difficult part of the book--the suicide of his firstborn child that he had with second wife Angie Dickinson named Nikki. The book opens with his profession of love for her and it details the girl's mental struggles, including Burt's insistence on putting her in a facility in Minnesota for ten years as a young adult. The daughter's cries of just wanting her father to be with her are ignored. Angie even writes at one point that the only way Nikki improved was when Angie quit work and stayed with her every moment; meanwhile Burt was flying around the world banging other women saying he didn't know what else to do for his kid. The solution was in the final letter the girl left her father--that she just wanted him to be around! But Bacharach won't admit it, blaming Nikki's problems on bad doctors. This guy comes across as too self-centered to be a decent parent, husband or even composing partner. The book's title, based on one of his less-successful songs, is ironic since it appears Burt has no real heart for anything but himself and his songs.

David says

Because I grew up with these songs and still play a lot of them as a musician, I enjoyed reading this book and getting the back story on how many of my favorite songs came about. Bacharach and his co-writer Hal David produced some of the most memorable songs of our era... but like sausages, its not always pretty seeing how they are made. Bacharach was a colorful figure and he would be the first to admit he made some mistakes in his personal life. Nevertheless, its a enjoyable story with insights, interesting people and places, and great memories for me. P.S. Here's a short list of the performers he wrote for: The Carpenters, Dionne Warwick, Johnny Mathis, Aretha Franklin, the Beatles, Cher, Herb Alpert, Steve Lawrence, Marlene Deitrich and many more. I can't list all the famous songs he wrote but they are listed here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burt_Bac...

Audrey says

I don't often read memoirs, although I'd like to read more. This one seemed interesting to me because I had

an idea of what Bacharach must be like, after listening to his music for so long. I was totally wrong. Bacharach's voice comes through loud and clear, and I didn't always like what I heard. Memoirs are largely dependent on the person they're representing, and early on I didn't think I'd like this book. The reason was Bacharach's callous talk about women in general, as well as the women that were in his life. He came across as a womanizer and a cad. I hated whenever he called a woman a "dog" to indicate that he thought she was ugly, or how he casually talked about cheating on his wives and girlfriends.

At a point, though, the book transitioned to be less about his romantic escapades and more about his music, which is where I got sucked in. It details how he was the pianist, arranger, and conductor for Marlene Dietrich, and traveled the globe touring with her.

I loved reading about how he met and began working with Dionne Warwick, who became famous singing the songs written by Bacharach and his songwriting partner Hal David. She had the perfect voice for these songs, and really made them iconic. Too bad Bacharach, Warwick, and David all fell out of favor with each other and embarked in a circle of lawsuits. They made up later, but missed out on a lot of potential years of more hits.

Even better were the songs that I didn't realize Bacharach wrote. For example, *Baby It's You*, which was recorded by The Beatles. I also didn't connect him with *That's What Friends Are For* or Neil Diamond's *Heartlight*, both songs that were the foundation of the soundtrack of my earliest years (I was born in the early '80s).

It was great reading about the instrumentation Bacharach would use in the studio, like five (count 'em, FIVE) pianos playing on the recording of Tom Jones doing *What's New Pussycat?*, or the amount of takes he would make the musicians do to get the perfect take. He'd have them do it over and over again, but when Herb Alpert recorded *This Guy's In Love*, Alpert insisted that they didn't need anymore takes because the first take was perfect, and it turns out it was. He also talks a lot about how musicians were irritated by his use of complex meters and time signatures in his music, but he wrote the song that wanted to be written without forcing it into 4/4 time. This comes across when you listen, because with the exception of songs like *Promises, Promises*, the melody flows so gently that the transitions in time signatures is hard to detect by most ears, which is a real testament to Bacharach's songwriting.

I also had fun reading about the writing of *Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head*, because it was my favorite song in the whole world when I was a kid. Really.

While I wasn't in love with Bacharach (he loves himself enough already), I am still in love with his music. I enjoyed getting insight into this aspect of music history, and am glad Bacharach's still with us. He talks about future projects, and you have to admire a guy who is still working so hard in his mid-80s. This is worth the read if you love the songs.

