



Naked

Kevin Brooks

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London, 1976: a summer of chaos, punk, love . . . and the boy they called Billy the Kid.

It was the summer of so many things. Heat and violence, love and hate, heaven and hell. It was the time I met William Bonney - the boy from Belfast known as Billy the Kid.

I've kept William's secrets for a long time, but now things have changed and I have to tell the truth. But I can't begin until I've told you about Curtis Ray. Hip, cool, rebellious Curtis Ray. Without Curtis, there wouldn't be a story to tell.

It's the story of our band, of life and death . . . and everything in between.

Naked Details

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Author : Kevin Brooks

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From Reader Review Naked for online ebook

Kirsty says

Naked is one of those books by a well established author that you just know is going to be huge. While not entirely for me as I'm not sure I'm into the topic it covered I enjoyed reading it and I'm sure someone far more into music than me (or someone who can remember those early days of Punk) will devour and love it.

The thing that struck me most about this book is that the main characters voice is so brilliantly realistic. Reading this is actually like reading the diary of a teenage girl (granted without all the sopiness -Lili is in a punk band you know). I loved learning about the early punk scene through her eyes.

There were several elements to the story that I enjoyed.

I liked seeing the relationships Lili built up with both Curtis and with William and enjoyed seeing how completely different those relationships were. I will admit now to being a William fan and therefore this meant I spend a vast amount of the book hoping he and Lili would get it together.

Those people who are looking to get this for school libraries younger teens I would certainly advise caution with younger children as there are a lot of drug / sexual references / swearing which might not be entirely appropriate for very young teenagers although I imagine this will be the entire reason why older ones would love it.

As I said enjoyed learning about the early punk scene through Lili and loved the edginess it brought to the book.

This book also added an interesting storyline involving the IRA troubles in the 1970s which is one part of the book which I personally found fascinating especially as it gave a lot of insight both into the political situation at the time for ordinary people but also into the mind set of people fighting on either side.

All in all a book which I think is going to be highly successful and earn many fans both young and old.

DarkMiryam says

Da bassista non potevo certo non farmi prendere da un libro in cui la protagonista suona il basso in un gruppo punk (genere con il quale ho cominciato pure io).

E questo libro mi ha presa moltissimo, specialmente per quanto riguarda la prima parte: il reclutamento nella band, la ricerca dei membri mancanti - dinamica in cui mi sono rivista tantissimo! - , i primi concerti, le opportunità...

Un po' troppo romantico-mielosa la seconda parte, ma comunque accettabile.

I protagonisti sono stati descritti molto bene, con i loro pregi ed i loro difetti. Provare empatia è facile, specie se si è musicisti e con esperienza di band alle spalle :D

La storia è ambientata a fine anni '70 ma a parte qualche accenno ad alcune band (come, ad esempio i Sex Pistols o Siouxsie and The Banshees) e un paio di luoghi che sono stati il focolaio del punk e del post punk a cavallo tra fine anni '70 e inizio anni '80 non viene dipinto in maniera approfondita il panorama culturale e

musicale dell'epoca. E' un vero peccato.

Purtroppo questo romanzo ha una grossa pecca: la traduzione è fatta MALISSIMO. Io capisco che sia uno Young Adult, che il linguaggio debba rimanere giovanile, che la storia sia scritta in prima persona e possa quindi mancare di lirismi... ma non da il diritto a te, traduttore, di scrivere in maniera a tratti raffazzonata e permetterti di scrivere AFFIANCO al posto di A FIANCO. E non si tratta di un refuso (che posso pure tollerare) ma di un errore gravissimo reiterato più volte.

Do al romanzo quattro stelline per il coinvolgimento che mi ha trasmesso ma, se dovessi valutare il traduttore, si cuccherebbe una stellina scarsa.

Nathalie says

3,5/5

Erin Sterling says

A student asked me for a tragic romance list recently, and this would fit the bill. But it's also great for those interested in the origin of punk music, not to mention that it also deals with conflict in Ireland and the IRA. I devoured this book, although the writing was a little...removed? I'm not sure I can explain it but it's basically a look-back at this year from the life of a girl in a punk band.

Cristina M. says

Bellissimo! Consigliatissimo a chi come me vuole una romanzo ambientato nel mondo reale e che abbia verosimiglianza, personaggi davvero ben caratterizzati e perciò indimenticabili, e perché no?, una buona dose di citazioni e conoscenze musicali. Qui c'è tutto questo e anche qualcosa in più.

I protagonisti sono liceali solo all'apparenza, perché la loro "testa" e la loro esperienza vanno ben oltre la scuola frequentata (a cui si accenna pochissimo) e la data anagrafica di nascita. Sono uomini e donne con volontà e capacità decisionali ben definite, caratterizzati nella loro psicologia dai comportamenti tenuti in situazioni più o meno drammatiche.

Ho sorriso, mi sono emozionata, è scesa anche qualche lacrima e... Ho anche scoperto cose che non sapevo.

Un piccolo oscuro capolavoro scoperto grazie ad un'amica per la comune passione per la musica. Ma una chicca da non perdere, per chiunque abbia voglia di leggere una bella storia.

Grazie all'autore e complimenti vivissimi.

Brin says

This is the first Kevin Brooks book I've read but it will definitely not be the last. This was a raw, exciting novel set in the burgeoning world of punk. The main character is Lili, a young classically trained musician who finds herself swept into this dirty, unglamorous music scene that began sweeping its way through 70's-era England. She finds herself becoming the bassist of a group called 'Naked' but is never really sure if she fits into this world.

The characters are at the heart of this novel and Lili is a likeable and relatable protagonist. Her relationships with Curtis (the lead singer in the group) and William (the mysterious new rhythm guitarist) are what drive the narrative. I found both characters to be very interesting. Curtis, with all his self-destructive ways, is a heart-breaking character and William (or 'Billy the Kid' as he becomes known) is simply a fascinating character. The only downside of the book is you never really feel you get to know him as well as you would like. William was easily my favourite character.

Anyone familiar with the early punk scene will enjoy all the references, from Malcolm McLaren (and his infamous boutique 'Sex') to various bands that would soon be taking the country by storm such as The Sex Pistols, The Buzzcocks etc. There is also a subplot revolving around the IRA conflict in Northern Ireland which ends up playing a really big role in the story as it unfolds.

The story is at times beautiful and heart-breaking. Brooks writes as someone very familiar with the setting and the events. I wasn't even born during the time the book is set in (although I am at least passingly familiar with punk as a social movement though prefer post-punk music personally) but I really felt swept up in the events.

Five stars *****

Jo says

Some of the best books I read are the ones I stumble on accidentally. I can't even remember why I decided that I might like this book. I'm not a huge fan of the 70s. I have an aversion against bands in YA fiction. I'd never even *heard* of Kevin Brooks.

So why would I read this YA book about a fictional band in the 70s... written by Kevin Brooks?
Maybe I was feeling particularly crazy that day.

I don't know, but I did and it was brilliant. Seriously, it was brilliant.

If I could sum up what this book was about in one word it would be 'passionate'. Every single character in this book is passionate about something. Well, OK, not Stan but I'm passionate about Stan so that's OK; we'll kind of balance each other out. Whether it's music, drugs, punk, sex, - it seeps from the page and it's practically impossible not to be drawn into it whether you care about it or not. This book is everything that YA should be- breathless, messy, funny, heart breaking, intriguing.

OK, I was going sum up this book with one word wasn't I? Whoops.

I loved everything about Mr Brooks' writing. I found myself underlining so many paragraphs it got a bit daft, especially when I found that my favourite quote ended up coming pretty early on in the book. And when I say early I mean the first paragraph.

“My heart was born in the long hot summer of 1976; my life was made, my love was sealed, my soul was lost and broken. It was the summer of so many things – heat and violence, love and hate, dreams and nightmares, heaven and hell- and when I look back on it now, it's hard to tell the good from the bad.

It was *all* good and bad.

Altogether, all at once.

It was everything.”

Isn't that one of the best openings ever? I could wax lyrical about how brilliant his writing is and how it

really transported you to exactly where he wanted you but well, we don't have all day, do we?

I have quite an eclectic taste in music but I'm not the hugest fan of punk music, which is basically what this book is about. The closest thing I am to being a punk is having a nose piercing and that one time I ripped my skirt and had to use a safety pin to save myself from an awkward situation.

Punk rocker, thy name is not Jo.

But it honestly didn't matter to me because I was too busy loving this story and the characters to care. I think that's one of Mr Brooks' main talents. Not many YA readers could honestly say that they are true, true, true fans of punk music (and no, wearing a Ramones t-shirt from Topshop doesn't count) but he makes sure that you're never out of your depth. Mr Brooks has this great way of telling a story that heavily relies on the setting and the culture of the 70s without coming across as one of those pretentious music fans.

You know the ones... the ones who corner you at a party and they know everything and they heard of that obscure band before you did and omg they're so retro and *how* have you never heard of them? You know the ones.... The ones you want to thump?

Mr Brooks is as far from that as you can get. Which, um, is good because I like to think that I'm not the kind of girl who would attack bestselling authors and also I can't throw a punch to save my life.