Kristen says

I thought this memoir would be fun poolside reading about Burt Bacharach, a composer and musician I like.

Instead, it's an unapologetic trudge through the history of his neuroses, narcissism, and bad behavior, punctuated with long excerpts from old interviews with his ex-wives, lovers, and friends.

Although it was clearly inadvertent, the hero of the book is Angie Dickinson. She comes off as a self-sacrificing wife and mother, as well as a bright, grounded person. You wonder why she ever married him.

Nick Duretta says

Bacharach is one of my idols, so I devoured this one pretty quick. The subtitle is "My Life and Music," and fortunately, there's plenty about his brilliant music in here (his songwriting style, habits, inspirations, etc.) and the artists who sang his songs. The "life" part is fairly interesting, too, given his high-profile marriages to Angie Dickinson and Carole Bayer Sager. The book's structure is interesting in that both Dickinson and Sager (and many others) are given opportunities to comment on, and sometimes refute, Bacharach's recollections. Normally this would have bugged me but it seems to work here. Bacharach comes across as complex, occasionally difficult (and demanding), but basically a good man. He admits to many missteps he feels he's made, so this reads like a confessional at times. But, at 85, he seems (and claims he is) happy--and still writing!

Brian says

Truly conflicted as I have adored the music since I was a child and was excited to learn about the man behind these great songs. I had read some not so glowing reviews and must admit that in the first part of the book, I was disappointed that this might just be another portrait of a self absorbed celebrity who's body of work was in complete conflict with the individual.

As Burt's life story evolves, his brutal honesty became refreshing. We may not be able to fix or erase the pain of our past, but there is something to be said for owning it. I think ultimately, he did. The beginning was a 2 for me, but I ended up enjoying the book and was happy i took the journey. 3.5 stars

Val says

A nice walk down memory lane for me-- always loved his & Hal David's music that touched me through the years. The book reveals Burt to have been a hugely talented but tortured musician/artist always seeking perfection. I give him points for admitting past mistakes & apologizing to those he hurt along the way. Most of all, my heart goes out with sincere condolences to him & Angie Dickinson on the loss of their beautiful daughter.

Ken! says

He started losing me when he said his first wife, "was really good looking and had great tits, which back then could not be prefabricated." This man is an unsurpassed American master of songcraft and all he wants to talk about is who he slipped it to. Burt comes off as a superficial misogynist but I was hoping for a little

theory.

The one part I did like was that this book gave the lie to the whole tortured bad boy artist archetype. Bacharach's partner, Hal David, is repeatedly described as a mild mannered dentist type. In spite of this handicap, he managed to write the lyrics to all of Burt's songs.

Joan says

Painfully honest accounts of Burt's life. Well written and fast paced. A few back-tracks in timeline but easy to follow. I am left with a deep sadness for all the lives Burt harmed by his immature selfishness and lack of commitment. Such a brilliant composer and yet so ignorant about personal relationships. Glad his current family is seemly intact.

Ty Buckner says

A good book for a Bacharach or 70s music fan. Fairly typical celebrity memoir with some interesting insights about the music industry and Bacharach's successes and challenges. Pretty light reading that can be done in a few sittings.

Andy says

One of the best autobiographies I've ever read. The stories Burt Bacharach tells are absorbing like few I've ever read. A classically trained conductor and pianist who studied under composers Darius Milhaud and Henry Cowell, Bacharach made his mark writing deceptively simple love songs using bizarre chord progressions and complex time changes. This turned out to be a great source of frustration for thousands of musicians and singers alike.

The list of famous singers that turned down recording songs that would become his greatest hits is almost comical in a case of poor judgment. Like all great serious classical composers Bacharach became a hardcore insomniac, regularly waking up in the middle of the night to agonize over each and every chord and rhythm change. The end result are some of the most unique pop songs ever written.

Lest you think this is a cold technical book about his music there's enough Hollywood Babylon gossip and anecdotes to keep you interested in his unstoppable sex life. Parts of this book read like a music version of "Shampoo", i.e. Bacharach knocking boots with some showgirl while one of his four wives waits for him to meet her for dinner. There's a lot of action going on in this thing and I wasn't disappointed.