Let's talk about Naked. Normally I find fictional bands, YA or not, completely horrendous. They seem to be so cringey and fake and terribly unrealistic. But Naked?

“The sound was electrifying, stunning, the crash of chords ripping through the air like a thunderous shot of adrenalin, and when I started playing [...] and the stage erupted in a blaze of lights, it all felt so good that I thought for a moment my heart was going to explode. The sound was almost too good to believe. We were so loud, so fast, so tight.... We were so *there*.. it was incredible.”

I'd definitely go and see them and stand at the front and be doused in the blood/spit/bodily fluids of the nearest tattooed punk rock-.....

Hahahaha, I'm totally kidding. I'd be at the back because I'm a delicate girl who values her limbs and face. Also, I find only a certain kind of person can truly look good in a leather bra and swastika tattoos.

If, however, you aren't too fussed about punk music please stop backing away from this book slowly. It's not all punk and swastikas and Johnny Rotten. Do you like David Bowie? Of course you do, because who doesn't? The Buzzcocks? Velvet Underground? Pink Floyd? THE WURZELS? Yep. This book comes with one of the best readymade soundtracks I know.

See? I'm not a complete dunce in 70s music. But if I had been alive in the 70s, I like to think that I would be cool enough to be looking upwards... a bit more.... *Northern*. Things were happening up there. I dunno, you may have heard of them?

And while I'm talking about awesome things from the 70s that came from my neck of the woods...

“The shop was called Sex, and over the years it came to be known as the birthplace of the sex pistols. When Curtis first took me there, in August 1975, it already had a growing reputation as *the* place to be. It was owned and run by Malcolm McClaren and Vivienne Westwood.”

Dame Vivienne Westwood.

Need I say more? Northern England sure produces the most excellent of artists... *cough*

I think this book would be perfect for anyone who is interested in reading something that is a bit different from the norm. This isn't a book set in a high school and it's not set in a dystopian world. It is truly sex,

drugs and rock 'n' roll punk rock. But the glorious thing about this book is that it won't just interest people who are interested in the 70s or music but anyone who is interested in British and Northern Irish history as a whole. Mr Brooks sets the scene perfectly and it's rough and it's uncomfortable and it's so, so good.

Anyway, enough with the setting. I think we've established that Mr Brooks knows his stuff. My favourite thing about this book were the characters. I absolutely loved Lili, our narrator. She was such a gorgeous, vibrant and clever heroine. I loved how she held her own in a very masculine world. She was such a caring character who, even though I didn't *always* agree with the things she did, always tried to do the right thing and stand by the people she cared about no matter how close they were to crashing and burning. She was also hilarious.

"I bought most of my clothes from jumble sales and charity shops, and – as far as I remember- my hair at the time was a failed attempt at a Suzi Quatro-style layered cut, which might not have looked all that bad if I hadn't recently attacked it myself with a pair of blunt scissors... an exercise that resulted in me resembling a slightly deranged medieval waif."

:D

Also she plays the guitar like an absolute beast!
While I'm talking about Lili, I have to talk about something else....

Slight spoiler

I also loved the relationship between William and Lili so much. As much as I loved Curtis Ray in all his tragedy and beauty and I appreciated how magnificent he is as a character, William Bonney takes the biscuit. I just loved how he treated Lili.

"It made me feel how I was *supposed* to feel at my age.
Excited and stupid...
But stupid in a good way."

girly sigh

I'm not going to talk about these two too much because I think it's best to meet them on your own terms but I will say one thing, something that I think will sum up their relationship. On one of their 'dates' they walk around London discussing the genius of David Bowie and whether it was Ziggy Stardust or Aladdin Sane who had the orange stripe across their face.

If you can give me an example of a more perfect date, consider my reviewer's bonnet eaten.

End of slight spoiler.

The only problem I had was this book was the ending. Not the 'just before the ending' ending which I really loved, but the proper ending. I was OK up until then. Then things got a little too neat and tied up and lovely. BUT.... After the angst Mr Brooks had put us through, a nice ending was a bit of a reprieve. Hey, I'm a Brit- I like my endings messy... don't judge me.

Perhaps a little unrelated, I read this book on my Kindle which is such a shame because I would have LOVED to have seen the faces of my fellow commuters as they saw what I was reading.

Live fast. Play dirty. GET NAKED.

LOL.

Anyway, this book is spectacular and you should be reading it.

You can read this review and other exciting things on my blog, [Wear the Old Coat](#).

L A i N E Y says

“You can’t make them unhappen. You can’t just leave them behind, because once they’ve happened, they’re part of you, part of your past, and their memories become part of your present, and their consequences become part of your future.

Things that happen become you.

And you can never leave yourself behind.”

I don’t think I can sufficiently made you understand how impressive the writing was: it was **infused with emotions**. How Kevin Brooks (who was totally obscure to me before picking this up!) wrote about music was just so visceral. And to think that normally, I actively avoid reading novels about bands since I usually find it hard to “hear” the music! In the case of Kevin Brooks and Naked, the writing was so good, I found myself rereading sentences I just read because I felt my heart moved by them.

“It was called ‘Heaven Hill’. It started off quietly, with Curtis singing sorrowfully over a single haunting guitar line, and gradually it built up into a swirling echo of bittersweet harmonies over a mesmerizing heartbeat of throbbing bass and drums. Again, I’d never heard anything like it before, and if someone had asked me what kind of music it was, I wouldn’t have known what to say.

It was, quite simply, unforgettable.”

And this has one of the best female voices that was written by male authors. There’s really nothing to jar me out of my conviction that yes, she is a girl. Amazing feat indeed.

Adele says

This book was stupid, boring, and pointless. Maybe someone who was really into the origins of the punk music scene would enjoy it. I honestly don't know. I considered giving it one star, but I have this odd feeling about how no-one forced me to read it, and I could have stopped at any time, so it couldn't have been that

bad, right? And it didn't offend and the ending didn't ruin it or anything so . . .

Lyndsey O'Halloran says

I'd never read a Kevin Brooks book before this one but I know a lot of people rave about his writing so when I got the review request, even though it didn't totally look like my kind of thing, I decided to give it a chance!

Each character in this book was so unique and different from the next and that was something I really loved. The main character, Lili, is quite sweet and innocent at the beginning and a massive contrast to Curtis, the boy who takes her under his wing. In one way, I kind of think that Curtis corrupted Lili a little bit, showing her a completely different way of life and introducing her to drugs and drink but then on the other hand, I think maybe she might have turned out the same way anyway due to the era and what was going on. I liked Lili though, she brought a softer side to a very hard story and gave it the feminine edge that it needed.

Curtis and Billy were the most interesting characters though. Curtis is a complete wild child and doesn't care what anyone thinks of him. He just wants to live his life his own way and not have people telling him what he should and shouldn't do. Although this gets him into a heap of trouble at time, I admired him for his bravery and determination. As crazy as Curtis was, he had a softer side to him that was rarely seen as it only came out when he and Lili were alone but it was good to see that he wasn't totally wild. Billy was nearly the complete opposite to Curtis. Yes, he still drinks, sometimes does drugs and has a good time at parties but he was a much quieter and subdued character. Billy had a lot of hidden depths and it was great to hear his story being revealed at small intervals, always leaving me wanting more about him.

As Naked is about the story of a band in the late '70s, there are a lot of references to drugs, sex and drinking. Because of these things, Naked is definitely not a book for younger readers. I didn't mind these things in the book at all though because they were so fitting with the setting of the book. I wasn't even born in the '70s but I felt like all of these aspects helped to add to the atmosphere of the punk era and to make it possible for me to feel like I was actually there. Brooks' writing was so vivid and intense that I could picture every skanky bar and party extremely well. The whole punk aspect of the book was something that interested me greatly as I had never read anything about it before, nor did I know anything about it beforehand. Another big issue which is brought up is the IRA and problems in Ireland during the time and again, I didn't really know much about this so it really fascinated me and I think these things made Naked intense, interesting and complex.

The pacing in Naked is a bit hit and miss and felt all over the place at times. Just when it began to get really exciting, it would slow down completely for a large amount of pages and I thought this transition could have been a lot smoother. All of a sudden, the action stopped and the story would change to being dreary. Even so, these slower parts of the book really gave me a chance to get to know the characters better and to pay attention to the smaller things that they did or said which wouldn't have been included I guess if there had been a lot more action and excitement.

I loved Kevin Brooks' writing and how he is able to bring an era I wasn't alive for to life. I am really glad I started with this book and because I loved it so much, I am desperate to get my hands on more of his books now.

Charlotte says

Really this is the story of Lili Garcia, and her coming of age during the beginnings of the Punk scene in London. Lili- the classical pianist- falls for sexy cool-kid Curtis, and is invited to play bass in his band, Naked. What follows is the progression of the band and its members, all told from Lili's point of view.

I really struggled to get into this book, and was distracted throughout by issues such as the reliability of the narrator: at times the narration sounded phoney, and I found it difficult to believe that she could remember such details from 34 years ago.

Some elements of the storyline seemed a bit far-fetched and the ending a bit rushed and convenient. There was a very strong sense of the author tying up the loose ends, rather than bringing the book to its natural end. It just felt forced.

There were moments when the writing was effective, really drawing me into the storyline, but they were few and far between.

Not being alive at the start of the punk scene, I can only experience it through Brooks' description which created a believable enough, if repetitive, picture of that environment. The constant name dropping, however, began to get annoying. I could totally understand it, had Curtis been the narrator, but telling the story from Lili's perspective didn't sit well with me. Curtis is the one with the dreams and the desire to make the contacts and know all the movers and shakers of the industry, not Lili.

The involvement of William was an interesting development in the story, and I think some of the interactions between Lili and William, and Lili and William's family are the highlights of the book. Although, at times, I think Brooks was trying too hard to include far too many of the issues: social, political, of the 1970s. Perhaps he should've just focussed on the punk movement.

On a plus side, I think the characters that Brooks does choose to develop are given interesting and maintained traits and personalities.

This book was recommended to me as an example of gritty, teenage fiction. I think if you are a teenager, especially one who's interested in the punk scene, then this book will be right up your street. Or, if you're a teenager looking for something a bit different: a bit of old-school, teenage rebelliousness, then you'll also enjoy it.

Jo Bennie says

This is the best book I have read in a long time. The Troubles (the ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland during the late 20th century) may be living memory for any of us over 30 but for teenagers they are history and a new book is needed to replace the likes of Joan Lingard's excellent *Across the Barricades*. *Naked* fills this space brilliantly with a narrative seen through the eyes of naive teenage girl experiencing sex, first love and painful loss of innocence during a blazing summer.

It is 1976, London and Lili is 17, practicing Debussy in the school music room when Curtis Ray, the boy everyone loved, hated, wanted to be or be with, comes in and asks her to join his band. She says yes and finds punk and love, their band feeding into the burgeoning Kings Road punk scene in London around Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's controversial shop *Sex*. Brooks never forces the issue by name dropping, Curtis' band *Naked* fits naturally against a backdrop of the Ramones and Sex Pistols. And when they need a new rhythm guitarist brilliant Irish musician William Bonney appears as if from nowhere and is promptly nicknamed Billy the Kid after his namesake. As Curtis spirals out of control through alcohol and drugs Lili learns more about William and his life growing up as a Catholic in violently polarised Belfast and loses her innocence.

What Brooks does brilliantly in this is two fold. Firstly, he writes convincingly in the voice of a 17 year old girl who is affluent but emotionally bereft, charting her growing awareness of a larger world and her own sense of self. And secondly by putting the point of view behind her eyes he shows the horror of the Troubles and the UK bombings in a completely fresh light, as she learns so do we and what we learn is heartbreaking, of shattered families, brutality and fear. It makes for an achingly melancholic book, and the way I would like my 10 year old to learn about this vital aspect of British history that made a generation what it is.

Art Child says

2.5/5 ??, only because of William's storyline (which was the only thing that kept me interested enough to finish the book).

Laura says

Oh mio dio, non ero per niente pronta alla tristezza di questa storia.. Pensavo di leggere qualcosa di spensierato e allegro, invece mi sono trovata tra le mani un libro intenso e tanti kleenex...

Emma says

Review by Arthur 8:8

I was completely engrossed from the very first page: The story starts off with a woman, Lili, looking back on the year 1967 and what later followed. This is the time where she met two people that changed her life: Will and Curtis. Curtis was always known to be the rebellious bad boy at school. Everyone loved him, wanted to be like him or be with him. And so, it came a great surprise to Lili, when she got asked to audition for his band 'NAKED' even though she had no prior experience in Punk/Rock bands. From here on, the real story unfolds as we get dragged through Lili's life through her eyes.

Lili is a realistic character. I really like her. She does have flaws and so do the other characters but, that's what really defines them and makes them who they are. When Lili first saw Curtis, he seemed like a pretty decent guy. I don't like him at all! I have to say I love his band and music. The lyrics are okay. But, sometimes they do get pretty weird. They all do drugs (apart from Lili) which is rather off putting and in the story they treat doing drugs and living on road as a good thing and that could encourage people who have read this to pursue the same way in life as Curtis. I really don't care (much) especially when Will came into the picture. Yeah, I think that pretty much sums it up. He's plain awesome!

What I really really loved about Naked was how something interesting was always going on making it entirely engrossing. It's like one thing after another. You're tossed and turned into this fabulous world. Ideally, Naked is not your average read. It's tough, gritty and very edgy. Like, the ending! What can I possibly say? I knew it was coming, you could just tell but I didn't want to accept it.
